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2023: As Nigerians go to polls



Come this Saturday, February 25, 2023, eligible Nigerians would go to the polls to elect a new president that would run the affairs of the country in the next four years. Amidst the numerous challenges facing the country at this moment both economic, social and security, Nigerians are anxiously waiting for this moment of decision. Turn to pages 10, 31.

Covid - 19 CASE UPDATE; 266 NEW CASES CONFIRMED; 4.00 p.m. February 18, 2023; TOTAL CONFIRMED: 266,463 . DISCHARGED: 259,850 . DEATHS: 3,155; NCDCToll-free Number: 080097000010



Towards mitigating the looming food crisis

FOOD and Agricultural Organization (FAO) in one of its recent report has estimated that 25 million Nigerians are in danger of facing food shortage between the months of June and August 2023. It warned that unless urgent actions are taken it will result to a serious humanitarian crisis.

THE analysis reportedly indicates that about 17 million people including Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and returnees in about 25 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) were already facing food crisis since October 2022.

THE Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Dr. Mohammad Mahmood while speaking last year during World Food Day celebration said that Nigeria is doing everything possible to deal with food shortages in the country. He assured that the country is doing a lot to put in place strategies that would not make Nigerians go hungry. While the Minister seems to be optimistic that Nigeria is not at the brink of any food crisis the recent report however, cast doubt on the claim that it has put a lot of strategies to address any unexpected food crisis in the country.

It is, however, reasonable to posit that a country like Nigeria with vast arable land has the potential to be the food basket of not only West Africa but Africa and other parts of the world should not be threatened by hunger. The question is, however, where have we gone wrong that this warning is coming from an international organization that places great value to human capacity building, especially in the area of food production?

THE burden of surviving amongst Nigerians has become unbearable in the recent past. And with the recent forecast by FAO of an impending food crisis in the country it means more burden has been added to the citizenry.

ACROSS the country last year farmer, lost a lot of their investment due to flood that ravaged a number of farming communities in many states. The flood washed away farms and until now, there is not record to show that farmers have been attended to by the government in the form of assistance, coupled with the fact that last year was a bad one for farmers as farming implements and imputes were sold at very exorbitant rates. Without mincing words, therefore, the projected food crisis is already here. Today the prices of essential food items in the market have skyrocketed beyond the reach of the average Nigerian. In some cases, the prices have increased more than 100 percent compared to the last three years.

EVEN before the recent spate of insecurity, the agricultural sector had been neglected despite different government intervention programmes. We have neglected technology in our agricultural practices. It is obvious that tools we inherited and still use (hoes and knives) will hardly till enough land not to task of guarantying high yielding and better crops.

IT is believed that when government encourages farming through irrigation especially in areas that have arable land, food will be produced all year round and that will go a long way to increase food production and batter the lot of farmers and Nigerians as a whole.

IT also our conviction that government should fashion a new programme for the country's agricultural sector by creating the enabling environment for agriculture to thrive. For instance it should subsidize component like fertilizer and other farming inputs and ensure that it gets to the end users. It should also give subventions and incentives to local farmers. On their part, the farmers need to adopt new mechanized systems of farming driven by modern technology to increase output. Like the saying goes "A stitch in time saves nine". It is time for government to wake up and prevent this avoidable crisis.

El-Rufai's counter directive treasonable



Baba-Ahmed

The Vice Presidential Candidate of the Labour Party (LP), Datti Baba-Ahmed, has said the directive by the Kaduna State Governor, Nasir El-Rufai, to residents in the State to defy the monetary policy of the government and continue to spend the old bank notes was close to treason.

Baba-Ahmed's remarks followed

the directive issued by El-Rufai to residents in Kaduna, to continue to use the old N500 and N1,000 notes, contrary to the new monetary policy of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), as approved by President Muhammadu Buhari.

President Buhari had in his State of the Nation address on Thursday, insisted that the N500 and N1000 notes remained phased out.

However, Baba-Ahmed wondered "why would you as the Commander-in-Chief give an executive order and it is clearly constitutional and a State Governor would say you should continue exchanging those currencies?"

"This is to say there are two authorities. Why President Buhari is silent about this is best known to him.

"Immunity does not mean that the offence has not been committed.

"These are the States (kicking against the naira swap policy) that contributed about the largest votes for Buhari - Kano, Kaduna - but these are states at the forefront of fighting Buhari's Government because of currency.

"These are State Governments, who have not fought over failure to secure Nigerians. Their States have

-Baba-Ahmed

become so insecure. "They didn't challenge Buhari when the naira fell from N200 to N750.

"It is with this drama in the election that they are challenging him to the extent of giving counter orders...You know, treason. It is close to treason; lawyers will tell you that better."

The LP vice-presidential candidate, however, noted that "It was very strange that the Attorney-General of the Federation allowed Mr President to proceed with yesterday's national broadcast.

"It was unfortunate. The least I know is that when a competent court of jurisdiction, for that matter, the Supreme Court, is addressing an issue, all parties stay in action.

"However, I have submitted in the second paragraph that we are more than bewildered by the poor quality of leadership in Nigeria. That is the only way I can explain this phenomenon.

"The Supreme Court has adjourned ruling and a Commander-in-Chief goes and takes another action. This is classic, poor, quality leadership."

No plan to truncate elections-Presidency

The Presidency, on Friday, dismissed the alleged plot to truncate the 2023 elections to enthrone an interim government.

Senior Special Assistant to the President on Media and Publicity, Garba Shehu, in a statement on Friday, said, "The talk of interim government and truncation of democracy is way off the mark. Those who peddle it stand to gain nothing - nothing at all - but the creation of panic and the incitement of the public against the Federal Government."

Kaduna State Governor, Nasir El-Rufai, had alleged in an interview with an online news platform that a cabal around President Muhammadu Buhari, was plotting the failure of the general elections.

According to the Governor, those hoping to make the system fail, whom he described as non-state actors, were those who failed to pick the ruling All Progressives Congress' presidential ticket for Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Godwin Emefiele and Senate President Ahmad Lawan.

However, the Presidency assured that elections will hold as scheduled as Nigerians desire progress and good government as well as a system that works.

Reiterating President Buhari's commitment to sustain democracy, Shehu said, "Elections, just a week ahead, will hold and Nigerians will vote for the All Progressives Congress, APC, (and any others if

they so wish) on the basis of their choice.

"Our people want progress, good governance, law and order and will not be swayed by the negative energy that is being expended against a well-meaning currency change.

"Finally, to state that the President clearly has a favoured successor in Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, is not in doubt.

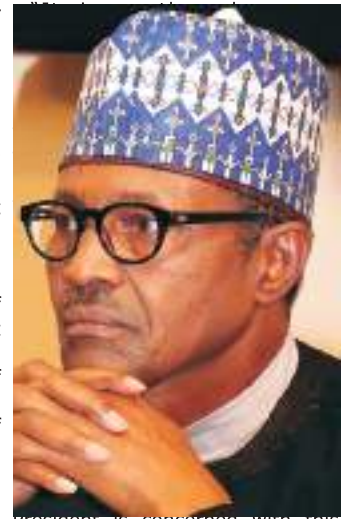
"The fact that Tinubu has been opposed to the speed and timing of the Naira swap timetable does not mean he is against the idea of Nigeria becoming a cashless society. Of course, Tinubu does support a cashless society for he is a man of the future.

"What should be made crystal clear to the doubters and the speculators and the untruth-tellers is that in no way was the naira swap "engineered" to keep the President in office beyond May 29. Nothing could be further from the truth.

"The President looks forward to handing over the reins of power to his elected successor. This will happen on May 29, 2023, as the Constitution requires it.

"The days of unelected Nigerian leaders, and those who outstay their welcome by unconstitutionally extending it, have gone.

"The talk of interim government and truncation of democracy is way off the mark. Those who peddle it stand to gain nothing - nothing at all - but the creation of panic and the incitement of the public against the Federal Government.



President is concerned with this problem that he opened several avenues for consultation with leaders and groups across the country, culminating in his broadcast to the nation on Thursday morning.

"In line with the speech, his clear and unequivocal directive is that the problem of cash supply must be addressed without delay.

"While this is being done, there is no need to panic. We need to work together as leaders, as a people and as one nation. When panic hits, people go into overdrive. Shouting helps no one because no one can listen.

"The solution to the problem is not in sending Nigerians into confusion."

Obasanjo's in-law bags seven-year imprisonment

Justice Mojisola Dada of an Ikeja Special Offences Court has sentenced former President Olusegun Obasanjo's in-law Dr. John Abebe to seven-year imprisonment for laundering and forgery.

Justice Dada, however, gave the convict an option of fine of N50million to be paid within 30days in lieu of imprisonment.

The trial judge handed the judgement after it was established that the prosecution proved its case beyond reasonable doubt and convicted him accordingly.

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) arraigned Abebe, who is a younger brother to the late former First Lady, Stella Obasanjo for forgery.

The prosecution led by Rotimi Oyedepo (SAN) arraigned the convict on July 26, 2018 on a four-count charge of forgery, fabricating evidence, using fabricated evidence and attempt to pervert the course of justice before the Special Offences Court in Ikeja.

The EFCC, in the charges, claimed that Abebe "knowingly forged" a November 30, 1995 letter written by BP Exploration Nigeria Limited to Inducon (Nigeria) Limited.

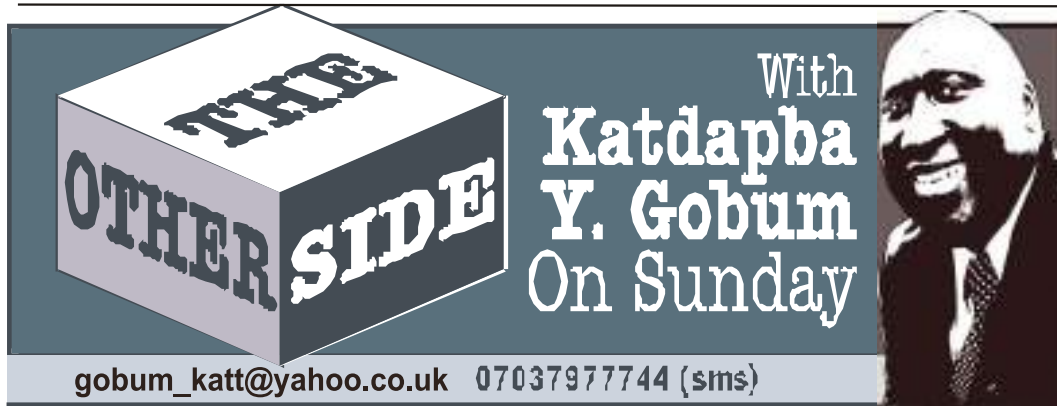
The anti-graft agency claimed that the businessman "illegally inserted" into page 2 of the said letter "the following statement: 'Also note that the 'Buy-Out Option' only applies to the pre-production stage of the NPIA. The \$4m buy-out

is thus irrelevant from production of oil in any of our fields."

According to the EFCC, Dr. Abebe also attempted to "pervert the course of justice" by tendering the allegedly forged November 30, 1995 letter "as a fabricated evidence" in court, in Suit No. FHC/L/CS/224/2010 between Dr. John Abebe, Inducon Nigeria Limited and Statoil Nigeria Limited.

An oil company, Statoil Nigeria Limited had on June 22, 2010, accused Dr Abebe of forgery.

Statoil Nigeria Limited had alleged that the defendant forged parts of a Net Profit Interest Agreement (NPIA) dated November 30, 1995, which was drafted by British Petroleum (BP).



"Queuing has become common place. Nigerians had thought the currency swap would be less problematic, even as our country men and women never thought it would get to the level that we have reached. The Central Bank of Nigeria is reported to have been prepared for it, yet I thought we should have seen the preparations come to place, but not in the sufferings that were meted on all of us."

WHAT stands out as Nigeria's major characteristic is our proclivity for long queues. Whether positively or negatively inclined, it is a dark spot for the country's development, and a need to ensure that we are worried for it.

Today, everywhere one turns to in Nigeria, such a one is sadly greeted with queues that have defied all known solution. If you want fuel, one must queue for hours to get it. Go to the pharmacy store or the hospital, if you are not ready to queue, you may return with nothing in your hand.

Nigerians in all states have had a raw deal concerning long fuel queues that have lasted for almost a year, while no one has suggested the reason for it. From refineries that have refused to work, to official theft and corruption; it does appear that nothing is needed to be done to stem the tide.

It is perhaps only in Nigeria that you must wake up at three am to go and queue for money. The queues increased as soon as the currency swap began. While it is understood that the new development is a good omen, whoever designed it must have expected Nigerians to suffer, otherwise, pray, why it is difficult to get the new naira notes despite assurances.

The way and manner it is being implemented, one would have thought that the government planned to make the people suffer. Everyone is feeling the pain in the land and it has affected almost all Nigerians who need money for their economic activities. But the politicians need it most to prosecute their campaigns.

It does appear that for some time, the Nigerian people will continue to be in pains, what with the fact that a lot of things are needed to fix the development. While the government wants to settle the excessive use of money in politics, there are people who are benefitting from the pains of lack of money. The banks with their various heads are reported to be in sync with the politicians that have tried to circumvent the new policy. Whether this is true or not, nothing can be far from it as the politicians, who often use money for campaigns are finding the waters so hot to handle without available cash in hand.

Queuing has become common place. Nigerians had thought the currency swap would be less problematic, even as our country men and women never thought it would get to the level that we have reached. The Central Bank of Nigeria is reported to have been prepared for it, yet I thought we should have seen the preparations come to place, but not in the sufferings that were meted on all of us.

The education the Central Bank of Nigeria needed to carry out did not go down to the grass roots; as such the people in my village are unaware of the development. They are detached from what would happen even if new swap policy is

Nigeria: A country and its long queues



stopped. Many understand that the new policy is for the good of all, only a few Nigerians find it hard to reciprocate, and government says; the few are the ones antagonizing the policy.

No day passes without observing the preponderance of queues at banks in the local government headquarters. In the end, what came out from the experience was an eye opener, telling graphically the shape of things to come if the government did not get worried to nib it in the bud.

Characteristically of Nigerians, everything was left to chance; even government may have believed that the noise would be made for a time, and before long, it would subside and die naturally. That must have been the greatest mistake may have made, as the frustration of Nigerians soon became manifest; they lashed on that to become violent; dealing blows to people and institutions.

Many of us remember with nostalgia what happened during the End SARS protest. Government and the security agencies took the menacing frustration of Nigerians for granted. By the time it got to the point of assuring Nigerians that something would be done, it was late for the protesters to return home. However, the deed had been done by then; today, when the losses are recounted, many would have wished it didn't take place.

No doubt, it was a lesson for all. While we are saying this may not be like the SARS protest, the need to be circumspect is worth considering by all. Reports have it that many financial institutions were set ablaze in the last two weeks on account of the difficulties Nigerians are going through.

To think that government would wait until the situation got out of hand is to underestimate the tone of the problem; and the fighting power of the people. Get this clear: No government prays for crisis on its head. As such, on February 17, 2023, President Muhammadu Buhari addressed Nigerians on the

situation and appealed that government was also worried about what Nigerians were going through.

And as many had thought, an address by the President came in to douse the frustration. Whether it did or not is left to be seen in the next 60 days. Just three or more days after the presidential address, only a few understand the reason behind the new naira policy swap.

The fact that it is still difficult to get cash means that we have more harsh days ahead of us. The banks and POS are dry but with many waiting on the queues for what are not available for them. In this situation, it is expected that the banks should be given sufficient cash to dispense to their customers.

If this is not made possible, more Nigerians, in their desperation will cut the neck of the next available customer. Much has been seen done in this regard, even as it is regrettable that Nigerians have used the situation to make profits at the expense of their countrymen. While they have made more money derived from their charges, they have no regard for what their customers are made to go through.

It is true that several families do not have the new notes let alone the old. Feeding for many families has become a problem; business owners are lamenting the losses they have incurred in the last three weeks of going forth and back. The policy summersault, by all intents and purposes, should, according to the Central Bank of Nigeria meant to help fast track the economy that has been bastardized and it is hemorrhaging from all parts.

But of all known reason for the currency swap, the federal government is determined to stamp its feet on money politics in the 2023 general elections. In this part, money plays a big role in ensuring that a candidate is delivered with a mandate by all means, using money that is at the disposal, or rather in the hands of politicians, who are desperate to win elections by all means.

In the course of the weeks in which most Nigerians experienced hardships beyond measure, much was expected from government,

such that measures would have been taken to cushion the effects of the sufferings of Nigerians.

Gagdi and the new trajectory

On February 12, 2023, Rt Hon Yusuf Adamu Gagdi started a tour of some of the farthest parts of the Federal Wards of Kanam LGA.

Traversing through Dugub, Dogonruwa, Munbutbo, Garga, it was easy to make out what was ahead: Driving as if in a grandprix, that must be done to beat the heavy sand on the roads, but what lay ahead became a test of who was on the wheels.

But, Na Kankwana, an old hand in handling the wheels from Ungwan Gyero in Munbutbo, can give any driver a lesson on how to drive in the sand. He was part of the entourage, and knows every pothole from point of start to finish.

The casualties became pronounced: Some vehicles fell to function and were left to be attended to the next day, just as the fatigue that came through pushing some of them that got stuck in the sand took its toll on all.

At Munbotbo, Lugur and Tunga, Rt Hon Yusuf Adamu Gagdi would himself lead to push the vehicles stuck in the sand. Those who have stayed longer with him are quick to recall some of the days that he would challenge drivers who had problems and drive their vehicles to safety.

The moment night fell, the test became manifest from Ganjuwa, Birbyang, Tunga, Tukur, Yenla, Kantana, and Jom terminating at Jarmai. By the time the entourage arrived at the venues of meeting his constituents, the night was far spent.

At some point, and for a first-timer, it would appear no soul would be met at the venues. It would surprise those that doubted; they kept vigil by singing and dancing until he arrived at the venue.

But it was not the test that should make the headline: It was the sheer patience of supporters patiently waiting in the sun for

hours to receive their son. They knew he would turn up considering the terrain of their area.

They understand politics. Only the patient goes home happier. The orientation serves well to raise politically conscious actors that could be accommodated. That is the mold Rt Hon Yusuf Adamu Gagdi is made of. And suave as ever, he is the man to beat.

Only recently, Rt Hon Yusuf Adamu Gagdi just concluded a four-day tour of 36 Federal Wards that make up his constituency.

There are a few takeaways from the tour. The lessons are instructive, as they send signals of hope and commitment to political office seekers in the land.

To have involved a large number of constituents does not show that one is wealthy nor has the wherewithal to throw around. It shows that there is enough room for others to also participate in the process of electing their representative.

Visiting constituents constantly shows that they are valued. When one doesn't, it is an indication that they do not matter to them; but only during elections that they become relevant. They are witnesses to such treatment by different politicians in the past.

Such politicians come and go, without considering the constituents. They are treated with levity, to the extent that, there is no genuine commitment to the people they seek to represent.

Consider this: Rt Hon Yusuf Adamu Gagdi, has, since 2019 been in a different class. He has shown that he makes things happen as the people mean a lot to him on the journey.

He has visited the 36 Federal Wards about 8 to 10 times minimum. It is no doubt a commitment to service, and of his responsibility to them.

Gagdi has continued to Do Good, and that is why they say, he who does well always sees good from the people. This truism is replicated in the life of Rt Hon Yusuf Adamu Gagdi.

There is genuineness in the struggle by Gagdi. Those that are involved have been bitten by the same bug.

Perhaps, for good measure, his outings are a delight. Gagdi has never been a long ranger; he travels with his arsenals fully prepared to support other candidates.

In all the ward headquarters, he would appreciate and tell the crowd why supporting Tinubu/Shettima, Nentawe, Diket, and Assembly members should be a priority.

What better sacrifice could there be by Gagdi than to get everyone involved in the struggle? Those who cherish the struggles Gagdi has been engaged in know that it is good he has down so much good to reap there from.

This can only be so, knowing that Gagdi has always trusted in God!



Girl-child and her rough terrain

IT is very glaring that the African woman has a lot she is contending with. Tradition or culture and religious beliefs have clipped her wings from her formative years unlike her male counterpart, who enjoys limitless freedom.

In most homes in Nigeria, the girl-child wakes up at the break of dawn while the male children still snore away. If it is a rural community, she will join other young girls to go to the stream to fetch water in large basins to fill everywhere in the house. The weight of the containers they use in carrying the water from the stream is usually too heavy for their size and age. But the fact that no one wants to visit the stream several times especially when others are done fetching water, they would rather bear the weight and reduce the number of trips to the stream.

The girl – child is expected to start the fire in between her trips to heat bathing water. Exhausted or not, she is expected to run around, wash plates, sweep as breakfast is on heat. It is only when bathing water is ready that she will wake her male siblings and younger ones to take their bath. In some cases, she bathes her younger ones and prepares them for school. And at the nick of time, she rushes into the bathroom to take her bath, using as little time as possible to dress and then dash off to school most times unable to eat the breakfast she prepared.

Due to the burden of her responsibilities, it is no wonder that the boy-child often does better than her in academics. He comes to school refreshed and well rested. The girl – child, on the other hand, may be fatigued, her mind going ahead of her to plan what she would cook and finish up her remaining house chores.

An only girl among 3 boys said while growing up she thought her mother hated her with a passion due to the reasons enumerated above. On top of it all, anytime they came back from school, her younger brothers would change out of their uniforms, dropping them where ever they felt like, eat their lunch and go out to play with their friends. It was her duty to pick up after them, wash their plates and then everyone's uniforms.

This lady said she had no life but being a housekeeper or cook for her brothers who could demand for any kind of food apart from what was available. While she washed their clothes, they could be watching film or playing football. Every one seemed very insensitive to her needs as they used plates, clothes or water without regard.

She said " My mother would always say she was training me for my husband's house", which was ridiculous. That meant she was spoiling her brothers for an unfortunate wife. This is the plight of most African girl-child.

As if that is not enough, the female gender has to watch her steps especially in the village. In most communities, there are foods that are taboos to women. In the Ibo community, a woman does not eat chicken gizzard. This is a serious offence.

In the Goemai community, a woman who is menstruating is isolated from her husband during those days. She is not allowed to enter the kitchen not to talk of cooking food for her husband especially if he is a traditionalist. Many a woman ended up with a co-mate after a prolonged menstrual period.

Unfortunately, our culture and traditions favour the men because he who pays the piper, dictates the tune. Till date the issue of inheritance favours men. There are traditions where women can not inherit anything from either their father or their husband especially if they have no children together. And to think that some parents still do not see the relevance of education for their girl-child. And some men do not allow their wives to empower themselves economically. They prefer them to depend on them completely.

We are living at a time that wickedness is an accepted norm. The rate death is sweeping away our productive population is scary. It would not be wrong to say every woman is a potential widow. Or every married man is a potential widower considering the number of deaths recorded every day.

Recently, I was in the company of a close relation that had just lost her husband. It shocked me when I overheard some of the rules that will guide her life. She was told that she will remain indoors for 100 and a few days without crossing the threshold of her gate. This applies because she is self employed or else it would have been 40 days if at all she needed to eke a living to survive or she was employed by someone.

Do you now understand how the life of suffering is initiated into the life of a widow? Even if you have a business and you are absent from your place of business for 3 months plus, it will take the grace of God for it to survive. A worse case scenario is if one was totally dependent on one's husband. Feeding, daily needs, school fees and if unlucky, rent, will all become issues and put one at the mercy of people.

Unless and until we address the issue of the girl-child as a second class citizen, the rights of a woman, this circle of women being economically disadvantaged will continue. The change begins with you.

NEWS

I've added value to PPC despite difficulties

By JAMES E. NYAM & JULIET TYOSAA

-Gwotbit

OUT-GONE General Manager of the Plateau Publishing Corporation (PPC), Publishers of **THE NIGERIA STANDARD** and **SUNDAY STANDARD**, Dr. Boniface Gwotbit has said that he added value to the corporation, despite some of the challenges faced

Gwotbit stated this while handing-over to the acting General Manager of the Corporation, Mr. Paul Jatau who until his appointment in that capacity was the Managing Editor of **THE NIGERIA STANDARD** newspaper Jos.

Our correspondent reports that the ceremony took place at the corporation's General Manager Office last Thursday.

Gwotbit congratulate the acting general Manager over his appointment and wished him happy stay as he steers the ship of the corporation from now henceforth.

The outgoing general Manager said that his joy was on the fact that he was handing-over to an insider who also knows much about the organization.

He maintained that he was not leaving in tears because he was elevated to the position of permanent secretary (PS), posted to the ministry for information and communication Plateau State.



Gwotbit

Gwotbit advised the management and staff of the corporation to give the needed support and cooperation to the acting general manager so as to enable him succeed in all his plans. He encouraged team work between management and staff of the organization.

He advised staff to rally round the acting GM with good advice that would further move the corporation forward. Gwotbit described the organization as a training centre for those who have

passed through the organization.

Responding shortly after receiving the hand-over note, the acting General Manager, Mr. Paul Jatau expressed delight with the appointment given him, adding that as a journalist, he would bring his wealth of experience to bear so as to move the organization forward.

Jatau also called on staff to given him the needed support and cooperation. He assured the staff of the corporation of his readiness to carry everyone along at all times.

Nentawe needs Tinubu to make an impact

-Lalong

By PALANG KASMI

IF the impact of the All Progressives Congress (APC) Governorship candidate is to be felt in the state, then equally voting for the Presidential Candidate of the party, Asiwaju Bola Tinubu should be the option.

This position was stressed by Governor Simon Bako Lalong, during the APC Central Zone Gubernatorial rally flag-off which took place on Wednesday February 15, 2022 at the Pankshin Mini Stadium, in Pankshin Local Government Area.

The flag off was attended by party big wigs, stakeholders and supporters from the state including government officials, political appointees, and office holders.

Lalong stressed to the mammoth crowd who converged at the stadium for the event to ensure they give the APC their votes from top to bottom to enable their Governorship candidate Dr. Nentawe Yilwatda and his running Mate, Hon. Pam Botmang to work cordially with Tinubu when he is voted into power in the 2023 general elections.

He urged the people of Central Zone to give the Governorship candidate who comes from the Zone the mandate to serve alongside a credible President to work with, to enable him attract Federal Government projects and development to Plateau.

"You should vote the APC Presidential Candidate Tinubu and his running mate Kashim Shettima at the Federal level, and Nentawe/Botmang as Governorship Candidate at the state. Vote APC from top to bottom".

House of Representatives Deputy Speaker, Rt. Hon. Ahmed Idris Wase in his remarks said,

the APC Governorship rule in the Plateau has yielded good results and provided a rulership that has brought peace, unity and tolerance among the citizens.

He appreciated the Governor for attracting many Federal Government projects to Plateau including roads and schools, warning that the people should be weary of politics of religion and put the sentiments and development of the state at the front burner.

He said the APC Governorship candidate, Nentawe Yilwatda can only work and synergize better with a President from his party to bring development to the state.

Hon. Yusuf Gagdi appreciated the APC for rotating the Governorship seat to PPK Federal constituency to ensure justice.

He urged the people to vote for Nentawe Yilwatda as the Governorship candidate and make sure they deliver the APC Presidential.

He described Nentawe as a community developer and grassroots mobiliser who will deliver the dividends of democracy to the people of Plateau.

Nentawe Yilwatda called on the people of PPK to come out and vote for himself and Tinubu so that he will have a repeat of the historical senerio of how JD Gomwalk had a President in Gen. Yabubu Gowon.

He said, 52 percent of Nigerian wealth is in the national level therefore without a President from the party at the National level, he will not be able to woo even 2 percent of the resources into the state when he is elected.

He urged the constituents to vote for APC Presidential who has set a foundation and precedence for Development assuring that same will be replicated in Plateau if APC wins from top to bottom.

"Religion should not be used but look at how Tinubu has acted as a detribalized Nigerian by working with both Christians and Moslems during his tenure as Lagos, and see how now he has many people working with him at the Presidential Council including Plateau Governor as his Director General.

While calling for support for other APC Candidates, Yilwatda said "If you want me to succeed as Governor, give me a Tinubu as president, and if it fails, blame me for it".

Good will messages were given by Deputy Governor Prof. Sonni Gwanle Tyoden, Speaker Plateau House of Assembly Hon. Yakubu Sanda, Party Chairman, Hon. Rufus Bature Director General of the Nentawe/Botmang Generation Next Campaign Council Prof Sebastine Maimako, APC Central Zone Senatorial Candidate Hon. Diket Plang among other stakeholders who urged people of the Central Zone not to miss it in the elections by voting another party, but to vote the APC Presidential candidate alongside the Gubernatorial, and other candidates to form a formidable team to work together.

Governor Lalong had earlier on arrival to the local government commissioned one, out of 12 skills acquisition centres spread across Pankshin, Kanke, Kanan Federal constituency and a road network in Pankshin town, built by the House of Representatives member, Rt.

SUNDAY POLITICS

Close race, cash shortage raise desperation among politicians

As this year's pivotal elections draw nearer, the combination of a tight race and the shortage of cash to buy support mean that politicians and their field men are getting even more desperate across the country.

THE February 25 presidential poll is proving to be unlike the ones before it. It is the first time a presidential election will be this tight, it is the first time that the two major parties are truly being challenged and it is the first time that the election will be held in an environment where access to cash to buy votes has been significantly curtailed, leading to politicians willing to pay a huge premium for the cash when they can lay hands on it.

Government and security officials in Abuja said they now believe that senior bankers hoarded and sold the new Naira notes to politicians and that in some cases, a premium of up to 25 percent was charged. This they claim led to the failure of the Central Bank to move the new notes to Nigerians, leading to the anger across the land.

"We have no record that banks were themselves involved," one senior government official told BusinessDay. "But for bankers to have held the notes and sold them as we now believe, it means that even if the bankers acted for themselves, they were senior level people in the system."

