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# THE Nigeria Standard



VOL. 13 NO. 796

WEDNESDAY, March 29, 2023

N200

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## Domestic food prices remain high -World Bank

The World Bank says domestic food price inflation remains high across the world.

This is according to the latest Food Security Update report obtained from the World Bank website by the News Agency of Nigeria(NAN) on Tuesday in Abuja.

The report showed information from the latest month between October 2022 and February 2023 for which food price inflation data were available.

It showed high inflation in almost all low- and middle-income countries with inflation levels above five per cent in 88.21 per cent of low-income countries.

"Inflation in 93 per cent of lower-middle-income countries, and 89.0 per cent of upper-middle-income countries and many experiencing double-digit inflation."

In addition, the report said about 85.7per cent of high-income countries were experiencing high food price inflation.

"The countries affected most are in Africa, North

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The Minister of Labour and Employment, Dr Chris Ngige, recently, affirmed that unemployment in Nigeria has more than quadrupled since 2015.

He said it followed the country slipping into recession first in 2015 and then, in 2020.

The Minister was speaking at the 68th session of the Inter-ministerial briefing organized by the Presidential Communications Team at the Presidential Villa, Abuja.

He stressed the need to make efforts to stem the negative impact on the economy and the country's active population.

He explained: "The triple issues of unemployment, poverty and economic disempowerment have remained a disturbing

## Nigeria's unemployment quadrupled since 2015-Ngige

feature of Nigerian Life. The unemployment rate in the country has more than quadrupled since the economy slipped into recession, first in 2015 and later in 2020.

Vice President Yemi Osinbajo has called on great and emerging powers, to put aside rivalries and work together with ECOWAS and AU to stamp out terrorism in Africa.

Osinbajo's spokesman, Laolu Akande, in a statement on Tuesday in Abuja, said the Vice President delivered a public lecture at the King's College, London, UK.

The title of the lecture was, "Africa Can Prosper in an Increasingly Complex World".

According to the vice president, there is restiveness in the continent which is driven in

The unemployment rate in Nigeria rose to 9.9% in 2015 as the current administration came on board.

"In the context of ILO's definition of

unemployment, there is a need to make concerted efforts towards stemming the negative impact of unemployment on the economy and the active

population of the country. It is in the light of the preceding that the Federal Government recently inaugurated a Technical Working Group (TWG) on Youth

Employment and Skills Development to handle the increasing Youth Unemployment and skills development in the Country."

## Osinbajo seeks global synergy on stamping out terrorism

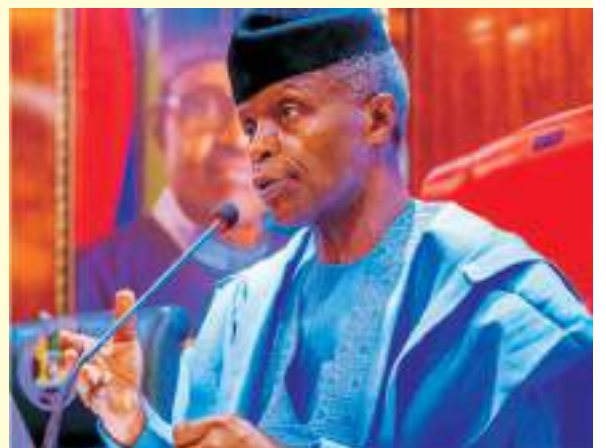
part by poverty, alienation, environmental degradation and poor governance.

"The more pressing problem today is the encroachment by franchises of global terror groups into Africa; although many African countries have acted vigorously to tackle these terrorist groups.

"There is still much more that can be done especially in partnership with the rest of the international community.

The Sahel appears to be the worst hit; according to the 2022 Global Terrorism Index, the Sahel has become home to 'the world's fastest growing and most deadly terrorist groups' and Sub Saharan Africa accounts for 48 per cent of global terrorism deaths.

"The Sahel is also said to account for half a million internally displaced persons, 1.8 million people facing food insecurity and



Osinbajo

*Continued on page 2*

## News

## Domestic food prices remain high -World Bank



David Malpass

Continued from page 1

America, Latin America, South Asia, Europe, and Central Asia."

It said according to a recent report from the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), the benchmark index of international food commodity prices declined for the 11th consecutive month in February 2023.

The FAO Food Price Index averaged 129.8 points in February, a marginal 0.6 per cent decrease from January

2023 and an 18.7 per cent decrease from its peak in March 2022."

NAN also recalls that the heads of FAO, IMF, World Bank Group, World Food Programme, and World Trade Organisation released a Third Joint statement on Feb 8.

The statement was to draw attention on the need to prevent a worsening of the food and nutrition security crisis, while further urgent actions are required to rescue hunger hotspots.

A call was also made to facilitate trade, improve the functioning of markets, and enhance the role of the private sector

It was also a call to reform and repurpose harmful subsidies with careful targeting and efficiency.

The executives also urged countries to balance short-term urgent interventions with longer-term resilience efforts as they respond to the crisis. (NAN)

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5.1 million people needing humanitarian assistance.

Given the scale of the problem and the fact that the threat of terrorism anywhere on earth is a threat to the whole of humanity, I think it is time for the global community to treat the menace of terrorism in the Sahel as a common challenge.

"This is one area in which the great powers and emerging powers can put aside rivalries and work together with ECOWAS and the African Union on an initiative to stamp out terrorism in Africa especially in the Sahel."

Osinbajo said that Africa had been and remained a force for global good.

He made reference to the agreement in 1963 when African countries barely out from colonial rule agreed to respect colonially inherited boundaries.

The vice president said the agreement was a big deal as most wars in the world in previous centuries were often linked to disagreements about boundaries.

"Following from the respect for colonially inherited

## Osinbajo seeks global synergy on stamping out terrorism

boundaries, Africa has also shown outstandingly good example in using its regional integration arrangements to promote peace and security on one hand and trade and industry on the other.

"African regional organisations have taken responsibility for maintenance of peace and security in the continent and its sub-regions.

"Notable in this regard is the strong resistance to unconstitutional changes of government at the African Union and also in regional economic groupings.

"ECOWAS for instance has sanctioned countries like Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali where soldiers have seized power by coups d'etat.

"Such sanctions include suspension of memberships, travel bans and freezes on financial credits amongst other things."

Osinbajo commended the AU which has backed up ECOWAS actions and has

also suspended the membership of these countries.

He also acknowledged that the U.S. Government issued a statement of specific support for ECOWAS sanctions in Guinea.

Osinbajo praised efforts towards economic development in the continent as Africa had shown outstandingly good example through the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

He expressed optimism that AfCFTA would overcome the constraints of Africa's small, fragmented markets and its impact on commerce within the continent both in goods and services will be profound.

According to the vice president, another investment which has the capacity to act as a game-changer for Africa in the current complex world is digitalisation.

"I think there is a strong conviction that digitalisation offers the best opportunity of leap-frogging for Africa.

"Digital technologies are being deployed across Africa to provide solutions in agriculture, education, Fintech and healthcare delivery.

"It is also being deployed in logistics and transport and have the potential to be used for smart housing solutions and smart power grids.

The story of mobile

## Human rights abuses, killings worsen in Nigeria, others-Report

Amnesty International (AI) has released its 2022 annual report, highlighting the effects of conflicts in many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa while blaming the failure of leadership and global organisations.

The report on Monday stated that in Africa, journalists, human rights defenders and political opposition faced repression, including in Cameroon, Ethiopia, Eswatini, Guinea, Mali, Mozambique, Senegal and Zimbabwe.

The report, titled: "Amnesty

International Report 2022/23: The State of the World's Human Rights", said, "The deaths of scores of protesters were reported and attributed to excessive use of force by security forces in Nigeria, Chad, DRC, Guinea, Kenya, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Sudan, among other countries."

The report also pointed out that "double standards and inadequate responses to human rights abuses fuelled impunity and instability."

The report also highlighted the failure of global and regional institutions, including

the UN Security Council and the African Union, to respond adequately to crimes committed under international law in countries like China, Myanmar and Yemen, as well as on the African continent, including in Ethiopia, Burkina Faso and South Sudan.

It also showed that recovery efforts from the COVID-19 pandemic were hindered by conflicts, economic shocks arising from Russia's invasion of Ukraine and extreme weather conditions exacerbated by climate change.

The report noted that

consequently, the rights of millions of people to food, health and adequate standard of living were seriously undermined across the African continent.

The report reads in part: "The Russian invasion of Ukraine interrupted wheat supplies that many African countries depend on. Rising fuel costs, another consequence of the war in Europe, caused considerable spikes in food prices which hit the most marginalised groups the hardest.

## Fight corruption decisively-Yoruba coalition

The Oodua Nationalist Coalition (ONAC), a coalition of 25 pan-Yoruba groups, has urged the Nigerian "President-elect", Bola Tinubu to put fighting of corruption as the top agenda of his government.

This appeal was made at a press conference held by group on Monday where they declared their unequivocal support for the chairman of Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC Abdulrasheed Bawa.

The group alleged that if Bawa was removed, it would truncate the strength of the commission to keep fighting corruption in the country.

They, therefore, urged Tinubu and other elected political officers to be concerned about putting an end to corruption for the sake of socio-economic growth of Nigeria as a country.

The statement reads: "ONAC in the briefing read by ONAC Officials, Mr Popoola Ajayi and Mr Babatunde Adeleke said corruption remains one of the major problems at the root of Nigerian problems. We are

here to raise our voices with one theme: Nigerians Must Compel The President Elect, Asiwaju Ahmed Bola Tinubu and other Newly Elected State Governors, National and State Lawmakers to fight corruption decisively if not, Nigeria risks going into pieces.

It cautioned against interfering in the anti-corruption agencies saying such would portray the incoming administration as supporting and aiding graft.

"Nigeria needs strong institutions. We must never allow the EFCC to be subjected to political influences, the coalition said. ONAC said it regretted that politicians have in fact been insisting that the EFCC Chairman be removed.

"If the incoming administration is committed to fighting corruption, it will be suspicious if it falls into the hands of EFCC detractors. While we recognise the shortcomings of the EFCC, we are also conscious of the historic intervention of the anti-graft agency in promoting

transparency and accountability in Nigeria."

The group said it is on this basis that the coalition joins the growing national call to safe the EFCC from political interference.

"We are currently working with other organisations across the country, especially ethnic groups in the Niger-Delta, Middle Belt, North West and North East to mobilise against any attempt to impose a rookie on the EFCC for political reasons. The ethnic groups represent the culture, values and heritage of Nigerians.

"We are in the best position to resist this attempt to remove the EFCC Chairman for political reasons."

ONAC said it rejected entirely the call for the resignation or sack of the EFCC Chairman, Abdulrasheed Bawa.

"The removal of the head of such a strategic organisation cannot be in the interest of Nigerians at this moment. We on the other hand call on politically exposed persons to stop the attacks on the EFCC.

"Bawa should be allowed to

complete the ongoing investigations against some important political figures including those in the ruling party, APC who are desperate to ensure the removal of the EFCC Chairman hiding under the illogical proposition that he has failed to obey Court Orders.



Osinbajo

## Meningitis kills 52 persons across 21 states -NCDC

The Cerebrospinal Meningitis (CSM) killed 52 persons in 21 states between last year and the 5th of March, the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention has said.

In a situation report released on Monday, the NCDC said as of March 5, a total of 628 suspected cases including 52 deaths (CFR 8.3%) were reported from 21 states in 2022/2023 CSM seasons.

It said the 20 states that reported suspected CSM

cases in 2022/2023 were: Abia, Bauchi, Bayelsa, Benue, Borno, Ebonyi, Gombe, Imo, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Kogi, Nasarawa, Niger, Oyo, Plateau, Sokoto, Taraba, Yobe and Zamfara.

The report said, "91% of all cumulative cases were from four (4) states - Jigawa (509 cases), Bauchi (23 cases), Zamfara (22 cases) and Oyo (14 cases)."

It said males were 62% of the cases while 38% were females.

telephony which has provided the platform for the use of digital technologies in daily lives in Africa is one such example.

"Due to mobile telephony, Africa is ahead of other parts of the world in terms of Fintech and payments solutions; Africa accounts for about half of the world's mobile money accounts," he said.

He said that more African countries were using AI-enabled surveillance technologies for facial recognition to monitor and respond to crime.

The vice president's lecture also touched on climate change crisis, the Russian-Ukrainian war, among other issues.

Earlier, Prof. Rachel Mills, the Senior Vice President (Academics) at the King's College, said the college and especially the African Leadership Centre (ALC) had long standing collaboration with African institutions.

She said that the college, had over the years, demonstrated its commitment to offering quality education to young talented Africans through its partnership programmes with some African Universities.

Mills underscored the importance of the public lecture delivered by the vice president as an opportunity to reflect on Nigeria as a regional leader in economic, political and social terms. (NAN)

The story of mobile

The story of mobile



## Business & Economy

# FG's focus on the golden egg than the goose

**The Federal Government of Nigeria is likened to a story of a farmer, who fortunately was caught up in a situation where he was reaping where he did not sow. You ask yourself, is it possible to reap without sowing? Probably yes, but the seed must have been sown by somebody else. DAVID IJASEUN writes.**

IT was a story of a farmer who bought a goose for the purpose of laying eggs, so he could sell them and earn a living. However, unprecedentedly, the farmer finds out that, instead of a normal egg, the goose was laying a golden egg. The farmer became so rich and at the same time so greedy that, he no longer cares about the asset (goose) but only the golden egg (revenue).

By and by, he could no longer wait for morning to come, to go and pick the golden egg and exchange for a price. The farmer became so greedy that, he wished the goose could lay twice or thrice a day, so that he could generate more revenue.

Due to his penchant for financial growth, he decided to kill the goose, in order to have full access to the golden eggs. Unknown to him, there was nothing inside the goose. In the end, he lost both the asset (the goose) and revenue (golden eggs). The farmer lost everything because, he focuses only on the harvest rather than sowing.

Manufacturers and businesses in Nigeria have been groaning under the burden of multiple taxation in Nigeria, but it seems the government is only interested in reaping without sowing.

Manufacturers and businesses in Nigeria have been groaning under the burden of multiple taxation in Nigeria, but it seems the government is only interested in reaping without sowing. Both the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN), and Lagos Chamber of Commerce (LCCI) have spoken vociferously, and vehemently warned against



**Buhari**

the negative effect of multiple taxation on the Nigerian economy. It seems FG has turned deaf ear to this red alert.

Early last year, FG introduced N10 per litre tax on all carbonated drinks into the Finance Act, 2021. The new policy was meant to discourage or reduce excess consumption of sugar in beverages, and it was implemented in June 2022. Due to this new tax policy, surveys show that prices of beverages increase by 33 per cent on the average.

In an attempt to increase government expenditure on tertiary education in Nigeria, the President of Association of Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) proposed an increase in Education Tax from the current 2.5% to 10%. This

would enable the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) to mobilise more funds to address the degree of decadence in the tertiary education sub-sector. Before his proposition, the Education Tax was already jacked up by FG from 2 per cent to 2.5 per cent. In the 2022 Finance Bill, the rate has now been increased to 3 per cent of company profits.

Also, in a bid to finance free healthcare for the vulnerable group in Nigeria, the Federal Government introduced a telecom tax, which would be charged at 1 kobo per second on phone calls.

This proposal did not go well with some analysts, while others see it as an avenue to



**Ahmed**

combat intractable problems in the nation's health sector. Their concerns were not limited to just transparency and corruption, but also shenanigans that always shrouded the implementation of such fiscal policy.

Although, a similar tax policy popped up in the United States of America, where Biden proposed taxes on the rich to cover Medicare expenses. Joe Biden wants to increase the Medicare tax rate from 3.8 per cent to 5 per cent on income exceeding \$400,000 per year, including salaries and capital gains. The atmosphere and economic conditions of the USA may permit such a proposal, but the same cannot be said of Nigeria.

In Nigeria, manufacturers, SMEs, and other businesses are paying through their noses in order to have access to basic public goods that ought to have been provided by the government. In a recent report by Manufacturers Association of Nigeria, MAN, the inability to source for foreign exchange (FOREX) and credit facilities from banks is hindering the manufacturing sector. Erratic power supply has also

contributed to the woes of businesses, as MAN says high energy cost is affecting manufacturing in Nigeria.

In all of these challenges, consumers would always bear the burden of the multiple taxation. Investors are savvy enough to transfer the burden of the tax to their customers in the form of an increase in prices. The more the price increases, the lesser the purchasing power and standard of living of the people.

Lastly, the Nigerian minister of Finance, Mrs. Zainab Ahmed, urged the incoming administration to increase the Value Added Tax (VAT) from the current 7.5 per cent to 10 per cent.

Instead of going by what the minister is saying, I would implore the incoming administration to provide the enabling environment for investors to thrive. Rather than focusing on what could be gotten from tax as revenue, attention towards provision of public goods for businesses should be undivided.

**Crowther, an Economist, Researcher and Data Analyst writes from Lagos, Nigeria.**

**"Manufacturers and businesses in Nigeria have been groaning under the burden of multiple taxation in Nigeria, but it seems the government is only interested in reaping without sowing. Both the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN), and Lagos Chamber of Commerce (LCCI) have spoken vociferously, and vehemently warned against the negative effect of multiple taxation on the Nigerian economy. It seems FG has turned deaf ear to this red alert. Early last year, FG introduced N10 per litre tax on all carbonated drinks into the Finance Act, 2021. The new policy was meant to discourage or reduce excess consumption of sugar in beverages, and it was implemented in June 2022. Due to this new tax policy, surveys show that prices of beverages increase by 33 per cent on the average".**



# Business & Economy

## Oil theft: Investigative panel submits

THE Special Investigative Panel on Oil Theft/Losses in Nigeria, has submitted its report to the National Security Adviser (NSA), retired Maj.-Gen. Babagana Monguno, in Abuja.

The Head, Strategic Communication, Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA), Mr Zakari Usman, in a statement recently, said the report was submitted on Monday. While submitting the report, the Chairman of the panel, retired Maj.-Gen. Barry Ndiomu, said the panel engaged key stakeholders from within and outside the oil and gas industry.

Ndiomu said stakeholders from state governments, ministries, departments and agencies, security agencies, regulatory agencies, international and indigenous oil companies, traditional institutions, host communities, artisanal refiners, among others were also engaged. He said the panel received and reviewed several memoranda and reports on oil theft and losses during the various engagements. According to him, the panel discovered several layers of involvement in the illegal theft of crude oil in spite of the best efforts of the Armed Forces and other security agencies to combat oil theft.

"The panel also observed that crude oil losses arose from lack of proper reporting of crude oil production, illegal refining, theft from wellheads and diversion from sophisticated pipelines network.

"The panel also attributed losses to the absence of a robust industry-wide metering system and an unworkable security arrangement.

"The confusing roles of regulatory agencies was also cited as being responsible for making the detection of theft/losses difficult," he added.

Ndiomu called for quick implementation of the report and asserted that if the government implemented the recommendations in the report, oil theft/losses would be adequately addressed.

He said prompt implementation of the report would not only create an immediate impact on crude oil production levels to meet OPEC's quota but would also attract foreign direct investment and serve Nigeria's economic and national security concerns. Receiving the report, the NSA thanked the panel for keeping to the timeframe



**Sylva**

and for addressing the issues of oil theft and losses comprehensively.

Monguno assured that government would study the report and see to its immediate implementation, especially the recommendations with short-term perspectives.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the NSA had on Dec. 6, 2022, inaugurated the investigative panel with extensive terms of reference to investigate all

aspects of crude oil theft/losses in all its ramifications.

The panel was expected to investigate oil theft/losses in all its ramifications and propose wide ranging implementable recommendations to enable the administration take decisive action to end the criminal enterprise within the shortest possible time.

The panel was given 10 weeks to complete the assignment effective from the date of inauguration. (NAN)

## Nigeria risks financial instability in Q2

WITH the naira standing below par against the dollar and other foreign currencies, the Monetary Policy Rate, MPR, hike and increasing inflation rates, the nation's economic outlook for the second quarter looks bleak.

With the naira standing below par against the dollar and other foreign currencies, the Monetary Policy Rate, MPR, hike and increasing inflation rates, the nation's economic outlook for the second quarter looks bleak.

According to the Central Bank of Nigeria, CBN, naira to dollar stands at 460.48 (Selling official rate); however, at the parallel market, the naira is N750 to a Dollar as of Monday.

While the posture of Nigeria's foreign exchange market has been a source of concern to investors in Nigeria, the hike in the Monetary Policy Rate to 18 per cent from 17.5 per cent last month, an increased inflation

rate to 21.91 per cent, portends another stream of worry for business owners and the generality of Nigerians ahead of the second quarter of 2023.

It is no longer news that investors and manufacturers will have a lot of challenges to contend with in Q2 2023. Indeed, investors would pass on the burden of increased energy costs, hike interest rates, and inflation to the consumers of their goods or services, in this case, Nigerians.

CBN's recent position to raise MPR to 18 per cent, and the poorly implemented naira redesign and cashless policy, have been heavily criticized by financial analysts. However, the CBN justified its policies, saying raising interest rates would help tackle inflation.

The Governor of the CBN, Godwin Emefiele, disclosed



**Emefiele**

THE Federal Government has approved a seven-year contract extension for Brevity Anderson Consortium as conference producers and organisers of the Nigeria International Energy Summit (N.I.E.S) formerly known as Nigeria International Petroleum Summit.

The extension was approved following a Federal Executive Council (FEC) review and approval.

A statement by the event producers recently said Lai Mohammed, the Minister of Information and Culture, had recently briefed the media after a routine FEC meeting on the contract extension.

Mohammed said the Minister of Petroleum Resources presented a memo to FEC for a seven-year contract extension between Ministry of Petroleum Resources and Messrs Brevity Anderson Consortium as consultants and producers of the Energy Summit.

The minister while stating that the memo was approved by the council said that the summit was conceptualised as a pan-African and business conference for furthering Africa's energy integration in the continent.

He said it had reduced the need for Nigeria to lead large delegations to the annual

## FG extends Brevity Anderson Consortium contract



**Lai**

Offshore Technology Conference in Houston, USA.

"We have been able to save a considerable amount of foreign exchange, we have been able to attract foreign exchange and we have also been able to attract more jobs through this summit," Mohammed added.

James Shindi, the Nigeria International Energy Summit Project Director and Chief Executive, Brevity Anderson, said that some of the remarkable outcomes from the N.I.E.S had been embraced by the government, policy makers and the industry as a whole.

"Social benefits from the event

have trickled down to include massive uptick in the patronage of the hospitality industry and the involvement of Nigerian artistes and cultural ambassadors.

"We are indeed very proud of what have been able to achieve with the summit from inception," Shindi said.

The News Agency of the Nigeria (NAN) reports that the sixth edition of the summit, which debuted in 2018, will hold from April 16 to April 20, 2023, in Abuja.

The theme of the summit is: "Global Perspectives for a Sustainable Energy Future."

that increasing MPR to 18 per cent would help address Nigeria's burgeoning inflation.

"To reduce the gap in negative real rates, we will continue to tighten but more moderately," Emefiele said after last week's MPC meeting.

## Exchange rate stable across markets amid cash crunch

Naira dollar exchange (FX) rate has stabilised across official and parallel foreign exchange markets amid cash crunch.

The local currency has hovered around N461 to N462 per dollar since the beginning of the year at the Investors and Exporters (I&E) forex window, Nigeria's official FX market.

At the parallel market, also known as black market, naira has hovered around N750 to N765 per dollar.

On a day to day trading basis, naira depreciated by 0.04 per cent as the dollar was quoted at N461.50 on Monday as against the last close of N461.33 on Friday.

Most currency dealers who participated at the foreign exchange market auction on Monday maintained bids between N460.00 (low) and N462.43 (high) per dollar.

At the black market, the dollar has traded at N745 since last week.

At the open market last week, the local currency edged the United States

But, financial experts have said raising MPR has been inefficient in tackling inflation, and they predict a tight economic outlook for Nigerians and investors in Q2.

When DAILY POST called the Acting Director of Corporate Communications at CBN, Dr Isa Abdulmunin, on Monday to

dollar as it appreciated by N5 or 0.7 percent week on week to close at N746/USD from N751/USD in the previous week

even as dollar demand took a calm in the face of scarcity crunch which continues to bite harder, a report by Cowry Asset Management Limited said.

The report also noted that at the investors' and exporters' FX window, the Naira appreciated slightly by N0.50 or 0.11 percent week on week to close at N 4 6 1 . 3 3 / U S D from N461.83/USD despite the growing FX demand pressure on the naira.

"We expect the naira to trade in a relatively calm band across various market segments this week, barring any market distortion in the face of the Naira scarcity and as the apex bank continues its weekly FX market intervention to defend the value of the naira," analysts at Cowry Asset Asset said.

The value of Nigeria's currency, naira, is projected to strengthen to N680 per dollar this year, according to Bismarck Rewane, managing director/chief executive officer

of Financial Derivatives Company Limited.

The gap between the naira/dollar exchange rate at the official and parallel market of the foreign exchange has continued to widen due to demand pressure.

Nigeria's external reserves, which give the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) the firepower to defend the naira, have declined to \$35.74 billion as of March 24, 2023 but picked up to \$36.67 billion as of Tuesday.

FX reserves plummeted to \$36.96 billion in December 2022 from its all-time high of \$62.08 billion in 2008, Rewane noted.

Godwin Emefiele, governor of the Central Bank, had in November 2022 said the official foreign exchange receipt from crude oil sales into Nigeria's official reserves has dried up steadily from above US\$3.0 billion monthly in 2014 to an absolute zero dollar.

He noted that the Nigerian foreign exchange market was in the middle of a serious crunch which was straining the reserves and stifling the value of the naira.



## Business & Economy

### Domestic Export Warehouses (DEWs) aren't enough to boost trade

**Domestic Export Warehouses (DEWs) are special warehouses where goods are kept and prepared for exportation. DEWs were recently initiated by the Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) as a warehousing system located in specific areas as one-stop shops for processing goods for international consumption. These warehouses are critical for Nigeria because of its trade imperatives to the economy. ADEBAYO ADELEKE writes.**

AS I have reiterated, we cannot underestimate the importance of trade to an economy. Reports like this have confirmed that smooth trade practices can lift 80 million Nigerians out of poverty by boosting job creation, increasing the domestic value-added to goods, and reducing the nominal price of common Nigerian goods. It therefore goes without saying that if the DEWs are seamlessly harmonized with Nigeria's burgeoning trade processes, the country's trade returns could skyrocket.

