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THE Nigeria Standard



VOL. 13 NO. 801

WEDNESDAY, May 3, 2023

N200

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Nigerians react as Igbos in Sudan lament discrimination

Some stranded Nigerians in warring Sudan have accused officials of the Nigerian embassy in the evacuation exercise of discriminating against Nigerian South-East ethnic group - the Igbo.

In a viral video, seen by SaharaReporters on Tuesday, a Nigerian of Igbo ethnic group is seen lamenting the level of discrimination against Igbos in a foreign land to the extent that after entry into evacuation buses, they were allegedly asked to come down in Sudan.

He claimed that Nigerian authorities evacuated stranded Nigerians in war-torn Sudan by state of Origin and left Igbos behind.

The man in viral video adorned in black attires, who spoke in Igbo language, stated they were asked to come down from the bus that conveyed other stranded Nigerians from other ethnic groups on Saturday and Sunday to Egypt.

The young man in the video, however appealed to wealthy Igbo men to come to their aide.

He said: "We are here in the University of Khartoum, they are doing evacuation project, evacuation of stranded Nigerians. They came and carried those they carried

and left us that are Igbos. When we entered evacuation vehicle three days ago, we were asked to come down. Everything has entered into politics. "We are being our people

who could help us. Our brother Allen Onyeama of Air Peace brought out planes that will carry people from Egypt to home. He is there doing everything to ensure that

things went well but I want to inform him and other Nigerians that things are not going well. See where they left Igbos to die while the news going on in Nigeria is that we have

been evacuated. See us and our bags where they left us in Sudan. We have not been evacuated oh!

"We are calling wealthy Igbo men like Arthur Eze, people who are known for helping people to come to aide."

Meanwhile, Nigerian twitter users have lambasted the Chairman/CEO of Nigerians in the Diaspora Commission (NiDCOM) Abike Dabiri-Erewa, describing her as "tribal bigot".



Plateau State Governor, Rt. Hon. Simon Bako Lalong, CON (left) putting heads together with the Nigerian Labour Congress, Chairman, Plateau State, Comrade Eugene Manji during the 2023 May Day celebration on Monday at the Rwang Pam Township Stadium, Jos.
PHOTO: DANLADI DUK

FG may resort to printing money for salaries - Obaseki



Obaseki

EDO State Governor, Godwin Obaseki, has said it would be a miracle for the Federal and State Governments to pay salaries beyond June 2023 without depending on massively printing money or removing fuel subsidy.

According to the Governor, "either of these decisions will bring more hardship and pain to Nigerians, particularly

workers".

Obaseki disclosed this while delivering his address during the 2023 May Day celebration held at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium, in Benin City.

The Governor, who reassured that his government would sustain reforms and projects to improve the welfare of workers and ensure better livelihoods for the Edo

people, urged workers in the country to shift from the tradition of reacting when policies that affect them have already been made but take charge and ensure full transparency and accountability of government's policies and programmes.

He said, "It would be a miracle for the Federal Government and State Governments to pay

salaries beyond June this year without resorting to massively printing money or removing fuel subsidy.

"Either of these decisions will bring more hardship and pain to Nigerians, particularly workers.

"We must all make sure that the burden and pain of these measures, which must be taken, are not carried by workers alone. Workers must now rise and

ensure that they champion any discussion on subsidy removal.

"You must shift from the tradition of reacting when these policies have been made but insist that you take charge and ensure full transparency and disclosure.

"If we are all undertaking a reform, then the benefits and pains that will come

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FG may resort to printing money for salaries

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out of the reforms must be mutually shared by all Nigerians, not just the downtrodden.

"I am proud to say that Edo workers are currently the best-paid workers in Nigeria. When we announced the increment of the minimum wage to N40,000 at this venue last year, I expected that the Federal Government and other State Governments would follow suit immediately but I am surprised that it has taken them one year already.

"My promise to Edo workers here today is that the day the Federal Government is able to pay its new minimum wage and hand over a cheque to any federal worker, that day, we will match the Federal Government and do the same for state workers.

"As your Governor, I will ensure that workers are fairly treated so that your take-home pay can really take you home. Our government has kept faith with prompt and regular payment of staff salaries and retirees' benefits in the state in the last six years.

"As a tradition, salaries are paid latest on the 26th day of every month and for any holiday celebrations, our workers are paid before the celebration so that they have money to celebrate.

"We currently do not owe arrears of promotion in Edo State because I have approved the promotion of all staff for 2022, which I believe will boost the morale of staff and the performance of our workers.

"Our vision is to make Edo State the best place to work and live in Nigeria.

"I appreciate the sacrifices of our workers and their unwavering dedication and zeal as these have led to the growth and development of our dear State in the last six years despite the difficulty suffered following the poor management of the nation by the Federal Government.

Our workers are the unsung heroes of society and the engine that powers our economy and we will continue to prioritise your welfare.

"This is why we will continue to embark on a series of reforms to boost your morale and productivity, ensuring the right incentives and enabling the environment to deliver quality service to Edo people.

"This is in addition to the reforms we have embarked on in education, healthcare, technology,

economy, agriculture, and many other sectors.

"We are investing in Infrastructure to provide our workers with a modern, more equipped, and dignified work environment to enable them to become more productive and deliver quality service to our people.

"We are installing fibre optic cables across all Local Governments so that government offices will now have an internet connection. The John Odigie Oyegun Service Academy is the best in Africa and is being effectively used daily to train our workers to make them the best in Africa.

"We have removed all processes of interference with our recruitment exercise to ensure that the recruitment process is free, fair, and merit-based.

"We have also kicked off

the policy to ensure that any student of Edo extraction, who makes a first class in any University in Nigeria, is given an opportunity for automatic employment into the state's civil and public service as we want the best.

"I appeal to workers to ensure they register in the health insurance scheme and utilise it effectively."

Dignitaries at the May Day celebration event in the state included the Edo State Deputy Governor, Philip Shaibu; Secretary to Edo State Government, Osarodion Ogie; Edo State Head of Service, Anthony Okungbowa; Chief of Staff to the Governor, Hon. Osaigbovo Iyoha; Speaker, Edo State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Marcus Onobun; and the Chief Judge of Edo State, Hon. Justice Itsebaga Acha, among others.

NIGERIA'S foreign exchange reserves have dropped by \$1.82 billion over the past four months, official data and reports have shown.

It was indicated that the forex reserves had suffered consecutive declines since the beginning of this year, a development that has raised fears the economy may be heading for tougher times in the months ahead.

According to one of the reports, the forex reserves dropped by \$47.83 million last week to close the four-month period at \$35.36 billion as against \$37.08 billion recorded at the close of 2022. The April 2023 closing position represented the lowest point in recent months.

Analysts were unenthusiastic about the outlook for the nation's forex reserves, with most

Nigeria's foreign reserves drop by \$1.82b in four months



Salami

experts expecting the reserves to continue deteriorating, a scenario that could worsen the

country's currency risks and delay recovery.

A member of Presidential Economic Advisory Council (PEAC), Mr. Bismarck Rewane, who spoke to The Nation, described the outlook for the country's forex reserves as negative.

"The external reserve is expected to continue its downward trend in the coming weeks as major sources of forex inflows deteriorate.

"This would be compounded by an adverse ruling in the ongoing P & ID trial. The \$11bn arbitral award accounts for about 30 per cent of gross external reserves," Rewane stated.

Rewane, Managing Director of Financial Derivatives Company (FDC), said the implication of the declining reserves was likely worsening of the country's external imbalance and limitation of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN)'s supply of foreign exchange to support the naira at the forex market.

