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Lalong inspects projects, optimistic APC will win elections

By PALANG KASMI

Plateau Governor, Simon Bako Lalong has said his Party, the All Progressives

Congress (APC) will record another landslide victory in the upcoming Governorship and state Houses of Assembly elections. He stated this yesterday while addressing newsmen after inspecting some

ongoing projects across the state capital. The Governor was optimistic that just as he predicted his party's victory in the just

concluded Presidential polls, the APC will record success and produce the next governor of the state that will succeed him in the upcoming Governorship polls. The Governor who was in company of key government officials and political appointees

inspected the British American Junction fly over Bridge, where work was at finishing stages. He also went to Plateau Specialist Hospital Jos to see the level of work at the Radio Diagnostic Center, and was taken round the facilities by the Acting Chief Medical Director, Dr. Phillimon Golwa.

Lalong also inspected the Jos High Court Complex, which has been furnished and is awaiting commissioning including the Plateau Multi-door courthouse (PSMDC), and was taken round by the Contractor, Justices, and stakeholders in the state Judiciary.

He also visited the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) Press Center where he was taken round by the Chairman, Mr. Paul Jatau, to inspect the remodeled Press.

The Governor however tasked the Accountant General to release funds for the furnishing of the Multi-door Court Complex and Press Center.

He disclosed that contrary to insinuations that his administration has not done any project, President Mohammed Buhari Buhari is expected to visit the state to commission his government's numerous projects.



Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) Chairman, Mr. Paul Jatau (right) taking the Governor, Rt. Hon. Simon Bako Lalong (CON), Commissioners for Information and Communications, Hon. Dan Manjang and Hon. Brian Bintim Dadi, Ministry of Housing yesterday during the inspection visit to the remodeled NUJ State Secretariat, Jos

Photo: DANLADI DUK



Adhanom

WHO warns against biggest Cholera outbreak

Global health body, the World Health Organisation, raised the alarm that the world is gravely facing the biggest cholera surge in 20 years.

WHO revealed that factors including economic crises, climate change and the fallout from the Covid-19 pandemic have led to the ideal circumstances for cholera to flourish in high-

risk countries, noting a sharp surge of the illness in at least 30 countries.

The scale of the various outbreaks rose sharply in 2022 after several years of decline, the WHO said.

According to global health body, between January and October of last year, 29 countries reported cases of the disease, compared to 23 the year

before - with those numbers set to rise in 2023.

"The number of countries with these large outbreaks occurring at the same time, we have not seen it in at least 20 years," Philippe Barboza, the head of the WHO's cholera emergencies response unit, told The Telegraph.

"Most of the major outbreaks we are looking at are all driven by major, unusual climate events," he added, adding that southern African countries are particularly at risk as they face a third straight year of heavy rain and cyclones brought on by the La Nina weather phenomenon.

WHO director Tedros

Adhanom Ghebreyesus said last year that the effects of climate change had "turbocharged" the impact of cholera.

Syria declared its first outbreak of the disease in 15 years last year, with the situation worsening following last month's earthquakes. Lebanon is facing a similar problem for

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News

WHO warns against biggest Cholera outbreak

Continued from page 1 Covid-19 cases, given that the first time in 30 years as it struggles to fight off the disease amid economic collapse.

Experts say that the problem has also been exacerbated by various countries' health services being overwhelmed by

efforts to combat cholera outbreaks were paused throughout the pandemic.

"Cholera can be controlled, should be controlled," Barboza explained. "It's not that expensive, just to provide access to healthcare. It's a

basic human right."

Cholera is a severe disease that is contracted by ingesting contaminated food or water. It can lead to death within hours if left untreated. Figures from the WHO state that around 143,000 die from the disease globally every year.

CBN recovers 52% of loans under Anchor Borrower Programme



Emefiele

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has said that total repayment of loans under the Anchor Borrowers' Programme (ABP), stood at N503 billion as at date, representing 52.39 per cent of recovered facilities.

The CBN Acting Director, Corporate Communications Department, Dr. AbdulMumin Isa, made this known in a statement on Monday.

Mr Isa said that the apex bank remained committed to its developmental mandate of stimulating access to finance for the real sector

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) recalls that the International Monetary Fund, IMF, in a recent report, had said only 24 per cent of loans collected by

farmers under the ABP had been repaid.

The IMF said the report was based on the information available at the time it was completed on Jan.12.

According to the IMF, agricultural credit in the country has not significantly succeeded in increasing production due to the difficulty in targeting the correct recipients.

It said that although the CBN allowed farmers to pay in cash or give the CBN their produce of same value, repayments had been very low.

According to Isa, the CBN has released N1.079 trillion under the programme, out of which N960 billion is due for repayment.

He said that the ABP had supported about 4.57

million smallholder farmers who cultivated over 6.02 million hectares of 21 commodities across the country.

He listed the commodities as rice, wheat, cowpea, millet, maize, cotton, fish, soya bean, poultry, cassava, groundnut, ginger, sorghum, oil palm, cocoa, sesame, tomato, castor seed, yellow pepper, onions, and cattle/dairy.

NAN quoted Isa as saying that the ABP had contributed significantly to the increased national output of focal commodities, with maize and rice peaking at 12.2 and 9.0 million metric tonnes in 2021 and 2022 respectively.

He said the programme had also helped to improve the national average yield per hectare of the commodities, with productivity per hectare almost doubling within the eight years of the programme's implementation.

According to the acting director, repayments under the ABP have been made through cash or produce by the beneficiaries.

He said that the outstanding due balance on loans was still under moratorium due to the COVID-19 forbearance granted to beneficiaries of the apex bank's interventions in March 2020 and extended to Feb. 28, 2022.

"It is pertinent to note that the tenor of loans under the ABP is based on the commodity gestation

Commercial banks in some satellite towns of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) are yet to start cash payment, leaving customers stranded and frustrated in spite of the Supreme Court ruling.

A correspondent who monitored banks in Nyanya, Mararaba, and Karu in Abuja on Tuesday, reports that none of the period.

"For instance, loans granted to farmers cultivating some perennial crops could have up to seven-year tenor," he said.

He said that CBN's interventions, with the core objective of catalysing the economy's productive base, have continued to support investments in capital assets in sectors with high-growth and employment-elastic potential.

"The CBN remains committed to its developmental mandate of stimulating access to finance for the real sector, particularly agriculture, as it continues to support the Federal Government's drive for food security and economic growth.

"Accordingly, the CBN continues to welcome applications from eligible Nigerian farmers and firms under the ABP," he said.

The ABP was launched by President Muhammadu Buhari in November 2015, to create a linkage between anchor companies involved in processing and smallholder farmers of the required key agricultural commodities.

It was designed to provide farm inputs to the beneficiaries to boost production of the key commodities, stabilise input supply to agro-processors and address Nigeria's negative balance of payments on food.

Banks customers stranded as delay in cash payment lingers

banks have started paying customers over the counter or via Automated Teller Machines (ATM).

The apex court had on Friday nullified the ban on use of the old N200, N500 and N1000 banknotes saying the notes still remained legal tender until Dec. 31.

The gates to the banks' are still being manned by security officials who barely permit the numerous customers with complaints to go into the banking hall in turns.

A customer seen at one of the banks, Mr Isa Abdullahi, said: "I have been here since 10 a.m. and this is 3 p.m. to complain about some failed transactions but I was refused entry.

"The crowd here is discouraging. They are not even listening to anybody here.

"Some people said that after the Presidential and National Assembly elections, the Naira will be released everywhere but that is not the case.

"We are suffering so

much in this country. You will have money but you cannot access your money," he said.

Also, Mrs Angel Abiodun, another customer at another bank on Karu road described the situation as annoying.

I am helpless. I came to my bank to complain about my expired ATM card and also to collect some cash but I was not allowed in.

"If I knew that the situation will turn like this, I wouldn't have deposited all my money in the bank even when they told us to take our old notes to the bank.

"The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) should do something and save us from this mess," she said.

Also, some PoS operators also confirmed to NAN that the new Naira notes were still scarce.

A POS operator, Gami Johnson, said: "I wonder what is happening. We are yet to see the old or new Naira."

NAN reports that the CBN is yet to respond to the apex court judgment on the old notes. (NAN)

IG meets defaulting banks over non-payment of allowances

The leadership of the Nigerian Police Force has met with the managements of defaulting banks, who were responsible for the delay in payment of 2023 election duty allowances to police personnel, after a report by our source.

The source had exclusively reported on Friday that the Nigeria Police Force refused to pay the special duty allowances to personnel who participated in February 25 Presidential and National Assembly polls.

Some of the officers had said that if the money was not paid they would boycott the March 11 governorship and state house of assembly elections.

The officers had said they used their own funds

throughout the elections expecting that they would be refunded.

"Nigerian police officers are suffering in terms of salaries. Imagine, after working diligently for the elections, police are entitled to collect N150,000 for election allowances but we didn't get any money," a female Superintendent of Police had told our source on Friday.

"Those that received; just a few of us got N35,000. Please come to our aid, we police are working but suffering in terms of our salaries. Kindly tell our IGP (Inspector General of Police) to pay us our money. Even our arrears that the President signed for us, we were not paid."

Sequel to report of SaharaReporters, the Inspector General of Police, Usman Baba, met with the DMOs at the police force Headquarters in Abuja, on Monday, to address the alleged delay or non-payments of the police personnel election allowances.

The Force Public Relations Officer, Olumuyiwa Adejobi, who disclosed this in statement, said the meeting was in furtherance of the IGPs passion to address the delay, adding that "information/evidence from the Police Account's and Budget's Department showed that the banks have been credited as schedules of payment have been dropped with the banks even before the February 25 presidential and national assembly elections.

"So, we urge the affected officers to remain calm as every penny accrued to them will be paid.

INEC removes Sokoto REC ahead of polls

Three days to the Governorship and House of Assembly elections slated for next Saturday, the Independent National Electoral Commission, (INEC) has directed the Resident Electoral Commission (REC) in charge of Sokoto State, Dr Nura Ali, to stay away from the commission.

Consequently, he been replaced with the Administrative Secretary of the Commission in the State, Hauwa Aliyu Kangiwa, with immediate effect.

The development is contained in a letter addressed to the Commission's headquarters in the State

and signed by the Secretary to the Commission, Rose Oriaran-Anthony, dated March 6, 2023.

According to the letter with reference No: INEC/SCE/442/V.II, "This is to inform you of the commission's decision for you (Dr Nura Ali), Resident Electoral Commissioner, Sokoto State, to stay away from the commission's office in Sokoto State immediately until furthermore notice.

"The administrative secretary is directed to take full charge of INEC, Sokoto State office with immediate effect."

Also, in a separate letter sighted by our

correspondent, the commission directed the Administrative Secretary of the commission in the state, Hauwa Aliyu Kangiwa, to take full charge of the commission in the state with immediate effect.

The separate letter which was signed by the same commission secretary, directed Hauwa to take full responsibility of all issues of administration and election pending when the commission directs otherwise.

The letter further directed her to liaise with the Supervisory National Commissioner, Professor Muhammad Sani Kaita, for

further clarifications when necessary.

LEADERSHIP recalls that INEC had on Saturday announced that all negligent regular and

ad hoc staff of the Commission during the February 25 elections will be barred from the forthcoming March 11 elections nationwide.



Yakubu



Business & Economy

Transition to cashless economy and matters arising

Since the transition from a liquid economy to a cashless one, Nigerians have had varying degrees of experiences, good or bad.
IDACHABA SUNNY writes

TRANSITION to a cashless economy in the opinion of financial experts is a good development in modern times. As a matter of fact, many developed countries had since migrated from cashless economy to a highly digitised crypto system. In Nigeria and many African countries, an economy largely driven by cash still holds sway.

The administration of former President Goodluck Jonathan snowballed the cashless policy, but lacked the necessary political, technical and financial wherewithal to implement it before the administration was voted out in 2015. President Muhammadu Buhari in whose tenure digitisation took a centre stage took a bold step to begin the implementation of the programme through the recent policy of the apex bank.

When Mr Godwin Emefiele, the CBN governor announced the return to a cashless economy in October, it was greeted with skepticism for many reasons, but bothering on lack of strong network backbone to drive the policy. No one envisaged that along the line, bank customers would have sour stories to tell judging from recent developments.

Unpleasant tales

For Mr Maduabuchi Eziukwu, a civil servant, February 7 was another day to source for cash to meet his financial needs. So, he headed for a nearby ATM centre for some cash withdrawal where unknown to him, a predator ATM scammer was lurking in the background.

"I had an unfortunate experience trying to get cash at a Zenith Bank Branch at Amarata in Yenagoa.

"That day was a sad day for me as I was defrauded. All my savings in the bank was cleared by one dubious character.

"I had slotted my card into the ATM but the machine rejected it and pushed it out. The guy who had just used the machine before me told me that my card was not properly inserted," he said. Eziukwu thought he had met a Good Samaritan, but the strange guy had other plans for him.

"He removed my card and pretended to help me to properly insert it. The card dropped from his hand and he picked it up and reinserted it. He told me to put my password again.

"When the machine still did not dispense the cash to me, he returned my card' to me and left. "Immediately I realised that the card he gave to me is not mine but a dummy card while he made away with mine.



It flashed in my mind that having observed me input my password, he had obviously memorised it. Prince Mike Tayase and Mrs Pauline Onyibe, both Bayelsa-based journalists said they have bitter experience of declined transactions at Point of Sale (PoS) terminals at supermarkets. Tayase said as plausible as the reasons advanced by the CBN to justify the policy sounds, the apex bank has woefully failed in its monetary policy duties. "The CBN governor, Godwin Emefiele, has decades of commercial bank experience from Zenith Bank and has served close to 10 years as CBN governor. He is expected to consider all variables in the planned transition to a cashless economy. "It seems the apex bank did not ascertain the integrity of the ICT infrastructure in the payment system because of the level of failed transition being experienced by bank customers. "The cash withdrawal limit is also a source of concern and has exposed many Nigerians to be at the mercy of some bank officials and greedy PoS operators. "There are also reported cases of fake transfers and fake alerts," Tayase said. According to Onyibe, the apex bank should carry enough sensitisation on the benefits of the policy and take concrete steps to ensure that those who sabotage it are punished. The CBN says it is not unaware of the challenges posed by the new policy as assures that it is working hard to ensure that the hiccups

Although this is now becoming a familiar story among Nigerian bank customers, the ongoing transition to a cashless economy reinforces the challenge posed by these characters, particularly in

the area of ICT literacy and infrastructure. They said the policy is good, but it's not good for some of us that do menial jobs with little pay. Please help us tell the government to help us because we are suffering." To confirm Gabriel's complain, Tony Ayame, another resident said he left his car on a lonely road last week because he had no cash to pay a roadside vulcaniser after his car tyre deflated. To compound his problem, he said the spare tyre too was flat unfortunately he didn't know until that day. "This happened just before the NEXT Cash N Carry on my way home in the evening. The vulcaniser man, obviously frustrated by the cashless gridlock refused a transfer because he has no bank account. Every pleas went on deaf ears and I had no cash. To secure the car, I pushed it to the broad entrance of the hotel adjacent the place just for safety and left. Luckily, I got a lift from there to Gwarimpa and trekked to my house. I was lucky the car was safe the following day. My brother, this cashless thing is good though but the initial hiccups were not envisaged. Even the Central Bank did not envisage what is happening. " The policy is almost a month old since it started. It seems the economy is gradually adjusting to its inconveniences, but the apex bank especially commetcial banks need to assist the government to lessen the pains on citizens.

were addressed to the benefit of Nigerians and the economy. In a recent statement by CBN director, Corporate Communications Department, Mr Osita Nwanisobi, the apex bank's governor, Mr Godwin Emefiele, urged Nigerians to be patient as the apex banks fixed the hitches. Emefiele also said the CBN remained committed to ensuring the effective distribution of the newly introduced naira banknotes nationwide.

A traumatizing experience

Apart from the narratives above, in the last one month when naira redesign and cashless regime started, Nigerians have gone and are still going unprecedented trauma accessing their money in the banks either due to banks inability to meet the yearnings of customers or simply poor network services from the service providers. In interactions with many fun seekers and residents in the nation's capital, its been unpleasant tales. According to an Abuja resident, Gabriel Obodo, I didn't know I will live up till now. "I am a vulcaniser along Kubwa expressway and that is the job I have been doing since 2013. I don't have any bank account because often we do daily contributions after customers pay us. When this cashless policy started, customers always want to make transfer but I don't have any account. Because of this, I have not been receiving customers again. There are days I will not make 500 naira even in three days.

They said the policy is good, but it's not good for some of us that do menial jobs with little pay. Please help us tell the government to help us because we are suffering." To confirm Gabriel's complain, Tony Ayame, another resident said he left his car on a lonely road last week because he had no cash to pay a roadside vulcaniser after his car tyre deflated. To compound his problem, he said the spare tyre too was flat unfortunately he didn't know until that day. "This happened just before the NEXT Cash N Carry on my way home in the evening. The vulcaniser man, obviously frustrated by the cashless gridlock refused a transfer because he has no bank account. Every pleas went on deaf ears and I had no cash. To secure the car, I pushed it to the broad entrance of the hotel adjacent the place just for safety and left. Luckily, I got a lift from there to Gwarimpa and trekked to my house. I was lucky the car was safe the following day. My brother, this cashless thing is good though but the initial hiccups were not envisaged. Even the Central Bank did not envisage what is happening. " The policy is almost a month old since it started. It seems the economy is gradually adjusting to its inconveniences, but the apex bank especially commetcial banks need to assist the government to lessen the pains on citizens.



Business & Economy

CBN says farmers repaid N503bn, faults IMF's rating

THE Central Bank of Nigeria has disclosed that farmers under the Anchor Borrowers Programme have repaid N503bn representing 52.39 per cent owed as of February 2023.

The Anchor Borrowers Programme was established in 2016, is to support farmers by offering single-digit interest-rate loans.

This was made known by the Acting Director, Corporate Communications Department, AbdulMumin Isa, in a statement recently.

This figure, however, contradicts claims by the International Monetary Fund that only 24 per cent of loans disbursed under the Anchor Borrowers' Programme of the Central Bank of Nigeria have been repaid.

The report completed on Jan. 12 noted that although the CBN allows farmers to pay in kind or cash under the ABP, repayments have been very low.

The document read, "For the Anchor Borrowing Programme, repayment is also low at 24 per cent, especially since repayment can be made in kind, thereby limiting the tenor of the loans to one year.

"Part of the problem is that the incentive structure for repayment is weak, the recipient loans are not always well targeted and occasionally the funding is used for other purchases (e.g., new agricultural input trading companies to elicit trading rents)."

Disputing the claims, Isa explained that N1.079 trillion has been released under the programme, out of which N960



Emefiele

billion is due for repayment.

According to him, the CBN programme has supported 4.45 million smallholder farmers, who cultivated over 6.02 million hectares of 21 commodities across the country.

Citing statistics from the Food and Agriculture Organisation, the acting spokesperson noted that the ABP had contributed significantly to the increased national output of focal commodities, with maize and rice peaking at 12.2 and 9.0 million metric tonnes in 2021 and 2022, respectively.

He said that the outstanding due balance on loans was still under moratorium due to the COVID-19 forbearance granted to beneficiaries of the apex bank's interventions in March 2020 and extended to

Feb. 28, 2022.

"It is pertinent to note that the tenor of loans under the ABP is based on the commodity gestation period.

"For instance, loans granted to farmers cultivating some perennial crops could have up to seven-year tenor," he said.

He added, "The Central Bank of Nigeria remains committed to its developmental mandate of stimulating access to finance for the real sector, particularly agriculture, as it continues to support the Federal Government's drive for food security and economic growth. Accordingly, the Central Bank of Nigeria continues to welcome applications from eligible Nigerian farmers and firms under the Anchor Borrowers' Programme."

Population census crucial to economic growth, development - Elumelu

The Chairman of United Bank for Africa (UBA) Plc, Mr Tony Elumelu, says adequate knowledge of Nigeria's population will help accelerate economic growth and development.

Elumelu, who is also the Chairman of Heirs Holdings Group and Transnational Corporation (Transcorp) Plc, said this in Abuja on Monday, at a donor engagement on Nigeria's 2023 Housing and Population Census.

According to him, the task of conducting the census is critical to our country's future.

"If we do not know our population, we cannot properly plot our developmental path, our economic growth, our society's goals.

"Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, with an estimated population of over 200 million people. Population growth and development are inextricably related in Nigeria.

"The last time a census was conducted in Nigeria was 2006, when we recorded a population of 140 million people.

"Today, our population is estimated to be in excess of 200 million, it is projected that

this figure will grow to 450 million by 2050, which could make Nigerian the third most populous country in the world," he said.

Elumelu commended President, Muhammadu Buhari, for his laudable effort at organising the 2023 housing and population census.

According to him, credible demographic data is of profound importance for the public and private sector alike.

"We all know we live in a data driven world.

"As a private sector leader with investments in key sectors of the Nigerian economy, I understand first-hand, the value and importance of available, accessible and accurate data.

"Data helps in making informed decisions, driving development, and creating opportunities," he said.

He said that the upcoming census was a significant milestone in Nigeria's development, as it would provide an opportunity to collect accurate and reliable data on the country's population and housing.

He urged the authorities to

ensure that the census was credible, as the census figures would serve as a vital tool for policymakers, private sector actors, and civil society organisations.

"The census will affect how we allocate resources in Nigeria and so many other important decisions, so it is important that the process is credible and above board.

"Today, Nigerian population estimates and demographic profile are unclear and projections debatable.

"Census figures and population distribution have unfortunately become politicised.

"Population figures have ramifications for revenue allocation, office allotment, legislative power and even elections.

"The stakes are, therefore, high for various interest groups - we need to act for our nation as a whole and the next generations," Elumelu said.

He said that Nigeria needed a credible and extensive population enumeration exercise, adding that the National Population Commission (NPC) should live

THE Debt Management Office (DMO), recently offered two Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) Savings Bonds for subscription at N1,000 per unit.

According to the DMO, the first offer is a two-year FGN Savings Bond due in March 15, 2025, at interest rate of 465 per cent per annum.

The second offer is a three-year FGN Savings Bond due in March 25, 2026, at interest rate of 10.465 per cent per annum.

"They are offered at N1,000 per unit, subject to a minimum subscription of N5,000 and in multiples of N1,000 thereafter, subject to a maximum subscription of N50 million.

"Interest is payable quarterly, while bullet repayment (principal sum) is made on maturity," the DMO said.

It said that FGN Savings Bonds qualified as securities in which trustees could invest under the Trustee Investment Act.

"They qualify as government securities within the meaning of Company Income Tax Act (CITA) and Personal Income Tax Act

DMO offers two FGN savings bonds for subscription



Oniha

(PITA) for tax exemption for pension funds amongst other investors.

"They are listed on the Nigerian Stock Exchange Limited and FMDQ Securities Exchange Limited, and they qualify as liquid assets for

liquidity ratio calculation for banks," it said.

It added that they were backed by the full faith and credit of the Federal Government of Nigeria and charged upon the general assets of the country.(NAN)

Many loan apps yet to register FCCPC

In recent years, the proliferation of loan Apps in Nigeria has risen.

The Nigerian market has witnessed the emergence of various fintech companies offering digital financial services to the population, including loan apps.

Recall the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC) had given the loan companies till March 27, 2023, to register their presence as digital money

lenders (popularly known as loan apps) as the online lending space had almost been taken over by quacks with questionable practices.

However, as the deadline for registration of loan apps in Nigeria approaches, the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC) disclosed that the number of registered loan apps in the country has surged to 131.

This figure was recorded as of February 28, according to

the Commission's database. However, only 92 of the 131 companies have secured full approval, while the remaining 39 secured conditional approval.

This development is a positive one for the financial sector, as it promotes healthy competition and enhances financial inclusion. Analysts believe that the registration of loan apps in Nigeria has several advantages for both borrowers and lenders.

It protects borrowers, improves access to credit, reduces the risk for lenders, improves credit scores, and increases confidence in the industry. It is important for loan apps to comply with regulations and register with appropriate authorities to ensure that they are providing safe and reliable lending services.

The Federal government had since 2021, wielded the big stick on loan apps that constantly exploited customers and others with very outrageous interest rates.

The Chief Executive Officer of the FCCPC, Babatunde Irukera, also accused some of the loan apps of resorting to unethical, obnoxious, and unscrupulously exploitative practices in the industry.