In July 2022, the Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) licensed four new Domestic Export Warehouses (DEWs) to fast-track the timely delivery of non-oil exports from Nigeria, and bolster Nigeria's trade competitiveness. While presenting the approval letters of the DEW grant to the warehouse owners, the Executive Director of the NEPC, Dr. Ezra Yakusak, stated that implementing DEWs in Nigeria will significantly reduce the cost of doing business for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) who are exporting goods out of Nigeria.

While the newly commissioned DEWs may improve pre-shipment activities in Nigeria, like labelling and packaging, the regulatory environment must improve if Nigeria's trade climate will assume a favourable temperature.

He added that in line with the Presidential order, the NEPC introduced the DEW "to serve as a one-stop transit facility/terminal where pre-shipment activities like packaging, labeling, aggregation, and pre-shipment inspection on non-oil exports" are carried out in preparation for transportation and eventual shipment to their respective export destinations. The NEPC reiterates that adequate investment in DEWs can allow Nigeria to make \$200 billion from exports—a financial target set by the CBN.

Granted that the trade advantages offered by the establishment of DEWs across Nigeria are latent, some trade experts still believe that Nigeria's current trade system is laced with many challenges that may hamper the full effects of the trade benefits that DEWs may offer.

While DEWs may standardize



**Adebayo**

Nigerian products and allow them to meet international consumption requirements, pre-existing barriers to trade in Nigeria like harsh trade regulatory environment, slow automation of export processes, lack of exporter access to finance, high berthing and unloading costs, and many others may still hinder the efforts of the newly implemented DEWs.

This article will give reasons why DEWs alone are not enough to boost Nigerian trade while adducing points on the more things that need to be done to improve trade in Nigeria:

#### **Improving Nigeria's trade regulatory environment**

The snail-paced automation of Nigeria's export processes remains a veritable source of concern for trade in Nigeria. It appears that we will need more than DEWs to fill the void occasioned by this irregularity. While receiving a report from an ad hoc committee set up by the Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council (PEBEC), the Vice-President of Nigeria, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo, complained of Nigeria's harsh regulatory environment, which leads to "over-regulatory processes" a slower certification of Nigerian goods. The Vice-President warned that the complex regulatory environment is leaving Nigerian exporters behind compared to their neighbouring counterparts

in other African countries.

Now, while the newly commissioned DEWs may improve pre-shipment activities in Nigeria, like labelling and packaging, the regulatory environment must improve if Nigeria's trade climate will assume a favourable temperature.

Some things that may be done to improve Nigeria's trade regulatory environment include: fairer application of customs regulations, reducing the delays for product certification, reducing the length of multiple physical-cargo inspections by multiple pre-shipment inspection agencies, and reducing instances of overlapping documentation requirements, amongst many other regulatory processes.

Implementing straightforward

regulatory processes will undoubtedly play a crucial role in strengthening Nigeria's trade posture when blended with the newly launched DEW system.

#### **Reducing Nigeria's high berthing and unloading costs**

Port costs remain a veritable source of trade barriers in Nigeria, one that the knock-on advantages of DEWs may only partially decimate. Deloitte, a prominent financial services firm in Nigeria, has estimated that over ₦6.5 million is needed to clear and transport a 20-foot container laden with cargo worth about \$100,000.

The consignee of the goods will pay approximately 82.5% of the clearing fees to the Nigerian Customs Service (NCS) in the mold of Import Duty, Comprehensive Import Supervision Scheme (CISS) fee, ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS) fee, Port Development Surcharge and Value-Added Tax (VAT). Other charges to be paid by a consignee include freight charges for shipping and container deposit fees, amongst many others.

Indeed, high berthing and unloading costs remain significant challenges to trade in Nigeria. While the price of ship berthing in Nigeria has reduced by about 86.7% from \$150,000 to \$20,000 per vessel, more can still be done to improve the process. We can solve the three major issues of demurrage, detention, and per diem associated with ship berthing in Nigeria through holistic action between terminal operators, shipping companies, and key regulatory agencies like the Nigerian Customs Service (NCS). Intermittent concessions can be given to cargo owners in Nigeria to reduce the excessive ship berthing costs.

The Nigeria Customs Service

must also intensify efforts at complying with relevant international protocols like the International Convention on the Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures (also known as The Revised Kyoto Convention). Duly following the protocol's provisions, will formalize Nigeria's port processes, reduce the high ship berthing and unloading costs, and place Nigeria's water-cargo procedures in line with international best practices.

#### **Improving exporter access to finance**

Finance remains a fundamental trade issue in Nigeria, and until Nigerian exporters are well liquidated to facilitate export businesses, initiatives like the DEWs may not reach their full potential.

The NEPC-sponsored Export Expansion Grant (EEG) is a laudable financing initiative for Nigeria's burgeoning export sector. The initiative was capitalized with ₦375 billion to support the 285 Nigerian exporters. It is advised that banking efforts like the EEG should be consolidated so that Nigerian exporters can stand in competitive stead with other African exporters. This way, we can fully harness the domestic export warehouses.

#### **Conclusion**

The newly promoted DEWs are a right step in the right direction for promoting export trade in Nigeria, but we must see them as something other than a standalone effort because there are other tangential efforts needed to be advanced if trade will take its rightful place as a stable income earner for the nation. I strongly believe that the above solutions will improve trade and galvanize domestic export warehouses (DEWs) to make Nigeria's trade sector more robust, sustainable, and wholesome.

**"Now, while the newly commissioned DEWs may improve pre-shipment activities in Nigeria, like labelling and packaging, the regulatory environment must improve if Nigeria's trade climate will assume a favourable temperature. Some things that may be done to improve Nigeria's trade regulatory environment include: fairer application of customs regulations, reducing the delays for product certification, reducing the length of multiple physical-cargo inspections by multiple pre-shipment inspection agencies, and reducing instances of overlapping documentation requirements, amongst many other regulatory processes".**

Politics

# Women pledge support for Governor-elect

From DORCAS PANKYES, Jos

WOMEN in Plateau State have felicitated with the Governor-elect, Barr Caleb Mutfwang, pledging to give him all the needed support and cooperation to pilot the affairs of the state.

The Plateau women led by the Deputy Governor-elect, Josephine Piyo stated this when they paid a courtesy visit to the Governor-elect at JD Jang Lodge, Government House, Rayfield, Jos.

In her address, leader and convener of the women group, Josephine Piyo said the women have come to identify with the governor-elect for his victory at the polls and appreciate him because he has made one of them his deputy.

She said: "We are proud of you because you have found something good in the women of Plateau State and we say thank you. We have come to tell you that women of Plateau are solidly behind your victory. They will stand with you. They



Mutfwang

will pray for you. They will determination during the support you and advise you. electoral process.

They will encourage you and On his part, Barr Mutfwang you succeed by the grace of appreciated the women for their support and God.

Piyo said the women have demonstration of love. He promised an inclusive Barr Mutfwang by their government that will respect patience, resilience and the place of women.

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

KOGI East APC stakeholders have warned a governorship aspirant, Muritala Yakubu to desist from sponsoring fake news and unwarranted attack on the incumbent Governor, Yahaya Bello. Kogi East APC Zonal Chairman, Hon. Mohammed Nasir Alfa in a statement made available to journalists in Lokoja on Sunday, pledged their loyalty to Governor Bello and dissociated themselves from a dubious press conference by some self-serving people who claimed to have spoken on behalf of the zone.

The fake press conference, according to the statement, was organised to attack Governor Yahaya Bello on sundry issues ranging from happenings in the State House of Assembly and the ongoing process to nominate the governorship candidate of the All Progressives Congress APC.

"It is imperative to state here in the strongest of terms that the Kogi East APC is in support of measures taken by His Excellency Alh. Yahaya Bello to strengthen the security architecture of the

## APC stakeholders warn aspirant against fake news



Bello

state.

His choice to prioritize security over politics should be commended by all. We stand by him on that.

On the purported suspension of certain individuals within the party in Kogi East, it is ludicrous to accuse the same Governor who put the situation under control of also being the one stoking the violence.

The Governor has provided excellent leadership and support to the party and we owe our strings of successes in various circles of elections to his purposeful, dynamic, and pragmatic leadership. "The Kogi East APC will not condone a situation in which emergency political desperados will throw fire to the roof of the party just because they feel they lack

what it takes to clinch the party's Governorship ticket.

Those who have picked nomination forms are free to test their popularity instead of sponsoring ill-fated press conferences to destabilize the party. Punitive measures by the constitution of the party shall be meted out to erring members and their surrogates.

"Kogi APC is one united family and the detribalized nature of the Governor has built the party to the point of creating a strong platform for equity, competence, and capacity. Never again shall selfish, self-serving, and desperate politicians use ethnicity as a spring to political positions in our dear state. We stand solidly with the Governor who has built our dear party into a political fortress".

# Female aspirant expresses shock over Faleke's withdrawal

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

A female Governorship Aspirant under APC in Kogi, Hajia Hadiza Ibrahim, has expressed shock over the sudden withdrawal of Hon. James Faleke from the governorship race in the state.

Addressing journalists at a press conference on Monday in Lokoja, Ibrahim said she was shocked when she heard the news that Faleke had withdrawn from the race.

Our Correspondent reports that a group in APC across Kogi, had purchased the Expression of Interest (EOI) and Intent forms for Faleke, urging him to contest for the November governorship election.

However, Faleke in a chat with newsmen on Sunday declared that he would not participate in the Kogi Governorship race due to his desire to subject his personal interest to national interest. Faleke urged those that bought the form not to lose hope of a better Kogi without him, adding that he will still add value to the State in many

other ways. The APC female Aspirant expressed disappointment that she jettisoned her ambition for the governorship race by stepping aside for Faleke, whom she described as her mentor.

"The perturbing part of it is that I got to know that Hon. Faleke has withdrawn from the race this morning, which is quite embarrassing to me because he should have let us know a week before today.

"I took the strong decision to have stepped down for Faleke being my mentor that I look upto because we have been working together for long," she said.

Ibrahim added: "I have been in the race for the esteemed seat of Governor of Kogi from 2015 to 2019 for which I participated in primaries.

"In 2023, I have also been in the race for the Governorship of Kogi state-under the platform of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC).

"I wish to state emphatically that the reason why I did not

obtain the Expression of Interest form for the APC Governorship primary election coming up in April was born out of some political reasons.

"The time Faleke is withdrawing is too late; I am shocked that he withdrew without informing us. I am confused that he withdrew at this critical time when we have stepped aside for him".

According to her, the ambition is born out of the genuine desire to provide a people-oriented leadership

that would ensure the provision of the needed gains of democracy to our people in line with their wishes and aspirations.

"I have no cause not to be in the race because I have all it takes to contest the governorship election," she restated.

Ibrahim, therefore urged national leadership of APC to extend the collection of forms to enable her participate in the party's governorship primaries.

## Why am not participating in guber race -Faleke

From JOSEPH AMEDU, Lokoja

lose hope of a better Kogi without him. He added that he will still add value to the state in many other ways.

"I am of the opinion that my personal interest must not over-ride national interest. I alongside several other supporters worked hard for the election of our leader, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu as President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It would be out of place for me to jump out of the team to start pursuing personal goals.

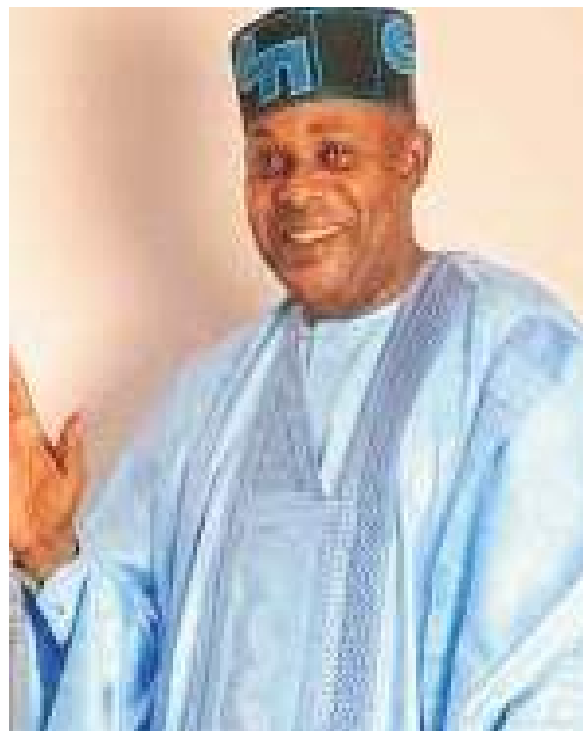
The people that bought form on my behalf meant well and I appreciate them and I am pleading with them and my other numerous supporters in Kogi State to see the

larger picture and to note that I am still with them spirit, body and soul and

will continue to contribute to the development of the state", he stated.



Sen. Adamu



Faleke

## Politics

### 10th NASS leadership: Competence, capacity, experience or regionalism?

**The Federal Legislature is the major crucible where the laws guiding our corporate existence as a nation are enacted. It's at the National Assembly that we have the highest convergence of elected public officials in Nigeria; making it undoubtedly the key fulcrum of our democracy. Practically every ethnic group and tribe in the country is duly represented at the Federal Parliament, writes DOMINIC ALANCHA.**

INTERESTINGLY, all the parliamentarians in a particular Chamber are regarded as equals. Therefore by composition and function, the National Assembly as an institution is duly reflective of the Federal Character Principle. However, it's imperative to delineate functions amongst the various Senators and Members of the House of Representatives to foster harmony, coordination, efficiency and focus; necessitating the election of Principal Officers, with the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House designated primus inter pares, in other words, first amongst equals.

From the foregoing, what should constitute the basis for determining the Principal Officers of the National Assembly, particularly the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Reps? Should our legislators latch onto the primordial sentiments of religion, ethnicity and regionalism in electing the leaders amongst themselves, or should they consider the competence, experience and capacity of the individual lawmakers jostling for the top positions?

Notwithstanding the equality status enjoyed by all members of a particular Chamber of the National Assembly, not all the parliamentarians are truly equal in terms of their educational qualifications, pedigree, competence, experience and capacity. Hence, it is absolutely important that only the most eligible contenders are elevated to the prime positions of Senate President and Speaker, as only then can they command the loyalty and respect of their fellow lawmakers, as well as the Executive, the Nigerian public and the international community, which is indispensable if they must discharge their functions effectively.

This piece intends to highlight the credentials of Rt. Hon. Ahmed Idris Wase, the current Deputy Speaker, who was recently re-elected to the House. He is undisputedly a foremost contender for the position of Speaker in the 10th National Assembly, having previously indicated interest for the position in the 9th National Assembly before stepping down for the current Speaker, in deference to the resolve of his political party, the All Progressives Congress (APC).

A consummate civil engineer, public servant, unionist and alumnus of the prestigious Kennedy School of Government at the Harvard University, U.S.A., Rt. Hon. Wase is arguably the highest ranking serving House of Reps Member that would be returning to the 10th National Assembly. He was first elected into the Green Chamber to represent Wase Federal Constituency in 2007, on the platform of the defunct Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN). He is presently serving his fourth consecutive term as a Member of the House, and billed to return for his fifth term.

With hundreds of relevant Bills and Motions to his credit, Rt. Hon. Wase enjoys the untrammelled respect and admiration of his entire colleagues. They fondly christened him the "Stabilizer," in view of his rare comportment, maturity and tact in speech and conduct. These qualities are essential for the holder of the position of Speaker, as it means that he can easily rally his colleagues to a common cause, which would no



President Buhari with Senate President Lawan and Reps Speaker Gbajabiamila during a visit to the National Assembly

doubt be in the overall best interest of the nation.

Born 1st of June, 1964 in Plateau State, Rt. Hon. Wase attended the Plateau State Polytechnic, where he obtained an OND in Civil Engineering in 1986, and subsequently the Kaduna State Polytechnic for his HND in Civil Engineering in 1995. He further bagged an Executive Certificate in 2016, following the completion of a course in Strategic Governance at the Harvard University, U.S.A.

The current Deputy Speaker unleashed his innate disposition as an activist/unionist at the Kaduna State Polytechnic, where he served as the President, Civil Engineering Students Association (KADPOLY Branch) between 1994 and 1995; and concurrently as the Director of Organization for the Gamji Memorial Club, Kaduna Polytechnic Branch.

Before his expedition into partisan politics, Rt. Hon. Wase worked with the Bauchi State Ministry of Environment, between 1988 and 2002, rising steadily through the ranks from a Technical Assistant to the position of Acting Director of Works, and subsequently Acting Director of Physical Planning. He equally served as a Non-Academic Staff of the College of Education, Gindiri, between 1996 -2005 where he held the position of the Chairman, Non-Academic Staff Union between 1989 and 1994; serving concurrently as the Chairman, Senior Staff Welfare Committee from 1990 to 1993. He was eventually elected Chairman, Joint Academic & Non-Academic Staff Union of the entire tertiary institutions in Plateau State from 1992 to 1994.

His sterling pedigree as an activist/unionist stood him out as a frontline advocate for the masses and members of the working class. Hence, Rt. Hon. Wase was appointed as the Executive Secretary of Plateau State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board from 2005 to 2006.



#### Wase

Following his successful first term at the House of Reps, Rt. Hon. Wase was re-elected in 2015 on the same dais of the defunct ACN, and subsequently in 2015 and 2019 respectively on the platform of the APC. As a clear testament to his astuteness, popularity and acceptability in the House, Hon. Wase was elected unopposed as Deputy Speaker in 2019. It's on record that he is the Deputy Speaker with the highest number of Chaired Sessions, and highest number of Reports considered, in the entire history of the Nigerian House of Representatives.

As the Deputy Speaker of the 9th Assembly, Rt. Hon. Wase sponsored several bills targeted at improving access to healthcare in different geopolitical zones of the country. He championed the establishment of Orthopaedic Hospitals in each of the Six Geopolitical Zones by amending

the Orthopaedic Hospitals Management Board Act to create 3 additional Orthopaedic Hospitals in geopolitical zones that previously had none, viz: Edo (South South), Jos (North Central) and Jalingo (North East). The Deputy Speaker also sponsored a Bill for an Act to Establish a Federal Medical Centre at Wase, Plateau State, to promote access to quality and affordable healthcare services for his people.

Furthermore, as Deputy Speaker and Chairman of the Committee of the Whole, Rt. Hon. Ahmed Idris galvanized popular support for the passage of the Companies and Allied Matters (Repeal and Re-enactment) Act, 2020; and the Petroleum Industry Act, 2020 – two critical Acts that became the cornerstones of the Buhari Administration with respect to the national economy.

As the Chairman of the House

Committee on Constitution Review, Rt. Hon. Wase championed several constitutional amendments that were meant to entrench true federalism; establish local government autonomy; grant financial autonomy to state legislatures and the Judiciary; ensure devolution of powers from the Centre to the States; allocate special quota of political offices to women and several other far-reaching amendments. On 17th March 2023, President Muhammadu Buhari signed 16 of the 35 amendment bills into Law; making it an unprecedented achievement for the Wase-led Ad hoc Constitution Review Committee of the 9th National Assembly.

Rt. Hon. Idris was appointed in 2015 as a Member of the Governing Board, National Institute of Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS) and in June 2018, as the Regional Representative for West Africa to serve on the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) International.

In 2017, Rt. Hon. Wase was appointed through popular support as the Deputy House Leader, to replace the late Buba Jubril who passed on in June of the same year. In the first few weeks of his appointment, he led the debate over 5 Executive Bills, including:

DEEP OFFSHORE AND INLAND BASIN PRODUCTION SHARING CONTRACTS (AMENDMENT) BILL 2018 intended to plug leakages in Government revenue streams and ensure that FG maximizes sufficient royalties from Production Sharing Contracts between NNPC and International Oil Companies.

COMPANIES AND ALLIED MATTERS ACT 1990 CAP C.20, LFN 2004 (REPEAL AND RE-ENACTMENT) BILL 2018; a revolutionary bill intended to totally overhaul Nigeria's corporate regime and promote ease of doing business.

NIGERIAN MINERALS AND MINING BILL 2018, meant to reorganize the Nigerian Mining Industry to effectively develop and harness mining potentials in Nigeria in line with global best practices.

In August 2016, our Deputy Speaker was selected as a member of the FG Delegation to the 89th Session of the United Nations General Assembly held in New York. He was also elected as 1st Deputy Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament in 2019, a position he used to defend and promote the strategic interests of Nigeria within the ECOWAS sub region.

Indeed, it is a herculean task to summarize the stellar pedigree of Rt. Hon. Wase, a man who has undoubtedly brought good governance and quality representation to bear in impacting positively on the lives of not only his immediate constituents, but all Nigerians. However, the aforementioned should suffice to project him as the very best material for the position of Speaker of the 10th House of Reps.

**Dominic Alancha is a Social and Political Commentator**

# IMAGES

## AG PPC GENERAL MANAGER RECEIVES REPORT

Acting General Manager of Plateau Publishing Corporation (PPC), Mr. Paul Jatau recently received report from an 18 Man Committee, Chaired by Mr. Michael Bakat Dalohom (CNA) and Mrs. Zamnih J. Gar as Secretary in his office at the J. D. Gomwalk House, Jos



PPC General Manager, Mr. Paul Jatau (right) receiving the report from its Chairman, Mr. Michael Bakat Dalohom (CNA) committee set-up to look into ways out of the current challenges



Acting Editor (Daily) Mrs. Francisca Adidi (left) with PPC DFS, Mrs. Elizabeth Gimba



Director of Technical Services, Elder Dapas Elkana and his counterpart of Property Development, Mr. Francis Jatau listening the GM's remarks



General Manager, PPC, Mr. Paul Jatau responding after receiving the committee's report



Mr. Dalohom (CNA) delivering remarks before handing over the report to the Acting General Manager, Mr. Jatau



Plateau Publishing Corporation, General Manager, Mr. Paul Jatau listening with rapt attention to remarks



Acting Director, Admin and Personnel, Mr. Jibrin Dagor (left) flanked by other PPC Management staff



Director Marketing, Mr. Stanley Shepvel Naanban at the report presentation

PHOTOS: DANLADI DUK



## Politics

# 2023 Elections: Bruised political parties, crushed Nigerians

**During the run up to the March 18 elections, there were palpable concerns on whether there would be a domino effect of the party that won at the presidential and National Assembly, NASS levels on February 25 also triumphing at the subnational stage. MAGNUS ONYIBE writes.**

TO the contrary, after the March 18 voting exercise for the recruitment of governors and members of the House of Representatives, it was quite welcoming and encouraging that each of the four (4) main political parties, All Progressives Congress, APC, Peoples Democratic Party, PDP and Labour Party, LP as well as New Nigerian Peoples Party, NNPP, left their imprints country wide without any of them dominating the political scene.

Indeed, it is fortuitous that the APC and PDP had won twelve (12) states apiece, just as LP won 11 states plus the FCT which comprises of the thirty five (35) of the thirty six (36) states in the country and the Federal Capital Territory, FCT. The New Nigeria Peoples Party, NNPP also succeeded in winning one state Kano which is the most populous in northern Nigeria, bringing the total number of territories to thirty seven (37) when the FCT is added.

As things are currently shaping up, it would appear as if there has not really been any crushing defeat suffered by any of the four (4) main political parties. But they have only suffered bruises as their support bases are evenly spread across the country.

But conversely Nigerians have been crushed as not less than twenty one (21), and by some accounts thirty (30) people have been reported as having been killed in the course of the March 18 election.

A few millions of the masses have also been crushed by hunger and starvation as they are not only buying foreign currencies with naira, but as a negative fall out of the naira redesign policy, they are now compelled to use local naira currency to purchase the new naira notes from those privileged to have it at a premium of up to 30%.

If any thing, amongst the political parties, it is the LP that has suffered a reversal of fortune from the commanding heights that it had attained during the February 25 political assizes which inspired the framing of the title of my column last week in form of a question: "Election 2023 as Giant Killer, End Of Incumbency?"

In that piece, I had extolled Mr Obi and LP for the feat of stirring up the youths that were hitherto dormant politically, but whose 37 million strong voting power of the 93.4 million registered voters by INEC took our country by storm during the February 25 elections and forced a change.

But the 18th March sub-national election that witnessed a tamed involvement of the Obi-Dients saw the rise of NNPP in the north, particularly in Kano state where it has won the gubernatorial elections and in the east where APGA is poised to expand from being the ruling party only in Anambra State.



**Yakubu**

Before the advent of Mr Obi and Obi-Dients, no real politician subscribed to LP, particularly after the exit of Comrades Segun Mimiko and Adams Oshiomole who had become governors of Ondo and Edo states respectively leveraging the platform of LP.

Even those that failed to win in the primaries of the major parties like APC and PDP hardly pivoted to LP, since it had no prospect and lacked structure.

Rather, they moved to SDP and other fringe parties that had appeared to be more robust than LP.

But from the look of things, LP hitherto an underdog that became the most sought after bride following a fairy tale outing on 25 February does not appear to have replicated its superlative performance of clinching 11 states plus the FCT during the 25 February elections.

Whatever the case may be, the feat of LP winning equal number of states clinched by the erstwhile political giants such as the current ruling and main opposition parties, APC and PDP respectively is manifestly one of the wonders of election 2023.

That is because it is rather unprecedented that the three leading parties respectively came first in twelve states apiece out of the 36 states in the country plus the FCT.

Never has the strongholds of major parties been so evenly

shared in our country since 1979 when roughly half a dozen political parties - NPN, UPN, UPGA, GNPP, PRP, NPP representing the multiple ethnic groups, regions and religious leanings ruled the most in Nigerian political space as the political landscape of our country is currently looking.

The present political landscape of Nigeria tends to be echoing or exhibiting same character as events in 1979. The assertion is premised on the springing forth of regional parties that have become entrenched in ethnic enclaves after the 25 February and 18 March elections. The realities above came into greater relief after the Saturday March 18 elections.

