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Do not truncate electoral process

The Federal Government has told former President Olusegun Obasanjo not to truncate the 2023 General Elections with his alleged inciting and provocative letter on the elections.

The Minister of Information and Culture,

Alhaji Lai Mohammed, in a statement he issued on Tuesday, said what the former President presented as an 'appeal for caution and rectification' is nothing but a calculated attempt to undermine the electoral process and a willful incitement to violence.

The Minister expressed

shock that a former President could throw around unverified claims and amplify wild allegations picked up from the street against the electoral process.

"Though masquerading as an unbiased and concerned elder statesman, former President Obasanjo is in

reality a known partisan who is bent on thwarting, by subterfuge, the choice of millions of Nigerian voters," Mohammed said.

He recalled that the former President, in his time, organized perhaps the worst election since Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999, hence he is the least

qualified to advise a President whose determined effort to leave a legacy of free, fair, credible and transparent election is well acknowledged within and outside Nigeria.

"As the whole nation waits with bated breath for the result of last Saturday's national elections, amid

-FG

unnecessary tension created by professional complainants and political jesters, what is expected from a self-respecting elder statesman are words and actions that douse tension and serve as a soothing

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INEC's official collation, declaration of state by state results in Abuja

INEC blames technical hitches for delay

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), has blamed technical hitches for the delay in uploading most results of the general election to INEC Results Viewing Portal (IREV).

A statement issued on Sunday, by INEC National Commissioner and Chairman, Information and Voter Education Committee, Festus Okoye

(Esq), assured Nigerians that results from the polling units, copies of which were issued to political parties, are safe on both the BVAS and the IREV portal and cannot be tampered with.

He noted that unlike in off-season elections where the portal was used, it has been relatively slow and unsteady.

Okoye stressed that the

Commission regretted the setback, especially because of the importance of IREv in its results management process.

He said: "The problem is totally due to technical hitches related to scaling up the IREv from a platform for managing off-season, State elections, to one for managing nationwide general elections. It is indeed not

unusual for glitches to occur and be corrected in such situations.

"Consequently, the Commission wishes to assure Nigerians that the challenges are not due to any intrusion or sabotage of our systems, and that the IREv remains well-secured."

The electoral body assured that its technical team was working

assiduously to solve all the outstanding problems, adding that the users of the IREv would have noticed improvements since last night.

It added: "We also wish to assure Nigerians that results from the Polling Units, copies of which were issued to political parties, are safe on both the BVAS and the IREv portal.

"These results cannot be

tampered with and any discrepancy between them and the physical results used in collation will be thoroughly investigated and remediated, in line with Section 65 of the Electoral Act 2022."

The commission said while it fully appreciated the concerns of the public on this situation and welcomed various

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News

Do not truncate electoral process

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balm.

"Instead, former President Obasanjo used his unsolicited letter to insinuate, or perhaps wish for, an inconclusive election and a descent into anarchy; used his time to cast aspersions on electoral officials who are unable to defend themselves, while surreptitiously seeking to dress his personal choice in the garb of the people's choice. This is duplicitous," he said.

The Minister further reminded the former President that organizing elections in Nigeria is not a mean feat, considering that the voter population of 93,469,008 in the country is 16,742,916 more than the total number of registered voters, at 76,726,092, in 14 West African nations put together.

"With a deployment of over 1,265,227 electoral officials, the infusion of technology to enhance the

electoral process and the logistical nightmare of sending election materials across our vast country, INEC seems to be availing itself creditably, going by the preliminary reports of the ECOWAS Electoral Observation Mission and the Commonwealth Observer Group, among other groups that observed the election.

"Therefore, those arrogating to themselves the power to cancel an election and unilaterally fix a date for a new one, ostensibly to ameliorate perceived electoral infractions, should please exercise restraint and allow the official electoral body to conclude its duty by announcing the results of the 2023 national elections.

"After that, anyone who is aggrieved must follow the stipulated legal process put in place to adjudicate electoral disputes, instead of threatening fire and conjuring apocalypse," the Minister said.



Buhari

INEC blames technical hitches for delay

Continued from page 1

The Labour Party (LP) candidate, Mr Donatus Mathew, an okada rider, has been declared the winner of the Kaura federal constituency of Kaduna State.

The returning officer, Professor Elijah Ella, declared the result yesterday and said Mathew polled a total of 10,508 to defeat the incumbent member of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Hon Gideon Lucas Gwani,

who came second, with a total vote of 10,297 votes.

Professor Elijah said the All Progressives Congress (APC) candidate trailed with 9,919 votes, while New Nigerian People's Party (NNPP) secured 5,354 votes to come third and fourth, respectively.

Speaking to journalists shortly after the declaration of the winner, the member-elect, Mr. Donatus Mathew, thanked the electorates for the confidence reposed in him

to represent them at the Federal level.

Donatus solicited support and cooperation from the people and pledged to carry everyone along to achieve desired success

The incumbent member, Mr. Gideon Lucas Gwani, congratulated the member-elect and wished him well.

He urged his supporters to remain calm and accept the electorate's will, even as he noted that God gives and takes power.

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ADC disowns PDP, LP pressure on INEC chairman

The African Democratic Congress (ADC) has disowned the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and Labour Party (LP) over the call to ask the chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Prof. Mahmood Yakubu to step down.

Also, the party said it was not calling for fresh elections.

It asked all parties to remain law abiding and remember that the Electoral Act has provisions for redress.

The party's position was contained in a statement by ADC Board of Trustees Chairman, Sen. (Mrs.) Patricia Akwashiki.

The statement said: "My attention has been drawn to a press statement issued by the National Chairman of the Labour Party, Julius Abure, on behalf of the Labour Party, Peoples Democratic Party and the African Democratic Congress.

"They demanded that the INEC Chairman step down from his position and that fresh elections should be conducted.

"This is not the position of the African Democratic Congress (ADC). Ralph Nwosu who is the immediate past Chairman of the ADC does not speak for the ADC and cannot speak for the

ADC."

The party said it was not part of any action to undermine INEC.

The statement added: "We cannot be a party to any action that will undermine the integrity of INEC or lead to a breakdown of law and order.

"When the final results are announced by INEC, we will have an informed reaction.

"The ADC will not be a party to any attempt to truncate the ongoing electoral process. "All parties to this process must remain law abiding and remember that the Electoral Act clearly spells out guidelines for redress."

2023 marred by operational failures, lack of transparency -EU



The European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) has highlighted operational failures in Saturday's general elections in Nigeria.

According to the International observers, the election lacked transparency and such operational failures made people doubt the entire election process.

The observations were part of a preliminary statement of the EU EOM, issued on Monday, in Abuja.

While the report observed that fundamental freedoms of assembly and movement were largely respected, it, however, noted that such freedom was impeded by insufficient planning, insecurity and the prevailing Naira and fuel scarcity.

The report, which observed abuse of incumbency by various political office holders, also noted widespread allegations of vote buying.

On the IReV, the report noted that "The introduction of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and the IReV for the 2023 elections was perceived as an important step to ensure the integrity and credibility of elections.

"However, delayed training of technical personnel, an inadequate mock testing exercise, and a lack of public information on the election technologies diminished expectations and left room for speculation and uncertainty.

"During the early stages of collation, presidential result forms from polling units were not displayed on the IReV, while Senate and House of Representative results were slowly published. Presidential election result forms started to be uploaded after 10pm on election day, raising concerns and reaching only 20 per cent by noon on 26 February. Later the same evening, INEC explained the delay with technical hitches."

In its pre-election observation, the report stated that "INEC's operational capacity was hampered by the ongoing fuel and Naira shortage. Insecurity prevented it from accessing some Local Government Areas (LGAs), notably in the South. Attacks on INEC premises, including just days before polling, hindered preparations in affected areas while instilling fear in voters.

"Overall, stakeholders had expressed confidence in INEC's independence, professionalism, and voter information efforts, but this decreased ahead of elections.

"INEC lacked efficient planning and transparency during critical stages of the electoral process, while on Election Day, trust in INEC was seen to further reduce due to delayed polling processes and information gaps related to much-anticipated access to results on its Results Viewing Portal (IReV).

"In the lead-up to elections, the widely welcomed Electoral Act 2022 introduced measures aimed at building stakeholder

trust, however, leaving some important gaps in terms of accountability and INEC's power to enforce the law.

"Weak points include a lack of INEC empowerment to enforce sanctions for electoral offences and breaches of campaign finance rules.

"Positively, INEC benefited from more timely financing than for previous contests. Other new provisions also aimed to enhance transparency of results."

INEC worker shot dead, others injured in Delta

A staff member of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has been shot dead by security personnel who reportedly shot into the bus that was conveying some workers of the commission after electoral duties in Ukwuani Local Government Area of Delta State.

The commission's Delta state Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC), Mr. Monday Udoh Tom, who disclosed this to newsmen at the state collation centre in Asaba yesterday, said that several other occupants of the vehicle also sustained injuries during the incident.

The Delta REC, however, said that the five other persons wounded were receiving medical attention in the area but would be moved to another hospital later.

The shooting was said to have occurred when the driver of the bus allegedly failed to stop when flagged down at a checkpoint in the area.

However, the state police spokesman, Mr Bright Edefe, said that investigation into

the incident was ongoing but added that the identity of the trigger-happy security operative was not yet ascertained.

The shooting incident was coming on the heels of the abduction of INEC officials, including nursing mothers during the just concluded Presidential and National Assembly elections.

Udoh had lamented the frequent kidnap of INEC officials, including nursing mothers during the just concluded Presidential and National Assembly elections.

He said INEC staff were abducted because of their inability to upload election due to poor network which he said was beyond INEC's control.

Udoh said: "Voters held our personnel hostage in many locations because the results could not be uploaded. It was the issue of poor network and it is not controlled by INEC. Voters believed our staff were trying to play pranks. I had to take a lot of people on bail. Even this morning, we had to go to Ethiope East LGA and Agbarho community to release our staff."

Collation of election results must continue - INEC

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has insisted that the Commission will go ahead with the collation of the election results.

Chairman of the Commission, Prof. Mahmood Yakubu, declared the position in response to growing calls for the cancellation of Saturday's presidential elections by political stakeholders across the country.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, Professor Yakubu said politicians cannot celebrate wins where their parties have won and denigrate the same elections wherever they have lost.

The statement read: "This election is far from being

perfect, just like many before it, but there's no election in the recent history of this country that has thrown up so much upset as this one.

"If the least expected small parties had upstaged the big ones in their homestead, I don't see the logic in insinuating malpractice where the big ones are leveraging advantage.

"I, therefore, say no to cancellation of the results. INEC should run the full course and let the process of redress take over afterward.

"We will survive this like every other. Proposing cancellation is defeatist, and I disagree with the proponents. You can celebrate your big wins in some places, but challenging those of others in their supposed stronghold.



CBN and the imperative of brand damage control

In his executive summary of what constitutes strong brands, a global business consultant, Nick Cober, says such brands focus on their niche, remain consistent, reflect the communities they serve, create excellent products and services and have strong and authentic personalities. It is debatable to ascribe these attributes to the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) in recent times. SOLA ONI writes.

WHEN the incumbent governor of the CBN, Godwin Emefiele, announced the plan and justification by the apex Bank to redesign some of the Naira notes on Wednesday, October 26, 2022, he never envisaged that he had unwittingly set up a booby trap that will later plunge the innocent Nigerians into an unprecedented fit of rage to withdrawal their money from deposit banks.

Communication strategy is critical to the success of any initiative at individual or corporate level. In the public relations parlance, it is said that brand communication, brand image and brand trust are antecedents of brand loyalty.

The whole world is watching with shock and disbelief why redesigning of a country's currencies has led to loss of lives, protest in many states of the federation, wanton destruction of property, recourse to the use of CFA franc- currency used in the Francophone countries, by Nigerians in the land borders following scarcity of new Naira notes. In some places, trade by batter has been adopted.

The Central Bank's poor stakeholder engagement became public knowledge when the announcement of the new currency redesign was faulted by the Minister of Finance, Mrs. Zainab Ahmed that her Ministry was not consulted.

The failure of the apex bank to consult the key stakeholders, including the legislators to work out the impact analysis of the project ahead of implementation was in itself a public relations blunder. There are other instances of gross abuse of public relations practices by the apex



Read also: Heap of CBN loans to FG defies naira redesign logic

bank.

In the early hours of Thursday, February 16, the expectation was high that President Mohammed Buhari's nationwide broadcast would douse tension as he shall announce the CBN's compliance with the ruling of the Supreme Court that the old Naira notes

should remain legal tender alongside the new ones until the determination of the substantive suit filed by some states. But the broadcast was a misplaced optimism as President Buhari said only N200 note would remain legal tender for 60 days.

The brazen disregard for the Supreme Court ruling elicited protests in many states of the federation as people could not withdraw their money and they desperately need cash. As of today, the Nigerian economy is predominantly cash-based. The Federal Government's disregard to the Supreme court order is a mockery of the Nigerian legal system.

With all his strong campaign for the All Progressive Congress (APC), Festus Keyamo, the Party's Spokesman could not hide his condemnation of the abuse of court order by President Buhari, saying he was misadvised.

Who are those misadvising the President and what is the motive? What does it cost the CBN to comply with the court directive which would have calmed the frayed nerves? Hopefully, Emefiele shall one day tell his story and unveil the cabals that have messed him up as the brand personality of the CBN.

Unfortunately, due to bad planning and poor timing, the objectives of the new Naira notes

are far from being achieved. Against the market expectations of further reduction in the inflation rate, the Nigerian inflation rate in January inched up to 21.82 percent from 21.34 percent in the prior month. Similarly, the country's foreign reserve has dipped further to \$37.1 Billion on January 30, 2023, from \$37.8 Billion in December 2022.

Other objectives of the new Naira notes are more of wrong permutations by the apex bank. Nigerians have lost confidence in the financial system. There is a trust deficit already. The apex bank's brand value has lost steam. Many investors would rather prefer to be on the sidelines until after the general election. This is understandable in view of the uncertainty in the country.

For the apex bank to remain relevant, it is now a game of brand recovery. The Central Bank shall be more effective and trusted if Nigerians perceive it as transparent. One of the lessons from the global financial crisis of 2008 is the obligation of every central bank to deploy effective communication with all its stakeholders to reduce uncertainty and enhance better policy choices.

The Nigeria Economic Summit Group (NESG), has offered some

tips as brand recovery strategies for the apex bank to address its reputational damage. The Bank should embark on a gradual phase-out of the old notes, an indication of obeying the Supreme Court order.

It should take advantage of a gradual phase-out of the old Naira notes to commence massive production of the new ones. The bank should embark on renewed public enlightenment of Nigerians on the substance and essence of redesigning some Naira notes.

These assignments should be undertaken immediately by the CBN's High Priest of Image Makers, Osita Nwanisobi and his team. The apex bank should lead the campaign for the federal government's investment in critical infrastructure for a seamless transition to a cashless economy, especially in rural areas.

As the Presidential Election is at the back of the corner, President Buhari must disprove the insinuations making rounds that the ongoing confusion is to scuttle the election and constitute an interim government. He should direct the CBN to obey the Supreme Court order and thereby reverse the abuse of executive power, a subtle invitation to anarchy.

Source: Business Day

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Business & Economy

Currency in circulation drops to N1.38tn - CBN

THE Central Bank of Nigeria analysis showed that the total amount of currency-in-circulation in the country dropped from N3.29tn as of the end of October 2022 to N1.38tn as of the end of January 2023.

Figures obtained from the CBN showed this represents a drop of N1.91tn in the three-month period as a result of the naira redesign policy.

The Governor, CBN, Godwin Emefiele, had in October 2022, announced plans to redesign the old N200, N500 and N1,000 notes.

Emefiele also announced deadlines for Nigerians to swap their old with the new notes.

The banking sector regulator said, "Accordingly, all Deposit Money Banks currently holding the existing denominations of the currency may begin returning these notes back to the CBN effective immediately. The newly designed currency will be released to the banks in the order of first-come-first-serve basis.

"Customers of banks are enjoined to begin paying into their bank accounts the existing currency to enable them to withdraw the new banknotes once circulation begins."

He decried the challenges associated with currency management including significant hoarding of banknotes by members of the public, with statistics showing that over 80 per cent of currency-in-circulation was outside the vaults of commercial banks.

Other challenges, he added included shortage of clean and fit banknotes with attendant negative perception of the CBN and increased risk to financial stability; and increasing ease and risk of counterfeiting evidenced by several security reports.

In recent years, he said, the CBN had recorded significantly higher rates of counterfeiting especially at the higher denominations of N500 and N1,000 banknotes.

Although the global best practice was for central banks to redesign, produce and circulate new local legal tender every five to eight years, he said, the naira had not been redesigned in the last 20 years.

"On the basis of these trends, problems, and facts, and in line with Sections 19, Subsections A and B of the CBN Act 2007, the management of the CBN sought and obtained the approval of the President to redesign, produce, and circulate new series of banknotes at N100, N200, N500, and N1,000 levels," Emefiele said.

Before the currency redesign plan of the CBN, huge figure of currency in circulation was recorded.

According to the CBN, the currency in circulation rose by N58.36bn to N2.84tn in September 2022 from N2.79tn in August.

The currency in circulation rose to N2.81tn in July, 2022 from N2.74tn at the end of June, 2022. It fell to N2.79tn in May from about N2.80tn at the end of April.

Currency-in-circulation is defined as currency outside the vaults of the central bank; that is, all legal tender currency in



Emefiele

the hands of the general public and in the vaults of the Deposit Money Banks, according to the apex bank.

The CBN stated that it employed the "accounting/statistical/withdrawals and deposits approach" to compute the currency in circulation in Nigeria.

This approach involved tracking the movements in currency in circulation on a transaction-by-transaction basis.

It said for every withdrawal made by a DMB at one of CBN's branches, an increase in the CIC was recorded, adding that for

every deposit made by a DMB at one of CBN's branches, a decrease in the CIC was recorded.

The transactions are all recorded in the CBN's CIC account, and the balance on the account at any point in time represents the country's currency in circulation.

According to the apex bank, analysis of the currency in circulation showed that a large and increasing proportion of the naira outside the commercial banking system was held by the general public who hoard a lot of the new banknotes.

Nigeria, others growth impacted by energy cost - Report

THE International Gas Union, in partnership with Hawilti Limited, latest report has indicated that the available energy in Nigeria, Cameroon, Egypt, and other African countries, is expensive, inefficient, polluting and unreliable.

The February 2023 report on energy resources pointed out that Nigeria and other nations on the continent were energy-poor despite the presence of abundant gas in Africa.

Hawilti, a pan-African investment research agency and advisor to businesses, investors, public and private institutions, as well as governments in Africa, released the report in conjunction with IGU, with focus on gas for Africa.

The study assessed the potential for domestic gas resources to energise Africa in line with the global energy transition. The African Energy Commission and the Africa Finance Corporation endorsed the report and its findings.

The report read in part, "Where energy is available in African countries, it is often expensive, inefficient, polluting, and unreliable: for example, Nigeria's grid collapsed four times between January and September 2022".

It stated that domestic gas resources could improve the lives of Africa's young, increasing population, and deliver the energy it needs to develop within a just energy transition.

"Africa has the lowest energy

per capita in the world, while the average electricity use of a sub-Saharan Africa resident is lower than that of a household fridge in the United States," it stated.

Energy experts at the International Gas Union and Hawilti Limited explained that domestic natural gas could help to alleviate Africa's energy poverty.

"But despite producing over six per cent of the world's natural gas supply and having close to one-tenth of proven global reserves, most of the African continent has no access to its natural gas.

"Africa's domestic gas markets remain under-developed or non-existent, especially south of the Sahara, and much of Africa's abundant natural gas resource development has been for export to the rest of the world.

"Africa produces over 280bcm of natural gas, while its domestic demand is just above 160bcm," they stated in the report.

They further noted that the adoption of natural gas in Africa would have minimal impact on the net global Green House Gas emissions, given its miniscule starting point.

The report showed that Africa had a fifth of the world's population and represented only three per cent of global emissions.

"For the 48 Sub-Saharan African countries, without South Africa, the estimated share of emissions is 0.55 per cent.

"If Africa consumes 50 per

EARNINGS from non-oil export in October and November rose to \$75m, figures obtained from the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) have revealed.

The CBN stated in its November economic report that non-oil export earnings rose by 16.9 per cent to \$0.40bn, from \$0.35bn in October.

It stated, "Non-oil export earnings rose by 16.9 per cent to \$0.40bn, from \$0.35bn in October, due, largely to sustained favourable commodity prices at the international market.

"This was due to the 7.0 per cent and 16.1 per cent increase in other non - oil products and re-exports to \$0.38bn and \$0.02bn from \$0.36bn and \$0.01bn respectively."

According to the report, analysis by direction of trade revealed that Brazil was the major destination of non-oil export products with a share of 13.7 per cent.

Exports to the Netherlands were 12.6 per cent; 11.6 per cent to China; 6.7 per cent to Belgium; and 6.0 per cent to Japan. The major commodities exported were urea, which accounted for the largest share of 21.0 per cent, followed by cocoa beans with 20.2 per cent; and sesame seeds, 9.3 per cent.

Receipts from the top five non-oil exporters declined by 13.7 per cent to \$0.15bn, from \$0.18bn in October.

Further analysis revealed that Indorama Eleme Fertilizer

Non-oil export earnings hit \$75m in two months



Sylva

and Chemical Ltd and Dangote Fertilizer Ltd were the top two exporters with shares of 13.5 per cent and 7.5 per cent of the total, respectively, from the export of urea and fertilizer.

The third was Outspan Nigeria Ltd with a share of 6.5 per cent from the export of cocoa beans. Starling Global and Ideal Ltd came in fourth, with 5.8 per cent from the export of cocoa and cashew nut.

British American Tobacco Nigeria Ltd came in fifth place, with 4.4 per cent from the export of cigarettes.

On crude oil and gas export, the report said, "Crude oil and

gas export receipts declined to \$3.90bn from \$4.30bn in October. A breakdown reveals that crude oil export receipts fell by 9.0 per cent to \$3.30bn, from \$3.65bn in the preceding month.

"The decrease was driven by the fall in the price of Nigeria's reference crude, the Bonny Light, by 3.3 per cent to an average of \$93.36pb, relative to \$96.57pb in October.

"Similarly, gas export receipts declined by 6.0 per cent to \$0.60bn, from \$0.64bn in October. In terms of share in total export, crude oil and gas accounted for 90.2 per cent. Of the total crude oil and gas export, oil constitutes 84.6 per cent, while gas accounts for 15.4 per cent."

Kerosene prices rise to 163.87 percent

ACCORDING to data obtained from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the average retail price per liter of kerosene paid by Nigerians increased by 163 percent between December and January of this year, despite Naira scarcity.

The NBS data shows that the average retail price rose by 163 percent to N1,153 in January from N437 in January last year. On a month-on-month basis, it increased by 4.42 percent from N1,153 in January.

On a year-on-year basis, the average retail price per litre of the product rose by 163 percent from N437 in January 2022.

Ever since the kerosene subsidy was removed in 2016, kerosene prices have always gone high and low.

Nigerians who still rely on kerosene to power their stoves are worst hit by the surging price of kerosene. Since the naira scarcity, getting kerosene has been an issue for many.

Alli Jumoke who is a resident of Majidun Ikorodu, told BusinessDay she gets

kerosene for N950 per liter. Because of the naira scarcity and price increase on kerosene, Jumoke said, "Getting kerosene these days is like going to war." Filling stations closed due to the fuel shortage.

"When you eventually get to a petrol station that is open, they will tell you they don't accept transfers or POS. "I will have to go and look for cash."

"I use my stove to cook beans and mostly food that takes a long time. Even the kerosene is like gold," Jumoke said.

Ore Owolabi, corporate intelligence lead, GAS360, said the kerosene market is fully deregulated; hence, it is fully dependent on market forces.

"The cost of kerosene follows the exchange rate of the parallel market, which further increases the cost of kerosene."

Owolabi said, "Due to rising costs, some households have switched from clean cooking gas to kerosene. Likewise, some

households will switch from kerosene to charcoal or firewood in this period."

According to Owolabi, a price control mechanism will reduce the cost of kerosene (similar to the petrol subsidy). However, the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) Limited does not import kerosene any more.

He added that the NNPC was not financially buoyant enough to take on the added cost of a kerosene subsidy. "However, it goes against the government's Decade of the Gas plan."

On state profile analysis, Anambra recorded the highest average retail price per gallon of Household Kerosene with N4,623, followed by Kwara with N4,600 and Ebonyi with N4,557.

Borno recorded the lowest price with N2,800, followed by Bayelsa and Gombe with N2,900 and N2,925 respectively.

Analysis by zone showed that the South-East recorded the highest average retail price per gallon of Household Kerosene with N4,497, followed by the North-Central with

N4,143, while the South-South recorded the lowest with N3,424.



Business & Economy

Banks: Customers forever at their mercy

Doctors are there at our bedside when we are born. We look up to them when we fall sick. They are at our death bed when we expire, thus making them an integral part of our existence. In between birth and death, sound of mind and body, we work hard to make money, most of which we entrust to our bankers. Accessing that money can be frustrating sometimes, especially now with the ongoing currency swap in Nigeria, Michael Jimoh writes.

SHORTLY before last Christmas, Ademola Oloriegbe (not his real name), a teacher in one of the pricey secondary schools in GRA, Ikeja went to a branch of his bank in the same locale. It was a Friday and there weren't too many customers in the bank's premises. But there was the ubiquitous presence of three or so security men – all of them dressed in white with partly crumbling shoes.

As the teacher approached them, two of the security detail manning the revolving doors at the entrance snapped to attention like soldiers meeting a superior officer. "Good afternoon sir," both of them said simultaneously pressing their index fingers to the button on the revolving doors, eager to green-light the customer into the banking hall. Ademola acknowledged both of them with a smile and then made his way inside.

Of course, the teacher understood perfectly why the security men were so deferential to him when he got there. Now leaving, he pressed a folded N500 note to the palm of one of them, saying "for both of you." The security men bowed low from the waist, both of them telling Ademola "God bless you sir," something they conveniently forgot to say to him when he first got there.