He noted that CBN's inability to meet up with the pressure of its managed exchange rate would lead to further depreciation of the naira.

The naira is currently trading at N740.00/\$ at the parallel market - N277 gap ahead of N463.00 per dollar at the official Investors and Exporters (I & E) Window of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN).

Other analysts agreed that Nigeria's shaky forex reserves position and currency crisis were directly due to the CBN's currency management stance.

The apex bank's fixed-rate, controlled exchange policy has seen the emergence of parallel markets with some N277 basis points between the official rate and the market-driven, unofficial parallel market.

SEC blacklists six online trading platforms

THE Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has blacklisted six online trading platforms.

The source gathered that the development is part of the Commission's move to crack down on illegal and unregistered firms purporting to offer investment and finance services and products.

"The Commission's attention has been drawn to the under-listed e-commerce companies and their websites offering online trading platforms to the investing public.

"They are not registered by the SEC Nigeria and the financial services offered by them are also not authorized," SEC said in a statement on Monday.

The blacklisted firms include Prime Invest and Primeinv.co, FXBoxed, New Finance LLC and New Fx Limited, Axi24, Evolve Consulting LCC and Trust Fund-Mining Global Pty



Lamido

Limited.

"Members of the public are advised to adopt the greatest diligence in making investment choices. In view of the above, the general public

is hereby warned that any person dealing with the above-mentioned e-commerce websites is doing so at his or her own risk," the Commission warned.

500 pregnant women benefit from Hospital 'health gathering'

OVER 500 pregnant women across Oyo State on Monday benefitted from the bi-annual Ibadan Central Hospital health initiative tagged: "Health

Gathering".

The event, according to the Medical Director of the hospital, Muyiwa Bewaji, was part of activities marking the 25th

anniversary of the hospital.

Bewaji said the event was to appreciate and sensitise pregnant women on importance of anti-natal and what to expect during pregnancy.

Bewaji said the event was to appreciate and sensitise pregnant women on importance of anti-natal and what to expect during pregnancy.

According to him, pregnant women were basically chosen for the program having realised role of mothers in the society and importance of maternal healthcare.

He maintained that maternal mortality rate in Southwest is at lower rate

compared to what it used to be decades ago courtesy of sensitisation of pregnant women and focus anti-natal healthcare.

He said, "We sensitise them on importance of anti-natal care, what to expect during pregnancy and for them to know how to take care of their child after delivery.

"We also give them gift inform of raffle draw, this year's event is special because it coincides with our 25th anniversary, we are having another section for children that were born in this hospital over a decade ago by next week, we are taking care of mothers this week."



Bewaji



Business & Economy

Nigeria is a rich country!

Nigeria but often experience man-made disasters like building collapse and blocked flood channels.

It is a country which Britain, the colonial master, cherished and was devoted to. Few years after Nigeria's independence in 1960, the military struck and took over governance. Reading Nigeria's political history from independence till date terrorizes the mind and can traumatize innocent, delicate minds.

Most African countries were underdeveloped through the military take over of governance because they were never trained to rule. Nigerian economy boomed in the years of military regime. The increase and multiplication that astounded every sector of the economy turned the government to squander mania as they claimed ignorance of what to do with the overflow.

Nigeria is a country richly endowed with natural, material and human blessings but the political leaders had impoverished both the nation and the people.

Moreso, the government in the days of the military was tribalistic, ethnocentric and full of religious bigots. The system of governance was dictatorial and autocratic. We could hear things like Igbo coup, Kano riots, conflicts and ethnic cleansings. It is not verifiable to say that there was hatred for a particular tribe in Nigeria but the Igbos were the most enterprising and independent minded.

The Igbo people of Nigeria did not feel the impact of the central government especially after the Nigerian-Biafran war. They travelled to several parts of world and encouraged each other with the saying; 'what you cannot do for yourself, nobody will do it for you'. And so, they struggled throughout the country without government assistance.

Sadly, when democracy returned to Nigeria in 1999, it was the same military men in civilian uniform that took over governance. It was an issue of life and death that took the military out of politics in Nigeria. The circle created by the former military heads of state was still controlling politics and elections in the country. Nigerian presidents who were not former military head of state were too

Toochukwu Nigeria is the most populous West African country and a one time giant of Africa. Nigeria is a country naturally blessed with various mineral resources, talented individuals, a good and serene climatic environment. There is rarely a natural disaster in OBIOTIKA WILFRED



scared to step on toes or even generate a new template for democracy other than the ones used by the military.

Interestingly, a lot of politicians in Nigeria are said to be richer than the country. The political class turned Nigeria upside down in terms of immorality, bribery, corruption, impunity and wickedness. If you want to be rich in Nigeria, the best advice you can get is to join politics, become an internet fraudster, open a church and better still take a political appointment.

The worst thing that had happened to Nigeria was when a former military head of state, 1983-1985, came back to be a civilian president in 2015. The former military head of state that ruled Nigeria from 2015-

2023 made Nigeria a shadow of itself. Nigerians are good people. Nigerians are hardworking people but the inefficiency of government and the selfish interest of the political class has turned millions of Nigerians poor.

This is antithetical to the glamour and flamboyancy of the political leaders. The tribal sentiments and the so-called Fulani hegemony which characterized the present administration in Nigeria had many Nigerians pushed into abject poverty. What every concerned elite thinks about these days is how to bring Nigerians out of poverty.

Nigeria has in the past few years adopted one step forward and two steps backward in terms of politics,

democracy, economy and security of lives and property.

Unbecomingly, the one-time African giant is now a dwarf of Africa. Nigerians are seen emigrating to different African countries with stable economy, well-regulated currency and higher Gross Domestic Product (GDP) than Nigeria.

The president himself has told Nigerians that after his tenure in government he will travel to Niger Republic for comfort and relaxation. Evidently, so many hardworking Nigerians in diaspora have Nigeria as their fatherland. They do not have another homeland.

They do their monthly remittances to Nigeria and they are ashamed by the rhetoric of politicians in the name of governance. There is an institutional decay in Nigeria because the competent, capable, tested individuals do not man the institutions or agencies of government. It is notable to remark that politicians in Nigeria cannot eat their cake and have it at same time checking the current status of Nigeria in the global performance rate of nations.

Finally, cleaning up the mess in Nigeria will require a lot of capacity, dexterity, resilience and doggedness. Unfortunately, many rich politicians who were made fat by sharing the

largesse are determined to continue the old order.

Democracy, governance and politics in Nigeria has been made a laughing stock and a by-word proverb. As Nigerians watch helplessly to the tune of political structure in Nigeria, they pray every day for divine intervention, diplomatic intervention and a total overhaul from the structure that has ruined their lives. Making a rich country a debtor and turning her citizens to beggars is the fancy of a leader who claimed he has done his best for the country.

This is sad, ridiculous, devilish and cruel. The world in which we live is governed by two forces: force of good, force of evil or force of light and force of darkness. Faith and prayer are the two wings that bear us to heights beyond human reach. Nigerians are hopeful. Nigerians have great expectations.

Nigerians still believe in the actualization of a total rebirth and the arrival of a new Nigeria. This is possible because Nigerians want to take back their country. This is possible because Nigerians need restoration. Nigerians believe that human instruments could be used to renew the face of their country.

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Senate demands N3.2bn tractor loan recovery

THE Senate has indicted the Bank of Agriculture in Kaduna over a N3.2bn loan disbursed to 10 vendors to purchase tractors and other equipment for allocation to end users.

