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THE Nigeria Standard



FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1972

VOL. 13 NO. 794

WEDNESDAY, March 15, 2023

N200

Email: nigeriastandarddailynewspaper@yahoo.com

Presidency rates February 25 election high

The Presidency has rated the February 25 presidential election, as the biggest and most competitive in Nigeria's history.

In a statement by Senior Special Assistant to the President on Media & Publicity, Garba Shehu, the election marked improvement over past polls.

Pointing out that the outcome of the elections had been widely praised locally and internationally, the Presidency, noted that no one had disputed the result of the elections, except those who lost to the will of the majority in the process.

According to Shehu, the

Presidency thanked former ambassadors, Mark Green and Johnnie Carson – along with other foreign observers – for their concerns over the logistics of the recent general election in Nigeria and their work as observers on the National Democratic Institute/International Republican Institute

Election Observation Missions.

He said, "The Presidency thanks former ambassadors Mark Green and Johnnie Carson – along with other foreign observers – for their concerns over the logistics of the recent general election in Nigeria and their work as observers on the

National Democratic Institute/International Republican Institute Election Observation Missions.

"It is worth setting their comments in context. No one has disputed the result of the election, except the candidates that fell short.

"The biggest and the

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Buhari

Lassa fever cases rise to 676 -NCDC

Nigeria recorded 676 cases of Lassa fever in nine weeks, Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC) has said.

One hundred and nine deaths have been reported since January from 22

states and 89 local governments.

Latest epidemiological report by NCDC showed between February 27 to March 5, (Week Nine), 40 cases and five deaths were recorded in five states and 16 councils.

The states are: Ondo (11), Edo (16), Bauchi (five), Taraba (five), and Ebonyi (three).

Five deaths were recorded in Ondo (two), Bauchi (one), Ebonyi (two) states.

The report showed 72 per

cent of Lassa fever cases were reported from Ondo, Edo, and Bauchi, while 28 per cent were from two states.

Of the 72 per cent, Ondo had 33, Edo 29, and Bauchi 10.

It said: "Cumulatively, from Week One to Nine, 109 deaths were reported with a case fatality rate (CFR) of 16.1 per cent, lower than the CFR for same period in 2022 (18.6).

"Predominant age group affected is 21-30

years (Range: 1 to 93 years, Median Age: 32 years). The male-to-female ratio for cases is 1:0.8.

"The number of suspected cases increased compared to that reported for same period in 2022. One new healthcare worker was affected in the reporting Week Nine.

"National Lassa fever multi-partner, multi-sectoral Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) has been activated to coordinate response activities."

APC, LP, PDP, others to access all documents

PARTIES seeking to examine the materials used during the Presidential and National Assembly elections to prosecute their election petition will have unhindered access to them, Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Prof. Mahmood Yakubu, has assured.

The INEC boss said the agency has nothing to hide.

He spoke while hosting the legal team of the Labour Party (LP) and its candidate at the February 25 poll, Mr. Peter Obi at the Commission's Abuja National Headquarters, Monday.

Besides the LP, the All

Progressives Congress (APC), its standard bearer (now President-elect), Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and its candidate, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, have approached INEC to grant them access to the materials.

Yakubu told the LP counsel that there were two levels of documents to be given to them – those available at the Headquarters of the Commission and those domiciled at its offices in the states.

According to him, the accreditation records for the elections will be printed from the back-up server and certified by the commission

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(R-L) Plateau State Governor Simon Bako Lalong and his Deputy Prof. Sonny Tyoden during farewell ceremony for intending pilgrims from Plateau State to the Holy Land held at the Government House Chapel Rayfield Jos.

News

Presidency rates February 25 election high

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most competitive presidential election in the history of Nigeria has been won by one man: Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu. The US State department congratulated President-elect, Bola Tinubu of the governing All Progressives Congress, APC, and the people of Nigeria on the outcome of the "competitive election."

British Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, was also quick to congratulate the winner, on this victory. And so did many others in ECOWAS and the African Union.

"Though it is true there were some delays and technical faults in the process that we can learn from – as is the case in any election the world over – the vote progressed and consolidated democracy in Nigeria. The integrity of the Electoral Act of 2022 was strengthened. The Bimodal Voter Accreditation System cut out ghost, unauthorised or multiple votes to stem fraud.

"The election may not have been pluperfect, but due to the steps the government has taken, it is an improvement on

previous polls. That achievement should not be overlooked. The next step is for the Election Commission to ensure transparency in collation.

"Adverse reactions as received from some quarters are themselves a part of the learning process for everyone. Elsewhere, the world had been treated to epic lies, obfuscation, jingoism and hate, and told by global media to expect a different outcome. Nigerians shocked the world by refusing religious hatred and sectarian politics.

"All true friends of Nigeria should join the people in proceeding forward for sustainable peace.

"APC victory in the presidential election, underscored by the nationwide wave of support in the National Assembly results is clear mandate for the party to retain power for another term of four years.

"This election is an improvement on past elections and due credit should be given to the government and people of this country."

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before they are given to the parties.

Yakubu said: "We received a letter from Uzoukwu (SAN) on behalf of the Labour Party. The letter is dated March 6, in the letter, we were served notice that the team will be here on the seventh at nine in the morning to inspect the materials.

"But most specifically, the letter requested us to get in touch with our resident electoral commissioners across the 37 states of the federation to make the documents and information available for the prosecution of their petition.

"A meeting has been scheduled with all the resident electoral commissioners. It is going to be a virtual meeting at 3pm, today, where we will discuss among other issues, this matter of providing CTCs not only to the Labour Party, but to all other litigants as well.

"I want to assure you that the Commission will not hide any document from anybody and will make available any document that they have requested.

"There are two categories of documents. Those that are in possession of the headquarters of INEC. We will easily make these documents available to you. Specifically, the EC8Ds from the states and the ECD A, which is the collation at the national collection centre by the commission itself.

CSOs affirm confidence in Bawa

COALITION of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have hailed Chairman of Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Abdulsheed Bawa, on his achievements, noting EFCC has done well in prosecution of cases and litigation.

National President of Campaign for Dignity in Governance (CDG), Razaq Olokoba, spoke at a conference, with the theme: EFCC Team under Abdulsheed Bawa: Lessons in Conviction and Recovery and Need to Encourage a winning Team, in Ikeja, Lagos.

He noted that EFCC, under Bawa, has obtained more convictions and that attacks on the commission are from those out to undermine this.

Olokoba said the agency demonstrated its continual relevance and earned confidence among the people.

He noted the success of the agency cannot be

separated from the commitment and sacrifice of individuals who kept faith with their roles.

"At its inception, the mandate of EFCC was clear. It included prevention, enforcement and coordination. But in the earlier years there were issues with public confidence as a result of poor perception of laws and the feeling that implementation was targeted at the opposition. There was also low conviction rate even when cases were before the court, showing poor performance in enforcement and coordination.

"But in the last seven years, records have shown increased competence and commitment, following appointment of Bawa in February 2021. There was spike in conviction and recovery across all zones. For example, between 2016 and 2019, the number of convictions rose from 195 to 1280 and by 2021 the figure

had hit 2220, a value amounting to 98.47 per cent of cases brought before the court. In the same year, over N150 billion was recovered, with recovery in other currencies, such as \$386 million, 1.182 million pounds and 156000 euros".

He said Nigeria, for the first time, witnessed a five-year period of "consistent unrelenting, unbiased and upscaling battle against corruption that has support of well-meaning citizens because of transparency and indisputable result," adding EFCC remains one government agency that has moved from being regarded with pessimism and misgiving to that of being revered.

"For us, details of the work the EFCC team has been doing, is the fact that individuals like Bawa deserve a place in the fight against corruption.

"His integrity, intellectual prowess, dedication, proficiency of his legal team in unravelling thorny cases and ability to ensure conviction ... He represents to us an exemplar in the fight against corruption. The anti-corruption efforts need more like him.

"Bawa and his like in this effort still have more to contribute and more to teach to generation of anti-corruption enthusiasts, practitioners and experts in this field of democratic institution building", he said.

APC, LP, PDP, others to access all documents - INEC

"The EC8E, the declaration can easily be certify and give to you almost immediately. As for other documents that you are asking for, they are at state level. So we need to work out the schedule so that we know when your team is going to which state and on which date so that we can easily facilitate not just certification of documents, but also the inspection that you requested for each of these documents.

"The other one is accreditation data from the back end. This will also be made available to you. Remember that the accreditation data covers over 176,000 polling units. We have to print them physically, certify them, and give them to you, so the long and short of what I'm saying is that you will get this document speedily.

"They will also make arrangements and notify our Resident Electoral Commissioners of your intended visit so that these documents will be made available to you, especially those that are at that level, including access to inspection of any category of materials.

"So, I crave your indulgence to suggest that let your team interface with the legal team of the commission immediately. So you work these things out and then we make all the documents available to you.

"But please be assured, that INEC has nothing to hide. Whatever you're asking for will be made available to you. So, I want to thank you for coming. Now the meeting will be between our technical people and you will just work things out.

"Whatever we need to facilitate as a commission so that you get this document that you require as a matter of urgency, I want to assure you that you will get them as a matter of urgency."

Uzoukwu, who is lead counsel, said they came to the commission because they have not received any electoral



Mahmood

stocks for inspection on behalf of their clients, in view of the fact that election petition is time sensitive.

He said: "We have 21 days to file a petition on behalf of our clients. Out of that 21 days, we probably have about 10 days to go and up till now, we have not received any document.

"We have written to INEC requesting for a documents apart from that, the Court of Appeal made an order on the March 3, to INEC to release those documents to us but we haven't received any hence we requested for a meeting with the chairman of the commission.

"He graciously granted that audience within a very short notice, and he has given us assurance, concrete assurance on record that all documents we require will be made available and if possible, some of them will be made available to us today.

"So, we believe that that will happen and we are leaving here rest assured that by the time we leave INEC premises at least we will leave with some documents, the rest can then come from tomorrow and so on and so forth.

"We are very much bothered and I made that point when we met with the

chairman that not only that our clients are bothered and agitated but also we members of the legal counsel are bothered, members of Labour Party are bothered and their supporters are bothered and restive."

"Well, some documents will come from the state level but we do not think it will take eternity for those documents to come. Meanwhile, there are those that are domiciled here at the headquarters. Those ones we can go away with today."

On what will happen if the needed documents are not made available, he said: "That will be a national calamity. Why do I say that? Not making the documents available will create the impression that INEC is deliberately frustrating us.

"That's just the impression it will create to make sure that we cannot prosecute this petition. But listening to the chairman a short while ago and all assurances, I want to give him or we want to give him the benefit of the doubt that we will get some of them today.

"At least if we get some of them today that is indicative that we'll get some other documents from tomorrow, next tomorrow to enable us file this petition. Having said that, the way and manner, the chairman spoke, I'm confident that he will keep to his words."

NIBSS: E-payment declines to N37tn as failed transactions mount -Report

The Nigeria Inter-Bank Settlement System data has revealed that the increase failed payment transactions in February caused a 4.83 per cent decrease in the value of cashless transactions to N37.67tn from the N39.58tn that was recorded in January 2023.

This came as the usage of e-payment gateways recorded a 41.29 per cent month-on-month increase.

In February, cashless gateways were used 901.46 million times, in January, they were used 638 million times. Despite an increase in usage, the total value of cashless transactions fell in February, indicating an increase in the number of failed transactions.

The NIBSS has not updated its efficiency platform portal, which states the number of failed transitions and more, since 2020, making it hard to report the number of failed transactions.

As the major payment switch in the country, the NIBSS records cashless

transactions from the

Nigeria Instant Payment System and Point of Sales terminals. In February, the total NIP (instant payments) fell to N36.79tn from N38.772tn in January.

Despite the scarcity of naira witnessed in the month, the data from NIBSS revealed that the value of PoS transactions grew from N807.16bn in January to N883.45bn in February.

Usage of mobile transfers, which serve as the primary payment gateway for many Nigerians, soared by 69.87 per cent from 108.14 million times in January to 183.69 million times in February.

While usage grew drastically, transaction value only grew marginally by 7.88 per cent from N2.37tn in January to N2.56tn in February. This mirrored the experience of many Nigerians in the month, who had to grapple with multiple failed mobile

transactions.

Since the Central Bank of Nigeria announced its naira redesign policy and withdrawal limits, in 2022, Nigerians have had to adopt electronic forms of transactions.

While announcing its policy, the apex bank said, "The maximum weekly limit for cash withdrawals across all channels by individuals and corporate organisations shall be N500,000 and N5m respectively."

It added, "Customers should be encouraged to use alternative channels (Internet banking, mobile banking apps, USSD, cards/POS, eNaira, etc.) to conduct their banking transactions."

However, the pressure of increased electronic payment has overwhelmed the banking sector, leaving many customers waiting and stranded.

Many bankers have suggested that some of these failures have been because the NIBSS didn't increase its capacity for the increase in the volume of transactions.



Bawa



USSD: Enhancing e-Naira's capacity to ease cash crunch

There is no doubting the fact that the naira redesign policy of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) which led to the unintended consequence of naira scarcity was not meant to punish or torture Nigerians. It was meant to mop up excess cash in the system, bring down inflation, reduce criminality and advance the country's movement into full cashless economy. ABDULRAHMAN ABDULRAHEEM writes.

IN its wisdom, the CBN had ensured that there were a lot of viable alternatives that Nigerians could make use of before introducing the policy. There was internet banking via the app and there was also USSD for money transfers and other operations.

There was also the e-Naira which was introduced in October 2021 as a store of value which is equal to the physical naira.

When President Muhammadu Buhari launched the Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC), aka e-Naira, and made Nigeria the first country on the continent to embrace the official digital currency, he made it known that it was a new dawn for the monetary side of the economy.

On his part, CBN boss, Godwin Emefiele, said the e-Naira would revolutionise transactions in Nigeria and give Nigerians more efficient, cheaper and easier means of doing business.

Since 2021, millions of Nigerians who are on the e-Naira platform have been testifying to the vibrancy of the platform. They have seen how the e-Naira makes life easy, makes sending and receiving money seamless and how payment of bills is much more efficient with the digital currency.

Nigerians on the e-Naira platform are also excited that CBN has used the e-Naira innovation to eradicate intermediaries that make transactions cumbersome. Consequently, it is cheaper to use e-Naira than the internet platforms because there are no banks to pay charges to. The absence of banks also completely eradicates the possibility of depositors losing their monies in case of any bank crashing. This is



because CBN is the one keeping the money on e-Naira and it can never crash.

Again, the usual network problems associated with conventional internet banking is completely absent in e-Naira transactions. e-Naira is fast and efficient and it takes away the pains and frustration associated with traditional banking.

There are a couple of opportunities embedded in the e-Naira platform for both the CBN and individuals to introduce new products that can also make life abundant for people. While the CBN has encouraged Nigerian tech experts to come up with a lot which innovations that are at different stages of incubation, the apex bank recently launched a USSD channel to boost the usage of the platform.

The platform was launched in Lagos last week during an event to discuss the cash

crunch and how the services introduced by Bullnet on the USSD channel of the e-Naira would solve the problem.

During the launch, the Chief Executive Officer, Bullnet Bulletin and Enquiries Networking Services, Bayo Akintoye, said the USSD with the code *997*50#, would soothe the pain felt by Nigerians given the current scarcity of cash as it transitioned from cash-based economy to a cashless one.

"The CBN has collaborated with Chamsmobile Limited (a CBN licensed Mobile Money Operator and Super-Agent) to address challenges faced primarily by the unbanked, the under-served and those on the other side of the digital divide by developing the service known as 'eNairaEnhanced Services' via the eNaira USSD channel (*997*50#) which is fully run and powered by the patented Bullnet Platform.

"It is expected that Nigerians will proudly associate with this innovation and register to have the e-Naira wallet. These wallets can be funded directly with cash-purchased vouchers (like the GSM recharge cards) or from funded bank accounts using bank cards via the web portal or using electronic payment with any authorised agent.

"Users can also transfer e-Naira from one wallet to another simply by inputting the recipient's phone number. The service also makes it possible for users to cash out by sending the e-Naira directly from their wallets to an ATM and withdrawing the cash equivalent without the need for a bank account or bank card. The user can also send e-Naira to a designated bank account for savings or further transactions," he said.

As a consequence of the new landmark, the network of banking agents across the country such as the Chamsmobile Super Agents and other mobile money agents, the POS agents and the growing e-Naira adoption agents would now become e-Naira extension workers who would be involved with e-Naira agency, (selling vouchers to customers at a profit and onboarding new users), education and advocacy (creating awareness and educating the

masses about the concept of the CBDC and its benefits).

The Project Coordinator, e-Naira Project Giant Team, Otaru Abdulkadir, said the e-Naira was introduced to improve financial inclusion in the states, increase cross border transactions, diaspora remittances and the likes and also complement our payment infrastructure.

"As it is today, we are able to transact on the eNaira with four methods; you can scan to pay, you could use your wallet ID that is when you onboard, and the e-Naira gives you a 10 digit number. And of course you can use USSD strength, and it is for everyone. It is available for everyone with a mobile phone. It doesn't have to be a smartphone or any data phone," he said.

It is obvious that the e-Naira platform has limitless opportunities for a lot of more great things to be accommodated therein. And with the way the CBN is working round the clock to expand the platform and encourage other Nigerians to come up with different initiatives, the coming weeks and months promise to be interesting for Nigerians who are already on the e-Naira platform.

In the next few months, the e-Naira would be the big deal in the banking country.

Nigerians on the e-Naira platform are also excited that CBN has used the e-Naira innovation to eradicate intermediaries that make transactions cumbersome. Consequently, it is cheaper to use e-Naira than the internet platforms because there are no banks to pay charges to. The absence of banks also completely eradicates the possibility of depositors losing their monies in case of any bank crashing. This is because CBN is the one keeping the money on e-Naira and it can never crash. Again, the usual network problems associated with conventional internet banking is completely absent in e-Naira transactions. e-Naira is fast and efficient and it takes away the pains and frustration associated with traditional banking.



Business & Economy

Finally, CBN accepts old notes as legal tender

THE Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), on Monday, said that the old N200, N500 and N1,000 banknotes remain legal tender till Dec. 31.

According to a statement by Isa AbdulMumin, CBN's Acting Director, Corporate Communications, this is in compliance with the March 3 judgment of the Supreme Court.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the apex court, had in the said ruling on March 3, ordered the Federal Government to accept the designated demonstrations of Naira notes as legal tender until Dec. 31.

However, neither President Muhammadu Buhari nor the CBN governor, Godwin Emezie, reacted to the ruling until when the presidency, in a statement on Monday, absolved the president from non-compliance with the ruling.

According to the statement signed by Malam Garba Shehu, Senior Special Assistant on Media and Publicity to the President, Buhari never told Emezie and the Attorney-General of the Federation, Abubakar Malami to defy any court order.

"The directive of the president, following the meeting of the Council of State, is that the CBN must make available for circulation all money that is needed and nothing has happened to change the position," Shehu said.

AbdulMumin said that the



Emezie

new CBN directive was in compliance with established tradition of obedience to court orders and sustenance of the rule of law principle that characterised the Buhari government.

"Deposit Money Banks operating in Nigeria have been directed to comply with the Supreme Court judgment of March 3.

Accordingly, the CBN met with the Bankers' Committee and has directed that the old N200, N500 and N1,000 banknotes remain legal tender alongside the redesigned banknotes till Dec. 31,"

he said.

Reacting to the directive, a financial expert, Prof. Uche Uwaleke, described it as a welcome development.

Uwaleke, a Professor of Capital Market at the Nasarawa State University, Keffi, however, urged the CBN to reinject the quantity of note withdrawn to address the acute shortage of cash.

"My concern is that except a substantial quantity of already withdrawn notes are reinjected and the cash withdrawal limits eased, the cash scarcity is most

THE Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria has announced that the Murtala Muhammed International Airport, Runway 18R and 36L, Lagos, will be shut for eight weeks down for maintenance.

The Runway 18R and 36L is specifically dedicated for international flights. Following the development, the Federal Government has diverted all international flights to Runway 18L and 36R located at the domestic wing of the Lagos airport. The Runway 18L is dedicated for local flights.

FAAN in a statement recently confirmed that Taxiway B-18L would be used instead for all flight operations until maintenance was completed.

The President of the Association of Foreign Airlines and Representatives in Nigeria, Kingsley Nwokoma, said, "If you go into the history of runway closures, there's never been a time we have two runways running concurrently for a long time.

"My advice is that whatever they're doing, eight weeks should be eight weeks. Foreign airlines hope that this will be a final solution and then we can

Lagos Airport runway down, international flights diverted - FAAN

have two runways running concurrently for a long time like we see in other climes which have more two runways."

Speaking on the matter an industry expert and former Director of General Aviation at the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority, Capt. Ayodele Sasegbon, hailed the maintenance move by FAAN but noted that the agency must keep to the stipulated schedule

He hopes FAAN has learnt to manage the 'make shift' runway better than it did last year when it shut the runway to fix airfield lighting.

Aviation expert, Capt. James Daniel, said, "If FAAN is closing down the international runway which is slightly longer, I believe the other runway is of sufficient length to accommodate bigger aircraft.



Sirika

Market capitalisation falls, stocks shed N3bn - NGX

THE Nigerian Exchange Limited, market capitalisation shed N3bn on Monday at the close of

trading.

This was also as the All-Share Index dropped by 6.14 points representing a decrease of 0.011 per cent to close at 55,788.37.

At the close of trading on Monday, 179,028,155 million of shares worth N2.547bn were traded in 4,296 deals.

The market breadth trended towards negative as 21 stocks

ended up on the losers' table while 12 equities were on the gainers' table.

Topping the losers' table was the stock of the NGX Group, which had been seeing a lot of insider trading in the past days. NGX Group lost 9.72 per cent of its share value to close at N26.00 per share. Following was the NPF Microfinance Bank which lost 8.47 per cent of its value to close trading at N1.73. Third on the losers' table was Courtville which closed trading at N0.45 per share after losing 6.25 per cent of its share value.

For the gainers' table, UPL gained 9.89 per cent to close trading at N2.00. Computer Warehouse Group and Multiverse gained 7.69 per cent and 2.05 per cent to close trading at N0.98 and N3.75 respectively.

Atop the Most Traded stocks chart on Monday was Zenith Bank which traded 14,834,841 shares worth N374,262,538.35 in 388 deals. Zenith Bank's share value closed at N25.00. Next was MTN Nigeria, whose 462,734 shares were traded. The shares valued at N114.904m were exchanged in 301 deals and the share closed at N248.30. Third on the gainers' table was United Capital Plc which had 9,115,536 million of its shares sold in 235 deals. The shares were worth N132.752m.

NIMC mandates payment of N1,000 NIN fee

THE National Identity Management Commission has announced that Nigerians applying for passports will be charged N1000 in Nigeria for the verification of their National Identification Number.

This was made known in a statement signed by NIMC Head, Corporate Communications, Kayode Adegoke, recently. According to the commission, the fee is to improve the quality of service, accuracy, and speed of passport services through timely verification of NIN.

It stated that it agreed on this framework with the Nigerian Immigration Service. NIMC said, "This new arrangement is in furtherance of the Federal Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy's directive to streamline passport application, renewal, and issuance processes.

"Consequently, a NIN Verification fee would be

charged for each Nigerian passport application for this service."

It added, "NIMC and NIS have agreed on a revised applicant journey that will significantly improve the speed of passport issuance /re-issuance and reduce the traffic visiting the NIS office(s). The NIN service, fees, and the new NIS process will go live on 1st April."

According to the commission, Nigerians will pay N1000 for NIN verification in Nigeria, \$5 in other African countries, and \$15 in other countries.

NIN is supposed to tie an individual's record together, according to the NIMC. An individual's demographic data, fingerprints, head-to-shoulder facial picture, other biometric data, and digital signature are supposed to be lodged in the National Identity Database and confirmed and verified through NIN.

Recently, the Acting Comptroller General of Nigeria Immigration Service, Isah Idris, blamed

the delay in the issuance of passports on the integration of data between NIS, and NIMC.

He said, "The delay in the processing of passport

applications could be as a result of the integration of data between NIS and the NIMC, which also, in turn, integrate with the BVN data of applicants."

Nigerians lament exorbitant PoS Charges, Poor Network

AS the ongoing cash crunch continues to bite harder, Nigerians have condemned the poor network that makes online banking difficult and the exorbitant charges they have to pay to get cash from Point of Sale (PoS) operators.

