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Sunday Standard



TRUTH EXALTS A NATION

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1972

VOL. 13 NO. 794

SUNDAY, March 19, 2023

N250

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How governors-elect will inherit massive debts

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As some states across the country prepare for the Swearing-in of new administrations on May 29, 2023, there are concerns in some quarters that no fewer than 17 In-coming Governors are likely to inherit from their predecessors a gargantuan debt burden of about 1.9 billion U.S dollars which translates to N2.1 trillion. KENNETH DARENG, writes.

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PSIRS and the task ahead

The relevance of taxation to any given society cannot be over-emphasised. It is primarily, the system through which government raises revenue for its expenditure, infrastructural development and provision of social amenities. This makes it very necessary and important in governance.

Recently, the executive Chairman of the Plateau State Internal Revenue Service (PSIRS), Mr Dashe Arlat in a press briefing disclosed that the seven billion naira they realised from January to March this year was partly as a result of arrears collected for the month of December 2022.

However, the chairman notes that there was a short fall from over twenty billion naira revenue generated in 2021 to sixteen billion naira last year due to some challenges beyond their control forcing the Service to generate low revenue against the set target of the twenty billion naira for the year 2022.

The efforts by the Plateau State Internal Revenue Service is commendable. However, deliberate and strategic efforts need to be intensified by PSIRS to get to where it should be. The Service must ensure that all its tax revenue lines remain active and that all ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) contribute efficiently to the state internally generated revenue.

Needless to say that the internally generated revenue is a combination of taxable and nontaxable revenue collected in other to achieve a set target in an explosive revenue drive. Therefore, it behooves on the Plateau State Internal Revenue Service to collaborate with all MDAs to ensure that everyone is on board to meet the set target of the state IGR.

Some of the revenue lines the PSIRS must activate is the tax audit. They need to do a lot of tax audit. Also, the non- revenue lines which could be from the Plateau Geographic Information Service (PLAGIS), that is from quality assurance registration, school renewal fee, motor vehicles and tricycles administration fee need to be activated and brought to life.

Even though most of the state's revenue comes from personal income tax which is pay as you earn (PAYE) and direct assessment, to encourage people to pay tax, the PSIRS must carry the tax payer as well as the critical stakeholders along to educate, enlighten and show them the benefits of paying tax and what the tax money is used for. For instance, the provision of critical infrastructure and/or other social amenities.

As a statutory obligation, it behooves on all patriotic citizens to pay tax and where the tax payer fails, the body saddled with the responsibility of collecting tax takes the necessary action which is to enforce the law on person or organisations.

Similarly, the Plateau State Internal Revenue Service can borrow a leaf from states like Lagos and Kaduna where their achievements in the IGR is highly recommended considering the high IGR generated in their states.

In order for Plateau to grow its IGR, there is need to pursue an inclusive, aggressive revenue drive.

PSIRS needs to re- strategize its mode of revenue drive so as not to constantly depend on federal allocation for payment of salaries and other projects.

Telecom operators to disconnect banks over USSD debt



Danbatta

Telecommunications Operators in Nigeria say they have been granted approval by the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) to disconnect banks over N120 billion unstructured supplementary service data (USSD) debt.

This was made known in a statement signed by Mr Gbenga Adebayo, Chairman of the Association of Licensed Telecommunications Operators of Nigeria (ALTON), in Lagos yesterday.

He said that Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) would disconnect banks if they failed to pay the debt owed.

Adebayo said that the approval was granted because in spite of the multi-party stakeholder efforts to resolve the situation and prevent any impact on services, banks continued to incur greater debt, without making the commensurate payments.

He said members of the public would recall that MNOs and banks had protracted disagreements concerning the appropriate USSD pricing model for financial transactions, transparency of charges, mode of collection and liability for payment of the outstanding and continuous service fees due to the MNOs.

Due to the inability of MNOs and banks to reach an agreement on the issues, MNOs in 2021 sought to disconnect banks due to the unpaid debts which stood at N42 billion as at that time.

However, the Minister of Communication and Digital

Economy, Prof. Isa Pantami, intervened and asked the MNOs not to disconnect banks as the action will negatively impact on the digital and financial inclusion policy of the Federal Government.

Unfortunately, the patriotic intervention of the minister and the NCC have been taken for granted by the banks, as two years after, the banks have failed to sign a final agreement," he said.

Adebayo noted that it was pertinent to note that the contract between MNOs and banks on the use of USSDs for banking transactions was strictly commercial and MNOs were at liberty to withdraw the services if the transaction was unprofitable to them.

He noted that MNOs have invested billions of naira in expanding their systems to accommodate the USSD

needs of banks over the years.

Adebayo said this had resulted in more Nigerians having access to banking services in addition to enabling banks to trim down costs by requiring fewer branches to service their growing customers.

He said that unfortunately, MNOs were not getting paid for their services and the debt that stood at N42 billion in 2021 had now risen to over N120 billion.

"It is obvious that the level of debt is unsustainable given the time or value of the huge cost of the continuous upgrade, operation of the systems and infrastructure dedicated to supporting USSD transactions of banks.

In view of the foregoing, unless banks meet their debt obligations, MNOs will disconnect all banks indebted to them for USSD services rendered," Adebayo said.

CSO wants NPC to determine census date, not FG

The Executive Director, Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre, Auwal Rafsanjani, has said that the inability of the National Population Commission to determine when to conduct census is an indication of a lack of institutional strength and independence of the commission.

Rafsanjani, who made this remark in a telephone interview with Saturday PUNCH on Thursday, criticised a statement by the Director of Public Affairs of National Population Commission, Dr Isiaka Yahaya, that only government could determine when the population

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would hold and not the commission.

Yahaya had said, "It's for government to answer about the time that is auspicious, not the commission."

But Rafsanjani said, "The census in Nigeria has been very contentious and very controversial and therefore, we need to make sure that we have a legal framework with which we allow a body like National Population Commission to have its independence and autonomy, have people with impeccable character and credibility to be in the commission because it is as good as holding elections."

He added, "We cannot continue this way. The NPC needs to check the law and see where those gaps are and we can all seek proper autonomy and independence with people of impeccable character and morals, who are patriotic, not people doing ethnic or religious census which undermines the essence of having census in Nigeria."

Also, a political analyst, Chief Omenazu Jackson, noted that such a statement was not a tenable excuse, stating that the commission needed some form of autonomy and independence like the Independent National Electoral Commission to determine when to conduct census.

Explaining that census was like an election, Jackson said, "The commission giving Nigerians such an excuse clearly shows that they don't know what they are doing and it clearly shows an institution that lacks ideas and the knowledge of inherent powers associated with it as regards the constitution.

"It is a commission just like INEC but INEC determines when to conduct elections. It is wrong to say the Federal Government will determine when census will hold. We have weak institutions in this country."

FG earmarks \$50m to attract investments into oil & gas park

The federal government has pledged to spend \$50 million to attract companies to the facility as Nigeria's first oil and gas open doors for business.

The Park was built by the Nigerian Content Development & Monitoring Board (NCDMB).

The NCDMB director of Corporate Communications, Engr Ginah O. Ginah, who disclosed this on Thursday during a media tour of the park located in Odukpani, Cross River State, noted that, "this park is ready for habitation," Engr Ginah said of the facility started 10 years ago. "We have already advertised for interested manufacturers and are presently going through applications to see those who are qualified."

The NCDMB director of Corporate Communications noted that, all needed facilities have been provided to make the place conducive for the manufacturers, which include; manufacturing hall, security, roads, 24-hour power supply, banking hall, restaurant, and state-of-the-art ICT facilities,

among others.


Others include fire service, water treatment plant, mini parks for accommodation, and free land for those who wish to build their own structures.

"All these are things that increase cost of production, so this park is going to crash the cost of production," Engr. Ginah said of the facility located on 25 hectares of land.

Engr Ginah disclosed that several other of such parks are under construction across the Niger Delta as part of NCDMB's efforts to significantly increase local content in the oil and gas industry and generally drive Nigeria's industrialisation.


"We have taken Nigeria's local content level from 5 per cent to 55 per cent. The industry spends about \$20 billion a year, so you are talking of about \$10 billion saved annually," Engr Ginah said.

He stressed that NCDMB's goal is to take the local content in the industry up to 70 per cent by 2027, and "the only way to achieve that is to ensure local manufacturing of components, which is why we are building these parks."



With
**Katdapba
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On Sunday**

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Many Nigerians have displayed their aversion against the position of the party, considering the party's stand it is possible not to come clean as opposition group, Greater Majority is not relenting in its push to surprise the ruling party if it is unaware of its vulnerability in the current dispensation. The opposition parties have a combined numerical majority in the House, which they intend to use.

IN the last couple of weeks, there has been intense politicking about who will become the Senate President and Speaker, House of Representatives as well as other principal officers when both chambers are inaugurated. Senators and Reps members have, since winning their election on February 25, 2023 indicated interest to vie for the number three and four positions in the land.

That of the Senate may not have been problematic, as it was sure that the south was going to be the sole beneficiary. It was where it was going to be zoned to in the south that became contestable, as the South East zone was hoping it be considered for the plum job. The powers that be after the President-elect, Bola Ahmed Tinubu met with the National Working Committee of the party 'recommended' Godswill Akpabio and Jibrin Barau for the two top positions in the senate.

It is no longer news that the Muslim-Muslim ticket is responsible for the present arrangement in the Senate. Whether it is welcomed is yet to be tested, but recall that former Zamfara State Governor Abdul'Aziz Abubakar Yari now Senator-elect has since made headline challenging everyone who cares to know that he would go ahead with the senate presidency bid.

His reason: The senate presidency contest was the senators' business backed by the 1999 constitution to choose their leaders within themselves and not based on instruction from anyone. What is going to happen that day, it is going to happen based on the instructions of the constitution and not anyone's.

The press statement by the Publicity Secretary, Felix Morka on May 8, 2023 confirmed that the party's National Working Committee (NWC) has zoned the position of the Speaker to the North West and Deputy Speaker to the South East. The party endorsed Tajudeen Abbas representing Zaria Federal Constituency of Kaduna State for Speaker and Benjamin Kalu representing Bende Federal Constituency of Abia State as Deputy Speaker.

He was quoted as saying the recommendation were results of 'wide consultations' received by the party. It is true; every one of the aspirants has the right to contest for the office; but 'does it not also exude a serious discomfort that the aspirants to the speakership were not consulted, approached and effectively engaged before the purported zoning formula?' The party's preferences may snowball into a conflagration in the House of Representatives, if not handled with caution and tact.

That 'recommendation' for both chambers did not go down well with majority of the aspirants who were ignominiously treated and Nigerians who read meanings in the choice. Knowing that the atmosphere in the field was already tense, coming with a list of favourite candidates was an idea that should have been buried long before it was mooted; considering what happened in 2015, when the party just smarting from its hard

APC and the continuing injustice in the land



won victory over the People's Democratic Party (PDP) angled for the outgoing Speaker, Femi Hakeem Gbajabiamila; they realized too late as Rt Hon Yakubu Dogara swept the carpet off their feet and became Speaker.

The history against such 'manipulation' of the interest and wishes of House members is replete with stories of rejection of imposition. Whether it was in 1999 or in 2003, the same trend overshadowed the selection process of the Speaker. It continued during 2007 when the choice of PDP NWC Patricia Ette was rejected for Demiji Bankole; so also was the case of Aminu Waziri Tambuwal. Don't forget that it happened in the case of Yakubu Dogara and Femi Gbajabiamila in 2015. The power of the members forced the NWC of the APC to accept Femi Gbajabiamila against Ahmed Idris Wase in 2019.

The barrage of threats that followed soon after indicated that the All Progressives Congress has a crisis to contend with; as a group the group, G7; made up of all aspirants for the leadership of House in the 10th National Assembly have since rejected the party's consensus candidates for positions of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker.

Even before that was made public, Alliance for True Democracy in Nigeria (ATDN) through its coordinator, Hon Inalegwu Ejembi Adaje expressed displeasure and disappointment for the choice of Tajudeen Abbas and Benjamin Kalu, noting that 'if democracy must survive in Nigeria, people must make choice'.

He argued that the North West has been the most favoured (as if it is the only part of the North) since 1999 having produced four Speakers in the persons of Ghali Umar Na'Abbas, Salisu Buhari, Aminu Bello Masari and Aminu Tambuwal, while in the case of the North Central, it was yet to produce an occupant; he therefore wondered if that cannot be described as injustice.

He singled out Rt Hon Yusuf Adamu Gagdi whose contributions on the floor of the House has made him a history maker, and therefore

cannot be ignored by the party and his colleagues. For equity and justice, would the party ignore a man, who in his first three years did not just sponsor numerous bills and motions, but out of those, six of them have since received the assent of Mr. President with consequences for the development of the country and giving young men and women a livelihood.

Can Gagdi then be said to be in the same class with Tajudeen Abbas, who is hyped and credited to sponsoring about 78 bills, but are yet to even get to the gates of Aso Rock to receive presidential accent? At that, many Nigerians are questioning why the North Central zone, though crucial for the survival of the party cannot be rewarded with the position of the Speaker. Political pundits are quick to point accusing fingers at Governor Nasir el-Rufai of Kaduna State, who had openly said he was not angling to become Chief of Staff to Mr. President.

The question to ask is, why has the North West been iniquitously zoned the position of Deputy Senate President in the person Jibrin Barau from Kano State? Furthermore, is there equity and justice in the land for the North Central zone to be completely ignored as all zones have been 'allocated' one principal office position? They wondered why the North West will take two juicy positions at the expense of the North Central. Their argument is that the party chairman is from this zone.

The duo of the Deputy Speaker, Ahmed Idris Wase and Majority Leader, Alhassan Ado Doguwa in separate statements said they were against the arrangement as announced by the party on May 8, 2023. They insisted they would go ahead with their campaigns for the speakership no matter the position by the party. So also is Rt Hon Yusuf Adamu Gagdi, whose proclivity for justice has further revealed what they would do if the party does not right the wrongs.

Lending their voice on the development, Plateau Elders have insisted on a candidate from the state for the speakership, saying that is the path of equity and justice, even as the two frontline aspirants vying for the position from the North

Central geopolitical zone are from the state; each of which 'possesses unassailable credentials'.

They argued that apart from the resourcefulness of the Plateau aspirants, it is in the interest of fairness and justice that the state be given the opportunity to lead the House. How better said, considering that it aligns with the mood of the struggle for justice in the land.

If anything, the addition of the voice of Governor Oluwarotimi Akeredolu of Ondo State on the impasse vindicates the position of the G7, which is made up of Rt Hon Yusuf Adamu Gagdi, Hon Mukhtar Aliyu Betara, Rt Hon Ahmed Idris Wase, Hon Alhassan Ado Doguwa, Hon Sada Soli Jibiya, Hon Maraim Odinaka Onuoha and Hon Aminu Sani Jaji.

In a terse statement by Akeredolu, who is chairman, South West Governors' Forum noted that 'aside the unpretentious ambiguity in the purported statement issued by the leadership of the APC, the contents, intentions and motives of the zoning formula represent early steps aimed at attempts to cabin the hard-earned Presidency for our leader, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu by a few individuals with eyes on Aso Rock Power Buttons'.

For him and indeed most Nigerians, 'it is trite, that, it stands logic on the head that one geopolitical zone, Northwest in this regard, will be favoured with two presiding officers positions out of four while the North Central suffers the consequences for its innocence and shrewd loyalty of having none.'

As it is canvassed by G7, 'it is an insidious permutation that North East will be deprived in the face of the unsavoury generosity dispensed through two slots to a particular geo-political zone. It is self-repudiating for one to argue therefore, that the Speaker of the House of Representatives cannot also emerge from the North East.'

'Therefore, the move to zone the National Assembly leadership positions on the behest of interested personalities with perceived closeness to the President-elect manifestly lays the dangerous foundation of distrust,

needless suspicion even as it structures nothing but combination of booby traps. We must avoid all these.'

Many Nigerians have displayed their aversion against the position of the party, considering the party's stand it is possible not to come clean as opposition group, Greater Majority is not relenting in its push to surprise the ruling party if it is unaware of its vulnerability in the current dispensation. The opposition parties have a combined numerical majority in the House, which they intend to use.

Speaking the minds of Nigerians in a statement which he titled: '10th Assembly: Do not expect us to be loyal if present zoning arrangement stands, G7 Speakership candidates tell APC' and released on May 10, 2023 after their meeting with the APC NWC same day.

Rt Hon Yusuf Adamu Ggadi was emphatic and vowed to oppose any attempts by outside forces to impose a leadership on the 10th House of Representatives, describing the zoning formula as 'unworkable arrangement that reinforces injustice and enhances inequity'; the formula won't be acceptable.

Said Gagdi, 'when we elect our leaders, all of you will not be there; it is we and our conscience and the covenant of the people of Nigeria that will be in the hallowed chamber. So, it is better, it is not late, let the wrongs be righted. Unless this is done, sir, our party should not hope that our loyalty will be guaranteed at the detriment of justice, peace and fairness. We will respect justice, unity and equity in the chamber, but only if your instruction is in line with the principle of this party. Sir, do not hope that we have come here to succumb to any instruction and directive given to us'.

That was candid enough, Gagdi asked rather rhetorically, 'do we want unity, to say that the Deputy Senate President should go to the North West and the Speaker should go to the North West when in the true sense of the word, in the presidential election, North Central known to have majority number of Christians and the religious and tribal affiliations attributed to 2023 elections, yet North Central resisted the temptation, delivered four states to the President-elect, Asiwaju Ahmed Tinubu; delivered 11 senators. The North West delivered 10 with two states and North East 1 state with 10 senators and the zone that has performed like this for Mr. President will be relegated to have party chairman and perhaps as they insinuate, Secretary to the Government of the Federation; positions that the president or whosever can scream at them and they have no locus to speak for the people for the people of North Central.'

The last of what has been heard is that APC National Chairman, Senator Abdullahi Adamu has admitted they didn't consult adequately on zoning of NASS leadership positions. What does it portend? It means that the struggle has made its impact for justice to be served on North Central zone.



Quacks at work

HUMAN capital abound in Nigeria. The only bother is the quality. There's no problem with the quantity because every year our tertiary institutions churn them out in millions for professionals trained in school. Unfortunately, it would seem, some went through school but school didn't go through them.

One Business and Finance diploma graduate was honest enough to tell me that he graduated with very good grades. The problem is that he can't defend his certificate. He said money did the magic for him.

From the first day he was admitted into University of Jos, Centre for Continuing Education, located at Gangare, he never lifted a finger to write an assignment or test. He was referred to one young man who gladly wrote everything, including his examinations for a good price.

Today he is employed and earning good money with the certificate. What quality job would come out from such a person who admitted that he cannot even define banking and finance? Sadly, a job was waiting for him immediately after his National Youth Service Corps year.

Rebecca's encounter with quack made her to lose confidence in Nigeria's young doctors. She was ill and needed immediate attention. It so happened that public hospitals were on strike, so she and her sister entered the first hospital that they saw.

In their haste, they didn't notice that in spite of the fact that public hospitals were on strike, the hospital was still empty. She was immediately ushered in to see the doctor. The doctor could not hide his excitement when he noticed that Rebecca was visibly pregnant. But his hopes were dashed when she told him that she had been treated with chloroquine for malaria and the aftermath was worse than the malaria. She was there, she told him, for an alternative treatment.

The doctor excused himself for about 20 minutes. Uncomfortable with his silence, Rebecca went after him and found him hidden in a room in the rear of the hospital, engrossed in reading a medical book. Embarrassed, he apologised that he would be with her shortly. Rebecca said, she ran for her life, after getting the message that the doctor was reading his book to come and treat her sickness.

It was after they ran out and were taking a break at a shop at the vicinity that she found out that the clinic is notorious for abortion and nothing else. Unbelievable that someone will go through medical school and come out and specialise in destroying life. It does not make sense. People like this, have decided to work contrary to the vows they took before they began practicing their profession.

Sadly, there are many examples of Quacks in the medical field. A lady

described how she went for malaria treatment but was asked to undress except for her pant. She said she almost slept up the examination bed when she felt the old doctor's mouth on her breast. Fortunately for him, her eyes were closed due to embarrassment that she was almost naked before her father's friend. However, it took the grace of God not the doctors pleadings for her not to call her father's attention. He was waiting patiently at the waiting room.

The lady above said since that experience, she developed an aversion to hospitals. She became guilty of self medication until recently.

Another lady said she almost lost her life after giving birth. She discovered that the area where she was torn up after her private part would not stop itching her. It became worst when it began to stink, followed instantly by pus dripping from the area. This forced the hospital to book her for a surgery. What they discovered made heads roll. Who ever cleaned her up after the baby was removed, forgot to remove the pad and cotton wool. I leave the rest to your imagination.

The above lady suffered avoidable pain. She was placed on very strong antibiotics because of the infection that had set in. What she went through was not only painful, or waste of resources, expensive but life threatening. She suffered and so did her baby. It was a very trying time for her whole family. All of this because of somebody's carelessness.

My family would have roasted due to activities of a quack electrician. We had to pack into our house in a hurry even though it was uncompleted due to insecurity. Plateau State was embroiled in crises and we were living in an area that was unfriendly to our religion. That meant fixing electricity in a hurry. One of our masons introduced someone to us, whose job can only be described as 'trial and error. Power came everywhere and we were happy. What we didn't know was that the connection inside the roof was something else.

One day we noticed that smoke was coming from inside the roof. And one by one, different light switches were refusing to turn on. Thankfully, when we got in touch with him, he was busy. We were forced to get a professional. This man exclaimed in shock when he saw the terrible job done by the first electrician. He found several fuses burnt. And explained that our whole house could have gone up in flames if things were left as they were. That was how bad it was.

One of the issues that contribute to Quacks in the system is students not allowed to read what they are passionate about. This could be influenced by parents or tertiary institutions giving admissions to those who can pay for it, while others make do with what ever they are given.

Our systems need to be restructured for us to get it right. Certificate is not enough, that can be bought. We need to plead with each others conscience. Be your brothers' keeper.

NEWS

By EZEKIEL DONTINNA

30 million children suffer vaccine-preventable diseases yearly

Plateau State Commissioner of Health, Dr. Nimkong Lar Ndam, has disclosed that despite improved immunization services, there still exists the shortfall of estimated thirty million (30m) children in Africa particularly, Nigeria that suffer from vaccine-preventable diseases each year.

He disclosed this Thursday, while delivering his keynote address on the occasion marking 2023 African Vaccination Week commemoration, held at Epid Unit Children Clinic of the Plateau State Primary Health Care Management Board Jos, the state capital.

The commissioner said, "The goal of other African Vaccine Week (AVW) is to strengthen immunization programmes in the African region by increasing awareness of the importance of every person (particularly, children and women's need and right to be protected from vaccine-preventable diseases.

"Over the last two decades, Africa in particular registered tremendous progress in improving access to immunization services. But, despite this progress, about 30 million children in Africa are estimated to suffer from vaccine-preventable diseases each year.

"For more than two centuries, vaccine-from the very first vaccine developed to protect against smallpox to Covid-19 vaccines have helped keep people healthy. Since then, families and communities have trusted vaccines to protect their love ones. But the value of vaccine is measured by more



Ehanire

than the number of doses given", he highlighted.

According to Ndam, "This year's campaign comes at a critical turning point for immunization. Covid-19 pandemic disruptions contributed to an increase in the number of children who have never received a single dose of vaccine (zero-dose children) in Plateau State from 31,377 in 2019 to 73, 627 in 2021.

"We must catch-up, restore and strengthen immunization services to reach the millions of people missing out on the life-saving benefits of vaccines and stop outbreaks from accelerating. It is not surprising that in the last few years, Plateau State has experienced one form of vaccine-preventable disease outbreak or the other.

"As we commemorate this year's African Vaccination and World Immunization Week, we declare our commitment to ensuring that people of Plateau State have regular access to vaccines and thus, urge all stakeholders from the public and private sector to align with the immunization agenda for the African region; "A region where everyone, everywhere and at every age, benefit from vaccines for good health and well-being", he explained.

However, the Commissioner added that for Plateau to catch up, they must strengthen their collective efforts and ensure regular access to immunization by prioritising actions targeted towards strengthening health systems, enhancing data systems for decision making and building resilient immunization programmes among others.

NSCDC arrests father for allegedly raping daughter

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

THE Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Kogi Command, has arrested a 41-year old father for allegedly defiling and raping his 16-year old daughter.

Speaking after parading the suspect recently at NSCDC Command Headquarters, Lokoja, the state Commandant, Ahmad Gandhi, said the command received a complaint lodged by an NGO on May 5.

According to him, the complaint was lodged on a case of defilement, rape and incest in which the suspect is a biological father of the victim.

The commandant said that the abusive act was on for three years from 2020 to 2023, since when the victim was 16 years old.

Gandhi said that the younger sister to the victim advised her that they should either commit suicide or kill their father to free themselves from the abusive act.

The commandant said that the father had admitted committing the act, saying he would be charged to court after concluding the investigation.

Gandhi commended the NGO for reporting the case to the command, while urging other victims in the society who were dying in silence to come out and report such cases.

Our correspondent reports that newsmen were not allowed by the NSCDC to disclose the identity and names of both the victim and the suspect due to the sensitivity of the case to avoid victim's stigmatisation.

The victim told newsmen that she

had been sexually abused by her father since 2020 after her mother left home.

"It happened in 2020 when my mum left home and since then my dad had been sexually abusing me.

In 2021, my father impregnated me and took me to a clinic where they aborted the pregnancy I had for him.

"I couldn't leave the house because of my younger sister as I was afraid my father could do the same thing to my sister," the victim said.

"After aborting the pregnancy he continued the sexual abuse until I couldn't take it anymore, and I had to report to an NGO who reported the case to NSCDC," the victim narrated.

On his part, the suspect admitted to have committed the act, that he actually de-flowered his daughter, saying he was hypnotized after his wife left her in 2020.

"I actually committed the act but I don't know how I did it. I love my wife very well; I begged her to come back home but she never did for the past three years.

"It is the same stage I was when my mother left my father that my wife left my children for me and went away. I love my wife but she never came back to me," the suspect said.

In his comment, Mr Abdulrasak Ibrahim, the Executive Director of the NGO, the Islamic Centre for Communication and Creative Thought (ItrippleCT), commended the NSCDC for doing a fantastic job by swinging

into action to arrest the suspect.

Ibrahim noted that after hearing about the issue, the victim was immediately relocated to a safe place from her father's house to protect her from further abuse.

Speaking on the matter, the Chairperson, Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), Kogi, Barr Lilian Okolo; and Amb. Idris Muraina, the Chairman, Kogi Network of NGO (KONGONET), also commended the NSCDC for their proactiveness in handling the case.

Okolo assured that FIDA would make sure that the suspect was brought to justice to serve as deterrent to other irresponsible fathers out there.

Muraina assured that the NGOs in Kogi would continue to put professionalism into play in such cases to ensure that the right of the girl-child was protected and get justice for her.

He urged other victims of such act going through such traumatic experience speak out, assuring that it would be pursued to a logical conclusion to get justice for them.

The KONGONET Chairman also appealed to the state and Federal Governments, and International community to provide a "Safe Keep" accommodation in the state where victims of such act could be accommodated during the duration of the case.

"As at today, we don't have such "safe keep" accommodation in Kogi where gender based violence victims could be kept during the trying period," Muraina said.

SUNDAY POLITICS

Bello appoints DG Special Task Force

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

THE Executive Governor of Kogi State, His Excellency Alh. Yahaya Bello, has approved the appointment of Elder Friday Sanni as the Director General, Special Task Force on Illegal Smuggling of Firearms to Kogi State.

The appointment, according to Commissioner of Information and Communications, Kingsley Fanwo was conveyed via a letter signed by the Secretary to the State Government, Dr Mrs Folashade Arike Ayoade, dated 8th May, 2023.

The decision of the State Government to set up the Special Task Force is part of recalibration efforts in the security architecture of the state to ensure that firearms are not illegally



Bello

smuggled into the state to perpetrate the nefarious activities of criminal elements as government is committed to ensuring criminality is reduced to near-zero level in the state.

We recognise increase in proliferation of arms in the state and we cannot afford a situation where firearms are in the hands of people

who are neither licensed nor trained to handle them. The Taskforce will also afford those already in possession of firearms illegally to submit them voluntarily.

Elder Friday Sanni was a former member of the Kogi State House of Assembly with vast knowledge in security studies.

Under Tinubu Nigeria'll will become a producer nation -Artisans

THE Association of Nigeria Artisans and Technicians (ASNAT) has said under Bola Tinubu, the president-elect, Nigeria will graduate from a consumer country to a productive country.

Sanusi Rikiji Mu'Alledin, a former speaker of the Zamfara State House of Assembly and leader of the group said this at a press conference in Abuja Thursday.

Mu'Alledin said positioning Nigerian artisans and technicians for optimal contributions and economic development in a new agenda for Tinubu's administration cannot be overemphasised.

He said: "We believe that the artisans and the technicians are the service providers and they are the movers of the larger economy of this country. The micro economy of this country is in their hands.

"So, the best way to develop this economy by greater inclusion of Nigerians is by ensuring that the agencies concerned are overhauled to do what they are established to do by the law.

"What we are saying is that provision must be made to scale up most artisans by bringing up technology thereby, improving the economy, the more wealth is created, the more peace and stability, insecurity bedeviling the country is addressed."

He said the group had in December 2022 converged over 5000

artisans, who declared support for the All Progressives Congress (APC) presidential flag bearer, now president-elect, Tinubu.

Mu'Alledin added: "We launched operation 30:30 in which all Artisans and Technicians nationwide were tasked to mobilise 30 participants per polling unit in the country.

"Today, we congratulate Tinubu for emerging winner and the people's choice by becoming a rallied force because of his sagacity, display of capacity, and great leadership skills, despite all challenges.

"As movers of Nigeria's micro economy and service providers, we have been so much neglected in previous administrations.

"We therefore, appeal to agencies saddled with the responsibility to look after the functionality of Artisans and Technicians in the country, the

incoming administration for a total overhaul of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency, (SMEDAN); National Directorate of Employment, (NDE) and the Industrial Training Fund, (NDE) for effective economic revitalization to enhance productivity in the country.

"By improving on Small and Agro-Allied industries, creating employment opportunities, increasing our Gross Domestic Products, (GDP) addressing issues of youths restiveness and insecurity in the country."

The group warned those trying to discredit the outcome of the presidential election saying: "We Artisans voted in the presidential election and we are more than ready to defend our votes.

"Elections have come and gone and Bola Ahmed Tinubu won squarely and fairly."



Tinubu

AMINU Masari, governor of Katsina State has revealed why himself and other Northern Governors supported the presidential ambition of the President-elect, Sen. Bola Tinubu.

The governor made the revelation on Thursday in Daura during a farewell visit to the Emir of Daura, Alhaji Umar Faruq-Umar.

According to him, the northern governors under the All Progressives Congress (APC) supported Tinubu in order to respect the zoning formula of the party.

He added: "God had saved us from shame during the last general elections in the country where our party, the All Progressives Congress APC recorded huge successes.

"Any one in this country with foresight, should thank God again because had it been our party did not win the election, people may think that the Federal Government failed Nigerians.

"Whatever someone planned in this country, God has helped President Muhammad Buhari to defend his integrity, because if we had failed in the election, he would be the first to be blamed.

"Those with foresight have

'Why northern governors supported Tinubu's presidential bid'

seen that, especially we the governors from the north under the APC. We have seen attempts to tarnish the image of Buhari.

"Everybody knows that all the political parties believe in zoning, but some people in our party wanted to keep that aside, but we rejected their attempt."

According to Masari, the lack of respect for the zoning arrangement by some of the

opposition parties had brought them into the current crises rocking them.

"So, if we had done such, only God would know the situation in the country at the moment. Therefore, we had to stick to our promises.

"That's why the northerners then succeeded and earned respect for our people, because once we said yes, it's always yes," he added.