BusinessDay learnt that before deadline for the return of the old notes, desperate politicians who besieged Abuja and Lagos and other cities with a large concentration of bank branches were able to exchange their old notes for the new ones for up to twenty-five percent premium.

Now that the deadline has passed, the politicians are exchanging US dollars for the new notes. In one case our reporter learnt that a politician who brought in \$1m left with just N450m in the new notes. That amounts to a discount of N300m which was pocketed by the banker. Security officials now believe many of such a transaction took place in the early days of the Naira exchange and that this, more than anything precipitated the chaos that is now blamed for the rioting and attacks by irate Nigerian mobs on banks around the country.

Politicians unable to get the Naira are piling up lower denomination of the dollar for use to buy electoral favour. Our reporters learnt that in the border areas in the northern part of the country, politicians and their agents are acquiring loads of CFA with which to buy votes.

Many of the election polling that have been conducted so far indicate a close race and the desperate search for banknotes is fueling more desperation in the final days of campaigning for an election in which President Muhammadu Buhari would want Nigerians to believe he is indifferent or unconcerned



about who will replace him.

But some including governors of his ruling APC and led by Nasir El-Rufai of Kaduna state have countered the president's messaging by claiming that the Naira redesign and its mishandling were deliberate ploys by some in and close to the presidency to blunt the chances of the party's candidate Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

According to a recent report by African Confidential, "so predictable was the chaos triggered by the plan and its unrealistic deadlines, its critics insist it must have been a conspiracy designed to undermine Tinubu – both to hamper the payment of electoral inducements and to

paint the image of his party as incompetent and uncaring about the hardship the policy is causing to tens of millions of poor Nigerians."

It added that "the naira crisis could disrupt all the frontline candidates in the presidential elections: Tinubu as well as Abubakar Atiku of the main opposition Peoples Democratic Party and Peter Obi of the previously insignificant Labour Party."

Farooq Kperogi writing in the Tribune on Saturday said, "the intensity of frustration and rage that APC governors have been ventilating over the policy is the surest signpost that they recognize the politically mortal

danger that the (Naira redesign) policy poses for them in next week's election. Their winning strategy was obviously anchored on the strength of their financial muscles. It had to be."

Tinubu's camp has also aimed its fury at the Federal Attorney General, Abubakar Malami, after he asked the Supreme Court to dismiss the governors' case for lack of jurisdiction immediately after the justices granted an injunction allowing the old notes to remain legal tender beyond the central bank's deadline of 10 February for their retirement. 'Malami is a public enemy like Emeziele,' was the

view of Bayo Onanuga, the Tinubu campaign spokesman and veteran publisher. The attorney generals of Kaduna, Kogi and Zamfara said in a joint application filed at the supreme court on February 3, 2023, that "economic activities are grinding to a halt' under the 'haphazard, cack-handed' initiative that has left the states on the verge of anarchy and law-abiding citizens had been denied access to cash," they added, lambasting the Buhari-led federal government for "embarking on the policy with an unreasonable and unworkable timeframe."

Politics

'I'm relying on God for Victory to come'

From **ABBAS GUNGURA, Bauchi**

THE Governorship candidate of the All Progressives Congress, (APC) in Bauchi state, Retired Air Marshal Sadique Baba Abubakar, has revealed that his ambition is not worth mingling with demons and wild animals in Yankari Game reserve to enable him win the March 11, 2023 Governorship election in the state.

He made this assertion during his campaign tour in Ganjuwa Local Government Area of the state recently, where he said his trust is in Almighty God who gives power to whom He so wishes at any given time.

The APC Governorship candidate was reacting to recent comments by one of his opponents in Dass local government that he has been in Yankari Game reserve where he mingled with Demons and wild animals and as such, he fears no one.

Abubakar pointed out that he was only faithful to God in his Guber ambition and not mingling with demons and wild animals to enable him win election in his quest to reposition the state.

He said, if elected as Governor in 2023, he will ensure that series of skills acquisition opportunities are created for the Youth and women in order to make them self reliant.

"We are going to run an all inclusive government such that the youth, women and other citizens of the state would live a better life. It's going to be in such a way that you don't need to rely on anybody for your daily needs", he said.

Ambassador Sadique further pledged adequate scholarship support to students of various tertiary institutions if given the mandate to pilot the affairs of Bauchi State, adding that his administration will change the narratives in the state.

Ambassador Sadique who said it is God who created demons and wild animals as well as the Yankari Game reserve, noted that his belief has grown beyond that, adding that, God willing, his party will emerge victorious in the polls.

"It is not good that some children afford can to go to school while others can not, it is unfair that some people afford treatment in the hospital while others can not due to lack of money, this is the kind of scenario that we are going to change", he said.

The APC Governorship candidate while urging the people of Bauchi state to keep their voters card ready in order to vote for the party from top to bottom, advised them to ensure that their votes counts to avoid any possible rigging.



Abubakar

"I urge you to shine your eyes so that these people will not outsmart you by rigging the election. Ensure that your votes are counted", he said.

Sadique Baba Abubakar who pledged to actualize the Kafin Zaki Dam if

'Don't return Inuwa for a second term'

An elder statesman and former Chief of Staff during the reign of Muhammad Danjuma Goje as Governor of Gombe State, Lamido Umaru Chikere has advised voters against voting for the incumbent Governor, Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya for second term.

He gave the advice while addressing supporters in his residence in Kumo, the headquarters of Akko Local Government Area of the state.

Chikere said Inuwa is not the type of governor that deserves a second term adding that, he has proven not to be good enough in his first four years and cannot deliver on the yearnings of the state.

He alleged that the State Government under the All Progressives Congress (APC) has only succeeded in inflicting hardships on the people and will make the people suffer more if reelected.

He said, "I have been in Government and I know what Governors do in their first term and what they intend to do if given another opportunity.

"So, when I say I know what this Governor will do if reelected is probably because I know from experience.

"I am warning and advising, don't vote for Inuwa and it is for your own good. The governor has

elected, pointed out that by so doing, it will boost farming activities and by implication, improve the economic activities of not only the people of Ganjuwa, Bauchi State but North East state as a whole as critical stakeholders.

shown us all in his first four years that he doesn't care. What are you expecting from his second term when he has nothing to lose?

"If you know that you are my supporter and follower, I want you to know that I have studied the situation and I am telling you that the APC candidate isn't the right choice for our state.

"We should not make the mistake of voting for him," Chikere stated as he assured that there are better candidates elsewhere in an opposition party in the state.

"We should look beyond party and do the right thing for our state and population yet unborn", he warned.



Inuwa

Thugs disrupt VOA debate for guber candidates

Some "Area Boys" conscripted as Political THUGS have succeeded in stopping the Voice of America (VOA) Hausa Service to abruptly discontinue the debate for governorship candidates it organized in Sokoto.

The debate organized for governorship candidates of various political parties that succeed the out going incumbent Governor will the State, Sokoto Rt Hon. Aminu Waziri Tambuwal Voice of America, Hausa Service did not end well.

The political parties that turned up for the debate numbered just six (6) out of many.

Our Correspondent also reports that those who were present at the occasion for the debate

From ANENE AIKE, Sokoto include, Senator Abubakar Gada of the SDP, Hon. Saidu Umar of the PDP, Senator Umar Dahiru Tambuwal (NNDP), Comrade Aminu Umar Ahmed (LP) and that of the APC, Hon. Ahmed Aliyu Sokoto including Dr Ibrahim Liman Sifawa of the NDP.

The organizers of the debate had at the beginning appealed to candidates, their supporters and the entire audiences to maintain absolute decorum and respect for all candidates.

The participating governorship candidates took advantage of the debate to once again state their mission and vision

From **WILLIE ATTAH, Gombe**

Ahmed Khamisu Mailantarki, the Gubernatorial candidate of the New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP) for Gombe State, has called on traditional rulers across the state to ignore threats issued against them by Governor, Inuwa Yahaya for supporting candidates of other parties.

He has therefore vowed to reinstate any traditional leader affected by the Governor's desperate move to retain power against the wish of the people if elected.

Mailantarki made this promise while addressing a mammoth crowd of supporters and voters at his campaign rally in the Dasa community of Yamaltu/Deba Local Government Area of the state.

Reports had filtered in that Governor Muhammadu Inuwa

I'll reinstall, compensate any deposed traditional ruler

- Mailantarki



Mailantarki

Yahaya had during his campaign at the palace of the Lamido Gona in Akko LGA, threatened to remove any traditional ruler who supports opposition part candidates in the state.

He promised to resuscitate values, respect, and the rich culture in the institution that has been lost under the current administration in the state.

He said, "I want to call on our traditional rulers and leaders to ignore all threats meted against them and to support the will of their people.

"If elected, we will reinstate any Chief and Emir deposed or removed and pay them a kind comparison and their entitlements as well", he assured.

The NNPP Governorship candidate also unfolded his plans for better lives for women and youths saying, "It is unfortunate that our youths don't have jobs today and are mostly idle.

"The e current administration has failed to come up with any

meaningful empowerment for our youths, and the need for social amenities in our communities has not been growing. I assure you that such will not continue if NNPP is elected in the forthcoming elections.

"My contest for the seat of Governor is to address needs in our states I promise we will address challenges in the lives of our youths by changing the face of the Agricultural sector.

"We will not just provide fertilizer and input in time but develop a kind of market for the off-take of all our farm produce, we will introduce genuine mechanized farming and ensure that farmers get value for whatever they produce", he vowed.

Mailantarki, a top contender for the seat of the Governor, promised to provide quality healthcare system for the state.

He said, "If elected as Governor I will make sure that our women especially pregnant mothers, children, and the elderly are given free and quality healthcare services".

Mailantarki also led the NNPP campaign team to Kuntaru community in Jagali North ward of Yamaltu Deba LGA and promised to fix the dilapidated roads traversing the state.

He said, "I have driven through the roads leading to this community and I have seen what you are going through.

"We will end your suffering and long drive on a bad road to access healthcare. I know that farmers and herders clash is another major challenge, I assure you that we have concrete plans to address the issue and put a smile on your faces.

"I promise to address the issue of the lack of a functioning health facility in this community within my first 100 days in office", he promised.

(APC) raised an alarm over what they described as undue favour to the PDP, alleging the first two persons that asked are all members of the ruling PDP.

Supporters of the APC insisted that the microphone be given to somebody else, a development that resulted into a free for all blow between supporters of the APC and the PDP.

These act informed the management of the Usman Danfodiyo University (UDUS) and the organiser's decision to immediately ask everybody to vacate the auditorium, the debate venue to avoid possible breakdown of law and order.

Politics

2023 elections: INEC, politicians and the electorate

The much awaited 2023 elections will take place a few days from now. The election has a tripartite part of the electoral body, the politicians and the electorate. In line with this therefore, LUCY CHINDABA went round to get the pulse of the people as regards the preparedness of the electoral body INEC, the politicians and the electorate who are the major key players in the exercise.

Mrs Hannatu Bugama, a female politician of repute responds thus:

"I can see the electoral body, politicians and electorates more prepared than ever before. 1. Their improvement on the issue of the BVAS is really encouraging. They are making sure that the little hiccups are put in place.

The trial in the few bye elections have shown their readiness. I am personally more comfortable now than before. 2. The politicians themselves know the serious challenge on them so most of them are really reaching out to the electorate. They are not taking them for granted because of their party affiliation again like before. The politicians are more attached to the electorate than ever before. Even though, we still have some lazy politicians who are only depending on the political party to mob the votes for them.

3. The electorate are more aware and more prepared than ever before. Most of the electorate understand the need to get their PVCs, but we still have some few that are still living in the past with the attitude of "I don't care". The percentage is lower than before.

On his part, Mr Gyang bere, a journalist says "To my mind, INEC released the timetable for the conduct of the 2023 elections long before now and the commission has followed the guidelines judiciously up to date. It commenced the electoral activities with the voter registration and collection of PVCs which ended few weeks one ago.

With this, we can say to some extent that, INEC has been on working round the clock towards the success of the election.

All political parties have kept faith with the 2022 Electoral Act and no schedule on the INEC timetable has been stepped down for any reason.

Also, INEC has assured Nigerians that BVAS would be deployed for accreditation and it would also be used for transmission of election results.

It is pertinent that the commission should ensure that functional BVAS are deployed across the country to ensure smooth electoral process.

The fears are with the current challenges of fuel scarcity and naira redesign by the Central Bank of Nigeria. Although, the NNPC has promised to provide fuel for logistics for the electoral officials and the Council of States has also urged the CBN to reprint more new naira notes to ease the current hardship in the country. It is believed that if this is done, the election will hold without encumbrance.

Another challenge envisaged is the prevailing security



Nigerians casting their votes on an election day

challenges in some parts of the country where several households have been displaced. The mobilization of electoral officials with materials to these areas would be one of the challenges of INEC towards having an all inclusive election.

Mr Christopher wannany a public servant says "I'm prepared. Friday 24th I'll be in Pankshin to vote for a credible, capable and visionary leader. Someone I can trust with a clean past free from corruption and drug related issues.

I pray that other electorates will consider Nigeria first, and vote in good conscience.

INEC As much as I don't know much about the electoral body, because in Nigeria, Govt institutions and organs say one thing and do another, always in the favor of whoever is in control of the central government; but I hope that INEC will live up to our expectations and conduct a free, fair and credible elections.

In the case of politicians? Most are unpatriotic, selfish and can do anything to win elections. I don't have much confidence in them.

Chairman of the Nigeria Union of Journalist, NUJ, Plateau state council responded thus: "The electoral management body from what we hear seems to be prepared. Barring unforeseen circumstances, they have put up robust plans and are ready to go. But that is not to say their plans are cast in stone.

They must keep working at strengthening their systems so as to keep at bay those who might try to compromise their gadgets.

As for the politicians they are

yet to do justice in the area of convincing the electorate as to why they should be voted. Some have refused to appear on national television to debate their manifesto and how they intend to achieve them. If they do not render themselves to these courts of public opinion, then they might deny themselves the opportunity to reach a large number of people. As for the electorate, they seem to have learned nothing. They are still pursuing pecuniary gains instead of engaging politicians on what would bring development to communities.

Joel Gomiya of Light Bearer said: "My take on INEC preparedness is that, what they are telling the citizens on their readiness for the conduct of the 2023 elections are somehow a theory because visible. We have days from but nothing to show only a few.

For instance, by now non sensitive materials are expected to have been delivered across local government areas, but nothing is heard of that, especially on the Plateau which seem, even the INEC are not sure as if the election will eventually hold. I stand to be corrected on that.

Hundred means of prospective electorates could not access their PVCs, which automatically they have been disenfranchised from participating in the elections.

Although INEC has tried by introducing the Biometric Voter Accreditation System, BVAS to address kages in the election process that hitherto are creating room for rigging was elections.

INEC Chairman, oral Prof. Mahmood Yakubu had assured Nigerians that they are ready to

conduct free, fair, credible, accessible and verifiable election in 2023 with the use of BVAS, but Election Petition Tribunal has nullify Osun state governorship election for over voting, despite the use of the BVAS and they expect the electorate to trust.

Another fear is that, even the INEC Chairman has already expressed fears that the election might not hold due to scarcity of fuel and cash for logistics.

Again, the recent unrest, attacks on commercial banks in some states and other unfolding happenings occasioned by the cashless policy is another pointer on the possibility of the election not holding as proposed by the INEC.

The normal last minute rigorous campaign by politicians to canvas for votes is no where in sight as everywhere is quite which to me is a kind of doubt on the possibility of conducting the election by even the actors on the elections.

The politicians are being careful of spending for lack of confidence on the Nigeria electoral umpire. For the electorates, I see the electorates being anxious to vent their anger on the current situation through the ballot. Unlike previous elections that recorded low turnout as a result of election apathy from the citizens.

Some electorates have vowed that even if it means trekking long distance to their various polling units to vote this time around they are ready to trek. An indication that the electorates are more prepared to participate in the election than even the electoral Commission that is saddled with the responsibility of

conducting the election.

On her part, Nenpan Monday Zakka, Executive Director, City of Refuge-Friends Club, Nigeria, says, "I will want to respond to the questions you raised above, but I think I lack access to the instruments to do so, appropriately. Data and statistics are not easily accessible in the systems we have.

I won't know how prepared the electoral body is, except if they make public what have on the ground, in terms of resources, human and materially.

Are the electorates ready? Anyone could easily see that, for the very first time in the history of our nation, electorates at all levels are declaring their readiness to make their votes count.

Sadly, the Eastern part of Nigeria still deals with IPOB's issues, so that suggests that, they may not be fully involved in the elections.

In other parts of the nation, there are also still thousands of unclaimed voters cards. Are the owners deceased or alive? We don't have death records that can be centrally unified and accessed on that too.

Are the politicians ready? Well, they seem always ready for elections. They are usually very active as elections approach. But since our election processes are usually powered by raw currency, the current currency crisis will certainly affect the preparedness of politicians.

From the responses collated so far, INEC, Nigeria's the electoral umpire is ready, the politicians are hopefully putting in finishing touches to the campaigns and the electorate are said to be more than previous elections, where there was no doubt voter apathy, ready to come out and change the narrative by exercising their franchise. We look forward to free fair credible elections on February 25 and March 11. So help us God.

SUNDAY PEOPLE

APC PLATEAU CENTRAL ZONAL RALLY 2023

All Progressives Congress (APC) Plateau Central Zonal rally took place on Wednesday at the Pankshin Mini Stadium, Pankshin LGA



Governor Simon Bako Lalong (CON) with his wife, Mrs. Regina Lalong at the rally



APC Gubernatorial candidate, Hon. Pam Bot-Mang and wife at the rally



From left are, APC Gubernatorial Candidate, Dr. Nentawe Yilwatda, APC PKK candidate, Rt. Hon. Yusuf Adamu Gagdi, wife of Governor Lalong, APC Chairman, Hon. Rufus Bature and the Deputy Governor, Prof. Tyoden



Plateau State Governor, Rt. Hon. Simon Bako Lalong (CON) making his speech



All Progressives Congress (APC) party faithful at the Zonal rally in Pankshin



House of Representatives Deputy Speaker, Rt. Hon. Ahmed Idris Maje Wase delivering his remarks



Mammoth crowd listening to speeches



Cross section of supporters celebrating the arrival of Governor Lalong (CON) and other APC candidates of the Zone

ONE of the present administration's five pillars is agriculture and rural development. The place of agriculture in the country cannot be overemphasized, especially since the sector is now referred to as the engine that contributes to the growth of the economy. To say that Plateau State is agrarian and an agricultural society is to state the obvious based on the many food crops grown.

However, maintaining this status has never been easy due to the many bottlenecks and challenges which has made the sector, especially farming less attractive. Nowadays, most young people in the state are not interested and do not want to engage in farming. Most of the young graduates would rather opt for white collar jobs. Unfortunately too, there still exists this misconception that farming is a profession for the poor and illiterate which entails gruesome toiling on the farm, with mere pittance as reward.

Suffice it to say that these notions have been fuelled over the years by lack of proper training for those who choose to go into agriculture, thereby causing them to out of frustration abandon the venture. This has definitely created a gap in the farming population because once the aged who are left to farm stop farming, there will be no one to replace them and Nigeria's population is currently growing faster than there are farmers to feed the nation.

With these in mind, the Plateau State House of Assembly through its Committee on Agriculture have been seeking ways to redefine agriculture on the Plateau. Thus, the committee led by the Chairman Hon. Mohammed Ballo Abubakar, who is also the member representing Qua'an Pan South constituency recently paid a working visit to one of our citadel of education in the state, with a view to uplifting the standard of the institution both physically and educationally for optimal performance and better productivity.

For the management, academic board, staff and students of the Plateau State College of Agriculture Garkawa, the visit by the committee was a date with destiny. As the visitors approached the college premises, it seemed as if the whole college community was awaiting their arrival. One could not help but notice the warm reception accorded members of the committee and their entourage which goes to show the level of the cordial relationship between the State Assembly and the college. To set the ball rolling, the committee chairman stating the purpose for the visit, said first and foremost they were at the college to concretize on the powers given to the legislature and as enshrined in the Constitution that they shall perform oversight of all government agencies to ensure they performed their responsibility as expected.

Secondly, is to afford the committee the opportunity to familiarize itself with the college community, the environment and certainly get to find out about its activities. Hon. Ballo did not

mince words in pointing out how the institution can help in boosting agriculture in the state, and make it the center of attraction. In his opinion, agriculture has every potential to augment the oil sector and take the country out of its present economic situation since it is now considered as a major driver in the area of diversification.

The Plateau State College of Agriculture Garkawa, was established in 1996 with the mandate to train and equip middle-level manpower especially in the area of agriculture and agricultural related courses that will lead to



In support of College of Agriculture Garkawa



the award of a National and Higher National Diploma certificates. The college also conducts research works in various fields of Agriculture as may be beneficial to the state and country at large. Interestingly, the college has trained its staff to meet up with all these and other challenges.

Note that the College of Agriculture Garkawa, is under the supervision of the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and runs academic programmes such as Agricultural Technology at Ordinary National Diploma levels (OND). Other courses offered include Animal Health and Production Technology, Home and Rural Economics, Horticultural Technology and Agricultural Extension and Management which by the way, is the only programme of the college for now that runs at Higher National Diploma (HND). All the above programmes are with interim accreditation and were due for full accreditation assessment by the NBTE in 2020. Unfortunately, due to the Covid 19 lockdown imposed, it was cancelled and it is hoped that this will happen anytime soon.

However, the NBTE has approved some programmes for

resource inspection which was intended to hold simultaneously with the full accreditation for those with interim accreditation. Some of these programmes include Crop Production Technology, Animal Production Technology, Animal Health Technology etc. These are no doubt very resourceful programmes that when completed will provide self sustainability for the graduates, even creating employment opportunities for others. For these to be attainable, the college requires modern facilities that meet current technological development trends which all boils down to finances and adequate funding.

The college Provost Dr M. A Dasbak who expressed gratitude to Governor Simon Bako Lalong for coming to the aid of the college and graciously approving funds for the execution of certain critical capital projects appealed for the release of the balance to help facilitate the completion of the projects. He in clear terms also appealed to the House Committee on Agriculture to 'help make this happen'.

Highlighting some of the challenges facing the college, the

especially since the college inherited dilapidated structures of the old Government College Garkawa. As such, many required facilities are lacking and the ones present required an upgrade to the standard befitting a tertiary institution. He was also quick to mention how lack of yearly implementation of capital projects have affected the growth of the college.

Again, there cannot be progress without enough qualified manpower. This is lacking due to depletion in the number of staff. Some have had to retire, some have withdrawn their services in the course of seeking greener pastures elsewhere and have not been replaced while in other cases vacancies were created as a result of deaths. There is a serious need for employment in order to meet up with the reality on ground. Other challenges raised include insecurity as a result of non fencing of the college premises.

For the Committee, all hands must be on deck to ensure the promotion and sustainability of the agricultural sector. After being taken round the premises and seeing things for themselves, it was resolved that another critical attention be given to the bill which brought the college into existence, with the aim of reviewing it to see that it suits the purpose and intent for which it was established so that agriculture will continue to prosper on the Plateau.



SUNDAY MAGAZINE



Buhari



Arioola



Mahmood

2023: AS Nigerians go to polls

Come this Saturday, February 25, 2023, eligible Nigerians would go to the polls to elect a new president that would run the affairs of the country in the next four years. Amidst the numerous challenges facing the country at this moment both economic, social and security, Nigerians are anxiously waiting for this moment of decision. VICTOR ALI writes.

BARING any last minute change, come Saturday, 25, February 2023, Nigerians in their millions of course (eligible ones), would troop to the polls to elect a President who would lead the country in the next four years. The incumbent President Muhammadu Buhari's tenure would tentatively end on May, 29, 2023 having served the constitutionally required two-terms of four years each.

The Frenzy, ecstasy and even anxiety that have encapsulated Nigeria since the electoral umpire, the independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) blew the whistle in line with the electoral process (es) is too palpable, just as apprehension and skepticism remain obvious. Therefore, both Nigerians and the international Community are watching keenly to see what happens come May 29, 2023, Nigeria's moment of Monumental decision.

Since the return to democracy in 1999, Nigeria has been having a smooth transition from one president to the other. The biggest beneficiary of the struggle for democracy against the military apparachik, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, successfully served his two-

terms and handed power to his successor, the late Umaru Musa Yar'adua. Though Yar'adua was Midway into his first term when he Suddenly died, the Vice President completed the tenure and he himself (Goodluck Ebele Jonathan) won the Presidency in his own right in 2011. However, he (Jonathan) could not make it in his second term bid as he was roundly defeated by the incumbent President Muhammadu Buhari in the 2015 Presidential Polls in 2015.

The avid interest of people in the 2023 elections, particularly the Presidential election is not misplaced. There is no time in its over fifty history as an independent nation that Nigeria had myriad problems as now. Insecurity epitomized in armed robbery, banditry, cultism, kidnapping and terrorism have become the order of the day; abject poverty, wants and penury have become the lot of many Nigerians; Medicare is in comatose while the educational infrastructure is an apology.

Added to all these malfeasance is the hydra-headed monster corruption which has eaten deeply into the fabric of the nation. That

cancer worm has permeated every facet of national life. So bad that liquid cash are hidden in overhead tanks and suck away. Yet, subsisting governments since 1999 have been mouthing anti-corruption. The anti-corruption fight in the prism of the ordinary Nigerian seems to be on paper. In spite of several disclosures of corruption cases, even purported "arrest" of the culprit, the whole thing looks like a circuit show.

To say the economic situation in Nigeria is precarious is an understatement. Starkly, it is lying prostrate. Inflation has run to high heavens. According to report, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) announced that the inflation rate jumped to 20.52 percent in August last year. This was the highest in eleven (11) months. This statistics is scary and unless and until some workable proactive measures are taken, the inflationary trend may still be on the increase. Couple with the huge debt overhang, Nigerians are hoping to go into the election to elect a president that would change the ugly narratives.

Though the candidates seeking for the presidency have gone round the country

canvassing for votes with bags of promises, the big question remains. If elected can the winner fulfil such promises? If elected, will such a winner work in tandem with the wishes and aspirations of the Nigerian people? Most at times, such promises are mere cliché to hook wind the electorate in order to get votes. Sadly enough, candidates campaigning for the presidency are yet to tell Nigerians in concrete terms how they can tackle the numerous challenges facing the country rather they've dissipated a lot of energy castigating, even insulting each other.

It was in the light of this that on the 29th, September, 2022, an eminent group of statesmen under the aegis of the National Peace Committee, brought together all the presidential candidates to sign a Peace Accord which represents an agreed Code of conduct for the conduct of 2023 election. Despite this noble move by the eminent statesmen towards the conduct of a peaceful, free and fair elections, typical of the Leopard, Nigerian politicians don't seem to change.

One can observe that, in the course of their electioneering campaigns, it has been accusations and

counter-accusations amongst and between them with unsavory utterances belittling their status as leaders. So much so that, they've thrown decorum to the dogs. The vice Presidential candidate of the Labour Party (LP) in a conference recently, raised alarm over violation of the peace accord. He declared that orchestrated attempts by opponents to denigrate the candidacy of the presidential candidate of the party, Mr. Peter Obi, using false claims and attacks on his supporters will fail.

Datti-Ahmed who stated this at a press conference in Abuja expressed disappointment that despite signing peace accord, Presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Asiwaju Ahmed Bola Tinubu and his Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) counterpart, Atiku Abubakar had continued to use campaign events to spew invectives and spread nation-wide that Mr. Peter Obi is against the production of oil in the North, nothing could be further than the truth. Peter Obi has repeatedly stated at both local and international that the greatest physical asset of Nigeria is the vast rich land in the North and declared his

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NEWS

Plateau should remain in mainstream politics- Lalong

By PALANG KASMT

AS the APC Gubernatorial campaign train moved to the Plateau Northern Zone Thursday, Governor Simon Lalong has called on Plateau people to give his party their votes to remain in mainstream politics.

Lalong said Plateau State should elect Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu and Senator Kashim Shettima if it is to continue to play a prominent role in Nigerian politics by remaining in the mainstream during the next dispensation.

"Remember to get your PVC and vote for Asiwaju Bola Tinubu", he said Thursday February 16, 2023 while addressing the Mammoth crowd that gathered at the APC Zonal rally for Plateau North Zone held at the Bukuru mini stadium.

The Governor was optimistic that Tinubu and his running mate, Kashim Shettima will win the elections and assured that he has the competence to rule the country.

He also assured that Tinubu has great love for Plateau, as demonstrated in the flag off of the APC Presidential Campaign in Jos, which is a sign of greater opportunities coming to the state.

Lalong also said the State has seen the significance of remaining in national politics



Lalong

and should not go back to opposition politics.

He charged the people to vote for the Tinubu/Shettima ticket on 25th February 2023 which will usher in a period of renewed hope for the State and nation at large.

Lalong told the voters to disregard the antics of the opposition who use slogans of "unpaid salaries", or insecurity, lack of unity and unfulfilled promises to distract party loyalists and gain sympathy.

He said the opposition party cannot be trusted with power again since they did not perform well and were kicked

out stressing further that the APC is the right answer for the continuous peace, stability and unity of Plateau State.

He however said he will be proud to hand over the baton of leadership to Dr. Nentwawe Yilwatda and his running Mate Hon. Pam Botmang who will further consolidate on the gains of his administration by providing more dividends of good governance to citizens of the state.

Deputy Speaker House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Idris Wase said the people of the Northern Zone have every reason to vote the APC from Top to Bottom because they

have seen and touched the dividends of democracy within their zone and the entire State.

APC Gubernatorial candidate Dr. Nentwawe Yilwatda thanked the people of Plateau Northern Zone for their support so far which proves that APC is the party that is founded on justice, equity and fairness.

He said when elected, he will build on the wonderful performance of the Lalong Rescue Administration by ensuring that Plateau is taken to greater heights.