The cross-section of Nigerians who spoke to Economy on the street anchor, Rahma Olatosu, said the naira redesign policy the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) was implemented at a wrong time without measures in place to control network problems and exorbitant PoS charges.

A buyer in the market lamenting the difficult situation said: "I approached a PoS agent to withdraw N10,000 and was charged

N1,000 making a total of N11,000. I am a working class person but I find it difficult to cope with the hardship."

According to a seller, "we are facing a lot of challenges from this cashless policy, customers will come to the market to buy provisions and other items but payment always become a problem."

A customer will make a transfer but you can't see the alert," she said.

Another customer said: "The rate of withdrawal from the PoS is so exorbitant, and it is killing our businesses, even when we accept transfers, we don't get the alert. All this becomes more hectic with network



Data privacy implications for companies thinking about expansion

Technology, as it stands today, acts as a catalyst for innovation and provides businesses with the means to expand their reach globally. Startups and SMBs now have the opportunity to compete in the global marketplace and easily develop a diverse clientele internationally with the help of the internet. Managing logistics, like international freight and shipping, for example, has become far easier. Kehinde Seun Ogundare writes.

HOWEVER, despite the increased feasibility of global expansion for businesses, there remain several critical considerations that must be taken into account. One of the most significant among these is the data protection and privacy concerns that arise in the context of international operations.

Businesses run the danger of breaking regional laws and regulations when they do not pay careful attention to data protection and privacy. Should hackers exploit vulnerabilities, organisations run the risk of experiencing operational disruption, as well as losing the trust and support of their clients.

Ensuring business and suppliers are compliant

As an initial step, it is essential to ensure compliance with various global data privacy laws and regulations, both for the business and its suppliers. It is imperative to note that these laws and regulations are not limited to markets where the business has established operations, and comprehensive compliance measures must be taken into consideration. The European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), for instance, applies to any company that has an EU citizen as a customer, regardless of where they currently live.

It is essential that businesses select tools from companies that not only adhere to the relevant regulations but also place a high priority on data protection and privacy

Take a Lagos-based company that only sells goods in its own city, for example, and assume one of their local customers is an EU national. The company has to be compliant with the Nigeria Data Protection Regulation 2019 (NDPR), which is a subsidiary legislation issued pursuant to the National Information Technology Development Act, 2007 (NITDA Act 2007), as well as the GDPR.

The consequences for anyone found to be in violation of data and privacy regulations are potentially severe. A breach of the privacy rights of any data subject under NITDA Regulation with respect to data controllers



dealing with more than 10,000 data subjects carry a fine of 2% of annual gross revenue of the preceding year or payment of ₦10 million, whichever is greater.

With respect to data controllers dealing with less than 10,000 data subjects, a fine of 1% of the annual gross revenue of the preceding year or payment of ₦2 million, whichever is greater, will be levied. GDPR offences, meanwhile, carry fines of up to €20 million or 4% of the

total global turnover for the preceding fiscal year, whichever is higher.

Privacy and security assessments should be included in due diligence processes for software vendors.

To ensure optimal readiness for data protection, it is crucial to implement sound database management practices, employ robust cybersecurity measures, and provide ongoing education to employees on the importance of data protection and privacy

in the workplace. These things need to happen on an ongoing basis with businesses adapting as new threats emerge.

An area of vulnerability that businesses frequently neglect is the software and productivity tools they utilise. It is essential that businesses select tools from companies that not only adhere to the relevant regulations but also place a high priority on data protection and privacy.

Aside from tools and offerings with robust privacy measures, vendors should present a business model that is not dependent on ad revenue and data monetization. These proactive measures considerably reduce the chances of a data breach. With the average cost of a breach now at \$4.35 million USD, that's an investment worth making.

Data protection is a must for businesses, especially those with a global presence.

Expanding a business globally demands an elevated sense of responsibility. Regardless of the size of the organisation, it is crucial to recognize that similar challenges to those faced by large corporations, particularly with regards to data security and privacy, must be addressed.

Consequently, a concerted effort is necessary to provide the highest level of protection for customers. This necessitates partnering with software providers who possess a commitment to data security and privacy.

Ogundare is country head, Zoho Nigeria



Politics

We've nothing to hide, we'll make documents available -INEC

THE Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) says it is willing to make available all necessary documents on the Feb. 25 presidential election for inspection by interested parties.

INEC Chairman, Prof. Mahmood Yakubu, said this when he received a team of lawyers from the Labour Party (LP) led by Dr Livy Uzoukwu, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) in recently.

Yakubu acknowledged the receipt of a letter from the LP dated March 6, notifying it that the team would visit for inspection of election materials.

He said that the letter also requested the commission to get in touch with its Resident Electoral Commissioners (RECs) across the 36 states and the FCT to make the documents available for the prosecution of the LP's petition.

Yakubu said that INEC had scheduled a virtual meeting with all the RECs to discuss among other issues, the matter of providing Certified True Copies (CTCs) not only to the LP but to all other litigants.

"I want to assure you that the commission will not hide any document from anybody and will make available any document that they have requested.

"Please be assured that INEC has nothing to hide; whatever you are asking for will be made available to you.

"There are two categories of documents those that are in possession of the headquarters of INEC we will easily make these documents available to you.

"Specifically the EC8Ds from the states and the EC8DA, which is the collation at the national collation centre by the commission itself.

"The EC8DA, the declaration, so many documents, a total of I think 39 documents, this we can easily certify and give you almost immediately," he said.

Yakubu said other documents being sought for were at the states level, saying that INEC would work out a schedule to know when the team would visit the states, so as to easily facilitate not just certification of documents, but also the inspection requested for each of the documents.

"The other one is accreditation data from the back end. This will also be made available to you. Remember that the accreditation data covers over 176,000 polling units.

"We have to print them physically certify them, and give them to you, so the tall and short of what I am saying is that you will get this document speedily," he said.

Yakubu urged the LP legal team to interface with INEC's legal team immediately to work out things.

Speaking, Uzoukwu, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) and Lead Counsel to the LP Presidential Legal Team, said the visit was to prepare ground for the inspection of the materials for the presidential election.

"As you all know, election petition is time sensitive, we have 21 days to file a petition on behalf of our clients and out of that 21 days we probably have about 10 days to go and



Yakubu

up till now we have not received any documents.

"We have written to INEC requesting for documents apart from that, the Court of Appeal made an order on the March 3, ordering INEC to release those documents to us but we haven't received any hence requested for a meeting with the chairman of finance.

"INEC graciously granted that audience within a very short notice, and he has given us assurance, concrete assurance on record that all documents we require will be made available and if possible, some of them will be made available to us today," he said.

Uzoukwu said the team believed that INEC would respond as promised adding that "we are leaving here rest assured that at least we will leave with some documents, the rest can then come from tomorrow and so on and so forth.

"At least if we get some of them today that is indicative that we'll get some other documents from tomorrow, next tomorrow to enable us fight this petition," he said.

Dr Tanko Yusuf, Chief Spokesperson for Peter Obi/Datti Ahmed presidential campaign council, said that the party gave an ultimatum for INEC to make available the documents failure of which it would mobilise its members to

Homicide: Police declare Bauchi Lawmaker wanted

POLICE Command Bauchi state has declared Rep Yakubu Shehu wanted and placed a bounty of N1m on him.

The News Agency of Nigeria NAN reports Shehu is representing Bauchi Federal Constituency on the platform of PRP but later defected to APC.

This is contained in the Special Police Gazette Bulletin CB: 2685/Bsx/VOL.T/4s distributed by the Bauchi State Police Command spokesperson, SP Ahmed Wakil, on Tuesday in Bauchi.

The bulletin said the Nigeria Police Force, under the authority of the Inspector-General of Police, Usman Baba, had declared the member, Yakubu Abdullahi Shehu wanted.

He is wanted "in connection with a case of criminal

demonstrate against INEC nationwide.

Yusuf said that graciously the chairman of INEC haven read that particular statement granted them the opportunity to come and liaise with him and he has assured the team of lawyers to present these documents.

Yusuf said however, that the INEC chairman granted the party's request for its lawyers to assess the documents.

"So we want to wait and see the responses of our legal team, it is the legal team that will give us the marching order.

"When they are satisfied with what they've received from INEC so that our members nationwide and worldwide will be satisfied that we are doing our job and they are ready to prosecute this case accordingly," he said.

Okoye refuses to apologize for INEC's underperformance

FESTUS Okoye, the National Commissioner and Chairman of the Information and Voter Education Committee of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), has refused to apologize for INEC's role in the lapses witnessed at the conduct of the February 25 presidential and national assembly elections in

From **ANENE AIKE, Sokoto**

THE Sokoto State Gubernatorial Candidate of the People's Democratic Party, PDP, Mallam Saidu Ubandoma, has vowed that if he eventually clinches the seat as Sokoto state governor, he will re-engineer the administrative sector of the state.

In a pally with the NUJ Sokoto state Correspondence Chapel, Ubandoma said he will also focus on engagement drive for sustainable development agenda as currently being practiced by the incumbent Gov. Aminu Waziri Tambuwal.

He promised to carry everyone along while opining that democracy is government of the people for the people and by the people which he believes will spur him to carry all and sundry along.

That he will bring up a mechanism that will through consultative system engage the people of the state for the state to development and grow fast in equality with other states in Nigeria.

Mallam Saidu also stated that he will discourage the dependence on federal allocation but infuse the system of self-reliance by embarking on economic drive that will shore up the socio-economic base of Sokoto State.

He said his doors will be thrown open for all in other to brace up for rapid transformation of the Sokoto while soliciting the support of the electorate and peaceful turn out to vote for PDP candidates at all levels.

That he will not want Sokoto to always be seen as

Nigeria.

Okoye instead put the blame on the political parties for sabotaging the electoral process, a statement he made on Channels Television's Sunday Politics. He blamed the political class for perpetuating most of the challenges evident in the just-concluded presidential and national assembly elections.

PDP candidate to re-engineer administrative sector in Sokoto



Ubandoma

conservative community separately operating in isolation hence he will open his administration door wide open for consultative ways as being practiced by Gov Tambuwal currently.

These, according to him will enable the government to build a base for prosperous economic horizon through promoting investments for sustainable revenue generation, employment opportunities for youths and enhanced productivity.

That it will also open the state economic horizon, positively, strengthen and induce value chain in the investment space where more suppliers and distributors as well off-takers

will assist in the marketing process of goods and services.

That the approach would also enable the state government domesticate and divest opportunities for both local and outside investors to participate in actualising the dream of the state becoming a nerve and hub for industrialisation and commercial activities.

Mallam Ubandoma assured all that these standards in the principles of transparency, accountability and fairness in governance will invoke consideration from the generality of the people of the state confidence on his administration.

stakeholder venture. Yes, the commission is at the receiving end now - the political parties also have their own role to play in making sure we have a good electoral process."

He accused the political parties and their candidates of hiring thugs. "It is some of the political parties and some of their candidates that make the atmosphere at the level of the polling units becomes inaccessible. They made the atmosphere in such a way that the voters cannot really have a very good voting experience on election day," the commissioner explained.

"So we also need to talk to the political parties and their agents and help to make sure that they abide by the code of conduct and the peace accord that they signed so that Nigerians can go to the polling unit on election day without a challenge and our officials can deploy without fear of harm.

"As an electoral management body, we will keep improving with every election, and when we make mistakes, we have the honour, integrity, and presence of mind to acknowledge that we have made mistakes and that we are going to improve with every election."



Alkali

conspiracy, causing grievous hurt, inciting disturbances of public peace and culpable homicide.

"The police are seeking anyone with valid information that will lead to his arrest for interrogation and arraignment on criminal charges.

"Anyone with information that could assist in his arrest should please contact 08151849417 or report at any nearest police station".

It said the security agency asked anyone with useful information about his whereabouts to contact them, promising a N1m as a bounty on the lawmaker.

Politics

Implications of Nigeria's flawed presidential election

Many people, both Nigerians and foreigners, have wondered aloud why Nigeria, which is blessed with equable weather conditions, large arable landmass, and abundant material and human resources, has remained trapped in the mire of national undevelopment. But the reason for Nigeria's economic distress and technological backwardness is not farfetched. The fact is,

NIGERIA, we all know, has always been led by her third eleven politicians, who are moral derelicts, intellectual midgets, ethnic jingoists, and religious bigots. Over the years, our egregious and atrocious culture of the imposition of leaders on the populace by kingmakers, which was introduced to us by the British imperialists, has led to the emergence of third-rate political leaders in Nigeria. So imposing political leaders on the people by political kingmakers has become part of our political culture.

For example, when we became a sovereign country in 1960, the departing British imperialists clandestinely helped Alhaji Tafawa Balewa to become our Prime Minister at the expense of the Rt. Hon. Nnamdi Azikiwe and Chief Obafemi Awolowo, who were his political and intellectual betters. And Alhaji Shehu Shagari, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'adua, and Dr. Goodluck Jonathan became our executive presidents at different periods in our democratic journey either through the help of kingmakers or fortuitously.

The disputed presidential election, the winner of which is likely to be decided by the courts, has the potentiality of throwing our country into a political cul-de-sac, if the judgement on the presidential election is thought to be unfair.

But none of the aforementioned political leaders, who led Nigeria in the past, could leapfrog her to the acme of economic and technological development. And none of them could bridge the chasm of disunity, which has separated the northern people from the southern



Yakubu

people. They failed to extirpate corruption, the cankerworm destroying Nigeria, from our body polity, too. As a result, Nigeria has not realized her potential. She is the giant with the feet of clay.

However, the coming of Muhammadu Buhari to power some eight years ago rekindled hope in the minds of millions of Nigerians, who were, hitherto, dispossessed and disillusioned. Given his much-touted zero tolerance for corruption, patriotic zeal, ascetic lifestyle, and messianic aura, millions of Nigerians believed that he would bring about political renaissance, economic recovery, and technological development in Nigeria. And they thought that he would unite the people of Nigeria instead of deepening the country's ethnic

and religious fissures.

But President Buhari's leadership of Nigeria is a study in economic ruination of Nigeria, impeding our country's march to technological development, polarisation of Nigeria along ethnic and religious lines, and the enthronement of the Fulani hegemony and irredentism in the country. And his inability to rein in the Boko Haram insurgents, terrorists, bandits, and fulani herdsmen, who are kidnapping rich Nigerians for ransom and killing other people is an index and/or proof of the ineptness and ineffectiveness of his political administration of Nigeria.

Now, not a few Nigerians want to see his back. They are tired of his political ineptness and cluelessness. Those

disenchanted and disillusioned Nigerians trooped out en masse to exercise their franchise on February 25, 2023 during the presidential election. But their political will was subverted by the political desperadoes and the APC head honchos, who want a continuation of the ugly status quo ante in Nigeria.

Based on pieces of evidence obtained from participants in the February 25, 2023 presidential election, the election was deeply flawed. Millions of people were disenfranchised. And it was conducted in total disregard of the electoral laws, which made the presidential polls susceptible to manipulation by unscrupulous APC political stalwarts. So the result of the presidential election is not by any stretch of the imagination a reflection of the people's political will.

Now it is evident and clear to us that the next occupant of the presidential seat at Aso Rock, Abuja, will be determined via electoral litigation. So far, the presidential candidates of PDP and the Labour Party have got court rulings to inspect the electoral materials used in conducting the February 25, 2023 presidential election in Nigeria. Politicians' seeking of redress in courts of law has become part of our democratic culture.

So members of the judiciary who will handle electoral matters arising from the general election should live up to billings and our expectations. They should know that the judiciary is a component of the government, which checks the excesses of the executive arm of government. The judges should not compromise on their integrity

and morality so as not to allow themselves to be used by unscrupulous politicians to truncate our democratic journey and progress. A judiciary that is independent in the true sense of the word can save our democracy from destruction.

The judiciary should act right and handle 2023 presidential electoral matter dispassionately given the fact that millions of Nigerians feel that Mr. Peter Obi of the Labour Party won the presidential election, but was robbed of victory. The mood of the people, now, is disillusionment and indignation. And the atmosphere of fear and uncertainty reigns in the country. So Nigeria can be said to be sitting on a tinderbox as the followers of Mr. Peter Obi, who number in the millions, can be rallied to cause civil unrest in the country.

Nigeria, which is a heterogeneous country, is already buffeted by disunity and is bifurcated along ethnic and religious lines. And the fact that the three top contenders for Nigeria's 2023 presidential election, who belong to the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria, each have a large following, is a portent of doom for us. So if the disputed presidential election is not handled fairly, it will likely cause political instability in Nigeria, and tip Nigeria over the precipice.

However, surprisingly, prominent Yoruba leaders such as Chief Ayo Adebajo, Chief Obasanjo, and others have continued to lend support to Mr. Peter Obi in his quest to become the next president of Nigeria. And his victories in Lagos and Abuja in the presidential election has lent credence to his claim that Nigerians from diverse ethnic groups and religious affiliations are solidly behind him.

But the fact is that our February 25, 2023 presidential election was marred by massive irregularities, which made its result unacceptable to us. The disputed presidential election, the winner of which is likely to be decided by the courts, has the potentiality of throwing our country into a political cul-de-sac, if the judgement on the presidential election is thought to be unfair. So I urge the top members of the judiciary to treat all electoral matters arising from the general election(s) with absolute impartiality and emotional detachment.

"Nigeria, which is a heterogeneous country, is already buffeted by disunity and is bifurcated along ethnic and religious lines. And the fact that the three top contenders for Nigeria's 2023 presidential election, who belong to the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria, each have a large following, is a portent of doom for us. So if the disputed presidential election is not handled fairly, it will likely cause political instability in Nigeria, and tip Nigeria over the precipice. However, surprisingly, prominent Yoruba leaders such as Chief Ayo Adebajo, Chief Obasanjo, and others have continued to lend support to Mr. Peter Obi in his quest to become the next president of Nigeria. And his victories in Lagos and Abuja in the presidential election has lent credence to his claim that Nigerians from diverse ethnic groups and religious affiliations are solidly behind him."

IMAGES

LALONG INSPECTS REMODELED NUJ SECRETARIAT

Plateau State Governor, Rt. Hon. Simon Bako Lalong (CON) recently inspected the remodeled Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) Secretariat project in Jos



Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) Chairman, Mr. Paul Jatau (left) receiving the Governor, Rt. Hon. Simon Bako Lalong (CON)



Governor Lalong (2nd left) answering questions from newsmen after the visit



Engr. Solomon Jankanwa of the Ministry of Housing taking the Governor and entourage round the NUJ remodeled Secretariat



Secretary to Government of the State, Prof. Danladi Abok Atu (right) with the Commissioner for Youth and Sports, Hon. Daniel Dung Dalyop



Chief of Staff Government House, Hon. Noel Dongjur (right) with the Commissioner of Transport, Malam Muhammad Muhammad (left) and Permanent Secretary in the State Service, Alhaji Sani Yahaya Mavo



Commissioners of Budget Planning, Hon. Dan Philip Hirkop (right) Hon. Idris Gambo of Commerce and the Permanent Secretary, Malam Ibrahim Kam



NUJ Chairman, Mr. Paul Jatau (right) discussing with his Vice, Ayuku Pwaspo, Josiah Busun and Pam Musa before the arrival of Governor Lalong



Site of the remodeled NUJ Secretariat inspected by Governor Lalong

PHOTOS: DANLADI DUK

Politics

Election: Can the judiciary save Nigeria?

Before the February 25, 2023 presidential election, there was a somewhat 'hope rising' feeling in the air, as many Nigerians planned to use their votes to reclaim the country from the selfish and non-performing politicians, who have held the country hostage and its development dwarfed since the return to democratic rule in 1999, EMELIKE OBINNA and IWOK INIOBONG write.

TODAY, that feeling seems to be replaced with anger and frustration as many believe that the result as announced by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) did not reflect what they voted for. As expected, the parties and their presidential candidates that believe their mandates were stolen have since gone to court to challenge the results.

The Nigerian judiciary is struggling to gain people's confidence due to so many opportunities it has had in the recent past to save democracy or set sound precedence, but disappointed with its publicly criticised rulings.

That fear that the judiciary cannot be trusted is also a reason to ask if the judiciary can save the country as both presidential candidates of the Labour Party and Peoples Democratic Party are currently in court to challenge the declaration of the All Progressives Congress presidential candidate as the winner of the February 25th poll.

Chijioke Umelahi, former Abia lawmaker and legal practitioner, thinks that the judiciary has never been independent as appointment of the judges is heavily influenced by the President.

Considering that lack of independence, Umelahi argued that the judiciary cannot be trusted to save the country in the legal battles following any unpopular declaration by the INEC.

"I don't see the judiciary that lacked power to challenge the executive or to checkmate the excesses of the legislature doing something to rewrite its name in gold. The calibre of judges there seems compromised," Umelahi said.

Considering the above argument, many decry that it is still the same judiciary that made the very unpopular and undemocratic judgment in the last Imo State gubernatorial election, with the negative fallout still trailing the state.

Till date, many mock Hope Uzodinma, the governor of Imo State, as the 'Supreme Court Governor'. Imo people see his government as illegitimate, which reportedly accounted for the high level of insecurity in the state.

Recently, the Supreme Court's declaration of Ahmad Lawan as APC's Yobe North senatorial candidate and Godswill Akpabio as the validly nominated APC candidate for Akwa-Ibom North-West senatorial seat based on



Malami

technicalities, did not go down well with the generality of Nigerians.

Both participated as aspirants at the APC presidential primaries, and by law, forfeiting other political offices. But the Supreme Court ruled in their favour after losing at the presidential primaries of their party.

These are some of the worrisome cases that make many Nigerians to further lose confidence in the judiciary, and also do not see it salvaging the country's democracy.

"If the Supreme Court can rule that a candidate who came third in an election can become the governor and today he is, it means it can do more at the presidential level because of the benefit that can come to the judges afterwards," Peter Oseni, a serving senior public servant, said.

According to him, the judiciary is heavily compromised and the system of appointing the judges is no longer on merit as Mr. President can pick undeserving judges and make them his puppet at the upper echelon court.

"If you have followed the kind of judges we have had at the Supreme Court especially since Buhari came to power, you will notice that most of them are not the most senior, most qualified and are considered based on Mr. President's

criteria. So, they will be answerable to the President and not to Nigerians. Those Mr. President appointed judges are still at the Appeal and Supreme courts, Abubakar Malami is still there too, so how do you expect good judgment for the people," Oseni argued.

Toeing a different line, Samuel Onikoyi, a Nigerian academia in Belgium, noted that the Supreme Court may likely save its name and regain people's confidence with a surprise ruling in the presidential election debacle.

"We know the court has failed, but not all of them are compromised. Remember that the ruling on Ahmad Lawan's senatorial candidacy for Yobe North was a three-against-two split judgment of the Supreme Court's five-member panel.

"So, there are still some upright judges out there at the Supreme Court, Justice Mary Odili proved herself while there, there are others and aggrieved masses can get judgment at the Supreme Court this time," Onikoyi said.

Saying that the current cases before the judiciary may be a make or mar for the arm of government, Onikoyi said: Well, Nigerians await the Supreme Court to prove them wrong, regain its lost confidence or allow illegitimacy to thrive."

Onyeka Ikwunze, a Political



Ariwoola

Science lecturer at Abia State University, Uturu, said that there was hope this time at the Supreme Court because the new Electoral Act has been contravened, and that there is much evidence that cannot be thwarted and the lawyers know all these.

"I see the Supreme Court standing with the people because of the clear evidence and the fact that INEC violated the provisions of the new Electoral Act. Again, the fact that the results were written manually rather than using the new machines, which Nigeria spent billions of Naira to acquire, are enough to cancel the result. The fear now will be money to hold another election if the Supreme Court rules for rerun of the election," Ikwunze said.

Some optimistic minds also think that while Abubakar Malami, Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice of Nigeria, is known to support the government of the day, Olukayode Ariwoola, the new Chief Justice of Nigeria, who emerged on merit, may likely set things right.

"I think a lot of people are not happy with the judgments coming out of our courts in recent time, look at the Imo State case where a sitting governor was removed by questionable judgment. The

judiciary is at its lowest ebb now.

"But we are hoping they can redeem themselves with this presidential election matter and let the will of Nigerians prevail," Tope Musowo, a public affairs analyst, said.

Musowo noted that a reform of the judiciary in Nigeria was overdue.

"There are so many things wrong with our judiciary there is no doubt the system needs reform, even from the appointment of judges to infrastructures at the courts," he added.

Eddy Olafeso, a politician, said that the judiciary has opportunity to redeem itself in view of recent criticism, stressing that the international community and everyone would be watching with keen interest.