The indictment was sequel to the 2016 report of the Auditor General of the Federation considered by the Senate Public Accounts Committee chaired by Senator Mathew Uhrohghide.

After an investigation by the committee, the management of the bank was indicted for being unable to account for N3.2bn disbursed to 10 vendors out of the N3.6bn provided in 2015 by the Federal Government through the bank.

The Senate after the adoption of the report of the committee demanded the recovery of N3.2bn loan from the 10 unnamed vendors.

The query reads, "The sum of N3,200,592,007.00 (Three billion, two hundred million, five hundred and ninety-two thousand, seven naira) was disbursed out of N3,600,000,000.00 (Three billion, six hundred million naira) provided between 24th March 2015 and 17th November 2015, by the Federal Government through the bank to 10 vendors selected by the Ministry of Agriculture to purchase tractors and other equipment for allocation to end users.



Lawan

"The beneficiaries were expected to make repayment through Service Provider Operators under a revolving fund arrangement with expected multiplication effect on the national Agricultural mechanisation agenda.

"The Bank was to monitor and supervise the disbursement as well as ensure recovery of the funds for further lending to new participants. However, the entire revolving fund could not be accounted for by the bank's management."

It added that "The Managing

Director was communicated to account for all the amounts involved."

But, the Bank of Agriculture in its written response which was not accepted by the committee said, "Programme was structured with a four-year loan tenor commencing from the date of release of the machinery/equipment to the Agricultural Equipment Hiring Enterprises Centre.

"Since the machinery/equipment were not released on the same day, the expiry dates of the machinery loans also vary."

THE external reserve is expected to continue its downward trend in the coming weeks as major sources of forex inflows deteriorate.

Nigeria's foreign exchange reserves have dropped by \$1.82 billion over the past four months, official data and reports have shown.

It was indicated that the forex reserves had suffered consecutive declines since the beginning of this year, a development that has raised fears the economy may be heading for tougher times in the months ahead.

According to one of the reports, the forex reserves dropped by \$47.83 million last week to close the four-month period at \$35.36 billion as against \$37.08 billion recorded at the close of 2022. The April 2023 closing position represented the lowest point in recent months.

Analysts were unenthusiastic about the outlook for the nation's forex reserves, with most experts expecting the reserves to continue deteriorating, a scenario that could worsen the country's currency risks and delay recovery.

A member of Presidential Economic Advisory Council (PEAC), Mr. Bismarck Rewane, who spoke to The Nation, described the outlook for the country's forex reserves as negative.

"The external reserve is

"The fact is that Africa requires sustainable energy sources to meet the growing needs of all sectors of its economy and the energy transition is a crucial enabler

Manufacturing output drops by 9.7% to N6.67trn

THE production output of Nigeria's Manufacturers fell by 9.7 percent to N6.67 trillion in 2022 from N7.39 trillion in 2021 on account of forex scarcity, high inflation, high cost of energy and limited household purchases.

Director General, Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN), Segun Ajayi-Kadir, disclosed this as part of the findings of MAN's survey of the manufacturing sector for the second half of 2022 (H2 2022).

The MAN DG also disclosed that increased difficulty in sourcing foreign exchange (forex) compelled the manufacturers to embrace the use of expensively sourced local raw materials for their operations in 2022, adding that this pushed up average local raw materials utilisation to 52.8 percent in the period compared to 51.5 percent recorded in the preceding year.

Ajayi-Kadir stated:

Nigeria's foreign reserves decline by \$1.82bn



Ahmed

expected to continue its downward trend in the coming weeks as major sources of forex inflows deteriorate.

"This would be compounded by an adverse ruling in the ongoing P & ID trial. The \$11bn arbitral award accounts for about 30 per cent of gross external reserves," Rewane stated.

Rewane, Managing Director of Financial Derivatives Company (FDC), said the implication of the declining reserves was likely worsening of the country's external imbalance and limitation of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN)'s supply of foreign exchange to support the naira at the

of sustainable development." NAN reports that 12 Nigerian companies are participating at the PETAN oil and gas exhibition, at the ongoing OTC.

Manufacturing output drops by 9.7% to N6.67trn

"Manufacturing sector factory output value declined to N2.68 trillion in the second half of 2022 (H1'2022) from N3.73 trillion recorded in the corresponding half of 2021 (H2'2022), thus, indicating N1.05 trillion or 28 percent declined over the period. It also declined N1.31 trillion or 32 percent when compared with N3.99 trillion recorded in the preceding half (H1'2022).

"The value of manufacturing production totaled N6.67 trillion in 2022 as against N7.39 trillion recorded in 2021. Manufacturing production was severely affected in the second half of 2022 by absence of implementation of new capital projects by the government as they focused on the election. Production in the sector was also negatively affected by limited purchases by households due to the Naira redesign policy, the high inflationary pressure in the country, high cost of energy, particularly diesel and gas, acute shortage of forex for

importation of raw materials and machinery needs of the sector that are not locally manufactured in the time being and many more." In a bid to ensure that the nation's manufacturing sector remains competitive, Ajayi-Kadir said it is expedient for the government to direct more funding towards backward integration development in the country.

His words: "Local raw materials utilisation in the sector averaged 52.8 percent in 2022 as against 51.5 percent recorded in 2021. "The increase in the local raw materials utilization in the sector during the period is due to increased difficulty in sourcing forex which compelled manufacturers to look more inward for raw materials notwithstanding the associated huge cost. "It is therefore important for the government to re-evaluate its role in local development and production of raw materials in terms of funding."

FG explore alternative funding for oil, gas industry development- NUPRC

THE Nigerian Upstream Downstream Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) says the Federal Government has concluded plans to explore alternative funding models for development of the country's oil and gas resources.

Mr Gbenga Komolafe, the Commission Chief Executive of NUPRC, said this on Monday during the opening ceremony of the Petroleum Technology Association of Nigeria (PETAN) pavilion and exhibition stand at the ongoing Offshore Technology Conference (OTC), in Houston, Texas, United States.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the five-day conference has as theme: "Energy Transition and AfCFTA: Key Reforms for Sustainable Development of the African Oil and Gas Industry".

Komolafe said that the need to develop the country's hydrocarbon resources required huge funding, hence the decision of the commission to develop alternative funding model for the industry.

According to him, Nigeria will not be left behind in the energy conversation discussion as the country is a place where needs meet opportunities.

"Africa and by extension Nigeria is well positioned because it has all it takes to bridge the energy gap in the light of energy transition.

"Nigeria with abundant oil and gas reserves and other sources of energy mix, is well positioned to be a super power if all these hydrocarbon resources are well coordinated," he said.

Komolafe said the signing into law of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) had created a landmark reform in the petroleum industry which included attractive fiscal and regulatory regime.

Also, the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Petroleum, Mr Gabriel Aduda, said that the PETAN pavilion at the OTC had showcased Nigeria's diversity in oil and gas industry.

Aduda said: "We are looking at African countries collaboration toward developing the oil and gas sector.

"This is especially important because we in Nigeria are totally aware of the need to carry the entire continent alone.

"And we are not looking at this entity as just Nigeria alone but the whole of African Petroleum Producers Organisation (APPO).

"So, we are looking at these

beyond us. We are looking at the APPO," he said.

He said about eight African countries were part of the ongoing exhibition, adding that other African countries would join the conference.

According to him, this is extremely important because the place of local content cannot be over emphasised.

"That is why we are so happy with what PETAN is doing because PETAN is providing the capacity for local industry players to be able to strive," he said.