On February 10 last week, also a Friday, the teacher was in the same branch of the bank to make some withdrawal from his savings account. This time, there was a crowd milling about the bank premises. The green-coloured awning that used to be directly in front of the bank was gone. So were the half a dozen or so plastic chairs. Standing alone, in twos, groups of four or more, the reason for the impromptu gathering was evident on the anguished faces of those around: the deadline for swapping old naira notes for the new, redesigned ones was that very day.

Many of them had the old notes which the bank refused. Getting the new ones was even less certain because none of the customers outside was allowed into the banking hall. Luckily for Ademola, he saw one of the obsequious security men he met last December standing by the entrance to the bank – same white uniform, same crumbling shoes.

"Of course, he will recognise me," the teacher assured himself, already envisaging some preferential treatment. After all, a favour received, so the saying goes, is a debt owed.

"But when I got close enough to him," Ademola later told friends, "the yeye man pretended he didn't know me. He just looked



Emefiele

over and above my head and started whistling to himself. It broke my heart."

The teacher's tale is not an isolated one. It is the same story for most Nigerians now as they crowd banks, ATMs and POS avenues for unavailable cash. Nor are the bank staffers making things any better for depositors.

On the same Friday, the security man snubbed Ademola, scores of customers were treated even more shabbily in another branch of a different bank as they waited in vain to withdraw money bank staffers insisted was not there. Left unattended to in the bank premises, they chaffed at the bits, complained about everything from an uncaring Presidency to an even less caring CBN who initiated the currency swap in the first place and politicians who have made life generally unbearable for the masses.

While they were at it, they heard laughter coming from within the banking hall as if there was a party going on. It was the bank workers inside joking among themselves. Whatever it was, the waiting crowd outside could not say.

"How can they be laughing inside the hall," an impatient customer wondered, "while we are out here waiting?"

Nigerians have been waiting, waiting with febrile anticipation as the deadline for currency swap neared mid-February spawning serpentine queues reminiscent of the fuel lines in petrol stations across the country at about the same time. The fuel queues have

refrain (old or new notes), that lack of empathy may have sparked off the spate of demonstrations and attacks on some of the financial institutions across the country lately – in Asaba, Benin, Ibadan and Warri.

Speaking on the attacks on the local office of the CBN in Benin and some other banks, Crusoe Osagie, spokesperson for Edo State Government blamed it on hoodlums. "The hoodlums then started attacking and vandalising banks," Osagie said. "They also blocked roads and forced businesses to close." It may have gotten out of hand but for the prompt intervention of the police.

A similar scenario played out in Asaba, Delta state where, according to Delta Police Public Relations Officer, Bright Edefe, "unguided youths/miscreants in the name of protests also set two banks and two vehicles on fire." Nine persons have been arrested so far in connection with the protest and assault on the banks.

The riot and demonstrations at Ibadan, Oyo state capital, was more extensive, recording two or so deaths in its wake. It began two Wednesdays ago. Edefe's counterpart in the State Police Command, Adewale Osifeso, confirmed that "there were pockets of protest this morning by some aggrieved bank customers" at Apata, Dupe, Mokola and Ogunpa areas.

The disaffection soon spread to Lagos, the sprawling commercial nerve centre of the country. Although youths in the coastal city had been restive over the scarcity of the naira – old and new – it took until just last weekend for the demonstration proper. By the early morning of Friday February 17, hoodlums at Mile 12 down to Ojota had taken to the streets, burning tyres, attacking banks and motorists. Benjamin Hundeyin, the State Police spokesman, confirmed the attacks but told journalists the situation was under control.

Though there is a lull in the country-wide protests and acts of vandalism for now, the tension

resulting from the cash crisis lingers on. Last Friday, for example, when this reporter visited two branches of two banks on Mobolaji Bank Anthony Way, Ikeja, the situation had not changed much. If anything, it had worsened. A security man in one said the bank was not open for business.

Customers were allowed in the second bank but they came off empty handed: no money, period! A group of five men in neon-coloured construction jackets left in a huff, just like most angry and disappointed customers have been doing these past weeks.

Part of their anger is that the CBN did disburse the new notes to most of the banks. What did they do with it? There is talk of some of the banks in question allowing privileged customers access to the new notes at the expense of the general public. To shore up their claim, they readily cite the example of Oluwadarasimi Omoseyin a Yoruba actress now at Kirikiri Correctional Centre Lagos for tampering with and spraying N100, 000 of the new notes at a party.

For every Omoseyin, most Nigerians now believe, there are hundreds of other beneficiaries who are roaming free, not nabbed by the ICPC or EFCC. In that sense, the anger of millions of customers unable to access the new notes in banks is understandable. The banks, in their reckoning, have been more selective in dispensing the new notes.

That view may be right or wrong. But what is pretty much clear, as a loony character in a short story once mused, is that whoever keeps your money virtually has your life in his hands. In the light of unfolding events, that character may not be so crazy after all, as millions of customers are now at the mercy of bankers like never before.

Source: The will.

"The riot and demonstrations at Ibadan, Oyo state capital, was more extensive, recording two or so deaths in its wake. It began two Wednesdays ago. Edefe's counterpart in the State Police Command, Adewale Osifeso, confirmed that "there were pockets of protest this morning by some aggrieved bank customers" at Apata, Dupe, Mokola and Ogunpa areas. The disaffection soon spread to Lagos, the sprawling commercial nerve centre of the country. Although youths in the coastal city had been restive over the scarcity of the naira – old and new – it took until just last weekend for the demonstration proper. By the early morning of Friday February 17, hoodlums at Mile 12 down to Ojota had taken to the streets, burning tyres, attacking banks and motorists. Benjamin Hundeyin, the State Police spokesman, confirmed the attacks but told journalists the situation was under control."

Politics

Governor commends INEC for use of BVAS

From **ABBAS GUNGURA, Bauchi**

GOVERNOR Bala Mohammed of Bauchi State has commended the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) for the smooth conduct of the Presidential and National Assembly elections in the state, saying that the introduction of the Modal Voters Accreditation System (BVAS) has improved the electoral process, making it acceptable, credible and transparent.

Our correspondent in Bauchi reports that Governor Bala Mohammed and his wife, Aisha Bala Mohammed arrived at their Bakin Dutse, 008 Polling Unit, Yelwan Duguri in Alkaleri Local Government Area of the state where they cast their votes at exactly 11:20am.

Speaking to journalists shortly after voting, the governor expressed satisfaction with the manner in which the electorate conducted themselves in a very peaceful manner without rancour.

"I am highly fulfilled and accomplished. We give



Mohammed praise and gratitude to our creator, the Almighty Allah that has made us to see this day that we are electing our new president and national assembly members after so many fears. "I want to express my satisfaction with the peaceful conduct of the polls in my polling unit. Definitely, we can say democracy is progressing," he said.

Governor Bala

Mohammed urged supporters of his party to remain focused and not to engage in any electoral malpractice for the smooth conduct of the elections in the state.

The First Lady Hajija Aisha, commended the full participation of women in the process in her polling unit, and urged them not to relent in supporting the process for democratic development and urge them to do the needful.

ADC circulating fake result for Kabba/Bunu/Ijumu Federal constituency

From **AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja**

- **APC candidate**

THE candidate of the All Progressives Congress APC Kolawole Matthew, has refuted the claim by the African Democratic Congress (ADC) that the Independent National Electoral Commission INEC issued duly signed result sheet for Kabba/Bunu/Ijumu Constituency.

On the contrary, Kolawole said what the ADC were circulating was fake.

"Results were cancelled in two other polling units due to over voting which

were not collated by INEC in line with the electoral act, and everybody agreed to it. But the results cancelled in Otu Polling Unit and Egbeda- Egga Polling Units was due to violence at the poll.

"We have video evidences of when the electoral umpire declared the result inconclusive. I wonder why the same body who early declared election inconclusive will later issue a signed result as being circulated by ADC.

That shows that the ADC is circulating fake result."

He urged the ADC to approach the INEC to argue their case rather than heating up the polity with their fake results.

He however expressed optimism that he will win the supplementary election as those places canceled due to violence were his strong base.

APC accuses PDP, LP of heating up polity

THE Presidential Campaign Council, PCC, of the governing All Progressives Congress, APC, has accused the opposition Peoples Democratic Party, PDP and the Labour Party of planning to precipitate the crisis to discredit the results of the presidential and national assembly polls.

Director of Public Affairs and Chief Spokesperson, Tinubu/Shettima Presidential Campaign Council, Festus Keyamo, a Senior Advocate, on Sunday alleged that "Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) were presently putting undue pressure on some State Resident Electoral Commissioners of INEC to alter the results duly collated in the States before proceeding to Abuja to submit the results."

"This is despite the fact that the collated results are already well known by the public and the political parties as they were publicly declared, unit by unit and at the State level and electronically transmitted. This is with a view of creating

From **AMEDU JOSEPH**

HON. Abdullahi Ibrahim Ali Halims, candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), has been officially declared the winner of Ankpa, Omala and Olamaboro Federal Constituency election in a landslide victory that earned him eight thousand, four hundred and thirty three votes difference with the first runner up. The winner and ranking member elect of the House of Representatives, according to an official declaration by INEC, polled thirty four thousand, two hundred and eighty (34,280) votes to defeat his closest challenger, Hon. Joshua Adejoh of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), who polled twenty five thousand, eight hundred and forty seven (25,847) votes. Reacting to the result, Comrade Muhammed Nasiru, the Coordinator of Information, Visual and Strategic (IVS) Operations to Hon. Halims said the result scored by his principal is a reflection of the fact that Hon. Halims was and still highly loved by the people of Ankpa Federal Constituency. Halims got the landslide-winning figures from Ankpa (his home) Local Government Area where he polled nineteenth thousand, one hundred and eighty seven (19,187) votes

APC wins Ankpa Federal Constituency election

against his Ankpa indigenous rival, one Ahmed Sani who polled five thousand, one hundred and thirty eight (5,138) votes in Ankpa and came fourth in the overall results. The electoral umpire, INEC, through its Federal Constituency Returning Officer for Ankpa, Omala and Olamaboro Federal Constituency, Dr. Kadiri Wasiu formally declared Halims the "winner

and returned elected" at exactly 6.45PM Nigerian time. It could be recalled that Hon. Abdullahi Ibrahim Halims was elected into the Kogi State House of Assembly as a member representing Ankpa I State Constituency in 2007. He was appointed Chairman of the Kogi State Water Board in 2013 and first elected into the House of Representatives. in 2019.



Bello

Election: Returning Officer 'absconds' with results in Kogi

From **AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja**

THE Acting Kogi State Chairman, African Democratic Congress (ADC), Comrade Adaji Jibrin Udeli, has called on the Chairman, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Prof. Mahmood Yakubu to order the Returning Officer of Kabba/Bunu/Ijumu Federal Constituency in Kogi State, Dr. Baba Adamu to declare the candidate of the party winner of the election.

disparities in both the transmitted results and the hard copies and thereby sparking nationwide crises.

Arguing that the results of the election is one of the best so far conducted by INEC in the country, Keyamo We fully salute the resoluteness and steadfastness of these RECS so far and encourage them to continue their resilience in the face of such pressures. We salute INEC for organising, as we can see for now, one of the best elections in Nigeria from time immemorial.

He said the PCC has reliable information that the Labour Party was mobilising for what he described as another ENDSARS protest across the country next week and appealed to the security agencies to rise to the occasion and check those he considered were try "foist their will on the rest fo Nigerians" and "give the State RECS 24-hour close-guard and maximum APC accuses PDP, LP of heating up polity protection as they travel to submit their results in A b u j a .

He made the call on Monday during a press conference at the NUJ Press Centre, Lokoja where he expressed the devastation of the party to the injustice they suffered due to what the Returning Officer did to the candidate of the party, Arch. Salman Idris . Udeli, who disclosed that Arch. Idris scored 265, being the highest valid votes at the election and signed by Dr. Adamu.

The acting Chairman, who however, acknowledged that there were cancellations in some

polling units due to over voting in the exercise, said Dr. Adamu ought to have officially declared the results inconclusive rather than absconding with the result sheet.

" We call on the Chairman of INEC to do the needful by ordering the candidate of our party, Arch. Salaman Idris the winner of the election of Kabba/Bunu/Ijumu Federal Constituency," he said . He said doing so would be in conformity with the Electoral Act as well as averting crisis in the area.



Adamu



Mahmood

Politics

Gbajabiamila hails constituents for sixth term election

From JIDAUNA YANUNG

THE Speaker of the House of Representatives, Femi Gbajabiamila has hailed his constituents in the Surulere1 Federal Constituency of Lagos State for electing him for the 6th term.

Gbajabiamila emerged victorious during the Saturday's Presidential and National Assembly elections.

He polled 19,717 votes and defeated his closest opponent, BosunJeje of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), who scored 5,121 votes.

Gbajabiamila said he remains grateful to the people of Surulere 1 for giving him the sixth term mandate, noting that he would not disappoint them.

He said he would continue to work assiduously and bring more developmental projects to Surulere and beyond.

"I am immensely grateful to the people of Surulere for their overwhelming support. I do not take your support for granted.

"As your representative for the past 20 years, I have always protected your interest. I am proud of you as my constituents. I thank our teeming supporters, our Surulere APC leaders, party members, CDAs and residents for their massive



Gbajabiamila

support.

"This victory is not mine alone. It is a victory for democracy. Surulere has made history by this sixth mandate given to me, which would definitely spur me to do more for you," Gbajabiamila said.

The Speaker was first elected to the House of Representatives in 2003 to represent Surulere 1 Federal Constituency. Since then, he has won elections in the subsequent five election

cycles, including Saturday's.

Gbajabiamila remains the only lawmaker from South West geopolitical zone to have been elected six times to represent his constituency.

During his 20-year journey in the House of Representatives so far, Gbajabiamila has served as Minority Whip, Minority Leader, Opposition Leader, and Majority Leader before getting elected as Speaker in 2019. He remains the only lawmaker in Africa to have done this.

From John FWAH Kaduna

THE opposition People's Democratic Party (PDP) in Kaduna State has floored the ruling All Peoples Congress (APC) in the 2023 presidential elections held last Saturday.

Governor el-Rufai's ruling party won just two local government areas (LGAs) out of 23. The party suffered the defeat, when it lost to PDP with a margin of 155, 068 votes, and came second on the list with 399,293 votes.

According to the results, PDP won in 14 Local Government Areas with 554, 360 votes, while Labour Party who maintained third position secured 294, 494 votes, winning seven LGAs. NNPP had 92969 votes.

Prof. Muhammad Zayyan Umar, who was the Returning Officer for Kaduna State declared the results as follows

Giwa LG

APC - 19,922
PDP - 22,302
LP - 565
NNPP - 3,114

Kaura LG

APC - 1847
PDP - 7847

Kaduna 2023: PDP floors APC; sweeps 14 LGAS

LP - 25,744
NNPP - 320

Kajuru LG

APC - 3,940
PDP - 9,253
LP - 14,875
NNPP - 1,221

Soba LG

APC - 18,965
PDP - 23,364
LP - 354
NNPP - 3,722

Makarfi LG

APC - 13,767
PDP - 22,098
LP - 759
NNPP - 5,219

Jaba LG

APC - 3,131
PDP - 8,798
LP - 9,967
NNPP - 335

K/South LG

APC - 29,596
PDP - 42,996
LP - 22,577
NNPP - 9,124

Kauru LG

APC - 15,870
PDP - 19,018
LP - 11,293
NNPP - 3,128

Lere LG

APC - 24,695
PDP 34,149
LP - 15,568
NNPP - 7,264

Ikara LG

APC - 17,297
PDP - 24,540
LP - 994
NNPP - 4,274

Sanga LG

APC - 9,393
PDP 9,233

LP 9,088
NNPP - 356

Kagarko LG

APC - 9,698
PDP - 14,027
LP - 12,502
NNPP - 1,255

Kachia LG

APC - 12,053
PDP - 16,049
LP - 17,381
NNPP - 1,521

Zango Katag

APC - 5,877
PDP - 20,170
LP - 22,689
NNPP - 246

Zaria LG

APC - 41,422
PDP - 62,260
LP - 3,634
NNPP - 8729

Sabon Gari

APC - 25,714
PDP - 30,713
LP - 12,834
NNPP - 6,082

Kubau LG

APC - 20,139
PDP - 23,686
LP - 1,701
NNPP 4,819

Birnin Gwari

APC - 17,087
PDP - 8,774
LP 235
NNPP - 1,143

Chikun LG

APC - 9,367
PDP - 32,659
LP - 69,117
NNPP - 2,752

Kudan LG

APC - 11,630
PDP - 19,340
LP - 923
NNPP - 6,747

Jemma LG

APC - 10,928
PDP - 16,452
LP - 26,560
NNPP - 719

K/ North LG

APC - 39,693
PDP - 40,670
LP - 10,330
NNPP - 12,616

Igabi LG

APC - 37,259
PDP - 45,962
LP - 4,839
NNPP - 8,276

No of registered votes - **4,335,208**

No of accredited voters - **1,418,046**

No of votes cast - **1,401,376**

No of valid votes - **1,360,153**

No of rejected votes - **41,223**

APC sweeps Benue's Presidential, NASS polls

From TERESE TUHWA, Makurdi

THE All Progressives Congress (APC) has won Saturday February 25th, 2023 presidential election in Benue State and two of the three senatorial seats while Senator Aba Moro of the PDP representing Benue South Senatorial District was returned re-elected.

Meanwhile the state out going governor, Dr. Samuel Ortom and his predecessor Gabriel Suswam have lost bid to represent their constituents at the red chambers of the National Assembly.

Dr. Titus Zam of the All Progressives Congress (APC) polled a total of 143, 151 votes to defeat Governor Samuel Ortom of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) who polled 106, 882 votes.

Governor Ortom was floored by former Gwer West Local Government Council Chairman

and his former Adviser on Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Dr. Titus Zam just as his predecessor Senator Gabriel Suswam representing Benue Northeast Senatorial District (zone 'A') lost to immediate past member of Sankera (Ukum/Katsina-ala/Logo) Federal Constituency, Barr. Emmanuel Udende.

Also, the return bid to the green chambers by members representing Gboko/Tarka Federal Constituency, John Dyegh, Kwande/Ushongo Bob Tyough, Oju/Obi Samson Okwu, Katsina-Ala/Ukum-Logo Richard Gbande, Makurdi/Guma Benjamin Mzondo, Gwer/Gwer-west Mark G b i l a h a n d A d o / O k p o k w u / O g b a d i b o Francis OtahAgbo were dashed following their crash at the polls.

For Otukpo/Ohimini Federal Constituency, Mrs. Blessing Onuh, daughter of the former President of the Senate, David

Mark who won election into the House of Representatives on the platform of All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) but later defected to the All Progressives Congress (APC) was returned re-elected.

Out of the seven local government areas of zone 'A' where Dr. Suswam comes from, he won Logo his home local government while Vandeikya, Ushongo, Ukum, Konshisha, Katsina-Ala and Kwande local government areas were cleared by his rival Barr. Emmanuel Udende of the APC

In zone 'B' Senatorial District where Governor Ortom hails from, he won from his home local government area of Guma while Dr. Titus Zam of APC cleared Gboko, Makurdi, Tarka, Buruku, Gwer and Gwer-west Local Government Areas.

Governor Ishaku loses senate bid

By VICTOR GAI, Jalingo

TARABA State Governor, Darius Ishaku, the PDP senatorial candidate for Taraba South, has lost to the APC candidate, David Jimkuta by a wide margin.

In the result declared by the Returning Officer, Professor Solomon Adeyeye of the Department of Agriculture, Federal University Wukari, the APC candidate scored 85,815 while Ishaku of the PDP scored 45,708. The SDP candidate, Michael Magaji came third with 4133.

Also, the governor has lost Takum, his local government to the Labour Party, coming a distant third behind the APC in the Presidential election.

In the result declared at the State Collation Centre, the Labour Party won with 13,406 votes, followed by the APC which scored 5944 votes while the PDP scored 4890 votes.

On a similar note, Senator Shu'aibu Isa Lau has regained his seat as Senator representing Taraba North.

Declaring the result, the Returning Officer for Taraba Northern Senatorial District



Ishaku

election, Professor Chibiya Paul Chingu, DVC Central Admin Federal University, Wukari said the candidate returned elected with total of 74,645 votes to defeat Sani AbubakarDanladi who scored 61,878 votes.

Also, Isma'ilaYusha'u of the PDP has been declared winner of the House of Representatives for Jalingo, Yorro, Zing Federal Constituency.

Declaring the result, the Returning Officer for the Jalingo, Yorro, Zing Federal Constituency elections, Professor Ayuba Daniel Kwado, Director Examinations, Federal University, Wukari, Taraba State said the candidate returned elected with total number of 43,545 votes to defeat his opponent Kasimu Bello who scored 23,943.

The result for Taraba Central Senatorial district is however still pending.



Adamu

IMAGES

BRITISH AMERICAN FLYOVER

The British American road interchange and dualization project progress report as captured yesterday morning by The Nigeria Standard photographer



Front view of the flyover



Dual bridge before Green House (Government Guest House)



Photo showing the flyover from Dogon Karfe to Terminus and Lamingo road junction roundabout



Earth moving equipment putting some finishing touches on the flyover



Level of work on the Lamingo Junction roundabout



Level of the dualization work in progress as captured yesterday



Newly completed road along Lamingo Junction roundabout



Road from Terminus connecting Dogon Karfe and Lamingo road junction

PHOTOS: DANLADI DUK

Politics

2023 elections: There is light at the end of this tunnel

On Saturday the 25th of February, Africa's largest economy and most populous nation goes to polls. This election is a defining moment for Nigeria. It is occurring at a time when Nigeria is at a tipping point. Christians and more particularly, Catholics, are being slaughtered in the North and South-West regions, women and children are facing the brunt of the cost-of-living crisis with no assurance of food security, many young men are not gainfully employed, and businesses can't operate due to high insecurity and unconventional monetary policies.

EVEN before now, the country has had its own fair share of development challenges – poor health care, worsening schooling outcomes, dilapidated transport infrastructure and extreme weather events. These issues have been caused by an interplay of factors including bad governance, and have been exacerbated by recent events such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. The state of the nation has led to a migration crisis with young people emigrating abroad in droves for better economic opportunities. Put together, these factors make the 2023 elections very critical as the country is at crossroads.

Before delving further, here are a few facts about Nigeria and the elections. First, Nigeria has one of the youngest population structures globally, as two out of every five Nigerians are below 14 (World Bank, World Development Indicators). Second, the country is very diverse as there are up to 371 ethnic groups, the largest of which are Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo. Third, the leading presidential candidates in the 2023 elections are from the three large ethnic groups: Former Vice President Atiku Abubakar (Hausa), Former Governor of Lagos State Bola Ahmed Tinubu (Yoruba), and Former Governor of Anambra State Peter Obi (Igbo).

Because of the diverse nature of the country and scars from the civil war, voting patterns have been known to be guided by tribal sentiments. We saw this in 2015 when President Goodluck Jonathan, a Southerner, was ousted out of office on grounds of non-performance; whereas, this present administration has performed worse but still won elections in 2019 majorly because President Muhammadu Buhari was able to galvanize Northern votes. However, with the myriad of challenges the country is facing and the geopolitical tensions the world over, one would expect that competence rather than ethnic groupings will be the deciding factor in the 2023 elections.

Contrarily, it appears that some of our Fathers (and maybe even Mothers) are bent on making voting decisions along tribal lines. Earlier this week, I came across a video where Pastor Paul Adefarasin spoke about the possible outcome of the elections in a parable using the tribes of Israel and Judah. The history of Israel and Judah is well known to Christians: God has a covenant relationship with both tribes and chose them as his own.

Even when both tribes go against God's precepts, he rebukes them but very quickly receives them with open arms once they repent and turn towards him. My interpretation of Pastor Adefarasin's comments is that Judah is the Yoruba tribe (while Israel is the Hausa tribe); and Saul is Presidential Aspirant Bola Ahmed Tinubu while David is current Vice President Prof. Yemi Osinbajo, both of whom are Yorubas.

This is only my interpretation and I hope I am wrong about this because the implications are damning if I am right. Pastor Adefarasin is therefore suggesting that his congregation should vote for Bola Ahmed Tinubu despite his well-known health challenges.

Again, it is not surprising because historically, when tire meets the road at elections, we become divided along tribal lines and begin to think of ourselves as the enemies rather than our slave masters (who in some cases are Blacks and other minorities).

It is important to note that other dimensions of disparities come to play in Nigeria including gender, age, and socio-economic status but during elections, tribal discriminations are most apparent.

It is disappointing that in a country with 371 ethnic groups, there are people who still hold on to age-long belief systems that only the two



Mahmood

dominant ethnic groups – Hausa and Yoruba – are born to rule.

Worse still, they use youths as pawns to achieve their agenda. We saw how the youths were galvanized to Occupy Nigeria before the 2015 elections (on grounds of fuel subsidy removal) but were rebuked for taking initiative to mobilize to end police brutality under the EndSars campaign.

Rather than working towards ending school strikes, programmes like the Big Brother Nigeria are used as a way to dull the minds of young people. Sports betting, internet fraud and a drug

epidemic is killing young people and reducing their potential.

Nevertheless, it has been made clear that the minds of the youths are not a switch that can be turned off or on at will. Power is now in the hands of every individual – rich and poor, Southern and Northern, young and old, man and woman! The capacity to rule does not lie only within the top-two dominant ethnic groups (Hausa and Yoruba) or even the top-three dominant ethnic groups (including Igbo). The EndSars campaign demonstrated that we have all become leaders in our own right – we are all

enlightened and can think for ourselves.

Hausas and Yorubas may (with a big emphasis) have been the most enlightened ethnic groups when Nigeria gained independence 62 years ago but the situation has evolved and we should be thankful that it has. Nigerians from all ethnic groups are demonstrating excellence.

Only last year, a South Eastern medical doctor in the diaspora contributed US\$1 million to his university alumni. In 2021, a young man from the South-South, Damini Ogulu AKA Burna Boy, won the Grammys for Best Global Music Album. At the last Olympics in 2022, the quartet of Joy Udo-Gabriel, Favour Ofili, Rosemary Chukwuma and Grace Nwokocha, all Southerners, brought us the gold medal for the 4*100 meter relay.