Masari

Senate presidency: Izunaso calls for fairness in process

OSITA Izunaso, frontline aspirant for the position of Senate President, has urged the leadership of the All Progressives Congress (APC) to consider fairness, competency and experience in the selection of the senate president in the 10th National Assembly.

He added that his aspiration to lead the senate of the 10th National Assembly is in the best interest of the nation.

In a statement by his media Adviser, Kehinde Olaosebikan, he urged leaders of the All Progressives Congress (APC), to douse the tension generated by the controversial zoning formula already fouling the political atmosphere of the country by coming up with a zoning arrangement that would guarantee unity and national cohesion.

He explained that what the country needed now was a brand new assembly chaired by a competent, capable and experienced man of proven integrity, without any blemish whatsoever.

Izunaso said he was the highest ranking Senator from the South-South and South-East with a robust and outstanding legislative and National Assembly experience spanning from 1992 when he served as the Chief Press Secretary to the Speaker of House of Representatives to 1999

when he was appointed as the Chief Press Secretary to the President of the Senate.

Izunaso, noted that the President-elect, Bola Tinubu, the outgoing President, Muhammadu Buhari and APC under the leadership of Adamu Abdulahi, should as a matter of importance come up with a new zoning arrangement that would not only produce the best among the senators and House of Representatives Members-elect as their presiding officers, but be seen by Nigerians and the world at large meeting the best practices in legislative norms and satisfying the political exigencies of the present Nigeria.

The statement noted that the expectations of Nigeria and the entire world were high on the incoming administration and that no efforts should be spared by the present political leaders of the country in meeting the yearnings of the people.

The journalist cum lawyer ranking senator-elect from Imo West Senatorial District, however, agreed with the position of the national working committee on the need for further and better consultations by all the necessary stakeholders of the party in reaching a workable zoning formula for the principal offices of the National Assembly.

According to him, "As a consummate party man, I joined the nation's best of eggheads like Babatunde

Raji Fashola, and our erudite baba, Bisi Akande in the formation of the All Progressives Congress in 2014. After the birth of the party, I served meritoriously as the National Organizing Secretary of the party.

"It would also interest you to know that during the five years of my tenure as the National Organizing Secretary of APC there was no single litigation over our congresses both for party primaries and party executives. I was fair, just, adroit and meticulous in all my activities.

"Looking for a complete and loyal party man, I am the best. If competence as in what our father, the President-elect desires in his planned Government of National Competence is the criterion, I am not just the most competent, I am the most capable, creative and organized senator among the contestants.

"If you want to go with the mood of the nation requiring a government of National Unity, I am an Igbo man from South-East, the most marginalized zone in Nigeria, I am the most qualified.

"Equally, if you want to go with the Not Too Young Act, one of the greatest achievements of President Muhammadu Buhari's government, I am the youngest of all the aspirants, the face of the youths, representing the most agitated demography in the country today.

"It is me. I am indeed the best and the next person for Senate President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Emi Lokan!"

SUNDAY POLITICS

Benue Speakership: Who wears the crown?

As Members of the Tenth Benue Assembly take Oath of office June 2023, the battle for who becomes the state number one lawmaker becomes fiercer. TERESE TUHWA examines the chances of two members elect from Gboko Local Government Area where it is zoned to.

The jostle for who presides over the 10th Benue State House of Assembly soon to be inaugurated in June, 2023 as speaker began soon after the March 18th, 2023 governorship and state houses of assembly election.

One interesting thing about the speakership of the incoming assembly according to findings by **Sunday Standard** is that, it is left for Jemgbagh (Gboko, Buruku and Tarka Local Government Areas) political bloc and in particular Gboko Local Government Area.

With the arrow now pointing towards a specific direction, the people of Jemgbagh are to produce for the state who will head the state legislature in the next four years.

In this wise, Hon. Mrs. Becky Orpin, member elect for Gboko East state constituency and her counterpart from Gboko west state constituency, Hon. Alfred Aondona Dajoh are the two arrow heads to slug it out for the state assembly plumb job.

The two characters, findings further revealed, are banking on certain intrigues that are likely to play out in order for either of them to pull through.

Hon. Mrs. Becky Orpin, an ace radio broadcaster, a former legislative aide to the then Speaker of the Benue State House of Assembly, Hon. Mrs. Margaret Icheen, Senior Special Assistant on Media to former Governor George Akume, former Legislative Aide to Senator George Akume now Minister for Special Duties and Inter Governmental Affairs and also former chairman, Gboko Local Government Council will be counting on her past experiences.

The Gboko East state constituency member elect, **Sunday Standard** gathered that given her father-in-law's long standing political alliance with the north central leader of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Senator George Akume who may likely decide the formation of the next legislative house will speak in her favour.

Elder Haa Orpin, father-in-law of the incoming state law maker and one of the well respected opinion leaders and APC chieftains in zone 'B' political bloc and Jemgbagh in particular, it may be unholy political union should the leader, Senator George Akume does not support his daughter-in-law's bid to lead the state legislature.

Again, historically speaking, the state upon return of the country to democratic rule in 1999, produced the first female speaker in the whole of West African sub region in the person of chief Mrs. Margaret Mwuese Icheen who represented Kwande West state constituency at the state house of assembly.

As nascent as the country's democracy was at that time, Mrs. Icheen handled the male dominated house to the admiration of people of the state including sceptics who were initially cynical about her capacity to deliver.

Going by Mrs. Icheen's antecedent, the question of



Dajoh



Orpin

whether a woman has the capacity to deliver or not is inconsequential given that the US house of commons was adjudged to have passed most quality

legislations during Mrs. Nancy Pelosi's tenure as speaker during Donald Trump's presidency.

Furthermore, with her continued presence within and

around corridors of power and her eventual emergence as Gboko Local Government Council chief executive with vast experience about the workings of government, her political

tentacles which she has broadened over the years will count in her favour if political alliance is anything to go by.

Hon. Alfred Aondona Dajoh though a new feature in the political land scape of the state with no known political office to his credit, his goodwill has been the propelling force behind his successes including his journey into the state House of Assembly.

A son of one of the opinion leaders of All Progressives Congress (APC) in Mbativ, elder Dzuul Anshibi, Hon. Dajoh has devoted a greater part of his life fighting criminality in the nooks and crannies of the state.

He has worked closely with security agencies within and around the state with a view to nipping crime in the bud thus, carving a niche for himself.

Findings are that Hon. Dajoh will have a smooth sail to speaker of the 10th Benue Assembly given that he is one of the favourites of the House of Representatives member-elect for Gboko/Tarka Federal Constituency and wife of the Minister of Special Duties and Inter governmental Affairs, Mrs. Regina Akume who findings further revealed, influences most decisions taken by her husband.

Mrs. Regina Akume's mother, hails from Mbativ where Hon. Dajoh comes from, as such, sentiments are likely to play out prominently when matters relating to speaker of the 10th Benue Assembly are brought on the table.

In as much as the APC leader in the state, Sen. George Akume will exert greater influence on who becomes the state number one lawmaker, Hon. Akume will also have a greater role to play in deciding on a critical issue of this nature.

Another factor that is likely to play out in favour of the Gboko West state representative is the fact that the incoming governor, Reverend Father Hyacinth Iormem Alia whose lineage is traced to Mbativ where Hon. Dajoh hails from will prefer somebody from his mother's place to Hon. Becky Orpin over and above every other considerations.

The above assertion among other things underscores the fact that Hon. Dajoh was among the first few persons that championed agitations for Father Alia to step into the governorship contest of the state.

With his alleged strong synergy and allegiance to wife of the honourable Minister of Special Duties and Inter governmental Affairs and House of Representatives member elect for Gboko/Tarka Federal Constituency, Mrs. Regina Akume, the pendulum is likely to swing in his direction come June, 2023.

If the decision of who becomes the state number one legislator is to be arrived at based on house rule of seniority, the duo are novices in legislative business since both are coming into the assembly for the first time. However, if this principle is to be jettisoned, the two incoming law makers are characters to watch come June, 2023.

SUNDAY POLITICS

An eight-point agenda for the president-elect

Without prejudice to what transpires at the Presidential Election Tribunal on the 25 February election, and the request by the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and others that the proceedings should be televised live – no problem about that, as long as the parties involved can bear the cost in defence of the ideal of transparency – it seems certain nonetheless that Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, president-elect and presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), the ruling party, would be sworn in as president of Nigeria on 29 May, REUBEN ABATI writes.

THE Federal Government has set up a Transition Committee, the President-elect has also set up an Inauguration Committee with some Nollywood stars named into that committee already behaving like party boosters on social media. While the Election Petition Tribunal continues to keep, hopefully to its promise that it would consider every application on its own merit, Tinubu and APC are already preparing for their own Coronation ceremony on 29 May, complete with jollof rice and *aso ebi* parties and a scale of pomp and pageantry that could rival the Coronation of King Charles III of Great Britain on 6 May. Nigerians are very good at imitating the colonial masters. No one should be surprised if Tinubu arrives at the Eagle Square on Inauguration Day on a horse-drawn golden carriage. The morning after, he would swing into action, real time.

The sword of power would have been handed over to him. He would have such authority and access to resources that his challengers in court cannot hope to match. He would in fact have been placed in a position to exercise authority over those who are challenging him, their businesses and their needs. Even the courts would have taken notice of the fact that Nigeria is under a new dispensation. Tinubu has been in politics for a long time. He knows what power means. He has been a Senator. He has been Governor twice. He has been a Godfather in Nigerian politics for more than two decades. He has been a kingmaker. He is a veteran of the game. The real threat to our democracy is that we may have been presented with a fait accompli, while the lawyers shuffle papers and quote dead authorities and precedents in order to earn their pay. Even if the matter goes all the way to the Supreme Court, let it be noted that the apex court is a court of law and also a court of public policy. This is why there is merit to the emerging argument that our electoral system needs further reform, and the Constitution must be amended accordingly to ensure that post-election, all election petitions are determined before anybody is sworn in. That is what they do in Kenya. Why not in Nigeria? For now, Bola Tinubu and the APC will benefit from this omission in the Nigerian Constitution. But the people's consciousness has been awoken. Legal frameworks emerge on the basis of lessons learnt. Those who doubt the integrity and the legitimacy of the process that made the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to declare Tinubu as President-elect are bound to stay on this question until it is resolved, ahead of future elections. Such persons have the right to raise questions.

For now, therefore, let us reflect on the reality of a Tinubu Presidency that stares us in the face. He has not yet been sworn in, he is already acting as President. He has since moved into the Defence House, the traditional residence for Nigeria's President in waiting. The other day, the Rivers State Government invited him to commission two projects and a two-day holiday was declared to host him. His supporters are now taking out family attires, the famous *aso ebi*. Materials have been submitted to tailors and fashion designers. No one should be surprised if Tinubu invites the opposition party leaders to his inauguration and quite a number would show up on D-Day. Has Action Alliance (AA) not withdrawn its petition at the Presidential Election

Petition Tribunal without giving any reason? For Bola Tinubu, 29 May would be a significant moment – the day that the kingmaker of many years takes the throne for which he had long prepared himself. His campaign slogan was "*Emilokan*" – "it is my turn" – 29 May would be a culmination of a life-long ambition, carefully executed over the years, from the days of NADECO struggle to Senatorial position, Governorship, and a crafty, deliberate, even if cynical construction of power, name recognition and influence. It would be history made on 29 May, because Tinubu would have become the third South Westerner and the fifth Southerner – after Aguiyi Ironsi, Ernest Shonekan, Olusegun Obasanjo and Goodluck Jonathan to lead Nigeria.

In 1966, July, in the heat of the counter-coup, Brigadier Babafemi Ogundipe who was next in line to Ironsi had to flee abroad when his Northern aides threatened to kill him. In the First and Second Republics, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, who was most prepared for office and leadership never achieved the dream of becoming Nigeria's President. In 1993, Chief MKO Abiola who emerged winner of what has been adjudged the freest and fairest election in Nigerian history was denied victory because the military led by General Ibrahim Babangida annulled the election. When Tinubu wears the Presidential sash on 29 May, he would have succeeded where other clearly accomplished Yoruba sons "failed". Such is the irony of life, but it is also the reason why Tinubu as a Nigerian President from the South and from the South West would be assuming a heavy burden of history. Being President alone, even for a week is probably enough for him – his name would have entered the annals of history. But that cannot be enough. The President-elect must not look forward to the fulfilment of naked ambition. He cannot go to Aso Villa in Abuja to drink tea, eat free food, and pick his teeth afterwards with toothpick. I dare say that toothpicks should be banned from Aso Villa forthwith. When a man sits on the stone of destiny, he sits atop a huge responsibility.

Bola Ahmed Tinubu as presidential candidate engaged Nigerians with an 80-page manifesto which he titled "Renewed Hope". I would be surprised if he has read his own manifesto. It took some time for that manifesto to be announced. His campaign managers disowned several versions before they finally decided on the 88-page document. Now here is the deal – in Nigeria, political manifestoes are written by a hired team who put out textbook ideas and tell the people what they want to hear which is why all the presidential manifestoes in the 2023 presidential election mouthed the same platitudes, an expression of the lack of clear ideological lines in contemporary Nigerian politics. This is the reason why under the Buhari administration, we had the interesting experience of a sitting president denying some of the contents of his own campaign manifesto. The ideas were not his, they were put there by the political jobbers aiming for the right sound bites. Nobody should be surprised if Tinubu also distances himself from some of the verbiage in his campaign document. But we expect him to reduce his priorities to clear, policy choices that can be monitored. No verbiage, just very clear actionable points. President Umaru Yar'Adua (2007 – 2010) had a



Tinubu

seven point plus two special interest issues agenda for Nigeria. President Goodluck Jonathan (2010–2015) announced a Transformation Agenda with four special targets to seek profound changes in social, economic, political and the institutional structure of the country. President Muhammadu Buhari (2015–2023) eventually reduced his campaign manifesto to a specific three-point agenda. President-elect Bola Ahmed Tinubu is advised to follow the same pattern. I propose the following actionable, eight-point agenda, not necessarily in their order of importance.

One: The first big elephant in the room that the Tinubu administration has to deal with when it assumes office on 29 May, right after the inauguration banquet, is the removal of fuel subsidy. It is first and foremost a matter of law. Both the Appropriation Act 2023, and the Petroleum Industry Act 2021 prescribe a window of exit from the petroleum subsidy regime that does not extend beyond 1 June. There is no provision for the funding of subsidy in the budget beyond that point. The Buhari administration had cleverly avoided taking responsibility for removing fuel subsidy and shifted the goal post, claiming there could be "consequences" in a Bloomberg interview. The same administration has further saved itself from public backlash by saying it has secured an \$800 million facility from the World Bank for the provision of palliatives, but it is now up to an expanded committee, including the in-coming administration's team, to take a decision on this. It looks like a set up to me. Buhari would walk away as the man who was wary of "consequences". Tinubu will be required to use his head to break the coconut. If the subsidy remains beyond the provisions of the law, and no attempt is made to amend the law, Tinubu would be starting off his presidency by breaking the laws of Nigeria.

The government would have set out on a note of illegality. It would be akin to the Buhari administration violating the Procurement Act and the CBN Act

with regard to the CBN Ways and Means, and here on the eve of Buhari's departure, the National Assembly says it has approved the violation of the law. When the legislature breaks its own laws, and does so with immunity, then a country is in trouble. If it may be any consolation to those who are opposed to INEC's declaration of Tinubu as president-elect, the truth is that the man is going to inherit a troubled nation. The country is broke. After 29 May, it may not be able to meet its financial obligations. The question of fuel subsidy is a kind of poetic justice for Tinubu. In 2012, he and his allies organised designer protests at Ojota, Lagos and elsewhere to oppose fuel subsidy removal. If we had removed subsidy then, Nigeria would have since adjusted. Tinubu is saddled with the evil day that he postponed. He must either show courage or act cowardly. Economists, for more than two decades, have not changed their position, from Lagos to Washington DC, that a fuel subsidy regime is unsustainable. It is important to state this because there are some ruling party hangers-on who have been saying that once Dangote Refinery comes on stream on 22 May, then government can remove fuel subsidy. The two must be separated. It would be the ultimate act of cowardice to use the Dangote Refinery and the expected 650,000 barrels a day as the fall guy for years of government incompetence. It is either Tinubu has the courage to act, or he would take a cowardly option, which would again postpone the evil day.

Two: Revenue is a problem. We have been told this again and again by Nigeria's financial managers and that the main challenge is to widen Nigeria's revenue base. The Bretton Woods institutions in their Economic Outlook Reports on Nigeria have said more or less the same thing. Nigeria's next administration has to find ways of increasing revenue. The easiest recommendation is to say government has to collect more taxes or widen the tax base. Nigerians are already groaning under the weight of too many taxes and they can't see what anybody does with the taxes,

and so, whatever government proposes, the people are suspicious. Tinubu, given his reputation as the man behind Alpha Beta, the tax collection agency in Lagos, would find it difficult to tell Nigerians to pay more taxes. They would think he just wants to hand over Nigeria to Alpha Beta and collect bigger shares of the cake. Tinubu cannot be a tax collector of Nigeria. He will be resisted by everybody! His advisers must therefore look at other options. He has to prune down the cost of governance, starting with his own example. He must start by implementing the Oronsaye Report on Governance. All forms of duplication must be eliminated. There must be legislation telling governors and Local Government chairmen that they cannot have more than two assistants, a maximum of five, and that everybody must stop going about as if they have just inherited the world. The COVID-19 crisis has shown that if Nigerian leaders stay at home for medical care, they can survive. Everyone, including the president, must be told clearly that whatever they cannot treat in Nigeria may as well kill them. We are in the age of technology. Jumping around at public expense to treat gout and arthritis is unacceptable. Whoever wants to do so must show proof that they are spending personal funds! Tinubu must address Nigeria's health sector crisis.

Three: Tinubu has been a long-time apostle of federalism. He has written a book on it. Symposia have been held in his honour on the subject. As governor of Lagos State, he took President Olusegun Obasanjo to court on the subject of the creation of local councils and the true reading of Section 162 of the 1999 Constitution. He won. I am not very sure that President Obasanjo has forgiven him for that. He now steps into the same shoes that Obasanjo occupied. He cannot run an imperial presidency! If that sounds like another curse of nemesis, Tinubu must be made to realise that given his own antecedents and causes that he championed, he has to show that he truly believes in federalism. One of his first tasks must be to support the devolution of powers, give the states more responsibilities and make the Federal Government more compact and effective. Anything otherwise would be used against him. He could come across as a hypocrite on the question of federalism, and he would have allowed OBJ to have a very good, last laugh in this emerging game of thrones.

Four: Tinubu has been a champion of a special status for Lagos. He is now in a position to make that happen. But he must resist the temptation to be a Yoruba or Lagos president. It is not only Lagos that deserves a special status. He must add to that agenda, Kaduna and Enugu. He must be the president of all of Nigeria, a unifier, not a divisive village chief. The same Lagosians who did not vote for him on 25 February would expect that he should do more for Lagos. He must not repeat the error of ethnic irredentism in Nigerian politics. He must avoid a winner-takes-it-all approach.

Five: He must sanitise the budgeting and procurement processes. Six; he must take a quick look at the foreign exchange regime. Seven: empower the security agencies, particularly the police. Eight: respect media freedom and the demands of Nigerian youths. These are low-hanging fruits. We wait. We watch.

SUNDAY PEOPLE

LALONG PRESENTS SECOND CLASS/THIRD CLASS STAFF OF OFFICE

Plateau State Governor, Rt. Hon. Simon Bako Lalong, CON on Thursday last week presented Second/Third Class Staff of office to the Gwom Rwey, HRH Da (Dr.) Nga Danyang of Gyel and HRH Da (Sir) Christopher Mancha of Zawan all of Jos South LGA at a ceremony at the LGC Secretariat, Bukuru



Governor Simon Bako Lalong, CON (middle) with the Gwom Rwey Gyel, HRH Da (Dr.) Nga Danyang (right) and HRH (Sir) Christopher Mancha, Gwom Rwey, Zawan with their Second and Third Class Staff of office



Plateau State Governor, Rt. Hon. Simon Bako Lalong, CON, flipping through pages of the programme with the LGC Chairman, Amb. Gideon Dandereng



Plateau State Deputy Governor, Prof. Sonni Gwanle Tyoden (right) with Speaker, PLHA, Rt. Hon. Yakubu Yackson Sanda



Governor Lalong, CON (middle) acknowledging cheers, flanked by the newly coronated Second Class Traditional Ruler, HRH (Dr) Nga Danyang (right) and Third Class, HRH Da (Sir) Christopher Mancha



HRH Miskoom Martin Shaldas, Long Gamai of Shendam (2nd right) flanked by other members of the state traditional council



Cross section of traditional rulers at the ceremony



Head of Civil Service, Engr. Sunday Hyat, mni (left) with the Chief of Staff Government House, Hon. Noel Dongjur



Cross section of invited dignitaries at the staff of office presentation

Providing quality and good representation, law making and embarking on oversights are part of the main duties of the legislative arm. With just few weeks to the end of the present assembly, it is imperative to take a look at some key legislative activities of the ninth Plateau State House of Assembly. Here are few of the laws and bills moved from June 2019, when it was inaugurated.

A Bill for a Law to Provide for Anti- Land Grabbing, Kidnapping, Cultism and Related Matters, 2020. Interestingly, passed into law after the state executive governor gave his assent last year. A Bill for a Law to Eliminate Violence in Private and Public Life, Prohibit all Forms of Violence including Physical, Sexual Psychological, Domestic, Harmful Traditional Practices, Discrimination Against Persons and to Provide Maximum Protection and Effective Remedies for Victims and Punishment of Offenders, and for Other Matters related, 2020.

A Bill for a Law to Establish the Plateau State Displaced Persons Commission and for other Related Matters, 2021. This bill has passed first and second readings and have been committed to the House Committee on Judiciary to conduct a public hearing.

MOTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS: According to some school of thought, resolutions reached by the Plateau State House of Assembly are considered advises since all oars lies on the executive who does the implementation. Here are a few of these motions and resolutions. A call on the security agencies to urgently investigate the constant harassment and killings of the good people of Bokkos constituency.

Resolution reached was the House calling on the executive arm of Government to provide security in the affected communities. Second, that SEMA and other relevant agencies should as a matter of urgency come to the aid of the affected victims in all the various communities in providing succor in terms food items, clothing and other necessities of life.

Matter of urgent public importance on illegal motor parks on road sides within Jos- Bukuru metropolis and its environs.

Resolution reached by the House on the matter was that the Police and the Plateau State Internal Revenue Service should ensure that such parks are properly organized to avoid the break down of law and order, and to create other means of generating revenue for the Plateau State government.

A motion on adjournment on the activities of cultist gangs operating in Jos and its environs. Resolution: The House condemned in totality the activities of cultic gangs operating in some parts of Jos and environs, while also calling on the state government to work with security agencies in order to curtail cultist gangs' activities in Plateau State.

The unending conflicts between border settlements of Wadata in Wase Local Government Area of Plateau State and Kurmi in Taraba State resulted in several loss of lives and massive displacement of residents within the communities.

Resolution: The House called on

the Government of Plateau State to provide the affected victims with the needed medical care and relief materials. Secondly, that Government should liaise with Taraba State Government to prevent any form of conflict.

A matter of urgent public importance on the fire outbreak at the Laranto Market (Katako) which led to colossal loss of properties.

Resolution: The House called on the state government to provide a Fire Service Station outlet within the premises of all markets in Jos metropolis.

Another matter of urgent public



Notable legislations of the state ninth assembly



importance on the need to take decisive action on the abduction and gruesome murder of Plateau citizens by Boko Haram in the north eastern part of the country. Resolution: That Government should authorize the deployment of Nigerian troops along the north east and all other troubled spots in the country so as to safely guide the lives and property of citizens.

A call on the Plateau State government to as a matter of urgency consider the resettlement and rehabilitation of victims of attacks in Rukuba/ Irigwe constituency. Resolution: That the House was calling on the State government to as a matter of urgency, resettle

and rehabilitate the victims of attacks in Rukuba/Irigwe and other affected parts of Plateau State.

A call on the Plateau State government to urgently consider the re-design of the state security structure in order to curb the incessant attacks on communities across the state. Resolution: That the Government should deploy more security to protect the affected communities and fish out perpetrators for immediate prosecution.

A call on the Plateau State government on the need to ban day time movement of heavy-duty trucks, trailers and fuel tankers within Jos and Bukuru metropolis. Resolution: That the state

government should provide short term alternative routes and long-term planned routes to reduce loss of lives and property.

A call on the Plateau State government to ensure that justice was done over the killing of Ritji Peter Bala.

Resolution: The House deeply sympathized and condoled the bereaved family and condemned in strong terms the killing of Ritji Bala and also Dr. Nandi Drenkat. That the state government should liaise with the federal government to fish out perpetrators for immediate prosecution.

A matter of urgent public importance on the need to protect pedestrian lives on the stretch of

the road between Hill Station Hotel and the Polo roundabout.

Resolution: The House sympathized with the families of those who lost their loved ones in the many accidents occurring at Polo roundabout, and called on the Plateau State government to, as a matter of urgency, direct the Jos Metropolitan Development Board (JMDB) and other related authorities to construct speed bumps from the Hill Station Hotel roundabout to Polo roundabout, with a two week ultimatum given.

A call on the Plateau State government to put in place stringent measures to curtail the rising incidents of rape in the state.

Resolution: The House condemned in totality the act of violence and other forms of hideous crimes perpetrated on children by rapists. Also, that Government should empower relevant MDAs to conduct advocacy on social behavioral change.

A matter of urgent public importance on an attack in Rotsu village of Miango district in Bassa Local Government Area of Plateau State.

Resolution: That the coordinator of the state Operation Rainbow and Neighborhood Watch be invited for a meeting with the principal officers of the House, and the House Committee on Labour and Security on Friday 24/7/2020.

Another matter of urgent public importance on the need for the Plateau State government to strengthen the services of security agencies in Plateau State, especially Operation Rainbow and to provide armed security men for traditional rulers

Resolution: Again, that the Plateau State government should strengthen the Operation Rainbow and Neighborhood Watch outfit.

Matter of urgent public importance on the need for Plateau State government to caution the Joint Patrol team of security operatives checking roads to be modest in their approach to motorists.

Resolution: That the House Committee on Works and Transport should invite the Joint Security Operative, Federal Road Safety Corp, Police Force and the Vehicle Inspection Officers (VIO) to the House for a parley on 8th June, 2021.

A matter of urgent public importance on the increasing cases of wanton destructions of crops on farmlands by Fulani herders in Rikwe, Chongu and Zou communities of Rukuba/ Irigwe constituency.

Resolution: That the Operation Rainbow should be more proactive in halting security challenges in the state.

SUNDAY MAGAZINE



Some elected Governors

How governors-elect will inherit massive debts

As some states across the country prepare for the Swearing-in of new administrations on May 29, 2023, there are concerns in some quarters that no fewer than 17 In-coming Governors are likely to inherit from their predecessors a gargantuan debt burden of about 1.9 billion U.S dollars which translates to N2.1 trillion. KENNETH DARENG, writes.

THE first major challenge for the new administrations particularly for the first term Governors –Elect will come from many months of unpaid workers' salaries and mounting pressure from pension liabilities, as well as the implementation of promotions and the long agreed national minimum wage coupled with massive recruitment of new workers in some of these states. According to SUNDAY STANDARD sources, most of the newly elected Governors will find it an uphill task to implement their campaign promises due to the fact that most of them are going to inherit an already fractured and demoralized civil service and so many financial hiccups as a

result of huge financial liabilities from months of unpaid salary arrears and also loads of debts owed to commercial banks and contractors.

SUNDAY STANDARD also gathered, at least 17 states of the Federation are already indebted to the tune of N2.1trillion in both domestic and foreign loans obtained by the out-going administrations. And by implication, the servicing of such debts are tied to the Irrevocable Payment Order with the Central Bank of Nigeria [CBN].

These development according to Mathew Agbo, a Jos based public commentator will have negative effects on policy formulation and cause serious setback on programmes outlined by the newly elected

Governors considering the current economic realities on ground with the attending high inflation rate, escalating prizes of goods and services and weak purchasing power across spectrum of the society.

A recent report in one of the dailies quoted the Debt Management Office estimate of the country's total domestic indebtedness at N21,551,924,507.448 as at September 30, 2022, while foreign loans stood at 39.66 billion dollars.

According to the report, the In-coming Governor of Abia state Dr. Alex Otti, will inherit on May 29, a debt portfolio of N104,573,334,025.73 billion of domestic debt apart from over 95 million US dollars external debt incurred by his predecessor

Dr. Okezieh Ikpeazu. The newly elected Labour Party led administration may have to fashion out how to cough out the salary arrears of the state workforce for the period of between 10 and 27 months.

In Awa Ibom state, out-going Governor Udom Emmanuel is handing over to his hand picked successor, Pastor Umo Eno a massive domestic debt of N219,617,660,991.63 billion and Over 46 million dollars foreign debts. It is also assumed that the figure may rise before the May 29, handing over date.

The in-coming APC administration under Rev. FR. Hyacinth Alia will be confronted with unpaid workers salaries ranging from 8 to 15 months of arrears as he takes over from Governor Samuel Ortom of the PDP who has in his kitty a debt of over N143 billion domestic debt and more than 30million US dollars foreign debt incurred by his administration over the past eight years.

Another new Governor- Elect, Bassey Otu, of Cross River State will have to strategize his priorities to offset the left over debts being handed over by outgoing Governor Prof Ben Ayade, though from the same political party APC, had garnered for the state a domestic profile of over N175 billion domestic debt apart from

a foreign debt of over 215 million US dollars.

Delta State Governor Ifeanyi Okowa, who contested as Vice-Presidential Candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party [PDP] in the just concluded national elections, will on May 29, hand over the affairs of the state to his anointed successor Rt Hon. Sheriff Oborevwori with a hand over notes that contains a domestic debt profile of over N262 billion and another foreign debt of over 60million dollars.

In Ebonyi State, Governor David Umahi, is also leaving behind to the incoming APC elected Governor Francis Nwufuru, a debt burden comprising over N67 billion including that of foreign debt.

While in neighbouring Enugu State, the out-going Governor, Ifeanyi Uguanyi, will hand over a total of over N83 billion domestic debt and over 123 million US dollars external debt to the Governor –Elect Peter Mbah.

Jigawa State Governor- Elect Mallam Umar Namadi, will inherit a domestic debt of not less than N44 billion apart from over 27million dollars owed foreign creditors which has been obtained by the outgoing Muhammad Badaru administration in the state.

Governor Nasir El Rufai, of

The first major challenge for the new state administrations particularly for the first term Governors –Elect will come from many months of unpaid workers' salaries and mounting pressure from pension liabilities, as well as the implementation of promotions and the long agreed national minimum wage coupled with massive recruitment of new workers in some of these states.

Continued on page 31

NEWS

Mutfwang vows to provide solid foundation for education

By PETER TITLE.

PLATEAU State Governor -elect, Barrister Caleb Mutfwang has pledged to turn around the fortunes of education in the state, particularly at the primary level in order to provide solid foundation for learning and academic excellence.

Barr.Mutfwang disclosed this recently when he received the delegation of the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT), Plateau State wing led by the Chairman, Comrade Kefas U.Nanpan at the Jonah David Jang Lodge Rayfield.

The Governor -elect who recalled the immense contributions of teachers in the state to his success at the polls, assured them that his tenure would not only be eventful but productive for education to thrive in the state.

He assured them of his commitment to uplift the standard of education in the state saying "I'm a product of public primary school and I know what it used to be in those days. It was in school that a lot of people learnt how to live a better life. But it's unfortunate today, the school environment is the opposite of its former self with dilapidated structures".