"I think the judiciary is aware that public confidence in them is now very low, you can see the criticism that trailed the Lawan judgement, but I think they can redeem themselves with the presidential election case.

"It is an opportunity for them, all eyes are on them, let's wait and see what would happen this time around. The parties would be presenting their case and I can tell you that unlike in the past, justice can't be stolen this time around," he said.

NEWS

Dogara canvasses votes for APC's guber candidate

From **ABBAS GUNGURA, Bauchi**

FORMER Speaker of the House of Representatives, Yakubu Dogara has endorsed the candidacy of Air Marshall Sadiq Baba Abubakar (rtd) of the All Progressives Congress (APC) for next week's governorship election in Bauchi State.

The former Speaker is a member of the People's Democratic Party and member of the Presidential Campaign Council of the party's presidential candidate, Atiku Abubakar.

In 2019, he led a coalition of political parties and interest groups in Bauchi to oust former Governor Mohammed Abubakar and helped to install Bala Mohammed, who is now seeking re-election under PDP.

However, shortly after the elections, Governor Bala Mohammed allegedly reneged on all political agreements he entered into before the election.

Mohammed began to fight with prominent citizens of the state who opposed his style of governance including Dogara and an elder statesman, Alhaji Bello Kirfi, who was a minister in the Second Republic under President Shehu Shagari. The governor stripped him of his traditional title of Waziri of the Bauchi Emirate.

Dogara accused Bala Mohammed of non-payment of salaries of teachers and civil servants.

Recently, Dogara led a campaign team of Air Marshall Sadiq Baba Abubakar across some



Dogara

Bauchi local governments, including Kirfi and Alkalari, the hometown of the governor.

Speaking to a mammoth crowd of supporters in Alkalari Local Government Area of Bauchi State on Wednesday, Dogara urged the people to tow the path of honour by voting out Governor Mohammed from office.

"We came to tell you the truth that we need to effect a change of leadership in Bauchi State," he said.

"I came here to enlighten you that even though your son (Governor Mohammed)

is there but since he is not doing well, we should change him. I urge you all to cast your vote for Air Marshall Sadiq Abubakar come Saturday."

He described Abubakar as a father who will bring succour to the people of Bauchi State.

Recall that Dogara endorsed and delivered the APC candidate for his Federal Constituency of Bogoro/Dass/Tafawa Balewa, Jafaru Leko and the Bauchi South Senatorial District, Shehu Buba in the just concluded National Assembly polls.

HYPPADEC engages experts to mitigate flood

HYDROELECTRIC Power Producing Areas Development Commission (HYPPADEC) has enlisted the services of experts to identify areas of possible interventions against the Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMET) prediction of worse flood this year.

Arch. Abubakar Sadiq Yelwa, Managing Director of the Commission disclosed this while on a courtesy visit to the Ohimege-Igu of Koton-Karfe, Alhaji Abdulrazaq Sani Isah-Koto on Sunday at his palace in Koton-Karfe.

The Managing Director said HYPPADEC had received warning from NiMET indicating worse flooding this year (2023) beyond 2022 experience hence the need for plans to mitigate impact of flooding from the two major rivers in the country.

He said that against this backdrop, the Commission had embarked on critical assessment and appraisal of the six most affected

From **AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja**

local government areas in the state using experts from within and outside the commission to identify areas of intervention to mitigate against likely effects of the floods.

"That's why members of the Governing Council and the Management Committee decided to approve for us to come and meet with you and the Ministry of Environment to see what intervention we can implement before the rains set in.

"We have done a lot of studies and met a lot of consultants to ensure that what we want to do here will solve the flood problems forever", he said.

The traditional title holder of Katukan Yauri warned the 10 flood-prone local government areas and riverine communities in Kogi to guard against the NiMET prediction of a worse flooding situation this year.

In his response, the First Class traditional ruler

commended the efforts of Commission so far in providing succour for flood victims in the areas saying that HYPPADEC had become a household name in the communities.

Alhaji Abdulrazaq Sani Isah-Koto however said that the red alert from NiMET over possible flooding this year, had left his people in fear even as they are yet to recover from the devastating effects of the 2022 flooding.

The royal father called for dredging of the Rivers Niger and Benue as the plausible and most lasting solution to the perennial flooding of the area accentuated by waterfalls from hills and mountains surrounding the area.

He informed the visitors that the community had put in place what he called Koton-Karfe Area Flood Disaster Management Committee. And went on to confer a chieftaincy title of "Garkuwan-Igu" on the HYPPADEC Managing Director, Alhaji Abubakar Sadiq Yelwa, Hon. Victor Adewale Omofaiye, the state Commissioner for

From **AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja**

THE Dangote Articulated Truck Driving School has graduated 50 trainees who passed through a specially designed and rigorous educational curriculum.

The articulated truck driving school at Obajana in Kogi State is Nigeria's first and only accredited truck driving academy. The school was commissioned last year by the former Corps Marshal of the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), Dr. Boboye Olayemi Oyeyemi, who described it as a significant step towards taming the menace of auto crashes involving articulated trucks in Nigeria.

Speaking at the graduation ceremony at Obajana over the weekend, the Divisional Director Transport (DDT), Mr. Ajay Singh, said the new Batch C graduates have only qualified and graduated from classroom instructions, and will now be exposed to practicals through attachments for an additional six months.

Mr. Singh gave the assurance that the school will not only bring down the rate of crashes involving articulated vehicles but will also positively impact other road users.

The Director said the ultimate objective was to achieve zero accidents for all subsidiaries in the Dangote Group. On his part, the Manager of Dangote Articulated Truck Driving School, Dangote Cement Transport (DCT) Obajana, Mr. Daniel Marcus Akuso said the intensive training was carried out in collaboration with the FRSC and Fantique Driving Training Centre of South Africa.

According to the manager of

NPC releases updated 2023 Census Work-plan

The National Population Commission has released its Updated 2023 Census Work Plan as contained in its most recent release of the Updated

Dangote's Driving School graduates trainee truck drivers



Dangote

the school, the three months training programme has helped change the orientation of the trainee drivers.

"This is the only articulated truck driving school in Nigeria where the students are paid stipends, trained, tested, certified, licensed, and employed. Our products are not only for Dangote Cement but for all subsidiaries of the Dangote Group in Africa," Mr. Akuso said.

Speaking, Deputy Road Commandant, (OC Instructor) of the FRSC attached to the Dangote Driving School, Engr

Mukhtar Umar said his agency plays a significant role in the training and certifying old drivers and newly recruited trainees.

"We teach them defensive driving, road signs, responsibilities of the driver, driving culture, and then certify them," Engr Umar said.

The Executive Secretary of the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), Professor Idris Bugaje had said that the NBTE was partnering the Dangote Cement Plc in the execution of the school's programme.

From **ANENE AIKE, Sokoto**

2023 Census Work Plan where it indicated that the Refreshers (Virtual Training) for state level facilitators and specialized workforce will begin on March 6, 2023, and end on March 12, 2023.

NPC set up a new NPC Enumerators training date for adhoc staff enumerators and supervisors for the 2023 Housing and Population Census.

She also disclosed that the new Enumerators and Supervisors training will last for a period of Seven Days from March 15 to March 21, 2023, in all the 774 LGAs of the country.

The NPC indicated that the refreshers (Virtual Training) for state level facilitators and Specialized Work Force will begin on March 6, 2023, and end on March 12, 2023, outlining new schedules of operations in the Updated 2023 Census Work Plan.

NPC also revealed that the LGA Level Trainers would have to travel to various LGA Level Training Centers between March 13 and 14, 2023, in order to prepare for the NPC adhoc staff, enumerators and supervisors.

They revealed that the Commission's evaluation of Training Centers for the 2023 Post-Enumeration Survey (PES) would be done between March 13 and March 20, 2023, as a pre-activity before the LGA Level Training and Person Enumeration.

NPC also disclosed that the Refreshers (Virtual Training) for State Level Facilitators and

Specialized Work force will begin on March 6, 2023, and end on March 12, 2023, as contained in the newly updated schedules of operations of the year 2023 Updated 2023 Census Work Plan.

as a pre-activity before the LGA Level Training and Person Enumeration.

It also stated that the Building Numbering and Household Listing Training for enumerators and supervisors at the LGA level will take place between March 15 and March 21, 2023, and that the profiling of enumerators and supervisors for the census proper will take place during the same period.

NPC did not mince words when it alerted all the concerned persons or group of personalities that the LGA level training on Person's Enumeration will be held from April 26 through April 30 of the year 2023, even as she added that the Census Night will be on May 2, 2023.

They also disclosed that the Updated 2023 Census Work Plan of the National Population Commission intended to reschedule the 2023 Population and Housing Census Exercise following the INEC activities currently moving from one card or ballot paper to BeVAS.

It disclosed that following the new schedule of the Commission, the Enumeration of Persons which was earlier scheduled to begin on 29th March, 2023 and to end 02 April, 2023 has been rescheduled to commence on 3rd May, 2023 and to end on 7th May, 2023.

News

Only INEC, empowered to transmit results *-Justice*

Stories from **JIDAUNA YANUNG, Abuja**

A federal High Court in Abuja has held that it is only the Independent National Electoral Commission [INEC] that is empowered by law to determine the mode of collating and transmitting election result.

Justice Emeka Nwite, in a judgment, also held that it is only INEC that has the prerogative to direct how polling Unit Presiding Officer should transfer election result, including the total number of accredited voters and result of the ballot.

Justice Nwite further held that the collating and transferring of election results manually in the 2023 general elections cannot be said to be contrary to the relevant provisions of the Electoral Act. The judgment was on a suit marked: FHC/ABJ/CS/1454/2022 filed by the Labour Party [LP], with INEC as the sole defender. LP had prayed the

court to declare that INEC has no power to opt for the manual method other than the electronic method provided for by the relevant provision the Electoral Act, 2022

In the judgment delivered on January 23, 2023, a copy of which **The Nation** sighted on Friday, Justice Nwite held that the plaintiff misconstrued the provision of the Law and proceeded to dismiss the suit. He said:

from the argument of the learned plaintiffs' counsel, I am of the humble opinion that the sections that seek for interpretations are actually sections 50[2] 60[5] and 62[2] of the Elections Act, 2022. Section 47(2) as cited by the learned counsel to the plaintiff only deals with accreditation of voters using a Smart Card Reader, but not collation or transmission of result as postulated by the learned counsel,"the judge held. Justice Nwite noted that section 60(5) of the Electoral Act, 2022 provides

for the accredited voters from the polling unit. He also noted that section 62 (2) of the same Act provides for completion, maintenance and continues update of the register of election results as distinct database for all polling units results as collated by the commission.

Justice Nwite added: "The said section 62(2) has mandated that such register of election results shall be kept in an electronic format by the commission at its national headquarters. Now a close reading of section 50(2) of the Act has provided for voting and transmission of result to be done in accordance with the procedure to be determined by the commission. This is to say that the commission is at liberty to prescribe or choose the manner it is transmitted."

Consequently, this matter is hereby dismissed," Justice Nwite said.

'Return country to path of progress'

FORMER Commissioner for Environment, Mineral Resources, Science and Technology in Anambra State, who is currently the Head of Intervention Team in the Peter Obi Presidential Campaign Organization, Dr. Ifedi Okwenna, has enjoined judges of judiciary arm of the government to do the needful, by exercising their independence to ensure that they return the country on the path of progress.

In a press statement he issued to some selected media houses recently in Abuja, Okwenna said: "I am

telling the judges that we are all buying from the same market and if the economy is good, it is for all of us. They should do the needful as an independent arm of the government to restore Nigeria on the path of progress. From his past experience, you assured Nigerians that my principal, Obi will reclaim his mandate."

Still urging the judiciary to live up to expectations, he said that Nigerians are worried that INEC chairman is telling them to go to court. Adding: "if he is telling us to go to courts, he

deliberately did things wrong, it means his sister or brother is the judge."

Speaking on the fact that Nigerians know what Peter Obi stands for, he said "We campaigned throughout the 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), convinced Nigerians on what Peter Obi stands for and we told them what we have in store for them. We are happy every Nigerian knew what happened. The intervention team went to all nooks and crannies of Nigeria, including Borno where people fear to go. We were convinced that no one would conspire against Obi."

He continued: "During the Presidential and National Assembly election, Nigerians came out en-mass and voted for who they wanted to be their president and Obi won the election and there is no doubt about that. Everywhere throughout the country Nigerians came out and voted for Peter. But INEC truncated the wish of Nigerians. Not only did they suppress the wished of Nigeria the opportunity to have the president they wanted. We have gone to court, we are going to recover our stolen mandate. We can't suffer for nothing.



Okwenna



Is this our Plateau?

PLATEAU, the beautiful, blessed and endowed with so much has lost its swag. The State which was defined by industry and hard work has turned to one that cannot stand as an equal amongst its peers. The State which hitherto was a centre of attraction and a melting pot has since year 2001 become a shadow of its former self. Negative things happen in this once noble State at neck breaking speed and no one, including our so-called elders seem to give a hood about it. All that matters these days is for the interest of the disparate groups to be met and anyone else can go to blazes including the state that was once revered and held dear and in very high esteem.

In the past, Plateau used to be the centrifugal force that wielded the different groups that abound in the country. It used to be the glue that cemented the relationships between the different cultures and nationalities that abound in the country. No wonder, there hardly is a culture that is not represented in the cosmopolitan capital city of Jos nay the whole of the State. It was not only a State that produced bureaucrats but one that show cased a litany of talents in all spheres of national life. People born and bred or who once lived in Jos have gone on to reach for the skies in their chosen profession and make the city and State proud of their attainments.

The State has become known for several other reasons than things that had served to promote and project its image. Religious fundamentalism which hitherto was absent slowly crept its way into the social fabric of the life of the entire society. In the past, all shades of faith, opinions and differences used to tolerate each other living side by side and sharing in all that happened in the society. No one ever cared who a Muslim was nor anyone paid heed to who was a Christian or traditional religious practitioner. All that mattered was that all were humans created by God and living and sharing the same social space.

Ethnicity has become one very sore point that is

threatening to tear the society apart. Everyone resorts to their very small enclave each time there is a social dislocation giving the impression that we are yet to grow as a people. In most cases, these divides are emphasized by the political class who prefer that the people stand divided so that they can be easily manipulated. It is sad how these events are panning out and giving the impression that the State lacks statesmen. Those who have paid their dues and have reached the peak of their careers need to speak up and show the way for our people. We must have leaders who would call everyone to order when the state is veering off towards the precipice. Someone who could speak sincerely and caution whoever is trying to bring the state to disrepute.

We have many in the aforesaid mold. We have people who have been Head of State in the past, we have those who were former governors, ministers etc. with very rich curriculum vitae and who command serious respect from the people. These people must start speaking up and not allow the state to drift to very dangerous levels before crying after the milk has been spilled. Unfortunately, some of the divides that have become noticeable have been caused by some of

“ It is time we stop all the insults and propaganda and know that after politicking, we will still remain brothers and sisters. We should not let politics divide us neither should it be an avenue for allowing our enemies, those who do not wish us well to find space to destroy us. We must know that humanity was there first before tribe and religion. ”

these leaders who should show the path for the people to follow. They have become ethnic champions and see everything from the perspective of their ethnic lenses. We must, as a people do everything humanly possible to ensure that we do not allow some selfish people lead us to perdition.

Lately too, the social media has added to the many challenges that have piled up on the Plateau and has tasked well-meaning citizens of the state. Political propaganda and deliberate falsehood have become a stock in trade for some idle youths who engage in disparaging and assassinating the characters of those they perceive as enemies of their pay masters. What for instance would it profit anyone to destroy someone's hard earned reputation when at the end of the day Plateau people are pursuing the same goal using different vehicles or means to get to the destination? What is saddening is the use of thugs in the political space and campaigns for offices meant to serve the people? Why for instance would someone feel no qualms when these *e rats* feasts on their perceived opponents and they keep quiet? This should not be our Plateau. I am not sure our founding fathers would be happy with the state of affairs of our dear state wherever they are.

It is time we stop all the insults and propaganda and know that after politicking, we will still remain brothers and sisters. We should not let politics divide us neither should it be an avenue for allowing our enemies, those who do not wish us well to find space to destroy us. We must know that humanity was there first before tribe and religion. Our leaders must (be they secular or religious) therefore know that it is not their place to preach divisive messages but to preach messages of salvation and love which would entrench peace amongst the people. On the other hand, people must stand up to 419 political leaders and fraudulent religious leaders who delight in dividing the citizenry.

News

Police confirm attack by bandits in Kubwa

From JIDAUNA YANUNG ABUJA

The Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Police Command has confirmed an attack by gunmen suspected to be bandits on Grow Homes Estate in the Kubwa neighborhood in Abuja.

Residents said about 20 armed men stormed the estate on the night of Friday, March 10, ransacked homes and whisked some victims to an unknown destination.

Reports quoted residents, who pleaded anonymity, as saying the heavenly-armed assailants fired shots, which caused panic among the estate's occupants and other residents in the neighborhood.

The marauders moved from one apartment to another, pillaging belongings as many as they could carry.

Among the abductees are children and women. The eye witnesses said "They escaped through the bush, which linked the community to Paze village.



Alkali

The police and the estate security have been searching the bush since morning to see if they can rescue the kidnapped residents".

The FCT Police Command spokesperson, Josephine Adeh, a Superintendent of Police, has confirmed the attack.

"Upon receipt of the distress call, we immediately deployed our men to the scene. The suspects, however,

abruptly suspended their operations and took some victims with them into the bush.

"Operatives of the Police and the estate security are still combing the bushes in the area to ensure they are rescued unhurt," she said.

She appealed for calm among the residents and called on the city's residents to help the police with information that could help prevent crime and apprehend criminals.

Officials of the Kogi State government and stakeholders in the financial sector, on Monday, stormed the streets of Lokoja to sensitize the people on the need to accept the old naira notes in line with the ruling of the Supreme Court.

Addressing a large crowd of okada riders and market women under the newly constructed Ganaja Flyover in Lokoja, the state Commissioner for Information and Communications, Mr Kingsley Fanwo congratulated Nigerians over the Supreme Court judgement, affirming that people can now use both the old and new naira notes till December 31, 2023.

"We have met with the banks and they have agreed that they will accept old naira notes as deposits. So we urge all okada riders, keke riders and market men and women to accept the old naira notes. "The state government is grateful to the banks for their cooperation and commitment to the ruling of the Supreme Court of Nigeria. It is criminal to reject old naira notes after the judgement", he said.

He further said the state government will monitor compliance strictly.

In the same vein, the State Security Adviser, Commander Jerry Omodara (rtd) harped on the need for Kogites to cooperate

Kogi educates citizens on acceptance of old notes

FROM AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

with the state government in her bid to ease the current financial strains occasioned by the current cash policy assuring that his office will work with security agencies to ensure compliance.

In his remarks, Commissioner of Finance, MukadamAsiwaju Idris Asiru said the banks are already accepting old notes as deposits, urging the people to take advantage of the cooperation of the banks. He also said he has already gotten the commitment of the banks to load their ATM with old and new

naira notes to ease the cash scarcity in the state.

The representatives of the major banks in Lokoja also assured the people of the readiness of the banks to accept old naira notes as deposits.

They said the directive took effect on Monday morning, urging customers to freely accept old Naira notes. The sensitization train visited all transport unions, fuel stations and major markets in Lokoja. They also assured the people of sustained sensitization on radio and other media of communication.



Bello

NIGOMSAT to revalidate vision

By HOSEA NYAMLONG

In a deliberate effort to rejig the operations of the Nigerian Communications Satellite (NIGOMSAT) Ltd for optimal success, the Board and Management staff have

resolved to re-validate the company's vision to properly align with the realities of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity and with the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) demands. This was revealed in a statement signed by DrAdamu Idris, the GM Corporate Affairs and Special Duties.

The statement disclosed that in a communique read at the end of the two day retreat held at MEETHAQ Hotels, Jabi Abuja, with the Theme: 'Re-defining NIGOMSAT Road Map for Exponential Growth', the retreat resolved that the core values should reflect the belief system which shapes the organizational culture.

The retreat was chaired by the Board Chairman, Arc. Yusuf Kazaure, who said there should be an alignment of NIGOMSAT culture and strategy with effective leadership practices to achieve expected organizational vision.

Furthermore, the retreat emphasized the need for the government approved Performance Management System to be incorporated into NIGOMSAT Human Resource (HR) practices.

The event which was also attended by the Executive Management including senior management staff of the company led by the Managing Director, Engr. Tukur Mohammed Lawal, believe that the need for infrastructural audit and upgrade, provision of training support for installers, automation of business processes and support services to ensure on-time service delivery amongst others was thoroughly discussed and reached.

Earlier, the Board Chairman, Arc. Yusuf Kazaure, who presided over the two day retreat, reiterated the need for service delivery to reposition NIGOMSAT for exponential growth through team building and commitment from management and staff of the organisation.

The Managing Director, Chief Executive Officer, EngrTukur Mohammed Lawal, who presented a paper christened 'roadmap to excellence, designed to tackle and overcome the multiple difficulties confronting NIGOMSAT Ltd', outlined five strategic pillars within which the roadmap will be pursued. Engr. Lawal stated that the pillars are, people development, operational backup, service delivery customer focus and sustainability.

He said the Sustainability Charter which provides a general statement of NIGOMSAT's commitment towards sustainable business practices; was approved for implementation.

Other important outcomes of the retreat are; NIGOMSAT Ltd should focus on improving customer experience, service and meeting industry standard, internal process such as the Automated Network Operations Management (ANOMIS), improve marketing outreach and branding of the company leveraging more on traditional and new media towards enhancing visibility and revenue increase.

selected for the training and promised to put in her best to justify the opportunity given to her to serve her country.

LP chieftain warns against disobeying court order

A chieftain of Labour Party in Kogi State, Bayo Averehi has affirmed that respect for the rule of law in any given society is supreme and warns against disobeying court order by governments and their agencies or citizens irrespective of status.

"Disobeying court order is an invitation to anarchy" KogiLabour Party chieftain Averehi warns.

BayoAverehi maintained that the Independent National Electoral

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

Commission, (INEC) should strictly adhere to the court order allowing its lawyers to inspect the electoral materials used in the February 25 presidential election.

Averehi gave the warning in a statement made available to journalists in Lokoja on Monday.

The former People's Democratic Party, (PDP), governorship aspirant in Kogi State explained that

INEC was established by the laws of the country and must be subjected to the supremacy of the court of the land.

While noting that the electoral umpire is supposed to be unbiased and must be compelled to obey court orders to avert chaos in the country, Averehi maintained that It is preposterous for any individual, institution or organization to cherry-pick which court order to obey and not to obey.

"Existence in the state of nature is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (Thomas Hobbes Leviathan 1966). This informs the importance of lawful government and institutions in a sane society.

he youth and masses of this country believe in the "Rule of Law" and are also of the believe that the Judiciary is the last hope of the common man, as such did not resort to self help after the unprecedented and monumental



Mahmood

Foreign Commentary

Iran-Saudi Arabia ties: Can it last?

THE Saudi Arabia Diplomatic Missions in Iran were attacked with mob action on 2 January 2016 by protesters against the execution of a prominent Saudi Arabian Shi'a cleric. Mobs stormed the embassy in Tehran and the Saudi consulate in Mashhad ransacked them. The embassy building was set on fire with Molotov cocktails and petrol bombs. During the attacks, the police arrived and dispersed protesters from the embassy premises and extinguished the fire. The Iranian diplomatic mission asked to leave the kingdom within 48 hours as the Saudis evacuate embassy staff from Tehran. The two countries Iran and Saudi Arabia, the two great oil-producing rivals of the Middle East, have agreed to restore ties and reopen embassies after 7 years. HOSEA NYAMLONG writes, with Agency reports.

HISTORICALLY, in 1929, Iran and Saudi Arabia signed the Friendship Treaty, which involved mutual recognition and the establishment of full diplomatic relations. On that occasion, the Pahlavi and Al-Saud dynasties agreed that unbreakable peace and sincere and durable friendship would reign.

Over the last 90 years, efforts from both sides to achieve this goal have been met with some success. From the early 1950s to the late 1970s, the countries concluded other treaties, such as the Commercial Agreement (1953), the Agreement over the Islands of al- 'Arabiya and Farsi (1969), and the Agreement to Partition Neutral Zone (1978).