To further curb the menace of the loan apps, the FCCPC went ahead to order payment systems operators, telecommunication companies, and Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) to stop the illegal loan apps from accessing their services.

To give more backing to the process of delisting the defaulting apps, the FCCPC had last year, issued a 90-day notice to all the digital money lenders to get registered in compliance with the body's guidelines.

The first notice expired in November 14, 2022, and the FCCPC graciously extended the deadline to January 31, 2023.

above board.

"The challenge facing the NPC, therefore, is to conduct a census that meets the public's acceptability criteria.

"The most obvious are credible, transparent, verifiable, accessible universal

coverage.

"In this regard, being counted must not be an onerous exercise for citizens. We need to reach all our people.

"A credible exercise and outcome should be a source of pride and a demonstration of our capacity and intent," he said.(NAN)



Elumelu



Business & Economy

Missing pieces in expanding SMEs access to finance

Why credit guarantee companies (CGC)? There is a notion that small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are the workhorse from which future economic growth and innovation flow in every country. Ilesanmi Ayokunle writes

HOWEVER, in many developing countries, access to capital is a major obstacle to the successful take-off and growth of SMEs. According to a study by the World Bank Group, there exists a credit gap of \$1.10trn in lending to SMEs in these economies.

This issue arises due to market failure largely on the back of information asymmetry. This means that due to the predominantly informal nature of SMEs, lenders operating under strict regulatory provisions (prudential ratios, etc.) are averse to bearing the risk of extending credit to them. These banks prefer to avoid the unpredictable cash flows, limited hard assets, and thin governance structures that define this category of companies.

Several studies show that SMEs in Nigeria suffer the same fate. Available studies show that SMEs in the Nigerian market are not exempt from these financing challenges.

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) estimates the annual financing gap for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises at N617.00bn.

Institutionalised problem-solving approach

Fixing these market problems, however, requires fresh thinking at the policy level. In brief, this would involve market interventions that generate positive externalities by encouraging banks and non-bank lenders to extend credit to SMEs, albeit the real challenges with a lack of credit history and collateral.

A solution that has proven successful in other emerging economies is Credit Guarantee Schemes (CGS). These have gained prominence as a common form of intervention in SME credit markets. The CGS provides third-party credit risk mitigation to lenders to stimulate access to credit for SMEs in the marketplace.

This happens through CGS' absorption of a portion of a lender's losses on loans made to SMEs in the event of default in return for a fee. The CGS' provides a high level of efficiency in the financial sector by reducing the overall risks in specific sectors of an economy, thus offsetting the adverse mismatch between entrepreneurs and assets used for collateral.

In Nigeria, there are two widely recognised CGS – Infrastructure Credit Guarantee Company Limited (InfraCredit) and Impact Credit Guarantee Limited (Impact).

InfraCredit is focused on providing guarantees to lenders/investors in large-scale infrastructure projects. At the same time, Impact, a subsidiary of the Development Bank of Nigeria (DBN), has the mandate to stimulate lending to SMEs.

It is imperative to look at the idea behind CGS, its modalities, and a case study of success to understand the opportunities which can be exploited with the implementation of CGS in the Nigerian SME market.

A brief history of CGSs

Founded in the 1840s, the first known CGSs were the Brussels Credit Union and the Banque



Populaire in France. Structured as cooperatives, both used trade and mutual arrangements to guarantee loans to their union members using members' collective contributions as the underlying security.

Similar mutual guarantee arrangements were also prevalent in Germany, Spain, Portugal, and Greece before and following World War II.

These mutual guarantees, which were privately owned, relied on financial and social repayments mechanisms; members stood to lose their contributions (financial) and could be expelled from the union (social) in the event of a default on their financial obligations.

Indeed, across Europe and parts of Southern America, mutual guarantee arrangements remain dominant.

Types of CGSs

In practice, there are four major types of CGS arrangements – mutual CGS' as earlier discussed, privately-owned CGS', public CGS' and international CGS'.

Privately-owned CGSs are managed by entities established mostly by individuals with financial institutions, trade groups and private businesses to provide access to finance for smaller corporations within target sectors.

Public CGSs reflect interventions by governments in the form of budgeted subventions with the sole aim of expanding access to underserved sectors. International CGCs are interventions by bilateral/multilateral international agencies to improve access to finance for neglected sectors.

Internationally, however, very different lending objectives have been pursued by CGS' with most focusing on supporting lending for working or fixed capital while others have remained focused on export support.

On the face of it, the key distinguishing feature of CGS' is the

operating model and the source of the underlying financing for the guarantees. As the main weakness of public CGS arrangements is moral hazard and adverse selection issues, a middle ground has evolved in recent years.

This seeks to combine institutional arrangements that work for private/mutual CGS' with public/international financing to deliver a well-aligned CGS model.

This concept is increasingly referred to as blended finance. This type of evolving CGS design has two merits. Firstly, it delivers access to finance for underserved segments, and secondly, it ensures access to finance at a relatively lower cost without creating.

According to the World Bank and the Financial Sector Reform and Strengthening Initiative (FIRST) Initiative, developing CGS for SMEs requires sixteen (16) principles as the foundation layer.

These sixteen principles cover four key areas, namely the legal and regulatory framework, corporate governance, risk and operational framework, and monitoring and evaluation.

These requirements give additional credence to the establishment of a CGS through a blended finance approach; using this approach, CGSs' will be promoted using sound corporate governance principles that will aid transparency to its investors – public, philanthropic and/or private capital providers.

Case study of South Korea Credit Guarantee Funds South Korea, just like other economies, is characterised by a booming SMEs sector, which comprises about 90 per cent of the enterprises.

For decades, SMEs in South Korea have had similar challenges in accessing finance like insufficient collateral, high default risks, high transaction costs and asymmetric

covers creditworthiness and the quality of the borrower.

A possible operational model

The central function of a CGS is that the risk of loss is shared in an agreed proportion between the CGS and a lender.

Ideally, the borrower is typically a company with a viable project but unable to satisfy usual lending criteria either due to a lack of collateral or established credit ratings.

In this situation, and subject to some investigation of the company's creditworthiness, a third-party guarantee is made available to reduce lenders' exposure to risk.

A practical application is an establishment of a 'CGS Entity' – which may comprise public sector agencies, financial institutions, and other investors as promoters, to develop, provide capital and operationalise the CGS entity.

This is to ensure a system with a professional unbiased assessment of obligors' loans and management of the guaranteed loan portfolio within pre-set targets for underserved sectors.

To scale the rate of successful offtake, the CGS Entity could operate a model where lenders participate in a way that allows them to enroll and subsequently renew their membership with the CGS entity annually. Available research shows that this form of 'CGS-Lender' relationship has four advantages.

It allows the CGS to conduct a first-level appraisal, institute uniform underwriting standards on loans to be guaranteed, generate revenue, and most importantly, avail itself with the relevant information on participating members' financial records, governance, risk management practices and overall capacity to support the objectives of the CGS.

As the CGS entity generates revenue from its core business and builds on its operations, the CGS Entity can commence a capacity-building solution to create the appropriate governance and control structures for SMEs.

This is expected to allow SMEs to deepen their ability to access various finance sources. Subsequently, the CGS entity can diversify its revenue profile as more loans are guaranteed. CGS Entity can then look to raise first loss capital from public or bilateral development agencies after a few years to scale and deliver additional guarantee solutions.

In summary, CGSs can play an important role in developing countries by (i) improving the information on SMEs, (ii) building the credit origination and risk management capacity of lenders,

(iii) fostering innovation and building the internal capacity of SMEs through technical assistance/capacity building programs and (iv) helping to drive countercyclical financing to SMEs in economic downturns.

It is high time that the Central Bank of Nigeria and other financial system regulators give a careful look at CGS' as a pathway to unlocking credit for SMEs.

KOTEC's success owes a lot to its two-part evaluation process that

Politics

PDP's hope of winning guber, PLHA elections delusional -APC

THE APC Plateau State Chapter has just come across a press release by the desperate PDP in the state where it is putting high hopes on winning the 11th March, 2023 gubernatorial and House of Assembly elections in the state.

This was contained in a press statement signed by Sylvanus Namang APC State Publicity Secretary and made available to **THE NIGERIA STANDARD** recently.

According to the statement, without mincing words, this hope is a delusional hope as the PDP in the state is only raising false hopes to its hapless and rudderless followers.

The indicators are clearly pointing to the direction of a resounding defeat of this family and clannish party whose hope is based on what its "Dara" sole administrator says.

We are not unaware that the PDP in the state would reenact its tripod feud and vent its anger on its singlehandedly imposed candidate who the retired General and former Senator and a former Governor of the state from the southern zone and a former Minister of Sports and a two-term Member of the Federal House of Representatives from the Northern zone would not touch with a ten meter pole.

Now that the Wazirin Adamawa, the sole financier of the PDP in the state came a disappointingly third dismal position in the February 25th election, the woes of the party in the state has increased as the Atiku disciples led by the octogenarian former Ambassador to Switzerland would choose to watch on the sidelines as their only reason for being in the PDP is because of the now thoroughly defeated and disgraced serial presidential contestant.

The advent of the obedient movement whose gubernatorial candidate is still basking in the euphoria of Peter Obi's victory in the state, occasioned by a combined force of religiosity and emotional trajectory, has added to the woes of the PDP in Plateau State.

He explained that in spite of the combined forces against the APC during the last election, the party maintained its unanimity of purpose.

The APC in election years in Plateau State, from 2015 and 2019 had been stereotyped, negatively labelled and called all sorts of names, yet it won on both occasions.

Not minding the self-harm the APC caused for itself during the last Presidential election where we lost vital National Assembly seats, the gubernatorial election would be won by its gubernatorial candidate who is more than prepared for the governance of Plateau State than any of the other candidates who want to play the predatory role of capitalising on emotions and blackmail.

Thank God for the very



Bature

enlightened Plateau electorate who know where they will place their votes devoid of sentiments.

The duo of Dr Nentawe Yilwatda and Hon. Pam Bot Mang remain the most credible and dependable choice for Plateau State.

The decadent PDP in the state is living in the past. Its clannish and autocratic bend of leadership will be demystified at the Saturday gubernatorial and House of Assembly elections where the roll-call of the APC candidates is simply awesome and intimidating when weighed against the scale of the contraction of family, friends and protégé candidates in the PDP.

The PDP in the state should be prepared to accept defeat on Saturday as it is only trying to be wiser by half by its preemptive press release that it is going to win the coveted gubernatorial seat and more

House of Assembly seats in the state.

This is a grand delusion from a party totally enmeshed in self contradictions and grand delusion. For those who are old enough to know what Plateau State

passed through during the Second Republic from 1979 and 1983, no sane politician or true lover of Plateau State would want the state to willingly vote to be in the opposition, moreso in a state whose 80% reliance is on the federation account. The APC has a President-elect in its kitty and Plateau State cannot sacrifice this great feat on the altar of emotions and base sentiments.

We must vote wisely and vote the duo of Dr Nentawe Yilwatda Goshwe and Hon. Pam Bot Mang for a secured, united, prosperous and progressive Plateau State.

From **MOHAMMED ABDULLAHI, Keffi**

THE Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has declared Hon. Ahmed Wadada as the winner of the Nasarawa West Senatorial District election.

Associate Prof. Nasirudeen Baba, INEC Returning Officer for the Nasarawa West Senatorial District election made the declaration after the collation of results on Monday at the Zonal Collation Centre in Keffi Local Government Area of the state.

According to him, following the election held on Saturday, February 25, 2023, Wadada scored a total of 96488 votes as against the candidate of the All Progressive Congress (APC), ShehuTukur who scored 47717 votes.

Baba added that Alhaji Musa Galadima of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) scored 46820 votes while MrBalaTongurma scored 33228 votes.

He stated that, total votes cast for the election was 234040, while total valid votes amounted to 228917 with 5123 votes rejected.

"I Associate Professor Nasirudeen Baba hereby certify that I am the Returning Officer for the 2023 Nasarawa West Senatorial District election held on the 25th of February, 2023.

INEC declares Wadada winner



Wadada

"That Wadada Ahmed of SDP having satisfied the requirements of the law is hereby declared the winner and is returned elected," he said.

MrYakubu Mohammed-Salisu, SDP Party Agent for the election attributed Wadada's victory to his antecedents of mentoring the young and poor and having the heart of the people of Nasarawa West Senatorial

District due to his benevolence towards them.

"This election is the people's choice," he said.

The Nasarawa West Senatorial District is where the APC National Chairman, Sen. AbdullahiAdamu comes from and he was the senator representing the zone at the Senate before his election as the APC National Chairman in 2022.

9 parties endorse PDP's Ashiru as consensus candidate

By **JOHN FWAH, Kaduna**

NINE political parties in Kaduna State have endorsed the gubernatorial candidate of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), Hon. Isa Ashiru as a consensus candidate.

The endorsement is coming ahead of the forthcoming gubernatorial election slated for Saturday March 11, 2023.

The nine political parties comprise the Young Progressives Party, YPP, AA, APM, APP, APGA, and NRM as

well as the leadership of the Accord Party, ADP and ZLP.

Ambassador Sanj Yaya, the governorship candidate of the YPP, who spoke on behalf of the forum of the parties during a press conference, said they decided to endorse the PDP candidate because he remains the best man for the job.

He urged the people of the state to stay away from the All Progressives Congress, APC. The forum also said that people should come out en-masse and cast their votes for the PDP candidate during the Saturday

election.

"Today, we wish to announce our support and loyalty to Rt. Hon. Isah Muhammad Ashiru Kudan, the gubernatorial candidate of the PDP.

"We took this decision after extensive consultation with our party members as well as the good people of Kaduna State.

"This decision is borne out of our genuine desire to have one and indivisible state irrespective of tribal or religious differences, and we are confident that Isah Ashiru Kudan is the only candidate that will unify the state.

"This can be seen from the manner of his campaign which is aimed at building Kaduna State, and as well as from the selection of his running mate which has given fair representation to both Christians and Muslims who are the two major stakeholders in the state.

"Some desperate politicians have turned the political space into a hub of religious sentiments but IsahAshiru chose to stand on issue-based campaigns only.

"I want to use this opportunity to remind the good people of Kaduna State of the hardship and pain inflicted on them by this APC administration, from an unjustified high rate of taxes to authoritarian leadership and the ego, from the increase of school fees to tertiary institutions to the unlawful disengagement of teachers, local government staff and the removal of traditional rulers.

"It is on this ground that we call on our people to stay away from the APC candidate who is only a puppet to his paymaster who will continue with their anti-masses policy in the state.

"Therefore, we urge the good people of Kaduna State to come out en-masse on March 11, 2023, to vote for Ashiru/Ayuba for a better Kaduna State."

Gubernatorial hopeful promises to actualise Air Force University

THE gubernatorial candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Bauchi State, Air Marshal Sadique Baba Abubakar, retired, has promised to actualise the establishment of Air Force

University in Tafawa Balewa Local Government Area of the state if elected.

The gubernatorial hopeful

made the promise recently when interacting with elders of Federal Low Cost Housing Estate in Bauchi.

"The proposed Air Force University which idea i conceived while in service as Chief of Air Staff, is intended to boost tertiary education as well as bring lasting solution to the security breach in that part of the state," he said.

"The proposed university will be accompanied by the establishment of a Special Forces Unit that will guarantee security of lives and property in the area".

Baba Abubakar explained that socio - economic activities in the form of agricultural, mineral exploration and other commercial activities in Tafawa Balewa and other neighbouring local government areas will receive a boost if security is restored.

While thanking the people of

the state for voting Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu and other candidates of the APC, Abubakar urged them to come out in their numbers on Saturday 11 /03/2023 and ensure victory for the party at all levels.

While assuring workers and pensioners that he would address all salary-related infractions in government payroll, he assured youth and women of better days if opportuned to take over from the maladministration of PDP administration in the state.

Abubakar said special skills acquisition packages have been designed to make the unemployed not only employed, but become employers of labour.

He later met Islamiyya pupils of Imam Malik Model Islamiyya School who recited the Holy Quran and prayed for the success of Air Marshal Sadique.



Abubakar

From **ABBAS GUNGURA, Bauchi**

Politics

Lessons from last presidential, NASS polls

One general election that took the attention of all was the one held on February 25, 2023. Already, a winner has been declared by INEC in the person of Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu of the All Progressive Congress. In his acceptance speech, he has made tacit assurance for a renewed hope (as his slogan is) for the Nigerian people and particularly challenged the youth that a future awaits them even as the President Elect has stated that if any person has a claim they should approach the courts rather than protest on the streets, writes RINRET JENNIFER MWARAP.

THE results may not be acceptable to all Nigerians, that is the manner elections are meant to be as we cannot all be winners. In any election, there must be a winner and a loser. It is time for nation building and no part should be left out.

The electioneering campaigns were fierce and intense, as the major gladiators for all the offices which were competed for traversed major cities, towns and villages conversing for votes.

Above all, there were a number of issues that needed answers from those seeking to be elected under different political parties particularly the presidential candidates. Nigerians wanted them to know that there are numerous issues that needed to be addressed if any one of them gets elected.

It is to be noted that getting the number one office position in the land is not a child's play as there is more to it than meets the eye. The question that must be answered is, how can the challenges confronting Nigeria be addressed?

Talking about the challenges confronting us as a people, there is every need to take a look at the economy, security of the people which have continued to breed issues of concern and indeed numerous other internal challenges which have not been tackled in the last decade.

Therefore, if the candidates actually traversed the length and breadth of the country, did they pay attention to the social, security and political challenges confronting the Nigerian people?

Most of our leaders are aware of the problems confronting us



Yakubu

over the years. They may have good policies to address the challenges, however the implementation of the policies to solve them has been faulty.

The presidential candidates have a responsibility to understand the underlying problems of the country just as the National Assembly members whose election was held on the same day need to legislate for good laws for the running of the country.

If they don't work together for the common good of the country, we shall remain stagnant without development. It is a fact, any

nation that does not develop, its people suffer for the lack of it.

Nigeria must get her acts right having elected leaders that are selfish and who are only interested in themselves and their families. This explains why the country's resources are used for the wrong purposes and this being the case, we keep revolving in one place.

It is our belief that the presidential candidates have learnt a lot and are ready to unleash solutions to those challenges that have inhibited our development over the years.

Looking at the way things are

and considering what Nigerians feel about the way things have been run here, they think it is high time more has to be done to take us out of the woods

Nigerians remember that in the last 8 years life has not been kind to most of them. Everywhere one turns to it is the issue of long queues at the bank, fuel stations and in most public places.

These are disturbing signals that so much is wrong with the economy and how it is being managed to get it out of it. For now, all that is needed is to work out means and ways that could translate our hopelessness to the reality that is possible to rise up from the ashes of our despondence.

Hope is not lost. There is an air of freshness in the land. Nigerians want a new direction and to get that sorted out, what they saw during the electioneering campaign period gives most Nigerians hope that there is reason to change the leadership.

The issue of leadership, they believe has been our bane. They are of the view that fixing it can set us on the path of recovery as a nation. It is a huge responsibility requiring that all hands must be on deck to make Nigeria great once again.

When one considers the turnout at most polling units across the wards on February 25, 2023 it tells of the resolve to change what they have gone through in the last couple of years. The Nigerian electorate is wiser than they used to be, having tasted the other side of bad governance,

and the fact that it cannot be business as usual.

As observed above, voting on February 25, 2023 was peaceful except for a few places where INEC officials did not arrive on time. That did not stop the election in those units, Nigerians insisted on voting even if it was late.

Expressing their franchise is fundamentally a right to be exercised, and it was apparent, they came out in large numbers to choose the leaders of their choice. Weather they were harassed at some polling units, it was nonetheless a sacrifice for some Nigerians. It is hoped that those who were arrested would be used as a lesson for others. The governorship and states houses of assembly elections will be held on March 11, 2023

The two are the closest to the grassroots, particularly, the assembly elections, represents for those who cherish democracy another chance to do what is good. If the houses of assembly enact good laws for the states and governors implement them rightly, we shall be celebrating development everywhere.

It is in this context that we think the sacrifice to get things right is by voting those who will be committed to working for the good of the people. In that case, a mistake may not have been made by electing the people's representative all over the state. It is the right thing to do as obtained in saner climes

Any mistakes made by not electing the right class of politicians except some money bags, it is possible to return to square one. It is a bad omen if the right people are not elected, even as we know that there are bad politicians everywhere.

The electorate have a responsibility to themselves by doing the right thing always, as failure is an indication to continue to be despondent through the bad leadership we have helped to put in place.

The preparations that went into conducting the elections should not be in vain, meaning, even if it was almost apparent that Nigerians were apprehensive of the propriety of the 2023 elections. Having been held and peacefully too is reason to have faith in God and in the congress of Nigeria.

Nigeria has reason to survive the onslaught of those praying for its disintegration in whatever form.

Mwarap is a student of Mass Communication, Abubakar Tatari Ali Polytechnic Bauchi (ATAP)

As observed above, voting on February 25, 2023 was peaceful except for a few places where INEC officials did not arrive on time. That did not stop the election in those units, Nigerians insisted on voting even if it was late. Expressing their franchise is fundamentally a right to be exercised, and it was apparent, they came out in large numbers to choose the leaders of their choice. Weather they were harassed at some polling units, it was nonetheless a sacrifice for some Nigerians. It is hoped that those who were arrested would be used as a lesson for others. The governorship and states houses of assembly elections will be held on March 11, 2023

IMAGES

LALONG INSPECTS REMODELED NUJ SECRETARIAT

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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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



Site of the remodeled NUJ Secretariat inspected by Governor Lalong

PHOTOS: DANLADI DUK

Politics

February 25 elections and key takeaways

There are key lessons that follow the recently concluded elections and there is also the need to look inwards. We must through this process, count our blessings, even as a nation in our democratic sojourn. The Presidential and National Assembly Election of 2023 have crystallized a reasonable balance in the political distribution and we are gradually tending towards a multi-party state. Ayodeji Olatubora writes.

AT the return to democracy in 1999, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) was the dominant party for about 16 years up until 2015 when the ALL Progressives Congress (APC), a coalition of political tendencies across the length and breadth of Nigeria; being the defunct Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP), a faction of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) and a breakaway of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) took out the PDP and ended a 16-year regime.

Just within about 8 years of the APC in power, we now see the emergence of another formidable political party, The Labour Party (LP). It is noteworthy that the LP had always existed. Former Governor Olusegun Mimiko of Ondo State, won his Governorship election on the platform of the LP in 2007. However, the LP was never a major political party for the purpose of elections into the office of the President and the National Assembly, up until the choice of Mr. Peter Obi as its candidate for the 2023 Presidential Election in which those who feel disillusioned by the established parties tended towards the LP as a protest of their dissatisfaction with the establishment. This is indeed a welcome development in our democratic space.

There is now an even political distribution in the imminent dispensation, as the three major political parties would now have representatives in the 10th Assembly. It would no longer be business as usual and plenaries would be much anticipated.

In fact, it is even dangerous for electorates to have 'limited options' in the real sense of the expression; particularly in a nascent and evolving democracy like ours where politicians often openly demonstrate totalitarian tendencies. With the outcome of the Elections and the votes returned by the APC (8,794,726), the PDP (6,984,520) and the LP (6,101,533), it is fair to now say that the APC, PDP and LP are evenly matched with each having strongholds and weaker areas of presence. Many former governors who would even naturally go to the Senate after completing their term(s) of office as governors were consumed by the inferno of the Labour Party that swept across the country.

As aforementioned, this is a good development in our democracy. The LP even went



Nasarawa, which means that there is a considerable national spread of the party and a cross-regional acceptance of its candidate. Indeed, our democracy is a Work-In-Progress. The future of our democracy is really in our hands; more particularly the fact that we can now see an unusual interest by the younger generation. Politics is a long game. The youth must also keep learning the polity as this is the first real moment that they have shown genuine interest and concern in the democratic process and indeed, a good start because it clearly made a difference. I will admonish them to also play an active, knowledge-driven and patriotic role in nurturing this infant democracy; seeing that their collective interest has helped to crystallize a landmark in the political infrastructure.