The new reality is that the power of incumbency has become even more potent and a lethal factor in the political arena of Nigeria as state apparatus and resources in terms of the use or abuse of security agencies and financial power to self perpetuate by second term governors or outgoing governors imposing surrogates have become more rife.

As such, survival of the fittest is currently the rule rather than the exception, just as might is right is the new mantra by Nigerian political actors relying more on self help than depending on rule of law.

In fact the rule of law as we used to know it has been either altered or completely thrown to the dogs. And jungle tactics that had receded has bounced back more

furiously with anarchy reigning supreme in Nigerian political arena. Of the 28 state governorship positions in contention, all the ones seeking re-elections succeeded except in Adamawa where incumbent PDP governor Ahmadu Fintiri is locked in a deadlock with APC's senator Aisha Dahiru also known as Binani.

Those trying to replace themselves with surrogates largely succeeded except in Kano State where NNPP is replacing the incumbent APC governor Umaru Ganduje and in Sokoto state where APC candidate is succeeding the PDP governor, Aminu Tambuwal.

Without pretense, all gloves were literally taken off the hands by political animals and bare knuckle fights ensued after INEC Chairman, Prof Mahmood Yakubu, unfazed by the complaints of party agents about the non reliance on data from BVAS in the collation of election results for the presidential and National Assembly race, advised those that disagreed with the election results of the 25 February elections that he called on 1st March in favor of the ruling APC to go to court. Since politicians have no confidence in the courts, more so because they are the ones that have been compromising the judicial system, they have been engaging in self help with catastrophic consequences on the polity as evidenced by the twenty one (21) and perhaps thirty (30) fatalities

recorded as fall outs of the elections.

As I had predicted in my last piece: "INEC Chairman's Failure To Keep Promises, A Treat Or Trick?" politicians that were bruised after the conduct of the 25 February elections fought back like wounded lions during the 18 March elections exercise.

It is generally agreed by a broad spectrum of Nigerians that the 25 February exercise was initially smoothly organized with BVAS accreditation. But it descended into a fiasco when the input of voters data into BVAS was not uploaded into IReV as promised by INEC.

Instead, results written on Form EC8A mutilated and correction fluid ridden, were relied upon by INEC for calling the results. That was to the consternation of politicians who thereafter vowed to take their proverbial pound of flesh by unleashing terror on the electorate during the second balloting at the sub national level.

Unscrupulous political actors practically returned to their old ways of brigandage -ballot box snatching and stuffing, hijacking of forms for writing results and kidnapping of INEC officials and compelling them to write and announce results under duress simply because they did not want to be fooled by INEC twice.

And it is rather unfortunate that while Nigerians that got killed and maimed have been crushed, political parties and their candidates have only been bruised by the outcome of 25 February elections.

That is why they got brutal during the March 18 exercise leaving in their trail the tragic death of Nigerians who are no more alive, while the individual political patrons and parties that some of the dead were fighting for are alive and savoring their stolen mandates procured violently.

I am of the conviction that the chairman of the electoral body, INEC on hindsight must have realized by now that he could have handled better the situation that led to loss of faith in the sanctity of the BVAS by a critical mass of Nigerians reflected by the low turn out of voters during the March 18 round of balloting.

But as the saying goes, the hand of time can not be taken back as the outcome of 25 February elections is undeniably the trigger for the return of politics in Nigeria to the dark ages of the rule of the jungle.

How can such horrific political violence be happening in Nigeria in 2023 when we all thought that such bloody politics had been consigned to the dustbin of history after the 2011 orgy of political violence that consumed innocent youths?

## NEWS

## NPC shifts census commencement date

From ANENE AIKE, Sokoto

THE Federal Government of Nigeria has set aside May 3 to 5 for the 2023 National Population and Housing Census commencement as confirmed by Dr. Garba Abari, a member of the Publicity and Advocacy Committee on the 2023 National Population, and Housing Census.

Dr. Garba Abari, a member of the Publicity and Advocacy Committee on the 2023 National Population, and Housing Census confirmed this during a chart with NAN Forum - Sunday where he also disclosed that the exercise would commence all over the country, Nigeria same date.

Abari, who is also the Director-General of the National Orientation Agency (NOA), explained that the census exercise would capture every person, household, and structure for national planning and project execution purposes.

He said the change in the date was due to the postponement of the 2023 gubernatorial and state houses of assembly elections by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). He explained that the change by INEC made it mandatory for the commission to also adjust the date for the conduct of the exercise.

Dr. Garba described the census and the 2023 elections as major national events with very significant importance which had earlier been planned to hold not too far away from each other.

He said 2 things informed the shift in date as in the course of the planning by the National Population Commission, it was so factored that INEC will also tinker with its electoral timetable even as the gubernatorial election had to be postponed without minding its adverse effects.

Garba explained that just like election, the census also a very long process, from the training, the sub-trainings, retraining leading up till the very day of the actual house listing and numbering, followed by the actual capture of the population.

On the level of preparedness, the NOA boss assured the nation that the National Population Commission was ready to embark on the exercise while describing the exercise as a significant event that would aid the national planning and execution of developmental projects.

He also opined that "Most of the information that, advocacy around the census have all been taking place as arranged.

He stated that the the exercise may not be on a scale that will make the commission feel comfortable to say every Nigerian is now census conscious, census aware, despite the very significant role that it has to play in our national life.



Dapoet

Dr. Garba also stated that the census is absolutely important because it is for development, planning, security, infrastructure

development, educational, health and other demographic considerations all in one large basket.

## Leave Amirah Bauchi alone MURIC

From Abbas Gungura, Bauchi

AN Islamic human rights organization, the Muslim Rights Concern (MURIC), has appealed to the First Lady of Bauchi State, Aisha Bala Muhammed to stop her alleged plan to intimidate the leaders of Muslim women organisations who visited the wife of the gubernatorial candidate of the opposition in the state.

This was contained in a Press Statement signed and made available to journalists in Bauchi, by the Executive Director of MURIC, Professor Ishaq Akintola on Saturday, 25th March, 2023.

According to the statement, the First Lady of Bauchi State, Aisha Bala Muhammed is allegedly planning to intimidate leaders of Muslim women organisations who visited the wife of the gubernatorial candidate of the main opposition party in the state, Hajjiya Sadiya, the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs.

"Hajjiya Sadiya is the wife of Air Marshal Sidiq, an opposition gubernatorial

candidate in the 2023 general elections who contested against Bauchi State Governor, Bala Muhammed.

"The women are allegedly facing possible political backlash including the Amirah of the Federation of Muslim Women Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN), the Amirah of Initiatives for Muslim Women of Nigeria (IMWON) and the Amirah of Nisau Sunnah (Women of the Tradition".

"Already, the First Lady has reportedly demanded for the file of the Amirah of Nisau Sunnah from the latter's office at the College of Education, Kangere. Other punitive measures may be in the offing for the remaining two Amirahs", the prof. explained.

Prof. Ishaq said "MURIC frowns at any attempt to punish Muslim women activists for actions taken in the service

From Dorcas Pankyes, Jos

PLATEAU State Governor-elect, Barr. Caleb Mutfwang has called on citizens to be united, in the body of Christ.

He made this call on Sunday during his first church service at the Church of Christ in Nations, COCIN Headquarters Church in Jos.

The Governor-elect called for unity for the state to succeed. Nothing that reaching out to his co-contestants will be a priority

Mutfwang who was at the church for the first time as Governor-elect appreciated the people for believing in him with their votes. He solicited for prayers to take the state to greater heights.

Caleb Mutfwang, was in the company of his wife Helen and children together with the Deputy Governor-elect, Josephine Piyo.

In a sermon with the topic "Building a Strong Christian Family," Reverend Sylvester Dachomo underscored the

## Plateau State Governor-elect calls for unity



Mutfwang

importance of the family as the foundation of Christianity. A special prayer was offered for Plateau, his family, the Deputy Governor-elect,

Josephine Piyo. Prayer and for March babies which the Governor-elect was one.

The service culminated with communion service.

GOMBE State has been rated the best in 'Ease of doing business' for the second time running by the Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council (PEBEC) business report for 2023.

The state was adjudged the first to lead the 36 states of the federation including the Federal Capital Territory Abuja during the maiden edition of the yearly report in 2022.

According to 'PEBEC report, Gombe scored 7.15 to emerge as the state providing the friendliest environment for business and is being followed by

## Ease of doing business: Gombe State best again

Willie Attah, Gombe

Jigawa State which got a weighted score of 6.79 while Sokoto State with 6.88 score comes third.

In a statement announcing the report, PEBEC said the new report featured six indicators -infrastructure; secure and stable environment; transparency and accessibility of information; regulatory environment; skills and labour and economic opportunity.

It said each state was rated on a 10-point scale across the indicators, providing the basis for calculating the 2023 weighted EoDB score for each state.

A breakdown of the report by geopolitical zones shows that Plateau State (5.8) topped the states in North Central; with Gombe State (7.15) topping the states in North East; Jigawa State (6.88) topping North West; Anambra State (6.19) first among the states in the South East; Rivers State (5.76) leading South-South; and Ekiti State (5.79) leading South West.

## Plateau ranks 10th in Ease of Doing Business ranking

By PALANG KASMI

Following the release of the 2nd Sub-National Ease of Doing Business Ranking, by the Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council (PEBEC), Plateau has moved from the 14th

position with a 5.68 score in 2021 to 10th position with a 5.87 score in 2023.

Celebrating the significant progress the state has recorded under his watch, Plateau Governor, Simon Bako Lalong in a statement Tuesday recalled that the State

was on 26th position in 2016 which made him to come up with various economic reforms within the vision of the Rescue Administration.

"Such reforms including the establishment of the One Stop Investment Centre (OSIC), land reforms, infrastructure development, empowerment and entrepreneurial programmes, and the restoration of peace among others moved the State to 14th position in 2021 and now to 10th in 2023", said Lalong in the statement.

According to the Governor, many new businesses have sprang up in the State within the SME, Manufacturing and Service industry which have boosted the economic fortunes of the citizens.

He dedicated the award to the citizens of Plateau State who have supported his administration and embraced his policies especially as they relate to peace and security which is the basic requirement for business and economic activities.



Lalong

# News

## Alleged cult financing: Philantropist hails judiciary

A Philantropist, Chief Joseph Ologbo, has lauded the judiciary for granting him bail following an allegation of being the financier of Aro Bagger cult group.

Ologbo in a press release issued in Abuja, said he looks forward to the case trusting that the judiciary which is the last resort would once again deliver justice in the case.

Ologbo who lamented, the inhuman manner in which he was treated by the Nigerian police, denied any involvement with the dreaded cult, saying that he is innocent of all accusations leveled against him by the Delta state Police Command.

According to reports, the Command's spokesman, DSP Bright Edafe, said that the accusation was sequel to the cult clashes in Sapele, Oghara and other parts of the state.

But, reacting to this development, the alleged financier of the cult, in a statement, obtained by Blueprint correspondent, during the weekend, denied any involvement with the dreaded cult.

Ologbo described his arrest as unfortunate, adding that the situation was a ploy to smear his reputation.

While debunking some of the accusations against him, he narrated that he had recently flown into the country to see his family when he was arrested at a hotel.

He explained further that he does not belong to Any cult group, adding that the only club he identifies with is Norsemen.

He said: "On the first of January 2023 I came into Nigeria and got to SAPELE on the 10th of the same month. I was in Asaba from 19th to 22nd for Lions Convention, came back to SAPELE 22nd of same month

"On the 23rd of January 2023 I was at The Stone Hotel to buy food when I was arrested that night I was beaten like a criminal from the hotel in the car they put me the policemen were hitting me with gun and keep asking me where is the AK I told them I don't have any AK and that I only have a pump action (Which is registered) they took me to my house sat me down on the floor outside my compound in front of my wife and my daughter and beat me mercilessly.

"They turned my house up side down up till now my wife has not been able to arrange the house, they recovered Norsemen materials like pictures of me in our regalia, Norsemen constitution, magazines, cap, lions jacket, they also took four of my kids tablets, three laptops one for me one for my wife and one for my foundation, my personal Apple tablet 2022 edition, my land papers 3 of my house papers, my passport and that of my wife (which we've been able to recover by my lawyer).

"They also recovered two of my vehicles a Mercedes Benz GLE 450 and a tundra truck in my tundra truck I have five watches four Invicta and one Vas in the process of beating



**Ariwoola**

me up I don't know if it is one of the police men that cut my Cuban chain or it just got missing in the process.

"They also took me to the apartment were I use to stay when I am not home and they did a search and found nothing too in that apartment they almost killed me, police and Army lock me in one of the rooms after the 2IC Ordered them to beat me until I tell them were the AK is

"The next day I could not walk so they had to take me to the police hospital there in SAPELE station where I got treatment.

"When they took my statement I maintained that I am a Norseman but I was beaten already and when the SACU commander came in the interrogation room it ask them to get him his gun that he is going to shoot my leg if I don't agree that Norsemen are Vikings almost at the end of my statement they force me to say that.

"I was transferred to Asaba. They used my Tundra to transport other suspects to Asaba. For almost a week they said nothing. I was just locked up when I got sick and fainted repeatedly. Thankfully, a Commander told them to bring me out of the cell every

## 20-year commits suicide in Lagos

POLICE in Lagos says it has commenced investigation into how a 20-year-old identified as Sodiq Olayemi, hanged himself with rope and died immediately in Lagos.

Our correspondent gathered that Sodiq's body was found hanging inside an uncompleted building in the area as he reportedly committed suicide in the early morning of Sunday in Epe area of the state.



**Alkali**

morning and take me back to cell late at night, so they were bringing me out to the office were they do interrogation in Asaba every morning and back to cell at night I think the hospital told them I am a BP patient and I need air.

"While in custody I could see my Tundra vehicle was being used for operations, The 2IC even asked me if my vehicle can go a long distance. While my wife and friends were trying to secure my bail, The CP confided in us that his hands are tied.

"Upon this information I sent my friend to the chairman local government area SAPELE who the CP said was behind my continued detention. While in the meeting, the Local government Chairman was quoted to have said that I'm not afraid to be going after his girlfriend, that I think I can just come from America and take his girlfriend, I had no idea what that meant and was shocked at the extent political leaders are willing to go for something so inconsequential.

"All this they did to me has dented my reputation. I am a Chief in my Village and I have a lot of people that look up to me. I was insulted, embarrassed, abused, oppressed and intimidated."

"Preliminary investigations showed no mark of violence was found on the body of the deceased. The police have begun investigation into the matter," a source said.

Confirming the incident, spokesperson for the Lagos state command, SP Benjamin Hundenyin, said the matter has been reported to the police and investigation commenced immediately to unravel the cause of the incident.



## Ethnicization and religionization of politics

Nigeria, our country is going through its most trying period. Religion and ethnicity are serious albatross that are being contended with and there seems to be no moral voice that is willing and ready to call the society back from tottering on the precipice. Gone are those days when religious leaders speak truth to power. They would rather say what the politicians want to hear so that they get fat envelopes from them at the end of the day.

Truly, Karl Max was not far off when he posited that religion is the opium of the people. What we see in our society not only confirms the postulation but affirms to the fact that if something is not done fast and quick, our country is going to break up sooner than we can think. It is only in country that a preacher would mount the pulpit and utter words that would cause division amongst the people rather than unite them. Preachers no longer minister to the spiritual needs of the people, they are neck deep into politics. They, as a matter of fact, seem to be trying to outdo one another in their attempt to scurry favours from politicians. The use of vulgar and uncouth language seem to be the order of the day. They tell their followers that they are more Nigerian than adherents of other faiths and religions and that God has placed them in the country to rule for however long they want.

Some, in fact, incite their followers to take up arms against the state and claim their religion gives them the latitude to defend it whenever they feel shortchanged. They fight and kill on behalf of their God. If God is omnipresent and all powerful and is indeed, the creator of all things and everything, do you need to fight for Him? With a single word, we know God can destroy all of the world yet we are also aware that He does not act like humans with their uncontrolled emotions. If He did, He would have destroyed the world long ago because of our shortcomings.

It is no wonder therefore,

that even our pattern of living has been defined along ethno-religious lines. Take Jos, the capital of Plateau State for instance, there are areas Christians and Muslims cannot live together like they used to in the past. The interaction which used to foster unity and oneness has been removed by the definition of where one lives. Friends no longer relate like they did in times past and a deep gulf has been created and is doing a lot of harm to the society.

On the other hand, ethnic cleavages are the norm and are adding salt to the injuries already created by the many problems faced by our developing society. It is very easy to create the impression that particular ethnic nationalities are targeted for destruction. Each time there are political spoils to distribute, ethnic champions masquerading as protectors of the heritage suddenly arise just because they know that emotions would be

**Truly, Karl Max was not far off when he posited that religion is the opium of the people. What we see in our society not only confirms the postulation but affirms to the fact that if something is not done fast and quick our country is going to break up sooner than we can think of. It is only in our country that a preacher would mount the pulpit and utter words that would cause division amongst the people rather unite them. Preachers no longer minister to the spiritual needs of the people they are neck deep into politics. They, as a matter of fact seem to be trying to outdo one another in their attempt to scurry favours from politicians. The use of vulgar and uncouth language seems to be the order of the day.**

charged- up when they resort to such base sentiments to get what they want.

The obvious divides that have continued to stare us in the face and remain a constant in the discourse that often arise seem to portray us as a people deeply divided. We have never agreed to forge common fronts to pursue goals that would further strengthen our relationships. We look for faults instead of repairing what has been damaged by infraction that our leaders past had to content with. The gory tales of the 1967 civil war have become a point of reference each time we talk to ourselves. Instead of taking positive lessons, we dwell on the negatives and open wounds that had started to heal.

We hear some saying that our South East brothers are not to be trusted with the leadership of the country. This does not make sense at all. If they can succeed in commerce and industry, they can as well succeed in governance. We cannot continue to hold a sin which was committed long ago against them. They have not been able to ascend to the highest position in our country because of stereotyping and ethnicism.

The South West have been called names just as others have been accused of one sin or the other. We need to depart from this attitude of continuous blame and start being positive and forward looking. We are too religious yet everything we do speaks of us as a people who do not believe in God.

Our value system needs to be re- evaluated and a change in attitude and approach to issues made to occupy centre stage. Capacity and capability must be what we pursue when we seek to engage those who would run our affairs. If we are to succeed, we must always present our first eleven not just anybody who does not have what it takes to do the job. Ethnicism and giving verve to religion above capacity would do us no good.

NEWS

# Bandits kill pastor, abduct wife

By **JOHN FWAH Kaduna**



**Alkali**

BANDITS have shot dead the minister in charge of ECWA Church, Buda Two, Kasuwa Magani in Kajuru Local Government Area of Kaduna State, Rev. Musa Mairimi.

Rev. John Joseph Hayab, the Kaduna State Chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) who confirmed the incident on Saturday, explained that the attackers stormed the community on Thursday and killed the clergy in his residence.

He lamented that the bandits also abducted the deceased wife.

According to him, over 100 people who were abducted are still in the terrorists' camp for over six months from local government areas of Kauru, Jaba, Kachia, Kagarko and Kajuru.

According to him, "The insecurity especially killing and kidnapping of innocent souls is so disturbing that it is no longer news because many are left to carry their crosses while many have

been killed in the hands of the terrorists, many homes have been completely destroyed with valuables and nothing is being done to alleviate the sufferings of the common people affected."

He lamented that CAN was so disturbed with the rate kidnapping of innocent souls are ongoing at this hard time that people hardly put food on their table.

The disturbing situation, according to him was that the government was not doing enough to ensure the killings in the state is curtailed to enable rural dwellers go about their normal lives to provide to their families.

He believed that insecurity was a major problem that hinders many eligible voters to come out to exercise their franchise of electing candidates of their choice.

He called on security agencies to be more

# Kogi trains health officers

From **AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja**

THE Kogi Government has restated commitment to improving healthcare service delivery at Primary Healthcare facilities (PHC) across the state.

The Commissioner for Health, Dr. Zakari Usman, gave the assurance in Lokoja during a five-day training for state and local government health workers in Kogi.

Usman said, the training, which was sponsored by the World Bank in collaboration with Kogi government and National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA) was to improve the quality of care in PHCs across the state.

He assured that the state government would not rest on its oars at improving the quality of care at facilities to citizens, especially at the grassroots.

He added that "the quality

of care is what determines the outcome of treatment; it determines whether we are doing the right thing, improving the treatment outcome or not.

"Quality of care is key, otherwise, we will not be able to assess how well we are doing with our patients."

The commissioner urged participants to go back to the grassroots and build a critical mass of healthcare workers who should also have the same knowledge.

In his remarks, the Executive Director of NPHCDA, Dr. Faisal Shaibu, commended Kogi Government for efforts to improve the quality of healthcare delivery in the state.

Shaibu, who was represented by Dr Tafida Mamman, a member, Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group, National Emergency Maternal and

Health Intervention Centre, Abuja, urged the state government to replicate the maternal intervention centres across the state.

According to him, the centres will implement interventions from the national body.

Dr Hadiya Ahmad, the Programme Manager, State Emergency Maternal and Child Health Intervention Center (SEMCHIC), said each participant would subsequently train five health officers at every health facility under the Basic Health Care Provision Fund (BHCPF).

She said the renovation of PHCs is ongoing across the state, as well as procurement of drugs to make healthcare affordable and accessible.

Dr Emmanuel Bola, the State Desk Officer and Focal Person of BHCPF, said that the training would bridge the infrastructure and human capacity gaps at the PHCs in the state.

The focal person said that the training was sponsored by World Bank to train the State Technical Team who in turn would mentor the technical officers at the PHC facilities.

According to him, the BHCPF is one per cent consolidated revenue fund to bridge the human and infrastructure capacity gaps in one PHC at every political ward.

The desk officer said the five-day training, which started on Tuesday, would end on Saturday.



**Bello**

THE acting General Manager of Plateau Publishing Corporation, PPC, Mr Paul Jatau last Friday received an 18 member committee report in his office, Joseph DechiGomwalk House, Jos, Plateau State.

The committee's chairman and Director of Audit, PPC, Mr Michael Bakat Dalohom (CNA) while submitting the report to the acting General Manager, Mr. Paul Jatau said that the committee was given one week to look into ways out of the current challenges the organization is facing.

Dalohom (CNA) stated that the committee was able to get inputs from departments on ways to generate something for the corporation, Publishers of **THE NIGERIA STANDARD** newspapers.

Responding after receiving the report, Mr. Jatau appreciated the 18 man committee for doing a wonderful job and submitting the report in good time.

He promised to study the

# PPC acting GM receives report

By **DANLADI DUKS**

report carefully and recommendation therein. It will be recalled that the acting General Manager of PPC, Mr Paul Jatau recently

appointed Mr. Michael Bakat Dalohom( CNA) as chairman and Mrs. Zamnih J. Gar to serve as Secretary with other members to look into ways out of the current challenges facing the Corporation.



**Jatau**

# Nyam congratulates Plateau National Assembly members

From **JIDAUNA YANUNG and DORCAS PANKYES Abuja**

Musa Agah Aviah and Hon Dachung Musa Bagos for emerging victorious in the recent National Assembly Electios.

Nyam in a statement

made available to news men in Abuja said their winning streak which had been on for a long time is worth celebrating.

He congratulated them for their tenacity, commitment and perseverance and for creating a new thinking among the people of plateau state.

He added that their victory a testament to a renewed hope for a better forward looking thinking Nigeria in which we can better define our destiny as a people.

"this victory is a proof

that you are representing the interest of not just your constituency but the entire people of Plateau state and the country at large and it shows that you are in the good books of your people".

To the incoming legislative Nyam said their victory is a manifestation of their years of personal commitments sacrifice and service to the Nation.

Nyam while urging the incoming law makers to be magnanimous in their victory also assured them of the forum readiness to work with them.

# Emefiele apologises to Nigerians for failed online transactions

THE Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) governor, Godwin Emefiele, Tuesday, apologised to Nigerians for the failed online transactions.

Emefiele admitted challenges faced by bank customers following the limit on cash withdrawals and said the CBN would sustain the current monetary regime following a rise in headline inflation which posed significant risks to the economy.

He said this just as the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the central bank, resolved to raise the Monetary Policy Rate (MPR) otherwise known as an interest rate by 50 basis points to 18 percent from 17.5 percent.

"I must apologise. Yes, online channels fail. But no doubt it is as a result of the deluge of online transactions that hit the banking industry. But it is being resolved," Emefiele said while addressing journalists at the end of the two-day meeting of the committee in Abuja.

"On a daily basis, our



**Emefiele**

Payment System Management Department monitor the online payment platforms so as to make sure that when there is a downtime, they are quickly resolved so that transactions can go on smoothly."

Emefiele assured that all Nigerian banks are safe due to the existing prudential guidelines instituted by the CBN to protect banks against collapse that will wipe out depositors' money.

He added that "no depositor

has lost one kobo since 2008 from bank crisis because of the prudential guidelines put in place to protect depositors fund".

The CBN governor warned bank shareholders to be mindful of the fact that "banking licence is a privilege and not a right as it can be withdrawn if shareholders misbehave.

"We would rather dispense with the shareholders than put depositors' money at risk."

## Foreign Commentary



Steinmeier

# German Greens and ills of green party politics

**The Green Party should be held to account for its political compromises on the climate agenda, but not abandoned. CLARA S THOMPSON writes**

EARLIER this month, the European Union was expected to vote on a law banning the sale of combustion-engine cars by 2035. But the legislation, which had been months in the making, was blocked by the German government which had initially supported it.

The about-face was yet another major disappointment for environmentalists coming from a government, which paradoxically includes a green party as a coalition partner.

While it was the liberal Free Democratic Party pushing for this position within the coalition in order to get a concession favouring the car industry (which it succeeded in doing), this development demonstrated yet again how the Greens are struggling to push through an adequate climate agenda in Germany.

Just several weeks earlier, the leadership of that same Green Party watched on as the German police brutally cleared climate protesters trying to prevent the razing of the village of Lützerath to make way for the expansion of a lignite coal mine.

Worse still, that leadership participated in striking a deal with the coal mine's owner, energy company RWE, which happens to be Europe's single largest carbon emitter. They claimed the deal was good for the climate, as supposedly it was going to accelerate phasing out coal and thus help meet Germany's climate goals.