In contrast to present realities, their foreign policy also converged about Egypt, Yemen, Abu Dhabi, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, and Iraq. What began in 1991 as renewed Saudi-Iranian détente extended into another much longer pacifying period that lasted for 17-18 years.

The two states signed the Cooperation Agreement (1998), and Security Accord (2001), and held Strategic Talks (2006-20007). It was recalled that a rare and symbolic gesture, reserved for Saudi Arabia's closest allies when King Abdullah cordially greeted Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad at Riyadh Airport in March 2007.

However, in recent times on some earlier occasions, the Saudi-Iranian relationship has been characterized by opposition on major regional issues. For example, Riyadh backed Saddam Hussein in Iraq-Iran war from 1980 to 1988. Both sides were also protagonists in the costly "Tanker War" from 1984 to 1988. In February 2008, after a long friendly phase, King Abdullah delivered a strong warning indicating that Riyadh would suspend its relations with Tehran. Since then, their rivalry has gradually evolved into the most enduring security challenge in the Middle East and Persian Gulf region. In particular, the Arab Spring in Bahrain, Syria, and Yemen, and subsequent civil wars in Syria (2011-2019) and Yemen (2015-2019), created new battlegrounds. The unprecedented attacks on Saudi oil facilities in September 2019, which affected global energy markets, have been blamed on Iran.

The agreement mediated by China seeks to reduce tensions in the oil-rich region that has opened a new chapter in the middle east.

China's role helps to the peace process between the two nations to focus on respecting International Law, respect for sovereignty, and maintaining unilateral relations.

Saudi Arabia's national security adviser Musaad bin Mohammed al-Aiban in an agreement that later ended up in a handshake with Ali Shamkhani, secretary of Iran's



Saudi Arabia's national security adviser Musaad bin Mohammed al-Aiban, left, Wang Yi, China's top diplomat, and Ali Shamkhani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, in Beijing.

Supreme National Security Council, in Beijing last Thursday together with Wang Yi, China's top diplomat.

The Iran-Saudi deal is a victory for Chinese diplomacy and underscored Beijing's growing clout in the Middle East region. It is also a challenge to the US, whose traditionally strong relations with Riyadh have cooled recently. Iran and Saudi Arabia had previously held several rounds of talks hosted by Iraq and Oman.

The improvement in Saudi-Iranian relations also comes during a period of increasing tensions between the Islamic republic and the west over Tehran's crackdown on protesters, its nuclear ambitions, and the sale of combat drones to Russia that are used to attack Ukraine.

Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, who was in Beijing for the negotiations, said the groundwork for the agreement was laid at last month's meeting in Beijing between president Ebrahim Raisi and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping.

The visit paved the way for new and very serious negotiations between Iranian and Saudi delegations," Shamkhani told state-run Nournews. "Talks

between Iran and Saudi Arabia] were direct, transparent, comprehensive, and constructive. Addressing misunderstandings and looking at the future can help develop stability and regional security."

Xi also visited Saudi Arabia late last year to attend summits with Arab leaders, a move that was aimed at showcasing Beijing's broader ambitions in the region.

China's top diplomat Wang Yi described the agreement as a "victory for peace", according to a foreign ministry statement. Wang also said it showed that the world's problems were "not limited to the Ukraine issue" a reference to Russia's invasion and that there were others "related to peace and people's livelihood that require the attention of the international community".

The tensions between Riyadh and Tehran escalated last year during Iran's mass protests, with the authorities there accusing Saudi Arabia of funding media that allegedly incited the unrest. Western intelligence services around this time also picked up the chatter of a possible Iranian attack on Saudi Arabia, according to diplomats. The US said a show of force had prompted Iran to

reconsider its plans.

Riyadh also accused Iran of backing Houthi rebels in Yemen that it has been battling for more than seven years. Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which together led the military intervention into Yemen, have come under attack from Houthis who have targeted oil facilities and airports.

Riyadh also stood on the opposite side to Iran in Syria, where the kingdom backed rebel groups against President Bashar al-Assad's regime. Iran and Russia supported Assad, who has regained much of the country from the opposition. Saudi Arabia has in recent months suggested that Syria should return to the international fold.

A spokesperson for the National Security Council said the US welcomed "efforts to help end the war in Yemen and de-escalate tensions in the Middle East.

"De-escalation and diplomacy together with deterrence are key pillars of the policy President Joe Biden outlined during his visit to the region last year," the spokesperson added.

Now that the matter has being settled the regional rivals are expected to reopen embassies within two months as they re-

establish ties and a security agreement after the Beijing talks.

On this note, Saudi Arabia would hope that Iran will halt Houthi drone and missile strikes on the kingdom and that Iran would help with Saudi talks with the Houthis. But officials stressed that expectations would, at least initially, remain low.

The pact does not necessarily mean any change in the Saudi approach to the Palestinian conflict, where it has been warning Israel that it is on course to cause dangerous bloodshed.

However, the deal will cause concern among many Israeli politicians who have sought global isolation from its arch-enemy Iran. Naftali Bennett, the former Israeli prime minister, described the pact as a "serious and dangerous" development and a "fatal blow to the effort to create a regional alliance" against the Islamic Republic.

Saudi Arabia has refused to join the Abraham Accords that normalized relations between Israel and the Arab states.

The western powers must increase efforts to safeguard this process and encourage the Saudis and Iran to continue their participation in the Syria peace talks.

Foreign News

Judicial law passes first vote in Israeli Knesset

THE Israeli parliament has advanced a bill that would allow it to overrule Supreme Court rulings and enact laws that had been struck down, despite months of protests against it.

The Knesset took until the early hours of Tuesday morning to pass the first reading of the bill, which has been one of the main priorities of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his governing coalition of far-right and ultra-Orthodox religious parties.

Late on Monday night, in another win for Netanyahu, the parliament also advanced a bill that would make it harder to remove the prime minister over the corruption charges that still hang over him.

The bill would allow the parliament to declare a prime minister unfit to rule only for physical or mental reasons and would replace current law that opens the door for a leader to be removed under other circumstances.

Another bill that passed the first reading would allow more settlements in the northern occupied West Bank, which would lead to the legalisation of settlement outposts considered illegal even under Israeli law.

The vote comes only weeks after Israeli settlers rampaged through a Palestinian town last month, killing one man and setting fire to dozens of homes and cars. Settlements in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem are already considered illegal under international law.

The bills voted on overnight require additional votes before being enshrined into law. The steps were the latest in a series of moves by Netanyahu's coalition to modify Israel's legal system.

The prime minister and his allies say the effort is aimed at reining in an activist court.



Netanyahu

Critics say the drive would upend the country's checks and balances and concentrate power in the hands of Netanyahu and his parliamentary majority.

Netanyahu and his ultranationalist and religious coalition allies have pledged to plough ahead with the legal changes despite demonstrations by tens of thousands of Israeli protesters over the past two months.

Business leaders, legal experts and retired military leaders have joined the protests, and Israeli reservists have threatened to stop reporting for duty if the change passes.

The new bill would require approval by three-quarters of the government, and could be overridden by the prime minister.

The proposed change to the rules overseeing the removal of a prime minister is of personal importance to Netanyahu, who returned to power late last year after Israel's fifth election in under four years.

He is on trial on charges of fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes, and denies the allegations.

The proceedings have dragged on for nearly three years. Good governance groups and other critics have called on the country's attorney general to deem Netanyahu unfit for office.

Speaking to members of his Likud party on Monday, Netanyahu lashed out at the Israeli media, saying they are broadcasting a "never-ending tsunami of fake news" against him.

Palestinian citizens of Israel, who make up some 20 percent of the population, have been largely absent from the protests, in part because they suffer from discrimination in Israel and because of Israel's treatment of Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and blockaded Gaza Strip.

At least 70 Palestinians have been killed by Israelis this year under Israel's new government, many of them during Israeli military raids.

It brings up the total of Palestinians killed in the occupied West Bank over the past year to more than 220.

More than 40 Israelis and foreign nationals have been killed in attacks by Palestinians during the same period.

THE South African Labour Appeal Court has ordered striking state healthcare workers to end a weeklong walkout that has affected services in some of the country's big hospitals, the health department said.

The court interdict on Monday will help stabilise services at the affected hospitals, the department said. Striking workers have been ordered to go back to work by Tuesday morning, it added.

"The strike has disrupted provision of essential healthcare services in the country, leading to untold suffering and frustrations amongst the public who desperately needed healthcare and life-saving treatment," said South Africa's Health Minister Joe Phaahla.

Since last week, the National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (NEHAWU) members have been on strike after wage talks with the government failed.

The health department said on Sunday that clinical operations were hamstrung by a low nursing and administrative support staff turnout.

The labour relations act prohibits essential services workers from engaging in

S A court orders workers to end strike

strike action which is detrimental to healthcare services with a risk of loss of life, he told a press briefing.

Union leaders could not be immediately reached for comment.

The union has been demanding a 10 percent wage hike, but the government offered 4.7 percent, according to local media SABC News.

The union said in a statement on Sunday that "no amount of litigation or intimidation by the government will deter us from this noble worthy cause that

we have embarked on".

NEHAWU leader Zola Saphetha told a news conference that the government's demand to end the dispute "is another demonstration of how far government is prepared to undermine and collapse collective bargaining and the dispute resolution mechanism by imposing their will on workers".

The South African military said it had deployed medics to help in the affected hospitals at the request of the health department.



Ramaphosa

Ukraine's future depends on eastern battlefields

-Zelenskyy

UKRAINE'S future depends on the outcome of the battle raging around Bakhmut and other key cities and towns in the country's east, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has said.

"It is very tough in the east, very painful. We need to destroy the enemy's military

might, and we will," Zelenskyy said in his regular night-time address on Monday.

Zelenskyy said he was "grateful to each and every one who is now in combat ... to everyone who never lets down those who are next to them on the frontline."

Russia has said that capturing Bakhmut opens a path to taking control of the entire Donetsk region, one of its central war aims.

After weeks of grinding and bloody fighting, the Ukrainian military says it is intent on staying to fight in Bakhmut in order to inflict severe losses on the Russian assault force, which is said to have thrown a huge number of troops into what has become the war's longest and most hard-fought battle without regards for casualties.

Russian forces led by the Wagner mercenary army have captured Bakhmut's east but have so far failed to encircle the city despite making announcements over recent weeks that a Ukrainian defeat was imminent.

NATO also warned last week that Bakhmut could fall within a matter of days.

Ukraine's forces in continuing to fight have depleted and worn down Russian forces in Bakhmut, which has also diverted Russia's focus and its firepower from launching a planned counterattack in the spring, Ukrainian officials say.

A Ukrainian counterattack to relieve Bakhmut is increasingly expected.

According to Russian reports, several Ukrainian brigades were massed between the cities of

Sloviansk and Kostyantynivka for this purpose. So far, however, the mud that is typical for this time of year as winter snow melts in Ukraine has not allowed for quick advances off paved roads.

Ukrainian soldiers deployed near Kreminna, north of Bakhmut, said on Monday they were repelling intensified Russian attacks.

In a forested area some 8km (5 miles) from the front in Bakhmut, Ukrainian artillery boomed, firing at Russian positions to the northeast while explosions rumbled constantly in the distance as the heavy fighting ground on.

Mykhailo Anest, a 35-year-old Ukrainian medic, told the Reuters news agency that there was still lots of artillery and mortar fire but that the fighting had lessened compared with last month.

The battle for Bakhmut is also being fought out on social media as Russia spreads disinformation, Kyiv has claimed.

The Ukrainian Centre for Strategic Communications said on Monday that Russia was spreading advertisements on Facebook about alleged successes of Russian troops through anonymous channels.

Among other things, it claims that the battle for Bakhmut is "lost from the Ukrainian point of view" and that "the West does not believe in Ukraine". Other posts include the US being said to reduce its arms supplies because "Ukrainian authorities have been caught stealing".

Bakhmut officials said on Monday that there were still more than 4,000 people, including 33 children, living in the city, which had a pre-war population of about 75,000.

Biden to sign executive order on gun control

PRESIDENT Joe Biden is expected to sign an executive order on Tuesday aiming to increase the number of background checks to buy guns, promote better and more secure firearms storage and ensure U.S. law enforcement agencies are getting the most out of a bipartisan gun control law enacted last summer.

The Democratic president plans to unveil his latest efforts at curbing gun violence in a speech from Monterey Park, California, said a senior White House official, who discussed the order ahead of its signing on the condition of anonymity. In January, a gunman stormed a

dance hall in the community near Los Angeles and shot 20 people, killing 11, following a Lunar New Year celebration.

Biden's rhetoric has only grown stronger around guns — he routinely calls for banning so-called assault weapons in his speeches — and Democrats didn't push such a vocal anti-gun platform even during the Obama administration, when Biden was vice president. But Biden has been emboldened by the midterms after his regular talk of gun control didn't result in massive losses, and he's expected to continue to push for strong changes as he inches toward a 2024 run, his aides

say.

Biden invited Brandon Tsay, the 26-year-old who wrestled the semi-automatic pistol away from the gunman in Monterey Park, to his State of the Union address and praised the young man's heroism.

But his power is limited to go beyond bipartisan legislation passed by Congress last summer, the most sweeping gun violence bill in decades. It followed the killings last year of 10 shoppers at a Buffalo, New York, grocery store and 19 students and two teachers at a Uvalde, Texas, elementary school.

Biden will mandate that his Cabinet work on a plan to better structure the government to support communities suffering from gun violence, said the senior White House official who previewed the order. The plan will call on Attorney General Merrick Garland to shore up the rules for federally licensed gun dealers so they know they are required to do background checks as part of Biden is also mandating better reporting of ballistics data from federal law enforcement for a clearinghouse that allows federal, state and local law enforcement to match shell casings to guns. But local and state law enforcement agencies are not required to report ballistics data, and many do not, making the clearinghouse less effective.

And the president is going to ask the Federal Trade Commission to issue a public report analyzing how gun manufacturers market to minors and use military images to market to the general public.

The bill passed last year, known as the Safer Communities Act, is viewed by gun control advocates as a good start but one that doesn't go far enough. After the law was signed, there were 11 other mass shootings, according to a database of mass killings since 2006 maintained by The Associated Press, USA Today and Northeastern University. Those killings don't include shootings in which fewer than four people were killed — and gun violence is also rising nationwide.

Biden will also direct his Cabinet to make sure law enforcement agencies understand the benefits of the new law, particularly around red-flag laws, also known as extreme risk protection orders, which are intended to temporarily remove guns from people with potentially violent behavior and prevent them from hurting themselves or others.

Last month, the Justice Department sent out more than \$200 million to help states and the District of Columbia administer red-flag laws and other crisis-intervention programs.



Biden

Feature

Inside the courts and challenging election outcomes

By **SAMSON ITODO**

LITIGATING election disputes is contentious, complex, and excessively technical. This accounts for the reason election tribunals and courts make efforts to resolve election disputes but often fail to address the grievances of litigants. As expected, political attention is shifting to the courts as aggrieved candidates and political parties that contested in Nigeria's 2023 general elections are approaching the courts to challenge the outcome of the polls and seeking legal remedies. The polling unit was the arena of electoral competition a few weeks ago, but the courts have displaced the polling units as the new arena for electoral contests. As it stands, the courts will determine the final vote in all election disputes it entertains.

The process of registering a complaint or challenging the outcome of the election is called an election petition. Election tribunals or the courts address grievances with election results ventilated by litigants. Unlike other cases, election petitions are special cases in a class of their own. Due to their special nature, the procedures, courts, and timelines for filing documents are unique. Some technical defects or irregularities considered immaterial in other proceedings could be fatal to proceedings in election petitions. Let's consider five critical components of Nigeria's election adjudication process.

Not all persons can question an election outcome

Different categories of persons participate in elections, but not all possess the right to challenge or question the result of an election. Section 133 of the Electoral Act 2022 defines persons entitled to present an election petition. They include candidates in an election and a political party that participated in the election. A person whose election is questioned is a party to an election petition. Where the complaint is against a permanent or ad hoc official of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the electoral commission will be listed as a party due to its role in the administration of elections. Nigeria's electoral law considers these persons necessary parties in an election petition. An election petition will suffer an ill fate if these parties are excluded.

The person (s) or political party that initiates or files an election petition is referred to as the Petitioner, while the person or party the petition is made against is called the Respondent. In most cases, the Petitioner will seek to establish that the candidate INEC declared the winner was not validly elected or that they are entitled to be declared the winner. The respondents will include the person or party declared the election winner. A tribunal or Court would not entertain any petition that questions an election result or a winner declared by INEC unless the person announced as a winner is joined as a party.

Special tribunals and courts



Malami

resolve election disputes

A distinctive feature of election petitions lies in the courts and tribunals with judicial powers to resolve election disputes. The 1999 Constitution, as amended and Electoral Act 2022, establishes the following tribunals and courts with jurisdictional competencies;

National Assembly and State Houses of Assembly Election Tribunals for each state of the federation and the FCT with authority to entertain petitions on National Assembly and House of Assembly elections (Section 285(1) 1999 Constitution as amended)

Governorship Election Tribunal to hear and determine petitions for governorship elections (Section 285(2) 1999 Constitution as amended)

Court of Appeal to adjudicate petitions against presidential elections (Section 239(1) 1999 Constitution)

Area Council Election Tribunal to resolve disputes related to the elections into the office of the Chairman and Councilors within the FCT. (Section 131(1) Electoral Act 2022)

As a matter of law, election petition tribunals are constituted not later than 30 days before an election holds. The Tribunal is required to open registries for business seven days before the election. These tribunals and courts can only resolve an election dispute if the law gives them authority. Without the legal power, any proceeding conducted by these tribunals or Courts will be an exercise in futility. An election tribunal or Court must fulfill certain conditions before it assumes jurisdiction to resolve an election dispute. First, Tribunal or Court must be properly constituted. Members of the panel should be duly qualified as prescribed by law. Secondly, the subject matter of the case is within the defined scope or powers of the Tribunal or Court. Lastly, due process is followed in

initiating the case before a court, and all pre-conditions have been satisfied.

All timeframes are sacrosanct. The Constitution and Electoral Act make explicit provisions on the timeframe within which an aggrieved person can institute a legal case challenging the result of an election. The law also provides a timeline for the courts to determine an election petition. The Court will only entertain an election petition if the petition is filed within the timeframe prescribed by the law. The Petitioner intending to challenge an election result must file their petition within 21 days after the declaration of the election results. Filing a petition outside the fixed period renders it incompetent and strips the Tribunal of the jurisdiction to hear and determine the petition.

An election tribunal has 180 days from the filing date to hear and determine an election petition. Any petition determined outside 180 days is invalid. Any person displeased with the decision of the National/State Assembly or Governorship election tribunal must file a notice of appeal in the registry of the Tribunal or Court within 21 days from the decision date. An appeal against the decision of the Tribunal must be disposed of by the appellate courts (Court of Appeal and Supreme Court) within 60 days from the

date of the delivery of judgment by the Tribunal or Court. In addition, appeals from the decision of the Court of Appeal to the Supreme Court shall be filed within 14 days from the date the decision appealed against was delivered. It takes approximately eight months to resolve a dispute on National/State Assembly elections, ten months in the case of a governorship election petition, and eight months to determine a presidential election petition. No matter the exigencies, or emergencies, the time fixed by the constitution to hear and determine election cases cannot be extended.

Grounds for challenging an election must be recognised by law

Any individual or political party that intends to challenge or question the result of an election must ensure the petition is established on a valid ground or reason recognized by law. An election petition can only succeed with valid grounds recognized by the 1999 Constitution or 2022 Electoral Act. Section 134 of the Electoral Act 2022 lays out three grounds. They include;

Non-qualification: An election can be questioned if the person declared as a winner was not qualified to contest the election at the time of the election. Where a candidate fails to meet the criteria enshrined in the constitution, such a person is ineligible to contest an election. The requirements of citizenship, age (President 35yrs, Senate and Governors 35yrs, House of Reps and State assembly 25yrs), membership and sponsorship by a political party, and education qualification are the foundational criteria for running for office.

Corrupt practices and non-compliance: A petitioner must establish that the election was invalid by reason of corrupt practices or non-compliance with provisions of the 2022 Electoral Act. Corrupt practices include electoral offenses like election fraud, bribery, falsification of election results. Non-compliance refers to outright violations of the 2022 Electoral Act and INEC Guidelines, which confers an undue advantage to a candidate or party.

Failure of the person declared a winner to score a majority of lawful votes: Once the person initiating the petition can establish the candidate declared a winner of an election was not duly

elected by the majority of lawful votes cast at the election, the election will be nullified. This ground relates to errors, computational accuracy in the collation of votes, and exclusion of votes against the person filing the petition and that the person declared the winner fails to meet the legal requirement to be returned as a winner.

Tribunal judgments are appealable.

Litigants who are dissatisfied with rulings delivered by election tribunals or courts of first instance can appeal such judgments as a matter of constitutional right. Appeals arising from the decision of the Court of Appeal in respect of a presidential election shall be heard by the Supreme Court, which is the Court of last resort. In contrast, appeals against the decision of a Governorship election tribunal lie to the Court of Appeal and from the Court of Appeal to the Supreme Court, which is the final arbiter. Lastly, appeals on National and State Assembly election tribunal judgments are filed at the Court of Appeal, which is the final Court for all appeals related to legislative elections.

While the recourse to an unelected body of judges to resolve election disputes signals increasing faith in the judicial process, it also exposes the desperation of politicians to exploit the litigation process to clinch electoral victory. Without good judges, the aspiration of advancing electoral justice and political legitimacy may be thwarted. Charles Evans Hughes, in his presidential address to the American Bar Association, described a good judge as: -

"An honest, high-minded, able and fearless judge is, therefore, the most servant of democracy, for he illuminates justice as he interprets and applies the law; as he makes clear the benefits and shortcomings of the standards of individual and community rights amongst a free people."

May good judges rise when it matters most to enforce the will of the people expressed through the ballot box.

Itodo is an election, democracy, and public policy enthusiast. Itodo serves as the Executive Director of Yiaga Africa. He is also a board member of the Kofi Annan Foundation and the Board of Advisers of International IDEA.

"Litigants who are dissatisfied with rulings delivered by election tribunals or courts of first instance can appeal such judgments as a matter of constitutional right. Appeals arising from the decision of the Court of Appeal in respect of a presidential election shall be heard by the Supreme Court, which is the Court of last resort. In contrast, appeals against the decision of a Governorship election tribunal lie to the Court of Appeal and from the Court of Appeal to the Supreme Court, which is the final arbiter. Lastly, appeals on National and State Assembly election tribunal judgments are filed at the Court of Appeal, which is the final Court for all appeals related to legislative elections."

EYE'S ON THE WORLD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

Living

Taking on the right path in life

BY BECKY MEINSCHIN

HAVE you ever wondered if you're on the right path in life?

I think everyone does at one time or another.

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

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

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

Things start aligning for you.

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

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

Oftentimes, it feels like a mere coincidence or even a miracle; and maybe it is, but if you're experiencing this, why question it?

You don't allow obstacles to stop you.

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

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

You care less than usual about what other people think.

When you're feeling aligned and in the flow that comes with it, you'll feel less of a desire to seek the approval of other people. You won't need to get



not what you're doing is acceptable or right because you'll already be able to feel it. **You feel motivated, energized, and excited about what you're doing and where you're headed.**

You're proud of what you're doing and you get very excited to talk to others about it. You look forward to waking up in the morning and feel eager to get back to the task. Is this happening for you? Take this as a good sign that you're doing exactly what you should be doing!

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

Deciding between two options or what your next best steps should be is often easy (or at least easier) when you're on the right track.

Even if you're unaware of it, heading in the right direction and feeling good about it usually means that you've tapped into, and are able to access, your intuition.

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

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

Hard work doesn't feel hard – but rather, it's exciting, rejuvenating, and energizing. Some people describe themselves as going into a sort of creative

trance: losing hours or a whole day when they're working on something that lights them up and feeds their soul. **Your overall "bad**

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

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

Your health seems to support you.

Chronic stress raises the level of cortisol and other hormones in your body that ultimately lead to a weakened immune system.

This makes it easy to

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

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

When you're choosing the right path in life for you and your soul, you won't feel like you're selling out, or doing things that you'll later have to apologize for or regret. When you can stand in confidence about your decisions and actions, without having to make excuses, you know you're heading in the right direction.

Working hard towards your goals may make you

tired but not depleted.

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

On the contrary, if you're out of sync with who you are, you'll often come away feeling depleted and exhausted. It's as if you have to force yourself to keep going.

Are You on the Right Path?