Every government and every dispensation must be committed to Electoral Reforms, Judicial Reforms, Constitutional Reforms and Institutional Reforms; being prerequisites for the enthronement, development and sustenance of democracy. The results of the 2023 Presidential Elections might not have gone in the way some thought. However, there is still some progress that we have made from the recent past; more particularly with the introduction of modern technology in our Elections. We have seen political parties that have been pronounced and adjudged structureless, go on to

legislature. I do not think that the LP are losers here.

In fact, they just could be the biggest winner here by strengthening democracy through voter participation of a group that had been largely indifferent about the electoral process and as we can all see, the 2023 Elections altered the political order. Therefore, I guess it has served its purpose. It was never meant to see that a particular candidate that had been tipped to win must win and that if he doesn't, then there are no lessons to take so as to move forward as a nation. No, democracy is a life-long process.

Across the Federal Republic of Nigeria, there is now an even political distribution in the imminent dispensation, as the three major political parties

longer be business as usual and plenaries would be much anticipated. It is noteworthy that there would never be perfect elections anywhere in the world and we would recall that the 2016 American Presidential Elections that returned Former President Donald Trump was even alleged to have been influenced by the Russians and of course, the United States ought to be the model for global democratic practices. Again, I am not saying that there are no reasons to be aggrieved by the manner in which the elections were conducted.

Certainly, the individual actors are permitted to form their grievances and issues arising from the conduct of the polls. The democratic process has also put in place a system of redress

submitting the same to the Court. More important to note is the fact that it is not a must-win for any candidate. This democracy was fought for and indeed, the struggle for the enthronement and sustenance of democratic values is a life-long struggle. The next few weeks are definitely intriguing.

Many congratulations to Nigeria and more importantly, the President-Elect, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, who also took part and in fact, led from the front in the struggle for the enthronement of democracy after the infamous 1993 Presidential Election that was annulled by the General Ibrahim Babangida-led military junta. Asiwaju's victory has been an admixture of 'A Long Walk to Freedom' and the 'Audacity of Hope'.

"The results of the 2023 Presidential Elections might not have gone in the way some thought. However, there is still some progress that we have made from the recent past; more particularly with the introduction of modern technology in our Elections. We have seen political parties that have been pronounced and adjudged structureless, go on to win seats in both legislative houses of our bi-cameral legislature. I do not think that the LP are losers here. In fact, they just could be the biggest winner here by strengthening democracy through voter participation of a group that had been largely indifferent about the electoral process and as we can all see, the 2023 Elections altered the political order. Therefore, I guess it has served its purpose. It was never meant to see that a particular candidate that had been tipped to win must win and that if he doesn't, then there are no lessons to take so as to move forward as a nation. No, democracy is a life-long process."

NEWS

Acting General Manager PPC meets with Editorial staff

By HOSEA NYAMLONG

AS part of efforts to rejig the capacity of staff productivity, the Acting General Manager of Plateau Publishing Corporation (PPC), Publisher of THE NIGERIA STANDARD and SUNDAY STANDARD Newspaper, Mr. Paul Jatau has urged staff of the corporation to handle their duties diligently.

Jatau disclosed this during a meeting with the staff of the Editorial Directorate at the Newsroom on Monday. He added that the directorate is the image of the organization and the only way to maintain the image in the public space is by enriching the content of the newspaper.

He appreciated staff in putting in their efforts to ensure that the THE NIGERIA STANDARD survives, despite the financial challenges of non-remittance of overhead cost from the government for running the daily activities of the corporation over the years.

He encouraged staff to be more disciplined and patient in discharging their duties in ensuring that the corporation stands the test of time even in the midst of economic challenges.

In separate remarks by Francisca Adidi, SUNDAY STANDARD Editor, Lucy Chindaba, Political Editor, Bulus Gambo, Sub Desk Editor, Kenneth



Jatau

Dareng, Features Desk and Mr. Danladi Duks, Chief Photographer all alluded to the fact that the organization needs an urgent attention from the government.

They added that since the establishment of the corporation, it was not profit oriented, rather to serve as the mouth-piece of the Middle Belt and the voice to the voiceless.

They believed that the Acting General Manager would use his wealth of experience to build bridges that would connect and

move the corporation to greater heights.

Millions of Nigerian girls, women under-nourished- UNICEF

From DORCAS PANKYES, Abuja

7.3 million adolescent girls and women of reproductive age in Nigeria are undernourished, putting women and new-born babies at risk says UNICEF.

With half of stunting in children under 2 developing during pregnancy and before six months, new global report raises the alarm on the need to invest in essential nutrition programmes for adolescent girls and women

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

THE Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has declared Arc. Idris Salman of the African Democratic Congress (ADC) winner of Kabba-Bunu/Ijumu House of Representatives election in Kogi state. The Assistant Electoral Officer, Usman Uhami Ojo, announced the results in Kabba on Monday.

Salman's victory shattered the ambition of Kogi State House of Assembly Speaker, Prince Matthew Kolawole to represent the federal constituency. Declaring the final result on Monday in Kabba, Usman said Arc Idris Salman of ADC polled 13,867, while the candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Prince Matthew Kolawole polled 13,605. According to the Returning Officer, "Idris Salman of ADC having satisfied the requirements of the law is hereby declared winner and is returned elected."

The returning officer, Adams Baba had on February

Kogi Speaker loses House of Reps bid



Kolawole

26 declared the result of the Kabba/Bunu/Ijumu House of Representatives election inconclusive. Baba had said that the

declaration was due to the difference between the margin of winner and voided results in two polling units.

Police officer shoots civilian over argument

By JIDAUNA DARING

A police officer, Inspector Solomon Damak attached to Mopol 8 in Jos has shot one Nyamma Salah Badapba with pistol on his right hand following an

argument that ensued on the candidature of Dr. Nentawe Yildwada and Dr. Patrick Dakum between the duo.

The victim who is currently receiving treatment at the Bingham University Teaching Hospital (BUTH)

Jankwano, while narrating how the ugly incident occurred to our correspondent at the instance of the Plateau State Commissioner of Police, Bartholome Oyeka who was represented by the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) DSP Alfred Alabo revealed that he was shot by the officer at Tundun Wada in Jos North Local Government Area (LGA) of Plateau State

Mr. Badapba who works with Legal Aid Council at the State Secretariat, Jos said that he was shot by the officer because he said he is a supporter of Nentawe Yildwada in the forthcoming Governorship and state House of Assembly elections.

The victim said that the officer met him at the place where he usually interacts with other people to discuss different issues. But wonders why the officer sometimes comes to the place just to harass people. Adding that the officer sometimes

comes to the place and shoot in the air to intimidate them.

According to the victim, before he was shot by the officer, his wife who was at the scene of the incident intervened in the matter by trying to stop the officer from shooting him but he still went on and shot him.

Badapba also told the representative of the Police Commissioner that the officer has been threatening his life. He explained that he once told him that he would kill him one day.

The victim thanked God for saving his life and appreciated the representative of the Police Commissioner for coming to greet him in the hospital.

The representative of the Police Commissioner told the victim's family to communicate him about the hospital bill before they are discharged. He added that the commissioner is also coming to see them in the hospital.

South Sudan, Sudan and Yemen - represent the epicentre of a global nutrition crisis that has been increased by recent impacts of Covid-19 and exacerbated by the war in Ukraine and ongoing drought, conflict, and instability in some countries.

The report says undernourished and Overlooked: A Global Nutrition Crisis in Adolescent Girls and Women - issued ahead of International Women's Day - warns that the ongoing crises, aggravated by unending gender inequality, are deepening a nutrition crisis among adolescent girls and women that had already shown little improvement in the last two decades.

"This nutrition crisis is pushing millions of mothers and their children into hunger and severe malnutrition," said UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell. "Without urgent action from the international community, the consequences could last for generations to come."

According to the report - an unprecedented and comprehensive look at the state of adolescent girls' and women's nutrition globally - more than one billion adolescent girls and women suffer from undernutrition (including underweight and short height), deficiencies in essential micronutrients, and anaemia, with devastating consequences for their lives and wellbeing.

In Nigeria, 55 per cent of adolescent girls and women suffer from anaemia while nearly half of Nigerian women of reproductive age do not consume the recommended diet of at least 5 out of 10 food groups (grains and tubers, pulses, nuts and seeds, dairy, meat, poultry and fish, eggs, dark green leafy vegetables, other vitamin A rich fruits and vegetables, other vegetables

and other fruits) according to the 2022 National Food Consumption and Micronutrient Survey.

Inadequate nutrition during girls' and women's lives can lead to weakened immunity, poor cognitive development, and an increased risk of life-threatening complications - including during pregnancy and childbirth - risking mother's lives, also, with dangerous and irreversible consequences for their children's survival, growth, learning, and future earning capacity.

For example, in Nigeria, 12 million children under 5 are stunted, meaning they are too short for their age due to malnutrition. Of those, about half become stunted during pregnancy and the first six months of life, the 500-day period when a child is fully dependent on maternal nutrition, according to a new analysis in the report.

"To prevent undernutrition in children, we must also address malnutrition in adolescent girls and women," Russell added.

Since last year, UNICEF has scaled up its efforts in the countries hardest hit by the global nutrition crisis, including in Nigeria, with an acceleration plan to prevent, detect, and treat wasting in women and children.

"To ensure a better future for our children, we must prioritize the access of adolescent girls and women to nutritious food and essential nutrition services.

The nutrition crisis is deepening among them, and urgent action is needed from all partners including the government of Nigeria and the international community. We cannot afford to overlook this crisis, and we must work together to transform food, health and social protection systems for adolescent girls and women." said Cristian Munduate, UNICEF Nigeria Country Representative.



Alkali

News

Soldier kills colleagues, self in Sokoto *-Army*

THE Nigerian Army on Monday confirmed the case of a soldier who shot his colleagues and himself dead at Forward Operations Base, Rabbah, Sokoto State on Sunday.

Director, Army Public Relations, Brig.-Gen. Onyema Nwachukwu, stated in Abuja that investigations had begun into the incident.

Mwachukwu stated that circumstances leading to the incident could not be immediately ascertained since the soldier who killed his colleagues also shot himself dead.

He added that the General Officer Commanding (GOC) 8 Division and Commander, Joint Task Force, Northwest Operation Hadarin Daji Maj.-Gen. Godwin Mutkut and other senior officers had visited the location.

According to him, the GOC commiserated with troops for losing their colleagues in such an unfortunate situation.

"He urged them to be their brothers' keepers and to report any anomaly observed amongst colleagues to forestall a recurrence.

"He also encouraged them to remain calm and



Farouq

committed in the discharge of their duties.

"The authorities of the Nigerian Army are deeply concerned about this unusual and ugly development and have instituted a Board of

Inquiry (BOI) to unravel the circumstances surrounding the incident.

"It is envisaged that the findings of the BOI will help forestall such ugly and bizarre occurrence in the future," Nwachukwu stated.

U.S. Ambassador urges Nigerians on unity

U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria, Mary Beth Leonard, says it will be important for the future of the country that Nigerians do not let their differences divide them.

According to her, legally established process for resolving challenges to the election should be allowed to take its course.

In an Op-ED titled: "The Elections of February 25", Leonard said that the people of Nigeria demonstrated their dedication to democracy on Feb. 25.

However, that there were many angry and frustrated Nigerians just as there were many celebrating victories they believed were hard-fought and well-earned.

"In the coming days, it will be important for the future of this country that Nigerians not let their differences divide them.

"And that the legally established process for resolving challenges to the election be allowed to take its course.

"We commend Mr Obi and Mr Abubakar for their recent statements committing to take this path, and Mr Tinubu, who INEC declared the president-elect under Nigeria's electoral framework, for acknowledging their right to do so.

"The United States is no stranger to election-related controversy and

conflict.

"As much as it can be unsatisfying to end an electoral process in a courtroom, in a constitutional democracy bound by the rule of law, that is where electoral conflicts may appropriately conclude."

She said it was clear that the electoral process as a whole on Feb. 25 failed to meet Nigerians' expectations.

"As I said numerous times prior to the elections, Nigeria has accomplished much in just the two-plus decades since the return to democracy, and a gradual improvement in the quality of its elections in that time constitutes one of those accomplishments.

"We recognise that Nigerians want that positive trend to continue, including through the use of new technology intended to make the process of reporting results more transparent.

"We, thus, reiterate our call on INEC to address promptly the challenges that can be resolved ahead of the March 11 gubernatorial elections.

"And to undertake a broader review of the problems that transpired during the last elections and what can be done to fix them.

"In all cases, INEC should share with the Nigerian public information about the actions it is taking."

She highlighted some of the remarkable results from the past election that showed how Nigeria's political landscape was indisputably changing.

"In more than half of the states - 20 - the winning candidate represented a different party than that of the incumbent governor.

"Twelve of these states are led by APC governors. For the first time, four presidential candidates won at least one state, and the top three each won 12 states based on these initial results.

"In the National Assembly elections, even with results still incomplete, we already know that changes are afoot.

"Seven sitting governors lost in their attempts to win election to the Assembly; the Labor Party has won at least seven seats in the Senate; the NNPP has won at least 11 seats in the House of Representatives."

She said that the Nigerian people had made clear their desire for responsive and inclusive governance, and that the U.S. strongly supported the ability to express that desire.

"The United States and Nigeria are the two largest presidential democracies in the world, and longtime partners.

"As Nigeria goes through these next weeks and months, we stand with you," the U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria said. (NAN)



Random
MUSINGS
With Paul Jatau
pilingkwap77@gmail.com

Note to self

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

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

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

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

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

and change things for the better.

Let us do politics with reason

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

Do not fight. Do not put unnecessary pressure on the society. It already has myriad of problems to contend with. Let us not forget that it is because we failed to tame our ambitions that we are suffering from insecurity. Boko Haram, kidnappings, killings and the likes would have been minimal if we had been able to tame some of our ambitions. Politicians must also tame their data boys. They must be made to know in very clear terms that whatever they post must be cross checked to ensure that it is not false. Dishing out false information is tantamount to causing disaffection in the society and that does not speak well of people who want to project a principal who seeks to run a trust on behalf of a people. We must be diligent and cautious in whatever we do so that we do not stock the embers of hatred and distrust. Some of our religious leaders are to say the least, not supposed to be given the opportunity to address their congregations. Anything they spew out only shows who they are. They preach hate and destruction not salvation. Some of them are merchants who feed fat on the ignorance and gullibility of the people. There are some religious adherents who are so illiterate that once "mallam ya ce" it becomes the gospel. They can kill on behalf of that mallam and claim it is the will of God. Such commercial preachers must be helmed in to ensure peaceful coexistence and growth in the communities. If meaningful progress is to be made, therefore, these messengers of hate must be picked and cautioned no matter how highly placed they might be in the society. After all they are supposed to minister to and assist in saving the souls of the people from damnation not commercializing their preachments.

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



News

Governor Sule deserves another term

-Akwanga Chairman

From **MOHAMMED ABDULLAHI, Keffi**



Sule

EXECUTIVE Chairman of Akwanga Local Government Area, Hon. Safiyanu Isa Andaha, has said that Nasarawa State Governor, Engineer Abdullahi Sule, deserves another 4-year term in office because of the tremendous achievements he recorded during the past four years.

Hon. Andaha stated this while speaking with journalists in his office, on Friday.

According to the local government chairman, Engineer Sule deserves to be reelected as governor of the state particularly because of his efforts towards making Nasarawa one of the most peaceful states in the country.

While noting that, it's the responsibility of government at every level is to protect the lives and properties of the citizens, he stated that, the Engineer Sule administration has performed remarkably in the area of peace and security, which is making the state attractive to investors.

"Today, I am bragging and proud to say Nasarawa State is among the most peaceful states in this country, as a result of the efforts of our leader, His Excellency, Engineer Abdullahi A. Sule. Today virtually everybody is going about their normal businesses without let or hindrance. Nasarawa is gradually turning to an industrial state now, all thanks to the efforts of the governor towards sustaining peace," Hon. Andaha stated.

He added that, the governor's inroads in the areas of building infrastructure, cutting across each of the 13 local government areas, ranging from roads, renovation/construction of schools, grading of rural roads, provision of quality and affordable healthcare services, amongst several others, make it imperative that the people of the state, recognize and reward his selfless service by reelecting Engineer Sule come 2023.

"In addition to that, he is the most labour friendly Governor we ever had in the history of the state. You will recall that even the labour leaders have come out openly, for the first time ever, to endorse Engineer Sule. Recall also, not long ago, the same labour were agitating for the full payment of their monthly salary and not in percentages. Now they get 100 percent of their salary. Not only that, and for the first time since the creation of the state, workers receive their salary even before federal allocation comes. In addition to the implementation of arrears of promotions," the Akwanga LG Chair said.

He stated that, it is imperative for the people of especially Akwanga Local Government Area, to mobilize themselves and ensure they vote for Engineer Sule because of the development he brought to the council.

"Like I have always said, the remodeling of the Akwanga VIP Lodge that is at 100 percent completion is presently awaiting commissioning. We have the Akwanga Modern Market, also at 100 percent completion. We have the grading of Andaha/Ancho/Rinze road, we have 100 percent completion of

25km Moroa/Gudi road. We also have as ongoing project now the Nunku/Agyaga road.

"Also, His Excellency has constructed primary healthcare facilities in Akwanga West ward, Moroa and Njida wards.

"On the issue of electrification, Andaha my community and Gudi, have each received 500KVA transformer. We have also the Gudi Modern Market," he stated.

The council chairman was emphatic that Engineer Sule deserves another term in office because he has performed creditably well during his first term as such on this note, I want to say our leader has done beyond reasonable doubt that he has performed creditably well and excellently. In fact, in the history of Nasarawa State, despite the huge challenges of resources, within this four years, we have witnessed the transformation of the state.

"I am therefore calling on my people in the local government

to come out in their number and vote our dear governor again for the second time," Hon. Andaha said.

On his stewardship at the council level, Hon. Safiyanu Isa Andaha, said he has always emulated Engineer Sule by embarking on his own development initiatives, which so far, saw him construct eleven boreholes, one each, for the eleven electoral wards in the council. He equally refurbished other dilapidated boreholes.

The chairman added that, he constructed a bridge each in AngwanSalihu otherwise known as A. A Koto and Andaha adding that, there are series of ongoing projects, the Buku/Kambri bridge and the Andaha Modern Market, for example.

"I have done my best despite the challenges that we are facing. In addition to that, I want to emulate our dear leader by being labour friendly and to work harmoniously with my staff at the council," he said.

'I will sponsor bill to explore Lithium'

From **MOHAMMED ABDULLAHI, Keffi**

THE Nasarawa West Senatorial District senator-elect, Ahmed Wadada has pledged to sponsor a bill aimed at exploring Lithium in the state, after his swearing as a senator.

Wadada made the pledge in an interview with newsmen in Keffi Local Government Area of the state, recently, shortly after receiving numerous guests who came to congratulate him on his victory at the polls.

According to Wadada, lithium is in abundance in the district, hence his desire to sponsor a bill for the exploration of the solid mineral after the inauguration of the 10th National Assembly.

He stated that exploration and exploitation of lithium in the area will go a long way in providing jobs for people of the area and also generating revenue for the federal, state and local government areas in possession of the solid mineral in the zone.

"It is our duty as legislators to make laws that will see to the betterment of our society. For Nasarawa West Senatorial District, we are endowed and that is why today you see Chinese nationals all around the district because of lithium and quite a number of natural

resources in the district.

"Lithium is a very sensitive and important natural resource and we have it here and so it is for us to see how best we can put laws in place that will exploit, explore and unfold this natural resource and other potentials for the good of the people," he said.

Wadada said aside the bill, he would be very responsive to other needs of his people in a bid to give them quality representation at the Senate.

"All I will tell the electorate is that those qualities of mine that they had experienced in the past during my sojourn at the National Assembly for eight



Wadada

From **AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja**

NLC solicits labour, govt cordial relationship

THE National President of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Comrade Joe Ajaero has solicited for cordial relationship between the Organised Labour and the three tiers of governments across the country.

The NLC boss made the call while commissioning the newly built Kogi NLC Secretariat under the leadership of Onu Johnson Edoke in Lokoja on Monday.

The NLC president who was represented by the General Secretary of the union, Emmanuel Ogwaja, noted that peaceful co-existence among labour and government would no doubt enhance productivity of the nation's workforce.

Ajaero said that no meaningful development can take place in an atmosphere of rancour and misunderstanding between labour and government.

He commended the unity amongst the various unions in the state stressing that when workers unite, their struggles would not go in vain.

He also lauded the achievements of the NLC leadership in Kogi State, under Comrade Onu Johnson Edoke. In his welcome address, the Chairman of the Nigeria Labour Congress, (NLC) in Kogi State, Comrade Onu Edoke disclosed that the project was solely executed through the union's



Ajaero

initiative and funding and no build NLC secretariat by government in power can seal ourselves with little support its secretariat for whatever reasons.

Edoka, who will be handing over to a new executive of NLC during the building project, as State Governor, Yahaya Bello from the union got little support from stakeholders in the state. ensuring that NLC in Kogi State has its own secretariat for over 30 years of their existence.

He, however, used the Auditor General of Local Government, Alhaji Usman Ododo for his support in the completion of the secretariat. Edoka appealed to Kogi workers to always support NLC towards achieving their goal in all out to source for fund to the state.

I see Sadiq as governor-elect in Bauchi

From **ABBAS GUNGURA, Bauchi**

SadiqAbubakar and all other candidates seeking election into the state assembly.

Engr. Hassan who is a close Associate of Dr. Nura Manu Soro, the Bauchi State Campaign Coordinator for President-elect, Asiwaju Ahmed Tinubu /

- APC stalwart

KasimShettima, congratulated Bauchi South senator-elect, Hon. ShehuBuba and all House of Representative members elect under the banner of APC across the state for their well-deserved victory in the February 25 Presidential and National Assembly elections.

In an interview with our correspondent in his residence in Bauchi, Engr. Hassan described the victory of President-elect Bola Ahmed Tinubu / KasimShettima, Sen. ShehuBuba and Reps-elect under APC in the state as a sign of real democracy which was believed to be free and fair election ever conducted in Nigeria.

Engr. Hassan assured the awaiting governor of Bauchi State, Air Marshal SadiqAbubakar retired of his readiness to contribute in whatever ways in working hand in hand with other APC stakeholders to deliver Bauchi Senatorial zone by grace of God, he said.

He commended the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) for the election process, which was acknowledged by world leaders, international observers, NGOs and many other bodies to be the best elections ever conducted in the continent of Africa.

Engr. Hassan expressed hope that Rtd. Air Marshal SadiqAbubakar, will emerge victorious in the 11th March 2023, guber. election alongside all state House of Assembly candidates on the tickets of APC in order to bring more development to the state.

it takes or need to synergize and make life much easier for our people, we will do it," he said.

The Nasarawa West Senatorial District Senator-elect further called on politicians to rebrand themselves for the people they want to serve if they want to emerge victorious at the polls.

He also called on the electorate to vote for candidates who they think are suited for the position they are vying regardless of their political platform or parties.

"The era of adhering or getting magnetized to a political platform or party because you belong to a political party is gone. We can clearly see what happened in Nasarawa State, he said.

"Today, Nasarawa State has no senator-elect of All Progressive Congress extraction because the people have shined their eyes. So let everybody shine his or her eyes for the good of the state," he said.

Wadada under the platform of Social Democratic Party (SDP) defeated the candidates of the ruling party, All Progressive Congress (APC), and other parties at the just concluded National Assembly elections held in the zone to emerge the senator-elect.

Nasarawa West Senatorial District consists of Karu, Keffi, Kokona, Nasarawa and Toto Local Governments Areas.

Foreign Commentary

Unreliable US leadership in the shadow of elections

As a new round of presidential elections gets under way in the United States, much of the world looks with exasperation at the possibility of yet another major shift in America's domestic and foreign policy. The mere thought of a Trump comeback in 2024 is nerve-racking for Washington's allies, considering his vengeful eagerness to (once again) wreak havoc in America's democracy and its role in the world. MARWAN BISHARA writes.

NO wonder most states are reluctant to support Washington's policy towards Russia or China, for fear of another radical change of policy under the next administration as had happened after every administration in the past two or three decades. From the Bush administration's imperialist and messianic overreach to Obama's pragmatic realism, to Trump's America-first nationalism and lastly, Biden's return to strategic posturing, the dizzying change of doctrines has underlined the unreliability (read shiftiness) in American leadership.