When talent meets hard work, every Nigerian – rich and poor, Southern and Northern, young and old, man and woman – can lead exemplary lives.

On Saturday, there is no APC, PDP, Labour Party or NNPP (these are the leading political parties in Nigeria); there is only Nigeria and the enemies of Nigeria. If we are honest with ourselves, there is only one credible candidate. Not being a kleptomaniac should not be the minimum criteria required for a President, but in this case, it is. On top of that, the right candidate has shown an example worthy of emulation in governance, business, and in his personal life.

I am speaking up because our ancestors (both the ones that stayed back on the continent and those who became slaves in foreign lands) will turn in their graves to see that their descendants couldn't get the basic task of electing the obvious best candidate right. And so, because of this failure we may have no other option than to

become teachers, nurses, health care workers, being offered the bare minimum wage, to those that seek to continue enslaving us; those that are bent on treating us less than how they treat themselves.

This is not to denigrate any profession – we are all equal in the eyes of God but I used these examples because of the video where an older Caucasian woman spat on her health care worker and also because some countries are threatening to replace their striking teachers with Africans who are ready to work at any wage rate.

In conclusion, Nigerians are incredibly smart people. But haven't you ever wondered how the same Nigerians that outwit the world in other countries, have the worst country to come to. It is because tribalism and other biases underpins our most critical decisions. The leaders we've been electing are not accidents and the leader we will elect on Saturday will certainly not be an accident; it will be the leader we truly desire and deserve.

To the international community who are watching closely, support us by using your soft power to ensure that the lives of the most vulnerable among us are not sacrificed because of the ambitions of the ruling class. But please do not interfere in this process. Let the world watch as we outwit ourselves to select the candidate that will serve the people and bring long-term progress and prosperity.

PS: There is a reason why I don't mention Pastor Adefarasin's church in this article – because the man is separate from the church; and the body of Christ, no matter how flawed it may be, is part of God's tool kit in bringing salvation to the world

NigeriaDecides2023: Politicians engage in open rebellion

By Bakare Majeed

THE latest fuddle about the 2023 internal wrangling within political parties, often due to poor internal democracy, is a major feature of party-based politics in Nigeria. This has caused politicians to defect from their parties with "thousands of supporters".

Oftentimes, in buildups to elections in Nigeria, defections are a common phenomenon as politicians move around seeking refuge. Sometimes, the migration could be an "opportunistic move" by politicians to join parties that are likely to win.

In the build-up to the 2023 general elections, a new phenomenon is of politicians openly working against their parties. Some of the politicians have been able to carry out this anti-party activity despite the constitution of their parties forbidding such.

For instance, Article 21. A.II of the constitution of the APC forbids "Antiparty activities or any conduct, which is likely to embarrass or have adverse effect on the party or bring the party into hatred, contempt, ridicule or disrepute."

Also, Section 58.1.f provides that "subject to the provision of this constitution, the party shall have power to discipline any member who engages in anti-party activities."

Despite the position of the constitutions of the two major parties on "anti-party" activities, there are several cases of open rebellion by politicians, who for different reasons are backing candidates of political parties other than theirs.

Here are some of the most popular cases of open rebellion by politicians

against their parties in the current transition process.

Governor Nyesom Wike of Rivers State has been at the forefront of a rebellion against the PDP since losing the presidential primary election to Atiku Abubakar. In the past seven months, the governor has built a coalition with some governors, including Seyi Makinde of Oyo State, Samuel Ortom of Benue State, Okezie Ikpeazu of Abia and Ifeanyi Ugwanyi of Enugu State.

However, due to local political situations in their respective states, it has been difficult for them to unanimously endorse a single presidential candidate. For instance, in the case of Rivers State, it has been a case of moves on the chess board.

The PDP National Working Committee struck first by discontinuing the case filed by the local PDP under the control of the governor against the primary elections of APC and Democratic Party (SDP) in Rivers State. The move by the PDP was designed to strengthen the opposition in the state, particularly the APC, in a bid to forestall an alliance between Messrs Tinubu and Wike.

Governor Wike responded by accusing the PDP national body of anti-party collusion with APC Rivers. As a course of action, he revoked the permit granted to the PDP presidential campaign council for holding a rally. The political atmosphere in Rivers became so tense that Atiku was forced to call off the rally in Port Harcourt.

Also, the development has created tension in the APC in the state, as the former Minister of Transportation and

chieftain of the APC in Rivers, Rotimi Amaechi, boycotted the presidential rally of the party in the state.

Unperturbed about the situation in APC Rivers, Mr Tinubu visited Governor Wike during the campaign to stop in Rivers.

In Benue State, Mr Ortom has openly endorsed the presidential candidate of the Labour Party, Peter Obi. The reason for backing the former Anambra State governor may be connected with the political reality in Benue State. Unlike in Rivers State, the governorship candidate of the APC, Hyacinth Alia, a clergyman, poses a significant threat to Mr Ortom's succession plan.

On the other hand, the Labour Party presents a safe option for the incumbent governor who is about to complete his tenure and has set his sights on a Senate seat. It is safe to say that the Labour Party cares more about the presidential election than the governorship poll.

Secondly, the Labour Party senatorial candidate that is challenging Mr Ortom in Benue State South West district appears to be in a difficult situation. Mark Gbillah, a member of the House of Representatives, is the candidate of the Labour Party and also the candidate of the New Nigeria Peoples Party, according to the INEC official list.

Section 115(1) (d) of the Electoral Act provides that "any person who signs a nomination paper or result form as a candidate in more than one constituency at the same election commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a term of imprisonment."

Mr Gbillah had told PREMIUM TIMES that he has filed a lawsuit

against the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) on the appearance of his name as a candidate in the two parties. He claimed that he resigned from the NNPP in line with section 31 of the Electoral Act.

However, his name continues to appear on the INEC list as the candidate of both parties. With this, Mr Gbillah is facing uncertainty pending the determination of the case on his candidacy.

Mr Gbillah's situation could mean that the Labour Party poses no challenge to Mr Ortom's ambition. Not surprisingly, Mr Tinubu did not visit the governor when he visited Benue State for his rally because having Mr Alia is, arguably, more important.

Oyo State presents a much more delicate situation for Mr Makinde, the state governor. Within the PDP in Oyo State, the pro-Atiku camp led by Jumoke Akinjide, the former minister of state for FCT, appears to be formidable in the state. At the PDP presidential rally in Ibadan, the only person missing was the Oyo State governor as every other candidate appeared at the rally.

What makes Mr Makinde's situation seems precarious is that he is the only member of the G5 that is seeking re-election as governor, and he is running against formidable opponents like Teslim Folarin of the APC and Bayo Adelabu of the Accord Party. And considering the fact that only one governor has ever been elected to a second term in the history of the state, the alliance between Messrs Tinubu and Makinde seems complicated.

NEWS

NUT tasks members on objectivity, professionalism

From ANENE AIKE, Sokoto

THE Sokoto State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), has cautioned members of the pen profession to ensure accuracy, objectivity and balanced reportage throughout the 2023 elections.

A statement signed by the state council Chairman, Dalhatu Abdullahi SafiyalMagori strongly warned members against bias or partisanship at the expense of objectivity, describing such as unethical in election coverage.

He charged members to put in their best inline with professional ethics and, as well as see



Isiguzo

national interest and security as watch word especially at this time that Nigerians go to polls to elect new leaders.

Dalhatu Abdullahi noted that journalists should see themselves as responsible citizens and

contribute toward maintaining peace, unity and national cohesion among all Nigerians.

SafiyalMagori said the stand of the union is that any member who embraces partisan politics is on his own.

'Cultural festival should promote peace, unity'

A lecturer with the Department of History and International Studies, University of Jos, Mr. Santos Ayuba T. Larab has said that cultural festival should serve as a vehicle for promoting peace and unity among the diverse ethnic nationalities.

Larab stated this in his capacity as a guest speaker during this year's annual Tidiu Cultural Festival organized by the Kombun Traditional Council in conjunction with the Mwaghavul Development Association (MDA) Kombun District branch in Mangu Local Government Area (LGA) of Plateau State recently.

The guest speaker who spoke on the topic: "Our culture, our heritage and our identity; expression of Kombun people in the Tidiu Festival," explained that the importance of multifaceted perspectives of culture, heritage and

By
JIDAUNA DARING

identity expressed through cultural festivals have been lost due to challenge of time and window of materialistic drive by the present generation.

Larab said that the changes experienced in the light of "so-called" modernity has eroded the value of culture and traditions making it difficult to pass down to succeeding generations. He emphasized that customs, identity, heritage and traditions are no doubt catalysts for development.

He maintained that transition of culture is defined through images, music, clothing, customs, dialogue, language/dialect, sound and festivals in communities. He added that there is an urgent need to revive, sustain and preserve it at all times.

Chairman of Mangu Local Government Council (LGC), Hon. Minister Daput who was represented by Hon. Peter Dazel, commended the resilience and commitment of the Mwaghavul people towards peace and development.

Daput disclosed that the Mwaghavul people are known as industrious and hardworking. He reaffirmed the support of the council towards community development.

He reiterated the need for his people who are known as peace setters to unite more than ever before by expressing their cultural values.

In his remarks, chairman of the occasion, Engr. Danladi Mwantok said that the festival which holds during leisure time after every harvest period, is also connected with hunting, horse racing, dances and exhibition of preserved historical tools and artifacts.

Mwantok remarked that "Tidiu serves as a means of social interaction among the Mwaghavul and the non-Mwaghavul people as well as young boys and girls.

He advised youths in Kombun and the entire Mwaghavul land to reciprocate the efforts of their forefathers by preserving their much cherished culture and heritage among others.

Mishkaham Mwaghavul, Da John Putmang Hirse cautioned youths against consumption of illicit drugs and other social vices that are capable of negatively affecting their future.

Hirse called on the Mwaghavul people to come out enmass to exercise their

HEAD of the Inter-ministerial Committee, Mr. Noah Andrew has said the Federal University of Health Sciences Otukpo Teaching Hospital (FUHSOTH) will inherit staff of the General Hospital, Otukpo.

Mr. Andrew made this known when the committee visited the Vice Chancellor of the University, Professor Innocent Ujah at the take off campus Otada during staff verification exercise of both clinical and non-clinical staff of General Hospital Otukpo, for absorption into Federal Government payroll as staff of the University Teaching Hospital.

The committee head maintained that the exercise was done seamlessly without hitches, adding that the university will inherit 350 staff of the hospital into her fold.

Dr. Andrew, an erstwhile student and mentee of the

Fuhso to inherit Otukpo General Hospital staff

From
TERESE TUHWA, Makurdi

Vice Chancellor thanked Professor Ujah for being an outstanding mentor and leader of repute and extolled the university management for the hospitality.

The Vice Chancellor while responding commended the committee for its tireless effort to ensure the smooth take off of the teaching hospital of the first Federal Government Medical University in Nigeria.

Professor Ujah thanked Dr. Noah and his team for working within a tight schedule, stressing that the university was doing everything possible to provide quality medical services to the people of the zone and Nigeria as a whole. He pointed out that the

university has won a mega research grant from TETFund on Lassa Fever.

The former chairman, Nigeria Medical Association (NMA) also informed the committee of the philanthropic support from the first Senior Advocate of Nigeria from Benue South Senatorial District, Barr. Godwin Obla SAN, for building and donating a Dialysis Center to the University at the Teaching Hospital with state of the art equipment which will be commissioned soon.

Registrar of the university, Mallam Aminu Abba in a remark appreciated the committee for its thorough job and sued for more.

The Inter ministerial Committee comprises staff of Federal Ministry of Health, staff of Office of the Head of Civil Service as well as staff of Budget Office of the Federation.

Senate President sympathizes with victims of fire incidence

From JIDAUNA YANUNG

THE President of the Senate, Ahmad Lawan has sympathized with the

victims of the early morning fire that gutted the popular Monday Market in Maiduguri, Borno State on Sunday.

In a statement by his Media Adviser, Ola Awoniyi, Lawan sympathized with shops and property owners who must have suffered unquantifiable loss to the fire incident.

He also commiserated with the state government and the entire people of Borno over the unfortunate incident. And expressed the belief that the appropriate authorities would find out the cause of the incident with a view to preventing a recurrence. "I commiserate with all the victims particularly the traders and shop owners who are directly impacted by the early morning fire incident at the Maiduguri Monday Market.

"My sympathy also goes to the government and the entire people of Borno over the incident. We thank Almighty Allah that there was no report of loss of life in the incident.

"I have no doubt that relevant authorities will thoroughly investigate the

cause of the fire outbreak to prevent a recurrence,"

Meanwhile the All Progressive Congress (APC) candidate for Bende Federal Constituency and the current spokesperson, Hon. Benjamin Kalu has been re-elected into the Federal House. Hon. Kalu, defeated Hon. Nnenna Ukeje of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and eight others to emerge the winner of Saturday, February 25, 2023, National Assembly elections.

Announcing the result of the election at the Bende Local Government headquarters, the Returning Officer, Adindu Chidinma, Sunday evening, said that 22,308 voters were accredited to vote and Hon. Ben. Kalu polled 10,020 votes to come top in the contest and declared him elected.

Hon. Ukeje of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) former Federal House member representing Bende Federal Constituency came third position with 3,930 votes and the Labour Party candidate coming second with 6,818 votes.



Dah Hirse



Lawan

News

FG cautions Obasanjo not to truncate electoral process

The Federal Government has admonished former President Olusegun Obasanjo not to truncate the 2023 general elections with his inciting, self-serving and provocative letter on the polls.

The admonition is contained in a statement issued on Monday in Abuja by the Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed.

The statement was made available to the media by Mr Segun Adeyemi, the Special Assistant to the President (Media) Office of the Minister.

Mohammed said what the former president framed as an 'appeal for caution and rectification' was nothing but a calculated attempt to undermine the electoral process and a willful incitement to violence.

The minister expressed shock and disbelief that a former president could throw around unverified claims and amplify wild allegations picked against the electoral process.

"Though masquerading as an unbiased and concerned elder statesman, former president Obasanjo is in reality a known partisan who is bent on thwarting, by subterfuge, the choice of millions of Nigerian voters," he said.

Mohammed recalled that the former president, in his time, organised perhaps the worst elections since Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999.

According to the minister, Obasanjo is the least qualified to advise a president whose determined effort to leave a legacy of free, fair, credible and transparent elections is well acknowledged within and outside Nigeria.

"As the whole nation waits with bated breath for the result of last Saturday's national elections amid unnecessary tension created by professional complainants and political jesters. What is expected from a self-respecting elder statesman are words and actions that douse tension and serve as a soothing balm.

"Instead, former president Obasanjo used his unsolicited letter to insinuate, or perhaps wish for, an inconclusive elections and a descent into anarchy.

"He used his time to cast aspersion on electoral officials who are unable to



Obasanjo

defend themselves, while surreptitiously seeking to dress his personal choice in the garb of the people's choice. This is duplicitous," he said.

The minister reminded the former president that organising elections in Nigeria is not a mean feat.

He said the process was not a mean feat considering the fact that the voter population of 93,469,008 in the country was 16,742,916 more than the total number of registered voters, at 76,726,092, in 14 West African nations put together.

Mohammed said that the process was not a mean feat considering the deployment of more than 1,265,227 electoral officials, the infusion of technology to enhance the electoral process and the logistical nightmare of sending election materials across the vast country,

NGO screens 80,198 persons for cancers in 6 years

The Lift Above Poverty Organisation (LAPO), a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), says it screened 88,198 persons for different types of cancers between 2016 and 2022.

Dr Honestus Obadiora, the Executive Director of LAPO, said this during the organisation's Annual Media Forum in Benin on Monday.

Obadiora said the screening was done under the LAPO Community Campaign for Cancer Control (LAPO-C4) programme in selected states of the country.

He said, "between January 2016 and December 2022, LAPO-C4 project created awareness about cancer in target communities and sensitised 3,368,142 community members against cancer".

"About 86,198 of the

The minister said INEC was availing itself creditably, going by the preliminary reports of the ECOWAS Electoral Observation Mission and the Commonwealth Observer Group, among other groups that observed the elections.

"Therefore, those arrogating to themselves the power to cancel an election and unilaterally fix a date for a new one, ostensibly to ameliorate perceived electoral infractions, should please exercise restraint.

"They should allow the official electoral body to conclude its duty by announcing the results of the 2023 national elections. "After that, anyone who is aggrieved must follow the stipulated legal process put in place to adjudicate electoral disputes, instead of threatening fire and conjuring apocalypse," he said. (NAN)

beneficiaries were screened and referred for further screening and treatment in government-approved health facilities."

He attributed the problems militating against cancer control in Nigeria to inadequate awareness and poor access to screening services.

The executive director, however, said that almost 102,000 new cases of cancer occur annually in Nigeria with more than 60 per cent in women due to breast and cervical cancer.

Obadiora advised women to regularly check their health status as breast and cervical cancers posed a serious threat to their lives.

According to him, with early detection, more than 80 per cent of cancer cases are preventable, while 40 per cent of the disease can be eradicated by lifestyle changes. (NAN)



Note to self

SO many things happen for a reason and it is when we appreciate these things that you would understand the nature and character of God. Sometimes you gloat over certain issues and feel deflated for no just reason. When you feel despair, look up to the creator, pray. Make peace with yourself.

Life is not about what you get but about what you give. Life only makes meaning when you can help someone who on his own cannot do certain things. It is by helping out that you can get fulfilment and satisfaction.

When you are unable to reach your potentials, know that you need to push yourself. This is because it is only you that can limit yourself. Try in every situation to make the most of whatever there is that you are working at.

If you fail to try, you already have provided the ground for failure and blame. Focus, drive yourself and reach out to the skies. Long ago I learnt that each and everyone of us is imbued with the needed drive to succeed. If you truly want something, you must show you want it by pursuing and focusing on your set objective. Never look back especially when you are convinced that what you are pursuing is what you really desire.

I had given up so easily in the past even when I felt what I was doing was in the best interest of the society. But because there were roadblocks on the way, I had felt withdrawing was the best option. After abandoning this task, then regret often creeps in for leaving undone something that humanity perhaps would have been the ultimate beneficiary. Society suffers when we fail to attain our dreams. In being fulfilled, you exude positive energy. When you are in such a state, you definitely would reach out, impact on your immediate surroundings

and change things for the better.

Let us do politics with reason

It is the season of politicking. Politicians, many of them are running for offices. In the process some may fail to make it to the offices they are seeking to occupy. But we must know that if you cannot secure an office, it does not mean the end of your life. This is passing a note of caution to especially followers who often react negatively on behalf of their principal. Do not breach the peace because that you can get fulfilment to an office. There is always a second chance. Be positive and upward looking. Go back to the drawing board and see what you did not do right.

Do not fight. Do not put unnecessary pressure on the society. It already has myriad of problems to contend with.

Let us not forget that it is because we failed to tame our ambitions that we are suffering from insecurity. Boko Haram, kidnappings, killings and the likes would have been minimal if we had been able to tame some of our ambitions.

Politicians must also tame their data boys. They must be made to know in very clear terms that whatever they post must be cross checked to ensure that it is not false. Dishing out false information is tantamount to causing disaffection in the society and that does not speak well of people who want to project a principal who seeks to run a trust on behalf of a people. We must be diligent and cautious in whatever we do so that we do not stock the embers of hatred and distrust.

Some of our religious leaders are to say the least, not supposed to be given the opportunity to address their congregations. Anything they spew out only shows who they are. They preach hate and destruction not salvation. Some of them are merchants who feed fat on the ignorance and gullibility of the people. There are some religious adherents who are so illiterate that once "mallam ya ce" it becomes the gospel. They can kill on behalf of that mallam and claim it is the will of God. Such commercial preachers must be helmed in to ensure peaceful coexistence and growth in the communities.

If meaningful progress is to be made, therefore, these messengers of hate must be picked and cautioned no matter how highly placed they might be in the society. After all they are supposed to minister to and assist in saving the souls of the people from damnation not commercializing their preachments.

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News

PDP, LP, ADC demand fresh election,

Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the Labour Party (LP) and African Democratic Congress (ADC) have demanded fresh elections, saying the February 25 presidential election has been "irretrievably compromised".

LP National, Julius Abure; the PDP chairman, Iyorchia Ayu; as well as their ADC counterpart, Ralph Nwosu, made this known at a joint press conference in Abuja on Tuesday.

They alleged that Saturday's presidential and National Assembly elections were manipulated by officials of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) at polling units by their failure to upload results electronically on the commission's Results Viewing Portal (IREV).

Abure, who spoke on behalf of the LP, PDP and the ADC, said, "This election is not free and far from being fair", adding that there are "ongoing cancellation of results from areas of strength of the opposition parties".

They declared a vote of no confidence on INEC chairman, Mahmood Yakubu and asked him to immediately step aside for an unbiased person to take over and conduct a fresh election.

The LP, PDP and ADC said the deliberate refusal of the INEC chairman to respect the upload of results electronically as stipulated by Section 60 of the Electoral Act 2022 is unacceptable.

The three parties said the result so far by INEC showed "monumental disparities" between what the party agents signed and what INEC officials announced in Abuja.

They said the manual transmission of results compromised the integrity of the election process.

Drama At Collation Centre Channels Television had reported that agents of the PDP and the LP stormed out of the National Collation Centre for the presidential election results at the International Conference Centre in Abuja on Monday.

A member of the 8th National Assembly from Kogi West Senatorial District, Dino Melaye; and a former governor of Imo State, Emeka Ihedioha; an agent of the Labour Party, amongst others staged a walkout on the INEC chairman over dissatisfaction on the process of the collation of results from state collation officers for the presidential election (SCOPs).

The drama ensued around 4:30pm on Monday at the resumed collation exercise of the February 25 presidential election results for the second day.

Melaye, Ihedioha, as well as the agents of the Labour Party and others, had complained that the results presented by INEC SCOPs weren't uploaded on IREV as repeatedly promised by the electoral umpire before the February 25 presidential poll.

Melaye argued strongly that without the upload of results electronically on IREV, this year's election is not in any way different from the manual



Mamood

transmission of results done in 2015.

Melaye and others fiercely insisted that the INEC chairman must not accept the results of Ekiti, alleging that there were incidents of over voting and electoral irregularities. They contended that the collation of results at the centre is at variance with provisions of the Electoral Act 2022 and that they do not believe in the results presented by the SCOPs.

However, the INEC chairman maintained that there was no over voting in Ekiti and that the results presented by the SCOPs stand. Yakubu also said the process must continue.

In reaction, Melaye, Ihedioha and others stormed out of the national collation centre.

Mahmood had on Monday cautioned Melaye not to be "disruptive" of the collation process at the insistence of the PDP chieftain that the results announced by the SCOPs should first have been uploaded on IREV for transparency and accountability.

Election observer group calls on INEC to tackle challenges in results collation

An election observer group, Ready To Lead Africa, on Monday in Abuja called on INEC to tackle challenges affecting collation of results of Saturday's elections.

President of the group, Mr Godbless Otubure, told a news conference that it observed that the elections were dogged by logistics

The collation for Day 2 continued in their absence. The collation for Day 3 is scheduled for 2pm on Tuesday.

Already, results have been released for about 13 states with the top parties sharing the wins. PDP's Atiku Abubakar, LP's Peter Obi and Bola Tinubu of the All Progressives Congress (APC) have won some of the states.

Many party leaders have bitterly complained that INEC officials at the polling units were unable to upload election results to the IREV. The IREV and the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) are new technologies introduced by the electoral body for the accreditation and electronic transmission of votes for this year's polls.

Elections for the office of the President, 360 House of Representatives and 109 Senatorial seats were held in the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory on Saturday and Nigerians expect the declaration of results by the electoral umpire.



Buhari

An Abuja based Islamic cleric, Sheikh Yahya Al-Yolawi, has called on newly elected political leaders in the country to fear Allah and fulfill their electioneering campaign promises when they assume office.

Al-Yolawi gave the advice in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), on Tuesday in Abuja.

He said that being truthful in promises and covenants was one of the best characteristics by which true believers were known.

"I will like to remind our brothers and sisters in Islam, those who were elected in the President and National Assembly elections to fear Allah and endeavour to fulfill their electioneering campaign promises.

"They should also justify the confidence reposed in them by the electorate, by ensuring transparency and accountability in the management of resources that will be entrusted to them.

"They should also ensure the

Election: Cleric tasks newly elected political leaders



Tambuwal

protection of lives, properties and learn from the mistakes of their immediate predecessors; leadership is about trust and you will be asked by God on what you were entrusted with."

The cleric also enjoined them to work hard and emplace policies that would enhance the

living conditions of ordinary citizens.

"This means that leaders must have very close relationship with followers so that they can contribute their energy and work together towards realising and achieving set goals," Al-Yolawa said.

Protesters storm collation centre in Abuja,

Some protesters on Tuesday stormed the Presidential Collation Centre at the International Conference Centre in Abuja to demand for electronic transmission of results from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

The protesters in their numbers, who said they were members of the difference political parties, were expressing dissatisfaction over refusal to use electric transmission of results as promised by the electoral umpire before the election.

Speaking with newsmen during the protest which took place at Emeka Anyaoku street (about a kilometre to the coalition centre), one of the protesters, Ilemona Onoja, said their major demand is for the INEC Chairman to fulfil what he promised Nigerians

several before the election, which is transparent and open process.

According to Onoja, the process is not being followed. Instead what we are seeing is a situation where results that were written, that didn't follow the process, are being announced as the results of the election contrary to the provisions of the Electoral Act, contrary to the INEC guidelines that they issued, and contrary to the promises of the INEC chairman.

"We came out on the 25th of February to cast our votes for our preferred candidates. We were told that a process was going to be followed. This process involves accreditation, voting and our ballots will be counted. After it has been counted, it will be transmitted directly to a central server. And that on the day of the election,

at the national collation centre, that central server will be displayed and we will be able to follow the results.