In his remarks, Mr Nicholas Odinuwu, Chairman, PETAN, said the OTC continues to discuss on building a sustainable oil and gas industry across the African continent in light of the energy transition, using the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), as a veritable tool.

Odinuwu said: "With our collective efforts, we are charting a new pathway for our industry and the energy future of almost two billion people that Africa is home to.

"Nigeria has taken the lead by developing an energy transition plan, launched in 2020, which outlines the technologies and support needed to achieve universal energy access and net-zero emissions by 2050.



PIA, regulation and return of investments in oil, gas

There is absolutely no doubt that Africa is a very rich continent, both in terms of human and natural resources. It is this massive wealth, particularly of natural resources, that has continued to attract both the developed and developing world to its embrace. Developed countries often come with rapist tendencies, but pose as developers and partners. They see Africa as a raw material enclave, AKPANDEM JAMES, WRITES.

THEY explore and exploit to their own advantage and leave the continent either threadbare or desolate at the hint of more convenient alternatives.

Among other resources, the continent is endowed with massive energy potentials; and it has a huge hydrocarbon belt which sustains the economy of some of the richest countries. Crude oil and gas have come to define the economic status of some of the biggest economies in the continent.

Both also attract some of the biggest investors who see the two energy resources as the lifeline for industrial and social sustenance of their own economies.

Now with cleaner and cheaper alternatives, they see fossil fuel as a threat to the environment. Crude oil is associated with carbon emission and gas has become the transition fuel on the route to a carbon-free energy regime.

The new development in the industry is attributable to the return of confidence in the sector and a reflection of investors' acceptance of the effective implementation of the PIA by the regulator, NUPRC

Although Africa looks like the target of the zero-emission campaign; some major petroleum producing countries in the Asian and Gulf regions are also apprehensive of the energy transition timetable, given their huge belts of undeveloped hydrocarbon reserves. The zero-emission campaign and the accompanying defunding of hydrocarbon development projects have pushed producers to adopt new perspectives.

They are now thinking out ways of not just navigating the transition period, but flowing with the inevitable renewable energy tide.

Once in a year, industry players within the African continent in particular and others around the world gather at the Nigeria International Energy Summit to take a more strategic look at the energy industry and chart new pathways for growth and sustainable development, especially in the face of threatening global energy transition proposals.

The theme of the sixth edition of the summit which held in Abuja from April 16 to 20, was "Global Perspectives for a sustainable energy



Kayri

future." It is indicative of the divergent perceptions about the sustainability of certain aspects of energy sources and resources.

Particularly so, some countries are deeply worried about the conversations going on and being escalated on global theatres as regards the issue of climate change, a phenomenon that has come to link its nemesis to high carbon emissions.

Although Africa has about the lowest carbon emission levels in the world, in spite of the advancement made by developed countries in green and renewable energy sources, the continent is more worried than others because the developed world continues to point accusing fingers at fossil fuels as a major threat to the Ozone layer rescue mission, and the march towards a carbon-free world.

The thinking has refocused investment attention from the development of the vast fossil fuel reserves, which are largely untapped and underdeveloped in Africa, to renewable energy which is seen as cleaner and probably cheaper in some aspects. Government and Industry players in Nigeria are particularly worried because the petroleum industry is the country's biggest foreign income earner. The national budget is largely based on resources from this revenue

stream.

Nigeria has about 37.064 billion barrels of oil with a daily production of over 1.5 million barrels currently. It ranks 2nd in Africa, 8th among Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and 11th in the World in terms of reserves. In terms of actual crude production, Nigeria occupies the first position in Africa, 6th in OPEC and 15th in the world.

Even though crude oil contributes over 85% to Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings, its contribution to GDP is about 6.33%, while Algeria's is 10.2%. Angola's is 30% and Libya's is over 50%. Nigeria's GDP per capita stands at \$1,998 which places it at the 12th position among OPEC member states and 22nd in Africa. Nigeria therefore has real cause to fret whenever the phrase "Energy Transition" is mentioned, because it has implications on the investment budget; and consequently production returns.

The enactment of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) 2021 and efforts made by the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) to breathe life into its provisions have brought some relief to both the sector and operators. Before then, investments in the country's oil and gas had taken a southward trajectory due to three major factors: regulatory uncertainty, de-funding of fossil fuel development occasioned by energy transition, and the scourge of COVID-19 which shut

down the world between 2019 and 2021.

Between 2014 and 2022 there was a consistent decrease in capital expenditure (CAPEX) by international oil companies (IOCs), most of which deprioritized Nigeria in their portfolios and redirected funding of capital projects in the upstream sector to other countries.

That resulted in the decline in upstream operations and output. It was a double wahala for Nigeria. The country's total annual upstream capital expenditure went down by 74%, from \$27 billion in the year 2014 to less than \$6 billion in 2022. The stiff competition from regional peers also adversely affected the proportion of the overall upstream investment attracted by Nigeria.

The under-investment expectedly affected a number of operational facilities and activities, including the country's rig count. On the average, Nigeria I 2019 had 17 rigs, one of the highest in Africa; but it went down to 7 in 2021. It started climbing again in 2022 to 10 and by April, 2023 when new investments had started trickling back, it had gone up to 24. The new development in the industry is attributable to the return of confidence in the sector and a reflection of investors' acceptance of the effective implementation of the PIA by the regulator, NUPRC.

Fortune continued to smile on the industry with the high energy prices in the last two years. The oil and gas industry globally is experiencing positive inflows which could be directed to capital investment in upstream operations. Projections by industry experts for the next few years look good. Industry players therefore have a chance to leverage this opportunity by up-scaling every effort to attract more investments to revive the Nigerian upstream sector.

NUPRC Chief Executive, Engr Gbenga Komolafe is optimistic. During the NIES 2023 in Abuja, he stated that Nigeria is a nation where needs meet opportunity. He was not just referring to crude oil and gas, he mentioned vast potentials in blue energy, solar, wind, biomass, as well as other sources of renewable energy which he noted could be leveraged for the right energy mix in the energy transition regime.

While Komolafe, like every other major industry player in Africa, worries about the not-so-encouraging foreign investment in fossil fuel development, especially in Africa, he has always been alive to the reality of green transition. At the just concluded energy summit he reiterated the need for oil and gas producers in Africa to face the reality and take strategic positions

to leverage the opportunities presented by the unfolding era, as pressure from the clean energy promoters mounts.

He used that opportunity to also state that even as moves are already afoot to flow along the renewable energy corridor, Nigeria is already charting a new course in the upstream petroleum sector and is poised to secure a blossoming energy future through effective implementation of the PIA. The Act has relevant legal, governance, fiscal and regulatory frameworks for guiding industry operations. "In line with its mandate, NUPRC is developing forward-thinking technical and commercially viable regulations as instruments to promote transparency, efficiency, and innovation for sustainable development of Nigeria's hydrocarbon resources," Komolafe indicated.

Walking the path of international benchmarks in implementing the PIA provisions, the Commission's focus apparently has been targeted at achieving reduced unit cost per barrel, transparency in hydrocarbon accounting, operational efficiency, conducive operating environment, increase in oil and gas reserves and production, and reduction in carbon footprint. Within the 20 months of its existence, the Commission has already successfully gazetted five (5) Regulations, developed thirteen (13) fresh Regulations currently under review and another six (6) at consultative stages with industry stakeholders.

