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Naira crisis has brought hunger, anger -Sultan

The protracted naira crisis has caused hunger and anger in the land, the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar, lamented Monday.

He urged President Muhammadu Buhari to

address the problem to prevent an uprising.

The new naira scarcity has been worsened by the refusal of banks to accept the deposit of old notes.

As a result, many businesses insisted on only new notes.

But, lawyers said it

amounted to contempt for the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) not to have directed banks to continue to accept the old notes in line with the Supreme Court order.

Last Wednesday, the Supreme Court, in a case filed by Kaduna, Kogi and Zamfara states, barred the

Federal Government or CBN from enforcing the February 10 deadline for the use of old naira notes.

In a unanimous ruling by a seven-member panel, led by Justice John Okoro, it held that the "interim injunction" will subsist "pending the hearing and determination of the plaintiffs/applicants' motion on notice for interlocutory injunction."

Worried by the naira crisis, the Sultan said it has made life unbearable.

He said there was

increasing tension caused by the CBN monetary policy, adding that urgent steps should be taken to stem the heat.

The Sultan spoke in Abuja at a two-day conference by the Kano State government on livestock reforms and mitigation of associated conflicts.

The royal father said: "Let's keep politics aside.

Especially for the common man, (should be

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Sultan



APC Director General Presidential campaign Council, Rt Hon. Simon Bako Lalong (CON) and Plateau State Governor (right) in a discussion mood with the host Governor, Muhammad Yahaya Inuwa of Gombe State on Monday during the Presidential Campaign rally at the Gombe stadium, Gombe State
Photo: DANLADI DUK

'Peace an ingredient for sustainable development'

President of the Azikel Group, Dr. Azibapu Eruani, has said that peace is a priceless ingredient for accelerated development of a people, community and society, even as he called for the sustenance of peace across the globe.

Eruani, who spoke while delivering an address at the annual Ayakoro Community Festival (ACF) in Ogbia Local Government Area of Bayelsa State, said that stable economy is a product of sustainable peace.

Speaking as Chairman of the ACF, he reiterated that progressive growth and development made by nations, states and regions could not be unconnected with the peaceful disposition of the people, tranquility and harmony inherent in the area.

The Azikel Chief Executive averred that the sacrifices made by the founding fathers of Ayakoro moved the community from their previous settlement where

tidal erosion is recurring decimals to a new settlement in which the people have continue to enjoy sustained peace, growth and development.

He said: "Our history, culture and heritage defines us as people, and so as we celebrate we create a map for generations unborn.

Accordingly, he posted that indices of progress in the community could be seen in the appointment of sons and daughters of the community, particularly the appointment of Mr. Samuel Ogbuku, as the managing director of NDDC.

He, however, thanked the Paramount Ruler of the Community, HRH Righteous Inegbaha, and the organising committee for enthroning peace in the community.

To this end, Eruani extolled the people of the community for being peaceful and law abiding, stressing that it is commendable and worthy of emulation.

Earlier, the Paramount

Ruler, HRH Righteous Inegbaha, in his address had eulogised the founding fathers, prominent sons of the community for their invaluable contribution, which he attributed to the sustained peace in the area.

He also lauded the Azikel Group President's contribution towards the development of the community and the success of the festival.

The paramount ruler also lauded Eruani for his recent award by President Muhammadu Buhari as the Commander of the Order of the Federal Republic (CFR) and prayed God to strengthen him in his bid towards building sustainable energy and the new industrialization of Nigeria.

Meanwhile, Eruani, who runs a petroleum Refining and Power Generation company, has thrown his weight behind the Steve Azaiki Foundation with the payment of bursary to 500 students from Bayelsa state in various higher Institution of Learning.

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News

Naira crisis has brought hunger, anger -Sultan



Sa'ad

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"These people that God Almighty gave leadership over, one day, God forbid, will rise (against us).

"After all the English by professors (at the conference), how do we get these developments down to the common man who is a farmer, the common Fulani man who doesn't know anything about development? He only cares about cattle.

"The people are hungry – is there money? People are angry and hungry. Let's see how we can douse the tension."

The Sultan is not the only one worried about the developments.

Kano, Ekiti, Niger and Ondo states have applied to join the Supreme Court case, which comes up for hearing tomorrow.

Abia State Governor Okezie Ikpeazu warned that the crisis may lead to anarchy if not quickly addressed.

To minimise the impact on his people, he has barred the state Board of Internal Revenue Service from collecting 2023 revenue from all markets in the state until June.

immediately deploy sufficient Point of Sale machines to all markets, superstores, and other trading centres in the state to enable buyers to utilize their ATM cards for transactions.

He also urged the CBN to ensure that the new notes are made available to traders and residents in sufficient volume to avoid a breach of the peace that might result from the "massive suffering occasioned by the new transaction regimes."

Kalu added: "We are not against the new cashless regime and redesigning of the naira notes by the Federal Government.

"But the governor is deeply worried about the effect on our hardworking traders as a result of the poor implementation strategy which failed to take into cognisance the peculiar needs of rural and urban traders.

"Many rural traders are unbanked, and even if they wish to join the banking system, the branches are not even there, hence, they might have to travel several kilometres to neighbouring communities before they can carry out their transactions.

"Quite a number of them may also not have enough formal education to help them operate the PoS machines, so the policymakers should have made provisions for their needs before rolling out.

"The immediate solution is to inject enough new naira notes into our rural economy through special interventions by the CBN to avert the looming socio-economic dislocation that might lead to anarchy."

Ikpeazu, who spoke through the Commissioner for Trade and Investment, John Kalu, said he was "deeply worried" by the naira crisis.

Kalu said: "The governor has visited many markets in the state since the cashless policy came into effect along with the scarcity of new currency notes as a result of the naira redesign.

"He observed that traders in the state are possibly the worst hit.

"Many of our traders are unable to transact with buyers as the policy implementers failed to capture their peculiar needs while rolling out the new policies.

"The traders are bearing the brunt, and as a responsible government, we are looking at various options to support them.

"One of those options is what the governor announced this afternoon (Tuesday) during his visit to Good Morning Market, Aba, that, henceforth, state and LGA revenue collections in the markets will be suspended for at least six months starting from January 2023."

The Commissioner urged banks in the state to

'Peace an ingredient for sustainable development'

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A statement that confirmed the development explained that the decision to support the Steve Azaiki Foundation was to demonstrate his love for education, magnanimity and benevolence by supporting with bursary for five hundred (500) students of Bayelsa State extraction in different institutions of higher

learning.

Eruani noted that this is part of the greater vision of the President of Azikel Group; for youths of Bayelsa and the younger generation to develop, equip and build themselves intellectually for the contemporary challenges. According to him, "His vision is for Bayelsa to lead the way in the industrialisation of Nigeria and that can't be achieved,

if the youths are not well prepared and better equipped mentally for the enormous responsibility that lies ahead."

He stressed that the intellectual pool and creative ideas of today's youths are the driving force behind the innovative and result driven initiatives globally, and the youths of Bayelsa State and Ijaw nation cannot be left behind.

Pastor apologises for wielding AK-47

House on the Rock Pastor, Uche Aigbe, has apologised over AK -47 illustration in the church.

The apology letter was uploaded on all the verified social media platforms of the church on Monday evening.

"February 13th, 2023, on Sunday, February 12th, resident pastor of House on the Rock Abuja church pastor Uche Aigbe in a message about fighting the good fight with spiritual weapons, carried an unloaded gun to illustrate his message on "guarding your faith."

"Pastor Uche has been a leader in the house on the rock Abuja since 1999 and has always shown exemplary leadership; however, he realizes that even with the best of intention carrying a gun to illustrate his message was ill-advised and regrettable."

"Without hesitation pastor, Uche has acknowledged the gravity of his actions and apologizes unreservedly

for them.'

"As a church house on the rock rejects all forms of violence, we stand on the good news gospel of Jesus Christ, which embraces peace and goodwill for all mankind.'

"We are cooperating fully with the authorities as they carry out their investigations into this incident and will continue

to engage internally to ensure this break in protocol does not happen again," the statement read.

Recall Pastor Uche had on Sunday, February 12th, brought an AK-47 to the church to make an illustration in his sermon titled "guarding your faith".

This act led to his arrest and detainment by the Nigerian Police Force on Monday.

NCDC records 216 diphtheria cases, 40 deaths

The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC) has confirmed 216 diphtheria cases in the country as the death toll has hit 40 so far.

The NCDC also said the suspected cases in the country are now 523 from five states – Kano, Yobe, Katsina, Lagos, and Osun.

The Lead of the Diphtheria/Pertussis Technical Working Group in the NCDC, Dr Bola Lawal revealed this at a webinar titled 'Diphtheria Outbreak in Nigeria: A Case of Re-Emergence or Improved

Surveillance,' monitored by our correspondent on Monday.

Lawal said the agency is currently supporting the response activities in Kano, Katsina, Lagos, Osun, Yobe, and other States.

He further said: "Kano state has recorded 396 suspected cases with 211 confirmed cases, Yobe state has recorded 78 suspected cases with two confirmed cases; Katsina has 34 suspected cases but no confirmed case yet; Lagos state has recorded 14 suspected cases and two confirmed cases; Osun state has one confirmed case so far.

"We have also recorded 40 deaths with a case fatality rate of 18.5 per cent. Of the 216 confirmed cases, 184 (85.2 percent) were aged two to 14 years from both sexes."

On the vaccination status, Lawal said of the 216 confirmed cases, 27 were fully vaccinated, 84 were unvaccinated and 20 were partly vaccinated.

My ordeal in DSS custody –Fani-Kayode

The Director of Special Projects and New Media of the All Progressives Congress Presidential Campaign Council (APC-PCC), Femi Fani-Kayode, has narrated how he was grilled for five hours on Monday, by operatives of the Department of State Services (DSS).

The DSS had invited the former Minister of Aviation to its Abuja office, over a tweet, where he alleged a meeting between some military generals and the presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Atiku Abubakar, to possibly plot a coup.

Addressing newsmen on Monday, at the APC National Secretariat in Abuja, Fani-Kayode said he was thoroughly grilled, handled professionally without torture and asked



Fani-Kayode

to return on Wednesday, for further investigations.

He noted that the experience he had in the DSS custody was not the type he would wish for his enemy.

"I spent about five hours. I was subjected to

thorough grilling; they were very thorough and highly professional in their interrogation. And I was asked to go back on Wednesday for further interrogation.

"The place anybody wouldn't want to go, I think is the DSS. If I were

to do it a second time, I won't tweet this same way", he said.

Also speaking during the press conference, Director, Media and Publicity of the APC Presidential Campaign Council, Bayo Onanuga, said, "We were worried when we heard that FFK was invited by the DSS.

INEC publishes list of polling units with no voters

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has published 240 polling units across the country with no registered voters.

The Commission, on Monday, in Abuja, disclosed at a meeting with leaders of political parties that the polling units have no registered voters.

Chairman of the Commission, Prof. Mahmood Yakubu, said the 240 polling units spread

"So we contacted our lawyers and our lawyers followed him to the DSS headquarters. If he was detained beyond today, we would have challenged it. We would have taken further steps. But he said the DSS officials were very professional."

across 28 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

"240 polling units without registered voters spread across 28 States and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). They range from one polling unit to 12 polling units in each state and the FCT, except Taraba and Imo states with 34 and 38 polling units respectively.

"No new registrants chose the polling units and no voters indicated interest

to transfer to them during the last Continuous Voter Registration (CVR), mainly for security reasons. This means that no elections will hold in these polling units.

"With this development, the number of polling units where elections will hold nationwide on 25th February 2023 and 11th March 2023 is now 176,606. Hard copies of the list are included in your folders for this meeting", Yakubu said.



Naira redesign: Faulty assumptions and systemic risks

The current cash crunch is the dominant issue in Nigeria today. To go about their daily lives, many people all over the country are spending countless hours on never-ending queues trying to get some money, which they presumably own. With frustration building, as a result of the cash crunch as well as other issues such as the fuel crisis, the obvious question is: "what is the way forward"?, writes **DAVID IJASEUN**.

SHOULD Nigeria continue as is, hoping that people manage the suffering for real or perceived future benefits? Or do we need a course correction before the lid gets blown off completely and we find ourselves with a severe economic contraction or worse,

The currency change policy

The cash crunch can be linked directly to the policy effort of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN). In October 2022, the CBN announced plans to change the currency, replacing the soon-to-be-decommissioned N200, N500, and N1000 notes with new versions. Reasons given for the change ranged from fighting counterfeiting, kidnapping, corruption, money laundering and other forms of illicit financial flows.

Additionally, the policy has been touted by some advocates outside of the apex bank as a tool for stopping or limiting vote buying in the upcoming elections.

Although there were indirect suggestions that efforts would be made to promote digital transactions over cash going forward, there was no new and explicit statement on cash restrictions beyond what was already in place via the cashless policy when the currency change was announced last October.

By all accounts, Nigeria does not appear to have a cash problem and was already moving in the digital direction even before the currency change. The problem the policy was trying to solve was not really there.

Most of the reasons given for the new policy are valid. As pointed out by the CBN, the currency notes being changed had not been redesigned in over 20 years. Improving transparency through increased digital transactions has also been a longer-term goal of the CBN, and a good one too.

However, some of the reasons given were on suspicious economic grounds, such as too much cash being outside the banking system. It can be safely assumed that the point of cash is for it to be in circulation and not sitting in bank vaults and that reducing money supply in general would be part of its regular monetary policy operations. Regardless, a currency change was not expected to lead to a significant cash crisis.

However, as has become clear, the actual policy being implemented was not simply a change of the currency but a sort of "demonetisation" process. The expectation of the CBN was that cash being deposited would not be withdrawn one-for-one, but that customers would adopt other non-cash systems. This cash crisis has however exposed some of the weaknesses in the policy approach.

The policy challenge and why

The first key weakness exposed is that the CBN appears to have grossly underestimated the economy's actual cash needs. By the economy here we mean just regular people who need cash for their livelihoods on a daily basis. As most economists are aware, Nigeria is a sort of dual economy with a significant informal sector.

The summary is that informality in Nigeria is a norm and hence the financial needs of the informal sector, notably cash, would be just as significant.

Surveys on use of cash in the day-to-day lives of ordinary Nigerians corroborate those accounts. From the Multiple Indicator Cluster



Emeffiele

Surveys (MICS) published by the NBS last year, only 35.4% of women and 47.2% of men aged 15 – 49 as at 2021 had bank accounts or any other similar set up in any financial institution.

The implication of this is that the non-account-holding population use/need cash to survive on a day-to-day basis. In fact, in states such as Bauchi, Jigawa, and Kebbi, less than 8% of women had bank accounts. The most popular reason given was that they did not have a stable income, and apparently they were using cash daily for survival.

The use of cash is not limited to just the lower income segment though. Another survey in 2021 by Enhancing Financial Innovation in Africa (EFINA) asked a subset of adults if they had used cash for payments in the last year. 100% said they had. Only 24% said they had used digital means for making payments in the preceding year. Similarly, 86% said they had received some income in cash in the preceding year.

Only 13% said they had received income by digital means. In summary, almost all available information pointed to cash being ubiquitous in the daily life of Nigerians. The failure by the CBN to foresee this necessary cash demand means that it probably underestimated how much demand there would be for the new currency notes.

The ubiquity of cash does not however mean that Nigeria has not made progress in the move towards a cashless economy. Indeed, due to technological innovations that have put mobile phones in almost every hand and a previously favourable policy environment by the CBN, Nigeria has made tremendous progress in digital finance as

evidenced by the continued growth in digital transactions (Fig 2).

Nigerian entrepreneurs continue to build innovative products that use the improved digital connectivity to provide financial services to more and more people.

On a monetary policy front, cash has slowly become a smaller share of all broad money. As is clear in Fig 1, The percent of cash to all money has fallen from 11% in 2007 to about 5.6% as at June 2022. The percent of cash to GDP has similarly fallen from over 2% of GDP in 2007 to 1.67% as at the end of 2021. By all accounts, Nigeria does not appear to have a cash problem and was already moving in the digital direction even before the currency change. The problem the policy was trying to solve was not really there.

The second key weakness identified is one of unforeseen capacity constraints. On the one hand, and if unofficial information is to be believed, the Nigerian Security Printing and Minting Company Limited – the government owned corporation responsible for printing currency locally – only had the capacity to print about N200billion by the end of January 2023.

A long way short of the N2.73 trillion cash in circulation as at September 2022. You do not need to solve too much mathematics here to see why there is a cash crunch. The CBN, via the NSPM PLC, just does not have the capacity to exchange all old notes for new notes even if they wanted to.

The attempt by what must have been an enormous number of people looking to quickly migrate to digital platforms also appears to have overwhelmed some of the key financial institutions like NIBSS who must have had very little time to build up capacity. If the Minister of

Finance was unaware of the policy in advance, as she told legislators last year, then it is fair to say the banks and associated financial institutions were also unaware.

The consequence of CBN's failure to properly estimate cash demand, the lack of capacity to actually print new Naira notes, and the unpreparedness of the banks and associated financial institutions to handle the extra demand means that many people in Nigeria are stuck. Long queues at the ATMs that have cash to dispense. Little cash over the counter at the banks. More failures in digital transactions.

As with most economic problems in Nigeria, the poor, especially women, are left bearing the short end of the stick. As is clear above, women are much more excluded from the financial systems compared to men. As we also learned during the COVID-19 pandemic, women are much more vulnerable to extra demands on their time due to cultural expectations on activities in the home.

As with other situations involving scarcity of a key commodity, some people exploit the situation for their own benefits. Various examples have been reported in the news already from bank managers looking to give cash selectively to their preferred clients and POS agents looking to make a quick extra buck from desperate customers with few other options.

These are all symptoms of the cash scarcity, rather than the cause. We see these practices not only with cash but with FX and fuel. As with other instances, we can spend time and effort sending the secret police and EFCC to harass people but that will be equivalent to taking a pain killer when what you really have is malaria.

Potential outcomes with the status quo

The CBN obviously cannot print enough new currency to meet all the legitimate demand, and the financial system is struggling to cope with the increased demand for its digital services. So, what happens if we retain the status quo with continued cash scarcity?

From an economic perspective, that will be tantamount to a sharp reduction in money supply which will most likely be associated with a sharp reduction in economic activity, especially in the informal sector. Sharp reductions in economic activity are typically associated with protests and in some circumstances social unrest.

Just as during the COVID-19 pandemic, the how and where these will occur will always be a surprise but they tend to happen. There are some intimations of this already, from banking halls to the streets.

A second consequence of continuing with the status quo is that trust in the banking system will be eroded even more, ironically likely setting back the cashless policy. The banks, and to a large extent the whole financial system, run on trust.

Trust that when you put your money in a bank you expect to get it back when you need it. The likely outcome of this cash crisis is that people seek more financial options outside the banking system to limit the risk to their livelihoods in the event something similar happens again.

Policy options going forward

Although some of the objectives of the currency change policy are laudable, the costs to the economy, especially the poor and most vulnerable, are too high to ignore. Very few people can argue against taking actions to tackle kidnappers' use of cash or to limit the use of cash to influence elections.

However, as with every policy, the benefits have to be weighed against the costs. When this cash crisis is combined with the fuel crisis, the already high food inflation, and a competitive election season, then the risk of a self-inflicted recession and social unrest is too high to ignore. It will be tantamount to turning up the heat under a pressure cooker that is already bursting at the seams.

One option will be to increase supply of the new notes by printing abroad. Aside other complications, this will take time and thus will not address the short-term crunch. On the basis of this, the only credible path to reducing the pressure and limiting the economic consequences with the unfortunate effect on the lives and livelihoods of the poorest, is to extend the timeline for the currency change.

This should be done with a concerted effort to return some of the old notes into circulation to immediately ease the cash crunch.

If this is done with a new timeline that is far enough that most people do not fear the immediate risk of accepting the old notes, and is communicated clearly and transparently by all parties, then the cash crisis will end. Guaranteed, the reputational damage to the CBN from having to walk back on the policy will be difficult to reverse, but there is no cost-free path now.

We can only choose the least costly option. And in doing that, the ego of the central bank should weigh far less than the economic, social and political costs to the entire system.

This article was prepared courtesy of the Agora policy institute.



Petrol ex-Depot price rises by 110%

THE Major Oil Marketers Association of Nigeria latest industry data report revealed that Ex-depot price of Premium Motor Spirit popularly known as petrol has risen by 110 per cent in four months.

The data showed that the ex-depot price rose from N148 per litre last October to an average of N312 per litre on February 3 this year.

The Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited had set the price which products can be sold to oil marketers at depots at N148 per litre but prices had surged within four months to an average of N312/litre due to scarcity.

While the hike was witnessed at the depots, pump prices had also jumped from N179/N180 per litre to as high as N500/litre, depending on the location.

According to the data, the least average ex-depot price of petrol within the period under review was N303/litre.

It noted that N303/litre was recorded at Apapa depots, while N305/litre was recorded at Ibafor depots. The product was sold at the highest price of N312/ltr at Satellite depot- all in Lagos State.

Although NNPC recently jerked up ex-depot price to N172 per litre, the Depots and Petroleum Products Marketers Association of Nigeria said rising foreign exchange rate contributed to the increasing price of petroleum products at depots.

DAPPMAN also cited illegal levies and high cost of daughter vessels as other factors fuelling the price hikes.

The Independent Petroleum Marketers Association of Nigeria with over 30,000 members, and controls 80 per cent of the market share in the downstream sector, have continuously lamented daily price increment at the depots.

They also lamented the high cost of transporting products to their respective stations, high running costs, among others.

IPMAN Chairman, Satellite Depot, Akin Akinrinade advised the Federal Government to revive the refineries to allow for local production.

"The lasting solution is for the refineries to start functioning and we begin local refining", he said.

On his part, Operations Controller, IPMAN Mike Osatuyi, said the removal of fuel subsidy and deregulation was the key to resolving the fuel scarcity menace.

He said, "The permanent solution is to deregulate and remove subsidies. Allow the market to be a free market where marketers other than the NNPC will be able to



Kyari

bring in products. Since the government said the subsidy will be removed in June, let's wait and see, but until then, we have to manage."

While MOMAN advised that deregulation of the downstream sector would eradicate fuel scarcity, the group also said NNPC as the sole importer of petroleum products had put a strain on the country's resources and limits private sector participation.

The group in its latest report

FG projects 82% of revenue for debt servicing

THE International Monetary Fund (IMF) says the Federal Government has projected to spend 82 per cent of its revenue on interest payments in 2023.

According to the IMF, external debt (including that of the private sector) will rise to \$121.6bn, with external reserves climbing to \$37.5bn.

It disclosed this in a table of projections in its 'IMF Executive Board Concludes 2022 Article IV Consultation with Nigeria' summary.

The projections showed an improvement in the share of the government's revenue that was been used as interest payment, with interest payment falling from 96.3 per cent in 2022 to 82 per cent in 2023.

It added that interest payment was 86.1 per cent and 87.8 per cent of the Federal Government's revenue in 2020 and 2021 respectively.

The Washington-based lender further stated that Nigeria was at a near-term downside risk of high debt-servicing costs.

It said, "Directors welcomed the broadening of Nigeria's economic recovery but noted that the opportunity to reap the benefits from higher global oil prices was missed.

"They underscored near-term downside risks arising from elevated inflation, high debt-servicing costs, external sector pressures, and oil sector volatility.

"Looking ahead, Directors recommended decisive fiscal and monetary tightening to secure macroeconomic stability, combined with

titled 'Industry Data Sheet' said, "To this end, industry experts mostly recommend opening up the supply side as set out in Section 317 (8 to 11) of the PIA 2021 by encouraging private sector participation in the importation of refined petroleum products. This can be achieved through a transparent and inclusive process, which will help to reduce the current inefficiencies in the sector".

structural reforms to improve governance, strengthen the agricultural sector, and boost inclusive, sustainable growth."

According to the budget office, the Federal Government's retained revenue was N6.5tn from January to November 2022, of which N5.24tn (80.62 per cent) was used for debt servicing.

In 2022, the IMF's Resident Representative for Nigeria, Ari Aisen, stated that debt servicing might gulp 100 per cent of the government's revenue by 2026. He added that interest payments on debts may wipe up the country's entire earnings in the next four years.

He said, "The biggest critical aspect for Nigeria is that we have done a macro-fiscal stress test, and what you observe is the interest payments as a share of revenue and as you see us in terms of the baseline from the federal government of Nigeria, the revenue almost 100 per cent is projected by 2026 to be taken by debt service."

"So, the fiscal space or the amount of revenues that will be needed and this without considering any shock is that most of the revenues of the federal government are now, in fact, 89 per cent and it will continue if nothing is done to be taken by debt service."

"It is a reflection of the low revenue of the country. The country needs to mobilise more revenue to be able to have macroeconomic stability. It has become an existential issue for Nigeria."

According to the World Bank,

PRESIDENT Muhammadu Buhari has signed Business Facilitation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2022 and five other bills passed by the National Assembly.