Ultimately, deciding which path to take, and whether it's right for you, is something only YOU can determine. There isn't necessarily only one right path for each individual as many roads may lead to the same destination.

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

Take a step back and assess the situation. Then, figure out what doesn't feel right and tweak wherever necessary. Remember: you can check back in with these signs to evaluate how your new direction is going at any time along the way.



EVER'S WORLD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

Relationship

Recognizing and dealing with a lying spouse



BY CARLOS JUAN

MARRIAGES are made in heaven, but in some cases, they do not turn out as planned, especially if a partner is unfaithful and you notice signs the spouse is lying. Have you ever noticed your spouse suddenly locking their social media apps with extra security or lying to you that they were busy at the office while being out at a party? These are the signs that you must identify to understand the relationship problem. An unfaithful partner can destroy a relationship and cause irreparable damage to the relationship. Sometimes, it might just be a communication problem, and a heartfelt conversation is sometimes all you need to get your relationship back on track. Read on to know your partner is lying, common signs of a liar, and how to deal with the situation.

Avoids eye contact: The most common sign of lying is when your spouse avoids eye contact. If your spouse usually answers you without looking at you when you ask them a question, it is a clear indicator that they are lying.

Evades direct answer: You ask your spouse, "Did you drink with a friend last night?" Their reply will be, "Why would I do that?" or "Why did you ask me this?" They will ask you back to assess your reaction and take some time to come up with answers that bring them the

least trouble. They will also do this to check if you really know something, and if you don't, they will use it against you and take you on a guilt trip for doubting them.

Uses too many word fillers: If caught off guard, your spouse may fumble and buy time to come up with a lie. They will use many fillers, such as "umm" or "err." They might also appear distracted and fidgety because they are nervous. Sometimes.

Changes their body language: If a person is lying and feels nervous, it will show frequently in some degree in their awkward body language. They will shrug their shoulders, sweat a little more, play with their hair, and try to hide behind physical objects such as chairs or tables. If you observe keenly, you will notice that their body language is unusual, and they are hiding something.

Changes their tone or speech: When lying, your spouse may suddenly start to stutter or make a slip of the tongue. They may also speak faster than usual, hoping to end the conversation. The tone of their speech may also change, and they may act sweet, using endearments they don't usually use.

Does not stick to one story: Ask them to describe an incident and ask again in a few days. If

their answers vary, they may be lying.

Keeps their phone locked and away from you: If your spouse hides something, they will make sure that their phone is out of bounds for you. They will lock it with a code and may even keep it on silent mode most of the time. When you are around, they will immediately lock the phone. If they answer calls far away from you, they do not want you to know certain things and may even lie to you.

To avoid hurting you: You may often seek your partner's advice on small things such as your clothes, work samples, or any routine incident or event in your life. Sometimes, your spouse may notice that you made a mistake, but to avoid hurting you, they may lie. This lie is usually harmless and often used to give you instant happiness.

To look good in your eyes: Your spouse may have created a certain image of themselves in their mind that they would like to preserve. They may try to live up to the image so that you will continue to love them.

To control the amount of information you have: Some people don't like to provide others with too much information about themselves. It doesn't matter if you are married to them; they will

still hide certain details of their lives. For example.

To avoid explanation: It may be that your partner thinks you may endlessly ask them about what they have done or plan to do. To them, this may seem troublesome, and lying is an easy way out. For example, they spend time with friends but lie to you that they are working. It's not that they want to hide something, but they are worried that you might think they are spending time with friends drinking too much alcohol, or even flirting. Thus, they may lie to avoid explanation.

To avoid confrontation: You may hate your partner doing a certain thing. But if they can't stop doing it, they will lie to you about it. For

To break up with you: This may not always be the case, but it is not impossible. Your partner may not want to continue the relationship with you and sees no reason for telling you everything, so they choose to lie. They may hope that you will eventually get a whiff of it.

How To Deal With A Lying Spouse

Perhaps you are right about your partner lying to you. But what can you do about it? Here are some ways to deal with a lying spouse.

Observe their habit of lying: First, you need to understand

when and why your partner lies to you. Are they lying to cover up their bad habit? Do they lie when you ask for their opinion on something? Are they lying to hide something from you? You need to understand if there are certain patterns to it or if they are a habitual liar.

Discuss the issue with them:

If your partner is a habitual liar, confront them. Tell them how their habit of lying affects you and undermines the trust factor in the relationship. If they lie to protect your feelings, assure them that they can be honest with you. They can speak to you without being dishonest about their feelings. Try to find a way to resolve the problem.

Change your attitude: In most cases, your partner may be lying because they cannot handle your reaction to it. After discussing with your partner, try to reflect on your reaction to see if you can bring any change that will enable honest communication between you and your partner.

Consult a marriage counselor: Seek help from a marriage counselor if your partner continues to lie despite all your efforts. Your partner may have stopped lying, but you may be judging your partner based on your past experiences. A marriage counselor can help you look at things objectively.

Editorial

Plateau politics: Need for caution

THE 2023 general elections in the Federal Republic of Nigeria has been underway and is climaxing with the states gubernatorial and Houses of Assembly election, come 18th March, 2023. Though the presidential and National Assembly elections of February 25, 2023, were deemed to be relatively peaceful. Nigerians still await adjudications through the due judicial processes.

HOWEVER, it need be pointed out that, in a democracy, there must be a winner and a loser, it is not a matter of do-or-die because, the peoples will must prevail. Anything to the contrary is an anathema to the democratic ethos. Ultimately, Nigerians, qualified electorates are in a poll position to exercise their franchise in electing their leaders in the next dispensation for the next four years.

HERE on the Plateau, since the return to democracy in 1999, it has been rosy and electorally-wise in spite of some pockets of litigations as electoral fall outs. Unarguably, it is still embedded in the electoral system. Needless to say, in whatever credible system or process, flaw(s) may occur but, caution should be the watchword.

WE believe that Plateau people are naturally gifted with patience, resilience and resoluteness. Come this Saturday, the virtues and valors cannot depart from the original Plateau man that is worth his or her salt. As the land of "peace and tourism", this noble and dignified values should be exhibited to its logical conclusion.

HOWEVER, it becomes worrisome when some of our religious leaders become merchants of hate speech and instigators of needless electoral violence leading to mayhem and deaths. That simply is recklessness personified. Plateau people are very accommodating and not violent, therefore, those so called clerics should sheath their swords and allow peace to reign.

SINCE September 2001 when Plateau State had the unsavoury experience of the devilish act of terrorism, the state witnessed severally wanton destructions of lives and property. Perhaps by divine intervention, the state has been able to extricate itself from those unfortunate incidences.

AS the gubernatorial and Houses of Assembly election approaches, it is being observed that politicians and their supporters have taken a swipe to engage in campaigns of deceit, falsehood and character assassination instead of facing the real issues.

WE therefore condemn the incipient culture of character assassination and blackmail that has crept into the gubernatorial campaigns. Let us warn that such trend and tendency portend grave danger to a sane and civilized democratic culture that Nigerians are aspiring to enthrone.

IT is even much more regrettable and unfortunate that the smear campaigns were particularly directed at the candidates themselves; thereby belittling the persons of would be governor of Plateau State.

THESE campaigns that were supposed to be issue-based are veering off into mudslinging and cheap propaganda. It noted that the concentration and frequency of the pieces of blackmail woven around the candidates is creating a bad impression about those candidates and their supporters. Such should be discontinued to avoid future occurrences. Plateau indigenes should not be known for such acts.

WE equally want to appeal to the youths to exhibit high decorum, caution, calm and restraint as they go to the polls. After all, it is often said, and rightly too, that the youths are leaders of tomorrow. Plateau does not deserve anything less. We must together excel in this Saturday's gubernatorial and House of Assembly elections.

THE Bukuru Cattle Market is said to be one of the oldest in Northern Nigeria but not much has been done to keep it in and better condition.

The cattle market which is located in Jos South local government area of Plateau State dates back to the Nigerian colonial Period where traders and other business activities usually take place and is popularly known as Karra Market.

Recently, traders in the market were asked to quit by the local government authority which it was gathered that contract was awarded to a company for its modernization but uptill now not much has been seen in terms of work on the site.

Although traders at Bukuru Cattle Market have raised concern over the quit notice given to them by the Jos South Local Government Council. I wish to therefore suggest that instead of demolition of the market and relocating them, to a new place, why not modernize the present market to a better standard in order to generate more revenue



Government should renovate Bukuru cattle market

for the local government and the state at large. In view of the influx of business activities in the market.

Considering the importance of the market as a business hub, I wish to appeal to the Plateau State Government under the able leadership of His

Excellency, Rt. Hon. Simon Bako Lalong, to kindly wade into the lingering issue surrounding the modernization of the cattle market for the local government and the state at large.

Fatima Abdulkarim Taye is an IT student from Federal Polytechnic Bauchi.

Rikkos community needs portable drinking water

I want to use this medium of THE NIGERIAN STANDARD to appeal to the Plateau State government to come to the aid of the people of Rikkos community with the provision of portable drinking water.

People of Rikkos community have

to go through difficult challenges on a daily basis trying to source water for their daily cooking and other domestic usage due to the absence of pipe borne water.

The people now depend on water vendors, wells, River ponds

which are the main sources of getting water in the area.

As we all know, water is life, it makes life much easier and without modern water facilities, the health implication could be devastating with cholera and diarrhea and other health hazards which can be contracted due to the inability to access good water.

However in order to safeguard the health of the people of the area, there is need to provide water for the well being of the people in that community.

I also want to appeal to the Plateau State government to assist the people of rikkos communities with pipe borne water in other to ease their daily suffering of going to search for water at odd time of the day and the need for boreholes and the provision of clean water to be provided in the area so that the people can have a cause to have this basic amenity for domestic use which can be of great benefit for all the citizens and also give them a sense of belonging.

Abdul Azeez Abubakar is an IT student from Federal Polytechnic Bauchi.

PLSG, please place priority on early child education

A child's early foundation for his or her future development provides a strong base for a life long learning abilities.

Children who are enrolled in every child education programme tend to achieve more success at school with better career opportunities. This is necessary for holistic development of a child's social, emotional and physical needs in order to build a solid and broad foundation for life long learning and well being.

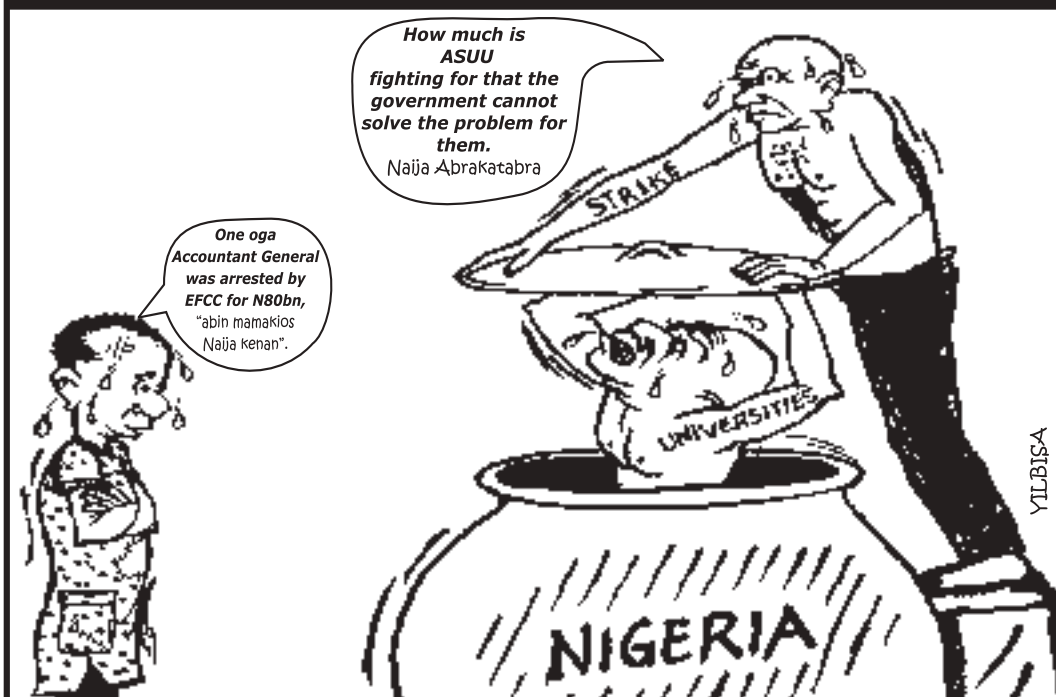
A good discipline in early childhood education programme also helps the child in the future while it is important to note that early childhood education can

expose and expand the child's scope of learning and growth in the environment and expose his or her understanding in terms of knowledge and development particularly in the acquisition of learning skills.

I therefore wish to appeal to the Plateau State Government to as a matter of priority place emphasis on compulsory education for every child. This policy would lay a foundation for a better and prosperous future for our children as well as for the overall development of the country.

Ibrahim Khadija Hassan is an IT student from Federal Polytechnic Bauchi.

Standard Cartoon



Opinion

African leadership: The rise of a dynamic generation

By **AHMED KABALLO**

FOR decades, Africa has been portrayed in the media as a continent beset by poverty, conflict, and instability. However, a new generation of African leaders and business thought leaders is breaking this mould and demonstrating the continent's vast potential for progress and growth.

These leaders come from a variety of backgrounds, but they share a common vision for Africa's future. They are well-educated, tech-savvy, and deeply committed to their communities. They understand the challenges that Africa faces and are determined to find solutions that will move the continent forward.

One such leader is Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, a Nigerian economist who was recently appointed as the Director-General of the World Trade Organization. With a career that has spanned academia, government, and the private sector, Okonjo-Iweala brings a

wealth of experience and expertise to her new role. Her appointment is a testament to the rising influence of African leaders on the world stage.

Another leader who is making waves is the Economist, Tony Elumelu, chairman of Heirs Holdings and UBA group and a mentor to young Africans through his foundation. Africa being the fastest growing and second largest market in the world, his mission of nurturing young entrepreneurs and business critical thinkers could not be more timely.

In Kenya, the tech industry is booming, and entrepreneurs like Peter Njonjo who co-founded Twiga foods, are leading the way. Njonjo is the co-founder of Twiga foods, an e-commerce platform that is transforming the way farmers in Africa do business. He is one of a growing number of young leaders who are using technology to drive economic growth and improve the lives of people across the continent.

Of the most famous young

African faces and ambassador on a global stage is the immediate former host of the Daily Show and world-renowned comedian, Trevor Noah. Noah has used his global platforms to tell stories, curate comedy skits and write literature with an African perspective. Today, he could arguably be one of South Africa's greatest unofficial brand ambassadors.

These young leaders are not content to simply follow in the footsteps of previous generations. They are charting Africa's growing influence and a new course for Africa, one that is centred on innovation, collaboration, and a deep commitment to their communities. They are leveraging technology and entrepreneurship to create new opportunities and drive economic growth.

Kaballo is CEO & founder, African Stream

The rise of this new

“These young leaders are not content to simply follow in the footsteps of previous generations. They are charting a new course for Africa, one that is centred on innovation, collaboration, and a deep commitment to their communities. They are leveraging technology and entrepreneurship to create new opportunities and drive economic growth. The rise of this new generation of African leaders represents a turning point for the continent. It is a sign of Africa's growing influence and potential, and it offers hope for a bright and prosperous future.”

The value of good education

By **DANIEL IGHAKPE**

“WHAT sculpture is to a block of marble, education is to the soul.”—Joseph Addison, 1711.

DID you ever go to school? Most people can answer yes—but not everyone can. Untold millions of children receive no regular schooling, and this has continued to be the case for a long time, so that today a large number of adults are illiterate. Yet, a good education is a basic need.

The Holy Scriptures strongly encourage the acquisition of wisdom, for example, at Proverbs 3:21, where it says: “Safeguard practical wisdom and thinking ability” and at Proverbs 4:7, where we read: “Wisdom is the most important thing, so acquire wisdom, and with all you acquire, acquire understanding.”

Wisdom implies a breadth of knowledge and a depth of understanding. Understanding adds strength to wisdom, contributing greatly to a person's discretion and foresight, which are also notable characteristics of wisdom. The Biblical sense of wisdom lays emphasis on sound judgment, based on knowledge and understanding; the ability to use knowledge and understanding successfully

to solve problems, avoid or avert dangers, attain certain goals, or counsel others in doing so.

Education is closely related to wisdom and understanding in the sense that education involves the gradual process of acquiring knowledge and understanding. Education holds the key to a better life. A good education prepares people to cope successfully with life in today's society. It equips them with academic skills, including the ability to read and write well and to do arithmetic. Moreover, it affects their interaction with others and helps them build up wholesome standards of morality. Also, as human society becomes even more complex, a good education takes on greater importance. Everyone, including children, deserve to be properly equipped with the necessary skills required for them to function effectively in the world.

In earliest society, the family was the basic unit for imparting education. The father was the head of the family and was therefore responsible for the education of his household. Today, parents continue to be the primary ones responsible for the education of their children, especially their

early education.

However, in some areas today, parents sometimes send their sons to school but not their daughters. Perhaps some parents think that it is too expensive to educate their daughters and believe that girls can be more useful to their mother by staying at home all day. But illiteracy will handicap a daughter. One UNICEF publication stated: “Study after study has demonstrated that providing education for girls is one of the best strategies for breaking the hold of poverty.” Educated girls are better equipped for life and make wiser decisions, thus benefiting all in the family.

In some other places children are deprived of formal education, and then handed over to someone to learn a trade. Sometimes these children are exploited. Learning a trade is a good thing, but they would be more likely to avoid exploitation if they first received a basic education and then learned a trade.

But how can a good education be possible without the proper resources? What if there are insufficient books, a lack of qualified teachers, and not enough schools? Indeed, where can people get a quality education that encourages individual participation, expands their knowledge of the world around them, and helps them achieve a better quality of life?

Apart from efforts by the government in providing quality education, other sectors of the society, such as the private sector, media, and community, can also help to improve access to quality education. This they can do by providing aids and grants, building new classroom blocks in public schools, donating educational infrastructure such as school furniture, textbooks, libraries, etc. Some private organizations could even identify some less-privileged out-of-school children, verify them, and sponsor their education. Often, a key to a good education is having a caring adult—preferably one or both of the child's own parents—who is supportive and deeply involved in the child's education.

In conclusion, here are some tips for parents and children that can help a child succeed in school:

What Parents Can Do

Get to know your child's school, its aims, and its attitude toward the values and beliefs you hold.

Become acquainted with your child's teachers, and try to build a good working relationship with them.

Take a deep interest in your child's homework. Read with him frequently.

Control what your child watches on TV and how much he watches.

Watch your child's eating habits. Junk food can have adverse effects on his/her ability to concentrate.

Make sure your child has sufficient sleep. Tired children do not learn well.

Try to help your child choose wholesome friends.

Be your child's best friend. He needs all the mature friends he can get.

What Children Can Do

With your parents' help, work out educational goals and ways to achieve them. Discuss these goals with your teachers.

Choose your subjects carefully with the help of your teachers and parents. Optional courses that are easy are generally not the best.

Try to build up a good relationship with your teachers. Find out what they expect of you. Discuss your progress and problems with them.

Pay good attention in class. Don't be drawn into disruptive behavior.

Select your friends wisely. They can help or hinder your progress at school.

Do your homework and assignments as well as you can. Give them quality time. Ask your parents or another mature adult for help if you need it.

Education is one of the greatest assets that we can ever invest in for our future. So, let us all put hands together to ensure quality education for all.

Ighakpe writes from Festac Town, Lagos via danny.ighakpe@gmail.com; 0817 479 5742.

“Education is closely related to wisdom and understanding in the sense that education involves the gradual process of acquiring knowledge and understanding. Education holds the key to a better life. A good education prepares people to cope successfully with life in today's society. It equips them with academic skills, including the ability to read and write well and to do arithmetic. Moreover, it affects their interaction with others and helps them build up wholesome standards of morality.”

Feature

Hope on the horizon for Plateau

As a Plateau son, I have never felt this proud before. I felt proud because I saw hope on the horizon through those who offered themselves and have been nominated as candidates in the forthcoming governorship election in the State. From the murky waters of politics comes the silver linen and pearl of hope for our dear state. Is anyone in doubt or at a lost as to what I meant? Please, come with me as I represent what I may prefer to call perceived or manifest hope that has uniquely visited Plateau in recent time.

ON Saturday, March 11, 2023, I listened to three frontline gubernatorial candidates who were guests at Rhythm 93.7 FM. It was a special political Radio programme which I followed that fateful day with so much pride with practical aura of confusion too. Those who might have come face to face with how difficult it can be to make an objective (not subjective) decision from very similar options will understand my dilemma shortly.

The gubernatorial candidates were Dr. Nentawe Yilwatda of the ruling APC in the state; Hon. Barr. Caleb Mutfwang of the main opposition PDP and Dr. Patrick Sunday Dakum of the LP. A computer Engineer; Legal luminary and Medical Doctor respectively. These are practically resourceful and professional gentlemen in their own rights. The reality, however, is that their respective political party affiliation, attachment to perceived goodfathers and other votes mobilisation platforms, will shape the perception of electorates and possibly affect the individual chance of each of them since political powers are mostly won or lost through popular sentiment; not, necessarily, credibility, especially, in developing climes like ours.

It was a very rare appearance on any radio programme but the special guests all shown up and after introducing them, the real business of the day began with the Radio anchor, Mr. Samson Omale asks them relevant questions which, I believe, were scientifically and professionally simulated and each of the candidates began to speak.

When the first to speak, spoke, I told myself, hey, there goes the governor; then the second followed and I said, our governor is here too. Interestingly also, when the third spoke, I saw a governor in him as well. That was when my confusion really began!

As these well respected candidates responded to second, third and subsequent questions, I became even more convinced that in speech, at least, all of them are most qualified to govern Plateau State. One might be tempted to say this is the best chance for Plateau State to have any of these candidates as its governor. The only concern, however, will be whether or not they will match their rhetorics with action when elected governor.

Plateau State has got peculiar problems which require both short and long time solutions. Some of these problems, in no particular order include unproductive civil service orientation that needs to be changed towards entrepreneurship; poor state of infrastructure which needs upgrade expansion and automation; intermittent ethno-religious and violent political crises require urgent but lasting solution; poverty and unemployment which must be reversed; human capital deficiencies that must be improved; tourism potentials that are grossly under exploited; weak and contracted Internally Generated Revenue base which must be fixed; urban congestion, dirty and disturbing environmental contradictions amongst others. Whoever scaled through as



Nentawe

governor will have these perennial problems to contend with. This means that the task ahead is harculean.

With these challenges hanging in the balance, it can be seen clearly that leadership is not luxury. It is a huge burden and practically about selfless service which can be personally unsettling to any serious minded leader. Whoever must fix the problems of Plateau State should be pitied because they are not casual but existential threats which require unusual courage, strategic and deliberate actions to fix. Those who know the length and breath of responsibilities involve in leadership often foot-drag until they are persuaded with cogent reasons to offer themselves!

The political leader Plateau State need at the critical moment must be a visionary, charismatic, pragmatic and courageous person with sound political will to minimise our threats and drive the process of realising our great potentials as a people through appropriate policy frameworks and laws. It has to be a leader that rewards excellence and hardwork on the one hand and punishes indolence and crime in a most decisive manner!

Because our challenges are multifaceted and daringly evolving, they must be compositely diagnosed and frontally confronted strategic efforts with the view to fix them with determined energy and attention. Since we live in the 21st century, we must explore 21st methods and solutions which are characteristically digital and automation compliant.

The leader (governor) must harness the experiences of past leaders of the state. This is with the view to avoid boop traps that limited performances while consolidating on their most cheering legacies toward making the state a better one.

I strongly feel a good mix of the



Mutfwang

Generation Next agenda of Dr. Nentawe; the time is now philosophy of Hon. Barr. Mutfwang and the consolidation blueprint of Dr. Dakum will ultimately advance the cause of a new Plateau. In other words, whoever wins the governorship in the state should consider it a priority to acquire and harmonise the blueprints of all the candidates towards building an enviable plateau where we can all be proud of in the community of states.

Their excellencies Dr. Patrick Dakum; Hon. Barr. Caleb Mutfwang and Dr. Nentawe Goshwe Yilwatda have told us in one and categorical frequency that they are for the unity, progress and prosperity of plateau State. Therefore, we must key into this family consensus or commitment to order our respective campaigns in a fashion that reflects this onerous motivation!