The strategic erraticism constitutes a major departure from America's steadiness during the Cold War. It also contrasts sharply with the autocratic but stable regimes in Russia and China, which have been largely predictable since their resurgence at the turn of the 21st century. World leaders need not wonder who will be in charge in Moscow or Beijing come next year, but wish they knew who will win next year's American elections.

I thought about this during a recent trip to the United States that took me to Florida, the home of the two leading Republican frontrunners: Donald Trump who announced his candidacy late last year, and Ron DeSantis, Sunshine State governor and rising star of the party, who is yet to announce his bid, but is widely expected to do so in the coming weeks or months.

The octogenarian President Joe Biden is also expected to run, even though many worry about his capacity to lead through the age of 86, when his prospective second term ends. If he decides to call it a day, there is no telling how many Democrats will throw their hats in the ring, but if he marches on, no Democrat is expected to take the plunge.

So, as things stand today, a likely scenario is the 2024 presidential face-off becoming a repeat of the 2020 showdown, but the final result will depend on a number of variables – economic, political and personal.

Biden has so far fared well in terms of his command of the presidency and the economy, but high inflation and potential recession could weaken his chances. Likewise, he has succeeded in reinvigorating NATO following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, but a costly protracted proxy war will not bode well for him or America. Biden's economic and national security scorecards will matter little if he starts showing pronounced signs of ageing that undermine the public's confidence in his ability to lead four more years.

For his part, Trump is betting on his tight hold on the party's machine and base to win the Republican nomination, notably against his former cabinet members cum presidential candidates like Nikki Haley, Mike Pence and Mike Pompeo. But that may be the easy part.

Trump lost the 2020 elections because he lost the confidence of the majority of American voters, including the independent voters, who deemed him unfit for a second term. They became even more certain of their verdict after Trump tried to undermine the democratic process by fraud and even by force on January 6, 2021. Since then



Biden

Trump has faced multiple lawsuits, some of which could place his candidacy in jeopardy.

Enter DeSantis. The Republican who, many believe, can defeat Trump and bring down Biden. But he remains an enigma for much of the world.

The ambitious two-term governor is a younger and more competent version of the populist former president. And unlike Trump, he is not riddled with sexual, financial and political scandals. He is a straight talker not a compulsive liar; a true believer in the hard conservatism he preaches, not a peddler of soundbites like Trump.

DeSantis is expanding his Florida Republican power base nationwide, and in the process expanding the donor base that can finance his prospective presidential campaign when the time is right. He has also written a campaign-styled biography that has come out this week.

Such PR books are terrible reads but their political messaging says a lot about their authors. True to form, DeSantis hits all the "right" notes in *The Courage to be Free*, boasting of his conservative upbringing in a blue-collar Italian American household, his talent in America's pastime sport, baseball, his scholastic achievements at the nation's top universities, Yale and Harvard Law, his military service in Iraq, albeit as a prosecutor, his three-term public service in Congress, and his successful governorship.

But the populist DeSantis also tries to have it both ways as he caters to the Republican base. He incessantly jeers against the nation's prestigious universities, the Washington bureaucracy, the hi-tech conglomerates and the "corporate media", all of which he believes are controlled by a liberal cabal, housed in the Democratic party.

DeSantis is authoritarian, angry and vindictive, with a chip on his shoulder. He is all too ready for a nationwide cultural war in the name of "the people" and against the liberal ruling class, starting with an

assault on "corporate wokeness", like that of Walt Disney, the professional class, the public school system, and the liberal indoctrination of America's education.

Considering the general apathy about foreign policy, the governor says little about the world in his book, aside from condemning the likes of communist Cuba and China, and complimenting colonial Israel, boasting of his early efforts as

congressman to move the US embassy to Jerusalem.

Interestingly, DeSantis's courage to be free stops with Trump, who helped him win the first gubernatorial race in 2018. Instead, he lavishes his old guru with praise, skipping over his disastrous performance in the 2020 elections. All of which raises doubt about whether the governor will be going head-to-head against the former

president in the Republican primaries.

Will the young DeSantis wait four more years? Wait until the 77-year-old Trump drops out of the campaign for legal or personal reasons? Or, wait only until it becomes obvious that the former president has no clear path back to the White House? Or, behave in a Trumpian fashion; betray his old ally in order to get ahead under the pretext of saving America from another Democratic presidency, or in his words, "making America Florida"!

Either way, Trump is showing no signs of backing down and is in fact gearing up for a confrontation with Ron "DeSanctimonious"; a confrontation that promises to be very personal, focusing on age, experience and loyalty, not policy or ideology. Such a confrontation may be beneficial to Biden, as the two bullies bloody each other in a fight for the Republican nomination.

A Trump comeback is sure to produce a vengeful reversal of everything Biden – a return to 2020 to Make America Great Again, again. A triumph for DeSantis is also a return to "MAGA" but without the whole drama. The fact that both are certified populist nationalists and neither is a liberal democrat will have major implications for America and its role as the world's leading democracy – especially in Europe. Their opposition to liberal interventions and messianic wars will shrink US strategic commitments abroad, including in Ukraine.

As for Biden, a victory will ensure a triumphant continuity of his domestic social democratic agenda and a boost for his liberal crusade against Russia and China.

Al Jazeera



Trump

Foreign News

Somalia to 'stop violence' amid Somaliland tension

SOMALIA is working closely to restore peace in its northern breakaway region of Somaliland amid heightening tensions between the region's authorities and local clan forces, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud said.

"We believe that unity is the only solution but we don't want this unity through violence, which makes matters worse," Mohamud added.

Violence erupted after leaders of the Sool, Sanaag and Cayn provinces of Somaliland – which claimed independence from Somalia in 1991 – announced their intention to rejoin Somalia.

Fighting broke out last month around the town of Lascaod in Sool, killing at least 80 people and displacing more than 185,000, according to the UN. Mohamud said in a wide-ranging interview in which he talked about the state's fight against the al-Shabab armed group, a sweeping drought in the country and gender violence.

In August last year, a few months after being re-elected for a second time, Mohamud declared an "all-out war" against al-Shabab, which has been waging a rebellion against the government since 2007.

Mohamud said, adding that the ultimate aim was to create the right environment for political inclusion, and attract foreign investment as well as Somalis to return to the country.

With support from the US army, African Union (AU) forces and local assistance, Somalia's army was able to regain swaths of territory from the armed group since launching its offensive last year.

In January this year, government-led forces recaptured the port town of Harardhere, an al-Shabab stronghold on the Indian Ocean, marking one of the most significant victories of the



Abdullahi

offensive.

Al-Shabab responded with a number of attacks in the capital and other cities, including targeting the mayor's office in Mogadishu and an attack on a military base.

AU peacekeepers provide security during Somali presidential elections in Mogadishu [File: Faisal Omar/Reuters]

"Challenges will remain in place," said the president, referring to when AU forces leave next year. "But we are organising ... on one hand we're fighting and, on the other, we are building the security sector."

The threat of famine in Somalia has been present since the country went through five consecutive failed rainy seasons. It now faces a sixth.

In an assessment last December, the UN estimated that eight million people were badly food insecure and that more than 700,000 could suffer famine between April and June this year if aid supplies are not increased.

However, in its latest report in late February, UN experts said that while food insecurity remains "extremely critical",

they were no longer projecting famine.

Climate experts and humanitarian workers have warned that trends in recent weeks, including expectations of below-normal rainfall, are worse than those in 2011 when a quarter of a million people died in Somalia due to famine.

There are also concerns among human rights organisations that data to assess the level of famine is not accurate due to the state of security in certain areas.

Mohamud also acknowledged the issue of gender violence by Somali forces.

In 2021, two UN reports denounced what they described as an "alarming" 80 percent increase in sexual violence in Somalia compared with 2019, mostly carried out by al-Shabab fighters.

But the reports also highlighted how sexual violence – for at least 15 percent of verified cases – was attributed to government security forces.

Still, the president acknowledged, "there are some limitations" to the justice system.

Congo urges Macron to back sanctions against Rwanda

DEMOCRATIC Republic of Congo (DRC) President Felix Tshisekedi has urged visiting French President Emmanuel Macron to pursue international sanctions against Rwanda for its alleged military support to M23 rebels.

Macron said he was waiting for the end of several ongoing peace negotiation efforts before considering such a step. But he promised that France would be "faithful to its role as an unwavering ally of [DRC] to

defend its integrity and sovereignty."

The eastern DRC has been mired in conflict for decades, with armed groups vying for control of the region's vast mineral resources. Most recently, the DRC has accused Rwanda of supporting M23 rebels, who have seized control of large swaths of the country's east.

Rwanda has repeatedly denied the allegation.

French President Emmanuel

Macron, left, meets with Democratic Republic of the Congo President Felix Tshisekedi in Kinshasa.

Peace talks have taken place in Nairobi, Kenya and Angola's capital, Luanda. Regional leaders have called for a ceasefire in eastern DRC and for the M23 rebels to withdraw from the territory they are holding.

"This is the very meaning of my presence today, to tell everyone that there cannot be a double standard between the tragedy being played out in Ukraine on European territory and that being played out on African soil," Macron said.

Tshisekedi pressed his French counterpart for sanctions against Rwanda, saying he remained "doubtful about the good faith of those who attacked us".

Earlier on Saturday, Brussels said it was setting up a "humanitarian air bridge" to deliver aid to eastern DRC.

The air bridge will link with Goma, the capital of DRC's eastern North Kivu province, where fighting with the rebel group M23 has displaced more than 600,000 people.

The operation will "deliver humanitarian support in the form of medical and nutritional supplies along with a range of

CHINA'S foreign minister says China-US relations have "seriously deviated" while warning of potential conflict.

"Containment and suppression will not make America great. It will not stop the rejuvenation of China," said Qin Gang.

Mr Qin, China's former ambassador to the US, held his first press conference as foreign minister on Tuesday.

The spy balloon saga has heightened tensions between the superpowers despite recent efforts to improve ties.

The foreign minister was responding to a question on whether a healthy China-US relationship was still possible as differences between the countries grew.

The US called for establishing "guardrails", but what it really wants is for China to not hit back with words or actions when provoked, Mr Qin added.

He also said the diplomatic crisis caused by the balloon incident could have been averted but the US acted with "the presumption of guilt".

Washington has previously described the suspected spy balloon as a "clear violation of US sovereignty". Beijing admitted the object belonged to them, but said it was a civilian airship blown off-course.

Relations between the two countries deteriorated during former US President Donald Trump's administration, which launched a trade war against

Suppressing China won't make America great

- Gang

China in 2018. The two superpowers continue to clash on various issues, including Taiwan, China's militarisation of the South China Sea and the origins of Covid.

Mr Qin's comments follow Chinese President Xi Jinping's unusually direct rebuke of the US on Monday.

Mr Xi said "Western countries led by the US had implemented all-round containment, encirclement and suppression" against China and that this brought "severe challenges" to the country.

On Tuesday, Mr Qin said an "invisible hand" was driving the Ukraine crisis but did not name any country or

individual. He reiterated that China had not provided weapons to either side of the Russia-Ukraine war and called for peace talks to resume.

The Ukraine crisis has reached a "critical juncture", he said.

Mr Qin, 56, was named China's foreign minister in December 2022 and is one of the youngest appointees to this post in the country's history. He replaced Wang Yi, who was promoted to the politburo of the ruling Communist Party in October that year.

A trusted aide of Chinese President Xi Jinping, Mr Qin is well known as a tough-talking diplomat.



Xi Jinping

Ukraine leaders vow to support Bakhmut defence

UKRAINIAN military leaders have expressed determination to hold onto Bakhmut as Russian forces encroached on the devastated eastern city they have sought to capture for six months at the cost of thousands of lives.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's office said he discussed the Bakhmut operation on Monday with the

chief of the general staff and commander of ground forces, who both spoke in favour of "further strengthening positions in Bakhmut" and continuing the defensive operation.

Intense Russian shelling targeted the city in the Donetsk region and nearby villages as Moscow pressed a three-sided assault to try to finish off Bakhmut's resistance.

The nearby towns of Chasiv Yar and Kostiantynivka came under heavy shelling, damaging cars and homes and sparking a fire. No casualties were immediately reported.

Police and volunteers evacuated people from Chasiv Yar and other front-line towns in an operation made difficult by the destruction of bridges and constant artillery fire that has left barely a house standing.

Russia is trying to surround Bakhmut to secure what would be its first major gain in more than half a year. Its capture would be the culmination of a winter offensive that has brought the bloodiest fighting of the war.

After Russian gains in recent weeks, Ukrainian troops have been reinforcing positions west of Bakhmut in apparent preparation for a possible retreat. However, the reports from commanders on Monday suggested they had not yet decided to pull out.

The intense battle has depleted both sides' artillery reserves as thousands of shells are fired daily along the eastern and southern fronts. Kyiv's European allies are working on a deal to procure more ammunition for the fight.

Meanwhile, Washington has said that even if the eastern city should fall to Russia, it would not signify a shift in the war's momentum.

Speaking to reporters in the Middle East, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said he

would not predict when or if Ukrainian troops might leave the city but its fall "won't necessarily mean that the Russians have changed the tide of this fight".

Moscow says capturing the city would be a step towards its major objective of seizing all of the surrounding Donbas region. Kyiv says Russia's losses in trying to seize a city reduced to rubble could determine the future course of the war by destroying combat power ahead of potentially decisive battles later this year.

Ukraine's ground forces commander, Oleksandr Syrskiy, visited Bakhmut on Sunday, according to the military. He said the Wagner Group, a Russian mercenary army, had thrown additional forces into the fight but Ukraine's soldiers were battling on.

Volodymyr Nazarenko, a Ukrainian commander in Bakhmut, said there had been no order to retreat and "the defence is holding", albeit in grim conditions.

Yevgeny Prigozhin said he had written a letter on Sunday to the commander of the Ukraine campaign "about the urgent need to allocate ammunition". On Monday morning, he said his representative at operational headquarters had his pass cancelled and had been denied access.

There was no immediate comment from the Russian Ministry of Defence. Since the start of this year, the Ukraine campaign has been commanded personally by Russia's top general, Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov.

On Monday, Prigozhin warned in a Russian social media post that the situation in Bakhmut "will turn out to be a 'pie': The filling is the parts of the Armed Forces of Ukraine surrounded by us (in the case, of course, if there is a complete encirclement of Bakhmut), and the shell is, in fact, the Wagner" Group.



Tshisekedi

Feature

Being an agile leader

THE entire world has dealt with so much uncertainty since the turn of this decade than most living humans have encountered in their entire lifetime.

The global business community has not been immune to this series of tumultuous events. From the Pandemic that hit at the turn of the decade, to political leadership crisis in some parts of the world, to the civil unrest in some parts of the Middle East, the fallout impact of Brexit on the United Kingdom and the entire Europe, the Ukraine/Russia war which significantly dried up global supply chains, to the massive shake up in the Global Technology Industry and the now looming global recession.

I have always been of the opinion that Business Leaders will be relied on heavily to shape the new direction for global peace, prosperity and progress.

It is no mistake that the drive to combat the biggest challenge plaguing our entire human existence – Climate Action has only begun to record meaningful progress because of the significant buy-in of Global Businesses and Business Leaders.

In a leadership training which I recently facilitated for an all-female group of middle level managers in a Nigerian Corporation a few days back; we spoke extensively around the subject of "Agile Leadership" as the core strategy for thriving in critically uncertain times.

Beyond being a continuous learner; make sure to enforce a culture of learning, sharing and rewarding inquisitiveness, research and innovation within your team

"Agile" and "Agility" have become such buzz words touted around very freely in management consulting and coaching circles.

Yet my simple pragmatic definition for Agility is "to be nimble, malleable and open to change everywhere else but at your core" – your core simply meaning your values and your vision.

As an entrepreneur and business leader; I recall at the beginning of the year trying to find an



appropriate theme for our Firm's commencement retreat – capability test is our threshold for dealing with UNCERTAINTY. No doubt it takes an agile leader to continuously anticipate and embrace changing realities without getting buried under the pressure of having to almost persistently change course, amend the strategy and sell this to the team in a way that inspires hope of ultimate or eventual success – this is the hardest part because it takes conviction to continue to be what a Leader ought to be at its core – "A frame of Possibility".

While asked what the key attributes of an agile leader are during the Leadership training I referred to earlier on; a few of these words featured in my response; - Self Mastery, Flexibility, Decisiveness, Continuous Learning, Transparency and Accountability.

Nonetheless the key question to ask is: – Are you an agile leader? I have highlighted below what in my opinion are the key attributes of an agile leader:

An agile leader keeps the team aligned around a central purpose. Is the purpose or vision of your organization so clear that it can be articulated by the least member of your team? Is the vision easily perceived by clients, new hires and your competition without you having to say a thing? Your first goal as a leader is to sell your corporate vision first to yourself and then to your team to the point of extinguishing any iota of doubt as to its believability or achievability.

An agile leader models a culture of continuous learning. Settle in your mind that you will never know enough to navigate today's problems. A leader must be in consistent search for new body of knowledge that enhances your problem solving capabilities. However, beyond being a continuous learner; make sure to enforce a culture of learning, sharing and rewarding inquisitiveness, research and innovation within your team.

An agile leader is comfortable with uncertainty. Many of us were raised to build comfort around routine. Unfortunately, the world as it is today does not allow us such privilege. The odds are changing and restacking on a per-second basis. Therefore beyond the things that remain loosely consistent (I say loosely consistent because even these could change on the super strength of conviction) in the core of your existence – your values and your vision. You must be

open to the reality that things could change in an instant and that you must be prepared to respond firmly, thoughtfully, but quickly too.

An agile leader is solution-minded

Pragmatism is one of the key parameters for assessing leadership capabilities today. Do you dwell on issues or promptly switch to solution mode? Do you play blame games or stay firmly on the way out? Do you equip your team with the capacity to think through and freely and fearlessly contribute to building solutions?

An agile leader holds self to account

A leader ought to live always by the rules, uphold the culture and values yet hold self to a much higher standard of conduct, output and result. You must self-assess but also create formal structures to get feedback and be appraised by your team. Always report back to the team on how you have collectively fared in terms of accomplishing your shared goals. While at it be sure to take personal responsibility for the overall outcome – Yes! Because the buck stops firmly at your table.

An agile leader acknowledges own failure and errors.

A leader that paints a picture of perfection is bound to fail. Be sure to acknowledge that you are not perfect and that you certainly do not know it all. It builds trusts and embodies confidence. Beyond this; be comfortable to acknowledge errors and failures in front of your team. It makes it easier to get their buy-in to try again or to change course.

An agile leader is not afraid to change or course correct

Finally, when the odds have been restacked, or key variables have changed; it is unlikely that the same strategy you were working with would still deliver your desired result. Have the courage to go back to the drawing board and promptly rejig the plan.

Leadership is neither a badge of honour nor a reward, it is a call to service which is terribly hard work as it were. Today, the world needs agile leaders who have multi-competencies, are quick thinkers, open-minded, not fixated on old, dated ideologies, systems or strategies but are willing to morph into whatever the circumstances require them to be to steer the ship of their corporation in consistently turbulent and high tide waters – Are you that Leader?

Ajose is an award-winning commercial lawyer, she is a Founding Partner at DealHQ Partners – a leading transactional advisory firm in Nigeria. A serial entrepreneur and astute public speaker and writer; Tosin is passionate about supporting Early-Stage Businesses and Venture Building.

"At the core of today's leadership capability test is our threshold for dealing with UNCERTAINTY. No doubt it takes an agile leader to continuously anticipate and embrace changing realities without getting buried under the pressure of having to almost persistently change course, amend the strategy and sell this to the team in a way that inspires hope of ultimate or eventual success – this is the hardest part because it takes conviction to continue to be what a Leader ought to be at its core – "A frame of Possibility. While asked what the key attributes of an agile leader are during the Leadership training I referred to earlier on; a few of these words featured in my response;- Self Mastery, Flexibility, Decisiveness, Continuous Learning, Transparency and Accountability. Nonetheless the key question to ask is: – Are you an agile leader? I have highlighted below what in my opinion are the key attributes of an agile leader:"

THE NIGERIA STANDARD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

Living

International Women's Day 2023

THE theme for International Women's Day, 8 March 2023 (IWD 2023) is, "**DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality**".

International Women's Day 2023: "DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality"

Under the theme "DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality", the United Nations Observance of International Women's Day 2023 will highlight the need for inclusive and transformative technology and digital education.

The United Nations Observance of IWD recognizes and celebrates the women and girls who are championing the advancement of transformative technology and digital education. IWD 2023 will explore the impact of the digital gender gap on widening economic and social inequalities. The event will also spotlight the importance of protecting the rights of women and girls in digital spaces and addressing online and ICT-facilitated gender-



based violence. Bringing women and other marginalized groups into technology results in more creative solutions and has greater potential for innovations that meet women's needs and promote gender equality. Their lack of inclusion, by contrast, comes with

massive costs: as per UN Women's Gender Snapshot 2022 report, women's exclusion from the digital world has shaved \$1 trillion from the gross domestic product of low- and middle-income countries in the last decade—a loss that will grow to \$1.5 trillion by 2025 without action. Reversing this trend will require



tackling the problem of online violence, which a study of 51 countries revealed 38 per cent of women had personally experienced.

A gender-responsive approach to innovation, technology and digital education can increase the awareness of women and girls regarding their rights and civic engagement. Advancements in digital technology offer immense opportunities to address development and humanitarian challenges, and to achieve the 2030 Agenda's Sustainable Development Goals. Unfortunately, the opportunities of the digital revolution also present a risk of perpetuating existing patterns of gender inequality. Growing inequalities are becoming

increasingly evident in the context of digital skills and access to technologies, with women being left behind as the result of this digital gender divide. The need for inclusive and transformative technology and digital education is therefore crucial for a sustainable future.

The United Nations Observance of International Women's Day under the theme, "DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality", will be marked. The event will bring together technologists, innovators, entrepreneurs, and gender equality activists to provide an opportunity to highlight the role of all stakeholders in improving access to digital tools.

Source: unwomen.org.

EYE'S ON THE WORLD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

Relationship

What to do when your spouse is angry

By ORKAA

WOMEN get angry for a number of reasons, and their husbands may be unaware of these reasons on several occasions.

If your woman is always angry at you, it's imperative that you first identify the underlying causes. Perhaps you said something inappropriate to her in the past, or she has unmet needs, or you did something in the past that has not been resolved. It's possible that any or all of these things will make her angry and depressed towards you.

What should a husband do when his wife is in such an emotional state? What can you do to bring back her happiness? These are the things we'll talk about in this article.

In the absence of an apology, wives tend to hold on to their resentment towards their husbands for longer periods of time. Disagreements in a relationship are inevitable due to the fact that each partner has a different attitude towards and perspective on life. When this happens, it is imperative that both partners put aside their pride and work towards

reconciliation. Your partner may hold a grudge against you until you make amends for your actions. Apologizing is among the most effective ways to bring an angry wife back to her senses.

When a woman feels enraged, she could say a number of things to communicate her feelings. Despite the fact that some of these things may be harsh, it is still crucial to allow her to vent herself while you stay cool. Choosing to walk away from her instead of listening to her could make things worse. In a nutshell, listening attentively to her problems can assist in soothing her feelings at any time.

When your wife is angry at you and expressing her grievances, it's natural to want to protect your ego, but it's best to be quiet and allow her to express her feelings. In order to avoid more crises, it's important to put your pride aside and engage her calmly rather than fight for your ego and refuse to compromise.

Make her smile by doing things she enjoys. Her anger will fade quickly once she realizes you're making an honest effort to win her



back. When you do the things that she enjoys, give her a special treat or take her to a place she'll find enjoyable, she'll feel appreciated and happy. If you take care of all of this for her, her resentment will dissipate quickly.

Don't be harsh with your wife when she's enraged. Don't get irritated by her behavior and decide to retaliate because of her temperament. Rather, try to understand and accept her behavior. Don't deviate from the pattern of increasing your affection and compassion for her. This can be accomplished by holding her close and speaking sweetly to her, as well as giving her compliments. As obnoxious as she may be, she still adores and wants you, no matter how many outbursts of rage she may spout.

If you've hurt your wife, don't just apologize; show her that you're working on your character so that this doesn't happen again. Apologizing all the time isn't enough; you need to deal

with it properly and show her that you're sincere about making things right.

Making her happy and gaining her confidence will be easy if you follow through on this.