The target is to grow reserves through deliberate oil and gas exploration, deep drilling, prospects maturation appraisal, field studies and improved oil recovery. Results are already showing. The national hydrocarbon reserves went up to 31.060 billion barrels for Oil and 5.906 billion barrels for Condensate at the beginning of the year. Associated Gas reserves stood at 102.32 trillion cubic feet; while Non-Associated Gas reserve is 106.51 trillion cubic feet.

The NUPRC chief believes that with a population of over 200 million people and abundant energy sources to achieve the right energy mix for sustainability of energy supply, Nigeria as a nation state is suitably positioned to become a superpower in the unfolding energy transition regime.

James, a journalist and commentator on contemporary issues, lives in Abuja.

Politics

Former lawmakers drum support for Wase

By EZEKIEL DONTINNA

PLATEAU State stakeholders under the aegis of Concerned Former Senators, House of Representatives, Speakers and Members of the State Assembly, have thrown their weight behind the candidature of the current Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Ahmed Idris Wase, to be Speaker of the 10th National Assembly.

The team led by former Senator representing Plateau North Senatorial Zone in the 3rd Assembly, Sen. Timothy Adudu, stated this recently while addressing journalists at a press briefing held at the headquarters of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), in Jos, the state capital.

Stressing on the theme: "The Race For The Speakership of The House of Representatives: A Strong Appeal That North Central Should Be Considered", the leader of the delegation said, "It is no longer news that the race for the leadership of both Chambers of the National Assembly are what is currently on the front burner in the Nigerian political arena.

"We have therefore found it expedient to join in the discourse on those who are qualified to lead both the Houses in the 10th Assembly. In this race for the leadership of the National Assembly, the one we are most interested in is the leadership of the House of Representatives, where two of our illustrious sons have indicated interest in contesting for the leadership.

"In going into the contest of this nature that is very competitive, one has to go with one's best so as to compete with others. Given this scenario therefore, by our own estimation, our very best is Rt. Hon. Ahmed Idris Wase (popularly known as Maje in Plateau State), the current Deputy Speaker of the House. We believe Hon. Wase has the requisite credentials that can compete favourably with any member from around the country", they enthused.

Adudu however, appealed to Plateau sons and daughters in the National Assembly to consider this contest as a patriotic call to service and throw their weight behind Rt. Hon. Wase, describing him as their worthy son irrespective of party affiliation. "Our brothers and sisters in Plateau State, this is the time for us to come together to persecute this agenda," he said.

"This is the time more than ever before to put aside our differences in whatever form. Our elders must take the lead in ensuring that we succeed in this endeavor. Hon. Idris Wase has done our state proud and this is payback time to show him love and appreciation for all he has done for our state and the entire country.

"We are appealing to Nigerians particularly his



Wase

colleagues in the green chamber to give this our son in whom we are well pleased, the opportunity to lead the House of Representatives in this 10th Assembly.

"We wish to call on our amiable Governor, His Excellency, Dr. Simon Bako Lalong, to use his connection with his colleagues to rally support for this our son," he appealed.

The former Senator,

however, stated irrevocably that the choice of Hon. Wase, was drawn from their tracking and resolve in the quality of his person, and they, as experienced former members of the National Assembly and Speakers of the Plateau State House of Assembly felt they have an insight more than anyone and called whoever was contesting with Wase to fold his or her mat.

APC group canvasses support for Akpabio, Jibrin

CONCERNED All Progressives Congress (APC) Members Forum, a registered group of all party members, has backed the call for the emergence of Sen. Godswill Akpabio as the President of the 10th Senate.

Mr Okpokwu Ogenyi, convener of the group, while briefing newsmen in Abuja recently also supported the call for Sen. Barau Jibrin (APC-Kano) to be the Deputy Senate President.

He said: "We are aware that

zoning is not done in a vacuum, so we highly recommend Sen. Godswill Akpabio for the position of Senate President and Senator Barau Jibrin as Deputy Senate President respectively".

Ogenyi said that their support was based on consideration of federal character in the zoning of the 10th senate leadership bearing in mind, competence and credibility with an understanding that the

From
ABBAS GUNGURA,
Bauchi

THE All Progressives Congress (APC) members in Bauchi state have been assured that the claimed defeat of the APC at the 18th March Governorship polls will be overturned in favour of their candidate, Ambassador Sadique Baba Abubakar by the courts.

The assurance was given by the gubernatorial candidate of the party, Ambassador Sadique Baba Abubakar shortly after his arrival to the state at the Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa International Airport, Bauchi.

The guber candidate urged his supporters who had besieged the Airport to receive him not to lose hope over the outcome of the March governorship election held in the state.

Abubakar who further assured them of his readiness to legally fight to reclaim his mandate at the election tribunal, expressed confidence in the capability of the judiciary to retrieve his mandate which he said was stolen.

"We have hope in God and the Judiciary to retrieve our stolen mandate in sha Allah. I want to believe that the judicial system of Nigeria is reliable, and I am sure that at

'We will reclaim our stolen mandate'



Abubakar

the end of the day, we will get back our mandate", the gubernatorial candidate said.

According to him, once the mandate is retrieved, his administration will commence the implementation of the promises made to the people of Bauchi state in earnest.

Ambassador Sadique Baba Abubakar who pointed out that the APC will continue to remain the only reliable political party not in Bauchi state but across the country, appealed to party supporters to remain committed and

supportive of the party at all levels.

Sadique who expressed gratitude to the members of the APC in Bauchi State for their patience and understanding, urged them to continue to be patient and hopeful.

The guber candidate who reiterated his readiness to legally fight to reclaim his mandate with proff at the tribunal, insisted that his party, the APC won the gubernatorial election without tears.

Commissioner tackles Adeyemi on APC primaries

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

A chieftain of the All Progressives Congress in Kogi State and the Commissioner for Information and Communications, Mr Kingsley Fanwo has described Senator Smart Adeyemi's assessment of the last governorship primary of the All Progressives Congress in Kogi State as "vituperation of a desperately dangerous bad loser".

Fanwo stated this in Lokoja while fielding questions from journalists recently, saying the APC governorship primary remains one of the most transparent in the history of the state.

"It is right for the media to give space to all to air their views. When we have such platforms, we must be responsible enough not to abuse it and dangerously misinform the general public. The world saw the governorship primary on television and on other media platforms. The

primary didn't only hold, it was free, fair and credible."

"We have always been here with Senator Smart Adeyemi and with all due respect, his own definition of credible election is one won by him. Any other election not won by him is not credible as far as he is concerned.

Fanwo maintained that, "Yes, I watched him saying all sort of things after filing his case. He said Alhaji Ahmed Ododo is from the same family, ward and clan as the governor. He said fielding him was the height of injustice. He dwelled so much on those fallacies and didn't even remember to tell the world why he is in court.

"To set the records straight, Alhaji Usman Ododo doesn't share the same family with the governor. They are not from the same ward and they even belong to different state constituencies. Assuming, but not conceding to the fact that he shares the same ward with the governor, does that render him legally incapable of vying for the ticket of the

country is a circular state with multi-faith.

According to him, the development will go a long way in building the confidence of party members across the country in preparation for the future of the party.

"It is pertinent to note that, in the South, South-South contributed the second highest votes after South-West which houses the President-elect.

"The North-West gave the party the highest votes in the North with Kano state

consistently giving APC the highest vote per state in every election since the formation of the party.

"More so, our submission is based on their legislative experience, prudent financial management, fair disposition towards national peace and unity, care for the less privileged, competence, reward for hard work, electoral value and diplomatic relations.