Studies, however, have shown that this is not the case; if Germany is to meet the 1.5C temperature increase limit set in the Paris Agreement, which the German government has signed and said it will abide by, then it must stop burning coal within the next two or three years, not 2030.

Last summer, the Greens also worked to open liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals with contract terms of at least 15 years. The party leadership justified their actions with the "gas shortage" following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, but many of us environmentalists wondered why we need such long-term gas contracts that run way past the period necessary to expand renewable energy production to meet demand.

Looking at the policies the Green Party is supporting these days, one may think that it lost its ways and succumbed to realpolitik when it came to power at the federal level in 2021. But these "Einzelfälle" (isolated cases) – as the party leadership likes to frame them – of striking deals and making compromises on the climate agenda are not isolated at all.

Even before the Green Party joined Chancellor Olaf Scholz's government, we were used to their leadership taking decisions that directly clashed with the party's own political platform.

In the summer of 2020, for example, I was among the hundreds of protesters who protested the clearing of part of a 250-year-old forest in the German state of Hesse to make way for a highway.

Although the Green Party was not involved in the decision to build the road, as part of the Hesse state government, it could have blocked the project on account of violations of the German and EU water law. But it chose not to.

The Green Party's minister of transport in Hesse, Tarek Al-Wazir, justified the decision to go forward with the construction by saying that it was taken democratically and was not the party's responsibility.

Indeed, there is quite a track record of "isolated cases" in the Green Party's recent history.

It is, therefore, hardly surprising that even with a green party in power, Germany is nowhere near fulfilling its plan to reduce emissions in order to meet the 1.5-degree target. According to Wolfgang Lucht, a sustainability science professor at Humboldt University, Germany is currently planning to emit about twice more CO2 than it could afford to within its Paris Agreement commitments.

The disappointment and frustration that many climate activists are feeling are hard to describe. Perhaps it suffices to say that after Lützerath, offices of the Green Party were attacked, occupied and decorated with "traitors" graffiti.

Many climate activists like myself believe that the top leadership of the party have grown too pragmatic and lost sight of their original goals of promoting climate justice. Indeed, it is difficult to see how green party politics in their current form can lead the way in ending Germany's and the world's dependence on fossil fuels and take the radical climate action needed to avert a climate apocalypse.

The question many of us are asking is whether we should give up on green politics, stop voting for the party and focus our energy on the climate movement, which is unrestrained by narrow partisan interests and corporate pressure. Some members of the Greens already have made that choice by leaving the party.

But, as emotions run high, it is important to think strategically. If we give up on the Green Party, wouldn't we lose an important tool – one of just a few at our disposal – to affect change at the political level? And wouldn't that play into the hands of the "enemy" – the big corporate polluters?

It is clear that green parties are unlikely to follow the same radical agenda as the climate movement. They face harsh dilemmas when in power, as they navigate the complexities of policymaking and balance the demands of their voters with the realities of governing in a coalition.

But that does not mean that we should give up and stop pressuring them to live up to their electoral promises. And it does not mean that we should close our eyes to the fact that many within the party itself disprove of striking deals with big corporations and succumbing to pressure from various lobbies.

Young members of the party, called the "Green Youth", have been speaking up and criticising the leadership for their controversial decisions. They seem quite eager to change the course the party has taken and have been conspicuously present at climate protests, including at Lützerath.

"We wouldn't be Green Youth if we didn't put pressure within the party and in parliaments – that's why we're taking to the streets", Luna Afra Evans, the Berlin spokeswoman for the youth branch of the Greens, said in an interview in January, as the organisation mobilised its members to go protest in Lützerath. She called the deal with RWE "a rotten compromise" and said that a "significant part of the Green Party does not support it".

There has been open dissent even within the higher ranks of the party. MP Kathrin Henneberger, who ran for office on a platform of saving Lützerath, was the only member of the party

to abstain during the vote on the resolution to demolish the village.

"Since Lützerath, debates have been conducted differently. Many have recognised that when the climate movement draws a red line, this must also be taken seriously. Nor must we allow the interests of fossil fuel companies like RWE to prevail," she told me in a private exchange.

As much as we are disappointed and frustrated with the Green Party, we should not give up on it. We need to recognise that there is potential for radical change from within the party's own ranks and encourage it. We also need to continue scrutinising the party's policies and hold them to account whenever they veer away from their own declared environmental goals.

Indeed, if the climate movement, strong as it has been in Germany, continues to build pressure from the outside and from within the party, there is a good chance that we can prevent other "isolated incidents" from happening.

As we battle the formidable enemy that corporate polluters are, we must learn from them. As the noose around their fossil fuel profits tightens, they have employed every tactic, every opportunity to fight back; and they have definitely not given up on trying to influence global and national politics.

We, too, should be strategic in our fight. While I absolutely understand the frustration and have felt it myself many times over the past years, I believe that we still have a long way to go before we achieve real climate action. And until then, we will need to work strategically with all the allies we can get, even if they are sometimes swayed by realpolitik.

Source: Al-Jazeera

## Foreign News

### Israeli protesters attack Palestinians in Jerusalem

THREE people have been arrested as part of an ongoing probe after far-right groups were filmed attacking Palestinian citizens of Israel who were passing by pro-government protests in Jerusalem, according to Israeli police quoted by local media.

Reports say that one man was "savagely" beaten during the attacks on Monday evening – at the end of a day of nationwide protests against government plans to alter Israel's judiciary.

Hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets starting Sunday night and continued on Monday amid a general strike. Pro-government demonstrators also rallied in various parts of the country before Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced the postponement of the move.

The largest protests by both camps took place in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, prompting fears of possible violence between the two sides.

Reports and videos shared on social media suggested that right-wing protesters in Jerusalem accosted Palestinian passersby and drivers during their rallies.

People who were attacked included a taxi driver near a petrol station and a youth walking by the protest near Yitzhak Ben Zvi Boulevard in Jerusalem, the Israeli daily Times of Israel said.

A video shared on social media showed a large crowd of what seems to be



Netanyahu

demonstrators and security forces rushing into a petrol station in Jerusalem.

According to another short clip, a Palestinian appears to be caught up in a right-wing protest until he is saved by security forces.

Another one purportedly showed protesters with Israeli and Likud flags who blocked a Palestinian driver's path and chanted slogans.

Far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir had backed protesters who took to the streets supporting the judicial amendments.

He wrote on Twitter: "Today the right stopped sitting on the sidelines and being silent. The right is usually indifferent to demonstrations, and active at the polls. But when they want to cancel our vote, when they try to steal the election results from us, when they tell us that our vote is second class – this is the result."

He also shared a photo from the pro-government demonstrations.

The plans by the governing nationalist religious coalition to hand control over judicial appointments to the executive while giving parliament the power to overturn Supreme Court rulings has ignited one of the biggest internal crises in Israeli history and led to massive protests against the move in the past few months.

The decision to suspend the overhaul followed an extraordinary weekend in which Defence Minister Yoav Gallant was sacked after warning the divisions caused by the plans had affected the military and were threatening national security.

His dismissal by Netanyahu stirred mass protests once again as Israel's President Isaac Herzog urged a halt to pushing the amendments through.

### Russia-Ukraine war exposed human rights 'double standards'

THE invasion of Ukraine has exposed the "double standards" of human rights internationally, a new Amnesty International report has said, with the West adopting a tough response to Russia's war of aggression while also maintaining a "deafening silence" on rights abuses around the world.

The UK-based rights organisation published its annual 2022 report on Tuesday, highlighting the state of human rights in 156 countries.

The international response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine was "robust and welcomed", characterised by public denunciations and marked by "strong calls against the many war crimes being committed", Callamard said.

In March 2022, International

Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor Karim Khan said he was opening an investigation into alleged war crimes in Ukraine, dating as far back as the 2013 Maidan protests. At that time, demonstrations erupted in central Kyiv against the country's then-Russia-friendly government and persisted until the fall of then-President Viktor Yanukovich's administration in early 2014.

Earlier this month, the ICC issued an arrest warrant for President Vladimir Putin for allegedly committing war crimes in Ukraine.

Callamard said because the reaction to Ukraine had been so "multifaceted", covering many dimensions including the issue of Ukrainian refugees, it made the "silence, the indifference and the neglect very glaring" when

compared with other instances of human rights violations.

The Amnesty secretary-general said that while the report had many examples of double standards regarding human rights, the occupation of the Palestinians was a "particularly important one".

More than 150 Palestinians were killed in the occupied East Jerusalem last year, including 36 children. In May, Al Jazeera reporter Shireen Abu Akleh was killed by an Israeli soldier while covering a raid in Jenin, leading to worldwide condemnation.

Palestinian mourners carry pictures of slain Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh with words in Arabic that read: 'Shireen, the voice of Palestine' [File: Nasser Nasser/AP Photo] The Amnesty report also condemned Europe's approach and attitude to Ukrainian refugees compared with refugees from other nations.

"Generous reception of most people from Ukraine stood in sharp contrast to the often violent rejection and abuse of refugees and migrants at Europe's external borders," Amnesty said in the report.

Asylum seekers queue for food distribution along the roadside on the Greek island of Lesbos.

In the United States, the report notes that 25,000 Haitians were expelled between September 2021 and May 2022 without due

POLICE in Kenya have used water cannons and tear gas to disperse thousands of anti-government protesters who marched on Monday on the streets of the capital, Nairobi, defying a government ban on rallies.

One person was killed in the protests in the western city of Kisumu, according to the head of a local hospital, bringing the total number of fatalities since the protests started last week to two.

Opposition leader Raila Odinga joined protesters on the western side of the capital, where his convoy attracted thousands of supporters and he addressed them at various stops, calling for electoral justice and reduced prices for food items.

Police chief Japheth Koome insists that the protests are illegal, but Odinga says Kenyans have a right to demonstrate.

Odinga and his party, Azimio la Umoja-One Kenya Coalition, are leading the protests against the rising cost of living and calling for President William Ruto's resignation, saying he wasn't validly elected in last year's polls.

Odinga's legal challenge against last year's presidential election was thrown out by the courts, but he continues to allege that the poll was marred by fraud.

The opposition leader has urged his followers to take to

### Kenya police fire to disperse anti-government protesters

the streets twice a week, on Mondays and Thursdays.

Ruto over the weekend urged Odinga to face him directly and "stop terrorising the country".

Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua shared photos of himself at his office early on Monday morning and urged Kenyans to report to work. Ruto is currently out of the country visiting Germany.

Nairobi's central business district remained calm, but most businesses were closed on Monday morning due to the uncertainty over demonstrations.

There were reports of some violence directed at Odinga and his supporters. Some people raided a farm on the outskirts of the capital owned by the family

of former president Uhuru Kenyatta, cutting trees and taking away sheep, according to local media reports. The former president supported Odinga in the 2022 elections.

Odinga's gas cylinder manufacturing business near the central business district was pelted with stones.

More than a dozen civil society groups have in a joint statement expressed concern over police declaring Monday's protests illegal, and urged authorities to uphold people's constitutional right to peaceful demonstrations.



Protesters throw stones at riot police officers.

### Kim urges N Korean to produce 'powerful nuclear weapons'

NORTH Korea's leader Kim Jong Un has called on his country's scientists to expand

production of "weapon-grade nuclear materials" and build more powerful weapons, state media has reported.

Kim's latest calls, a reiteration of an earlier promise to ramp up nuclear weapons production "exponentially", came ahead of a United States Navy carrier strike group's scheduled arrival in South Korea on Tuesday.

Kim called on his officials to "expand on a far-sighted way the production of weapon-grade nuclear materials for thoroughly implementing the plan ... on increasing nuclear arsenals exponentially". He also told his officials to "put spurs to continuing to produce powerful nuclear weapons", KCNA reported.

North Korea last year declared itself an "irreversible" nuclear power and Kim recently called for an "exponential" increase in weapons production, including tactical nuclear weapons.

Kim was also briefed on an IT-based integrated nuclear weapon management system called Haekbangshoe, which means "nuclear trigger". The system's accuracy, reliability and security were verified during recent drills simulating a nuclear counterattack, the news agency added.

South Korea's Yonhap reported that North Korean media also released photographs for the first time of Kim inspecting what appeared to be tactical nuclear warheads known as the Hwasan-31.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, left, inspects a nuclear weapons programme in this picture taken on March 27, 2023, and released by

North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency on March 28, 2023.

The USS Nimitz aircraft carrier arrived in the South Korean port of Busan on Tuesday after the United States conducted exercises in international waters with South Korea's navy.

The report said the nuclear-powered USS Nimitz, which is one of the largest warships ever built, is taking part in extensive exercises with South Korean forces after a hiatus of a number of years to first allow dialogue with North Korea and then due to Covid-19.

In a separate report also carried details of what North Korea described as drills that simulated tactical nuclear strikes that detonated above targets.

According to KCNA, ground-to-ground tactical ballistic missiles were used in "nuclear air explosion" exercises, which involved mock nuclear warheads detonating in the air 500 metres above an intended target island, Yonhap reported.

Kim said the policy of expanding North Korea's arsenal was solely aimed at defending the country as well as regional peace and stability, KCNA added.

North Korea for decades has described the US's joint military exercises with South Korea as rehearsals for a potential invasion, although the allies have described those drills as defensive. North Korea last year ramped up its own weapons demonstrations as the allies resumed their large-scale training that had been downsized for years.



Putin

## Feature

# Rejuvenating Nigerian railway system

**The need to preserve lives and livelihood of people across the globe has made transportation system an indispensable factor in assessing the development and progress of a country. It has shown that no country can perform optimally without proper planning for transportation because it shapes and reshapes not only a nation but also the nature and character of its people and her relations with other countries. That is the reason most developed countries invest heavily in transportation system. However, experiences over the years seem to portray that Nigeria is yet to harness great opportunities embedded in transportation system, especially, the railway system. OLUWASANMI FEMI writes.**

ON 24th January, 2023, President Muhammadu Buhari alongside Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State commissioned the Lagos Blue Rail Line at Marina, Lagos State and witnessed the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the second phase which will run from Mile-2 to Okokomaiko. While commending the president for honouring his invitation, Sanwo-Olu stated that the Blue Line is a product of his timeless vision for Lagos State, though, it predates the birth of his administration.

Lagos Blue Line is the first light rail system in Nigeria expected to carry more than 500, 000 passengers daily when completed, reduce traffic gridlock and increase the Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) of the state. Replicating this project at the national level will improve inter/intra-city movement, provide comfort for long distance traveling, accelerate the movement of bulk goods at a low cost, reduce environmental pollution/cost of transportation and boost the economy strength of the country.

At present, the debt profile of Nigeria is above N44 trillion and it is expected to hit N77 trillion before December, 2023, because out of the over N21 trillion estimated budget for 2023, only N9 trillion will be accrued from the government generated revenue while closed to N13 trillion is expected to be sourced from loans.

Meanwhile, if the railway system is rejuvenated, Nigeria can generate up to N7.5 trillion annually from the system because of her population. That is equivalent to a quarter of the 2023 budget of the country. This is not to talk of other sources of revenue generation that are yet to be properly harnessed in Nigeria.

Also, it will surely reduce the rate of unemployment and underemployment because more hands will be employed to operate the train and work at the stations. Currently, the population of Nigeria is estimated to be hovering around 200 million and based on the last report of the National Bureau Statistics (NBS), more than 33% of the population are unemployed while over 20% are underemployed.

By calculation, this suggest that more than 100 millions of the country's population are struggling to survive. No wonder, the more the government claimed to invest in security, the more



insecurity continues to spread across the country.

In the South-east, for instance, the agents of terror seem to appear in forms of unknown gunmen/kidnappers while in the South-west, it is manifesting in forms of ritual killing/kidnapping and in the North it seems to take the forms of banditry, Boko Haram, killer herdsmen, among other unscrupulous elements, that pose great threat to the smooth running of railway system in Nigeria.

In March 2022, more than 100 passengers out of the passengers on board were abducted while 8 were killed when a train conveying people through Kaduna – Abuja rail track was attacked. It took more than six months before the abductees were released in batches through the help of some well meaning Nigerians who met the abductors and begged them with huge ransom.

The same would have happened if not for the rapid response of the security personnels when a train traveling through Lagos – Ibadan line ran out of fuel and stopped in the bush in 2020. Unfortunately, the report of the committee set up to investigate the cause of the incident is yet to be made known to the public till date.

Nigeria as giant of Africa ought to learn from the success story of other countries operating railway

system particularly, the UK, US, Canada, Japan, South Korea, and others where it's almost impossible for any criminal gang irrespective of their manifestations to halt a moving train and abduct passenger(s) on board not to talk of taking them hostage for months like the one witnessed in Nigeria.

Apart from the security mechanism installed that guarantees safety, proper planning that has made avoidable accident like the one that happened in Lagos State of recent where more than 6 persons were reported dead and scores of Lagos State workers injured impossible needed to be emulated.

This will not only prevent the occurrence of similar incident, it will also contribute to the economic growth of the country. For instance, based on the Oxford

Economics Finds report, "the UK railway sector supported £42.9 billion of economic production and was associated with 710,000 jobs and £14.1 billion in tax revenues in 2019."

The same could said of other countries running an effective and efficient railway system. Unfortunately, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) stated in its reports in 2019, that the "Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC) only generated N2.41 billion in revenue from passengers, N362.88 million from goods or cargo and N64.58 million from other income receipts in 2019" despite the size of her population.

Under the current administration, about 156km Lagos-Ibadan Standard Gauge Rail, 327km Itakpe-Warri Standard Gauge Rail, Abuja Light Rail have been commissioned

while a ground-breaking done for the construction of Kano-Maradi Standard Gauge Rail, and revamp of Port-Harcourt-Maiduguri Narrow Gauge Rail and financing negotiations for Ibadan-Kano Standard Gauge Rail project are in progress though, the realities on ground suggest that the desired result is yet to be achieved.

Therefore, there is urgent need to address the issue of insecurity across the country, wage war against corruption that exist in the system, assemble best brains to come up with recommendations on the gadgets that can track down threat to the tracks and cargos and create more awareness on the existence and effectiveness of the Nigerian railway system so that government can reduce the cost of maintaining the roads across the country and generate more wealth for the nation.

**"Lagos Blue Line is the first light rail system in Nigeria expected to carry more than 500, 000 passengers daily when completed, reduce traffic gridlock and increase the Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) of the state. Replicating this project at the national level will improve inter/intra-city movement, provide comfort for long distance traveling, accelerate the movement of bulk goods at a low cost, reduce environmental pollution/cost of transportation and boost the economy strength of the country".**

# EVERYBODY'S WORLD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

## Living

# Should you contact your rival

By **JENNI JACOBSEN**

• INFIDELITY is one of the most devastating events that can occur within a marriage. When you find out that your spouse cheated, you're probably left feeling a range of emotions, including anger, confusion, and deep pain.

• After the initial shock wears off, you wonder what to do next. Should you contact the person your spouse is cheating with? Learn the answer, as well as how to cope with a cheating spouse, below.

• Now comes the million-dollar question: should you contact the person your spouse is cheating with? The answer is that it depends, and there really isn't a straightforward answer.

• Before confronting the affair partner if your spouse cheated, you have to consider what your intentions are. If you're looking to make yourself feel better by lashing out at the person they cheated with, you're probably only going to create more drama and hurt feelings.

• On the other hand, if you have reason to believe the affair partner doesn't know your spouse is married, reaching out may put an end to the affair.

• **Pros of talking to the person your spouse cheated with**

• Finding that you have a cheating spouse is never easy, and when you find yourself in this situation, you may wonder if you should contact the affair partner. Below are benefits of reaching out:

• **You might be setting the record straight.**

• If your husband is a cheater, or you've caught your wife in an affair, there's a chance they may be lying to their affair partner. Perhaps they've told this person that they are single or that they're "in the process of a divorce."

• **You'll get the other person's side of the story.**

• When you catch your spouse having an affair, it's quite possible that they aren't giving you the whole story. Maybe they tell you that the



person is pursuing them, and they've just been an innocent victim.

• Reaching out can give you a different perspective. Perhaps your spouse tells you that the affair is over or that the affair partner pushed them to do things they didn't want to do.

• **You can learn details about the affair.**

• This isn't always beneficial, but if you truly want to know the details, the affair partner may dish them out to you. Your spouse may leave out certain details to avoid making you more upset, but since the affair partner has no obligations to you, they'll be more likely to divulge the details.

• For instance, your spouse may tell you that they just "went on a few

lunch dates" with this person, but you might learn from the affair partner that the two of them slept together on business trips or had a year-long relationship at work behind your back.

• You'll learn what your spouse meant to this person.

• In some cases, an affair partner can fall head over heels in love with the person they're having an affair with. If you're trying to rebuild your marriage or at the opposite end of the spectrum, trying to find the strength to move on, knowing what the affair meant might give you clarity.

• Maybe the affair was just a temporary fling, and it meant nothing serious to either party. This can be an indicator that it was short-lived and that you'll be able to heal.

• **You can convince them to part ways.**

• If you're trying to rebuild your marriage, but the affair partner keeps coming back around, contacting them may send the message, loud and clear, that they're not going to get away with seducing your spouse any longer.

• Ultimately, this should be a last resort because if your cheating spouse wants to make the marriage work, they should be the one setting boundaries and cutting off contact with the person they cheated with.

• **Cons of talking to the person your spouse cheated with**

• You might think that contacting the person your spouse cheated with will make you feel better and solve all your problems, but in many cases, it makes things worse. Confronting the affair partner can make a bad situation even worse by creating additional drama.

• **Consider 5 cons of reaching out**

• **They might belittle you.**

• Perhaps your cheating spouse told the affair partner that you're abusive or that you've gambled away all of the family's money. In this case, the affair partner may think you deserve what happened to you.

• When you reach out, instead of being remorseful or understanding, they will tear you down to make themselves feel better or to defend your spouse for having an affair in the first place.

• This reaction is probably only going to further damage your psyche.

• **They'll only lie to you.**

• Cheating in a relationship leads to a loss of trust, and you might think you can find out the truth by talking to the affair partner.

• While this may be a possibility, it's probably more likely that the person will lie to you because they have been convinced that your cheating spouse is justified in their behavior.

• **The truth can hurt.**

• Suppose you reach out to the person your spouse cheated with, and they do tell you the truth about their relationship with your husband or wife. You might find that hearing these details is just too painful.

• **You might make your spouse angry.**

• The harsh reality is that if your spouse is having an affair, they might be quite invested in the relationship with their side partner. If you reach out, you may make your marriage even worse by angering your spouse.

• **You'll compare yourself to this person, making yourself feel worse.**

• When you reach out to the person your spouse is cheating with, you'll now have information about this person. You may even lead yourself down a rabbit trail of searching for them on the Internet and checking their social media pages.

• Once you open yourself up to contacting this person, you may find that you become obsessed, constantly comparing yourself to them. This will likely lead you to feel inferior.

• **What is the best way to handle a cheating spouse?**

• Some people may have strong values against infidelity, such that an episode of cheating is grounds for

ending the marriage. If this is the case, you'll need to determine how to divide assets and move toward divorce.

• On the other hand, if you choose to repair the marriage when you find you have a cheating spouse, you'll need to set expectations with your spouse. This will require them to end all contact with the affair partner and show a commitment to rebuilding trust.

• For healing to occur, it will be important to have open conversations about what went wrong in the marriage, and both of you will have to be intentional about rebuilding the relationship. Your spouse will also need to show legitimate remorse and make amends for their behavior.

• How do I stop overthinking after cheating?

• When you've caught your spouse cheating, it can be difficult to stop your racing thoughts. You may become overly clingy or constantly worry that they're still cheating.

• It can be helpful to go through counseling to help you overcome your anxiety and develop coping strategies. It is also beneficial to have open, honest communication with your spouse about how you are feeling.

• If they are committed to rebuilding the relationship, they will be understanding of your need for additional reassurance during this time.

• What are the signs your spouse is cheating?

• **It's your call to take!**

• The answer to, "Should you contact the person your spouse is cheating with?" is quite complex. In some cases, reaching out may give you clarity, as well as an opportunity to tell the unknowing affair partner that your spouse is, in fact, involved in a marriage.

• In other cases, contacting the person your spouse cheated with creates additional drama and makes your hurt feelings even worse. Before reaching out, it's important to carefully consider your intentions, and understand that contacting the person may make things worse.





# EVER'S WORLD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

## Relationship

# Oversharing in relationship and how to stop it

By **NOAH WILLIAMS**

**What is oversharing?**

Oversharing in a relationship refers to sharing too much personal information or details with your partner that they may not be comfortable hearing or could damage the relationship.

It can include sharing intimate details about your past relationships, your insecurities, fears, or personal issues that are better addressed with a professional. Often, people overshare information to establish bonds or intimacy.

While sharing personal information with your partner is important for building trust and intimacy, oversharing can lead to discomfort and even emotional exhaustion. It can also create an unequal balance in the relationship, where one partner is burdened with more emotional labor than the other.

People ask, "Why do I overshare?" or "Why do people overshare?" Oversharing in relationships is based on many factors. In other words, people don't just start oversharing; it must have been due to background, depression, or being in a relationship's early stage.

For example, suppose you come from a family that doesn't know how to stop oversharing and talking too much. In that case, your oversharing is a learned behavior. Similarly, the early stage of a relationship is characterized by the need to connect through conversations.

Therefore, you might overshare without noticing. To prevent any issues in the future, it is better to stop oversharing. But before that, you must understand why you overshare

**1. Trust issues**

One reason why you overshare in relationships is due to trust issues. Suppose you've been betrayed or hurt in the past. In that case, you may feel a sense of insecurity and anxiety in your current relationship.

To ease this, you might end up sharing more than you should to test the waters and see if your partner is trustworthy. **Need for validation**

It's a human trait to want to feel accepted by others. People may also overshare in relationships due to their need for validation. Suppose someone feels insecure or unsure of themselves. In that case, they may share more personal information than necessary to gain reassurance from their partner.

**Fear of rejection**

Again, everyone wants to feel accepted. The fear of rejection is another common reason why people overshare in relationships. If someone has been rejected, they may need to share more personal information to make their partner feel closer to them.

**Difficulty with communication**

Difficulty with communication can also lead to oversharing in relationships. When someone finds it challenging to communicate their thoughts and feelings effectively, they may end up sharing too much personal information as a way of trying to convey their message.