The Senior Special Assistant to the President on National Assembly Matters (Senate), Senator Babajide Omoworare, made this known in a statement issued on Monday and titled 'President Muhammadu Buhari Assents to the Business Facilitation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2022 and Other Bills.'

According to the Presidency, this is in furtherance of Section 58 (4) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The statement partly read,

Buhari signs business facilitation Bill into law

"The President sent the Business Facilitation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act to the National Assembly to ensure the ease of doing business and transparency, efficiency and productivity in Nigeria. The Act amends relevant legislation to promote the ease of doing business in Nigeria and institutionalise all the reforms to ease implementation. The business facilitation bill, among other things, applies throughout the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

"The President also gave his assent to five other bills. The bills are the National Commission for Colleges of Education Bill, 2022; School of

Mines and Geological Studies (Establishment) Bill, 2022; Admiralty University of Nigeria, Ibusa (Establishment) Bill 2022; Federal College of Education (Technical), Keana Bill, (Establishment) Bill 2022; and National Institute for Hospitality and Tourism (Establishment) Bill, 2022."

Bills initiated by the executive branch of government are sent to the Senate and House of Representatives for concurrent consideration. Those sponsored by lawmakers are private member bills.

The last time Buhari signed multiple bills into law was in August 2022. They were eight.

FG raises N724.9bn bond auction in February -DMO

THE Debt Management Office says it has raised N724.9 billion Federal Government bond auction in February 2023, stating that it was a 100% increase compared to the previous year.

The auction, which was held on February 13, 2023, saw a total of 577 bids worth N724.9 billion

received for the total amount offered of N360 billion.

The total amount allotted was N771.56 billion, with successful bids allotted at marginal rates of 13.99%, 14.90%, 15.90%, and 16.00%.

The original coupon rates for each bond will be maintained, with successful

bids for the 13.98% FGN FEB 2028 (10-Year Bond), 12.50% FGN APR 2032 (10-Year Bond), 16.2499% FGN APR 2037 (20-Year Bond), and 14.80% FGN APR 2049 (30-Year Bond) being allotted at the marginal rates of 13.99%, 14.90%, 15.90%, and 16.00%, respectively.

The settlement date for the auction was February 15, 2023, and the bonds will mature on February 23, 2028, April 27, 2032, April 18, 2037, and April 26, 2049, respectively.

According to a statement on the DMO's website, it said the auction was part of its efforts to raise funds for the implementation of the Federal Government's 2023 budget and to finance critical infrastructure projects across the country.

"The DMO has been actively promoting the issuance of FGN bonds as a means of diversifying the country's funding sources and reducing its dependence on short-term borrowing. The FGN bond market has grown significantly in recent years, with a wide range of maturities and attractive yields for investors.

"Overall, the results of the February 2023 FGN bond auction highlight the continued strong demand for FGN bonds and the government's commitment to meeting its funding needs through the capital markets."

But, In recent years, Nigeria's rising debt profile has been a topic of concern, with some experts warning that the country's debt levels are unsustainable.

Earlier in [January](#), the DMO warned that Nigeria's public debt could reach N77 trillion if its "ways and means" were securitized.

Additionally, DMO, had announced [plans](#) to raise up to N1.2 trillion through FGN bonds in the first quarter of the year 2023.



Ahmed



Business & Economy

Dangers of illicit lumber/timber trading in Ile-Ife

When a handshake is getting beyond the elbow, drastic action to stem the tide and put the right pen in the right hole needs to be set in motion with immediate alacrity. If there is anything that has eaten deep like cankerworm and need not be taken with kid gloves is deforestation, killing, maiming and threat to life perpetrated by illicit lumbers and timber traders who are mostly non-Ife indigenes, against those farming in the Ife forest reserve. It has always been on record that this cruel act has been recurrent for years lacking adequate attention and remedy needed from the local and State authorities, writes FULOSPE JOHNSON.



IN April 2016, Ogbeni Rauf Aregbesola, while serving as the governor of Osun State, lamented bitterly about the illegal entry and deforestation in the forest. A month after, the government issued a twenty-one days ultimatum to encroachers. Also, on June 5 2020, the immediate past governor of Osun State, Gboyega Oyetola while celebrating World Environment Day, in Osogbo enjoined the residents of the state to stop the act capable of undermining environment sustainability such as deforestation, uncontrolled falling of trees, the gathering of fire woods among others while prepared to invoke the full weight of the law on anyone caught involved in such acts. Several petitions have been written to the government to help curtail this act but all was to no avail as this dastardly act still persist till today in Ile-Ife forest reservation despite the government order.

Going down the memory lane, the reserve forest was re-acquired by the fearless 48th Ooni of Ile-Ife, Ooni Ademiluyi, from the Ijebu's which is the present day Ife forest reserve used for planting of trees to aide afforestation's cum farming of plants by indigene's and non indigene's residing in the ancient city due to the unique fertility nature of the land forest.

Narrowing it down to subsequent Ooni's that succeeded Ooni Ademiluyi: Ooni Aderemi who gave part of the reserve to indemnify those who lost there farmlands to the establishment of Obafemi Awolowo University and Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospital Complex. Ooni Okunade, who was passionate about creating job opportunity for 30,000 unemployed youth during his reign requested the use of the forest reserve from the government. The same line was toed by the current Ooni of Ile-Ife, HIM Oba Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi, who doles out form to engage over 40,000 unemployed youth in 2015 upon ascending the throne but whose quite-essential efforts were cut short when some unscrupulous elements suspected to be illicit lumber trader's burnt down the whole farm when carrying out there illicit act in the midnight.

It is pertinent to note that, as the illegal falling of trees to enrich few unscrupulous persons continues, this has led to climate change coupled with habitat destruction, degradation and fragmentation. The effect of deforestation on climate change can never be over-emphasized; forest store large number of carbon as they grow for battle against climate change emissions. Experts explained that forests purify

the air, preserve watersheds, stabilize soil and prevent erosion. There is always less water in the air to be returned to the soil in deforested areas, hence, it will lead to having dryer oil and the inability to grow crops. More so, forest help to protect the planet from climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide (CO₂), a major greenhouse gas but deforested areas lose that ability and release more carbon. Deforestation have negative impact(s); affecting global climate change and biodiversity such as change in ecosystem among others. Continuous deforestation without corresponding afforestation has significantly contributed to 10% of global warming.

In developed world, the law protects the natural environment and the violation of such laws attracts commensurate reprimand. Deforestation with its occasioned menace poses threat on our forest and extinction of some rare species of the natural habitat. Apparently, many farmers had lost their source of livelihood with the activities of this illegal timber traders that constantly fall trees on farmlands with adverse effect on cash crops like cocoa, kolanut, palm, banana trees and many more plantations awaiting harvest and generate cash income for the farmers; which has wasted both human and financial resources invested and due to be enjoyed.

Attempts to put their activities in check has snowballed to infliction of injuries, killing and other acts have in one time or the other

disrupted the communal peace enjoyed by the good people of Ile-Ife and its environs.

It would be recalled that in a particular farm settlement in the forest reserve sometimes in August, 2021 where pandemonium loose broke and resulting to ruins when some farmer challenged the illicit timber traders of trespassing and wreaking havoc on there farmland. They were severely dealt with which led to the loss of life of the farmers on the spot. This escalated to a full-blown crisis between the farmers and the illicit timber traders who got enraged after a conscientious endurance as of the African illustration of a goat when pushed to the wall will turns to bite. The furious farmers came out in their large numbers to retaliate the unlawful killing of there members by descending on any timber traders they set their eyes on, either illicit timber traders or with government approval. Several people were injured and killed during this crisis that engulfed major part of the forest. This crisis lasted till November, 2021 when the luggers launched a reprisal attack, went on house to house search, ransacking and trailing of farmers who in a bid to avoid being killed by the illegal timber traders who are after their lives, had to take shelter to neighboring states in fear of being maimed or killed. The whereabouts of some farmer's are unknown till date, among them are Ogunwusi Peter, Adesakin Damilare, Ogunwusi Samuel, Adetiloye Emmanuel and others that can't be remembered.

On November 24th, 2022, two

illicit timber traders were apprehended in Ife forest reserve and arraigned on 1st of December, 2022 before the magistrate court in Osogbo the state capital in an attempt to kill two forest guards carrying out their duties as government representatives.

If this can be done to armed government officials, how much more of the armless farmers?

Without further ado, there's simply no way out of climate crisis if deforestation still persist. The more the activities continue, the more the community loses lives to crisis, while animals and plants species are exposed to extinction. The way forward in putting an end to deforestation, is that the state government must never get tired nor retire in their quest to eradicate illicit timber trading but rather start sensitisation among the timber contractors on the dangers attached to indiscriminate falling of trees and encourage afforestation. The government must show willingness and also show capacity that it can save the state from climate change through sensitization, ensuring security of lives and also work with the timber contractors to fetch out the bad ones among them. Conclusively, security apparatus should be strengthened to combat the irregularities in the forest through recruitment, fortification and reorientation.

Johnson, a farmer, writes from Ife South LG, Ile-Ife, Osun State.

Politics

New polling units: Voters will receive text messages -INEC

THE INEC chief revealed that elections won't hold in 240 polling units spread across 28 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) because they have no registered voters. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) says voters assigned to new polling units will receive text messages to know their new polling units before the February 25 and March 11, 2023 general elections.

The electoral commission said voters can locate and confirm their polling units before the general elections by sending regular texts or WhatsApp messages to a dedicated telephone number which will be uploaded on INEC social media platforms.

"Voters can locate and confirm their polling units before election day by sending a regular text or WhatsApp message to a dedicated telephone number," INEC Chairman, Mahmood Yakubu, said Monday at a meeting with political parties held at the INEC Conference Room, Abuja.

Yakubu also revealed that elections won't hold in 240 polling units spread across 28 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) because they have no registered voters, adding that the total number of polling units in the country is now 176,606.

"From the feedback we received from our officials and accredited observers following the recent nationwide mock accreditation using the Bimodal Voter Registration



Okoye

Systems (BVAS), it is clear that some voters could not easily identify their polling units," the INEC chair stated.

"This should not happen on election day. Consequently, the Commission is advising voters to confirm the locations of their polling units through a dedicated portal on our website.

"In addition, all voters who have been assigned to new

polling units will receive text messages from the Commission indicating their polling units".

He said the INEC has compiled the register of such voters and the commission's state offices will give it wide publicity, especially for those who may not have provided their telephone numbers during voter registration or those whose numbers may have changed.

Elections will not be held in 240 polling units in 28 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), has said.

This is because no voter chose the polling units during the last Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) between June 2021 and July 2022.

INEC Chairman, Mahmood Yakubu, disclosed this when he addressed members of the Inter Party Advisory Council (IPAC) at the INEC headquarters in Abuja on Monday. According to him, the polling units are part of the over 56,000 newly created polling units.

INEC had from 2021 increased the number of polling units from a total of 119,973 to 176,846. With this development, the presidential and national assembly as well as states and their houses of assembly elections will be held in 176,606 polling units, he added.

"There are 240 polling units without registered voters spread across 28 States and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). They range from one polling unit to 12 polling units in each State and the FCT, except Taraba and Imo States with 34 and 38 polling units respectively.

"No new registrants chose the polling units and no voters indicated interest to transfer to them during the

Elections won't hold in 240 polling units -INEC



Mahmood

last Continuous Voter Registration (CVR), mainly for security reasons. This means that no elections will hold in these polling units." Atiku-Okowa AD.

"You may recall that in 2021, with your support and that of other critical stakeholders, the Commission successfully expanded voter access to polling units 25 years after the last delimitation exercise in 1996. Consequently, the number of polling units increased from 119,973 to the current figure of 176,846," Yakubu said. Redistribution of Voters

Meanwhile, the INEC chairman said voters whose polling units have been changed will receive text messages from the commission.

He said voters can also confirm the locations of their polling units through a dedicated portal on its website.

"From the feedback we received from our officials and accredited observers following the recent nationwide mock accreditation using the BVAS, it is clear that some voters could not easily

identify their polling units.

This should not happen on election day," he said. "We have also compiled the register of such voters and our state offices will give it wide publicity, especially for those who may not have provided their telephone numbers during voter registration or those whose numbers may have changed.

"Voters can locate and confirm their polling units before election day by sending a regular text or WhatsApp message to a dedicated telephone number. Details of the simple procedure will be uploaded to our social media platforms shortly."

Mr Yakubu said the commission had redistributed voters to other newly created polling units to avoid congestion in pre-existing ones.

The redistribution was done only for voters in proximate locations, "where they are separated by distance, this must be done after consultation with the voters."

According to him, "this has been done by our state offices nationwide." The INEC chairman said the commission would make available to Nigerians, a comprehensive list of Elections will not be held in 240 polling units in 28 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), has said.

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Bauchi APC expresses optimism in winning guber poll

From **ABBAS GUNGURA, Bauchi**

THE gubernatorial candidate of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), Ambassador Sadique Baba Abubakar, has expressed optimism that he will win the 2023 gubernatorial election in the state.

The gubernatorial candidate stated this recently while interacting with Journalists in his residence in Bauchi.

He stressed that, "the APC in the state does not need to spill blood or fight in order to win

elections, it is not worth it and we will ensure that not even an ant is deliberately killed for us to win the election."

The gubernatorial candidate, however, said that, "We have told our youths not to engage in any act of thuggery no matter the level of provocation, not even the vandalism of our billboards, posters and other campaign materials should attract violence."

Abubakar said that he is in the governorship race to change the negative narrative in the state by ensuring that he end hunger and poverty, provide job opportunities,

improve security and empower the citizens.

He stressed that if elected as the next Governor of the state, he will ensure that the state has a functional educational system that would provide equal opportunity for everyone to be educated and not based on those who have the resources to afford it, adding that the only way to have a secured society is to eliminate hindrances that stop people from accessing education.

He also said that if elected, his administration will dismantle the system that failed to improve the living conditions of the people of the state over the years.



Abubakar

Group sensitizes voters on holding leaders accountable

A group Known as The leadership arm of Save Africa Initiative has educated electorates on the best way to elect credible leaders and hold them accountable during their tenure.

The sensitization of the electorates took place in Bauchi over the weekend at the inauguration ceremony of Thumb Power Consult, a leadership arm of Save Africa Initiative.

The Executive Director Save Africa Initiative Mr. Emmanuel Kanti, at the occasion said the forum was organised to sensitize women, youth and eligible voters on their voting rights and encourage them to engage in politics as well as

have the wisdom of choosing the right leaders by dropping sentiment and all kind of sectionalism.

Mr. Kanti expressed concern on how some Religious leaders give wrong notion to their followers saying that they don't tell the leader's the truth and called on people to have free minds to equal contributions to the development of the country.

He however advised electorates in the country to utilize their voting rights to elect credible leaders of their choice.

The Chairman Bauchi State Network for civil Society Network BASNEC Mr John Garba Jinjiri said a voter can

use his voting rights to call back any of their Representative who fail to deliver well.

Jinjiri said the electorates In each community knows their problems better than anyone for that they should write their problems and the changes they needed so that the political candidate will sign agreements that if he wins the election he will fulfill their promise by bringing change that will improve their area ,better their social and economic life. if he didn't do it they have right to take him to court or to recall him back.

He advised women to advocate and empower women to engage in politics in order to have good representation.

Politics

Plateau Labour Party's cacophony

The All Progressives Congress (APC) in Plateau State has come across a press statement by the Labour Party's hawkish mouthpiece, Shabul Mazadu who has earned the dis-reputation of hobnobbing with all the leading political parties in the state in search of stomach infrastructure.

A statement signed by Sylvanus Namang, APC State Publicity Secretary, said the so-called press release tagged, "Ignore fictitious rumour from the drowning APC," he claimed that the APC in Plateau State has gone to town with news of its hyperactive gubernatorial candidate, Dr Patrick Dakum stepping down for the ever prepared for governance and focused gubernatorial candidate of the APC, Dr Nentawe Yilwatda Goshwe.

The APC would have ignored the cacophony of the fledging Labour Party in the state as mere kite flying by its panicky, separatist and opportunistic agents who have now realised that their principal has embarked on a journey to no specific destination, but we need to put the records straight.

The statement maintained that, while we have refrained from joining issues with Dr. Patrick Dakum who jumped from the ship of collective bargain to obscurity, we advise that he should not allow his mostly fair weather followers to lead him to the precipice.

The APC acknowledges his contributions as one of its gubernatorial aspirants who left midway into the contest after realising that defeat was glaring.

He miscalculated as his newfound party in the state exists more on the social media and lays dangerous claims to religious purity, a belief which has evaporated into the tin air, hence the search for where next to go.

According to the release, Dr. Patrick Dakum moved to the Labour Party in a controversial manner with a few tribal warlords and hero worshippers who are known for massaging the ego of whoever pays the piper and dictates the tune.

The APC is not and would not waste its time and energy on someone who on his own decided to leave for reasons best known to him, adding also that we cannot be intimidated by Dakum's antecedents as claimed by Shabul.

The party which has been threatened with baseless litigations which have all collapsed irretrievably as confirmed by the courts,



Bature

has remained as one indivisible and indissoluble entity prepared to go into the general elections exactly two weeks ahead with full confidence.

We have from the Wase gubernatorial flag off a few days ago, reaped bountifully from genuine partners from the YPP following its gubernatorial candidate Engr. Manji Gontori and its Wase House of Assembly candidate Engr. Hamza Haruna joining our fold with tens of thousands of their

supporters. "We are going to have more purposeful partners join us as we roll out our awesome campaign machinery to the Central and Northern Senatorial Districts next week," the statement adds. The release also states, "we advise the Labour Party to leave the APC alone. If its gubernatorial candidate on his own volition is contemplating a return to the APC, he is welcome as a prodigal son would not be rejected by his father."

Lalong's position on G5 governors' support: Jang got it wrong

THE APC PCC Media and Publicity Committee in Plateau State finds it necessary to respond to the totally unacceptable and misplaced attack on the Director General of the APC PCC and Executive Governor of Plateau State, Rt. Hon. Simon Bako Lalong who recently confirmed at the Wase APC gubernatorial campaign flag off that the PDP G5 Governors would support the APC Presidential Candidate, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

In a release signed by Sylvanus Namang, Chairman, Media & Publicity APC PCC Plateau State, former Governor Jonah David Jang's attack dog ferociously berated Governor Lalong for stating the obvious but unwittingly ended up admitting that the G5 Governors of Rivers, Benue, Oyo Enugu and Abia states had problems with the emergence of the PDP Presidential candidate, Alh. Atiku Abubakar. Clinron Guruba, the Delta-born business associate of Jonah Jang who serves as his media consultant, described Governor Lalong's statement as day dreaming while in actual sense, it is the other way round if not a hallucination. Former Governor Jang's membership of the Integrity Group which the G5 Governors have chosen to adopt, is by association and convenience. He has been boxed into a tight corner as typical of him, he easily plays the religious and

ethnic cards when he wants to confuse the undiscerning Plateau minds. He had before the debut of Peter Obi, distanced himself from the Atiku presidential ticket which was not based on principles but a mere hatred for a Muslim candidate based on his deceptive religious fault line. He quickly jumped for the OBidients group. On realising that such hard line position is going to have adverse effects on his ordained gubernatorial candidate, he decided to make a detour which is too late in the day. For him to know come out in defence of an Atiku PDP ticket is an unhelpful venture as his supporters have taken hook, line and sinker what he had preached to them. To say that the G5 Governors have not taken a position on their support for the APC Presidential Candidate is a confirmation of his fear for a Bala Ahmed Tinubu unstoppable victory at the polls. He has suddenly remembered how Jonathan lost out in 2015 which he was at the centre of it. When he forced himself as Chairman of the Nigerian Governors Forum with his 16 is greater than 19 saga, seven Governors led by the then Rivers State Governor, Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi defected to the newly registered APC thus punishing Goodluck Jonathan who tolerated Jang's malfeasance. As stated earlier, Senator Jonah Jang is an outsider of

THE Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Sa'ad Abubakar, has said Nigerians are angry and hungry, hence the need to look for ways of dousing tension in the country.

Also, Kano state Governor Abdullahi Umar Ganduje said there was need to persuade the pastoralists to move their cattle into ranches and grazing reserves across the country in order to end perennial crisis between the farmers and herders.

The two leaders spoke Monday in Abuja at a National Conference organised by the Kano state government on "Livestock Reforms and Mitigation of Associated Conflicts."

The conference is expected to come up with a blueprint on the farmers-herders clashes in the country and proffer lasting solutions.

Speaking at the conference, the Sultan said the clashes between farmers and herders in Benue state had continued because all the suggestions made to the government were not implemented.

Sultan Abubakar said, "Let's keep politics aside, the issues of development especially for the common man should be prioritised. These people that God Almighty gave leadership over, one day, God forbid, will rise up against us."

"After all these English by professors (at the conference), how do we get these developments down to the common man who is a farmer, the common Fulani

Put politics aside, Nigerians are hungry, angry -Sultan to FG, politicians

man who doesn't know anything about development in his life, he only cares about cattle.

"I have been to Benue at least two times as Sultan to sit with the governor and traditional rulers to discuss peace in the Benue valley. At the end of it, the suggestions, we throw them away. Nothing is done and we are back to square one. Let this conference not be in the same manner, let's do it and let's do well and now."

"The people are hungry - is there money? *Akwai kudi?* No cash! People are angry and

hungry; let's see how we can douse the tension."

"As Nigeria searches for sustainable ways and means of diversifying its economy, becoming self-sufficient in food production as well as a major competitive exporter of Agro-allied products in the global economy; and becoming a stable, more cohesive developing democracy, a national strategic focus on the Livestock sector and its perennial challenges is an imperative that has assumed significance," Jega said.



Abubakar

have since call it quit with the Atiku ticket. Do we need a better confirmation of Governor Lalong's assertion than the one coming from the horse's mouth and pillar of the G5 himself, the steely Rivers State Governor Nyesom Wike when he recently responded to a journalist's inquiry thus; "Yes it is true that I have directed all Local Government Chairmen, Commissioners, Board Chairmen, Senior Special Advisers, Special Advisers, Senior Special Assistants, DGs, Board Members and all my Aides to

work for Bola Ahmed Tinubu and I owe no one any apology"? The G5 Governors are patriots who have decided to go with a very patriotic Nigerian in the person of Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu rather than presidential candidates with divisive tendencies. Jang should stop boiling his adrenaline over his morbid condemnation of anything coming from his immediate successor, Governor Simon Bako Lalong.

Tinubu pressure group appeals to northerners

From JIDAUNA YANUNG, Abuja

PROJECT 37 for Tinubu/Shettima 2023, a pressure group has appealed



Tinubu

to northerners to vote massively for the All Progressive Congress (APC) presidential candidate, Asiwaju Bola Tinubu and his vice Senator Kashim Shettima in the February 25 presidential poll.

The appeal was made by the Kaduna State Coordinator of the group, Alhaji Isyaku Haruna, while addressing an APC rally in Zangon Aya, in Igbi Local Government Area of Kaduna State.

Alhaji Haruna urged northerners both Christians and Muslims, to vote massively for Tinubu/Shettima to ensure peace, unity and oneness of the country.

He said voting for Tinubu/Shettima means voting for progress and development, rule of law, transparency and accountability, peace and harmony.

Alhaji Isyaku, who is an APC

chieftain, described Tinubu as a sincere and respected person, noting that while serving as governor of Lagos state between 1999-2007, Tinubu developed Lagos and its environ.

He also describes former Governor of Borno State, Kashim Shettima, as a technocrat saying that Shettima would put his wealth of experience to support Tinubu's developmental initiatives.

Meanwhile, the Independent National Electoral Commission, (INEC) said, in exercise of its powers under Section 40(2) of the Electoral Act 2022, it has allotted voters from overcrowded polling units to less congested polling units within the same location.

The commission said this was to promote a more pleasant and stress-free voting experience on election day.

IMAGES

BUHARI COMMISSIONS CRITICAL OPERATIONAL ASSETS BY NPF

Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari on Monday Commissioned critical operational assets procured by the Nigeria Police Force at the force Headquarters, Louis Edet House, Abuja



President Buhari (left) being welcomed to the Force Headquarters



Armoured Personnel carriers (APC) inspected by President Muhammadu Buhari during the commissioning ceremony



President Muhammadu Buhari (right) taking salute mounted by the Nigeria Police Force



President Muhammadu Buhari in a photograph with IGP, Usman Alkali Baba, Minister of Police Affairs, Muhammadu Maigari Dingyadi and other security Chiefs



Inspector General of Police, Usman Alkali Baba (left) showing something of interest to the President



Nigeria Police Force personnel demonstrating at the ceremony



President Buhari (middle) cutting the tape to commission the critical operational assets



Security vehicles commissioned by President Buhari

PHOTOS: STATE HOUSE PRESS, ABUJA

Politics

As LP expresses concerns over 'conflicting' INEC signals

THE Director General of the LP Presidential Campaign Council, Balogun Akin Osuntokun, while addressing newsmen in Abuja said the party's fears were heightened by the actions and utterances of agents of the electoral management body. Osuntokun noted that only a few days ago, there were speculations that INEC had engaged the services of Lagos State Park and Garage Management Committee, led by Mr. Musiliu Akinsanya, also known as MC Oluomo, a member of the APC Presidential Campaign Council and a known loyalist of APC presidential candidate, in the distribution of sensitive election materials in the forthcoming presidential election in Lagos.