"In the National Assembly, Sen. Akpabio is the most ranking senator from the South-South under the platform of the APC while Sen. Barau Jibrin is the most ranking senator from the North West.

"We call on the President-elect, the Progressives Governor's Forum (PGF) and the State chairmen of our party to implement a government of National competence by supporting the zoning of the Senate Presidency to the South-South and Deputy to the North West," Ogenyi said.

He noted that the constitution of the party and its manifesto which does not preach religion, ethnicity, and tribal dichotomy, emphasised competence while providing qualitative leadership for Nigerians.

"It is a fact that for the executive arm of government to perform maximally, it must work with the legislature professionally to ensure dividends of democracy to the teeming population of Nigerians.

"We understand that the business of legislature is highly professional because it deals with law-making and financial appropriation, its leadership must be able, ready, and willing to support Mr. President in the governance of the country.

"We believe that, the party's role in the National Assembly Leadership is to ensure the

emergence of a competent senator who has distinguished himself over the years, devoid of religious and tribal sentiment.

"We need a pan-Nigerian who has been tested and trusted, proven worthy of integrity, character and prudent management.

"The President-elect is from the South-West and the Vice President-elect is from the North-East, as such, the Senate President should be zoned to the South-South and the Deputy Senate President to the North West.

"The speaker of the House of Representatives and deputy should be accommodated by the other zones in view of competence and credibility of Honourable members," Ogenyi said.

He further said that the President-elect needed highly competent National Assembly members with vast knowledge of legislative business to complement him in delivering dividends of democracy to Nigerians.



Akpabio

Politics

The first hurdle before the President-Elect

"As the May 29th Inauguration Day for the President-Elect, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu draws near, the emergence of the leadership of the 10th National Assembly is a major task before the camp of the President-Elect. The need for a seamless election or endorsement of the Senate President and the Speaker of the House of Representatives in the 10th Assembly cannot be over emphasised due to the role the Legislature plays in every growing democracy. TAIWO OLAPADE writes."

MANY have questioned the interest of the President-Elect in this matter since there is Separation of Powers among the different arms of government, but the need for a united and committed National Assembly after the June 10th inauguration of the Legislature gave room for Asiwaju Bola Tinubu to accord attention to who becomes the Senate President and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Since the return of the President-Elect to the country after a month-long vacation in Europe, his Abuja resident has become a Mecca of sort for those lobbying for appointments when he is handed the mantle of leadership on May 29th, 2023.

The likes of Senator Bara Jubril from Kano, Godswill Akpabio from Akwa Ibom and Orji Uzor Kalu from Abia who are among those eyeing the seat of the Senate President have also paid homage to the President-Elect on his return to the country. What happened behind the scene of course will not be disclosed to you and me. Other contenders for the seat include newly elected Senators, Dave Umahi from Ebonyi and Adams Oshiomole from Edo state.

Report also has it that the leadership of the ruling All Progressives Congress including the President-Elect, Bola Tinubu, its National Chairman, Adamu Abdullahi, outgoing Senate President, Ahmed Lawan and the Speaker, Femi Gbajabamila, members of the National Working Committee have been holding marathon meetings with lawmakers who have indicated interest in becoming the number third and fourth citizens of the country at the Defence House, Abuja.

For the coveted seat of the Speaker, we have the likes of the current Deputy Speaker, Ahmed Wase, the Majority Leader, Alhassan Ado Doguwa, Hon Aliyu Betara and the Chairman House Committee on Information, Benjamin Kalu, seem to be on the front burner.

In the permutation of the leadership of the tenth National Assembly, the issue of religion and zoning of the Principal officers has been canvassed for fairness, equity and justice. In terms of religion, many Nigerians were of the opinion that since the President-Elect and Vice President-Elect are Muslims, then the Senate President which is number three in hierarchy should be a Christian.

However, the counter to that position is that the North East gave the Tinubu/Shettima ticket the highest votes in the February 25th Presidential Election, and for that reason they should be compensated for the loyalty to the party.

The other position being championed is that of the Zone



Tinubu

in which many have argued for in the spirit of reconciliation that the South East should be considered

despite given the lowest votes to the APC in the February 25th Presidential Election.

If I may ask, which of the positions canvassed do you

prefer?

As you think deeply to come up with your own answer, let us quickly discuss the threats posed by the opposition joining forces if

in the real sense they agree on a common front to sponsor candidates for the leadership of the National Assembly.

It looks like the Senate is a done deal with the APC having more than a simple majority but for the House of Representatives, the story is not the same.

According to INEC, out of the 360 seats in the lower chamber, the ruling APC won 175, PDP 118, Labour Party 35, NNPP 19, APGA 5, SDP and ADC 2 each, YPP 1 while 3 seats yet to be decided. A united opposition comprising seven political parties could indeed produce the next Speaker if the current discussion among them is concretised.

Although, what is critical at this moment is the peoples National Assembly that will collaborate with the Executive in the best interest of the country but the leadership of the ruling party must do all necessary to prevent a repeat of the 8th Assembly in 2015 which for better part of the four year was at loggerheads with the Executive despite being members of the same party. God bless Nigeria.

9th Assembly has performed creditably well

SENATE President Ahmad Lawan, says the 9th National Assembly has performed creditably well in terms of delivering democracy dividends to Nigerians, since its inauguration in 2019

LAWAN said this in his goodwill message to the Nigerian workers in Abuja.

"By 2019 when the 9th assembly was inaugurated, the nation's financial year or budget cycle had become notorious for being unreliable and uncertain.

"To redress that situation, the assembly in collaboration with

the executive arm of government, promptly reset the financial year to run from January to December.

"Since then, this has been sustained, resulting in significant improvement in budget performance," he said.

Lawan said the 9th assembly had successfully passed many

critical bills that had become jinxed under previous assembly.

He listed such critical legislations that were key to good governance and service delivery in public sector to include the deep off-shore and inland basin production sharing contracts (amendment) act, 2019.

Others were the Companies and Allied Matters Act, 2020; Police Act 2020, Petroleum Industry Act 2021; Electoral Act 2022.

He said that the assembly also passed 16 of the Constitutional amendment bills for the fifth alterations of the 1999 Constitution, which President Muhammadu Buhari signed into law.

The Senate President lauded Nigerian workers for their patriotism and resilience as they marked the 2023 Workers' Day.

Lawan said that the workers had contributed in finding solutions to the nation's challenges and supported the efforts of government targeted at meeting the yearnings of the people.

He stated that throughout the

nation's history, the great Nigerian workers had been remarkable for their patriotism, commitment to nation-building and resilience in the face of serious development challenges.

Lawan said that the consistent patriotic stance of the Nigerian workers had enhanced peace and industrial harmony, provided conducive environment for economic growth and development.

The dictum that labour creates wealth remains valid today as it has ever been, government must always pay serious attention to labour related matters, "It is with such understanding that the 9th National Assembly has guarded itself against the introduction of any anti-labour legislation since its inception in 2019.

"I'm happy that the stance has helped in sustaining industrial peace in the country," he said.

He urged the labour movement to continue to sustain the atmosphere of industrial peace and harmony under the incoming administration of President-elect Bola Tinubu.