Deputy Governorship candidate Pam Bot-Mang in his remarks assured the people of Plateau Northern Zone that APC is not about religion, ethnicity or tribalism but about justice and inclusive Governance.

Candidates seeking for elective posts and other stakeholders all drummed their support for APC calling for massive votes.

In his speech, Party Chairman, Hon. Rufus Bature charged the members of the party to sustain the campaign tempo which will lead to a resounding victory for Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Dr. Nentwawe Yilwatda and other candidates of the APC.

Those who spoke on behalf of elders, women, youths and persons with Disabilities affirmed their support for candidates of the Party, just as decampes were received from other parties into the APC.

Kogi Govt trains personal for annual school census

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

THE Kogi State Government has commenced the screening and training of Enumerators and Supervisors for the conduct of the 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 Annual School Census (ASC) in the state.

The State's Commissioner for Education, Science and Technology, Hon. Wemi Jones, FCIB, flagged off the screening and training programme on Friday at GYB Model Science School, Adankolo, Lokoja.

The Commissioner said His Excellency, Gov. Yahaya Bello, is so passionate about getting accurate and reliable school data for educational development in the state. Jones commended the governor for providing all the

needed resources and for giving his full support to ensure the success of the ASC exercise.

He urged the participants to put their best into the exercise so that at the end of the day they would all be proud of the expected results from the exercise.

"This is an exercise that is very dear to my heart because we have already set a standard upon which we want our education to run in Kogi State.

"We must take planning extremely serious which can only happen when we have accurate data to plan and work with.

"I am going to be the chief supervisor of this exercise because the governor has reposed so much confidence in my capacity and capability, and I don't want to let him down.

"I am very sure you are not going to let me down. You must make sure you do not disappoint me; you must be on the field to do the proper enumeration and supervision," Jones said.

The Commissioner stressed the need to know the accurate number of schools and students across the state for effective planning, saying the exercise was extremely important.

He assured the National Association of Proprietors of Private Schools (NAPPS) that the exercise was not meant to witch-hunt their members, but to aid effective planning. Jones stressed that the ASC was not intended to be an avenue for collecting more taxes from the private schools but for mutual benefits. Jones explained that the exercise when completed

would enable schools in the state to benefit from the World Bank assisted intervention program, known as "Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment (AGILE).

According to him, the intervention is a huge fund that if we get it, there is no aspect of education; basic and secondary, private or public that will not benefit from it.

He said that seven States were already benefitting from the largesse, saying Kogi State was lucky to be considered among the 11 additional States to be added. "Please let us work as fast as we can and as accurate as we can to ensure that effective and accurate data are generated. "I have made up my mind that by your support Kogi will be the biggest beneficiary of the AGILE fund.

"So, the earlier we are done the better," the Commissioner said. He, however noted that the Tablets' device that would be given to them for the digital exercise is not their personal property, but should be returned back to the Ministry at the end of the exercise.

In their separate comments, the Chairman of Kogi State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), Mr Suleiman Ndalaye; and the Director of Education Planning, Research and Statistics (EPRS), Dr Ahman Animoku, urged the participants to take the exercise very serious and ensure that accurate data was generated.

ASPATS mourns with CEO MD Mambilla Tea

By EZEKIEL DONTINNA

THE Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of ASPATS Media outfit stationed in Taraba State, has expressed deepest shuck over the demise of his senior brother, Pastor Samuel N. Timothy, who died on February 14, 2023 after a brief illness at the Federal Medical Centre Jalingo, describing his death as a great loss to ASPATS Media, family and the entire Taraba State.

The CEO Her Majesty,

Patience M. Baju II, sympathized with the family and that, the death of his brother was a great loss to only his immediate family, but the entire state and he would be greatly missed saying, "I join the Mr. Fanya Timothy Nyivu family mourning his elder brother, Pastor Samuel N. Timothy.

SUNDAY STANDARD gathered that, late Pastor Samuel N. Timothy, was the first son in the family of ten (10) and born in 1958 in Nyivu of Taraba State and before his demise, he a retired Judge of the Taraba State Ministry of Justice

after serving meritoriously in the state judiciary since obtaining his LLB Law in the University of Jos shortly after his diploma from ABU Zaria.

According to information made available our outfit in Jos, the Plateau State capital, the late Pastor also a devoted Christian working with Deeper Life Bible Church Takum and that, he died just a year after lost his wife, a marriage that was blessed with eight children. His body will be played to rest February 22, 2023 at Nyivu Town of Taraba State by 11pm.



NUJ charges members on sensitizing public on election

The Zone-D of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), has charged its members to take their role seriously to fully inform, educate and sensitize members of the public on the rules guiding peaceful conduct of forthcoming general elections as eyes and conscience of every society.

This came in a communique as a resolution signed by the Vice President Zone D, Chris Atsaka and made available to SUNDAY STANDARD in Jos, Plateau State shortly after the Zone D conference held at Precious Events Centre, opposite Benue Hotel, old GRA, Makurdi Benue State, organized by the NUJ Zone D.

Appeal Court upholds Madaki's election as authentic candidate

Jos Division of the Court of Appeal, has last Friday upheld the election of Hon. Madaki Isa Ajiji, as the authentic winner of the All Progressive Party's primary election recently conducted to represent Jos East Constituency in the Plateau State House of Assembly come March 11, 2023.

This followed a suit instituted on December 5, 2022 by one Silas Philibus Pada, through his Counsel, Vincent Orimushe Esq, challenging that the defendant was not qualified to contest for the post of House of Assembly for Jos East Constituency in the forthcoming general election and ordered the court to disqualify him.

INEC publishes list of 240 polling units with no registered voters

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has published lists of over two hundred and forty (240) units with no registered voters spread across the country. The Chairman of the commission, Prof. Mahmood disclosed this Monday at the meeting with political leaders ahead of the forthcoming general elections.

ACReSAL to partner AFR100 Initiative, NAGGW.

This came in a press statement signed by the Jos Office of ACReSAL Information Officer, Mathew Bawul and made available to SUNDAY STANDARD in Jos, the Plateau State capital recently shortly after a virtual meeting with AFR100 Initiative NAGGW and ACReSAL participating states hosted in Abuja, Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory.

The Acting NPC opines that there was need for a robust monitoring and evaluation system in place to enhance on the ground monitoring, tracking and reporting of project implementation and capacity building to ensure the delivery of the targeted 1 million hectares target specifically for ACReSAL.

IGP sets- up election planning, monitoring assessment team

THE Inspector General of Police, IGP Usman Alkali Baba, psc(+),CFR, has approved the setting up of an Election Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Team for deployment across the 36 states of the federation, to identify, analyze and mitigate threats as well as carry out on-the-spot assessment and appraisal of the security emplacements ahead of the 2023 general elections.

This was contained in a press statement signed by the Force Public Relations Officer, Force Headquarters Abuja, CSP OLUMUYIWA ADEJOBI, mnipr, mipra and made available to SUNDAY STANDARD in Jos, the Plateau State capital WSRN trains journalists on election, gender reportage

The Women Situation Room Nigeria (WSRN), has trained over thirty media professionals in Plateau State on violence against women and girls in election and gender sensitive reportage for them to have a new perspective on reporting.

This took place at the Plateau State Headquarters of Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) Jos, the state capital sponsored by Women International League for Peace & Freedom Nigeria, a Non-Government Organisation.

Presenting a paper titled: "Violence Against Women and Girls in Election (VAWG-E), Mr. Pwakim Jacob, who is the facilitator said violence against women has discouraged women from participating in election or being voted into political positions.

Former PPC GM now Perm Sec, Information Ministry

The immediate past General Manager of Plateau Publishing Corporation (PPC) Jos, Dr. Sir Boniface Gwotbit, has formally taken over the mantle of leadership as the newly appointed Permanent Secretary for the Plateau State Ministry of Information and Communication.

The handing over ceremony took place at the Ministry for Information and Communication, JD Gomwalk Secretariat Jos, the State capital Thursday where the outgoing Permanent Secretary, Sunday Davou appreciated directors and staff of the ministry for their resilience in service to humanity.

Conplied By EZEKIEL DONTINNA.

SUNDAY FEATURE

Cash fiasco: Rescuing the people, saving the policy

I therefore echo the well-thought-through position of Asiwaju Bola Tinubu on this matter, and in tandem with the Council of States resolution; bring back the old currency and let it run side-by-side the new ones for a while, as the new ones are being printed. Not all the withdrawn old currencies have been destroyed. Suspend or significantly reduce e-banking charges of all sorts. This will serve as a great incentive. Get the banks on your side... 'TOPE FASUA writes.

I had written about the efficacy of 'following the money' by changing the currency in order to give Nigeria's many organised criminals – kidnappers, bandits, drug-dealers, and of course some heavily-corrupt civil servants and politicians – some hard times, months before the Buhari government eventually came up with the idea in October 2022. When the project was announced, therefore, I was quite elated, though alarm bells rang that it could be too close to an election. Despite the political connotation, I had the confidence that the person I support (Bola Tinubu) is a quintessential politician who had invested in people for decades and so no matter what, he will be successful.

As things have turned out, the implementation has shown that there were many psychologies that were underestimated/mismanaged and perhaps a few black swans showed up in terms of our people's reaction to the policy. There are behaviours that are peculiar to us as Nigerians, which showed up and messed up the policy as it now is. I mean, how could the project managers in charge have estimated the demand for cash for *owambe* (spraying) purposes, and how this will trump the real demand for legitimate transactions? How much weight should have been assigned to this? How could planners have estimated the power of the politicians who were targeted, to get to bank managers and, as alleged, make the deals that ensured that the initial billions released by the central bank simply disappeared like a puff of smoke? Still the project has gone the way it went – we could say it has failed, because not only did the Supreme Court have to wade in, but also the Council of State, which includes every state governor. This was largely in reaction to how the implementation phase unleashed great agony on the poorest Nigerians. This was certainly not part of the plan.

The plan was certainly not to let poor people queue for hours at ATMs. And the plan was not all about strict implementation of the cashless policy. Cashless-ness in monetary policy is a relative phenomenon. There is nowhere in the world that is cashless. A central bank could plan to increase electronic transactions by a certain percentage. However, because of the unforetold scarcity of cash, people thronged banking halls to set up electronic banking and whatnot. It was a case of e-banking or die. But there are still millions of Nigerians who would never be able to get used to gadgets and codes and keyboards. Those ones are at the very bottom of our economic ladder. They were most hit; and very unfairly too. They were the farmers who had to



sell for cheap what they spent many months to grow and tend, harvest and transport, just to get a little of the cash that they were used to. They were the ones without any type of bank account anywhere. They were the micro retailers in the forgotten areas of Nigeria who saw zero sales for days because of this policy. Even beggars who survived on little alms had to go hungry. It's been a very stressful time for many people. A policy that punishes this category of people should not be whitewashed at all. What have these folks ever done to deserve this punishment as the rest of us luxuriate in our airconditioned offices, fiddling with our apps?

Apart from those who did not support the policy at the beginning but then became its most ardent advocates as people queued up and suffered, some even taking government to court, and some fringe political parties who swore to boycott the elections, some barbs must go the way of those politicians who it has been alleged went for the policy to specifically dim the chances of Bola Tinubu. The central bank must never be used as political contraceptive – to abort somebody's ambition.

I moved around and collected first-hand data myself, not to rely on what other people reported. Every six hours I drove past the same banks and also visited a few that I had accounts in. It was bedlam for the most part. People mobbed around ATMs that disbursed little, then went dry. In parts of Nigeria, people went ballistic and miscreants started destroying banks. When things got to that level, be sure the policy had tanked. In all of that, our people still played politics. I recall wondering why members of the

smaller political parties did not support the policy in the beginning, after all they were supposed to have less access to cash-for-votes. The bigger parties I could understand; the argument against the policy from a political angle was hard to make. For if you pushed too hard, someone will accuse you of seeking to bribe voters on election day. What I reckon most people did not envisage was that there will be an acute scarcity of cash. This scarcity has not only stressed many Nigerians, thus making the task of the ruling party and its candidate harder, but some analysts now say that the stress has really softened up millions of voters, such that they need even less money to sell their votes.

Apart from those who did not support the policy at the beginning but then became its most ardent advocates as people queued up and suffered, some even taking government to court, and some fringe political parties who swore to boycott the elections, some barbs must go the way of those politicians who it has been alleged went for the policy to specifically dim the chances of Bola Tinubu. The central bank must never be used as political contraceptive – to abort somebody's ambition. This is egregious. Some barbs must also be sent the way of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), which may have underestimated the capabilities of the Nigerian Security Printing and Minting Company, and relied on what must have now shown up to be false data.

A lot of my modern, well-educated friends like to swear by data. There is a saying oft-repeated that, *'In God I Trust, for everything else I need data'*. However, from the nadir of knowledge in econometrics, we

are taught that many times, data tells us nothing. Nigeria's data is especially fraught with inconsistencies, political machinations, inefficiencies, historical errors, and what have you. Rely on that totally at your own peril. I understand that the CBN relied heavily on its estimation of money supply, individual bank balances, average withdrawals at ATMs and what have you. They didn't reckon with people who went around collecting hundreds of ATM cards and ended up emptying many of such machines in order to do arbitrage business. There were things that happened in the interregnum that could be considered as 'unknown unknowns' in the strategy sessions of the CBN. Perhaps the bank could have backtracked earlier, having been allegedly licked by the politicians and their cohorts, but for the political overtone from the president, who was working on a legacy. Perhaps the idea could have been implemented months or years earlier by the CBN as an independent policy targeted at cleaning and reenergising the monetary space, sans political meddling.

...intensify sensitisation and education. The CBN executives who went upcountry found out there was a huge communication gap from the get-go. The policy is great and can still be rescued. There already seems to be less pressure on the FX side of things, demand for small bribes seem to be reducing, more people are embracing e-channels, but the pain and shock for our most-vulnerable should never be ignored or taken for granted.

And what do we do about our banking superstructure and architecture? I met someone who works in GTBank, who did not know that the bank was a super elite bank in the early 90s. I wonder why such a bank will today be led by a 'Britico', Segun Agbaje, but it is worse than an open market in terms of ambience, once you get into the building. It used to be that each GTBanking hall had a grand piano, with a professional pianist belling out the classics back in the day when they had a dream. And then Soludo came with consolidation, telling banks to forget their dreams and do every business. In time, banks were selling recharge cards and 'kpofof'. In the banking halls – whatever brought the profits. Later on, banks started strategising that 'retail' was the way forward. I never understood how having a surfeit of salary accounts from ministries, with millions of low-paid workers thronging your offices, would be a great vision. I left the sector. Today, even the deployment of ATMs and electronic sources have not solved the problem. It's such a mess. I think we need microfinance and community banks back – with clear mandates to mobilise savings and also grant loans to initiatives that add value to our raw materials. They are the ones that should house these small accounts.

I therefore echo the well-thought-through position of Asiwaju Bola Tinubu on this matter, and in tandem with the Council of States resolution; bring back the old currency and let it run side-by-side the new ones for a while, as the new ones are being printed. Not all the withdrawn old currencies have been destroyed. Suspend or significantly reduce e-banking charges of all sorts. This will serve as a great incentive. Get the banks on your side – none of the bank MDs were seen moving around their branches, even in Lagos, to ensure the right thing was done. Also, draft in FINTECHs and any entity that could help ease the snafu. Be sure the Mint is not messing you up. Let us not deceive ourselves. And lastly, intensify sensitisation and education. The CBN executives who went upcountry found out there was a huge communication gap from the get-go. The policy is great and can still be rescued. There already seems to be less pressure on the FX side of things, demand for small bribes seem to be reducing, more people are embracing e-channels, but the pain and shock for our most-vulnerable should never be ignored or taken for granted.

'Tope Fasua, an economist, author, blogger, entrepreneur, and recent presidential candidate of the Abundant Nigeria Renewal Party (ANRP), can be reached through topsyfash@yahoo.com.

SUNDAY FEATURE

YIAVHA inaugurates Peace, mediation committee ahead of elections

In a bid to ensure peaceful conduct of the 2023 general elections Nigerians countdown few days with their Permanent Voter cards (PCVs) to elect candidates of their choice that will represent them at different levels of governance for the next four years, YIAVHA in its initiative puts in result oriented strategy to achieve hitch free general elections in Nigeria that is devoid of rancour. JIDAUNA DARING writes.

IT was in view of this that a Jos based Non-governmental Organization (NGO) known as youth Initiative Against Violence and Human right Abuse (YIAVHA) in its wisdom thought it very expedient to inaugurate 7 eminent persons to serve as members of the peace and mediation working committee in Plateau State.

No wonder the vision of YIAVHA is to serve as a strategic platform where young people discover themselves for active roles in promoting good governance and driving human rights gender advocacy and peace building processes.

This epoch making event was organized by YIAVHA with support from impact development initiative (KSI) and National Endowment for Democracy (NED) which took place at Sacred Heart Pastoral Centre Jos, the plateau state capital, last Thursday.

In this order, the inauguration of the plateau peace and mediation working committee and media engagement around 2023 elections in plateau state was not misplacement of priority as far as the forth coming general elections is concerned.

It was against this background that the Executive Director of YIAVHA, Mr. Pwakim Jacob Choji while delivering his opening remarks appreciated all the committee members for honoring the invitation for their inauguration.

Choji pointed out that every election presents stakeholders and citizens with key yearnings owing to the experiences that each election presents. Like the popular 2022 electoral act which serves as a compendium that captures key lessons within the legal framework that guides election that are already impacting the democratic culture and practice in Nigeria.

He maintained that the use of BIVAS is a crucial believing that with technological gadgets, Nigeria would be able to have improved elections as a nation. He noted that the beauty of the policies is in their seamless implementation.

Choji further explained that elections in Nigeria come with mixed feelings, while some experience hope and enthusiasm to have the opportunity to choose their leaders, others experience fear and anxiety courtesy of the pass history of elections in their communities or some have scars of bitter experiences of violence preparatory to the 2023 elections.

He stated that according to the January 2023 Plateau State report supplied by long time monitors spread across the 17 Local Government Areas (LGAs) of the state as shared by their partners KDI, IRI and NED, added that there have been 25 reported cases of physical violence associated with elections across 10 LGAs, 3 destruction related protests, 4 cases each of recruiting and arming



Newly inaugurated committee in company of the Executive Director Pwakim Choji

thugs reflected in just one LGA, 10 reported cases of restriction on political activities across 4 LGAs and 13 reported cases of groups barred from using public spaces for campaigns.

Interestingly choji remarked that there have been 52 reported cases of vote buying across 15 LGAs.

YIAVHA Director told the committee that it may interest them to know that where issues of vote buying as reported are of matters of safety and privacy of voting points remain a point of concern to many voters.

It is also instructive to note that amidst the fragility highlighted above, this particular forth coming election will be held amidst increasing security challenges, increased digital activism by young people which increase the sensitivity around the elections.

He disclosed that the existence of a new electoral legal framework could also be precursor for violence as not too many citizens are knowledgeable about some of the provision of the election results will be transmitted electronically during the forthcoming polls as assured by the election management body INEC.

Choji said that considering all these vulnerabilities, their organization remains grateful to the 7 man committee who have accepted to serve in the committee that they are going to serve dual functions of being a strategic structure that designs actions to be taken in view of available statistic about emerging issues and as a rapid



Cross section of the committee and the media

response team that reaches out to those in position to take action where the peace and credibility of election is threatened.

According to him, the 7 man committee has been judged to be non-partisan, lovers and workers of peace and people who are willing to commit time and resources and to utilize their connections and also resources for free and credible elections in plateau state.

Choji on behalf of their partners unveiled members of the committee to include; Emir of kanam, His Royal Highness (HRH), Alhaji Muhammadu Muazu Muhammadu represented by Zaman kanam, HRH. Alhaji Lawatla Tanko, Ms. Benedita Daber, Dr. Dinshak Luka, sheikh khalita Dayyab, Ms Tabitha pam-Horo, Mr. paul Jatau was

represented by peter Amini and reprehensive state security service (SSS).

He said that they are anticipating a peaceful and credible elections guided by timely actions adding that YIAVHA and its partners must mention that this committee is not in contention with any structure in the state, but set-up to complement the role of other structures as there is no positive action that will be more than enough in the prevention of violence, especially around elections. YIAVHA encouraged that the committee and the organization should be given cooperation at all quarters.

He appreciated all their partners for providing the support to establish this committee among other activities.

Speaking on behalf of the committee Emir of Kanam, HRH, Alhaji Muhammadu Muazu Muhammadu who was represented by Alhaji Lawatla Tanko thanked the convener of the meeting and said that their inauguration as a 7 man working committee was a call to duty.

Muhammadu said that he could see zeal from the committee members and appreciated YIAVHA and their partners for finding them worthy to serve in the committee.

He promised the convener that the committee would not disappoint them in discharging their duties.

Our correspondent reports that the event featured questions and answers from the media, review of LTM data and design of action point.

Continued from last week

Business Intelligence Manager: Responsible for constructing tools for data analysis; tends to report directly to the management committees. Many of the organization's strategic decisions depend on the figures he extracts. His background tends to be computer engineering, economics, mathematics.... In any event, he needs to know about statistical models, data extraction, business intelligence tools, etc.

Consumer Experience Manager: Randstad says that "this is one of the professions that are most in demand by the market, as it responds to a changing trend in companies, which are now focused on customers and their experience of the brand." The consumer experience manager is responsible for checking the customer sales experience and building loyalty. The job profile is varied: administration and business management, marketing, etc. Among the skills and competencies needed are clear customer focus, analytical capacity and a strong capacity for communication and relations, as his decisions involve different levels and hierarchies within the company, and he must be capable of convincing all those involved of the changes or strategies to be implemented.

Digital Analyst: Any digital company is able to use a variety of online measurement tools; what is difficult is to make sense of all the data that has been gathered. This is precisely what the work of the digital analyst consists of. After designing, implementing and maintaining online measurement strategies, the digital analyst must propose how to optimize the company's various websites. A digital analyst must have a technical and technological profile, but also the strategic vision and communication skills for explaining and contextualizing his analysis.

With respect to the salary, a report by the Inesdi Digital Business School based on offers published in the job bank in 2015 puts the remuneration for someone with five years of experience within a band of between 40,000 and 55,000 euros gross per year.

E-recruitment Manager

The e-recruitment manager carries out the traditional work of an expert in human resources, but by digital means only, without contacting the possible candidates in person. He must search the online universe to be able to offer the company the best profiles, using all the digital means possible. He has training in human resources and personnel management, and also handles perfectly all the digital tools and knows how to segment the specialist social networks.

So take care of your LinkedIn profile and be careful about what you write in Facebook and Twitter, and about the pictures you share on Instagram. An e-recruitment manager could be on your case. According to the Inesdi report, the salary band is between 24,000 and 35,000 euros per year for someone with two to five years of experience.

Growth Hacking Manager

Growth hacking is one of the buzz ideas in the world of startups. The blog 40defiebre offers us a good definition: it is a discipline that aims to increase quickly and notoriously the volume of our company's users, income or impacts quickly and notoriously, with minimum

expense and effort.

The key word for the job is "viral". A growth hacking manager must be careful about the trends and behavior of the company's target public so it can adapt its strategy constantly to any changes, designing products with a potential to go viral. The natural scope of his work is social media, and he needs experience in both web analytics and product development. In exchange he will receive a gross annual salary of between 30,000 and 35,000 euros per year if he has over two years of experience.



The digital economy and job creation



Inbound Marketing Specialist: Responsible for designing all the corporate and business unit strategy of a company's inbound marketing; in other words, he takes care of all the non-intrusive attraction of customers, and subsequently builds loyalty using tools such as content marketing, SEO, the social media...

Among his duties are to define the company's ideal customers and, based on this, to define the type of content, tone, messages, keywords, etc. that are needed to attract them. Apart from a good analytical capacity, this job requires extensive knowledge of online marketing, databases and customer relationship management (CRM). The salary, with experience of two to five years, is around 40,000 euros gross per year, according to Inesdi.

RTB Manager

Real Time Bidding (RTB) is an online system for bidding for an instant impression of an advert in each of the advertising spaces on a website. The RTB manager runs strategic campaigns to maximize the return on advertising investment and revenue. To do so correctly, he needs extensive knowledge of marketing and management of RTB platforms such as Google or Facebook, as well as experience in search engine marketing (SEM), to structure the groups of ads according to the different target publics. According to Inesdi, the salary band is between 28,000 and

35,000 euros gross per year for someone with between two and five years of experience.

Virtual Reality Architect

A virtual reality architect must have advanced technical knowledge of programming, image management, 3D and the software needed for developing virtual reality. His goal is for no one to be aware of his work; in other words, to create virtual realities that are so advanced that users forget they are not in the real world. The salary is around 30,000 euros gross per year with over two years of experience.

Visual Data Scientist

A company's data on customers and potential customers is a goldmine, but goldmines require a great deal of work. Not only does all the data have to be transformed into information that is useful and relevant for the company (this is basically the work of a big data analyst). It is also essential that what the data tell us should be visualized easily. And that is where the work of a visual data scientist comes in. It is a discipline that combines analysis and design. The basic job is to analyze and represent graphically large quantities of data, for which the analyst needs the ability to manage databases, knowledge of visual design and a good capacity for analysis to understand the business context. The vacancies received by the Inesdi job bank in 2015 put the salary at around 40,000 euros gross per year with experience of between three and five

years.

<https://www.bbva.com/en/ten-new-jobs-created-digital-economy/>

Other jobs and ways on making money online are outline by Spotify as follows:

Start a drop shipping store, run a print-on-demand store, sell custom products online, sell handmade crafts on Etsy, sell products on Amazon, create digital products, start an affiliate marketing business, build online courses, sell freelance services, start a Shopify ecommerce store and sell drop shipping products online, sell virtual assistant or freelance services on websites like Fiverr or Upwork, sell used stuff on Amazon, eBay, Craigslist, or Facebook Marketplace, do micro-tasks on Amazon's Mechanical Turk program, tutor kids online in English, rent your unused space on Airbnb, drive for Uber or Lyft, create information products, become a Tasker on TaskRabbit, trade in items on Gazelle or Amazon for gift cards, sell your photos online, teach online classes, sell services online, productize an industry skill set, test websites on UserTesting, Online tutoring, start your own clothing line, launch a dropshipping store, flip your thrift store finds, publish a book on Amazon Kindle, become an influencer, launch a podcast, apps and websites, create handmade goods and curate subscription boxes.

Next week, we shall describe how to go into these fields.

Concluded

TODAY I will like to outline and discuss five distinct areas that the salvation of Jesus applies to in the life of a believer. First, Jesus is our saviour from sin; secondly Jesus is our saviour from sickness, disease and infirmities of the flesh and body. Thirdly, Jesus is our saviour from poverty want and lack. Fourth, Jesus is our saviour from destruction, danger, evil and harm. And then finally, Jesus is our saviour from every curse of life.

In Luke 2:11, when the angel met the shepherds, it is important to note exactly what he said to them: For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. Note that the angel designated Jesus as Saviour and Christ at His birth. The word Christ means the anointed one, so the good news is that when you become committed to Christ and confess Him as your Saviour and Lord, you automatically share together in that anointing.

Again, Christ means the anointed one and the anointing He carries is the power of God that destroys yokes and lifts burdens. It is by the anointing that His saving ministry functions in your life. The genius of God is that the moment you become connected to Christ you also share in that anointing. This is what we are going to begin to discover as we explore these five broad areas of Jesus' salvation.

First thing to note is that every believer needs the anointing of God's Spirit in their lives. Just because you are born again does not mean that Satan is on recess. You have to recognise that the believer's superior advantage in this life is the anointing. Ones you know that and also acknowledge that when you came into Christ, you also came into His anointing, the next thing you need to know is how to function in that anointing.

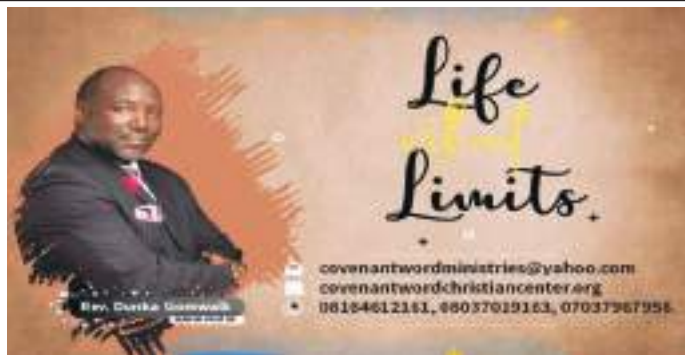
Know that, to function in His anointing, you must learn to stay in fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is only in the place of fellowship that the anointing can be deployed to answer every circumstance and every situation in your life.

There is no need for you to be afraid concerning anything in life. The anointing on Jesus that you partake of when you come into Christ is more than enough to answer any vice of the devil. The anointing is enough to guide, lead, instruct, protect, preserve and provide you with all you will ever need in to overcome in this life.

The anointing is your life – That is what the Bible actually says in the book of Col. 3:4, When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. It says Christ is our life; this anointing is our life and it is so important for us to understand this. The anointing has been given to you

call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

Now when sin is dealt with, the power of the devil is effectively neutralized. This is a very important point to note. So no man can deliver himself from sin. Deliverance from sin is a God domain. Only God can do



Why Jesus came

Jesus saved us in these Five Areas



as an inheritance. The anointing has been given to you to partake in the divine nature.

The fact is that Christianity is not just a religious experience but a union with the anointing and with Christ who is the possessor of the anointing. The anointing is not something that just makes you shout or fall down or cry; those may be some distinct manifestations of the anointing but the anointing actually functions in every area of your life to give you the solutions that you most desperately need and desire.

Now, from the list of 5 distinct areas in which the anointing of Jesus Christ works in our lives, the first is salvation from sin. What the anointing upon the Lord Jesus came to achieve first and foremost is to save all mankind from their sins. No human being can deliver man from sin. In Matthew 1:21, we see the angel telling Joseph about the child that his future wife, Mary will carry saying: And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt

that; only God can change a man's nature; only God can assure a man a place in eternity.