Editorial

Vote rightly, change perceived narrative

THIS Saturday, March 11, 2023, the gubernatorial and states' Houses of Assembly elections will be held in Nigeria. It would be recalled that only two weeks ago, on February 25, 2023 Nigerians went on the march again to elect the president and members of the National Assembly. Several take aways came out of the process, for which Nigerians have expressed reservation on the outcome.

However, it must be stated that there is need to give the electorate confidence in what would happen this Saturday.

THE results of the presidential polls have since been released with the candidate of the All Progressives Congress, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu beating 17 other candidates to the number one seat. Already, the candidates of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and Labour Party (LP), Atiku Abubakar and Peter Obi have challenged the outcome of the polls, while announcing that they were heading to the courts.

IT is expected in a democracy; that rather than taking up arms against the state, they have elected to challenge the results in the court of law. While many have called on the duo of Atiku and Obi to accept the outcome of the polls, it should be noted that the president-elect had equally said in his acceptance speech that rather than the youth dissipate their energies on the streets protesting, the courts are open to all who feel aggrieved to challenge the results as announced by INEC.

GOING forward, the March 11, 2023 elections are by far closer to the people, therefore, it is expected that more interest must be shown by voters. Agreed, some voters may have felt their efforts during the presidential elections may not have counted, even as more have alleged that it was going to be a waste of time to vote again this Saturday. In fact, some of the voters have been reported to have gone to the extreme of destroying their voter's cards again alleging that their parties were rigged out.

WE are aware that the electoral umpire, INEC has met to re-strategize on the next phase of the elections, if the outcries of what took place on February 25, 2023 across the nation are anything to go by. The lessons learnt are enormous to throw away, while agreeing that what Nigerians went through should help the Commission and its entire adhoc staff engaged in the process to ensure that nothing goes wrong in the conduct of the elections.

MORE can be done, even as INEC has a responsibility to make sure that Nigerians get the best out of what is needed in the process, especially in the usage of BVAS and materials. As electorate, Nigerians have a higher responsibly to play a greater role by being at the polling units to elect their representative. What better chance can there be as their engagements will translate to having representatives whose place in history is to change the lives of the people. This can only happen when they come out en masse to express their franchise by electing the right people devoid of sentiments.

WHAT should be obtainable and practicable on March 11, is for the electorate to express their resolve through voting the right candidates for the offices they have contested for. Staying away as a sign of protest may enable the wrong persons fill the gaps; even as that would make the constituencies where such takes place would live with the consequences of their decisions.

PASSION is said to be any great or powerful emotion, Most especially Love or hate.

I Thereby charge Journalists in various media organizations to endeavor to improve their writing, listening and speaking skills for an effective communication, merit Award winning and fame to the organization

However being passionate towards a career or profession involves determination and patience towards a successful life journey. it is proverbially said " A problem shared is half solved, therefore collaboration and

mentorship can be of great benefits to journalist and aspiring journalist in various tertiary institutions.

Research has proven that the more you talk about something, the more real it becomes, so one is expected to speak about his or her goal as often as possible with as many people as you can to keep your interest high.

In conclusion, practical learning and

Enhancing passion for journalism

Communication skills should also be adopted in various media organizations and tertiary



institutions to enhance knowledge amongst media practitioners and students. **Dammo from Mass Communication Department Plateau State Polytechnic.**
By Jonathan Rabo

Definition and principles of management

THE concept of management in Education Management can mean different things to different people at different

times. The term management is derived from the verb "to manage" which can mean to

handle, to control, to make and keep submissive, to organize, to alter by manipulation and to carry out for a purpose.

Some of these meanings appear almost effective. For instance, do you as a school head keep your staff and students submissive? These terms suggest to us various styles of management some of which will be more acceptable and productive than others.

However, management can be described it as an art, a science and a process.

Management as an art is concerned with carrying out organizational functions and tasks through people. Management is the application of techniques in human and public relations, the delegation of an authority (assigning and sharing responsibilities), communication (Including problems, solving and decision-making) and managing change.

Management as a science is concerned with establishing a philosophy, processes and practices which can be applied in a school situation.

Management as a process is a collection of activities which include things as decision-making, problem solving and action-planning. These processes involved the management of resources including human, material, financial and time. These processes constitute the main functions of school managers.

From Gonyok Francis Rebecca

Child abuse and neglect

NIGERIA is the black African country according to available census figures has a population 200 million people. It is said that one in every four Africans is a Nigerian. There are several ethnic groups but there are three majority tribes comprised of the Igbos in the East, the Yoruba in the West and the Hausas in the North. Nigeria plays a leading role in determining the future of Africa both at the regional and global levels.

Although endowed with massive natural resources and extensive human resources, Nigeria has not developed the necessary technological, industrial, managerial and political know-how to pull its resources together to a proper pedestal.

As a result of poverty and hard living conditions, the country faces social upheaval, cultural disagreements gradual industrialization and imperfect attempt to attain its national goals.

Tradition and culture has been greatly affected and a major source of the maintenance of culture, the family system which promotes the spirit of love and being one's brother's keeper is now disintegrating. Consumerism, an attitude of get rich quick", and westernization have led to rural-urban migration and emergence of the urban poor. These migration

takes on menial jobs and form the bulk of the population in the streets and market.

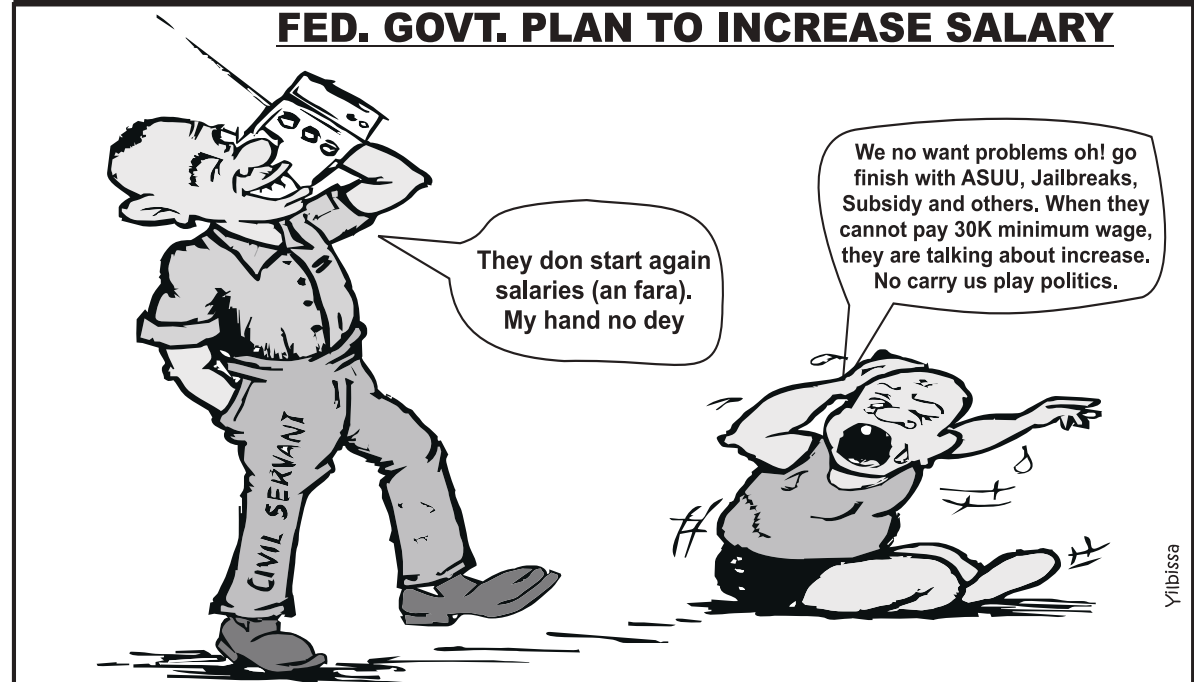
Children in urban areas are quickly caught up in the daily struggle for survival and material gain.

This can be attributed to the breakdown of our rich tradition and culture that has eroded discipline in society and turned our house helps either by their parents or by the families they serve who engage them as food vendors, clothing and general merchandise on the streets. Thus, they become part time street traders and subjected to many damaging aspects of street life.

In the northern part of Nigeria where the Muslims religion is dominant, practices such as begging has led young boys and girls into vices. Apart from this, many parents believe that good parenting means that children should be bought up strictly and with religious training which in most cases favours the male above female children. Some parents, having entrusted their children to religious teachers, never visit them or inquire about them and subsequently the children are forced to the streets to beg or become food vendors. The mallams often move some of these almajiris from city to city as beggars while some end up as prostitutes.

Standard Cartoon

FED. GOVT. PLAN TO INCREASE SALARY



Yilibissa

Opinion

Governorship and State Assembly elections: Matters for INEC

By OBOLI AUGUSTINE

LOOKING back at the just concluded Presidential and National Assembly elections, there is no doubt that many things went wrong, and the conduct could not stand the minuscule test of an acceptable standard.

As a consequence, nobody is celebrating. Nobody is gloating over the steal aided by concocted and doctored results by INEC. What happened on the 25th was a ballot revolution by marginalized Nigerians, unfortunately, the result produced by INEC was the joke of the century. A sham that robbed us of our future.

The entire country is in gloom and mourning because we lost the opportunity to get it right. We are now the boot of the civilized world who are amazed at the 'African Magic' performed by the 'dependent' Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). But that is gone, and we are hard put to accept the declared results and winners.

The coming rounds of elections on 11th March 2023 - that is the Governorship and State Houses of Assembly elections present another chance for INEC to right the wrongs of 25th February 2023 when many Nigerians were deliberately disenfranchised and made voiceless. This should not be another Ides of March when the aspirations and dreams of Nigerian youth would be murdered. INEC must strive to pass this litmus test.

The established flaws of the better-forgotten day of the rape of democracy must be addressed and confronted head-on. These

problems range from the late arrival of officials and materials, the disingenuous glitches of the BVAS and IReV tools, and voters' intimidation to results being written, mutilated, and teaped by unqualified personnel. Unfortunately INEC boss, Prof Mahmoud did not help matters, ordinarily, when these troubling issues were brought to his attention, he was expected to reassure us that the drawbacks are lessons learned, instead, he charged like a bulldog with a bone face of 'I don't give a hoot and proceeded to announce results even where no voting took place. At other times, he would have declared no or inclusive elections. But we are not surprised, everybody knows what was at play.

This post-modern is necessary to give us a sense of where we are and what to expect if genuine desire and concerted efforts are not mustered to give us credible, free, and fair elections on 11th March and something to be proud of as Nigerians.

Let me highlight some of these issues and the problem they pose to the general faith in and credibility of our democracy.

In my Pooling Unit, PU043, located somewhere in Mbor, Abuja, the officials did not arrive until 10.40 am. Interestingly, most of us leaving around the place were over-excited at the chance to choose our President, the people's President, and was on

the ground as early as 6.00am organizing and taking numbers. Before the late arriving INEC officials could settle down for business, it was about noon. The voting then started in earnest interrupted at one point by a heavy downpour. Not deterred, some of us rented canopies to ensure a seamless process. The game came when darkness fell, the officials claimed that ballot papers were finished. Aghast, most of us thought they were kidding us. How could that be when they know the number of voters in the unit? Well, we insisted on exercising our rights and the ballot papers were improvised. Some well-meaning citizens provided Power Generator to light up the place when the telephone lights could not prevail over the pitch darkness that fell on us after the rain.

The votes in that PU were counted at 1.30 am Sunday because we galvanized ourselves. I could not attend Church Service that morning because I have invested my faith in my country. The story may be different in places where the voters were less enthusiastic. Sadly, the results therefrom could not be uploaded in real-time on the IReV portal as we were deceptively promised. Our labor of love was therefore left to charlatans to play with.

So, INEC should find a way to provide for contingencies and ensure the prompt arrival of men and adequate materials and make the IReV portal functional. Nigerians don't want to be

heartbroken again because it could drive a few to the extreme if they genuinely feel cheated and fooled by the system.

One issue that should not be glossed over is the transport arrangement with members of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW). Why they failed to turn up in some places should be interrogated. In places, the official did not go at all, because there was no transport. Is it that they were not paid and someone pocketed the money or have they come under the influence of some politician who dishes out orders to them on where to or not to go? This is Nigeria, and you can't rule out anything. Anything that cannot happen in Nigeria does not exist, as a matter of fact. Nigeria happens to be the most decent.

Of concern also was the intimidation and violence visited in certain places considered to be the strength of the opposition. The Internet is awash with videos of such incidences. Democracy is supposed to be a game of choice and popularity, but we have desperate politicians who believe that it must be their way always, even when their support base has waned. It has to be by hook or crook. Such acts of opportunism tend to disenfranchise voters and made nonsense of a democratic choice. INEC should eye mark such flash points and in concert with the Police improve security around the PUs. Canceling the pools in such places only plays into the playbook

of the instigations to deny votes to the opposition who supposedly had their strength there.

Nigerian politicians are wily foxes, they will always up their evil game. What this means is that INEC should continuously have its thinking cap on to be ahead of the fertile minds of these professional politicians. Nigeria has come of age, and INEC should conduct a good election. No election by nature of the election, is perfect, even in advanced societies, but we can distinguish between fairly conducted elections from a bungled process, as witnessed on 25th February. The damage is already profound and seemingly irredeemable. History beacons on INEC to redeem itself and make Nigerians believe again. As the statutory body empowered to declare election results, INEC should avoid creating a legitimacy crisis for whoever they so declared. Staff found complacent in undermining the will of the people must be held to account. Everything must be done to overcome the challenges of the 25th February elections.

I appeal to Nigerians to come out again en-mass on 11th March and prove a point. Yes, the pain of yesterday has not dissipated, but we cannot continue to dwell on yesterday. Being apathetic now will be an ill wind that blows no good. We should move on to avoid playing into the hands and script of those who are hell-bent on subverting our democracy.

Broken promises, breached trust: Has INEC betrayed Nigeria?

By ANTHONY UBANI

WE viewed with grave concern the uploading of results and subsequent declaration of a winner of the 2023 Presidential elections in the early hours of Wednesday, March 1, 2023. The haste and timing of these actions have led to widespread consternation raising germane questions as to the motives of both actions.

Nigerians will recall that in November 2022, the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Professor Mahmood Yakubu, conscious of growing public concerns about the sincerity, transparency and commitment of INEC to conducting free, fair and credible elections in which the votes of citizens will be respected as the 'voice of the people', spoke at a press conference where he gave Nigerians an assurance and commitment that the Commission will upload polling results from the polling unit; and that citizens will have access to these results in real time. In his own words:

"...the commission will upload polling unit results and citizens will have access to those results in real time as we upload the results. This innovation was introduced by the Commission. The Commission cannot turn around and undermine itself. This technology has come to stay. We will upload polling unit results from the polling units. Citizens will have the right to view these results. After all, who are we serving? The citizens. How can we deprive citizens access to the results of the process conducted by them at the polling unit? I want to assure you and reassure you that the 2023 general elections will be our best ever election and we are committed that votes cast by Nigerians will determine the outcome of the elections. Nothing more, nothing less."

It is this assurance and several others by the INEC Chairman that built confidence amongst Nigerians to register to collect their PVCs. It was also as a result of this

confidence that voters went out enthusiastically to cast their votes on election day despite the significant challenges of access to cash and high cost of transportation for those who had to travel.

The public even accepted the added burden of the closure of the tertiary institutions as part of the sacrifice in reciprocity to the assurances given by INEC of a vote that would mean something. Many returned from overseas to exercise their citizenship in the hopes that the process will be transparent, free and their votes will count. Unfortunately, since the Presidential elections held on Saturday, February 25, 2023, the country has been saturated with reports, complaints and protests from citizens, candidates, political party officials, civil society organizations, the media, local and international observers and well-meaning Nigerians.

In spite of the diverse range of these voices, three specific complaints cuts across most of them: INEC's failure/refusal to upload presidential election results particularly in real time to the I-REV portal; the complete lack of transparency in INEC's processes; and the failure to follow its own regulations and processes amongst other elections management infractions.

With regards to the specific issue of electronic transmission of results, the combined effect of sections 50, 52(2), and 63 of the Electoral Act 2022 shows clearly that INEC failed to obey its own law. Article 38: 1, 2 and 3 of INEC's guidelines is unambiguous:

Article 38 on Electronic Transmission of Results and Upload of Results to INEC's Result Viewing Portal (IReV) states:

"On completion of all the Polling Unit voting and results procedures, the Presiding Officer shall:

(i) Electronically transmit or transfer the result of the Polling Unit, direct to the collation system as prescribed by the Commission.

"(ii) Use the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) to upload a scanned copy of the EC8A to the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV), as prescribed by the Commission.

"(iii) Take the BVAS and the original copy of each of the forms in tamper-evident envelope to the Registration Area/Ward Collation Officer, in the company of security agents. The Polling Agents may accompany the Presiding Officer to the RA/Ward Collation Centre."

In the face of INEC's failure to upload polling unit results from the polling unit in real time and sundry other failings added to the evident bewilderment and disillusionment of citizens with the opaque process, it seemed logical and respectful of the citizens whom it claims to serve for INEC to have taken immediate steps, consistent with its law and the promise made to citizens by its Chairman, to address the issues, fears and concerns that have been raised by citizens since the elections held. Instead, the world watched the INEC Chairman blithely dismissed and punt issues raised only to decide to attempt to rectify its egregious infractions and thereafter, to declare a winner of the Presidential election.

We believe that INEC's decision to declare the winner of the 2023 presidential election has raised severe doubts in the minds of Nigerian citizens and a global audience about the legitimacy of the process that produced the results announced by INEC. Elections are integral to the democratic process, and validity and legitimacy of elections are rooted in principles of transparency, obedience to the rule of law and the open compliance with due processes.

In the absence of these principles of good

governance, elections become a mere tool contrived to reach a predetermined end, leaving the citizens as hapless passengers and on-lookers in the governance of a commonwealth that is their patrimony. The beneficiaries of such a poorly managed and questionable process will lack the legitimacy and full support of citizens to govern effectively.

We believe that INEC has erred in declaring a winner of the Presidential election at this time when significant matters of electoral infractions that are of concern to most Citizens are yet to be addressed. This election was primed to be one that will help initiate the process of healing the many wounds inflicted on Nigerians, and uniting them in common purpose to face the monumental challenges that lie ahead.

By ignoring the legitimate complaints of Nigerians and choosing to declare a president elect, it is our well-considered and reasoned opinion that INEC has abdicated its legal and moral responsibilities to citizens and de-legitimized any candidate it declares winner.

Political leaders govern by the consent, support and confidence of their citizens. If that consent and support is lacking, governance becomes the first casualty. There is still time to get it right. INEC has the power to review its decisions. The clock is ticking as the law in its prescient wisdom recognizes that INEC is not infallible and can still restore the confidence and faith of the citizens in its role as an impartial umpire. It provides a window of seven (7) days for INEC to review its position -

We therefore call on INEC to swiftly review the breaches and gaps that occurred, investigate all petitions; and comprehensively review the election results based on findings, in the interest of the citizens and for the sake of the progress, peace, good governance and development of Nigeria.

Feature

Exploring Nigeria's nationally determined contribution

The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international agreement on climate change formulated to limit global warming to less than two °C, or more preferably, less than 1.5°C compared to pre-industrial levels. By this agreement, countries aim to reach peak greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions as soon as possible to achieve a climate-neutral world by mid-century. The agreement was adopted on the 12th of December 2015 by 196 sovereign nations at the 21st Conference of Parties (COP21). CHIAMAKA ASOEGWU writes.

ACCORDING to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Paris Agreement represents a significant milestone in the multilateral climate change process. This is because, for the first time, nations are voluntarily bound by a common purpose to make ambitious efforts to combat climate change. However, implementing the agreement requires significant science-led economic and social change. In keeping with this, the Paris Agreement requires each party to formulate and communicate their climate action plans, known as their Nationally Determined Contributions or NDCs.

NDCs are at the core of the Paris Agreement and represent the actions countries plan to undertake to address climate change. The phrase "nationally determined" was adopted to emphasize the voluntary, bottom-up nature of the contributions and recognize each party's national priorities and circumstances. NDCs to be submitted every five years to the UNFCCC secretariat embody climate change adaptation plans and efforts to reduce national emissions. Each successive submission is expected to be a progression compared to its predecessor and reflect the highest possible aspiration of the country.

According to the 10 New Insights in Climate Science report developed by Future Earth, The Earth League and the World Climate Research Programme, the potential to adapt to climate change is not without limits. Already in different areas of the world, people and ecosystems face these limitations, which will worsen if the planet warms beyond 1.5°C or even 2°C. Therefore, adaptation efforts cannot replace ambitious mitigation.

The report further highlights the vulnerability of specific regions to climate-driven hazards and increasing health threats from climate interactions. These regions include Central America, the Sahel, Central and East Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, and are home to 1.6 billion people – a number projected to double by 2050. Climate change impacts the health of entire ecosystems adversely. Other environmental events such as heat-related mortality, wildfires affecting physical and mental health, and growing risks of outbreaks of infectious diseases are all linked to climate change. Furthermore, there is the issue of climate mobility. The frequency and intensity of extreme weather events linked to climate change continue to lead to displacement



and involuntary migration.

According to a 2022 report on CO2 emissions by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, the International Energy Agency, and the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency, global CO2 emissions increased by 5.3% in 2021 compared to 2020, almost reaching pre-pandemic 2019 levels. In addition, coal – a significant emissions source, has had a resurgence, constituting a substantial drawback to achieving climate goals. Hence, another reason why NDCs must be taken more seriously.

The sections of the Paris Agreement related to NDCs have both legally and non-legally binding elements. Although all Parties are required to formulate, communicate and submit their NDCs, the scope and ambition of those NDCs is a national decision. In drafting their NDCs, countries must be able to identify and distinguish these elements. For example, it is legally binding for a party to regularly supply information on national inventories of emissions and the information necessary to

track the progress towards implementing and achieving the NDCs. The information must be clear, transparent and easily understandable. Also, the NDCs must be updated and communicated every five years. Also, NDCs may contain components related to mitigation and adaptation, although not mandatory. While many countries explicitly define time-bound GHG reduction targets in their NDCs, others do not. Instead, they indicate general action plans or targets specified in non-GHG terms. Most countries included adaptation components in their contributions, from a summary of observed impacts of climate change in the country to the identification of vulnerable sectors and descriptions of ongoing and planned adaptation measures.

The means of implementation is also a major consideration. Some parties include an enhanced conditional mitigation component alongside unconditional ones. The conditional component is typically contingent on support

from developed nations in finance, technology transfer and capacity building.

The Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN), in 2015, submitted an ambitious and transparent NDC. The country was among the few developing countries to set an economy-wide target. The NDC, updated in 2021, pledged an unconditional contribution of 20% below business-as-usual by 2030 and a 47% contribution conditional on international support. Considering that economic growth has been lower than projected, this level of climate ambition represents a significant enhancement, as it will result in substantially lower absolute GHG emissions than stated in the 2015 NDC. The scale of the emissions reductions is consistent with a global 1.5°C pathway. Nigeria could reach peak GHG emissions in this decade if it can mobilize the international support and private sector investment necessary to achieve this target. Also, several policy commitments have been made by the FGN to implement the unconditional contribution.

These include eliminating kerosene lighting by 2030, a 50% reduction in the fraction of crop residues burnt by 2030, and implementing forest programmes to deliver a 20% GHG emission reduction. Nigeria's vision on climate change is set out in its recently updated National Climate Change Policy. According to the policy, by 2050, Nigeria will be a country of low-carbon, climate-resilient, and high-growth circular economy with an emissions reduction of 50% compared to the current levels and is moving towards having net-zero emissions across all sectors in a gender-responsive manner. In November 2021, at the 26th Conference of Parties (COP26) in Glasgow, President Muhammadu Buhari announced Nigeria's commitment to achieving net-zero emissions by 2060.

Nigeria's energy sector accounts for about 65% of the country's total greenhouse gas emissions. On the 24th of August 2022, the country's Energy Transition Plan (ETP) was launched. Although the ETP aims to achieve a net-zero economy by 2060, several areas need to be addressed to achieve this goal. These include identifying and supporting low-carbon energy solutions for low-income Nigerians, developing natural gas infrastructure, modernizing biomass utilization, improving energy efficiency in small and medium enterprises, and reducing dependency on foreign climate finance.