Lawan

IMAGES

2023 MAY DAY CELEBRATIONS

Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), Plateau State Council and Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (TUC) on Monday celebrated the 2023 May Day with the theme: Workers Right & Socio-Economic Justice at the Rwang Pam Township Stadium, Jos



Governor Simon Bako Lalong, CON acknowledging cheers from Nigerian Workers during the May Day celebrations



Chairman and members of NUBIFIE demonstrating with Nigeria naira notes at the celebration



NIPSS Director of Research, Prof. Pam Dung Sha (left) who was guest speaker with the Chief of the State, Justice David Mann at the 2023 May Day



Chief of Staff Government House, Hon. Noel Dongjur (middle) with DOPPA, Dr. Makut Simon Macham (left) and the representative of the Chairman, Jos North LGC, Hon. Ezekiel Shina Agada, Deputy Chairman of the Council



Plateau State Governor, Rt. Hon. Simon Bako Lalong waving at the Nigerian Workers on arrival at the Stadium



Chief Judge, Justice David Mann (left) with the Speaker, Rt. Hon. Yakubu Yackson Sanda and others at the celebrations



NUPPPROW Plateau State, led by Comrade Fwengak Daniel Yilbisa during the March Pass



NUJ Vice Chairman, Ayuku Pwaspo, Chief Scribe of the NUJ, Comrade Peter Amine with other members of the Pen Profession

PHOTOS: DANLADI DUK

Politics

Guber poll: Can NNPP spring surprise in Kogi?

With the general election over, all eyes are now being shifted to Kogi, Bayelsa and Imo states whose governorship polls are expected to come up later this year. In Kogi State, the storm is already gathering and there are serious levels of scheming, permutations and manipulation on who will succeed Governor Yahaya Bello whose second term will officially terminate by Jan 14, 2024., writes IWOK INIOBONG.

WITH the conclusion of parties' primaries in Kogi State ahead of the November 11, 2023 gubernatorial election, political actors are already warming up for what is expected to be a fiercely contested gubernatorial poll.

Although several of the political parties are still lodged in internal wrangling and disputes emanating from the conduct of their gubernatorial primaries, however, the gubernatorial candidates are already preparing for the launch of campaigns in the state, which is expected to begin in July, in line with the 2022 amended Electoral Act.

For many, this year's gubernatorial poll in Kogi would be keenly contested and a departure from the past where only the candidates of the two dominant political parties in the country, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC) compete.

Observers say that the birth of the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) and the growing popularity of the party in Northern Nigeria is healthy for democracy, while offering an alternative platform for Kogites.

In recent months, the NNPP has been building structures across Kogi State, especially in Kogi East.

Political analysts say the NNPP has become a third force of some sort that could spring surprise in the gubernatorial poll, if right decisions are taken by its leaders, while also putting its house in order ahead of the November poll.

For many, the gubernatorial election this time around would not be an easy ride for the APC.

In the last eight years, Governor Bello's administration has received knocks for poor performance; observers say he has failed to fulfil his campaign promises and performed below expectations despite the resources of the state.

In the last eight years, the party, the state and the governor appear to have accumulated varied reputations, all of which were unified by the presumed desire for economic growth yet limited by



Mubarak

the disconnections between the people's expectations and the democratic dividends delivered.

Although Bello has successfully chosen his successor, Usman Ododo who hails from the same Kogi Central with him, there are criticisms that other zones should have been given a chance to rule the state instead.

Governor Bello was hell-bent in producing his successor within the rank of his cabinet members and his trusted aides who will carry on with his projects.

This may not have been a serious issue to contend with within the fold of the ruling party but for the fact that Governor Bello's rigid insistence that his successor

will not only come out from his cabinet but also from his own central senatorial district.

This stance, it is gathered, has caused a serious stir within the APC in the state which has now been fragmented and divided into different factions with each working at crossroads.

Before the 2015 governorship election in the state, there were cries of marginalisation and injustice on the part of other senatorial districts, the Kogi west who are mainly the Okun-Youruba speaking tribes and the Kogi East mainly the Igala.

This, it was gathered, was why the Kogi West axis of the APC teamed up in 2015 in the party primary to support Yahaya Bello who is an Epira man and who was seen as the youngest and most energetic among the aspirants, a development that made him to be

the runner up to Abubakar Audu.

In recent years there have been increased agitations from Kogi East, that they should be given a chance to rule the state, which is seen in mostly all the parties choosing their candidates from the zone.

Many say that Kogi State has made little progress in the last eight years and is not where it should be, such that there is increased yearning among Kogites for change of narrative and new direction for the state going forward.

However, the general feeling among some sections of indigenes in the state, is that the NNPP could offer that alternative platform that can take Kogi to its desired position if given the opportunity to rule the state.

The optimism is born out of the fact that the NNPP is one of the fastest growing political parties in Nigeria, especially in the North West, where it won the gubernatorial election in Kano State, while also winning national and state legislature seats in other states in the North.

Perhaps, a major factor, that may work in favour of the party is the emergence of its gubernatorial candidate from Kogi East, with the possibility of a deputy from Kogi West.

Observers say what can boost the chances of the NNPP gubernatorial candidate, Mubarak Abuche Musa would be if he can work with other party leaders across the state to run a robust campaign that can increase the popularity of the party and wide acceptance.

Some have suggested that since Mubarak hails from Kogi east, his running mate should be chosen from Kogi West, to boost his chances because of the clamour for rotational government in the state.

Although the task before NNPP may not look easy knowing that the two dominant parties, the PDP and APC are well established in the state, especially with the APC with incumbency power and state resources at its disposal.

Ladipo Jhonson, spokesperson for the Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso presidential campaign for the 2023 poll, says the large number of people who showed interest in becoming the party's gubernatorial candidate is a clear testimony of the growing popularity of the party in Kogi.

Ladipo said the party had mapped out strategies and plans to aid its victory in the Kogi gubernatorial poll, stressing that the APC's failure in the state in the last eight years was an opportunity for other parties.

"Kwankwaso has a decent structure in Kogi, for the fact that you had eleven people contesting for the gubernatorial ticket means they are on ground. But I can assure you that the NNPP has a good chance now that the governor brought someone from his senatorial district and Igala.

"Kwankwaso has a descent structure in Kogi, but we have mapped out what plans to aid our candidate's victory.

"The immediate task for us now; is to unite everyone after the primary and work collectively. We are happy everyone have decided to come together and work for the party," Jhonson said.

Similarly, Mustapha Akeem, a chieftain of the NNPP in Kogi State, said the last eight years of the Bello's administration had taken the state backward, stressing that the people are yearning for change.

According to him, "We are hopeful that this election would not be like the previous ones, because our people have suffered so much in the last eight years, and can't wait to see this administration come to an end.

"There is nothing on ground across Kogi, there is poverty and hunger in the land, go round and see. But it is an opportunity for us to correct the wrongs when we come in.

"I am sure with the conclusion of the gubernatorial primary, we would put our house in order before the campaigns begin and prepare to win this election. Bello's decision to take APC's candidate from his constituency would be his greatest undoing, and we would capitalise on that."

"Many say that Kogi State has made little progress in the last eight years and is not where it should be, such that there is increased yearning among Kogites for change of narrative and new direction for the state going forward. However, the general feeling among some sections of indigenes in the state, is that the NNPP could offer that alternative platform that can take Kogi to its desired position if given the opportunity to rule the state. The optimism is born out of the fact that the NNPP is one of the fastest growing political parties in Nigeria, especially in the North West, where it won the gubernatorial election in Kano State, while also winning national and state legislature seats in other states in the North."

NEWS

Don't lie about gratuity when I leave office

-Lalong

BY EZEKIEL DONTINNA

GOVERNOR Simon Bako Lalong of Plateau State, has blamed Unions in the state for the inexplicable delay in settling the outstanding gratuity and other emoluments of retired workers and warned them to not lie on him for the nonpayment when he leaves office as Governor.