He said, "We initially took the allegation with a pinch of salt, believing that INEC was conscious of red lines in these elections and that common sense and logic would not permit such arbitrariness.

"However, as days passed by, it became clear to us, that the news report was correct, especially as the explanation given by Mr Festus Okoye INEC Director of Information and Voter Education, does not go far enough in refuting this association. "This partisan and provocative action by INEC, in entrusting the conveyance of election materials into the hands of agents of an interested political party in Lagos State, is reprehensible and unprecedented in the annals of Nigeria's electoral and political history.

He further said, "It is a matter of grave concern, that barely 12 days to the 2023 presidential election, the INEC leadership led by Prof. Mahmoud Yakubu, has continued to give disturbing signals and strong reason for doubt and suspicion, on its impartiality, and with total disregard for the mood of the nation, at this time. "Our fears are indeed reinforced by the recent action of INEC in endorsing, via their official Twitter handle, a tweet, wherein the presidential candidate of the Labour Party, was maligned by another Presidential candidate. "This insensitivity of INEC to the public outcry on the glaringly partisan engagement of Lagos State Park and Garage Management Committee, led by MC Oluomo, as a major logistics contractor in Lagos State, during the election, is indeed very disturbing and capable of jeopardizing the election operation.

"In addition, recent public statements by the Resident Electoral Commissioner in Lagos State, Olusegun Agbaje, bordering on sectional bias and resentment, have shown overwhelming partisanship on his side, and therefore, he cannot be trusted with the onerous task of conducting an unbiased election, in a volatile state like Lagos.

"We recall further, with apprehension, that the heavily criticised 2018 Osun Governorship rerun election, wherein Mr. Gboyega Oyetola was controversially declared the winner, to the dismay of the populace, including international observers, was also conducted by this same Olusegun Agbaje."

The LP campaign DG explained that It is against the above backdrop, that the party demands that INEC takes immediate states to

The Labour Party (LP) has expressed grave concerns over what it described as conflicting signals from the Independent National Electoral Commission about its commitment to impartiality with barely 12 days to the general elections, JOHN ALECHENU writes.



Obi

address these concerns. Osuntokun listed LP's demands to include: "An immediate cancellation of the logistics contract entered into, between INEC and the Lagos State Park and Garage Management Committee headed by MC Oluomo;

"An immediate redeployment and blacklisting from any election duty, anywhere, of Lagos REC, Olusegun Agbaje, whose recent actions have raised concrete doubts about his suitability as an election supervisor, not just in Lagos State, but anywhere in decent

society.

He argued that there are far too many capable Nigerians of good professional and ethical standard available within INEC, to conduct an acceptable election, than to run the risk of any unpopular predetermined outcome, which his conduct, strongly suggests.

The LP urged INEC to remember that, it must always remain above suspicion, transparent and professional, more so in this election, of so much public hope and so much public trust.

It noted that in building the requisite public confidence, INEC must, as a matter of fact, leave no

room for doubt or for repetitive malfeasance, by any staff or official, whose professional ability, impartiality, and moral rectitude have already given reasonable cause for alarm. The party also reminded INEC that the forthcoming election was a very important exercise in which the people have not only demonstrated so much participatory interest, but also the will to ensure that things are done right.

The campaign DG equally expressed the party's shock over reports of multiple attacks on party supporters, especially as they were heading to the Mega

Rally at the Tafawa Balewa Square, Lagos, last Saturday.

He said similar reports from other locations across the country resulting in death injuries, destruction of vehicles, and theft of personal items were equally disturbing.

Osuntokun said, "We call on the Inspector General Of Police, the Lagos State Commissioner of Police, the Department of State Services, the Civil Defence Force and all security agencies, to deploy intelligence and reinforcements all over Lagos, and indeed in all other potential flashpoint and locations across the country, immediately, as the election season is already underway.

"These dastardly acts must be checked and the perpetrators and their sponsors arrested forthwith.

"We call upon the Lagos State Governor and all Political leaders in Lagos state to immediately condemn these provocative acts of violence and reign in any political supporters who may be involved in instigating these attacks."

He urged party supporters and all people of goodwill in Lagos, to continue their preparations and participation in the election while taking all precautions with regard to their safety.

The DG reiterated that members of the Labour Party will continue to toe the path of propriety, discipline, and fair play, but we will also remain unwavering in insisting on a truly free and fair election. "The Obidient Spirit is not much that can be deterred by violence or thuggery, and we shall remain undeterred in our march to February 25th, and in our resolve to vote in Peter Obi and Datti Baba-Ahmed, the team with the rounded capacity to turn Nigeria around.

'Elections may not hold with current affairs'

The Benue state secretary, National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) Benue state branch comrade Stephen Akintola has expressed fear that the 2023 general election billed to commence February 25th, 2023 may not hold if the nation's current state of affairs is urgently not checked, TERESE TUHWA writes.

THE NURTW scribe made bare his mind in an interview with **THE NIGERIA STANDARD** in his office in Makurdi saying as one of the major stakeholders in the electoral process, it will be difficult for the union to assist the commission in transporting electoral materials to designated areas given the current astronomic rise in price of Premium Motor Spirit, PMS (fuel).

He said for the nation to have a seamless and successful electoral process, it was incumbent on concerned authorities to do the needful by closely monitoring the distribution of petroleum product from the Jetty depots down to the filling stations and called for a strong synergy between the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation Limited

(NNPCL) for a better logistical arrangement.

He maintained that the petroleum product was indispensable in the transportation of the commission's personnel and sensitive materials to registration centres and polling units, revealing that already the commission has signed a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding, MoU, with NURTW, NATO and the maritime to assist in the distribution of both sensitive materials and personnel during the polls.

Commenting on current hike in price of Premium Motor Spirit (fuel), comrade Akintola faulted a situation where the nation's crude oil product was still being refined outside the country amidst four refineries in the country, disclosing that already saboteurs have taken advantage of the current situation to exploit the citizens.

He revealed that those feeding fat from the current fuel bottle necks are head bent to ensure that the

situation continues thereby leaving fuel consumers at the mercy of independent marketers

who he said are buying products from private refineries at exorbitant rates.



Yakubu

NEWS

Atiku vows to end banditry, Boko Haram

From ANENE AIKE, Sokoto

THE Sokoto state governor, Rt. Hon. Aminu Waziri Tambuwal has revealed that The PDP Presidential candidate Alh. Atiku Abubakar would end banditry and Boko Haram activities in the northern part of the country.

Tambuwal gave the assurance at a gubernatorial campaign rally held in Goronyo LGA of Sokoto state.

Gov Tambuwal who took record of the security situation of the entire Sokoto eastern zone said if given the mandate Alhaji Atiku's government would change the narrative by tackling banditry and other crimes affecting the peace of the people in the zone headlong. The governor who accused the present APC government at the centre of abandoning the Goronyo dam project, assured the electorates that if PDP formed government, Atiku Abubakar would continue with the dam project in the area.

He explained that the project was an important instrument for boosting agriculture in the area, noting that the people of Goronyo were mostly farmers who depended



Atiku

on the dam to produce large crops in commercial quantity for use by consumers spread all over the area.

Speaking at the campaign rally, the gubernatorial candidate of the PDP in the state, Sa'idu Umar Ubandoma said he would provide opportunities for youths and women in the affairs of governance and engage them in meaningful venture for self-reliance.

He urged the people of Goronyo to massively vote PDP candidates as

their yearnings and aspirations would not be let down if they clinch power

FG committed to protecting the Nigerian child

From POLYCARP ISHAYA, Lafia

FEDERAL Government says it will remain committed to ensuring full enforcement of laws on the protection of the Nigerian children and the vulnerable groups across the country.

Special Adviser to the President on Social Investment Mrs Mariam

TRADITIONAL rulers have been enjoined to be role models as the masses look up to them to play the role of non-partisan roles before, during, and after the forthcoming general elections.

Niger State Governor, Alhaji Abubakar Sani Bello made this known at the official coronation and presentation of staff of office to the 7th Sarkin Sudan of Kontagora Alhaji Muhammadu Barau Muazu II in Kontagora.

Governor Bello charged traditional leaders to ensure that Nigerians conduct themselves peacefully towards achieving a violent free general elections in the country.

According to him Niger state government will continue to engage the traditional institution in the governance process, especially at the grass root level to enhance

Uwais stated this during the closing ceremony of a three-week training of youth facilitators for At Risk Children Programme in Lafia the Nasarawa State capital.

At Risk Children Programme is a federal government initiative aimed at reaching out to the Nigerian children who are disconnected from their families and society

Bello tasks traditional rulers to be non-partisan

From MATHEW JWANTU Minna

rapid development of the state and Nigeria.

The governor also congratulated the people of Kontagora for having an Emir that has emerged through a transparent process which he said has further broadened the legitimacy and integrity of traditional institutions in Niger State.

The Sultan of Sokoto and President-General, Nigeria Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, Alhaji Sa'ad Abubakar advised the new Sarkin Sudan of Kontagora to be just and fair to his subjects in addition to operating an open-door policy to give his subjects a sense of belonging.

In his acceptance speech the seventh Sarkin Sudan

of Kontagora Alhaji Muhammadu Barau Muazu II the second appreciated Governor Abubakar Sani Bello for his support towards the success of the event and promised to stand by his subjects to succeed.

The oath of office and allegiance was administered to the Sarkin Sudan of Kontagora by the Chief Judge of Niger state Justice Halima Ibrahim Abdulmalik.

All the first class Emir's in Niger state under the leadership of the Chairman, Council of Chiefs, Etsu Nupe Dr Yahaya Abubakar were in attendance while over fifty Emir's from across the country attended the coronation and presentation of staff of office in Kontagora.

Unity Forum launches appeal fund

From DANLADI DUKS

THE Plateau Central and Southern Zone Unity Forum, Jos North-North has set aside Saturday 18th February, 2023 for a N15million endowment

fund raising for women and youth's empowerment and skills acquisition programme.

In a statement issued recently by the chairman, Central Planning Committee (CPC) Comrade Ponsak Daniel

Nansak and made available to The Nigeria Standard Newspapers in Jos recently, it stated that Plateau State Governor, RT. Hon. (Dr.) Simon Bako Lalong CON is expected to honour the ceremony as distinguished guest of honour with other dignitaries to includes Nde Yakubu Gomos, Prof. Matthew Sule of PSUBEB, Hon Diket Plang, APC, Plateau Central Senatorial candidate, Amb JY. Gotom, PDP Plateau Central Senatorial candidate and Member representing PKK, who is also the candidate of PKK, Rt Hon Yusuf Adamu Gagdi respectively.

He further stated that Engr. Mafwil Matawal is the chairman of the occasion while Hon. Lydia Fan is to serve as the chairlady.

The statement also mentioned that Dr. Patrick Dakum, Governorship

candidate of Labour Party, Barr. Caleb Mutfwang, PDP Governorship candidate and that of the APC Dr. Nentawe Goshwe Yilwatda are to serve as chief launchers.

On the other hand, Hon. Ibrahim Baba Hassan, Hon. Musa Avia Agah, Hon. Dr. Simon Mwadkon, Rt Hon. Ayuba Nuhu Abok, Hon. Dachung Musa Bagos, Hon. Bashir Lawadi Datti, Hon. Engr. Solomon Bulus Maren and Hon. Nanlop Jwanpe are to serve as co-launchers. His Royal Highness Pozoh Johnson Jauro Magaji, Ujah Anaguta of Jos North will lead royal fathers to the fund raising ceremony.

The chairman of Jos North LGA, Hon Shehu Bala Usman is the chief host while Rev. Dr. Polycarp Success Jurbe (JP) is host of the programme which is to take place at Government Secondary School Kyan Rikkos, Jos.



Buhari

especially victims of drugs and substance abuse, the almajiris and the vulnerable groups.

In Nasarawa State, over 650 unemployed youths were engaged in training to acquire various skills for the implementation as facilitators of the programme where they are expected to go back to their communities and step down the knowledge to the At Risk Children.

Addressing the facilitators, Special Adviser to the President on Social Investment and National Coordinator of At Risk Children Programme, Mrs Mariam Uwais said the federal government will continue to set aside substantial funds for programmes aimed at taking the Nigerian child off the

street.

She stated that each of the facilitators who are entitled to a monthly stipend of thirty thousand Naira was expected to be sending progress reports to government on the at Risk Children they are training.

Some of the facilitators Miss Mbewashi Danboyi and Mr Joel Ovey said they were trained in knitting, sewing, shoe making, tie and dye and crop production.

Governor Abdullahi Sule, represented by the state Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Development Hajiya Aisha Rufa'i noted that the state government was committed to providing necessary resources to ensure success of the programme.



Mabur

News

Nigerian journalist shot dead

THE Nasarawa State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), on Tuesday, condemned the attack and brutal killing of its former treasurer, Benjamin Ekom, by unknown gunmen at his residence in Washo village, Nassarawa-Eggon Local Government Area (LGA), of the state.

The NUJ made its position known in a statement jointly signed by its Chairman and Secretary, Salihu Alkali and Sunday John, on Tuesday in Lafia, the state capital.

The Union described the attack on innocent residents of the state by criminal elements as one too many, and called for drastic and proactive measures to be taken to protect lives and properties of residents in all parts of Nasarawa State.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), reports that late Ekom, of the Federated Chapel of journalists, was gunned down on Monday night.

The leadership of the union further urged security agencies to fish out the killers of the former treasurer, to face the law;

and also called for the support of members of the public in helping to unravel the mystery behind the incident, to expose criminal elements in their midst.

It, however, commended the efforts of the federal and state governments towards tackling insecurity, but urged that more be done to ensure that the people were safe to go about their lawful activities without fear, and also to avoid an

escalation of the situation.

"The entire journalists in the state also condole with the family and friends of the deceased, and pray God to forgive his shortcomings and grant him eternal rest," the union said in the statement.

The deceased, who retired as the information officer of Akun Development Area, was the immediate past National Secretary of Eggon Cultural and Development (ECDA).



Alkali

NSSERC: FG committed to safe education

THE Minister of Finance Budget and National Planning, Zainab Shamsuna Ahmed has said that the Nigerian government is committed to providing budgetary allocation to finance the initiated safe schools programme.

This was disclosed in a statement by the Minister of State for Finance Budget and National Planning, Prince Clem Agba, during the flag-off of the National School Security and Emergency Response Centre (NSSERC), at the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), headquarters in Abuja.

"In 2022, my dear sister and the Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, at the financing safe schools stakeholders' engagement forum held at the NAF Conference Centre

in Abuja committed to creating adequate budgetary allocation for financing the federal government's initiated safe schools programme.

"I align myself with that commitment and the further commitment to ensuring that we will also play our part in ensuring the prompt release of budgeted funds for its implementation."

Speaking at the flag-off, the Commandant General of NSCDC, Dr Ahmed Abubakar Audi, said the continuous attack by Book Haram sect made it expedient for the federal government to deploy extraordinary measures to tackle insecurities in Nigerian schools.

He said, "In view of the importance of education and human capital development towards overall national development, it has become

expedient for the Federal Government to deploy extraordinary measures to tackle the spate of attacks on school facilities in Nigeria.

"Such effort is the commitment and endorsement by the Federal Government of Nigeria to ensure that all Nigerian schools become safe and secure for uninterrupted teaching and learning activities.

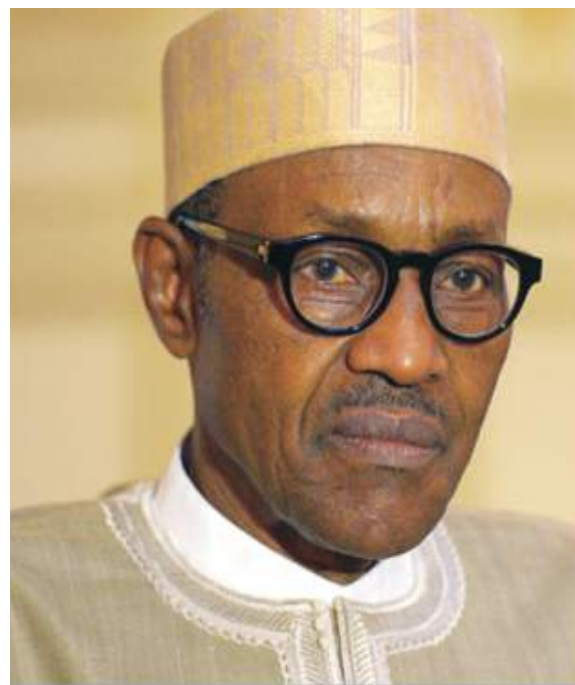
"Accordingly, in the consideration for a multi-sectorial working group, the NSCDC has been made the lead agency with the mandate to host the National Safe Schools Response and Coordination Centre.

"Following this responsibility, I immediately convened a technical committee composed of personnel of the NSCDC and consultants to develop strategies for the effective and efficient implementation of the National Plan on Safe Schools across the country.

"Nigeria's political history has been replete with various forms of violent insecurity challenges ranging from the civil war, election-related mayhem, riots and protests, militancy, insurgency and herdsmen and farmers clashes.

"However, the rise of the Boko Haram sect has created a new dimension to Nigeria's insecurity problems. The main ideological objective of this violent extremist group is strangely, to target the elimination of western education in Nigeria.

"The negative operations of this group against education became glaring following the abduction of 276 students of Government Girls College, Chibok."



Buhari



Is it possible to stay aloof

Being neutral signifies not being involved and clearly not taking sides. It means staying away, aloof and not participating in an event that would probably shape a particular situation making the none participant to look at the whole process from the standpoint of someone capable of making dispassionate and clear judgement about the situation. But is possible for a grown adult to stand aloof and watch his society drift away and does nothing to stem the drift?

True, it is often very difficult to stand aloof and watch without mingling and contributing in however small a way one can especially in today's contemporary Nigerian politics because the political actors have shown that they lack the capacity to lead yet, the responsibility of reporting the society lies squarely on the journalist who is expected to be fair to all manner or shades of opinions. But is neutrality possible?

The answer is both yes and no. Yes, because the ethics of the journalism profession expects the person on the field to helm- in his opinion and

"This is the dilemma that the journalist finds himself in when faced with the reality of politics. He is compelled to report events he does not believe in for the sake of his society and is often at the receiving end of societal backlash when things do not get done as is expected. I am looking at this from the build up to the 2023 elections and the part expected of journalists in the process."

reflect that of the news maker whether or not he believes in it. No because as a part and parcel of that society, he cannot stand by and watch his society drift and does nothing to stem the drift. If he does, history will not be kind to him at the end of the day because he did nothing when he was expected to act.

This is the dilemma that the journalist finds himself in when faced with the reality of politics. He is compelled to report events he does not believe in for the sake of his society and is often at the receiving end of societal backlash when things do not get done as is expected. I am looking at this from the build up to the 2023 elections and the part expected of journalists in the process. Lately, a number of journalists have been enlisted as publicists for people running for political offices. I do not have a problem with that. Whether we like it or not, somebody must do the job.

What is our major concern here however, is whether as professionals we are able to meet the requirements of the society and help it grow? I would not concern myself with the theories here but would prefer to speak to the morals and allow us judge for ourselves. Can we in truth be trusted to stand in the gap for the people? Do we have the moral high ground on which to stand, moralise and challenge society to tow the path of justice, truth and fairness? This is often the difficult and not too easy task society expects from the journalist. He is expected to be a moral compass for the society.

Often, publicists have been called journalists. This is not right. What is even more nightmarish is the evolution of online platforms that have tended to drag journalism into disrepute. Many of these online platforms are to say the truth owned by a single individual who is the reporter, editor and gatekeeper. There are

often no second eye to question certain postulations of the platform. For instance, anything can be churned out without cross checking and dished out to the reading public. This does a lot of harm to the people and if not checked causes trouble for the larger society. And, because a large number of publicists now own blocks, society is at its tipping point.

Fake news has become the order of the day and since these owners are the content providers, the gatekeepers and the all in all. In this condition neutrality becomes a difficult ingredient in the service of the society. That underscores the performance of the press in the present circumstances where biases and taking sides have become the order. Also ownership determines to a large extent the focus of the various media platforms. The biases of the owners often shape the content of the outfit.

Lately, what we see gracing the various platforms is not sultry at all. Charlatans have taken over the media space and are doing great disservice to the once cherished profession. Something needs to be done fast to rescue the situation. The things being churn out to the reading public is not healthy at all. Divisive and hate literature have become the order. Visit any site and you will understand what I am talking about.

Our fault lines are being taken advantage of, and, the divisions are being thrown to our faces. It appears all these years nothing positive has happened to us as a people. Yes, our leaders have shown that they do not have the capacity to steer the ship of state to safety but can we as a people not act and take back our heritage? The time to turn a new leave is now. Let us all determine to change the narrative and do what is expected of all of us.

News

Buhari to commission projects in Plateau

By PALANG KASMI

PRESIDENT Muhammadu Buhari will soon visit Plateau State to commission projects, as work on the British-American Flyover and dualisation to Lamingo junction/roundabout in Jos has progressed to its finishing stages.

This was disclosed in a statement released by the Director of Press and Public Affairs to the Plateau State Governor, Dr. Makut Simon Macham.

The statement disclosed that a recent visit to the site shows significant progress has been made with asphaltting works on the slip roads around the main flyover and the stretching from the flyover to the second bridge.

It also indicated that President Muhammadu Buhari is set to come to Plateau State to commission the flyover and many other projects executed by Governor Simon Bakolalong.

"Engineers were seen busy carrying out several activities including intermittent temperature measurement, density and other bituminous properties of the asphalt as part of the processes of quality control".

"Already, the main structure of the flyover has been done while the connecting bridges towards the Lamingo Junction Roundabout are also completed".

"Motorists and residents have expressed delight at the pace of work and are eager to have the

flyover and dualised road commissioned and opened to traffic which will make life easier for them", said the Director of Press.

He said motorists plying the road and residents who were excited with the project commended Governor Lalong for initiating the project and keeping his promise to ensure its completion before the end of his Rescue Administration.

Macham said, during the Governor's last visit to the site, he had stressed to the contractor Craneburg Construction Nigeria Ltd that the project must be completed on schedule, as it is one of those to be commissioned by President Muhammadu Buhari soon.

"Other projects which are expected to be commissioned soon are th

e new Plateau State High Court Headquarters Complex, Multi court Door House, General Hospital Kwall, Kanke; Mabudi, Langtang South; and Riyom. Others are ultra



Buhari

Bank customers describe cash withdrawals as nightmare

By PETER TITLE

CUSTOMERS of various banks in Plateau State are going through hell while accessing their funds as well as conducting other transactions as a result of naira swap policy presently being implemented by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN).

As a result of this development, majority of the customers have resorted to sleeping near Automated Teller Machines (ATMs), just to withdraw money.

Investigations carried out by The NIGERIA STANDARD Newspaper, reveals that accessing money had become a nightmare to many which had affected all in the state not minding social status.

Investigations further revealed that many parents who could not access their money, had some of their children where send back home from school for their inability to settled their fees.

Relations of patients in admission in various hospitals in the state, according to our findings had no alternative than quit such hospitals for lack of funds.

Just as the customers are groaning over the lack of the new redesigned naira notes however, banks transfer systems and Apps which could have aided the people in transferring money for other

purposes lack connecting networks.

Customers of the various banks interviewed by our man lamented the same fate saying there was no bank that was better than the other in the present circumstances.

According to Fredrick Yilbish, who was desperate desirous of paying his child's school fees had to leave his house by 4:30am, on getting to First Bank he was given a number which indicated that he was number 350 in the queue.

He explained that he was patient and was hopeful of accessing money because he said, the ATM was dispensing cash. Mr Yilbish further posited that, he was so devastated when it was finally got to his turned turn, at about 8:30am that fateful day, the money got finished ran out, and money could not be reloaded by the bank officials.

Mr Bartholomew Okoro while narrating his own ordeal said, he had a patient in one of the hospitals within Jos and needed money to settle some bills but could not, due to inefficiencies of the banks.

He said, he had made attempts in transferring some amount demanded by the hospitals but could not yield any positive results as

modern medical equipment at the Plateau State Specialists Hospital Jos which includes Superstar MRI Machine, 64 slices CT scanner, 4D Ultrasound Scanner and Digital X-Ray Machine among others".

"Others are the Shendam Internal Road Networks and bridges, Kalong-AngwanDadi Bridge (the longest bridge in Plateau State), remodelled and reconstructed NUJ Secretariat Complex Jos, Various Legacy Projects among others".