"Now, all we are saying is, we don't mind if our preferred candidate loses, just give us a transparent and open process. Let us be able to see the results. INEC promised us they will follow a certain procedure, we are asking them to follow it."

Also speaking, another angry protester, Barrister Lillian Kozau, called on President Muhammadu Buhari not to allow his image be tarnished and his legacy be destroyed by the INEC.

She said: "INEC assured us that it would be a transparent process. They assured us of a transparent process and that the BVAS would be used, which is supposed to be an electronic process. Yet, after three days, 23 states still need to be uploaded. Why? Does this mean we will be doing this for one week?"

"Why will a result be deleted from a platform after it has been uploaded? What are they up to? All we asked for was a transparent process. We just wanted whoever we voted for to emerge as the president of this country. We just wanted hope; we just wanted things to work. We are not asking for too much."

"We are not violent. Nobody is holding any weapon; we are just trying to make our voices heard. Please, our president should call INEC chairman to order. Eight years have passed, and we don't care what happened. We are looking to the future. Buhari should not let his legacy to be tarnished. Let them follow due process. Whosoever, we have voted for should be announced as the president of the country. Let things be done rightly."

In her own, Dr. Lovett Izeakor, called on international community, international observers and all the lovers of democracy in the whole world to mount pressure on the government of President Muhammadu Buhari to do the right thing by ensuring that INEC stick to the promise of electronic transition of results.

the efforts of INEC.

"We deployed observers across the 36 states of the federation.

"In the course of duty, many of them observed incidents of violence, malfunctioning of equipment or malpractice during the voting and counting stages at different collation centres.

"There had been several incidents of result collation centres either not opening or opening late.

"In addition, they observed 34 incidents of violence, 31 of vote counting suspension, and 30 of polling stations running out of material," he said.

Otubure said a police officer harassed one of the group's observers at Omuma Local Government Area of Rivers and she was denied access to the collation centre in the area.

He added that observers reported faulty Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) machines in Rivers.

He said also that reports from Obiakpor Local

Government Area and, Woji Town Hall, both in Rivers indicated that voting process was slow at two polling units.

He explained that at the two units, INEC officials arrived late and needed extra time to set up the BVAS machines.

"Also, in Oyo State, the collation process took much longer than normal; with collation starting extremely late at the local government area level," he said.

Otubure said results collations were delayed in so many areas of Lagos State with many presiding officers reporting delay in obtaining materials.

He advised INEC to ensure strict adherence to the Electoral Act 2022, and INEC guidelines on results collation.

He, however, commended high voter turnout and Nigerians' high expectation of the elections outcome.

He called on Nigerians to remain calm and to retain trust in the electoral umpire, and only undertake legal means where necessary.

Foreign Commentary

The Darfur conflict revisited: Lessons un-learned

I first stumbled on the formative phase of the ongoing conflict in Darfur almost by accident during a brief visit to el-Fasher, the region's capital, in January 1988. I was accompanying the then-Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi to a tribal reconciliation conference. Amid the deceptively peaceful sandy terrain of this charming town, it came to me as a shock that horrors had been taking place in this part of Sudan, writes ABDELAHAB-EL-AFFENDI.

I heard claims of dreadful atrocities, even attempts at extermination, particularly from representatives of the Fur ethnicity. It took me some time to figure out what was going on: an unprecedentedly brutal "ethnic" war was in full swing, pitting a bizarre "Arab" coalition of tribes against the Fur, a Nilo-Saharan ethnic group that gave the region its name (Darfur, the land of the Fur). While tribal conflicts had been a perennial feature of this region, they had been usually localised and brief, with limited casualties.

That one was different; unlocking its complexities is key to fathoming the continuing crisis in Darfur, which erupted 20 years ago. Despite being one of the most discussed, studied, and mediatised tragedies in recent history, many of the puzzles surrounding this crisis remain unsolved: its unusual level of brutality and rapid escalation, extremely high human cost, and its instant "spectacularisation".

The roots of the conflict in Darfur have both regional and local dimensions. The region borders Libya and Chad to the west, which has had a destabilising effect on it. In 1965, the Chadian Civil War erupted, as various groups in the sparsely populated country rebelled against the government. Most of the factions fighting in the conflict were based in Darfur and many Sudan-based "Arab" tribes got involved.

The situation became even more complicated in the 1970s when Libya under Muammar Gaddafi started backing some rebel groups and Egypt and the US lent support to the government. This only increased the influx of sophisticated weapons into the region.

The flow of immigrants from Chad and beyond also led to a new spirit of self-assertion by the Arabs and their allies among minor tribes, and frequent incursions by them into traditionally Fur (and Masalit) territory. The conflict was exacerbated by the proliferation of militias, and by land and water scarcity. This created inter-tribal tensions and the Fur reacted by restricting traditional access to farmlands and water resources for the nomadic "Arabs".

As the Chadian Civil War fizzled out, another conflict was re-ignited in Sudan's south in the early 1980s. The rebellion against the government was led by the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), which purported to represent the demands of all marginalised people in the country. The SPLA penetrated into Darfur, launching attacks against government forces there and later encouraging local rebellion.

The response from Khartoum was to arm the tribes of Darfur so they would act as a buffer against future attacks and enlist tribal militias to fight the rebellion.

Tensions between the Fur and Arab tribes escalated in 1987 into a two-year-long conflict. Since it involved many non-Sudanese actors, the traditional tribal restraints on excessive violence were not respected.

That war ended when a new and more moderate Fur governor was appointed in Darfur in 1989, making the regional government a



Hamdok

mediator rather than a party to the conflict. Ironically, the June 1989 coup led by Omar Al-Bashir also helped, since it removed the partisan rivalry in Khartoum, which had exacerbated tensions in Darfur. Within one week of the coup, the last remaining obstacle to the agreement was resolved, and peace was restored.

However, as the new military regime intensified its war in the South, especially after using Arab militias to quell the 1991 SPLA attack in Darfur, it began to lean more towards the Arabs. Tensions persisted and were exacerbated by recurring droughts and the entanglement of various groups in regional conflicts.

In early 2003, a group calling itself Darfur's Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) started attacking military and public institutions in Darfur. In April, it launched a spectacular raid on el-Fasher's airport, in which several military planes were destroyed. In May, the regime removed the more sober governor of North Darfur, a loyalist non-Arab, who had tried to contain the conflict by reaching out to the rebels and seeking to promote consensus among Darfurians.

The regime's pursuit of a quick "military solution" backfired badly, leading to an even more misguided decision to mobilise "Arab" militias, pejoratively known as the Janjaweed. A scorched earth policy was then implemented in combined attacks by these irregulars, the army and the air force, resulting in the destruction of hundreds of villages, the indiscriminate killing of tens of thousands and the displacement of millions. This did little to quell the

rebellion. The devastation was horrendous.

In this regard, it was natural that the atrocities should capture considerable international attention. But the intensity and breadth of interest remain unique, compared, for example, to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (1998-2003), where 5 million were killed, or even to the Rwandan genocide of 1994, which the US initially refused to classify as such. Even the war in South Sudan, which by then had been raging for two decades and had taken the lives of some 2 million people, did not receive comparable attention.

This occasioned some amazement and plenty of conspiracy theories. Even more sober voices, like Columbia University's scholar Mahmood Mamdani, marvelled at this disproportionality. In his case, he compared the simultaneous US intervention in Iraq, where the number of civilian casualties was much higher (by American figures), but was dubbed a "counter-insurgency", rather than a genocide. Mamdani blamed US propaganda for the disparity, and described the "Save Darfur Movement", which championed the Darfur cause internationally, as a "humanitarian face of the war on terror".

But the reality is a bit more nuanced. A combination of factors brought the conflict in Darfur to the international media spotlight, including the world marking the 10th anniversary of the Rwanda genocide in 2004 and Sudan's struggling with its reputation as a "rogue state", "terror sponsor" and perpetrator of atrocities in the war

in the South.

The media itself also played a role. In March 2004, Mukesh Kapila, the UN humanitarian coordinator in Sudan, decided to go public with his misgivings about the international inaction on the "ongoing genocide" in Darfur. He did so on the influential Today programme, a flagship of BBC Radio 4. He lost his job, but the impact of his interview was similar to that of British journalist Michael Burke's 1984 report for the BBC on the famine in Ethiopia. The popular reaction was phenomenal.

Soon after, Western politicians scrambled to catch up with the popular mood. Every Western foreign minister worth their salt interrupted their summer holiday and flew to Darfur, in appropriate summer attire, of course. US Secretary of State Colin Powell was joined by the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan on the visit. Neither of them would have normally visited Sudan. The UN agreed on a peacekeeping mission in Darfur within just two weeks.

In July 2004, the Committee on Conscience of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum made its first-ever "genocide emergency" declaration, warning that "genocide is imminent or is actually happening in the Darfur region of Sudan". From there on, the issue snowballed and became self-reinforcing.

The Save Darfur Coalition, an alliance of about 130 human rights and religious organisations – disparaged by Mamdani and meticulously and candidly documented by Law Professor Rebecca Hamilton – took it from there.

Unfortunately, this intense international activism did little to help the victims in Darfur, most of whom

still remain in displacement camps, two decades later. A UN peacekeeping mission, costing \$1.5bn a year was set up in a place where there was no peace to keep. The "peacekeepers" were not even able to protect themselves.

Many UN vehicles were car-jacked and recycled to fund and equip militias or rebel groups. The UN peacekeepers dutifully reported the theft to the local police. Had these funds been diverted to peacebuilding, the crisis would have been resolved. The international actors remained as inactive as Kapila had alleged, but they engaged in gesture politics: the equally expensive International Criminal Court has yet to punish somebody and would not have been much good if it had.

An internationally sponsored peace deal was concluded in Abuja in 2006, but with only one of the three main rebel factions joining. It collapsed within four years. An agreement brokered by Qatar in Doha in 2011 did function minimally but was also shunned by the key actors.

By 2018, the military dimension of the conflict receded, following serious defeats suffered by the main rebel groups, but the crisis situation persisted. The armed conflict practically ended following the fall of al-Bashir's regime in 2019, and the [conclusion of a new deal](#) involving most rebel groups in Juba in October 2020. However, even before the chaos that followed, the agreements had little impact on the lives of the millions of victims, and (too many) sporadic tribal conflicts still erupt.

To sum up, the conflict in Darfur, like that in the South, was caused by a combination of an implosion of self-rule in the region, combined with immorality and ineptitude at the centre, adverse regional and intentional dynamics, and mismanagement of political, economic, and environmental challenges.

The fragmentation and infighting of rebel groups accentuated the misery of the people, as did international inaction and misguided action. A whole generation of youths has grown up knowing nothing but life in camps.

If there are lessons, and a way forward, it is to put the victims into focus, and channel resources towards direct solutions. Half the annual expenditure on ineffective "peace" missions would have funded the repatriation and reconstruction for the displaced, and the demobilisation of armed groups, thus saving lives, resources and livelihoods. Let everyone get on with it.

Source: *AlJazeera*

Foreign News

China host Belarusian leader amid Ukraine tensions

BELARUSIAN President Alexander Lukashenko, a close ally of Russia, was expected to arrive in Beijing on Tuesday for a state visit that will be watched closely for signs that China could change its stance on Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

The three-day trip is a reminder that the war in Ukraine has far-reaching effects on global alliances. China, which has long retained close ties with Lukashenko, said the visit is an "opportunity to promote the further development of all-around cooperation between the two countries." But it comes after U.S. officials warned that China was considering sending military assistance to Russia.

China has called the U.S. allegations a smear campaign, saying it is committed to promoting peace talks.

But hosting Lukashenko illustrates the depth of Beijing's ties to Russian leader Vladimir Putin and his allies.

Lukashenko's government, meanwhile, has strongly backed Russian leader, and allowed its territory to be used as a staging ground for the initial invasion of Ukraine a year ago. This stance left Belarus even more isolated in Europe, where it faces sanctions from the European Union over both its role in the war and its repression of the country's domestic opposition. The country continues to host Russian troops, warplanes and other weapons.

In a recent interview with Chinese media, Lukashenko



Xi Jinping

said that now is "a unique situation ... to put a stop to the conflict." The interview was first released last week, but bits of it were shared online again on Monday night by Belarusian state media.

Chinese state media gave no word on his arrival or any activities in Beijing on Tuesday.

Beijing claims a neutral stance in the year-old war, but has also said it has a "no-limits friendship" with Russia and has refused to criticize Moscow's invasion, or even call it that. It has accused the U.S. and NATO of provoking the conflict and condemned sanctions leveled against

Russia and entities seen as aiding its military effort.

Last week, those sanctions were expanded to include a Chinese company known as Spacety China, which has supplied satellite imagery of Ukraine to affiliates of Wagner Group, a private Russian military contractor owned by a close associate of Putin. A Luxembourg-based subsidiary of Spacety China was also targeted.

"The U.S. has no right to point fingers at China-Russia relations. We will by no means accept the U.S. pressure and coercion," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said Monday at a daily briefing.

Tunisia must reinstate all judges and prosecutors arbitrarily dismissed by President Kais Saied, Human Rights Watch (HRW) has said, with the rights group adding that all measures taken to "crush judicial independence" should be reversed.

The watchdog's latest report, published on Monday, came after the Justice Ministry appointed by Saied refused to reinstate 49 magistrates, despite an administrative court order to do so.

"These blows to judicial independence reflect the government's determination to subjugate prosecutors and judges to the executive branch, at the expense of Tunisians' right to a fair trial before independent and impartial judges," said Salsabil Chellali, HRW's Tunisia director.

The human rights watchdog described Saied's proclaimed anti-corruption campaign as a "power grab" that began on July 25, 2021, when Saied dismissed then-Prime Minister Hichem Mechichi and gave himself broad powers.

On February 6, 2022, he unilaterally dissolved the High Judicial Council (HJC) — a constitutional body mandated to guarantee the independence of the judiciary — and replaced it with a temporary council appointing all 21 members.

Saied also granted himself the power to intervene in the career tracks and dismissal of magistrates with no form of immediate appeal.

On June 1, 57 judges and prosecutors were fired following accusations of financial and "moral" corruption and obstructing investigations. As per the new provisions introduced by

HRW calls Tunisia to halt crackdown on judiciary

Saied, a criminal prosecution was automatically initiated against them.

Despite the law granting magistrates the right to challenge their dismissals only after courts issue a final judgement in their criminal cases, they nevertheless appealed their dismissals to the Tunis administrative court.

The court ruled in favour of 49 of them, saying the actions taken against them were "a violation of the right to a fair trial" and "serious breaches of the right to access to court, the presumption of innocence and the right to defence".

Speaking to Human Rights Watch, dismissed magistrates said they had their salary and benefits, including health coverage, taken away and were subjected to online harassment on social media pages deemed supportive of the authorities.

Sadok Hachicha, investigating judge at the Court of First Instance of Sousse, had served as a judge for nearly 30 years before being dismissed.

The president's decision is "politically motivated ... against judges who did not want to follow orders," Hachicha said. "It is intended to scare the judges, to suppress any independent spirit."

Hachicha said he believed his dismissal was in retaliation for his order for Mehdi Ben Gharbia, a prominent businessman who served as a minister from 2016 to 2018 and was a member of parliament that Saied dissolved, to be provisionally

released in December 2021 after he had been arrested on corruption charges.

The prosecution appealed the decision, and Hachicha says he was summoned six times by the Justice Ministry regarding his handling of the case, and was targeted by a smear campaign on social media.

In a separate instance, comments by President Saied led to a social media campaign against a female judge, Khira Ben Khalifa, who had been accused of adultery.

Personal data, including the official police report and a so-called "virginity test", were disclosed on social media pages supportive of the president.

Saied has framed his actions as part of what he says is an anti-corruption campaign.

HRW rejected the president's position. "The fight against corruption should not be instrumentalised for political purposes and should be carried out in compliance with the rule of law," Chellali said.

"Authorities should immediately stop their attacks on the judiciary and targeting the judges through prosecution and intimidation." HRW's report comes as Tunisian authorities continue a campaign of arrests against opposition figures.

Tunisian media outlets reported on Monday that Said Ferjani, a leading figure in the Ennahdha party, had been arrested.

It followed the arrest of Jaouhar Ben Mbarek, another prominent opponent of Saied, last week.

US announces crackdown on child labour

THE United States government has announced plans to clamp down on child labour in the country following a surge in violations and news reports detailing the illegal employment of underage refugees and migrants in dangerous industries.

US officials said on Monday that the Department of Labor had seen a nearly 70 percent increase in child labour

violations since 2018, with 835 companies found to have violated child labour laws in the last fiscal year alone.

Officials told reporters during a conference call that US President Joe Biden's administration is probing the employment of children at companies, including Hearthsides Food Solutions and suppliers to Hyundai Motor.

To try to curb the rise, a joint task force by the Department of Labor and the Department of Health and Human Services — responsible for unaccompanied minors arriving in the country — will seek to improve information sharing between the two agencies.

A parallel initiative by the Department of Labor will focus on better enforcement of existing laws, especially in regions and industries where offences are most widespread. According to existing laws, the maximum fine for breaking child labour laws is \$15,138 per case.

It was not clear whether the probe will lead to criminal charges, fines or other penalties. Hearthsides said in a statement the company was "appalled" at allegations of child labour and would "work collaboratively with the Department of Labor in their investigation and do our part to continue to abide by all local, state and federal employment laws".

The uptick in illegal child labour coincides with a massive influx of unaccompanied children fleeing poverty and violence in Latin America, resulting in

the referral of 130,000 minors to US government shelters in the last fiscal year.

"This is not a 19th-century problem — this is a today problem," Labor Secretary Marty Walsh said in a statement on Monday, calling for a vast mobilisation of resources to tackle the problem. "We need Congress to come to the table, we need states to come to the table."

Children are allowed to start work at 14 in the US, subject to restrictions on their working hours, but employment in certain workplaces such as slaughterhouses and meatpacking plants is off limits for minors.

US politics, Canada's multiculturalism, South America's geopolitical rise—we bring you the stories that matter.

A weekend expose by The New York Times reported on an increased presence of migrant minors — some as young as 12 years old — working in sectors across the US economy, from car factories to construction sites and delivery services.

Pakistan launches trafficking probe

PAKISTANI authorities have launched an investigation to find alleged traffickers after a boat carrying nearly 200 people — 20 of them Pakistanis — drowned near the southern Italian coast, killing at least 63.

Sixteen Pakistanis survived the shipwreck, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif tweeted on Monday, while four others are still missing. A search operation is continuing.

On Tuesday, an official of Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) told Al Jazeera there had been two incidents of Pakistani refugees drowning in recent weeks, the other being off Libya's coast nearly a week ago.

The FIA official, on condition of anonymity, said the agency had formed several teams of investigators following the incidents and expected to arrest some suspected traffickers.

"We have met some families and conducted our own investigation into criminal elements involved in trafficking, and will hopefully make some arrests soon," he said.

The reports of the drowning

of over two dozen Pakistanis in a boat tragedy in Italy are deeply concerning & worrisome. I have directed Foreign Office to ascertain facts as early as possible & take the nation into confidence.

At least 63 people, including 12 children, died after the wooden boat that left Turkey last week crashed early on Sunday against rocks near Steccato di Cutro, a resort on the eastern coast of Italy's Calabria region.

In a tweet on Monday, Pakistan's foreign ministry said their embassy official in Italy met the 16 Pakistanis rescued from the capsized vessel.

"They seemed [to be] in good physical condition. According to them, there were 20 Pakistanis on the ship. Embassy is in close contact with Italian authorities to verify status of the four missing Pakistanis," said the tweet.

Muhammed Waseem, a resident of Gujjar Khan, a small city nearly 60km (37 miles) from the capital, Islamabad, told Al Jazeera his nephew Asad Naem was among the Pakistanis who drowned in the Libya incident.



Biden

Feature

Scarcity implications of new notes on Nigeria's economy

Nigerians are passing through hardship due to scarcity of the new naira notes recently introduced by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) in furtherance of its cashless policy. While launching the policy, we were told that it would mop up up to 27 trillion naira, curb illicit cash inflows, and prevent politicians from vote buying and other fanciful theories. Many Nigerians had thought that shifting the deadline from January to February 10 will enable the banks to release the new notes issued to them by the CBN but reverse is the case. The situation seems to be getting worse every day. To get 10,000 of the new notes in Jos, you must be willing to part with 1,000 or even more as the case may be. In other parts of the country, you will part with two thousand or three thousand respectively. Suddenly the new naira notes has become an essential commodity to be hoarded by the Point of sale (POS) operators. TIMOTHY JOSEPH, writes.

SOME commercial banks are hoarding the new notes while some simply just don't have enough notes and the CBN is aware of this sabotage. But on the flip side of the situation, the central bank is mainly responsible for the difficulties Nigerians are passing through otherwise, how can one explain a situation of moping out about three trillion naira and replacing it with just three billion naira? If that is the way to operate a cashless economy, many Nigerians would opt out of it. A cashless economy does not mean that people will not be able to buy sachet of water, Orange or Banana.

The new naira redesign policy is a good initiative but its implementation is muddled, the central bank should be aware that cashless economy is not attained with datelines rather it is usually a gradual process over a long period of time. The British government has embarked on one of such changes following the death of Queen Elizabeth the 2nd. They want to replace her image with that of her son, King Charles the 3rd. Britons have not been made to go to the banks that cannot dispense new notes that they probably do not have due to its insufficiency. They are not forced to patronize extortionist POS operators who will literally sell the money. Whenever the CBN governor, Godwin Emefile appears on television to explain the benefits of the redesign 1000, 500, and 200 notes, you will think that Nigeria is the best place to be where there is no infrastructural deficits.

But Nigeria right now has a lot of challenges confronting the nation which ranges from insecurity, poverty and unemployment among others which the CBN has failed to consider. There are millions of Nigerian Children who die annually as a result of child birth due to the poor condition of our health system. The recent Japa syndrome by Nigerians to



Europe and America is prompted by bad leaders and bad governance. Nigerian Youths and professionals troop to United States, United Kingdom and Canada in search of greener pastures at will.

They want to change their fortunes even if it means washing plates and cleaning toilets abroad, the brain drain in the health sector is tactically reinforced by our leader's refusal to equip our hospitals and give health care workers enhanced pay. It is equally supported by our leaders who encourage Medical Tourism.

Emefile should be told clearly that the

scarcity of the new naira notes across the country will vitiate whatever good the new policy will bring. Although cashless economy is worth giving a trail but it cannot in itself do those laudable things the CBN is saying. There is an inseparable link between a nation's economy and its politics. The two are Siamese twins. If the politics is toxic, the economy will invariably be toxic, we need good managers of the economy to manage our political leadership. Weather the naira is redesigned or not, Nigerian politicians will

always find a way to induce the voters, either through gratuitous money transfer, unsolicited gifts, threats and blackmail. Has the new cashless policy stopped terrorism or rising insecurity? Has it shoved up the value of the naira? The answer is all in the negative, rather than doing that the value of the naira is depreciating on a daily basis.

Why must we always be in a hurry to execute certain government policies? The new naira notes and the old ones can run simultaneously until the CBN mops up the old ones. All the shift in datelines and the recent pronouncement by President Buhari to allow the CBN to issue out the old two-hundred-naira notes to commercial banks until when the new notes is circulated would have been unnecessary if such policies were given careful thought, considerations and wide consultations before implantation.

Nigeria should learn to do things like other countries, any policy of government that inflicts suffering on the people is not worth it. It must be jettisoned. Why must Nigerians be made to suffer for almost everything? Nigerians queue endlessly under the sun to register for their permanent voter's card (PVC) they also queue for days to collect their PVCs, they queue to register for National Identify Number (NIN) and to deposit the old naira notes, they are forced to queue in the banks until the closing date when deadline will elapse. Incidentally, it is this same month we would be made to be on long Queues to vote our new leaders, hopefully we will vote for visionary and purposeful leadership.

TIMOTHY JOSEPH, is of the Ministry of Information and Communication.



THE NIGERIA STANDARD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

Living

Making sure your step siblings get along

By **SYLVIA SMITH**

SIBLING rivalry can cause animosity in even the most well-adjusted families.

As kids grow and learn about themselves and their place in the world, a certain amount of sibling rivalry is to be expected.

Trying to keep the peace when children are fighting is a challenge most parents of more than one child have to face at some point.

If you have stepchildren, the opportunities for sibling rivalry and jealousy between step siblings increase.

Step siblings relationship can be very tumultuous and tend to show more aggressive behavior because putting children who don't know each other together under one roof can quickly lead to fights.

Add in the fact that your stepchildren are trying to adjust to their parents' separation, and your own children don't like sharing you with their new siblings, and you have a recipe for fights.

Is it possible for step siblings to get along?

Absolutely yes, but it does take time, commitment, patience, and good boundaries from both parents. Here are some tips to help you mediate between step siblings and build a more peaceful family life.

Set standards of behavior

To help your stepchildren in getting along with family, you should sit down with your partner and agree on standards of behavior that you expect from all children and teenagers in your household.

Spell out ground rules from the obvious (no hitting each other) to the more subtle (be willing to share communal items such as the TV, or time with each parent).

Once you have your ground rules in place, communicate them to your kids and stepkids.

Decide how you're going to respond to infractions – will you take away phone or TV privileges, for example. Be consistent and fair in applying your new ground rules to everyone.

Be a good role model

How to get along with stepchildren? You can start by striving to be their role model.

Your kids and stepkids pick up a lot just from observing you and your partner, so be sure to set a good example.

Talk to them and each other with respect and kindness, even when things are tense. Let them see you handling conflicts with grace and a strong sense of fairness.

Show them how to listen and be considerate, by listening and being considerate with them and your partner.

If you have tween or teens in the household, try to get them on board with this. Older children can make wonderful role models, and your little ones are even more likely to copy their siblings than their parents.

Teach both sharing and respect

Step siblings arguing constantly can be due to their ability to share and respect each other. A lack of



respect can turn your kids into siblings that hate each other.

Teaching children to share nicely is vital, but teaching respect for each other's possessions is just as important.

During the process of blending a family, both sets of kids will feel like their familiar lifestyle is being taken away from them.

Having their things used, borrowed, or even broken by their new step siblings will only add to this sense of powerlessness.