Take some time to reflect on what you feel comfortable sharing with your partner and what you would rather keep private. Communicate these boundaries to your partner, so they know what to expect and doesn't feel overwhelmed or uncomfortable.

Take some time to think about why you tend to overshare in your



**Practice mindfulness**

Mindfulness is a practice that can help you to stay present in the moment, calm your mind, and reduce anxiety. According to research, mindfulness helps decrease and mitigate anxiety, depression, constant thinking, rumination, and emotional reactivity.

**Seek professional help**

If you cannot break the habit of oversharing in relationships, seeking the help of a therapist or counselor can be beneficial. A mental health professional can help you to identify the underlying causes of your behavior, develop healthier communication patterns, and build stronger relationships.

**Practice assertiveness**

Assertiveness is communicating your thoughts and feelings clearly and confidently without being aggressive or disrespectful. Practicing assertiveness can help you to avoid oversharing and create a more balanced communication

dynamic with your partner. Remember that it is okay to say no or set boundaries when necessary.

**Say less**

Finally, it is essential to remember that less is often more when sharing in relationships. Sharing too much personal information can lead to feelings of discomfort and awkwardness while sharing just enough can create a deeper sense of connection and understanding.

Try to balance sharing and listening, and remember that sometimes, the most meaningful conversations are left unsaid.

**Take control of your emotions**

Oversharing in relationships can be a difficult habit to break. However, knowing how to stop oversharing can overcome it in no time. As discussed in this article, setting clear boundaries, practicing self-reflection, focusing on active listening, taking breaks from technology, and so on can help you stop oversharing.



relationships. Is it because of past experiences? Fear of rejection? The need for validation? Understanding the underlying reasons for your behavior can help you to address the issue at its root.

**Focus on active listening**

Active listening is a crucial skill in any healthy relationship. It helps you understand each other and be empathetic toward others. Instead of always talking and sharing, listen to your partner actively.

Pay attention to their words, maintain eye contact, ask questions about what they say, and nod when you understand them. This will help you to understand their perspective, build trust, and create a more

balanced communication dynamic.

**Take breaks from technology**

In today's information and social media age, it can be tempting to overshare online. However, taking breaks from technology can help you stay present and engaged in real-life relationships. Put down your phone or laptop and focus on connecting with your partner in person.

**Learn to be comfortable with silence**

Many people tend to overshare in relationships because they feel uncomfortable with silence. However, being comfortable with silence can help avoid oversharing and create a more natural communication flow.

**Editorial**

**Nigeria's 16b loss worrisome**

**RECENTLY**, investors at the Nigerian Exchange Ltd (NGX) stock market lost 16 billion due to sell off in medium and large capital stock. The loss is said to be the investors losing streak for the seventh consecutive session as investors investments crashed.

**IT** is ironic that this is coming at the time the Security and Exchange Commission (SEC) has called for increased savings lifestyle and personal financing. The Director General of SEC, Mr. Lamido Yuguda, speaking on the theme, "Plan your money, plank your future recently said". This year's global money week 2023 is a great opportunity for everyone to engage children, and young people in activities around the scheme.

**THE** called by the DG of SEC for Nigerians irrespective of their disposition invest in the stock market is good for development. There is therefore, need for Nigerians to heed to the call, and note that in every investment risk is involved.

**WORLD OVER**, the regulatory body of any institution is held responsible in the event of any eventuality but it has never been the case in Nigeria. Records have shown that the past heads of Nigeria's Stock Exchange Commission failed to perform their responsibilities and did not face the wrath of the laws.

**THOUGH** investment in stock was seen as an elite thing in the past, it is now becoming very popular and profitable investment and it is getting into the heart of more citizens of this country. Unfortunately, the recent development is discouraging people from putting their hard earned money into stock business.

**CAPITAL** market shareholders have identified low patronage, unfavourable operating environment, and lack of incentives, fewer product offering and inconsistent government policies as factors inhibiting the growth of the nation's capital market and consequent contributions to the economy. Investors who bemoaned the shallow knowledge of the market regret that the capital market which is supposed to be the parameter and engine of growth for the economy has been neglected and given little attention by the government.

**ACCORDING** to experts in the stock business, the Nigerian capital market has failed to play the role of key economic driver because all the stakeholders have failed to play their roles as expected. It was emphasized that the federal government which is empowered to pilot the affairs of the country seem not to understand the importance of the capital market not to talk of how to use it to accelerate economic growth.

**IT** is our conviction that the NSE itself requires a wholesome investment in technology and human capital development. Top stock markets in the world boast of technology inclusion in their daily operations and a crop of tech-savvy stock market professionals who drive the process.

**TECHNOLOGY** comes at a price that has to be paid to enhance the stock market. Emphasis must be placed on training of the traders on the floor of the NSE on recent development in stock trading.

**WE** believe that the growth potentials desired by policy makers in Nigeria will never be achieved if effective policies are not put in place in our stock business for it to compete with other advanced nations.

**IT** is our desire that the NSE be one of the driving forces in the development of our already ailing economy. Regulators of Nigeria Stock Exchange (NSE) should be up and about so that investors will have confidence in the institution.

SIR, I want to use this medium of The Nigeria Standard newspaper to appeal to the federal government to build an overhead bridge to enhance easy pedestrian movement or crossing around old airport roundabout.

As resident of Jos city and always plying the old airport road, the traffic challenges caused by road users is getting worse by the day, people find it difficult to pass the road as a result of heavy vehicular movement which creates regular traffic grid mostly in the morning and evening.

This ugly situation affects people who are either expected to be at their duty posts or those on transit to other parts of the state and beyond.

However, the state government is trying its possible best to see that plateau is well developed and also a comfortable place for citizens to live.

Seeing the infrastructures government is providing in the state and also the success of



**Need for everhead bridge at Old Airport roundabout**

budgets implementation in the state, there is need for the government to also use such reasons towards the provision of an overhead bridge around the roundabout in order to reduce time wastage which in common saying "time is money".

Building an overhead bridge at Old Airport road would enable fast and easy transit of people to their various destinations and also reduce

the risk of falling into the regular traffic holdup which is time consuming and very stressful for motorist and commuter's who ply that route either within Jos or to other areas within the state capital.

Finally, I hope other people making use of old airport road will join in this appeal to the state government to reduce stress and enable fast and easy transit for those traveling to other states.

**By Ngot Bwehmasi Caleb**  
**I.T Student Federal Polytechnic Bauchi.**

**A united family breeds healthy relationship**

**PERMIT** me space in your widely read newspaper **The Nigeria Standard** to express my most profound gratitude to leadership of Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) for raising awareness on unity in the family.

The stories emanating from most families today are nauseating, giving birth to unhealthy and toxic relationships. The homes have turned to battle grounds where children don't learn good morals as there is nothing exemplary for them to emulate.

In the beginning of creation,

God made this union to be enjoyed and not endured. The table has upturned; parents no longer take up responsibilities as expected. Most children are struggling on their own to make ends meet. This has landed some of them in the hands of traffickers and blood thirsty unscrupulous elements that use them particularly for ritual purposes.

Base on this ailing situation, the church has deemed it fit to correct the anomaly by creating awareness that can restore and sustain healthy family relationships.

Spouses have been admonished to close ranks, bury their differences and give peace a chance so as to lay a good foundation for our healthy spiritual growth.

Many young people are becoming scared of going into marriage contracts because of the bond surrounding it. The insecurity that accompanies the marriages nowadays puts one off.

The bottom line is to go back to God. It doesn't matter how bad the situation is, he is faithful and will meet all needs and fix things right.

**Christy Adams**

**Standard Cartoon**



## Opinion

# Osun guber election 2022: An overview

By ADEOLA SOETAN

UNLIKE its neighbouring Oyo State which has potential for spontaneous volatility in unpredictable places because of its wideness and its unenviable tradition of violence ripples, Osun hotspots can be mapped out easier by INEC and police if they properly want to do their work.

INEC is always striving better to conduct fair elections but the logistic problem is always a major issue aside from conscience buying (unlike vote buying) of its few unscrupulous Adhoc and permanent staff. And the conscience buying is mostly done by the two large parties, APC and PDP rogue stalwarts and their equally unscrupulous field officers aided by unscrupulous security personnel, especially the police.

With the appreciable improvement in the electoral law and electronic-driven process, a higher level of performance is expected from INEC if they walk their talk and hold firm to obey its own rules of engagement without fear or favour. If INEC says its card reader only, so be it no changing of rules to manual on the field of play like it happened in Oyo and some other states. Let your no be no and yes be yes in all circumstances. Changing rules breaches public confidence.

Police... Depending on the credibility and integrity of its high command and the state command which manifests largely on its rank and file, police are not always predictable on the election field. Their performance on the field can be almost projected by their conduct and real-time responses to violence and tension before an election. All feedback and alarms should be looked into before, during and after the election. I have heard cause to write them officially and communicated through our organization, Democracy Vanguard, DV, and other election monitoring organisations I consulted for codedly where unscrupulous officers compromised to favour the two biggest political parties at different times.

They acted swiftly in some reported cases after telephone calls to me and their independent investigation. So their hotlines should be functional with a real-time response

from their situation room which I once suggested to be decentralized for quick action.

Police know or should know from their past field experience that "foreign thugs" (now tagged as political enforcers) are always imported as mercenaries from Oyo, Lagos, Ondo and Kwara states mainly by the big parties with a huge war chest to assist the local breeds to consolidate and extend the frontiers of violence and election rigging. If the no movement of people including top politicians and thugs aside from vital officers is strictly adhered to, and pre-election scoping is properly done, critically analyzed and evaluated, the act of thuggery, and rigging will be drastically curtailed. But this is where police always compromise and become powerless by design or pressure to lawless "powerful" rogue politicians who would move about with thugs despite restrictions of movements.

Hotspots axis of rigging and violence. Osogbo township is always tensed more on pre-election days than on election days. This is major because many voters in the town which is the seat of power are determined voters. They always troop out en masse to vote with little or no disturbance. With their countenance and hush-hush discussions at polling units, an experienced discerning mind can make the probability of which party will win in the township and may win the outcome. Police and INEC always fair well and better in Osogbo because all eyes of election observers, monitors, and media, are on them. And unscrupulous politicians and potential election riggers are in the rigging parties are mutually watchful. But security personnel allowed some lawless politicians to move around after voting. All my calls to report such lawlessness were not acted upon on days of previous elections. I hope they will have the liver to stop such movement this time around.

The major axis of rigging and violence traditional hotspots predictable include Ede -

Iwo axis, a top contender for the post comes from there so it has to be spotted very well. Ile Ife -Garage Olode - Osu - Ilesa axis. Ikire town is always violence /rigging prone but surprisingly or interestingly neighbouring village towns like Apomu, Ago Owu, and Ode Omu, are always better in conduct. Another axis to watch is Ikirun - Ofa road axis, Iragbiji the home of the sitting governor is not a traditional hotspot in that axis but police should map it for eventualities now that a sitting governor is from there. It naturally becomes a potential hotspot Hotels - All major hotels should be under surveillance and crosschecked regularly. By now, some trusted undercover police intelligence officers should have lodged, at least one officer per selected scoped hotel. Hotel t is a major source of free & loose information to read the temperature of the political /election environment.

From my scoping of twenty hotels in the past election period, it's easy to know who lodged where even if it's under a fake name for an electoral crime. Just be friendly but cautious and if need be, be selectively amorous with some sensitive staff of hotels. Information flows to you easily without asking.

For instance, in a particular hotel in Osogbo during one of my election duties, two house staff who I tipped and joked with always voluntarily informed me: "Daddy, se e ku ku bo si yara kan loke nitori ati ni awon alejjo n'la ni sale o nigbati e jade lana.." "Awon wo ni alejo n'la o? I asked. " E o mo pe asiko election la wa yi, orishirishi alejo la ma n'gba" was their response.

I agreed to move to the upper floor vacant room. You can't believe it, those alejo n'la smoked Igbo and drank throughout the night making noise singing and dancing disturbing upper floor lodgers unchecked. I intentionally didn't report to the hotel staff because it's a good lead for me. I didn't understand their communication well because they were non-Yoruba. By the second day, I made a covert report to necessary quarters for attention. On

the third day, the "Alejo n'la started behaving well pretentiously. On the fourth day, I checked out of the hotel to another one for safety reasons in case of leakage of source, but I maintained my contact with the receptionists and the house cleaners throughout the election period.

In Ado Ekiti it was in one of the hotels I lodged in the Adebayo area during the election period that I got to know through a beautiful hotel assistant manager some vital info and I got in touch with a journalist to investigate properly and independently. It was in the same Ado Ekiti in one hotel with a big beautiful garden along Ikere road that I got information that motor park thugs loyal to Fayemi were warming up to take over some motor parks from thugs loyal to Fayose on the eve of the election. It happened and I almost got trapped in the violence that started around the post office area.

Hotels, pepper soup joints and motor parks are sensitive information areas. I don't think the police have excuses at all not to nip election violence in the bud before it escalates to burning and killings. We all need to be vigilant and assist security agencies in vital and credible information sharing during the electioneering period. Rogue politicians desperate for power will always rig elections, buy votes and cause violence. It's not limited to a bourgeois party alone but all of them, their criminal merchant leaders and unscrupulous followers. Power is their religion don't be deceived with their kurukere kurukere to prayer centres. Be vigilant, and vote wisely for your choice without inducement or intimidation.

Wishing INEC, the good and conscientious people whose votes can't be bought (only) of Osun, the second-best Amala & Abula centre after Ibadan in Yoruba land a successful election.

**Adeola Soetan** *Citizenship Civic Awareness Centre aka Democracy Vanguard*

THE founding fathers of politics in Nigeria came with some ideals girding them. To begin with, one would discover that almost all of them were lawyers while those who were not lawyers were people with discernible convictions. Also, political parties or organisations at the time were always with a sense of direction, to the extent that no two parties were the same in their aspirations and/or the philosophies they believed in. Without doubt, the whittling down of these qualities gave rise to the mumbo jumbo being witnessed, currently, in Nigeria's political firmament. Unfortunately, Nigerians felt unperturbed.

Once upon a time, Nigeria was not used to having fraudulent people, especially, in her decision-making positions. But how come they have now become thorns in her flesh? Take for instance, when political hoodlums realized that they could help themselves through the instrumentality of terror and violence, they hijacked the process and created for themselves a vibrant specific political space with juicy benefits to boot. Unlike the First Republic where hoodlums were put into their positions according to the dictates of the social stratification and the ranking of social statuses, these days, the texture of our politics has become so frighteningly rough and evil-permeable that a gangster can nurse the governorship ambition of a Nigerian state. These are issues Nigeria's political class ought to have addressed long ago. But they couldn't! Well, it's not that they didn't understand how to go about resolving them. It is

## Nigeria and the politics we play!

By LEO IGWE

frustratingly annoying that they're also products of the confusion. Hence the difficulty in speaking to them!

When Obafemi Awolowo was arrested and eventually sentenced to 10 years imprisonment with hard labour for treasonable felony, had Nigeria's activists woken up to their calling and suppressed the trumped-up charges, Awolowo would not have been unjustly imprisoned. Of course, Nigeria would most certainly have escaped the mess into which she was eventually - and, conveniently, too - plunged. Awolowo went to jail and Nigerians went about their daily activities as if nothing had happened. As fate would have it, only the grace of Gowon saved the sage!

When Adisa Akinloye and 'men of like minds' from the ruling *National Party of Nigeria* (NPN) went on a spending jamboree in London, Awolowo was the first to warn Nigerians of the economic calamity waiting to happen. Again, Nigerians behaved as if they were untroubled. Instead of sitting up to salvage the situation with unrivalled dexterity, the then President Shehu Shagari-led government chose lampooning the 'old man' as a hobby. Regrettably too, Nigerians ignored the warning! Since the old man had no power; and, since the society was gullible, economic depression had its way! Not long after, 'austerity measures' hit the country like a plague. Still, the

society did nothing! Of course, that sounded the death knell for a government that was already on edge! Tantalizingly, 'austerity measures' have kept expanding, in different sizes and colours.

When the Wole Soyinkas of this world founded the Pirates Confraternity, there was a set academic standard which must be met before a prospective candidate would become initiated. That's why conversations with any member of the Confraternity at the time were always laced with impressive delicacy and skill. Again, that was then! Gradually, the low-life popular culture of hooliganism took control and 'Fadayi Oloro' usurped the functions of the 70-year-old Confraternity!

When on February 1, 1971, Adekunle Ademuyiwa Adepeju was shot and killed at the *University of Ibadan* (UI), the then General Yakubu Gowon's regime was almost brought down because no calamity of that magnitude had ever befallen Nigeria's university system before that time. To a typical Hausa man at the time, it was merely 'nufin Allah ne'. So, 'life continues!' The Ibos simply thought that it was a Yoruba boy who was killed. Since the 23-year-old undergraduate was not from their tribe, 'life' also 'continues.' That's not all! Half of the Yoruba population were not even as knowledgeable as to have understood that no Nigerian, let alone a university student, should be killed. But the elite shouted and Gowon was scared! Unfortunately however, after a time, some

never-do-wells emboldened the Head of State. They advised Gowon to merely apologise to the nation, condole with Adepeju's family on the loss, and assure them that government would look into it, which the junta did! But what has become of the Student Union Building named after the fallen hero? It is doubtful if students of this prestigious university still remember that a Kunle Adepeju was mowed by an unknown police officer in Nigeria.

Time it was in Nigeria when academic journals from Nigeria's foremost universities were being accorded international recognition. Now, one even wonders whether Nigeria's academics even have the time to sit down, think and write, let alone get them published in internal journals. The worst part of it is that lecturers are now promoted as professors, not based on their publications, what they do, or international recognition. No! It's because they have been around for too long, marking time in the Departments; or belong to a cult; or something like that!

In 1972, the *Nigerian Students Loans Board* was established with the core mission of catering to the financial needs of Nigeria's indigent students. At the end of the day, the rich and the elite hijacked it for their children while those for which it was originally intended were left gasping for breath. Unfortunately, those children who illegally benefitted from our commonweal have not even deemed it fit to give back to the society, which is one of the worse things. They are either in

the UK, USA or Canada, making merry, thereby forgetting their humble beginnings. As such, the opportunity they had was never reproduced so that other people can have what they had.

Well, I have argued elsewhere that a tyrant is a tyrant to the extent that people believe the man is using the frontiers of his ambition and power given to him legitimately. That's when a tyrant can be seen to be acting. But then, what is missing, centrally, is the control. The tragic truth is that, due to lack of control, those who hitherto had no business in politics came into it and impose their own values. The depth and impact of this tragedy can be felt from our mystifying and super-lifting an individual, simply because he spends a token of our commonwealth to build a substandard road for us, and commissions it with nearly the same amount of the cost of construction. What's more? Every new and incoming government campaigns on the anvil of the most heinous crimes and dysfunctions of the incumbent government with a view to securing the votes of the masses. However, if one doesn't have the understanding of the dynamics of power and how it relates to human beings, one is most likely to be offered a seat on the table of mammon in a way that's likely to make one become a tyrant. And, as we know, when warped values become part of the majority, it becomes a problem.

May the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, grant us peace in Nigeria!

**KOMOLAFE** wrote in from *Ijebu-Jesa, Osun State.*

## News

# Protecting Nigeria's animals through enhanced emergency response strategy

Animal welfare is an interesting global issue. In many countries it has received dedicated attention by researchers, conservationists, consumers and governments.

The need to ensure the general well-being of both wild and domestic animals is mandatory now in many developed countries.

In Nigeria, where there have been snags, the Federal Government said, to enhance the welfare of animals, it had identified the need to develop a response strategy during emergencies and disasters.

The resolution was reached as one of the outcomes of a national stakeholders' consultative meeting on Animal Welfare During Emergencies and Disasters in Nigeria.

The meeting was organised by the Department of Veterinary and Pest Control Services, Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, (FMARD).

It brought together stakeholders in the industry to brainstorm and come up with strategies that would address ways to rescue and rehabilitate animals during disasters and emergencies.

Participants deliberated on the three basic principles of response strategies: Reducing or avoiding losses of animals from hazards; ensuring prompt assistance to animals affected; and achieving rapid and effective recovery of the animals.

Speaking at the event, Dr Musa Inuwa, the Overseeing Director, Department of Veterinary and Pest Control Services, FMARD, said the federal government was stepping up efforts aimed at adopting global best practices in Nigeria's animal welfare strategy.

He also said the meeting would serve as a medium for awareness creation among relevant stakeholders on good animal welfare practices.

Inuwa, who is also the Chief Veterinary Officer of Nigeria (CVON), said the efforts were in line with the guidelines and standards provided by World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH).

"The essence of the meeting is to provide a platform for effective engagement and interaction among relevant stakeholders on implementing policies on matters concerning the general care of animals", he said.

He said the National Animal Welfare Strategy for Nigeria was approved by the National Council on Agriculture in 2016.

According to him, the approval was followed by the inauguration of the National Council on Animal Welfare by the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development on Aug. 4, 2022.

Inuwa urged the stakeholders to serve as credible animal welfare ambassadors in their various capacities and within their areas of operation.

Dr Umakaltume Abubakar, Deputy Director, Department of

Veterinary and Pest and Control Services in the ministry, captured the essence of animal welfare.

She said animal welfare covers the physical and mental state of an animal in relation to the conditions in which it lives and dies.

Abubakar explained that an animal could be said to experience good welfare if it was healthy, comfortable, well nourished, safe, and free from pain, fear and distress.

However, disasters such as flooding, rivers overflowing their banks, drought, and deforestation, among others pose a heavy challenge to the survival of animals in many countries, including Nigeria.

Earthquakes, hurricanes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, forest fires and floods are other natural disasters that with the potential for devastating on the welfare of animals.

"Animals are vulnerable in the event of natural disasters, especially those living in the wild. Hence natural disasters that harm humans also harm

animals. "In disaster situations, the welfare of animals both domestic and wild is compromised.

"They are the forgotten victims of disasters, millions of them suffer and die each year," she said.

She further said the animals also experience the same terrible effects of disasters that humans do such as injury, starvation, thirst, habitat destruction, displacement, illness and stress.

"It is our responsibility as stakeholders to come together and determine measures that we need to put in place to mitigate the effects of disaster on our animals," she said.

Dr Abdulkareem Durosinlorun, Head, Quality Assurance and Standards Division, Department of Veterinary and Pest Control Services, FMARD, said there is a need for rescuers to take cognizance of animals during disasters and emergencies.

"The Department of Veterinary & Pest Control Services identified the need to develop a response strategy for animals during emergencies and disasters.

"Traditionally, when disasters strike the main focus is on humans but we also need to pay attention to the welfare of our animals which tend to be badly hit and suffer in silence.

Similarly, the National President, Nigerian Veterinary Medical Association, Dr Olutoyin Adetuberu, urged stakeholders should consider animal welfare during disasters as part of the contribution to boosting the animal sector of the economy.

"We are looking at how to incorporate the animals' health components into the National Emergency Management Agency, if we have veterinarians there, they will be able to rescue these animals", she said.

Adetuberu said the need to rescue animals that have escaped from their shelters during disasters and emergencies could not be overemphasised.

"Usually, when there is a disaster, you see all that human beings are being rescued and there are data of those being rescued but we don't take cognizance of the animals.

"We are not just rescuing them because they are animals, we are also considering the human aspects of it so that these loose animals cannot come and attack human beings," she said.

Adetuberu called for the setting up of committees on animal rescue during emergencies and disasters.

Experts at the event recommended that during emergencies, animal rescuers should always be involved in rescue operations.

Stakeholders argue that the way forward to promote the welfare of animals is by protecting animals through well-enforced laws and regulations.

They contend that should be rapid veterinary response during disasters and emergencies so that animals rescued are rehabilitated or treated.

They also advise that the public should be educated on animal care during disasters and emergencies, as well as setting up temporary rescue camps for veterinarians and para-veterinarians. (NANF)



## News

# PLHA confirms Agwo as head PSDMCMA

By PAULINE DALLONG

THE Plateau State House of Assembly (PLHA), has screened and confirmed Pharmacist Fabian Yilshal Agwo, as the Executive Secretary Plateau State Drugs and Medical Commodities Management Agency.

This followed a Communication from the Executive Governor of Plateau State, Barr. Simon Bako Lalong, as presented before the floor of the House by the Speaker Rt. Hon. Yakubu Yackson Sanda during Tuesday's plenary.

The House has also slated 4th April, for the second reading for 'A Bill for a Law to Establish the Office of the Surveyor General of Plateau State', standing in the name of the Deputy Speaker. Rt. Hon. Saleh Shehu Yipmong, member representing Dengi constituency.

In the same vein, the PLHA also considered 'A Bill for a



Sanda

Law to Establish the Plateau State House of Assembly Service Commission Law and to repeal the Plateau State House of Assembly Service Commission Law 2003', as sponsored by the Majority Leader and member representing Mikang

constituency, Hon. Naanlong Gapyil Daniel. The next plenary session, being Wednesday 29th March has been fixed for further consideration, alterations and addition, as observed by members during the day's plenary.

SHE Forum Africa has called on governments at all levels to prioritise gender issues especially those that have to do with health.

The Founder of She Forum Africa, Ms. Nimfon Etuk, made the call when the Forum in partnership with Pathfinder International paid a visit to the National Council for Women's Societies (NCWS) Thursday in Abuja.

According to Ms Etuk, the authorities should improve their decision making as it relates to women's health and empowerment.

She said: "Health is fundamental to every achievement a woman can get. We maintain that health is an important matter that needs to be prioritised by the government, the executive, and the legislature. If we don't have the right access to quality healthcare, the Nigerian woman will still be left behind on a number of things. And this is something Nigeria as a country must prioritize if you would move forward to achieve the SDGs for all."

"We are leveraging the fact that this is a transition period for Nigeria. We are pushing forward the narrative and

## NGO urges government to prioritise health, gender issues

advocacy that the country should accelerate development on all the sectors including the SDGs; everything involving women and girls has to be prioritised.

"We understand that as the new administration comes in, they are going to need a look out of guidance and they are going to be faced with a lot of decision making issues, and we don't want them to go all over the place when it comes to issues that have to do with women and girls."

"We are taking the initiatives and engaging with other stakeholders that have similar goals and aspirations as us and establish some sought of framework as the new administration kicks in," she explained.