The ETP highlights the importance of Bio-Energy with Carbon Capture and Storage (BECCS) in achieving net-zero emissions. Still, Nigeria must also focus on cost-effective and realistic solutions, such as expanding forest cover, while waiting for CCS technology to catch up. Coordination among relevant government institutions is also crucial to harmonize policies, strategies, and targets to ensure the success of the ETP.

Conclusion

Sustainable, climate-neutral energy is crucial for economic and social development, and the global climate crisis can only be addressed through a worldwide energy transition. Ambitious NDCs are necessary to achieve 65% renewable energy generation by 2030. The largest energy consumers and carbon emitters from the G20 and G7 must lead with frameworks and investments supported by increased climate finance and knowledge transfer. Furthermore, a rapid transition requires political commitment and international cooperation, focusing on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

News

FCTA committed to addressing health challenges

THE Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) on Monday in Abuja reiterated its commitment to address the health challenge, improve welfare and well being of senior citizens in the nation's capital.

Alhaji Sani Amar, Director, Social Welfare Services Department, FCT, stated this during a one-day reach-out sensitisation workshop for older persons held at Karon Majigi Community in Abuja Municipal Area Council.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that reach out was organised by the FCTA in conjunction with the National Senior Citizens Centre (NSCC), FCT Stakeholders Consultative Forum, to commemorate the World Hearing Day 2023.

Amar revealed that the FCT Health and Human Services Secretariat was working assiduously to ensure the inclusion and the integration of the senior citizens into the FCT Health Insurance.

He also said the FCT Administration had quite a number of programmes, including social and empowerment programmes and others that would enhance the living conditions of the older adults in the territory.

"Every year we have quite a number of programmes that we roll out and for the 2023 and this is the first programme we are starting for the year; others are in the pipeline.

"We are here today at KaronMajigi Community in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC) to commemorate the International World Hearing Day, 2023, as enshrined by the United Nations.

March 3 of every year is a day set aside to celebrate World Hearing Day.

"We are here with the team of medical doctors from the National Hospital and Women Council to assist in examining and diagnosis of older persons with hearing problems and some other health challenges.

"We are targeting 70 older persons and as you can see inside the palace the examination is ongoing and quite a number of persons have been examined."

The director commended the efforts of the District Head of KaronMajigi Community for mobilising senior citizens in the area in spite of short notice.

Dr Ogugua Osi-ogbu, the Co-chair 1, National Senior Citizens Centre, FCT Stakeholders Consultative Forum, said the forum was concerned about catering for the needs of older adults in the FCT.

Osi-ogbu, who is a Consultant, Geriatrician and Head Geriatric Unit, National Hospital, explained that the aim of the outreach was to sensitise older adults to how to keep their ears healthy and avoid things that could cause hearing loss.

"We are here as the National Senior Citizens Centre FCT Stakeholders Consultative Forum to commemorate World Hearing Day with the theme Ear and Hearing Care for all.

"We want a situation where everyone knows about how to

keep his or her ear healthy, how to prevent hearing loss and identify those with hearing loss.

Osi-ogbu said the exercise would also advise them on how to go for treatment that would make them continue to engage with the society because without hearing is difficult for one to socially engage.

"Hearing loss is one of those risk factors for social isolation, we know people developed depression with hearing loss issues and we don't want our older adults to be victims.

"As NSCC FCT Stakeholders, we are concerned about catering for the needs of older adults in the FCT and that is why we targeted this outreach in KaronMajigi to the older adults and specifically talking to them how to keep their ears healthy.

They are also told "things to do to prevent damage to the ears such as exposure to loud noises and using the cotton bud."

She noted that ear naturally had a cleansing mechanism, saying: "We don't need to clean our ears. The wax that we see at the outer ear is the dead that has gathered all the debris from the canal of the ear and comes out.

"All we need to do at that point is to pick up that wax from

the outer ear, discard it and wash our hands after that.

"So we have no need to clean the ear at anytime and if for any reason you are hearing sounds in the ears or suddenly feel like one ear is not hearing well as loudly as the other ear or you need people to speak a lot louder for you to hear them, that may be that you are developing a hearing loss.

"And you need to see the Ear, Nose and Throat doctor (ENT) so that they can do adequate evaluation for why that may be developing."

Also, the District Head of KaronMajigi Community, Alhaji Yunusa Bako, thanked the FCT Administration and the forum for the choosing the community to benefit from the medical outreach.

"Actually I will like to commend the FCT Minister of State, Dr Ramatu Aliyu for coming to our aide here in KaronMajigi Community and sensitising the senior citizens and the medical outreach.

"Senior citizens deserve proper healthcare services because without health nothing works."

Banks yet to start cash payment, customers stranded

COMMERCIAL banks in some satellite towns of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) had yet to start cash payment, leaving customers stranded and frustrated in spite of the

LEADERS, development partners and government ministries have called for a universal guaranteed access to water and sanitation services in Africa.

The stakeholders resolved this in a communique issued at the end of the 21st African Water Association International Congress and Exhibition.

The event was held at the 7th Faecal Sludge Management Conference in Abidjan.

The communique, issued on the African Development Bank's (AfDB) website, acknowledged the burden of inadequate water and sanitation in Africa.

It also took cognisance of the need for closer coordination among the government, development partners and industry to mobilise financing to strengthen the water sector.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that 1,600 delegates and representatives from 146 international companies participated in the joint conference, co-sponsored by the African Development Bank.

Dr Silver Mugisha, president of the African Water and Sanitation Association, said sanitation would be a big part of the Association's focus.

Supreme Court ruling.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) correspondent who monitored banks in Nyanya, Mararaba and Karu in Abuja on Tuesday, reports that none of

Stakeholders seek universal access to water, sanitation

"Let's not just say that we have added sanitation, but build it in from the ground up. Let's go with action-oriented take-homes to cause a difference.

"Whatever we do, we must do it in the best interest of people, and hopefully, this conference has provided a few things we can use," Mugisha said.

AfDB's Director of Water Development and Sanitation, Oswald Chanda, stressed the importance of innovation, partnerships and new approaches in strengthening water service delivery.

Chanda expressed optimism about the potential partnerships formed during the congress to implement innovations and help the water sector.

He also advocated for knowledge strengthening and promotion of business models to increase efficiency and scale up access to water and sanitation.

The director further called for including beneficiary voices in the sector's conversations.

"We need more voices of beneficiaries in these

conversations so that they can provide that much-needed experience and knowledge from the ground," Chanda said.

More so, he reiterated the Bank's commitment to supporting actions, initiatives and innovations that would improve livelihoods and make a difference for Africans.

Meanwhile, Drissa Diomande, Chief of Staff to the Ivorian Minister for Hydraulics, Sanitation and Hygiene, unveiled the Abidjan 2023 Declaration on access to water and sanitation.

Diomande said the communique recognised the need for an integrated approach to managing water resources to achieve Sustainable Development Goals six by 2030.

The chief of staff recommended that the Declaration be presented during the United Nations Water Conference in March 2023 in New York.

The next African Water and Sanitation Association congress will take place in February 2024 in Guinea Conakry.(NAN)

FG lauds British charity combating out-of-school crisis

THE Federal Government has lauded the British charity, IA-Foundation for the commitment shown by the charity in tackling the out-of-school crisis in Nigeria.

Vice-President Prof. Yemi Osinbajo gave the commendation in a message to IA-Foundation, to commemorate the fourth annual Black-Tie and Charity Ball of the organisation.

Osinbajo's message is contained in a message e-mailed to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) by the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of IA-Foundation, Mrs Ibronke Adeagbo, in Abuja on Tuesday.

The event with theme, "Securing the Future", is scheduled to hold on March 8 at Bishop Justus CE School in Bromley, Kent in England.

Osinbajo hailed IA-Foundation for offering strategic support to Nigeria's education sector,

saying that the charity had contributed immensely to Nigeria's growth.

According to the vice-president, IA-Foundation has made remarkable impact in reducing the number of girls who are unable to access education, due to poverty, insecurity or poor orientation about the importance of acquiring education.

Similarly, the Chair of the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission, Mrs Abike Dabiri-Erewa, commended the foundation for its consistency in the past four year in ensuring that children who were previously out of school were able to access quality education.

"For an organisation that has over 95 per cent of its leadership based in the UK to have executed projects across nine states in Nigeria, and also helping 100 children back to school is highly commendable.

Dabiri-Erewa called on other Nigerians and Nigerian-owned businesses in the diaspora to emulate IA-Foundation and be part of the development and transformation of Nigeria.

IA-Foundation Black-Tie and Charity Ball is an annual event, organised to intimate well-meaning individuals and the corporate world about the education deficit in Nigeria and mobilise resources to provide quality education for out-of-school children in Nigeria.

Fund generated from the event is channeled towards support for pupils and families, especially the girl-child; persons with disabilities and orphans.

Some high-profile Nigerians, including the Nigerian High Commissioner to the UK, Amb. Sarafa Ishola, and a former Central Bank of Nigeria Governor, Alhaji Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, are expected at the event.

Also expected at the event is the Chairman of the Nigeria-Business Forum, Prince Folabi Andu, and other eminent Nigerians residing in the UK.

Nigeria, Africa's most populous country has about 20.2 million kids out-of-school, a development caused by lingering insecurity, poverty and other issues plaguing the country.

However, IA-Foundation, which is based in Kent, took up the challenge four years ago, providing scholarships to hapless kids, to enable them get quality education.

The foundation is active in nine states in Nigeria, including Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Delta, Ekiti, Kwara, Nasarawa State and the Federal Capital Territory.

The charity has also spent handsomely to provide portable water in some poor communities in Lagos, Nigeria's economic hub. (NAN)



Emefiele

the banks have started paying customers over the counter or via Automated Teller Machines (ATM).

NAN reports that the apex court had on Friday nullified the ban on use of the old N200, N500 and N1000 banknotes saying the notes still remained legal tender until Dec. 31.

NAN reports that the gates to the banks' are still being manned by security officials who barely permit the numerous customers with complaints to go into the banking hall in turns.

Some of the customers who spoke with NAN said the current development in banks was frustrating.

A customer seen at Zenith Bank, Mr Isa Abdullahi, said: "I have been here since 10 a.m. and this is 3 p.m. to complain about some failed transactions but I was refused entry.

"The crowd here is discouraging. They are not even listening to anybody here.

"Some people said that after the Presidential and National Assembly elections, the Naira will be released everywhere

but that is not the case.

"We are suffering so much in this country. You will have money but you cannot access your money," he said.

Also, Mrs Angel Abiodun, another customer at the First Bank, Karu road described the situation as annoying.

"I am helpless. I came to my bank to complain about my expired ATM card and also to collect some cash but I was not allowed in.

"If I knew that the situation will turn like this, I wouldn't have deposited all my money in the bank even when they told us to take our old notes to the bank.

"The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) should do something and save us from this mess," she said. Also, some PoS operators also confirmed to NAN that the new Naira notes were still scarce.

A POS operator, Gami Johnson, said: "I wonder what is happening. We are yet to see the old or new Naira".

NAN reports that the CBN is yet to respond to the apex court judgment on the old notes. (NAN)



Osibanjo

Feature

Towards national rebirth through education, self reformation

During the recent convocation ceremony of the Federal University in Ekiti state, there were calls for the re-evaluation of values in education for national rebirth. OJO OLADELE in this report captures one of such calls. OJO OLADELE writes.

A popular adage has it that if you think education is expensive, try ignorance.

This perhaps gives the thought that investing in education may not be a wrong idea after all even though many perceive such venture as too driven by money consciousness. This saying no doubt corroborates the submission of a frontline educationist Prof Wahab Olasupo Egbewole the vice chancellor, University of Ilorin in Kwara state when he posited during the 7th Convocation Ceremony and Conferment of Degrees at the Federal University, Oye-Ekiti in Ekiti state recently.

According to him, "Nigeria is in deep throes today as virtually every aspect of our national life is in crisis and not a few are hopeless that a solution could be found.

The submission "Experiences all over the world show that education takes the lead in national rebirth. Some would argue that it is good leadership that leads the process of national rebirth, but a deeper reflection would show that good leadership is the product of good education.

"A good leader is one who has knowledge, skills and good character. And that is what education is all about.

"With due sense of modesty, I recommend that educational institutions should take the lead in taking Nigeria to the next level just simply by prioritising and inculcating good character in students over providing them with knowledge and skills."

According to the varsity don/legal luminary, providing knowledge without building character, he said is mere schooling, while learning (education) is providing opportunities for students to acquire knowledge, skills and good character. "It is in the self interest of educational institutions to promote learning because the greatest detractors of the education system in Nigeria today are those who went to school but left without acquiring good character." While stressing the need to reform Nigeria's educational system, most likely through the use of technology, the erudite professor maintained that, "In today's world, educators aspiring to be relevant must seek to provide solutions to the challenges of schooling, using the integration of innovative pedagogies, emerging technologies and best practices for teaching, learning and research that lead to reflection, problem-solving, informed decision -making, and practical experience." With the ability to train students' character, the legal luminary, in



his candid opinion, said that Nigeria's educational institutions have performed very poorly. Having the privilege to choose the subject of discourse, he said, "I have taken the opportunity to invite attention to the conundrum that education seems incapable of solving the problems of Nigeria. It appears that the more widespread and opportunities education becomes in the country, our problems multiply and complicated. Yet the goal of education is to enhance the problem-solving ability of its recipients. "Growth over the years in education sector as evidently proved, has without mincing words led to solving the problems of the world, breakthroughs in finding solutions to challenges in the different facets of human life at the interval of decades." Stressing further, Egbewole, in his analysis said, "Today, such breakthroughs occur almost weekly because of the unprecedented growth in education across the country. "It is puzzling that while education has continually solved the problems of the world, it has not had the same effect in Nigeria."

Many educational institutions; no values Although Nigeria like the rest of the world, according to the vice chancellor, has demonstrated faith in education as the primal factor in human development, he added that this has been exemplified by the phenomenal growth in educational institutions and opportunities. Tracing the country's educational growth to strengthen his submission, the VC recalled that, "From having only one university in the 1950s and only six in the 1060s, the country today (2022) has 221 universities (50 federal, 60 states and 111 private). He disclosed that there are now 152 polytechnics (64 federal, 31 states and 58 private) and 143 Colleges of Education (71 federal, 50 states and 22 private). Aside all these, he said there are, in addition, numerous other tertiary institutions, such as Schools of Nursing, Health Technology, Monotechnics and a plethora of certificate /Diploma awarding institutions located across the country. While lamenting lack of positive successful impact regarding the existence of the above listed educational institutions towards the growth and development of

the country and her citizenry, he quickly added that the trend has not excluded primary and secondary schools that feed the tertiary institutions. "It is indeed a puzzle that in spite of the existence of all these institutions and millions of Nigerians who have graduated from them, Nigeria still earned the unenviable epithet of being the poverty capital of the world." Dwelling on the matter of training of students' character, he posited that, "My candid opinion is that Nigeria's educational institutions have performed very poorly." According to him, "When institutions declare during convocation ceremonies that graduating students have been found worthy in learning and character, it only implies that they have not been found guilty of negative character such as examination malpractice, cultism, rape and theft. This follows from the maxim in litigation that a person must be presumed innocent until proven guilty." For students to be declared to be of good character, the Senior Advocate posited that, "Students must possess virtues like honesty, courage, compassion, temperance, liberalism, positive ambition, patience, friendliness, modesty, justice, sense of appreciation, feeling of care, confidence, courtesy, humility, creativity, diligence, generosity, spirit of forgiveness, selflessness kindness, love, moderation, sense of responsibility, simplicity, sincerity, tolerance and above all integrity." He, however, advised that, "It is better left to each educational institution to determine how widespread are these virtues among students of nowadays." But he also observed that there is growing evidence that educational institutions have not inculcated these virtues in their students "Majority of those who commit atrocities in the society today are products of our school system. The courts and the media are replete with records of people who are supposedly educated; some to a very high level and have demonstrated lack of virtues. "My take is that the ability of educational institutions to inculcate virtues in students has been compromised by their gradual adoption of vices that exist in the larger society. It is therefore now generally accepted that educational institutions are microcosms of the society".



By JENNIFER YARIMA

needs of women and girls. According to the United Nations, women make up only 22 percent of artificial intelligence workers globally.

A global analysis of 133 artificial intelligence systems across industries found that 44.2 percent demonstrate gender bias and a survey of women journalists from 125 countries found that 73 percent had suffered online violence in the course of their work.

"From the earliest days of computing to the present age of virtual reality and artificial intelligence, women have made untold contributions to the digital world in which we increasingly live" United Nations stated. "Their accomplishments have been against all odds in a field that has historically neither welcomed nor appreciated them".

The society has rated women so low and has placed little value on them that certain responsibilities are seen to be best handled by men alone for effective results. Most people are of the opinion that women are not intelligent enough to read some courses like computer science and other related courses that are termed hardest which needs intelligence.

World Health Organization Regional Director for Africa, Dr Matshidiso Moeti said

International Women's Day is a day women the world over look forward to celebrating their success and also find out the missing link. It is marked every March 8, in honour of women's contributions to society culturally, economically, politically and other relevant areas of living.

It is also an occasion to consider the steps taken towards achieving gender equality in all spheres of life and the work that remains to be done to guarantee it.

The theme for this year's International Women's Day is "DigitALL: Innovation and Technology for gender equality". This brings to bear the role of innovative technology plays in promoting gender equality and meeting the health and development

"Globally, the increasing number and use of mobile phones and internet connectivity have facilitated access to health information and services. The adoption of digital health other technological innovations has positively impacted



International Women's Day: Closing existing digital gender divide

electronic medical records, health data management, security and effective communication between health workers, patients and community stakeholders".

God in His grace has endowed women to be very productive in life and to handle tougher assignments that beat the imagination of many. Many women have ventured into diverse fields of technology and have proven their worth over times. In the world today, we have engineers, computer scientists, female pilots, modern farmers who have brought their brains to do extra ordinary things that have changed the narrative of women globally and have contributed to transforming the health needs of all people.

The clamor for recognition by women is never to compete with the men, but it's not for them to be buried under the pressure that they are competitors. Women want to be carried along, their views respected in the scheme of things and to avoid all forms of stereotypes that place them at a disadvantage position.

A woman's capacity has no limit considering the multi-tasking roles she plays within and outside her home. The doggedness of women is saluted as they spice up the world with their innovative tendencies.

The concern is the frequency of violence and harassments women face in different aspects. More needs to be done to remove the digital

gender divide, mainly impacting vulnerable and girls especially those in rural and remote areas with low education and socioeconomic status.

This challenge can be addressed by creating awareness about the digital gender divide, advocating for policies and legal frameworks to keep women and girls safe. Promotion of women's participation in science, technology and ICT. Doing these will ensure that disadvantaged and vulnerable women and girls also benefit equitably from digital and technological innovations for their improved health.

Lets' collectively work to ensure that women and girls are safe online.

God in His grace has endowed women to be very productive in life and to handle tougher assignments that beat the imagination of many. Many women have ventured into diverse fields of technology and have proven their worth over times. In the world today, we have engineers, computer scientists, female pilots, modern farmers who have brought their brains to do extra ordinary things that have changed the narrative of women globally and have contributed to transforming the health needs of all people.



By HOSEA NYAMLONG

protected and respected at all times. While God gave humanity the authority to kill and eat other forms of life such as animals, the murdering of other human beings is expressly forbidden, with a penalty.

It is believed that all human beings of any race, color, religion, language, gender, character, physical ability, social status, etc are to be equal. Therefore, human beings must be treated in a manner that commiserates with this moral status that respects and values the lives of humans.

Unfortunately, in Nigeria, these appear to be different, for any small provocative or misunderstanding among citizens without regional, religious, political, or ethnic grounds. Some Nigerians are ready to engage in the gruesome murder of fellow citizens.

This is a great threat to the younger generation in the country, which has given a wrong impression and perception of life. They looked at life as cheap and can be taken away within a

Wikipedia defines the sanctity of human life as the principle that implied protection regarding aspects of sentient life that are said to be holy, sacred, or otherwise of such value that they are not to be violated.

The phrase "sanctity of life" reflects the belief that, because people are made in God's image, human life has an inherently sacred attribute that should be

Sanctity of human life

twinkle of an eye of anyone or a group of persons without any regrets, be it political, religious, ethnicity, or even criminally minded of such groups or persons.

However, in 2015, during the presidential elections in Nigeria, when President Jonathan Good luck conceded defeat to President Muhammadu Buhari. He said that "no Nigerian should kill or maim himself or herself because of his presumed 2015 second term ambition, saying that "any ambition I have at any time is not worth the blood of Nigerians."

"He maintained that he would "never, ever expect a Nigerian to spill a drop of his blood because of him. Nigerians should always preach peace and unity in all their engagements. This is the only way the country will achieve greatness." he said.

It is believed that some of the fallen heroes did not only fight for the survival of this country but of other African countries and beyond. The

fallen heroes and their blood were to keep Nigeria one in the spirit of togetherness and fairness.

But today, Nigerians prefer to attain to the call of ethnicity, politically, and religiously before that of their motherland.

Sadly, in the just concluded 2023 Presidential and National House of Assembly elections. Sahara reported that at least two people were killed during electoral violence in Ndi Agwu community of Abam, Arochuku Local Government Area of Abia State, Southeast Nigeria.

The incident occurred during Saturday's February 25, 2023, presidential and National Assembly elections. It was gathered that one of the victims, identified as Samuel Arunsi Eze, was allegedly beheaded by political thugs.

To this end, many have argued that the heterogeneous makeup of Nigeria, makes it harder to

get every citizen under one National Identity. Some have also viewed it as a rationale by pointing out the gaps and divisions between our ethnicity, religion, politics, etc.

Nigeria is neither the first nor the only plural multicultural nation in the world. Nigeria can solve the problem of disunity by promoting the sanctity of human life by respecting and upholding the value of human life as the cornerstone of living. The fundamental of this truth is to recognize the value of our own lives and the lives of others as sacrosanct.

As the country prepares for the Governorship election on March 11, 2023, across the 36 states excluding Ekiti, Osun, and Anambra, citizens should respect the electoral processes and vote for the candidates of their choice without causing any fight that would result in the killing of the lives of the citizens. Life is precious, we must protect and guide it jealously.

IT'S a norm in Nigeria that at certain times, you see people travelling to their home town, and you will be like why are they travelling passionately.

For example, during some certain months of the year, you can see most Igbos from all corners of Nigeria travelling to their home towns. And, you will be wondering what is in these festivals that they are so much passionate about and are willing to spend time and money on.

In this 21st century, Festivals in Nigeria has become not just a cultural thing but a tourist. There are numerous festivals practiced in Nigeria. For this article's sake, I will be discussing only the major festivals.

Argungu fishing festival

The Argungu Fishing Festival is an annual four-day festival in the town of Argungu in Kebbi state located in the north-western part of Nigeria.

This festival started as far back as 1934. It began as a celebration that marks the end of the centuries-old hostility between the Sokoto Caliphate and the Kebbi Kingdom. The festival is held on the Sokoto River around February or March. Thousands of fishermen equipped only with nets compete to catch the largest fish. And the winner is crowned.

The festival contains other attractions like dance and music, sporting competitions and exhibits of arts and crafts.

This festival has become a national heritage whereby people from various parts of the world come to see or look at this festival.

Ikeji Arondizuogu

Ikeji Arondizuogu is a popular cultural festival in Imo state that brings the Igbo-speaking community around the world together to celebrate in this ancient town.

It started way back to five centuries ago and it is acclaimed to be the biggest Pan-Igbo cultural community festival with a strong heritage, coupled with international recognition.

It is arguably the biggest cultural festival in Igboland and the largest gathering of masquerades in Africa. The festival is marked with colourful displays of different masquerades such as *Ogionu*, *Mgbadike*, *Nwaaburuja* and *Ozoebune*; prestigiously parading and dancing in the market square to the admiration of the public.

There is no year that passes where you won't witness an increase in grandeur, display, dance, sophistication and all-inclusive participation of all Arondizuogu people and friends.

This festival is done around March or April to celebrate the New Year festival. The festival lasts for four days to signify and correspond to the four market days in the Igboland which are Eke, Orie, Afo and Nkwo.