Jesus is God manifested in flesh to first and foremost, deal with our sin problem and grant us deliverance from the nature of sin and then from the acts of sin. Secondly, Jesus came to deliver us from sickness disease infirmities of the flesh and body. When Jesus took our sin he took our sicknesses and diseases as well. Matthew 8:17 said. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses. Jesus did that on the cross. When Jesus took our sin in his own body on the cross, He took our diseases as well

The third area that the anointing deals with is the area of poverty, want and lack. What a joy to know that when Jesus took our sin He broke the power of poverty and lack and that there is provision and allocation in what He did for us

on the cross to deliver us from the life of poverty and want forever.

Fourthly, Jesus delivered us from general destruction in life. He delivered us from accidents, premature death or whatever you want to call it. Jesus has delivered us from banditry, kidnapping - anything under the category of destruction, know that He died to deliver us from that and that anointing upon Him can preserve us in this life from all these things.

The fifth is that Jesus came to deliver us from every curse in life. Whatever the curse is; whatever the empowerment to fail is, Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.

Galatians 3: 13&14 says, Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might

receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Psalms 103:1-5 captures beautifully these 5 general areas where we have been redeemed from by the power of God and where the saving ministry of Jesus kicks in.

Psalms 103:1-5 reads, 1A Psalm of David. Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. 2Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: 3Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; 4Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies; 5Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Glory to God! These are the five basic areas, the five general areas that Jesus' salvation works in in the believer's life. Note also that these general areas actually cover all conceivable areas of your life or the life of any human being in world. Praise the Lord!

INTERNATIONAL

UN launches \$1bn appeal for earthquake aid

THE United Nations has appealed for more than \$1bn in funds for the Turkish earthquake relief operation, just two days after launching a \$400m appeal for Syrians.

UN aid chief Martin Griffiths, who visited Turkey last week, said on Thursday that the people have "experienced unspeakable heartache", adding: "We must stand with them in their darkest hour and ensure they receive the support they need."

The February 6 earthquake has so far killed at least 36,187 in southern Turkey, while authorities in neighbouring Syria have reported 5,800 deaths.

Rescue efforts have continued in Turkey, but the number of people rescued daily has dwindled significantly.

A teenage girl was pulled alive from the rubble in the province of Kahramanmaraş on Thursday – more than 10 days after a devastating earthquake hit the region. But such rescues have become increasingly rare.

The 17-year-old was safely extracted from the ruins of a collapsed apartment block, broadcaster TRT Haber reported, 248 hours since the 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck in the dead of night on February 6.

For families still waiting to retrieve their lost relatives, there is growing anger over what they see as corrupt building practices and deeply flawed urban development that resulted in thousands of homes and businesses disintegrating.

Turkey has promised to investigate anyone suspected of responsibility for the collapse of buildings and has ordered the detention of more than 100 suspects, including developers.

Across the border in Syria, the earthquake slammed a region divided and devastated by 12 years of civil war.

The Syrian government said the death toll in territory it controls is 1,414. More than 4,000 fatalities have been reported in the rebel-held northwest, but rescuers say nobody has been found alive there since February 9.

The aid effort has been hampered by the conflict, and many people in the northwest feel abandoned as supplies almost invariably head to other parts of the sprawling disaster zone.

Deliveries from Turkey were severed completely in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, when a route used by the United Nations was temporarily blocked. Earlier this week, days after the disaster, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad granted approval for two additional crossings to be opened.

As of Thursday, 119 UN trucks had gone through the Bab al-Hawa and Bab al-Salam border crossings between Turkey and Syria since the earthquake, a spokesperson for the UN Office for the Coordination of



Guterres

Humanitarian Affairs told Reuters.

A convoy of 15 aid trucks from Qatar has reached Syria's rebel-held town of Afrin, bringing desperately needed food, essential medicines and tents.

Jagan Chapagain, secretary-general of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, said the crisis would be protracted, and announced his organisation would scale up its aid appeal more than threefold

for both countries.

"Its impact on people will not be over in three months, so we are having a 24-month perspective," he said in Beirut, on his way from Syria to Turkey.

The potential economic impact of the earthquake in Turkey could result in a loss of up to one percent of the country's gross domestic product this year, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) said in a report published on Thursday.

Canada to send warships to Haiti

CANADA will send navy vessels to the coast of Haiti to gather intelligence as the Caribbean nation continues to reel from economic and political insecurity as well as violence, much of it driven by organised criminal groups.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced the decision at a meeting of Caribbean leaders in the Bahamas on Thursday.

Among the topics they discussed were the powerful armed gangs operating in the country, leading to widespread reports of murder, kidnappings and sexual violence.

"Right now, Haiti is

confronted with unrelenting gang violence, political turmoil and corruption," Trudeau said. "Now is the moment to come together to confront the severity of this situation."

The Canadian leader did not specify how many ships would take part in the effort or the duration of their mission. The announcement came during a meeting for CARICOM, the 15-member Caribbean trade bloc.

Haitian leaders including Prime Minister Ariel Henry have previously requested military assistance from the international community to help curb the escalating violence.



Moïse

JOE Biden, 80, remains healthy and "fit for duty", the White House physician has said after the physical examination of the US president whose health has been in focus amid his expected run for a second term.

"The president remains fit for duty and fully executes all of his responsibilities without any exemptions or accommodations," White House physician Kevin O'Connor said on Thursday in a summary of the health exam.

The exam was closely watched as Biden prepares for his expected run for a second term in 2024. The summary said Biden did not have any "long Covid" symptoms and that his stiff gait has not worsened since his last exam in November 2021.

Biden said his physical went well. "Everything really went well ... Thank God, for small favours".

Biden's three-hour session with doctors at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in the Washington suburb of Bethesda, Maryland, was his second extensive exam since taking office in January 2021.

Biden takes the statin

US President Joe Biden is healthy



Biden

Crestor to keep his cholesterol levels low, an anti-coagulant in response to atrial fibrillation that remains asymptomatic and medication to treat seasonal allergies and acid reflux, the summary said.

Several small skin growths were moved from his face and head using liquid nitrogen and "one small lesion on the president's chest was excised today and sent for traditional biopsy", O'Connor said. Results are pending.

The summary found that Biden's weight had dropped from 83.5kg (184 pounds) in 2021 to 81kg (178 pounds).

His body mass index was at 24.1 compared with 25.0 in 2021, and his blood pressure was at 126/78 compared with 120/70 in 2021.

The summary made no mention of whether Biden underwent any cognitive tests sometimes given to people of his age.

O'Connor said Biden's back stiffness is a result of significant spinal arthritis.

"The president's gait remains stiff, but has not worsened since last year," he said.

N. Korea threatens response

North Korea threatened Friday to take "unprecedentedly" strong action against its rivals, soon after South Korea announced a series of planned military drills with the United States to hone their joint response to the North's increasing nuclear

threats.

North Korea has halted weapons testing activities since its short-range missile firing on Jan. 1, though it launched more than 70 missiles in 2022

— a record number for a single year. Friday's warning suggests the North's testing could resume soon over its rivals' military training, which it views as an invasion rehearsal.

"In case the U.S. and South Korea carry into practice their already announced plan for military drills that (North Korea), with just apprehension and reason, regards as preparations for an aggression war, they will face unprecedentedly persistent and strong counteractions," the North Korean Foreign Ministry said in a statement carried by state media.

The statement accused South Korea and the United States of planning more than 20 rounds of military drills, including their largest-ever field exercises. It called South Korea and the United States "the arch-criminals deliberately disrupting" regional peace and stability.

"This predicts that the situation in the Korean Peninsula and the region will be again plunged into the grave vortex of escalating tension," the statement said.

It didn't specify which U.S.-South Korean military trainings it was referring to. But North Korea has typically slammed all major regular military drills between Washington and Seoul as a practice to launch an invasion and responded with its own weapons tests.

Some experts say North Korea has used various South Korea-U.S. drills as a chance to test and perfect its weapons systems. They say North Korea would eventually aim to use its enlarged nuclear arsenal to win international recognition as a legitimate nuclear state and win sanctions relief and other concessions.

Haiti

under the new programme, Haitians who try to cross into the US from Mexico would be turned away.

The UN has urged countries not to deport refugees and migrants back to Haiti, citing the dangerous conditions there.

Speaking at CARICOM on Thursday, Trudeau explained that Haiti's plight "weighs heavily" on him. He also pledged \$9.1m in humanitarian assistance, as well as \$7.4m to help protect Haitian women and children along the country's border with the Dominican Republic.

Tens of thousands of Haitians and people of Haitian descent have been deported from the Dominican Republic over the past year, despite international criticism against the removals.

Both Canada and the US have previously sent military hardware to the Haitian government and imposed sanctions on individuals accused of corruption or criminal ties in Haiti.

That tactic continued on Thursday, as US Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced further sanctions against "five individuals and seven family members" with links to criminal groups that "have threatened the livelihoods of the Haitian people and are blocking life-saving humanitarian support".

In January, the United States unveiled new rules that would allow up to 30,000 people a month to arrive from Nicaragua, Haiti, Venezuela and Cuba so long as they meet a strict set of requirements, including extensive vetting. But

including extensive vetting. But

INTERNATIONAL

Xenophobic delirium: The US's race-making operation in Mexico

Mexico is performing the United States' anti-migrant dirty work – and Haitian refuge seekers suffer much of the discrimination. **Ralén Fernández Writes**

ASYLUM seekers from Venezuela, Cuba, Haiti and Afghanistan wait in line outside the Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance office in Mexico City, January 24, 2023. According to COMAR, more than 118,000 asylum applications were received in 2022 in Mexico.

In the historic centre of the city of Tapachula, located in Mexico's southern state of Chiapas near the border with Guatemala, sits a golden statue of Benito Juárez, the first Mexican president of Indigenous origins, who died in 1872. Behind the statue is a wall featuring a quote from Juárez in capital letters, the English translation of which is: "Among individuals as among nations, respect for the rights of others is peace".

It is an ironic backdrop, to say the least, for the scene currently playing out in Tapachula. The city not only hosts Mexico's largest immigration detention centre, where I myself was imprisoned for one night in July 2021, but also effectively serves as an open-air jail for countless refuge seekers from Haiti, Central America, and beyond – many of whom are endeavouring to reach the United States but find themselves trapped in indefinite limbo and extreme precarity in Chiapas.

Of course, many of those on the move have been forced to flee their homes thanks in good part to the US habit of inflicting political and economic suffering on its fellow nations. So much for



Biden

"respect for the rights of others".

Nor, to be sure, is it very respectful for the US to insist that Mexico perform its anti-

migrant dirty work.

The attendant paucity of respect for individual rights has bred an abuse-ridden landscape in southern Mexico that merely adds insult to

injury for people who have already risked their lives to get this far. As the Washington Office on Latin America noted in a report last year, asylum seekers struggling to survive in Tapachula "face abuses by authorities ranging from arbitrary detention to extortion to other forms of violence".

The report went on to specify that "Afro-descendant migrants" were among those facing "particular situations of risk and discrimination". Indeed, Haitian asylum seekers in Mexico are frequent victims of assault, including armed attacks on their camps. In August 2021, the internet was shocked by footage of Mexican security forces manhandling a Haitian father with a child in his arms.

Haitians comprise a significant portion of Tapachula's refuge-seeking population – and you do not have to look too hard to see the discrimination. For example, when I returned to the city for a one-week visit in January, I ordered beetroot juice from a Mexican woman whose juice stall is located just behind Benito Juárez Park, where numerous Haitians and asylum seekers of other nationalities spend their days and nights waiting for their fates to be decided by the bureaucratic powers that be.

No sooner had I received my beetroot juice and spilled it all over myself than I was being regaled with tales of alleged Haitian transgressions in

Tapachula. These, according to the juice vendor, ranged from being "dirty" to having "no culture" to presiding over a veritable occupation of the city and subjugation of its native population.

The racism of the woman's charges was mundane, unabashed – even upbeat – and was of a piece with the xenophobic delirium that passes for news in certain local media outlets, which get off on hyping the spectre of invading hygiene-challenged Haitian hordes.

The day before my arrival, it turned out, there had been an extensive operation in the vicinity of Benito Juárez Park to remove Haitian vendors selling food, clothes, and other items – who were then displaced to another area of the city. A big show had been made, with elements of the Mexican National Guard and the municipal police overseeing the dramatic sweeping, mopping, and scrubbing of downtown streets that had never exactly been known for spotlessness in the first place.

I learned of the operation when, continuing on from the juice stall in search of an avocado, I came upon a handful of police deployed across the street with riot shields. In response to my inquiry as to whether there was some sort of trouble, a policewoman grinned broadly and assured me it was just "limpieza" – a word that means "cleaning" but that naturally acquires more sinister undertones in

racialised contexts.

Later I spoke with a young man from rural Haiti, who had thus far spent two months and 11 days in Tapachula and who showed me a map on his mobile phone of all of the countries he had traversed to get there – starting from Chile, many thousands of kilometres away. To cross the notorious Darién Gap, he said, he had taken a boat from Colombia and then walked for five days through the Panamanian jungle, which had entailed seeing a lot of corpses and being robbed of \$200 by an armed assailant.

The final country on his map was the US, but there was no telling how much additional torment would be required to get there. After all, as a Haitian in Mexico, he was not only criminalised as an "illegal migrant"; he also had to contend with the added layer of persecution on account of skin colour – a combination that has at times proved lethal.

And yet the fundamental blame for the whole nasty setup lies with racist US border policies – blame that multiplies exponentially if you consider that the US has spent more than a century doing its best to make Haiti unliveable. Following an episode in 1914 in which US Marines rolled up to Port-au-Prince and stole half the country's gold reserves for safekeeping on Wall Street, the US continued to profit at Haiti's expense by invading and brutally occupying it, propping up despots and torturers, backing coups, and militating to keep Haitian wages down.

But the beauty of imperialism is that, in the end, you do not have to worry about "respect for the rights of others".

In her 2021 book *Border and Rule: Global Migration, Capitalism, and the Rise of Racist Nationalism*, scholar Harsha Walia documents how the US's "interdiction and detention of Haitian refugees during the 1980s and 1990s" – which included shipping them to the illegal US offshore penal colony known as Guantánamo Bay – "laid the groundwork for the US onshore and offshore immigration detention system in place today".

Immigration detention, writes Walia, is ultimately a "race-making regime" – one that perpetuates a social order predicated on categorical inequality. And as race-making proceeds apace in the US's outsourced open-air jail of Tapachula, that seated statue certainly has a lot to contemplate.

The views expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect Al Jazeera's editorial stance.



Lopez



My show should be supported by all

-Kalban Comedian

NO doubt, you are one of the most successful comedians who have continued to daze your targeted audience, I will not be wrong to say that you have improved quite significantly, right?

Well, I wouldn't say I am successful yet, and I would say that my audience still has a lot to hear from me. I have improved yes that is part of the rules of growth, to consistently work on oneself and continuously improve one's craft. if not they would have thrown me into the creative dustbin (laughs) don't you think so? lol.

How have you been able to put in your best in this regard?

There's a saying that goes as thus; no man is an island. so in this regard I've always tried to connect myself to my environment that's where I get materials from, day to day happenings, and relating with my colleagues in the industry as well. I learn from their craft too. I have senior colleagues who have succeeded in the industry I try to follow their progress stories as well. I've also learnt to fuel my disappointments into my work, push myself beyond my comfort zone and limitations.



Above all I look constantly and consistently to my creator and the giver of all gifts. He shows me how to harness what he has given me and how to improve myself.

Does comedy really pay in this contemporary society?

Well I won't say it doesn't pay, but it doesn't pay as it ought to. This is as a result of Jos being the melting point of creatives has not learnt to appreciate and value creatives. Most times you hear "you're doing well" but they expect that you put up the best events give a mind blowing show. How many things can I use "you're doing well" to buy in the market? How many "you're doing well can I use to organize an event? However, I believe that we will get there with persistence, and

Continued on page 26

Couples who became close friends after ending marriage

Not all marriages last forever, but that doesn't mean the separation has to be final. Some former celebrity couples decided to stay friends, even after they went through a divorce. Whether they have children that they're co-parenting, or just decided to have an amicable separation, these celebrity couples can prove to be an inspiration for all of us.

Demi Moore and Bruce Willis



Although Demi Moore and Bruce Willis were married for over a decade, and eventually got a divorce in 2000, they are still very good friends. Demi even attended Bruce and his second wife's vow renewal ceremony in 2009.

Channing Tatum and Jenna Dewan



Although they went through a difficult divorce, the former couple are still friendly with each other. Jenna Dewan said that she is happy about starting a new chapter in her life.

Orlando Bloom and Miranda Kerr



Miranda Kerr also has a good relationship with both her ex and his current partner, Katy Perry. The supermodel revealed that they often hang out together and that Orlando Bloom likes Miranda's new boyfriend too.

Continued on page 26

EVER'S WORLD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

Health

Benefits of spices and its side effects

THE health benefits of spices are varied. They help make up for nutritional supplements, help strengthen the immune system and help control blood sugar and blood cholesterol levels. Spices also have anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties, and they help prevent various diseases such as Alzheimer's and cancer. Spices have the capability to eliminate any nutritional deficiencies that might be present in your body, thus helping restore correct functioning of the system. Spices contain many vitamins and minerals, which provide some of the most necessary elements for leading a healthy life.

Nutritional Value of Spices

Spices generally have strong flavours, and due to the fact that they are used in small quantities, they don't add a lot of extra calories to the food. Some spices contain considerable portions of protein, fats, and carbohydrates. Spices like paprika contains a large amount of Vitamin A. If used in larger quantities, spices contain substantial amounts of iron, minerals, magnesium and calcium. Most spices are said to have antioxidant properties, and they also possess phenolic compounds such as flavonoids, which help in the absorption of nutrients.

Has anti-inflammatory properties

Spices generally have anti-inflammatory properties, which is why they are often recommended in cases regarding inflammation of certain body parts or nerves/tissues. Spices have been known to help reduce cancer, improve oral health and digestion, as well as help facilitate growth of bones and reduce blood pressure. Spices also act as an anesthetic or



analgesic, in certain cases.

Acts as antioxidants

Spices are the best antioxidants to have around. They have exceptional antioxidant, antispasmodic, antiseptic, digestive, carminative and stimulant properties. As an anti-oxidant spices help increase oxygenation and circulation in the body, as well as helping boost the immune system. Not only are spices great sources of minerals, but they also help improve quality of the skin.

Helpful in boosting immunity system

Spices are extremely low in calories, but they are very useful in helping the body's natural immune system. Spices not only boost the immune system, but they also help in reducing various illnesses, strengthening blood vessels and reducing blood clotting. Additionally, they help lower cholesterol levels, increase blood circulation, and prevent diseases like atherosclerosis, as

well as cancer.

Improves digestion

Spices are known for their ability to help regulate bowel movements, thus improving digestion and reducing problems related to the digestive system, such as indigestion and constipation. Spices are a great source of vitamins and minerals, and they help increase enzymatic activity in the human body. Spices are also known for their capability to lower cholesterol levels in the blood, as well as regulate insulin levels in the body.

Helps improve skin and hair

Spices have long been praised because of their ability to enhance the health of skin and hair. Spices are capable of improving the function of the nervous system, thus boosting immunity and blood circulation, which leads to healthier skin and hair.

Regulates metabolism

Spices can help regulate the body's metabolism efficiently. By helping regulate body metabolism, spices can effectively prevent diseases of the blood, such as anemia. Due to increased metabolism, the heart rate is also effectively controlled, and gastrointestinal cation is optimized.

Helps control diabetes

Many spices contain a compound called cinnamaldehyde, which is very effective in controlling blood sugar levels. By slowing down the rate of carbohydrate breakdown in the digestive tract, spices help improve insulin sensitivity. Reports have shown that certain spices such as cinnamon are capable of lowering blood sugar by around

25% in patients suffering from diabetes.

Improves memory and brain function

Spices such as Sage are very effective in helping improve brain and memory function. This spice has been shown to effectively improve brain function in people suffering from Alzheimer's disease.

Fights infections

Spices are very effective in preventing various infections caused by yeasts, molds and bacteria. Not only do spices improve the body's immunity system, thus preventing infections from taking hold, but they also help in actively inhibiting the growth of harmful bacteria in the human body.

Prevents allergies and helps fight nasal congestion

Certain spices such as rosemary contain specific compounds which help suppress allergic responses, as well as help treat any problems related to nasal congestion. This compound has anti-inflammatory properties as well.

Improves heart health



Spices such as garlic are extremely helpful in reducing cholesterol levels, thus keeping the heart healthy. For people suffering from high cholesterol problems, adding garlic to their diets could very well help reduce cholesterol levels and prevent the onset of heart problems.

Side-Effects & Allergies of Spices

Generally, spices have no known side effects. However, depending from person to person, allergic reactions can occur in people as a result of consumption of certain spices. These allergic reactions include, but are not limited to, occupational contact dermatitis, bronchial asthma, rhinitis and anaphylactic shock. Additionally, certain spices can react with certain medications and cause complications such as thinning of the blood, and formation of hemorrhoids. However, these are all quite rare, and the benefits of spices certainly outweigh its almost negligible side effects.



EVERYBODY'S WORLD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

Living

Building a marriage that will last a lifetime

By **PHILIP KITOTO**

AT times, parties in a relationship approach issues as though one is walking on egg shells, but seeking to discuss difficult issues from a place of level-headedness starts the relationship on a journey of maturing together

For almost everyone, the 'finding' journey is filled with adventure, suspense, and fun. A romantic crush is a wonderful feeling. However, finding the right spouse is a very personal journey; while becoming a best-performing relationship is a torturous journey.

We should start from knowing that we are all gifted differently and that we are uniquely endowed to fulfil a certain purpose.

We should never underrate the value and gifting that our spouses bring to the table.

Choice of words

What we value we treasure. According to Jeremy Bidwell, "one way of doing this is by getting good at saying words like, "you are right," or "you have a point," while at the same time "avoiding the tendency to simply debate. If you get into this habit, your life at home will get better."

Abusive language

We have to be good at fuelling the good in marriage by using words of affirmation. It is sad that, when one partner in marriage is threatened or intimidated by the success of the other, they turn to the use of abusive language that demeans their spouse.

However, celebrating value and gifting increases intimacy and connectedness.

There are also risks in seeking out treasure, although the bottom line is that, we find it brings great pleasure.

Connection

According to Smalley, "When you validate your spouse, you recognise, value and accept their deepest thoughts, opinions,



ideas, beliefs and emotions." This perspective is basic to building a strong connection and bond.

The danger is for any spouse to take the other for granted, by using the gift in them while treating them as strangers.

Create an environment where you regularly talk together, have fun and adventure. Setting downtime together with each other at the end of the day is key.

We all have weaknesses, flaws and misconceptions on issues that are bound to cause misunderstandings and miscommunication, so learning to be understanding and patient with each other pays.

Friendship

When we are masters at intelligently using the knowledge we have of our partner positively, then we are on our way to enhancing our friendship.

For those who are dating, if you want a best friend in your future partner, develop and build that friendship now. If you want a

listening partner who will empathise with you, then take time to build those habits now.

You cannot expect your wife to put your needs first when you have not modelled by putting her needs first. I am of the opinion that if we put friendship first, a couple has greater chances of building a successful marriage.

After all, every spouse wants someone in whom they can confide in and get support from, through the challenges of life.

Basic tips on building a relationship of friends

First, know each other well. Many people do not take time to know their partners. This puts the whole relationship and its future in jeopardy. The pain we encounter later in marriage could be reduced by half if only we took time to know each other well. Questions to really dig for answers could include the following; "what does my partner stand for in life? Who are my partner's influencers? What makes us feel authentic together?"

Second is the need to spend time together. Absence creates distance, suspicions and mistrust. Spending time together provides opportunity for re-energising and closing the gaps that exist.

Third, being real with each other is a must. Keeping secrets from each other is like creating a death trap for your relationship. We should never allow for our partner to have another life we have no idea about.

We are better together

Teamwork is important in marriage. The best-performing team must show evidence of the value they see each other bringing to the table. They must also exhibit a level of friendship and harmony at work.

Speaking about the love you have for your spouse in itself is not



enough. Moving from love to learning how to get along together is equally important. Growing together calls for values based on knowledge of who your spouse is, what their needs are, and how you can complement their weakness.

The feeling of belonging is key to any team performance. Spouses who feel affirmed are most likely going to put in more than if they were not. Loyalty to the team is based on the feeling that "I feel needed." Being a team means; first, accepting the boundaries that keep you connected. Violation of the boundaries will create a difficulty in building trust and confidence. Second, being part of the same future.

Spouses must watch against influences that would negatively affect their marriage. Third, being part of a great team requires vigorous training.

Many marriages desire to be

excellent by doing nothing at gaining new knowledge that will help the performance of the relationship.

Discipline

In a team, there are things you do for the team's well-being. Wrong thinking can negatively influence your marriage. For example, harbouring a thought such as, "Our marriage was a mistake," will eventually influence your performance. Or "She does not understand me," could as well make you feel as if your partner purposely listens selectively. Such wrong thoughts are dangerous since they eventually govern what we do.

Our only desire is to work towards becoming a functioning team where we treasure each other, are good friends, and desire to work towards improving our team





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Elections 2023: Concerns about level of preparedness

WITH barely 10 days to Nigeria's 2023 general elections, there are concerns about the level of preparedness and participation of women in the process despite being almost half of the nation's population.

According to Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) data, women accounted for 39.6 million (47.14 percent) of 84 million voters registered in 2019, and 44.4 million (47.5 percent) of the 93.5 million in 2023.

With this statistics, women and youths form over 75 percent of registered voters ahead of 2023 and will be the major determinants of the winners that will emerge in the 2023 elections.

But despite being the highest number of registered voters, how are women getting prepared to participate in the elections? There has been calls by many bodies to ensure there is adequate sensitisation to mobilise them to come out and participate.

The Gender Strategy Advancement International (GSAI) revealed that women political participation in Nigeria falls below the world and African continental standard.

According to the report, the National average of women's political participation in Nigeria remains at 6.7 percent in elective and appointive positions. This is below the global average of 22.5 percent, Africa regional average of 23.4 percent and West Africa Sub Regional average of 15 percent. Accordingly, Nigeria is just 4.1 percent in the national Parliament, compared to other African countries: Rwanda (67 percent); Senegal (about 57 percent).

Low self esteem, violence and thuggery perpetrated at polling units, female harassment and intimidation among others has been identified by many studies as the reason why women are sometimes indifferent about coming out to vote.



Abubakar, Amirah FOMWAN Plateau State

Plateau State Chairperson, Women Wing Christian Association of Nigeria (WOWICAN), Mrs. Rhoda Jahota said the level of preparedness of female voters in Plateau state, under her organisation is satisfactory.

She said in WOWICAN the five Blocs with every Christian denomination are all represented namely: Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN), Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN), Christian Pentecostal of Nigeria, Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (CPFN/PFN), Organization of African Instituted Churches of Nigeria (OAIC), TEKAN/ECWA, adding: "Since 2022, we had started

to mobilize women to prepare for the election and to come out on election day to vote candidates of their choice on the 25th February and March 11th 2023 by the grace of God Almighty".

According to the WOWICAN state Chairperson, "Our Women are optimistic that there will be great change and a new Nigeria will be birthed after crying unto God to give Nigeria God fearing leaders at every level".

"WOWICAN have already sensitised the women and we plan to go to out to our polling units for the elections in good time, we plan to wait patiently to be accredited and vote and we have asked them to carry along with them snacks, water, drinks not be hungry, including umbrellas and mats to sit on and wait, while we have ensured that we applied to relevant bodies and got approval for some women under WOWICAN to be election observers.

Jahota lamented that they are facing a few pre-election challenges. She disclosed that some women who did transfer could not get their PVCs, while some could still not get their PVCs from collection centers till the closing date. "Some of the women have misplaced their PVC's" she said.

However, Jahota said she is working with relevant stakeholders to address the problem. "We have advised those on transfer to go to their former locations to vote, but they cannot do so inter-state, while women who could not obtain their PVC can still go to INEC office to try to collect it" she said.

Concerning the number of females contesting in the elections, Mrs Jahota said it is worrisome and too low. "We are not satisfied with the statistics of women contesting, there are only 3 from PDP and I heard that there's one from another party".

The Leader of the Federation of Moslem Women Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN), Plateau state, Hajiya Kaltume Auwalu Abubakar tagged "Amirah FOMWAN", also says women under her organisation are set to participate in the 2023 elections.

She says already, through



Make, CEO GF-PWD

sensitization, dialogue, workshops, trainings and seminars, the women have been educated and told of expectations from the electoral processes.

"The women are hopeful, believing that Allah will surely intervene when they play their part and perform their civil rights by going to cast their vote".

"As FOMWAN Leader, I have tasked women to plan well and participate in the elections in following ways: By collecting their PVC's, identifying their polling units, giving good advice to their family members going out to perform their civil rights peacefully without getting involved in any kind of violence, putting their family in order by cooking, cleaning and making sure that the house will be comfortable for every member after coming back from the polling unit, going to the polling unit on time and being law abiding citizens, and making sure all her family members cast their votes".

The Amirah FOMWAN listed challenges faced by some of the women. She said some of them are yet to have their PVC's in their possession, while others are having issues with their transfer because of migration issues.

"Some FOMWAN members are still angry with some government policies and the suffering many Nigerians are facing like lack of adequate basic amenities of life, poor market price control, lack of water, no medicine in most of government hospitals among others and it has made them to say there is no need to waste their time again in voting or conducting another election. But as their leaders, we are encouraging them to come out and vote, not to give up, and hope that the new leaders we will elect will ease our suffering by giving us better governance".

Kaltume Abubakar however disclosed that she is satisfied with the number of women contesting elections so far because women have to start somewhere.