Mutfwang

According to him, payment of salaries is not an achievement. He stated it's a duty, adding that improving education is not an achievement as well, stressing it is a responsibility and that is the mindset his administration would approach it headlong.

The Governor -elect further observed that there is no society that can progress without sound education and assured that the incoming government would deploy available opportunities to revamp the education sector

for the greater good of Plateau people.

He explained that despite challenges confronting the state in all fronts, he promises to remain firm, focused and steady in the discharge of his responsibility of providing quality leadership that would turn around the fortune of the state.

Earlier, the state Chairman of the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT), Comrade Kefas U.Nanpan who said they were at the lodge to felicitate and congratulate him on his well-deserved

elections, used the opportunity to reel out some of the challenges facing them to include, shortage of manpower, inadequate instructional materials, dilapidated classrooms, two to three months' salary arrears among others.

Comrade Nanpan explained that they used the opportunity to intimate him of some of the problems bedeviling the education sector, most especially at the primary level so that "when you assume office, these challenges would not be new to you.

The NUT Chairman said "There are shortage of teachers in public primary schools as many teachers are retiring on a monthly basis without corresponding replacements or recruitments. The situation would have been worst if not for the adhoc teachers intervention undertaken by the current government".

He appealed to the governor -elect to look into the issue with a view to giving them the needed attention to improve the education standard in the state.

Emir of Zazzau to be new UniJos Chancellor

By EZEKIEL DONTINNA

ALL is set for the investiture programme of Emir of Zazzau, His Royal Highness, Mal. Ahmed NuhuBamalli, CFR, as the new Chancellor of the University of Jos, Plateau State scheduled for this Saturday during the grand convocation ceremony of the institutions in Jos.

The Vice Chancellor of the University of Jos, Professor TankoIshaya, disclosed this recently while briefing journalists on the occasion marking the commencement of the 33rd and 34th Combined Convocation, held

at the Senate Chamber of the University.

He said, "I am delighted to warmly welcome members of the press who are attending today's press briefing marking the commencement of events to celebrate the 33rd and 34th Combined Convocation ceremonies of the University of Jos.

"As has been the tradition of the university over the years, we are kick-starting this year's convocation activities with a media parley because of the importance attached and the critical role the media plays in creating awareness

among the populace.

"Several activities have also been lined up to make this year's celebration worthwhile. They are as follows: Thursday May 11, 2023 there will be award of Certificates like, Diplomas and Undergraduate Degrees at the Faculty of Social Sciences Auditorium, Naraguta Campus, Permanent Site by 10.00am.

"Friday May 12, 2023- there will Convocation Lecture by Professor Anthony OkonNyong, Director, Climate Change and Green Growth, Africa Development Bank, Abidjan, Cote d' Ivoire and 2007 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate titled: "Combating Climate Change for National Security and Development" at the Faculty of Social Sciences by 3pm", he highlighted.

According to the VC, "at the grand finale on Saturday May 13, 2023, there will be award of Postgraduate Diplomas, Masters and PhD Degrees at the Faculty of Social Sciences Auditorium, Naraguta Campus of the University of Jos by 10:00am.

"The highpoints of Saturday's programme will be the investiture of His Royal Highness, Mal. Ahmed NuhuBamalli, CFR, the Emir of Zazzau as the

new Chancellor of the University of Jos. The Chancellor will also be conferred with the Doctor of Law Degree (LL.D, Honoris is Causa) in company of two other eminent Nigerians; Professor Suleiman Elias Bogoro, OON, a renowned scholar and former Executive Secretary of TETFund with the Doctor of Engineering Degree (D.Engr. Honoris Causa).

"The other personality to be conferred alongside the Chancellor is the an Elder statesman and former Nigerian Envoy to Switzerland, Ambassador YahayaKwande, OON, with the Doctor of Letters (D.Litt.) Honoris Causa. The Honorary Degrees are being conferred on these distinguished Nigerians for their unique and outstanding contributions to national development and growth of humanity", Ishaya enthused.

He, however, disclosed that the number of students to be graduated during this convocation would be 20,532 and out of this number, 112 came out with First Class, 3093 with Second Class (Upper Division), 6325 Second Class (Lower Division), 1361 Third Class degree, 281 Pass and 109 Pass Qualified for Pharmacy and Veterinary Medicine



Tribunal Dismisses Petition Against Abia LP Rep-Elect

A suit challenging the victory of ObinnaAguocha of the Labour Party as the elected member of the Ikwuano/Umuahia North/Umuahia South federal constituency of Abia State has been thrown out by the state election petition tribunal.

Man Sentenced To 20 Years Imprisonment For Raping Nine-Year-Old

THE Principal Resident Magistrate court in Lilongwe Malawi has sentenced a 39-year-old man, KondwaniChitukula to 20 years imprisonment for raping a nine-year-old step-granddaughter in the district.

The victim was defiled multiple times, according to the findings.

ASUU: Court to rule on FG's suit in May

THE National Industrial Court has set May 30 for its ruling in the suit filed by the federal government against the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU).

ASUU was dragged to court by the federal government to determine the substantive suit filed during the eight-month strike in 202

2023 Presidency: Why Tinubu Had Northern Governors' Backing — Masari

THE Governor of Katsina State, Aminu Masari, has disclosed why he and the other northern governors chose to back the presidential ambition of the President-elect, Bola Tinubu.

Masari who made the disclosure in Daura on Thursday during a farewell visit to the Emir of Daura, Alhaji Umar Faruq-Umar revealed that their decision was hinged on respect for the zoning formula adopted by the All Progressives Congress (APC)

Buhari, Aisha move to transitional house ahead of May 29 handover

PRESIDENT Muhammadu Buhari and his wife, Aisha, have moved into the Glass House, a temporary abode for outgoing leaders, at the Presidential Villa, Abuja.

I must be Nigeria's president, won't run away — Peter Obi

THE Labour Party presidential candidate, Peter Obi, on Friday, expressed confidence in his chances of ruling Nigeria as president.

Plateau workers begin indefinite strike over salaries, others

PLATEAU workers have commenced an indefinite strike after the failure of the government to meet their demands. The action was declared in a notice of strike issued by the Joint Negotiating Council (JNC), Plateau chapter, on Wednesday night in Jos.

Angola, Nigeria top OPEC's oil production lists for Africa

ANGOLA displaced Nigeria as Africa's largest crude oil producer last month

Tackle quackery in construction industry — Group tells incoming govt

THE Nigerian Mining and Geosciences Society (NMGS) on Friday urged the incoming administration to...

Sudan: Talks to resume amid heavy fighting

SUDAN'S warring army and Rapid Support Forces paramilitary on Saturday said that they will resume talks on Sunday, even as air strikes and heavy fighting raged overnight around Khartoum in spite of an agreement to protect civilians.

Telecom operators to disconnect banks over N120 Billion Usd Debt

ELECOMMUNICATIONS Operators in Nigeria say they have been granted approval by the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) to disconnect banks over N120 billion Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD) debt.

FG constitutes advertising offences tribunal, Names OlatoregunAs Chairman

THE Federal Government has constituted the Advertising Offences Tribunal, with retired Justice Cecelia Olatoregun as Chairman. A statement issued by the Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON) and made available to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on Friday, said four other members were appointed.

Oil and gas workers express concerns over Nigeria's N77 Trillion Debt

THE Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN) on Thursday in Abuja expressed concerns over Nigeria's N77 trillion public debt. Addressing the 7th triennial national delegates' conference of the association, its president, Mr Festus Osifo, said the debt profile as at the first quarter of 2023 was mind-blowing

Zoning of NASS leadership positions, just advisory not binding — Idris Wase

IDRIS Wase, the Deputy Speaker of Nigeria's House of Representatives, said that the zoning of leadership positions in the incoming 10th Assembly of the National Assembly is only advisory and not binding on members. Wase insisted that further consultation, taking into consideration the federal character's importance and competence, should be used in choosing its leadership.

Compiled by LOIS DADUUT

SUNDAY FEATURE

Playing foul with electric power

A few days ago, a friend of mine called to share some woeful experience. The guy, a US-based pharmacist, recently spent three weeks in Aba, the most populous city in Abia State, where some members of his family live and he owns a business. OKEY NDIBE writes.

ACCORDING to my pal, the whole of Aba metropolis was, for ten straight days, without electric power during his visit. I had never known my friend to be given to embellishment or hyperbole. Even so, I voiced some doubt. In a pained, raised voice, he sought to disabuse me. "I'm not telling you that somebody told me. I was there. For close to ten days, the residents of Aba didn't have one flickering second of light."

He was able to manage, he said, because his home in Aba is equipped with a generator. Still, it cost him a grand bundle of cash to buy fuel for the generator. Again, he was part of the lucky minority. For some of his relatives and acquaintances, it was pure, unadulterated suffering. Tons of refrigerated food, cooked and raw, went bad. At night, residents turned and tossed in restless sleep in hot, airless rooms.

And this was only a partial glimpse of the domestic facet of residents' unrelenting experience of powerless hell.

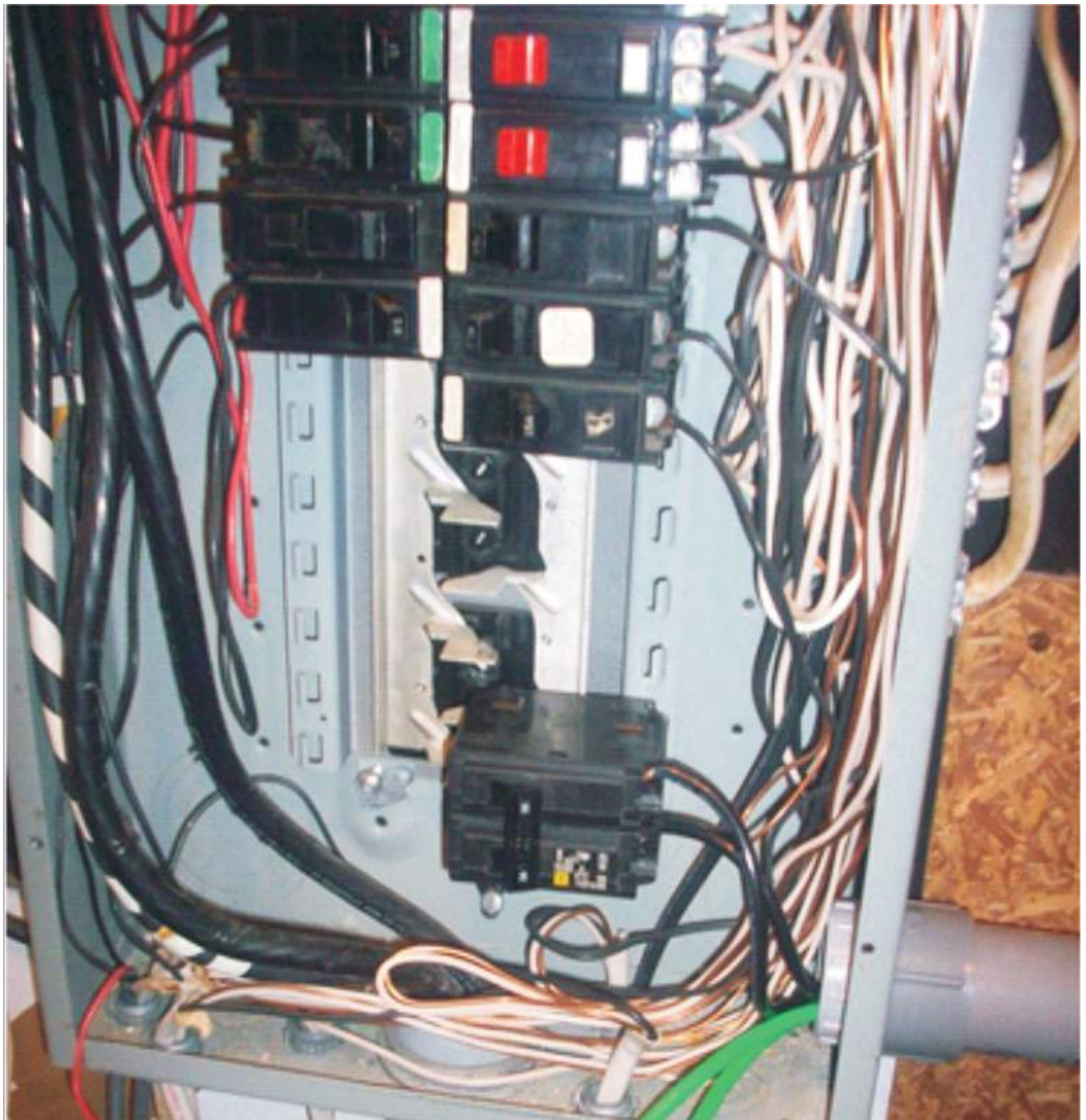
Now consider this: Aba is one of the most densely populated cities in Nigeria. In addition, it is one of Africa's most dynamic industrial hubs. It is the location of some of the country's privately owned medium- and low-level manufacturing industries.

For a city of this scale and importance, the implications of a long-lasting power outage are profound. Imagine the strain, for example, on hospitals where doctors must carry out routine and specialised surgeries. Even where hospitals own massive generators, they stand to incur huge costs if they run the generators round-the-clock for several days. Ultimately, the increased costs are passed on to patients or their relatives who often pay out of pocket.

After getting off the phone with my friend, I decided to dig around for information that would explain the plague of darkness that befell Aba and surrounding communities – a total of nine local government areas. To my chagrin, but hardly shock, I discovered that – like many a disaster in Nigeria – it was all man-made.

For manufacturers and other businesses, the outlook is just as forbidding, if not even grimmer. Ten days without power translates into incalculable disaster. Electricity powers manufacturing. In the absence of electric power, many businesses are forced to grind to a halt. When productive activities cease, the ripple effects are dire. Proprietors lose revenue and, in critical conditions, may face closure. Consumers are deprived of much-desired or needed goods and services. Employees often go unpaid, furloughed or are laid off outright. The dysfunctions also have broader macro-economic impact. When businesses and people are distressed on account of a collapse of electric power, governments stand to collect much less internally generated revenues.

Let's not forget the grave security implications of thrusting a major city



into darkness. Most Nigerian cities, Aba among them, are beset by high crime rates. Criminals thrive under the cover of darkness. It follows that the ten or so days when Aba's residents went without power were an unwitting boon to the worst of criminals. In a country where many violent crimes go unreported or unsolved, we may never get a full reckoning of the ways in which emboldened criminals lay siege to Aba's hapless residents.

After getting off the phone with my friend, I decided to dig around for information that would explain the plague of darkness that befell Aba and surrounding communities – a total of nine local government areas. To my chagrin, but hardly shock, I discovered that – like many a disaster in Nigeria – it was all man-made.

Since September last year, a corporate entity called Aba Power has been responsible for supplying electric power to the

sprawling commercial nerve centre. By many accounts, the company has been doing a commendable job. However, the company has faced two teething problems.

The first has to do with a perennial habit of many Nigerian consumers of utilities: the reluctance to pay bills. Even though Aba Power has greatly improved power supply within its jurisdiction, a significant percentage of commercial and residential consumers do not pay their tariffs. Some rogue consumers even go as far as tapping power illicitly. More hardened criminals frequently prey on the company's equipment, thus compromising the reliability of power supply.

Hampered by a lagging collection on its bills, Aba Power had a second problem. It happened to owe N896 million to Federal Government agencies in the power sector. On 19th April, the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN) sent a

letter to Aba Power demanding payment within thirty days of the nearly N900 million debt. The thirty-day notice was in line with best practices. Corporate and individual debtors are usually given a window of time within which to meet their obligations.

In this instance, TCN's seemingly gracious gesture was immediately subverted by a bizarre, even malicious, manoeuvre. That same day, the TCN's executive director for market operations, Edmund Eje, ordered the market operator to totally remove Aba Power from the national grid. Thus, with nary a moment's warning, all of Aba Power's 29 feeders were shut out. Millions of the company's customers in Aba and surrounding local government areas, many of them commercial enterprises, were thrust into a powerless dungeon.

Eje's action was baffling. It also smacked of bad faith. It's hard to defend his inordinate haste to punish Aba Power and, by

extension, its millions of customers. After all, TCN had that day served Aba Power a thirty-day notice to settle its debt. As if to underscore a malicious intent, Eje treated the far more indebted Kaduna Electricity Distribution Company with kid gloves. Even though the Kaduna Company owed TCN a whopping N33 billion, only three of the firm's feeders were taken off the national grid – for just four days!

Why did Eje order all of Aba Power's feeders removed from the national grid for ten days, while the Kaduna Company, which owes TCN thirty-two times more money, was given an exceedingly lenient treatment?

Nigeria is a trying environment for private businesses, as well as citizens. When overzealous federal bureaucrats play foul with electric power, they exacerbate harsh conditions. In effect, they further hinder the operations of private businesses and inflict gratuitous hardship on Nigerians who are already much abused.

SUNDAY FEATURE

How Nigerians have adjusted to CBN's cashless policy

The harrowing experience which accompanied the introduction of the cash policy in the country appears to be easing off, and Nigerians are gradually adjusting to it; TOPE SUNDAY writes.

TODAY, one of the issues leading the discourse is the cashless policy of the federal government, which is spearheaded by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN). Unarguably, it has remained to date, the most talked about, and next to the 2023 presidential election. This may be so because of its effects on the economy and on the generality of Nigerians.

Despite the problems faced by Nigerians as a result of the Naira re-designing, and its scarcity, citizens are gradually adjusting to the policy which most people consider to be anti-poor.

Policy ab initio

The CBN, on October 26, 2022, announced the introduction of the re-design of N200, N500, and N1,000 banknotes. The CBN governor, Godwin Emefiele, told journalists at a special press briefing in Abuja that the banknotes were to be re-designed after due approval from the federal government, and in a bid to control the currency in circulation, among other reasons for embarking on the exercise.

In compliance with the apex bank's policy that limited withdrawals across all channels to N500,000 weekly, banks suspended further cash disbursement via customers' Naira credit and pre-paid cards.

Consequently, the CBN announced an upward review of its cash withdrawal policy across all payment channels by individuals and corporate organisations.

Under the updated regime, the bank stated that effective January 9, 2023, individuals and corporate entities could withdraw a maximum of N500,000 and N5 million, respectively, compared to the N100,000 and N500,000 which was previously announced on December 6, 2022.

However, the apex bank, in an updated circular dated December 21, 2022, and addressed to all Deposit Money Banks (DMBs) and Other Financial Institutions, Microfinance Banks, Mobile Money Operators, and Agents, explained that the upward review was as a result of the feedback it received from stakeholders.

Exploitation

A social media user, Wakeel Salawu, alleged that the policy gave room for exploitation, insisting that traders who accepted transfers demanded between N20, N30, and N50 as bank charges.

He said: "There is an ugly trend in the commercial environment gaining ground and no one seems to complain. Most SMEs business owners that accept transfers would ask the buyer to add N20, N30, or N50 to the price, calling it 'bank charges.' Ironically, many buyers who will make issues with corporate Banks accept it as 'normal,' as 'nothing big' and 'I don't have a choice.' Some will even fall to 'you are bigger than that.'

"Just yesterday, I watched a gas attendant making cool cash on students who did not care about



throwing away their parents' hard earned money as he received N30 to N50 on transfer into his O Pay account. Within minutes, he had cornered about N1,000.

"This is one of the wickedness of ourselves to ourselves. I patronise you, you made a profit from me, and you still exploit me! This request is a lie and exploitation without justification. No bank charges anything for money that comes into the account except up to N10,000 when the bank charges N50 stamp duties."

He continued, "So, where is the justification for collecting N50 on the transfer of N500 and below 10k? Even users of online bank platforms that take no charges do ask for bank charges. Unless you use ATM cards on commercial POS terminals, no charges on direct online transfers of below N10k.

"Anyway, I have always resisted this and no one has been able to defend it. I can't imagine losing N1k daily on several daily transfers when I am not a Yahoo boy or money ritual. If it is 10k upward, I will

add the stamp duty without you asking, even if I am dashing you the money.

"Anyway, it is becoming a norm, courtesy of the wicked and obnoxious cash policy. The choice is yours to conform with or resist exploitation."

Reactions

Speaking with Blueprint Weekend, an Abuja-based trader, Mrs. Josephine Onyenehize, said she now enjoys the cash policy, adding that it has eased off all the stress associated with cash.

"It was difficult initially when the cashless policy was introduced but as soon as we started to see cash flow, it became easier and the stress associated with the introduction of the policy has greatly reduced as most customers quickly adapted. In my own experience, the cashless policy is a welcome development and I think its operation is okay.

In fact, the new policy is okay. We are coping and we love it except for at the initial stage when most people did not have an understanding of how the policy works," she said.

On his part, Malam Isiaka Shehu, who operates a cyber cafe at the corner shop in the Federal

Housing Authority (FHA) Estate, Lugbe, said he had opened multiple accounts to ease his business transaction.

He said: "Concerning the new cashless policy, I've been coping by opening multiple accounts with different banks and also making use of Opay. On the workability of the policy, as somebody who is into ICT, I think it is encouraging and I think it will work as it helps people to save money."

On the fate of Nigerians in the rural areas, he said: "The world is a global village as no place can truly be called a village anymore because some of the so-called villages have better access to the internet than even some cities. After all, they too have to browse the internet and use Facebook and emails. As for some remote areas that have not been covered by the internet, it is the responsibility of the internet service providers to expand and extend their services and antenna to these areas for them to enjoy the policy."

A wine shop operator at Lugbe, who identified himself as Mr.

Mayor, said it has reduced the stress of moving huge amounts of money around amidst insecurity.

"By the grace of God, this policy to me is fine and okay because, with it, one does not have to carry large sums of money around thereby making one's self a target for criminals while the imposed limitations on daily withdrawals also help to curtail unnecessary spending.

"With the restrictions placed on daily withdrawals which I understand can not exceed more than N20,000 daily, people can still afford to meet their daily financial needs such as paying for Okada, getting food stuff and groceries as well as other commodities required in everyday existence and, in the situation where the N20,000 is not enough to purchase what you want, then one can make use of USSD codes for transferring money or use the ATM cards to complement the cash-in-hand.

"Therefore, I think the policy is working and it is a welcome development. One just needs to plan in terms of what is needed and how much it will cost to obtain them."

POLITICIANS, politicians, politicians. These are the people behind the driver's seat of our national destiny. Consequently, we will keep talking to them until the country moves forward.

When Obama ran his campaign for presidency, his motto, mantra and slogan was "yes we can". This is because he had measured the task of leadership and weighed it against his capabilities. He weighed his health, his age and his intellect and when he was convinced that he could do the job, he said: "yes we can". Not "yes I can". "We" because he knew that leading was not about him but about a group of people he represented. He knew that leading was a task that required ability.

I am wondering and pondering about the people to be sworn in as the next batch of leaders in Nigeria. How many of them carried out this self-examination before contesting? Do they really have the capacity to lead us? It is not enough to have money for buying a ticket and campaigning for a position. That is called politics. How many of our politicians can govern, lead and create value for us? How many of them know that there is a big difference between politics and governance or leadership.

To politicians from top to bottom, please did you do that self-examination? If you did not and you won because you had the money to buy a ticket and run a campaign, how ready are you for your new job now? What do you know about your new job? What tools do you have to do the job? Are you a politician or a leader?

Clearly there is a difference between being a leader and a politician. As a politician, you are expected to be rich and influential, charismatic and popular. As a leader, you are expected to be selfless, a man or woman of integrity, hardworking, and result oriented. Can you create value? Are you result oriented? Nigeria is not a civil service state anymore. We are looking for leaders who can create value and solve problems, leaders who know business and how to create wealth. Are you equipped?

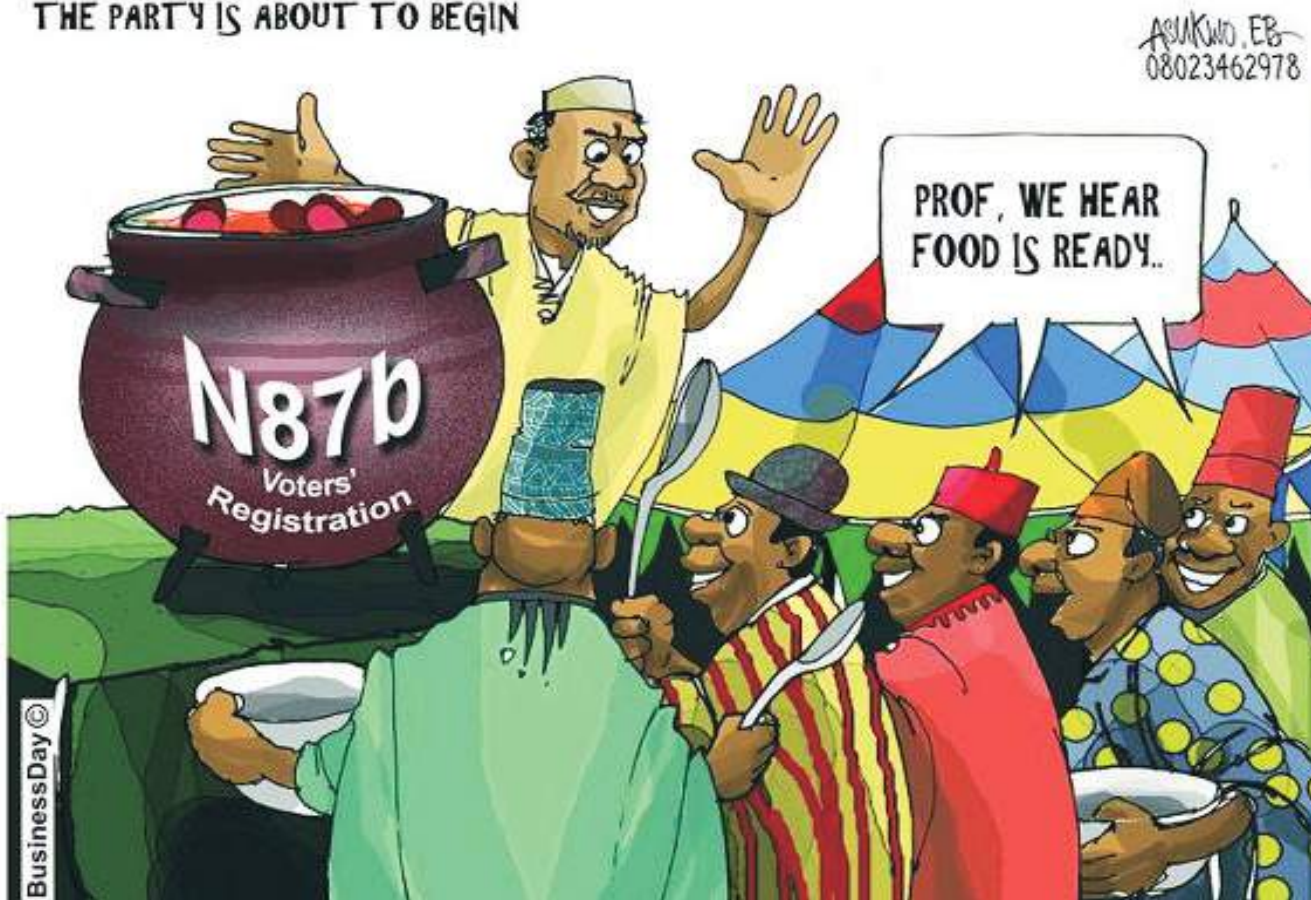
Let us look at the differences between a politician and a leader according to speakingtree.in: Politicians focus on position-leaders focus on disposition. Politicians lie on circumstances - Leaders tell the truth in all circumstances. Politicians focus on program-Leaders focus on principles. Politicians focus on promises - Leaders focus on values. Politicians focus on mission - Leaders focus on vision. Politicians focus on power - Leaders focus on empowering. Politicians focus on safeguarding their seat - Leaders focus on safeguarding the people. Politicians focus on protecting their rights - Leaders focus on protecting others' rights. Politicians focus on the next Election -Leaders focus on next generation. Politicians care about themselves and their organization-Leaders care about the people they serve. Politicians make decisions that help lobbying groups-Leaders make decisions that help their entire constituency. Politicians spend money on projects that help them - Leaders

spend money on long-term projects for the public good. Politicians have difficulty cutting luxury from the budget- Leaders have no problem cutting luxury from the budget. Politicians build and hide in bureaucracy- Leaders fight bureaucracy. Politicians point fingers at others and never admit to mistakes- Leaders will accept and admit to mistakes. Politicians never learn from their failures- Leaders learn from their errors. Politicians keep their objectives secret - Leaders establish long term



Politicians can do spirit

THE PARTY IS ABOUT TO BEGIN



objectives and communicate them to all. Politicians set bad examples - Leaders set good examples. The forgoing comparison is from speakingtree.com.

From the forgoing, we can see that leadership is not politics. Leading a group of people requires self-mastery and preparation. McKinsey describes leadership as "a set of behaviors used to help people align their collective direction, to execute strategic plans, and to continually renew an organization". It goes on to say: "all leaders, to a certain degree, do the same thing. Whether you're talking about an executive, manager, sports coach, or schoolteacher, leadership is about guiding and impacting outcomes, enabling groups of people to work together to accomplish what they could not do working individually. In this sense, leadership is something you do, not something you are. Some people in formal leadership positions are poor leaders, and many people exercising leadership have no formal authority. It is their actions, not their words, that inspire trust and energy. What's more, leadership is not something people are born with—it is a skill you can learn. At the core are mindsets, which are expressed through observable

behaviors, which then lead to measurable outcomes. Is a leader communicating effectively or engaging others by being a good listener? Focusing on behaviors, lets us be more objective when assessing leadership effectiveness. The key to unlocking shifts in behavior is focusing on mindsets, becoming more conscious about our thoughts and beliefs, and showing up with integrity as our full authentic selves". The forgoing is from Mckinsey.com.

What stands out in what McKinsey says is that leadership is not something people are born with but a skill you can learn. How many of our politicians know this? We have generational politicians who believe that it is a birth right to lead, who have misled after their fathers or uncles and yet their people have not benefited from their generational "leadership". We have people who have charisma, wealth and influence. They are people who have bought tickets and led great campaigns but when they were placed on the podium and given the seat of leadership, they turned it into a business venture and further enriched themselves with the people's money. They consumed the roads and bridges that should go to the people, with

effrontery and shamelessness. They were completely clueless about their place in society because they had no concept or understanding of what leadership is. There is a danger in giving power to a politician who is not a leader.

Leaders are not born. They are made. All politicians are not leaders, and all leaders are not politicians. Winning an election does not make one a leader. A politician may have leadership traits such as influence and charisma, but he is not yet a leader until he has integrity, selflessness, transparency, accountability, humility, self-sacrifice, the ability create value, to carry his or her people along and deliver results to his constituency. Therefore, it means that the mind is where leadership begins. Politicians need to shape their minds toward becoming great leaders by learning what it takes to be a leader and practicing the same because Nigerians are becoming more and more aware of who a leader is and who a politician is and we are becoming more demanding. We are demanding more accountability and paying more attention. Gone are the days of apathy. As such, politicians need to upgrade to political leaders in the real sense of leadership and governance.

To be concluded next week

WE find out from James 4 and 1 Peter 1 that we are to resist the spirit of fear. Now we have also mentioned that if you do not know how the spirit of fear operates, how can you successfully resist it? You must know what to look out for and then you will know exactly how to resist the spirit of fear. We have made a very important point and it bears repetition; the spirit of fear operates through thoughts, ideas, suggestions, and impressions that are injected or introduced into our minds by the devil to create feelings of fear.

Fear creates physical reaction in people; the saliva dries, the bodies begin to shake, the knees sometimes lose strength and begin to shake and quake, people begin to do crazy and dumb things reacting from the spirit of fear. We said in previous broadcasts that when the spirit of fear is in operation, when it has taken over an individual, it is almost like insanity. People begin to do things they would not have done in their normal minds. Initiative is lost; it is paralyzed or stifled.