"Others are the Shendam Internal Road Networks and bridges, Kalong-AngwanDadi Bridge (the longest bridge in Plateau State), remodelled and reconstructed NUJ Secretariat Complex Jos, Various Legacy Projects among others" Shendam Internal Road Networks and bridges, Kalong-AngwanDadi Bridge (the longest bridge in Plateau State), remodelled and reconstructed NUJ Secretariat Complex Jos, Various Legacy Projects among others"

From TERESE TUHWA, Makurdi

Tiv Area Traditional Council has condemned in strong terms coordinated and deliberate attacks on Benue State Governor, Samuel Ortom by a group of Fulani elite led by deposed Emir of Kano, Muhammadu Sanusi.

The Council bared its mind on Monday February 13th, 2023 in a 9-point resolution at the end of its supreme council meeting held in Gboko.

The enlarged council meeting was presided over by the paramount ruler of the Tiv nation, Tor Tiv, His Majesty Prof. James Ayatse.

The Council also conferred the chieftaincy title of "InyamkyumeiTiv" on Governor Ortom while his wife, Dr. Eunice was honoured with the title of "ShimaiInyamkyumeiTiv."

Prof Ayatse who read the three page press statement "Condemned in strong terms the coordinated, unwarranted and deliberate attacks by the group led by former Emir of Kano, Khalifa Muhammadu Sanusi, orchestrated to impugn the person and office of Governor Ortom and calls on the group to embrace patriotism focusing on issues that will foster unity and peaceful co-existence rather than inciting one group against another.

He further stated that "The 52 persons that authored the letter to the President in their statement blamed the Benue State Government as being responsible for the incident in Nasarawa State" without first waiting for the findings of the panel of investigation of the bombing which they called for in their letter.

Their action, the Tor Tiv reasoned, "appears unfortunately premeditated and prejudicial."

He further noted that "Similar premeditated actions of some Fulbe groups and their sympathisers in Nasarawa State could have been what led to the killings, maiming and destruction of properties of the Tiv people in Nasarawa State."

The Council then expressed strong support for and solidarity with Governor Ortom over the issue of Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law 2017 as a way of ending perennial conflicts between crop and livestock farmers in the state.

The Council, while commending President Muhammadu Buhari for the deployment of security personnel to checkmate banditry and terrorism in Benue and her sister states, called for increase in numerical and technical reinforcement for the security agencies to stimulate their performance.

The Council also commended the actions of Nasarawa State Governor with Nasarawa State Council of Chiefs in taking timely actions to arrest the killings of Tiv people and destruction of

Tiv traditional council condemns Sanusi's attack against Ortom



Ortom

their property in Nasarawa State.

However, the Tiv traditional Council appealed to Nasarawa State Government to "take necessary steps to facilitate the return of Tiv people displaced due to attacks on their homes by providing the needed relief and protection.

Prof Ayatse in the statement admonished all Tiv sons and daughters to close ranks and face the common security and economic challenges threatening them and continue to be law abiding even in the face of provocations against them.

On the forthcoming general elections, the Tiv Traditional Council warned against violence, thuggery and other sharp practices during the electioneering campaigns and pledged to continue to fight for the interest of the Tiv nation.

The Tor Tiv also enjoined all

Community appeals for upgrading of village head

From John FWAH, Kaduna

BoiAyya' a Community in Bogoro Local Government Area of Bauchi State has appealed to the Executive Governor of Bauchi State BalaAbdulkadir Mohammed to in the interest of development elevate the status of their traditional ruler from village head to chieftom.

The Community made their stand known at the 2023 annual cultural festival tagged VihMaaYaa which showcased their cultural values and heritage.

Speaking at the festival, the National President of the Boi Progressive Association (BPA) Philemon Kichime explained that the community had existed for 140 years with village head as traditional leader opining that it deserves to be elevated to the status of chieftom now.

He said that the elevation will help in preserving their culture

Tiv sons and daughters to make themselves available to be counted during the national population census.

The Supreme Council then directed all traditional and religious leaders, party chieftains and elders to fully mobilize their people to fully cooperate with all the officials and staff of the National Population Commission during the exercise."

In his address, Governor Ortom, expressed appreciation to the Tiv Traditional Council for the full backing the traditional institution has given to his administration amidst challenges.

He also lauded the traditional institution for the honorific chieftaincy title conferred on him and his wife and pledged to continue to fight for the interest of the Tiv nation.

and facilitate its growth and development.

Kichime further appealed for the construction of a modern market in Boi to complement one of the largest markets in southern Bauchi with high percentage of revenue generation.

On the issue of security, he called on government to establish a permanent military outpost or Mopol Barracks to stem the tide of insecurity confronting the community and its surroundings.

While commending Governor Bala for constructing the over 11 kilometers road from Boi to Tapshin and appointing worthy sons of Boi into the state government, he assured that the community will continue to support government's programmes and policies.

This year's VihMaaYaa is focused on sustaining the unity of the land and fund raising of 50 million Naira for the procurement of equipment for their entrepreneurship center.

Foreign Commentary

Kagame's achievements should not be basis to tyranny

Under Kagame's rule Rwanda made significant progress in key areas, but this does not excuse the president's authoritarianism, Tafi Mhaka writes.

IN December, New African, a leading Pan-African news magazine, published the 2022 edition of its immensely popular 100 most influential Africans list.

Advertising the year-ender as the "most authoritative, respected and consulted list on the continent and in the diaspora", the monthly magazine claimed those who appear on this list will "enjoy the adulation that is their due".

I clicked on the link thinking I would get to learn a few names worth knowing and browse through the most recent accomplishments of the continent's best and brightest. I was, however, quickly disappointed.

There was a well-known – and in my opinion highly misplaced – name at the very top of the list: Paul Kagame.

Kagame is undoubtedly an important name in African politics. He has been the president of Rwanda since 2000 and does not appear to have any intention of leaving power soon. But it is highly questionable whether he can or should be described as "influential" and included in a list that presents itself as proof that "Africa rules" and "the world of Wakanda is alive and kicking!"

Sure, in many ways, Rwanda is an African success story. Since the civil war and the Rwandan genocide of 1994, the tiny landlocked nation of 13 million made significant progress in key areas, from education and agriculture to healthcare and security. It has a majority-female parliament and is considered a world leader in gender equality. Despite taking a hit from Covid-19 like the rest of the world, its economy is now largely stable. It is hoping to achieve Middle Income Country status by 2035.

All this, however, does not mean Rwanda is an African utopia and Kagame a "pioneer" worthy of "adulation".

As detailed in the yearly report published by Human Rights Watch in December, in 2022, Kagame's administration continued "to wage a campaign against real and perceived opponents of the government". It cracked down on political opposition and restricted the people's right to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. Critics were arbitrarily arrested and some even said they were tortured in state custody. There were many forced disappearances and suspicious deaths that were not investigated by the authorities.

Kagame signed a controversial asylum seeker deal with the United Kingdom that the United Nations refugee agency believes is "contrary to the latter and spirit of the Refugee Convention". In August, a UN group of experts said they obtained "solid evidence" that Rwandan troops attacked soldiers inside the neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and provided support to the M23 rebel group. The years-long conflict between the DRC government and the M23 rebels, which Kagame is reportedly



Kagame

fuelling by providing support to the armed group, has caused widespread hunger and displaced more than two million people.

Backed by a long history of authoritarianism and political repression, this poor report card should have categorically prevented Kagame from being included in a list that marks and celebrates African achievement and progress.

However, the editors of New African not only placed Kagame at the top of their "authoritative" list but described him in the accompanying write-up as someone who is helping to "restore African pride and dignity". There are passing mentions of "a general lack of democratic culture" in Rwanda and the conflict in the DRC which may "stain [Kagame's] legacy", but overall, the Rwandan president is praised as a "standard bearer" in African politics.

As someone from Zimbabwe, I am saddened but not surprised that Africans are turning a blind eye to the democratic shortcomings of Kagame.

In the 1980s and 90s, Zimbabwe was regarded as a success story just like Rwanda. At the time, our president was liberation war icon, Robert Mugabe. He was respected across Africa and beyond as a revolutionary who fought for the dignity and pride of his people. He was admired and praised for his commitment to Zimbabwe's socioeconomic development and

for his passionate critiques of Western imperialism.

Mugabe's many admirable qualities and accomplishments, however, were clouded by his predilection for violence and unrestrained power. In the early 1980s, his administration paved the way for and openly encouraged countless rapes, enforced disappearances, mass beatings and nearly 20,000 civilian deaths collectively known as the "Gukurahundi" massacres. And after the end of Gukurahundi, hundreds of opposition party supporters were intimidated, tortured and killed in episodes of electoral violence that Mugabe openly stoked, or refused to take action to stop, for years.

Mugabe's violence and political thuggery often played out in the open. His government rarely bothered to hide away the abuse and the oppression. Anyone who dared to resist, oppose or raise the alarm was punished. To the dismay of long-suffering Zimbabweans, however, our African brothers and sisters did not support our struggle. They always gave Mugabe a hero's welcome at continental gatherings. They did not ostracise him for repeatedly violating our human rights. They did not condemn him for killing us. After his death in 2019, South Africa's former President Thabo Mbeki and former Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta rushed to sing his praises.



Gutteres

Back then, Africans refused to see the murderous dictator hiding under the facade of an anti-colonial hero in Zimbabwe. Today, they are making a similar mistake in Rwanda.

I can see how someone may fall for Kagame's projected persona. When I hear him condemn the West's neocolonialism and endless hypocrisy on human rights, I too cannot help but be impressed by his forthrightness. But whenever I find myself in awe of Kagame's principled stance against the West, I always remind myself that Mugabe's fierce critiques of the West were equally as impressive. Eventually, it became obvious that Mugabe hated Africans who criticised his policies as much as – if not more than – the former colonisers of his country. I am afraid time will prove the same about Kagame.

It is perhaps easy to ignore Kagame's authoritarianism today because his country is still doing relatively well. But Rwanda will not remain a success story if Kagame continues to crush all dissent and ignore all criticism.

Zimbabwe went from being the "breadbasket of Africa" to a socioeconomic and political basket case in a decade. Our vaunted health and education sectors went from world-class to dilapidated in no time. All because Mugabe thought his revolutionary credentials gave him the right to govern with an iron fist and

Africans – bedazzled by the liberation icon before them – chose to ignore his crimes against Zimbabweans. I am afraid the same will happen to Rwanda if Africans remain under Kagame's spell.

Zimbabwe's recent history is a cautionary tale about how unchecked power and unconditional adulation can transform an imperfect hero into a tyrant and spell disaster for an entire nation.

So editors should stop declaring Kagame a "pioneer", calling him "inspirational" and claiming he is a "standard bearer" in African politics. He cannot be considered any of those things until dissenting Rwandans stop being threatened, arbitrarily jailed or forcibly disappeared. Rwanda and Africa deserve much better.

As Africans come to expect more civil liberties from their postcolonial governments, human rights and democracy are at a crossroads in Africa. The continent's self-proclaimed opinion makers must cease their attempts to whitewash liberation icons-turned-tyrants, and instead endeavour to hold them accountable for failing to responsibly fulfil their political mandates.

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

Foreign News

Kenya seeks divine help to end drought

IRAQ's political crisis has descended into violence, with the prospect of a sixth consecutive failed rainy season in the east and Horn of Africa, Kenya's president is hoping the heavens will finally open with the help of a national day of mass prayer on Tuesday.

William Ruto announced the plans for the country's first ever day of prayer on Sunday at a service in the drought-stricken city of Nakuru, some 100 miles (160 kilometers) from the capital Nairobi. It follows a joint call by the country's spiritual leaders to dedicate an entire day to prayer to ease drought conditions in the nation. Ruto's own ambitious economic revival strategy for the country is also dependent on a successful rainy season.

"As a government we have set out elaborate plans for food security, we have seeds, ample fertilizer, and water harvesting strategies including dams. We now need God to send us the rain," Ruto said. "I urge all people from all faiths ... to pray for our country."

Kenya and other east African nations have been experiencing some of the worst drought conditions in decades, causing crop failure, loss of livestock, wildlife and biodiversity, and malnutrition. Domestic agriculture is a large part of Kenya's economy.

The U.N. humanitarian agency has termed the ongoing drought in the region a "rapidly unfolding humanitarian catastrophe." Meteorologists say human-caused climate change has been exacerbating the extreme conditions.

"It is time we started including climate change as factor in our development plans," Evans Mukolwe, former director of the Kenyan and U.N. weather agencies, told The Associated Press. "The current drought which we warned about some years ago has wider ramifications on the social economic conditions of the region including peace, security, and political stability."

Mukolwe added that climate



Ruto

change has contributed to below average rainy seasons in the region for about three decades.

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development's climate center said that since 2020, five rainy seasons have failed, affecting over 50 million people. The center will release its projections for the long rains season, typically from March to May, later in February. Early projections from other meteorological groups are not optimistic.

Around the world people from different faiths have often sought divine intervention for rain or other favorable weather. Last summer Milan's

Archbishop made a pilgrimage to three churches in hopes of ending the country's dry spell and Utah's governor called for citizens to pray for rain ahead of a weekend of extreme heat. Some Kenyans intend to heed the president's call.

Nairobi business owner Millicent Nyambura said she supported the idea, "even IRAQ's political crisis has descended into violence, with SWith the prospect of a sixth consecutive failed rainy season in the east and Horn of Africa, Kenya's president is hoping the heavens will finally open with the help of a national day of mass prayer. William Ruto announced the

Peace talks between the Colombian government and the largest remaining rebel group in the South American country, the National Liberation Army (ELN), have resumed in Mexico City.

While left-wing President Gustavo Petro's administration has expressed optimism over the renewed negotiations, tensions between Bogota and the ELN have grown since the last round of talks ended in December in Caracas, Venezuela.

The Colombian government was forced to backtrack on a New Year's Eve announcement that a truce had been reached after the ELN denied that any such agreement existed. Instead, the rebels said a ceasefire "was merely a proposal to be considered".

Now, as the second round of talks began on Monday in the Mexican capital, experts have questioned how the government's apparent misstep will affect the prospect of ending decades of armed conflict in Colombia and how reliable any potential ceasefires will be going forward.

"Expectations in affected communities were sky-high after [last year's] elections," which brought Petro to power, said Kyle Johnson, co-founder of the Conflict Responses Foundation, which studies armed conflict and peacebuilding in Colombia.

"But now we're starting to see doubt," he told Al Jazeera.

Colombian rebels peace talks amidst tensions



Petro

"Residents in militarised conflict areas ask, 'If there is a ceasefire, why are there still soldiers and tanks in my community?'"

'Total peace'

Violence in Colombia has risen in recent years, particularly in rural areas, despite a 2016 peace accord that saw members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) rebel group lay down their weapons after decades of conflict.

Petro, a former rebel fighter who took office in August, promised on the campaign trail to move away from the militarised strategies of previous Colombian

administrations, which seemed to have only exacerbated the violence.

He also pledged to engage all criminal groups in direct negotiations with the goal of reaching disarmament agreements, a plan he calls "total peace".

The government said this month that it has reached informal ceasefires with four armed groups: the Gaitanista Self-Defence Forces, which the state calls "Clan del Golfo"; two FARC dissident groups that rejected the 2016 peace deal, Segunda Marquetalia and Estado Mayor; and a paramilitary group on the Caribbean coast called the Self-Defence Conquistadors of the Sierra Nevada.

Judge orders release of Trump probe

A judge in Georgia has ordered the partial release of a panel's report on Donald Trump's efforts to overturn the 2020 United States presidential election results in the state.

The special grand jury's report, which has been sealed since its existence was disclosed in January, could serve as the basis for potential prosecution of the former president and his associates.

In a ruling on Monday, Fulton County Superior Court Judge Robert McBurney said the introduction and conclusion of the report will be released on Thursday along with a section in which the panel "discusses its concern that some witnesses may have lied under oath".

But McBurney ruled in favour of withholding the public release of the

panel's recommendations on criminal charges, citing the due process rights of witnesses or potential defendants.

The judge issued his decision after a group of US news outlets had asked him to release the report last month, The New York Times reported.

Trump, who is seeking the White House again in 2024, has falsely claimed that widespread election fraud led to his loss to President Joe Biden in 2020. He was not subpoenaed and did not testify before the grand jury in Georgia.

The decision on whether to charge Trump is ultimately up to Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis. During a hearing last month, Willis told McBurney that charging decisions were "imminent" and asked the judge not to release the report.

Willis launched her investigation shortly after Trump urged Georgia's top election official during a call in January 2021 to "find" enough votes to deliver him a victory in the state.

Days later, a mob of Trump supporters stormed the US Capitol in an effort to prevent Congress from



BIDEN

certifying Biden's win.

"So look, all I want to do is this: I just want to find 11,780 votes, which is one more than we have, because we won the state," Trump told state officials in the 2021 call that later leaked to the media. A judge in Georgia has ordered the partial release of a panel's report on Donald Trump's efforts to overturn the 2020 United States presidential election results in the state.

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UN criticised over Assad aid deliveries

The head of a Syrian opposition-run rescue group has denounced a United Nations decision to seek authorisation from Syrian President Bashar al-Assad for the delivery of aid to earthquake-stricken northwestern Syria through additional border crossings with Turkey, saying it allowed him to score a "political gain".

"This is shocking and we are at loss at how the UN is behaving," Raed al-Saleh, head of the White Helmets,

The comment comes after UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Monday said al-Assad had agreed to allow UN aid deliveries to opposition-held territories through two more crossings on the border with Turkey for an initial period of three months.

The agreement to open the Bab al-Salam and Bab al-Raee crossings to UN aid followed a meeting in Damascus between al-Assad and UN humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths, who spent Saturday and Sunday visiting affected areas in southern Turkey and northwestern Syria.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said 58 trucks had already been sent to deliver aid. "What this crossing point agreement will do is up the volume of supplies that we will be able to introduce into northwest Syria," Griffiths told Al Jazeera.

The White Helmets repeatedly beseeched the world for help in the hours following the first pre-dawn

magnitude 7.8 earthquake on February 6, asking for heavy machinery, rescue teams and equipment to help them save as many lives as possible during a crucial 72-hour window.

The group, also known as Syria Civil Defence, denounced what they said was a "failure" on the part of the international community to bring timely aid into northwest Syria.

UN officials have acknowledged aid was slow initially but said they were stepping up deliveries, including getting supplies from Turkey.

In the first three days, at least two dozen shipments of disaster relief aid were sent to the Syrian regime in Damascus. None reached areas under opposition control in northwest Syria.

Feature

Elections: Count down to the decisions of our lives

By **OBOLI AUGUSTINE**

I woke up this morning feeling awkward. I couldn't just place my well-being. I was heavily soaked in sweat as if I have conducted some manual labor all through the night. Though, something akin to that happened. In the phantasmagoria of horror, mystery and rapture, I fought forces that violently tried to hold me down as a perpetual captive. They came innocently with their gift of garb and promised things out of this world. But that was their undoing because I know without the luxury of a second opinion that only our maker, the subliminal source of power and knowledge can assure freedom from earthly travails, and guarantee the certainty of celestial transition. On this night, I was taken through a journey of discoveries, ecstasies, and exposures to the past and future. I saw the reward of being wise with one's decision and the anguish of the opposite.

I was ruminating about these flashes when the morning sun streaked across my room and my bleary eyes opened, and I was only waking up from a dream.

As we count down to the election of our leaders at various levels on February 25 and March 11, what can we extrapolate from my dream? Given our negative experiences in the past and currently, have we critiqued our leadership recruitment process? What kind of leaders do we want to hire? What values or considerations are dominant in determining our eventual decisions? Are those considerations standing for God and country, universal, altruist? As a people we cannot be forever lucky, yes nature does not operate that way. We have to do the right thing or be prepared to pay the price through suffering, pain and misery. But we don't wish that for even our number one enemy. Yet good things will not come to being by mere wishes, they have to be worked for by pulling up the sleeves and getting the hands dirty. For the future, pride and wellbeing of our dear country, we have to make that inconveniencing decision that will speak to our love for it. And it is voting our



Yakubu

conscience and not being swayed by walds of cripsy new naira notes, particularly now that it is the currency of choice.

Let it not be lost on us that nation building is a collective responsibility, but it is more critically embedded in the leadership we hire because as enunciated by John Maxwell 'everything rises and falls on leadership'. Nothing can be further from the truth, though that is not denying fellowship as a factor. And this is the crux of the matter: if we have erred by electing the bad ones to the helms of affairs, wont it be self immolating to bring them back to inflict more pains on us when we have the power to send them packing. It would be a curse to consciously continue trusting ones life to a Dracula, who feeds on blood.

The place of leadership in the annals of a nation is hugely important in that leaders are the embodiments of the dreams and aspirations of their people. Leaders influence the collective direction of the citizenry and determine the course of the history of a nation. Leaders, not rulers across time and space are revered for their vision and ability to mobilize and galvanize society toward the actualization of goals encapsulated in their vision. Unfortunately for Nigeria, the

Throughout recorded history, leaders have made great impacts that positively changed the stories of their people. The list is endless and I won't go mentioning them for want of space.

The present crop of leaders in Nigeria is ill-equipped and lacked the gravitas for the enormous task of governance and nation-building. Their leadership inclinations are devoid of utmost good faith in their approach to issues, as they knowingly pay lip services to things that are of greatest concern to the citizenry. It is therefore not surprising that nearly everything they do has a tinge of self-interest surrounding it. They suffer from a trust deficit. Power is their plaything, but it is ephemeral.

But it is high time we recognized that those manning the affairs of the state in our clime are not leaders in the true sense of it. They are politicians who play on our faultlines to attain/retain the power to continually remain relevant in the scheme of things. They make us hurl insults at one another, hate, and even kill for their selfish ambitions. It is rather piteous that we still have this caliber of people in leadership positions. Elections are here again and the jostling for power is already playing out in every foreseeable place and space. Having kissed the blarney stone, they have started 'sweet talking' us again and as always we will fall for the bait. Five thousand naira, branded salts, wrapper clothes, and bags of rice is all it takes for the gullible and vulnerable amongst us to be hoodwinked to endorse their

sole right to our collective patrimony.

It is clear that our current leaders are always laser-focused on the till or spoils and perquisites of the office with the spirit of *k l e p t o m a n i a* overshadowing; so, at the outset, there is a lack of readiness for national service or somewhat lack of understanding of what national service entails.

This is the time to say no more. We are in a pole position to turn things around with our PVC if we turn out en mass on the days of elections to rewrite or make history. Remember, when the nose is beaten, the eyes cry. Enough should be enough. This is the time for the Nigeria ballot revolution. And nothing can stop an idea whose time has come: February 25 and March 12 are loading. We have acquiesced for so long. Let's retire the men of yesterday who failed to deliver and try new hands. In this election, let's end our fringe loyalties and affinities. In a recent viral video, a pastor admonished the congregation to vote for the candidate whose character they wished for their children. That goes for all of us. If that is instructive, then we should ignore the party and vote for the individuals that will make a difference by changing our circumstances for good. Let's see this as a task that must be done and wear it as a badge of honor. The coming elections call for the decisions of our lives, let's do it for God and our country.

leadership recruitment process is shady because no attention is paid to talents. And until we place a high premium on this critical requirement, we will never get it right. It will always be, to use the computer terminology, GIGO (garbage in, garbage out). Yes, you can't give what you don't have. Period! As things stand, I am worried for it seems a lofty dream that a true Nigerian Leader will emerge in our time because society gets the leadership it deserves. So, it is in effect a collective problem of the citizenry. But there is hope on the horizon, things appeared to be looking up. With the growing level of citizens' consciousness, a new Nigeria is about to birth.

“This is the time to say no more. We are in a pole position to turn things around with our PVC if we turn out en mass on the days of elections to rewrite or make history. Remember, when the nose is beaten, the eyes cry. Enough should be enough. This is the time for the Nigeria ballot revolution. And nothing can stop an idea whose time has come: February 25 and March 12 are loading. We have acquiesced for so long. Let's retire the men of yesterday who failed to deliver and try new hands. In this election, let's end our fringe loyalties and affinities”.

THE NIGERIA STANDARD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

Living

Benefits of spending time with family

IN today's competitive world, we all are running worried to keep ourselves afloat and sustain our families.

As parents, we are trying to strike a balance between work and home, and our kids are trying to match up to their pace with the constantly growing competition. In this entire hustle-bustle of life, we are missing out on spending quality time with the family.

We have forgotten the importance of spending time with family and why it is important.

Spending time with family may seem unproductive or mundane but the truth is that it has many health benefits. It can improve your day, as well as have a positive effect on your mental and physical health.

Here are some benefits that spending time with family has on your life:

Strengthen the bond

As discussed above, today every member of the family is busy putting their life in a straight line. They're struggling and are going through a lot of stress and pressure, mentally and physically.

In such a scenario, by not spending enough quality time with family, they're missing out on an important aspect of their life, a pillar of strength, their family.

So, by spending some good time with family, they're reinventing their relationship with their family. After all, our family is our pillar of strength and will stand with us in any circumstances, no matter what.

They all matter

The definition of parenting doesn't imply providing comfortable living and meeting their daily needs.