Those marshalling political propaganda as campaign strategy in the manner we are witnessing in the last few weeks are wrong and should stop it; those using character assassination as a weapon to outdo others are also wrong, avoid it. Only issue based campaigns are good enough for Plateau people whose trade in stock is rational gentlemanism!

Perhaps the unethical political horse ridding which has snowballed to shameless political propaganda and vitriolic character assassination in Plateau state is triggered by politics of zoning which makes futuristic political projectors to feel uncomfortable with a situation where failure to clinch the seat will ultimately mean waiting for decades to try again. Zoning has shortrun stabilising effect but technically longrun distabilising effect too. In other words, the seeds of discord sworn courtesy politics of zoning which is synonymous with politics of desperation in this clime has to be reviewed to through the chance open for interested but credible



Dakum

persons to try their luck.

Necessity, they say, is the mother of invention. There are no perfect systems, methods or arrangements by which nations thrive but what nations normally do when confronted with problems is to go for what works in promoting greater stability and development concurrently. A commanding debate on the stability and development benefits of our subsisting zoning arrangements or otherwise of it is being proposed, going forward. The wisdom of our living or death heroes/heroines who brought the practice of zoning for us is commendable but times are changing and there is need to fashion a new order that will take care of contemporary dynamics and threats to corporate peace in our collective heritage: Plateau. Who will even bother if our leaders are equitably transformative?

By grand design, Plateau people are peaceful people. The very fibre and heritage of the people is peace, tourism and hospitality. Anything to the contrary is counterfeit and the residents know this. Therefore, we must keep within the promise of our callings as children of God and sustain our most cherished orientation which is centred on love, faith and unity of purpose in God and the good of humanity.

While crystalising and eulogising our governorship candidates, let us not lose sight of those gunning for house of assembly representation from various state constituencies. Our representative democracy is three (3) arms structure, namely, the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. We do not elect members of the judiciary but are appointed by the executive with the understanding that they will function independently and impartially in interpreting laws. The president, governors and charmen of local governments are elected to function as executives while the

legislature is composed of counsellors, house members and national assembly members (Senate and representative members) at their respective levels.

These arms at each level of government are independent but interdependent and are meant to serve as checks and balances on one another under what is known as separation of power and the principle of checks and balances as propounded by a French political philosopher, historian, judge and man of letters, Baron de Montesquieu. Therefore, the house of assembly hopefuls are critical stakeholders and so must be scrutinised to ensure those our votes will go to for that matter have the requisite capacity to represent well without being 'rubber stamp' agents in the house of the people and house of necessary actions!

Best wishes to 'the idea whose time has come' be he Mutfwang, Dakum or Nentawe. There is only one seat for grab at Little Rayfield for the faithful service of Plateau people. We cannot all be governor at the same time. If anyone does not make it today, tomorrow is another chance. The excuse Plateau people will not take is for anyone to be graciously favoured with the coveted seat of governor and then the favoured person failed to deliver.

There is anxiety in every camp but let us take it easy, folks. Hope is the brooke that supplies men with energy when there is anxiety occasioned by viscissitudes and delimma of life. 'The best laid plans can go so wrong' as Sidney Sheldon will put it and heaven shall not fall. There is life after the electioneering campaigns and with one of these three living assets of plateau as governor. May peace, unity and progress never elude us. God forbid failure of leadership in this state, Nigeria and the world at large!

News

Pray for Nigeria's peaceful transition, Lalong tasks pilgrims

By PALANG KASMI

PLATEAU State Governor has challenged the 2023 Christian Pilgrims in the state to use the opportunity of visiting the Holy Land to pray for a peaceful transition to power for the state and Nigeria as a whole.

He gave the charge Monday, May 13, 2023 at Government House Chapel during the farewell ceremony for the intending pilgrims.

THE NIGERIA STANDARD reports that 420 persons are performing the 2023 pilgrimage.

The governor reminded them that the spiritual exercise goes a long way in reaffirming their faith and rejuvenating their connection with God, and should be seen as an opportunity to develop themselves spiritually to draw closer to God.

"I hope that you will come back with fond memories and experiences that widen your horizon to the truth of the Word of God and universality of His love", he said.

He called on the pilgrims to exhibit good behavior, warning that the Nigerian Christian Pilgrims Commission has put in place stringent measures to check unwholesome conducts such as absconding by some pilgrims, who choose to use the exercise as a cover for irregular migration.

Lalong also warned that any pilgrim caught trying to abscond will be made to face the full wrath of the law for attempting to bring the name of Plateau State and Nigeria to disrepute.



Lalong

He commended those on self-sponsorship for devoting their resources for the all-important spiritual exercise, adding that the current economic situation has made government unable to always bear the huge burden of sponsoring pilgrims to the Holy Land.

"Pray for Plateau State and Nigeria to have a smooth transition and also experience more stability, prosperity and happiness".

"Please pray earnestly for Plateau and Nigeria while you are there. Those who are coming into office in a few months need God's guidance and direction", Lalong said.

Executive Secretary, Plateau

State Christian Pilgrims Board, Rev. Fr. George Gorap in his remarks praised Governor Lalong for sponsoring the highest number of pilgrims in the history of the state.

Gorap disclosed: "Since 2017, Plateau State had had the highest number of sponsorship of pilgrims and this has earned our governor the name the 'pilgrims friendly governor', he said".

"The total number of pilgrims sponsored by Governor Lalong is 4,570", he disclosed.

Rev. Dachomo Sylvester Davou, in a sermon tasked the pilgrims to be of good conduct while in the Holy Land by being good ambassadors of the state and country, and strive to

From DORCAS PANKYES, Abuja

JAMB has shifted the 2023 Universal Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) mock examination earlier scheduled for Thursday, March 16 to Thursday, March 30.

Its Head, Public Affairs and Protocol, Dr Fabian Benjamin told newsmen in Abuja on Monday that the shift became necessary because of the postponement of governorship elections from March 11 to March 18.

"Candidates who registered early and indicated their willingness to take the Mock-UTME would be notified as to when to print their Mock-UTME notification slips, which would contain their centres and other details.

"The Mock-UTME is an optional examination introduced by JAMB to provide opportunity for candidates to have hands-on experience with the system.

"It also affords JAMB an opportunity to ascertain its readiness and that of its partners for the main UTME scheduled to hold between April 29 and May 12, 2023.

"The board also uses this opportunity to announce that the 2023 UTME would witness some ground-breaking innovations to address observed infractions and centre failures.

"For instance, in the new regime, if there is a delay of up to one hour before the commencement of a particular session, that session stands cancelled and would be rescheduled along with the candidates," he said.

Benjamin added that by the same token no examination would be started one hour after

JAMB postpones UTME Mock Examination



Adamu

the scheduled commencement time as the session would be scheduled for any vacant or available slot.

"JAMB has made it mandatory that candidates must be notified of their new scheduled sessions or centres, as the case may be, before they leave their original centre.

"In addition, no candidate would be allowed to spend less than one hour before submission of responses during the UTME.

"Similarly, the new regime would make it impossible for candidates to login after one hour of activation of examination.

"If for any reason an examination session is cancelled or cannot hold, candidates are not to panic as they will simply be scheduled

for the next available session, which could be that same day," he said.

Benjamin called on candidates who might experience delays to log into the system to quietly leave the hall and move to the "Holding Area" to await further instructions.

He also urged candidates not to leave the examination centre until they had been notified of the day and time of their rescheduled examination.

"Candidates are to note that any rescheduled examination is strictly to accommodate only those whose examination session could not hold on account of one reason or another.

"It is not for those who were marked LATE or ABSENT for their session," he stressed.

Army frowns at smear campaign against it

From DORCAS PANKYES, Abuja

THE attention of the Nigerian Army has been drawn to a deliberately calculated smear campaign in the Social Media and other fora against some of our senior commanders and officers. While these unconscionable acts are inexplicable, the motivation behind them are not far-fetched.

In a press statement issued to journalists Monday in Abuja by Brigadier General Onyema Nwachukwu, Director Army Public Relations, it pointed out that in the just concluded Presidential and National Assembly elections, officers and men of the Nigerian Army adopted a firm and resolute stance in providing security

support for the elections in a manner that effectively curbed and prevented ill-intentioned groups from violently interfering with the process.

There is no doubt that Nigerians are excited at this responsible posture and the democratic opportunity it offered them. However, some interest groups, that were effectively prevented from hatching their nefarious plots to influence the course of the elections through violence, are understandably piqued by this assertiveness of the Nigerian Army.

As constitutionally conceived, the Nigerian Army is nationalistic in its make-up and organization, drawing strengths from the diversities in our great nation.

Our responsibilities, so far as elections are concerned, remain that of providing support to primary law enforcement and stakeholders in the electioneering process towards ensuring that Nigerians are allowed to choose their leaders and representatives in a peaceful manner.

This goal remains our only focus and one we would continue to pursue, mindful that the average citizen expects nothing less from his Army.

The Army Headquarters wishes to assure the public that any misconduct against any of its personnel would be responsibly investigated and any subsequent substantiation would attract the appropriate disciplinary sanctions in accordance with established practices and extant laws.

In the same vein, it should equally be appreciated that the character and reputation of a senior officer earned over 3 decades of meritorious service cannot be allowed to be destroyed by misguided elements through mere speculations.

The resort to the sentiments of ethnic and religious colourations would not also diminish the Nigerian's Army resolve to carry on its roles professionally.

The Nigerian Army, therefore, urges all Nigerians to ignore the mischief being propagated by ill-intentioned

individuals and groups, and continue to go about their civic responsibilities without any fear of molestation.

We would continue to work with sister services and other security agencies to meet all security-related expectations of citizens as enshrined in the laws of the federation.

Property worth N23.3bn lost to fire outbreak -FFS

From DORCAS PANKYES, Abuja

THE Federal Fire Service said property valued at more than N23.3 billion was lost to fire outbreak in the country between October and December 2022.

This was contained in a statistical report made available to news men Monday in Abuja by Mr. Abraham Paul, the FFS Public Relations Officer.

The report showed that 649 fire outbreaks were recorded within the period under review, while properties valued at about N145.4 billion were saved.

It indicated that 28 lives were lost in the fire incidents within the period, while 40 others were rescued.

The report gave the number of properties affected to include 111 public buildings and 230 private ones, 11 educational establishments, 61 shops, 19 factories and banks, nine clubs, hotels and restaurants.

It added that 56 petrol stations, 21 oil and gas facilities, two timber sheds, 63 automobiles, 17 markets and 49 others were also destroyed by fire within the period under

review.

On the causes of the fire incidents, the report indicated that 122 of the cases were linked to electrical equipment and high voltage, while 16 were due to illegal storage of petroleum products.

According to the report, 32 of the fire incidents were caused by

cigarette stubs and bush burning, 185 by electrical sparks, 37 through gas, and 104 due to accidents, arson and automobile incidents.

The statistics further showed that 88 of the fire incidents were due to unknown causes and seven as a result of building collapse.

The report also showed that 17 out of the fire incidents were under investigation.

Stakeholders seek universal access to water, sanitation

From DORCAS PANKYES, Abuja

THE Senate is to resume plenary on Tuesday (March 21), the Clerk of the Senate, Mr.Chinedu Akubueze, has said. A statement issued by Akubueze on Monday in Abuja said that the plenary had been rescheduled from March 14 to March 21.

He said: "This is to inform all Senators of the Federal Republic of Nigeria that the resumption of the Senate in Plenary has been rescheduled

from Tuesday, March 14 to Tuesday, March 21.

"All senators are by this notice requested to resume sitting in plenary on Tuesday, March 21, by 10 a.m prompt, the statement said."

The reports said that the Senate had on March 2, suspended plenary to March 14, to enable senators participate in the Governorship and State Houses of Assembly elections.

The election which was slated for March 11 was postponed to March 18 by the Independent National Electoral



Yahaya

Feature

INEC and controversial elections

Year in and year out, the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, conducts elections into various offices in Nigeria, either through the main general elections, the bye-elections or other elections. INEC has been involved in the conduct of elections for an unbroken period of twenty-four years on, from 1999 to 2023. It would seem however that there is still a lot to do get the electoral umpire moving. For sure, INEC is the only statutory body authorised to organise or conduct elections in Nigeria, in respect of certain offices created by the Constitution. EBUN-OLU ADEGBORUWA writes.

INEC is one of the federal executive agencies of the State established under section 153 (1) of the 1999 Constitution as amended, with its functions stated in paragraph 15 of the Third Schedule of the said Constitution. Under and by virtue of paragraph 14 of the said Third Schedule, the Chairman of INEC should be at least forty years old, he must be non-partisan, he must not be a member of a political party and he must be a person of unquestionable integrity. By law, the major functions of INEC are to:

- * organize, undertake and supervise all elections into major positions of national importance as stated in the Constitution;
- * register political parties;
- * monitor the organisation and operation of the political parties, including their finances, conventions, congresses and party primaries;
- * arrange and conduct the registration of persons qualified to vote and prepare, maintain and revise the register of voters for the purpose of any election;
- * monitor political campaigns and provide rules and regulations which shall govern the political parties.

From all the above, INEC is the alpha and omega of major elections in Nigeria. This is further confirmed by section 158 (1) of the Constitution which states that INEC shall not be subject to the direction or control of any other authority or person. In plain language, the Constitution has set out to establish an electoral body that is truly independent, because of the unique roles that INEC has to play in the emergence of leaders across the land. Statutorily and financially therefore, the goal is to make INEC a self-accounting body, in order to guarantee its independence and impartiality. But this has not been the case at all, over the years. Now let us relate all these with the recent presidential and national assembly elections that were held on February 25, 2023.

There were too many challenges associated with the registration of voters and issuance and collection of the permanent voter's cards, which indeed should be the foundation of any electoral success.

Without any doubt whatsoever, there was some form of disconnect between INEC and the voters, in terms of voter education and information, especially in relation to the collection of the voter cards. The procedure was unduly bureaucratic, unwieldy and frustrating. You just have to keep going and going, at times



Mahmood

for many days on end.

With the resources committed to this exercise, there is no reason any voter should have been denied this entitlement at all. To the extent that a court in Abuja had to issue an order upon INEC to allow Nigerians with temporary voter cards to participate in the elections!

Then comes the main election. The first thing to note is that INEC cannot boast of adequate personnel to handle its very sensitive matters. For sure, the Constitution has stated clearly that its personnel must be impartial and non-partisan. For crying out loud, how do you recruit youth corps members from all over the country and you don't expect them to be partisan? When they have parents and relations some of whom are actively involved in politics? And some of the youth corps members themselves are active politicians!

There is just no way anyone can expect loyalty from a youth whose father, mother, brother or uncle is contesting election on the platform of a political party, no matter the jurisdiction of his posting, as loyalty for the presidential election for instance, is to the party, not the individual. Then comes the returning officers, who are mostly members of the academic community, recruited on temporary contracts to assist in

hoc personnel, not to be biased in one way or the other, in favour of or against a particular political party.

On the day of election itself, we met the unexpected, as there were cases of locations that were totally neglected by INEC, which did not benefit from the distribution of election materials, especially in the difficult terrains of the Niger Delta and other rural areas. In some other cases, the election materials did not arrive early, whilst yet in other cases, INEC personnel were simply overwhelmed by partisan security agencies or thugs recruited by politicians. It was a case of general unpreparedness on the part of INEC, notwithstanding all the time it had to prepare and organise the elections and the huge funds committed to it.

For a fact, INEC budgeted a whopping N355B for the 2023 elections, broken down into several categories. Nigerians put pressure on the National Assembly to approve the budget in order to guarantee free, fair and credible elections. The breakdown includes: Printing of ballot papers; Logistics expenses; Logistics for technical officers Procurement of non-sensitive materials; feeding of policemen and other security personnel;

Election day allowances for ad-hoc staff; Deployment of support staff; Campaign finance tracking; Monitoring of parties, primaries Supervision and reconnaissance; Outreach activities; Interface with groups; Advertisement; Voter education; Situation room, etc.

There are still many more of these ridiculous items budgeted by INEC and for which fund was duly released, but for which no tangible results were obtained. It should be possible for the National Assembly as part of its oversight functions, to do a thorough audit of INEC finances, especially against the background of the poor outing of the agency in the last

presidential and national assembly elections, which is nothing but money down the drain.

As we approach the governorship and house of assembly elections, the only way the electoral umpire will continue to earn the confidence of Nigerians is to go back to the drawing board to improve upon its game. Elections most times have to do with the perception of the people and unless there is an apparent display of neutrality and capacity, the people may soon become weary with INEC and its controversial elections. Given that technology is subject to errors and glitches as they now call them, there is an urgent need for INEC to douse the suspicions that characterized the presidential and National Assembly elections. The governorship and house of assembly elections are generally regarded as local games for which there is a greater degree of involvement by the people in the grassroots, which is why there is need for solid preparations by INEC in order to avoid the pitfalls of the past.

Through the tracking device of technology, INEC should be able to determine the locations of its personnel who have been assigned to different polling units into monitors and checkmate cases of late deployment of staff and failure to upload election results. Whereas we do not at all discountenance the efforts put into the electoral process by INEC, but once the lapses seem to overwhelm these efforts, it becomes very difficult to assess the electoral body for any serious pass mark. Thus, we all expect a better outing, come Saturday. Enough has been said, time has been given and fund has been provided, so let there be no further excuses. We are all concerned that election holidays have now graduated from the Saturday of the election into days and even weeks of uncertainties.

On the day of election itself, we met the unexpected, as there were cases of locations that were totally neglected by INEC, which did not benefit from the distribution of election materials, especially in the difficult terrains of the Niger Delta and other rural areas. In some other cases, the election materials did not arrive early, whilst yet in other cases, INEC personnel were simply overwhelmed by partisan security agencies or thugs recruited by politicians. It was a case of general unpreparedness on the part of INEC, notwithstanding all the time it had to prepare and organise the elections and the huge funds committed to it.



By JENNIFER YARIMA

THERE are certain professions that bring one in close contact with realities of what victims or survivors experience before others get the details. They mostly get first hand information by either witnessing incidences at the scene of occurrence or they are given narration by eye witnesses or survivors themselves. This looks attractive from outside because the public relies on the outcome of findings to be better informed. Some of these categories of people are health personnel, security agencies, Psychologists and Journalists etc.

Recently, yours sincerely was attracted to a lecture I keenly listened to online which highlighted the trauma

journalists who report gender based violence go through as they discharge their lawful duties. It's so good to keep the public well informed about certain things that are happening in the society, but no one understand the stress and pressure you undergo for the celebrated stories. That is to say that one should be mindful not to allow himself to be overworked.

The mental state of someone's well being is necessary towards achieving greater feat in everything one does in life. Health, welfare and emotional stability of the journalist need to be given attention to enable one does the work with ease. Every journalist should endeavor to make regular medical checkup a priority. This if done will help in understanding one's status to enable such a person work within specification. Don't be deceived by the remarks of people who term you a super person, the work is a thankless job. So go slowly and carefully.

Certain stories no doubt get one to think uncontrollably around the event. It didn't happen to you directly but because of your experience, you start thinking differently. It was interesting to note that it's not a weakness for one to say no to a story if your emotion is not strong enough to carry you through. The challenge here is that a reporter is mostly assigned to a bit or instructed to report an incident. This therefore means that in most cases; it's not optional but a must do work.

In journalism profession, the

significance of dateline need not be over emphasized because the editor gives the timeline that certain stories should be given due consideration for publication or to be aired depending on the medium where one works. This development entails that at certain times, one must work under pressure to meet up these

Relevance of mental health for journalists

datelines. The biggest question however is; what stories get you traumatic?

One is reminded of the much celebrated photojournalists Kevin Carter, whose fame in photography earned him a Pulitzer Prize award that he was globally recognized but it did not go down well with him at the end because he ended up killing himself as a result of the traumatic experience of his work. The agony of the photojournalist emanated when he reported the severe famine in Sudan where many lives were lost and many people struggled for survival.

While covering events that unfolded then, one of his best shots captured by New York Times on March 26, 1993 captured a vulture waiting for a starving Sudanese girl to die and feast on her carcass. He was celebrated on major news channels and networks world for such an exceptional photographic skill. The readers' reactions were intense and not positive. Some people said the photographer who took the photo was inhumane. That he should have



dropped the camera to run to the little girl's aid.

The interesting thing about journalism and the society is the fact that negative stories are best sellers for the public than any other. That of course was probably the driving force that diverted the humanity of Kevin than the thought of rendering immediate help. His depression started when during one of his interviews which he granted, someone asked him what happened to the child, Kevin replied that he didn't find out after the photograph because as he had a flight to catch. They replied him that there were two vultures on that day, one had a camera.

His constant thought of that statement and the gory images he saw almost on daily basis turned out that it took its toll in Carter's case fatally. Carter grew up in South Africa during apartheid; he became a photojournalist because he felt he needed to document the sickening treatment not only of the blacks by whites but between black ethnic groups as well like

those of Xhosas and Zulus.

In a few years, he saw countless murders from beatings, stabbings, gunshots and neck lacing, a barbaric practice in which a tyre filled with oil is placed around the victim's neck and lit on fire. It was evident that even if he had offered to help, the armed Sudanese soldiers wouldn't have allowed him. He talked about the guilt of the people he couldn't save because he photographed them as they were being killed.

To avoid trauma that comes with the stress of the work, experts have suggested some therapy to keep one on the job relevant. You need to know your limit or how far you can go. Disconnect from your normal schedules and do what works for you. Talking to a confidant is a healing balm, sharing your problem with a loved one matters a lot. Of course good time to hang out and have proper rest is of essence.

Celebrating yourself and the work you are doing gives you reason to keep on.



By YVONNE ISHOLA

HOW time flies. It was just like yesterday that we lined up under the scorching sun to vote leaders at different levels. Recall the emotional outbursts, the name calling, fighting and even violence by which die-hard supporters expressed themselves. No one seemed to be indifferent. We all wanted our own to be there so that the goodies would flow down to us.

The preparation to any event is usually full of promise. They rolled out their manifestos and wowed us. They won us with smiles plastered on their faces. The muscles on their faces must have suffered. Their doors then were open to all, and in their homes, drinks flowed like a river and food like Christmas day. They personally welcomed every visitor. The Absoloms of our time.

Two-faced politicians and the electorate

We felt loved because they showed genuine concern for us. They were interested in everything of interest to us-our families, jobs or lack of it, our comfort etc. They celebrated with us when we celebrated anything and wept with us when aggrieved. The Absoloms of our time.

When we launched a fundraising campaign in our churches, mosques, they came and generously supported us. We predicted that the incoming government would favour us.

Some of us were bought with wrappers, rice, and or as little as seasoning- Maggi/Royco or salt. They knew we had a price because we were still dazed from the blows we received from the last administration. Like Esau, we sold our birth right.

A group of peasant yam farmers told of their ordeal with a politician. He was so humble and down to earth that out of admiration for his humility, they all rallied around him, campaigned for him to enable him become a lawmaker at the national level. Their joy knew no bounds as he had a landslide victory. They saw it as their victory.

The lawmaker passed once and waved frantically at the peasant yam sellers to say thank you. However, that was

the last time they saw his face at close range. From then henceforth, anytime he was passing to or from Abuja, all his car glasses would be wound up. He never stopped again to rub minds with them or even to say hello.

They felt used and dumped. They were a means to an end to the lawmaker. It was like now they were stinking. It was

"Out of the blues, the two faced legislator appeared. He made his entourage stop and he got out of the car to personally greet the peasant yam sellers. The lawmaker noticed their coldness and to pacify them, he bought almost all their yams and left more than half of it for them to share it among themselves. That action loosened them a little.

From then onwards, the lawmaker stopped on his way to Jos or from Jos to Abuja to chat with them and or make them feel important."

as if he was ashamed of them.

They recalled all the promises he made to them to better their lot and decided to use their power as electorate to make their point. These peasants were eagerly waiting when the years quickly rolled by and it was campaign year again.

Out of the blues, the two faced legislator appeared. He made his entourage stop and he got out of the car to personally greet the peasant yam sellers. The lawmaker noticed their coldness and to pacify them, he bought almost all their yams and left more than half of it for them to share it among themselves. That action loosened them a little.

From then onwards, the lawmaker stopped on his way to Jos or from Jos to Abuja to chat with them and or make them feel important.

After a few stops, the politician started broaching the issue of his re-election. They smiled at the idea as if it pleased them. Shortly afterwards, he dropped his posters and some stipends. They didn't refuse his gift but on top of it, gave room to his competitor to come and sell himself. After weighing the two, they made their decision.