While pointing that the issues still remain the same despite strong advocacy over the years, the She Forum chief said there is need to adopt a new approach in order to achieve results.

"The gaps that women are advocating are still the same, only in a new dimension. What we are doing differently is how we are engaging, forming new alliances particularly with men. We are consciously seeking male alliances to be the voices for women's health and rights in Nigeria. We are interacting with religious and traditional institutions, all the groups that affect the life of women and girls. We are interacting with them differently this time engaging, supporting and seeking their inputs on how we can all find solutions to the pending

challenges for women and girls," she said.

On her part, Nigeria Country Director for Pathfinder International, Dr. Amina Aminu Dorayi called on the federal government to declare a state of emergency on women's health.

Dr. Aminu Dorayi, also revealed maternal mortality figures in Nigeria rose to 28 per cent in 2022.

According to her, if women fail, the global community has failed.

The Pathfinder International Country Director said her organization was ready to partner with various NGOs and other stakeholders especially those that amplify the voice of women.

"There is a need to have one common voice both in the rural and urban area, and there is no better time to speak up than now," she said.

She said the organization will "identify gaps and use it as an advocacy tool for the incoming administration."

Commenting, NCWS National President Lami Adamu Lau assured that the Council was ready to work with both organizations noting that there is a need to get the buy-in of women at the grass root.

She also noted with technology taking the centre stage globally, she reiterated the need for increased advocacy to get women

"We need to fashion out areas of collaboration," she stressed.

## Those calling for interim national government are enemies

THE Bola Ahmed Tinubu (BAT) Ambassadors has described those calling for the annulment of the Feb. 25 presidential election and the constitution of an Interim National Government (ING) as "enemies of Nigeria."

The National Coordinator of BAT Ambassadors, Chief Jamiu Ekungba, stated this in a telephone interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Abuja.

NAN reports that protesters, under the aegis of Free Nigeria Movement, had, on March 21, called on President Muhammadu Buhari to annul the presidential poll and set up ING pending the conduct of a fresh election on the grounds that the election was fraudulent.

Reacting, Ekungba said: "Even before the primaries, they have been planning for Interim National Government."

"Part of their plan was that even after primaries, they want to ensure there was no

election; they want to cause crisis.

"And you know a lot of things were done to cause crisis. So their cry for Interim National Government did not just start today."

"There are some people who are just enemy of Nigeria. They want to cause anarchy; they want to return Nigeria to the black days. But God will never allow them."

He said since election had been won and lost, what the aggrieved persons needed to do was to approach the law court.

"If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the election what is proper is for you to go to court, not the streets."

"I want to call on all right-thinking Nigerians; all patriotic Nigerians to rise up now and call these people to order."

"If Tinubu scored 37 per cent of the total votes to win the presidential election, in 1979, former President Shehu

Shagari scored 34 per cent of the votes and he was declared winner.

"So Nigerian Constitution is unlike other countries' constitutions that say one must score 51 per cent of the vote cast."

"And in this particular election, there were four gladiators; it was not a two-

– BAT Ambassadors

man race," he said.

Besides, he said the election was one of the most freest and fairest polls in the history of the country.

Ekungba, therefore, called on President Buhari to ensure that the transition was peaceful and successful on May 29 (NAN)

## Covid-19: FG advocates adherence to behavioural change

THE Federal Government has stressed the need for continued adherence to behavioural change to sustain the successful containment of the Covid-19 pandemic in the country.

Dr Boladale Alonge, the Director, Family Health Department, Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH), made the appeal on Monday in Abuja, during the close-out ceremony of the Hygiene and Behaviour Change Coalition (HBCC 2) programme.

Alonge said that irrespective of the health status of the populace, health hygiene rules were always important.

She also said that it was very important to get people vaccinated and immunised.

"In many countries of the world, the third booster dose of Covid-19 is also on and being given to the populace so I want us as much as possible to sustain the behavioural changes and ethics of being in a large group."

"If you want to sneeze, you can still sustain the behavioural change pattern that you learnt throughout the Covid-19 period."

"In fact in some countries of the world, they use face mask throughout the year but I wouldn't say that we should, but if it is necessary, especially if someone has a cold, you can use your face mask to prevent other people from getting infected."

"So definitely we will continue to roll out other

necessary health promotional posters and information that we need the public to adhere to because there are other infections that are ongoing throughout the year."

While talking about the programme, the director said that it was done in collaboration with FMOH and Population Services International Nigeria (PSIN), and was majorly about health promotion activities and packages especially during the Covid-19 period.

According to her, it was a very impactful collaboration used in developing messages on the basic rules to prevent infection.

Director, Health Promotion Division, FMOH, Dr Ladidi Bako-Aiyegbusi, said that from all indications, the nation was indeed winning the battle against covid-19 pandemic.

This, she said, was because people are being encouraged to adhere to all the preventive measures and they are complying.

She, however, said that the HBCC 2 programme (The Hygiene and Behaviour Change Coalition) supported FMOH to disseminate preventive messages against Covid-19 to Oyo, Osun, Kano, Nasarawa, Lagos states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

She added that materials were produced in English, Yoruba, and Hausa languages while radio and TV jingles were also produced in the three

languages, ensuring that standard methods for health communication material development were adhered to.

"Though it focuses on five states and the FCT, we are using the messages in all the 36 states of the federation because everybody needs to get the message of Covid-19."

"So we first of all had the session meeting in April 2022. Then we had a three-day stakeholders meeting where we brought the existing materials on Covid-19 prevention to the table."

"Then we looked at the mandates of the projects, reviewed the existing materials. We showcased the materials to beneficiaries within the community and asked them to look at the concepts to ascertain if they were easy to understand."

The question is "Are they in line with cultural norms, so that by the time they are using the materials for campaign, it will not be rejected?"

Bako-Aiyegbusi, however, said that the close-out ceremony for the one-year programme was to get the implementers at the state levels to recount their experiences, challenges and achievements and make recommendations about them.

The Head of Programmes, PSIN, Dr Fatima Bunza, said "Now that the project is closing out, by virtue of the way the project was implemented, quite a number

of resources were generated in partnership with the FMOH and these resources have been archived by the government at all levels.

"In addition, health promotion officers and public health officers at the state ministries of health were all part of this intervention and this will form resources for state intervention."

"Also, a virtual library has been established with all the resources for future reference by government and other partners and by the communities."

Dr Isiaka Adekunle, Director, Health Planning Research and Statistics, Osun state Ministry of Health, said that the programme has helped the state in preparation for pandemics.

This, he said, was because looking at the situation all over, one of the major keys in the management of diseases, whether Covid-19 or other communicable diseases, is health promotion activities.

"So health promotion is important and concerning this particular project in Osun, it was implemented to the letter and our own way forward is how we can own the project for sustainability."

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the programme, which began in April 2022, would be wrapped up on Friday. (NAN)



Tinubu

## Feature

By ABIODUN KOMOLAFE

# The evils of complacency in politics

*Often times, intrigues exist in political matrixes. Concepts such as political mass participation, collective demands, group identity and determination, and collateral damages could all mean different things to different people.*

It only depends on which side of the divide the definer pitches his or her tent. This unrestricted latitude and privilege to operationalize concepts and political ideas (especially in Nigeria) with 'sidon look' response from the masses breeds complacency on the part of the political gladiators. The salient issue, however, is that a little divergence from the standard definition or central course gnaws on both the integrity and legitimacy of the political institution.

Complacency comes in a surreptitiously slow-but-seamless manner. It doesn't make noise even as it rubs in on people with definitive exactitude. Political activists become complacent when they are no longer thinking with the people, when they think they know it all, and when they are eventually disconnected from the people. A discernible disconnect between the people and the political party is always in a spiral form, thereby making it problematic to actually curb, or control. The central rule is: never take the people for granted! Political party is about the people, and for the people; not the people for the political party! To this end, the leadership of any party must stop thinking for the people, but with the people. These are the issues!

Once upon a time in Nigeria's chequered history, the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) was indeed a national party. During the 2nd Republic, NPN was the party to beat while other political parties appeared like Lilliputians. As time went by, Nigerians began to see it as a party of the elite, the powerful and the rich. So, the mass of the people, who obviously constituted the majority, started leaving the 'One Nation, One Destiny' arrangement because, to them, they had nothing to show for being committed members of the party. After all, if you're a politician of the NPN hue, you must be rich; otherwise, you're just being used as cannon fodder. The perception went through the masses and it was well-received. Since politics is a game of numbers, the mass of the people left NPN – unknown to the party – for other political parties that showed some empathy towards the masses and the downtrodden.

Whereas Obafemi Awolowo's Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) was determined to give the people, especially, the children of the poor 'Free Education', NPN started talking about 'qualitative education', which meaning was lost to the deaf ears of the masses. As far as they were concerned, what's the meaning of 'Qualitative Education' when somebody else was ready to offer 'Free Education'? In their opinion, that's one sure way of deviating from the central theme of a political party. Thenceforth, complacency tampered with the destiny of NPN and its life never remained the same again! Sad therefore that the once-national party insisted on losing its vital



contents! Ultimately, disintegration became its lot even before the military struck on December 31, 1983 and cleared whatever remained of NPN as a political party.

There was also a time when the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) boasted that it would be in power for the next fifty years. As fate would have it, Nigerians are now witnesses to what have become of its fortunes as a result of complacency, particularly, on the part of its leaders. Take, for instance, time it was in Nigeria when every nook and cranny of the country was overstuffed with the 'Umbrella' men: strong in structure and texture, and powerful in shape and size! It was such a rich, national party that it was at a time assumed to be the biggest party in Africa. To its handlers, power was a personal property that could last forever even as they had forgotten that 'disservice power is like power thrown away.' For the once-thriving party, the rest is history! Labour Party (LP) came recently, allegedly, from nowhere, only to help put a 'dying-slowly' lid on the hope of the hitherto formidable party!

When PDP came, the general thinking was that the party would have learnt a lesson or two from its forebears because, in terms of structure and configuration, PDP and NPN were Siamese twins from the same father, the Northern People's Congress (NPC) of old; but, unfortunately, they went the same way! Now, and in our very eyes, PDP is disintegrating! Since the focus of its leadership is no longer the people but what each leader and/or handler can covet and convert to personal advantages, is it any wonder that members of the same political family are now fighting over positions? Aren't they fighting over, even monetising privileges and personalise perks of office?

By the way, while the loss of the National Assembly seats by the All Progressives Congress (APC) to the PDP in the just-concluded Osun State House of Assembly election was an expression of what had long happened and crystallized, the '25-1', winner-takes-all choristers might have forgotten that the Ademola Adeleke swing wasn't the first in the state's rich political history. With the benefit of hindsight,

Osun has once experienced the Olagunsoye Oyinlola '25-1' swing (in 2003) and Rauf Aregbesola's '26-0' has also happened to the state (in 2011). Yet, the heavens did not fall! Anyway, this is a story for another day!

Complacency helps in pushing people away. On the other hand, it represents a gateway for renewal because it also causes the people to think. Complacency shrinks the horizon of political parties and spells their doom. When a system becomes unsystematic, aberration steps in and discipline is the first casualty as control becomes problematic. Besides, immediately an institution

deviates from serving the purpose for which it was created, its social influence and functional relevance are bound to wane with time! Added to these is that power is functional; but, once it starts malfunctioning, its legitimacy is withdrawn. Needless to repeat that it is the reason men of unproven character who have taken over the control of political parties in Nigeria remain liabilities even as they portend ruination to our political system.

To sum up, there is a way leaders in the political space conveniently forget that performance and competence are key players in party sustainability and that no amount of political inducement or violence can help obliterate a cumulative history of non-performance. The principal reason for voting any government into power is to help bring the people up out of the valley of despair where the future is uncertain to the Next Level of development rooted in equality and the international character of mainstream socialism. Were Nigerians gainfully employed, the pressure wouldn't have been that much on the politicians, and politicians would not have been taking the electorate for a ride! However, since the preys are seen as bootlickers even as the predators are tragically insensitive, one doubts if pressure can stop from being exerted on the politicians.

Above and beyond, since the politicians have always mistaken the masses for political irritants, it is doubtful if they (the politicians) will stop insulting the electorate's collective intelligence with brazen ignominy. So, until there is a watershed in the life of each party, the way forward will always remain bleak! Normally, the credible way forward is total overhaul! Thankfully again, the introduction of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BIVAS) into Nigeria's election process has now shown that her future is neither gloomy nor doomed.

May the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, grant us peace in Nigeria!

\*Komolafe wrote in from Ijebu-Jesa, Osun State, Nigeria (H Y P E R L I N K "mailto:ijebujesa@yahoo.co.uk" ijebujesa@yahoo.co.uk)

**To sum up, there is a way leaders in the political space conveniently forget that performance and competence are key players in party sustainability and that no amount of political inducement or violence can help obliterate a cumulative history of non-performance. The principal reason for voting any government into power is to help bring the people up out of the valley of despair where the future is uncertain to the Next Level of development rooted in equality and the international character of mainstream socialism.**

# On bandits threat to Buhari, El-Rufai



BY PAUL JATAU

IN the last couple of weeks, I have refrained from visiting any of my social media handles and pages. This is because I wanted to keep my sanity. In the weeks preceding the general elections, the social media space became the battle ground not for the exchange of ideas and the propagation of the essentials of the Plateau person but an avenue for insulting those whose ideas and opinions were at variance with those of the so-called influencers or the e-rats of politicians who, at the slightest opportunity, vented their spleen on whoever dared speak up to them and try to point the way to

them. This space which used to be a market place for the cross fertilization of ideas suddenly lost its essence and became a *no-go area* for most people who genuinely felt the need to speak to the citizenry through the social media. Abuses were hurled left right and centre without recourse to debating issues that would add value to the society. Respect which used to be the hallmark of the Plateau person became lost in the anonymity which the social media provided. No one was spared in the rush to outdo each other in the propaganda war which took over the space.

Indeed, propoganda and outright falsehood found expression on these spaces and because Nigerians are typically lazy, no one bothered to fact check some of the rubbish that the public was being fed with. Without reading, most people shared materials that a little due diligence would not have allowed them share because of their harmful and false content. And, as a result of some of the recklessness, a lot of people were brought into harms way. Some people lost valuables due to this ingenuous and unfortunate sharing of such unverified content while some lost not just their limbs but also their lives. Leaders who, ordinarily would

have called their followers to order deliberately kept quiet and allowed such falsehood to spread like wildfire consuming in its wake a lot of innocent people could have been protected by such calls from leaders. Sadly, even those who claim to teach students issues concerning peace in our higher institutions of learning themselves fell short of the expectations of some us. Some of the postings on some of their social media handles spoke volumes about the kind of personalities they are. Even though they have a right to their opinions as citizens, they owe their students both past and present the responsibility of showing the way and acting what they teach.

Unfortunately, peace practitioners who should have shun partisanship, them were not able to do that. They themselves watered the seed of division which luxuriated in many of their social media posts and caused a lot of a harm to the psyche of the people. Yet it is this same set who had fought the introduction of some form of control in our social media space. With the benefit of hindsight, however, I dare to say that those who fought against the introduction of some form of control did so without thoroughly interrogating the issue and were quick to throw the baby with the



bathwater. What needs to be done now is for the National Assembly to rehash the bill, get inputs from the public and rework the entire law to take care of some of the toxicity which found expression through the social media space especially during the last elections circle.

No country in the world exists and succeeds without laws. We cannot and should not be different. We must learn in whatever circumstance to do right even when nobody is looking not when someone is breathing down our necks. We only have one country we can call our own. If we do not nourish it so that it would serve us, we run the risk of one day waking up and not finding the country at all.

The divisiveness that was palpable on the social media space in the wake of the recent election is enough to snuff out life in any sane human being. We therefore, owe our country the responsibility of rescuing it from the brink. As a matter of fact, our diversity should be a source of

strength and should not bring about division. We must thus take advantage of our plurality to grow our country. We cannot sit by and see our best brains *japping* to other countries to do dehumanizing jobs when they could flourish here given the right conditions.

Leaders must speak up and show the way. Silence and nonchalance would only bring us to paths that should never be towed by those seeking to build a country where all would feel betoken to it. A distinction should be made between governance and politics. Now that the elections have been won and lost, leaders must gird their loins and go to work and ensure that the citizenry, who are the employers of the politicians are served and made to feel proud of having them as leaders. They must shun **the come chop attitude** which has typified Nigerian politics since 1999 and must carve a niche for themselves so as to change the narratives.



By JIDAUNA DARING

IT is certain that every election that has come and gone since 1999 no doubt had its challenges. Therefore, the improvement in the Electoral System by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should be seen by Nigerians as a gradual journey.

It is against this backdrop that, the long awaited 2023 general elections have equally come and gone with the emergence of leaders or representatives at different levels in Nigeria.

Before the just concluded polls, electioneering campaigns were carried out by the contenders to seek for support from the electorate.

Canvassing for support during electioneering campaigns before any given election in Nigeria should not be seen as a time to exchange words that are capable of tearing people apart amongst the politicians.

It is also a known fact that democracy is the government of the people, by the people and for

## Encouraging post-election reconciliation for sustainable democracy

the people. With this, to ensure a sound and sustainable democratic practice in Nigeria, politicians must refrain from indulging in politics of hatred or bitterness before, during and after the elections.

This, if adhered to, would no doubt give room for politicians to always beat the drums of seeking for support during their electioneering campaigns base on their ideologies.

It is also glaring that those who often fall victims of politics of hatred or bitterness are agents of blackmail and character assassination and they mostly are the supporters of some contenders

What is equally most alarming in politics is the fact that some politicians have taken politics to be a do or die affairs which shouldn't be so as far as politics is concerned.

Enmity should not be created in politics either by politicians or supporters since it is a game of choice.

As far as politics is concerned, it is never a bad decision for family members or people within a given community to be in different political parties of their preferred choice. Unfortunately, there are some families or community members that in the course of belonging to different parties have created enmity which has scattered their well cherished brotherliness or togetherness.

This type of politics has injured both the family and community in a bad way by turning them to live

a cat and dog life. Although there are some family members that in this game encouraged putting their political eggs in different baskets, so that at the end such a family would still have hope of counting the surviving eggs that were put in a separate basket.

Our politicians from different political parties, particularly at the family side should as a matter of fact imbibe strongly the spirit of eating and doing other things together after going out and coming back from the political arena, so that they can stand united. This is because politics can come and go while the supporters still remain, irrespective of parties.

However, those who emerged as winners in their respective offices should on their part come out with agenda that would be geared towards carrying everybody along irrespective of party differences, tribe, geo-political

zones and religion, so as to enable masses reap the needed dividends of democracy.

In view of this, politicians should also on their part imbibe the spirit of encouraging post elections reconciliation for a sustainable democracy in Nigeria.

It may also interest our politicians to know that one politicking and elections times are over, the winners are expected to sit and begin to think or look at those good things that would bring about good governance.

In fact, once the ball is set rolling for governance by our elected leaders, such moments should be seen as a time to embrace all, rather than considering it as a time to pay evil for evil, which is not a healthy practice for our democracy as a nation.

Reconciliation as the name

implies is simply defined as an act of causing two people or groups to become friendly after having argument, exchange of words or disagreement.

Therefore, the importance of creating room for reconciliation amongst politicians cannot be over-emphasized since it is aimed at bringing people together, forgive and forget about the past, so as to work as a team.

It is also an established fact that, reconciliation helps in preventing any recurrence of violence or conflict by restoring broken relationships amongst individuals, communities, consolidating peace, strengthening newly established or re-introduced democratic institutions and breaking the cycle of violence in the society.

By and large, when post elections reconciliation is fully put into consideration, the sky would be the limit of politicians and every elected leader.

***"In view of this, politicians should also on their part imbibe the spirit of encouraging post elections reconciliation for a sustainable democracy in Nigeria. It may also interest our politicians to know that one politicking and elections times are over, the winners are expected to sit and begin to think or look at those good things that would bring about good governance. In fact, once the ball is set rolling for governance by our elected leaders, such moments should be seen as a time to embrace all, rather than considering it as a time to pay evil for evil, which is not a healthy practice for our democracy as a nation."***

CALABAR Carnival festival in Nigeria, also tagged "Africa's Biggest Street Party", was created as part of the vision of making the Cross River State, Nigeria, the number one tourist destination for Nigerians and tourists from all over the world.

The carnival which is Nigeria's most colourful event, begins every 1st of December and lasts until 31st December has boosted the cultural mosaic of Nigeria people while entertaining millions of spectators within the state, outside the state and foreigners, hence boosting industry for all stakeholders.

Cross River State, where the event takes place is a state in South South Nigeria, bordering Cameroon to the east. Its capital is Calabar and its name is derived from the Cross River (Oyono), which passes through the state. English, French, Bekwarra, Ejagham and Efik are major languages of this state.

The Calabar festival has been in existence from the early days, however, it began to take shape as it became officially a Carnival in 2004, when the then governor of Cross River State, Donald Duke, had a vision of making the state a hub for tourism and hospitality in Nigeria and Africa. The Carnival presents a perfect platform from brand visibility for consumer and market awareness.

"According to Osima-Dokubo, the carnival aimed to include more aspects of local heritage and culture and at the same time strengthen the capacity of the locals to participate in an economically beneficial way." Recently, Cross River State has become the pride of Nigeria in the areas of tourism, carnivals and hospitality.

The programme of the event at the carnival are drafted each year by the committee in charge of

tourism and cultural activities and new initiatives are introduced every year.

In December 2009, Carnival Committee organized "Carnival Cup 2009", a football competition amongst the five competing carnival bands - Seagull, Passion 4, Masta Blasta, Bayside and Freedom.

The Festival also included music performance from both local and international artists, the annual Calabar Carnival, Boat regatta, Fashion shows (introduced in 2016), Beauty pageant (Miss

Africa introduced in 2016) Christmas Village, traditional dances and the annual Ekpe Festival is a yearly event that brings in thousands of tourists.

Other activities that make up this carnival include Essay Writing Competition which involves both secondary school and tertiary students. These competitions are aimed at resuscitating the reading culture among the youths of the State as well as inculcating the carnival culture.

Source: Welcome to Nija



## Calabar carnival: Nigeria's most colorful event





# IMAGES

## CONCERNED PLATEAU PROFESSIONALS BRIEF NEWSMEN

The Plateau State Concerned Professionals led by Barr. Chesil Drenkat last week at the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Secretariat Jos briefed members of the press addressing alleged acts of irregularity involving the Vice Chancellor, University of Jos, Prof. Tanko Ishaya, when he served as 2023 General Elections INEC Returning Officer for Nasarawa State



Barr. Chesil Drenkat, Spokesperson, Concerned Professionals (right) with the NUJ Assignment Editor, Mr. Pam Musa



Plateau State Chairman of the Concerned Professionals, Barr. Drenkat (middle) addressing journalists



Spokesperson of the group, Barr. Drenkat making some clarifications



Chief Audu Onoja, member of the Correspondents' Chapel (standing) asking questions



NUJ National Auditor, Ladi Dinci Emmanuel (left) with Asile Abel at the briefing



Cross section of Cameramen covering the event



A cross section of journalists covering the Press Conference



Some members of the Plateau State Concerned Professionals

PHOTOS: DANLADI DUK

## Odd World

# UK's 'most married man' retreats to care home

THE UK's 'most married man' is turning his back on romance and moving to a care home, stating that his eight wives have 'worn his body out'.

UK's 'most married man' is turning his back on romance and moving to a care home, stating that his eight wives have 'worn his body out'.

Ron Sheppard, 74, kept dating until last year after admitting he didn't like being alone.

But after eight children and eight marriages, Ron says his relationship days are finally done.

He most recently called off an engagement to an American woman called Rose - who he had never met - in 2019 after it "didn't feel right".

Ron told Somerset Live: "My health is not good now. I think it's possible all my wives have worn my body out over the years.

"The mental and physical stress of the divorces have taken their toll."

Ron first tied the knot in 1966 with Margaret.

The pair shared three children but later divorced after two years, after which came wife number two, Jeanette.

Wed in 1973, the union lasted just one year before Ron got married for the third time a couple of years later in 1976.

He and Lesley had two boys but Ron - a former tour manager of comedian Norman Wisdom - left her five years later before she died in 1996. Then came Kathy in 1982.

The couple, who had a daughter, worked at Pontins as bluecoats with Shane Richie. Ron then wed Sue in 1986 and had two boys. But she threw him out 11 years later.

Usha from Singapore was next to tie the knot with Ron in 1999, followed by Wan in 2003 and Weng a year later. Ron's longest marriage was 13 years and the shortest just 10 months.

Lothario Ron has remained single since his marriage to Weng collapsed but admits to having 'friendships' with a number of ladies. But he doesn't regret walking up the aisle so many times.

"I don't regret any of my marriages," he said, "because I have my eight children."

Heartbreakingly, Ron said his constant search for love stemmed from sexual abuse he suffered as a child.

He says the trauma left him 'constantly

craving companionship'.

He continued: "It left me with a lot of problems.

"I turned to women. I felt safe in the company of women."

Ron released his autobiography, *Lord of The Weddings*, in 2014, and is still working on his second book *The Wife Collector*, which he says is due to be released alongside a film being made in the US.

His days now are very different to those when he was a serial husband, and he's leaving his two-bedroom ground floor flat in Somerset for a new life in a care home in the Isle of Wight, to be close to his family.

But far from looking for a new lady to share his golden years with, Romeo Ron says he is no longer well enough for romance due to his failing health.

Sadly, Ron suffers with a range of medical conditions including Parkinson's Disease, Lewy Body Dementia, COPD and Arachnoiditis which have left him reliant on a wheelchair and a team of carers which visit him three times a day.

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"I spend my days in a lot of pain," he added.

"I can't do anything really as I shake so much.

"I have carers come in to help me three times a day. They cook me meals and check on me and do shopping.