"For those of us that are in the race,

we are praying for their success and we will give them maximum support needed to face the men folk so that in a near future, women's voices will count in policy making in our nation".

Miss Esther Sunday Makwe, CEO Greenhands Foundation for Persons With Disabilities (GF-PWD), and also the Zonal coordinator Advocacy for Women With Disabilities Initiative (AWWDI) says she has a key role in mobilising female Persons with Disabilities (PWD's) to come out and participate in the elections.

"I am mobilising the over 500 women registered under GF-PWD, as well as AWWDI members across the North Central Zone of Plateau State to participate in the elections through awareness creation. I have been calling and meeting with

heads and members of each PWD group I work with, sensitising and telling them about the new INEC rules, and the Bimodal Voter Registration System (BVAS) use.

"Most PWD's believe in the BVAS but others are still skeptical about it, and this is a major challenge that my organisation is addressing through sensitisation".

She was optimistic however that based on her interactions with the PWD's, many female voters are willing to go to the polling units with their caregivers, to help them them cast their votes seamlessly".

However Makwe pointed out that some of the PWD clusters are facing challenges. "There are a lot of challenges, especially the deaf, they find it difficult to get information on how they will vote. But I spoke to the Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC) and he assured me that they will make provisions for interpreters and contact lenses for the albinos.

She described the statistics of women contesting the 2023 elections as poor stating further: "Presently I don't know of any woman that is contesting in Plateau State apart from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Deputy governor. Sadly there is not a single PWD contesting, I haven't heard any".



Jahota, WOWICAN Chairperson Plateau state

TEEN'S WORLD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

Parenting

Things your teen needs to know

By **DAN BORTOLOTTI**

HERE'S how to give your teens the skills they need to succeed on their own.

We all want our kids to be independent, but our actions often accomplish the exact opposite. When we do too much for our teens, we rob them of the opportunity to learn those skills for themselves. "Teaching independence is not something you start when they're 14," says Lynn. "It starts with having them dress themselves when they're three, and help pack their bags for camp when they're nine. You can't do everything for them for 12 or 14 years and then suddenly change the rules."

With that in mind, here are 10 things teens should be able to do for themselves before they leave home, and suggestions on how to impart the wisdom.

Wash their own clothes

"By the time kids are 13 or 14, there is no reason they can't do their own laundry," says Lynn, noting that any child who can operate a computer or video game can be taught to use a washing machine. The groundwork can be laid early on — preschoolers can sort socks or fold underwear, for example. And it doesn't hurt to add a natural consequence: Your teen may be more willing to pitch in when her favourite jeans have been lying in the hamper for two weeks.

Cook a meal

Do you remember hosting your first dinner party and suddenly appreciating how much preparation is involved? Most kids don't have a clue how to put together a meal until they try it themselves. By the time Lynn's son and daughter were in their early teens, they were each expected to cook dinner once a week. They didn't have to shop, but they did have to think ahead and make a grocery list. Bonus: When they leave home, teens who know their way around a kitchen will be less likely to survive on fast food and other junk.

Earn their own money

Direnfeld argues that as soon as teens are able to work, it's time to give them some financial responsibilities. "It's important for parents to know when to pull back, or kids will not be motivated to find a job." The benefits of part-time work are not just financial, he says: "Children learn what other people's rules are, not just their parents'. They learn what it's like to be in the real world."

Be in a healthy relationship



The patterns your teen forms in his early dating experiences will either help or haunt him as he gets older. Parents can't control what happens in their kids' relationships, but they can provide a model. "The first rule is: Look in the mirror," Direnfeld says. "If you're not in a respectful relationship, you lose your moral authority. Teenagers typically turn down the volume and look at the picture."

While it's good to be understanding and supportive when

our teens' relationships go awry, remember that gaining life experience sometimes hurts. "It's not necessarily a bad thing that your child has a failed relationship and a broken heart," says Direnfeld. It might help your teen choose a partner more wisely next time.

Avoid pregnancy and STIs

"Normal adolescence includes sexual behaviour and experimentation," says Direnfeld. "We have to understand that as a given, whatever our moral position." But, he adds, "the research tells us that parents who share their morals and values are influential in their children's sexual decisions." Whether you're preaching abstinence or you're more tolerant of sexual activity, make sure your teens understand the consequences of an unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and know how to protect themselves.

Lynn offers another suggestion: "Ask your family doctor to talk to your teen about sexual activity, and make it clear that whatever is said between doctor and child is confidential. Some doctors aren't sure whether it's OK to talk to kids about these issues."

Understand they're not the centre of the universe

Teens need to appreciate that the world doesn't stop because they need to be somewhere. You may want to put this in terms of a deal I was going to do the laundry this afternoon, so if you want to do the laundry, that gives me back my half-hour." Clavier says this type of exchange helps teens understand they have a responsibility to others.

Mind their manners

While etiquette standards constantly change, basic politeness and courtesy are never old-fashioned. Teach your teen to take off his baseball cap in a restaurant. Get him to phone his grandparents to thank them for the birthday gift. Make sure he understands that the language he uses around his friends may not be appropriate at work. "There are so many stories about young people going into job interviews and not having a clue how to behave," says Lynn. "We can't blame them. Why don't they know what's appropriate to wear at an office? Or that it's important to listen and be polite? We spend so much energy making sure they're involved in all these activities, yet

sometimes we're not teaching them basic social skills."

Be street-smart

Your teens are going to encounter all kinds of people — at their job, at the mall, on the street — and blanket rules like "don't talk to strangers" no longer apply. "Most teenagers believe they're more knowledgeable than they really are, so it's difficult to protect them from all the dangers that may befall them in the community," says Direnfeld. "It's something most people pick up from experience." This is why Lynn suggests we help kids hone their street smarts long before they're teenagers. "It starts with teaching them how to walk to school, how to go to the local store, how to take the bus downtown. If you're walking into a parking garage with your daughter you can say, 'You know, it's a good idea to take a look around and see who else might be here, and if something doesn't feel right, trust yourself and get out, or call for help.'"

Ask for help when they really need it

If you have a stubborn teen who thinks he always knows best, he may have no desire to come to you for advice. In some ways, that's good. You're trying to teach independence, after all. But teens can and do get into situations they can't handle on their own: unwelcome sexual attention, an unwanted pregnancy, an abusive relationship, pressure to experiment with drugs and alcohol. Maintaining open and honest lines of communication means listening without being judgmental. No matter how independent your teen, he needs to know that when he's genuinely in trouble, you will be there for him.

What a teen wants, what a teen needs Laugh about mistakes.

Sure, cleaning up a smashed bottle of soy sauce is annoying and, yes, it does stain white carpets, but there is something funny about smelling like chow mein all day, isn't there?

Do not use your child as a mannequin.

Once they hit the teenage years, kids need to express their own fashionista identities. Trying out hairstyles on your child to see if they will look good on you could result in years of therapy. (Thanks for the Richard Simmons perm, Mom!)

Let your child know you're human too.

Kids often forget that parents and teachers (and other people they won't admit looking up to until they're in their 20s) have needs and desires, and that, wait for it...they even cry!



BUSINESS WORLD

Nigeria's national debt, should citizens be alarmed?

"Within half a century, Nigeria's total external debt stock – due but unpaid foreign loans plus accrued interest arrears – rose from less than 1 billion dollars in 1970 to over 70 billion dollars as of 2021. ZUHUMAN DAPEL AND SANTOS LARAB, writes."

MORE than two-thirds of this is owed to multilateral institutions: the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the African Development Bank – and less than 10 percent to China, while the rest is to other bilateral lenders.

A caveat on the Chinese credit: according to information from Nigeria's debt management office, loans from China are wholly tied to 15 infrastructure projects ranging from transportation, water and telecommunications to electricity.

At 2.5 per cent interest rates, the debts are expected to be fully paid back within 30 years: 20 years maturity plus seven years grace period.

The nation's current foreign debt level, in addition to raising the risk of sovereign default (that is the failure of the government to pay its debt), is also absorbing and sucking up the entire government budgetary space such that the country has little room to spend on other pressing national needs.

The more money is allocated for debt servicing, the less money is available for spending on vital sectors – education and health

Concerning resolving the debt crisis, the situation raises two pertinent questions. First, what are the forces at the root of shaping Nigeria's debt profile? Second, what can be done to reverse the government finances from sinking deeper into the red? Before addressing these questions (in the later part) in detail, we proceed by laying out a context as follows.

In a setting of zero public sector corruption (practically impossible), who benefits the most from government spending? And who loses out whenever the government cuts its spending?

Both questions share the same answer: the poor. This is because state-owned, state-funded, and state-run public goods such as schools, hospitals, dams, electricity, roads, etc – are substantially relied upon by the poor as a means of raising welfare levels in that the rich can afford or buy education and healthcare services from private schools and private hospitals, respectively.

However, in the presence of corruption – the reality on the ground – the primary beneficiaries of government budgets in addition to the poor are typically the elected and the unelected corrupt government officials and bureaucrats.

Given that they wield the levers of power, government budgets are often used as tools (instead of instruments of delivering public goods and services) to leak way resources from public tills to private tills, thus providing more grounds for borrowing and mounting public debt to finance and grease the greed of corruption.

There is therefore no question that government spending is strongly connected to the national debt.

Like other nations, Nigeria borrows from the rest of the world. Its budget is significantly tied to changes in world oil prices, hence, in periods of falling oil revenues, the government usually rushes to lenders for loans to finance deficits otherwise, the decline in revenues will always come at the expense of investments in infrastructure – accumulation of physical capital stock such as roads,



Ahmed

new schools, hospitals, dams etc.

This is because the government must pay its workers and fund its operations including providing national security. In other words, the government chooses to borrow in periods of negative shocks to oil prices so that its recurrent expenditure will have to hold up so that workers are not shaded off from public employment.

The forces at the root of rising Nigeria's foreign debt

In our opinion, two main forces are driving the rise of the external national debt.

First, the rate at which the country borrows. According to the World Bank's International Debt Statistics, for the past 50 years, Nigeria was on average withdrawing at the speed of more than \$2 billion a year from its loan commitments.

However, the significant rise in the debt stock is attributed to disbursements on external loans within the last decade. In the lead-up to the 2015 general elections, about \$9 billion – five times the average initial withdrawals – was pinched in 2014. Similarly, in the two years (2017 and 2018) preceding the last general elections, close to \$25 billion was drawn.

This pattern could be linked to the incidence voracity effect – a notion that the absence of strong political and legal institutions, combined with the presence of multiple powerful groups fosters the mismanagement of public finance, possibly to finance political campaigns in attempts to reinforce and their hold (tighten their grip) on power as both presidents, in the case of Nigeria, were incumbents seeking re-elections before the massive debt accumulations.

The second reason behind Nigeria's expanding debt stock has been the debt management strategy, especially how the debt was serviced by various regimes. Please note that to service debt is to pay down the debt stock. That includes paying back part of the principal and the accrued interest arrears.

For instance, for the past five

decades, Nigeria has been servicing its debt at an annual average rate of roughly 15 percent (roughly \$2 billion) of its total external debt. More so, between 2007 and 2014 – when world oil prices hovered around \$100 per barrel, offering an opportunity for Nigeria to significantly lower its debt level – debt service payment was ironically at its lowest: an average of less than \$1 billion per year.

Shedding more light on this via a 2005 CGD note, Todd Moss aptly captured how Nigeria's poor management of its debt in the past swelled the nation's debt level:

"Unlike many indebted poor countries, Nigeria's debts are not from massive over-borrowing and then wasteful spending. The initial loans to Nigeria were fairly small amounts and undertaken by the civilian Shagari government in the early 1980s. The subsequent escalation of debt stock is primarily the result of accrued arrears, interest, penalties, and export credit defaults accumulated by the military governments that ruled the country from 1984-99."

However, in fairness to the military juntas, they built some of the major projects housing the current democratic system in the country such as the parliamentary building, the presidential villa or Aso Rock (Nigeria's equivalent of the US White House and the UK's 10 Downing Street), the federal capital and the creation of the country's 36 states and over seven hundred local councils.

Other notable infrastructure projects executed by the military governments include the country's three national refineries, dams, universities, roads, airports, major bridges, and more.

Should the citizens feel a sense of danger?

Rising debt levels should not raise immediate concerns if that comes with a falling debt-to-GDP ratio. The ratio, defined as the total debt stock divided by the size of the economy, tells us the fraction of the economy being eaten up by debt and the extent to which the debt benefits the

economy.

If a nation's debt stock is rising and at the same time its debt-to-GDP ratio is declining, it means the country is making the most of its debt and that should not be a cause for alarm.

However, a nation can offset part of its debt and still have a high debt-to-GDP ratio. For instance, if the country uses part of its capital expenditure or all of it to write down part of its debt, that will no doubt slash the debt stock and the country's balance sheet will look cleaner than it otherwise would have been.

But diverting and spending capital expenditure on the debt has stripped the nation of the desperately needed resources to grease the engine of growth. As a result, growth will shrink and the ratio of debt to GDP will rise, a sign of an unhealthy economy.

Nonetheless, incurring more debt in the short run and using that to invest in high-return infrastructure projects will potentially lower the debt to- GDP ratio in the long run.

The early 1980s collapse in world oil prices coincided with soaring Nigeria's debt to GDP ratio. It rose from about 4 per cent in 1981 to a peak of more than 90 per cent in 1993; and then within two decades, it fell back to roughly 4 per cent as of 2012.

However, it is firmly rising again. Between 2013 and 2020, it ballooned by over 250 per cent: more than 14 per cent in 2020. But should this be a concern? To find an answer, a debt study by two Harvard professors of economics (Carmen Reinhart and Kenneth Rogoff) of over 40 countries spanning 200 years established that a debt-to-GDP ratio of 90 per cent and above is considered bad for economic growth.

Drilling this to Nigeria paints a different picture. Debt servicing highlights not only the potential cost of mounting the debt burden but also the risk of government finances dipping deeper into the red.

The message here is clear: when a nation continues to pile its debt, serving the debt deprives the country of the badly needed financial resources to fund government operations and power economic progress.

For instance, our analysis of Nigeria's debt-expenditure shows for every \$1 that is embedded in the nation's budget towards debt servicing, government spending on pro-poor projects is lessened by less than a dollar, 56 cents.

In other words, the more money is allocated for debt servicing, the less money is available for spending on vital sectors – education and health. The chart below depicts the extent to which debt servicing has been squeezing the financial strength of the nation in meeting domestic spending obligations.

Another downside of Nigeria's debt servicing obligation is that it is ill-timed: coinciding with a period the country needs foreign exchange earnings to revive, defend and stabilise its falling currency as substantial parts of the foreign exchange earnings are now being used to meet debt service obligations. For instance, in 2020 alone, more than 40 percent of the country's oil rent went into debt servicing.

Dealing with the debt

How can Nigeria be freed from the clutches of debt – clear its books, and

restore normal conditions? Are there hopes for a cleaner external sector balance sheet?

Currently, Nigeria's outstanding external debt stock is less than the country's oil revenues and external reserves, combined. That means Nigeria can instantly write down its total external debt stock but doing so will come at a significant economic cost for the country: its external balance sheet will be close to empty, with almost no foreign currency left for settling imports bills and maintaining economic relationships with the rest of the world. This is not a feasible option.

Nigeria's debt was never forgiven, cancelled, or forgotten. It was bought back. Can this happen again?

In 2006, Nigeria struck a debt buy-back deal with its Paris Group of Creditors – buying a dollar-debt by roughly 20 cents, thus paying \$12 billion upfront to slash its debt by over \$30 billion.

The Center for Global Development (a Washington, D.C.-based think tank) led by Todd Moss and Nancy Birdsall provided the technical leadership but much of the debt relief praise goes to the then Nigerian finance minister, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, who provided policy leadership and served as the bridge between a Nigerian government, the deal makers, and the creditors.

The debt relief conferred a couple of benefits – improve the economic landscape of Nigeria.

Following this move, consistent with the notion of debt relief, was a significant improvement in the economic landscape of the country. There was a recorded rise in Nigeria's credit rating in that the country was able to access an additional about \$2 billion a year from the global lending market and a supplementary \$5 billion in foreign direct investments.

Nigeria saw its debt fall from 110 per cent of GDP in 1993 to just 5 per cent in 2006. Correspondingly, the economy rose from a negative growth rate of 2 per cent per year to a growth rate of 15 per cent in 2002 before falling to roughly 6 per cent in 2006.

Average living standards measured in terms of GDP per capita rose by about \$1000.

Consequently, over 10 million people were lifted out of poverty.

Given that these benefits were preceded by falling debt levels, then rising debt levels are a pointer to what may, in terms of development outcomes, be eluding Nigeria in the future should the country continue to accumulate more debt.

The possibility of additional debt relief for Nigeria

Contrastingly, the economic conditions, political climate, and Nigeria's creditors in the early years of their return to democracy in the country are significantly different from the current realities on the ground. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that what worked then (the 2006 debt successful debt relief) may not work now.

Then, Nigeria used its oil proceeds – what it was able to bring to the table – to negotiate a debt relief package with predominantly European and North American creditors. Will its current leading creditors – the World Bank, the IMF and AfDB – heed Nigeria's plea in this regard after years of covid-induced Debt Service Suspension Scheme? We doubt it but it's worth giving a try.

Source: BusinessDay.

BUSINESS WORLD

World Bank President to step down in June

THE World Bank's President, David Malpass, says he would resign from his position by the end of June.

He said he would step down by June 30. This is about a year before his term would have ended.

The 66-year-old was quoted as saying in a statement from the bank, having informed its board of his decision that "After a good deal of thought, I've decided to pursue new challenges."

"It has been an enormous honor and privilege to serve as President of the world's premier development institution alongside so many talented and exceptional people.

"With developing countries facing unprecedented crises, I'm proud that the Bank Group has responded with speed, scale, innovation, and impact. The last four years have been some of the most meaningful of my career. Having made much progress, and after a good deal of thought, I've decided to pursue new challenges. I want to thank our staff and Boards of Directors for the privilege of working with them every day to strengthen the effectiveness of our operations in the most



Malpass

challenging of times."

Malpass added, "This is an opportunity for a smooth leadership transition as the Bank Group works to meet increasing global challenges, facilitate private investment, sharpen its focus on global public goods, and maintain strong momentum on operational delivery and portfolio performance for client countries."

Prior to leading the World Bank, Malpass served the US Treasury.

His tenure at the World Bank, spanning four years,

saw the group face global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, as well as an international economic slowdown.

The bank said in a statement that it has "Responded quickly in the face of these challenges, in particular, mobilising a record \$440bn in response to the pandemic."

"Under his leadership, the Bank Group more than doubled its climate finance to developing countries, reaching a record \$32bn last year."

AS part of efforts towards positioning the Digital Economy sector on the path of sustainable national development, the Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Prof. Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami, has tasked the Board and management staff of the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) to continuously engage in critical thinking in order to solve complex problems that will benefit Nigerians and humanity at large.

Pantami stated this during a ministerial training on "Skills for Successful Leadership in the Fourth Industrial Revolution", organized by the ministry.

"There is no problem that exists in the world that has no solution, globally, there is none. The only challenge is being able to engage in critical thinking", Pantami maintained. He highlighted customer centricity, long-term thinking, passion for invention, and surrounding one's self with mentors as key to staying relevant and impactful.

The Minister said "Create the future and be the driver of it. When hiring, look at taking-in people with discipline, expertise, capacity to deliver and do

Fourth industrial revolution: Pantami harps on equipping NITDA



Abdullahi

away with sentiments".

While urging the participants not to compromise their core values, the Digital Economy Boss advised that engaging in compromises attract negative results in the long run and so, it should be avoided.

Prof. Pantami took time to explain the modus operandi of managing success, failure, crisis, and leadership in the work space, adding that facts should always precede emotions.

According to the Minister, leadership is about being brave and taking hardcore decisions, especially when it is for the good of those concerned, he however, stressed that they should be taken after critical evaluations of the subject matter.

"As a leader if you want to be successful don't be worried about today, rather be worried about the legacies you would leave behind."

"Always be consistent in your determination to do the right things and have a high level of decisiveness", the Minister admonished.

The Director-General of the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), Kashifu Inuwa CCIE, who welcomed the participants, expressed delight in the theme of the training which he said aims at equipping the Board and Management Staff of the organization for growth and resilience in the fourth Industrial Revolution.

Inuwa particularly appreciated the Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Prof. Isa Ali Pantami, for taking the initiative to share his knowledge and expertise on the subject matter; the knowledge sharing initiative, Inuwa said he has benefited from for twenty-five years.

The DG emphasized that the fourth Industrial Revolution is

upon Nigeria, affirming that it presents great opportunities for leapfrogging Nigeria in the digital economy.

"To seize the opportunities that abound, we need to fully equip ourselves with relevant knowledge, skills, expertise and tools in order to position Nigeria to create and capture value from the fourth Industrial Revolution", Inuwa stressed.

He described the Minister's leadership over the years as instrumental to the successes recorded by the Agency, noting that it is a golden opportunity for Board members and Management Staff to grow faster in their service delivery, especially as they are part of the training session which is to be handled by the Minister himself.

Inuwa said "when the Honourable Minister formulated the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS), he directed us to implement and with his guidance, all the force-set, that is, from the mindset, skill-set to the look and feel of the agency are all his initiatives we implemented".

The Director-General encouraged everyone to fully participate in the different sessions as he hoped that the training would transform their lives and by extension impact on their performance at work and the Digital Economy of the Nation at large.

The event featured a presentation of Icon of Digital Economy Award to Prof. Isa Ali Pantami by the Board Chairman of NITDA, Dr Sa'id Abubakar in recognition of his immense contributions to the sector. Meanwhile, a symbolic certificate was also presented to the Board Chairman of the Agency.

Financial inclusion, consumer protection top discourse at RegtechAfrica

EXPERTS across various sectors of economies in Africa would be addressing issues and challenges impeding growth in financial inclusion in Africa and speak on policies that would ensure consumer protection against cybercrime is upheld in the continent at the 2023 RegtechAfrica Conference.

The conference would also focus on ways to reduce cybercrime as technology continues to disrupt economies.

The conference which is scheduled to hold in Nigeria from 24th to 26th May, 2023 at Oriental hotel, Lagos would be a forum for regulators; regulated and key Industry stakeholders to

engage collaborate and share knowledge around new technologies and practices that support better regulations.

Cyril Okoroigwe, CEO, Regtech Africa Conference said the conference is coming at a time when digital revolution in financial sector has seen increasing changes with a new move towards technology driven delivery channels. This holds great promise as a means to enable financial inclusion and thus help improve citizens lives.

Okoroigwe however stated that cybercrime has become a key concern in developing and emerging key countries' financial markets and is

threatening to hinder consumer trust and other global advances in building more inclusive financial sectors.

Read also: 2023: I am not against Peter Obi becoming president — Ekwunife

According to him, harnessing the power of big data, artificial intelligence and even block chain, regulatory technology is poised to reduce financial risk, increase regulatory compliance and stamp out laundering and fraud, all of which contribute to an estimated \$2 trillion yearly loss for the global economy.

The CEO, Regtech Africa assured that the conference would therefore reveal how governments in emerging markets are raising the bar in implementation of policies and strategies with the aim of setting innovative standard for risk management aimed at providing clarity and engendering prosperity.

Some speakers who already confirmed attendance at the event include Phillip Chitalu, Chief Executive Officer, Securities and Exchange Commission, Zambia; Kashifu Inuwa Abdullahi, Director General, National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA); Ayisat Agbaje, Senior Special Assistant to the Governor on Development Partnership and Economic Planning, Lagos State and Yilebes Addis, CEO of EthSwitch S.C, Ethiopia.

The conference will feature an expansive line-up of stellar

speakers, case studies, panel discussions, presentations providing access to a wealth of industry-leading knowledge sharing best practices and experiences, spotlighting trends, information exchange, insights and outlooks with actionable take-aways.

The event is focused on attracting top professionals with interest in regulations, compliance, technology, fraud, risk, monitoring, reporting, financial crime, cyber security, data management and identity management.

Technology service providers will share their knowledge, invited agencies of government at federal and state levels will share insights and showcase use cases in their domains, while international experts will provide perspectives on international best practices and use cases.

With 50 speakers and over 1,000 industry experts across the world, the conference is a platform to engage with the industry stakeholders to drive business growth and stay ahead of the curve.

The maiden edition of the conference held in partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, was hugely successful and boasts of high-level representation of businesses and regulators across key sectors such as financial services, technology, telecommunications and Venture Capital companies.



Ahmed

ENTREPRENEUR WATCH

WITH CELESTINE D. ATTSAR

Afrigo: How it will drive SME growth

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), in conjunction with the Nigeria Inter-Bank Settlement System Plc (NIBSS), recently introduced the card scheme known as AFRIGO. EMMANUEL OTORI, writes.

IN order to enable cardholders to use their payment cards to make purchases and access cash at businesses around the world, payment networks and financial institutions form a system known as a card scheme. The widely used card schemes are Visa, Mastercard, American Express, and Discover.

These schemes develop standards and processes for card issuance, authorization, and security, among other things, to ensure a simple and secure experience for both cardholders and merchants. AFRIGO was launched on January 26, 2023 to unify all banking technologies in one card like UnionPay of China, RuPay of India, etc.

AFRIGO is believed to address the core difficulties by releasing foreign exchange reserves and promoting easy cross-border trade in the wake of the economic crisis in Nigeria. AFRIGO will address the drawbacks of previous card systems like Mastercard.

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) anticipates that AFRIGO will lessen the costs connected with the existing card systems and the requirement for keeping multiple cards by paying with local currency.

The CBN believes that the data kept on each AFRIGO



card will help to improve the transactions, this system economy by reducing was created. To offering a safe and convenient payment mechanism. Furthermore, accommodate varied consumers' demands, the AFRIGO seeks to shield Afrigo card scheme offers a range of payment methods, including debit cards, credit cards, and prepaid cards.

Nigeria's AFRIGO card Also, it makes it possible for users to transact both domestically and globally, which facilitates business operations and financial management for users. Afrigo's overarching goal is to foster financial inclusion and spur economic

development in Nigeria by don't hold cards, they haven't kept up with financial improvements throughout time. AFRIGO would promote the adoption of many cards in a less expensive and cashless way. This can support the expansion of SMEs by lowering their dependency on cash transactions and increasing their capacity to participate in the formal economy.

Ease of Commerce

The new domestic card initiative from the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) aims to improve small and medium-sized enterprises' (SMEs) access to financial services by providing them with a more straightforward and safe method of handling payments. Safe payment methods increase client loyalty and buy their faith, helping businesses expand.

Foreign Exchange Control AFRIGO will help balance the fluctuations in rate of exchange during trade. This domestic card scheme will help in seamless importation and exportation of products as well prevent the continual increase in commodity prices brought on by fluctuations in foreign exchange rates. Customers' perception that they are being exploited has made it difficult for SMEs over time to gain their loyalty.

Financial Inclusion

The CBN considers that because many Nigerians

don't hold cards, they haven't kept up with financial improvements throughout time. AFRIGO would promote the adoption of many cards in a less expensive and cashless way. This can support the expansion of SMEs by lowering their dependency on cash transactions and increasing their capacity to participate in the formal economy.

In essence, the AFRIGO card scheme intends to reduce expenses, gain data sovereignty, and address foreign exchange problems, all of which, when implemented, have a triple positive impact on the growth of SMEs.

The CBN has accomplished a great deal and AFRIGO's status as the continent's first project of its kind is commendable. In general, the new domestic card from the CBN might give Nigerian SME growth the much-needed boost.

Otori has over 10 years of experience working with 100 start-ups and SMEs across Nigeria. He is the Chief Executive Officer at Abuja Data School.

"The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) anticipates that AFRIGO will lessen the costs connected with the existing card systems and the requirement for keeping multiple cards by paying with local currency. The CBN believes that the data kept on each AFRIGO card will help to improve the economy by reducing laundering. Furthermore, through data sovereignty, AFRIGO seeks to shield customers from the monopolistic regulations of international card schemes. Nigeria's AFRIGO card scheme seeks to give both consumers and businesses a safe and practical way to make payments. In order to provide a widely used and effective form of electronic payment in place of conventional cash transactions, this system was created. To accommodate varied consumers' demands, the Afrigo card scheme offers a range of payment methods, including debit cards, credit cards, and prepaid cards."



Continued from page 18

My show should be supported by all

-Kalban Comedian

Continuous pushing our people will understand, and comedy will start to pay.

Who are specifically your target audience?

Everyone is my target audience. The old, the young, the toddler; the aim is to reach all. Laughter is for everyone and is also a binding force. So yes, I want smiles on everyone's faces.

The event is my annual comedy show which is THE WITNESS, it is the 3rd edition and this year's edition is tagged THE DELEGATE. It's election season and we also have a responsibility to our society to generate humour in that direction. It promises to be a great event. Loads of premium laughter will be delivered and something that will shock the audience too. I'm telling you Jos city will be shaken to its foundation with this comedy show.

We are aware of the fact that you are organizing a show in Jos, gave us an insight into the event?

Hmmmmmm. The financial consumption no be here oh, you don't even want to know how financially draining it is, but we are grateful to the few people who go out of their way to supply our events. Buletz systems, Toybabs printing and Events, Peniel Model prints, Masters Book World, Finix prime, K T M D entertainment, Marvel pix, Etaria global and many other individuals. Especially in these difficult times. I'm grateful to them and to others who will chip in their support. We still need heavy weight supporters and I'm using this medium to call out for sponsorship, partnership and support.

It is always financially consuming to put up a show like this, any support from wellwisher?

This year we the Jos base comedians are doing it. It's us that put up these shows so we are the ones to deliver. The special guests we so want to always call on were made by their own communities. Lagos celebrate their own and we extend the celebration, so this is us celebrating us till the world receives us and celebrate us as we deserve.

Are there anything without challenges?