So resisting the devil is resisting fear, and resisting fear is resisting thoughts of fear, ideas of that are full of fear, concepts in our minds, and suggestions that are introduced into our minds that create impressions and create feelings that motivate us to fear filled actions. So when you understand this, then it becomes easy for you to deal with the spirit of fear.

Again, the word resist as used in the Bible talks about standing against or opposing or setting ones self against something. When the Bible says in James 4:7 **Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you** and then in 1 Peter 5:8 & 9, **Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same**

afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world; we have to know exactly what we are to resist.

We have already established the fact that in the context in which we are speaking, resisting the spirit of fear is resisting the devil because the devil is the initiator and the

come from somewhere. If we understand this, then we must also understand that we have the right of control as free moral agents to decide what thoughts we will allow in our minds.

I like the way one man of God described it; he said that a man cannot stop birds from flying over their head, but he can the birds from making a nest on his head.



Fear not, trust God (14)



“
You have authority as a free moral agent, especially if you are born again, you have the authority in the name of Jesus, to cast down wrong thoughts. You can refuse by a simple act of your will making a decision to refuse thoughts that create fear to remain in your mind; use the name of Jesus against them.
”

active participator in your life to see to it that only The right kind of thoughts remain in your mind.

So again, it is very important to understand that you cannot resist the devil without resisting fear and you cannot resist fear without resisting fear-filled thoughts. The Bible instructs us on this matter and you know that if God asked you to do something that He has not empowered you to do, He will be an unjust God. God is a just God and He is not asking you to do anything that He has not given you the capacity and grace to do.

You must come against thoughts of fear in your mind. Anytime a thought of fear is introduced into your mind that produces fear in you, know that it is not of God but of the devil because 2 Timothy 1:7 says, **For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.**

What you are to do when such thoughts come is to say no, I resist that thought of fear in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. You must refuse to allow thoughts of fear to control your live because to the extent that they do, is the extent to which Satan has access to the affairs of your life. You must learn to say, fear, I resist you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Praise the Lord.

To be continued...

sponsor of the spirit of fear. He is the one behind the spirit of fear. Therefore resisting the devil as it says in the Bible is to stand against the spirit of fear. Refuse to let fear have control over your life.

Now, if you do not know how the spirit of fear operates, you will not know how to stand against it. the spirit of fear operates through thoughts, ideas, suggestions and impressions. These in turn create feelings, physical reactions and actions in the life of the one who has yielded to them.

Now, it is important for us to understand that thoughts have origin. Thoughts do not come from nowhere but from somewhere. Thoughts are not just thoughts; they

Just as we will think a person who lets birds build nests on his head to be not normal, so also with thoughts; you cannot stop them from entering your mind but you can decide which thoughts remain in your mind.

You have authority as a free moral agent, especially if you are born again, you have the authority in the name of Jesus, to cast down wrong thoughts. You can refuse by a simple act of your will making a decision to refuse thoughts that create fear to remain in your mind; use the name of Jesus against them.

Thoughts are governed or controlled by associations and by what we hear; teachings that we hear. Thoughts are also controlled by experiences that we go through and by our

environment. If you associate with people that are fearful, the Bible says in Proverbs 13:20, **He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.** If you have close companions or friends who are constantly talking fearful thoughts and whose lives are governed and controlled by fear, most likely their reasoning will affect you.

The unfortunate reality about our country Nigeria today is that there is so much terror of banditry and terrorism going around in all kinds of forms seemingly unbridled but the promise of the scripture is that God is able to take care of you in the midst of all of these things. Psalm 91 gives us that promise. It tells us in categorical terms that God will be with us in trouble; He said that He will keep us in the midst of trouble. While we are praying for change in our country and for change in issues in your life you must understand that in the middle of that crisis God is able to take care of you.

So thoughts are not just random but they have origin and if you understand how thoughts are controlled and governed, you can be an

"Fear creates physical reaction in people; the saliva dries, the bodies begin to shake, the knees sometimes lose strength and begin to shake and quake, people begin to do crazy and dumb things reacting from the spirit of fear. We said in previous broadcasts that when the spirit of fear is in operation, when it has taken over an individual, it is almost like insanity. People begin to do things they would not have done in their normal minds. Initiative is lost; it is paralyzed or stifled"

INTERNATIONAL

What Turkey's elections mean for Sweden's NATO membership

Turkey's voters head to the polls on Sunday in an election that will not only determine the country's domestic policies but could also influence Sweden's NATO membership. After Russia invaded Ukraine, Finland and Sweden abandoned decades of military neutrality and applied a year ago to join the world's largest military alliance in an effort to fortify their borders. While most NATO members were quick to ratify the two Nordic nations' membership applications, Turkey and Hungary held back. PRIYANKA SHANKAR, writes.



From left, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg (third from left), Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Finnish President Sauli Niinisto and Swedish Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson at last year's NATO summit in Madrid, Spain.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan accused both countries, especially Sweden, of providing safe haven to members of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the Democratic Union Party (PYD) in Syria, both of which Ankara considers "terrorists".

Erdogan also called on Finland and Sweden to lift an arms embargo on Turkey they had imposed in 2019 after Ankara's incursion into northern Syria.

He said these were important "security concerns" for Turkey that had to be resolved before he agreed to NATO's enlargement.

The three nations signed an agreement on the sidelines of the NATO summit in Madrid last year, in which Finland and Sweden pledged to address Turkey's security demands.

Since then, Finland and Sweden have lifted the arms embargo, focussed on extraditing suspects with links to the PKK, and Stockholm has passed an anti-terrorism law.

But Turkey has only ratified Finland's NATO membership. Erdogan has said Sweden has not yet met all of his country's demands.

Right-wing demonstrations in Sweden involving the burning of the Quran and a mock hanging of Erdogan led to further tensions, and their NATO dialogue has stalled.

After a meeting with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in Berlin in March, Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson told reporters that he hoped Turkey would ratify Sweden's NATO membership after the elections.

"With Turkey, we have signed a memorandum where we were required to address some demands, which Stockholm has done everything it can to address," he told Al Jazeera.

"But currently, nothing in terms

of any ratification is happening until we have clarity on who's going to govern Turkey for the next few years," he said. "So we are looking forward to what happens after the elections and hope there will be a speedy ratification before the NATO summit in Lithuania in July."

Bildt added that Turkey's decision will also influence Hungary. Budapest followed Ankara's lead in the case of Finland.

"Hungary's Viktor Orban claimed that Finland and Sweden's accusations of Budapest's rule of law was one of the main reasons behind Hungary holding back their NATO membership ratification, but Orban is just playing a political game," Bildt said, speaking of the Hungarian prime minister.

Gonul Tol, director of the Middle East Institute's Turkey Programme and author of Erdogan's War: A Strongman's Struggle at Home and in Syria, told Al Jazeera that part of the reason the Turkish leader has dragged his feet on Sweden is for domestic gains.

"His role in getting both Finland and Sweden to lift sanctions they had imposed on Turkey after its incursion into Syria and getting especially Sweden to try and extradite PKK members has appealed to nationalist voters," she said.

Turkey will vote in presidential and parliamentary elections on Sunday as the country battles a cost-of-living crisis and a slump in its currency, the Turkish lira.

Erdogan is running for the People's Alliance, a coalition of his AK Party and several right-wing parties.

Opinion polls showed Kemal Kilicdaroglu, a candidate for six opposition parties in the Nation Alliance, in the lead.

Kilicdaroglu calls himself a "democrat" and has pledged to return to a "strong parliamentary system", solve the Kurdish issue

and send Syrian refugees home. He also wants to move closer to the European Union as Ankara's role on the global stage grows during Russia's war in Ukraine and Turkey's involvement in Syria.

The candidate of the nationalist Ancestral Alliance, Sinan Ogan, is the remaining candidate in the race after the Homeland Party's Muharrem Ince pulled out this week.

Gol argued that the result of Turkey's elections will not have a dramatic impact on Sweden's NATO membership.

"No matter who wins the elections, Sweden's NATO membership will be ratified," she said.

"In terms of NATO and Turkey's foreign policy orientation, I think an opposition win is going to be good news for the West since they're not only devoted to Turkey's role in NATO but also want to rekindle Turkey's EU membership process," she added.

Özgür Ünlühisarçıklı, director of Turkey's office of the German Marshall Fund of the United States, told Al Jazeera: "So far, President Erdogan has framed the issue very narrowly on the basis of the PKK. ... A new government could frame it differently, in a broader way, by considering Turkey's overall security strategy. That could be a possibility."

"Moreover, while the recent Quran burning incident in Sweden has angered Turkey, can Ankara actually stop Islamophobia by not ratifying Sweden's membership to NATO?" he asked. "If Sweden cannot become a NATO member, does it make Turkey safer?"

"These are aspects the presidential candidates will have to frame effectively in the run-up to the elections in order to not undermine both Turkey and Sweden's security."

The Swedish government

condemned the Quran burning, and Bildt said the Swedish public also do not align themselves with the "extremists" behind the Islamophobic stunts.

"Sweden has signed a memorandum with Turkey, and now it's just a question of continuing a process of implementation that includes cooperation between our judiciaries, our police authorities and our intelligence authorities in order to be more effective in meeting Turkey's demands," Bildt said.

"It's not something that you do sort of over lunch, over one lunch," he said. "... Turkey taking its time to assess our process and make a decision after their elections is understandable."

After decades of staying out of military alliances, last May Finland and neighbouring Sweden announced bids to join NATO following Russia's February invasion of Ukraine.

With Turkey becoming the final and 30th member to ratify Finland's bid on Thursday, the Finns are expected to finalise their membership in the coming days, while Sweden continues to face opposition.

Finland President Sauli Niinistö tweeted after Turkey's decision: "We look forward to welcoming Sweden to join us as soon as possible."

Here are five things to know about the two countries' membership bids, and why Sweden's bid is lagging.

For decades, most Swedes and Finns were in favour of maintaining their policies of military non-alignment.

However, Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year sparked sharp U-turns.

The change was especially dramatic in Finland, which shares a 1,300km (800-mile) border with Russia.

Prior to the application, public support for NATO membership

had remained steady at 20-30 percent for two decades, but a February poll suggested 82 percent were happy with the decision to join the alliance, according to the AFP news agency. A Swedish poll in January had 63 percent of Swedes in favour of joining the bloc.

During the Cold War, Finland remained neutral in exchange for assurances from Moscow that it would not invade. After the fall of the Iron Curtain, Finland remained militarily non-aligned.

Sweden adopted an official policy of neutrality after the 19th-century Napoleonic wars, which was amended to one of military non-alignment following the end of the Cold War.

The Nordic neighbours were originally adamant they wanted to join the alliance together, agreeing to submit their applications at the same time.

Despite assurances they would be welcomed with "open arms", their applications quickly ran into opposition, primarily from NATO member Turkey.

Bids to join NATO must be ratified by all members of the alliance.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in mid-March asked parliament to ratify Finland's bid, but delayed Sweden's following a litany of disputes.

Similarly, when Hungary ratified Finland's bid on March 27, Sweden's was pushed until "later". Hungary is holding up Sweden's admission, citing grievances over criticism of Prime Minister Viktor Orban's policies. However, Budapest is likely to approve Sweden's bid if it sees Turkey moving to do so.

Meanwhile, Finland decided to move forward, even if it meant leaving Sweden behind.

Since Finland's parliament has already approved the application, all it needs to do now that all ratifications have been secured is deposit an "instrument of accession" in Washington to finalise the membership.

Sweden, Finland and Turkey signed a trilateral memorandum at a NATO summit in June last year to secure the start of the accession process.

However, Ankara has repeatedly butted heads with Stockholm, saying its demands have remained unfulfilled, particularly for the extradition of Turkish citizens that Turkey wants to prosecute for "terrorism".

It has accused Sweden of providing a safe haven for "terrorists", specifically members of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Turkey and the Democratic Union Party (PYD) in Syria, which, Ankara believes, is linked to the PKK.

Negotiations between the countries were temporarily suspended in early 2023, after protests, involving both the burning of the Quran and a mock hanging of an effigy of Erdogan, were staged in Stockholm.

SOURCE: AL JAZEERA

INTERNATIONAL

South Africa supplied arms to Russia - us



Ramaphosa

THE US ambassador to South Africa has accused the country of supplying weapons to Russia despite its professed neutrality in the war in Ukraine.

Reuben Brigety claimed that a Russian ship was loaded with ammunition and arms in Cape Town last December.

President Cyril Ramaphosa's office said it was disappointed by the claims and said no evidence has been provided to support them.

The country has maintained claims of neutrality in the invasion of Ukraine.

Mr Brigety said at a media briefing in Pretoria on Thursday that Washington had concerns about the country's stated non-aligned stance on the conflict.

He referred to the docking of a cargo ship in the Simon's Town naval base between 6 and 8 December last year which he was "confident" uploaded weapons and ammunition "as it made its way back to Russia".

The presence of the ship, the Lady R, had seemed curious at the time and raised questions from some local politicians.

"The arming of the Russians

is extremely serious, and we do not consider this issue to be resolved," Mr Brigety said, in a damning accusation that seems to have caught South Africa's officials off guard.

In the wake of the allegations, the South African government announced the establishment of an independent inquiry led by a retired judge, a spokesman for the president's office said.

The US has been critical for months about South Africa's continued cosy relationship with Russia.

State Department deputy spokesman Vedant Patel told journalists on Thursday that the US had previously raised concerns about the Lady R with numerous South African officials.

He said the US would speak out against "any country taking steps to support Russia's illegal and brutal war in Ukraine", but would not say whether there would be any repercussions for South Africa if the claims proved to be true.

Washington has also expressed concerns about South Africa's participation in military exercises with Russia and China during the anniversary of the invasion of Ukraine.

Ukraine claims gains in Bakhmut after Russia denials

Ukraine says it has recaptured ground in Bakhmut, a rare advance after months of grinding Russian gains in the eastern city.

Deputy Defence Minister Hanna Malyar said Ukrainian forces advanced two kilometres (1.2 miles) in a week.

The claims signal a momentum shift in Bakhmut - but more widely, there is no clear evidence of the much-anticipated Ukrainian counter-offensive.

Russia has denied reports of Ukrainian gains, after claims from both sides.

"The individual declarations on Telegram about a 'breakthrough' on several points on the frontline do not correspond to reality," Russia's defence ministry said.

"The general situation in the special military operation zone is under control," it added, using Russia's term for the invasion.

As the intense, bloody battle has worn on, Bakhmut has become symbolically important - though many experts question its tactical value.

In a post on Telegram, Ms Malyar said Bakhmut has become a target of "almost sacred" importance to Russia.

She accused the Kremlin of simultaneously claiming false victories on one hand, while also spreading lies about being short on weapons and ammunition.

Describing the "real situation" over the past week, Ms Malyar claimed Russia suffered significant troop losses, as Ukraine gained 2km without losing any positions.

On Thursday, Yevgeny

Prigozhin, head of the Wagner mercenary group fighting on the Russian side, accused regular Russian troops of abandoning positions in Bakhmut.

"The situation on the flanks is developing according to the worst predicted scenario," he said.

And Russian military bloggers reported Ukrainian advances or troop movements in several areas.

The Institute for the Study of War also said Ukrainian forces had probably made gains of 2km in Bakhmut.

And the US-based think tank said the Russian defence ministry acknowledging "the Ukrainian counterattacks uncharacteristically quickly" - by denying them - indicated "increased panic".

Away from Bakhmut, the exiled mayor of Melitopol

reported a large explosion on Friday morning in the centre of the city in south-eastern city, which has been occupied by Russia since the start of the war.

It's not known what caused the blast, but the Ukrainian air force made 14 strikes on Russian forces and military equipment on Thursday, Ukraine's armed forces said.

Alongside the air strikes, Ukraine said it destroyed nine Russian drones and carried out successful attacks on dozens of military targets - including artillery units, an ammunition warehouse and air defence equipment.

After months of stalemate, a Ukrainian counter-offensive - helped by newly-arrived Western weapons - has been openly discussed. But Ukraine's president said on Thursday it was too early to start the attack.



Zelenskyy

Pakistan: Khan to be released from custody

PAKISTAN'S ex-prime minister Imran Khan is to be freed from custody, a day after the Supreme Court ruled his dramatic arrest on corruption charges was illegal.

Judges granted Mr Khan protected bail, meaning he can not be re-arrested on those charges for two weeks.

The court also ordered he could not be arrested on any charges filed after last Tuesday until 17 May.

Despite the rulings, the corruption charges against Mr Khan still stand.

The 70-year-old - who was arrested on Tuesday as he arrived at a courthouse in Islamabad - pleaded not guilty to the charges when a judge formally indicted him with corruption for the first time in the dozens of cases he faces.

Officials say Mr Khan unlawfully sold state gifts during his premiership, in a case brought by Pakistan's Election Commission.

He remained at court after the hearing on Friday seeking preventive bail against other charges, which he told the BBC included counts of terrorism, sedition and blasphemy.

Conviction would disqualify the former international

cricket star - and Pakistan's prime minister from 2018 to 2022 - from standing for office, possibly for life. Elections are due later this year.

Mr Khan had arrived at the hearing under heavy armed guard, and greeted supporters with a single raised fist.

Speaking during Friday's hearing, Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial said the arrest was unlawful because it took place on court premises.

He ordered that the "whole process" of Mr Khan's arrest "needs to be backtracked".

The dramatic saga has significantly escalated tensions between Mr Khan and Pakistan's powerful military.

Many analysts believe Mr Khan's election win in 2018 happened with the help of the military, which both parties denied.

But he later fell out with the army. After a series of defections, and amid mounting economic crises, he lost his majority in parliament.

Since being ousted less than four years into his term, he has become one of the military's most vocal critics, and analysts say the army's popularity has fallen.

And his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party says the charges against him - which relate to gifts given to him by foreign leaders while he served as prime minister - are politically motivated.

His dramatic arrest outside the courthouse on Tuesday sparked outrage among Mr Khan's supporters.

At least 10 people were killed and some 2,000 arrested as unrest swept the country. Those protests included an attack at a military commander's home residence in Lahore, which was set on fire.

While this week's violence petered out after the army was deployed in Islamabad and other areas, such as Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the country remains on edge.

There was a large security presence at the court on Friday.

Speaking to the BBC before his bail hearing, Mr Khan said he feared immediate re-arrest once released, and urged authorities against a move as "there might be huge reaction which will go out of control. Because mobs are out of control, no-one controls mobs."

"How am I supposed to control what happens afterwards?" he told the BBC.

Critics say the PTI has been fuelling unrest through social media posts calling for protesters to take to the streets, and judges told Mr Khan that he must condemn the violence and tell supporters to stop.

Mr Khan told the BBC he and his party had only called for peaceful protest and asked for supporters to "act within the constitution".

"We have never broken the law. Even now, when I tell them to protest I say 'They should be peaceful protests'," he said inside the courtroom on Friday.

Pakistan's current Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who took power after Khan was ousted, criticised the Supreme Court's ruling to free Khan in a cabinet speech aired on state television.

He alleged that judges had favoured Imran Khan, and their ruling had caused "the death of justice in Pakistan".

He further criticised Mr Khan and his party for their inflammatory language, and encouraging protesters to take to the streets.

"Imran Khan has divided the nation," he said.

Sudan conflict: Army, RSF agree to protect civilians

AFTER nearly a week of talks, Sudan's warring parties have signed a deal to alleviate the suffering of the civilian population, but have made little progress towards peace.

This is a first step to providing relief for trapped civilians.

They agreed to allow safe passage for people leaving battle zones, protect relief workers and not to use civilians as human shields.

However, they did not agree to pause the fighting.

There are reports of more air strikes and shelling in the capital, Khartoum on Friday.

The talks have been mediated by the US and Saudi Arabia, the host country.

US officials said they were cautiously hopeful there was momentum now for the safe delivery of relief supplies, as both

sides committed to let in badly needed humanitarian assistance after looting and attacks that targeted aid.

However, the conflicting parties are still quite far apart when it comes to brokering peace, the US said.

They are still discussing a proposal for a truce and a mechanism to monitor it.

Meanwhile Saudi Arabia said there is still more work to be done, according to Arab News: "Other steps will follow, and the most important thing is to adhere to what was agreed upon."

Not everyone is happy about the new deal, with some Sudanese saying it falls short of what they expect: "I'm really incredibly disheartened," Professor Nisrin Elamin from Toronto University told the BBC's Newsday programme.

"Ceasefires that they have agreed to in the past

have not held. I don't understand why we would ever take them by their word. To me this is really just another closed door negotiations with no civilian actor," Professor Elamin added, saying that she still has family who are stuck in Khartoum surrounded by conflict.

The BBC has heard several accounts of people trapped in Khartoum, who have been witness to loud explosions, gunshots and all-out violence.

The conflict erupted in mid-April when the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) refused to be integrated into Sudan's army under a planned transition to civilian rule.

Since then, the death toll has risen to more than 600 according to the WHO, and thousands of people have been forced to flee their homes.



Khan



'I spend time writing songs'



Can you introduce yourself?
 My name is Lot Sunday Lamka, from Plateau State (Middle-Belt) of Nigeria. 25 years of age, brave and gentle personality. I hail from Kanke Local Government Of Plateau State, am Ngas by tribe.
 Stage name: King Lot
 Beat maker, song writer, performer freestyler and a teacher

What kind of music are you in?
 I am more of Hip-Hop because Hip-Hop is one of the only genre that can fuse with other genres as well. for example, you can have Hip-Hop Reggae, Hip-Hop R & B, Gospel Hip-Hop it all depends on the pattern and interpretation of how you sound. So being a hip-hop artiste and a rapper comes with a lot of advantages.

When did you start your music career?
 Credit to my late mother, I started listening to Hip-Hop songs in her tailoring shop in Kaduna when I was in nursery school, when she died, I had to come home to Plateau State to continue schooling.
 So, this music dreams started back then around 2009/2010 when I was in secondary school (Gonerit Memorial college tuwan). Rhymes starts as Soon as the school closes.
 I spent time listening to Hip-Hop songs, miming some lyrics & after some time I had the inspiration to start writing Raps and then convert them into a song.
 I beat box with mouths to make beat Simon Dokgak (Cooler/SimonSaxx) does chorus for me then I rap.
 I enjoy that more more than anything at that time.
 Staying with my parents in Kanke has been great and challenging for me at the same time, because there was no studio there to help me record a song. So, after some years I moved to Jos because this the heart of entertainment, Charisma in the Middle-Belt and influence to other northern parts of the country.

country are not finding it easy in the music industry, can you tell us your story?
 Well, this is a broad topic I must say but there is always a process and the process is what really shapes you as an artiste.
 The financial challenges, the rejections, discouragements and many factors are all part of the process. They must be there especially when there is a great competition in our Era. One thing is for sure before you achieve great you must abandon a lot of things before you can carry the cross of your hustle effectively.
 'I really suffered for this music dreams'. At first even my dad was not satisfied with me doing music, some felt like there are certain people that should be doing music not dudes like us.
 While some of my guys spend times for their girls, I spend time writing songs and rhymes'. some of my very own Friends became strangers to me and some strangers became my friends, some said am too serious, some considered my music whack until they heard people playing and loving my songs.
 'I made preparations for a long time before I moved to Lagos'.
 My album didn't bring much money so I used the little to purchase a laptop and some equipment instead of buying clothes to look good. I started learning Music production with the help of Jazmin Yarima (Kespan producer), Raheed the wisdomist abbatoir and Weng mattedw triumph in bukuru, when I don't have money to go and learn a task for a day, mostly carry my bicycle from Rantya to all these locations, sometimes I even trek or spend night and come back the next day.
 All these happened in six months. My strong will and readiness really inspired me to learn fast.
 I left my comfort zone for this music dreams, used my lifetime savings just to have some tools for the trade.
 After graduation from FCE Pankshin now

Many upcoming musicians in this

Continued on page 26

Hollywood rising young stars

Rachel Zegler and Madelyn Cline



Rachel Zegler and Madelyn Cline
 From Daphne Bridgerton to "The Iceberg that Sank the Titanic," these 16 rising stars are behind the characters that entertained audiences through lockdowns and stay-at-home orders. Looking forward, they are fronting the titles that will bring audiences back to the multiplex.
 Some talent, like *Bridgerton's* Phoebe Dynevor and Nicola Coughlan, had their break-out moments in the middle of the pandemic, while others like *West Side Story's* Rachel Zegler are still waiting for their delayed big breaks to hit reopened movie theaters. From breaking barriers in the superhero space, like *Batgirl* star Leslie Grace, to breathing new life into established franchises (see: *Dominique Fishback*, who will lead the new *Transformers*), this year's class will continue to play major roles in studio and streamer slates.
 They join a list that, in years past, has included now-established stars like *Midsommar* actress Florence Pugh, *Atlanta's* LaKeith Stanfield and *Shang-Chi's* Simu Liu. All of them navigating an industry that is rapidly changing around them. As *Cobra Kai's* Xolo Maridueña puts it: "I don't have the handbook or 'Acting in Your Early 20s for Dummies' book just yet."

Simone Ashley



Growth is something Ashley relishes about being an actress, which is good being that the British up-and-comer, who is of Indian heritage, is on the rise. A bit part in Warner Bros. feature *Detective Pikachu* and a cadre of episodes in U.K. series like *Casualty* and *Broadchurch*, predated a recurring role in Netflix's *Sex Education*. The latter, which has been a recurring fixture in Netflix's Top 10 over its three seasons, offered a "confidence boost," says the actress. Next up is an almost assured breakout role as the female lead in the second season of the streamer's global hit *Bridgerton*, an experience that Ashley says has her already feeling "like a different person."

Ronny Chieng



Chieng exemplifies Hollywood's growing commitment to a sense of authenticity, or what the actor calls the "street test": "Does what we see onscreen reflect what we see on the street?" Chieng was born in Malaysia and grew up between the U.K., U.S. and Singapore before heading to university in Melbourne, where he began performing stand-up comedy.

A personal commitment to AAPI representation is evident in his growing list of credits: *Shang-Chi*, *Crazy Rich Asians* and Disney+ series *Doogie Kamealoha, M.D.*. Next up — when he's not taking on Asian stereotypes and racism in his Netflix comedy special and viral segments as a *Daily Show* correspondent — is a martial arts action-comedy for Sony and Blumhouse horror *M3GAN*.

Harris Dickinson



The British actor, raised by a hairdresser and a social worker, once considered joining the Royal Marines before a drama teacher talked him out of it. The decision to focus on acting paid off, with Dickinson earning acclaim (including a Film Independent Spirit Award nomination) for 2017 Sundance drama *Beach Rats* and turning heads as Prince Phillip in Disney's *Maleficent*. He steps into his biggest roles yet with long-delayed *The King's Man* from filmmaker Matthew Vaughn, whose previous discoveries include Taron Egerton and Aaron Taylor-Johnson. After that, it's Sony's adaptation of best-seller *Where the Crawdads Sing* and the Sam Rockwell-Saoirse Ronan murder mystery *See How They Run*, both due out in 2022.

Continued on page 26

EVIE'S WORLD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

Parenting

Stoping children's attention seeking behavior

By: **PAMELA LI**

It's normal for kids to want attention from their parents and also sometimes from other adults.

However, some children insist on constantly being the center of attention. They may go out of their way and use annoying behavior to get noticed.

It can be frustrating and problematic when these kinds of behavior become excessive.

What Is Attention-Seeking Behavior?

When attention-seeking problem behaviors aren't met with the desired social attention, they may escalate into risky acts, which becomes a problem over time.

When children act out to seek attention, they are actually seeking c

This attachment-seeking behavior looks exactly like attention-seeking behavior in infancy. A baby might cry, whine, fuss, or move toward a parent seeking proximity.

When a baby receives warm, sensitive, and responsive parenting in response to their attachment behavior, a secure attachment forms. Early parenting that meets a child's emotional needs leads to a secure attachment and a lower level of attention-seeking behavior late.

These children develop a sense of trust in their parents and feel confident that they will be there for them as their secure base. They have high self-esteem and develop independence as they grow.

Therefore, older children who seek attention are looking for ways to connect. The pursuit of attention is actually the pursuit of relationships.

The problem arises when attachment-seeking behavior



becomes overly attention-seeking, disruptive, or dangerous.

Examples of Attention-Seeking Behavior in Children

- Temper tantrums over little things
- Whining or crying
- Interrupting
- Asking for help with simple tasks that don't require additional assistance
- Sympathy or praise-seeking by sharing exaggerated stories
- Lying or arguing
- Constantly showing their work or achievements for recognition
- Acting like a clown or comedian
- Risky behavior that can put them in danger such as standing on a table
- Damaging properties

Attention-seekers' behaviors are characterized by their emotional dependence on the validation, praise, and emotional reassurance of others.

How to Stop Attention-Seeking Behavior in Children Do not ignore

A child who throws tantrums or cries easily for every little thing is likely looking for connection rather than the thing itself. Punishing them or treating them as misbehavior will push them farther away and not fulfill their needs.

Some children will stop their attention-seeking behavior temporarily when they are ignored.

But this only fixes the symptoms, not the underlying problem. Because the need to connect has not been met, the bad behavior will return over and over again.

Call it out

Giving your child attention doesn't mean you condone it.

Call out the unwanted behavior with empathy.

"Junior, I've noticed you've

been upset easily this week over little things. Are you truly upset about this candy, or are you upset about me?"

It shows that you have paid attention to them when you say this.

Moreover, you are narrating the issue to help your child express themselves so they will use words rather than acting out.

Help them identify the issue

If you ask your attention-seeking child directly, they will sometimes be able to confirm the issue immediately.

However, other times they may not be aware of the true cause. It is especially true for children who are very young.

In this case, you will need to help them discover what the real issue is.

Take a look back at the week that just passed.

Did you spend enough quality time with your child?

When they came to show you something, were you too busy looking at your phone?

Did you ignore them to speak with other adults instead?

If there were moments like that, ask them directly.

"Are you upset that I didn't look at the beautiful airplane you made when you showed it to me yesterday?"

"Are you crying because you want me to draw with you instead of just handing you crayons?"

Make a plan After identifying the problem, work on a solution together.

Here is an example.

"Mommy works from home. While I am here, I may not be able to play with you at this time. What if we make a plan to draw together after dinner every day?"

Address the problematic behavior

Once your child is calm and you

occurring in the first place by using proactive strategies.

Make an effort to spend time with them and give them undivided attention on a regular basis.

Notice and encourage positive behavior

It is not necessary for a parent to shower their child with attention to demonstrate their love.

Something as simple as praising your child's appropriate behavior or having a 10-15 minute snuggle can go a long way in showing them that you care and are paying attention to them.

Assess priorities

Oftentimes, parents pay attention to negative behaviors but still cannot stop them. That usually happens when they have the wrong priorities.

Parents tend to address the undesired behavior first because their priorities are to stop it.

They scold the child, emphasize the exact rules, and use consistent consequences. They do all of these without attending to their child's needs first.

This shows the child that they and their needs are not as important.

This kind of attention does not meet the child's need to connect.

If you are struggling with this, consider reversing the order you address the issues. Follow the steps above to connect before you correct.

Final Thoughts on Attention-Seeking Behavior

Changing your child's behavior over time requires patience. Don't give up when it doesn't seem to work at first.

Children don't learn to walk, speak, or behave overnight. It is important to have age-appropriate developmental expectations.

When things become too difficult or too much, don't hesitate to seek help from professionals such as child psychologists. Child therapy and family therapy can help.

References



THE SOW WORLD

With *Henrietta Gonzuk*

Health

Eating bananas on empty stomach

SHOULD we eat banana on an empty stomach? Find out the answer here along with some side-effects of bananas.

Bananas are sometimes the go-to food when we feel hungry and don't have any solid meals at hand. Bananas are extremely healthy, fulfilling, and tasty. Most people love to eat them, especially before workouts as a quick energy-boosting snack. Similarly, a lot of people have bananas in the morning as breakfast. But should we eat bananas in the morning on an empty stomach?