Each of these days has a special significance and represents one of the several dimensions of Ikeji – a festival renowned for sumptuous feasting, fascinating

masquerades, pulsating rhythms, and colourful performances. It serves to unify and foster ties among Aro people who are spread across the entire Igbo speaking states and part of Cross River state and even those in the Diaspora.

During Ikeji festival, on the last day, a ram is usually tied to a pole at a popular market square with a single thread. Somebody with the strongest protection from any juju of whatever type is expected to leisurely walk to the ram amidst heavy attempts

spectators. This will be followed by visits to his house by fellow kinsmen with food and wine for elevating the status of his village. Each year this is used to commemorate the person in Arondizuogu and neighbouring towns with the strongest juju.

Eyo festival

The Eyo Festival is annually held in Lagos, Nigeria around. It is also called *Adamu Orisha* play.

Back in the day, it was held to escort the soul of a departed king or Chief and to usher in the new king or chief. That's why the



Cultural festivals projecting Nigeria's positive image



with juju from other people to knock him down, maim him or kill him. Only the brave can participate, while the not so brave will either abstain from or remain with the crowd as spectators.

Only the brave can stand forward from the crowd, one after another and approach the tree with a view to untying the ram. However, each contender will be attacked by forces that are beyond the scope of this article to explain, with a view to stopping him from reaching the ram. If overwhelmed, he will beat a retreat back to his starting point. Until eventually, the bravest among the masquerades participating in the competition for that year's festival, after overcoming all odds, will reach the ram and untie it and take it, to thunderous applause by the

white-clad masquerade representing the spirits of the dead referred to as "*ogogoro Eyo*" comes out to dance in the festival.

The word "Eyo" also refers to the masquerades that come out during the festival. It is widely believed that Eyo is the forerunner of the modern-day carnival in Brazil. No one is permitted to wear a cap during the festival.

Calabar carnival

The Calabar Carnival is known as the biggest street party in Nigeria attracting over 50, 000 costumed participants and over 2 million spectators and it is being broadcasted not only by local television but international media outlets like CNN and BCC carried it.

It is a one-month long celebration that starts from 1st

December to 31st every year. It involves carnival teams marching across the streets where they engage in colourful displays and competitions from which winners are selected and awarded. Participating teams usually rehearse for months in advance before the carnival date itself

It started in Calabar in 2006, including band competitions, a parade, and food and dancing across the country.

Ofala festival

The Ofala Festival also called **Ofala Nnewi**, is an annual cultural ceremony practiced by the indigenes of Onitsha in Anambra State, South-West Nigeria.

The festival is described as the most important surviving traditional ceremony of Onitsha indigenes which is celebrated

within two days mostly in December and January in honour of the *Obi of Onitsha*.

The festival starts with a traditional twenty-one-gun salute followed by an all-night royal gong (Ufie) drumming, dancing and cultural activities.

Sango festival

The Sango Festival is known as **World Sango Festival** and is usually held in August at the palace of the Alaafin of Oyo. The festival which is observed in over forty countries in the world is held in honour of Sango, the third king of the Oyo who became the deity of thunder and fire.

This festival runs for a week attracting over 20,000 spectators from all over the world. It is also recognized by UNESCO as a cultural heritage.

Source: FastLagos

IMAGES

BRITISH AMERICAN FLYOVER

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



Closeup view of the Flyover from Dogon Karfe approach



Long shot of the Flyover captured by our lenses



Another view of the Flyover



Closer shot of the flyover



Second constructed bridge after the British American flyover



View of the flyover from Terminus



Photo shows the lane from Dogon Karfe to Terminus completed



Shot under the flyover

PHOTOS: DANLADI DUK

Odd World

'Man slammed for being 'unrealistic'

A woman has told how her husband's actions were really starting to irritate her as whenever she went to breastfeed when they were out he would tell her not to, claiming it is not safe

A mum has grown irritated by her husband as he did not allow her to breastfeed their newborn in public - he has since had to apologise for his actions.

The woman claims that whenever she felt she was in a comfortable position to breastfeed their baby she would try to do so but her husband would tell her not to and get her to pass the baby over to him.

The husband says that doing this in certain public situations is not safe, like in the back of taxis, but she says sometimes it just needs to be done, but he has not been comfortable with it.

Taking to Reddit, the woman, who remained anonymous, wrote: "It's really starting to irritate me. Initially, I was not comfortable with doing it, but if I'm not facing people and I can cover or obstruct my nipple I am fine.

"Whenever I try to feed our loved

one he will tell me no and ask that I pass her over to him. Even when she is crying or fussing and it's clear she wants feeding to calm down he is still adamant that I not feed in public."

The mum does not have a blanket to cover up as she prefers for her baby to be able to breathe freely.

Since raising this with her husband, she claims he has been understanding and has come around to her point of view, which she explained in updates to the post.

"I spoke to him and he said he doesn't think it's safe to breastfeed in taxis and he wants me to use a courtesy blanket in other public spaces. He says he will buy one if I'd like," she wrote.

"My husband apologised and said he has to deal with his insecurities. He said I should feed our loved one when she is hungry and again that he is sorry."

In response, many agreed the husband had been acting unreasonably and he should get past his insecurities as it is a crucial part of feeding a baby.

Source: *The Mirror*



Nigerians are voting new leaders

LAST Saturday the 23rd February 25th 2023 marked another significant moment in the annals of Nigeria's history as citizens came out in their numbers to vote for their president and parliamentary representatives across the nation. The election was anticipated to replace the incumbent, President Muhammadu Buhari who is about rounding-up his two tenures as constitutionally permitted as well as respective tenures of other parliamentarians at the National Assembly.

About 18 prospective candidates participated at the presidential polls, the contenders cutting across all façade of contemporary accomplishments with intimidating credentials at their disposals. Evidentially, the present elections will be the sixth exercise since Nigeria's return to the present democratic dispensation in 1999.

For the legislative elections, polls were conducted in all 109 senatorial districts and 360 constituencies in all the 36 states of the country including the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. It was an election most citizens of the country were not prepared to miss.

About 93.4 eligible voters out of the nation's population put at over 200 million registered and exercised their democratic franchise. Out of these eligible voters are significant number of youths of the nation who are presently feeling completely left out and or sidelined in the act of governance. This group of vulnerable individuals mostly unemployed with no basic financial empowerment have been easy recruits for hardliners, fanatics, insurgents including other criminally minded individuals consistently causing sleepless nights for innocent and law abiding citizens.

Prior to the elections, many had predicted high degree of uncertainty which pundits' had opined would not auger well for the most populous black nation of the world. If my memory has not failed, prior to the 2015 general elections, a few multinational bodies had equally predicted that the then traumatizing political brouhaha necessitated by unabated waggling would drag the nation into chaotic and unpleasant circumstances leading to possible disintegration of the nation. As God would have it however, all their predictions hit the dust giving the country another hopeful second chance or opportunity. Though this first elections were recorded rancor-free, many scholars and leaders of thought are grateful for the obvious fact that the polls took place in a peaceful atmosphere, hoping that others being anticipated should follow suit.

This is against the backdrop of skepticism that the polls would perhaps not take place in the first instance. In fact, pockets of political commentators had earlier also harangued that the problems of fuel scarcity, redesigned new naira notes hiccups and hardship coupled with unpalatable security situation in the country had become major factors which could ignite election shift. Added to this nasty development was the unswerving activities of insurgency and agitations by militant groups both in the north east and the south east axis of the nation.

To the glory of God however, both the much talked about presidential and parliamentary elections were held and as it is; credit must be given to both the Independent National Electoral Commission and the citizens of the nation for this successful conduct. That is not to however say that the elections was smooth all through without some significant hiccups

recorded. From all indications, some of the major problems recorded included the malfunction of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System, BVAS which in most cases failed to accredit voters using biometrics and or upload results.

This aside, the electorates were also thrown into muddle following relocation of several polling units and or collapsing of such units which did not capture citizens into more active ones. Interestingly, INEC had earlier informed our electorates that about 280 out of the 176,846 polling stations would not have elections due to lack of registered voters.

By and large however, most of the citizens were able to cast their votes enduring systematic and undesirable humanly created difficulties. Several others had to trek for many kilometers before reaching their polling units to cast their votes. This never give up spirit of theirs assisted them in no small measure towards making this country proud.

Beyond this however, Nigeria, the world's most populous black nation and Africa's largest economy still have a couple of elections left to warp-up the entire exercise in the country. So far, the two already conducted polls have solidly consolidated the fact that the country can get it right if we sincerely intend to achieve this objective. It has surely depicted the fact that nothing would be difficult to achieve if the desire to effect a positive impactful change is sought for in the interest of the majority.

In this regard, since the people of this country are halfway through completing these elections, it is incumbent on them to patriotically approach issues without any bias or political sentiments. Knowing too well how the country has become polarized along ethno-religious lines, it is high time the needful in done so as to save the nation from total disintegration.

Thus, even as we urge our political class to embark on positive change in their behavioral attitude, they must continue to exhibit exemplary lifestyle capable of healing our wounds and integrating the entire populace into a virile nation. In other words, our politicians must begin to accept the reality of the fact that as elected leaders, they have automatically become servant leaders who are prepared to be good listeners.

If there is any moment in time that Nigeria needs servant leaders, it is now. In the midst of these daunting challenges, such servant leaders will comprehend the fact that due to the biting economic realities of our time, the citizens of this nation obviously needs a shoulder to learn on. For the mere fact that the majority of the people of the nation have completely lost their bearings, only leaders who are compassionate and overwhelmed with loving kindness can ideologically motivate and propel the people to greatness and ensure that they are focused on a journey to the Promised Land.

We must as a people also not lose hope in this country and such leaders who are desirous of redressing our footsteps for the growth of this nation and the sake of our future generation must continue to serve this country well. Therefore, the time to believe and be more dedicated to our country is now. The time for us to appreciate dispassionately the great sacrifice of our founding fathers and ensure that we do all to protecting their dreams and the integrity of this country is certainly now or never.

View Point

A lifeline for Judges

By
**EBUN-OLU ADEGBORUWA,
SAN**

THE judgment of the Court is sequel to the suit filed by renown author and legal luminary, Dr. Sebastine Hon, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria, against the National Assembly, Revenue Mobilisation and Fiscal Allocation Commission, Attorney-General of the Federation and the National Judicial Council as the 1st to 4th defendants, respectively. In his affidavit in support of the case, Dr. Hon, SAN stated that as a legal practitioner who has practiced in all the levels of courts in Nigeria, he was aware that the poor pay for judicial officers is seriously affecting the quality of judgments and rulings being delivered and also the discharge of other functions associated with their office. He stated further that the current economic reality in the country requires that the salaries and allowances of judges be improved upon, urgently. The Claimant noted that the highest paid judicial officer in Nigeria, the CJN, currently earns about N3.4 million per annum, far below what is earned by such an officer in other countries. While quoting what all judicial officers currently earn as provided under Part IIB of the Schedule to the Certain Political, Public and Judicial Office Holders (Salaries and Allowances, etc) Amendment Act 2008, Dr. Hon, SAN averred that the said paltry sums have discouraged him from aspiring to become a judge.

About a week ago, the National Industrial Court, sitting in Abuja, directed the federal government of Nigeria to increase the salaries of all judicial officers in the country. In a landmark judgment delivered by the Honourable Justice Osatohanmwun Obaseki-Osaghae, the government was ordered to commence a monthly payment of N10 million to the Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN), N9 million to other Justices of the Supreme Court and the President of the Court of Appeal, N8 million to the Justices of the Court of Appeal and the Chief Judges of the Federal High Court and High Court of the States, Heads of the Sharia Court of Appeal and the President of the Customary Court of Appeal, while other judges of the Federal High Court, the State High Courts, Sharia Court and the Customary Court will earn N7 million, in that order. In addition, the Court held that the federal government shall continue to carry out a yearly or once in two years review of the salaries and allowances of all judicial officers. In its judgment, the court held that



Malami

the refusal of the government to review the salaries and allowances of judicial officers for fourteen years was unconstitutional, unlawful, adding that the National Industrial Court has the power to compel the government to do the needful. The judgment of the Court is sequel to the suit filed by renown author and legal luminary, Dr. Sebastine Hon, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria, against the National Assembly, Revenue Mobilisation and Fiscal Allocation Commission, Attorney-General of the Federation and the National Judicial Council as the 1st to 4th defendants, respectively. In his affidavit in support of the case, Dr. Hon, SAN stated that as a legal practitioner who has practiced in all the levels of courts in Nigeria, he was aware that the poor pay for judicial officers is seriously affecting the quality of judgments and rulings being delivered and also the discharge of other functions associated with their office. He stated further that the current economic reality in the country requires that the salaries and allowances of judges be improved upon, urgently. The Claimant noted that the highest paid judicial officer in Nigeria, the CJN, currently earns about N3.4 million per annum, far below what is earned by such

an officer in other countries. While quoting what all judicial officers currently earn as provided under Part IIB of the Schedule to the Certain Political, Public and Judicial Office Holders (Salaries and Allowances, etc) Amendment Act 2008, Dr. Hon, SAN averred that the said paltry sums have discouraged him from aspiring to become a judge. I have described the commendable efforts of Dr. Hon, SAN as a lifeline for the judges because it is long overdue. We have heard lamentations and complaints from judicial officers during their valedictory speeches, at times embarrassingly, on the state of wanton neglect of the judiciary. The judiciary remains one of the gateways to the economic progress of any nation as the mode and time of resolution of legal disputes are key issues to consider in investment decisions and also part of the indices for determining the ease of doing business. For anyone who has experienced the near-drowning syndrome while swimming or in accident situations, it is always a matter of lapping on to any and all things for immediate rescue or else life is gone. The appalling situation of the judiciary in Nigeria is not so very well appreciated by many. Without mentioning names,

there are judges who buy their own generators and fuel them in order to discharge their duties. Some buy stationery and even help to augment the meagre take home pay of those working with them in the courts. Some other judges have no drivers whilst some have no official accommodation. And do you know that when judges retire from service, they become orphans and their pension is not paid as and when due? It got so bad that a retired judge in Lagos recently had to approach the court to get the government to pay his pension. When those of them in service get to hear of such neglect, how do you think they will react? The judiciary had long been in urgent need of the kind of lifeline that Dr. Hon, SAN threw at them, for their survival and for the survival of Nigeria. We cannot pretend about that. For the lifeline to be of any value however, it must go with autonomy and independence for judges, especially at the State High Courts, where the muzzling of judicial officers by the executive arm of government has reached an epidemic proportion. What this has done is to turn the governors into some kind of emperors who can do no wrong. No matter the amount of money thrown at judges, it

will not make the desired impact if they are not free to decide cases in line with the prevailing law and their conscience. A rich man in chains is worse than a poor man who is free. We must all agree to allow our judicial officers the independence that they so richly deserve if justice is to bear its proper meaning. The seeming neglect of the judiciary by the other arms of government is rather unfortunate as in most cases, they need the courts more for them to function effectively. Just imagine the confusion that the Electoral Act 2022 has created already or even the issue of candidates participating in multiple primary elections. What about the case of public servants who want to actualize their political ambitions through the ballot? A nation with poorly paid judges is courting trouble for itself. Be that as it may, my focus here is beyond salaries and allowances of judges as that is only an aspect of the issues plaguing the judicial sector. My humble appeal is for My Lords to take this lifeline as a challenge of some sort. We as citizens have agonized on behalf of the judiciary for so long on how to achieve effective administration of justice. How do we eliminate the delays, the frustrations and the disappointments that lawyers and litigants go through every day in the courts? The situation in the Lagos State High Court for instance has reached a dead end. New cases filed in these courts remain in the Registry for months unattended to. The e-filing system has become the albatross of the judiciary in Lagos State. Presently, to get a permanent suit number, you have to embrace some prayer and fasting. And while you're at it, the mischief that was sought to be tackled through the case would have been consolidated by the adversary. What this means is that the court has gradually become a shield for wrongdoers, by default. When a system is subjected to such a grinding delay, then desperation will set in, by those who are eager to have their matters heard expeditiously. Corruption will surely follow such experience as court officials would readily cash in on the misfortune of litigants and lawyers to make brisk business. It is good that the Judiciary Committee of the Lagos Branch of the Nigerian Bar Association is already collaborating with the authorities of the judiciary in Lagos State to tackle this menace. Let other States take a cue to avoid this pitfall in the implementation of their e-filing systems



Governor Lalong fetes with Journalists

TUESDAY, March 7th 2023 was a day that will remain memorable in the lives of Gentlemen of the Press on the Plateau.

The memorable outing was two fold, first, the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) Chairman, Mr. Paul Jatau, and his executives received the state Governor, Simon Bako Lalong who paid a visit to the Press Center to take an assessment tour of the ongoing work and remodelling at the Center.

The NUJ Chairman took the Governor round the Press center, which is now wearing a new look. The physical structure had been completed, except for the furnishing. The Governor thereafter mandated the Accountant General to release funds for the contractors to furnish the centre within the next 3 weeks.

The second memorable aspect of the visit was when the Governor took to the table, at the center of the Press Center premises. The Press Center is popularly known as a relaxation hub in the state, and it does not only attract politicians, social advocates, rights activists, legal and diverse groups for press conferences, but it is a center for members of the Pen Profession.

Though this is not the first time the Governor is visiting, this time it was different. Lalong ordered for lunch, in company of some of his aides and the NUJ Chairman, even as other members of the Pen joined in the sitting.

As everyone was taking their order, He said he was excited sitting and eating lunch in his favourite spot, after such a long time and recalled how the Press Center had made a name in the state as a place for not only taking good food, but for social and intellectual interactions.

"After inspecting the projects, I said I must come here to the NUJ Press Center to make you know that I have remained a Press-friendly governor. I also came here today to see the level of work which my administration is undertaking here".

"I have gone round, seen the rehabilitation work and out of my excitement, I have also decided to have lunch here, after a very long time".

"This was where I used to take my lunch when I was practicing, each

time we run from the High Court, we come here to eat cheap and very good food. Not only that, we also used to see it as an opportunity to interact with Journalists", said Lalong.

Before coming to the Centre, the Governor had earlier paid a visit to some of the project sites being funded by his government including the British American Junction Flyover, Plateau Specialist Hospital, Jos new High Court Complex, Plateau Multi-door courthouse (PSMDC) to assess the level of work.

After lunch, he spoke to Press men and expressed excitement that the state should expect the visit of Nigeria's President, Mohammed Buhari,

to commission the numerous projects spread across the Senatorial Zones in the next few weeks.

He was also in high spirits as he told the Press that his Party, the All Progressives Congress (APC) will record another landslide victory in the Saturday, March 11, 2023 Governorship elections, just as it did in the Just concluded Presidential elections where Asiwaju Bola Tinubu emerged winner.



Governor Simon Bako Lalong (CON), SGS, Prof. Danladi Abok Atu and his commissioners eating at the NUJ Press Center, Jos during an inspection visit to the remodeled secretariat yesterday. Photo: Danladi Duk.

News

NDE begins enterprise, finance training for graduates

THE National Directorate of Employment (NDE) on Monday commenced a five-day training for 1,235 graduates under the NDE-Enterprise and Finance Counseling Clinic (NDE-EFCC).

Malam Abubakar Fikpo, Director General, NDE, disclosed this at the opening ceremony of the training in Yola.

Fikpo, represented by Mr Nuhu Bello, Acting Adamawa State Coordinator, said the training was simultaneously taking place in Anambra, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Gombe, Imo, Kebbi, Kogi, Kwara, Lagos, Ogun, Osun, Plateau, Sokoto and Taraba states.

"In all, a total of 1,235 participants have been selected from 18 states at the rate of 65 participants per state.

"The concept of the NDE-

efcc was borne out of the desire to provide opportunity for business persons facing challenges to obtain solutions through experience sharing with other businessmen.

"Or through counseling sessions with the established business persons that are part of the facilitators of the training," he said.

According to him, the clinic also seeks to guide them in solid business management.

He called on the participants to take advantage of the opportunity before them to succeed in life, as there were several persons without white collar jobs.

Ms Chikodi Ike, Head, Small Scale Enterprise, NDE Abuja said, the training developed as part of the effort of the NDE to equip unemployed graduates of tertiary institutions.

Ike, represented by Ms Aishatu Aliyu, Enterprise Development Officer (EDO) of the scheme, said that the

training would enhance their capacity to succeed in the chosen businesses.

Mrs Na'amar Jonnah, HOD Small Scale Enterprise, NDE Adamawa, congratulated the beneficiaries and advised them to actively participate throughout the training to acquire business skills.

She encouraged them to also be entrepreneurs and contribute to the socio-economic development of the state and county at large. Mr Bello Ishaq, who spoke on behalf of the participants, appreciated the Federal Government for the opportunity, and gave assurance that they would do their best and be employers of labour in their communities.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the participants were also counseled on the dangers of drug abuse by NDLEA. (NAN)

THE Ohanaeze Ndigbo Worldwide has charged Ndigbo in Lagos to maintain peace with their hosts before, during and after the forthcoming governorship election in the state.

This is as it also urges Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu to provide adequate security in Lagos, especially in various markets.

In a statement signed by Mazi Okechukwu Isiguzoro, Secretary-General Ohanaeze Ndigbo Worldwide, the apex Igbo organisation urges Ndigbo to vote their conscience in the March 11, 2023, governorship election but should do so in peace and harmony with their host communities.

Iziguzoro, however, retracted his earlier hostile posture against Governor

Maintain peace with your hosts – Ohanaeze to Ndigbo

Sanwo-Olu and congratulated the President-elect, Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu, on his victory in the 2023 presidential election.

He urged Tinubu to reach out to other contestants in the spirit of sportsmanship and that the national healing process should begin with the President-elect personally reaching out to Atiku Abubakar and Mr. Peter Obi, in person not through proxies

"We are aware of the tension and anxieties building up and ranging from the South and spreading to every part of the country due to the poor performance of INEC over the conduct of the 2023 presidential election and that Nigerians had lost confidence in the electoral

umpire but there should be room for improvement in the future," the statement said

He urged the President-elect not to victimise any section of the country, who voted against him but as the new political leader of the country, he should ensure that Nigerians, especially Ndigbo, are accommodated in the distribution of public amenities and provision of an enabling environment for businesses to thrive in the country.

He said the Ndigbo calls for the formation of Government of National Unity (GNU), saying this is one of the ingredients that will soothe nerves and restore peace across the country.

Sports

Saka, Odegaard... Haaland? Who is the best?

It may seem early to make that call - after all, there are still almost three months of the Premier League campaign to go and everything is left to play for at the top and bottom of the table.

But, like it or not, March signals the start of voting season for the individual player awards. So, who deserves the top accolade from what we have seen up until now?

MOTD2 pundit Micah Richards has picked the six players he feels deserve to be on the Professional Footballers' Association's shortlist for men's player of the year when it is announced next month - and reveals who would get his vote if he had to choose now.

Do you agree with him? See Micah's list below [in alphabetical order] and scroll down to the bottom of the page to find out his winner. You can choose your player of the year too.

Casemiro fact: Man Utd have lost just three of their 18 Premier League games this season when Casemiro has played, the same total they've lost in the seven games when he's been absent.

Micah's verdict: Casemiro has simply been brilliant in terms of the impact he has made on the rest of the United team.

We know what he did, and what he won at Real Madrid before he joined United in August, but there were still question marks over the signing.

He was coming to a new league at the age of 30. Could he adapt? Did he have the legs, or the hunger to succeed?

I wouldn't say I was on the fence myself but I didn't know how he would fit into Erik ten Hag's team. I didn't think he suited the high-energy style and high-pressing game that United were trying to play.

But he has proved all of us wrong, really. He's been United's stand-out performer, a threat from set-pieces and a real organiser and leader.

I remember when I was at City and David Silva and Yaya Toure joined, I would look at them and think I can trust them because they have been there and done it all before.

That's the effect Casemiro has had at United. He brings a calmness to the rest of the team and it was a real shock to see him have a bad game against Liverpool this weekend because that has just not happened before.

Haaland's match-winning hat-trick against Wolves in January was his fourth triple in the league this season, putting him on par with Harry Kane and Alan Shearer as the only players to have ever scored four hat-tricks in a single



Haaland

Premier League campaign

Haaland fact: Erling Haaland has scored 27 goals in the Premier League this season, the most by a Manchester City player in a single campaign in the competition. He passed the 23 goal mark reached by last season's Golden Boot winners, Tottenham's Son Heung-min and Liverpool's Mohamed Salah, after only 20 games.