It's far more than that.

It means to be with them and supporting them emotionally and mentally. When, as parents, you make yourself busy in life and distance yourself from your kids and family, you send out the wrong message.

However, when you take out time from your busy schedule and spend some time with them, you tell them



that they matter. This sends out a right and strong message, which further strengthens your bond with them.

Learning new things

Learning is never a one-way route.

It's a two-way process. Whilst you're teaching your kid something, you end up learning a new thing. By spending time with family, you're ensuring that the learning curve exists in your family and your kid learns new things from you as you do from them.

You are a part of their life and are aware of all the new things they're discovering in their life as they're growing up. It is remarkable to be their childhood and growth.

Passing tradition

When you spend time with your family, especially with your kids, you pass on the family tradition.

This is how you've learned about them, and this is how you're supposed to pass it on to the next generation. Family traditions are important as your tradition might not be similar to a family staying next door.

ways to spend time with family

Ensure you meet at the dinner table, no matter what

Encourage 'dinner time is family time.'

Today, most kids and parents keep checking their mobile phones despite being at the dinner table. It's not only rude, but it also gives out the message that something



else is far more important than your family. Don't let your phone distract you from spending time with your family. Make this a rule and abide by it.

Go often on a holidays or weekend getaways

Everyone needs free time from work and regular daily life. That's why it's good to go out on a family holiday or weekend getaways together. Choose a place where there are activities or someplace quiet.

Start involving your kids in daily household chores

We all want our kids to learn things and be independent.

However, we fail to spend much time with them. Daily interactions can bring a lot of change in your relationship with them. For instance, if you want something to be fixed, involve them.

Read together or get involved in their school project

Kids learn from us.

If you want them to participate in household chores and help you in the kitchen, you have to help them

with their school project or read out a book before they go to bed.

These small gestures and activities will send out a huge message. They would see your involvement in their life and would want to get involved in yours. Plus, this is another way of passing on the family tradition to your kids.

Go for a post-dinner walk or do exercises together

Another way to strengthen the family bond is to do some physical activity together.

For instance, if you have a habit of going out for a post-dinner walk, take your kids along with you; or you all can join a gym or get involved in some physical exercise together. This way, you're not only teaching them the importance of staying healthy, but you're also spending time with family.

Final thoughts

You may not realize what a toll life is taking on you until you reach a breaking point. However it is better if you let off steam regularly by spending time with your family.

When you spend time with your family it can enhance your familial relations, while also having a positive impact on your mental health simultaneously.

Source: Familyfocus.com



EVERYBODY'S WORLD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

Living

How to keep your room clean

At the end of a long day, as I turn out the lights and head towards my bedroom, I think about what a busy day I had and how I can't wait to get under the covers in my bed, turn on the tv and relax.

As I approach my bedroom door, I'm almost giddy with excitement.

The only thing that could ruin this desire to relax after a hard day is to walk into a cluttered and untidy bedroom.

I've had times in my life where I have not always kept a clean bedroom.

After a long day or night out on the town with friends, the last thing I want to do is to look at clothes on the floor, laundry sitting on the bureau, or stacks of bills on the nightstand.

There's no denying that a messy bedroom can have a negative impact on one's state of mind.

Over the years I've learned a thing or two about how to keep your room clean so that my little oasis, the spot in my home that is peaceful and calm – my escape sanctuary – stays that way.

Easy tips to keep your bedroom clean

No storage allowed

Have you ever walked into someone's bedroom and it was filled to the brim with storage boxes, cartons, and junk?

I have and there is nothing inviting me to want to go to sleep in that room.

Your bedroom shouldn't become a storage facility for everything you can't find a spot for in your home.

If you use your room in this way, it will be difficult to keep it clean and tidy.

Take a day and clear out the clutter from your room and find a new place for them, or better yet, sell, donate or toss what you no longer need or want.

Purging your environment and creating a space that you'll enjoy coming to at the end of the day, is one of the best things you can do for yourself.

Use storage containers appropriately

If you have to store items in your



bedroom, purchase the appropriate storage containers for under the bed or closet storage solutions.

Here is a solution that might work for your bedroom:

Keep tops of dresser/bureau/nightstand free from clutter

Furniture surfaces are not quasi-storage areas.

The tops of nightstand and bureaus should remain clutter-free. Only hold the essentials you need above your nightstand.

Having a limited amount of stuff on the tops of your furniture makes it super easy to dust once a week. Remember, one of the habits of people who always have a clean home is to dust and vacuum once a week.

Removing clutter will make this possible.

Make your bed

Making your bed at the start of the day is an important first step in starting the day off right.

It takes virtually two minutes to make the bed and the room looks instantaneously improved. Did you know to make your bed actually helps to motivate you to keep your room clean?

Make your bed each morning and you'll be amazed at how great your room will look. In the few minutes it takes to make the bed, you create a neater room almost instantaneously.

No clothes on floors

Nothing makes a room look a mess more than the clothing on the floor.

You immediately feel the disorganization of the environment when clothes are left there.

Please, please, please stop throwing your clothes on the floor.

Put a hamper in your bedroom if that's where you get undressed each night or the bathroom.

It takes just as much time to throw your clothes in the hamper as it does to toss them on the floor.

Toss your clothes in the hamper and your room will look better at the



end of the day.

Put your shoes away

Instead of flinging your shoes off and leaving them where they land, try putting them away in your closet or on a shoe rack.

Keeping them off the floor will also lend itself when it comes time to vacuum your room. This small task will only take a few seconds but will make your room look neat.

Put clean laundry away

This is a particular pet peeve of mine.

When I first started my house cleaning business, I had this family who never required their kids to put

away their clothes.

On their bureaus and dressers, were clothes piled so high you couldn't see the mirror. It was ridiculous and it made the room look messy despite the fact we had just cleaned the room.

Putting your laundry away is worth the time it will take to make your room the sanctuary you deserve.

Don't eat in your bedroom

I know lots of people like to grab a bowl of ice cream and head upstairs to watch the Late Show, but try and resist.

Eating in bed typically means you end up with a collection of glasses,

bowls, spoons, and more.

It attracts bugs and ants into your sleeping quarters and nobody wants that!

Leave the eating to the table and you'll never have to worry about uninvited guests in your bedroom.

Throw things out regularly

First, make sure you have a garbage basket in your bedroom.

But then don't forget to empty it!

Also, take the time to throw things out that you otherwise would leave hanging around dressers and nightstands. This way your room is always free of clutter and trash and looks impeccable.



Editorial

Fine tuning the naira redesign policy

THE Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) had last October, 2022 announced that it was redesigning the 200,500 and 1000 naira notes to help arrest the liquidity problem which has had devastating consequences on the polity. Monetary policies are tools often employed for economic management to bring about sustainable economic growth and development.

SINCE the first policy was launched, the Central Bank of Nigeria, CBN has reviewed the cash withdrawal limits on different occasions.

HOWEVER, the past few weeks have been quite traumatic for citizens and small scale businesses in Nigeria as a result of continued scarcity of the new redesigned naira notes which have lingered unabated.

DESPITE the dateline extension, the scarcity of the new naira notes has persisted, unleashing hardship and traumatising experiences on the polity.

RECENTLY, protests have been recorded in some parts of the country as a result of the policy. For instance, in Ogun, Oyo, Akwa Ibom to mention but a few, coupled with the lamentation of suffering of Nigerians due to inadequate cash in Automated Teller Machines(ATM) including the banking halls.

MANY banks in various states have shut down their operations as citizens violently protests their inability to access their funds.

FURTHERMORE, the problem is compounded by the country's fragile electronic transactions infrastructure which has seen a spike in failed transactions as more people resort to the use of transfers in the face of cash shortages.

AS a result of the hardships Nigerians are faced with, because of the policy, some state governors have sought for legal redress at the Supreme Courts in the hope of bringing respite to the citizenry.

IN spite of efforts by critical stakeholders, many citizens have not seen the new naira notes especially in the villages let alone exchange them with their old notes despite assurances by the CBN governor to make the currency available.

RECENTLY, two unnamed bank branches were busted for hoarding the new naira notes. However, commercial banks have denied hoarding the new notes, saying, the CBN is simply not providing them with enough notes for customers.

WE believe that the CBN monetary policy may have the best of intentions, but it has failed to consider its consequences on the informal sector.

MORE so, cash based economies are costly, inefficient and are prone to attacks by economic saboteurs. However, huge amounts of time and money is needed to print the currency and lots more to steer it through the system.

IN as much as we commend the Federal Government and the Central Bank of Nigeria, CBN for implementing the policy, the policy needs to be reviewed and strengthened. It behoves on the Federal Government to put in place the necessary mechanism to make the policy achieve its desire aims.

THE Council of State recently affirmed the naira redesign policy, but, it agreed that there is need for aggressive action on the part of the CBN as it relates to the implementation of the policy by way of ensuring adequate provision being made with particular regard to the supply of the naira in the system.

WE, therefore, call on the Federal Government and the CBN to respect the rule of law and listen to the voice of reason expressed by Nigerians and several other stakeholders before more damage is done to our economy.

Although, the apex bank was compelled by the federal high court to extend the expiry date of the old naira notes by six months, retaining it will jeopardise the fight against fraud and corruption.

IN criminal law, kidnapping is the unlawful confinement of a victim against their will which often causes fear and trauma the perpetrator may use a weapon of force on the victim which leads to captivity and can be referred as kidnapping. It is common knowledge that taxis and other means of transportation are used to perpetrate such act which has gained a scandancy in Nigeria. Therefore, Government needs to take proactive steps to address security issues in the country. Unfortunately the Nigeria Police art have become apprehensive as families barricade themselves at night like prisoners for fear of criminals.

Statistics have shown that at least 7,222 Nigerians have been killed and 3,823 abducted across the country while 2840 incidents of kidnapping have been reported between January 1, 2022 and July 29, 2022. Therefore I wish to use this medium of the Nigerian Standard newspaper to express my concern over the increasing cases of insecurity across Nigeria and hope that the Federal Government



Government should take a proactive steps on kidnapping

together with all security agencies including stakeholders would synergize in taking proactive measures that would curb the menace of kidnapping by criminal groups

in order to keep Nigeria safe and productive.
By Abdul Azeez Abubakar is an IT Student from Federal Polytechnic

Nigerian Youths and political violence

POLITICAL violence is becoming a global phenomenon which many nations find within their political system, it refers to various forms of crises in the society particularly during elections and politically related violence are always attributed to the teeming youths that are suppose to be the backbone of

every society but due to idleness, lack of education, unemployment, poor orientation and greed of political class. Another factor which reinforces violence in African political system is the desperate attitude towards politics among African politicians, the desperation among some African politicians,

to win elections and occupy political offices by all means is a major cause of political violence in the political realm of the continent other illegitimate youths which may have been absolved as personal assistance and special body guards during campaigns and other struggles

just hogan political power. In some cases, it is the contestants who are aspiring to come into political power organize some youth and provide essential arms that would be used to enforce fear during election. It is said that when two elephants meet only the grass suffers", it is simply the youths who are at the middle of those desperate fellows are being used against each other and even the innocent civilians who peacefully want to exercise the right to vote for a representative with pure intention and hoping to choose a credible candidate that will protect their interest. During campaigns the money and offer of some the materials to the people have become order of the day across African nations that cannot be left out and is also a relevant factor responsible for continued spread of political violence, the level of poverty on the continent is an intimidation to the innocent youths may give it through if circumstances warrants the opportunity to participate in violence it will be done just to survive, the politicians store huge amount of money that will be use during electoral campaigns inform of gift to the poor especially those in the rural areas just to win people's consent not only to vote but to justified their sponship thuggery.

Gloria Jared is an IT student of Kwarafa University Wukari.

The negative effects on rape victims

RAPE is said to be a forced sexual intercourse without the person's consent.

However some of the major contributing factors to such menace include indecency, speaking in vulgar and offensive manner by some males etc.

The use of vulgar and offensive words which certain people use naturally suggests sex to the opposite sex. A lady who often uses the 'fuck you' word indirectly communicates that she is use to it and this builds up in the mind of the opposite sex and he eventually carries out his evil act.

Often times the uncontrolled urge to have sex brings about this disaster upon people. Alcoholism and drugs also have a high tendency of increased sexual urge amongst offenders the good and bad people of the society are often caught as either the victim or the offender because this is when the person is at the wrong place and at the wrong time.

Furthermore my advice to young girls is to be mindful of the specific time they do visit their boyfriends, most especially late at night in some cases when the light are out the next thing that come to the guy's mind is sex"

Religious institutions have a vital role in preaching to their members on the need to be decent, it may interest you to know that perpetrators of rape and other sexual offences might not be who you think but sometimes people that are closely attached to each other.

However research has proven that 1 out of 2 rapes cases are carried out by their partner or ex partner and also 98% of adults prosecuted for sexual offences are men and 5 and 6 rapes against women are carried out by someone they know.

Rape is indeed a social vice perpetrated by individuals of the society and the nation at large and if not dealt with, has negative effects to victims of such act.

In addition, the psychological motivations of rapists are more complex than it was formerly thought it include the desire to punish to gain revenge to cause pain or to cause sexual prowess etc.

The psychological reactions of victims of rape also varies but usually include feelings of shame victims can also be traumatized confusion and any fear and rage with them.

Moreover the duration of the psychological trauma varies from individual to individual whereby many feel the negative effects for years even with considerable supportive therapy.

I therefore appeal to the government and non-governmental organizations to sensitize the general public and rape victims by organizing workshops, seminars and conferences in public & private institutions on the need for rape victims to speak up and never feel intimidated and also report such cases to relevant authorities.

Supportive therapy should be given to victims to boost their psychological and emotional wellbeing.

Lastly, advocacy and human rights activists should Endeavour to stand and speak up against rape and they should ensure that these criminals are brought to book. To serve on a deterrent to both rapist and other animal minds in the society.

By Jonathan Rabo Dammo writes from the Plateau state Polytechnic, Barkin Ladi, Mass Communication Department.

Standard Cartoon



Opinion

Illegitimate child, chances of inheriting intestate parents

By **SAMUEL OLOMU**

IN the current situation of the world, the illegitimacy of a child is a striking crisis that needs to be properly fixed. No child has the freewill to choose if he's to be legitimate or illegitimate. On this basis, we can't consider a child illegitimate regardless of the parents' mistakes and deprive him of the rights he's entitled to benefit because he never knew nor consented to be referred to as illegitimate.

For a broader analysis of the topic, it's expedient to construe the meaning of an illegitimate child. Despite the varieties of Nigeria's customs, and under the existing family law, an illegitimate child is a child who was not conceived or born in a lawful wedlock nor later legitimated.

In common law, such a child is considered the child of nobody (nullius filius) and has no name except one who was gained by reputation. Therefore, it can be well-established that an illegitimate child is otherwise known as 'bastard'; or child out of wedlock; or non-marital child; or a child born to a married woman whose husband is not the father of the child.

Progressively, the issue of illegitimacy of a child may

emanate as a result of certain conditions and circumstances such as religious differences between desirous lovers, diversity of cultural and traditional beliefs, parents' refusal to consent in marriage, unlawful sexual intercourse, concubinage, and other illicit marital affairs.

All these have been an impetus to the increasing rate of illegitimate children. Perhaps, the concept of illegitimacy wouldn't have seemed significant in the lives of humans if social stigma, embarrassment, shame and other invectives were not associated with it. Moreover, no one would be happy to be addressed as an illegitimate child.

Furthermore, the rights of an illegitimate child wouldn't have been quarrelsome nor disputatious if the deceased person had died testate, that is to say, he has a will left behind. A testator, as it implies, has the right to distribute his assets to anybody he wants. However, the necessity to examine legally, the laws relating to an illegitimate child will surely arise when the death of a deceased person is intestate.

With that, the rights of the illegitimate child becomes controversial. This conflict occurs more often during the period

when children are to succeed the deceased properties. Kasunmu has once said in one of his evidential statements that "most of the cases on illegitimacy deal with the rights of illegitimate children to succeed the property, it is in that area, that the consequences of illegitimacy are being greatly felt."

Constitutionally, S.42 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 as (amended) provides for the Right to Freedom from Discrimination and subsection(2), by extension, specifically emphasises that "no citizen of Nigeria shall be subjected to any disability or deprivation merely by reason of the circumstances of his birth." Pursuant to the statutory provision of the section, every child regardless of the birth cannot be deprived of his right to inheritance. Therefore, illegitimacy is immaterial to inheritance.

More also, The Supreme Court of Nigeria, in the case of Salubi v. Nwariaka, held that "the children of the deceased who were born within a lawful wedlock and the children of the deceased who were born out of wedlock are entitled to equal shares to the properties of the deceased." Ayoola, JSC ascertained this

point, when his Lordship passed it decision that: "by virtue of that: "It suffices to hold that the court below was right in holding that the trial court below had jurisdiction to entertain the claim before it and that the two issues born out of wedlock are entitled to equal shares with the two other issues of the marriage of deceased and the widow."

Even, the court, as it's known, won't be a demolishing agent of the law that tends to act on the contrary path of the public policy; as a result, pronounces various judicial requirements such as paternity acknowledgment and presentation of evidential proofs. With this, in the case of Okonkwo v. Okonkwo, (2014) 17 N.W.L.R (pt 1435) 18 the court made a

decision that: "by virtue of section 42 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, children born out of wedlock but whose paternity was acknowledged by the intestate have equal share with the children of the marriage."

Conclusively, it's noteworthy to state that the implications of the constitutional provision of S.42 is capable of encouraging promiscuity and multiplying children outside wedlock in most homes. The reason is that a father or mother, having known that no child will be discriminated against based on sex may be motivated to walk the path of adultery.

"Furthermore, the rights of an illegitimate child wouldn't have been quarrelsome nor disputatious if the deceased person had died testate, that is to say, he has a will left behind. A testator, as it implies, has the right to distribute his assets to anybody he wants. However, the necessity to examine legally, the laws relating to an illegitimate child will surely arise when the death of a deceased person is intestate".

Media and post 2023 elections reportage

By **ISMAIL ABDULAZIZ**

AT its last meeting on Feb. 10, the National Council of State agreed that the 2023 general elections are set to kick off with the brief it received from relevant stakeholders including security chiefs.

The February 25 date is therefore confirmed by the highest advisory body in the country which comprises the President, Vice-President, all former Presidents and Heads of the Government of the Federation, former Chief Justices of Nigeria, President of the Senate, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Governors and the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of the Federation.

At the 6th round of the Nigeria-European Union Human Right Dialogue recently, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Zubairu Dada gave the Federal Government commitment to a credible and fair election.

"On the topics for discussion today, you must have all noted the strides that the government has made in the past decade to improve the election process and integrity. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has received needed resources from the government and is ready to conduct what will be our best elections ever.

"The security agencies are also working to ensure that people will be able to carry out their civic responsibilities without fear. They are ready to act swiftly to protect lives and properties around the country during the election."

Similarly, the electoral umpire, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has expressed its readiness to conduct the elections as scheduled.

Prof. Mahmood Yakubu, INEC Chairman at an event in January, stated the

readiness of the commission to conduct the 2023 general elections. He said that the commission was not contemplating any adjustment to the election timetable.

"Already, substantial quantities of sensitive and non-sensitive materials have been deployed to various locations across the country. The last batch of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) has been received while the ongoing configuration of the critical technology in readiness for elections will soon be completed. In the last two days, we commenced the airlifting of other sensitive materials to states across the country.

"Already, some of the materials for 17 States in three geo-political zones have been delivered. Furthermore, 13,868,441 Permanent Voters' Cards (PVCs) have been printed, and delivered to states and are being collected by citizens as new voters or by existing voters who applied for transfer or replacement of cards as provided by law."

Also, recently the security agencies reiterated their dedication for the continuation of democratic governance in Nigeria.

The National Security Adviser Babagana Monguno, Chief of Defence Staff Lucky Irabor and Inspector-General of Police Usman Baba assured Nigerians of safe and rancour-free election.

During a visit of INEC boss to the trio, Monguno said although there were issues confronting the polity, agitations geared towards the conduct of 2023

elections should be dispelled as the election would hold.

"We have done a lot to put things in place. We have had meetings with INEC, Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Elections Security (ICCES) which I chair. I know what we have put on the ground. The remaining days before the elections will be an intense period for us and I know that all security agencies are equal to the task," he said.

Also, Irabor and Baba pledged collaboration towards ensuring free, fair and credible 2023 general elections. While Irabor said the Armed Forces would support the police as the lead agency handling the electioneering process, Baba said the Police would continue to look into the agitations that have led to apprehension and uncertainty by Nigerians towards the conduct of credible polls.

These laudable commitments by critical stakeholders are enough for us to move the nation forward in terms of engendering the promotion of democratic ideals.

This is where the role of the media would be most critical as the fourth estate of the realm and watchdog of the society.

Immediately after the conduct of the general elections, the entire process would be taken over by the information sector. Nigerians and the rest of the world would recede to the background to await the outcome of their efforts at the polls.

The media, therefore, need, to recommit itself to upholding the tenets of democracy by following all laid down rules and regulations guiding the conduct of the media on electoral

process in their reportage of the elections.

The regulatory authorities, the Press Council of Nigeria and the National Broadcasting Commission, had outlined guidelines for election reportage that would ensure the defence of the rights of every citizen and discourage the assumption of fighting for the rights of other people without recourse to the rule of law and constitutional provisions.

The media must, therefore, play the game by the rules. After the 2023 elections, just like other previous elections in the country, the media are at spotlight to exhibit their professionalism and skills in national development through dispassionate reporting of events, actions, reactions and activities of Nigerians in order to safeguard our commonwealth.

The media must not allow itself to fall into the categories of those that work against the rule of law, since this is the first step towards sanity and continuous development of any nation. It must be seen at this critical time in the life of the nation as a sole holder of public peace and stability.

The profession does not allow the media to play to the gallery or fall into the manipulation of some unscrupulous elements in the society who are known for fomenting trouble when their selfish interests are not pampered during elections.

This is the time for the Nigerian media to rise up to their calling and show that it is truly the watchdog of the society in whom every citizen irrespective of political, religious or ethnic affiliation can depend on for credible, balanced and objective news.

News

Valentine: NOA tasks Nigerians on patriotism, love of country

THE National Orientation Agency (NOA) has called on Nigerians to use the 2023 Valentine celebration to show patriotism and love for one another to ease national rebirth and peace.

Director-General of NOA, Dr Garba Abari, gave the advice at the Patriotism Orientation Programme held at Government Secondary School, Gosa, and Abuja.

Abari said the purpose of the programme was to promote safe online space for Nigerian children.

The director-general said Nigeria and its people had witnessed a disturbing trend in the social and political conversation that sometimes called to question tradition of friendship, love for neighbour and sense of unity.

According to him, this trend seems to suggest that Nigerians have not learnt anything from history and that the long, well thought-out national integration initiatives are yet to yield the desired results.

"Government and well-meaning citizens continue to express worry at the level of division and hate that is being expressed in the conventional and social media about us and by us.

"The social media in particular, which is mostly used by our youths, because of its largely uncontrolled nature, gives amplitude to voices of hate, misunderstanding and intolerance.

"This blurs our beautiful diversity for which the world admires our country," he said.

Abari that Nigerians should support government's efforts at sustaining peace and security during 2023 general elections.

"As we approach the general elections, it is



Abari

important to note that the promotion of peace and security is a task for every individual whether young or old.

"We are all stakeholders in security and peace-building and we must all take action in supporting government's efforts at sustaining peace and security in Nigeria.

"This underscores the relevance of national cohesion which is a condition precedent for peace and security.

"The synergy that national cohesion brings to the table is the sort that modern societies leverage for their development.

"The resultant mutual respect and love among citizens is an invaluable contribution to promoting peace in Nigeria through our common heritage which signposts our common destiny," Abari stressed.

Speaking on behalf of the students, Master Umar Isah, said that with the programme, students were aware of the dangers associated with social media platforms, especially with

the trend of the spread of fake news and hate speeches.

According to him, the advocacy has opened the minds of students to safer platforms which we will be utilised to contribute to nation-building.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that NOA in partnership with Tiktok and Data Scientists Network organised the programme with the theme: "Fall in love with Nigeria." (NAN)

SEN. Eze Ajoku, President, Coalition of Societies for the Rights of Older Persons in Nigeria (COSROPIN), on Tuesday urged older persons to always be happy and laugh when necessary.

He said researches had shown that happiness and laughter are vital in maintaining a healthy living.

Ajoku said this during the coalition's Valentine celebration with older persons in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp, Kuchingoro, Abuja.

He urged elderly persons not to be weighed down by the negative side life.

"Don't allow yourselves to be excluded, find something that will make you happy, socialise, and have fun.

"Remember that this is one day people all over the world are happy, they are happy because they are celebrating good things of life.

"If you feel that life is weighing down on you, just smile and laugh, laughter is medicinal," he said.

The coalition president, who reiterated the commitment of the coalition to surmounting the plight of older persons, said the visit was being replicated at the

Happiness is good for your health—Group tells older persons



Faruk

sub-national levels.