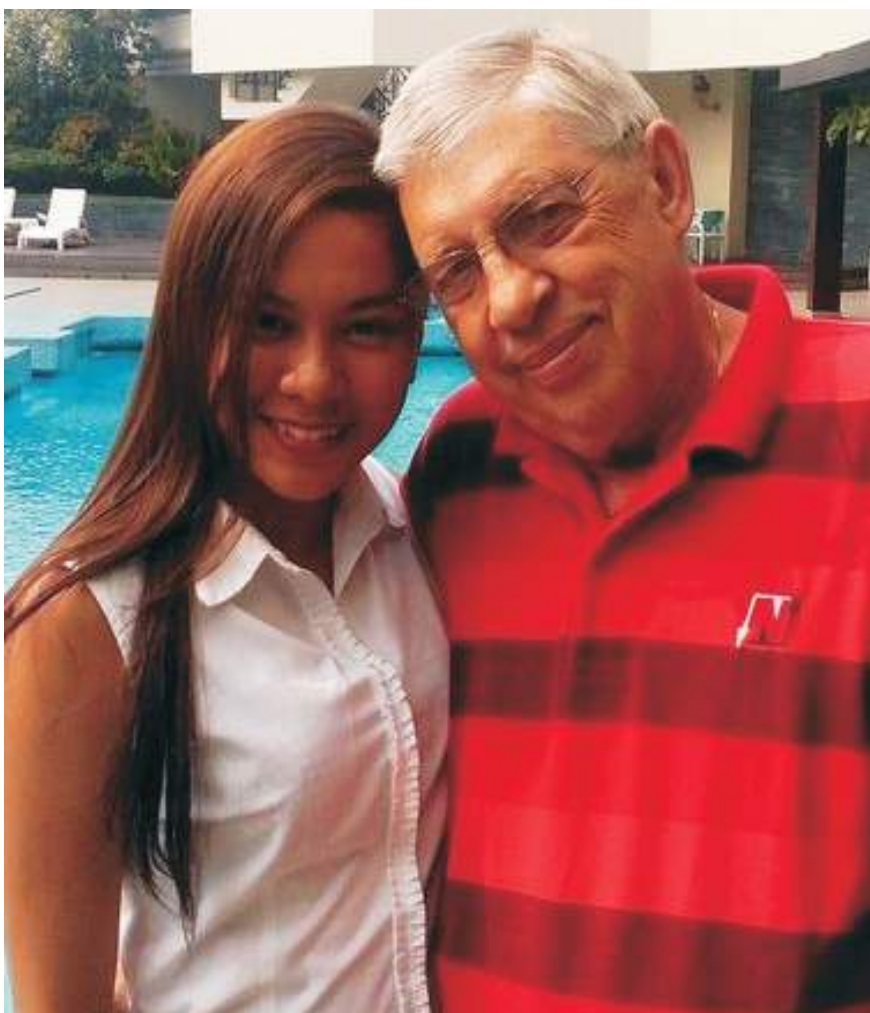
"I don't really go out at all apart from when I occasionally go shopping with my carers."

Ron is not in touch with any of his wives but is looking forward to moving to the Isle of Wight to be close to his sons and their families.

"I have a care home place organised but I am just waiting on social services," said Ron.

"And I am looking forward to getting over there and starting a new chapter of my life."

Source: The Mirror



## Dogara: Is this 'political prostitute's' huggermugger over?

ONCE upon a time, the former Speaker of the House of Representatives during the 8<sup>th</sup> assembly, Rt. Hon. Yakubu Dogara held sway in the corridors of power. As member representing Bogoro, Tafawa Balewa and Dass at the green chambers for over a decade plus, he certainly was once a force to reckon with within the circle of the political gladiators in the country including his immediate constituency back home. And as luck will have it for Dogara, after party-political cunning in the House of Representatives back then, he eventually materialized as the Speaker of our nation's significant parliament which epitomizes the integral aspect of the legislative disposition of the nation. Let many have forgotten, the former Speaker's rise to power was necessitated by the doggedness of his people back home who came out under the rains and sun to ensure that he consistently won elections to represent them at the lower federal chambers in Abuja.

Dogara who emerged as Speaker on the 9th June 2015 is a minority from Bogoro Local Government Area of Bauchi State favored by the god of politics to excel thus far in his political career. Today, Dogara is no longer the Speaker and would certainly come May 29<sup>th</sup> 2023 be amongst several other federal legislators in the country whose tenure would expire and he will not return to the green chambers for any legislative duty again. Evidently, Dogara will come back home where he all started his political adventure to meet his people at Gwarrangah village and more of his constituents at Bogoro, his local government area. As is the tradition with most politicians, he may decide to hold a Thanksgiving Service and or preferably quietly stay back in Abuja to think of what he would venture into next in life. He would certainly be left deep in thoughts considering the present traumatic and unpleasant unfolding developments trying to envelop him back home. For many concern individuals like us, the federal lawmaker may with a sober reflection come to terms with the unpleasant realities on ground concerning him and perhaps turn a new leaf.

This is because; once out of power, reality eventually hits many of such once political gladiators and pushes them to repentance. This perhaps is the only noble path Dogara may humbly chose to follow if the little "demons" in him do not rebel again.

Prior to the 2023 general elections, Rt. Hon. Dogara and Babachir Lawal abandoned the ruling All Progressive Congress,(APC) in protest over the Muslim-Muslim ticket which the party decided to adopt. After several visitations to churches and other significant political gatherings aligning with others who shared his similar thoughts, Dogara ended up in the People's Democratic Party, (PDP), an opposition political party which decided to adopt a Muslim-Christian ticket but infringing the gentleman's rotational agreement consensus earlier adopted by the northern and southern political juggernauts in the country. This gentleman's agreement came into effect before the emergence of this incumbent political dispensation to help consolidate the balance power sharing arrangements for uninterrupted effective and efficient leadership succession intended to enhance fairness, justice and socio-economic and political integration of the citizens of the country.

With the passage of time however, Dogara back home in Bauchi State surprisingly decided to support APC's gubernatorial candidate in the state, Air Vice Marshall Saqid Abubakar against the incumbent Governor, Senator Bala Mohammed who has since won re-election for a second term of office. Rt. Hon. Dogara's campaign for the immediate past Chief of Air Staff was an open secret to the extent that people got confused on which side of the divide the former Speaker was. This attitude was another flagrant disregard to party loyalty and another anti-party activity if one may say so.

Though Dogara was a team member of PDP's Presidential Campaign Council for Atiku/Okowa, he was also deeply involved campaigning for the APC gubernatorial candidate of Bauchi State perplexing

intellectuals and political pundits. Even as he meander from one political party to another taking crucial decisions which needs further consultations with stakeholders back home, Dogara for once never found it expedient to do so. This is certainly Rt. Hon. Yakubu Dogara for you. Retorting to this infrequent malfeasance, the APC Presidential Campaign Council Spokesman, Festus Keyamo described Dogara as a political prostitute. Keyamo, the incumbent Minister of State Labour further tagged the former Speaker as a wanderer and back-stabber. True to his word, since Dogara's departure from APC, no one can pragmatically ascertain where or which political party he can confidently call his comfortable home. Plenty water has passed under the bridge right now and not even Dogara himself can resonate the positive implication of his nasty political misadventure and or it's glaring advantage to both the members of his immediate constituency and Bauchi State at large. Typical of some Nigerian politicians who employ administrative ingenuity to tackle crucial issues, Dogara is perhaps still hypnotized by spontaneous wealth and affluence and believes that he is still in a class of his own forgetting the reality of life in the sense that in politics and or life journey, there are seasons for everything under the sun. His leadership arrogance eventually came to bear after he started fighting anyone who shared a more pragmatic and logical ideology than his. Dogara is such a man driven by fallacious quest for power, unimaginable control of people and overwhelming notice me kind of a lifestyle. This narcissistic ideology, unnecessary desperation for undue and undeserved power control by Dogara has led to his political misadventures in most recent times. As it is today however, Dogara is no longer on the same page with APC, PDP and or the Governor of Bauchi State. Beyond this, he has consistently continued to pick up fruitless quarrels with the former Executive Secretary of TETFund, Prof. Suleiman Bogoro, one man who has selflessly served this country with due diligence and integrity including other noticeable stakeholders in his community. For some of us, there is no way Dogara can compare his level of impact both back home and in diaspora with that of Prof. Bogoro. Truth be told, Prof. Bogoro's legacy and tremendous service to humanity is uncountable and Dogara can never claim to have done anything near it despite the office he occupied when he held sway in the corridors of power. Unfortunately, Dogara is yet to comprehend the simple fact that the people of Bogoro are wiser than his thoughts now.

Therefore, if some unfolding unspeakable happenings in Bogoro Local Government Area fingered at Dogara must be taken into consideration critically, some of us with all sense of responsibility would opine that the Dogara we know in 2015 is not the one some of us are seeing these past months and years. His unpleasant engagements with stakeholders of the area has portray him as one who is self-centered, uncultured and intolerant of eclectic peculiarity of a contemporary but complex society as ours. In the midst of many intellects Bogoro Local Government Area is blessed with, Dogara has continued to arrogate a fallacious cloud-nine lifestyle only ascribed to medieval tyrannic emperors degrading the need for accepting systematic principles of good brotherliness for the benefit of the people of the entire area. The way and manner Dogara arrogates power to himself including his erratic reaction to societal issues today makes some of us wonder whether he is not out of touch with reality this time.

But again, for the fact that while the APC has won the presidential polls, PDP has overwhelmingly won both the Bauchi State gubernatorial election solidifying the return of Senator Bala Mohammed as Governor and theseat of the member representing Bogoro constituency at the Bauchi State House of Assembly with the retention of Hon. Musa Wakili Nakwada of the PDP, he will end up becoming politically homeless without any base to operate after 29th May 2023. This equally means that the people of his constituency have completely deserted him for their own good.

As each day passes-by, Dogara will continuously bereminded of his obvious political miscalculations which has brought him from the pinnacle of power down to rock bottom. He will also be reminded of the obvious fact that prosperity eventually judge all mankind when the chips are down.

## View Point

**Bala Mohammed's re-election and Bauchi politics**By **LUKA MUSA Jr**

THE victory of Governor Bala Mohammed's re-election in Bauchi State is such that can be best described to have come with surprises, mixed feelings and lessons to learn. Owing to the gang up that brought one of the strongest coalition of opposition parties in the political history of the state, the coalition vowed to by all means oust the incumbent Governor, Senator Bala Mohammed in the just concluded Governorship and State Houses of Assembly elections that took place on the 18th March 2023.

The coalition which brought together two former Governors of the state, Dr Ahmed Adamu Muazu and Malam Isah Yuguda, Former Speaker House of Representatives Rt. Hon. Dogara Yakubu, Former Senator, Bauchi North and PDP Chieftain, Hon Suleiman Nazif Gamawa, Former Senator, Bauchi Central, Hon Isah Hama Misau, Former Secretary of the Federation under the military era, Alhaji Yayale Ahmed the deposed Wazirin Bauchi, Baba Bello Kirfi, Former Chairman TETFund, Dr Musa Babayo, Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and disaster management and wife of the APC Gubernatorial candidate, Hajiya Sadiya Umar Farouk, Hon Sani Abdu, Hon Yakubu Abdullahi Wowo (Wakilin Birni) and other top politicians who operated to ensuring that the All Progressive Congress (APC) Gubernatorial Candidate and former Chief of Air staff, Air Marshall Sadiq Baba Abubakar (rtd) defeated the incumbent Governor. All turned to be fertile and fruitless as Gov Bala comfortably won the election overwhelmingly with a wide merging of almost 90,000 votes.

Gov Bala who since his assumption of office as the Executive Governor of Bauchi State, under the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in 2019

**Mohammed**

has been up and doing in executing projects spread within Bauchi metropolis and in all the 20 Local Government Areas of the state. Stretching from road construction and road networking, construction and renovation of classrooms, Bauchi metropolis water project, building and renovation of Hospitals, Housing Estates.

Payment of the accumulated gratuities, Empowerment scheme in all the 20 local governments known as Kaura Economic Empowerment Programme (KEEP) and other things, that are in consonant with his slogan "Greater Bauchi" Most of all is the peace and stability enjoyed by citizens of Bauchi State, as against the

**Dogara**

neighbouring crises ridden states of the North East.

In less than 4 years, Gov Bala has changed the face of Bauchi State true urban city, after constructing 27 roads just within Bauchi town and it's outskirts plus other roads constructed in almost all 20 local government areas, beating the records of previous Governor's in the like of Dr Ahmed Muazu and Dr Malam Isah Yuguda who had 8 years in office. This record of performance, was key to what enabled Gov Bala subdue the pressure, tactics and conspiracies laid by the coalition of opposition's whose defeat has left lessons and created a new era in the politics of Bauchi State.

It is now a norm in Bauchi politics that once you are elected as a Governor, you must be committed to execution of physical projects without hesitation, as electorates are becoming more enlightened and observant on what has been achieved, believing on what they can see, touch and use, than Money, Rice, Omo, Maggi and Spaghetti which politicians do offer at last hours in order to convince the electorates and buy their votes.

It has brought also, to an end God fatherism kind of politics such that it is the content of one's

character, capacity and will to deliver the expectations of people that endears one to the electorates, not the big names and top political class that are behind a candidate. It has again, established an era that raised the conscience of the electorates towards issue based campaign because electorates no longer listen and conform to campaigns of vitriol, hate, mud sliding and character assassination. It's rather about reality check, solution driven and all-inclusive progressive programmes germane to good governance.

Moreover, the victory of Gov Bala has restored the confidence of the electorates and hope that their votes can choose the kind of leader they want. No matter the support or machineries set to favour the candidate they don't like, their votes can count and bring them they like to rule them. It has again, close gap the masses with top political class, such that now in Bauchi State the masses hold the power to decide in election not the power of money, fame and government influence. That's the new dawn brought by the victory of Gov Bala Mohammed's re-election in Bauchi State.

**Musa Jr. wrote in from Bogoro Local Government Area of Bauchi State**

***The coalition which brought together two former Governors of the state, Dr Ahmed Adamu Muazu and Malam Isah Yuguda, Former Speaker House of Representatives Rt. Hon. Dogara Yakubu, Former Senator, Bauchi North and PDP Chieftain, Hon Suleiman Nazif Gamawa, Former Senator, Bauchi Central, Hon Isah Hama Misau, Former Secretary of the Federation under the military era, Alhaji Yayale Ahmed the deposed Wazirin Bauchi, Baba Bello Kirfi, Former Chairman TETFund, Dr Musa Babayo, Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and disaster management and wife of the APC Gubernatorial candidate, Hajiya Sadiya Umar Farouk, Hon Sani Abdu, Hon Yakubu Abdullahi Wowo (Wakilin Birni) and other top politicians who operated to ensuring that the All Progressive Congress (APC) Gubernatorial Candidate and former Chief of Air staff, Air Marshall Sadiq Baba Abubakar (rtd) defeated the incumbent Governor. All turned to be fertile and fruitless as Gov Bala comfortably won the election overwhelmingly with a wide merging of almost 90,000 votes.***



### Succor for traditional rulers with "Renumeration Bill 2020".

One of the policies taken by the Lalong led rescue administration recently was towards positioning the traditional institution in Plateau state to be self-sufficient.

Therefore, Governor Simon Bako Lalong signed into law "The Plateau state Traditional rulers remuneration bill 2020" which is for the upgrade and benefit of traditional rulers of the state.

The bill came into law after getting the assent of the Governor at Government House Jos, on March 15, 2023 and it has 17 clauses and 2 schedules.

The signing was witnessed by traditional rulers across the state, who gathered to support the cause.

A synopsis on the new bill by the Attorney General of the State, Chrysantus Ahmadu indicated that in the bill, Clause 3 stipulates that the categories of traditional rulers in the state are first class chiefs, second class chiefs, third class chiefs, senior district heads, district heads, senior village heads, village heads, heads of hamlets among others.

And Clause 4 is on the appointments of traditional rulers, it stipulates that the appointment of traditional rulers shall be carried out in accordance with the selection process of their respective native law or customs and any appointment of the traditional ruler in accordance to chieftaincy law 2005 shall be approved by the Governor within a period of 21 days.

Clause 5 on the other hand covers salaries of traditional rulers and it provides for annual basic salaries for them, there is also order of ranking for instance Chairman traditional council, Deputy Chairman traditional council, first class chiefs, second class chiefs, third class chiefs, districts heads etc and stipulates their salaries according to their ranking.

Salaries, allowances and remuneration payable to traditional rulers is found in clause 6, while clause 7 provides that the State Executive Council shall from time to time prescribe the allowances and other stipends of the traditional rulers to aid them, including the manner which it shall be made.

Even traditional rulers in acting capacity are covered by the new bill in clause 9 as they are to be paid the same salaries and remuneration as those duly appointed, while acting appointment is to be approved by the Governor of the state upon recommendation by the traditional council, and all acting appointments shall be made within the duration of 3 months only except where there is a litigation in court.

Clause 13 however deals with demise of a traditional ruler including payments of death benefits. It provides that as soon as a traditional ruler passes, immediately after his burial, a selection process for his successor must be initiated immediately, however in case of any litigation, the person chosen by the Kingmakers may be appointed to see the affairs of the council, such a person must not be one who belongs to the ruling house and shall draw only allowance payable to the traditional ruler.

There is also a provision for death benefits where the family of the deceased traditional shall be given 50 percent of his annual wages and salaries to cushion the effect of the loss of their dear traditional ruler.

Clause 14 is on the use of sirens and flags shall be restricted to: First class traditional rulers, (Sirens and Flags), second class traditional rulers (Flags only), third class traditional rulers (Flags only), while all traditional rulers will use vehicle plate numbers made by their Local Governments or the traditional council.

Clause 15 on domestic staff states all traditional rulers are entitled to various numbers of domestic staff based on their ranking, provided in the schedule.

While clause 16 deals with tenure and posting of domestic staff, and their remuneration which shall come from the Local Government and traditional council, Clause 17 provides administration and autonomy of chiefdoms stating that each chiefdom is autonomous, and no graded traditional ruler shall interfere with affairs of another chiefdom.

Governor Lalong was happy that with this new policy, the traditional institution in Plateau now has the legal recognition and structure to exist and carry out its function as a key partner and stakeholder of government.

He said the policy will have the desired impact on the traditional rulers, the traditional institution and the state at large.



## News

### Lassa Fever: Nigeria records 784 confirmed cases

The Nigeria Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (NCDC) says in with 142 deaths across 23 less than three months, the statistics.



Ehanire

The NCDC via its official website said on Tuesday that the infections were recorded from 1 January till date.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that Lassa fever is an acute viral haemorrhagic fever caused by the Lassa virus.

The natural reservoir for the virus is the Mastomys natalensis rodent (commonly known as the multimammate rat or the African rat).

Other rodents can also be carriers of the virus which spreads through direct contact with the urine, faeces, saliva or blood of infected rats.

The virus can also spread through contact with objects, household items and surfaces contaminated with urine, faeces, saliva or blood of infected rats.

It said that in Epidemiological Week 11, the number of new

confirmed cases decreased from 70 in Week 10 of 2023, to 38 cases.

The agency said that the cases were reported from Edo, Ondo, Ebonyi, Bauchi, Taraba, Benue, Rivers, Plateau, and Nasarawa States.

NCDC said that cumulatively from Epidemiological Week 1 to Week 11, 2023, 142 deaths had been reported with a Case Fatality Rate (CFR) of 18.1 per cent which was lower than the 18.7 per cent CFR for the same period in 2022.

The NCDC said that, in total for 2023, 23 states had recorded at least one confirmed case across 97 local government areas.

The public health institution said that 71 per cent of all new confirmed Lassa fever cases were reported from Ondo, Edo and Bauchi while 29 per cent came from six states.

It said that of the 71 per cent, Ondo reported 32 per cent, Edo, 29 and Bauchi, 10.

According to the NCDC, the predominant age group affected is 21-30 years with the median age as 32 years.

It said that the male-to-female ratio for confirmed cases was 1:0.9.

The agency said that the number of suspected cases increased compared to the number reported for the same period in 2022.

The NCDC said that a healthcare worker was affected in Week 11.

It said that the National Lassa fever multi-partner, multi-sectoral Emergency Operations Centre was activated to coordinate response activities at all levels.

NAN reports that the person-to-person transmission of

Lassa fever can occur through contact with blood, urine, faeces, vomitus and other body fluids of an infected person.

Lassa fever initially presents like other commonplace illnesses accompanied by fever, such as malaria.

Other symptoms include headache, general body weakness, cough, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, muscle pains, chest pain and sore throat. In severe cases, the symptoms include bleeding from ears, eyes, nose, mouth and other body openings.

The time between infection and the appearance of symptoms of the disease is three to 21 days.

Early diagnosis and treatment of the diseases greatly increase the chances of a patient's survival.

(NAN)

## Sports

By DAFYDD PRITCHARD

## How a New York gang truce spawned an Olympic sport

**THE introduction of breaking into the Olympics for Paris 2024 may have surprised many, but for Michael Holman - writer, producer, artist, entrepreneur and self-dubbed hip-hop pioneer - it was the realisation of a 40-year vision.**

The Games' website describes breaking as a "hip-hop" style of dance characterised by 'acrobatic movement and stylized footwork'.

The format is fundamentally different to ice dancing or gymnastics though. Athletes don't wait their turn to perform one-by-one and impress judges.

Instead breakers will take to the floor in pairs in Paris, "battling" head-to-head and upping each other's moves to take home a medal.

Back in the early 1980s, Holman ran a weekly hip-hop revue in a downtown Manhattan club which combined rap and graffiti with the new form of street dance.

At first, it was about performance. The breakers would dance, the audience would applaud, the evening would move on and the next act would appear.

But Holman insisted on adding one more element to his booming club night.

"New York is all about competition and about trying to be the best," he said. "And I wanted to bring another crew along to battle. I want the audience to see a battle, not just moves."

It's what Holman had witnessed months earlier on the streets of the Bronx. There, breaking had emerged as a form of dance combat, springing from a shift in the gang tensions that had blighted 1970s New York.

"There were the Ghetto Brothers and the Black Spades, the Savage Nomads, and the Savage Skulls. And they'd been bloodletting for years: breaking heads, killing, stabbing each other," he said.

"Then, in 1971, Yellow Benji - the leader of the Ghetto Brothers - forced a truce that allowed the guys and gals from rival gangs to get together and party."

It was at these parties, where dance replaced violence as an outlet for neighbourhood bravado, that the city's many cultures cultivated breaking's creativity.

Holman continued: "Breakers would watch other breakers saying: 'Wow, that's wild. The way you're bringing in Kung Fu moves from the Chinese community. I'm gonna incorporate your Kung Fu and put it with my African cakewalk dance, or incorporate it with a Puerto Rican gymnastics aesthetic.' And all this while dancing to old James Brown records mixed on Jamaican-style sound systems. That's the culture of b-boy dance."

The first band of breakers resident at Holman's nights were a group he informally managed called the "Rock Steady Crew". Initially, they were loathed to share a stage with a rival outfit, but eventually they relented to Holman's requests.

"I brought down a crew called the 'Floor Masters' and boom, it was like a historic moment," said Holman. "The 'Floor Masters' were much more about athleticism and speed and power, and when I saw them battle, I dropped the 'Rock Steady Crew' like a hot potato."

Holman helped form and then manage a new breaking crew that would focus solely on the 'power' moves he'd witnessed from the 'Floor Masters'.

They recruited the best dancers from the best crews across the



**The Rock Steady Crew, seen performing in New York in 1983, were Holman's first breaking project as a manager**

city's five boroughs and named the new group the 'New York City Breakers'. It featured some of the art form's best exponents: Noel 'Kid Nice' Manguel, Matthew 'Glide Master' Caban, and Tony 'Powerful Pexster' Lopez.

Holman first arrived in New York from San Francisco in 1978. Though working at a bank on Wall Street, "wearing Brookes Brothers suits each day", he quickly fell in love with the grittier culture of the city he called home.

"I was living in a loft apartment on Hudson [Street] and Chambers [Street]," he said. "I'd get the elevator down in the morning and I'd see Joey Ramone [lead singer of iconic punk band The Ramones] - coming in from an all-night party with a girl on each arm. It was crazy."

Holman soon became part of the scene himself, becoming friends with pioneering graffiti artist Fab Five Freddy and frequenting night spots like Max's Kansas City, Mudd Club and CBGBs; venues that allowed him to mix with musicians, poets and other up-and-coming artists.

"I was eating-in New York like ice cream," Holman said, wistfully, recalling that he was on his way back from a late-night party of his own when he saw the first signs of a new street culture emerging around him.

"I was half asleep waiting for a subway. And then this train comes into the station and it's covered, top-to-bottom, across all the windows with graffiti logos and burners [large, elaborate designs in spray paint]. And I'd never seen anything like it before, it was an insane message from the street. It was vandalism, but beautiful at the same time."

"Young kids saying: 'Look at me. Look what I can do. I'm not a nobody. OK, so this city houses the United Nations, it's the capital of media and finance but I'm a kid from the Bronx, and I've got game, too!'"

For Holman, this ethos was also behind hip-hop's emergence and breakers' compulsion to express themselves through dance.

"It's about, look at me, I'm somebody," he said. "I can take a microphone and write my own poetry, I can cut and scratch a turntable, I can rock the floor like a

Together, they took breaking to an all-new level of skill.

"I got rid of the weak dancers and raided three or four other crews from the city. I created a super crew of power breaking," said Holman.

"The Breakers were able to like,

b-boy, I can pull off head spins like you can't even imagine.

"Kids were creating their own universe with nothing more than two turntables, a mic and a piece of linoleum."

As Holman made music, shot films and soaked up New York's energy, he wondered if the city's small hip-hop and breaking scene could become a break-out trend, just like punk which had sprung up in London and New York in the previous decade.

"A friend of mine went to school with Malcolm McLaren back in the

1960s," said Holman. "When McLaren visited New York, I invited him to a block party in the Bronx with Afrika Bambaataa and Jazzy Jay. I took him to a park jam, where the DJs had their sound systems and where the b-boys and b-girls went to dance."

"Malcolm was blown away and so he asks me to put together a review. Well, I did that."

McLaren had a good instinct for revolutionary cultural movements. He had managed the Sex Pistols, who became punk figureheads after

certain way, they'd create an internal energy.

"They were able to spin and do these flares. They figured out a new way to move, and it was pure poetry."

releasing their anti-monarchist single 'God Save the Queen' to coincide with Queen Elizabeth II's Silver Jubilee in 1977.