Micah's verdict: It's not just the number of goals Haaland has scored that impresses me the most, it's the way he has been able to adapt so quickly to the Premier League after his summer move from Borussia Dortmund.

Of course there is still so much to improve about the way he fits into the way City want to play. But at 22 he is only going to get better, and he has made a phenomenal start, much better than I imagined.

We talked so much last season about City not having a number nine to finish off chances, especially in their Champions League semi-final defeat against Real Madrid when they ended up playing with defenders up front.

Haaland was the answer, and he has more than lived up to expectations.

I felt it was unfair to compare him with Liverpool's new striker Darwin Nunez at the start of the season, because that wasn't fair on Nunez. I squashed that so-called battle straight away.

Nunez was young and promising, and is showing us now what a great player he can become. Haaland already is one - he is a guaranteed



Saka has been with Arsenal since he was seven and is reportedly close to signing a new contract with the Gunners.

goalscorer - game after game, season after season.

Mitoma fact: No player has made more take-ons in the penalty area than Kaoru Mitoma (17) in the Premier League this season.

Micah's verdict: I think the other five players I've named are dead certs to be on the PFA's shortlist, but I have gone for a bit of a wildcard here.

There are no Liverpool players involved, as brilliant as they were against Manchester United on Sunday, because too many of them have had disappointing seasons.

I haven't included Kevin de Bruyne, either. He has still been very good for Manchester City, just not as brilliant as we know he can be.

Arsenal's Thomas Partey could have been in there, and Brentford striker Ivan Toney had a shout too. Harry Kane keeps on scoring goals for Tottenham as well. Those three were very close.

Fulham's Joao Palhinha has been one of the signings of the season but I don't think he quite makes the list - instead I am going to go with Mitoma at Brighton.

I love how he has essentially got a degree in dribbling - he studied how

to beat players as part of his thesis when he studied PE at university in Japan.

Some attacking players hit a purple patch where they are in form for three or four games, but Mitoma plays well every week - he might not score or get an assist each game he plays, but he always beats his man.

Martin Odegaard (Arsenal)

Odegaard fact: Martin Odegaard has created more chances than any other Arsenal player in the Premier League this season (59) - 47 of those have been from open play, with only Manchester United's Bruno Fernandes (60) and Manchester City's Kevin de Bruyne (52) creating more that way in 2022-23.

Micah's verdict: I love Odegaard's journey and the way he has put his career back on track.

He was big news when he joined Real Madrid aged 16 but then things seemed to drift and I was wondering if he would ever realise his potential.

Odegaard was 22 when he joined Arsenal on loan from Real in 2021 and you only get so many chances at big clubs. I wasn't sure whether he would take off, or fade away.

There are plenty of examples of

talented teenagers who don't quite live up to the hype. I always think of a player called Sergio Canales who I used to buy on the Football Manager game all the time.

In real life he also joined Real as a teenager, aged 18 in 2010, and he was another wonderkid, who I thought was the next best thing. For whatever reason it did not quite turn out that way, although Canales played for Spain and has had a very good career, he did not hit the heights I thought he would.

So, for Odegaard to turn things around for himself like this is impressive, especially in one of the world's most competitive leagues, and then to take the responsibility of captaincy to inspire his team too.

He has taken the challenge on and has helped turn Arsenal into title contenders, as the driving force in their midfield.

Odegaard reminds me of my old City team-mate David Silva in the way he wants to get into pockets of space, get on the ball and dictate play. He does it all so effortlessly too, and I love watching him play.



Rashford has scored 17 goals in 21 games in all competitions

Sports

Search for goalkeepers still on

Super Eagles' goalkeepers' trainer, Ike Shorunmu, has said that national team coaches are still scouting the Nigerian Professional Football League (NPFL) for quality players to beef up the team ahead of the forthcoming African Cup of Nations qualifiers and other international competitions.

Shorunmu, who disclosed that Francis Uzoho is still Super Eagles' number one goalkeeper and will keep his place in next month's African Nation's Cup qualifier against Guinea Bissau, said the coaches will give every Nigerian player, no matter where they ply their trade, equal opportunity to vie for inclusion in the team.

The former Super Eagles' goalkeeper told The Guardian that Uzoho's fine form for his club this season has given him the edge over the other goalkeepers, adding, however, that performance in the team's pre-game training sessions would also count on who man the post in the match.

"All the goalkeepers in the team are good, but I still believe Uzoho is still the number one based on his outstanding form so far in his club. Unless there is injury or loss of form in national team camp, there will not be any drastic changes in the team."

"I am still searching for more talents in the Nigerian league, but as an experienced coach, I can only test new goalkeepers in friendly games, not major International matches," he said.

Recently, a website, transfermarket.com statistics showed that Uzoho is currently Nigeria's best shot-



-Shorunmu

stopper in Europe this season, saying that Cyprus-based goalkeeper has kept more clean sheets than any of his compatriots in Europe this season.

The report declared that the in-form Omonia Nicosia star has kept eight clean sheets in 15 games, conceding 14 goals so far this term - the best return so far among top Nigerian goalkeepers in Europe.

According to the report, Uzoho, whose contract with Omonia ends at the end of this season, is attracting interest from French Ligue 1 club, Stade Reims. By the website's rating, Hapoel Jerusalem goalkeeper, Adebayo Adebeye, is Nigeria's

second best goalkeeper in Europe with six clean sheets and 16 goals conceded in 15 games, while Sebastian Osigwe is third in the ranking, having kept two clean sheets from three games for Lugano of Switzerland. Maduka Okoye is ranked fourth as he is yet to keep a clean sheet for Watford after two games this term.

He disclosed that the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) has not contacted him on the programme for the forthcoming African Cup of Nations' qualifier against Guinea Bissau, adding, "but I believe that after the elections next week, the NFF will unveil plans for the game."

Head Coach of the Nigeria U-20 side, Ladan Bosso has blamed the semi-final loss to Gambia on an Ugly tactical approach by their opponent, BSNSports.com.ng reports.

Flying Eagles failed to push on a record eight AFCON crown after a seventh-minute goal from Gambian forward Bojang sent the seventh-time champions out of the race for the title at the Cairo International Stadium on Monday night.

After conceding in the 7th minute of the encounter, the Flying Eagles went on to donate all proceedings, before striker Abdullahi missed a penalty kick in the 86th minute after a VAR check.

Despite the Gambian playing the last six minutes with a man down,

Bosso blames defeat on Gambia's ugly tactics

Nigeria couldn't break their defence which had not conceded a goal in the tournament.

According to Pulse sports, the head coach of the Flying Eagles blamed the defeat on the ugly style of play from their semi-final opponent.

"Sometimes playing ugly is a tactic, all you need is to dispossess your opponent of the ball, score & defend it."

Sometimes (it is all about) tactics. You can play ugly and win, we played better than Senegal in our first match but they still won," Bosso cries.

Despite the defeat, Nigeria will still be in Egypt with the Flying Eagles having a chance to settle for a bronze medal when they face Tunisia who also ceased out in the semis.



Bosso

AFCON U20: Ten-man Gambia stun Nigeria to reach final

TEN-Man Gambia sealed their placed in the final of the total energies U-20 Africa Cup of Nations on Monday night after beating giants Nigeria

1-0 in Cairo. The Young Scorpions talisman Adama Bojang scored the lone goal which secured Gambia their historic qualification to the final.

The baby scorpions held on to secure their slim victory despite defender Harunanjie received his marching orders in the 90th minute for a second yellow card of the semi-final clash.

Gambia will face their neighbours Senegal in the final on Saturday, 11 March at 19h00 local time (17:00 gmt) at the Cairo International Stadium.

The anglophone derby lived up to its billing in the Egyptian capital as Nigeria look to secure their place in yet another final while Gambia hope for a maiden showing in the final.

Gambia scored against the run of play when Ebrima Singhateh blocked a misplaced pass towards the path of Adama Bojang who slotted past the helpless Chijioke Aniagboso after seven minutes.

Abdoulie Bojang's young scorpions held on to go into the break with the narrow lead against the Flying Eagles who dominated possession but couldn't find a way past the solid defense.

Goalkeeper Paebou Dampha who was named Total Energies man of the match played a key role in the historic victory for the Gambia. The Waa Banjul fc

custodian was dominant inside his area winning all aerial balls against the Flying Eagles.

The busy goalkeeper conceded a penalty five minutes from time when his challenge impeded Ahmed Abdullahi.

Abdullahi missed the spot kick as it came off the post and the Young Scorpions survived to sail through to their first ever Total Energies U-20 Africa Cup of Nations final.

Gambia ended the match at ten following the dismissal of Haruna Rasid Njie in the 89th minute for an unsportsman like gesture.

Twice bronze medalist (2007 and 2021), Gambia is already doing better by qualifying for the final and will face its neighbor Senegal to try to win the gold medal for the first time.

Gambia played the last minutes of the match with ten men following Rashid Njie's second booking.

The Baby Scorpions will face Malick Daf's Senegal in what will be the repeat of the WAFU-A qualifying tournament in Mauritania which Senegal won courtesy of Samba Diallo's diving header.

The 2023 Total Energies U-20 Africa Cup of Nations is Gambia's fourth participation and they have qualified to the semi-finals in three of the four tournaments.

Osimhen named 2022 Best Foreign Athlete in Italy

VICTOR Osimhen's good fortunes this season in the Serie A have further earned him accolade as the Outstanding Foreign Athlete in Italy in 2022.

The Napoli talisman who leads the Italian topflight as highest scorer in the 2022/23 season on 19 goals also have additional two goals in the

UEFA Champions League. The 24-year-old Nigerian international was named the winner of the award Monday in a statement issued by the Foreign Press Association in

Italy who are the organisers of the prize. Napoli's President, Alfredo De Laurentiis, watched with admiration as his player received the honour.

The organisers stated further that Osimhen was given the prize "because of his fundamental to Napoli's extraordinary success, thanks to his excellent play, great power and vocation for scoring goals."

The Super Eagles gangling striker has been pivotal to Napoli's 15-point lead from 25 games. The Naples-based former club of Diego Maradona are on the verge of winning their first Scudetto since 1990.

Only few weeks back, Osimhen was named Serie A's Player of the Month of January while also going home with Goal of the Month gong for his magnificent volley that earned Napoli Win at Roma.

Globe Soccer Award also named him Emerging Player of the Year. He defeated the likes of Barcelona's Gavi and Real Madrid's Federico Valverde for the Best Young Football Talent prize for 2022.

He's likely going to be in the centre of 'transfer war' as several big clubs in European leagues are gunning for his signature in the summer despite still having two more years on his contract until June 30, 2025 at Napoli.



Osimhen

Sports



Manchester United 'eaten alive' in Liverpool thrashing

EX-MANCHESTER United captain Gary Neville did not hold back after watching his former side torn apart by a devastating Liverpool team on Sunday.

The 7-0 thrashing was United's joint-heaviest competitive defeat - matching those by the same score against Blackburn Rovers in April 1926, Aston Villa in December 1930 and Wolves in December 1931.

Six of the goals came in a stunning second-half Liverpool display, with their opponents simply unable - or possibly even unwilling - to cope.

Neville singled out captain Bruno Fernandes for individual criticism.

"The second half has been an absolute disgrace," he said on Sky Sports.

"It was a shambles, epitomised by captain Bruno Fernandes, who has been embarrassing at times.

"They've not understood the dangers of this fixture. The Manchester United players have been eaten alive out there."

Manchester United had not lost a match by seven goals since December 1931.

Fernandes' frustration at the events unfolding around him became more apparent as the half wore on.

At one point, when substitute Stefan Bajcetic skipped past him by the touchline, he stopped rather than trying to chase down the young midfielder.

Neville was also angered by Fernandes appearing to gesture to the bench when Marcus Rashford was substituted in the 85th minute, possibly to question why he was not taken off.

"He is holding his hands up asking: 'Why am I not coming off?'" Neville said during the game, before later adding: "I have had enough of Fernandes throwing his arms around, whinging at everyone, holding his face when touched.

"That wasn't a captain's performance from a Manchester United player and I am sure Erik ten Hag will deal with that.

"I am sure normal service will be resumed but they have to own that because that is a disgrace."

Fernandes also appeared to give the referee's assistant a push, which was pointed out by some fans on social media.

Fellow former Manchester

United captain Roy Keane was equally dismayed by Fernandes' behaviour.

"Fernandes' body language today was nothing short of disgraceful," Keane said on Sky Sports.

"A really talented boy, he's your captain, but his body language, waving his arms, not running back... you wouldn't be happy with him in your dressing room."

Despite his reaction on the pitch, Fernandes did front up to the media afterwards.

"It is very frustrating, disappointing, sad because it is a really bad result," he said.

It came seven days after the club won the Carabao Cup, beating Newcastle at Wembley for a first trophy since Ten Hag's arrival as manager last May.

The league form, by and large, had been strong too - after opening with two defeats, they had picked up 49 points from 22 matches before the Anfield annihilation.

But there were signs of trouble against Liverpool, even during a first half where they had some really good moments. Casemiro was uncharacteristically sloppy

Juventus' Kean sent off after 40 minutes of entry

ACCORDING to recent rumours, the Nigerian international is no longer content with his current club, and the Turkish outfit Fenerbahçe is considering an out-of-window transfer move for the star.

The former Burnley boss, on the other hand, has dispelled the report, claiming that the 26-year-old is content with Everton.

The Super Eagles attacker, whose contract on Merseyside is in its last 18 months, has been essential in the Toffees' fight to avoid the relegation zone.

Per the previous reports, the Blues are reportedly pressing ahead with a new deal to lengthen his time at the club, following the recent agreement with Jordan Pickford.

A Turkish media outlet, however, recently reported that the Nigerian star is "unhappy" and "wants to leave" the team amid transfer rumours.

When questioned about Iwobi's future at Everton, the 51-year-old manager addressed this and refuted

with his passes. Antony struggled to find team-mates with some of his crosses.

And once Liverpool had scored twice in the first five minutes of the second half, to take the score to 3-0, United fell to pieces.

Ex-Manchester City defender Micah Richards told BBC Match of the Day: "I was in disbelief, shocked and stunned.

"There was no communication between Diogo Dalot and Antony. At times it was like Manchester United were playing with 10 men because Antony wasn't doing his work. We are talking about the biggest game for Manchester United. I think it was him not helping out his team-mates. Manchester United of now - maybe of the past."

He also appeared to push the referee's assistant in the 81st minute. No action was taken by the referee at the time and the incident is not being investigated by the Football Association

BBC Sport has also been told he did not ask to be substituted towards the end of the match, after questions were asked about a gesture he made to the bench.

PARIS St-Germain striker Neymar is set to miss the rest of the season as he needs surgery on an ankle injury.

The Brazil forward was carried off with an injured right ankle during PSG's 4-3 home

Neymar to be out for rest of season

win over Lille on 19 February.

PSG say the 31-year-old has suffered several "instances of instability in his right ankle" over recent years and surgery is needed to "avoid a major risk of recurrence".

The Nigerian international has appeared in practically all of Everton's Premier League contests so far this season, and from midfield, he has contributed with one goal and six assists in the English Premier League.

They added it will be three to four months before he can resume training.

Neymar has suffered a number of injury problems with his right foot over the past few years.

He missed two of Brazil's matches at the 2022 World Cup after being injured in their opening group match against Serbia.

The former Barcelona player also missed the 2019 Copa America after suffering torn ligaments in his right ankle and was out for several weeks in 2021 with a similar injury.

He has scored 13 Ligue 1 goals and contributed another 10 assists for PSG this season.

Christophe Galtier's side are eight points clear at the top of the table as they seek an 11th French top-flight title.

They take on German side Bayern Munich in the Champions League round of 16 second leg on Wednesday looking to overturn a 1-0 deficit from the first fixture.

Their final league match of the season is against Clermont on 3 June with the Champions League final scheduled to take place on 10 June.

BRUNO Fernandes should not captain Manchester United again following Sunday's humiliating 7-0 defeat by Liverpool, says Chris Sutton.

The Portuguese, who deputises in the absence of club captain Harry Maguire, was criticised for his behaviour and attitude in the game.

"There are people that are far better qualified to be captain," Sutton said.

"Fernandes is not their best leader. There are more suitable candidates than him, Casemiro being one."

Speaking on BBC 5 Live's Monday Night Club, former Premier League striker Sutton, who also suggested Raphael Varane as another option, added: "I think he should never put on the armband again for Manchester United."

Fernandes, 28, has 57 goals and 50 assists in 166 games for the club in all competitions, but his body language at Anfield was called "disgraceful" by former United captain Roy Keane, while another former skipper Gary Neville said he was "embarrassing at times".

He also appeared to push the referee's assistant in the 81st minute. No action was taken by the referee at the time and the incident is not being investigated by the Football Association

BBC Sport has also been told he did not ask to be substituted towards the end of the match, after questions were asked about a gesture he made to the bench.

'Bruno Fernandes should not captain Manchester United again'



Bruno Fernandes has scored seven goals and provided 11 assists in 40 games

At one point, when Ten Hag, who described his side's performance against Liverpool as "unprofessional", dropped the in-form Marcus Rashford earlier this season after the striker missed a team meeting, while Cristiano Ronaldo's contract was terminated by mutual consent in November.

"The way Ten Hag has dealt with Rashford, Ronaldo, it's a situation he needs to get a grip of," added Sutton. "Ten Hag has no option but to let him know who is boss."

On the United captaincy, football journalist Rory Smith said: "Fernandes is a fighter, he has a win at all costs mentality. To me he looks petulant and whiny, but maybe to other players they just see that as he is desperate to win."

Smith added: "As much as Bruno was the most eye-catching shortfall, League.

They are third in the Premier League and have reached the FA Cup quarter-finals, as well as the last 16 of the Europa League.

They added it will be three to four months before he can resume training.

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Neymar went over badly on his right ankle five minutes into the second half



Quest



writer

FRAGMENT

"Learning from all these, the Commission has worked with all concerned government agencies and stakeholders to ensure that the challenges of preparing for the 2019 general election are minimised this time around. A great deal of forward planning and engagements has been done, and many aspects of our preparations attest to that. First, we concluded a new four-year Strategic Plan and Strategic Programme of Action (SP & SPA), as well as the 2023 Election Project Plan (EPP), over 18 months prior to the date set for the election."

Prof. Mahmood Yakubu

PROF. MAHMOOD YAKUBU

Preparations, priorities for electoral integrity and inclusion

Continued from last week

THE last noteworthy lesson from the 2019 general election is that adequate funding and early release of funds to the Commission is also very important to well-organised elections. Partly because of delays in finalising the electoral legal framework for the 2019 general election, finalising the budget for the election and arranging a good schedule of fund releases to the Commission was rather tardy and challenging. To add to the pressure on the Commission, there were over 14 million more voters to cater for in 2019 compared to 2015. It required painstaking and prolonged engagements between the Commission and both the Executive and Legislative arms of government. Given that practically all the activities for the elections depended on funds, from printing of ballot papers and results sheets to hiring of election staff and transport providers, the Commission could not meet many of its targets in preparing for the 2019 general election.

Preparation for the 2023 General Election

Learning from all these, the Commission has worked with all concerned government agencies and stakeholders to ensure that the challenges of preparing for the 2019 general election are minimised this time around. A great deal of forward planning and engagements has been done, and many aspects of our preparations attest to that. First, we concluded a new four-year Strategic Plan and Strategic Programme of Action (SP & SPA), as well as the 2023 Election Project Plan (EPP), over 18 months prior to the date set for the election. The 2023 EPP identifies all the specific activities to be implemented for the general election. Each of these activities has a specific timeline based on which it is implemented and tracked. Among other things, the Plan reflects the new technological innovations that will be used in 2023, the increase in the number of voters from 84,004,084 to 93,469,008 as well as increase in Polling Units from 119,974 to 176,846, following the Commission's expansion of voter access to Polling Units in 2021.

Electoral Legal Framework

Elections are essentially anchored in law. Unlike the case with the 2019 general election, new Electoral Act was signed into law on Friday 25th February 2022 exactly one year ahead of the general election, giving time for



both the Commission and all stakeholders to fully acquaint themselves with any changes in their responsibilities and functions. As an affirmation of our readiness for the general election, the Commission released the Timetable and Schedule of Activities the following day, Saturday 26th February 2022. The new law contains some very important changes that hold potentials for improving the quality of Nigeria's elections. Perhaps the ten most important provisions in the new law are:

Early release of notice of election. INEC is now required to issue the Notice of Polls 360 days to the general election. This also entails an early release of the Timetable and Schedule of Activities for general elections by the Commission. When these are added to the fixed dates for general elections established by INEC, which is the 3rd Saturday in the month of February of the election year for the national election and State elections coming two weeks later, stakeholders now have ample time for forward planning, which will greatly benefit the quality of general elections in Nigeria.

Use of electronic device for accreditation of voters. The debates over the legality or otherwise of the Smart Card Readers now appears to be settled by Section 47 of the Act which empowers INEC to use the Smart Card Reader or any other

device for accreditation.

Early primaries by political parties. They must now complete their primaries and submit the names of candidates 18 days to the general election. This gives the Commission enough planning time to produce the materials for the elections, particularly the sensitive materials.

Type of Primaries. There are now three types of primaries in the law namely, Direct, Indirect and Consensus, giving political parties a wider range of options for selecting their candidates.

Electronic transmission of results. The Act now empowers INEC to determine the form of transmission or transfer of election results.

Ensuring inclusive elections. INEC is now mandated to ensure that persons with disabilities and other vulnerabilities are properly assisted to participate in the process.

Election finance. Various new limits have been set for amounts of money that political parties and candidates can spend in elections, as well as the amounts that can be donated to them.

Redefinition of over-voting. Unlike the 2010 Electoral Act which defined over-voting in terms of registered voters, the new Act defines it in terms of accredited voters. This will greatly reduce the challenge encountered by the Commission whereby elections are easily declared inconclusive because they were tied to the number of

registered voters, even where turnout is low.

Power of the Commission to review results. The law now empowers the Commission to review the result of elections to ensure that declarations are made voluntarily and that results emerge in accordance with the law, regulations, guidelines and manuals for elections.

Related to the Electoral Act are the Regulations and Guidelines which derive from them. These Regulations and Guidelines, together with the Electoral Act and Constitution, constitute the core of the electoral legal framework. The early passage of the Electoral Act enabled the Commission to finalise the Regulations and Guidelines for the election. The review of the Regulations and Guidelines brought them in line with the Electoral Act. The Regulations and Guidelines will subsequently form the basis for the actual operational deployment for the general election, training of electoral staff and managing the entire election.

Voter Registration and Permanent Voters Cards (PVC)

There has been a major component of our preparations for the 2023 general election. The law in Nigeria requires the Commission to conduct voter registration on a "continuous" basis. However, the law also provides dates for suspension of the process to prepare for general

elections. Consequently, the Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) as we call it, recommenced on 21st June 2022 following its suspension for the 2019 general election. The CVR continued until 31st July 2022 when we again suspended it for the 2023 general election. In the one-year period of the CVR, 12,298,944 new voters were registered out of which 9,518,188 were validated after a thorough clean-up of the data. We believe that the enthusiasm, especially among young people, was partly driven by the innovation of online pre-registration introduced by the Commission. This enabled intending registrants to commence the process online from a dedicated portal, book an appointment on the same portal and finally appear in person at an INEC office to have their biometrics taken.

The clean-up of the register was painstakingly conducted by the Commission because the Automated Biometric Identification System (ABIS) that we used to check the data, detected many multiple registrants. It seemed that many voters, probably out of ignorance, re-registered when they were already in the register from previous CVR. For two weeks from 12 - 25 November 2022, the Commission displayed the entire register online and physically in the 8,809 Wards and 774 Local Government Areas for "claims and objections" as provided by law. This included identifying persons who should not be in the register and making requests for various corrections. It was the first time the Commission would be displaying the register online for this purpose and it yielded fruits. Many claims and objections were made by citizens, which the Commission addressed, such as cases where many alien and unusual names were identified in a Local Government Area of the country. Expectedly, several other claims could not be backed by evidence for verification, as provided by law, thereby making it difficult for the Commission to take any further action. However, the Commission believes that it has a solid register for the election, which remains that largest database of Nigerians in existence. In any case, in every jurisdiction, improvement of the voter roll is a continuous process, and ours is no exception.

To be continued