I have money challenges. I need money. There are many things I've not paid for and I need money for them. There are several other challenges but time and space will fail me to mention them. However I need money support me with money.

After this show, what next?

There's a lot in the Pipeline, but I don't want to spoil the surprise. There are more events coming up, plenty skits and a whole lot more. just stay glued to my page.

Any appeal for help?

Yes. I'd like to appeal to the general public to come and witness this historic comedy show. I want to also call on Corporate bodies and organizations to support my event, there's a lot of benefits, mouth watering benefits if you sponsor.

Final word?

I want to say thank w to you, every single person who has supported me so far, my followers, my family. thank you. I want to say a big thank you to my mentor Senator Comedian; Dede I appreciate you sir. please follow my social media handles for premium content

Facebook, Twitter and YouTube @Kalbang Maman Mu
Tiktok @kalbangmamanmu
I n s t a g r a m @kalbang_maman_mu



Couples who became close friends after ending marriage

Continued from page 18

Jennifer Lopez and Marc Anthony



Jennifer Lopez said in an interview that she didn't feel her best during her marriage to Marc Anthony, but after their separation, they became great friends and parents to their twins.

Reese Witherspoon and Ryan Phillip



Although their relationship had its ups and downs, the former couple did everything in their power to offer their children a great childhood. That includes staying on good terms with each other too. Most recently, Reese and Ryan got together for their son's birthday.

Angelina Jolie and Billy Bob Thornton



Angelina and Billy remain good friends even after their split that happened almost a decade ago. Billy Bob Thornton revealed that even if they might not see each other often, they still talk regularly.

SUNDAY FEATURE

Concerns over fake alcoholic herbal drinks

Fresh concerns are mounting over the number of strange illnesses in recent times, developments that NAFDAC has attributed to harmful alcoholic drinks being produced illegally and sold in many parts of the country. *ELEJO IDACHABA writes.*

Some call them energy drinks; others call them super power houses. There are some of the many appellations ascribed to these numerous brands of alcoholic herbal drinks that are currently on sale all over the country.

Of more concern is the fact that these drinks are laced with poisonous substances that can affect the health of the consumers. This reporter's investigation has revealed that among those that largely consume these substances are young men between the ages of 16 and 30, many of whom have been diagnosed with various degrees of mental malfunction and alert disorders.

It is as a result of this that recently, the National Agency for Foods and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) posted a warning on its website to intimate Nigerians about an adulterated/fake drink currently in circulation across the country.

The alcoholic bitter herb known as Japata Alcoholic Bitters, according to NAFDAC, is more harmful than the one the company that produces it originally submitted for testing and registration with the agency. NAFDAC, therefore, advised Nigerians to be watchful of the herbal alcoholic drink they consume.

This is a great concern to many people because this is the second time within a space of four months that this concern over Japata is being raised.

NAFDAC had stated, "An alcoholic bitters product that is of grave concern is Japata Alcoholic Bitters which was duly registered by NAFDAC, but laced with marijuana or cannabis compared to the registered product that had only ethanol. Through intelligence, NAFDAC was able to shut down the company. This product, when tested in the laboratory, caused the death of the mice within five minutes.

"The alcoholic content was doubled compared with the registered product. The retained samples, kept at the point of registration, did not cause any injury to the animals.

"The product laced with cannabis was said to cause altered state of mind and psychological problems to the user. The owner of the company is on the run and the matter has been shared with NDLEA."

Other harmful drinks also listed by NAFDAC after their investigation were Five Minutes Power, Gamzaki Tradomedical, Barakallahu, Sabon Karfi and Haonu Laha herbal mixtures which are also currently on sale in many stores and motor parks across Nigeria.

Haonu Laha Herbal Mixture, it noted, is registered with NAFDAC, but laced with unapproved substances that are injurious to the human body. Report has it that a large number



of male populations consume alcoholic bitters as regular drinks.

While some consumers claim that the drinks have health benefits when taken, investigation shows that there is really no proof to back up such claims.

Also, this reporter's findings showed that in many communities across the country, the effects of adulterated alcoholic drinks, such as these, are obvious, especially on the young adult population. While many of the young people have died as a consequence of ailments such as kidney failure, a large number of the men have liver-related diseases and other life-threatening illnesses traceable to those drinks.

In a chat with this reporter, Mr. Obed Nakajuru, a native of Southern Kaduna, but based in Abuja, said in his community, there has been a serious depletion of young adults due to strange deaths, a development no one could explain until it was discovered recently that what they termed strange illnesses were as a result of kidney, heart and liver-related illnesses all traceable to alcoholic drinks that were prohibited by NAFDAC.

"These drinks contain higher amounts of ethanol that is harmful to human health.

Suddenly, many of the healthy looking young men began to shrink in size with some developing pot bellies. From 2019 to date, we have buried not less than 30 corpses because of this strange disease until it was discovered that a certain herbal alcoholic drink is responsible. Apart from insurgency and banditry, fake alcoholic herbal drinks cause the death of young people in Nakajuru and nearby communities," he said.

The same applies to many

communities in Benue and Kogi states; in a rural community called A'Idogodo near Okpoga in Benue State, it's the same story. According to Peter Enogela, a resident of the area who spoke to Blueprint Weekend.

"That is the common drink in my place right now. To make it worse, they combine it with local gin in an empty stomach. I was shocked when I travelled home early 2022 for a burial only to discover that many of the young men of my age, whom I grew up with, were down with illnesses. When I inquired further, I realised that there is a cartel of fake herbal alcoholic drinks from Enugu state that supplies the drinks for them.

"A close look at those drinks reveals that they are fake, expired and laced with substances like marijuana. Almost all the young men are already addicted to these drinks. It can only take God to change their taste," he said.

In many motor parks across the country, especially in major cities, these drugs are sold on a large scale. A transporter at the Jabi Motor Park in Abuja who gave his name as Taofeek Araga

told Blueprint Weekend that the sale of alcoholic herbal drinks in the park has been a major challenge for them.

"Herbal sellers are the major problems we have in the parks. When you hear of drugs in the parks, the majority of them are from what those women are selling as energy drinks. There is no corner you go to in this park that you will not find these sellers. The amazing thing is that they are mostly women. Few men sell them here.

"We have realised that some of the accidents that occur on the roads are caused by the influence of these alcoholic drinks. The union is aware of what I am saying because we have raised this concern before them. Since they are not doing anything about it, the government should intervene to save travellers," he said.

To buttress this argument while speaking at another forum recently, the director-general of NAFDAC, Prof. Mojisola Adeyeye, said, "We have commenced a nationwide crackdown of all illegal manufacturers and distributors of these herbal preparations with a view to

bringing perpetrators to book and minimise the usage of the substance.

"Findings from various operations carried out revealed a dangerous trend in the use of such substances laced with high concentration of tobacco and sometimes cannabis by our populace cutting across all genders and age groups particularly artisans, drivers, Okada riders.

"These substances, when abused, can be harmful to the body organs such as the brain, kidney and liver. The damage to the kidney and liver cannot be overemphasized. This substance can cause irrational thinking, altered state of mind, which if taken by a driver can lead to road traffic accident with the attendant fatality consequences or can lead to criminal behaviours such as rape, kidnapping and murder."

There is no way of knowing for certain the ingredients contained in fake or illegally produced alcohol which means that drinking it can lead to anything from nausea to blindness and death. Hence, drinking fake alcohol is risky to health and could have dangerous consequences.



NEWS

'Women to participate in peace and security process

From ANENE AIKE,
Sokoto

SOKOTO chapter of National Association of Women of Journalists (NAWOJ) has urged women to participate in the process of peace building in the nation.

At a One -Day Special Platform on the Role of Women in Peace and Security organised by the NAWOJ, Guest Speaker, Professor Tukur M. Baba of the Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto noted that every individual has the responsibility of exhibiting the capacity at ensuring the security and peace of the society.

"Nigeria is still experiencing the challenges of peace, security and harmonious relations which genesis is from individual's influence resulting to disharmony and destruction

He noted that women were critical factors and could be instrumental in driving the agenda for sustained peace and security for nation building.

However, Baba regretted



Tambuwal

that women were relegated without given free space to encourage themselves educationally, adding that they suffered most in the chain and process of survival.

Baba who also holds the title of Danmasanin Mutum Biyu in Taraba State identified research, environment, training, inclusiveness and resilience among fundamental drivers that were key to inspiring the confidence of women for peace and security.

He noted that women were

fast exposed to negative issues as rape, asexual relationship and general GBV occasioned by injustices as fundamental issues to address.

"Women need to engage themselves in advocacy through associations like NAWOJ to be able to brace up to their role by identifying their competence and capacity against all sort of violence especially on the girl child.

EFCC chairman at large, evading arrest

From AMEDU JOSEPH,
Lokoja

THE Kogi State Government, has said that no matter how the godfathers of the Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Abdulsasheed Bawa, tried to shield him from facing the consequences of disobeying court order, he remained a convict that must join others in the correctional centre to be purged of contempt.

Responding to what it described as the EFCC's laughable excuse for not obeying a court order that committed him to prison for contempt, which the Commission gave at a press conference in Abuja on Tuesday, the state government noted that unless his conviction was set aside or vacated by the Court or a higher Court, he remained a convict.

The Commissioner for Information and Communications in Kogi

State, Kingsley Fanwo, in a statement made available to Journalists in Lokoja recently, noted that the EFCC's recent despairing attempt to intimidate some Kogi State Government officials and persons related to the Governor was nothing "but the classic naked dance of a hen whose anus has been unfurled by the wind of truth."

"While we might not dwell on the matter like the EFCC is doing right now because of our own respect for the Judiciary, we make bold to say that monies belonging to the State Government are not missing. Like the 'missing' or 'fixed' 20 billion Naira Bailout Loan, the recent attempt is a political tool to silence the Governor and distract him from the task of garnering support for the election of the APC Presidential Candidate, Sen. Bola Ahmed Tinubu," the Commissioner added.

He pointed out that the current display of desperation of Bawa to paint the Kogi State Government and its

officials in the colours of corruption at all costs was not unexpected. "Having failed to make Nigerians believe that a 20 Billion Naira Bailout Loan was placed in a phantom fixed deposit account with Sterling Bank Plc, he kissed the dust of defeat when Sterling Bank unequivocally denied under oath that Kogi State owned such an account or such funds," he stated.

"If Bawa continues to walk free after conviction by a competent court of jurisdiction, it spells doom for our justice administration in the country. We cannot have one law for Bawa and another for the rest of us. That is why Bawa could refer to a free citizen as being at large. Someone who was not invited for questioning; someone who was not informed of having committed any offence; someone who is not a convict like Bawa. If Bawa is not at large, the honourable thing to do is to turn himself in and stop avoiding justice," the state government argued.

Responding to a live press briefing by a group on Tuesday, in support of the naira redesign policy of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Fanwo said, "The recent press conference by some 'very rich CSOs', recklessly delivering the lines of their highly placed power-drunk sponsors in Abuja that could afford live telecast on many TV stations simultaneously, has further shown how some people in high places feel the rule of law does not matter.

"Nigerians do not deserve such extreme hardship. As a Government of the people, the Kogi State Government



Bello

THE National Population Commission has said all is now set for the conduct of 2023 population Census across the Country with hard to reach areas inclusive.

Head of Technical National Population Commission, Malam Sanusi Yusuf stated this in a One Day Capacity Building organized for Journalists in Niger State, held at IBB Pen House Minna.

Delivering a paper titled "Digital Census: The implication for Reality, Accuracy and Acceptability of 2023 Population and Housing Census", the head of Technical unit said, the commission is poised to ensure every house is count and every Nigerian is enumerated in the Country.

Responding with security challenges especially bandits dominated areas, Sanusi said, the commission Will ensure the bandits are also counted as well.

Sanusi who spoke in an exclusive interview with our Correspondent after the occasion said, the bandits are not as hard as you think but it depends on the strategy you use in approaching them.

"You remember the story of Gumi? That's the same thing, if you can explain to bandits what you want to do and the reasons you're doing that, and they're convinced they'll even help you but all they want is for you not to expose them".

He said the strategy to be

NPC set for 2023 census.

From MATHEW JWANTU, Minna



Bello

used is not to be made public as it is part of the agreement reached during the Mob-out exercise. "But I can assure you they will be counted".

Speaking earlier, the Technical Adviser to the Federal Commissioner National Population Census in charge of Niger State Alh Nda Ali Abdullahi called for the support of Nigerians to succeed in the task of conducting the first ever digital census in Nigeria.

According to him, the commission had concluded all necessary arrangements for a hitch free population and housing census and that they are leaving no stone unturned to achieve the desired objective.

In a welcome address the State Director Alh Nma Shehu Alhaji said, the role of media cannot be overemphasized as such must play a vital role in ensuring the success of the population and housing

census slated for the twenty ninth of March to the second of April this year.

Speaking on "The Population or Housing? Deciding the Matrix for effective reporting of Twenty-Two Three Population and Housing Census" Head of Department Mass Communication Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida Univrrsity Lapai Mr Tenendes Ende charged Journalists to dispelled all the rumours about the census.

He also would want them to contribute positively at the end of the exercise in making the census figure acceptable by Nigerians to achieve maximum results.

Other resource persons that delivered papers, including Prof Nicholas Iwakwagh of FUT Minna Malam Bala Galadima of Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University Lapai, took turns to called for collective efforts by Nigerians to achieve a reliable and acceptable population and housing census.

Police, hunters kill one in gun duel

From WILLIE ATTAH, Gombe

THE Police in Gombe have said that they succeeded in neutralising a suspected kidnapper with the help of local vigilante/hunters after a gun duel with a gang of kidnapers in Lawanti, near Gombe town.

Mahid Muazu Abubakar (DSP), Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) of the Gombe State Police Command in a statement made available to newsmen said, the success was as a result of the proactive crime prevention measures and active collaboration between the Command and local vigilantes/hunters.

According to him, the collaboration has continued to yield

positive results in preventing crime and criminalities in the state.

He explained that, "Following an intelligence report received by the Anti-Kidnapping unit of the State CID Gombe, on 11/02/2023 at about 4am, a group of three suspected kidnapers were sighted along the Lawanti axis of Akko LGA, Gombe State.

"On receipt of the information, the officer in charge of the unit in collaboration with the Hunters and Vigilante groups mobilised to the scene and engaged the kidnapers in a gun duel", he stated.

He explained further that due to the firepower of the Police, one of the suspects was neutralized

while others took to their hills with bullet injuries.

He said, an AK-47 Rifle, a magazine with five (5) live bullets, and a Honda Bajaj Motorcycle were recovered as exhibits.

"The Commissioner, of Police, Oqua Etim commended the officers for a good job and directed that the case be investigated discreetly by the unit and ensure fleeing suspects are arrested", Mahid added.

He stated also that the CP equally appreciates and enjoins the peace-loving citizens in the state to continue to give credible information to the command which will lead to the arrest and apprehension of criminal elements.

NEWS

How Kwankwaso would deal with insecurity

From VICTOR GAI, Jalingo

THE Presidential candidate of the NNPP, Dr. Rabiu Kwankwaso intends to recruit one million policemen and soldiers each as a way of dealing with the insecurity, a party chieftain, Comrade Bobboi Bala Kaigama, has disclosed.

Kaigama spoke during the maiden media parley organized by the Correspondents Chapel of the Nigeria Union of Journalists, Taraba State Council.

According to him, the plan was in his (Kwankwaso's) working document which he will implement as soon as he becomes president.

The NNPP senatorial candidate for Taraba Central also promised to ensure that Kwankwaso adheres to the party manifesto when elected president.

"He has pledged to recruit one million soldiers, one million police. Nigeria with a population of over 200 million does not have one million police, does not have one million soldiers. How do you police the nooks and crannies of this country? It is not possible!" the former TUC leader queried.

He added that the country has the resources and with the political will, it can be achieved.

"We have the resources. Some few people have cornered these resources. He said he is going to block these leakages and make sure that he invigorates and equip the police in such a way that we bring back the idea of community police.

"We all know about drones. Even media men use drones. What stops the military from using them. I am aware that a Nigerian is one of the best drone designers in the world. We can use that to equip out



Kwankwaso

security agencies.

"See Iran, they are experts in drone production. Why can't we have a bi-lateral policy with them that would provide more drones that are not manned by humans to patrol the entire country. It is a very simple thing, it is just matter if the political will.

"I am telling you that with NNPP at the national level and with the program we have set, our presidential candidate is prepared. He has

done that in Kano. He will replicate it as president of this country.

"So ours is for Nigerians to make the right choice. We are assuring them that we would be there to remind our principal that, look, let's get back to our working document! We have contract with Nigerians. Our document is one that if implemented, will reduce the issue of insecurity to the barest minimum," Kaigama stated.

From ABBAS GUNGURA, Bauchi

400 members dump PDP for APC

TROUBLE for PDP in Bauchi as few days to the general elections, over 400 members of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) on Thursday dumped the party to the opposition All Progressives Congress (APC) in Itas-Gadau local government area of Bauchi state.

The PDP Ward Chairman of Itas-Gadau, Dasoso Gadau who led other decampers to the APC during the Governorship campaign rally of the party in the LG, explained that the feat was aimed at repositioning and strategizing all the candidates seeking for various political offices under the party from Itas Gadau and Jama'are constituencies.

Addressing supporters, the APC Governorship candidate, Ambassador Sadique Baba Abubakar, pledged to if given the opportunity by good people of Bauchi state will returned the only boarding secondary school in the area that was converted to a day Secondary school back to its former status, including the provision of adequate accommodation and feeding. Air Marshal further promised to engaged youth and women into useful ventures in order to empower them to become self reliant, purposeful as well as



Abubakar

employers of labour to boost small and medium enterprises in the council.

He said, if by the grace of Allah elected as Governor of Bauchi state, he will create a platform for medical outreach to all the nooks and crannies of the state with a view to addressing medical needs of the citizens.

Sadique appealed to the voters to come out enmass and vote for the APC during the forth coming elections for good governance, fairness and justice.

Standard reports that , Ambassador Sadique Baba

Abubakar, visited the District Heads of Gadau, Atafowa as well as Itas to seek their royal support and blessings.

While at the District Head of Itas, the APC Governorship Candidate informed the District Head, Alhaji Sagir Abdullahi that the APC is not into a do or die electioneering campaign, appealing to his supporters to conduct themselves peacefully.

In his response the District head of Itas thank the APC Campaign train for the visit and prayed for a peaceful and successful conduct of the 2023 elections.

Mohammed commended for signing prohibition Law

From ABBAS GUNGURA, Bauchi

BAUCHI State Chief Judge, Justice Rabi Talatu Umar, has commended Bauchi State Government under the leadership of Governor Bala Abdulkadir Mohammed, for facilitating the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act into law, saying that the judiciary in the State recorded 1,519 rape cases in 2020.

Justice Rabi Talatu, gave the commendation recently at the official unveiling of the Administration of Criminal Justice Law 2022, Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Law 2022 and Penal law 2022 of Bauchi State, held at Press Conference Hall of NUJ Bauchi organized by Ipas.

The Chief Judge who was ably represented at the occasion by the Chief Registrar of Bauchi State High Court, who was also recently appointed as National Industrial Court of Nigeria Judge , Barrister Sibilim Danjuma Emmanuel, unfolded that "From our records in the Central Registry of the High Court where cases are registered and assigned to Magistrate and District Courts within Bauchi metropolis reveals that from January 2021 to December 2021 567 civil cases were registered; 1,232 criminal cases were registered out of which 219 cases were GBV cases.

"January 2022 to December 2022, 1,519 child rape cases were registered; 2,416 criminal cases were registered out of which 184 cates were GBV cases; 1st January 2023 to 13 February 2023, 130 civil cases were registered; 275 criminal cases were registered out of which 17 are GBV cases.

"These statistics only cover 11 of the 35 Magistrates in the State and over 100 Sharia Courts across the State. This is not even without making any reference to the pending cases in the various courts," the Chief Judge said.

She decried the congestion of prison cells in the State due to delayed justice occasioned by gaps in the law.

"It is obvious that delays in the dispensation of justice and congestion of dockets of our courts and by extension congestion of Correctional Centres with high population of Awaiting Trial Parsons (ATPs) are the norm and the order of the day.

Sokoto ADP guber candidate pledges youth friendly govt

From ANENE AIKE, Sokoto

THE Sokoto State Action Democratic Party (ADP) Governorship Candidate in the state Sokoto Dr Ibrahim Liman, has opined that he will run youths friendly government if elected the Governor.

Liman, who made the promise at the party's

"The journey to the signing into law of these laws was not easy. In the eave of Administration of Criminal Justice Law and Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) law, the repealed laws when assented to were pemaps said to be recent existing laws only in our status books.

"The reality is that these laws only existed in the bookshelves of the Ministry of Justice as they could not be implemented after their assent. The major reason in

the legal cycle was primarily because of the multiple incurable defects associated with the (repealed) laws.

Justice Talatu Umar who is the Chairperson of the State administration of Criminal Justice Monitoring Council, concluded that the reality of today's history making in Bauchi was born out of total commitment and good will of Governor Bala Mohammed that provide the judiciary a space and it's righfull place to operate efficiently.

campaign rally in Sokoto, said his manifesto is geared toward the empowerment and revival of skills that would give people more opportunity to become self-reliance.

He said that In ADP, we tell people what we have for them not to deceive them with what is not possible to fulfill.

That its ur party is the right

party for youths, being a new party designed to tackle the numerous challenges bedeviling our country, Nigeria.

He pledged to provide conducive atmosphere for learning, address security challenges, improvement of the standard of agriculture and boost the economy, among others.

He also appreciated the people of the state for their support to the party and show of love to his aspiration toward changing the system of governance in Sokoto, Nigeria.

Earlier, Alhaji Nasiru Sarkin-Larabawa, the state ADP Chairman, called on people of the state to support all the party's candidates to have the best leaders whose ambition is to ensure a great future for the country.

Sarkin-Larabawa urged the party supporters to sustain more awareness on the good qualities of the ADP candidates for them to succeed.



Liman



Barkin Ladi Local Government Council
Plateau State

TENDER NOTICE

The Executive Chairman Barkin Ladi Local Government Council, Hon. Jock Alamba, in his effort to provide more infrastructure development to the people across the local government area, through the Tenders Board has approve the Construction of Shopping Complex in Barkin Ladi Town.

NOTE! All contractors are to note that opening and closing of Tender will be from Monday 20th February, 2023 to 6th March, 2023 respectively.

Signed: Esther Yakubu Polit
DPM
For: Executive chairman
Barkin Ladi LGC

NEWS

Lalong charges Mwaghavul people on culture

From DUMAH RANDONG, Pushit

GOVERNOR Simon Lalong of Plateau State has charged the Mwaghavul people of Mangu Local Government Area of the state to preserve and promote a single cultural heritage that would give them due recognition and identity.

The governor gave the charge at the 2023 Nriyem Festival which took place in Pushit last Saturday.

The Nriyem festival which is celebrated every year, originated from a hunting encounter with an animal called Nriyem which was believed to be a difficult animal to be killed.

The festival showcased a display of cultural dances, demonstration of hunting by hunters, traditional fire rekindle and lots of other presentations common among the Mwaghavul people.

Governor Lalong who was represented by his Deputy, Professor Sonni Tyoden, emphasized the importance of cultural festival in teaching the younger generation about their roots and culture.

He called on the Mwaghavul people to be united in pursuing development for their land.

The Miskaham Mwaghavul, Da John Hirse appreciated the people for sustaining the festival and urged the youths



Lalong

to desist from the consumption of illicit drugs and other social vices.

The Royal father also called on the people not to sale their Permanent Voter Cards, PVC's and ensure that they come out to vote the right people in forthcoming general elections.

Chairman, Mwaghavul Development Association, Pushit branch, Stephen Songle while assuring the sustenance of the festival, promised to promote peace and development in the area.

District Head of Pushit, Da

Diket Gupiya who re-emphasized the great value of festival, appealed to government to collaborate with cultural organizations to promote culture.

There were goodwill messages from the Gubernatorial Candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, Barrister Caleb Mutfwang and Wife of the Gubernatorial candidate of the All Progressive Congress, APC, Mrs Tina Nentawe, APC Senatorial Candidate, Central zone, Diket Plang and Garba Pwul, SAN of the Labour Party respectively.

From WILLIE ATTAH, Gombe

THE Advocacy for Disability Act Clustre ADAC, and Inclusive Friends Association has called on the Gombe State Government to establish a Disability Commission to oversee affairs of Persons With Disabilities (PWD's) in the State.

Mr Moses Oluwaseyi, Programme Manager Officer, Inclusive Friends Association on Advocacy for Disability Act Clustre (ADAC), who represented Grace Jerry, Executive Director, and ADAC Clustre Anchor Inclusive Friends Association IFA, made the call in Gombe during an advocacy visit to Journalists.

About 40,000 people in Gombe State are said to be living with one form of disability or the other and most of them are stigmatized by the society making life very difficult for them amidst high level poverty.

Mr. Moses said IFA through USAID is implementing a project promotion Inclusiveness of PWD's in Governance and socioeconomic development across four states of Abia, Adamawa, Gombe and Taraba States with the aim of domestication of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disability Act in the State.

It is also aimed to encourage the establishment of a commission to ensure speedy and smooth implementation of the Act where it has been

ADAC, IFA calls for establishment of Disability Commission



Inuwa

domesticated.

He said the organization particularly seek collaboration with the media so that it can help increase reportage of issues that relates to PWD's.

According to him, the collaboration with the media will serve as a pressure group to the relevant authorities responsible for establishing the Disability Commission, media content as well as provide platforms that creates a voice for PWD's in the society among others.

He told the Journalists that, "We believe your efforts to implement the above request will ensure that PWD's live their lives to the full potential and some accessible system will be achieved through the creation of the Disability Commission.

"This project is implemented by four organizations who form a consortium called Advocacy for Disability Act Clustre (ADAC), EI-New Hope

Foundation, Global Youth Empowerment and Vulnerable Initiative, Lawanti Community Development Foundation and Centre for Peace Education and Community Development and led by IFA.

"IFA, a PWD's and women-led non profit, non partisan and non Governmental Organization, employs data to address the inclusion and participation challenges of Nigeria's over 30 million PWD's. IFA does this through advocacy, training and research", he stressed.

Chairman of the Gombe State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Comrade Saidu Bappa Malala, assured of its readiness to partner with the organization in ensuring that issues of PWD's are put on the front burner of their editorial, news and other contents.

Kaduna traders endorse Kaduna for guber polls

From JOHN FWAH Kaduna

THOUSANDS of Kaduna State Traders association, across the state's three senatorial districts, says they have endorsed Hon. Isa Ashiru kudan, a the gubernatorial candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, in Kaduna state, for the 11th March governorship elections.

On why the association endorsed him, "we decided to endorse Hon Ashiru because the previous PDP administration in Kaduna state has always been sympathetic to traders. They

have even given us soft loans in the past and created a good environment for our members to flourish in their different businesses," he said.

The endorsement of Hon Ashiru as its candidate during a stakeholder meeting attended by several traders in Kaduna Tuesday, the state chairman of the association, Alhaji Adamu Usman, said the endorsement became necessary given the harsh economic situation that the

administration of Governor Ahmad el-rufai has thrown traders into.

According to Adamu, their stalls were demolished without compensation from the state government, "even owners of stalls in Sheik Ahmed Gumi central market had their stalls revoked. Owners were asked to reapply on the new rent set up by the government and must pay 10 per cent of the total rent before taking possession.

"The present state government demolished most of our markets and in the process threw thousands of traders into poverty. Where you are asked to apply for a new stall, the amount put on the stall is so high that most of our members couldn't afford it.

Speaking after the endorsement, Ashiru, expresses gratitude for the support, while adding that he won't disappoint them when elected.

He added that empowerment, entrepreneurship, and having the right environment for business people in Kaduna to flourish would be one of the tasks of our administration when elected. Creating the right environment for our traders is itself a way of developing

Kaduna state and that is why we will not take this endorsement for granted," he said.

After presenting him to those gathered at the meeting, the traders vowed to continue mobilizing the general public to vote for Ashiru and all other candidates of the PDP.

PDP accuses Police of unfairness

From WILLIE ATTAH, Gombe

GOMBE State chapter of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) has refused to signed the peace accord aimed at encouraging a peaceful conduct of the 2023 general election.

Chairman of the Party, Maj Gen Abnon Kwaseke (rtd), while giving reasons for the party's stand to newsmen said security agents, particularly the Police, had never taken any action to address the numerous attacks meted on the party.

The signing of the peace accord, organized by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in collaboration with the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) is intended to bring together major stakeholders, particularly contestants, INEC (the electoral umpire) and Police into signing a commitment for a peaceful conduct of elections.

But unsatisfied with the actions of the security agents, particularly the Police, in the past few months, the leadership of the PDP and it's Governorship candidate, Mohammed Jibrin Barde in

absentia, refused to sign the peace accord.

Even though present at the event, the PDP Chairman later told newsmen that his refusal to sign the peace accord and the absence of their Governorship candidate was to register their grievances against the unfair treatment of the Police.

He said, the PDP decided to decline in signing the peace accord because of the numerous attacks on the party and it's facilities in the State in the past months.

However, the State Police Commissioner, Mr Oqua Etim, when contacted immediately, denied receiving any reported attack or petition to that effect.

He said, "I have not received any petition to that effect", and went further to advise all contestants to seek peace.

Earlier in his remarks, Mr. Oqua Etim, who is co-chair of ICCES, described Gombe "as one of the safest states in the country", assuring of level playground for all parties and people to exercise their constitutional rights.

The CP said the Police Force will collaborate with other law enforcement agencies in the state to ensure peaceful

elections and proper enforcement of laws without fear or favour.

In his reaction to the absence of Jibrin Barde, the PDP Governorship candidate, Chairman of ICCES and Resident Electoral Commissioner of INEC in Gombe State, Alhaji Umar Ibrahim, said

Addressing newsmen after signing the peace accord, Governor Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya restated his unflinching commitment to peaceful and harmonious relationship with other political parties in the state.