He described Valentine as a time to show love as demonstrated by the coalition with donation of food stuff such as rice, noodles among others to the older persons in the camp.

Also speaking, Mrs Vivian Ugwu, Head of Administration, Dewdrop Foundation described love as a way of sharing in other people's pain and joy.

Ugwu affirmed the willingness of Dewdrop Foundation in collaboration

with COSROPIN to continue to put smiles on the faces of older persons.

Mr Ishiaku Abdullahi, Chairman, Elders in Kuchingoro IDP camp, expressed appreciation to the Ajoku-led coalition for extending hands of love and care to them.

Ishiaku prayed God to enlarge their coast and grant them the grace to excel in all their endeavour.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that Feb. 14 every year is Valentine's in celebration of love. (NAN)

2023 Transition: FG inaugurates 22-man presidential council members

THE Federal Government on Tuesday in Abuja inaugurated a 22-man Presidential Transition Council ahead of the 2023 handover to the incoming government.

The committee, chaired by Mr Boss Mustapha, Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), has Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Solicitor-General of the Federation and Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Justice as



Buhari

members.

Others are Permanent Secretaries from the Ministries and offices responsible for defence, interior, budget and national planning, foreign affairs, information and culture, Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA), Special Duties and Inter-Governmental Affairs.

The rest are the Permanent Secretaries, Cabinet Affairs, General Service Affairs, Economic and Political Affairs, office of the SGF, State House, National Security Adviser, Chief of Defence Staff, Inspector-General, National Intelligence Agency, Director General, State Security Services, Clerk of the National Assembly, Chief

and managing the 2023 Presidential Transition Programme, and facilitating the handing over process by the current president to the president-elect.

Other responsibilities included to organise for the security of the president-elect and the vice president-elect, including coordinating security briefings on the nation's security matters post-elections among others.

The SGF said he would on his own capacity as the chairman of the council, do everything within his powers to ensure that the council meets the expectations of Mr President.

Responding on behalf of the council members, Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Dr Folasade Yemi-Esan, expressed gratitude to President Buhari for the confidence reposed in them.

Yemi-Esan said the steps taken by Buhari to establish the transition council before the presidential election is not only proactive but is also selfless and a noble decision in the interest of the country.

"This will no doubt remain as one of his legacies after his administration.

"It is also important for us as a committee to state that the importance of the work that we have been saddled with can never be overemphasized. It in view of the remarkable landmark achievement of the president's administration." (NAN)

FG Pays Outstanding Debts on Digital Switch over Project – Minister

THE Federal Government has paid all debts owed to service providers under the Digital Switch over (DSO) project, Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed said on Tuesday in Abuja.

He made the declaration at the 26th edition of the President Muhammadu Buhari's Administration Scorecard Series (2015-2023).

The DSO is the globally-endorsed process of transition from analogue to digital broadcasting.

Presenting the scorecard of the ministry, Mohammed recalled that after Nigeria had missed the deadline for the DSO a number of times, the Buhari administration re-

launched the whole digital transition process.

He said the re-launch resulted in the pilot launch of the DSO in Jos in April 2016 and subsequent roll out in Abuja, Kwara, Kaduna, Enugu, Osun, Lagos and Kano states.

The minister also recalled that following a stall in the DSO process the Federal Government resolved that for the transition to be sustainable it should be a private-sector-driven exercise.

According to him, the DSO must be self-sustaining and there will be no more subsidies either on Set Top Boxes or on signal carriage.

He said the ministry, therefore, pledged to work with the Ministry of

Finance, Budget and National Planning and the Federal Executive Council to secure funds to pay the outstanding debts

The minister said also that reforms embarked upon at the National Broadcasting Commission were in line with government's drive to provide job opportunities for Nigerians.

He said amendments made to the National Broadcast Code were aimed at encouraging the development and growth of local content in the broadcast industry.

Mohammed stressed that the Buhari administration had succeeded in making ground-breaking reforms in Nigeria's advertising and marketing communications industry. (NAN)

News

NPC partners journalists to correct misconceptions

By YVONNE ISHOLA

THE role of journalists in informing, enlightening, correcting misconceptions and misrepresentation was emphasized Monday by Mr. Jick Lawrence of National Population Council, NPC.

He made the assertion at a one day capacity building workshop organised for journalists by National Population Council, Plateau State with the theme: Effective Reporting of the 2023 Population and Housing Census which took place at Mining Corporation and Geo-Sciences, hall Tudun Wada.

Journalists from print, electronic media in the state were equipped to appreciate the purpose of census, the challenges, gains and methodology of carrying out the census so that they will allay any fears Nigerians have towards the census.

Some of the challenges pointed out include insecurity, high cost of carrying out census (over 400 Naira to be expended and N100 billion has already been expended), unreached areas etc. The gains on the other hand include collection of data to enable government plan and develop the nation and provision of employment. More than one hundred staff will be engaged in the census exercise.

In his welcome address, the representative of the Federal Commissioner, NPC, Mrs Cecilia Dapoet, Mr Pam Du Deme told journalists that they were building their



Isiguzo

capacity to enable them educate the public on their activities to be able to understand and appreciate it.

According to Deme, 2023 population and housing census is the first digital census to be carried out and will set the agenda for technology driven census. He pointed out that information is said to be power but only when it is disseminated to the right audience.

Earlier in his speech, Mr Paul Jatau, Chairman, Nigeria Union of Journalists, NUJ, Plateau State expressed gratitude to NPC for their

magnanimity in organising the training for journalists but advised that they should make it more constant.

The Chairperson, Nigeria Association of Women Journalists, NAWOJ, Nene Dung harped on the need to include women, children and the vulnerable in government's plans at all levels to change their narrative when the data is collected after the census exercise.

The 2023 population and housing census will take place sometime in April, after the general elections.

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

KOGI State government has expressed disappointment over the spurious allegations by the Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, Abdurashed Bawa describing it as baseless fixation on the state's affairs in a bid to satisfy certain political interests. The state government expressed its sadness that an agency charged with the responsibility of fighting graft in the country had turned itself into a pawn in the hands of political opponents of the Kogi State government, with untamed desperation to damage the integrity of the Governor and the Government of Kogi State.

It said, the shadow chasing by the EFCC and their known and unknown sponsors would not distract the current administration in the state from serving the people. The government, in a statement, titled, "EFCC has become an embarrassment to Nigeria", signed by the Commissioner for Information and Communications in the state, Kingsley Fanwo, also called on the Inspector-General of Police to immediately effect the arrest of Bawa and commit him to prison as ruled by a competent court.

"Allowing convicts to roam about the society portends a great danger to our judicial system. Rasheed Bawa cannot be allowed to continue to disobey court orders at will while also evading justice. Let

Old naira notes no more legal tender in Nigeria -CBN

THE Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has declared that the old N200, N500 and N1000 have ceased being legal tender since February 10, 2023.

CBN had originally fixed January 31 as deadline for old

Kogi expresses disappointment over EFCC allegations

justice be done," the statement said.

Fanwo noted that the EFCC was known for media trial and that no amount of such would distract Governor Yahaya Bello from recording more successes in the state. "The latest shenanigans of the EFCC is to accuse some members of the Governor's family of corruption, arrest them without any prior invitation or warrant and against extant court orders restraining them from so doing and charge them to court.

This has further exposed the uncivilized, unconstitutional and unethical practices of the anti-graft agency.

Their latest approach has further confirmed to Nigerians that they have an institutional agenda against the Governor

and Government of Kogi State," he said. According to him, Nigerians are wiser now and they know when an operation is politically motivated. "We reiterate that funds belonging to the Kogi State government are not missing and we retain our enviable status in the areas of transparency, accountability and probity.

The shadow chasing by the EFCC and their known and unknown sponsors will not distract our administration from serving our people.

The seeming attack on Governors that are committed to the victory of the APC Presidential Candidate by the anti-graft agency is well understood by discerning Nigerians. No force can stop the voice of the people," the stage government said.



Bello

Old naira notes no more legal tender in Nigeria -CBN

notes to be in circulation but extended it in response to pressure from Nigerians.

However, before the February 10 deadline, Kogi, Kaduna and Zamfara States approached the Supreme Court, seeking that the CBN be restrained from going ahead with the deadline.

The Court answered their prayer and adjourned the case till February 15.

However, there has been silence on the part of the apex bank since the court gave its

ruling. The silence threw Nigerians into confusion on the state of the old notes, which were widely rejected but accepted in some places.

Commenting on the development in a chat with journalists, CBN Branch Controller in Bauchi, Haladu Idris Andaza, said the old notes were no longer legal tender.

"In the last 24 hours, we have been inundated by questions from various angles of the general public about our operational guidelines on the old currency notes, be that as it may, there are so many questions here and there which people have been asking about."

"So for the avoidance of doubt, we wish to state categorically that CBN is ready and is opened to receive all of those old notes based on certain conditions and criteria. Customers are free to come to the Bank and deposit which they cannot do at the Commercial Banks anymore because the currency has seized to be a legal tender since the 10th of this month.

"Consequently, the management of the CBN decided that those customers will have a sigh of relief by coming to the offices of the CBN in all the 36 states in the Federation including FCT to deposit their money.

"The customer has to go to the CBN portal and fill a form in the portal, there will be a form there concerning this currency redesign and exchange. After filling the form, you generate a code, you either print it or come with it in your mobile phone, give us the code and the information contained therein.

NA committed to free, fair elections

NIGERIA Army has restated its commitment toward ensuring a conducive atmosphere for free and fair 2023 general elections in Sokoto State and across Nigeria.

Maj.-Gen. Godwin Mutkut, the General Officer Commanding 8 Division of the Nigeria Army, Sokoto made the statement at the 2022 end of the year West African Social Activities (WASA).

He said, the Division was ready to support all relevant security agencies and authorities in shaping the environment to ensure the forthcoming general elections were conducted in a conducive atmosphere.

He also stated that the 8 Division of the Nigeria Army will

From ANENE AIKE, Sokoto

continue to be committed and more responsive in discharging its constitutional roles and it will not relent in fulfilling the assurance of the Chief of Army Staff, Lt.-Gen. Faruk Yahaya, to Nigerians in ensuring the 2023 general elections are conducted under free without military intervention.

The GOC further expressed gratitude for the performance of the officers and soldiers of the Division, saying they have done exceptionally well as evident in the current level of peace and security within the state, Sokoto. Mutkut in his words said, "This is in line with

the Chief of Army Staff's vision, which is to have a professional Nigerian Army ready to accomplish assigned missions within a joint environment in defence of Nigeria."

He thanked President Muhammadu Buhari for his sustained support to the Nigeria Army, while appreciating the COAS for ensuring an enabling environment for the military toward addressing the country's security challenges.

In his address, the Sokoto State Governor, Rt. Hon. Hon. Aminu Tambuwal commended Buhari for his foresight toward sustainable peace and peaceful coexistence across the country.

The Governor who was represented by the Secretary to the State Government, Alhaji Mainasara Ahmed, restated his commitment to support security personnel in achieving their constitutional mandates of ensuring a peaceful environs in Sokoto State, Nigeria.

Our correspondent also reports that WASA is a social function inherited from the colonial era in the 2nd World War, during which Indigenous Nigeria Army personnel celebrate their cultural heritages at the end of every year.

The traditional event usually brings officers, soldiers, family members and the communities together to display rich cultures and cuisines together. That some of the activities that featured in the yearly event included; bonfire, dances and other forms of

entertainment as well as the presentation of awards of excellence to troops who distinguished themselves in the previous year, 2022.

FCT minister commends ICICE

FCT Minister, Malam Muhammad Bello, has commended the International Centre for Islamic Culture and Education (ICICE), custodian of Al-Noor mosque, Abuja, for promoting Islamic culture and education in West Africa.

Bello made the commendation at the 10th anniversary of ICICE and Al-Noor Mosque Dinner in honour of major donors of its ongoing expansion project to increase the capacity of the mosque from 1,000 to 12,000 worshippers, held Saturday in Abuja.

Represented by the director, Department of Development by the director, Department of Development Control of FCTA, Alhaji Muhtar Galadima, the minister said the centre had become a hub for scholars, researchers and students of Islamic studies, who come from far and wide to learn about the rich heritage and teachings of Islam.

Bello observed that in last decade, the centre has also successfully organized numerous conferences, workshops and seminars, aimed

From JIDAUNA YANUNG, Abuja

at promoting peace, tolerance and understanding among different religious communities.

He said: "Over the last 10 years, the centre has made tremendous strides in promoting Islamic culture and education, not just in Nigeria, but I also in the wider West African region.

"Your contributions have made it possible for the centre to achieve its mission, provide meals and medical outreach for those in need and we remember very well your generous contributions during our fight against Covid-19.

Your contributions without doubt have provided the centre with the resources it needs to continue its important work, expand its programmes and bring its services to more people."

Earlier, the founder of the mosque and the centre Alhaji Aminu Babakusa, while reflecting on the mandate, vision and mission of the ICICE, said: "I'm intrigued by the laudable achievements recorded so far, which are in line with my vision and aspirations.



Yahaya

Feature

By SANI KALLA

Fighting drug abuse, thuggery

Drug abuse and thuggery, under whatever guise, are twin evils which menace was known to have taken a disastrous toll wherever they were allowed to go unchecked, with notable drug barons having a field day illicitly importing the detested commodity into the country's shores at the expense of the most vulnerable youth who often become victims of the dastardly business.

He who got drunk or intoxicated, via the consumption of hard drugs, can go to any length to perpetrate all forms evil ranging from killing or maiming whoever he come across in the course of perpetrating his nefarious act and that one always lose his mental calculus at the time drug bedclouds his sense of judgement.

In many countries across the globe, there are dismal instances when some drug addicts got intoxicated to the extent that they wantonly open fire in schools and kindergarten where innocent children are attending classes or in a restaurant, unmindful of the repercussions of their despicable acts, in as much as they feel to kill innocent people with sheer levity.

In Nigeria, for example, drug addiction among the youth has become a recurring decimal with almost no end in sight despite the persistent spate of public enlightenment via radio jingles, seminars and workshops all in a bid to keep their minds away from the menace that was known to have taken a catastrophic toll on their future, but all to no avail.

It is an indisputable fact that high profile drug barons who were believed to have become billionaires in a jiffy, most of the time escape the long arm of the law in a situation they were able to strike a deal with some heartless security operatives



who could never discern the danger of striking such a shady deals.

With the present political dispensation in the country taking shape and the much awaited 2023 general elections around the corner, there is the looming danger of political thuggery, with the deep-seated fear that some irresponsible politicians would out of their seeming parochial interest love to seduce youth with peanuts in order to perpetrate mayhem before, during and after the elections with no justifiable premise.

What is however most worrisome is the fact that

despite the usual peace accords brokered by various security agencies, non governmental organisations or civil societies, is the manner dangerous weapons like swords, knives, sticks and machetes are being displayed in the convoy of politicians on campaign tours, without regard for the so-called peace accords signed for sanity to prevail.

What is also most disturbing is the fact that the youth being used by such politicians are children of the common man, whose future cannot be safeguarded by those pushing them into such a cul de sac, and craftily forgetting to realise the folly of engaging in such a destructive mission that gives them a bad name.

They have also failed to take into cognisance the fact that those who are luring them into such a despicable act, only care about the future of their children, using their plum positions of political authority to accumulate stupendous wealth for their children, only their children I dare to repeat, in first class universities around the globe, leaving the most gullible sons of the common men to wallow in ramshackled public schools.

They unashamedly enroll their children in Cambridge, Oxford, Sussex Cardiff and others, or have them enrolled in Princeton, Harvard Stanford, Caltech or MIT regardless of the respective promises they have made in the course of their political campaigns.

What is most intriguing is the cavalier manner the youth engaging in drug abuse and political thuggery fail to heed the voice of reason by agreeing to put a stop to such a dubious practice and that the peanuts they are receiving cannot in anyway bail them out from the bondage of hunger, poverty and miserable life.

It is a point of fact that some of our major streets are littered with scores of mad men and women, who sleep in gutters by the roadside and dimly fall easy prey to those who have crude appetite for mad women.

It is the menace of dug abuse that often lead to giving birth to unwanted children as a result of commercial sex by their mothers who engage in prostitution and drug taking to satisfy their flair for getting high, without taking into cognisance the fact that they are doing a great disservice to

themselves.

However, with the huge population of youth in Kano under extensive spotlight, there is a palpable aura of apprehension in the minds of most peace-loving citizens of the state that the menace of wanton banditry and thuggery may rear its ugly head, especially during and after the elections, knowing that the most bellicose losers may not accept to regard their loss as divine.

But if the most vulnerable youth refuse to be cajoled into accepting to receive negligible slush fund to perpetrate any illicit act, those supporting such evil acts may not be able to actualise their dream via the use of crude tactics that could spell doom for the peace we are desperately yearning for.

It is high time for those seeking respective political offices to embrace the concept of decorum and have the ability to think out of the box during elections.

It is also high time for the most vulnerable youth to chart a positive course for themselves, in order to be responsible citizens, since there is no way the people they support to murder sleep can think of them under whatever guise.

"With the present political dispensation in the country taking shape and the much awaited 2023 general elections around the corner, there is the looming danger of political thuggery, with the deep-seated fear that some irresponsible politicians would out of their seeming parochial interest love to seduce youth with peanuts in order to perpetrate mayhem before, during and after the elections with no justifiable premise."

Expectations for a new Nigeria with a trajectory



BY KENNETH DARENG

AS the country prepares to elect a new President and other political office holders in just a few days from now, most citizens are having the hope that the new Federal Government is going to rejig the system to pave way for a new Nigeria.

The present challenges demands an end to insecurity, a stop to the nonsense of scarcity of the Naira, and a quick solution to the endless fuel scarcity alongside the agonizing pain of poverty that has impoverished more than 120 million people with a devastating effect of

corruption being felt across every fabric of the nation's weak institutions.

Unfortunately, the new Commander-in-Chief, may not have the luxury of time to digest the problems the out-going government may be living behind, neither is the government going to come up with a magic wand to tackle pressing national issues such as; unifying an already broken nation that has fallen apart along ethnic, religious and political divide, as well as finding a way out of the debacle of fuel subsidy, power supply, weak Naira and the economy generally.

According to the expectations of many Nigerians, the country now needs a President that will once again launder the image of the country and restore the hope of the teeming masses who have over the years been subjected to bad governance at almost all tiers of government. They have also experienced very excruciating pain and hardship which had forced many particularly those in the medical, teaching and technical professions to seek greener pastures beyond the shores of the country.

It was because of these factors that the organized labour in a recent admonition, reiterated its plans to play the lead role in the fourth-coming general polls in order to ensure that the right people are elected into the various political offices across the country. According to the President, Trade Union Congress [TUC], Comrade Festus Osifo, "this election would determine whether Nigerians have learnt any lesson from previous administrations".

He noted that, "The over six million dynamic members of the TUC demand for a new Nigeria and that of good governance not just from the Buhari government, but from those who may win elections at state and national levels.

"We appeal to workers not to sell their votes, but elect leaders they can trust. We must demand a new trajectory of governance, assert our sovereignty over those in government, and hold governments at all levels responsible to their constitutional duties and make them accountable to all Nigerians."

However, the absence of sincere leaders in Nigeria seem to suggest that most of them may have read Niccolo



Machiavelli's book, "The Prince" and perhaps become so addicted to his political theory of accepting that the aim of rulers—such as glory and survival can justify the use of immoral means to achieve those ends.

Then our politicians began to adopt the concept of divide and rule, a strategy that breaks up existing power structures which prevents smaller interest groups from partaking in decision making, thereby causing rivalries and foments discord among the people to prevent a rebellion against the elite who have remained a constant blockade against any form of growth and development over the years.

Despite the challenges of the past years, this period of general elections is one window of opportunity for the citizens to either make good or break the opportunity of electing leaders that would change the narratives in terms of coming to implement policies and programmes that

would take Nigerians out of the woods of primitive accumulation by a tiny fraction of the populace who have sad on the common wealth of all Nigerians.

History have shown how nations of the world have come out of the ashes of war and other economic conflicts only to rise to a much higher pedestal of prosperity. Nigeria has what it takes to galvanize itself to stardom. It has the human capital with a vast untapped wealth above and beneath its soil that is if we can collectively aim at the skies.

Above all, if Nigerians can unite with the determination to chat a new beginning, there is also the need to reflect, look back to those painful years of backwardness by also telling ourselves, just like the Israelites once said, "Never again shall we go back to Egypt..." hopefully, we too are on the threshold of a historic journey to a new Nigeria.



By IBRAHIM T. LOT

NIGERIA'S democratic journey which culminated in the fourth Republic on May 29, 1999, started amidst great hope and expectations. Although the Military regime that mid-wived the process could not significantly convince Nigerians on its success, a huge section of the populace still believe it could herald the dawn of good governance in the country.

Over two decades after democratization in Nigeria, the political landscape is yet to show clear evidences of good governance. The rule of law is merely pronounced, elections and electoral processes are subverted while political parties and other important public institutions are still manipulated in favor of the privileged few.

Nigeria's poor socio-economic performance, human rights abuses, wides spread poverty, insecurity, corruption and lack of trust have led to disenchantment amongst the electorate, especially the youth who feel it was high time the old horses retire and give them a chance.

The effect from this disenchantment can affect the

2023: Are Nigerian youths relevant?

turn out of the 2023 elections. It can motivate high turn-out in which people demand better governance or lead to apathy and low turn-out. Dr. Kenneth Okonkwo wrote in The Sun newspaper that during the build up to the 2023 presidential elections, General Ibrahim Babangida made it clear that he will prefer younger people in Nigeria to take up the mantle of leadership than any of the elderly presented by the two major political parties.

He buttressed his point by stating that Babangida specifically put the age of future presidential aspirants to be sixty or below.

President Muhammadu Buhari, himself, being an aged president, during the signing of the Not-too-Young-to-Run Bill, pleaded with the younger generation to allow him complete his second term in 2019 and appear in 2023.

At the end of the day, it was the younger men that were prevailed upon to step down for the oldest aspirant in PDP, Atiku Abubakar, and in the APC, it was the younger men that were prevailed upon to step down for the oldest aspirant, Bola Tinubu. Obe of the younger candidates, Peter Obi, fled to the Labour party where he got a soft landing and got the presidential ticket for the party.

In June 2022, youth from across the nation converged in Kaduna under the aegis of Nigeria youth collective Action to deliberate on the 2023 presidential elections and vowed never to vote for any presidential candidate above 55 years old.

Same year, the Nigeria Youth Union said, come 2023, they will

only support candidates who are below 60 years of age.

The group said aspiring president should be prepared to show by his antecedents how far he has reflected or factored youths in his leadership vision and accomplishments. However, before his re-election, precisely June 2018, President Buhari pleaded with the Nigerian youths to wait till 2023 before they can contest for the number one seat. This was when he signed the Not Too youth To Run Bill.

Then just last year, the APC presidential flag bearer, Asiawaju Bola Tinubu expressed his concern about the youth ones become contesting to president next year, 2023.

Preclude to that was the agitation by the youths that old leaders should pave way for them after president Buhari. Tinubu in a viral video said, he wants the youth to be president of Nigeria but that will happen after he has served as president which is his lifelong aspiration. So, why is it so difficult for a youth to be president of Nigeria? Firstly, it is politically naïve to ignore the fundamental differences between the Nigerian political system and the political system in western nations where we have the Macrons, the Borics, the Marins, and a host of others.

We must acknowledge that to win any sort of election in Nigeria, you have to possess financial and political capital in abundance. The former is so important that it can buy you the later, and the later is so important that it attracts the former.

The clamour for a young president is all motion and no

movement and it resonates from social media where we have a lot of activists but not a lot of voters. The painful pill to swallow is that for a leader to emerge victorious in Nigeria, he/she must have spent a significant amount of time with in the corridors of power.

Obasanjo was once Head of State before becoming a democratic President, Ya'Adua was once governor of Katsina, Goodluck Jonathan has been Governor and a Vice President before his emergence as president and Buhari has attempted to run for president several times after his stint as head of state in 1983. These are the precedents before young people.

The truth of it also is that the credibility of the youths has dwindled over the years to the advantage of the older politicians.

A former Presidential Candidate of the African Action Congress (AAC), Omoyele Sowore, expressed his ill feelings at what currently obtains as opposed to the struggle for the country's independence which the youth at the time fought for and went on to serve in high positions at tender age.

"What I am driving at is that young people have made themselves so irrelevant that they keep pushing them to the fingers to do dirty jobs. Today, now, in the north, you have those who are carrying machetes for politicians, we have the area boys in Lagos.

"You had people like Kanu, not Nnamdi Kanu, yearning for Abacha to become president in

the 90s and totally, youths were eviscerated from the political scene likely because of their own making because, over time since the 60s, young people have continued to deploy themselves to the service of old people who have nothing to offer", he explained.

No denying the fact that what we have now are young people who are mostly hungry, not for relevance or power, but for picking up crumbs from the table of people who sometimes are not even as intelligent as they are.