You might consider setting up schedules if one child feels their sibling is getting too much of something.

However, it's also important to teach step siblings respect for each other's possessions, and that there are some things they're not allowed to take.

Show your children and stepchildren that you respect their personal possessions and that you expect them to do the same for each other.

Also watch:

Give everyone some privacy

Children, especially older children and teenagers, need some privacy. Children in blended families feel like their space and privacy is being taken away from them, especially if they've inherited younger siblings who want to follow them around!

Make sure all your step siblings get some privacy when they need it. This could be time alone in their room, or if they don't have separate rooms, it could be time set aside in the den or at the dining table for hobbies.

Perhaps some time outside or a trip to the park or mall with their biological parent will prove to be just the thing. Support all children

in your family to have their own time and space when they need it – you'll save a lot of stress and anger.

Set aside time to bond

If you want the step siblings in your family to bond with each other, make sure you set aside some family time when they can bond with each other and with you.

For example, you might try setting aside a regular family mealtime when everyone can sit down around the table and talk about what happened for them that day.

Or you might designate a weekly beach day or game night when everyone can get together for some fun.

Don't force things

Trying to force step siblings to get along is bound to backfire.

Encouraging time together is vital, but do allow everyone their own space, too. Your kids and stepkids might be able to learn to be civil and spend a little time together but won't become the best of friends, and that's ok.

Give everyone to indulge their time and space and let the relationships develop naturally

Don't get attached to the idea of your kids getting along wonderfully. A respectful truce is much more realistic than expecting them to become the best of friends.

Helping step siblings get along is no easy task. Muster your patience, set good boundaries, and treat all the young people in your newly blended family with respect and kindness to help things along.



EVER'S WORLD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

Relationship

When there is no emotional connection in marriage

WOMEN crave emotional connections. This is an ingrained personality trait that allows you to form a deep attachment to your husband, to develop physical intimacy within the marriage, and to continue to grow in love.

Therefore, it's especially harmful to your emotional health and the health of your marriage when you feel no emotional connection with your husband.

A situation where you are not emotionally attracted to your husband could severely dampen your marital happiness.

This can especially sting if you used to have a healthy emotional connection at the beginning of your relationship.

Perhaps he was once attentive and insightful. Perhaps you used to spend hours in deep conversation together. However, presently he isn't bothered to simply return a text message or share his thoughts.

Lack of emotional connection in relationship or intimacy in marriage equals no emotional intimacy in marriage. Lack of emotional support from your husband saps out all the trust, happiness, and comfort out of your equation with your spouse.

Feeling no emotional connection with your husband is a dire state that needs immediate attention and corrective steps.

The reason for a lack of emotional connection could vary from your **husband's sheer negligence, or he is just not emotionally intelligent.**

Whatever the reason, you first must look for some obvious signs of how the relationship has grown emotionally distant.

Signs of growing emotionally distant

Here are some common signs showing a lack of emotional intimacy in marriage, and how you are growing emotionally distant from your husband.

You stop coming to him for advice

One sign that you feel no emotional connection is that you stop coming to your husband for advice or his thoughts on what is going on in your life.

This is because you either feel like he will not care about your problems, you no longer respect his opinions, or you think, "I feel neglected by my husband," and are not emotionally secure enough with him to share your problems.

Lack of emotional support from your



husband could be a **major blow to your sense of self-worth** and could make you feel withdrawn and less inclined to seek his advice.

You stop sharing your life

Similar to the above, instead of not sharing problems, you find that you are no longer sharing anything with your husband.

Lack of intimacy from your husband, experiencing emotional disconnection in marriage, and feeling neglected by your husband leads to an inability to share each others' lives together.

Your conversations consist of simple pleasantries before you settle in for a night of TV. You no longer share the details of your work, your family, your friends, or your children.

You do not feel he deserves to know what's going on in your life.

When there is no emotional connection in a relationship or no intimacy in marriage from a husband, there is nothing that you or your partner find worthwhile to share with each other.

You stop having sex

A big red flag that you have no emotional connection with your husband is that you no longer want to be intimate with him. Without an emotional connection, you simply can't fathom sharing that much of

yourself with him.

Neglected by an emotionally detached husband, you may even start using the gatekeeper method of withholding sex as a form of punishment.

You start feeling distant in a relationship and experience no emotional connection with him



You are purposely critical

Because you are feeling emotionally disconnected and hurt, you look for ways to hurt him. You start feeling disconnected from your husband and face a growing emotional detachment in marriage.

So, you find ways to take it out on him. You see his unwashed coffee cup in the sink and call him lazy or see a DIY project undone and claim he doesn't care about your home. You may find the smallest thing to criticize.

This is a dangerous behavior, with studies suggesting that **criticism in marriage can lead to an increase in depressive tendencies in couples.**

Even though you are frustrated, know that if the majority of your conversations are criticisms, your husband is most likely going to withdraw even further from you.

Feeling no emotional connection with your husband can often push you to the brink of being overly critical.

Side effects of no emotional connection.

Feeling no emotional connection

with someone you want to spend the rest of your life with is more than just a little problem. These are harmful signs of emotional neglect in a marriage.

If you have been trying to connect with your husband and find that he keeps turning you away, it can lead to feeling hopeless.



Loneliness and depression

You and your husband have made vows of forever and ever, and yet you feel like you are taking on your days alone.

Loneliness is disheartening. The situation is further aggravated when you are losing connection with your husband.

You keep thinking, "I don't feel loved by my husband." Loneliness and disenchantment become your constant companions.

Self-doubt

There is little in life that is more paralyzing than self-doubt. When you can't emotionally connect with your husband, you may find you start doubting yourself.

Are you not a good enough wife? Does your husband not like you enough to share his emotional side? Is he not connecting emotionally with you because he is already doing so with somebody else?

These questions can lead to jealousy, paranoia, and low self-esteem. But, the best way to save yourself from self-doubt is by **identifying signs of emotional neglect in marriage** and learning

how to fix emotional detachment.

You grow distant

Feeling no emotional connection with your husband can create a detrimental snowball effect on your marriage. The more you try to get him to connect and feel nothing in return, the more distant you will grow from one another.

Infidelity

Feeling emotionally neglected to a woman feels much like being sexually neglected to a man. It makes you believe that your partner no longer cares about you or about fulfilling your needs.

Loneliness and neglect can sharply turn into anger and resentment toward your mate. Coupled with insecurity, these emotions can leave you ripe for an affair. This will be because you were already feeling distant in a relationship.

How to rebuild an emotional connection

The longer you let an unspoken problem fester inside of you, the more hurt you will feel.

It is never a good idea to sit on a problem in your marriage, as marriage without emotional intimacy isn't going to fix itself. You need to learn how to connect with your partner again.

Here is what you can do to take control of the situation.

Communicate

Let your husband know, gently, how you are feeling. **Tell him you don't feel as close to him as you once were.** Ask if there is anything you can do to help you bond together again.

This may open up the conversation and allow both partners to share their issues.

Don't play the blame game

When you bring up your lack of emotional connection to your husband, it's important not to play the blame game.

Do not tell him that it is his fault that you feel disconnected. This will get him defensive and create unhealthy communication. Instead, express your desire to be as connected to him as you once were.

Schedule date nights

Date nights are essential for a happy marriage, especially for those who have children. Even though you are now parents, it's important not to forget that you are still mates who have fun together.

Scheduling a date night once a week and religiously following it will create a deeper emotional connection for both parties.

Take up a hobby together, go out for dinner and a movie, jog together, or simply go out for drinks.

Whatever you do, make sure it is something that you both enjoy where you will be able to talk and share with one another as you used to do when you were in the dating phase of your relationship.

Have sex

This may be difficult to do, especially if you feel no emotional connection, but having sex is going to be beneficial to both of you. Sex that results in orgasm is one of the biggest doses of oxytocin, or "the love drug" you will ever get.

For women, this hormone is released post-orgasm and creates an intimate bond of trust by stimulating certain brain sensors.

Overall, **sex is a bonding agent that is healthy for your relationship.**



Editorial

Presidential, NASS elections: A post mortem

SATURDAY, February 25, 2023 was the day the highly anticipated Presidential and National Assembly elections took place, with Nigerians going to the polls to elect those who would lead us for the next four years, and the stage was set for the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to conduct the "freest and fairest" elections yet. Or so we were made to believe. A postponement was far from it, because INEC assured Nigerians that despite the volatile and challenging environment, the fuel shortage, coupled with the Naira shortages, it was ready, and able to deliver on the promise of a credible election.

EVERY election in Nigeria comes with its own sackload of challenges, no matter how prepared the electoral body claimed to have been, or how ready and on-top-of-the-game they were. There's always some sort of shocker thrown at the electorate when it finally comes to the time for performance. The laid down plans always look fantastic and error-proof.

THE electorate must be commended for the unprecedented turnout witnessed on Saturday the 25th. By the time we moved round some voting centers, we were glad, and thought in our hearts, "Nigerians have finally woken up from their slumber and are determined to take their destinies in their hands by voting in a credible crop of leaders" to get us out of the doldrums, we were however, disappointed. We thought the issue of vote buying would be a thing of the past, but we were proven wrong, as widespread allegations were reported across the length and breadth of the country. We must, however commend the EFCC for having its men on ground for this election.

THE playing field was already distorted by vote buying and the abuse of incumbency by many political office holders. It is common knowledge, and was even stated by the European Union observer mission that stakeholders expressed confidence in INEC's independence, professionalism, and voter information efforts. However, there was a downward trend to that optimistic outlook ahead of elections.

THE statement reads in part, "INEC lacked efficient planning and transparency during critical stages of the electoral process, while on election day, trust in INEC was seen to further reduce due to delayed polling processes and information gaps related to the much anticipated access to results on its Results Viewing Portal (IReV)." The IReV was well celebrated as a milestone that would finally bring about the much anticipated transparency in our electoral process.

A lot of money went into this electoral process. Part of the monies given to INEC was used to introduce the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and Server for the immediate transmission of results from polling units. With that in place, the feeling was that all results would be a true reflection of the will of the people. It is common knowledge, and widely rumoured that INEC compromised at the operational level.

IN other instances, some security personnel denied some journalists free access to collation centers. The working relationship with INEC and the media has been very good, up until this point. And the media has given the coverage the elections deserves to ensure a most credible and successful exercise, this time around, and for the future. The media offered extensive coverage, despite economic hardships and other factors militating against it.

THE issues of overcrowded polling units were recorded in many parts. Some had over 1,000 voters. That, coupled with other factors like slow connectivity, forgotten passwords, leaving other vital election items behind, or having inadequate amount of ink for thumb-printing, further contributed to rendering the exercise not successful.

GOING forward, INEC must look into the shortcomings of this election and make adjustments to ensure it is not found wanting, again.

BVAS was used for accreditation, but voters were given paper ballots for voting, and results were not uploaded electronically. What we saw on the website, a website whereby you have to register to view the results, were photos of handwritten results and the like.

MAYBE we are not yet mature for electronic voting. AND upon all of that, we can't visit the website freely, because the site is down.

THE next round of elections is around the corner, in 10 days' time. Nigerians deserve better. We can't afford to have a repeat. Any form of manipulation is a direct assault on the people. As such it is incumbent on the umpire to be fair and just.

ALCOHOLISM has rendered many youths in different communities to be unproductive, as well as caused serious damages to their well being.

Alcohol and tobacco are among the top causes of deaths in Nigeria today. The use of alcohol is associated with an increased risk of injuries and accidents even a single episode of excessive drinking can lead to negative outcome. Alcoholism and chronic use of alcohol are associated with numerous medical, psychiatric, Social, and family problems. Family members including children are exposed to a first degree related alcohol problem.

Children of a parent with alcohol addiction, for example, show higher rates of alcoholism than children who do not have parents with alcohol addiction.

It is important for social workers to keep in mind that alcohol and alcohol problems affect the health safety, and well being of people. Smoking is not good for the health; it causes so many illnesses, like cancer, heart disease, stroke, lung disease, diabetes, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

There is need for government to prevent diagnosis and treat alcoholism in communities throughout the country.

For example, bringing in educational campaign to middle and high-school students help raise awareness of the dangers of alcohol.



Effects of alcoholism among the youths

There are many ways civic groups and community organizations can develop programmes and services to promote long-term recovery to bring about change in policy to increase education and awareness of alcohol misuse.

Health fairs, rallies, festivals, running races, prevention campaigns and other wellness events. Help raise awareness and limit the social impact of alcohol use. Most times when you see those that smoke or drink, you can't compare them with someone that doesn't smoke why, because, smokers even in their appearances you

can't compared to some one that doesn't.

So am pleading to all the youths that know they drink or smoke should please try and stop, so that your future will be better. I know it will be hard, but there is a saying that says, a journey of a thousand miles begins with a step.

Over thousands of youths out there do smoke and abuse drugs why? Because they don't have job opportunities, most of them are graduates so am pleading on behalf of them, let the government do something about this to employ more youth so that our country will be free from all this abuses. **Nansel John, is an IT student from PLAPOLY Jos**

The fear of God is the beginning of Wisdom

MY brothers and sisters, Youths in particular be afraid of the Creator only and do the right thing, honour your father and your mother and your days will be long. Whether you are a true Muslim, a Christ's follower, a pagan, or a free thinker you must obey the rules and regulations of your Maker and of the Government or law makers in your country, protect the image of your country and leave a good legacy. God is the creator of law why can't we obey the law and order of the society. The Creator is order and orderly He took His

time to create so we must also do same. Be responsible, accountable, credible, reliable, authoritative, a good planner, or in whatever way you find your self do it right.

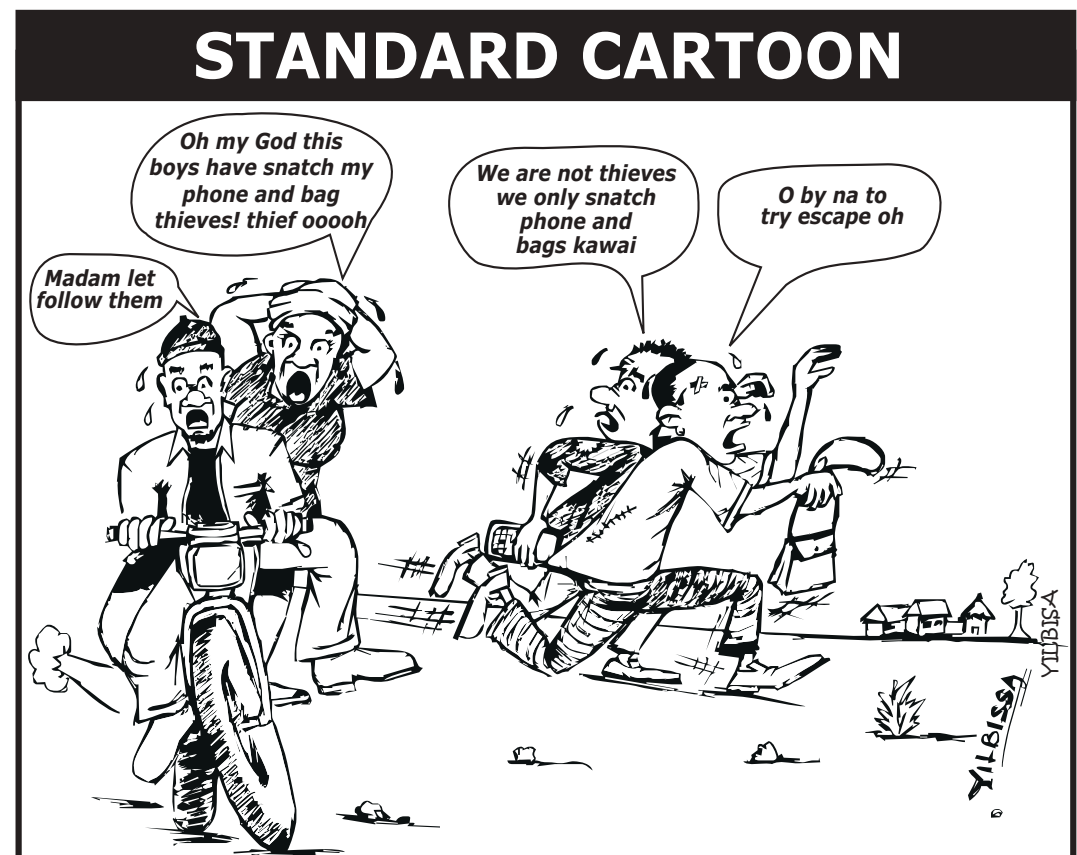
For instance, the forthcoming Gubernatorial and House Assembly elections, by now the highlighted problems of voters should be taken into consideration for better and brighter Nigeria. For instance these were the complaints of voters, I heard during this presidential elections!

In my own view, I think the

people need a prayerful, educative Creative, industrious and an accountable, credible. A good decision maker, planner and God fearing Leader who would carry the people along and as such, I plead with the government to look into this comments and proffer solutions to them.

However, in my own opinion, Despite all efforts INEC have made to clarify issues of the masses, the masses are pleading for creation of more polling units. It is now or never.

Gonyok Francis Rebecca, Jos.



Opinion

Brain drain: the misfortune of Nigeria's healthcare

THE World Health Organisation (WHO) prescription states the acceptable ratio of physician to patients is a doctor to a thousand population. However, this ratio remains a far cry from what is obtainable in many parts of the world, especially in the developing world. Nigeria's healthcare system has been plagued by brain drain which translates into very poor doctor-patients ratio. Recently, it was reported that the UK licensed 91 Nigerian doctors within 15 days, bringing the number of Nigerian-trained physicians to more than 10,200 comprising specialists, associate specialists, general practitioners and doctors in training. This figure is quite alarming considering the fact that Nigeria, with less than 30,000 practicing doctors, currently has far less number of physicians to meet the medical demands of its citizens.

During the Covid-19 lockdown in 2020, according to the Nigerian Medical Association (NMA), about 5,000 doctors had applied for, and met the requirements to work abroad: they were only waiting for the ease on lockdown in order to leave the country to various parts of the world. Subsequently, officials from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia were in Nigeria scouting for medical personnel to fill available spaces in their health sector. These are doctors and other medical specialists trained in Nigeria and who were working within the country at the time.

The continued rise in the number of medical personnel leaving the country, especially doctors, raises concerns and deserves attention. For Nigerian doctors to readily be absorbed into the medical system of other countries implies that the training in Nigeria breeds standard despite the challenges of funding for research and poor infrastructure within the academia.

Some of the major reasons for the continued brain drain in Nigeria's healthcare sector are poor welfare of the personnel, inadequate facilities and poor working environment. Again, during the Covid-19 lockdown, it was evident that Nigerian elite could not access medical facilities in countries of their choice and had to cope with what

was available within the country. No one ever thought a time would come when Nigerian elite would be deprived of medical attention abroad despite having the means to afford it.

This should serve as a lesson to the elites that they should prioritise the development of local healthcare system such that anyone leaving to seek medical attention outside the country would be doing so not because it cannot be done in Nigeria but because it is the person's choice, or for other associated (covert) reasons. In a report by Al Jazeera's Mercy Abang on 8 April, 2019, she stated that, *'Even the septuagenarian Nigerian president, Muhammadu Buhari, seeks medical care in London'*. This impugns the person of the president who has built a strong personality based on integrity and discipline, and won the elections with the hope of turning the tide in situations as this.

In India, for instance, despite the multidimensional challenges associated with high population, the country has been able to develop its health sector such that there is efficient service delivery. The only challenge that most citizens may face is the ability to afford it. This implies that if majority of the citizens can afford the cost of medical care locally, then it would save the government the cost of balancing trade due to medical tourism abroad. India is one of the favoured destinations for Nigerians seeking medical treatment abroad. At the High Commission of India in Abuja, on the one hand, one of the easiest visas to process is of seeking medical care in the country.

On the other hand, when applying for visa to study a professional course especially in the field of medicine, the process is tedious. This could partly be because, these professionals would return to train other compatriots in the field thereby reducing income to the country in terms of foreign exchange earnings derived from medical tourism by Nigerians. However, they are not to blame because they developed their system and their diplomats are only acting in the

manner they deem as in the best national interest of their country: we could develop ours to attain such heights.

The case of a serious brain drain in Nigeria is not in doubt. Every medical personnel considers working in Europe, United States, or the Middle East unless they lack the opportunity to leave. According to Nigerian Medical Association estimates, the Physician-to-patient ratio in Nigeria is 1:9,083 (that is one doctor to about 10,000 individuals) which is a far cry from the WHO recommendation. Under this circumstance, patients would have to wait for several hours to be attended. The ratio is even worse for dentist with 1:47,079 in every 100,000 population. For nurses the ratio is 1:1,135. This implies that Nigeria needs more medical personnel at a time when they exodus to foreign lands to offer their services after acquiring knowledge in Nigeria. The only way to reduce the mass exodus is by improving welfare and emoluments of the workers within the sector.

Furthermore, an efficient healthcare system can be a source of foreign exchange earnings as Nigeria would become a medical hub and an easier and more accessible destination to most people in need of medical care especially within West Africa and some parts of Africa as a whole. This is because it would cost less than going to Europe, Asia or the United States to seek medical attention coupled with the factor of considering the purchasing power parity in their native countries compared to Nigeria and other parts of the world like Europe, United States or Asia.

To some extent, individual attitudes towards national development is part of the problems that hampers growth in the county. In mid-January, there was another alarming report that the Zamfara state government discovered 199 ghost doctors on the state payroll of 280 doctors. The imagination that 199 ghost doctors are on the pay roll of government hospitals is alarming

to any well-meaning citizen. To begin with, 280 is an appalling number for physicians in a state with a population above 9 million. How many hospitals are in the state and where are these ghost doctors located?

It is more disheartening that some individuals defraud the state by including nonexistent physicians on the payroll making the challenge of fewer doctors look less macabre than it actually is from distant observation. This is at a time when Zamfara, a major state affected by banditry, is in dire need of all the possible healthcare attention it could get; a time when all hands should be on deck to ensure that healthcare is prioritized in all ramifications while taking into cognizance factors that facilitate brain drain in the country's health sector. It is hoped that the government fetch out and mete due punishment to those involved in this crime against the poor people of the state.

Thus, while battling with the scourge of brain drain in health sector, a group of individuals are busy defrauding Nigerians of any hope at better healthcare delivery. If this is tenable in Zamfara State, then how many more states could be suffering from the same challenge of ghost doctors and medical personnel in the country? Rural communities are usually the ones to bear most of the brunt as they are the places with more chances of having quack medical personnel and location of nonexistent hospitals with dubious staff list. This is devilry at its peak. These are challenges that the various state governments and policy developers must look into in order to have more accurate statistics on the current state of healthcare and how to ameliorate the challenges in the sector.

Primary healthcare is another area of concern in national health security: ensuring a very functional primary healthcare system shall greatly reduce the rate of maternal and infant mortalities which is very poor in the country. Primary healthcare reaches most of the

citizens in the urban and rural areas as the first, and in most cases, the only means of affordable healthcare to many Nigerians. If the primary healthcare system can be optimized towards better service delivery it could save the higher echelons of healthcare the burden and need to handle many health issues of primary concern. And, at the same time, reduce the rate maternal and infant mortalities ravaging the country.

Consequently, the government at the centre must endeavour to commit all resources towards upgrading the standard of healthcare. This stands as one of the major components of contemporary security. If the government is serious about economic diversification, then luring other African states towards medical tourism in Nigeria should be one key area that will definitely increase foreign exchange. In fact, if only to cut the humongous amount Nigerians spend on medical tourism abroad. Citing how Nigerian leaders flock abroad for medical tourism, how much could Nigeria save if the president and other elected officials get medical care locally? Thus, if the president is going to London it should be strictly on holiday but not with an additional cost for healthcare.

Having, at least, two medical structures as those frequented by the president constructed and functional within Abuja and similar ones (one) in each geopolitical zone of the country could save Nigeria a lot and earn more for the country in terms of foreign exchange. If the leaders use it, it would definitely build the confidence of other African leaders to change their preferred destinations for medical tourism abroad. These are structural policy concerns that government, at all levels, must take into consideration with respect to revamping the health sector in Nigeria.

Ejuailo writes from Lagos via diejuailo@gmail.com

By ISMAIL ABDULAZIZ

Prioritising stakes of retirees in next dispensation

IN the next few days a new administration would be elected by Nigerians with various expectations to better their lives, more especially those that have served and retired in the public and private sector. Retirees in Nigeria have not received the desired attention of various administrations, making them to face an uncertain future. This election is therefore an opportunity to usher in an administration that is friendly and with a human face that will give priority and change the fate of retirees for the better. The Contributory Pension and Happy Retirement Advocacy (COPEHRA) is a Non-Governmental Organisation concerned about the fate of retirees in the country. It has been advocating sustainable and happy retirement by creating awareness and guiding individuals in public and private sectors, as well as artisans on the value of saving through the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS) ahead of retirement, to avoid old age poverty.

The organisation is focussed on having reliable and stable retirement through a contributory pension scheme that upholds the core principles of transparency, accountability, participation and enlightenment.

At a recent campaign and engagement with the media, COPEHRA spoke on the need for politicians aspiring to take the reign of leadership by May 2023 to make clear statement on the fate of retirees in the country.

"As we countdown to decision dates, Presidential and Gubernatorial elections, to determine those in the helm of affairs of our country for the next four years, we will like to use this opportunity to bare our minds on a very vital concern, which is setting an agenda for pension administration.

"One common element of the mandate of all the presidential candidate is economic boost. We are here to emphasize that pension is a major factor to the well-being of any society."

The organisation stressed that pension plays very important role in national development.

"The importance of sustainable pension to a country cannot be overstated. Pension guarantees financial security for retired workers who have served the country, and generally boost the economy.

"It brings equality and general wellbeing by ensuring that the weak and vulnerable have ready funds to take care of their day-to-day expenses after retirement from active service to the fatherland."

It suggested that the incoming administration should fashion a country specific policy and approach that would be in line with worldwide accepted norms in pension administration.

"The dominant pension scheme in Nigeria is the Contributory Pension Scheme. This pension scheme is contributory, fully funded, privately managed, with third party custody of the funds and assets and based on individual accounts.