The peasant farmers used

legislator. And they said they have no regrets. Once beaten, twice shy.

A colleague told me that after their votes ensured the victory of a lawmaker in the state, they decided to go and congratulate him as his supporters. But to their surprise, they were stopped at the gate and told that he was sleeping. And that was how it continued, he even changed security guards and brought professionals who were very unfriendly.

They forget that without people, one is nothing. That is where the Hausa man beats us hands down. He builds people, empowers people around him who become very loyal to him and ensure he never lacks and that he remains relevant all the days of his life. We forget that he who eats alone, dies alone.

Our style is for us to sit on our high horse and give out stipends every now and then. The worse case scenario is that of one who has deprived his/ her constituents the dividends of democracy and is unapproachable. How can such an evil person even come back and seek for votes a second time? Do they take the electorate for fools? If you are in this category, abeg, carry go! We need people with the heart of flesh, ready to serve not play God.

BY
JANEFRANCES CHIBUZOR

THE residents of Evuazu community displayed their cultural heritage at the Ugwudoro Cultural Festival, which attracted arts and culture custodians and tourism stakeholders seeking adventure. The guests at the event were excited by the diversity of the people's cultural displays that range from the masquerade dance to musical performances among other competitions.

This year's edition of the annual cultural fiesta was better organized. The festival planning committee laid down certain rules to ensure that the event held smoothly and without hitches. It is on record that anyone who goes contrary to the stipulated rules should be punished.

Every participant and guest at the festival is expected to be treated with respect due to the inherent dignity and value as human beings.

The festival, which had attracted personalities from every facet of life, is targeting to become the people's money-making machine, if well harnessed.

However, the annual festival brought together government officials and stakeholders in the private sector.

Although the festival faced some challenges, especially in the planning stage, it nevertheless lived up to expectations. Some stakeholders were able to invest in the festival, as they were adorned with expensive clothes and ornaments to elevate the masquerades status.

To ensure that the activities kept visitors enthralled, the President-General of Evuazu Community in Obeleagu Umama, Mr. Sunday Ekwo, with support from the executive members, provided the community with infrastructural facilities. The facilities included electricity and potable water, among others.

Under the leadership of Mr. Ekwo, the people organised a mini-festival known as Evuazu Day, a move aimed at promoting peaceful coexistence among the people. Ekwo noted that when he took over office, the community was in a state of disorderliness as the whole system was not functional.

Speaking with journalists on the last day of the festival, he assured them of the readiness and determination of members of the community to raise the standard of the festival by 2024.

Earlier, The National President of the Nigeria Union of Pensioners (NUP), Mr. Godwin Abumisi, stated that the Umunwanke people had more and bigger masquerades

performing than the previous years, assuring that he would be presenting big masquerades to his village. "I have fulfilled that and they all performed during this festival. If you come to Umunwanke, we have about seven big masquerades that performed today," he said.

Ekwo noted that despite the unfortunate experiences encountered by the community

that nobody was injured, there was no kidnapping on that day and no vehicle was stolen meant the community is safe.

Appealing to the state government to support the community with infrastructure, the president-general noted that residents of the community had for long depended on their own self-help efforts without assistance



Ugwudoro Cultural Festival of Unity



in the past, the 2023 celebration was the best festival ever celebrated since the beginning of the annual cultural festival. He promised that the 2024 edition of the event would be better organized.

"I know the festival is older than me. It is our inheritance," he said.

On security, he said the fact

from the government. "We have not got any support from the government in terms of infrastructure.

One of the honourable members that graced the occasion had promised the organisers that by 2024 he will make sure that the Nigeria Television Authority is invited to cover the event," he added.

IMAGES

PPC ACTING GENERAL MANAGER ADDRESSES STAFF

The Acting General Manager, Plateau Publishing Corporation (PPC) Mr. Paul Jatau recently addressed staff of the corporation at Newsroom, PPC, Jos



Acting General Manager, Mr. Paul Jatau (left) addressing Director, Production, Mr. Yakubu Kangha and staff of Production



Acting General Manager, Mr. Paul Jatau (left) Acting Director, Admin, Mr. Jibrin Dagor and The Sunday Editor and Acting Editor, Mrs. Francisca Adidi listening



Cross section of Editorial staff listening to the Acting General Manager's address



Cross section of Marketing Department staff during meeting



From left are, The Nigeria Standard newspaper online Editor, Mr. Fwenji Goar, PPC Chapel, NUJ Chairman, Mr. Israel Nanjul Lar and Sub-Desk Editor, Mr. Bulus Gambo during the meeting



Cross section of Editorial Department Staff listening to the Acting General Manager



Director of Marketing, Mr. Stanley Shepvel Naanban (left) flanked by other staff of the Department



Mrs. Victoria Alabura Jonathan of the Production Department (right) flanked by other staff the Department at the meeting

PHOTOS: DANLADI DUK

Odd World

Pregnant woman in disbelief over boyfriend's packed items

PREGNANT woman Holly Bolton was left gobsmacked after her boyfriend - who was in a hurry - packed her hospital bag last minute and she was in disbelief to what she found inside

At the height of pregnancy, many women are forgiven for the common and slightly aggravating baby brain - a term which often refers to easily forgotten memory and poor concentration. However, there is no such excuse for their partners.

Sharing her disbelief online, expecting new mum Holly Bolton revealed her utter shock at the hospital bag that her boyfriend packed for her at 33 weeks pregnant. Revealing what happened on popular social media app TikTok, fellow users were also in absolute dismay about the man's choice of items, which the video detailed.

She wrote: "Rate the hospital bag my boyfriend packed for me 33 weeks pregnant - he tried his best."

The clip showed items which the mum - who is in the third trimester of pregnancy - pulled out of the bag to show budding users on TikTok.

"Toothbrush and a very empty tube of

toothpaste," she said. "Trackies in the 33 degree heatwave.

"Contact lense case but no solution, face wipes and deodorant.

"His clothes - at least I have shorts and old thongs, which are too small."

Sharing their thoughts on the gobsmacking packing in the comment section, follower TikTokers rushed to the comments - with some even sharing shocking experiences of their own.

"My husband packed me a denim mini skirt to leave the hospital.....there was no way it was gonna fit.....it was also December!!!!!" One user wrote.

"He packed exactly how he would if he was traveling," another joked beside a laughing emoji.

A third wrote: "Thongs? You're joking, right? I'd tell him to get out of his boxers right then and there."

Coming to his defence, Holly quickly came to her boyfriend's defence after stumbling across the long list of comments.

She said: "Guys, he was panicking okay, he left work, rushed home, and tried to get to me as quickly as possible."

Source: Mirror



Our Christian politicians are betraying Christ

ONE of the heartrending and moderately thought-provoking Bible stories which have continued to prick our spiritual life as Christians is how Apostle Peter denied knowing Christ and was subsequently betrayed by Judas Iscariot during his physical ministry here on earth. These two disciples according to scriptural records were both great men who started their promising journey in the vineyard of our Lord with extraordinary enthusiasm.

Both Peter and Iscariot were men of high integrity and possessed unquestionable characters but at a point; let go all they had to be with our Lord, Jesus Christ in furtherance of His ministry. For the fact that they were with our redeemer for years witnessing his heart-touching miracles and listening to his life changing simons, some of us still wondered what really got into them to afford them behave in such a manner they did when it mattered most? As the treasurer of the team, Iscariot was knowledgeable enough, even as quite too Peter was appreciably knowledgeable. Nonetheless, never did the scriptures mentioned that both lived in want and or were in any precarious situation as such; they were obviously comfortable.

When the ministry of Christ was nearing historical end and Jesus Christ was in the garden of Brook Kidron, a detachment of troops and Pharisees came asking who amongst the disciples Christ was. Much earlier, Judas had betrayed our lord with a kiss trying to isolate him for immediate identification. As the situation further got complicated, after Peter was asked three times to confirm whether he was part of our lord's team; he vehemently refuted. In fact, Apostle Peter subsequently denied knowing Christ three times and after which, his eyes met with Christ and he remembered the promise he earlier professed of not going contrary to this.

In 2019, when I had the opportunity of visiting the Promised Land, Israel, we got ourselves engaged in snapping several shots as a reminder of such a rare opportunity to travel thus far. At each biblical historical point, we had to snap these shots with our android phones. Our guide was always on hand to intimate us of where we were and the significance of such places.

On fateful day, our guide took us to one of this strange garden and in my usual manner, I subsequently ask of where we were. Responding, our guide noted that "if I must tell you, this tree was where Judas Iscariot hanged himself after betraying Christ". On hearing this, most of us pocketed our android phones as we became uninterested about having snapshots there. While many Christians will argue that the place also has biblical historical value, for me, there was nothing quite phenomenal about the place.

To be more specific, I was left with no other feeling than to completely detach myself from any curse which may generationally have a symbolic link with me. Since this incident took place, I have continued to ask God to help me not to betray him in my journey of life. We have also encouraged many other Christians not to go the Iscariot's way no matter the difficulties they may find themselves in

our contemporary society.

Surprisingly, what is in vogue in Christendom today are unending stories of Christians not only betraying Christ as it is but significantly, their other brothers in the Lord. This issue has become more pronounced during this democratic dispensation which has left some of us to wonder whether Christians in this country are really in unionism.

One of the crucial issues on the table of discourse today is whether accepting the Muslim Muslim ticket by Christians as proposed by the All Progressives Congress, (APC) to the detriment of the church is not to some extent betraying Christ? First of all, as a free moral agent, any Christian can chose where he or she belongs in the politicking of a nation. In fact, any Christian has the fundamental right to getting involved in the governance of a secular state like Nigeria.

In the spirit of fair play, justice and equity however, the concerns and reservations many Christians are having in the aftermath of the party primaries in Nigeria is; though the nation based on constitutional provisions is a secular state, Christians in most recent times have not been carried alone in the act of governance.

Basically, since the advent of President Mohammed Buhari's regime, the exclusion of Christians in some sensitive top ranking government positions have left much to be desired. This incomprehensible development is coming on the heels of several unpalatable attacks against Christians, their places of worship including other strategic edifices in the country. No doubt, this most recent ugly unfolding pathetic situation has continued to traumatize significant Christian population in Nigeria. This development has forced many to lose confidence on the efficiency and capability of the government to protect all irrespective of religion and or creed.

As hardship continue in the land, imminent hunger, starvation and absolute lack has equally pushed many innocent citizens against the wall. This is not to also forget other excruciating consequences of dreaded acts of criminality which have negatively continued to affect the innocent citizens of this country. Left in the middle of this circumstances, many citizens are still not convinced that this country as polarized as it is would overcome these difficulties.

Unfortunately, most of our Christian politicians are seeing nothing wrong about these sad developments. In fact, many of them have refused to come to terms with the reality of the fact that it has not been easy with Nigerian Christians in the past couple of years. Today, though Christians have managed to endure lopsided appointments, and all sorts of persecutions, our Christian politicians still are of the opinion that it is not yet time for the sons of Jacob to liberate themselves from these shackles of mental enslavement. Therefore, what would be the stance of a Christian politicians who do not refuse to accept a system's strategic policies grossly unfriendly to Christians? For me, this class of politicians are obviously betraying Christ and or the Christendom.

View Point

Curbing brain drain in the health sector

One of the burning issues currently bedeviling health sector in the country is the phenomenon of brain drain challenge in the health sector. Between 2016 and 2018, Nigeria has lost about 9,000 medical practitioners to the Western communities. Prof. Innocent Ujah, President of the Nigerian Medical Association, (NMA), recently raised concern over the phenomenon which now manifested as brain drain challenge while speaking during the Maiden Annual Lecture of the Nigerian Medical Association, with the theme "Brain drain and Medical Tourism." GODWIN MOSES writes.



Ujah



Osagie



Mamora

NIGERIA, a nation of over 250 million people has doctor -to-population ratio of 1 doctor to 5000 patients. This is grossly inadequate and unacceptable.

The future of Nigeria and its health sector is at stake. As a matter of urgency, government should pursue transformative policies and direction to deliver on strategic areas of needs which would foster growth and development in the health sector. To protect the interests of the country, we must fall back to engage Nigerian Medical Association, NMA, with a view to addressing issues around funding, salary remuneration, provision of enabling environment and equipment to practise.

Arguably, the political class who consistently embark on medical tourism or often go on trips abroad under the guise of scouting for foreign investors have failed to improve our health sector. This is responsible for the brain drain challenge threatening the Country's health sector. As a nation, curbing brain drain challenge in the health sector and medical tourism will continue to elude us unless something is done to restrict those presently serving in public offices or holding political positions, and members of their families by way of legislation or

policy from accessing health care services abroad till the end of their tenure as this might likely prompt them to do the needful.

The three points identified around brain drain challenge in the health sector are: Under funding. Include poor salary remuneration for medical practitioners and insufficient work equipment. Other reasons include poor work conditions such as deteriorating states of health facilities, shortage of manpower caused by brain drain and underemployment. Practically, challenges of brain drain in the health sector is surmountable in spite of paucity of funds and different competing economic sector demand.

Ethnicity, religion, judicial compromise and lack of political will are the bane of Nigeria's fight against corruption. If leaders or those in corridors of power do diligent work on prosecuting corruption cases to the letter, remove loopholes, block misappropriation and mismanagement of funds in all sectors of the economy, and ensure strategic deployment and timely releases of budgeted funds to health related areas; if they prioritise key health infrastructure projects with multiplier potentials; it will not

only curb the challenge of brain drain in the health sector, and medical tourism but will also return the country on the path of economic and institutional growth and development.

Other measures to reduce medical tourism and brain drain challenge include identifying opportunities for tapping into the potentials of Nigerian medical practitioners abroad, sustain and increase partnership with development partners, reform and restructuring of health care service facilities at all levels- Primary health Care, Cottage

Hospitals and the Tertiary health Care institutions.

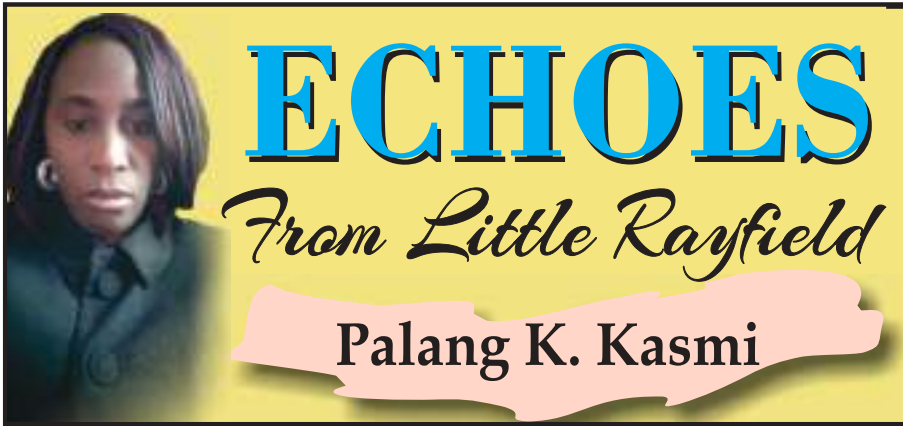
Contrary to speculations, Nigeria's medical practitioners credible performance in the management of Ebola and Covid-19 pandemic is an attestation to the competency of our gallant medical practitioners. If accorded the needed motivation and encouragement in terms of proper funding, better salary remuneration, provision of adequate work equipment, they would professionally meet the medical need and expectations of many Nigerians to the point where the Country would attract

people from elsewhere for medical tourism. Till then, achieving Sustainable Development Goal; Number 5 is one of the key areas in which government needs to rebirth.

As we mark World Health Day, let's play our quota to stop pollution, desertification, and other harmful practices to safeguard our planet (environment).

Godwin Moses is of Media Action for Health, Environment, and Sustainable Development, (MAHESD)

"Contrary to speculations, Nigeria's medical practitioners credible performance in the management of Ebola and Covid-19 pandemic is an attestation to the competency of our gallant medical practitioners. If accorded the needed motivation and encouragement in terms of proper funding, better salary remuneration, provision of adequate work equipment, they would professionally meet the medical need and expectations of many Nigerians to the point where the Country would attract people from elsewhere for medical tourism".



Palang K. Kasmi

Lalong performs coronations, bids pilgrims farewell

Last week, all roads led key stakeholders from the seat of power in Little Rayfield, including the Governor, Simon Bako Lalong to two Local Governments, Mikang and Shendam for the Coronation ceremony and upgrade of staff of office of more Traditional Rulers.

This is coming after he performed similar functions before the 2023 Presidential and National Assembly elections in a coronation ceremony, held at Government Secondary School Bashar, that saw the upgrade of the staff of office of the 16th Rekna of Bashar of Wase Local Government, Alhaji Abdullahi Idris Isa to a second class status.

Lalong was received by the sons and daughters of Mikang and Shendam LGA's, who gathered for the epoch making event.

At T/RCM Primary School Mikang, the Governor presented the 3rd class staff of office to the Long Piapung, Miskom Lawrence Lityong Nashel, as the 8th Traditional Ruler of the Piapung Nation.

While at the Long Gamai's Palace, in Shendam, he did the upgrade and presentation of staff of office to the Long Mekaat, Miskoom Many Danjuma (3rd class); Long Manbial, Miskoom Yakubu Longshal (3rd class); Long Pol, Miskoom Bolnaan Bawa (3rd class); Long Jiban, Nuskoom Ali Zemlong (3rd class) and Long Goebou, Miskoom Kenneth Kwaptoe, (2nd class).

The ceremony saw the Kingmakers, Pince and Princess's, sons and daughters of the soil, all taking turns to pay homage to their newly upgraded Chiefs.



'Plateau Fresh project'

AMONG one of the remarkable visits at 'Little Rayfield' last week was a team of South African Investors under the 'Plateau Fresh Project'.

The project which is a joint venture between a South African Company, Wellington and White and the Plateau Investment and Property Company (PIPC) targets farming, processing and export of exotic crops, vegetables and perishables from Plateau.

Technical partner to the project, Mr. Ian White, and PIPC Managing Director, Mr. Chris Yilzak both assured the governor that investing in such agribusiness is a viable venture that would create great opportunities for citizens, in the area of employment, farming, export, industrialisation, globalisation and increased Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as well as stop the exploitation of farmers in Plateau by middlemen.

Lalong who received the team alongside his officials said he was eagerly looking forward to the project take-off based on its high potential to improve his state's economic growth.



News

Traditional ruler assures of peaceful election

By HOSEA NYAMLONG

HIS Royal Highness (HRH), Da Gabriel Adamu Sha,(OFR),Gwom Kabong of Jos North Local Government of Plateau State has assured citizens of a peaceful Governorship and State House of Assembly Elections come March 18,2023.

Da Sha stated this during an Advocacy visit by the Peace and Mediator Committee, Plateau State in his palace adjacent Bishop's Court Jenta, Jos on Tuesday. He added that as traditional institution and the custodian of the people, they would continue to play the role of mediation, enlightenment and advisory among its subjects to ensure that Plateau State is peaceful.

He called on the citizens to conduct themselves in a peaceful manner just as in the last Presidential and National House of Assembly elections.

Prof.B.T.Bingel who represented the royal father said that the ward heads of the locality would ensure that they talk to the youths to come out and vote peacefully and to maintain a violent free election.

Speaking earlier during the visit, the Chairman of the Committee Dr.Dinshak Luka, from the Centre for Conflict Management and Peace Studies, University of Jos said that it has become necessary for the group to visit the royal father looking at the nature of



Buba

elections in the state. They notice that whenever elections approach, there is usually tension among citizens, which most times leads to voter apathy.

According to Luka, they want citizens to participate in the forthcoming elections without any fear or intimidation.

Recently, the group also paid an

advocacy visit to the Chairman of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Plateau State, Rev Fr development of Plateau State and Poly/cap Lubo at NUJ Press Centre Jos.

Lubo assured the group of his commitment to ensure that the message of peace is preached across all the denominations in order to have a violent-free election in the state.

Work commences at project sites in Qua'an-Pan

By HOSEA NYAMLONG

CONTRACTORS handling various projects in Qua'an-Pan LGC of Plateau State have commenced work.

The QP Project Media Team took an assessment tour of some of the construction works, and reported that workers were busy on the project sites.

The sites visited include, the renovation and remodeling of the Old Secretariat Complex, the construction of Skills Acquisition Center in Doemak and the construction of an Examination Hall in Kwa.

Recall the Council Chairman,

Hon. Ernest Abner Da'a recently awarded contracts for the execution of 8 projects; including the renovation and remodeling of the Old Secretariat Complex, construction of Skills Acquisition Center Doemak, the construction of Examination Hall in Kwa, and the construction of Turniang Road Bridge.

Others include the consultation

for the construction of Turniang Road Bridge, re-awarded contract for the completion of the Police Station in Kwalla, Asset Revaluation and Revenue Revitalization.

Hon. Da'a, had during the signing and presentation of letters to the 8 contractors in his office at the secretariat, charged them to work according to specification and standard.

Lalong salutes Jang @ 79

By PALANGKASMI

PLATEAU State Governor Simon BakoLalong has sent warm felicitations to his predecessor, former Governor Jonah David Jang as he clocked 79 years.

Lalong in a goodwill message released Monday March 13, congratulated the elderstatesman for marking another birthday in good health and God's favour.

He used the forum to appreciate BakoLalong for his contributions to the development of Plateau State and Nigeria during his military and political careers.

Governor Lalong further charged Jang to continue to contribute to the peace, progress and development of Plateau State and the nation at large.



Sports

Do Arsenal regret letting Aubameyang join Barca?

By CHARLES WATTS

"A gift from heaven."
That is how Barcelona boss Xavi described Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang earlier this month following his sensational start to life in Spain.

The former Gunners forward has been in sensational form with the La Liga giants, scoring eight goals in his first 11 appearances.

And when you consider the Gabon international has kicked off his Barca career with eight goals in 11 appearances, it is no surprise to hear that everyone at Camp Nou is delighted by the way their January capture has settled.

At the weekend, Aubameyang even marked his El Clasico debut with two more goals as a revitalised Barcelona stunned La Liga leaders Real Madrid with a thumping 4-0 success at the Bernabeu.

It was a win that generated headlines around the world and Xavi's "gift from heaven" was at the heart of it.

"Hello from the finished player," Aubameyang posted on social media after the victory, in what appeared to be a clear message to those who believed his best days were behind him following his difficulties at Arsenal during the first half of the season.

The 30-year-old has been reborn in Spain. His smile is back and the goals are flowing.

So, did Arsenal make a massive mistake letting him go in January? The simple answer is no.

The fact is this is one of those rare occasions when a transfer works out perfectly for all concerned.

Aubameyang has his mojo back, Barcelona have landed themselves a top striker and Arsenal have improved immeasurably in his absence.

It's been a win-win for everyone involved.

Whether that stays the case at Arsenal remains to be seen, because questions will undoubtedly be asked about the wisdom of



Aubameyang

allowing Aubameyang to leave should they go on to miss out on Champions League qualification during the final 10 games of the season.

However, for now, there is a steadfast belief around the north London club that the decision was the correct one.

"I'm extremely grateful for what Auba has done," Mikel Arteta said

soon after Aubameyang's departure.

"The way I see myself in that relationship is the solution, not the problem. I've been the solution, 100 per cent. I can look in the eye of anybody.

"The intention all the time is the best and not for me, it's for the club and the team.

"You have to make a decision that the best thing to do was let him move on and now he plays for Barcelona. It ended up the best possible way for everyone, I think."

Indeed, it's difficult to think of many transfers that end up pleasing all parties.

It was clear going into the transfer window that his time with the Gunners had come to an end.

He had already been banished by Arteta following the latest in a long line of disciplinary breaches and so hadn't featured since the 2-1 defeat at Everton on December 6.

So, when January arrived, it was just a case of trying to find the striker a new club.

It looked like Arsenal's attempts to find a bidder were going to prove unsuccessful as the month progressed, only for Barcelona to enter the equation with just days remaining.

They were initially centred around a loan, only for the discussions to shift towards a permanent deal in the final hours of the window due to disagreements over what percentage of Aubameyang's wages Barcelona would cover.

When the deal was eventually announced, there was plenty of

surprise that Arsenal had ended up releasing Aubameyang from his contract 18 months early and given him away on a free transfer.

But the Gunners were more than satisfied with that outcome.

They may not have received any transfer fee for their former captain, but they had saved up to £18 million (\$24m) in wages and rid themselves of a problem they thought they would have to revisit in the summer.