When we sleep the body stays in fasting mode. You don't eat anything for several hours, which drains your energy and in order to replenish that you should have something energetic in the morning. While bananas are definitely healthy and satisfying, these aren't the ideal breakfast food. Despite being loaded with essential nutrients, it is not good when consumed on an empty stomach.

Here are some reasons why everyone should not eat bananas on an empty stomach:

Bananas have natural sugar content, which might increase blood sugar levels. Thus, diabetes patients must avoid eating bananas in the morning. Others should avoid overconsumption of bananas on an empty stomach as it might abruptly spike blood sugar levels.

Bananas have high magnesium content, which can disrupt metabolism and hamper the digestive system. Besides, high magnesium also affects heart health and so, it is better to avoid.



Patients of hypertension and other cardiovascular issues must not consume bananas in the morning. If consumed, have them with cereals, berries and dry fruits to neutralise harmful components.

Possible side-effects of eating bananas on an empty stomach

Digestive issues

Bananas are rich in fibre and so, they are extremely fulfilling. While fibre is good for digestive health, its overconsumption can disrupt gut microbiota. Consumption of fibre in the morning on an empty stomach can trigger gas, flatulence, stomach cramps and constipation. Do not eat more than one banana in the morning.

Inhibition of mineral absorption

Consuming more than one banana on an empty stomach can hamper the body's mineral absorption process. Your body might not be able to absorb minerals like iron, zinc, and calcium. This can lead to mineral deficiencies. Thus, avoid consuming bananas or eat them in limits.

May cause irregular heartbeat
Since bananas contain a high amount of potassium, its excessive consumption can cause hyperkalemia, which can increase the risk of muscle weakness, irregular heartbeat, and paralysis. This is why heart patients must consult their doctors before consuming bananas.

How to Eat Bananas On An Empty Stomach

Sometimes, we don't have any option but to have bananas in the morning. In such a case, consider these tips to negate the side effects of eating bananas on an empty stomach.

Have bananas with yoghurt, porridge, cereals, peanut butter, berries, and herbs. Eating bananas alone can cause issues.

Incorporating these things would neutralise the acids released by the stomach. This would cause less damage.

- Besides, doing so would also prevent a sudden spike of sugar.
- You can have a banana shake or smoothie instead to enjoy the

benefits with lesser risk.

Bananas are extremely beneficial but these can be bad in certain cases. It is best to avoid eating bananas on an empty stomach or have them with milk, nuts, yoghurt, etc. to optimise their benefits.

Source: Healthnews.com





Reality Bites

with Palang Kasmi
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Family bonding ideas for busy parents

GETTING very busy these days to make ends meet has become a daily norm for parents.

And parts of the reason why they have to work so hard is to pay the bills and meet up with their family's needs.

According to momnewsdaily.com, "Sometimes, hectic schedules and the demanding nature of your jobs can get the best of you and cause you to slowly feel disconnected from your family members. Most especially since screens, gadgets, technology, and the Internet have taken up most of your time, it's now challenging to make time to bond with your family, especially your children".

"However, if there's one thing you must not sacrifice for the sake of your job, it's your time and moments with your children, therefore spending enough time around your children can significantly affect their growth and development. Not only will it help cultivate a healthy and profound parent-child relationship, but it'll also help your kids feel like they have a support system, making them feel more confident, independent individuals".

So, do you still remember the last time you had a fun family bonding together? If not, this may be a sign that it's time to reconnect with your family and create amazing memories together.

Momdaily website however advice that despite being busy parents, make sure you make family time a frequent occurrence by keeping a list of these five family bonding ideas and try them out one at a time as follows:

Cook Together

Despite having hectic schedules, it's natural for parents to make time for kitchen chores and cook meals for the family. So, why not utilize this time not only for cooking, but as well as family bonding? Together, you can decide on what meal or dish you should work on for the day's meal. Make sure you keep your kids



involved through the whole process by letting them do the mixing, stirring, or slicing, if they're capable.

For younger kids, you can also focus on creating baked goods, like cupcakes, cookies, or mini-cakes.

Your kids would be happy to participate in mixing the eggs, rolling the flour, making the icing, and decorating the baked goods with their favorite colors.

Your kitchen can be the best place for your family to bond, get creative,

and make great memories together. Check out parenting sites, like The Parenting Daily, for more at-home activities that would encourage your child's creativity and participation.

Schedule a Movie Night

If weekdays are for work, then make sure your weekend nights are scheduled for movie nights! Movie nights are a perfect time to bond with your family in the living room and snuggle with each other as you watch a movie. To make it more

interesting, let every family member decide which movie the family should watch for the night by taking turns each week.

If your child wants to watch a cartoon movie for the night, then do so. The point is you let your child feel involved with the planning. You can have your movie night at home or move your TV outdoors under the stars, or you can also do this in a movie theater.

Sit down for meals together

Gone are the days when it's always a family tradition to sit down and eat meals together, regardless if you're running late for work or your kids are off to school. Nowadays, it has slowly become a norm for some families to eat individually, anytime they want. To bond with your family even during your busy days, make it a routine to eat meals unitedly as a family as often as you can. You can put down your paperwork for a bit, tell the kids to pause their screen time, and, together, you can sit down at the table and catch up.

If not, you can, at least, schedule two to three days a week, wherein a family dinner is a must. This way, you can bond together during this time and be able to catch up with each other's happenings and the latest events of the week.

Have a Treat Night

As you and your spouse are working long hours at work every day, it may be hard for you to catch up some time with your kids or even bond together as a family. As a way of making it up to them, while at the same time finding a way of bonding

with your family, designate one night every week for a treat night. It can be a Friday or a Saturday night.

For this treat night, make it a habit to bring some delicious treats for you and your kids to enjoy. This way, your kids will surely look forward to this treat night every week, as not only will this be a night for them to enjoy delicious treats, but because they also get to spend time with their parents and bond as a family.

Go Backyard Camping

Perhaps, as busy parents, you may not have enough time to plan elaborated travels or faraway family road trips, or arrange overnight camping out in the woods or the mountains with your family. However, that doesn't mean you can never go camping ever. Why not make use of your lawn and have backyard camping?

You can go backyard camping together as a family and still do camping activities as if you're camping in the real woods. You can build a campfire, tell them stories, stargaze, and sleep out for the night with your tent. This will surely be one of the evenings your kids will never forget.

Praying together and teaching them a skill are other ways of bonding with your kids that will leave them with a lasting impression about you.

Therefore take some time off work, bond with your family, and create unforgettable memories together. Remember, a time well spent with your family is never a wasted time.



EVIE'S WORLD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

Relationship

Avoiding consequences of perfectionism in relationships

By **LEVANA SLABODNICK**

The first time that I suggest to a client that they are a perfectionist, they usually take it as a compliment. They assume it implies success, drive and being good enough. They soon learn that perfectionism is not usually a quality that is helpful to them.

What is Perfectionism?

Perfectionism is often deeply rooted in anxiety and lack of self-acceptance. The need to feel that your every action is perfect leads to constant feelings of failure. After all, who among us is perfect? Perfectionism can also lead to giving up, not trying new activities or learning new skills for fear of failure. Some perfectionists would rather not try something new to avoid truly accepting their flaws. The anxiety that surrounds perfectionism can be debilitating to some. Sufferers might experience panic attacks, irritability and depression. Their efforts to be perfect are a means to control the anxiety that results from failure. It can be very challenging for a perfectionist to face their limitations. Perfectionism often causes conflicts in surrounding relationships. The question becomes:

What happens when you are married to a perfectionist?

When one person is easily affected by failure and has unrealistic standards for themselves, these expectations often spread to those around them.

For anyone who is married to a perfectionist, think about the areas of conflict between you and your partner.

- Do you feel criticized often?
- Does your partner express disappointment in you regularly?
- Is your partner somewhat controlling over areas of your life because they don't trust you to accomplish tasks to their standards?

These can be signs that your partner is experiencing anxiety related to handing over control to you. Remember, perfectionism is fueled by fear of failure and if your partner doesn't think you can complete a task perfectly, it will increase their anxiety. You may argue with your partner about letting you do things your way or just give up control to avoid conflict altogether. Neither of these strategies are best for either of you long term. Your partner may become exhausted and overwhelmed by all the tasks before them and you may become resentful of their behavior. On the other hand, those who challenge the perfectionism might find the conflict increasing over time with no resolution in sight.

This may seem like a no-win situation for those going through it. What can be done to work through the perfectionism in the individual and as a couple?

Here are some tips to help you set boundaries and reduce conflict related to perfectionism:



. Identify the problem

We can't fix a problem if we don't know what it is. If you suspect that your partner is struggling with perfectionism, bring it up in a kind and compassionate manner. The more you know about the issue at hand, the easier it will be to figure out the next step.

The perfectionist in the relationship will need to learn coping strategies to manage their anxiety and to increase their self-confidence.

Consider individual and/or marital counseling.

Working with a licensed professional who specializes in anxiety is invaluable in improving the challenges that are present. Marital counseling is often a good idea if both partners are unsure about how to change the previous dynamic in their relationship that the perfectionism caused. An outside, professional perspective is very helpful and often necessary to make sure that both partners can meet each other's needs.

Communication is key

As in all aspects of marriage, honest and clear communication can be the difference between a strong marriage or a struggling one. As difficult as it may be to open up about the effects of perfectionism, it is important that both partners feel that they can be heard and validated. Communication can build understanding, compassion and respect between partners. Make sure to schedule time for regular

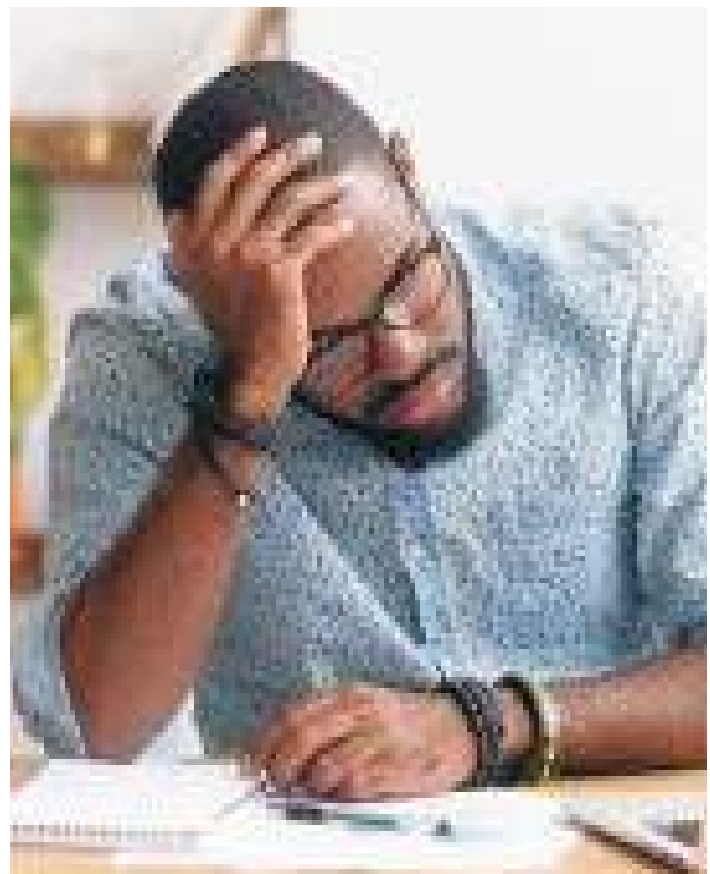
communication.

. Know your boundaries

For the partner that is married to a perfectionist, it is important for you to hold on your beliefs and standards without being negatively affected by your partner. You may need individual counseling to learn this skill. When your partner is critical or wants to take over a task because their anxiety is overwhelming, gently remind them of where their anxiety ends

and your beliefs begin. Compromise is a wonderful tool in marriage, but sticking to your guns can be as well.

Working through perfectionism in a marriage is undoubtedly hard work. I believe that when both partners are determined to make a relationship work, they can emerge from their challenges with a stronger, healthier and less perfect marriage than they ever could have expected.





Business & Economy

Transforming Nigeria's food system via agricultural biotechnology, genomics

Statistics from World Population Review shows that Nigeria population is growing at the rate of 2.57 per cent. It projected that the overall population of Nigeria will reach about 401.31 million by 2050. AFONNE EMMANUEL writes.

THIS projected increase in the Nigerian population necessitated the move to increase food production in order to meet the demands of both man and livestock via biotechnology and genomics.

Agricultural biotechnology includes a range of tools that scientists deploy to understand and manipulate the genetic make-up of organisms for use in the production or processing of agricultural products, while genomics is the study of an organism's genome, its genetic material and how that information is applied.

John Komen, in his presentation at African Biennial Bioscience Communication (ABBC 2021) on "Global and Africa Policy and Regulatory Perspectives of Genome Editing," outlined the power of modern agricultural biotechnology and genomics in transforming African food systems.

Komen said that the ability of agricultural biotechnology and genomics in transforming African food systems into a force of economic growth, create wealth in the rural space and beyond, feed an African population expected to reach 2.2 billion people by 2050 could not be ignored.

He said that biotechnology, including improved breeds and varieties, was not widely embraced across Africa, and was inadequately addressed in food production policy frameworks.

An article by Nature Genetics, "Genomics and our future food security," explicitly stated that genomics has a part to play in ensuring that agricultural production meets the goal of feeding the world with continual human population growth and increasingly severe effects from climate change.

The article said genomics' role was in the area of maximising the utility, diversity and yield of resources, as well as in contributing to sustained food security in the future.

It further noted that agricultural genomics is a rich field that has been contributing to advances in crop development for decades.

"From sequencing reference genomes to genotyping for genome-wide association studies to genomic prediction, advances in technology and applications have led to breakthroughs in crop improvement," the article read.

Scientists have argued that one potential way for genomics to lend itself to crop improvement and food security was through the collection-wide sequencing and classification of established seed banks or gene banks.

They said that through this process, it would be possible for important agricultural species to be stored and maintained in large collections, organised by classification and origin.

Similarly, Nigerian scientists and agricultural biotechnology experts have affirmed that agricultural genomics uses technology to study the genes of plants in order to develop new



and specific varieties of crops.

These new crops they say, can help address various food problems in Nigeria and Africa by helping to improve the productivity and sustainability of many plant varieties and livestock productions.

They also confirm that genomics can reduce the trials and failures involved in scientific research to a certain extent, which could improve the quality and quantity of crop yields in agriculture.

Dr Rose Gidado, Deputy Director at the National Biotechnology Development Agency (NABDA) and other experts have consistently spoken on the benefits of genome editing, also known as gene editing and the need for adoption of appropriate technologies to boost food production.

These indigenous experts listed some of these benefits to include among others: increased crop yields, reduced costs for food or drug production, reduced need for pesticides and enhanced nutrient composition.

MODIFIED FOODS IN NIGERIA

The establishment of the National Biotechnology Development Agency (NABDA) and its recent 2022 Act, showed that the Nigerian government had taken a big leap in demonstrating willingness to improve food production and drive towards transforming the country's food systems via application of modern agricultural biotechnology and

genomics.

Unarguably, the Nigerian government believes that safe modern biotechnology application can proffer solutions and offer great potential in the agricultural and other sectors of the economy.

The National Biosafety Management Agency Act, 2015 (as amended) was set up to entrench legal, regulatory, and administrative mechanisms in the safe application of modern biotechnology and the use of its products, genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

Dr Rufus Ebegba, Director General of the National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA), who spoke at a sensitisation workshop on modern biotechnology and biosafety regulations organised by OFAB for Board Members of the NABDA, hinted on the need for safety concerns.

He said biosafety was a means of addressing potential adverse impacts of modern technology and GMOs, particularly in the areas of gene flow, invasiveness, non-target effect, allergenicity, toxicity and socio-economic concerns.

Nigeria has embraced genetic modification and engineering, as the country is among the six African counties leading in adoption of genetically modified crops.

Prof. Chiedozie Egesi, Director, NextGen Cassava Breeding, IITA also at a sensitisation workshop said, "the application of genetic

engineering has the potential to revolutionise food production.

"But unnecessary fears and concerns fuelled by false information and myths is limiting the application, majorly in regions that needs it the most, Nigeria inclusive."

Prof. Abdullahi Mustapha, Director General of the NABDA, who recently spoke on pod borer resistant cowpea, highlighted the gains recorded through the application of modern agricultural biotechnology.

"Biotechnology has proven its potential to help us overcome agricultural productivity challenges leading to more yield, for example, 2.9 tonnes per hectare of Bt cowpea from 350kg of non-Bt cowpea and addressing various breeding limitations that conventional breeding method cannot address.

"The PBR cowpea is a classic example of how the technology can provide solutions to one of the major challenges confronting cowpea farming," he said.

Mustapha disclosed that with the commercialisation, adoption and use of the new variety of cowpea modified to be resistant to insect maruca vitrata, Nigeria was beginning to revolutionise food production through tremendous yield, quick bumper harvest and good cooking characteristics.

Listing the economic benefits, he noted that a 20 per cent increase per hectare translated to N48 billion annually at N120, 000.0 per

tonne.

Dr Rose Gidado, who is also the Country Coordinator of Open Forum on Agricultural Biotechnology (OFAB), outlined reasons at a recent sensitisation workshop on modern agricbiotech, why Nigeria and Africa must hasten up the adoption of modern agricultural biotechnology tools.

Gidado said major promises of biotech crops were abundance of healthy foods, less dependence on pesticides, decreased production risks for farmers, more agricultural yield per land mass to feed the people.

Comparing Africa's progress in modern agricultural biotechnology to other developed and food secured nations, she said that with all the benefits of the technology, Africa was behind the rest of the world in application of genetic engineering in agriculture.

The OFAB country coordinator said Africa's backwardness was largely due to restrictive and unpredictable policy environments, poorly functioning institutional mechanisms for biosafety oversight and lack of political will for GM technology.

However, she assured that NABDA remained committed to transforming Nigeria's food systems and recovery of the economy through application of biotechnology. **Source: NAN.**

BUSINESS WORLD

Petroleum equator to boost oil, and gas production

THE Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) along with oil and gas host communities of the Niger Delta region are looking to boost oil and gas production by leveraging the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) to internally curb issues around pipeline vandalism, oil theft, insecurity.

Speaking at a HostCom sensitisation workshop on the implementation of the Host communities development Trusts (HCDTs) on Tuesday, Gbenga Komolafe, Commission Chief Executive, said Nigeria has the technical capacity to produce about 2.5 million barrels of oil daily, but issues around insecurity, low investment, de-prioritisation of funding of hydrocarbon development arising from energy transition limits production capacity to around 1.5 million barrels of oil and condensate per day.

Komolafe said to the PIA 2021, in addressing some of these issues particularly theft and insecurity domesticated the protection of the country's oil and gas infrastructure to the Host Communities with the incorporation of Host Communities Development Trust (HCDT) by the settlers (oil and gas companies) provided for in Section 235 as well appointment of Board of Trustees (BOT) by the settlor in consultation with the host communities.

"The PIA stipulates that each settlor, where applicable through the operator, shall make an annual contribution to the applicable host communities development trust fund of an amount equal to 3 percent of its actual annual operating expenses of the preceding financial year in the upstream petroleum operations affecting the host communities," he said.

He added that the PIA required the Board of Trustees to set up a Management Committee responsible for the general administration of the Fund, and they should also institute Advisory Committee, adding that the PIA also provides an allocation formula with which the Board will annually give allocations from the fund.

"75 percent to the capital fund to be disbursed for projects in each of the host communities; 20 percent to the reserve fund to be invested for the utilization



Komolafe

of the host communities development trust whenever there is a cessation in the contribution payable by the settlor; and an amount not exceeding 5 percent to be utilised solely for the administrative cost of running the trust and special projects," he said.

Komolafe said efforts have led the Commission to successfully approve 75 Host Community Development Trusts out of which 41 have been fully incorporated by the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC).

Furthermore, 19 Fund Managers have been pre-qualified and commenced the process of establishing a baseline of ongoing community development projects, in preparation for ensuring the migration of such into the HCDTs.

He revealed that the Commission in partnership with an OEM developed an industry-intelligent, digital automated platform for reporting and monitoring the HCDT for transparent administration of the HostCom provisions of the PIA.

"The portal has been designed to meet specific requirements of HCDT as enshrined in the PIA and will aid all stakeholders (including the Settlers, Board of Trustees, Management Committees, Advisory Committees, Fund Managers etc) to fulfil their obligations to host communities and promote accountability and transparency in the management of the HCDT program as well as enable quick feedbacks from the stakeholders and the public for the Commission to carry

THE Debt Management Office (DMO) has assured Nigerians that Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) Securities are the most rewarding Naira denominated investment.

The Director-General of the DMO, Patience Oniha gave the assurance on Thursday in Port-Harcourt, during the FGN Securities Issuance Awareness Programme in Port-Harcourt.

Oniha, who was represented by Mr Alfred Ekiye, Deputy Director, Administration of the DMO, called on residents of Rivers State to take advantage of the opportunity in the FGN Securities to invest and earn regular income.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the awareness programme was organised by the DMO in collaboration with CSL Stockbrokers Ltd., the stockbroking firm for the Federal Government,

Oniha said the risk-free nature of FGN securities made them an attractive and secure investment option for Nigerians.

She said that the different products provided by FGN Securities provided a rare opportunity for all Nigerians to invest based on their financial capacities.

According to her, the Federal Government had introduced additional products to make it more inclusive and to meet the aspirations and demands of investors.

She said that all Nigerians, irrespective of their financial status, were qualified to invest and get good and safe returns on their investments.

Oniha said that FGN Securities were attractive because they provided citizens with the opportunity to contribute to national development.

According to her, it also helps to provide some of the funds needed by the government to address deficit in

FGN Securities most rewarding naira denominated investment -DMO

infrastructure.

"The purpose of this forum is to create more awareness on investment opportunities inherent in FGN Securities that the DMO offers to Nigerian investing public.

"It is particularly about the FGN Savings Bond, which is designed for retail investors.

"Investment in FGN Securities is one of the safest Naira investments that you can have; there is nothing to worry about in terms of security of the investment," she said.

She assured that the awareness programme would be taken round the country to be of benefit to many more Nigerians.

Also speaking, Mr Abiodun Fagbulu, the Managing Director of CSL Stockbrokers Ltd., said that the federal government issued various security instruments to raise funds to finance most of its projects.

Fagbulu, who was represented by Mr Richard Akinmoladun, from CSL said that FGN Securities were best

suited for all categories of Nigerians, irrespective of status.

He urged Nigerians to invest in the various products available, as they would have no need to worry in view of the safety that comes with such investment.

He listed some of the products as FGN Bond, FGN Savings Bond, Nigerian Treasury Bills, FGN Sukuk and the Green Bond.

"With as little of N5,000 you can invest in the FGN Savings Bond," he said.

NAN reports that the FGN Securities Issuance Awareness Programme, which commenced in Lagos in March, 2022, has earlier been taken to Enugu, Ibadan, Kano, Yola, Umuahia, Gombe and Osogbo.

It is scheduled to hold in Benin, Edo State on May 18.

In January, the DMO had also created an FGN Securities portal to make subscriptions to the various products seamless and to attract more investors, especially young Nigerians, to FGN Securities.(NAN)



Oniha

Second-hand shopping booms as inflation bites

A growing number of people in Africa's biggest economy are now buying used clothes, shoes, wigs, and accessories as inflation cut down on real wages.

Second-hand items popularly known as Thrift or Okrika have gained a lot of traction in the country in recent years on accelerating inflation - that is eroding consumers' purchasing power and dollar scarcity.

Tope Idowu, a civil defense officer and mother of three, said the current economic situation has made it difficult for her to buy new clothes for her children, thus resulting in buying second-hand clothes.

"I have three boys, when they were younger I used to buy them only new clothes. The situation of the country has taught me how to economize as the bulk of their clothes are second-hand," she said.

"I only buy new clothes for outings, because most of our income goes to food and rent," she added.

Idowu like millions of Nigerians has resulted in purchasing second-hand items

to survive the current economic hardship and accelerating inflation.

According to the latest report by NBS, the inflation rate accelerated to 22.04 percent in March from 21.96 percent in February. The report showed that clothing and footwear are the third most contributing factors to the increase in inflation after food & non beverage alcohol and housing water, electricity, gas & other fuel.

Bimbo Adelabi, a single mother and civil servant said second-hand items are cheaper alternatives for a lot of struggling Nigerians.

"Everything is expensive in Nigeria now, especially food. With food, there are no alternatives, but for clothes, I can buy second-hand items that are of quality," Adelabi said.

"This is why markets like Yaba, Asuwani, and Katangwa will keep thriving. They afford the average Nigerian's clothes and other second-hand items," she said.

Anthonia Chukwu, an accountant in a top secondary school at Ikeja said she has

been buying fairly used wigs as she cannot afford to buy new ones.

"Prices of relaxers and attachments for braids have tripled within the last year. I decided to cut my hair as I can no longer afford to maintain it," she said.

"I ended up keeping natural hair and wearing wigs. Wigs are cheaper to maintain and since I can't afford the new ones, I buy the second-hand wigs and they are as good as the new ones," she noted.

Last year, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) puts the number of Nigerians living in multidimensional poverty at 133 million, compared to 82.9 million considered poor in 2019 by national standards.

The Japa wave has also fueled the second-hand market. Nigerians migrating to other countries are usually forced to sell most of their household items at distressed prices, creating a new second-hand market online.

Chuks Obinna, a trader of second-hand items said his brother who is based in Belgium regularly sends the items for him to sell.

"My sales have increased tremendously. Nigerians are now buying second-hand used pots and other accessories for their use," he said.

Ayo Dunsin, sales and market officer at a food company told BusinessDay how she got all of her appliances from an online vendor that sells items she bought from people migrating.

"I bought my wardrobe and other appliances from a declutter page on Instagram, they were all items from people that have traveled," Dunsin said.

"It was cheaper than buying new items. During my search, I discovered there are lots of these kinds of declutter pages selling second-hand items of people that are migrating."

Tosin Olasehinde, founder MoneyAfrica last year posted on Twitter talking about how Nigerians are now moving to Ready to Wear (RTW) over shopping from popular brands like ASOS, and Primark due to FX issues.

"A lot of people that used to shop on ASOS are turning to RTW Nigerian brands because of the exchange rate. RTW brands, this is your time to shine," she said.

Her comments were flooded with people complaining that these "Ready To Wear" meant to be alternatives to popular foreign brands are even more expensive and some said they are now turning to "Thrifts" otherwise known as "Okrika".

"RTW is still good, but thrift shops aka Okrika are the rave now," someone commented. Okrika has been rebranded from just second-hand clothes sold cheaply to being called "Thrifts".

They have now evolved from the popular bend-down select to hand-picked, washed, ironed clothes and sometimes fast-fashion brands with tags. Thrift clothes are now sold between N1500-N5000 per piece.

Oyinyechi Anozie, a digital creator, also replied to the tweet saying "We stick to thrift and China clothes, average Nigeria can't even afford clothes produced here."

Anozie further said, "It is getting quite bad and affecting necessities like food and clothing. I hope the next administration caters to the poor class because it is really hard for them to forget luxury."

ENTREPRENEUR WATCH
WITH CELESTINE D. ATTSAR



Navigating the storms: The Nigerian SMEs story

All over the world, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are the lifeblood of economies and one of the major employers of labour.

ACCORDING to the World Trade Organisation, SMEs account for about 60-70% of the global workforce and constitute about 90% of businesses worldwide. SMEs are also a significant contributor to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of economies around the world. According to reports, in developed economies, SMEs contribute about 55% of the GDP, while emerging economies like Nigeria make up over 40% of the national GDP. Despite these significant contributions, small and medium-sized businesses have recently faced critical challenges that have severely impacted the sector leading to the mass closure of firms and loss of jobs. More recently, the devastating impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on various sectors has had a crippling effect on most businesses worldwide. In addition, the impact of the enforced lockdowns resulted in a depleted workforce that hit the production capability and bottom line of many organisations. This further led to additional job losses and decreased economic activity, leaving countries worldwide struggling to recover. The impact was especially devastating on the African continent, Nigeria inclusive. In addition to the forced closure of most businesses, the pandemic seriously affected the worldwide logistics supply

chain, which was essential to the survival of most SMEs in the nation. According to a report released in January 2022 by the National Bureau of Statistics and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria, the number of Micro, Small, and Medium-sized enterprises in Nigeria (MSMEs) reduced from about 41.5 million that existed in 2017 to just 39.6 million by the end of 2020. Before now, MSMEs in Nigeria already had to deal with the inherent challenges prevalent in the country's business environment and the pandemic and resulting lockdowns made an already dire situation worse. Although the global easing of Covid restrictions and the gradual reopening of the Nigerian economy seemed to signal recovery for small businesses, the Ukraine-Russia conflict over the past year further complicated matters, the ongoing war has caused its share of supply disruptions leading to an increase in energy prices and fossil fuels like diesel and petrol that most small firms in developing economies like Nigeria rely on. Despite these challenges, SMEs still form the bedrock of the Nigerian economy contributing over 46.1% to the country's GDP. This shows the huge impact that small businesses will continue to have in the country as the largest employers of labour and the highest type of business,

accounting for over 90% of such firms in Nigeria. SMEs have largely remained resolute and productive, thanks to financial institutions like Union Bank, who have, from the get-go, recognised how invaluable the sector is to the Nigerian economy. For over 105 years, the bank has consistently supported small businesses with its dedicated SME Banking proposition and unique product offerings providing access to loans and intervention funding. Over the years, Union Bank has generously supported Nigeria's small and medium-sized enterprises with cutting-edge products and solutions that have helped to boost capital infusion and promote effective business practices, leading to increased profitability and business growth. In addition, through value-adding training programs for business owners that have increased consumer awareness of the dangers and opportunities within their industry, Union Bank has directly benefited more than fifty thousand enterprises. Women-owned businesses, which according to PricewaterhouseCoopers, make up roughly 41% of the MSMEs in Nigeria, have also enjoyed access to exclusive business support through Union Bank's alpher© proposition. alpher© provides access to unique, innovative products, mentorship programs, and

access to business management workshops that have empowered women's businesses to continue to prosper. This unique proposition which was conceived to boost enterprise and enable success for women in Nigeria has attracted domestic and international grants and funding opportunities that have greatly improved female-owned establishments. As laudable as these kinds of private interventions are, there is still a need for a holistic, collaborative effort between the public and private sectors. Suppose the government hopes to realistically achieve its dream of pulling 100 million Nigerians out of poverty over the next decade; the government at all

adequate plans to transform the SME sector positively. Some solutions should be tailored toward enabling massive growth in the segment in the next few years. Deliberately formulated government policies, in addition to upgrading and building critical infrastructures like seaports, railways, and power stations, amongst others, should be a catalyst that will undoubtedly lead to massive growth and profitability of SMEs in the country. This could catapult Nigeria into one of the top 20 economies in the world in the next couple of decades with a projected trillion-dollar economic output. Abraham is head, SME products and segment, Union Bank.





'I spend time writing songs'

Continued from page 18

(Federal University of Education) Pankshin, I enrolled for teaching jobs and home lessons just to help me pay for studio sessions and mostly it doesn't end well with some Producers especially if you are broke.

When I came down to Lagos, it didn't go smooth at first. Sleeping in uncompleted buildings with some hard-working friends before I started looking for jobs. I exposed myself to danger but grace has always been there because of prayers.

I looked for agents here in Lagos with the help of good friends I now consider brothers because they gave me a place to stay in Dodan Barracks Obalende. I did therapist trainings for some time and I got jobs that paid up to 60k per month with good intentions of setting a studio, after some time I got a strong partnership with an online radio station in brooklyn New York. They really supported me to set up a decent studio in Lagos where I can record without me going to other studios

Despite these problems what are your hopes for a better tomorrow?

I want to be one of the biggest stars in the world, that is a big dream and it comes with big challenges but would not destroy the hopes cemented in my heart and mind.