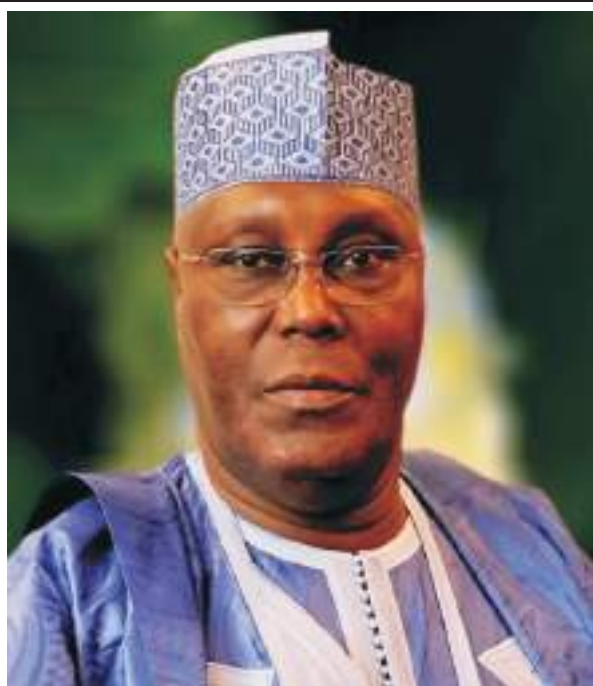
He called on the other gubernatorial candidates that signed the accord documents to live up to expectation.

In their separate remarks, the Emir of Gombe, Alhaji Abubakar Shehu Abubakar III, who was represented by the District Head of Jalo Waziri, Alhaji Mohammed Ibrahim Bappah, the State CAN chairman, Rev Father Alphonsus Shinga who was represented by his vice, Rev Chris Godobe and the Secretary of JNI, Alhaji Saleh Danburam, all call on community and religious adherents to conduct themselves peacefully before, during and after the election.



el-Rufai

SUNDAY MAGAZINE



Atiku



Tinubu



Obi



Kwankwoso



Al-Mustapha



Kola

2023: AS Nigerians go to polls

Continued from Page 10

commitment as a visionary, transformative leader to exploit same for the overwhelming benefit of the Nigerian people.

"To the architect of consumption to production, oil in the North means more revenue for development, more jobs and opportunities. Earlier attempts to discredit the Obi's candidacy through 'fabricated allegations of demolition of mosques, internal deportation of northerners issuance of ID cards to Northerners as ethnic hostilities were all conclusively proven to be false and without basis.' (Vanguard Friday, December 2, 2022).

Needless to say, such mudslinging are also rearing their heads in the other major political parties. Recently, Oshiomhole Atiku/Okowa campaign Organization were at war over the presidential poll. Oshiomhole who is a Chieftain of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) had in an interview on channels Television described the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Presidential candidate as the

"weakest linke" among leading presidential candidate for the 2023 election.

Oshiomhole who is also the Deputy Director General of Tinubu/Shettima Presidential campaign Organisation said the main opposition PDP was "a house divided against itself owing to the row between the party and five of its governors known as integrity group. "PDP is a house divided against itself and the real damage being done to the reputation of the PDP candidate, Atiku Abubakar is that, governors not unknown qualities, who had never decamped from the PDP who could be called PDP indigenes, have spoken to the fact that you cannot trust the PDP candidate, Atiku Abubakar and therefore they withdrew from ;the campaign council.

However, in a swift reaction, the Atiku/Okowa campaign organization dismissed the Director-General of the Tinubu/Shettima Presidential campaign Organisation, Mr. Adams Oshiomhole as an unstable and false-hearted character who should be disregarded by Nigerians.

Spokesperson of the Atiku/Okowa campaign Organisation, Kola Ologbonidiyan said the APC ex-National Chairman's remarks about Atiku were reckless and unbecoming.

There is no gain saying the fact that virtually all the major political parties are involved in these campaigns of character assassination and hate speeches. IN all these altercations from the major contenders in the 2023 presidential election, they must apply caution in their utterances. From the forgoing, it is cryster-clear that the major contenders have failed to address Nigeria's major problems. For instance, how are they going to put food on the tables of millions of Nigerians? How are they going to revamp the education sector? What happens with the decayed Medicare, What about social infrastructure like roads? What about the provision of clean water in all the nooks and crannies of the country? These are simply what Nigerians want to hear!

It is instructive to note that at the 20th Daily Trust Dialogue, the panelist were

unanimons that candidates' "blueprints' cannot solve Nigeria's problems. The chairman of media Trust Group, Publishers of Daily Trust Newspapers and owners or Trust TV and Trust Radio), Malam Kabiru A. Yusuf, with the insecurity and the candidates use of mudslinging and personality attacks, it is hard to envisage an unchallenged out come from this year's general elections in Nigeria. An addressing the authorities concerned, Kabiru said, "the government and its security agencies must be aware that in hundreds of towns and village across the North-West and North East of the country, banditry, kidnapping have made normal life impossible. It remains to be seen if people faced with such existing threats can patiently queue to do their civil duty that day.

The panelists at the Dialogue went further to state that, the presidential candidate had not explained to Nigerians how they would go about addressing issues of national importance which they listed as security, economy, corruption, restructuring among others.

Professor Ibrahim said though the candidates had unveiled well articulated and detailed manifestoes, they had failed to explain how they would do it. A highlight of the Dialogue was a recorded video presentation on "My First 100 days in office as president of Nigeria" from each of the four leading political parties. Atiku Abubakar (PDP), Bola Ahmed Tinubu (APC), Rabi'u Musa Kwankwoso (NNPP) and Peter Obi (LP).

Though the four are seen as leading contenders, there may be some dark horses inking in the corner that may spring surprises. Al-Mustapha of the Action Alliance and some others are already on the turf. Whatever may be the case, Nigerians are yearning for positive change. The monumental challenges being faced now are quite surmountable. What the country needs now is a leader on a mission with a vision. The political will to drive the developmental initiative is what is needed at the moment. This Saturday is the moment of decision by Nigerians for Nigeria. Hence, every vote must count and Nigerians should vote wisely.

METRO-FOCUS

Ashoebi: Conduit pipe draining our pockets

By YVONNE ISHOLA

ONE of the trends that Nigeria has embraced that has more disadvantages than advantages is ashoebi. This is simply the act of wearing a specific wrapper or lace which may be accompanied by headgear during an event along with hundreds of other people. This is done to express loyalty, support or solidarity. It could be for a funeral, wake, naming ceremony or birthday.

It is important to point out that it is only on rare occasions that men bother about ashoebi. A man can wear something as casual as jeans and t-shirt and he is good to go for any occasion. However, women are crazy about ashoebi for the fact that it makes them feel like they belong.

The ashoebi is usually decided by the celebrant of birthday, or marriage who may have preferred colours. In the case of funeral, it is most likely decided by the aggrieved party or parties.

A stranger to Nigerian weddings may be amazed by how colourful it is. This is because in one wedding, there could be more than ten ashobis, each representing a class or relationship.

In one wedding one witnessed, there was ashoebi of ₦45,000. This was worn by the high class friends of both mothers of the couple. Next to it was an ashoebi of ₦7,000. This was worn by all and sundry.

At weddings like this, in church, all may be treated as equal. But the moment everyone steps on the reception ground, there would be class disparity. Those wearing the expensive ashoebi are usually given an exalted position while those wearing the cheap one, will have to make do with any position.

It also means that those wearing expensive ashoebi will be seated on round tables where there will be assorted drinks for their consumption. And when it is eating time, they will be served first and the best while others will be served whatever remains.

If you have ever experienced the disparity, then you will understand why some people go to all lengths to wear the expensive ashoebi. According to a Lagos based Jos lady, Mrs Attah, "No one wants to be looked down at". She cited a situation where those that wear expensive ashoebi are not only treated like royalty but are given very expensive souvenirs. Those in the other class are ignored or if lucky, given rubber bowls or dust pan.

Attah corroborated the notion that so many women borrow money or do unwholesome acts to make sure they buy ashoebi. A lady who wants to remain anonymous said some of her friends in Abuja will go out of their way to use what they have to get what they want especially if the wedding is here in Jos, better still in the village. She explained that to maintain the name Abuja babe, which is synonymous to big girl is not easy.

From every indication, ashoebi



has done more harm than good. Apart from class distinction, it has robbed couples of gifts. Mrs Laven said that if she coughs out so much money to buy your ashoebi, then you should understand and don't expect any gift. Gifts used to be part and parcel of marriage that used to help newly weds begin their home.

Mr Shitnaan said he hates ashoebi because it has cost him so much. He is a civil servant who has had to pay for ashoebi more than twice to avoid fight with his wife. Shitnaan said he alone knows what he went through to pull through those times as regards feeding his family.

Another man who does not want his name in print for obvious reasons said every sane man hates ashoebi because it is no respecter of budgets. He said his wife would always plan with the ashoebi sellers to bring it directly to him. And he would be shameless to refuse to buy one for his wife depending on the relationship.

In different ways, the men are pleading with women to consider the harsh economic condition and give them some space to handle other important issues in the home front.

It will not be out of place for colours to be given instead of ashoebi. That will give everyone peace and bring back the old practice of giving gifts during



SUNDAY PEOPLE

OUTGONE PPC GM HANDS OVER TO MANAGING EDITOR

The outgoing Plateau Publishing Corporation (PPC) General Manager, Dr. Boniface Gwotbit (KSM) who was recently appointed Permanent Secretary on the State Civil Service to Mr. Paul Jatau, Managing Editor of The Nigeria Standard newspapers on Thursday during a brief but colourful ceremony at its corporate Headquarters, JD Gomwalk House, Jos



Dr. Boniface Gwotbit, Permanent Secretary, MOI and Communication (right) and Mr. Paul Jatau in-coming Acting General Manager of PPC signing the handing over notes



Mr. Paul Jatau (right) receiving the handing over notes from the immediate past General Manager of the PPC, Dr. Boniface Gwotbit (KSM)



Outgone General Manager, Dr. Boniface Gwotbit (KSM) making some remarks



IT students, James Ezekiel and Juliet Tyosaa covering the brief ceremony



Dr. Gwotbit (KSM) going through some copies of the handing over notes with the Acting PPC Director of Admin, Mr. Jibrin Dago (left)



Acting General Manager of PPC, Mr. Paul Jatau (standing) responding after receiving the handing over notes



From left are, Mr. Micheal B. Dalohom, Director of Internal Audit, PPC, Mr. Francis Jatau, Director of Property Development, PPC, Elder Dapas Elkana, PPC Director of Technical Service and Mr. Yakubu Kangha, PPC Director of Production



Immediate Past General Manager, PPC, Dr. Boniface Gwotbit (KSM), Acting General Manager, Mr. Paul Jatau in a photograph with PPC Management Staff after the ceremony

Photo: DANLADI DUK

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 SAFER TOGETHER

Automobile fire prevention & protection techniques

What is fire?

Fire is a rapid combination of two or more substances which produce heat, light, smoke and carbon. For fire to occur, oxygen, heat and fuel must be present. OXYGEN is the gas that supports burning (Nigeria Highway Code, 2018). HEAT is the sufficient temperature needed for ignition of fire while FUEL is any combustible (free burning) material (solid, liquid or gas).

Fire Triangle: this is the combination of oxygen, heat and fuel.

Fire Extinction: when an automobile or any type of fire is starved of any of these elements (oxygen, heat or fuel), the fire goes out.

Classes of Fire

For easy identification and extinction purposes, fire is classified into four categories:

Class A

This is fire involving free burning materials like wood, paper, textiles, etc. WATER is the best means of extinguishing this class of fire, please note that the water must be in form of jet or spray.

Class B

This is fire involving flammable substances like petrol, paint, grease, etc. fire under this category can best be extinguished with LIQUID FOAM extinguisher. Dry chemical powder, carbon dioxide extinguisher and dry sand are also good media to put out class B fire.

Class C

This fire involves combustible gases or liquefied petroleum like propane and butane. they can best be extinguished with dry chemical powder and carbon dioxide fire extinguishers. Water in spray form could be used to cool down the cylinder.

Class D

This class of fire involves metals, e.g. Potassium, Aluminum, Magnesium, Zinc, etc. they can best be extinguished with dry chemical powder fire extinguisher or dry sand.

Fire Protection

This is the protective measure of providing equipment, device and gadgets that are handy in case of fire incidence. These include fire extinguisher, dry sand, blankets, smoke detector and fire alarm systems, etc.

Fire Prevention

This are measures put in to ensure that fire does not break out. It simply means that fire occurrence is preventable. It is of utmost interest of everybody to prevent fire. This is because fire is a good servant but a bad master. Fire must be subjected to control measures at all time to ensure that is within bounds and does not go out of hand. Within bounds, fire is a good servant but out of control fire becomes a dangerous and life-threatening master. Some of the techniques of preventing automobile fire includes:

1. Watch out for fuel leakages, exposed wires and cracked hoses.
2. Be alert to changes in vehicle sound as it might involve metal grinding.
3. Ensure that the positive terminal of the battery is completely insulated to avoid contact with the body of the vehicle.
4. Clean regularly all areas where flammable liquids may collect.
5. Do not leave fabric for cleaning the engine parts within the engine compartments.
6. Ensure that the contact point of the high-tension cables to spark plugs is not exposed.
7. Do not carry fuel in cans in the vehicle.

Extinguishing Automobile Fire

Fire can be extinguished by knocking off any of the three sides of the fire triangle. This can be achieved by:

1. Cooling

This is the act of using water to reduce the temperature of the burning material(s) before ignition point (the flash point).

2. Smothering

This is the act of cutting off air by the use of foam or fire blanket. This deprives fire of oxygen which is necessary for combustion.

3. Starving

This is the act of removing the burning material from the fire to a safe place thereby hurting its spread.

How to operate a Fire Extinguisher

To effectively operate a Fire Extinguisher, hold it upright and do the followings:

1. Pull the safety pin break cartridge
2. Aim the horn at the base (bottom) of the fire
3. Press/squeeze nozzle
4. Discharge content at the base of the flame.



NEWS

Kogi commissioner defends delegates for list

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

THE Kogi State Information Commissioner and APC Presidential Campaign Council (PCC), Mr. Kingsley Fanwo has defended and authenticated list of APC delegates for the November governorship election

The Commissioner while responding to the call by a concerned APC body known as Kogi Mandate Group to disregard the list, appealed to the National Chairman of APC, Sen. Abdullahi Adamu to jettison the call. Fanwo claimed that delegates elections were held across the three Senatorial Districts of the state and names of successful delegates were collected and sent to the national leadership of the party.

He described the Kogi Mandate Group as disgruntled members seeking means of causing problem for the party in the state but "they won't succeed in their bad attempt"

It would be recalled that a concerned APC body known as Kogi Mandate Group, had urged the party's National Chairman, Sen. Abdullahi Adamu to disregard a purported delegates' list sent to him for the November Kogi governorship election. Our Correspondent reports that Kogi's governorship election is coming up in November, as Gov. Yahaya Bello's tenure ends on Jan. 27, 2024.

The political parties' primaries comes up in April ahead of the polls.

But the Group, through its solicitors, Atlanta Partners, based in Abuja, had in a letter dated Feb. 15, and made available to Our Correspondent in Lokoja at the weekend, alleged that the list was allegedly concocted in Kogi Government House without following due process specified in the Electoral Act

Mr Promise Ogbodu, lead Counsel to the group, in the letter titled, "Complaint/appeal against the submission of purported delegates names/list in respect of Kogi Primary Election for 2023 Governorship election," threatened to go to court if the right thing was not done by the state party leadership. Ogbodu said, "We are Solicitors to Kogi Mandate Group and its leaders, Messrs Audu Sule, Isah Yahaya and Ahmed Momoh, hereinafter referred to as our clients on whose instruction we write."

He explained that Kogi Mandate Group was an association of All Progressives Congress (APC) members spread across the three Senatorial Districts of Kogi, who have irrevocably committed themselves to marketing APC and its policies.

Our clients, the leaders of Kogi Mandate Group are committed, loyal and productive members of the party, APC and are desirous of contesting delegates election in respect of the forthcoming governorship primary election in Kogi State.

The solicitors said their clients had information that

while they and their members were eagerly and patiently waiting to contest for and serve the party as delegates in the forthcoming primary election for 2023 governorship election in Kogi State, a purported delegates list for the primary had been submitted to the party. According to the lawyer, this prompted the complaint/appeal for total rejection and/or cancellation of the list.

At no time whatsoever was any information/notice of Congress at ward level or any other level for delegates election for Kogi State 2023 governorship primary election given to the members of the party, including our clients at any level.

He said that not even at the stakeholders meeting of Feb. 6, at Kogi Government House, Lokoja, was any issue concerning or touching on delegates election for Kogi 2023 governorship primary election raised or discussed. "At no time was sale of forms and even the cost and venue of sale of forms for the delegates election advertised

Old, new naira notes remain legal tender in Kaduna-- el-rufai

From JOHN FWAH Kaduna

KADUNA State Governor, Malam Nasir el-Rufai says all the old and new Naira notes shall remain in use as legal tender in Kaduna State until the Supreme court of Nigeria decides otherwise.

He said this in a state wide radio and television broadcast following the nation wide broadcast by President Muhammadu Buhari Thursday morning

He said, "For the avoidance of doubt, all the old and new notes shall remain in use as legal tender in Kaduna State until the Supreme Court of Nigeria decides otherwise. I therefore appeal to all residents of Kaduna State to continue to use the old and new notes side by side without any fear. The Kaduna State Government and its agencies shall seal any facility that refuses to accept the old notes as legal tender and prosecute the owners. If need be, we shall take further consequential actions according to the law."

"The address by the President earlier Thursday morning limiting the legal tender status of old notes to only N200 amount to total disregard and disobedience of the ruling of February 8th which was extended further yesterday by the Supreme Court. The misguided action of the Attorney-General to mislead the President into engaging in this public violation of the order of the highest court of the land shows how desperate the policy architects are to cause national chaos, by showing open contempt for the judiciary.

"The decision to recognise only N200 as legal tender till April the President announced this morning was offered to the state government as part of proposals for an out-of-court settlement three days ago. The Federal Government asserted that this was offered because all the 'old' N1,000 and N500 notes had been

by the party of any committee at any level (State, Local Government and Ward) in Kogi State.

"The list of purported delegates submitted to the party for Kogi State 2023 governorship primary violates the mandatory provisions of the Electoral Act which compels political parties, including APC, to ensure democratic emergence of delegates for primary elections," he said.

The lawyer described as "very unfortunate" that stakeholders within the party who have given their all and sacrificed so much for the party have been shortchanged and deprived of their right to aspire to be delegates for the primary election.

He advised the National Secretariat of the party under Adamu's leadership to immediately extricate itself from "this web of manifest irregularities." "It is our clients prayer that, the purported delegates list be rejected and/or cancelled in the interest of democracy, fairness, justice and conduct of congress for the election of delegates and adequate notice of same given to the members of the party."

destroyed. We rejected the offer and proved to the officials that not a single higher denomination note had been destroyed. We also believe that circulating N200 only to be inadequate in alleviating the suffering that we see every day. We insisted that all the components of the Supreme Court order should be complied with.

"But back home, what do we do in Kaduna State? My dear people of Kaduna State, with the foregoing revelations, it is clear that our peaceful coexistence as a state, and a nation, is being placed under deliberate danger using the intentional combination of fuel and cash supply disruptions. These evil people using the instrumentality of the Federal Government and the President as convenient covers are willing to truncate our democracy because they have personally lost out. They are massively deploying resources and tools to defeat the political party that gave us the platform to serve the country just because they could not impose the candidates of their choice. Let us not help them

"Let us stay calm and peaceful, and support the lawful means being utilised to solve our problems. On behalf of the Kaduna State Government, I wish to assure you that none of you would lose the money you have in old notes. Let no artificial and illegal deadline frighten you. Whether you live in towns, villages or in our isolated rural communities, do not feel stampeded to deposit your old notes in the banks. Hold on to them. Continue to use them as legal tender as ordered by the Supreme Court of Nigeria. No deadline can render them worthless, ever. The law is on your side. The Central Bank of Nigeria Act, 2007 and the Bills of Exchange Act, both oblige the CBN to recognise your old notes and give you value in new notes whenever you bring them to the CBN, even in the next 100 years.

SUNDAY FEATURE

Nigeria and imperative for credible 2023 polls

Nigerians will be heading to the polls on February 25 and March 11, 2023 to elect a new president, members of national and state assemblies and governors. It will be another seamless transition from one democratically elected government to another since 1999 when Nigerians shed off the cankerworm of military dictatorship SALISU SANI IDRIS writes.

DEMOCRACY no doubt remains the most acceptable form of government globally, and as Nigerians get set for the elections, issues of credible elections, neutrality of security agencies, issue-based campaigns and a level playing field for political parties and voters to exercise their rights have remained paramount.

This has attracted the interest of patriotic Nigerians who have taken it upon themselves to ensure that the elections were not only seamless, but open, credible and acceptable.

One of such groups is The Compatriots, a forum of some patriotic eminent Nigerians with passion for good governance.

At its maiden press briefing in Abuja, Chairman of the Compatriots, Obong Victor Attah, a former governor of Akwa Ibom, expressed concern over the state of the nation, saying Nigerians should unite to overcome current challenges of insecurity, collapsed economy and educational system, tribal, religious, regional and class issues, and strive to build a new nation.

Attah said elections provide the platform for Nigerians to make informed choices by electing leaders who will effectively tackle the challenges facing the country.

Prince Tom Iseghohi, Secretary and Operating Officer of the Compatriots said the group would support fundamental social and political reforms to strengthen the Nigerian project.

"These include the promotion of core values of equity, justice and fairness for every citizen, realization of the full potentialities of every Nigerian, protection of the rights of every Nigerian wherever he or she decides to reside, and primacy of peaceful coexistence between and among Nigerian communities.

"The group will also inspire a proper sense of nationhood and common nationality.

"It promises to mobilise the best intellectual resources in addressing the key challenges that are hindering the development of Nigeria as a strong and viable political and economic community and promote a network of concerned Nigerians towards assisting in the improvement of governance at all levels as well as in the provision of social services."

As its contributions to a robust political environment ahead of the elections, the Compatriots had engaged the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), held parley with presidential candidates and raised awareness of Nigerians on the imperative for seamless elections devoid of violence.

At its meeting with INEC, the Compatriots made a presentation entitled: 'Let's Join Hands to Re-Invent Nigeria'.

At the meeting, the chairman among other things, commended INEC for its firm commitment to the conduct of free and fair polls during the general elections.

Attah said: "It is clear by your actions that we believe that sovereignty belongs to the people and their inalienable rights to sovereignty can only be protected by properly conducted elections that are free, fair, legitimate and reflect the will of the people."

He urged INEC to take deliberate steps to demonstrate unquestionable transparency during the polls



Similarly, in its parley with the presidential candidates, the group said that the engagement was to ensure the conduct of credible polls, so as to bequeath a "new and better Nigeria for every Nigerian".

The parley involved presidential candidates of the PRP, LP, SDP, PDP and APC, among others.

A communique issued at the end of the meeting with the presidential candidates said the interface was to contribute to the growth of democracy in Nigeria.

"INEC's integrity and competence should be protected by all the stakeholders and Nigerians.

"It is necessary, however, to insist on the utilisation of capacities that represent independent audit of its systems and processes from now until the elections.

"Candidates and their supporters should recognise that all Nigerians look forward to these elections as being the ones that will produce a leadership that will make a difference between further decline and sustainable greatness.

"Nigerians expect a decent contest, a credible election and a peaceful transition to great leadership from all three arms of government."

The Compatriots, therefore, admonished candidates who lose the elections to either accept defeat or seek redress in court, but "must avoid throwing the country into crises over the elections."

They emphasised that Nigerians who registered for the elections should be availed of opportunities to vote.

"This include allowing those who are legally registered to collect their PVCs and improving the security environment so that it does not disenfranchise voters on election days."

The Compatriots also admonished the Judiciary to play its part in the entrenchment of democratic ideals and culture in the country.

"The judiciary has vital role in improving the quality of our democratic process, and these



elections will provide it with an opportunity to exercise its responsibility with the highest level of integrity and impartiality," the group said.

The Compatriots are also concerned about the current hardship in the country and how it may affect the elections.

It therefore urged that "government should take steps to relieve the citizens of the severe difficulties under which they live at the moment.

"This will greatly improve the atmosphere under which the elections will be held."

To engender mass participation of voters in the elections, the group said schools should be closed to allow students who registered for

the elections to cast their votes.

It also admonished politicians to promote responsible campaigns devoid of violence.

"Students in tertiary institutions represent a critical segment in the entrenchment of our democracy, as such the government should give them opportunities to vote in the elections.

"Politicians should recognise that the elections are about the citizens' right to freely exercise choices and not just about the ambitions of the contestants.

"Nigerians are worried about negative campaigns which include damaging rhetoric and actions which strip contestants, one of whom we expect to be elected President soon, of dignity and respect.

"More Nigerians should be given opportunities to see contestants discuss issues and contest ideas and strategies in the most mature manner as was witnessed at this meeting.

"For the new government to enjoy legitimacy and general support from the citizens, among other things, there must be an emphasis on ensuring credible elections," the Compatriots emphasised.

It is clear that the Compatriots are fully committed to ensuring the conduct of credible elections in the world's most populous black nation, as Nigerians head out to the polls on February 25 and March 11, 2023. (NAN)

SUNDAY SPORTS

Commonwealth Games:

Goodness sets new world record, wins gold medal

Team Nigeria's Nwachukwu Goodness has secured Nigeria's fourth gold medal at the ongoing Commonwealth Games in Birmingham. She did it in spectacular fashion; breaking the world record twice before claiming the top prize.

Newsnow said that, the 23-year-old, Nigeria's sole competitor in the Women's Discus Throw F42-44/61-64 event, was way better than her challengers; setting new records with her first two throws.

Nwachukwu before now was the F42 World Record holder with the best mark of 33.35m but on Thursday she improved on that distance with her first throw of 34.84m which she further improved upon with a throw of 36.56m.

While the Nigerian could not throw further in her subsequent attempts, she drew thunderous applause from the fans at the Alexander Stadium each time she took her turn.



Goodnews

Earlier, PREMIUM TIMES reported that two members of Team Nigeria at the ongoing Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, Adijat Adenike Olarinoye and Rafiatu Folashade Lawal, received special recognition for their record-breaking feats at the Games.

It is expected that Nwachukwu will also be accorded a special recognition before the end of the Games in Birmingham

Meanwhile, before Nwachukwu's gold medal feat, Team Nigeria had won a bronze medal in the Powerlifting event through Nnamdi Innocent in the men's lightweight category. Sebastian Coe, the world Athletics president has said current restrictions on events from the 400m to the mile were "not set in tablets of stone" stressing that gender eligibility rules would not be changed any time soon.

Omanyala's 100m triumph the 'perfect race'

Ferdinand Omanyala says winning the 100m title at the Commonwealth Games was the "perfect race" that he has "always been dreaming of".

BBC SPORT said that, the 26-year-old clocked 10.02 seconds to claim gold in Birmingham on Wednesday, beating defending champion Akani Simbine by 0.11 seconds.

Omanyala becomes the first Kenyan to win the Commonwealth crown, adding to the continental triumph he recorded in Mauritius in June when he saw off South Africa's Simbine in a photo-finish.

"This was the goal we had since the start of the year - to win the African Championships and the Commonwealth Games," Omanyala told BBC Sport.

"We have achieved what we said, so we thank God for this. I am sure it will have a lot of impact, because I'll be training knowing that I'm Commonwealth and African champion.

"This is a big motivation. We are adding more accolades to my success."

Omanyala's success come



Ferdinand Omanyala is the first Kenyan man to win the 100m at the Commonwealth Games

after disappointment at the World Championships in Eugene, where he failed to make the final after arriving late in the United States because of visa delays.

However, he says he forgot about that experience "after days".

"It is all about just moving forwards and using setbacks as stepping stones," he added. "You have to pick up yourself. Everything happens for a reason."

In June, Omanyala became just the second Kenyan to be

crowned African champion over 100m, emulating 1990 winner Joseph Gikonyo, and expects more sprinters to emerge from the east African country on the back of his triumphs.

"There is so much talent in Kenya, it's just that they never saw anybody ahead of them that has been sprinting.

"With my success, there are going to be so many sprinters coming. You saw one of our guys [Samwel Imeta] get to the semi-finals. Next time we'll all be in the final," he rallied.

Sports ministry splashes \$25,000 on Nigeria medalists

The Ministry of Youth and Sports Development has splashed \$25,000 on Team Nigeria athletes who have so far won medals at the ongoing Commonwealth Games in Birmingham.

Newsnow said that, at a colourful ceremony held at the Hilton Garden Birmingham, the athletes and their coaches were rewarded for bringing glory to fatherland.

Gold medal winners, Adijat Adenike Olarinoye and Rafiatu Folashade Lawal, received \$5,000 each, while their coaches were also given \$3,000 each.

Folashade won gold in the women's 59kg weightlifting event while Adenike won gold in the women's 55kg weightlifting event.

Taiwo Laidi, a silver medalist in the women's 76kg Weightlifting event, received \$3,000 for her effort.

For bronze medal winners, Eddiong Joseph Umaofia, Islamiyat Yusuf and Mary Osijo, they all got \$2,000 each for their effort.

The event had in attendance, Chief of Staff to the Minister of Youth and Sports Development, Alhaji Abba Yola, Director of finance at the ministry Olufehinti Olusegun and Dr Simon Ebhojiaye who is the leader of delegation for team Nigeria to the games.

Gold medalist in the 59kg Women's Weightlifting event, Folashade Lawal said "I am pleased we got rewarded even before the end of the competition, I thank the honourable Minister for Sports, Sunday Dare for his proactiveness in this regard".