Nigeria has never lacked quantity of youth participation in politics but quality. They have not really been in positions that matter in governance despite forming the highest number of voters in election exercises over the years.

Youths who desire to change the narrative should join active politics and don't come out to translate their anger into something that can be negotiated with

The recent protests by young Nigerians against police brutality, the EndSARS protests, showed there is unity among the youth who came out to expose the gross human rights abuses by many Nigerians at the hands of the institutions created to protect them. The same anger, not literarily, should be able to divert the political scene.

The race starts now for the youth. Not for 2023 or even probably 2027, but the future. By then, the youths clamouring for elder politicians to occupy these position will also be facing the same opposition from the younger generation.

By **BULUS GAMBO**

THE persuading productive, effective and efficient historical antecedents of the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) of Nassarawa Gwong Police Division in Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State, Chief Superintendent of Police, (CSP) Musa Hassan has distinguished him amongst his coeval colleagues in the state. But for his doggedness and competent protocol to policing his area of jurisdiction today, the desire for accomplishing sufferable peace would have circumvented this once apprehensive area of the state by now.

To CSP Hassan's prestige however, Nassarawa Gwong has turned a new leaf even as many criminally minded elements have either repented or left the proximity for their own good. The fallacious cloak which had in the past insulated the sense of reasoning of community leaders, youths and stakeholders in the area has been destroyed leaving behind a group of people who are prepared to putting their best and ensure sustainable peace for collective progress and vital development.

For the record, since the ethno-religious conflict which started in 2001, Nassarawa Gwong which is home to multifaceted and heterogeneous communities has before now been too difficult to handle in terms of ensuring adequate security of lives and property. In fact, the 2001 crisis which later snowballed into one of the major conflicts the state ever had sad enough started in Congo/Russha which is within the area presently supervised by CSP Musa Hassan.

In the aftermath of the crisis, the community became visibly polarized as enclaves of no go areas were subsequently created. As a result of this negative development, many citizens and natives of the area who harbored unforgiving spirits were just but another significant accident waiting to happen.

Aside these major differences which became a setback to attaining sustainable peace, the vulnerable disposition of several communities led to the sudden emergence of several criminal gangs terrorizing innocent lives. Community leaders were also left aloft struggling to tackle the

menace of drug abuse which was fast consuming productive youths. When CSP Musa Hassan was posted to Nassarawa Gwong in January 2019, not many people gave him any chance of reconciling the warring parties and ensuring that all acts of criminality be it, rape, theft, drug abuse, gang related and ethno-religious conflicts would become a thing of the past. Many criminal elements also thought that his coming was going to be business as usual.

It was as a result of the complex nature of policing Nassarawa Gwong that many security experts have continued to opine that "If a

many individuals and mangers of corporate organizations including several security experts. His particular appreciable conduct rescinding all forms of bribe has made him stood out in the crowd.

On numerous occasions, the DPO has used his personal resources to help desperate vulnerable victims of abuses and other forms of inhumane violence or practicable violation of fundamental human rights get medical care. Out of his pocket, the DPO has continued to help considerable fragile and less privileged members of the society to the admiration of all.

Born on the 31st December 1980,



CSP Hassan celebrated as 2022 Plateau Security Personality



CSP Hassan



Hon. Bagos in a warm handshake with the award recipient

police officer can conveniently serve in Nassarawa Gwong Division, there is certainly no place in this country that would be difficult for such an officer to man." This is because, the area is quite a difficult terrain which requires a technically sound and intellectually decent officer to successfully manage.

Today, what this diligent and disciplined police officer has achieved in the area of his jurisdiction has continued to baffle

CSP Musa Hassan, an indigene of Adamawa State joined the Nigeria Police on the 1st May 2000 as a Cadet Inspector after undergoing the usual rigorous training with the Nigeria Police Academy. Despite the toughness of the course in terms of physical input, CSP Hassan who hails from Hong Local Government Area reflects a distinctive character of his people who are classified heroes and can endure any difficulty to protecting their integrity. But again what has

helped CSP Hassan to succeed is his fear of God, respect for humanity and dignity of life.

Upon completion of his studies, CSP Musa then a young and promising police officer was posted to Jos, the Plateau State capital where he received his baptism of fire. While in Jos, he was reassigned to Nassarawa Gwong Division to enable him cut his teeth as a fresher from the college. From there, he was posted to Benue State, then to Enugu State before finding himself in Kano again. CSP Hassan briefly served in Kaduna State before he was reposted back to Plateau State where he has continued to excel in his anticipated obligations.

Since assuming office as the DPO of Nassarawa Gwong Police Division, CSP Hassan has continued to synergize with various stakeholders to ensuring a crime free community through a dynamic, resilient and pragmatic workable strategy which would integrate all facade of residents for the betterment of all. Through his dogged approach to policing, complex issues bedeviling the heterogeneous community has been resolved while other criminal activities witnessed in the past including kidnapping, armed robbery, drug abuse and other gang related crimes have been greatly minimized.

CSP Hassan in a move to bring community leaders together to help consolidate on lasting peace created the Muslim/Christain Forum where disputes were resolved without resorting to physical violence. This forum, the first of its kind created an opportunity for both Imams and

Pastors to come together and rob minds, dialogue for better understanding of any issues which stands between them.

It is also on record that the Nassarawa Gwong Police Division is also the first to create and efficiently use the Gender Desk Office where gender based violations were treated. While synergising with the Nigeria Association of Women Journalists, NAWOJ, Plateau State chapter and the International Federation of Women Lawyers, FIDA Plateau State branch including other civil rights organizations have sanitised the area.

CSP Hassan who had the opportunity of visiting the Promised Land of Isreal in 2019 has also attended various leadership seminars both within and outside the country which includes that of a Sexual and Gender Based Violence in Senegal, the need to Improve Security Collaboration in Tunisia, General Investigations course at the Detective College Enugu and most recently, the Need to Collaborate with Security Agencies tagged Junior Command Course at Jaji.

Before this award, he has benefited from several other awards given him by the Nigeria Union of Journalists, (NUJ), and Nigeria Association of Women Journalists, (NAWOJ) including others presented to him by Nassarawa Gwong communities for serving the people in a deligent and transparent manner. Certainly, this award of the Peace and Security Personality of the Year 2022 will spur him to doing more for his immediate community, the state and the country at large.



The DG ITF, Sir Joseph Ari exchanging pleasantries with the Divisional Police Officer

IMAGES

APC PRESIDENTIAL RALLY, GOMBE 2023

The All Progressives Congress (APC) Presidential candidate, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Vice Presidential candidate, Sen. Kashim Shettima, Director General of the Presidential Campaign Council, Rt. Hon. Simon Bako Lalong were in Gombe to flag-off APC's Presidential Campaign



Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Sen. Kashim Shettima and other party stalwarts acknowledging cheers from the mammoth crowd



cross section of APC supporters at the presidential rally



DG PCC, Rt. Hon. Simon Bako Lalong, some senators and Governor Muhammad Yahaya Inuwa of Gombe State



Large gathering of people at the Gombe state Stadium to cheer their Presidential Candidate and other candidates



Director General of the Presidential Campaign Council and Plateau State Governor, Rt. Hon. Simon Bako Lalong (CON) discussing with the host Governor, Muhammad Yahaya Inuwa of Gombe State



Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, APC Presidential candidate waving to the mammoth crowd during the Gombe rally



DG. PCC, Rt. Hon. Simon Bako Lalong (CON) advancing to make his speech at the rally



Cross section of APC Supporters in their number at the rally

Odd World

Man dubbed 'living Nostradamus'

A man who has been dubbed the modern-day Nostradamus following a series of correct predictions has denied that he's Satan's messenger - and made a bombshell claim about Illuminati.

Athos Salomé, 36, claimed to be able to see into the future and said he knew about many huge news events - such as the coronavirus pandemic - before the rest of us.

The self-proclaimed seer, from Brazil, said he was targeted by internet sleuths who have accused him of being an "Illuminati elitist" and questioned if he may be a "messenger of the Antichrist".

Mr Salomé said he now wants to shed light on the Illuminati, which some internet theorists considered an Order that secretly dominates society and the government.

He told the Daily Star: "American writer and historian Mitch Horowitz says people are convinced because it is interesting to think that there is a secret group that dominates the world."

"If you study what the Illuminati really were, you would realise that it was a political organisation whose ideals were based on a more just society."

"Musicians understand the attraction and use symbols like the pentagram, the obelisk or the all-seeing eye, but that

does not make them members of a secret society.

"American writer Mark Dice, the author of a book about the alleged order, believes there is evidence that the Illuminati continue to exist today.

"Dice said that after their dissolution in 1785, the Illuminati continued to operate through various interconnected secret societies."

The self-proclaimed prophet went on to reference Jesse Walker, who is quoted stating the internet was instrumental in driving and propagating the Illuminati phenomenon.

Salomé continued: "Dice assures that the Illuminati want to create a socialist-inspired global government and use world-famous artists to further their cause."

"Conspiracy theories are an intrinsic part of the human psyche and today are linked to all sorts of theories by both far-right and far-left groups. Walker recalls that there are real reasons for fear or anxiety."

"American writer and historian Mitch Horowitz said 'it is madness to believe in the existence of the Illuminati'. He also believed people are convinced because it is interesting to think there is a secret group that dominates the world."

Source: The Mirror.



I wish Buhari can handover a value-added Nigeria

Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari a few days ago again instructed the top bosses of the hierarchy of security establishments in the country to intensify their sweats by decisively dealing with all terrorist groups currently subduing and triggering mayhem and pandemonium in almost all parts of this nation. This most recent prescription is coming on the heels of a failed hostage swap between his government and one of the terrorists of the Abuja/Kaduna train passengers kidnap.

Unconfirmed reports revealed that while the Federal Government honored its part of the negotiations, by freeing the wife and twins of one of the terrorist after a successful medical treatment asserting the family's health status, the terrorists have failed to release the rest of these passengers on agreed terms. This sad turnout of events has continued to traumatize the relations of the victims of the train hijack considering the number of days their relations have remained in captivity against their wish and or making.

Our president who recently visited the Shehu of Borno also intimidated the traditional ruler that the recapitulating tenure of his administration would focus on both the rehabilitation of victims of Boko Haram onslaught and for the army to be gingered enough towards sustaining its territorial gains and superior power in the fight against these evil and devilish individuals who have continued to cause great havoc on the polity.

No doubt, the past couple of years have been not only unpalatable but horrid and unimaginable particularly for the victims of these atrocities and the entire citizens of this country. As it is, our beloved nation Nigeria has today bled to the extent that the polarization of this nation along several irrelevant lines of thoughts is sending absolute hardheaded wrong signals to our children presently perceived as our leaders of tomorrow. Accordingly, many of them do not believe in a united and trustworthy nation worth dying for. Obviously, the elderly generation would not blame them over this self-inflicted destructive ideology knowing too well that our political leaders have failed in nourishing the legacies of our founding fathers. Neither did they create better opportunities for them to integrate into the system efficiently.

Since the advent of the present democratic journey in 1999, some of the problems which have continued to bedevil this nation have been ugly experiences of high level insecurity ever imagined in the annals of this country's history Corruption, failed promises, deceptive and fallacious blueprints necessitated by administrative ingenuity and greed on the side of our leaders. Some of these administrative blunders have given birth to the menace of insurgency, kidnaping, rebellion and other sophisticated acts of criminality ongoing with impunity in this country.

After President Buhari came to power in 2015, many Nigerians heaved a sigh of relief thinking that the man had all it takes to bring this nation out of the woods. For those who were fortunate to have witnessed his administrative antecedents while in power in 1983, they were quickly convinced that the former military despot had all it takes to revive the nation for better prospects.

Indeed, Buhari who lost his presidential bid numerous times eventually got the opportunity to rewrite his name in gold as a

leader who fundamentally could better the lives of the citizens of this country but squandered it. Sad though, before Buhari was elected into office, he made some promises of not only becoming a father to nobody but a father to everybody and pursue practicable socio-economic and political policies aimed at fast-forwarding the prospects of our nation in the larger interest of all which were not implemented.

Significantly, while on campaign, Buhari was aware of the emerging threat to security by some of these criminal elements, many citizens of this nation had hoped that as a General in the Nigeria Army and one who fought during the civil war of 1966, he had all it takes to tackle headlong, some of these unpleasant narratives confronting us as a developing nation.

Unfortunately, for Mr. President and us, this is where we have found ourselves today. We have found ourselves in a situation we never prayed for, anticipated and or wished in the first place. We have found ourselves in a country where almost nothing is working perfectly even as we struggle to come to terms with this unending fiasco.

Most painful is the dwindling level of our educational status in the comity of nations even as both the Federal Government and striking academic staff are yet to amicably resolve their lingering dispute. Consequently, the ongoing avoidable strike action has deprived our children the opportunity to transit into industrious aspects of their lives in nation building. They have also left a dent on the reputation and integrity of our educational sector in global affairs. Coupled with this sad reality is this unending menace of divisive tendencies presently overwhelming our political landscape. Today, many of our leaders have allowed ethnic and regional sentiments to becloud their sense of reasoning which if care is not taken would aggravate our disposition as a developing nation struggling to move out of the woods.

With all sense of responsibility, the past seven years of President Buhari's administration has left much to be desired. As it is, a greater number of Nigerians cannot afford three square meals a day and or pay their children's school fees without stress. For the fact that innocent citizens are kidnaped here and there and ransom negotiated like prices of chickens or groundnuts bargained in open markets tells one that our nation is going down the cliff to only God knows where.

But again, while we are passing through these difficulties, it seems our president has not been told of the realities on ground. It seems that all that his lieutenants are after is that which they desire to accumulate selfishly and leave behind for their concubines, mistresses and or families. In more definite terms, many innocent Nigerians are dying before their time only because of the fact that our administrators have basically abandoned us in the middle of the Red Sea while scavenging for mundane things of this world.

Yet, in the midst of these calamities, yours sincerely still hopes that there is a better future for this nation. I still believe that Nigeria will come out of these problems though bruised but not beyond repairs. I therefore, only wish that Buhari will hand-over a value-added nation to the next leadership of this nation in the aftermath of the 2023 general elections.

View Point

Kogi East Multipurpose Cooperative Society bags award

What started like a joke far back September 10, 2005 with about five cooperators, has grown to be a big Iroko tree that shreds many people. Many doubting Thomases thought it was another form of defrauding people and decided to stay off, watching how it later snowballed into what it became today as Kogi East Multipurpose Cooperative Society. EZEKIEL DONTINNA writes.

A retired public servant of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Chief John Yakubu Omede, with four others started normal monthly contributions for themselves, but later registered it as Kogi East Multipurpose Cooperative Society, (KEMCS) and before they knew it, the membership grew to over two hundred members.

What the Society's Management Committee never thought could happened was its recognition by the Federal Government. All they were so busy doing was how to meet the welfare and needs of their members and never thought it would one day earn them this National Award.

Over the years, the Kogi East Multipurpose Cooperative Society has been operating with individuals monthly contributions by members. The minimum contribution monthly ranges from one thousand naira and above and charged as low as 3% interest when accessing loans and it depends on how much one collects, it has been wonderful.

They have one spectacular way and term of accessing these loan and remittances. For those who apply below two hundred thousand naira, the condition therein that, you must bring two members to stand as guarantors. Also, if one is applying above two hundred thousand, he or she requires three guarantors to qualify him or her and the repayment duration is one and a half years.

This has been awesome and a lot of the members have developed themselves. The only challenge they sometimes have is how battle with loan defaulters. Although, they most times use persuasive means to recoup their money, but in a case of total default, the guarantors pay.

Apart from loan benefits, the cooperative society has a yearly dividends for its members especially during its Annual General Meeting, (AGM). This



has also attracted new people who troop to register. Majority of women and young people operating small and medium businesses around Jenta Adamu community are beneficiaries of KMCS.

Some of these beneficiaries are buying and selling grains, operate provision shops, saloons, vegetables, fish and lots more businesses and has helped put food on their tables. No wonder, the society was being singled out for a National Award at the NICON Luxury Abuja recently.

Speaking to THE NIGERIA STANDARD, in Jos, the Plateau state capital, the President of Kogi East Multipurpose Cooperative Society, Chief John Yakubu Omede, said, "we thank God for this great award. The award came to us as a surprise. We never knew that somebody somewhere out there is reporting our work.

"We got the information from the Plateau State Director of Cooperative, Ministry for Commerce and Industry that, our name is being submitted for National Award. We did not understand what it meant until they called us from Abuja to

was going to be mere ceremony only for us to discover that it was a very big ceremony.

"When our name was mentioned. It was as if we should develop wings and fly or tell the whole world to celebrate with us! In fact, people who were doubting us when we first started, have seen today that we are being recognised nationally. To God be the glory and we are very, very happy!

"We are going to formally and officially present the award to the Congress. Although, we had done a little ceremony in our office as Founding Fathers, we were only four left because one of us is late, but up till now the happiness of this award is still there. Our most happiness is, we were privileged to have the Director Cooperative who accompanied us to this occasion".

The President, thanked the State Director of Cooperative for identifying and supporting them to achieve this feat and promised to work hard because the award has motivated and encouraged them to do more for humanity disclosing that, the Kogi East Multipurpose Cooperative Society was

Apart from loan benefits, the cooperative society has a yearly dividends for its members especially during its Annual General Meeting, (AGM). This has also attracted new people who troop to register. Majority of women and young people operating small and medium businesses around Jenta Adamu community are beneficiaries of KMCS.

inform us. They told us what to do and we filled the form and sent it online and our name came out.

"We started this Cooperative Society like a child's play and for us to be recognised by the Federal Government through Cooperative Rating and Support Association in conjunction with the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, it is a thing of joy to us. While in Abuja, we thought it

working systematically and gradually to migrate into Microfinance Bank.

However, as it is now, the membership of this cooperative society is not only for Kogi East indigenous alone. They have sold 30% space for other tribes like Berom, Ngas, Afizere, Igbo, Yoruba, Orobo, Calaba, Goemai, Taroh, Irigwe, Rukuba, Mwaghavul and a host of other tribes on the Plateau.



Commemorating the 2023 Forgiveness Day in grand style

IT was another milestone for the seat of power to organise and mark the 2023 Plateau Day and Day of Forgiveness and Reconciliation.

The event which took place on February 7th 2023 attracted former Governors of the state, traditional leaders, religious leaders, peace advocates, and all the ethnic groups in the state.

Among personalities that graced the occasion were the Sultan of Sokoto, Sa'ad Abubakar, Archbishop Emeritus of Abuja Cardinal John Onaiyekan, Emir of Kano Aminu Sa'ad Abubakar, Emir Of Askira, Gbong Gwom Jos, Archbishop of Abuja Diocese, Ignatius Kaigama, former Plateau Governors Col. Lawrence Anebi Onoja and Sir Fidelis Tappun, who all commended the Governor for deliberately institutionalising peace and spearheading peace and unity processes across the country.

Plateau Governor who is the initiator and chief host was emphatic that the day was marked in grand style with pomp and pageantry because aside being the last observance for him, he would also use the form to leave a legacy of peace and unity for the state when he leaves office in May.

The event was two fold, to mark the 47th anniversary of the creation of Plateau State the "Home of Peace and tourism" and to mark the day of forgiveness and reconciliation which is spearheaded by the Plateau Peace Building Agency to create a model for peace, reconciliation, rehabilitation, accommodation, and forgiveness after the spate of crisis that engulfed the state.

Lalong said during all the 8 years of his governance of the state, he had taken steps to deliberately work hard, with the support of traditional, religious and social group leaders to put the ugly occurrences and build a foundation for peace, justice, tolerance, equality, and hospitality to make the people put the ugly occurrences behind them for the development of the state.

While appreciating the guests and stakeholders for attending, he in his usual joking tone promised one of the special guests, the Emir of Kano of getting a wife for him from the state.

Earlier in his speech, The Emir of Kano, Alhaji Aminu Ado Bayero, who praised the peace initiatives of Governor Lalong said Plateau and Kano have agelong similarities even as he disclosed the strong ties he has with Plateau in his early years.

The Emir said apart from almost marrying a wife from Plateau, he remembers playing football at the Rwang Pam Township Stadium. He also said he remembered how he witnessed the first crisis in Plateau, during the Governor Joshua Dariye regime, where alongside others, they spent over 4 days in a hotel till their food almost finished, and they had to be taken out of the place to Saminaka in Kaduna Local Government with the help of security operatives. He stressed that nothing can be compared to peaceful coexistence.

Emir of Askira Alhaji Ibn Mohammed Askirama from Borno state also while addressing the forum

said his life story started in plateau since 1976.

He said he fell in love with the state and got married to a woman from K/Vom and gave birth to his children in Jos before going back home to ascend the throne but confessed that he still comes around to enjoy the serene weather and lovely environment.

"Plateau is like home to me and I am always nostalgic when I come to Plateau", he said commending the Governor for striving to make peace to reign in the state.

On his part the Sultan of Sokoto said he and his team were in Abuja but had to cut short another peace meeting to come to Jos for the celebrations, which they couldn't miss.

He said he attended the inaugural day of forgiveness and reconciliation and was glad that the event had been sustained, but called on the incoming Governor of the state to continue with the initiative.

The Gbong Gwom Jos, Da Jacob Gyang Buba praised the Governor for coming on board since 2015 to immediately set up a committee to handle the conflict between the Berom nation and Fulani's.

"The white paper and outcome of the peace committee is what is being used today in the state that has bought peace", he said.

Archbishop Kaigama who represented Cardinal Onaiyekan expressed happiness to be home

again to Plateau saying he was a part of the many peace processes to douse tensions when the series of crisis occurred in the state.

He said he had also attended the inaugural Plateau Forgiveness Day event and was glad that the people are now living in peace with each other.

Former Director General of NTA Alhaji Yakubu Ibn Mohammed also recalled his early years growing up on the Plateau and gave a testimony on behalf of himself on how his heart bled 5 years ago when Plateau was engulfed in crisis, which made him to write two emotionally laden letters.

"I am glad today things have changed" the former NTA DG said as he read the content of one of letters which stated with a quote by Martin Luther King "We must live together as one or perish as fools".

The letter he read further described how he lived harmoniously in Plateau with various tribes irrespective of religious or ethnic affiliations and did his secondary school in St. Murumba college, with classmates like popular Nigerian footballer Segun Adegbenmi, and how he serially emerged at the best student with

A1 in CRK, stressing he wished those good old days will return and be sustained.

There was testimonies from communities about their resolve for peace and the impact of the Peace Building Agency's work in their areas. Rev. Fr. Homsuk Ahmadu, from Shendam Community said there was peace in areas faced by conflicts like Lakushi and others. Mallam Ya'u Idris on his part said Bassa has now become a peaceful place between Fulanis and the Irigwe people. "I can now go out in the night to ease myself without any fear and our people go their farms" he said.

There was rich cultural dances and display from tribal groups in the state including Zawan dancers, Irigwe dancers, Anaguta women and Asharuwa dancers, Ron Dancers, Gamai Dancers, Asharuwa dancers from Jarawa among others.

A spectacular display was demonstrated by PIDAN as the 56 ethnic tribes of the 17 Local Government Areas of Plateau clad in their different cultural attires and symbolic tribal icons did a cultural parade to display the rich cultural heritage Plateau is blessed with.

Plateau Initiative for the Advancement and Development of the Natives (PIDAN) President Prof. Aboi Madaki said the day is such a special one as the 56 ethnic nationalities in the state celebrate even as he commended the wonderful peace structure the governor has created, that has brought relative peace in the state.

Madaki however disclosed that there are 120 villages where people are living as Internally Displaced Persons (IDP's) and prayed for their resettlement so that they can join in future celebrations. He was also hopeful that the coming of the Sultan will create a forum for more collaborations with the north.

As the event was streamed live on NTA, PRTVC, and other life social media platforms,



NEWS

Domesticate regional, international instruments on disability rights – Network urges FG

NETWORK of Women with Disabilities (NWD), FCT Chapter, has urged the Federal Government to domesticate all the regional and international instruments on disability rights that it has signed and ratified.

Ms Godiya John, Media and Communication Officer, FCT Chapter, said domesticating the instruments would promote inclusion, political participation and economic independence of People with Disabilities (PWDs), especially women.

John said the charter was developed through the findings and consultation of key actors, committed to the inclusion of women with disabilities in Nigerian Democracy and Governance.

According to her, the charter would serve as a tool for inclusion and a strategic roadmap for developmental processes for stakeholders with a clear objective of inclusion of women with disabilities in the political sphere and other sectors.

"Relevant Government actors must domesticate relevant regional and international conventions and frameworks in Nigeria, including the UN Convention

on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

"Also to be domesticated are its Protocol; and the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa, the United Nations Charter on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities," she said.

She also recommended immediate implementation of the Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities Prohibition Act (2019), provisions on political and electoral participation taking into consideration the need for Gender equality and equity.

John also stressed the need for electoral reform to provide for affirmative action's targeting women with disabilities as a criterion for registration of political parties.