Am hoping to work with international rappers. Singers and other great icons so am working hard everyday for this

What shows have you performed in and what are your experiences?

I've performed in numerous shows mostly in Jos Before I moved down to Lagos. I've performed in Claycity (former bight of Benin), Fremzy Hotels in Tudun Wada, Neon Shows @ Pizza Hubs in Rayfield, imprimis gardens in



Gold and base all in Jos.

Then the prestigious Spar in Yaba, Kanike Hotels Ikoyi and some streets shows in Ikeja all in Lagos.

I've also had the privilege of being hosted in radio stations In Jos Rhythm 93.7FM with sir Obtain Gabriel Chuwang & Raheed the wisdomist, PRTVC 90.5 FM with Johnny 227 & Doctor groundzero for Freestyle Sessions.

Performances as such has really helped and shaped my Life as a rapper and artiste in terms of confidence, improved my writing skills, expanded my fan base

Do you have any appeal for help?

We all need help in all areas of life and we all need one another. A teacher needs students, students need teachers. Politicians need votes artistes and rappers need support of all kinds.

I represent J-town wherever I go, so I need you all in this journey to keep putting the heart of Middle-Belt on the world map. There are other artistes from Jos in diaspora as well, we all need your prayers and support.

What message do you have for your fans?

I dropped an album in Jos called the " crystal Ball" (Man of the Future) it was launched 8th November 2021 at Azi Nyako youth Center in Dadin Kowa.

I also have upcoming projects am working on currently here in Lagos which would soon be released by the grace of God. I'll love to share this to everyone out there it all depends on "You" anything you dream of can be achieved if you work hard and believe it from your MIND...

Don't do anything because you saw other people doing, do what you love and give it all you have.

The Human Mind is one of God's greatest design for everything you see today in the world was once perceived from the MIND. Anything is possible

Lastly, I represent you all if I succeed, we succeed. Thank you and God bless

Instagram: @OfficialKingLot, Tiktok: @OfficialKingLot, Twitter: @OfficialKingLot and Email: sunexxlot@gmail.com + 2 3 4 8 0 5 2 0 4 7 1 6 . www.brooklynstation.com

Do you have any music Icon? and which of them would you love to collaborate with?

Everyone out there is unique with their own craft and style of music. My music icons however are the likes of Big Punisher, Jay-z, Nas, Joyner Lucas, Canibus, Rakim, M. I abaga, J. Cole, Jesse Jagz, Wu Tang clan and the list goes on and on.

If given the opportunity, I would Love to collaborate with Nas, Joyner Lucas, Jay-z and J. Cole in the future which I believe and strongly believe it would come to reality.

Hollywood rising young stars

Continued from page 18

Ariana DeBose



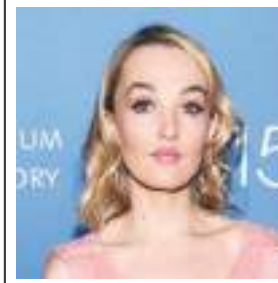
Moving to New York City from North Carolina at 19, DeBose's Broadway debut came in 2011's *Bring It On: The Musical*, which featured lyrics from Lin-Manuel Miranda, who would later tap DeBose for early workshops of *Hamilton*. "To see the fruits of your hard work, become an international phenomenon, I don't think you can ever fully process it," says the actress, who remembers helping Daveed Diggs escape a mob of fans during a lunch break as the show was gaining popularity. It was in the middle of her Tony-nominated run as Donna Summer in the musical *Summer* that DeBose was called in to audition for Spielberg's *West Side Story*, eventually landing the part of Anita, originally made famous by Rita Moreno. Ahead of filming, Moreno offered the actress some advice: "Lean into everything that makes you special." DeBose surmises, "She basically was like, 'Don't get in my shadow.'"

Phoebe Dynevor



A week after Dynevor wrapped filming on the six-month shoot for Netflix's *Bridgerton*, the quarantine began. "I went from one intense thing into another," says the actress, who only recently grasped the reach of the pandemic's biggest breakout: "It wasn't until the world has gone back to normal that I have realized the enormity of the show." The English Dynevor, who has been performing for over a decade and was previously best known stateside for TV *Land-turned-Paramount+* darling *Younger*, is set for Amazon's U.K. remake of French series *Call My Agent* and Sony feature *I Heart Murder*. And, of course, there is *Bridgerton's* much anticipated second season. Dynevor is happy to be back at work, noting, "The noise that comes after what we do for a living is a whole separate thing."

Chloe Fineman



On *SNL*, Fineman has impersonated everyone from Drew Barrymore to Timothée Chalamet. She was upped to repertory status this season and is also making the jump to the big screen this year with Warner Bros.' *Father of the Bride* remake, where she will take on Martin Short's wacky wedding planner role, minus the signature accent. "I felt like it was too much if I was German," she teases. "Now I'm the out-of-touch but likable white girl." And, in a more dramatic turn, Fineman will appear opposite Brad Pitt and Margot Robbie in Damien Chazelle's Hollywood epic *Babylon*. The goal for the NYU grad is to straddle the worlds of both comedy and drama, while also eyeing a future in producing. She explains, "The more hands-on I get to be, the more I enjoy it."

Dominique Fishback



When Fishback was working a retail job at New York's famed Drama Book Shop, she found out that the pilot she filmed titled *The Deuce* had been picked up to series by HBO. She kept signing up for shifts. "I still wanted to be grounded and wanted to be with everyone," says the East New York, Brooklyn, native of the decision. "Then my schedule got too busy and I had to give all of my shifts away." Her schedule has stayed busy with a variety of high-concept features (*Project Power*), Oscar-nominated titles (*Judas and the Black Messiah*), and prestige television (*Apple's The Last Days of Ptolemy Grey*). Now, she has just wrapped filming on *Paramount's* next *Transformers* movie, which she co-leads with fellow Brooklynite Anthony Ramos.

Leslie Grace



"It's something that I was itching for — to be able to play a role that didn't necessarily have anything to do with music," says Grace of her latest role in the highly anticipated DC feature *Batgirl*. The three-time Latin Grammy nominee made her onscreen debut earlier this summer in Lin-Manuel Miranda's NYC-set musical *In the Heights*, but is currently in training in London to play the superhero and alter ego *Barbra Gordon* ("I am stretching for fun now"). *Batgirl* is only the second onscreen role for the Bronx-born and Florida-raised actress, and her first time on the top of the call sheet. But Grace is no stranger to performing, having started her career as a singer-songwriter when she was 16 years old. She says, "I use all of that experience in one way or another to fuel all the things that I'm doing now."

Source Hollywood Reporter

CHANGE OF NAMES

<p>MATUR</p> <p>I, formerly known as MATUR KIM JOSEP, JOSEPH MATUR, now wish to be known and addressed as MATUR KIM JOSEPH. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>ABUBAKAR</p> <p>I, formerly known as SALE BASHIR, now wish to be known and addressed as ABUBAKAR USAINI. All former documents remain valid. Correct date of birth is 6/8/1988 not 28/1/1985. All concerned authorities and the general public please take note.</p>	<p>OBADIAH</p> <p>I, formerly known as DASAM BOEMAN, now wish to be known and addressed as OBADIAH BOEMAN DASOEM. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.</p>	<p>ANNA</p> <p>I, formerly known as ANNA JANG DANIEL, now wish to be known and addressed as ANNA MOSES PAM. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.</p>	<p>VERONICA</p> <p>I, formerly known as VERONICA OMOLA AGBENYI, now wish to be known and addressed as VERONICA AGBENYI. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.</p>	<p>PHILEMON</p> <p>I, formerly known as SESHA DAVID, now wish to be known and addressed as PHILEMON WILSON. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.</p>
<p>GAIUS</p> <p>I, formerly known as GAIUS JONATHAN, now wish to be known and addressed as GAIUS JONATHAN SERIEM. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.</p>	<p>BIMWARIT</p> <p>I, formerly known as GOMA BIMWARIT NICODEMUS TSENPET BIMWARIT YITNOE, now wish to be known and addressed as BIMWARIT TSENPET YITNOE. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.</p>	<p>BALA</p> <p>I, formerly known as BALA WAJAL, now wish to be known and addressed as BALA WAJAL MACHEN. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.</p>	<p>BRISKILA</p> <p>I, formerly known as BRISKILA ELISHA HWOK, now wish to be known and addressed as BRISKILA PYAM MBANG. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.</p>	<p>MAHUEL</p> <p>I, formerly known as MARAM HANNATU MOSE, MARYOM HANNATU YUNANA, MAHUEL HANNATU MOSES, now wish to be known and addressed as MAHUEL HANNATU YUNANA. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.</p>	<p>DAKAGAN</p> <p>I, formerly known as MALLAM PIUS, now wish to be known and addressed as DAKAGAN PIUS DABOER. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>
<p>ADAMU</p> <p>I, formerly known as ADAM ISMAIL ADAM, now wish to be known and addressed as ADAMU ISMAIL. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>ADAM</p> <p>I, formerly known as ADAMU ISMAIL ABASS, now wish to be known and addressed as ADAM ABBAS ISMAIL. Correct date of birth is 10/8/2004. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public please take note.</p>	<p>ADIKO</p> <p>I, formerly known as ADIKO JUMMAI AHUK, now wish to be known and addressed as AYIKO JUDITH AHUK. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public please take note.</p>	<p>UGOCHUKWU</p> <p>I, formerly known as OBINWANNE IFEOMA CHRISTIANA, now wish to be known and addressed as UGOCHUKWU IFEOMA CHRISTIANA. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.</p>	<p>AYUBA</p> <p>I, formerly known as AYUBA BALONG, now wish to be known and addressed as AYUBA BALONG DAKUM. Correct date of birth is 14/04/2002. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.</p>	<p>NASUK</p> <p>I, formerly known as PEACE MIWENA ADAHA, now wish to be known and addressed as NASUK PEACE DASHE. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.</p>
<p>SELKUR</p> <p>I, formerly known as SELKUR TIMBYEN SOLOMON, now wish to be known and addressed as SELKUR TIMBYEN DASHE. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>LOHNA</p> <p>I, formerly known as LOHNA MIRI, now wish to be known and addressed as LOHNA PEACE NJINAN. Correct date of birth 22/09/1988. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public please take note.</p>	<p>YUSUF</p> <p>I, formerly known as ABBULJABAR YUSUF, now wish to be known and addressed as YUSUF ABDULJABAR ABUBAKAR. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.</p>	<p>ABDULLAHI</p> <p>I, formerly known as ABDULRAHMAN HADIZA, now wish to be known and addressed as ABDULLAHI HADIZA. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.</p>	<p>NENFORT</p> <p>I, formerly known as MUNGAKKA BENJAMIN GODIT, now wish to be known and addressed as NENFORT BENJAMIN GODIT. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.</p>	<p>STEPHEN</p> <p>I, formerly known as STEPHEN HELEN DANBOYI, DANBOYI HELEN STEPHEN, DANBOYI HELEN STEPHEN DANIEL, now wish to be known and addressed as STEPHEN HELEN DANBOYI. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.</p>
<p>JOSHUA</p> <p>I, formerly known as HARRY GABA JAPHET, now wish to be known and addressed as JOSHUA JAPHET HARRY. Correct date of birth is 8th July, 2001 not 1st January, 1996. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>CHUWANG</p> <p>I, formerly known as DUNG CHUNDUNG GYANG, now wish to be known and addressed as CHUWANG CHUNDUNG DUNG. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public please take note.</p>	<p>ONYIGBUO</p> <p>I, formerly known as ONYIGBUO EMMANUEL CHIJOKE, now wish to be known and addressed as ONYIGBUO EMMANUEL KENNY. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.</p>	<p>SOEPDING</p> <p>I, formerly known as RIFKATU CHUWANG DUNG, now wish to be known and addressed as SOEPDING RIFKATU ALKALI. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.</p>	<p>UGBABA</p> <p>I, formerly known as ABU FAVOUR AJUMA, now wish to be known and addressed as UGBABA FAVOUR AJUMA. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.</p>	<p>DENNIS</p> <p>I, formerly known as NANSHIN EMMANUEL, now wish to be known and addressed as DENNIS PATRICIA. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.</p>
<p>JOHN</p> <p>I, formerly known as EZE JOHN, now wish to be known and addressed as JOHN SUNDAY EZE. Correct date of birth is 13/2/1972 not 12/2/1972. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>MERCY</p> <p>I, formerly known as MERCY KANGMI IBI, now wish to be known and addressed as MERCY KANGMI DAKON SARPIYA. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public please take note.</p>	<p>BALA</p> <p>I, formerly known as HARISU BALA GARBA, now wish to be known and addressed as BALA HARISU GARBA. Correct date of birth is 29/1/2002 not 29/1/2000. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.</p>	<p>DAKAT</p> <p>I, formerly known as DAKAT BLESSING, now wish to be known and addressed as DAKAT LOHNA BLESSING. Correct date of birth is 29/11/1999. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.</p>	<p>FRANCA</p> <p>I, formerly known as FRANCA BALA ADAMU, now wish to be known and addressed as FRANCA ABEL DAUJI. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.</p>	<p>SARAH</p> <p>I, formerly known as SARAH DANIEL DUNG, now wish to be known and addressed as SARAH VOU DANLADI. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.</p>
<p>YAKUBU</p> <p>I, formerly known as FELIX GYANG YAKUBU, now wish to be known and addressed as YAKUBU FELIX GYANG. All former documents remain valid. UBA and concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>FOR SALE</p>		<p>FOR SALE</p>		

Tackle quackery in construction industry – Group tells incoming govt

THE Nigerian Mining and Geosciences Society (NMGS) on Friday urged the incoming administration to take concrete steps to reduce quackery in the construction industry to the barest minimum.

The President of NMGS, Prof. Akinade Olatunji, said this while interacting with newsmen on agenda setting for incoming governments in Abuja.

Olatunji said sharp practices as reflected in shoddy execution of projects, poor project and delivery had led to loss of scarce resources and lives.

"All activities in the sector that have to do with sub-soil investigation for geo-technical properties to determine the type of foundations to be put in place are the work of our members who are engineering geologists.

"Anyone that is not properly trained in this field cannot deliver the job. Most of the failed roads that we see all over the country are because of non-consultation with the engineering geologists.

"Some of the collapsed buildings that have been the lots of cities is because of non-utilisation of the appropriate professionals in the investigation of the sub-surface materials.

"We recommend that every state of the country and the Ministry of Work have a dedicated department to provide geo-technical information on sub surface materials before any construction is undertaken," he said. Olatunji said the aim was to achieve the best global practice in the industry, adding that the NMGS would continue to engage the government at all levels.

He urged the incoming administration to pay special attention to such areas as the Ajaokuta Steel Company, oil and gas, environment and water sectors. Olatunji called for a policy that would govern hydro-geophysics-related sectors.

"There is no coherent national policy that governs the water, environment, and the construction sectors.

"The need for a clear and

coherent national policy for the sectors cannot be over-emphasised," he said.

He said it was imperative for the incoming administration to recognise the role of NMGS in the Oil and Gas sector.

"The NMGS is ready and willing

to work with all stakeholders to ensure that all hands are on the deck and the plough to ensure that we achieve continued progress.

"As professionals, we are ready to work and advise whoever needs advice in these sectors", he said. (NAN)



Adebayo

<p>AJALUKE</p> <p>I, formerly known as AJALUKE CELESTINE, now wish to be known and addressed as AJALUKE CELESTINE FORKI. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.</p>	<p>MORIS</p> <p>I, formerly known as HAJARATU LONGRET DADONG, now wish to be known and addressed as MORIS DADUNG HAJARATU. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.</p>
<p>DEBORAH</p> <p>I, formerly known as CHRISTIANA SUNDAY EIRE, now wish to be known and addressed as DEBORAH DANIEL EIRE. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>SUNDAY</p> <p>I, formerly known as SUNDAY NANDAT KWAMKUR, now wish to be known and addressed as SUNDAY NANDAT. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public please take note.</p>
<p>MIRI</p> <p>I, formerly known as KURMOCIT NANLIR SELVEN, now wish to be known and addressed as MIRI MALCIT SELVEN. Correct date of birth is 15/3/1995. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>VENDIP</p> <p>I, formerly known as VENDIP TIMZING JULIUS, now wish to be known and addressed as VENDIP TIMZING JULIUS. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public please take note.</p>

NEWS

EFCC tasks journalists on whistle blowing

From ANENE AIKE, Sokoto

JOURNALISTS have been tasked on budget tracking, whistle blowing and performance evaluation, monitoring of failure and project abandonment by authorities, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC Sokoto has posited.

The Commission through Abdulrasheed Bawa, gave the charge at the opening of a one-day workshop on "Economic and Financial Crimes Reporting for Journalists" in Sokoto where he stated that the task of exposing corrupt public officials calls for commitment and attention to details.

The programme which he said was flagged off last year in some of the commission's zonal Commands has been significantly expanded to make journalists in other Zonal Commands of the commission benefit from it, hence in Sokoto.

Bawa, who represented the Sokoto Zonal Commander of the Commission, Aliyu Yunusa, said, "the media should begin to ask questions on budget performance through deliberate monitoring and reporting, whistle blowing on project failures, abandonment of contracts, project delay and poor project delivery.

He said the task of exposing corrupt public officials is not as demanding as thought by all and sundry but really calls for commitment and attention to details.



Isiguzor

Bawa explained that one way of doing this is through budget tracking and yearly budgets of government at all levels need to be announced at all times.

He emphasized that Institutions have their budgets, as well as elected politicians for their respective constituencies and the media should begin to ask questions on budget performance through deliberate monitoring and reporting.

He also stated that the workshop is one of the modest efforts of the Commission to build synergy, understanding and a more cordial relationship with the gentlemen of the Pen Powers.

Our correspondent also reports that the Assistant Commander of the EFCC, ACE II, Legal and Prosecution Department, Headquarters, Chris Mshellia, delivered a paper tagged "New Money Laundering Framework: Duties and Responsibilities of Individuals and Corporate Organizations.

This was followed by that of ACE I Dele Oyewale and Superintendent Cajetan Egerue that delivered papers on Investigative Journalism, Nigeria's fight against Money Laundering and Digital Payment System sub titled Emerging Opportunities for Fraud and Prevention Tips for Victims and Comitants.

From
ABBAS GUNGURA, Bauchi

Governor commends Army Chief over security strategies

GOVERNOR Bala Abdulkadir Mohammed of Bauchi State, recently commended the Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General Faruk Yahaya for his robust security formations and units deployed in the state for effective management of all forms of security.

Speaking while declaring this year's Combat Arms Training Week open in Bauchi, Governor Bala explained that since inception of his administration, he has noted with appreciation, the collaborative efforts between the Nigerian Army and other security agencies in tackling the prevalent security threats across the state.

The governor said the Nigerian Army alongside other security agencies have made tremendous efforts in keeping Bauchi State safe and secure as their presence had given the state unprecedented security and made it one of the most peaceful states in Nigeria.

He however called for a holistic review of the operational strategies and preparedness of the Army in view of the myriad of security challenges bedeviling the country and suggested that the amorphous nature of the current security challenges in the nation requires the use of kinetic and non-kinetic means, as well as multi-faceted strategies to effectively tackle them.



Gov. Bala Mohammed with Chief of Army Staff Lt. Gen. Faruq Yahaya in Bauchi

"It is my honour and privilege to be invited to this year's Combat Arms Training Week as a Special Guest. I wish to welcome the Chief of Army Staff, Lt. General Faruk Yahaya to Bauchi State, the 'Pearl of Tourism' for this very important event.

"I understand that the event is aimed at assessing the combat readiness and efficiency of the infantry and Armoured Corps of the Nigerian Army. This would help in developing strategies to correct any observed operational difficulties and ultimately put the Nigerian Army in a better position to protect the territorial integrity of the nation and support in maintaining internal peace and security as enshrined in the 1999 Constitution (as

amended).

"In line with global best practice, it is usual for forces to train regularly in order to maintain combat readiness. It is not therefore out of place for the combat arms to constantly engage officers and men in training. I am pleased to note that the Nigerian Army is currently being re-positioned to professionally contain all forms of threats to Nigeria from both within and outside its borders.

"It is to the credit of the Armed Forces that Boko Haram menace has been substantially brought under control. I would like to commend Mr. President, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, Grand Commander of the Order of the Federal Republic, for providing the visionary leadership to transform the Nigerian Army in particular and the military as a whole.

"Let me also commend the Chief of Army Staff for maintaining high standards of professionalism in the Nigerian Army through his unique leadership style and quest to build capacity through consistent training and welfare programmes. I will also appreciate the existing cordial relationship between officers and men of the Nigerian Army and the civilian population in Bauchi State."

The governor therefore assured the Chief of Army Staff of the continued support and corporation of the Bauchi State Government to the Nigerian Army to enable it to effectively perform its constitutional responsibilities.

In a key note address, the Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General Faruk Yahaya said the Combat Arms Training Week is part of efforts to enhance the operational effectiveness of the participants for efficiency in a joint arms environment.

General Faruk Yahaya who appreciated President Muhammadu Buhari for improved funding to the Nigerian Army, reiterated the readiness of the army towards adopting strategies to sustain its gains in defending the country against all forms of insecurity.

District head organizes annual cultural Durbar

From
ABBAS GUNGURA, Bauchi

THE District Head of Lame, one of the kingmakers in Bauchi Emirate and Sarkin Yakin Bauchi, Alhaji Aliyu Yakubu Lame, has organized an annual cultural durbar which attracted each community in the district to showcase its heritage. That event thrilled spectators and provoked exultations as it gladdened the heart and minds of spectators in remembrance of Late First Sarkin Yakin Bauchi, Mallam

Muhammadu Mamman Kusu.

Alhaji Aliyu organized the annual durbar in his effort to promote peaceful coexistence, unity of purpose and cultural development in the emirate and to remember the legacies left behind by Late Sarkin Yakin Bauchi, Mamman Kusu who fought the war during the reign of Shehu Usman Danfodio.

Our correspondent who was at the venue of the event, reports that

spectators were enthralled by the exhibition of dances and other displays by various cultural troupes, while hunters honoured the occasion with several gun shots in the air. Decked in their different costumes, the troupes matched in a procession to the stage to display in Lame Central Primary School

Also, entertaining spectators were Fulani, Jarawa dancers, dancers from Dass, other neighbouring districts, villages and hunters who displayed their prowess with bows and arrows and guns.

Among the Dignitaries at the occasion were the Barden Kudun Bauchi, Dr Hayatu Mustafa, Chigarin Bauchi, Alhaji Sanusi Yakubu Wanka, Rector Federal Polytechnic Kaltungo, Dr Suleiman Lame, Katukan Bauchi, District Head of Toro and many traditional and community leaders. Thousands of people from all walks of life attended the occasion.

Speaking to **SUNDAY STANDARD** at the Lame Palace, Dr Hayatu Mustapha Barden Kudun Bauchi

commended the Sarkin Yakin Bauchi, Aliyu Yakubu Lame for his effort to unite his people, to promote peace and security and to remember the legacies and contributions of our fallen heroes like Mamman Kusu

towards the development of Islam.

He said Aliyu Sarkin Yaki has set a pace for others to follow and commended him for the peace enjoyed in his domain. He said, "We can't do or achieve this stride without realigning our culture, even as incredible feats have been reached and can be attained using our culture".

On his part, the Rector of the Federal Polytechnic Kaltungo, Dr Suleiman Lame, stressed the importance of the event and explained that natives could only be identified by showcasing their culture and tradition, noting that they should not allow other Nigerians to come and show them their cultures. He appreciated the district head and members of his council for promoting peace across the state, emirate, Lame District and the country at large.

The Chigarin Bauchi, Alhaji Yusuf Yakubu Wanka, prayed for continuous peaceful coexistence among diverse ethnic groups and called on the youths to continue to remain loyal to constituted authorities.

The convener of the Durbar, Sarkin Yakin Bauchi, Alhaji Aliyu Yakubu Lame, explained that the event served as a symbol of strengthening the bond of unity and togetherness of the good people of Lame



Bala

NEWS

Ortom assures security operatives of support

From **TERESE TUHWA, Makurdi**

BENUE State Governor Samuel Ortom has assured the Nigeria Police and Navy of continuous support of the people and government of the state.

The governor gave the assurance Friday at the Benue People's House, Makurdi when the new Assistant Inspector General of Police (AIG) Zone 4, Musa Halidu and the new Commandant, Nigeria Navy Provost and Regulating School Makurdi, Commodore Mohammed Salisu paid him separate courtesy calls.

Governor Ortom while welcoming the AIG to the state expressed optimism that with his experience, he will deliver on his mandate.

He congratulated Halidu on his elevation to the rank of AIG and informed him that

people of the state were law abiding and have respect for constituted authorities, stating that they have always extended support to the Police Force in the state.

"We met a very bad security situation when we came on board. We have been able to put in place laws that have reduced these challenges.

"We don't take laws into our hands. We make sure that when these laws are violated, we ensure that violators are made to face the wrath of the law.

He informed the AIG about the increase in the activities of terrorist herdsmen in the state after the elections which has led to the loss of several lives and appealed to him for intervention.

"Our people are not happy with the activities of terrorist herdsmen who are trying to take over the lands in the state. They kill, rape and maim at will. Security personnel are not left out of

these attacks. Something urgently needs to be done to end these evils."

Earlier in his remarks, AIG Halidu thanked the governor for the audience. "As Chief Security of the state, it is pertinent for me to intimate you of my posting to the state which is the headquarters of Zone 4 Police Command"

Halidu who is the 40th AIG Zone 4 disclosed that without support of the governor in the zone, it will be difficult for effective policing, stating that Governor Ortom has supported the zone immensely.

The AIG said intelligent and effective policing go hand in hand with technology in the 21st century and called on the governor to sustain his support to the force

Similarly, Governor Ortom has expressed appreciation to the Nigeria Navy for sitting the Navy School in the state and for contributing to the security of the state.

"We will support you at all times. Whatever you do here in the state is for our benefits."

He informed Commodore Salisu that the state will do everything possible to ensure that the Navy gets a permanent site for her school and assured him of support of government and people of the state.

Speaking earlier, Commodore Salisu stated that he was around to identify with the governor, having been posted to the state and thanked the governor for all his support to the Nigeria Navy. "The Navy barracks could not have been achieved without the support of the state government"

He informed the governor about the challenges of inadequate land for the Nigeria Navy Provost and Regulating School, Makurdi and sought for his intervention in getting a permanent site for the school.



Ortom

Ishaku needs a bullet proof car

By **VICGOR GAI**

THE Taraba State Commissioner of Information, Lois Emmanuel has disclosed that Governor Darius Ishaku needs a new vehicle for his safety and that the one currently in use had at several times embarrassed the governor.

The Nigeria Standard had sought for clarification on the recently reported SEC approval of N2 billion for the purchase of vehicles for the governor, his deputy and their spouses.

A Nigerian online newspaper had reported that the Governor of Taraba State, Darius Ishaku, had approved N2 billion for the purchase of luxury vehicles for himself, his deputy and their wives.

According to the report, Ishaku and his wife will get over N1.3 billion worth of exotic cars while his deputy and his wife will receive cars worth N750 million.

But the Commissioner denied the sum while also justifying the approval for the purchase of vehicles for the governor, his deputy and their

spouses.

"It is not N2 billion. The purchase should have been done when he came on board for the second tenure in 2019. The car he was using since 2015 is supposed to be changed but it was not because funds were not available.

"I can remember, the car broke down several times. It was supposed to be changed long ago. That is the gospel truth!"

"Now that he is going, it is his entitlement to have a car. At least as a governor, he needs a bullet proof car for his protection," Emmanuel disclosed.

Meanwhile, the news of the approval of N2 billion for the purchase of vehicles is raising a lot of dust in the state.

Some Tarabans have condemned the decision, citing the poor welfare condition of workers and pensioners in the state.

The spokesman of the main opposition APC in Taraba, Aaron Artimas, has bared his mind on the matter, describing it as "simply reckless and insensitive".

- Information Commissioner

"As you can see, some people retired over ten years ago including myself. I have not been paid my gratuity and you can imagine there are people like this who do not have cars. Two billion would pay many pensioners their gratuity. Some have not been enrolled after five years of retirement.

"So you can see the degree of recklessness and insensitivity. It shows the level of greed. Anytime they ask him about salaries, he would say he has paid up to date.

"The State Executive Council is just like errand boys. They have no role to play. Their ministries are not funded. I am surprised, maybe they have something to share from it because there is no way they can approve that reckless amount knowing fully well that the state has no money. The state government has not been given commissioners' running costs to run their ministries. The state public service has been run down. There is no justification

By **PALANG KASMI**

CHAIRMAN of the Northern Governors Forum and Governor of Plateau State Simon BakoLalong has recently given reasons why Northern Governors of the APC supported power shift to the Southern part of Nigeria.

He said their decision was prompted by the desire to promote the unity, peace and stability of Nigeria within the spirit of fairness, equity and justice which the late Premier of the Northern Region, Sir Ahmadu Bello stood for.

Lalong disclosed this recently while speaking at the 9th Annual Sir Ahmadu Bello Memorial Lecture on Leadership and Good Governance held in Lafia, Nasarawa State. He disclosed this in a statement released by his Director of Press and Public Affairs".

He said because the late Sardauna lived a life of accommodation, tolerance, justice and fairness, his legacies have endured long after his demise and continue to inspire leadership in the region and country at large.

"When I led my colleagues, the Northern Governors to push for power shift to the south, it was not because we wanted Asiwaju to be president. Rather, we wanted to ensure that justice and fairness prevails in our nation for the unity, peace and harmony. That is what we believe our revered father of blessed memory, Sir Ahmadu Bello would do in such circumstances".

whatsoever. Everything points to the fact that he was a selfish leader," Artimas stated.

The Taraba State Coordinator, Coalition of Civil Society, Joseph Gimba, described the decision as ill-timed. According to him, if the approval runs contrary to the law, then it must be jettisoned.

"Considering the amount involved. It is huge. Ordinarily, that should have happened before now. One would begin to wonder why should this be the right time for the governor to do that? It would look like he is trying to empty the coffers so that the incoming government would inherit nothing.

"As a civil society, one would have to look at the merits and demerits of the action entirely. It is coming at the wrong time. If it is not captured in the state budget, then it should not be allowed to go. He should allow the incoming government to consider that. This is taking into consideration that local government staff have not been paid, teachers have not been paid," Gimba stated.

Why we supported power shift to the North - Lalong



Lalong

"Fortunately, the party delegates chose Asiwaju who was eventually accepted by Nigerians as he was unanimously elected".

Lalong urged all Nigerians, both in the North and across the country, to support President-elect Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu as he takes on the mantle of leadership. He said the North is an important stakeholder in the Nigerian project and its contributions towards his election cannot be over emphasized".

He said The Northern region needs serious attention in various sectors ranging from security, education, infrastructure, agriculture, economic revival and restoration of law and order in various areas that have been ravaged by insecurity.

"It is heartening to note that the Northern Governors Forum, under my leadership, has done a great deal of work on bringing our people together as one people with a common destiny," he said.

Nasarawa State Governor, Engr. AbdullahiSule said it was a privilege for his state to host the very important event which reminds the region and the nation about the values that Sardauna lived and died for.

He said although there have been challenges in the country after the demise of Sir Ahmadu Bello, some progress has been made which can be built upon to make the Northern Region and Nigeria a better place.

Speaking on the topic "2023 Elections as Panacea for Search for Quality Leadership in Nigeria," Kenyan Law Professor and pan Africanist, Patrick

Lumumba said the late Sardauna left behind several lessons for politicians which include his selflessness and sacrifice for the general good.

He said the question of unity and cohesion in Nigeria particularly after the 2023 general elections cannot be over emphasized because Nigeria plays a very key role in the stability of Africa being a giant in all ramifications.

Lumumba stressed that the sacrifices of founding fathers like Sardauna who paid the supreme price should not be left to go in vain but built upon for a greater Nigeria and Africa.