"It is quite timely for us, as this act will encourage and spur all other athletes to do more. For me, I want to thank the Minister for this and I'm very excited" she said.

As more medals and records

continue to pour in for Nigeria at the games, the ports

minister has again reiterated the fact that athletes' welfare remains a top priority in his administration.



Dare

Nnamdi wins bronze in para-powerlifting

Nigeria's captain to the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, Innocent Nnamdi, on Thursday won a bronze medal in the men's lightweight para-powerlifting event.

Newsnow said that, Nnamdi's successful lift of 190kg for a total point of 132.5 was not enough to secure a gold medal. Malaysia's Bonnie Gustin scored 154.6 points to win the gold medal and set a new Games record.

The silver medal went to Mark Swan from England with 145.5 points, leaving Nnamdi in third place. Another Nigerian, Thomas Kure, finished fourth with the same points total as Nnamdi, but he recorded a lift of 180kg.

In the final of the women's event, Nigeria's duo of Onyinyechi Mark and Latifat Tijani were disqualified.

The **News Agency of Nigeria** (NAN) could however not get the reason

for their disqualification. However, a Team Nigeria official at the Games who asked for anonymity told NAN that an appeal has been sent to the International Paralympic Committee (IPC).



Nnamdi

Thompson-Herah races away to 100m gold

Elaine Thompson-Herah's experience shone through as the Jamaican added Commonwealth 100m gold to her collection in a time of 10.95 seconds.

BBC SPORT said that, the five-time Olympic champion was clean away and immediately upon England's Daryll Neita outside her.

Neita, who ran a personal best 10.90 in the semi-finals, could not make up the deficit and ended with bronze.

Kenya's Ferdinand Omanyala claimed the men's title ahead of South Africa's defending champion Akani Simbine.

Omanyala, who only converted to sprinting from



Thompson-Herah

rugby in his late teens, came home in 10.02 seconds to add the Commonwealth crown to the African title he claimed in June.

The 26-year-old's shop of a hat-trick of titles this season had been scuttled by a visa delay that meant he arrived at last month's World Championships just two and a half hours before his first heat.

He was eliminated in the semi-finals in Eugene after running a disappointing 10.14.

By contrast, he dominated the Commonwealth final, powering away from Simbine, who finished back in 10.13.

Sri Lanka's Yupun Abeykoon claimed Sri Lanka's first athletics medal at the Games since 1998 by taking bronze in 10.14.

The 27-year-old's success comes amid political and civil

unrest in the country that has extended to its Commonwealth team.

Two members are reported to have absconded from their base in Birmingham.

England's Neita looked in ominous form in the semi-finals, but her new personal best proved a better performance than the final.

"My overriding emotion is that it is nice to get another medal on home soil but I really didn't put the best race together today," she said.

"That makes me want to get back to work right now."

Neita made her first major final at last year's Olympics, finishing eighth in 11.12 seconds after running 10.96 in the heats.

The 25-year-old, who won the British title ahead of Dina Asher-Smith earlier this year, admitted that peaking at the right time across a championship campaign is now her priority.

"I am in fantastic shape but I need to do better in these finals,"

SUNDAY SPORTS

GTI affirms commitment to revamp Nigerian football

GTI Asset Management & Trust Ltd, a strategic partner with the Nigeria Premier League, has pledged its commitment to drive the Nigeria Premier Football (NPF) League (NPFL) through its novel The Nigeria Football Fund (TNFF).

Newsnow said that, the leading financial institution has committed millions into the NPFL since the Gbenga Elegbeleye-led Interim Management Committee (IMC) took over the day-to-day administration of the NPFL as GTI gave a 10m take-off to each of the 20 teams taking part in the on-going abridged 2022/2023 season.

Speaking at a parley with the media at the outfit's corporate headquarters in Lagos yesterday, Executive Director Fund Management who doubles as the Projector Director of the TNFF, Nelson Ine, said the intervention funding of the NPFL was a well-thought out business module, adding the TNFF will in a record time change the fortunes of Nigerian football forever.

"Football has become big business and the TNFF is here as an enabler for the NPFL," Ine said. "The TNFF is a specialised mutual fund and the whole idea is to encourage every Nigeria to invest in this fund and this fund will be used to activate professional sport because professional sport has the capacity to deliver substantial revenue instead of always waiting for the government to fund our sport, especially football."

Citing the Premier League in England, the vastly financial investment expert, noted that professional sports can survive without government funding, adding there are millions of investors from Nigeria and abroad that would be willing to finance Nigerian football even more so through the TNFF.

"For the avoidance of doubt, we (GTI) are not a sponsor of the league rather we are strategic partners with the Nigeria Premier League with the sole aim to make the NPFL business driven; we are the NPFL enablers," he said.

Ine further said that the strategic partnership between GTI and NPF has started yielding results in the on-going NPFL season after his outfit took over the payment of indemnities of NPFL match officials as well as funding other ancillary services associated with the country's top-tier league.

In his own remarks, the Group Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of GTI, Abubakar Lawal, said the outfit has taken it upon itself to make NPFL and indeed



The three-time African champions dominated their opponents to head into the tournament proper with winds in their sails

Plateau United bash El Kanemi 5-0

Nigerian football a successful business enterprise.

"We have been on this project for over a decade and we have been working and funding this TNFF project on a daily basis," said the sexagenarian. "As an investment banking, we have taken it upon ourselves the responsibility to turn around Nigerian football using the TNFF but I want everybody to know that this is a collective responsibility; therefore all Nigerians must be ready to invest in the TNFF."

Flying Eagles smashes Kawkab Athletics Club 6-1

Nigeria's U-20 national team defeated Kawkab Athletics Club U23 of Marrakesh 6-1 on Wednesday evening to wrap up their training camp in Morocco on a hugely positive note.

Newsnow said that, the Flying Eagles were scheduled to face the Central African Republic U-20 side in their final friendly match before heading out for the 2023 Africa U-20 Cup of Nations.

But the youth wing of Kawkab Athletic was drafted in as a late replacement after the CAR pulled out of the warmup game on Tuesday night.

The Flying Eagles, however, showed their opponents no mercy in the match played inside the Complexe Sportif, Sidi Mohammed, Ain Sebaa, Casablanca.

The former African champions took the lead as early as the first minute through Mohammed Aminu.

Further goals from Ibrahim Mohammed and midfielder Samson Lawal within the opening half-hour established the Nigerian boys' superiority.

Kawkab Athletic reduced the deficit moments before the break.

But Flying Eagles scored three more goals after the interval through Emmanuel Uchegbu, Augustine Njoku, and Jonathan Nicholas all

send a strong message of intent to other participating teams at the U-20 Afcon.

Nigeria have not won the U20 championship since 2015.

The Flying Eagles will begin their quest for a fourth continental honour with their opening Group A match against the Junior Teranga Lions of Senegal on today at the Cairo International Stadium.

Eagles' U-23 AFCON qualifier against Guinea has a new date

NIGERIA'S Olympic Eagles have been given a new date and location to face Guinea in their U-23 AFCON qualifiers.

According to reports, the Salisu Yusuf-led team will meet Guinea in the first round of their 2023 Africa U-23 Cup of Nations match at the Lekan Salami Stadium in Ibadan on March 22.

When Nigeria plays the French-speaking nation in a reversal match on Monday, March 27, the 1996 champions will continue to pursue their goal of winning a second Olympic football gold medal.

Since no stadium in Guinea has been approved by the Confederation of African Football, CAF, to host international matches, the game is most likely to be played in Morocco.

However, the match against Guinea, which will be held in Morocco later this year, will decide who of Nigeria and Guinea advances to the 4th Africa U23 Cup of Nations.

The overall champions will earn a spot in the U-23 AFCON, which will be hosted in Morocco later in the year.

Recall that in the second leg of the match against Tanzania at the Benjamin Mkapa Stadium in Dar es Salaam in October 2022, penalties in each half and at opposite ends ensured a stalemate. However, a free-kick by Timilehin Ogunniyi and a second penalty by captain Success Makanjuola in the return leg in Ibadan allowed the Eagles to advance to the third round with a 3-1 aggregate score.

Nigeria won the tournament in 2015 after defeating Algeria 1-nil in the final. South Africa, who finished third, and the two finalists all

GROUP A leaders, Bendel Insurance, Thursday, faced, perhaps, their toughest game of the 2022/23 Nigerian Professional Football League (NPFL), so far, but at the end, they came out 1-0 winners against visiting Nasarawa United.

Newsnow said that, Nasarawa United were among the top sides in the league last season, but they have been floundering in the seven-week competition, until yesterday.

Led by Coach Abubakar Arikyia, Nasarawa United threw everything they had into the game played at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium, perhaps, looking for their first away win.

But in a Bendel Insurance, who have won all their home games and recorded a couple of away wins, they met a side grilled for success.

The first half of the game ended goalless, but the second half was only seven minutes gone when Ebuka Akobundu got the goal that made the difference.

Insurance will meet second-placed Enyimba in their next game away from home.

Speaking on his side's loss, Nasarawa United Coach, Arikyia, said: "We played well, but we got a result we did not expect. That is football."

"I am proud of my boys because they gave a good account of themselves."

"We will go back to work harder and by the grace of God, we will get a better result in our next match. We intend to be in a position to qualify for the play-off."

Plateau United thrash El Kanemi 5-0



Plateau United

To Insurance's Coach, Monday Odigie, yesterday's result showed the stuff his players are made of, saying a lot is being demanded of the players by the tight fixtures.

"It was difficult because this is our second game in just four days and that was why we struggled from beginning to the end."

"We beg the organisers of the league to please consider these boys and make the schedule lighter," he said.

On the game against Enyimba at the weekend, Odigie said Insurance would approach it without fear.

"It doesn't matter who our opponent is, but we always try to play well and get a good result. We are taking it one game after the other."

In Aba,, Enyimba defeated

Shooting Stars 2-0 with Chukwuemeka Obioma Godson scoring the two first half goals. The defeat leaves Shooting Stars four points off the championship playoff places, while Obioma becomes the leading scorer with seven goals from eight games.

Elsewhere, Plateau United bashed El Kanemi 5-0 in Jos, Kwara United drew 1-1 with Remo Stars, Niger Tornadoes held Bayelsa United to a 1-1 draw, Wikki Tourists defeated Lobi Stars 2-0, while Doma United beat Abia Warriors 1-0.

The league continues today with Akwa United hosting Gombe United, while the game between Rivers United and Enugu Rangers in Port Harcourt has been postponed.

earned Olympic spots.

Meanwhile, FC Nantes forward, Moses Simon, has expressed his joy at being a Nigerian player in the UEFA Europa League.

Newsnow said that, the Ligue 1 team will travel to Italy on Thursday to face Juventus in the opening leg of their Europa League Round-16 match at the Juventus Stadium.

The quick-footed Nigerian has said that competing against the Old Ladies is wonderful and that his countrymen would cheer his side.

Prior to the tie, the Nigerian international spoke to UEFA.com

and expressed his excitement.

"It's a great joy for me, for my family, my parents, because we know that it's not easy to hoist the Nigerian flag green, white, green," he said.

Numerous Nigerian players, including Mikel Obi, Victor Moses, Samuel Chukwueze, Kanu Nwankwo, and Taribo West, have competed in and won the Europa League.

Speaking about this, the €9.00m rated Super Eagles star demonstrated his courage as a

Nigerian playing against the two-time Europa League champions.

"Many Nigerians have already participated in European competitions, and I am now one of them. We know it's a great club, so it's just magical to play Juve. And if we win, all Nigerians will be happy and proud of the team, especially of me as a Nigerian," he said.

The Canaries will be looking forward to grabbing all three points against the struggling Juventus side as they lock horns on Thursday night, at 9 p.m. Nigerian time.



The team has made four appearances in the Olympics, winning gold in 1996, silver in 2008, and bronze in 2016

SUNDAY SPORTS

In-form Neita, Prescod aim for titles



Daryll Neita and Reece Prescod will both compete over 60m in Birmingham

DARYLL Neita and Reece Prescod will aim to continue their exciting starts to the year at the UK Indoor Championships in Birmingham this weekend.

BBC SPORT said that, Neita and Prescod both produced personal bests as they impressed with victories over 60m in Berlin last week.

World 1500m medallist Laura Muir is also in action, with coverage available on BBC iPlayer, Red Button and online.

It is the first in a series of major UK Athletics events to be shown across BBC platforms in 2023.

The World Indoor Tour Final in Birmingham (25 February), UK Athletics Championships (8-9 July) and the London Diamond League event (23 July) will follow, with the latter also available on BBC TV.

Neita described her run in Berlin as "incredible" after her time of 7.05 seconds moved her behind Dina Asher-Smith in the UK women's all-time rankings.

The 26-year-old crossed the line one hundredth of a second behind Asher-Smith's British record and she hopes to use the 60m to benefit her 100m performances.

Both she and Prescod have moved to Italy to train under coach Marco Airale, alongside British team-mates Jeremiah Azu and Ama Pipi.

The change appears to be paying off for both athletes and Prescod, who said he and Airale had been working together "on new things", now stands joint-fifth in the men's rankings following his win in 6.49secs.

Alongside competing for national titles, British athletes will be bidding to earn a place at next month's European Indoor Championships in Istanbul.

BRITISH number one Cameron Norrie avoided a shock defeat by Facundo Diaz Acosta as he fought back to reach the quarter-finals at the Argentina Open.

BBC SPORT said that, Norrie was on the brink of exiting the tournament but broke back as home favourite Diaz Acosta, ranked 191st in the world, served for the match.

World number 12 Norrie eventually edged a close deciding set in a tie-break to win 4-6 7-5 7-6 (8-6) in Buenos Aires.

The Briton meets another Argentine, Tomas Martin Etcheverry, next.

Norrie, 27, had trailed 3-1 and 5-3 as he was broken twice in the second set - but after taking the crucial ninth game the Wimbledon semi-finalist won three more without reply to force a decider.

He then had to stage another fightback in the

Argentina Open: Norrie fights back to win



Cameron Norrie won four of the final five points to edge the deciding tie-break

tie-break, Norrie recovering from 4-1 behind to clinch his second match point and progress.

Norrie, who helped Great Britain reach the Davis Cup Finals in Colombia earlier in February, received a bye in the first round at the ATP 250 event.

World number two Carlos Alcaraz made a winning return from injury by defeating Serbia's Laslo Djere.

Spaniard Alcaraz, 19, won 6-2 4-6 6-2 win over world number 57 Djere under the lights in Buenos Aires. It was his first victory since suffering an abdominal injury at the Paris Masters in November.

"It's been a long time for

me with no competition, with no matches, just recovering," said Alcaraz, who pulled out of the Australian Open because of a leg injury and lost the number one ranking to Novak Djokovic.

Meanwhile, part-time player Matija Pecotic has bowed out of the Delray Beach Open in Florida.

The 33-year-old Croatian said he was going to "have to ask for another day off" from his full-time job in finance after a shock win at the Delray Beach Open.

Pecotic lost his last 16 match against the United States' Marcos Giron, the latter progressing with a 6-3 6-3 victory.

Part-timer Pecotic needs 'another day off' from job

Matija Pecotic said he is going to "have to ask for another day off" from his full-time job in finance after a shock win at the Delray Beach Open.

BBC SPORT said that, Pecotic, who came through qualifying, was making his ATP Tour main draw debut against former world number eight Jack Sock and won 4-6 6-2 6-2 in Florida.

The 33-year-old Croatian hit 10 aces and 30 winners in a first-round match that lasted two hours and 10 minutes.

"I had to leave work early, my boss let me off," joked Pecotic.

And his boss watched on from his player box as the world number 784, who reached a career-high 206 in 2015, beat American Sock, who is 143 in the men's rankings.

"You've got to be realistic," said Pecotic.

"This is a former top 10 guy with an incredible amount of tennis experience and a huge serve. He came out serving 134mph on the first serve. It would be arrogant to think I'm going to come out

and expect to win. "But I figured if I could sink my teeth into the match and work on the two or three patterns I prepared before, that I'm going to have a chance."

Pecotic, who will play American world number 55 Marcos Giron in the last 16, came through two rounds of qualifying to reach the main draw but only found out he was competing 30 minutes before the first qualifier after a play pulled out.

"When I was going out to play [Stefan] Kozlov they announced my name as the guy who was originally supposed to

play, so they said Kozlov and Watanuki," he said.

Pecotic's tennis career was halted just before the 2016 Australian Open when he was bed-ridden for eight months after picking up an infection following stomach surgery.

Ko shares first-round lead

WORLD number one Lydia Ko and Pajaree Anannarukarn carded eight-under-par 64s to share the first-round lead at the Aramco Saudi Ladies International.

BBC SPORT said that, Anannarukarn's Thai

compatriot Athaya Thitikul is one shot back along with Aditi Ashok and Jung-Min Hong.

England's defending champion Georgia Hall is six strokes behind after an opening 70.

The \$5m (£4.16m) purse available at the event is the third-largest on offer on the Ladies European Tour.

It matches the prize money from the men's PIF Saudi International on the Asian Tour, having enjoyed a five-fold increase.

Ko, who was born in South Korea but now represents New Zealand, won the event in 2021 but did not defend her title last year.

She looked in fine form as she carded four birdies on the front and back nines at Royal Greens Golf and Country Club.

"I knew that today was the day to take advantage of the



Lydia Ko won the event in 2021

calmer conditions," said Ko. "With some of the pin positions I needed to be a little bit more aggressive. Most of the opportunities I had I was able to take

advantage of that, it was that kind of a day and a nice start to the season.

"It's cool to see I have an officially under-par round as a Mrs."



Pecotic's boss was in the stands to watch his win against Sock

SUNDAY SPORTS

Australian Open 2023:

How can PSG be this bad with Messi, Mbappe?

By Thomas Hindle

LIONEL Messi and Neymar were ineffective, Kylian Mbappe wasn't much better, and PSG were held scoreless in a disappointing 1-0 loss to Bayern Munich.

Lionel Messi, Kylian Mbappe and Neymar are footballing freaks. Few, if any, players in the world possess the same ability as Paris Saint-Germain's attacking trio when the ball is at their feet. In theory, having them all play in the same team should be a recipe for overwhelming success.

And yet, here we are again, with yet another post-mortem of a disappointing Champions League knockout performance from one of the world's richest clubs.

Tuesday's 1-0 loss to Bayern Munich at Parc des Princes leaves Christophe Galtier's side with a mountain to climb in Germany in three weeks' time. Another embarrassingly early European exit is more likely than not right now.

Article continues below

What was perhaps more concerning than the final result, however, was the performance that PSG put in. Playing at home as one of the favourites to win the competition, they were toothless for over an hour before a half-fit Mbappe was introduced off the bench.

It was a display more akin to a team who were just trying to survive against a visiting juggernaut than a side who believed they could actually win the game. So often in Ligue 1, PSG play the role that Bayern did on Tuesday. Now, the tables had been turned, and it wasn't pretty for anyone associated with the French champions.

So why were they so bad, and what can be done to fix the problems before the second leg



Messi, Neymar and Mbappe in Munich?

The easy answer would be to get Mbappe back to full fitness. The France superstar was originally slated to miss the first leg, but made a surprise return to training on Sunday before being named on the bench two days later.

In the 36 minutes he was on the pitch, PSG looked like a different team. There was clearly an extra desperation to their game having fallen behind to Kingsley Coman's volleyed strike, but Mbappe's presence up front allowed them to play much differently than they had done up to that point.

Suddenly they had an out-ball when they won possession in defence; a player to stretch the field and test a Bayern defence that had spent much of the night with their feet up, watching the game largely unfold in front of

them.

That sudden improvement with Mbappe on the pitch, though, speaks to the problem that underpins PSG's constant failures at the highest level: A lack of structure or accountability from those who are meant to be leading the way.

Let's start with the structure. While PSG set up to defend deep against Bayern, their shape quickly became messy, with notional wide midfielders Warren Zaire-Emery and Carlos Soler moving inside into their more natural central positions.

Soon, PSG were simply being played through, effectively cut apart. For almost the entirety of the first 10 minutes they were pinned back, forced into rash challenges and last-ditch tackles to win the ball back.

At the other end of the pitch,

meanwhile, there wasn't much help being offered.

Messi and Neymar don't have positions these days. Neymar likes to play in the left channel, as long as he can start with the ball somewhere around the centre circle. Messi still tucks in from the right wing, but prefers to float between the midfield and defensive lines. Neither player will run after a ball knocked into space, or stretch an opposing defence.

That's acceptable when there is a system around the duo that accounts for their shortcomings — one with a player, or ideally multiple players, that can run in behind, or chase a lost cause. But on Tuesday, that player - Mbappe - wasn't there, and neither of his partners in crime were willing to step up and do something different.

The result was a PSG side that looked lost on the rare occasions they got hold of the ball. Their issues were clear early on as Sergio Ramos tried to ping a pass away from pressure. With no easy options and Bayern midfielders advancing on him, the defender was forced to launch his effort into touch.

PSG failed to adjust as the half wore on. Marco Verratti, Danilo Pereira and Marquinhos regularly found themselves gasping for air, suffocated by Bayern's press.

"I think the individual will win you a game, but structure will make sure you're not going to lose it," explained France legend Thierry Henry to CBS post-match. "If you have that standpoint, then your so-called 'freaks' can win you the game.

"PSG don't have structure at the minute and haven't had structure for a very long time. It's always about, 'Can you win me the game, individuals?'. Football doesn't work like that. Structure is key."

It's clear that the way PSG set up on Tuesday was detrimental to getting the best out of Messi and Neymar, but that is not to say that the finger of blame shouldn't also

be pointed towards them.

Galtier was meant to be the manager who overlooked the egos inside the PSG dressing room and created a system and accountability that would finally allow the team to succeed. Instead, it seems like he, like so many before him, is having to bow to those who really hold the power at Parc des Princes.

"I ask the team to play for Leo and work for him," Galtier said after Messi scored the winning goal against Toulouse 10 days ago. "He must be exempted from certain tasks. His teammates must redouble their efforts to recover and create movement so that he can find passes, which are so rare in today's football, in such small spaces."

The narrative of Messi walking around the pitch when he doesn't have the ball is one that has grown as age has begun to catch up with the seven-time Ballon d'Or winner, and it can be forgiven if he then produces moments of magic when in possession, as he did so memorably at the World Cup in Qatar.

But in a team that lacks structure such as PSG, every player needs to be pulling their weight with and without the ball. Asking others to do the work of up to three of their team-mates should not be allowed to stand.

On Tuesday, PSG's midfield ran themselves into the ground. They were harassed on the ball, and sprinted relentlessly when they didn't have it. And, when they made a mistake, they were met by scowls and gesticulations from an increasingly antsy Neymar.

The obvious solution, then, is to ask more out of Messi, Neymar and Mbappe. But who has the final word: the manager, or the superstars he coaches?

It's a question that every PSG manager in recent years has been forced to answer. Usually, the superstars win, and most weeks it doesn't matter. Messi, Mbappe and Neymar are typically so good going forward that their work off the ball - or lack thereof - is irrelevant. But in games like Tuesday's, when PSG need to defend with 10, work with 10, and run with 10, the rigidity of their front three is glaring.

The trio don't necessarily have to mould into a deadly pressing machine. Messi lacks legs, Neymar lacks inclination, and Mbappe, right now, isn't fully fit.

It comes down to Galtier to find a system and a structure that works for everyone in his team, not just his 'freaks' up front.





Christian Atsu found dead after Turkey earthquake

Footballer Christian Atsu has been found dead under the rubble of his home almost two weeks after the Turkey earthquake, his agent has confirmed.

The Ghana international, 31, had spells with Premier League sides Everton, Chelsea and Newcastle.

Atsu had been missing since the 6 February quake that caused the collapse of his apartment in Antakya, Hatay.

"There are no words to describe our sadness," tweeted his Turkish top-flight club Hatayspor.

"We will not forget you, Atsu. Peace be upon you, beautiful person."

In the aftermath of the quake, Hatayspor initially reported Atsu had been rescued "with injuries", but a day later that position changed.

His agent Nana Sechere, who has been in Hatay, confirmed the news on Saturday on Twitter, writing: "It is with the heaviest of hearts that I have to announce to all well wishers that sadly Christian Atsu's body was recovered this morning."

"My deepest condolences go to his family and loved ones. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their prayers and support."

The Ghana Football Association said Atsu's body was recovered on Saturday morning after "almost two



weeks of emotional torture".

The earthquake and aftershocks in southern Turkey and northern Syria are known to have killed more than 40,000 people.

Atsu joined Hatayspor in September 2022 after a season with Saudi Arabian team Al-Raed and scored the

winning goal in a Super Lig match on 5 February.

He won 65 caps for Ghana and helped his country reach the 2015 Africa Cup of Nations final where they lost to Ivory Coast on penalties. Atsu was later named player of the tournament.

In a tweet, Ghana's men's

team the Black Stars paid tribute to the winger, writing: "You served our Country well, forever in our hearts. Rest in Peace."

He joined Chelsea from Porto in 2013 and had several loan spells at clubs including Everton and Bournemouth.

An initial loan period at

Newcastle in 2016, in which he helped the team win promotion from the Championship to the Premier League, was made permanent in 2017.

"We are profoundly saddened to learn that Christian Atsu has tragically lost his life in Turkey's devastating earthquakes," Newcastle said.

"A talented player and a special person, he will always be fondly remembered by our players, staff and supporters."

Everton said they were "deeply saddened" by the news, while Chelsea said they were "devastated".

The Toffees said there will be a period of applause before their Premier League game against Leeds on Saturday and their players will also wear black armbands in remembrance.

Ghana sports broadcaster Michael Oti Adjei told BBC World Service Sportshour: "He was always grounded and he had a nice word for everybody."

"He was a lovely person to deal with and was one heck of a player too. He had a very good left foot and played 65 times for Ghana, scoring more than 10 goals. He paid his dues to the national team."

"When he made his debut, there was talk of a nickname of Ghana's Messi. Those who knew him were talking of a young Ghanaian player who could potentially become one of the best African players ever."

Atsu won 65 caps for Ghana and helped the Black Stars reach the 2015 Africa Cup of Nations final in Equatorial Guinea where they lost to Ivory Coast on penalties

Manchester United sale bid confirmed

British billionaire Sir Jim Ratcliffe and his petrochemicals firm Ineos have confirmed their bid for "majority ownership" of Manchester United.

Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad Al Thani, chairman of one of Qatar's biggest banks, has also tabled a bid.

The Glazer family are considering selling the club and a 'soft deadline' of Friday had been set for proposals.

Ineos said it wants to make the club a "beacon for a modern, progressive, fan-centred approach to ownership".

In a statement confirming its bid for the 20-time English champions, the company added: "We would see our role as the long-term custodians of Manchester United on behalf of the fans and the wider community."

"We are ambitious and highly competitive and would want to invest in Manchester United to make them the number one club in the world once again."

The Ineos group, owned by 70-year-old British billionaire Ratcliffe, has a history of investment in sport and owns French Ligue 1 club Nice and Swiss Super League club Lausanne.

Ratcliffe made an unsuccessful late £4.25bn offer to buy Chelsea last year when Russian owner Roman Abramovich put the London club up for sale.

His petrochemicals firm Ineos makes about £50bn in annual sales and employs more than 26,000 people across 29 countries.

Following his failure to acquire Chelsea, Ratcliffe said he would have tried to buy United but, after meeting with the brothers Joel and Avram Glazer, he stated that they did not want to sell - a stance that has now changed.

At least two offers for United

from the United States are expected, while there have also been suggestions of interest from Saudi Arabia.

The Glazer family have owned United since 2005 and in November confirmed they wanted to "explore strategic alternatives" for the club.

What remains unclear is how Ineos would finance their bid. After the Glazers' leveraged takeover 18 years ago, fans will want reassurances that no debt will be secured against the club.

Despite Ratcliffe's failed bid for Chelsea last year when he spoke about "divided loyalties", and the fact he is thought to live in Monaco, many United fans will welcome the idea of a Mancunian owner who has supported the club since childhood.

While others will be excited by the apparent wealth of the rival Qatari bid, there are also significant concerns about any association with the country's human rights record.

However, Ineos is no stranger to controversy itself. Environmental campaigners believe its sports investments have been used to soften the image of one of the world's largest chemicals and plastics companies.

Ratcliffe has also been a major supporter of fracking - a method of extracting natural gas from shale rock opposed by green campaigners.

Sheikh Jassim's Qatari consortium has promised to "return the club to its former glories".

It added: "The bid will be completely debt free via Sheikh Jassim's Nine Two Foundation, which will look to invest in the football teams, the training centre, the stadium and wider infrastructure, the fan experience and the communities the club supports."

Napoli beat Sassuolo to move 18 points clear

Serie A leaders Napoli moved 18 points clear at the top of the table thanks to a routine away victory over Sassuolo.

Napoli scored after only 12 minutes through Khvicha Kvaratskhelia, shooting low into the corner after a fine run.

Armand Lauriente hit the post for the hosts, before Victor Osimhen hit the

woodwork for Napoli.

Osimhen made it 2-0 after 33 minutes when he powerfully shot on the turn and beat Sassuolo goalkeeper Andrea Consigli at his near post.

Osimhen has now scored in seven successive Serie A matches for Napoli, who are trying to become Italian champions for only the third time and for the first time since

1989-90.

The visitors thought they had added a third goal in injury time through Giovanni Simeone, but it was ruled out after a video assistant referee check showed there was an offside.

Napoli have only lost one league game all season and have 62 points from 23 matches, with second-placed

Inter Milan on 44 points.

Inter have a game in hand, which they play on Saturday when they entertain Udinese at San Siro.

Napoli finished above Liverpool in their Champions' League group and play away at Eintracht Frankfurt in the first leg of their last-16 tie on Tuesday.



Victor Osimhen has scored 19 goals in all competitions for Napoli this season