"It ensures that everyone who has worked receives his/her retirement benefits as and when due."

The COPEHRA, therefore, encouraged frontline contenders in the elections to give priority to pension administration in the country.

"We take solace from their antecedence that all the frontline contenders made efforts to make laws for the reform of the pension sector when they were in charge of the helm of affairs in their respective jurisdictions.

"While Federal Government leads in the pension reform implementation, it is noted that Lagos State

leads other states in Contributory Pension Scheme implementation.

For the working class to enjoy the benefit of pension after retirement and for an inclusive participation, the organisation called on all workers in the informal and semi-formal sectors to key into the Micro Pension Plan.

It noted that this would expand the implementation of the CPS to the informal sectors such as low income earners, self employed, Small and Medium Enterprises and artisans.

"We as an NGO wish to note and congratulate the hardworking National Pension Commission staff and management, the operators, for continuous reform and vigilance to safeguard the largest quantum of funds specifically set aside for payment of pensions in Nigeria.

"We call on states to key into this noble scheme for the happiness of their retirees. Most states that key into the CPS and have their funds managed by registered operators, do not owe their pensioners.

"We also call on entities that have issues with the CPS to look for solutions inside the scheme and not outside— How can you leave where there are funds ready for payment and then move to where loans have to be taken before pension payment?"

They advised the incoming administration to urgently address the agitations by some contributors to the scheme.

"We call on the incoming Federal Government of Nigeria to increase the employer contributions for Police by 100% to ensure their Retirement Savings Account (RSA) is robust enough after serving their country in such critical sector."

It also suggested the setting up of machineries

for the consideration of a second pension pillar in conformity with World Bank standard, in order to increase protection against retirement poverty.

"We also noted that the CPS still has a long way to go in addressing issues such as perception of employees and employers to the scheme, non or late remittance by employers.

"This reduces the effectiveness of the scheme to generate enough investable funds for the RSA owners. More awareness is needed for both employers and employees."

As the new administration comes to power, COPEHRA called for more sensitisation, regular reviews of regulations to adapt to changing times, enforceability of existing regulations and uniform applicability of pension laws and regulations.

"We use this opportunity to urge all candidates in the upcoming elections to bear upon their agenda, the need to work towards a more adaptive and inclusive Pension Administration that is all inclusive and proactive."

According to a 2014 report, pension funds significantly impact the financial development of underdeveloped countries. A one per cent increase in pension fund assets can promote corporate governance, information disclosure and transaction efficiency.

These are some of the advantages that Nigerians and the government can benefit from a proper, standardised pension administration that can be fully exploited to the benefit of retirees and the public in general. **(NAN Feature)**

Feature

Is there no end to electoral violence in Nigeria?

Spontaneous acts of violence have become part of the political system in Nigeria, especially during and after elections. Last weekend's poll was no different as hoodlums dared the authorities by disrupting the elections despite the peace accord signed by the presidential candidates and party leaders.

By
Michael Jimoh, THEWILL

THEWILL wonders whether they are intelligent interpreters of their master's every wish or they acted alone. Michael Jimoh reports

By now, General Abdusalam Abubakar would have been wondering what suddenly went wrong with the just concluded general elections across the country over the weekend. The retired army general and last military head of state of Nigeria who has since morphed into a peacemaker by virtue of his position as the head of the Peace Committee would have seen firsthand, like many of his compatriots, the spate of violence perpetrated by hoodlums when polls held last weekend, mostly in the southern part of the country.

For the second or third time, Gen Abubakar has presided over peace meetings of political gladiators. Fearful of the tension-soaked campaigns and possible degeneration into a state of anarchy during and after the 2015 presidential polls between Goodluck Jonathan of Peoples Democratic Party and Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress, the peace committee brought the contenders to the table whereupon they and their party leaders swore to eschew violence and to also not incite their supporters to acts of violence whatever the outcome of the results.

Then incumbent President Jonathan provided a much needed relief for INEC, the Peace Committee and Nigerians as he conceded defeat to his opponent even before conclusion of the election that year. Abubakar expressed the same sigh of relief four years later after the presidential election between Buhari and his opponent Atiku Abubakar of the PDP.

It was in the hope of a peaceful denouement to the last election that the Infantry commander summoned the presidential candidates to the table last September. With more than a dozen flag bearers and party leaders in attendance, it was all decorum from the participants. Bola Ahmed Tinubu of APC appended his signature to the document. So did Atiku Abubakar of PDP, as well as Peter Obi of Labour Party and Omiyole Sowore of African Action Congress.

To reaffirm their commitment to the peace accord, Abubakar once again summoned them to another meeting late last January at the International Conference Centre, Abuja. Three or so former African presidents were in attendance this time with the convener insisting on the "need for all parties to be committed to the second peace accord."

According to the former head of state, some of the candidates flouted the first peace accord last September which necessitated the second one.

"There was lack of compliance by the major political parties," Abubakar let on at the meeting, adding that "forty-four percent of the violations were carried out by spokespersons of the political parties and twenty-six percent by party members. Nineteen percent of the violations were carried out by the presidential candidates

themselves, 11 percent by hard-core supporters and four

Even before the election proper in late February, Abubakar reminded the attendees that "in January 2023, a lot of violence has occurred with at least 15 abductions (including that of a police officer) and at least 30 killings (including those of 11 security personnel)" while there were at least "six attacks at political campaign rallies."

Against that background, it was necessary to caution the politicians and their followers once more. In the light of the recent electoral violence, it does seem the politicians and their followers threw caution to the wind.

Which is why Abubakar would have been aghast at the needless acts of violence during last week's polls. Did the contenders and party leaders sign the peace document just for the sake of it? In other words, was Abubakar, and the rest of the committee members including the venerated Catholic Bishop of Sokoto Diocese Matthew Hassan Kukah, deceived?

It does seem so now, considering the widespread violence during the election itself.

One of the very first was the unpremeditated beheading of Samuel Arunsi Eze by a political thug Daniel Mgba in Abia state. The killing took place in Ndi Agwu Community of Abam in Arochuku council. One of the assailants was himself killed in the process.

Violence in other states and cities were soon recorded and reported in the papers and social media. Polling stations and INEC officials were invariably the target of such attacks by political thugs. In Lagos state alone, polling stations in Amuwo Odofin, Badagry, Fadeyi, Iba, Ijaiye, Ijanikin, Iyana Shashi, Ikate, Ikorodu, LASU Iba, Lekki, Mafoluku, Ogombo, Ojota, Sangotedo, Surulere were among those affected.

Thugs in Surulere working on behalf of the ruling party APC reportedly "warned voters who were not willing to vote for the presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Bola Tinubu to vacate the polling units while policemen looked away."

If the police looked away while the thugs operated in Surulere, their action was even more damning at Ogombo Primary School. According to one account, "thugs chased away voters and locked the gates while police officers stood still, smiling at them," a situation that was not "different at Ojota Senior Secondary School."

The thugs did not stop there, they snatched the phone of popular rap artiste Falz, scattered the ballot boxes in the polling station and then dumped them into the gutter while the law enforcement agents watched. "It took the intervention of the military personnel," a report stated "who were also overstretched, to restore peace and orderliness in some of the affected polling units."

Lagos state police chief, Idowu Owohunwa confirmed the attacks by thugs on polling stations during the elections in the state.



Surveying the exercise from high above on a police chopper, Owohunwa later told reporters he and his team visited places like Maryland, Mafoloku in Oshodi and Surulere "where armed thugs disrupted voting exercises and snatched and burnt ballot boxes." Continuing, the police boss said "we visited about five polling units in Epe, and there was this family way of approaching the process. I interacted with them, and they insisted that Epe was calm. They are a peaceful family, so regardless of the political divide, they remain one family and work to ensure peace."

"What we are dealing with here has to do with human conduct," Owohunwa went on. "It could be unpredictable or driven by passion, emotion, or criminal intent. We recorded specific instances of thuggery and violence. These things will always happen, and when they do, we will implement a response plan to be able to respond to most of those incidents. We have made arrests and recoveries."

As if replaying the murder scene in Abia state where Arunsi Eze was killed, thugs shot and killed a man identified as Akayama, an Economics graduate of Abubakar Audu University, Ayingba Kogi state. He was killed at a polling station in Iji-Anyigba Kogi state. Thugs also chased voters and made away with INEC materials from polling units at Abejukolo, Agbeji, Ajiolo, Dekina and Ejule communities.

The same sorry tale of intimidation and destruction of voting materials have also been reported in places like Benin, Warri, Gworza in Borno state, Shiroro in Niger state and Safana council area in Katsina state. There have been attacks in no fewer than five or six states across the country during the presidential and NASS polls.

To be sure, electoral violence isn't such a novel thing in Nigeria. Nigerians of a certain generation remember the days of Operation Wetie in the Western region in the fifties and sixties where houses belonging to members of the opposition were torched and

burnt, and some of them killed. It continued in the Second Republic when political disturbances erupted in Ondo state after the governorship elections in 1983.

Of course, politicians themselves have encouraged political violence either before, during or after elections. Nigerians still remember very well the infamous remark credited to former President Olusegun Obasanjo that the election in one year was a "do or die affair."

It is just very possible that the current crop of politicians and their foot-soldiers have borrowed a leaf from OBJ's boast then.

The murder of Arunsi Eze in the South east may have been precipitated for selfish reasons, other factors have also fuelled electoral violence in the geopolitical region. Chief among them is the mandatory sit-at-home order by IPOB before elections. Before the Anambra state governorship election in 2018, for instance, the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) threatened to scuttle the polls, giving a stay-at-home order to residents of the state and potential voters. It got everyone aflutter – especially political stakeholders in the state in particular and the entire country in general.

Thankfully, the proposed boycott by IPOB never got to be. The election came and went peacefully, producing incumbent governor Willie Obiano for a second term in a state with the motto: Light of the Nation. Contrary to the position of the regional separatist group, the light in Anambra was not dimmed in any way.

Recalling what happened at the time and in connection with the general elections last week and mid-March, Chief Alex Ogbonna, spokesperson of Ohanaeze Ndigbo Igbo socio-cultural group stated late last month that "IPOB will not and they cannot stop this election from holding. There have been instances in the past like the second tenure of Governor (Willie) Obiano, the IPOB said there won't be any election and a lot of us at the Igbo level, we intervened and the election was held."

The will of the people of Anambra state, Ogbonna went on, "would overwhelm every distraction from participating in the poll in the South-East."

But recent indications have shown

that despite the will of the people to go forth and vote during the last polls, there may have been distractions all the same, at least in the Enugu north senatorial zone. What happened?

As reported in the newspapers last week, gunmen surprised and attacked the campaign convoy of the Peoples Democratic Party at Eke-Otu in Amechi Awkunanaw Enugu state. The driver in one of the campaign buses was killed instantly while a senatorial candidate for the party survived the ambush.

At about the same time in the same senatorial zone, Labour Party candidate Oyibo Chukwu was shot and killed in a separate attack along with five members of his party. The killers added a macabre twist to their blood orgy: they set their bodies ablaze with the vehicles they were travelling in.

Bizarre by every account, such acts of casual electoral violence is not new in the region, thus showing indications that the election might not hold. Though not directly linked to the attacks, IPOB has also not claimed responsibility for the double mid-afternoon tragedies in the state.

Even so, IPOB itself has been linked in the past with such coordinated murders and destruction of government-owned facilities in parts of the South east. What is their objective? To destabilize the region so that elections will not hold. If that was the aim of the attackers last week, they succeeded partly. In the wake of the killings, INEC postponed the election held nationwide yesterday to March 11.

Before the killings last week, the South east had been a hotbed of the regional separatist group attacking INEC officials and its facilities to create an unmanageable situation so that elections will not hold. In one viral video after one such attack in Enugu, hooded gunmen ambushed a man driving a red Toyota car, threatened him and then deflated the tyres with gunshots. One of the masked men later said: "We don't want any political activity in the area."

The Nigeria Army had known that for long, insisting at one time that IPOB and its more militant arm, Eastern Security Network, were responsible for killings and destruction of property in the benighted region. As far back as November 2021, the Army spokesman then, Brig-Gen Onyema Nwachukwu let it be known that the two groups were, indeed, responsible for "killings, destruction and total insecurity in the South east."

News

Senate confirms appointment of five members of CCB

THE Senate on Tuesday at plenary, confirmed President Muhammadu Buhari's five nominees for appointment as board members of the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB).

Their confirmation was sequel to the consideration of a report by the Committee on Ethics, Privileges and Public Petitions.

Chairman of the Committee, Sen. Akinyelure Ayo Halliru (PDP - Ondo) presented the report.

Akinyelure urged the senate to consider their confirmation, following the screening of the nominees by the committee.

The nominees are, Murtala Kankia (Kastina, North -West), Zephaniah Ishaku Bulus (Nasarawa, North-Central), Farouque Umar (Yobe North-East).

Other members are Abdulsalam Taofiq Olawale (Ondo, South-West) and Prof. Juwayriya Badamasiuy (Kogi North-Central).

The Senate also at



Lawal

plenary approved for first reading five bills.

The bills are, Institute of Chartered Chemists of Nigeria Act Amendments Bill 2023, sponsored by Sen. Ibrahim Gobir, (APC-Sokoto), National Agency for Food and Drugs Administration and Control Act amendment Bill 2023, sponsored by Sen. Ibrahim Gobir. (APC-Sokoto)

Federal Medical Centre Okigwe Establishment Bill, 2023 sponsored by Sen. Ibrahim Gobir. (APC-Sokoto).

APC accuses PDP, LP of heating up polity

THE Presidential Campaign Council, PCC, of the governing All Progressives Congress, APC, has accused the opposition Peoples Democratic Party, PDP and the Labour

towards the Commission.

INEC further said it accepted full responsibility for the problems and regretted the distress that they have caused the candidates, political parties and the electorate.

EU election observers highlight areas of improvement

The European Union (EU) Election Observation Mission in Nigeria on Monday said it observed some short comings in the the just concluded general elections in Nigeria, in spite of INEC's efforts.

Mr Barry Andrews, Chief Observer of the mission disclosed this in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on the sidelines of a briefing on the preliminary report of the mission.

"I think it's important to note that the elections took place as planned on the day that it was planned and there was no postponement, and that is something that had been a feature of previous elections.

"By and large, the election took place in a peaceful environment.

"However, unfortunately, there were expectations regarding the use of the technology that were not met.

"There were shortcomings in relation to planning and training of the individuals at the polling units, which did

THE Director-General Raw Materials Research and Development Council (RMRDC), Professor Hussain Doko Ibrahim, has commended Nigerians especially the youths for the massive turnout to exercise their franchise in the presidential and national assembly elections.

Speaking to journalists in an interview at his polling unit Saturday in Minna Bosso Estate, Niger state, he further lauded the federal government and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) for free and fair polls.

He said, "For the first time in a long time, I cast my vote within few minutes after accreditation. With this move, I'm positive that the process will be smooth and fast for all to partake in it."

Professor Ibrahim said the massive turn out of voters especially not only

Party of planning to precipitate the crisis to discredit the results of the presidential and national assembly polls.

Director of Public Affairs and Chief Spokesperson, Tinubu/Shettima Presidential Campaign Council, Festus Keyamo, a Senior Advocate, on Sunday alleged that "Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) were presently putting undue pressure on some State Resident Electoral Commissioners of INEC to alter the results duly collated in the States before proceeding to Abuja to submit the results."

not meet the standards that INEC has set for itself.

"So to that extent, it was disappointing. But I would say that our observations are consistent across the country.

"The late opening of polling stations, clearly hampered the ability of people to exercise a political right to vote.

"Because they opened so late, it was impossible for many people to stay around and wait until the actual polling units opened.

"So there is definitely room for improvement and unfortunately, a number of improvements that need to be made," he said.

Andrews said although the mission was not in Nigeria to interfere but observe the elections, it was important to have peace and credible elections in the country.

"We don't interfere in any way in the political process. We're very careful to simply observe from the outside and try to provide some assessments that can be of some use to Nigeria in the

2023 general elections: Nigerians ready for democracy

- RMRDC DG

in his polling unit but also in other wards, indicated Nigerians' readiness for democracy.

He said: "Only one's vote would count at the end rather than stay back at home and watch while at the end push complains on government at every given opportunity.

"I believe with this positive change, whoever emerges the winner, would appreciate Nigerians more for coming out to make sure that votes are cast and counted judiciously."

He urged citizens to keep up the good job of ensuring a peaceful process, and making other nations imbibe the nation's electoral system.

Similarly, voters at Dutse/Kubwa Living Faith Church FO1 polling unit

were in positive mood for the large turnout and relaxed atmosphere during the election.

Speaking to *Blueprint*, a contractor/businessman, Mr. Chukwudi Simon, said he intentionally left his work and returned back to the FCT just to cast his vote because of the optimism it would count.

Also speaking, Mr. Bayo Ayoola of Jaji 007 polling unit in Kubwa, said the turnout was massive.

He said he left his house by 7am and returned 9am for the first time going to cast his vote.

"If the Federal Government can maintain this standard, I tell you that many things will change because the change everyone is in dire need of, begins with you and I," he said.

face of such pressures. We salute INEC for organising, as we can see for now, one of the best elections in Nigeria from time immemorial.

He said the PCC has reliable information that the Labour Party was mobilising for what he described as another ENDSARS protest across the country next week and appealed to the security agencies to rise to the occasion and check those he considered were try "foist their will on the rest fo Nigerians" and "give the State RECS 24-hour close-guard and maximum protection as they travel to submit their results in Abuja.

future.

"But the one thing we would say, without hesitation is that it is absolutely critical that elections take place in a peaceful environment, and the sentiments that were expressed by the leaders at the peace accord signing last week.

"We would hope that they would be followed through.

"That political participants and particularly political leaders, would make it clear to all actors and that they should respect people's right to get to the polling units whether in the governorship elections in a second round if one takes place, so that people can exercise their franchise freely and unhindered," he added.

He urged INEC to improve its operational structure so that the sanctity of the process can be protected and credible elections enthroned in the country.

"We would also encourage INEC to improve some of the steps that they're taking, particularly for example, the configuration of polling booths, which didn't allow for

secrecy in every instance and that therefore exposed the process to accusation of not been a secret ballot.

"So that was another shortcoming but we absolutely recognise that this election was taking place in a very challenging situation, particularly having regard to cash and fuel shortage," he said.

"And also the scale of this election is really quite an extraordinary thing with 175,000 polling units 800,000 polling staff, as well as 1.5 million accredited agents of the various parties.

"So overall, the scale of it is a challenge. And while we did note these security issues, by and large, there was a peaceful opportunity for many, many millions of Nigerians to vote," he said.

The EU envoy also decried the low participation of women in the electoral process while calling for more inclusiveness.

He said the mission would still be in Nigeria until after the March 11 governorship elections, when it will come up with a final report. (NAN)

Feature

Nigerians yearn for national re-birth

Nigeria is at the cusp of political transition. Millions of dispossessed Nigerians, who chafe and suffer under the weight of excruciating poverty caused by our political leaders' maladministration, want a change for the better.

They have seen through the ruse of the APC-led government, which is incapable of offering us purposeful, meaningful, and result-oriented leadership. So they want a change for the better.

The 2023 presidential election offered them a chance to assert their will and effect political leadership change in the country. Who doesn't know that the 2023 presidential election was the conduct of a referendum on APC to determine its suitability and eligibility to continue ruling Nigeria?

President Muhammadu Buhari who won the 2015 presidential election; and reelection in 2019 on the political platform of APC has recorded disastrous outing as the president of Nigeria. He couldn't bring about positive change in Nigeria as he had promised before he became the president of Nigeria. Based on the indices and metrics for judging an economically prosperous and technologically advanced country, Nigeria is an underdeveloped country. Is Nigeria not technologically backward; and is her economy not in tatters and in a tailspin?

The fact is, President Buhari has failed to shore up the economy of Nigeria. Consequently, our naira has depreciated in value, which necessitated the APC-led government's implementation of the naira redesign policy. The new naira swap policy has caused immense hardship to millions of Nigerians as we are experiencing acute shortage of the new naira notes.

Again, Nigeria has been sucked into a maelstrom of violent killings owing to the ineffectiveness of the security agencies to perform the cardinal duty of government, which is protection of lives and property. While the Boko Haram insurgents, terrorists, and the Fulani herdsmen are decimating the populations of the north, kidnappers are kidnapping well-heeled Nigerians in the south for ransom. And gunmen have run amuck in the southeast, killing people to actualize their political ends.

So nobody can gainsay the fact that Nigeria is an unsafe country whose economy is depressed. And her successive political leaders have failed to evolve Nigeria's technological culture, which will make Nigeria have a productive



economy, and not a consumptive one. And the infrastructural rot, which characterizes Nigeria has continued to impede her national development.

So millions of Nigerians want a change for the better. They want to reclaim their country from the jaws of destruction and predatory political leadership, which have assailed Nigeria and Nigerians. And they had cast protest votes to make sure that Nigeria experiences national re-birth. Not a few Nigerians want a political renaissance that will lead to a change of guards at Aso Rock, which will usher in a transformational government in Nigeria.

Nigerians had spoken. The long-suffering hoi polloi had cast their protest votes to elect the next president of Nigeria, knowing that sovereignty or the ultimate power in the country belongs to the people. They can vote out bad leaders,

and our political leaders derive the legitimacy of their government from the people's acceptance of their government. That's why subverting the political will and choice of the people will imperil Nigeria's political stability and derail her democratic trajectory. So it is incumbent on top INEC officers not to succumb to pressures being mounted on them by unscrupulous political desperadoes regarding manipulating and doctoring the electoral results for pecuniary rewards. But subverting the people's political will and thwarting Nigeria's democratic growth will cause political apocalypse in Nigeria.

Nigeria, as it is now, is bedevilled by the divisive factors of religion and ethnicity. And in the run-up to the presidential election, the campaigns conducted by the political candidates deepened our religious differences and ethnic animosities. Nigerians are acutely conscious of their ethnic origins; and they owe allegiances to their ethnic homelands at the expense of their country, which is Nigeria. The situation is caused by the fact that Nigeria is not yet an organic whole.

Nigerians are one people, who

are united by a common shared colonial experience. And the peoples of Nigeria had co-existed peacefully long before the advent of the British imperialists in Nigeria. So let us place our ethnic allegiances beneath the national good so as to make Nigeria great. And if Nigeria goes up in political conflagration, the spillover effects will cause the destabilization of the West Africa sub-region.

So I beseech the top members of the national electoral umpire to discharge their duties dispassionately. Officers of INEC should resist the temptation to do the biddings of corrupt and unscrupulous politicians.

Nigerians do not want a reenactment of the MKO Abiola political episode, which led Nigeria to a political cul-de-sac and dilemma. Rather, Nigerians want a smooth transition to another civilian government, which will herald our country's political re-birth.



By JENNIFER YARIMA

THERE are certain professions that bring one in close contact with realities of what victims or survivors experience before others get the details. They mostly get first hand information by either witnessing incidences at the scene of occurrence or they are given narration by eye witnesses or survivors themselves. This looks attractive from outside because the public relies on the outcome of findings to be better informed. Some of these categories of people are health personnel, security agencies, Psychologists and Journalists etc.

Recently, yours sincerely was attracted to a lecture I keenly listened to online which highlighted the trauma journalists who report gender based violence go through as

they discharge their lawful duties. It's so good to keep the public well informed about certain things that are happening in the society, but no one understand the stress and pressure you undergo for the celebrated stories. That is to say that one should be mindful not to allow himself to be overworked.

The mental state of someone's well being is necessary towards achieving greater feat in everything one does in life. Health, welfare and emotional stability of the journalist need to be given attention to enable one does the work with ease. Every journalist should endeavor to make regular medical checkup a priority. This if done will help in understanding one's status to enable such a person work within specification. Don't be deceived by the remarks of people who term you a super person, the work is a thankless job. So go slowly and carefully.

Certain stories no doubt get one to think uncontrollably around the event. It didn't happen to you directly but because of your experience, you start thinking differently. It was interesting to note that it's not a weakness for one to say no to a story if your emotion is not strong enough to carry you through. The challenge here is that a reporter is mostly assigned to a bit or instructed to report an incident. This therefore means that in most cases; it's not optional but a must do work.

In journalism profession, the

significance of dateline need not be over emphasized because the editor gives the timeline that certain stories should be given due consideration for publication or to be aired depending on the medium where one works. This development entails that at

Journalists and need for mental health

certain times, one must work under pressure to meet up these datelines. The biggest question however is; what stories get you traumatic?

One is reminded of the much celebrated photojournalists Kevin Carter, whose fame in photography earned him a Pulitzer Prize award that he was globally recognized but it did not go down well with him at the end because he ended up killing himself as a result of the traumatic experience of his work. The agony of the photojournalist emanated when he reported the severe famine in Sudan where many lives were lost and many people struggled for survival.

While covering events that unfolded then, one of his best shots captured by New York Times on March 26, 1993 captured a vulture waiting for a starving Sudanese girl to die and feast on her carcass. He was celebrated on major news channels and networks world for such an exceptional photographic skill. The readers' reactions were intense and not positive. Some people said the photographer who took the



photo was inhumane. That he should have dropped the camera to run to the little girl's aid.

The interesting thing about journalism and the society is the fact that negative stories are best sellers for the public than any other. That of course was probably the driving force that diverted the humanity of Kevin than the thought of rendering immediate help. His depression started when during one of his interviews which he granted, someone asked him what happened to the child, Kevin replied that he didn't find out after the photograph because as he had a flight to catch. They replied him that there were two vultures on that day, one had a camera.

His constant thought of that statement and the gory images he saw almost on daily basis turned out that it took its toll in Carter's case fatally. Carter grew up in South Africa during apartheid; he became a photojournalist because he felt he needed to document the sickening treatment not only of the blacks by whites but

between black ethnic groups as well like those of Xhosas and Zulus.

In a few years, he saw countless murders from beatings, stabbings, gunshots and neck lacing, a barbaric practice in which a tyre filled with oil is placed around the victim's neck and lit on fire. It was evident that even if he had offered to help, the armed Sudanese soldiers wouldn't have allowed him. He talked about the guilt of the people he couldn't save because he photographed them as they were being killed.