President Muhammadu Buhari in a message delivered by Chief of Staff, Prof. Ibrahim Gambari said it is important that Nigerians devote more attention to recruiting quality leaders who are capable of steering the nation in the right direction.

He also said the process of elections should also be looked at and improved upon to ensure that those who serve the people have their mandate and also enjoy their support.

Emir of Lafia, HRHSidiBage said the lecture series is an opportunity to reflect on the dreams of Sardauna and also a way of putting critical national and regional issues on the front burner.

He thanked Governor Lalong who as Chairman of the Northern Governors Forum worked hard to ensure that the traditional institution is given a place in the governance of Nigeria much as it was during the time of the Sardauna.

The next Sardauna Lecture is scheduled to take place in Maiduguri.

NEWS

Ishaku commissions 250 unit housing estate in Jalingo

From Victor Gai, Jalingo

TARABA State Governor, Darius Ishaku, had recently commissioned the first phase of 250 completed units of 2 bedrooms semi-detached bungalows and 3 bedrooms fully detached bungalows, known as DDI Estate Garden in Jalingo.

He also flagged off the second phase of the multi-million naira 5000 housing project, through a public private partnership.

According to the governor, the ultra-modern DDI Garden Estate, was one of "several signature landmark projects completed by his government".

"This project was conceived as a deliberate government policy to reduce the housing deficit by providing decent, comfortable, and affordable housing for civil servants through a highly flexible payment regime that allows the occupant to take full ownership of the houses before retirement," Ishaku stated.

The housing estate has the following facilities: Parks, a shopping centre, a clinic, recreation centre, a garden, military, police, and civil defence outposts, CCTV, burglary alarm systems, solar street lighting, and constant water and electricity supplies.



Ishaku

Ishaku also urged the newly recruited 1445 civil servants to seize the opportunity and own the housing units, saying government has facilitated the process for them to own the houses.

"I urge the young and upcoming civil servants recently recruited by my administration to seize this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to purchase any of the available brands of houses of their choice using the flexible payment plan of a mortgage payment, instant payment, or staggered instalments payment. "As an added incentive to the newly recruited

employees, I have purchased 55 bungalows, and a raffle draw will be held with the chosen winners receiving the houses to be repaid on a mortgage loan," he stated.

KSPHCDA procures data tools for data collation

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

THE Kogi State Primary Health Care Development Agency (KSPHCDA), has procured and donated data tools worth over N20 million to the state Ministry of Health to enhance effective data collation. Speaking at the handing over ceremony in Lokoja, Dr Abubakar Yakubu, the Executive Director of KSPHCDA, said the data tools were procured under the Impact Project anchored by

From John FWAH, Kaduna

THE Director-General of Kaduna State Urban Planning and Development Authority (KASUPDA), Ismail Umaru-Dikko, had in a letter dated April 20, 2023, demanded the urgent release of N29,253,500 for the demolition exercise of various properties.

The memo by KASUPDA entitled 'Request For Clearance To Carry out Pending Demolition Exercise', listed the properties of IMN, UBE schools, Damau Household Farms owned by Dangote Dairy Farm, Gbagyi Villa, Ali Scorpion House, Oriapata and Polo Club Stable at UgwanDoka.

Others are at Architect Namadi Sambo Road, Danbushiya Layout and General Hospital, Kawo.

This is coming with less than 20 days to the exit of Governor Nasiru el Rufai as Kaduna State Governor. He has approved the final phase of demolition of properties belonging to the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), the residential complex in Gbagyi and others.

Meanwhile, among the reasons given by the

KASUPDA demands N29m for demolition of structures



el-Rufai

authority for embarking on the demolition are the ban placed on the Islamic group, encroachment on schools' landed properties, non-compliance on special regularisation programme, dilapidated structural failure, urban renewal and upgrade encroachments and illegal subdivision.

Out of the N29,253,500 to be expended on the exercise, N20,253,500 will be used to demolish IMN properties. Umaru-Dikko said: "The

governor is invited to kindly consider the above and approve the release of the estimated funds to enable the authority execute these pending tasks."

This is coming with less than 20 days to his exit as Kaduna State Governor, Nasir el-Rufai yet he has approved the final phase of demolition of properties belonging to the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), the residential complex in Gbagyi and others.

KSPHCDA procures data tools for data collation

THE Agency. Dr Yakubu said the tools would assist the Department of Health, Planning and Statistics of the ministry in data collation, processing to address the hitherto impeding correct data analysis from the state. "Let me quickly establish the importance of what we are doing today.

"About one or two years ago, we had this challenge of our data not reflected in the National Statistics; the reason being that we did not have tools to transmit those data.

"The version we were having then was not updated which made us to have a very drastic drop in our reporting from the relevant agencies responsible for data processing and evaluation in the country, which affected our work plan.

"We made frantic efforts to

correct the trend, and today we have more than enough data tools to work with across all our health facilities in the state," he said.

He described the action as very strategic from the KSPHCDA under the Impact Project and for the ministry to see it as a very good gesture for the collaborative roles that we have established over time. "There is no system without data because you cannot make any meaningful planning without data.

"We need to report all our interventions and the data has to be captured correctly and appropriately. The cost for the latest version of the procured data tools is way over N20 million. "We hope that it would better our reporting profile for all our health indices in the state".

The ED appreciated the leadership of Impact Project, KSPHCDA, Ministry of Health, as well as partners such as World Bank, among others. The Executive Director urged primary users of the tools to effectively utilised them by generating accurate data, report back to the state appropriately thereby enhancing the state's health data capacity.

In his response, the state's Commissioner for Health, Dr Zakari Usman, commended KSPHCDA for including the provision of the latest version of the data tools in their work plan to the ministry.

Usman, who was represented by the Director of Public Health in the Ministry, Dr. Francis Akpa, described the gesture as evidence of synergy that existed between the ministry and all its parastatals.

He said that the tools would further enhance the state Ministry of Health's ability to report on the current data in the state.

The commissioner assured that the ministry would continue to leverage on other existing projects between the ministry and the agency.

On his part, Mr Theophilus Olorunmaiye, the Programme Manager for IMPACT, said the data tools were the latest version of the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS).

The presented items include; 825 copies of each of NHIS HF monthly Summary Form, Vaccine and Devices Requisition Ledger, OPD Register and TD Register, Monthly Immunization Summary Form, and HF Daily General Attendance Register.

Others include: 825 copies of HF Vaccine Utilisation Summary Form, VM IA/IB, Child Immunisation Register, HD Daily Immunization Tally Sheet, Health Facility Daily ANC Register; and 21 copies of LGA Summary Form.

Emir of Zazzau visits Lalong

By PALANG KASMI

THE Emir of Zazzau and Chairman Kaduna Council of Chiefs, Alh. Ahmed Nuhu Bamali, has paid a visit to Plateau Governor, Simon Bako Lalong at Government House, Rayfield, Jos.

The Emir was in the state to attend the 33rd and 34th Combined Convocation and the Investiture Ceremony on him as the New Chancellor of University of Jos (UniJos), as well as the conferment of an Honorary Doctorate Degree on him by the university.

He commended the governor for being a detribalised leader who has demonstrated an all inclusive leadership style which should be emulated in the whole country by all leaders.

He called for peaceful co-existence and tolerance among Nigerians, stressing that it is a country with different cultures and ethnic groups.

He appreciated the hospitality he received in

Plateau and thanked UniJos for finding him worthy as a candidate to be awarded an honorary Doctorate degree.

Governor Lalong described the Emir as a hardworking personality who is interested in development, stressing that the university is privileged to have him as its Chancellor.

He recalled how during Covid-19 era, the Emir chaired a committee set up by the Northern Governors Forum on youth and women issues coming up with brilliant outcomes that were recommended as a template for governors.

Lalong also recalled that there was a greater level of unity in Nigeria with the practice of ethnic and religious tolerance compared to the polarisation that the nation is witnessing today.

The governor called on all traditional rulers to sue for peaceful coexistence in their domains adding: "If there is peace in the North, there will be peace in Nigeria".

He officially presented a congratulatory letter to the Emir for the conferment of a doctorate degree, and best wishes as he embarks on his new job as new UniJos

Journalist emerges president of Yoruba community

From Abbas Gungura, Bauchi

YORUBA community in Bauchi State has elected Mr. Segun Awofadeji, the **This Day** Senior Correspondent in Bauchi as the President-General of all Yoruba-speaking communities in Nigeria residing in the state. Awofadeji emerged as winner of the election that was held on Saturday 6/5/2023 after defeating the incumbent President, Bamigbade Abayomi who sought re-election. The Vice President, Prof Abdul Azeez Eytayo Kazeem was re-elected unopposed, while Mukaila Adegboyega was elected Secretary and Alhaji Ahmed Olokoba was re-elected Financial Secretary of the community. In his acceptance speech

after being sworn-in, Awofadeji expressed gratitude to God for giving him the opportunity to be voted as President General of Yoruba Community in Bauchi State. He thanked all those who contributed in making the occasion successful and peaceful.

According to him, "I therefore want to call on those who lost the election to support the present administration's move towards transforming the Yoruba community in the state.

"The Yorubas have a rich and robust culture and tradition of peaceful co-existence and harmonious relationship with one another and with other tribes, irrespective of ethno-religious, political and socio-cultural

differences. So, I strongly appeal to you all to continue to promote unity, tolerance, peaceful co-existence, harmonious relationship and love among ourselves as well as with our host community."

He said that the election is over; it is now time for him to work. He implored all contestants, in the interest of the Yoruba community, Bauchi State chapter, to rally around his administration, "as we forge a united front to chart a new chapter that would take our community in the state to the promised land."

The Senior journalist said he will operate an open door policy where members will come in and add value to his administration to achieve the desired goals.

SUNDAY MAGAZINE



Some governors

How Governors-Elect will inherit massive debts

Continued from page 10

Kaduna State has also included his state among the list of states whose new Governors will have to service huge domestic and foreign debts. For instance, the Governor Elect Mallam Uba Sani may be set to inherit a total of N86,863,069,011.79 with a foreign debt of over 586 million US dollars.

The debt profile of Kano State is huge which as at September last year stood at over N125 billion and that of foreign creditors of over 109million USdollars incurred by the Governor Abdullahi Umar Ganduje led administration which the incoming PDP Governor Elect Abba Kabir, will take time to look at.

In Katsina State, the transition is between Governor Aminu Masari and his compatriot of the APC and Governor Elect Dr. Dikko Radda, but the challenge ahead might be how to wrestle the liabilities being left behind which translates to over N62 billion in domestic debts and with over 55million USdollars of foreign debt.

Governor Atiku Bagudu will also at the end of his reign on May 29, in Kebbi State bequeath to the Governor -Elect over N60 billion of domestic debt and over 42 million US dollars in terms of foreign liabilities.

Niger State Governor, Abubakar Bello, is also set to hand over to his successor, Umar Bago a domestic debt of over N98 billion with an

additional foreign debt profile of over 69 million US dollars.

Governor Simon Bako Lalong, of Plateau State and Director General of the APC Presidential Campaign Council as well as the Chairman Northern Governors Forum whose tenure comes to an end on May 29, will hand over to the PDP led administration under the leadership of the new helmsman, Barrister Caleb Mutfwang a huge liabilities of over N151 Billion of domestic debt and over 33million US dollars to foreign creditors, plus 4 Months of salary arrears owed state workers.

Rivers State Governor Nyesome Wike, and leader of the G-5 PDP Governors, had given the impression that the state under his watch had no reason to owe any debt. But this is not the true picture of the buoyancy of the state, as he too is now set to leave behind to his hand picked successor, Siminialayi Fubara, a whopping debt profile of over 225 billion domestic debt and over 140 million US dollars owed foreign creditors.

Governor Aminu Tambuwal, of Sokoto State, who is now heading to the Senate having won his election on the ticket of the PDP, but the opposition APC in the state won the Governorship seat whereby, Governor Tambuwal will hand over to the Governor- Elect Ahmed Aliyu, on May 29, with a domestic debt profile of over

N85 billion with an additional 37 million US dollar of foreign liability.

Similarly, Taraba State Governor Arch. Darius Ishaku , will be exiting the Government House and paving the way for the Governor-Elect Kefas Abu, but with a domestic debt profile of over N90 billion apart from an incurred foreign debt of over 22 million US dollars.

The tenure of the Governors in the 17 states out of the 36 states of the Federation finally comes to an end on May 29, 2023, SUNDAY STANDARD gathered, domestic contractors and other creditors owe over N2 trillion to the 17 States which implies that the new Chief executives will as from May 29, carry a huge burden of also servicing foreign debts of more than 1 trillion US dollars.

The fears of many public analysts is that, the excitement that greeted some of these victories at the Governorship election will fade away, giving room for criticism on the new administration especially where the expectations are now high.

And with the mirage of challenges to be inherited from the outgoing governments, ranging from contractors whose payments might be overdue, to civil servants whose salary arrears have not been paid coupled with the pressure from politicians waiting for their own reward in terms of sharing of political offices, it remains to be seen how the first term

Governors would navigate the terrain and even make any meaningful impact.

In some states, alarm has been raised that some of the outgoing Governors are still awarding contracts and tying such agreements with CBN irrevocable standing Orders [IPOs], while at the same time, employing workers which will eventually swell government spending more than is required.

Meanwhile, some economic experts have called for caution on the part of those Governors who belief in the popular cliché that government is a continuum, thereby ,emptying the treasury before handing over to the new administrations, must realize that the law enforcement agencies are watching with keen interest those that have looted their states dry through bad governance.

It is obvious that some of these new Governors may not have the luxury of time to learn the robes looking at those challenges that are already starring them in the face. For instance, the incoming administration in Plateau State led by Barrister Caleb Mutfwang, will have to work extra hard in order to solve the nagging Farmers /Herders crisis that has in recent times resurfaced and placed many farming communities in the state under constant attack.

Similarly, Kaduna state will be governed by a first term Governor, Uba Sani, where the stakes are high in battling the

menace of kidnapping, banditry apart from the recurring Farmers /Herders conflict that had threatened the peace and tranquility of the state despite the strong presence of security personnel in those areas.

Niger State has also remained a hot bed of insecurity as various communities have either been sacked by Boko Haram terrorists or have continued to live under fear of attacks which have had negative consequences on the socio- economic activities in many local communities in the state. The Governor -Elect, Umar Bago will inherit a state with a catalogue of challenges side by side with a huge debt burden.

Also, in the south eastern part of the country including the South-South, the agitation for resource control and the activities of Indigenous People of Biafra [IPOB], will be on the front burner for the Governors -Elect from those regions judging from the way and manner some states in the zones where almost held hostage due to the hard stance of the agitators which include vandalisation of crude oil installations, targeting and killing civilians and security personnel.

However, as the stage is now set to usher in the Governors-Elect, to govern for the next four years, the big question remains how and what kind of measures they would apply that may take those states out of the woods.

METRO-FOCUS



Vegetables vendors and the price of cash crunch

By EZEKIEL DONTINNA

FEAR due to the earlier ban on the use of Nigeria's old money which brought monumental loss to vegetables vendors due to the Naira redesign policy of the Federal Government, is still pinching them. Most of them seem not to be investing much in the business like it used to be.

Majority of them could not pick up in the aftermath of the cash crunch because they had earlier invested huge amounts in the business without commensurate profit. In most cases, money sunk into the business was not recovered, talk more of profit.

Their case was very pathetic because their goods are perishables that lose freshness or value after a day or 2. Goods like cabbage, spinach, lettuce, tomatoes, carrots, peas, green beans, green pepper etc. have a very short lifespan. After a few days, they become spoilt and stink horribly. While the cash crunch lasted, most of these women who are small holder business women, watched as their hard earned money wasted because of lack of patronage.

It adversely affected the vendors in no small measure because customers no longer trooped in to buy tomatoes, cabbage, lettuce, spinach, green peppers and lot more of these perishable

commodities like it used to be due to the lack of cash.

Truly, there was limited cash in circulation and only few of these women had bank accounts or POSs to follow the new business trend. Most of them were left with no option than to carry home their commodities and bear their losses.

However, for the fear of the unknown, most of them have refused to invest hugely in this vegetable business and hardly would one see the usual fresh vegetables spread on tables these days. Most of the vegetables you see are not always the fresh ones from the farms.

Our correspondent visited some of these vegetables markets in Jos, the Plateau State capital and reports that perishable commodities like spinach, cabbage, tomatoes, bananas etc, are no longer purchased in large quantity. Probably, because the vendors are still nursing the pains of their past experience and would want to play safe to make sure they were not dreaming this time around.

It was discovered that some of them who were into the business in small scale had to back out and are completely out of the business. These are women whose daily bread comes from these petty business. And for them to be out of the business,

only God knows how they are faring now.

Speaking to one of the vegetables vendors, Mrs. SarayahGokir, who sells at the Kabong (GadaBiyu) Market, she said, "this is not as if the market is not selling, but what we encountered at the introduction of this cashless policy has dealt us hard blows. I lost almost a hundred thousand naira (#100,000) in three days because there was no cash in circulation. And you know, we do not use POS to transact business with customers, which became the order of the day.

"Now that things seem to have normalised, I have decided to be conscious of what happened last time and I only buy in small quantity so that I will be able to bear the loss that may come. I don't want a repeat of the past. We understand that at the end of this December, this policy will recommence and we are trying to be careful", she bared her mind.

On her part, one Mama Innocent Onyecha, of Tudun-Wada, narrated that she had earlier backed out of the business because of the loss she had incurred during this cashless policy. But she was able to come back because one of her customers gave her money to continue. "I was at home one day thinking of where to start

when my brother came in and broke the news to me that one of my customers came looking for me. He said he told the man what happened and the man came back the following day and met him because his shop is next to where I used to sell.

"The man said to my brother that if I must stop selling anything, it should not be lettuce and cabbage because I used to bring fresh ones directly from the farm. In fact, this man gave my brother fifty thousand naira (#50,000) to give me and that he did not disclose his name. As I am talking to you now, I don't know who this man is oh!", she stated.

Mama Innocent disclosed that there are many women like her who are out of this business and are still at home doing nothing. She prayed that good Samaritans like the man who came to her help would show up one day and help them. "I want to use this opportunity to express my appreciation to whoever this man is and pray that whatever he touches, God will replenish it double".

Considering the importance of these vegetables to our health, we would like to call on government and other Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to come in and reimburse these women's

businesses, because health is wealth and more so that, Plateau State is blessed with this wonderful nature for this business to thrive.

It may interest you to know that some people purposely visit Plateau State from different states to purchase some of the rare vegetables that are only found in Plateau State. A visit to parks is a testimony to the number of way bill that transport these products out of Jos to other parts of the country.

We want to appeal to government through its Social Investment Programme to reimburse these women by giving them soft loans to start again. The health of the citizens is at stake now, because we do not eat balanced diet like we used to do before.

It would be good for government to revisit what the past administration did in and outside the state capital, where shops were built specifically for vegetables sellers around the roadside. This will generate revenue for the state and also put food on the tables of these women. The health advantage of vegetables cannot be overemphasized!

Our esteemed readers! We want to introduce a new innovation. This deals strictly with PROFILING. It is aimed at bringing to limelight personalities who have put their marks on the sands of time. They may be unsung heroes/heroines but models to our generation due to their personality, principles, beliefs, attributes, impact in the society or for standing out in the crowd. Here is our very first for your reading pleasure. Keep a date with us!

Sunday  Standard
PROFILE

others were imported from China.

Are you registered with Export Promotions for your products to be exported

No, I am not. My rights are patronised locally but we are doing very well. We have enough customers as you can see for yourselves. Our customers

that.
What about tapping into what bank of industry offers on form of grants?

Trully, I am just hearing about it. I grew my business from the scratch through hard work, determination and dedication. Besides, I prefer to thread carefully instead of going to

How did your business journey begin?

Mine was an issue of trial and error nine years ago when I decided to leave the business of milling corn and try something new. I picked interest in rice processing. It was a timely decision because spoilers were entering the corn milling business by the dozens every day. It was overcrowded and I lost interest in it. I decided to try something challenging. The attraction to me was to buy the unprocessed rice and process it myself. I began with 2 bags. At first we used to soak the rice in cold water for about 3 days to peel off the bran. But through our mistakes, we learned that we could do it faster and get better results soaking it in hot water for just one day. As it is now, our rice comes out very well. I can score it 90 per cent. Even the 10 per cent subtracted is because of machineries we still lack to finish the work.

What kind of rice do you process here?

We process the common rice for cooking jollof rice, white rice,. Also processed is tuwo-rice which is white in colour. Another service we render is destoning to get rid of stones. We also polish rice here. That apart, we have a machine for grading which separates long rice from the ones broken.

You mentioned processing the rice manually when you started. How did you come about these machines?

In the beginning, we had no option but to process the rice manually. However, there was a man that we used to take our work to because he had the processing machines. That man was kind enough to be cleaning up and finishing up the process for us. On the side, I use to engage in contributions we refer to as adashi. That was how I was able to save up to buy my first rice processing machine. Again, I have one talent that gives me an edge in this kind of business. God has gifted me with the ability to fix machines or couple machines. This could be due to the fact that I'm a trained welder.

Could you tell us how many machines you have?

We have Oscar- for threshing the rice to remove the bran. There is also Destoner which removes stones from rice. We also have Polisher for polishing rice and Grader from separating long rice from the broken ones.

How do you compare your work in the past and the present?

There's indeed a big difference. The machines have made a big difference. Our work is easier, faster and the rice processed is cleaner. As a result, we now have more customers.

Were your machines locally made or imported?

It is a mixture of both. Some were fabricated here by me, while

FADAC Integrated: Journey of self-made man

In an era when majority of people especially the educated, go for white collar jobs or wait to be empowered by government through grants before starting a business, one man stands out : Alhaji Bashir Ahmed. Born into a humble home, he decided to find a niche for himself in the business world. He started with corn mill. When Ahmed noticed that it was over-crowded, he decided to try his hands in a business that very few people were attracted to at that time- rice processing. Today, he can beat his chest and say that he is a self-made man. He is the CEO of FADAC INTEGRATED, JOS. YVONNE ISHOLA and YAKUBU KANGAH engaged him in a chat. Except.



overwhelmed us during festive periods like Christmas when Co-operative Societies buy in bulk for their members.

What is your staff strength?

My staff are about 30 in number. They are receiving training even as they work. School of Forestry usually sends its students for Industrial Attachment with us, year in, year out. My doors are also opened to pupils from primary schools and students from secondary schools and tertiary institutions that come for excursion.

Have you ever intimated ITF on what you do, to see if they will send youths to you to train in rice processing?

No, I have never thought of

banks at the point I am now. But when the business grows bigger, of course, we may have need for a loan to enable us buy some particular machines.

What is your primary source of rice?

We usually travel down to some villages like Jengre in Bassa LGC, Samunaka and some villages in Bauchi State to purchase the unprocessed rice.

What edge does foreign rice have over your processed rice?

Foreign rice has really gone far because of the machines available to the developed nations. There is a big difference. However, if our local rice is

processed well, it can be second comparing and contrasting with to none. Besides, Nigerians now know that if you are looking for nutrients and tasty rice, our local rice is the one to go for. As it is now, some of our local rice can pass for foreign rice. Some middle men have even taken advantage of that fact to cheat customers.

What is your take about engaging middle men in the sale of your products?

I have some misgivings about that, considering the fact that there are bigger companies involved in rice processing. If they decide to ruin one's business, it takes little effort to slander one's business by simply

hopefully as we grow bigger, that is inevitable.

Tell us about the machines you have

Sewing machine- for final sewing of the sacks or bags after packaging the rice inside them.

There is also the Scale to measure appropriately the bags in KGs. We have the horscar for threshing the

There are boiling tanks for per-boiling the rice, dryers for drying the rice after processing, steaming tanks used for processing. Others include Polisher, Destoner, and Grader.

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 SAFER TOGETHER

Driver's protection

Who is a driver?

A driver is a person who operates an engine-powered motor vehicle with four or more wheels. This category of road users is enclosed because he operates from within the vehicle.

Before setting out

- i. Plan route and give enough time
- ii. Do not use clothing and footwear that pose difficulties in operating the vehicle controls.
- iii. Know where all the controls are as you will need them in the course of your driving.
- iv. Adjust seat, steering wheel, mirrors and headrest correctly for ease of control and clear view.
- v. Ensure vehicle has sufficient fuel before setting off.
- vi. Ensure vehicle brakes and lighting systems as well as other essential parts are functioning properly.
- vii. Do not drive under influence of alcohol, drugs or other harmful substances.

Note: Do not use phone while driving.

Long Distance Driving

- i. Always ensure there is fresh air in your vehicle to keep you awake and alive.
- ii. Stop at a convenient place for ten to fifteen minutes after every four hours of continuous driving to rest and walk around to let blood circulate and feed your brain adequately.
- iii. Have a co-driver for any journey exceeding ten hours.
- iv. Avoid fatigue, it is a silent killer.
- v. Do not drive if tired or sick.
- vi. Do not rely on drugs, coffee, kola nut, chewing sticks, etc. to stay awake.

Note: Ability to drive coordinate become difficult when under stress

Driver's Protection

Driver's protection mechanism in a vehicle include:

- Seatbelt, Airbags, Headrest, etc.
- i. Seatbelt: A seatbelt is a vehicle safety device designed to secure the occupants of a vehicle against harmful movement that may result during a sudden stop or collision.

Note:

- a. Always fasten the seatbelt and ensure that everyone in the vehicle belts up.
- b. Ensure seatbelt mechanisms are functional and kept clean always.
- ii. Airbag: An airbag is the vehicle occupant restraints system designed to provide the occupants with a soft cushioning and restraints during a crash event.

Note:

- a. Check to ensure the airbag is functional by watching out for indicator lights which comes on momentarily and goes out.
- b. Airbag saves lives, and also reduce head and chest injury in the event of a crash.
- iii. Headrest: Headrest are automotive safety features, attached to the top of each seat to limit the rearward movement of the

adult occupant's head in the event of a collision. It prevents neck hyperextension in a crash which often lead to whiplash injury. Headrests are adjustable to suit the head position.

Driver's responsibilities to passengers

- i. Ensure that all passengers fasten their seatbelts.
- ii. Ensure appropriate use of headrests.
- iii. Do not overload the vehicles and/or goods.
- iv. Do not cause discomfort to passengers with goods, music, offensive odour, etc.
- v. Ensure passengers embark and disembark at safe locations.

Driving Under Influence (DUI)

- i. Do not drive influence of alcohol, drugs or other harmful substances. They impair vision judgment, coordination and slow down reaction.
- ii. Maximum permissible blood alcohol level for drivers is 0.5gms per litre or 0.05 degree of blood alcohol concentration (BAC).

Transporting Animals

i. Driver's Protection

A driver must take the following care while transporting animals in vehicle:

- i. Animals in vehicle should be kept under control.
- ii. Ensure they do not disturb you while driving by keeping them secure at the back.
- iii. Do not load livestock and passengers together.

Note: while on the highway, always watch out for unrestrained or unguarded herds or animals crossing the road.

Leading an animal

- i. Do not let pet animals out on its own.
- ii. Do not let animals into traffic.
- iii. While leading an animal on a road that has not footpath, walk on the left hand side and keep it close to edge.

Horse Riding

- i. When riding a horse, keep to the ride side of the road.
- ii. If riding a horse while leading another, still keep to the right and keep to the led animal on your right.
- iii. Avoid riding a horde on the highway or expressway.

Herding Live Stocks

- i. When herding live stocks, keep them under control at all times.
- ii. When herding livestock alone or across the road, send someone ahead to look out for traffic at such places like bends, brow of hills, where other road users will not see in good time and lead them across when it is safe to do so.
- ii. It is safety not to lead live stocks in the dark, but if it must be done, herdsman should wear reflective clothing, carry staff (stick) covered with reflective tape and lights in addition to white and red lights at the front and rear respectively.



NEWS

PEF make case for speakership position

By HOSEA NYAMLONG

CHAIRMAN of the Plateau Elders Forum, Ambassador Yahaya Kwande has urged the executive council (EXCO) members of the non-partisan organization to call on the elected members of the House of Representatives, both old and new, to support a Plateau State candidate for the position of the speakership in the green chamber of the National Assembly.

This was contained in a press release, signed by Nde Jonathan Ishaku, spokesman, Plateau Elders Forum, and made available to THE NIGERIA STANDARD recently in Jos. The statement added that the two frontline candidates vying for the position in the North Central geopolitical zone are from Plateau State, namely, Hon. Ahmed Idris Wase, the out going Deputy Speaker, and Hon. Yusuf Adamu Gagdi. Each of the two candidates possesses unassailable

credentials. As Deputy Speaker in the 9th Assembly, Hon. Ahmed Idris Wase has served diligently using his long legislative experience and has deputized effectively for the Speaker of the House of Representatives. He said that on the other hand, Hon Yusuf Adamu Gagdi, on account of his legislative dexterity and skills has sponsored the highest number of bills by a member in a single first term, with six having been accented into law by the President. Kwande noted that elders have maintained that apart from the resourcefulness of the Plateau State candidates, it is in the interest of fairness and justice that the state be allowed to lead the House. They contended that while the North West and the North East geopolitical zones have produced the Speaker four times and one Deputy Speaker, Plateau State has never produced one.

They argued that if the rumours making the rounds that the speakership position has been zoned to the North West again, in addition to the Senate President position, are true it would be unfair to the North Central zone which would get nothing.

"In the interest of equity, therefore, we insist on zoning the speakership to the North Central and particularly to Plateau State," they declared.

Meanwhile, the elders have appealed to the two candidates to unite and allow only one of them to stand, arguing that doing so would brighten the chance of the state to get the position. They said this would be in the best interest of the state as both of them are high-quality candidates who have demonstrated that they both are great legislative assets to the nation.

SSG denies plan to sell Kaduna Liaison Office

By EZEKIEL DONTINNA

THE Plateau State Secretary to the Government of the State (SSG), Professor Danladi Bok Atu, has debunked allegations making the rounds that he was in Kaduna State to sell the Plateau Liaisons Office to him, describing it as baseless and deliberate act of mischief workers.

He stated this recently while briefing journalists in his office in Jos, the state capital following reports from some social media platforms, accusing him of planning to sell some properties belonging to the Plateau State Government in Kaduna State.

He explained that Plateau State Government has three properties in Kaduna State and all this while, they have not concluded the processing of the land documents. That was why his Excellency, the Governor directed him, being the Chairman of the committee inaugurated March 18, 2023 to access all properties belonging to the state government.

The SSG said, "Some people think selling of such historic property can be sold like selling bread or groundnut. If you were aware, the Kaduna State Government has embarked on the demolition of properties without Land Tittles and this has affected some states, hence the decision by the government to get this done.

"I am sure we enjoyed this privilege because our governor is the Chairman of



Atu

the Northern Governors Forum. If not, consider how strictly laws were implemented by the El-Rufai led administration", he enthused.

Atu, however, described the allegations as primarily

the game work of mischief makers who would not want to rate high the achievements of the Rescue Administration in the past eight years. Instead, they look for reasons to paint it black.

Potable water scarcity: Residents jubilates over early rain

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

RESIDENTS of Lokoja, Kogi State, North Central Nigeria, have gone into jubilation as a result of the early downpour in the capital city which according to them now serves as alternative means of access to potable water.

"Our earlier prayer, no doubt had evoked divine intervention for "God to send down the rain" in the face of the biting effects of scarcity of potable water they encountered in the state capital"

Our correspondent in Lokoja reports that substantial parts of Lokoja, capital of Confluence Kogi State, such as Gadumo, Adankolo, Ganaja, Kabawa, Felele, Phase 1 and 2

Areas among others have been facing scarcity of drinkable water since October 2022 flood.

It is also reported that the flood submerged the water equipment at the Lokoja Greater Water Works, Ganaja, thus putting stop to supply of potable water to the larger members of the public in the state capital.