He connected Holman with an English-born promoter in the city called Ruza 'Kool Lady' Blue who had a regular night at the Jamaican-owned NeGril nightclub.

And by November 1981, the nightspot was rocking to Holman's DJ friends and the The Rock Steady Crew breakers.



**Holman quit a job as a junior banker on Wall Street to dive into New York's vibrant cultural scene in the 1980s**

## Sports



Morocco became the first African nation to reach a World Cup semi-final when they qualified for the last four at Qatar 2022

### "Morocco must end 47-year Afcon wait"

MOROCCO head coach Walid Regragui has told his team they must beat Africa for a second time before they can beat the world.

The World Cup 2022 semi-finalists on Saturday recorded a first win in their history against the team ranked number one in the world, Brazil.

The Atlas Lions have not, however, lifted the Africa Cup of Nations title since 1976.

"I told my players that we cannot be kings of the world before being kings of our continent," Regragui said.

The Atlas Lions, who are the first African side to reach the last four of a World Cup, beat Brazil, themselves five time World Cup winners, 2-1 in a friendly on Saturday.

It came just a day after Morocco's place in the 2023

Afcon was sealed without kicking a ball.

A 2-2 draw between South Africa and Liberia meant neither country can catch Regragui's team in Group K.

"You know it means a lot for us to beat Brazil, the top team in the Fifa ranking, and the country of football," Regragui continued.

"This is the month of Ramadan, we have to go and pray Tarawih to confirm if it's true or not.

"Now we are going to celebrate but it's a long way to go. We must not get on fire."

Sofiane Boufal and Abdelhamid Sabiri's goals in Tangier earned Morocco the win over Brazil with Manchester United midfielder Casemiro pulling one back for the Selecao.

Now, with a place at the next

Afcon assured, Regragui has told his players they must beat Africa first before beating the world.

"When I say we must win the African Cup, they say that I am exaggerating," Regragui continued.

"I must be careful, so I say we are not going to play for a win but we only play for happiness."

The Atlas Lions' progress from Group K with six points was confirmed when Liberia came from two goals down to force a 2-2 draw against hosts South Africa.

Having record two wins against Liberia and South Africa so far, it meant that Morocco qualify from a group reduced to three sides after Zimbabwe were suspended by Fifa for government interference.

ENGLAND striker Harry Kane has said scoring 100 goals for his country "is not out of the question".

The 29-year-old became England's all-time top scorer with 54 goals when he converted a penalty in Thursday's Euro 2024 qualifying 2-1 victory in Italy.

He added his 55th in 82 appearances when he scored in the 2-0 win against Ukraine on Sunday.

"Getting 100 will be tough for sure, but I never count out anything," said the Tottenham forward.

"I am still young - I am 29, I

### Kane: Scoring 100 goals for England is possible

am still fit and strong. I want to play for England for as long as I can."

England will play Malta and North Macedonia in June in their next two Euro 2024 qualifiers.

"Every game there is I will be putting myself forward to try and play," added Kane.

"We will take it step-by-step. The next step will be trying to get into the sixties."

"A hundred is not out of the question. It will be extremely

tough but we will have to see how the next few years go."

Kane overtook Wayne Rooney's 53 goals to move top of England's all-time men's goalscoring chart.

The Spurs striker now leads a group of six Englishmen to have scored more than 40 international goals. Of those, only Jimmy Greaves scored his at a faster rate - one every 1.3 games, compared with Kane's 1.5.



Kane scored his 55th goal for England in Sunday's Euro 2024 qualifier against Ukraine at Wembley

### 'PGA tour must find way to keep matchplay event'

IT would have been fitting if both had prevailed in Sunday morning's semi-finals to provide the tournament with a stirring

send off. Instead it was Sam Burns against Cameron Young in an all-American final, comfortably won by Burns 6&5.

But even though an undercard contest usurped what most observers wanted for the main event - McIlroy beat Scheffler in the "consolation match" - last week's action highlighted the folly of allowing this curious competition to slip from future schedules.

It is curious because, since its inception in 1999, The Match Play - where competitors go head-to-head in trying to build an unassailable lead of holes won - has rarely gone to form.

In the inaugural final, the world number 25 Jeff Maggert beat the 51st ranked player Andrew Magee at the second extra hole. They set a trend, where upsets are often the order of the day.

Indeed, in 24 runnings McIlroy (2015) and Dustin Johnson (2017) are the only reigning world number ones to make the final other than Tiger Woods who did it four times - 2000, 03, 04 and 08.

As Sunday's semi-finals proved, head-to-head combat in golf is much harder to predict than a sport such as tennis where a player's superiority can more easily prove decisive.

In matchplay, golf becomes all the more engaging to watch. When the worst that can happen is the loss of a hole rather than a tournament-wrecking blow up, competitors play more aggressively.

Although the group stage format - brought in to replace a straight knockout in 2015 - offers potential second chances, the imperative to beat your opponent is compellingly ever present.

And Saturday's last-16 matches and quarter-finals provided a truly spellbinding day of golf - the sort that leaves you scrambling for the TV remote

when the screen tells you it has been on too long and is about to switch off.

But with the advent of the PGA Tour's "designated" events in response to the threat of the lucrative LIV tour, there no longer seems room for this tournament.

It will be sadly missed. John Wood, a former top caddie and now an erudite and insightful commentator for NBC, tweeted: "The PGA Tour can't abandon matchplay."

The tournament invariably serves memorable moments. McIlroy's monumental 375-yard drive to four feet on the par-four 18th to help secure a place in the knockout stages last week was a case in point.

And few who saw it will forget Bob McIntyre doing something similar against Dustin Johnson a few years ago.

There have been spats too, Sergio Garcia falling out with Matt Kuchar in 2019 and Keegan Bradley squaring up to Miguel Angel Jimenez in 2015 might not have been the most savoury sporting moments, but they generated plenty of passionate interest.

The difficulty with matchplay is the whittling down to just a couple of matches for the final day, which can make sustaining engaging TV coverage a real challenge.

Perhaps running the tournament in conjunction with a women's matchplay event is the answer? Allow both to share the limelight with simultaneous coverage and the sharp ends of both would not feel so sparse.

Regardless, let's hope the magic of matchplay is not forgotten as the golfing bandwagon moves on.

It does so with McIlroy in jaunty mood after what was undoubtedly a successful bounceback from his missed cut at the Players earlier this month.

### Mboma: Coach shocked as DSD changes rule

THE coach of Olympic 200m silver medalist Christine Mboma is "shocked" by changes to the rules for female athletes with high testosterone - a decision which rules the Namibian out of this year's World Championships.

On Thursday, the governing body World Athletics voted to reduce the amount of blood testosterone permitted for athletes with differences in sex development (DSD).

"It was a bit of a shock, receiving it without any prior notice once again," Henk Botha told BBC Sport Africa.

DSD is a group of rare conditions whereby a person's hormones, genes and/or reproductive organs may be a mix of male and female characteristics. Some of those affected prefer the term "intersex".

Botha added: "The rumours were running through the whole [of] Europe and some of the people were telling me this is coming. World Athletics haven't contacted anybody."

Under the new rules, DSD athletes will be required to reduce their blood testosterone level to below 2.5 nanomoles per litre - half of the previously accepted level of five nanomoles.

Athletes must also remain under this threshold for two years in order to compete internationally in the female category in any track and field event.

The new rules now encompass all track events, a change from previous restrictions which only affected events ranging from 400m to a mile.

However, interim provisions will be put in place for DSD athletes already in competition

outside the previously restricted distances.

They will only be required to suppress their testosterone levels for six months before competing in any World Athletics-sanctioned event.

But this still does not allow enough time for Mboma, and others, to comply before August's World Championships in Budapest, Hungary.

According to Botha, the 200m World Under-20 champion remains "positive" despite the news.

"Christine knows about the updated rules and we've discussed it. She's positive and we will keep on training."

When announcing the changes, World Athletics president Lord Coe said 13 DSD athletes will be affected by the decision to include all track events in the updated regulations, seven

(55%) of whom compete in running events above a mile, with six (45%) in sprinting events below 400m.

He confirmed none of the 13 will now be able to compete in Budapest, but will be eligible for future events, including the Paris 2024 Olympics, "if they maintain their testosterone at the required level".

Christine Mboma and her coach Henk Botha in Zambia

African athletes ruled out Mboma, who was named BBC Africa Sports Personality of the Year for 2021, is not the only African to be impacted by the new rules.

So too Niger's African champion Aminatou Seyni, who was fourth in last year's 200m World Championship final in Eugene, Oregon, and Burundi's Francine Niyonsaba, a silver medalist in the 800m at the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.

But perhaps the most high-profile exclusion involves South African Caster Semenya, who refuses to take drugs to lower her natural testosterone levels.

The double 800m Olympic and world champion fought a legal

battle with World Athletics over DSD rules but was eventually forced to move away from her preferred distance to events like the 5000m in order to keep competing.

She finished sixth in the 5000m at last year's African Championships, failing to qualify for the World Championships in Eugene.

Like Semenya, Mboma's team say they will now consider all options, including legal action.

"For us, this is an obstacle not the end," Botha said.

"Challenging World Athletics in the court, obviously, is expensive and a long thing. We need to go and look at every single option on the table and take it from there."

"My own opinion is [that] it's time for the world to stand up against things like this and the way this has been handled." His new team, new surroundings and to explore what trainer James can add to his game.

"I felt like I let a lot of people down"



Mboma

Sports

# Super Eagles shoot down Guinea Bissau to regain top spot

AFTER suffering a shocking defeat at home against Guinea Bissau on Matchday 3 of the 2023 African Cup of Nations qualifier, the Super Eagles bounced back to secure a 1-0 away win against the same opponent, **BSNSports.com.ng** reports.

The Djurtus of Guinea Bissau produced one of the most shocking results on the continent when they secured a 0-1 win against the 3-time African champions Nigeria at the MKO Abiola Stadium.

Guinea Bissau hosting the second leg at Sempbro 24 Stadium in Bissau started the game with a more defensive approach allowing the Super Eagles to dominate the game.

The much-changed Nigerian side has successive chances in the first 20 minutes through Kenneth Omeruo and Samuel Chukwueze but was unable to convert.

The bright spot in the Super Eagle team Bright-Osayi drove into the penalty box and was brought down by the Guinea Bissau defender.

The referee awarded a penalty to Nigeria which was well-converted by Moses Simon in the 30th minute as they ended the half in the driving seat.

The second half resumed with the host trying to press more to get the much-needed equalizer but was unable to break down Nigeria's defense.

Napoli forward Victor Osimhen almost doubled the Nigeria lead but the effort hit the post midway into the second half.

Guinea Bissau tried to peg back Super Eagle to get their equalizer but they failed in their attempt at Nigeria and ran away with a 0-1 win.

The result means that Nigeria returned to the top of the group with 9 points and Guinea Bissau dropped to the



The Super Eagles bounced back to defeat Guinea Bissau

second position while Sierra Leone and Sao Tome and Principe occupied 3rd and 4th position respectively.

Meanwhile, the Super Eagles have arrived in Nigeria from Bissau after taking a sweet revenge on the Wild Dogs of Guinea Bissau.

In a 1 minute 11 seconds video posted by the Super Eagles Media Officer, Babafemi Raji, the players and officials led by the General Secretary of the Nigeria Football Federation, Sanusi Mohammed were seen alighting from a chartered Air Peace flight at 2:15 am with all the players on board.

The Super Eagles players will from today book their flight back to their different clubs in Europe.

The three times African champions last Friday lost 0-1 to the Guineans at the

Moshood Abiola Stadium, Abuja but they were able to take a pound of flesh three days later with a resounding 1-0 win to reclaim the top of the group A table with 9 points in four games. Guinea Bissau are second with 7 points while Sierra Leone, Eagles next opponents have 5 points. Sao Tome and Principe have 1 point from 4 games.

Moses Simon 30 minutes penalty gave the visitors the edge very the home team. With the win, Super Eagles are back on top of the table with nine points while second placed Guinea Bissau have 7 points. Sierra Leone and Sao Tome and Principe have 5 and 1 points (from four games) respectively.

The top two teams from group A will qualify for the 2024 African Nations Cup to be hosted by Cote d'Ivoire.

PLATEAU United, on Sunday, won their Northern derby with a 2-0 victory over Gombe United.

Izuchukwu Chimezie and Silas Nenrot got the goals in the 31st and 86th minute respectively.

The Peace Boys moved to the third position with 17 points after Sunday's victory.

Elsewhere, Remo Stars defeated Nasarawa United 1-0 while Kwara United at their new home ground in Akure defeated El Kanemi Warriors 2-0.

Despite the strong will to halt Bendel Insurance's unbeaten run, Enyimba joined the long list of clubs that have gifted away points to the abridged group A leaders.

The 1-1 draw played in Aba meant the People's Elephants conceded for the first time this season to Bendel Insurance who extended their unbeaten streak to 10 games.

Before the end of the first half, Emeka Obioma increased his goal tally to eight scoring from the spot to put the Elephants in front in the 44th minute.

While Enyimba thought they were on course for a lone goal

# Plateau United beat Gombe

win, their hearts were broken in the 81st minute when Insurance levelled the score line courtesy of Imade Osarenkhoe's direct freekick.

With the crucial point secured in Aba, Bendel Insurance tightened their grip at the top of group A with 24 points while Enyimba dropped to the fourth position with 17 points.

Elsewhere, Abia Warriors gave Rivers United a run for their money at the Adokiye Amiesimaka Stadium where they were forced to a 1-1 draw by their hosts.

Nweke Kalu scored for the visitors in the 51st minute before Morice Chukwu's 97th strike spared the Pride of Rivers their blushes.

Despite the draw, Rivers United tops Group B with 19 points while Abia Warriors are in the fourth position with 15 points.

Wiki Tourists' chance for a third league win of the season was thwarted by a relentless Sunshine Stars who cancelled Idris Guda's 50th-minute penalty at the cusp of the

second half through Samson Olasupo to end the game 1-1.

Meanwhile, the draw was Edith Agoye's team's third draw on the road this season and Wikki Tourists' second at home this season.

Akwa United continued from where they stopped in the first stanza of the season as they defeated Shooting Stars 2-0 in Uyo on Sunday evening.

The Promise Keepers had forced the Oluyole Warriors to a draw in Ibadan last month

Having learnt their lessons from the Ibadan experience, the Ayodeji Ayeni-led Promise Keepers kept to their promises and scored to deny the Oluyole Warriors a chance to get a consolation at the Nest of Champions.

Two quick-fire goals from Ubong Friday and Taiye Muritala in the 53rd and 55th minute respectively sent the Promise Keepers to the second spot with 18 points while Shooting Stars dropped to the eighth position with 10 points.

# Osimhen, Oshoala lead winners at the Nigeria Pitch Awards

SUPER Eagles and Italian Serie A top scorer, **Victor Osimhen** and FC Barcelona Femeni's top finisher, Asisat Oshoala, were named the King and Queen of the Pitch respectively at the 9th Award Ceremony of the Nigeria Pitch Awards held at the Johnwood Hotel, Abuja on Friday.

Award organisers insisted on staging the colourful ceremony despite the Super Eagles' shock loss to the national team of Guinea-Bissau at the Moshood Abiola National Stadium earlier.

Speaking at the well-attended ceremony, Shina Philips, President of the Nigeria Pitch Awards, stated that one shock loss by the

team should not obliterate the exploits and achievements of the players and the entire team.

'The Eagles are ranked 5th in Africa; they have 19 appearances at the AFCON finals and have emerged winners 3 times. The Eagles have made 6 appearances at the World Cup finals since 1994.'

Speaking further, Philips said in the current season in Europe, Victor Osimhen had scored 21 goals in the extremely competitive Italian Serie A; Asisat Oshoala had netted 18 goals in the Spanish Ladies Premier League. Alex Iwobi and Calvin Bassey have helped their respective teams to successful outings.'



Osimhen

'We also cannot ignore the exploits of our local coaches, administrators, football sponsors and football journalists. These people have put in their best and deserve to be identified, recognized and honoured. We have a lot to celebrate, Philips concluded.

The Award Ceremony was witnessed by AIG Aishatu Abubakar, the highest ranking woman police officer in the NPF, AIG Olukayode Egbetokun, AIG Zone 7, members of the Super Eagles, representative of SIAO Partners, Mr Alan and Mr Elli of Hawthorn Suites and guests.

Francis Uzoho, the AC Omonia Nicosia FC shot-stopper was named the Goalkeeper of the Year while the AFC Ajax left-back Calvin Bassey emerged as the Defender of the Year.

Alex Iwobi, who has averaged a total of 39 passes per match with a pass completion rate of 80 per cent, and has 6 assists for his English Premier League side, Everton FC, won the Midfielder of the Year and the current Napoli FC goal poacher, Victor Osimhen also picked up the Striker of the Year award for the second season.

# Super Eagles played better in Abuja

THE three times African champions created 17 chances in Abuja while the opponents created seven. The 2013 African champions were unable to convert any of the chances to lose their top spot to the visitors.

Meanwhile, Super Eagles were able to redeem their image on Monday after a deserved home defeat to Guinea Bissau. The 2013 African Nations Cup champions beat Guinea Bissau 1-0 at their back yard to record a sweet revenge and reclaim the top spot on the group A table.

Peseiro in the post match interview said, "We could have won 6-1 in Abuja and 5-0 here in Bissau today because we played better on Friday than today. But that's football, some times you played better than your opponents but the result will show otherwise.

"We dominated the match more at home than today but we could not convert our scoring chances." He said.

Head coach Jose Peseiro made five changes with Semi

Ajayi, Kenneth Omeruo, Frank Onyeka, Terem Moffi and Moses Simon making their starting eleven.

The Super Eagles

deservedly took the lead on 30 minutes as Simon converted from the penalty spot after a foul on Bright Osayi-Samuel.

The Super Eagles are on nine points, reclaim top spot in Group A from Guinea-Bissau who are second with

## - Peseiro Insists

7 points while Sierra Leone and Sao Tome and Principe have 5 and 1



Super Eagles



**Quest**



writer

**FRAGMENT**

*"While the Commission has the core responsibility to conduct free, fair and credible elections based on the law, the Judiciary is responsible for the interpretation of the law and adjudication of electoral disputes. In the discharge our responsibilities, few public institutions in Nigeria are subjected to more litigations than INEC. In the 2019 general election, the Commission was involved in 1,689 cases, made up of 852 pre-election, 807 post-election and 30 electoral offences cases. The Commission is committed to the rule of law without which democracy cannot thrive."*

**Prof. Mahmood Yakubu**

**PROF. MAHMOOD YAKUBU**

# Preparations, priorities for electoral integrity and inclusion

*Continued from last week*

Detailed account of these attacks has been published on the Commission's website. The implication of the attacks is that facilities must be rebuilt and several election materials must be replaced. Further, the Commission and security agencies must have to increase the number of their personnel to these facilities. Nevertheless, the Commission is determined to continue its preparations for the general election despite these attacks. So far, all the destroyed facilities will be rebuilt, or alternatives found, and the materials lost are being replaced. However, the Commission has repeatedly called for more concerted efforts to control the attacks. In December 2022, the National Assembly (House of Representatives) held a public hearing on these attacks, and we hope that authorities now have them under control since they appear to have abated.

**Campaign Violence**

One important provision of the new Electoral Act is the extension of campaign period from 60 to 180 days before the date of election. Campaign periods have traditionally seen increases in violent actions by political actors. These range from verbal attacks, hate speech, destruction of campaign materials by opponents such as billboards, to overt violence, sometimes leading to fatalities. We have seen some of these during the ongoing campaigns. Although the situation appears to be under control, yet the concerns still exist as we come closer to election day. The Commission believes that a peaceful electioneering campaign heralds a peaceful election. That is why we continue to engage with political actors and the security agencies to ensure that violence on the campaign trail does not snowball into major violence on election day or afterwards. Partly in consequence, the Commission issued specific guidelines on the Conduct of Political Rallies, Processions and Campaigns in November 2022. We are also closely monitoring and tracking compliance as we come closer to election day.

A major contributory factor to violent campaigns is also a high degree of disinformation, misinformation and fake news. During the recent Ekiti and Osun Governorship elections held in June and July 2022 respectively, many observers noted the rise in fake news and disinformation. This has also been noticeable in the general election campaigns. Deeply worried about this, the Commission has been engaging with civil society organisations, media executives, oversight bodies, law enforcement agencies and owners of social media platforms to track and curtail the spread of fake news.

**Campaign Finance and Vote Buying**

This is one important undermining factor of our elections to which the Commission is increasingly turning its attention. The Nigerian Constitution



gives the Commission enormous responsibilities to oversight campaign fundraising and expenses of both candidates and political parties. The Electoral Act, in turn, specifies various limits to campaign spending and also empowers the Commission to set other limits. Experience however shows that political parties and candidates often observe these limits in the breach. Consequently, INEC is working on strengthening enforcement of these limits, including the use of a web-based application and dashboard for political parties to submit their expenditure for verification. Working with one of our development partners, we have developed the Political Parties Financial Reporting and Auditing System (PFRAS) for this purpose. We shall be deploying it soon and will train both our staff and political parties on its use. In the past, the reporting system had been tardy and unorganised, making it difficult to effectively oversight campaign finances.

Vote buying or voter bribery by political parties and candidates provide a different, but related, set of challenges. It is not only illegal within the electoral legal framework, but also affects election administration. In the past, vote buying has been linked to disruption of elections at the polling units and even violent conduct. The practice takes several forms, one of which is the so-called "mark and show" technique in which a voter marks his/her ballot paper and shows it to the party agents present and later goes to an agreed location to collect the payment. In response to this, the Commission reorganised the Polling Units to ensure that the voting cubicle and ballot box are placed away from the party polling agents such that they are unable to see the marked ballots. In reaction, the vote

buyers modified their approach to "mark, snap and show". This time around, a voter takes his/her cellphone to the voting cubicle, marks the ballot, snaps it with the camera of the phone for presentation later for payment. Again, the Commission responded by banning the use of cellphones at the voting cubicles. However, voters are allowed to take their cellphones to the Polling Units, but they are not allowed to take them to the voting cubicles while marking their ballots.

**Electoral Litigation and Adjudication**

While the Commission has the core responsibility to conduct free, fair and credible elections based on the law, the Judiciary is responsible for the interpretation of the law and adjudication of electoral disputes. In the discharge our responsibilities, few public institutions in Nigeria are subjected to more litigations than INEC. In the 2019 general election, the Commission was involved in 1,689 cases, made up of 852 pre-election, 807 post-election and 30 electoral offences cases. The Commission is committed to the rule of law without which democracy cannot thrive.

Towards the 2023 general election, the Commission has been joined in 791 Court cases as at Friday 6th January 2023 involving intra-party elections and nomination of candidates by political parties. These are not cases involving elections conducted by the Commission or litigations initiated by it, but purely intra-party matters involving candidates and their political parties mainly due to the absence of internal democracy within parties. In fact, the Commission is only a nominal party in these cases but nevertheless has to be represented by lawyers in all court proceedings. The Commission will continue to obey

clear orders of Courts because of the plethora of conflicting judgements from Courts of coordinate jurisdiction on the same subject matter, particularly those involving the leadership of political parties or the nomination of candidates for elections.

**Prosecution of Electoral Offences**

Although the Commission is empowered by the Electoral Act to prosecute electoral offences, it lacks the power and resources to make arrests and thoroughly investigate electoral offences. While we will continue to cooperate with the law enforcement agencies for the arrest, investigation and prosecution of electoral offenders, most of those that are arrested, tried and convicted so far are the foot soldiers rather than the sponsors of electoral violence and other violations. Efforts at mitigating electoral malfeasance can only become effective with the arrest, prosecution and sanctioning the "mother spiders" to end their reign of impunity. It is for this reason that INEC supports the establishment of the Electoral Offences Commission and Tribunal imbued with the responsibility of prosecuting electoral offences as recommended in the reports of various committees set up the Federal Government, notably the Uwais Committee (2009), the Lemu Committee (2011) and the Nnamani Committee (2017). This will enable the Commission to focus on its core mandate of organising, supervising and conducting elections and electoral activities. While appreciating the considerable work already done, the Commission once again appeals to the National Assembly to expedite action on the conclusion of the legislative work on the Bill. It will be another enduring legacy of the 9th Assembly that will

strengthen Nigeria's democracy just like the passage of the Electoral Act 2022.

**Diaspora Voting**

Voting by millions of Nigerians living outside the country remains a recurrent issue for the Commission. Nigeria is said to have one of the largest diaspora communities in the world. Our quest for a fully inclusive electoral process in Nigeria will not be complete as long as these Nigerians are unable to vote. However, the Commission only acts in accordance with the electoral legal framework, which remains the main reason why we cannot implement diaspora voting for now. Both the 1999 Constitution and the 2022 Electoral Act provide that voters can only be registered and vote within the country. For instance, Section 77(2) of the Constitution provides that "every citizen of Nigeria, who has attained the age of eighteen years residing in Nigeria at the time of the registration of voters for purposes of election to a legislative house, shall be entitled to be registered as a voter for that election".

Sections 132(5) and 178(5) tie the eligibility to register and vote in executive elections (Presidential and Governorship) to the requirement of residency as in the case of legislative houses. The Commission hopes that these legal obstacles will be cleared at some point to enable Nigerians in the diaspora to vote in elections.

**Conclusion**

We have promised Nigerians and friends of Nigeria that the 2023 general election will be free, fair, credible and inclusive and we have left no stone unturned in preparing for it, despite several challenges. But all elections, especially those involving the type of extensive national deployment like we do in Nigeria, will naturally come with challenges. We have worked closely with stakeholders and development partners to confront these challenges and we are satisfied with our preparations so far. Our Commission does not take the pledge that we have repeatedly made to Nigerians lightly. We are leaving no stone unturned in our preparations. Our commitment remains only to Nigerians and not to any political party or candidate. That is what the law requires of us. We cherish the institutional independence and integrity of the Commission. With the enthusiasm of Nigerians, the goodwill of stakeholders and partners, and the commitment of the Commission, we believe that the 2023 general election will be among the best conducted in Nigeria.

I thank you very much for the kind invitation and audience.

**Yakubu was at Chatham House, London to speak about the commission's preparations for Nigeria's 2023 general elections.**

**Concluded**