To avoid trauma that comes with the stress of the work, experts have suggested some therapy to keep one on the job relevant. You need to know your limit or how far you can go. Disconnect from your normal schedules and do what works for you. Talking to a confidant is a healing balm, sharing your problem with a loved one matters a lot. Of course good time to hang out and have proper rest is of essence.

Celebrating yourself and the work you are doing gives you reason to keep on.



BY HOSEA NYAMLONG

NIGERIAN citizens have demanded better electoral reforms to enhance the smooth running of democracy over the years. These agitations from citizens received attention last year In February 2022, when Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari signed the Electoral Act 2022 ("the Act") into law, ushering in hopes of a new dawn of electoral reform in the country.

During his address at the 77th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), the president alluded to the coming invigoration of the electoral process. It is certainly beyond the debate that Nigeria is in urgent need of electoral reform, the same

Nigeria and its democracy in focus

cannot be said about the potential impact and outcome of such a process.

At the 2023 general elections on February 25, 2023, both the Presidential and National Assembly election witnessed an unprecedented turnout of electorates to cast their votes in choosing their leaders to govern the affairs of the country in the next four years.

This is the longest period of democratic rule in the history of the nation, despite its challenges of social, political, economically and uncertainty Since its inception in 1999 till date. However, the need to ensure that the Electoral Act is taken seriously is hinged on the processes, because over the years lack of electoral reform has hindered development in the political system of the country.

Needless to say, it is worrisome that since the independence of the country, Nigeria's electoral process has remained untransparent and politicians are having a field day with the activities of thuggery in a do-or-die affair. The falsification of electoral results for selfish interest is on the increase every day by politicians while addressing these imbalances within the political circle. Citizens and stakeholders in Nigerian

politics should have rethought the 2023 general election.

It is believed that this should help the electorates to reflect and look at the country's setback and what the future holds for the next generation of good leaders elected into power to transform the system of the country for the betterment of all citizens of Nigeria.

In reforming the electoral processes, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), needs to be independent of any form of influence by both politicians and government at all levels. Citizens would want leadership that ushers in a lasting democracy and good governance starting from 2023 and beyond.

The electoral law should ensure corrupt-free INEC officials in the cause of discharging their duties with honesty and transparency without fear or intimidation from any quarters

Furthermore, to authenticate the Electoral Law, there should be stipulated punishment that awaits any INEC official who violates the law by accepting a bribe from any political party candidate to declare him or her winner of the election. And also stipulated punishment for

any political candidate that is caught offering a bribe to any INEC official for falsification of electoral results.

Therefore, political parties on their part should also ensure they have a guideline for selecting candidates of their choice for election. The party's guidelines should include a selection of credible candidates with good track records and worthy to be the popular choice of party members.

In addition, the reform processes should include a kind of rotational system of the leadership position that cut across federal, state, and local government levels.

To a large extent, this would end up with citizens' agitations against the issue of marginalization, inequality, sectionalism, and nepotism which is believed to bring mutual understanding among people of different ethnic groups in the country to cement unity among all.

Importantly, the reform of the electoral process should ensure that the activities of thuggery, snatching of ballot boxes, kidnapping of political opponents during elections, and other related evil vices should be eradicated.

On this note, the Electoral

Law should also spell out stipulated punishment that awaits offenders of any of these acts during elections. Nigeria electorates that are 18 years and above should be properly sensitized and guided not to sell their conscience through vote buying by politicians who think that their money would buy what they want from the citizens at all costs.

To this end, electorates should therefore note that the current hardship, insecurity, poverty, etc in the country can only be brought under control by good governance and good leadership by electing credible leaders with the mission and vision to transform the country in the 2023 general elections

Parents on the other hand are to monitor and advise their children and wards not to take part in any political criminality before, during, or after elections, because the future of the country depends on them.

The traditional rulers and religious leaders are to preach against any form of violence during the elections which are mostly characterized by desperate politicians who believe in a do-or-die affair to win elections.

Reviewed by The Black Heritage

WHAT an incredible solo trip this was! My driver Bright was extremely well informed about Nigeria and he gave me all the tips and historical context about the country on our way to Badagry.

When we got there, I got to see the heritage museum, the baracoon and then the point of no return. I mean, there was so much history the entire day.

I booked this trip last minute and I'm so glad I did it. It was one of the most impactful moments of my entire Nigeria trip.

If you have the time and interest, it's definitely worth it. Bright picked me up at 8:30am in an air conditioned car, with snacks and we were able to hit just a little bit of traffic on the way back, but I was back home before 4pm.

Make sure you have a copy of your passport and visa and walk all the way to the point of no return, it's a long humid walk but it's worth it. Such is a wonderful experience!

Nike Art Centre, Lagos, is one of Nigeria's hidden treasures. Located in Lekki, Lagos, the four-story building comprises of an art gallery and textile museum featuring over 7,000 pieces and soon to have a coffee shop.

The Centre has a diverse collection of art by a multitude of artists, celebrating Nigeria's talents, offering visitors an insight into all cultures of Nigeria through the medium of art.

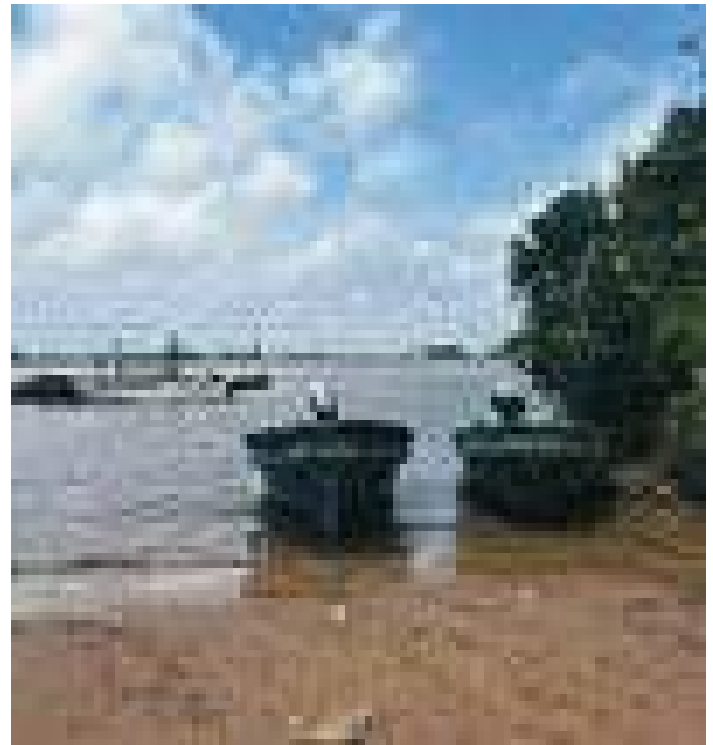
It can take up to a full day to discover all the Nike Art Centre has to offer. Fortunately, the gallery is open 7 days a week often holding art exhibitions, workshops and cultural days.

If you're feeling creative you can take an art course with Nike or go on one of her week-long retreats

outside of Lagos in Osun in creating traditional state (Osogbo), Kogi state African crafts such as adire, (Ogidi) and Abuja, all of batik, indigo, beadwork, which you can visit with paintings, or carvings. 'Nike Tours'. Nike Art Centre is an impressive gallery and a accommodation at her must for art lovers with a guesthouses, and partake touch of leisure and fun.



2023 Important leisure destinations in Nigeria



Nike Art gallery

Badagry

IMAGES

BRITISH AMERICAN FLYOVER

The British American road interchange and dualization project progress report as captured yesterday morning by The Nigeria Standard photographer



Front view of the flyover



Dual bridge before Green House (Government Guest House)



Photo showing the flyover from Dogon Karfe to Terminus and Lamingo road junction roundabout



Earth moving equipment putting some finishing touches on the flyover



Level of work on the Lamingo Junction roundabout



Level of the dualization work in progress as captured yesterday



Newly completed road along Lamingo Junction roundabout



Road from Terminus connecting Dogon Karfe and Lamingo road junction

PHOTOS: DANLADI DUJAK

Odd World

Cowboy hat house goes up for rent

AN eco-friendly house with its roof shaped like a cowboy hat in Huntsville, Texas, America, has gone up for rent on property site Zillow for \$900 (£750) per month

An eco-home that looks like it belongs on the set of a western movie as its entire roof is in the shape of a cowboy hat has gone up for rent. The two-bed property, appropriately called The Hat House, caught the attention of social media users after images of its striking Stetson-shaped roof, which also serves as a balcony, emerged online.

Heart of Texas Real Estate posted the snaps on property site Zillow, showcasing the rental's 'story book charm' and rustic interior salvaged from discarded materials destined for landfill. The 660 sqft house, in Huntsville, Texas, US, was designed in 2017 by Texan-born builder Dan Philips, and built using recycled wood and cement plaster stucco.

Described as a tribute to Texas' Ranch culture, the \$900 (£750) per month property is located on a highway opposite a famous Texan steakhouse and next to another of Philips' works - a cowboy boot-shaped home.

Many thrilled country and western fans declared the property's designer a visionary, while others weren't so complimentary, describing it as "the ugliest disaster I've seen".

A third added: 'Truly the world's most unusual house, I had NO idea what to expect and am still shocked'.

Principal Broker for Heart of Texas Real Estate, Theresa Frazier, described how the property largely appeals to artistic househunters- and that they were looking for a "special" person to lease it.

Theresa said: "It's really adorable. There's a cowboy hat house and a boot house and they're both right beside each other on the street.

"It's a very interesting property. It

seems to appeal to artsy people, students and younger folk in the art department.

"Your conventional furniture doesn't actually fit in there real well, it takes a little bit of creativity to re-arrange furniture in there. It's pretty neat.

"It's cute and quirky. When it was first built we had loads of people come to see it open.

"People are usually really interested, they want to see the oddity of the type of property it is.

"There's a lot of interest, but it will take a special type of person to want to lease it.

"Dan Philips used discarded materials that were overflowing the landfills. It was all salvageable materials and this was a good way for him to use it.

"It's wonderful, it exemplifies the spirit of Texas. People enjoy driving by and taking a look at it."

The property was shared online with the caption: "Is this Texas enough for y'all?"

One commenter replied: "Say what you will [but] the guy was a visionary, and talented.

"Not being most people[s] style obviously, but every piece was well thought out. A lot of work and imagination went into those."

Another wrote: "This has to be the ugliest disaster I've seen on this site. Gah. I can't un-see this mess."

One commented: "My eyes. There is a lot going on it that little space... interesting though."

Another wrote: "This is a good deal on a rental in a college town. Wow. Weird house though."

One commented: "I hate how so many on here resort to ugly criticism and judgement, just because something doesn't fit with their taste, or the "influencers" they follow so religiously."

Source: The Mirror



Now that Nigerians are voting for new leaders

LAST Saturday the 23rd February 25th 2023 marked another significant moment in the annals of Nigeria's history as citizens came out in their numbers to vote for their president and parliamentary representatives across the nation. The election was anticipated to replace the incumbent, President Muhammadu Buhari who is about rounding-up his two tenures as constitutionally permitted as well as respective tenures of other parliamentarians at the National Assembly.

About 18 prospective candidates participated at the presidential polls, the contenders cutting across all façade of contemporary accomplishments with intimidating credentials at their disposals. Evidentially, the present elections will be the sixth exercise since Nigeria's return to the present democratic dispensation in 1999.

For the legislative elections, polls were conducted in all 109 senatorial districts and 360 constituencies in all the 36 states of the country including the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. It was an election most citizens of the country were not prepared to miss.

About 93.4 eligible voters out of the nation's population put at over 200 million registered and exercised their democratic franchise. Out of these eligible voters are significant number of youths of the nation who are presently feeling completely left out and or sidelined in the act of governance. This group of vulnerable individuals mostly unemployed with no basic financial empowerment have been easy recruits for hardliners, fanatics, insurgents including other criminally minded individuals consistently causing sleepless nights for innocent and law abiding citizens.

Prior to the elections, many had predicted high degree of uncertainty which pundits' had opined would not auger well for the most populous black nation of the world. If my memory has not failed, prior to the 2015 general elections, a few multinational bodies had equally predicted that the then traumatizing political brouhaha necessitated by unabated waggling would drag the nation into chaotic and unpleasant circumstances leading to possible disintegration of the nation. As God would have it however, all their predictions hit the dust giving the country another hopeful second chance or opportunity. Though this first elections were recorded rancor-free, many scholars and leaders of thought are grateful for the obvious fact that the polls took place in a peaceful atmosphere, hoping that others being anticipated should follow suit.

This is against the backdrop of skepticism that the polls would perhaps not take place in the first instance. In fact, pockets of political commentators had earlier also harangued that the problems of fuel scarcity, redesigned new naira notes hiccups and hardship coupled with unpalatable security situation in the country had become major factors which could ignite election shift. Added to this nasty development was the unswerving activities of insurgency and agitations by militant groups both in the north east and the south east axis of the nation.

To the glory of God however, both the much talked about presidential and parliamentary elections were held and as it is; credit must be given to both the Independent National Electoral Commission and the citizens of the nation for this successful conduct. That is not to however say that the elections was smooth all through without some significant

hiccups recorded. From all indications, some of the major problems recorded included the malfunction of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System, BVAS which in most cases failed to accredit voters using biometrics and or upload results.

This aside, the electorates were also thrown into muddle following relocation of several polling units and or collapsing of such units which did not capture citizens into more active ones. Interestingly, INEC had earlier informed our electorates that about 280 out of the 176,846 polling stations would not have elections due to lack of registered voters.

By and large however, most of the citizens were able to cast their votes enduring systematic and undesirable humanly created difficulties. Several others had to trek for many kilometers before reaching their polling units to cast their votes. This never give up spirit of theirs assisted them in no small measure towards making this country proud.

Beyond this however, Nigeria, the world's most populous black nation and Africa's largest economy still have a couple of elections left to warp-up the entire exercise in the country. So far, the two already conducted polls have solidly consolidated the fact that the country can get it right if we sincerely intend to achieve this objective. It has surely depicted the fact that nothing would be difficult to achieve if the desire to effect a positive impactful change is sought for in the interest of the majority.

In this regard, since the people of this country are halfway through completing these elections, it is incumbent on them to patriotically approach issues without any bias or political sentiments. Knowing too well how the country has become polarized along ethno-religious lines, it is high time the needful in done so as to save the nation from total disintegration.

Thus, even as we urge our political class to embark on positive change in their behavioral attitude, they must continue to exhibit exemplary lifestyle capable of healing our wounds and integrating the entire populace into a virile nation. In other words, our politicians must begin to accept the reality of the fact that as elected leaders, they have automatically become servant leaders who are prepared to be good listeners.

If there is any moment in time that Nigeria needs servant leaders, it is now. In the midst of these daunting challenges, such servant leaders will comprehend the fact that due to the biting economic realities of our time, the citizens of this nation obviously needs a shoulder to learn on. For the mere fact that the majority of the people of the nation have completely lost their bearings, only leaders who are compassionate and overwhelmed with loving kindness can ideologically motivate and propel the people to greatness and ensure that they are focused on a journey to the Promised Land.

We must as a people also not lose hope in this country and such leaders who are desirous of redressing our footsteps for the growth of this nation and the sake of our future generation must continue to serve this country well. Therefore, the time to believe and be more dedicated to our country is now. The time for us to appreciate dispassionately the great sacrifice of our founding fathers and ensure that we do all to protecting their dreams and the integrity of this country is certainly now or never.

View Point

ACRC: Five years of God's faithfulness

The steadfast love of God and His mercy never ceases even as the Christendom has continued to face all sorts of daunting challenges in contemporary times. Indeed, but for God, the prevailing challenges which have continued to bedevil the entire body of Christ would have overwhelmed us all. What has however gladdens the hearts of the people of God is the obvious fact that the gates of hell has not and will never prevail against the church. BULUS GAMBO, writes.

TODAY, the Christendom has continued to appreciate God for the tremendous way and manner He has continued to rise incredible men and women of God mandating them on strategic vision of reconciling humanity with their creator. About five years ago, God in His infinite mercy mandated the General Overseer of the Ark of Covenant Restoration Center Worldwide, Dr. Isah Harry Yanshiyi to restore dignity to mankind which started with the formation of a fellowship group in Lafia, Nasarawa State, to reconcile and restore mankind to God. Based on God's divine mandate to His disciples to "Go and restore my people back to me that are despised, rejected with the message of righteousness," the General Overseer of the church led by the Holy Spirit on the 6th of June, 2017 in his hotel room in Lafia started implementing God's vision bestowed on him which subsequently witnessed the establishment of a church called the ARK where many shall never lack, be in sickness and never see oppression when they identify with this task.

Evidently, the established focal analogy as directed by the Almighty God was to ensure that "many shall come into this assembly in their thousands; anyone who enters the ARK genuinely shall surely be restored from all manner of afflictions, barrenness, lack, oppression, of darkness, and where the wealth of my people shall be restored. I have given you all that it takes for the gates of these things to be opened"

Consequently, the center was and is still effectively and efficiently through divine mandate to become a place of reconciliation and restoration of humanity back to God as the commission is



Prof. Arch-Bishop Emmanuel Jatau presenting an award to the General Overseer Ark of Covenant Restoration Center Worldwide, Dr. Isa Harry Yanshiyi, while his wife Lydia Yanshiyi watches in appreciation

doggedly standing for righteousness, holiness, restoring God's people back to Him, building a people that shall be pleasing to God, making God's people prosper, deliverance from all oppression of the devil and kingdom stewardship.

Since 2017 when the General Overseer of the Ark of Convent Restoration Center Worldwide, Dr. Yanshiyi was mandated with this incredible mission in the Lord's vineyard, many achievements have been recorded to the glory of God. What has continued to baffle many who have come in contact with this Man of God is his simplistic and servant-leader character. Yanshiyi has not only shepherd his flock very well but also continued to stand by them during their moments of trials.

As a solid prophet of God whose word and blessings on his congregation has continued to germinate impacting many lives, the General Overseer has no doubt stood in the gap praying for his ministry and the nations of the world. His distinctive and outstanding character has also presented him as a vibrant spiritual leader who is ever ready to give his all for the benefit of humanity.

Interestingly, within the span of these five years, the Ark has grown and expanded having three branches in three different states namely, Lafia, Kaduna and Bauchi. The church has also increased in numerical strength, spiritual growth, as two services are being held every Sunday at the church headquarters, including the creation of 14

Home-cell Fellowship centers.

This aside, the church has Basic Foundation School for new entrant, development of church operational manual and creation of more functional church units which consists of counselling, evangelism, prayer, welfare and re-branding departmental fellowships. But again and to the glory of God, the church was able to conduct successful ceremony of the graduation of first set of Basic Foundation School, evangelical outreaches to unbelievers, series of training and retreats for workers/workforce and took decisive measures to curb indiscipline through the creation of disciplinary committee.

It is in the light of this development that the church decided to hold its 5th Anniversary and Thanksgiving Service at the Rock Garden, Plateau Hotel, Jos, the Plateau State capital so as to also gather financial resource to help facilitate the actualization of the proposed ARK of God Restoration Center Church Auditorium. This center if and or when fully constructed and commissioned is anticipated to further consolidate on the mandated placed on the shoulders of the Man of God in furtherance of the propagation of the word of God to the unreached nations of the world.

Speaking during the 5th year anniversary commemoration, the General Overseer of the Ark of Convent Restoration Center Worldwide, Dr. Isah Harry Yanshiyi explained that "Today's event is quite significant and unique day in our lives as a commission/church as given by God. This year unmistakably vide by God's inspiration of the Holy Spirit gave me the theme as "Our month of turning point". This we shall achieve by holding every word of God in high esteem.

Meticulously, carrying out the mandate and expecting tangible results in our lives."

According to him, "Beloved, I want to believe that we all enjoyed the spiritual level with which the Lord has taken us into the past five years. The testimonies and fingers of God that we have enjoyed are more than enough to tell of the Lord's goodness and faithfulness towards us in the Ark. For you to be in the Ark, you must be spiritually awakened, stabilized and focused. It is not gainsaying that today, the body of Christ is desecrated by love of money, power and fame. I am not deceived or carried away by the vibrancy of prayers or speaking in tongues but by sacrifice, righteousness and consecration. The days are evil. I am a man of mantle not title."

Dr. Yanshiyi further explained that "We have maintained and shall always be voracious for the word, unquenchable fire of prayer and continuously engage in praise and worship of God. Our spiritual temperature must always go up. Our language is restoration, hope, faith, gratitude, possibility, positivity and victory. Talking is proposing, but acting is achieving, nothing makes nothing. Therefore, may you be stirred by the Holy Ghost to contribute meaningfully and sacrificially towards the mandate of the Ark."

In his sermon, the Guest Speaker, Bishop Timothy Kume noted that Christians must always be encouraged in the act of giving so as to receive their blessings from God knowing too well that it is a spiritual law.

Taking his Biblical text from the book of Deuteronomy 16: 16, the guest speaker admonished Christians to remain dogged knowing too well that no matter the situation confronting them, God will never disappoint all those who diligently serve Him adding that "all we need to do is to operate under the remarkable principles of God."

Contributing in his vote of thanks, Chairman of the Anniversary and Thanksgiving Committee, Engr. Joshua David thanked all who contributed to towards the actualization of the event and prayed God to bless all those who contributed in one way or the other towards the success of the programme.

Highlights of the epoch making event included an anointed service where the congregation was significantly blessed to experience showers of blessings in the next coming decades. Some gospel groups who ministered during the occasion included the Bazata International Group, Police Band Jos and the Ark of Covenant Restoration Voices International Jos choir.



Guest Speaker, Bishop Timothy Kume and Professor Arch-Bishop Jatau at the event



Emir of Rekna gets second class status

The 2023 Presidential and National Assembly elections which took place on February 25, 2023 has come and gone as Nigerians came out enmasse to participate and perform their electoral franchise.

However, last week, days before the elections, Plateau Governor Simon Bako Lalong made a stint to Bashar, in Wase Local Government Area to perform the official coronation ceremony and presentation of staff of office to Alhaji Abdullahi Idris Isa, the 16th Rekna of Bashar, in Wase Local Government Area of Plateau.

The well attended event attracted traditional rulers, kingmakers, sons and daughters of Wase and well wishers.

While cultural displays of glamour and tradition filled the atmosphere, the Governor in his speech expressed his commitment to uplifting the traditional institution.

Lalong admonished the Rekna to carry his subjects along irrespective of creed, religion or any affiliation.

He tasked the Rekna to promote peace development and harmony in his domain.

Long Gamai of Gamailand, Miskoom Martin Shaldas III who spoke on behalf of Gbong Gwom Jos, Da Jacob Gyang Buba commended the Governor for prioritising the sanctity of the traditional institution in Plateau State since assuming office, describing him as a leader with passion for peace, security and harmony.

The Paramount Ruler and Emir of Wase Alhaji Muhammadu Sambo Abubakar was happy with the development and upgrade of the title of the Rekna to a second class status.

A prominent son of Wase, and the Deputy Speaker House of Representatives Idris Wase who is also the brother of the new Rekna of Bashar thanked Governor Lalong for his sense of fairness, justice and equity which he said has been demonstrated in his non interference forj selection of the Rekna and other traditional rulers across the State.

Kingmakers of the Chieftdom added colour to the event as they lined up in their numbers to pay homage to the Emir, who in turn sprayed them with Royal B



News

Obi wins Plateau with landslide victory

BY PETER TITLE

BY EZEKIEL DONTINNA (307,195) votes. The Presidential Candidate of People's candidate of Labour Party Democratic Party, (PDP), (LP), Peter Obi, beats his Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, who close contendants, Atiku scored the total number of Abubakar and Asiwaju two hundred and forty-Bola Tinubu to emerge three thousand, eight winner of the Saturday hundred and eight presidential election in (243,808) votes came third Plateau State. after winning only two out Obi who scored the total of the 17 local government number of four hundred areas in the state. and sixty-six thousand, The Labour Party won two hundred and seventy- thirteen out of the two (466,272) votes, seventeen local defeated the candidate of governments of the state, the ruling party, Ahmed while its close contending Tinubu who had a total parties (APC and PDP) won number of three hundred two local governments and seven thousand, one each. hundred and ninety five The election was peaceful except for Jos-North LGA

where thugs invaded the collation centre forcing the local government Collation Officer, Prof. Maigoro, to reconcile figures together with parties' agents at the INEC office in Jos.

Declaring the results of the Presidential Election at the INEC Headquarters in Jos, the Presidential Returning Officer of Plateau State, Professor Shehu Abdulraman, who is the Vice Chancellor of Federal University Lafia, announced Peter Obi as winner and commended the people of Plateau State for conducting themselves peacefully. He called on various party agents to sign the Result Sheet.

On his part, the Resident Electoral Commissioner, Dr. Oliver Agundu, commended the security operatives, journalists, various observers and stakeholders for their patience and commitment to see that the election was concluded. And prayed that this same collaboration would be seen during the Governorship and Houses of Assembly elections.

There were commendation from party representatives and agents.

Plateau State Government has presented certificates and Appointment Letters to senior and newly appointed District Heads of Northern zone of the state.

Presenting the certificates to the District Heads at the Azi Nyako Youth Centre in Jos yesterday (Tuesday), the Commissioner for Local Government And Chieftaincy Affairs, Honourable Sylvanus D.Tapgun challenged them to see their appointments as a call to duty and a higher responsibility.

According to the commissioner, they should be proactive in the discharge of their duties by ensuring that they carry everyone along in their communities irrespective of tribe, religion or other affiliations.

While urging them to be fathers to all in their respective domains, Hon Tapgun challenged them to be more united in the pursuit of their common goal of uniting their people in the interest of peace and the development of their respective communities.

The commissioner noted that government would look up to them in the area of peaceful coexistence, security and other challenges that may subvert the peace and security of their communities. He called on them to be vigilant at all times as well as

PLSG presents certificates to newly appointed District Heads



Lalong

report any negative tendencies that may truncate the peace of the state as a whole.

For the generality of the people and illustrious sons and daughters of the benefiting communities, Hon.Sylvanus Tapgun said it's their duty to accord the district heads' maximum support in order for them to succeed in their new assignments.