Some members of the public who spoke with our correspondent recently in Lokoja, sent passionate appeal to the state government to solve water problem, in view of its importance in the lives of the people.

According to them, lack of drinkable water had brought untold hardship to their living condition and social economic activities.

SUNDAY FEATURE

Rising crime rate in Nigeria

During the campaigns for the 2023 General Elections, the known militia and pariah state of Nigeria experienced calm, peace and safety. It was nuanced that the sponsors of terrorism, banditry and other crimes were too occupied with the electioneering campaigns. Obiotika Wilfred Toochukwu, writes.

A few weeks after the elections and announcement of results, the spate of insecurity took over the Nigerian space again. It is quite disheartening to see young men of school age involved in various crimes. Education in Nigeria has been so degraded that most youths view it as a waste of money, time and resources.

Due to incessant strikes and other bottlenecks in the high institutions, majority of the students have embraced cybercrimes, internet fraud (Yahoo plus) and kidnapping. The university professors on the other hand are used by the incumbent government to perpetuate electoral fraud and announcement of election results marred by irregularities.

A pertinent question seeking for answers is why individuals take up leadership positions in Nigeria? To feather their own nest? Take on an uneasy head bearing a crown? Become famous and popular? Or to be precursors to the demands of common good, improve and make their society better and liveable? Our world must be a crazy place to live in. It is just like solving one problem today and tomorrow another one rears its ugly head.

Do we need a soothsayer to declare that the network of criminality is getting stronger everyday in Nigeria? Several State Governors have abandoned the security of lives and property to providence and fate due to incessant killings and lack of cooperation from the federal government.

Crime rate in Nigeria has taken a new dimension in recent times. All these happenings corroborate the statement that 'the society we abuse today, will take revenge on us tomorrow'. Politicians and influential personalities are seen in different church denominations thanking God for sparing their lives from bloodthirsty men.

We may not need the analysis of criminologists to validate that the corruption of the best is the worst of all corruption. Conflicts, religious tension, religious intolerance which has often bedeviled the nation are ignored due to the tribalistic minds of our leaders. The wealthy and the rich are not the only ones affected by the high rate of crimes; poor farmers and animal husbandmen are always attacked by armed men.

Moreover, we cannot discuss crime in Nigeria without referring to the APC-led government at the Federal level which promised to end insurgency, terrorism, banditry and other crimes in 2015 but has failed woefully in protecting lives and property. The rate at which young people



embrace crime is an indicator of a failure on the part of government.

Ritual money, ritual killings and celebration of evil practices is on the increase. Thuggery and touting were the mechanisms used by the ruling party in some states to win elections. Kidnapping and demand for ransom are always evolving into different forms in the South eastern part of Nigeria. In some parts of Nigeria, Christians do not attend churches again for fear of losing their lives.

Undoubtedly, there is crime in every corner of the world but the rate of crimes in Nigeria is alarming. The dignity, sanctity and sacredness of human life is derided. Even priests, pastors and men of God are not spared in the quest for quick money or innocent blood.

Some Catholic priests have been killed and others kidnapped. The masses in Nigeria are faced with the worst scenario of their life every day. Night life is a thing of the past in some cities in Nigeria. Families, friends, relatives and well-wishers are too scared to attend social events like burials, parties, picnics, fun-seeking, recreational outdoor programmes. Many Nigerians are regretting being a Nigerian in the first place.

As a solution is not forthcoming from the government which is into a social contract with the

citizens, many are seeking to take laws into their own hands and protect themselves. The failure of the government to fight crime, prosecute offenders and the courts to sentence them portends a grave danger for Nigerians. In October 2020, the youths took to the streets protesting police brutality.

It all shows that justice is not well served as it concerns crime and corruption. Today, not a significant improvement is recorded. The most corrupt Nigerians are seen among the security agents and the armed forces. The security apparatus in Nigeria has been severely compromised.

Inadvertently, the law enforcement agents take authority from the executive arm of government and our political leaders. The rot in Nigerian leadership and democracy is horrendous. To clean up Nigeria is a great task. Only a competent, capable hand with integrity can make Nigerians smile and sleep with their two eyes closed again.

Northern Kaduna, Benue, Enugu and Imo States have been engulfed in unending conflicts that have claimed so many lives. The impact of high crime rate in Nigeria has affected the citizens physically, mentally, emotionally, financially and otherwise.

The financial crimes perpetrated by political leaders

in Nigeria have given vent to all kinds of atrocities in the country. Many people have been turned to widows, widowers, orphans and beggars due to crime. The rate of extortion and brutality by the law enforcement agents leave much to be desired of a country.

Read also: Crimes during 2023 general elections in Nigeria

Unfortunately, the only thing that our leaders do in the midst of the imbroglio is to express shock, mourn or sympathize. A lot of Nigerians are fearful and depressed due to crime. There is a feeling of helplessness in Nigeria as far as insecurity is concerned. Many have resorted to substance abuse, self-harm and attempted suicide in the wake of unwarranted deaths.

The important question remains: How do we achieve successful prosecution of criminal offenders and dismantle the organized criminal groups? How do we assist and protect people who have fallen victim or witnessed serious crimes? Organized crimes in Nigeria range from human trafficking, armed robbery, hired assassins, kidnapping, rape, prostitution, banditry, terrorism and Fulani herdsmen attacks.

The South West geo-political zone established a security outfit known as 'Amotekun' due to the several attacks and killings by Fulani herdsmen. In the South East part of the country, the

governors established 'EbubeAgu' security outfit and Eastern Security Network (ESN) due to wanton loss of lives and property orchestrated by the Fulani herdsmen. All these point to the fact that all is not well with Nigeria.

Finally, all that Nigeria needs is responsible and accountable leaders. It is a noteworthy testimony that leaders are a terror to evil. "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil". Who then should fear the power of political leaders; those who commit crime, or those who criticize government policies or law-abiding citizens? Leaders are given power by God to be a minister of good deeds.

Why should leaders relax, be at rest when evil and crime thrive? A place of leadership is a place of honour. Leadership is simply the practice of positive influence on character, development or behaviour of people without the use of brute force and direct exercise of power.

It is not a title but a task because a leader has many constituencies and needs to be many things to many people. Godly leadership entails promoting righteousness and eschewing evil. Self-reevaluation is crucial in leadership. Leaders must be accountable and not blame others for failures that occur under their watch.

SUNDAY FEATURE

Government can halt Nigerians from seeking education abroad

THE Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) data on payment analysis has shown that Nigerians have spent about \$4 billion on foreign education since 2015.

Blueprint Weekend gathered that Canada, United States of America, United Kingdom, Germany, Republic of Ireland, Hungary, Cyprus, Ukraine, Netherlands, Norway and some Arab countries, are highly patronised by Nigerians.

Experience
Lucky Ojeme, 34, graduated from one of the universities in the eastern part of the country about nine years ago. This computer engineering graduate is heading to Germany in pursuit of his master's degree.

The IT specialist told this reporter that his decision was informed by the desire to seek a greener pasture. It was when he got the opportunity to travel to Germany for an official assignment and visited some universities that he developed the interest to be part of the system he saw.

"I have been saving for a very long time now because I have planned to leave Nigeria. There is nothing more for anyone in this country. Thank God that I was able to secure admission into a university for my master's degree," he said.

Disclosing that he has no intention of coming back to Nigeria, he said, "As soon as I settle down, I will be able to come home and see my family.

"I will be schooling while I also try to secure a little menial job to help me out. Although I have saved a lot to enable me to be comfortable in the country, I need to also work hard as a Nigerian."

Ojeme is one of millions of Nigerians who are seeking to leave the country in search of foreign education and greener pastures.

Apart from individuals, groups, states and even the federal government sponsor young men and women to acquire better education in different countries across the globe.

Impact on nation's economy

In a chat with our reporter, an economist, Musa Sakaba, said foreign education has a negative effect on the Nigerian economy.

He said: The huge net dollar outflows have dual adverse effects of under-investment in domestic education and pressure on naira exchange rate, while high demand for dollars to pay foreign educational institutions also affects Nigeria's external reserves.

"Foreign education spending requires the availability of foreign exchange, something that the country currently is in short supply of. The increased demand for the dollar to pay for foreign services and speculative needs have caused a significant depreciation in the local currency against the U.S. dollar."

Likewise, Friday Erhaboh, director of media and strategy at Marklenez Limited, an education consultancy firm, believes that the effect of education tourism on the Nigerian economy is a two-sided coin.

"Nigerian students migrating to foreign countries for their undergraduate and postgraduate studies will negatively weaken the country's currency via exchange rate but ultimately bring about human development to the country as Nigerian citizens are exposed to

...About \$4bn lost to foreign education since 2015 '...It's the easiest way to relocate'...It's better to cope with ASUU strikes than wars, racism – Don. Despite the promises by successive governments to improve education funding and allocation to the sector, Nigerian students have continued to troop abroad and in droves in pursuit of foreign education. BENJAMIN SAMSON writes.



higher levels of human capital development.

"However, as more Nigerians move to study abroad, it weakens the country's currency," he said.

On its effect on Nigerian tertiary education development, Erhaboh said it does not paint a good picture of the country's education system.

"When a lot of citizens are leaving the education system in their country to study abroad, it suggests that the system has collapsed. Hence it weakens the confidence outsiders have on your education development.

"And that is the major reason Nigerians are mandated to sit for other examinations when applying for a place in foreign institutions, because they do not have confidence in the certificates they obtained here," he said.

Why they seek education abroad
Many experts and parents indicated that the shabby state of the Nigerian education system is basically fuelling the education tourism pursuits of Nigerians, especially as it concerns tertiary education.

An education psychologist at the College of Education, Zuba, in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Dr. Beatrice Zunge, told this reporter that many parents send their children abroad because of the standards and conducive learning environment.

She said: "The learning environment is poor in Nigeria. Nigerian institutions lack the capability to compete with top institutions around the world in terms of standard and quality. This is simply because institutions in Nigeria are poorly funded and therefore cannot meet up with the demands of the increasing student population.

"Besides, the lack of conducive and quality learning environments, deplorable state of infrastructures, lack of qualified lecturers, corruption, poor social welfare packages for students, etc; are some of the many problems that have contributed to Nigerian

students migrating abroad for tertiary education.

"Most of the people who leave the shores of Nigeria for studies abroad do so simply because they could not get the right environment for studying in their country. The Nigerian education system is not friendly at all.

"In United States Of America, the education system is so flexible and well-structured that one could be a student and at the time be working. Some schools are so structured that a student has five hours for lectures and five hours for his work.

"There are no idle moments there; as a student who is up 18years, you are expected to work and earn a living even while you are in school," an expert pointed out."

Parents
A parent, who gave his name simply as Ezenwa, said he chose to send his child to Canada to study because the quality of education in Nigeria is poor.

"Sometime back, our education system ranked among the best in the world, but that is no longer the case.

"I think that in this age, you must educate a child to be competitive, not just within your environment but globally. I don't think our system currently offers that quality, especially in technical areas. My child is about to go out to study a technology-related course and I don't think we have what it takes here to give him what he wants," he said.

Ezenwa noted that it is no longer about the certificate but the quality of education, saying, "If you can make a difference with that education and compete out there, your certificate can not be respected wherever you walk in to apply for a job. And when you get a job you will do it properly. We are trying to give them that competitive edge and not to put them at a disadvantage."

On the challenge of dollar exchange, he said, "It is a hindrance, but as Nigerians we never say die. If you want to do something you find a way to get it done. So if it is difficult to

get the dollars, we are not going to give up because you are looking at what you want to achieve. So, it is a problem but we must find a way to get around it."

'Jappa'

However, the chief executive officer of FAB, an education consultancy firm, Felix Adedayo, said, "A lot of people are travelling through schools because that is the easiest way to relocate to those countries. Some of them sell their last property to travel.

"Education loan business is currently booming in the country as some commercial banks give loans to people who do not have enough money in their accounts. They can give you up to N10 million to put in your account for three to six months so that you can apply for a visa. They charge you like seven per cent monthly. When your visa is out you give them back the money and travel. Those who can afford it go for it.

"A lot of people are doing that and it has helped a lot of average families to travel," he said.

Risks

In his view, a professor of History and International Studies, Kogi State University, Ayingba, Joseph Adaji, advised Nigerians to settle for studying in government-owned universities, rather than face war and racism in their quest for education abroad.

He said: "I advise those who are dying to study abroad to stay at home and get into a federal or state university. It is better to cope with Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) incessant strikes than war and racism.

"In February 2022, the Ukraine-Russia war broke out and left about 16,000 African students studying in Ukraine stranded, among whom were at least 1,000 Nigerian students. Many were traumatised for days before they were finally evacuated back home, while some others found their ways to nearby Poland, Hungary, Germany, Slovakia and Europe, generally, despite the racial abuse at the

borders and repatriation difficulties for those who headed home to Nigeria. Yet, others opted for online classes, which only provided temporary succour and were unable to fill the void for practicals-oriented courses like medicine and engineering.

"Also, Hundreds of Nigerian students are still stranded in the conflict-hit Sudan where fighting between two warring generals has claimed more than 500 lives.

"Although Nigeria began evacuating the first of around 3,500 of its nationals, mostly students, as a fragile ceasefire allowed foreigners to flee. However, many are still stranded in Sudan."

The way out

On the way out, Professor Adaji said to make Nigerian universities attractive, the government must invest heavily in infrastructure, teaching, laboratory and library facilities in public tertiary institutions; recruits and pays competitive wages to high-quality staff; and sets minimum standards of foreign universities that can be attended by Nigerians, as an advisory.

Besides, Adedayo urged the government to, especially, fund specialist federal universities for post-graduate studies and those dedicated to producing graduates in fields where the country suffers huge deficits, such as medicine.

He said, "There is a need to audit and classify, which is best fit for undergraduate or graduate training in the public and private universities in terms of quality of staff, infrastructure, facilities and governance systems.

"Also, there should be a selection of institutions to be developed as flagship universities over five, 10 and 20-year (short, medium and long-term) development time frames, with targets and matching funding. The government needs to identify degree programmes in demand and select public universities to be specially equipped to produce graduates for both domestic and foreign job markets."

He also tasked the government to pay competitive wages to qualified staff to attract sound minds to the university system.

Likewise, public affairs analyst, ChidiOkechukwu, said the government should not even think of stopping our students from travelling abroad for further studies because that will amount to reducing the scope of learning amongst our citizens.

He advised that the authorities in charge should go out there, learn what these advanced countries are doing to promote their education system and come back and develop our system.

"The education managers should work on the education system and make it attractive.

"A major way to get this done is through partnership programmes. Education exchange programmes with some of these advanced countries should be largely incorporated into the Nigerian education system."

SUNDAY SPORTS

Why Haaland struggles against Real Madrid

Guardiola

MANCHESTER City manager Pep Guardiola has explained why Erling Haaland struggled to make an impact against Real Madrid in the Champions League.

The two European giants shared the spoils in the first leg of the Champions League semi-final at the Santiago Bernabeu on Tuesday evening with Vinicius Jr and Kevin De Bruyne scoring superb goals for their teams. However, it was surprisingly a rather quiet outing for Haaland, who did test Thibaut Courtois early in the match but struggled to have an impact as the game progressed with Antonio Rudiger tightly marking him. He managed to have just 21 touches on the ball, which was fewer than both goalkeepers Courtois and Ederson.

Guardiola admitted it was "not easy" for the Norwegian as he explained his struggles: "The pockets and distances between the central defenders and full-backs were occupied by attacking midfielders, [Luka] Modric, Toni Kroos and [Federico] Valverde. Twin central defender close to Erling, it was not easy for him. He moved well and had his chances."

Guardiola said it was a "tight, tight game" but was relieved that



Haaland

the second leg would be held at the Etihad Stadium in front of their own fans, which he considers as a "play-off" given the circumstances. "Tight, tight game. The Bernabeu in the semi-final, sometimes we had

good moments and sometimes it was difficult with the quality they have on the ball. Final next Wednesday at home with our people. When we were better they score, when they were better we score," he added.

"They are so demanding, with the experience and quality. We are travelling to Manchester and we will see what we can do better. When you play this kind of game it is like a play-off, so hopefully we can learn, defend better and

attack better."

Manchester City have a trip to Everton up next on Sunday in the Premier League before they host Real Madrid in the second leg of their Champions League semi-final on May 17.

Tiger Woods out of PGA championship, Spieth in

THERE won't be a surprise appearance by Tiger Woods at the PGA

Championship, with the 15-time major winner officially out as he recovers from ankle

surgery. The entry list for the second major of the year, set for May

18-21 at Oak Hill Country Club in Pittsford, N.Y., was released Wednesday with Woods' name

missing. Jordan Spieth withdrew from this week's AT&T Byron Nelson in Dallas, his hometown, citing a left wrist injury but is listed on the entry list for the PGA.

Spieth, 29, needs a win at the PGA Championship to complete his career Grand Slam. He counts the US Open and Masters Tournament (both 2015) and The Open Championship (2017) among his 13 PGA Tour titles.

Also on the entry list is defending champion Justin Thomas, who defeated Will Zalatoris in a playoff to win the 2022 event at Southern Hills Country Club in Tulsa, Okla. Zalatoris, who is out for the year after surgery to relieve the pain caused by a herniated disk, is the only player ranked in the top 10 who is not expected at Oak Hill.

The field includes the hottest golfer in any league, Talor Gooch, who has won the past two LIV Golf tournaments. He will be joined by several LIV participants, including 2021 PGA winner Phil Mickelson, 2018-19 champion Brooks Koepka, Dustin Johnson, Bryson Dechambeau and Cameron Smith of Australia, who is ranked eighth in the world.



SUNDAY PEOPLE

HARMONISED SWEARING-IN/TRANSITION COMMITTEE MEETING

The Plateau State Transition and Swearing-in Committee for the May 29, 2023 inaugurated by Governor Lalong and that of Governor-elect, Mutfwang met on Wednesday at the Old Government House Conference Hall, Rayfield, Jos



Chairman of the Committee set-up by Governor Lalong, Prof. Danladi Abok Atu delivering his remarks



Cross section of members of the committee during the harmonised meeting



Cross section of media persons at the meeting



Prof. Ganyir Lombin (right) who is chairing the Governor-elect, Barr. Caleb Mutfwang team making his speech

HARMONISED SWEARING-IN/TRANSITION COMMITTEE MEETING

Plateau State Governor-elect, Barr. Caleb Mutfwang recently received on a courtesy call Plateau State Chapter of the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) at the JD Jang Lodge, Government House Rayfield, Jos



Governor-elect, Barr. Caleb Mutfwang (left) with the leader of the Nigerian Union of Teachers, Comrade Kefas Nanpan



Plateau State Governor-elect, Barr. Caleb Mutfwang in a group photograph with Comrade Kefas Nanpan leader and members of NUT



Barr. Mutfwang (middle) in a group photograph with some groups that paid courtesy all on him



Barr. Caleb Mutfwang responding to speeches from the groups that paid courtesy call on him

SUNDAY SPORTS

Robert Lewandowski struggled to score goals for Barcelona

If Barcelona clinch their first LaLiga title since 2019 at Espanyol this weekend, a large part of their success can legitimately be credited to Robert Lewandowski. The Poland striker is the league's top scorer with 19 goals, which represents 32% of Barca's scoring in the top flight this season. His winning goals against Mallorca and Valencia in 1-0 victories were crucial as Barca kept Real Madrid at bay earlier in the campaign, while he has scored twice or more in a game on five different occasions.

After a red-hot start, Robert Lewandowski has struggled to score goals for Barcelona. Why?

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Lewandowski's arrival at Barca last July had raised some early doubts. No one questioned his excellent track record over a decade in Germany with Borussia Dortmund and Bayern Munich, but the transfer fee of €45 million for a player who was about to turn 34 did raise eyebrows, especially considering Barca's financial limitations. They had to sell club assets to fund last summer's splurge in the transfer market, including Lewandowski's contract

Nine goals in his first seven league games blew those doubts away, though, as Lewandowski hit the ground running in Spain.

Champions League disappointment followed but, aside from a couple of painful misses against his former side Bayern in Munich, Lewandowski did everything he could to keep Barca at Europe's top table. He netted five times in five games in the competition, including a brace against Inter which almost kept the Catalans alive at the expense of the Italians, who are now on the verge of a first final since 2010.

Yet as the league title draws closer -- if Barca don't win it this weekend, their 13-point lead at the top with just five games to go dictates it is just a matter of time -- there are arguably some fresh questions about Lewandowski's importance to the team. Scratch beneath the numbers -- 29 goals



in 42 appearances in all competitions -- and there's a clear difference in his form before and after the World Cup.

So, what has happened? And should Barca be worried that one of their biggest earners, who turns 35 in August and is locked into a contract until 2026, has struggled to stay hot in 2023?

Barcelona had been among the teams interested in signing Erling Haaland last summer. Once it became apparent he was joining Manchester City, they moved all-in on Lewandowski. Paving the way for the deal with Bayern Munich were Barca president Joan Laporta's relationship with Lewandowski's, Pini Zahavi, and coach Xavi Hernandez's desire -- bordering on desperation -- to add him to his squad.

In Lewandowski, Barca were seeking a range of things: Primarily they wanted his goals, of course, but they also felt his leadership and experience would

help the youngsters at the club. While veterans like Gerard Pique, Jordi Alba and Sergio Busquets were still in the first-team squad, sources tell ESPN that the lack of experience in attack was viewed as a problem.

Lewandowski's arrival was seen as something that could aid the development of players like Pedri and Gavi, while also reducing the pressure on winger Ousmane Dembele to be the main architect in attack.

The star signing quickly ticked all those boxes as goals flowed and Barca players gushed about Lewandowski's influence in matches and on the training ground. After 10 games in all competitions, he had scored 12 goals, including a Champions League hat trick. It became a common scene early in the season to see Lewandowski, post-goal celebration, explaining to Pedri, Gavi or Ansu Fati something he felt they could adjust.

"It is easy to link with a player like Lewandowski," Pedri said in September. "It is a luxury to play with him."

Off the pitch, he quickly settled into his new life in Gava, a small town down the coast from Barcelona. Along with his wife and children, Lewandowski is regularly seen on the local beach, where he often carries out individual training sessions, and has integrated well. He does not keep himself hidden: It's not uncommon to spot him doing his food shopping in local supermarkets and taking his kids to ballet classes. The family sometimes take the train into Barcelona for a spot of tourism, too, while his wife, ASources inside the dressing room at Barca say it's impossible to overstate how much of an effect a midseason World Cup had on the players. There is an acknowledgement that has been especially true for Lewandowski, who put so much into the tournament -- and in the build-up to it as his country's flagship player -- and has struggled to scale those same heights since.

Prior to Qatar, per 90 minutes, he was averaging 1.07 goals from 4.47 shots and an xG of 0.84. Since the World Cup, those numbers have halved. He has netted 11 times in 22 appearances, averaging 0.50 goals per 90 minutes from 3.75 shots with an xG of 0.56. Not only is he scoring fewer goals, but his accuracy in front of goal has also dropped.

Barca have also suffered post-World Cup blues even as they remained on track for LaLiga success after winning the first trophy of the Xavi era, the

Spanish Super Cup. Lewandowski was on target in the cup final in January, an impressive 3-1 win against Real Madrid. In LaLiga, though, Barca have gone from 2.36 goals per 90 pre-World Cup to 1.42 since. Chances created per 90 minutes have also dropped, from 13.21 to 11.00.

That may not just be down to the World Cup. Sources at Barca point to the fact that Dembele and Pedri have missed chunks of the league season since January. Dembele has just returned after missing 13 LaLiga games with injury, while Pedri sat out eight games across February, March and April.

Without them, Lewandowski has struggled given that the pair rank among the best creators in the league. Of players to have played more than 500 minutes, only Real Madrid's Marco Asensio (2.78 chances created per 90) has created more than Dembele (2.71). Although Pedri (1.85) ranks 32nd, it is difficult to quantify exactly how much Barca -- and Lewandowski -- miss him when he's out given his importance in earlier phases of play. The answer, though, is a lot. nna, has put on boot camps that have proven popular with the Polish ex-pat community in Catalonia.

However, just before the World Cup at the end of last year, Lewandowski was sent off in a league game against Osasuna. By that point, he had scored 18 goals in 19 appearances for Barca. Then he headed for Qatar, where he reached the last-16 with Poland, but nothing has quite been the same at Camp Nou since he returned.

"Without them, Lewandowski has struggled given that the pair rank among the best creators in the league. Of players to have played more than 500 minutes, only Real Madrid's Marco Asensio (2.78 chances created per 90) has created more than Dembele (2.71). Although Pedri (1.85) ranks 32nd, it is difficult to quantify exactly how much Barca -- and Lewandowski -- miss him when he's out given his importance in earlier phases of play. The answer, though, is a lot. nna, has put on boot camps that have proven popular with the Polish ex-pat community in Catalonia."



May 14, 2023



Hunt for World Cup bronze medal

Insurance, Rangers, Plateau Utd get 'giant-killers' pairings

Nigeria Premier Football League leaders Bendel Insurance and other NPFL teams like Lobi Stars, Rangers, Plateau United, Sunshine Stars, Gombe United, and Doma United have been paired against 'giant-killers' in the Round of 16 of the Federation Cup, BSNSports.com.ng reports.

The Competition Department of the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) on Friday released the fixtures of the next round of the Federation Cup.

Insurance, who are unbeaten this season in all competitions will lock horns against Heartland in Akwa.

Sunshine Stars will welcome the country's anti-graft commission team, EFCC in Aba.

Shooting Stars slayers Warri Wolves will hope to extend their run when they fill out against Gombe United at the Abuja Goal Project.

Lobi Stars will battle Bendel Insurance Feeders while Plateau United who edged Enyimba via penalties will battle Ingas FC of Enugu at the Abuja Goal Project.

It will be an all-NPFL clash between Nasarawa United and Kwara United as the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium hosts the game.

All matches have been fixed for Wednesday, 24th May.

In the women's category, it will be a tough battle between Rivers Angels and Delta Queens with Aba hosting the tie, while the other NWPL teams host soft teams.

FULL ROUND OF 16 FIXTURES (MEN)



Heartland FC (Imo) Vs Bendel Insurance (Edo) – Awka – 24/05/23 – 2 pm

Sunshine Stars (Ondo) Vs EFCC FC (FCT) – Aba – 24/05/23 – 2 pm

Warri Wolves (Delta) Vs Gombe United (Gombe) – Abuja Goal Project – 24/05/23 – 2 pm

Bendel Insurance Feeders (Edo) Vs Lobi Stars (Benue) – Awka – 24/05/23 – 4 pm

Plateau United (Plateau) Vs Ingas FC (Enugu) – Abuja Goal Project – 24/05/23 – 4 pm

Nasarawa United (Nasarawa) Vs Kwara United (Kwara) – Benin – 24/05/23 – 4 pm

FC Ebeide (Ekiti) Vs Rangers International (Enugu) – Asaba – 24/05/23 – 2 pm

Doma United (Gombe) Vs Edel FC (Anambra) – Abuja Area 3 – 24/05/23 – 4 pm

FEDERATION CUP : QUARTER-FINAL FIXTURES (WOMEN)

Bayelsa Queens (Bayelsa) Vs Fortress Ladies (Ebonyi) – Calabar – 18/05/23 – 4 pm

Lakeside Queens (Ogun) Vs Edo Queens (Edo) – Owerri – 18/05/23 – 4 pm

FC Robo Queens (Lagos) Vs Nasarawa Amazons (Nasarawa) – Awka – 18/05/23 – 4 pm

Rivers Angels (Rivers) Vs Delta Queens (Delta) – Aba – 18/05/23 – 4 pm.

Meanwhile, as the English Premier League side Leicester City continues its fight to remain in the elite division, their survival hope received good news on Friday as one of their attackers Kelechi Iheanacho is set to resume training next week, BSNSports.com.ng reports.

The Nigeria international sustained a muscle injury during their league game against Leeds United and his absence has had a huge impact on the team.

The team boss Dean Smith gave an update on his recovery on Friday as they prepared to face Liverpool this weekend.

"Hopefully he's due to training earlier next week rather than later. We thought he'd only have a build-up of two days before the Newcastle game, but he's ahead of schedule, which is pleasing for us", he said.

The Foxes are languishing in the relegation zone after suffering a surprising 5-3 defeat to Fulham last week.

Also, Nigeria's U20 national team, Flying Eagles on Friday beat Argentina Primera Nacional B team, Almirante Brown (3-2) in five-goal thriller,

BSNSports.com.ng can exclusively reveals.

Lawal Salem Fago scored the first goal in the first half for the U20 team before midfielder, Tochukwu Nnamdi scored the second in the second half.

Emmanuel Umeh sealed the win for Nigeria as Almirante Brown scored two goals to reduce the deficit to a 3-2 advantage to the Ladan Bosso led team.

The Flying Eagles, who are currently training in Buenos Aires for the FIFA U20 World Cup played the friendly with local side Almirante Brown on Friday night in preparation for the Colombia U20 friendly on the 16th of May before departing to Mendoza for their group games.

Almirante Brown currently plays in the Primera B Nacional, the 2nd division of the Argentine football league system. The team's stadium is located in the Isidro Casanova district of the same partido where the friendly match against Nigeria U20 boys took place.

Head coach Ladan Bosso and his assistants have been drilling the players since Monday evening shortly after their arrival from Nigeria in making sure that the players are in good shape ahead of their group opener.

The Nigeria and Colombia U20 national team friendly match next Tuesday will hold at the Tristan Suarez Stadium in Buenos Aires at 4pm Argentine time (8pm Nigeria time).

The two times World Cup finalists are in group D of the FIFA U20 World Cup with Dominican Republic, Italy and Brazil. The 2015 African champions will entertain Dominican Republic in the group opener on 21st May, 2023 before trading tackles with Italy and Brazil.

Nigeria qualify for World University Games

Athletics pundits described the feat as classic that goes beyond expectations as athletes drawn from Nigerian Army University, Bui won three gold medals and one silver to qualify to represent Nigeria at the World University Games in China.

Blessing Ehi Ikpa, an undergraduate female athlete started the gold rush when she placed first in the 100 meters final returning 11.36secs an achievement many tagged monumental for her.

This was followed by John Benjamin who raced to first position in the men's 1500 meters in 4:02:25.secs.for

another gold medal

Benjamin, again came off the blocks in the 800m event to win the second gold medal returning 15.4.12secs. Asemota Mervelous summed up the victory dance when she secured a silver medal in 100m hurdle in 15:26 secs.

According to the Technical Adviser of the team, Prince Ayuba, five athletes participated in the Athletics event and four were successful.

He described the athletes performance as beyond imagination following short period available for preparation and particularly, excelling in events not too

popular in the Northern part of Nigeria

Ayuba also expressed gratitude to the Chairman Gombe State Athletics Association Hon. Ahmed Shuaibu Gara Gombe for being the power behind the successful outing of the team in Benin.

He said more work is still ahead as Athletes have to brace up for more training to represent Nigeria well in China.

"We have just scaled through the first hurdle, next is the battle in China at the World University Games proper.

Nigeria have to motivate

these Athletes having come this far"

The NUGA World University Games Trials started on Monday as 315 athletes from 41 universities compete for their spot to represent Nigeria at the 31st Universiade in Chengdu, China, scheduled for July 28-August 8, 2023.

The trials featured seven sports, including athletics, badminton, judo, swimming, table tennis, taekwondo, and tennis, and will be held at

the University of Benin and Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium in Benin City, Edo State.

This event was exciting showcase of Nigeria's top university-level talent, as athletes competed for the chance to represent Nigeria at the prestigious international event.

The trials are also an opportunity for athletes to demonstrate their skills and ability to compete at the highest level, inspiring others to take up sports and pursue their athletic dreams.

The NUGA World University Games Trials are an important milestone in the Nigerian sports calendar, and We encourage everyone to come out and support our talented athletes