"We wish him the best and we move on without any regrets," Arteta said. "I prefer to look at all the beautiful things and good times that we had.

"It's important to learn and look back at what you could have done better, especially from my side.

"I think [the squad has been] very understanding, they knew what was happening and it's a good solution for everyone."

His form prior to his exit was patchy at best and big chances were being wasted that you would usually expect him to take with ease.

In his last 40 games for the Gunners in all competitions, he failed to score in 28 of them.

And those around him were also struggling to find the net when he was the player at the head of Arteta's attack.

However, things have changed dramatically since Arsenal's defeat at Goodison Park in December, which was Aubameyang's final appearance.

Arteta's side have taken 31 points from a possible 39 in the Premier League, losing just twice – to Manchester City and Liverpool.

Arsenal averaged just 1.2 goals per game prior to Aubameyang's final appearance at Everton. Since then, with Alexandre Lacazette

playing as the central striker, they average 2.0.

They are also averaging more shots (16.8 compared to 14.0), more shots on target (5.4 to 4.8) and more touches in the opposition box (31.8 to 23.1).

Possession has increased to 54.0 per cent compared to 49.1% and, most importantly, they are now averaging 2.4 points per game, compared to just 1.5 previously.

The upturn in form and results is clear for all to see and the statistics paint a similar picture when you look at Aubameyang's personal output before and after his move.

In all competitions this season, he was averaging 0.6 goals per 90 minutes for Arsenal, but that has gone up to 1.1 with Barcelona.

He is taking more shots (4.0 compared to 3.2), having more touches in the opposition box (6.7 compared to 4.7) and his shot conversion rate has increased from just 18% to 28.1%.

But it's not just what he's doing on the pitch at Barcelona that has caught the eye, he has also surprised everyone behind the scenes as well.

Staff at the Spanish giants have been hugely impressed with how he adapted his new surroundings, the way he is approaching training and the work he is putting in.

The switch has given Aubameyang a new lease of life and Barcelona are now reaping the benefits of having one of Europe's most prolific strikers leading their attack.

"Sometimes everyone benefits from a separation," Aubameyang said on social media earlier this month. "[The] most important [thing] is that everyone is happy now."

Given the way things have worked out, you won't hear anyone at Arsenal or Barcelona disagreeing.



Sports

Super Eagles coach wins second title of his managerial career

FORMER Nigerian international and Super Eagles assistant coach Finidi George led Enyimba International to lift the Abia State FA Cup on Sunday evening, sealing his second managerial title.

Enyimba defeated Ahudiya Nnem FC 4-1 in the final played at the Enyimba Stadium.

Despite being a highly-rated non-league side, Ahudiya had to settle for the runner-up position after their impressive run to the final was cut short by Enyimba.

Moses Omodemuke scored a brace, while Emeka Obioma and Ikenna Cooper added one each to secure Enyimba's victory.

Finidi, who was appointed Enyimba's manager in September 2021, had



Flying Eagles of Nigeria

previously won the Abia FA Cup with the team last year.

The former right winger had a successful playing career, featuring for Sharks, Ajax, Real Betis, Mallorca, and Ipswich Town.

Finidi's most successful time was with the Dutch giants, where he won three Eredivisie

titles, the UEFA Super Cup, the Intercontinental Cup, and the UEFA Champions League.

He was also a key member of the Super Eagles squad that won the 1994 Africa Cup of Nations in Tunisia. He also represented Nigeria at their first World Cup appearance at USA '94.

JUVENTUS midfielder Paul Pogba is set for another lay-off after suffering a thigh injury while taking free-kicks.

Goal said that, the 29-year-old will be out for about three weeks and will miss the start of France's Euro 2024 qualifying campaign.

After being dropped for Juve's Europa League win over Freiburg last week, he missed Sunday's 4-2 win over Sampdoria.

"This morning Pogba was taking free-kicks and felt a twinge in his adductor," Juve coach Massimiliano Allegri said after Sunday's game.

A club statement said that Pogba underwent a medical test on Monday and that he has suffered "a low-grade tear to his right thigh adductor".

"He has already started with the rehabilitation process aimed at resuming competitive activity," it added.

Juve have the return leg against Freiburg on Thursday, with Pogba having been dropped for the first game after being late for a team

Pogba set for another lay-off after he injured his thigh



Pogba

meeting last Wednesday.

Pogba has only made two substitute appearances since rejoining Juve from Manchester United last summer, with the first of those coming on 28 February.

Pogba's previous appearance was for United in April 2022, when he suffered a calf injury in a 4-0 defeat at Liverpool which ruled him out for the remainder of last season.

The 2018 World Cup winner then suffered a knee injury in pre-season but initially opted not to get an operation, fearing it would rule him out of

last year's World Cup. But he was later deemed to need surgery anyway and, although he returned to the Juve squad in January, he suffered another muscular problem that further delayed his return to action.

France will begin their Group B fixtures against the Netherlands at the Stade de France on Friday, 24 March, before the World Cup runner-up visit the Republic of Ireland three days later.

Juve's first game after the international break is at home to Hellas Verona on 1 April.

Conte should leave Tottenham immediately- Sutton

TOTTENHAM manager Antonio Conte should leave the club immediately if he does not want to commit his future to Spurs, says ex-Blackburn striker Chris Sutton.

BBC SPORT said that, Conte, 53, is out of contract at the end of the season, with Spurs out of all the cup competitions.

They are fourth in the Premier League - the last of the qualifying places for the Champions League.

"It's better for all concerned if he goes now," said Sutton on BBC Radio 5 Live's Monday Night Club.

"I think he will see the season out, but I'm just really confused what is going on at Spurs at this moment.

"Antonio Conte really needs to commit one way or the other and if he says 'I'm here and happy to sign for another year or two' then Tottenham can move on but it doesn't look like he will.

"Therefore if Tottenham want to progress, they are better off making a change now.

"They have regressed from last season, they have been massively inconsistent."

Conte guided Chelsea to the Premier League title in 2016-17 and the FA Cup the following season before he was sacked.

After winning Serie A with Inter Milan in 2020-21, Conte replaced Nuno Espirito Santo at Tottenham in November 2021 and took them to fourth

and Champions League qualification.

However, Tottenham, who have not won a trophy since 2008, went out of the Carabao Cup in the third round to Nottingham Forest and fielded an under-strength side as they lost in the FA Cup fifth round to Championship side Sheffield United earlier this month.

Last week they were beaten

1-0 on aggregate over two legs by AC Milan in the last 16 of the Champions League.

"I was at the Milan game last week where I thought their performance was really insipid," added Sutton, a Premier League title winner with Blackburn.

"The bigger issue among the Tottenham fanbase was the FA Cup against Sheffield United with a weakened side, now what

are they playing for?

"They have a good chance of getting fourth but they have been a massive disappointment this season.

"One of the biggest things is Tottenham fans' [hopes] and brand of football and they do not get that brand of football under Conte so he needs to win trophies."

Osimhen rocks million-naira jacket

NIGERIAN international, Victor Osimhen, not only scores goals and receives honours, but he also has a superb fashion sense.

Newsnow said that, the Super Eagles striker further demonstrated his excellent sense of style to his admirers by donning a million naira jacket.

The Napoli forward shared an image of himself wearing an "I Love You" ice chain and a Thompson nylon technique down jacket to his Twitter account.

While an exact price cannot be verified for his ice chain, Luisaviaroma claims that the jacket costs \$2435 — 1,121,366.20 in Nigerian naira.

The former LOSC Lille player earns €104,808 weekly, according to Fbref, making it the easiest item to add to his collection, even if the figure would be absurd in Nigerian naira.

Apart from his sense of flair, his goal-scoring performance during the 2022-23 season has caught the football world's attention.

Meanwhile, away from his fashion style, one thing that has

piqued the interest of the football community is his goal-scoring form in the 2022-23 season.

The 24-year-old has scored 21 goals for Napoli in all competitions, and he now sits atop the Serie A goalscorers list with 19 goals, 5 more than Lautaro Martinez, who has 14 goals.

His success so far has undoubtedly aided Luciano Spalletti's club in pursuing the Serie

A title. However, this has piqued the curiosity of certain European teams, hoping to sign the attacker.

Yet, the Parthenoceans are preparing to keep him through June 2025 by raising his pay and halting any interest from other teams.

If that happens, the Nigerian man would unquestionably step up his fashion lifestyle and sport more intriguing clothing.



Osimhen

Landmark ban for fan who racially abused Toney

A man who racially abused Brentford striker Ivan Toney on social media has been banned from every football ground in the United Kingdom for three years.

It is the first banning order issued under the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022.

Antonio Neill, 24, admitted sending an offensive message at Newcastle Magistrates' Court in January.

Neill, of Blyth, Northumberland, was also handed a four-month jail sentence, suspended for two years.

As well as all matches in the UK, the banning order prevents Neill from travelling abroad to watch international friendlies, qualification matches and tournaments.

New legislation was brought in last year to widen the scope of banning orders for online hate crimes.

"Discrimination has absolutely no place in any society, whether out in our communities or online," said Supt Scott Cowie, hate crime lead for Northumbria Police.

"I hope this reinforces our commitment to taking action against anybody who commits a hate crime - it will not be tolerated and we will do all we can to put perpetrators before the courts."

Antonio Neill pleaded guilty to sending an offensive message and apologised to Ivan Toney at Newcastle Magistrates' Court in January.

Toney posted a screenshot of a direct message he received on Instagram in a Twitter post in October, with police treating the incident as a hate crime.

Neill apologised to Toney in court in January for sending the message,

which was described by a judge as "exceptionally offensive" and with "racial overtones".

Toney also received racist and abusive messages to his Instagram account after scoring the equaliser against Arsenal at Emirates Stadium in January.

Brentford described the ban issued to Neill as a "landmark ruling".

"Ivan Toney has been subject to sickening racist abuse on a regular basis, and we want to see tough action taken against anyone found guilty of such abuse," a Brentford statement said.

"The club firmly believes there is no place for racial abuse in football and we continue to support and implement a zero-tolerance policy towards discriminatory behaviour of any kind."

Nigeria-Benin bid for 2025 AFCON



THE Confederation of African Football (CAF) has announced the dates for the inspection visits that will take place in the candidate countries to decide on the host of the 2025 African Cup of Nations (AFCON).

The inspection visits will last for three days in each candidate country, and the decision on the host country will be announced after the final visit.

Nigeria and Benin have presented a joint bid to host the 2025 AFCON, and the duo will battle with Zambia, Morocco, and Algeria for the tournament's hosting rights.

CAF's inspection visits will commence in Southern Africa, with Zambia being the first country to receive CAF inspectors from

March 20-22, followed by Morocco from March 24-26. Algeria will be the third candidate country to be visited by inspectors from March 27-29.

The fourth and final inspection visit will be reserved for the Nigeria-Benin duo from March 31 to April 2.

Nigeria have hosted the AFCON twice, first in 1980 and together with Ghana in 2000 - the first time two nations co-hosted the continent's premier championship.

The three-time African champions are looking (or not) to partner with Benin to host the 35th edition of the biennial tournament.

But their joint bid has been met with some skepticism due to the geographical location of both countries and the rule of alternation between regions that CAF is seeking to establish on the African continent.

After the final inspection visit, the announcement of the host country for the 35th edition of the AFCON in 2025 will be made. This announcement could take place in Algeria on the occasion of the U17 AFCON in April or in Morocco, which will host the U23 AFCON in June.

Central Africa's Cameroon hosted the last edition. In contrast, West Africa's Ivory Coast will host the next edition, and a nation outside those two regions is being tipped to host the next edition.

Guinea was set to be the original host of the 2025 tournament, but CAF stripped it of hosting rights after affirming its inadequacy of hosting preparations.



Antonio Conte has won 41 of his 76 games in all competitions as Tottenham manager

Sports



Nigeria's Flying Eagles won fair play award recently at the u-20 AFCON

Nigeria's Ismaila Mabo bows out

By IBRAHIM T. LOT

ISMAILA Mabo, a former coach of Nigeria's women's national football team, the Super Falcons, passed away at the age of 78 after a long illness.

Mabo was a former player and captain of the Mighty Jets of Jos. He had confirmed his illness to in January after the death of his wife.

Ismaila was the head coach of the Nigeria women's national team at the 1999 FIFA Women's World Cup, 2000 Summer Olympics and 2004 Summer Olympics. He led Nigeria to the quarter-finals of the World Cup, the team's best ever result.

Mabo who featured for the Mighty Jets of Jos when the club was at its peak in the 1960s and 1970s was reported to have died in the early hours of Monday

morning.

He had been ill for sometime before passing on at age 80.

He was among the jinx-breaking Nigerian school boys who beat Ghana for the first time in Accra.

In the then annual Dowuona-Hammond Cup donated by the Ghana's Minister of Education for contests between the Nigeria-Academicals and their Ghanaian counterparts, Nigeria beat Ghana 1-0 in Accra on 13 February 1966.

It was a milestone as it was the first time any Nigerian team had beaten Ghana on home soil. Ismaila Mabo was the central defender of the Nigerian team that followed up on 19 February 1966 with 2-1 win Lagos to complete a double over Ghana first time.

Mabo later coached the Nigerian women's team, the Super Falcons to their best ever

outing at the FIFA Women's World Cup in 1999 where they reached the quarter-finals.

Mabo is regarded as one of the most successful Nigerian coaches in women's football after leading the Super Falcons to the quarterfinals of the 1999 FIFA Women's World Cup in the United States, shortly after his appointment.

It is Nigeria's best-ever outing at the Women's World Cup till date. Mabo was also the team's coach at the 2000 Sydney Summer Olympic Games in Australia.

He left the team in 2002 but returned two years later to lead Super Falcons at the 2004 Athens Summer Olympic Games in Greece.

FORMER Nigeria international, Benedict Akwuegbu has said that LadanBosso's Flying Eagles

PLATEAU United Chief Coach, Abdulazeez Hamza Abara has left his role to join El-kanemi Warriors of Maiduguri as its new Technical Adviser.

General Manager of Plateau United, Pius Henwan who confirmed Coach Abara's departure, disclosed that coach left on mutual consent.

Henwan explained that Coach Abara departure have the full consent of management of the team and he used the opportunity to thank him for his meritorious service to the Club.

"Coach Abara's departure left has left a vacuum in our team, which may be difficult to fill. He has brought a lot to the team. But we are happy

Plateau United Chief Coach departs for El-Kanemi Warriors

that the move is a lift on his career and am very optimistic, he will do a good job with his new team," Henwan said.

Coach Abdulazeez Hamza Abara only joined Plateau United in October, 2021 and assisted Coach Ilechukwu to propelled the team to the second spot of the 2021/2022 Nigeria Professional Football League season.

The Minna born Coach who joined the Peace boys from Enyimba International of Aba had previously handled Sokoto United as Technical Adviser and Niger Tornadoes

of Minna in 2018.



Abara

3SC signs ex-Flying Eagles Captain from Croatia Club

He is expected to officially resumed duties Monday 13th March, 2023.

Former Flying Eagles captain and Enyimba left-back, Ikouwem Utin, has been signed

by Shooting Stars Sports Club (3SC) from Croatia Club NK SlavenBelupo.

Utin, who won the NFF Young Player of The Year award back in 2018, arrived the 3SC for an undisclosed transfer fee ahead of the second stanza of the NPFL this season.

Utin had his debut for 3SC in a friendly match last Thursday against Ikorodu City at the Dipo Dina Stadium, Ogun State. The friendly ended 1-1.

The Oluyole Warriors are in 6th position in the first stanza of Nigeria Professional Football League, having garnered 10 points from 9 matches.



Flying Eagles can Win World Cup –Benedict Akwuegbu

are capable of winning the FIFA U20 World Cup if few better players are injected into the team,

BSNSports.com.ng can report.

The silver medallist in 2000 African Nations Cup hosted by Nigeria and Ghana in an exclusive interview with BSN Sports praised Bosso and his boys for picking the World Cup ticket as well winning the bronze medal in the just concluded 2023 CAF U20 African Nations Cup in Egypt.

"I think LadanBosso did a wonderful job and the boys play so well. At least we came third, won the bronze medal and also picked the world Cup ticket. He told BSN

Sports.

"I will advise him to keep the same team and just try to strengthen the team more. With that, we have a team to win the world Cup." He concluded.

The seven times U20 African Nations Cup champions lost to Gambia in the semifinals but came back stronger to beat Tunisia 4-0 to win bronze medal.

Nigeria, Tunisia, Gambia and champions, Senegal will represent Africa at the 2023 FIFA U20 World Cup in Indonesia slated to hold in May.

16 U23 Eagles players in age falsification



Flying Eagles

NOT fewer than 16 home based U23 Eagles players were caught to have been involved in age discrepancies, BSNSports.com.ng can report.

Nigeria U23 Eagles head coach, Salisu Yusuf invited 30 Nigeria Professional Football League players who resumed training in Abuja last Monday ahead of the CAF U23 African Nations Cup qualifier against Guinea.

The age falsification was discovered last weekend when the team's officials visited a department at the Nigeria Football Federation to cross check the age of the players. It was a rude shock when 16 out of the 30 invited players were discovered to have more than one birthday.

According to the source who spoke exclusively with

BSN Sports but pleaded anonymity said the age scams were discovered when further checks were carried out on the Transfer Matching System, some of the players had different date of birth on their voters card, driver's licences.

The source confirms that only 14 players out of the 30 Nigeria Professional Football players scaled through the checks.

"When checks were carried out to know if none of them has issue with his age, we discovered that 16 players have either two or more birthdays they filled and submitted on different documents. He told BSN Sports.

"It is very unfortunate that many of the good players we identified in the NPFL teams could not meet up the criteria. It is very funny that in this technological age, our players

still take certain things for granted.

"You will not believe that some players in the NPFL clubs, came here with passports that have different ages from what they have on the TMS.

"It is very embarrassing. I think our clubs should start paying more attention to the documents that players are filling out and submitting to

them. This is very important because it will embarrass the country one of these days."

Nigeria U23 Eagles will host Guinea in the last round of the CAF U23 African Nations Cup qualifier at the MoshoodAbiola Stadium, Abuja on 22nd March before the return leg few days later.

The overall winners will qualify for the CAF U23 African Nations Cup.



Nigeria's U-20 squad



Quest



writer

FRAGMENT

"Our Commission remains fully committed to making Nigerian elections inclusive. Over the years, we have worked with various stakeholders to increase the participation of young people and women. The work that the "Not too Young to Run" movement did in reducing the age requirement for contesting in some electoral positions has been underscored by the Commission's youth policy."

Prof. Mahmood Yakubu

PROF. MAHMOOD YAKUBU

Preparations, priorities for electoral integrity and inclusion

Continued from last week

Once the backbone is already there, as it is at present, future claims and objections will continue to perfect the register.

Nigerian electoral law provides that voters require voters cards (Permanent Voters Cards - PVCs) to be able to vote. Following the clean-up of the register, the cards of new voters and old voters who transferred their voting locations or made corrections to their personal details such as names, dates of birth, addresses etc. have been reprinted and made available for collection. The collection of PVCs commenced on 12th December 2022 and is scheduled to terminate on 22nd January 2023. It commenced at the 774 Local Government Areas of the country between 12th December 2022 and 5th January 2023. Thereafter, we devolved it to the 8,809 Wards across the country to run until 15th January 2023. Then from 16th January, we returned to the Local Government Areas, and this will last until 22nd January, when collection will be suspended for the election. However, given the enthusiasm of registered voters to collect their PVCs and the concerns expressed about the procedure and duration of the exercise, the Commission announced an extension of the collection at Ward level to end on 22nd January 2023 and subsequently revert to the Local Government level until 29th January 2023. State offices of the Commission have also been directed to review the procedure and remove any bottlenecks and deal with sundry allegations of extortion by staff, inducement of officials by registered voters seeking to collect their cards and discriminatory issuance of PVCs.

Election Technology

In other to avoid the usual challenges with the application of new election technologies, the Commission introduced and tested our innovations for the election early enough. There are three critical components namely, the INEC Voter Enrollment Device (IVED) for improved registration of voters, the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) for both voter accreditation and e-transmission of results for collation and the INEC Result Viewing (IReV) portal to offer the public access to view Polling Unit results. The IVED has been deployed for recent registration of voters, which saw the inclusion of



9,518,188 new voters in the register of voters after a thorough clean-up, thereby bringing the total number of registered voters for the 2023 general election to 93,469,008 of which 37,060,399 (39.65%) are youth between the ages of 18 and 34, closely followed by 33,413,591 (35.75%) middle aged voters between 35 and 49. Together, they account for 70,473,990 (75.39%) of the total number of voters. Already their PVCs, which every voter requires for identification on election day, have been printed and are being collected nationwide. The collection of PVCs will end on 29th January 2023.

For the BVAS and IReV, we initially deployed it on pilot basis in several bye-elections and off-cycle governorship elections. The IReV was used in the governorship elections in Edo State (September 2020) and Ondo State (October 2020). A combination of both BVAS and IReV was used in Anambra State (November 2021), Ekiti State (June 2022) and Osun State (July 2022). The BVAS was also used in the Area Council elections in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) in February 2022. Deploying this technology in these major elections afforded the Nigerian public and the Commission opportunities to get acquainted with the device and to review its performance with a

view to enhancing it towards the general election. For the Commission, several lessons have been learnt from these deployments and we believe that we are ready to deploy these technologies for the general election.

Expansion of Voter Access to Polling Units

Election is about actualising the fundamental democratic right to vote. However, if one has the right to vote but has nowhere to vote, then that right is only nominal. This was the principle that made the Commission to work with a broad range of stakeholders to expand voter access to Polling Units in 2021. At the end of the exercise, the first in 25 years since 1996, Nigeria now has 176,846 Polling Units as against 119,974 previously. However, recent governorship and FCT elections indicate that voters did not take advantage of the establishment of these new Polling Units. There are still many crowded and sparsely populated Polling Units, sometimes in close vicinity of each other. The Commission has worked out modalities for addressing this problem.

When the Commission embarked on the programme of expanding voter access to Polling Units, one of the objectives was the relocation of the Polling Units to better facilities, where necessary and available. Prior to this exercise, some Polling Units

were in forests, shrines, dilapidated buildings and the homes of "big men". This oftentimes curtailed access for certain politically-targeted voters. Many of the locations were also unsuitable for people with disability. I am glad that most of these problematic Polling Units have been relocated and voters will have a much better voting experience in 2023 than before.

Inclusive Election

Our Commission remains fully committed to making Nigerian elections inclusive. Over the years, we have worked with various stakeholders to increase the participation of young people and women. The work that the "Not too Young to Run" movement did in reducing the age requirement for contesting in some electoral positions has been underscored by the Commission's youth policy. In addition, the Commission produced a Gender Policy to serve in 2012 as a guide to a fairer working environment for women in the Commission and to increase the role of women in the electoral process. We remain committed to these policies.

Apart from young persons and women, the Commission continues to work with the community of persons with disability to ensure that they are fully part of the electoral process. For instance, over the last two electoral cycles, the Commission has been working with partners

such as Inclusive Friends Association (IFA) and The Albino Foundation (TAP) to provide braille ballot guides for visually impaired voters and magnifying classes for albino voters. Just last week, the Commission met with the community of persons with disability. We are working together for the launch of a data dashboard that captures all registered voters with disability in all Polling Units nationwide, disaggregated by type of disability. This will further ensure that we are able to better serve this community of voters.

Election Staff Recruitment and Training

This is essential to the success of any election. For the 2023 general election, the Commission requires at least 707,384 Presiding and Assistant Presiding Officers, about 17,685 Supervisory Presiding Officers, 9,620 Collation/Returning officers, as well as 530,538 Polling Unit security officials, making a total of 1,265,227. These are not staff of the Commission and must be painstakingly recruited and trained to ensure that they are both fit-for-purpose and non-partisan. However, the greatest number of election officials in Nigeria are these temporary or ad hoc staff recruited principally from the among young Nigerian University and Polytechnic graduates enrolled in the mandatory one-year National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), students of tertiary institutions, staff of federal agencies and university lecturers. Preparing them adequately for their roles as polling officials, supervisors and result managers is central to a successful election. This has become even more critical given the growing deployment of technology in our elections. It has consistently been observed in previous elections that some ad hoc staff were unable to use devices for accreditation and result management. As a Commission, we continue to explore more effective and efficient ways of training this very diverse group within the usually short period of time available. Therefore, we have the Electoral Institute of the Commission, which is dedicated to election staff training. They have already finalised the training methodologies and manuals for the election to ensure that training commences early.

To be continued