"It is for these reasons that His Excellency, the Executive Governor of Plateau State, Rt.Hon. Dr.Simon Bako Lalong being a listening governor, considered the request of our various communities which have clamoured for self-actualization by creating more districts and chieftdoms in the state. This is a promise fulfilled which is brought to effect by the instrumentality of the Plateau State Legal Notice No.1 Gazette on creation of new Chieftdoms/Districts, Restoration, Grading and other Related Matters Order No.1 Vo.1 of 3rd February,2023,"he stressed. In his speech, the Aten of Ganawuri, HRH.Yakubu Chaimang enjoined the District Heads to work assiduously for the benefit of their communities. He pointed out that the reward for hard work is more work. Chaimang thanked Governor Lalong for the appointments and urged them to support the rescue administration and to carry all along.



Obi

Sports



Ben spent the second half of the 2018-19 season on loan at Udinese

Two brothers and a chat about football and sexuality

BEN Wilmot made his professional debut for Stevenage as a 17-year-old and moved to Watford less than a year later after bids to buy him from a clutch of Premier League clubs.

Since then he has enjoyed loan spells at Swansea and Italian side Udinese, along with appearances for England Under-21s, before a switch to Stoke in 2021.

His older brother Joe is gay and has been on the sidelines supporting Ben since they were boys.

They joined Football Focus to discuss the sport's relationship with sexuality - in the stands, in the changing rooms and in the media.

Joe: I don't think there has ever been a time when someone in the family hasn't been involved in football. Our dad (former Stevenage goalkeeper Richard Wilmot) was still playing while we were growing up.

Mum has got a photo at home of us both on the pitch with him - in full kit - before he played a match for St Albans City.

Dad used to manage your under-14 side and mum and I would run the tea bar, following you around in the freezing cold on a Sunday morning.

I remember Matt Le Tissier giving you a golden football when we went to a football tournament at Butlins one year. That sticks out. Those were really fun times.

More recently, one of my fondest memories of us as a family was coming to see you play for Udinese away to Juventus during your time in Italy.

Ben: I would say that too. It was the first time I had lived away and to have you all come to watch that game was special. I don't think any of you had watched football abroad. You hadn't needed to!

Joe: I don't think we ever actually

talked about me coming out at the time. My story is quite a weird one - I came out to mum in a PowerPoint presentation. I asked her if she wouldn't mind telling dad. I don't actually know how you came to find out. Did mum tell you?

Ben: Yeah, it wasn't a passing comment, but it wasn't a big deal either. Mum told me. I said OK. And that was that. I don't know what it felt like to you, but, for me, within our family, it didn't feel like a big thing.

Joe: Yeah. And that is what I wanted. I didn't want a song and dance about it, I just wanted people to know, so it didn't become a weird thing.

We went to the same school, you were a few years below me, and no doubt people were talking about it, because back then it wasn't a particularly common thing to do.

But I didn't feel I needed to speak to you directly about it. I felt like it was done and then we moved on.

When I have told that story before some people have asked if my family didn't really care. But that isn't it. You did care, but we didn't want it to feel like it was abnormal.

Ben: What are some of your experiences of being gay and football fan?

Joe: I have a running joke with dad that I become a different person at a football match - I don't recognise that person. I am effing and jeffing, I'm shouting, and my voice, for some reason, goes so much deeper.

It is not intentional or something that I feel I have to do. It is just, watching you, I am really into it.

The thought of being gay and being at a football match has never really crossed my mind. That is probably a bit of a luxury for me.

I know for a fact though some people who are concerned about

the reaction to how they present, act or look when they watch a football match.

I am really fortunate in that sense.

Ben: It's good to hear that you have always felt comfortable watching me because you have not been watching in a corporate box. You have been in away ends and the rest of it...

Joe: I have felt absolutely fine with being gay - I have been 100% comfortable with that - but watching you play is really hard. Mum and dad will attest to that. We spend the entire game stressed out! But the gay part of it is absolutely fine.

How do you think football has come on in the last 10 years or so, being on the inside of it?

Ben: I haven't been a professional for 10 years! But from my experience there is a lot more awareness of the issues. A lot more people are more educated on it.

Ideally, in 2023, sexuality shouldn't be something that we still need to talk about.

It should be something we can accept and get on with. It doesn't affect anyone apart from the person involved. Football should be a safe enough space so players can come out while they are playing, but I feel, with the abuse that players get day-to-day online or on a matchday, they don't want to give fans another angle to come at them.

Joe: I completely agree. I don't even like having the conversation [about whether a high-profile player will come out while still playing]. It can feel like a bit of a witch-hunt.

You can get headlines about Premier League players potentially planning to come out or being in same-sex relationships and I think 'why are you drawing attention to

it?'

Let people get on with their lives.

Ben: There is this idea that that there has to be at least one LGBT player at every club - and people start guessing who it might be.

Joe: Exactly! People are watching television, or looking through the squad online and saying 'do you think it's him?'

Maybe they decide it is a player who dresses eccentrically or likes fashion - that doesn't make a player gay, it just means they like fashion!

They have all the money in the world, of course they are going to buy loads of nice clothes!

At the moment, the first Premier League player to come out knows they are going to become some sort of figurehead.

What if they don't want that?

It is so much pressure and it is probably having the opposite effect. I think keeping the fanfare low and not making a big deal out of it is the best thing for everyone.

Just like it was for us as a family - a quiet conversation and we move on.

Ben: Speaking on behalf of the dressing room I am in the moment, I think if someone did want to come out they would be more than comfortable doing so to the group we have.

We have such a good group, no-one would be bothered. It wouldn't be a big deal. And overall, I feel like football is going that way.

Back in the day the dressing room was a lot harder and young players especially might not have been treated well - a lot of that has gone. There wouldn't be any stick or abuse for sure.

Joe: If you look at today's generation of footballers, what's their average age? Maybe 27 or

so? They know what society is like. I cannot imagine for a second that homophobic slurs are used in dressing rooms any more. I think we are completely beyond that.

I read that when [Blackpool's] Jake Daniels came out, he had told the team and they had kept it to themselves and respected his privacy.

I don't know any bigger gesture from a team-mate than that respect of his privacy.

He must have been really nervous and for them to do that is massive.

If any players are wondering how to show support, it doesn't have to be rainbow laces or Instagram posts. You don't have to shout about it. Sometimes the subtle, quieter gestures are the most powerful.

What do you think are some of the barriers that prevent players potentially coming out?

Ben: I think the biggest one is the fan and social media reaction. I don't think a player would have any problem coming out to the lads they see on a day-to-day basis.

But there are so many people who give it 'the big'un' behind a keyboard. They wouldn't be able to say it to your face, but people can do so online without many repercussions.

Given how much time people spend on their phone these days and how things get passed about, a player would probably see it, even without meaning to. I think that is the biggest thing they would be worried about.

Joe: Absolutely, I completely agree. But another thing to say would be that although there will be abuse online, it would be 2% or 3%. The rest would be so positive. The amount of people who will come out in support will be enormous.

Sports



Senegal's men beat Egypt in the final of the 2022 Africa Cup of Nations in Cameroon. It was a first African title for the Lions of Teranga

2025 AFCON: Morocco confident of bid to host tournament

MOROCCAN officials remain confident the North African country can launch a strong bid to replace Guinea as hosts of the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (Afcon).

Morocco, who last hosted the tournament in 1988, were due to stage it again in 2015 but withdrew because of fears over an Ebola outbreak.

But having successfully hosted both the Women's Africa Cup of Nations and the Club World Cup in the past 12 months, the Atlas Lions believe they can see off neighbours and rivals Algeria in the bidding process.

"Morocco is ready," top Moroccan official Hassan Kharbouch told BBC Sport Africa.

"We just organised a successful Club World Cup after our previous successes of hosting this same tournament in 2013 and 2014."

Kharbouch is director of the Mohammed VI Football Complex, a project launched over a decade ago that has been praised for its role in helping the men's national team become the

"We've also staged the Under-17 and Under-23 Nations Cups and as hosts we delivered record African attendances for the Women's Cup of Nations in Rabat and Casablanca in 2022," Kharbouch continued.

"We have all the facilities and logistics to organise the African Cup of Nations, not only in Rabat and Casablanca but also in Tangier, Oujda, Fez, Marrakech and Agadir, each venue boasting of a number of training sites."

The Confederation of African Football (Caf) president Patrice Motsepe confirmed last month that Algeria, Morocco, South Africa, Zambia and a joint Benin-Nigeria bid are in the running to replace Guinea as hosts of the 2025 event.

The West African nation were stripped of the 24-team event in October because of a lack of suitably advancing infrastructure and facilities.

Motsepe said the successful replacement would offer the best "transport, logistics, hotels and beautiful stadiums".

"Each region will have a chance to organise a Cup of Nations; we cannot assign the organisation of the tournament successively to the same region," said Motsepe.

This would seem to count against Benin and Nigeria, because another West African nation, Ivory Coast, will host in 2023.

Zambia have never hosted the tournament, while 1996 and 2013 host South Africa's economy is struggling.

This all means that Morocco and North African rivals Algeria are regarded as favourites - and both nations will push hard for

the right to host the 35th edition of the continental showpiece.

Algeria last hosted the Cup of Nations in 1990, but they are boosted by a successful hosting earlier this year of the delayed 2022 African Nations Championship (CHAN), using four locations: Algiers, Oran, Constantine and Annaba.

January's CHAN tournament, which produced big crowds with top facilities on display, may have been overshadowed by the political tensions between both countries, but Algeria are also set to stage another continental event, the Under-17 Nations Cup in April.

Despite facing huge competition from Algeria, Kharbouch believes Morocco offers the right combination of growth, security, facilities, infrastructure and passionate fans.

"In Rabat alone there are more than 10 pitches in which teams can have their training sessions. We also have big hospitals," added the man who organised the Under-23 Afcon in 2011.

"In the Mohammed VI training centre we have eight pitches and a huge medical

Liverpool announces pre-tax profit of £7.5m for 2021-22

Liverpool reached the Champions League final in 2021-22 as they went close to an unprecedented quadruple

Liverpool have announced a pre-tax profit of £7.5m for the 2021-22 season as the Premier League club's overall revenue rose by £107m to £594m.

During the 2021-22 campaign the Reds played in all 63 club games possible as they won the FA Cup and Carabao Cup.

They have recorded a profit for the first time since 2018-19, despite a £69m increase in administrative costs.

However, matchday revenue rose by £83m to £86m, as supporters returned following the coronavirus pandemic.

"Some of the numbers in these latest accounts look slightly skewed as a result of the previous reporting period being impacted by the global pandemic," managing director Andy Hughes said.

"However, the underlying strength of our financial position remains strong and we continue to operate a sustainable club, which is our main objective from a financial perspective," he added.

centre with radiology, rehabilitation and other facilities that impressed a big club like Real Madrid to want to plan a future pre-season camp here.

"And you can travel one hour from Tangier to Rabat, with the TGV and it's about 45 minutes to Casablanca.

"We have the highways, hospitals. IT and communication are of the highest standard."

"It's not about having stadiums, but you have to manage that stadium during competition."

Following a last-minute postponement, Caf is now expected to announce their decision some time in March.

Morocco were the first African country to qualify for a World Cup in 1970, the first to reach the last 16 in 1986 and the continent's first semi-finalist in 2022.

The Atlas Lions won their only Africa Cup of Nations in 1976, beating Guinea in the final, but lost the 2004 final to host nation Tunisia.

The first African referee to take charge of a World Cup final - when France beat Brazil in 1998 - was Moroccan Said Belqola.

Liverpool owner John Henry said this month that he is not selling the Premier League club, but added he does expect some investment.

The Champions League finalists rose four places to third in the latest Deloitte Money League study, behind Premier League winners Manchester City and European champions Real Madrid.

However, Jurgen Klopp's seventh-placed side are in danger of missing out on a lucrative Champions League place next season.

Liverpool signed seven new players during the year, including forward Luis Diaz for



Liverpool

THE technical adviser of Rivers United Stanley Eguma has insisted that they are on the verge of becoming a perfect team, BSNSports.com.ng report.

The Pride of Rivers on Sunday evening secured a 1-0 away win over DC Motema Pembe in the third group game of the CAF Confederation Cup.

While speaking on the game, Eguma said they travelled to Luanda, Angola prepared for the game and they were happy about the result.

"We came to Luanda with the mindset to win because we needed these points to make it from the group. Our plans were working well until we got the red card and everything changed again.

"In training sometimes, we practice with one man down in case we have this situation in a match so that we will be able to cope.

"My players showed character and tactical discipline and that saw us

Rivers United will soon become a perfect team- Eguma

through. I believe they gave them all even though the game almost sapped them up. That strength and dexterity were what helped us.

"We are showing character in the league

as well and I think we are growing with the competition, I mean both in the league and on the continent. In a matter of time, we will become a perfect team", he said.



Eguma

Uganda coach bullish ahead of Nigeria game

UGANDA Under-20 coach Jackson Mayanja is targeting a victory against

the Flying Eagles of Nigeria when both teams lock horns in the

quarterfinal of the Under-20 Africa Cup of Nations.

Nigeria bounced back from an opening-day defeat against Senegal to pick wins against hosts Egypt and Mozambique and ensure they claim the second spot in Group A.

They will take on the Hippos of Uganda in one of the quarterfinal clashes on the 2nd of March. Uganda qualified as group winners after picking five points from their three games.

Ahead of the clash, Uganda gaffer Mayanja is talking tough. He thinks his team has a good chance and believes they will beat Nigeria and advance to the semifinal.

"Since that we have qualified, now we're planning for the next one so that we can qualify for the next stage," Mayanja said on CAF's website.

"My goal here in this tournament is to take this team to the World Cup."

A lot is at stake in the fixture. The winner of the tie will qualify for the semifinal of the U-20 AFCON and automatically get one of the four available tickets for the World Cup.

Also, Nigeria coach Ladan Bosso will be looking to guide the Flying Eagles to an eighth African crown.



Sports

FIBA 2023 World Cup: Dare Salutes gallant D'Tigers



D'Tigers

THE Minister of Youth and Sports Development, Sunday Dare, on Monday heaped praises on Nigeria's senior men's basketball team, D'Tigers, for their commendable showing in the last round of the FIBA 2023 World Cup Qualifiers for Africa that ended in Luanda, Angola on Sunday.

D'Tigers won two of their three games, narrowly missing out of a place at the FIBA 2023 World Cup after finishing in fourth place in their group where the top three teams booked automatic spots.

Nigeria defeated Cote'd Ivoire 72-63 in the first game, ending the Ivoriens' unbeaten run in the qualifiers before beating Guinea 62-59 in the second game. However, before their third and final game against Angola on Sunday, news was already out that the final World Cup ticket had gone to Cape Verde but the Nigerians still put up a credible showing despite losing 65-59

to the hosts. Dare said the efforts of the Nigeria Basketball Federation, the coaches and players were well appreciated. "As painful as it is, to narrowly miss out on the World Cup, we must appreciate the NBBF, the coaches, officials and players for their gallant performance.

They played with honour and pride, and gave this campaign their 100%," Dare said. "It was an opportunity given to the home based players and coaches to show their potentials and they did not disappoint. I believe this

will open them up to many more opportunities and exposure."

Meanwhile, the Vice President of the Nigeria Basketball Federation, Babs Ogunade, attributed the ouster to the administrative problems in the basketball family over the years.

He said: "Our failure to qualify was because of all the distractions and court cases affecting preparations and other logistics. It is unfortunate but we saw it coming because we were depending on the results of other people and not just our own."

Arsenal monitoring Raheem Sterling for Champions League preparations

ARSENAL manager Mikel Arteta is interested in a reunion with Chelsea winger Raheem Sterling as the Gunners prepare for their return to the Champions League, *90min* understands.

Not since the 2016/17

season have Arsenal featured in Europe's premier competition but their emphatic push for the Premier League title has almost guaranteed them a spot in the Champions League next season.

Arsenal are already putting plans in place to bolster in

MORTADA Mansour is no stranger to controversy, but his current jail sentence will prevent him returning to his position as Zamalek president. Zamalek president Mortada Mansour has been jailed for one month for verbally insulting the president of bitter Egyptian rivals Al Ahly.

Mansour, who is also a politician and former member of parliament, had previously used parliamentary immunity to protect him from such lawsuits.

But after losing an election in late 2020, Al Ahly chairman Mahmoud El Khatib, a legendary former player for the Red Devils, filed a defamation case over a video that appeared on social media and the Zamalek club channel.

Mansour was found guilty and initially sentenced to a year behind bars but that was reduced to one month in August 2022.

However, a further appeal has now been rejected and Mansour has been jailed.

According to Egyptian law, he will not be able to return to his position as president because anyone convicted of a crime judged to impact reputation, honesty, honour or integrity is not entitled to obtain or occupy a public position.

It is not the first time that Mansour has landed himself in hot water with some of his comments.

In 2007, he was sentenced to three years in jail by a criminal court in Cairo for insulting court officials and calling them corrupt, while in 2018 the

Zamalek President jailed for insult

Confederation of African Football (Caf) banned the 70-year-old from all football-related activity for a year following comments about Caf officials.

He was also a vocal critic of Mark Clattenburg, the former English referee who was briefly in charge

of the Egyptian Referees Committee.

Zamalek and Al Ahly, both based in Cairo, have long been two of the dominant forces in African football.

Al Ahly have been crowned African champions 10 times, more than any other side, with Zamalek joint-second on the list with five titles.



Mansour

Arsenal monitoring Raheem Sterling for Champions League preparations

preparation for their return to the competition and sources have confirmed to *90min* that Arteta is looking to add players with European experience.

One of those on his radar is Sterling, who worked under the Spaniard during their time at Manchester City.

Sources have confirmed to *90min* that Arteta is a huge fan of Sterling, given his ability to play anywhere across the front line, and would be interested in lodging a bid to try and sign the 28-year-old if he became available this

summer.

Importantly, Sterling is not believed to be looking to leave Chelsea and the Blues are not advertising his services either, but the Stamford Bridge outfit will have to make some tricky decisions when it comes to player sales after 12 months of bolstering their squad to an unsustainable level.

A number of Chelsea's summer signings could be offloaded after just one year, with Kalidou Koulibaly and Marc Cucurella among those facing uncertain futures in west London.

Sterling has spoken openly of his respect for Arteta in the past and has praised his former coach for the impact he has made at Arsenal.

"I knew once he went into Arsenal that it would be a great opportunity for him but also he would definitely implement what he wanted to bring in," Sterling said in October 2020. "And he's a person that will put his foot down and not let things slide as you can see with the boys at Arsenal. They know if they don't run they are most likely not going to play."

"We all knew before Mikel got in how much good football they could play, how technically good they were but probably off the field they weren't as aggressive as they are with Mikel."

"They run their socks off now, you can see why they benefited with some good results recently."

Chelsea to stick with Potter despite poor run

CHELSEA manager, Graham Potter, will reportedly not be sacked and will be given time to turn the team's fortunes around, despite overseeing just two wins in their last 15 English Premier League matches.

The Englishman took over from Thomas Tuchel in September and signed a five-year contract. As turbulent as the initial period of his time at Stamford Bridge has been, Chelsea officials have emphasised that they always had a long-term plan with Potter in mind.

While Potter's job may be safe at the moment, the club is currently 10th in the EPL, 14 points behind the UEFA Champions League qualification spots. The team has only scored 23 goals all season, and just six since November – the lowest in the Premier League during that time period.

Potter himself acknowledged that results need to improve and that he has taken full responsibility for the situation. The Blues will face Leeds on Saturday and Borussia



Potter

Dortmund in the UCL last-16 second leg at Stamford Bridge the following Tuesday. N'Golo Kante, who has

been sidelined since August with a hamstring injury, returned to training on

Monday. Christian Pulisic, who has been out of action since January due to a knee injury,

was also present, as he continues to work on his fitness.



Quest



writer

PROF. MAHMOOD YAKUBU

FRAGMENT

"A further lesson from the 2019 general election, which is helping us immensely in our preparations for the 2023 general election, is that an early finalisation of changes to the Electoral Act, the principal legal basis for elections, is critical to proper organisation of elections. In the build-up to the 2019 general election, there was an unending back and forth between the Executive and Legislative arms of government on the Electoral Act, and in the end the amendment of the Act was stalled. One consequence of this was that INEC could not conclude work on the Regulations and Guidelines for the election, which are meant to derive from, and be consistent with, the Electoral Act as early as we intended."

Prof. Mahmood Yakubu

Preparations, priorities for electoral integrity and inclusion

I am highly honoured to lead this discussion today and to share this illustrious platform which has over the years welcomed exceptional intellectuals, celebrated public servants and renowned statesmen. Today is exactly thirty-nine days to the next general election in Nigeria, which I have both the privilege and challenge of leading its proper delivery. Elections in Nigeria have become events that attract extensive international attention and concern, not only because of the sheer size of the deployment, which usually draws extensively on both national and international resources, but also because of the importance of Nigeria in Africa and particularly the West African sub-region.

Although it is true that elections should normally be routine, programmed events, each election in Nigeria invariably presents its own unique context and therefore distinct challenges and prospects. Overall, therefore, there are enormous expectations, both within Nigeria and internationally, about the conduct and management of elections in the country. The 2023 general election is no exception. These expectations place a great responsibility on the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), a responsibility that we do not take lightly. We appreciate that there are challenges and concerns. But we also realise that there is enormous goodwill and support, both in Nigeria and beyond. Consequently, we believe that by forthrightly sharing our experiences and discussing the challenges openly, we can surmount them and ensure that each succeeding election in Nigeria shows marked improvement over the preceding ones. This is what I hope that the exchanges we are going to have here today would achieve.

The general election will start on Saturday 25th February 2023 with the national elections, i.e. the Presidential election and elections for the two Houses of the National Assembly - the Senate and House of Representatives. On that day, legislators for 109 Senatorial Districts and 360 House of Representatives constituencies will be elected. The State elections, i.e. election of Governors, as well as 993 members of the State Houses of Assembly, will hold two weeks later, on Saturday 11th March 2023. Only 28 out of 36 Governors will be elected on that day. The



other eight do not fall due because of past electoral litigations that misaligned the tenures of the affected Governors.

Given the geographical expanse of the country, the number of registered voters, electoral constituencies and polling units, conducting a general election in Nigeria is a huge undertaking. The delimitation details are staggering: 93,469,008 registered voters expected to elect their representatives for 1,491 constituencies in 176,846 polling units. Based on the figures we compiled from the websites of various Electoral Commissions and Interior Ministries in West Africa, Nigeria's current voter population is 16,742,916 higher than the 76,726,092 registered voters in the other 14 countries put together. This means that a general election in Nigeria is like conducting elections in the whole of West Africa and beyond.

Since 1999, Nigeria has been conducting regular general elections following the restoration of civilian-democratic rule governance after many years of military rule. The 2023 general election will be the seventh consecutive general election in Nigeria. This fact makes this the longest period of electoral democracy in the

country's history. Previous periods of electoral democracy were relatively short, repeatedly truncated by military interventions. However, the quantity of elections is one thing, but their quality is another. As Zavadskaya and Garnett aptly note, the question of integrity of elections is relevant for "all elections, whether in new democracies or jurisdictions that have held election for decades", because they are all "vulnerable to malpractice." However, good elections are not only about curbing malpractices, but also about ensuring inclusivity. Inclusive elections constitute an essential part of democracy. This is the reason why in our Commission we regularly speak of our commitment to free, fair, credible, transparent, verifiable and inclusive elections. To be sure, credible and inclusive elections in the final analysis depend on adequate preparations and my main preoccupation today is to share with you how we are preparing for a general election of high integrity and inclusiveness in Nigerian 2023.

Lessons from the 2019 General Election

Preparations for the 2023 general election are largely being concluded and preliminary deployments are already underway. Indeed, our

preparations began quite early, learning from some of our experiences in 2019, particularly the sore experience of having to postpone that election a few hours before it commenced. One important lesson from 2019 is that great planning and preparations are important, but unfortunately these are often at the risk of what Pippa Norris calls "simple human errors, technical malfunctions and logistical failures". However, early preparations provide opportunities for adequate planning, resourcing, and testing of systems that will reduce these risks to a minimum.

A second lesson from 2019 is that early choice of election management tools, especially the main election technology. Their proper pilot-testing and deployment are exceedingly important for a successful election. For election technology, early decision is central to maintaining its integrity, popularising it among voters and addressing any challenges that could arise. We know that political actors often try to undermine the process by attacking the technology, casting doubts on its suitability, bypassing its use or indeed seeking to undermine its security. This informed the early choice of a new voter accreditation technology using

an electronic device we call the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS). We have tested it in several bye-elections and off-cycle Governorship elections. In addition, the decision to make polling unit election results available for public viewing, which has always been a major demand by citizens and election observers, falls into this early choice of election technology. The INEC Results Viewing (IREV) portal is a dedicated web portal for the public to view polling unit results as soon as they are finalised on election day. This has been employed in several elections conducted by the Commission in the past few years. In particular, the uploading of Polling Unit results on the IReV portal has been deployed 105 constituencies where the Commission conducted off-season elections since August 2020. The result can still be viewed on the portal, making the IReV an invaluable repository of elections results in Nigeria.

A further lesson from the 2019 general election, which is helping us immensely in our preparations for the 2023 general election, is that an early finalisation of changes to the Electoral Act, the principal legal basis for elections, is critical to proper organisation of elections. In the build-up to the 2019 general election, there was an unending back and forth between the Executive and Legislative arms of government on the Electoral Act, and in the end the amendment of the Act was stalled. One consequence of this was that INEC could not conclude work on the Regulations and Guidelines for the election, which are meant to derive from, and be consistent with, the Electoral Act as early as we intended. Since the Commission has no say as such in the passing of the Act, it had to wait for a final document to emerge from the process, which ultimately did not materialise. The several recommendations that the Commission made to the National Assembly to include in the amended Act to improve the quality of elections, such as the strengthening of the use of technology, early conclusion of candidates' nominations, as well as timely funding of elections, never became law. It is noteworthy that this time around, the Electoral Act 2022 was passed in good time, and it has addressed some of these issues.

To be continued