She also said that relevant stakeholders must provide dedicated funding for women's political participation aimed at achieving 35 per cent and appointive positions in

2023 and beyond.

She said that "The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the Inter-party Advisory Councils must set and implement requirements that mandate Political parties to have in their decision-making organs women with disabilities before registration.

"Convene National Women with Disabilities Summit and conduct a survey on women with disabilities inclusion.

"Commence the process of development of the first National Disability Inclusion Framework for Women with Disabilities in Nigeria," she said.

According to her, the charter of demands has 11 articles, consisting the rights of women with disabilities to work, demonstrate political will and commitment to gender equality and empowerment, education, economy, health, affirmative action in elective and appointive positions in

Others include protection during election, leadership and management of executive opportunities, involvement in the informal sector, and access to physical structures.

Also, Mary Musa, Legal practitioner and Secretary, Network of Women with Disabilities, stressed the need for government to ensure safety, security and protection of People with Disabilities (PWDs) during the forthcoming election.

"We urge the government even as 2023 election is coming up that they provide systems and structures for security of women with disabilities," she said.

She also stressed the need that the forthcoming census exercise should capture data of PWDs.

Similarly, Ms Rose Daniel, Vice President II, NWD, stressed the need for the government and other stakeholders to prioritise education, empowerment and health of PWDs. (NAN)



Lalu

Sports

How many goals has Osimhen scored during his career?

By ABHINAV SHARMA

THE Nigeria international is widely considered as one of the game's best young strikers, but just how many goals has he scored so far?

Napoli star Victor Osimhen has been making headlines for all of the right reasons, and his sensational performances for the Serie A side have garnered attention all across the continent.

Indeed, his outstanding goal-scoring statistics have not gone unnoticed to the eyes of Europe's wealthiest clubs, with the likes Manchester United, Bayern, and Chelsea all expressing an interest in acquiring his services in the near future.

The Nigeria international has established himself as one of Europe's deadliest marksmen this season and has similar attributes to his childhood hero, Didier Drogba.

Osimhen's game possesses the same certain brutality and devastation, with physical robustness to match his pace and presence.

The power and poise of Drogba can be seen in Osimhen's style of play and he possesses a natural ability to find the back of the net, which is backed up by his prolific record.

But just how many goals has he scored for the club so far? Let's take a look.

After a stellar 19-20 campaign with Lille, Osimhen was being chased by numerous big clubs and moved to Serie A side Napoli for a club-record fee of €70m.

A shoulder injury, suspensions, and coronavirus-related problems hindered Osimhen's rhythm in his debut season in Naples.

Despite that, he still managed to end the season on a high note and scored 10 goals in the 2020-21 season, before topping that tally the following campaign.

Needless to say, he has become a popular figure among Napoli supporters due to his efficiency in front of goal.

Osimhen has taken his game to a whole new level this term, and his very presence on the pitch strikes



fear into the heart of defenders, working in tandem to devastating effect with his partner in crime, Kvicha Kvaratskhelia to fire Napoli to glory.

Charleroi made a significant profit on their measly €3.5m outlay as LOSC Lille came calling, bringing him to France in a deal said to be worth up to €15m.

The Nigerian youngster was signed as a direct replacement for out-bound Rafael Leao, who was on the verge of completing a €35m move to AC Milan at the time. During his only season in Ligue 1, Osimhen hit top form, scoring 13 goals and setting up four assists in 27 league appearances. Only Wissam Ben Yedder, Kylian Mbappe, and Moussa Dembele had a better goal tally that season.

Osimhen joined Belgian club Charleroi in 2018. While his start in the European game was a bit rocky,

he bounced back and slowly started showing his full potential sooner rather than later.

He was named Charleroi's Player of the Season for the 2018-19 campaign after he scored 20 goals in 36 games in all competitions for the Zebras and he ended the season as the club's top scorer. His form also led him into Nigeria's 23-man squad for 2019 Africa Cup of Nations.

Osimhen's excellent performances drew interest from clubs all across Europe, with Milan, Schalke, Arsenal, and many more vying for his signature. Indeed, the Belgian side converted his loan move into a permanent one for just €3.5m in the summer of 2019, only to make a quick buck by sanctioning a sale in the same transfer window.

Osimhen started his career at the Ultimate Strikers Academy in Lagos, before starring for the Super Eagles

at the 2015 FIFA U-17 World Cup. He gradually progressed through the ranks and signed a pre-contract with Wolfsburg, with the view to join the German top-flight outfit in January 2017.

He made his official debut for the club on May 13, 2017, coming on as a substitute in the 59th minute of a 1-1 draw against Borussia Mönchengladbach.

However, his time at the German club was riddled with injuries and he ultimately had to look for loan options to get more playing time.

Osimhen's swift rise to the summit has more often than not been the result of his glowing performances for the Super Eagles across various age levels.

Indeed, his extremely promising performances at the 2015 FIFA U-17 World Cup caught the eyes of many European scouts, as he won the highest goal scorer award with 10

goals, playing a pivotal role in ensuring that the Nigeria U-17 squad 2015 were eventually crowned tournament champions. He earned a move to Wolfsburg off the back of that tournament.

Osimhen made his debut for Nigeria in a 3-0 friendly win over Togo in 2017, but had to wait until March 2021 to open his international account in an AFCON qualification match against Lesotho. While his international career is still in its early stages, the former Nigeria U-17 goal machine is among the 10 highest Super Eagles goal scorers, and boasts a superb goals-to-game ratio.

A footballing unicorn in many ways, Osimhen is an athletic, modern and powerful striker who has a strong eye for goal, is direct, and is pretty good with his hold-up and link-up play. Give him a yard in the box and he will make you pay.

He also has a great aerial ability, can easily beat defenders in the air, and the pace and acceleration to surge beyond his marker, making him a rare blend and, by consequence, a precious commodity. It's no wonder so many big sharks are after his services.

Osimhen remains under contract in Naples until 2025, but the Partenopei's determination to keep hold of their star striker is expected to be tested soon. The calls will be coming in during these next few months and clubs will be lining up to sign the Napoli hitman.

However, he won't come cheap by any means. In fact, it would be a big surprise if he goes for anything less than the €100 million mark, especially with club president Aurelio De Laurentiis renowned for driving a hard bargain when it comes to selling his prized assets.

His stock will only skyrocket further if Napoli finally end their long *Scudetto* drought this season.

All in all, Osimhen is rapidly developing into a world-class striker, and it'll be worthwhile to keep an eye on his goal-scoring exploits since he is on course to break some records at both club and international level.



Osimhen

Sports

Yaya, Akauho win third Diri Anniversary Marathon

HAMADJAN Yaya from Cross River State and Lidiah Akauho from Plateau State, on Saturday, won the men and women categories of the third Senator Douye Diri (SDD) 15-kilometre marathon race.

Newsnow said that, the race was part of the activities commemorating the third anniversary of the governor's administration.

Other winners in the men's category were Tosin Adedeji from Ogun State, who came second, while Wadata Barau from Bauchi took the third position.

In the women category, Patience John, also from Plateau State, placed second, while Charity Agofure of Delta State came third.

The competitors started from Akenfa and concluded the race at the Peace Park in Yenagoa.

Governor Diri, in his remarks, commended the winners and participants, and urged the private sector, particularly corporate organisations in the state, to sponsor sporting activities as part of their corporate social responsibility.

The governor stressed the need to develop the sports sector, describing it as a money-spinning venture as well as a veritable tool to foster peace and unity among the people.

He, therefore, charged his deputy, Senator Lawrence Ewhrudjakpo, and the Commissioner for Youth and Sports, Daniel Igali, to scout for sponsors, particularly for the SDD Marathon, to enable the state produce top athletes that would compete in long distance races.

He also directed that the SDD Marathon be included in the calendar of the Ministry of Youths and Sports as well as given greater publicity to attract more athletes.

His words: "Let me call on



Governor Diri handing over winners' cheques to champions of the SDD marathon

those who are doing business in Bayelsa, particularly those doing business with the state government, that by next year, I want to hear that a particular company has taken over the sponsorship of this marathon.

"Today, we have winners that are not from Bayelsa but from other states such as Plateau, Bauchi, Cross River and Edo. That is why we are one country and we will continue to live together and compete very favourably to ensure this country produces top athletes in world marathon.

"Going forward, this marathon should be in the calendar of the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

"I also commend Comrade Igbeita Idonkumo, a young man from my local government, who initiated this race out of his emotion on my emergence as governor.

"He trekked with a few others from Kaiama to Yenagoa to show solidarity and happiness with the government and that was how this race started from 2020."

Also, the Commissioner for Youth and Sports Development, Daniel Igali, said the SDD Marathon is to encourage young Bayelsa

athletes to compete in long distance races both at the national and continental levels.

Congratulating winners and all participants, Igali appreciated Senator Diri for his unflinching support to the sports ministry.

"I want to use this opportunity to thank you for always making sure we achieve giant strides in sports and making the state the leading sports destination in Nigeria in just three years in office as governor.

"As a result of your leadership style, you always back it up with action and that is why we see the results.

"We started this marathon event three years ago. Hopefully next year we will ensure it gets a bit longer because now it is about a quarter mile.

"Since we are not good in the long distance race, this is one opportunity for some of our young athletes to begin to compete in this sport to come out tops nationally and even at the continental level."

The winners in both categories got N400,000 each, while second placed winners got N200,000 each and third placed N150,000 each.

THE manager of the Super Eagles, Jose Peseiro, has formally joined the Nigeria Football Coaches Association.

Newsnow said that, the Portuguese manager made an announcement on his social media page after getting a diploma from the association.

The diploma issued by Flying Eagles coach, Ladan Bosso, the association's chairman, is to welcome the coach to the association officially.

In May 2022, the former Venezuelan manager succeeded Augustine Eguavoen as manager. Since then, he has managed 7 games, winning 2 of them.

The 62-year-old is making every effort to ensure that he connects with the proper people, as demonstrated by visiting a number of his players at their clubs, as well as joining the association of coaches.

In a recent development, the former Sporting CP coach turned to his social

Eagles' coach joins Nigeria Football Coaches Association

media accounts to announce his membership. "Honoured to have received the Diploma given by the Nigeria Football Coaches Association and to have become officially a member," he wrote.

Peseiro is anticipated to announce his team for the encounter with Guinea-Bissau in less than a few weeks as part of his preparations for the forthcoming AFCON qualifying match against the West African side.



Peseiro,

I'm not going nowhere-Klopp

JURGEN Klopp has confirmed he will not walk away from Liverpool, insisting he is "100 per cent committed" to reviving the Reds' fortunes.

Goal said that, the Reds head into Monday night's Merseyside derby with Everton 10th in the Premier League table, having won only eight of their first 20 matches. Their decline this season has led some to suggest that Klopp, who only last April signed a contract to keep him at the club until 2026, may quit as manager, but the German



Klopp

has emphatically denied such suggestions.

Klopp told reporters: "I understand that people would think that way, but I will not go and I cannot go. I have too much responsibility and I want it, and I want to sort it again.

"It is a difficult time, I don't enjoy it but if we could show in this difficult time that this club is so special because we believe in everything - or people believe in me - then we have to go through this together, because then when we come out we will have great times again.

Article continues below "I am here 100 percent committed. If we win I feel like I was part of it but if we lose I feel 100 percent responsible, I was always like this in my life, so you can imagine how big the responsibility at the moment is and how I feel now and we will do absolutely everything to get through this and prepare the very positive future again."

Klopp is aware that there will need to be significant changes at Anfield this summer, with a number of players out of contract and his team, in particular his midfield, in need of significant reinforcement. It is understood that Fenway Sports Group, the club's owners, are ready to provide him with funds with which to strengthen, with Borussia Dortmund's Jude Bellingham, Wolves' Matheus Nunes and Chelsea and England star Mason Mount among the Reds' transfer targets.

Liverpool, Madrid join race for Osimhen

PREMIER League campaigners Liverpool and La Liga giants Real Madrid are the latest clubs to be linked with a move for Napoli forward Victor Osimhen in the summer.

Newsnow maintained that, Victor Osimhen has been the subject of transfer interest from some of Europe's biggest clubs with Bayern Munich, Manchester United, and Chelsea expected to go all out to sign the Super Eagles striker at the end of the season.

But according to Fichajes, Liverpool and Real Madrid have also joined the queue of clubs that will pull all the strings to win the race for the 24-year-old signature.

Liverpool could be open to letting Egyptian talisman Mohamed Salah depart Anfield, as the Reds continue a revamp of an attack that waved bye to Sadio Mane and welcomed Darwin Nunez last summer.

For Real Madrid, the search for a long-term replacement for Karim Benzema has begun



Osimhen

with the 35-year-old Frenchman approaching the twilight of an incredible career. And who best to replace the Ballon d'Or winner than a

striker who has turned the Serie A into his playground?

Victor Osimhen has been the best striker and arguably the best player in Serie this

season, the former Lille lad netting 16 goals as Napoli keep up the charge towards a first Serie A title in 30 years.

Osimhen won the best goal

and best player awards in Serie A in January.

Napoli, though, insist that the Nigerian target-man is not for sale.

Sports

3SC floor Insurance, Remo Stars, Plateau share spoils



SHOOTING Stars rallied back from two goals down to draw 2-2 against Bendel Insurance at the Lekan Salami Stadium, Adamasingba Ibadan on Sunday. Insurance extended their unbeaten streak to seven games in the Nigeria Premier Football League this season. Imade Osehenkhoe opened scoring for Insurance in the first minute of the game. Ismael Seriki added the second goal seven minutes before the

break. Shooting Stars pulled a goal back through Malomo Ayodeji in the 43rd minute. Olufemi Opeoluwa equalised for the visitors 25 minutes from time. In Ikenne, Remo Stars dropped points at home for the first time this season after they were held to a 1-1 draw by Plateau United. Segun Olalere opened scoring for the hosts, while Ibrahim Mustapha equalised for Plateau United two minutes

before the hour mark. Seven-time champions, Rangers recorded their second win of the season after a slim 1-0 win against Doma United. Chidera Ezech netted the decisive goal from the spot seven minutes from time.

MATCH DAY 7 RESULTS

Gombe United	1-2	Enyimba FC
Nasarawa United	2-0	Kwara United
Rangers Int'l	1-0	Doma United
Abia Warriors	1-1	Wikki Tourists
Lobi Stars	2-1	Dakkada FC
Elkanemi Warriors	1-1	Akwa United
Remo Stars	1-1	Plateau United
Shooting Stars	2-2	Bendel Insurance
Sunshine Stars	2-0	Niger Tornadoes

Falcons to participate in World Cup preparatory in Turkey

WORLD cup bound Super Falcons will continue their preparations ahead of the FIFA Women's World Cup when they engage other countries in international friendly games in Turkey in April, 2023, BSN sports.com.ng can reveal.

The nine time African champions are currently in Mexico for a four-Nation invitational tourney which will hold between 15th-21st February, 2023. The four participating nation are; Mexico, Costa Rica, Colombia and Nigeria. This deliberate attempt is to make Super Falcons have the best outing at the world Cup following their adequate preparations.

The preparatory tournament in Turkey was made known in a communique released by the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) after their board meeting on Monday

It reads, "With commendations for world football-governing body, FIFA for its greater attention, interest and commitment of



funds to women's football, the Executive Committee expressed delight that Nigeria will be participating in the Four-Nation Revelation Cup Tournament holding in Leon, Mexico 15th -21st February 2023. It praised the wisdom behind getting the Super Falcons into the preparatory tourney ahead of the FIFA Women's World Cup finals in Australia and New Zealand this summer, noting that the other three participating nations, viz Mexico, Costa Rica and

Colombia are also World Cup-bound. It was also pleased that the Falcons will be participating in another preparatory tournament in Turkey in April."

CHANGE OF NAME REGINA
I, formerly known as REGINA ADAMU PAM, now wish to be known and addressed as REGINA DAVOU MAKIM. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

ABOUT seven years ago, world football governing body, FIFA, initiated a four-year pilot financial assistance scheme for all its members. Titled FIFA Forward 1.0 and 2.0., it was meant to help federations in the development of infrastructure, such as secretariat, mini stadiums, technical training centres and befitting camping facilities for all category of the national teams (male and female)

The 2014 to 2022 Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) reportedly received a total of \$10 million from FIFA in tranches from 2017-2022, out of which \$3.2 million was said to have been allocated to building FIFA Goal Projects in Ugorodo, Delta State and Birnin Kebbi, Kebbi State. That was in 2016.

Seven years down the line, the two Goal Projects have reportedly been abandoned, with nothing to show for the money earmarked for them.

Yesterday, chairman of the Professional Footballers Association (PFAN) Task Force, ex-international, Harrison Jalla, alleged that the projects in Ugorodo and Kebbi have since been abandoned.

"As we speak, FIFA has commenced forward 3.0 from January 2023, and federations, including the NFF, have started receiving funds for the next phase of development.

"The dividends of these funds from FIFA is glaring in other African countries like Senegal, Morocco, The Gambia and Cameroun. The contractor handling the Ugorodo project was alleged to have received \$800,000 so far from the NFF, while what was paid to the Birnin Kebbi contractor remained

PFAN Task Force, NFF disagree over FIFA Goal Projects

undisclosed," he stated.

Jalla revealed that on February 9, 2023, he paid a fact-finding visit to the FIFA Goal Project site at Ugorodo, adding: "Before then, on December 13, 2022, I made a post on the current state of the project, but in a swift reaction, the contractor handling the project attacked me, claiming it was not true. He even posted videos and pictures purporting that work was on going at the project site. I decided to snap several pictures on February 11, 2023 at the project site, which speaks for itself.

"The site remains abandoned and deserted. As I said, the FIFA Goal Projects were scheduled to be time bound, tied to specific budget within a time frame. They were not conceived to be open ended in terms of delivery," Jalla stated.

Among other questions, Jalla asked: "Will FIFA move into forward 3.0 without paying the NFF for the projects executed in Forward 2.0? What happened to the \$7.7 million balance of \$10 million received from Forward 1.0 and 2.0? Reacting to Jalla's allegations, NFF Secretary General, Sanusi Muhammad, said the claims are not true.

He said: "It isn't in my character to respond to issues like this, but I know where this is coming from. I am equally surprised that Jalla will post something that is not correct, thereby misleading people.

"For the purpose of record, FIFA Forward money is not released to Federations to spend. The money is tied to projects and activities,

which have to be approved, monitored by FIFA."

Sanusi added that NFF had a total of \$4 million for the last cycle Jalla was talking about and not \$10 million. The money is not given to the Federation, but kept with FIFA to be released as the need arises. Only \$2.3 million of the \$4 million is being utilised for the projects in Kebbi and Ugorodu.

"It is important to note that the money (\$4m) is kept with FIFA, to be released only as the need arise, passing through different FIFA due diligent stages: FIFA Regional Office, FIFA Compliance and Member Associations before going to FIFA Finance for payment to the beneficiary / contractor, through the Federation.

"For example, when FIFA approved the Kebbi and Delta Projects, they released first payments to the two contractors through NFF. Federations are only mandated to release to the contractor what was released by FIFA."

According to Sanusi, "before the next payment, FIFA requested an on the spot assessment from the engineer for the project, who is also being paid by FIFA from the same FIFA Forward funds. FIFA would also send its representative for an on the stop assessment, usually comprising FIFA Regional Officers, FIFA Consultant from another country, Local FIFA Consultant and the representatives of the Federation."

Joshua describes 'back to basics' strategy against Franklin

ANTHONY Joshua believes he has benefitted from going 'back to basics' with new trainer Derrick James, reports www.dazn.com.

Joshua has moved onto a new training setup after back-to-back defeats against Oleksandr Usyk and ahead of an April 1 clash with Jermaine Franklin, he is mainly operating from Texas after he had been expected to relocate to the United States ahead of a comeback.

The fight with Franklin will be shown live on DAZN, and speaking to the streaming service, he discussed how he has

adjusted his preparation.

"I don't see much of Texas to be honest. I've liked the United States more and more. I'm not saying I'll move there but I'll probably spend more and more time outside of the UK," he began.

"There's a whole world out there." Promoter Eddie Hearn has suggested Joshua could now fight three times this year, and the former champion has no problem with that idea.

He said: "That's very easy, but it's the expectation, because of the situation - look at the undisputed - it's nice to have a date set so you can work towards what's next. I think three fights is easy, to be honest.

"In terms of rebuild, let (me) have some time to fight without the pressure, but let me not forget this guy, Jermaine Franklin, is working in the trenches. It's silly of me to come in with that mindset (that I will definitely win.)

Discussing his new trainer he added: "Why Derrick? On the search for greatness, thanking God, my direction and hopefully it works out.

"It was a natural progression. It's nice, you know: what do you need to do as a boxer? Skip, shadow box, hit the heavy bags, hit the mitts and spar, but with intention. I was looking for before, let's strip it back, get it back to the basics. I like that, it's good.

"I feel I have to take Jermaine Franklin more seriously than I do Usyk. I now know better. How I trained, it wasn't enough. I have to put more pressure on myself. As long as I'm fighting I'll have self-expectation to get better."

Meanwhile, British heavyweight, Joe Joyce, has disputed promoter, Hearn's claim that an offer was made to fight Joshua, reports worldboxingnews.net.

Reports quoted Hearn as stating Joshua 'wanted to fight' Joyce instead of choosing the lighter option of Jermaine

Franklin.

In response, Joyce sent Hearn a 'Pinocchio' emoji as if he knew nothing about the supposed approach.

Joyce is set to battle Zhang Zhilei on April 15, two weeks after Joshua returns from two defeats against American Franklin.

On paper, Joyce has the more challenging assignment. The WBO number one bids to cement his place as the mandatory challenger.

'The Juggernaut' believes AJ is taking little risks as he knows another loss would devastate his five-year DAZN deal.

A fight with Tyson Fury was never really on the cards for Joshua despite plenty of fluff in the UK media in late 2022.

Speaking to talkSPORT, Joyce got real on Joshua's choice of test for the spring as he's demoted to arenas for the first time in six years.

"I guess he wants to take the long route back, who shall not be named. I went to the Olympics, and I turned professional at 31. I've had to get a move on," said Joyce.

"My team has strategically made the right steps. I've boxed all over the world on all the channels. To get to the top, you have to plan out your route.

"I've delivered in all of my fights. I'm on a mission."

Joyce undoubtedly is after a brilliant stoppage of Joseph Parker, a foe that Joshua had trouble dealing with when they traded blows.

However, after his career nosedived on the back of the Andy Ruiz Jr. knockout, Joshua aims to impress a third coach in his last three bouts.

"I'm looking forward to stepping back into the ring on April 1 at The O2 in London," Joshua stated at the press conference for the Franklin non-Pay Per View.

"Mentally and physically, I feel ready. I want to put on a show and impress my coach (Derrick James), who has high standards.

"Franklin has a good style and a great attitude, which he has shown in recent fights."

On campaigning on off PPV for the first time since before his Dillian Whyte clash in 2015, Joshua added: "This will be my first fight broadcast on DAZN in the UK.

"It will be globally available on the platform. I want to thank DAZN for supporting both myself and the sport of boxing as a whole.

"I would also like to thank the team at 258 and Matchroom Boxing."

Joshua hopes to avoid looking like an April fool when the first bell goes.



Anthony Joshua.



Quest



writer

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

FRAGMENT

"I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

'You have been veterans of creative suffering'

I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation.

Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity.

But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity.

One hundred years later, the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. And so we've come here today to dramatize a shameful condition.

In a sense we've come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the "unalienable Rights" of "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note, insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds."

But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. And so, we've come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice.

We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of Now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the



Biden

time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice.

Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children.

It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment. This sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality.

Nineteen sixty three is not an end, but a beginning. And those who hope that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual.

And there will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges.

But there is something that I must say to my people, who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice: In the process of gaining our rightful place, we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds.

Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical

violence.

Again and again, we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force.

The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny.

And they have come to realize that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom.

We cannot walk alone. And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead.

We cannot turn back.

There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, "When will you be satisfied?" We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality. We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities.

We cannot be satisfied as long as the negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one. We can never be satisfied as long as our children are stripped of their self hood and robbed of their dignity by signs stating: "For Whites Only."

We cannot be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which

to vote. No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until "justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream."

I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow jail cells.

And some of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive.

Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed.

Let us not wallow in the valley of despair, I say to you today, my friends.

And so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream today!

I have a dream that one day, down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of "interposition" and "nullification" one day right there in Alabama little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream today!

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight; "and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together."

This is our hope, and this is the faith that I go back to the South with.

With this faith, we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith, we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith, we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

And this will be the day this will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning: My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing.

Land where my fathers died, land of the Pilgrim's pride, From every mountainside, let freedom ring!

And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true.

And so let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire.

Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York.

Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania.

Let freedom ring from the snow capped Rockies of Colorado.

Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California.

But not only that: Let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia.

Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee.

Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

And when this happens, when we allow freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual: Free at last! Free at last!

Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!