He disclosed this Monday, while addressing workers at the occasion marking the 2023 May Day as he bites his farewell to Civil Servants at the Rwang Pam Township Stadium Jos, the State capital.

The Governor said, "people talk about nonpayment of gratuity of retired workers, but thank God, the Speaker is here. I am not blaming any Arm of Government, but I want to make it clear that, three years ago, we told them that we are going to pay gratuity and all processes were made capturing all the retired workers.

"I do not know what magic, the evil and the devil that frustrated the passage of this bill into law. If this law was passed, nobody will be talking about gratuity today. A Bank said they were going to issue Ten Billion Naira (#10,000,000) to settle this and if we finished, we will get another #10,000,000.

"I tell you, I am not happy at all with that one now oh! But, we still have the remaining period and if you passed that, we will pay immediately. Thank God, the Trade Unions and Head of Service are here and I do not want to leave



Lalong

office with people blaming me for no reason", he enthused.

He, therefore, called on the Unions to come back in the name of God and allow this bill to go saying, "others said you are the cause of this delay and you are saying that, it is Governor Lalong that refused to pay gratuity. God forbid! If the fault is my own God will see, but if fault is on you and you blame it on Lalong, God is watching!

"If you want the bill to go now, then, go to the House of Assembly and make them pass it into law and I will sign it immediately. I will invite the retired workers to come and they will be paid their gratuities. So, do not mention my name when I leave

office!", the outgoing Governor assured and warned.

However, the Governor has assured teachers in the that their request for sixty-five (65) retirement age would be domesticated in two weeks time because the evidence he asked for in the past was handing now and that issue would be a thing of the past.

He thanked the NLC and all Civil Servants in the state for the confidence they have in him to have been invited him to bid his farewell to them on his last May Day celebration with them and that, it was an indication of the fact that the cooperation and support given to him in the past eight years (8yrs) was sincere.

The Benue State Governor elect, Reverend Father Hyacinth Iormem Alia has inaugurated members of his transition committee with a charge on them to be confidential.

Father Alia who gave the charge at the Tinubu/Shetima Campaign Office in Makurdi recently, said it was incumbent on the committee to exercise due diligence, commitment and sincerity of purpose in discharging their duties.

He said the choice of members of the transition committee was arrived at based on their track records over the years. He charged them to work diligently to justify the confidence reposed in them.

Earlier, the Deputy Governor-

Benue Governor-elect inaugurates transition c'ttee

From TERESE TUHWA, Makurdi

elect, Barr Samuel Ode told the committee members that they must bring their cogent experience they have acquired over time to bear on the assignment.

Responding on behalf of members, chairman of the committee and former Head of State Civil Service, Mr. Mike Iordye promised that the committee will uphold confidentiality as its top most priority while discharging its duties.

While commending the governor-elect for finding them worthy to serve amidst over 4 million indigenes of the state, Mr. Iordye stressed that the committee will work within its terms of reference to justify the confidence reposed in them.

Over twenty people are to serve in the transition committee to ensure seamless transition from the outgoing to the incoming administration.

Youth corpsers assured of safety in Sokoto

From ANENE AIKE, Sokoto

THE National Youth Services Corps (NYSC) members serving in Sokoto State, have been assured of their security and safety while serving in the state. Governor Aminu Waziri Tambuwal made the pledge at the NYSC Orientation Camp during the swearing-in ceremony of the 2023 Batch 'A' Stream II corps members deployed to the state. The Secretary to the State Government, Alhaji Mainasara Ahmed, who represented Gov Tambuwal also welcomed the new corps members saying, "You are all welcome to Sokoto State, the seat of the Caliphate and one of the most peaceful states in the country.

He also charged them to remain dedicated to the national service in order to fulfill the purpose of the NYSC in the country. He emphasised



Tambuwal

that "The orientation camp exercise will give you enough strength toward the primary assignment. As such you should remain committed in order to gain the required

experience," he added.

The Governor further urged the corps members to concentrate on the in-camp skills acquisition training to enhance their future self reliance.

In his speech, Mr Usman Yaro, the NYSC Sokoto State Coordinator said as at the close of registration exercise on Thursday, a total of 1,008 corps members were registered in the camp, comprising 545 males and 463 females, respectively.

He said the members of the set had already exhibited high sense of discipline since their arrival in the camp which he said is an indication of their determination and acceptance to diligently serve their fatherland in Sokoto State.

He assured the corps members that Sokoto was undoubtedly one of the most peaceful and accommodating states in the country. And encouraged them to fully participate in all the camp activities and utilise all the available opportunities therein to imbibe the ideals of the NYSC scheme.

He was emphatic about the Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development Programme (SAED), bearing in mind that the camp and its activities are highly regimented and compulsory.

The state coordinator used the ceremony to congratulate Tambuwal for emerging as a Senator-elect at the just-concluded 2023 National Assembly elections in the state.

Foundation donates kidney centre to teaching hospital

From TERESE TUHWA, Makurdi

THE Vice Chancellor, Federal University of Health Sciences Otukpo (FUHSO) Prof Innocent Ujah has expressed joy with the Judith OgwaObla Memorial Kidney Centre donated to the University's Teaching Hospital. He emphasised that the multi million Naira project will play a critical role in the treatment and management of kidney and other related diseases in Benue community and Nigeria at large.

Ujah, a Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology stated this during the commissioning of the facility and launch of a forty million Naira endowment prize for students of the medical institution by the Godwin Obla Foundation held at the premises of the University Teaching Hospital.

The immediate past president of the Nigeria Medical Association (NMA) averred that by the gesture, Chief Obla has stimulated an unparalleled contribution to the lives of not only people of Benue South but Nigerians who may be afflicted with kidney related diseases that will require highly specialised treatment and care.

According to the Vice Chancellor, the Kidney Centre has a world class equipment with the latest technology and

staffed with experienced and dedicated professionals who will provide comprehensive care to patients with kidney diseases including diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation.

He pointed out that FUHSO under his watch has broken many jinx in less than three years of its existence. Recounting that admission and successful matriculation of the first set of students who are currently in their 200 level; commencement of construction work at its permanent site at Akwete-Akpa with 70 percent completion as well as establishment of a teaching hospital.

He thanked the state Governor Dr. Samuel Ortom for unconditionally ceding the General Hospital Otukpo to FUHSO as teaching hospital which he noted was formally handed over to the university by the Federal Ministry of Health on April 13th, 2023 with the appointment of Professor Silas Ochejele as Acting Chief Medical Director (CMD).

The Pioneer FUNSHO Vice Chancellor added that the Kidney Centre was

the first of its kind in North Central and first in the history of Federal University of Health Sciences in Nigeria.

He informed that the occasion was not for the commissioning of a world-class kidney centre

alone but also Godwin Obla Foundation endowing four prizes in the College of Medicine of the university which include the overall best graduating student in the College of Medicine - named after Dr Edwin IdokoObe for being the first Idoma medical doctor and other best graduating medical student in Surgery; best graduating medical student in Internal Medicine - captioned after Joseph ElagbajeObla Snr and best graduating medical student in Obstetrics and Gynaecology - named after the donor, Chief Godwin OdumuObla, SAN.

Prof Ujah who added that each of the prizes was worth ten million - totalling forty million naira, maintained that the forty million naira (N40 m) prize by the Foundation will further enhance the Institution's efforts at creating an enabling environment for a world class university that will bring out innovation for improved healthcare services in the country.

The Vice Chancellor therefore hailed Chief Obla SAN and pledged that FUHSO management will not renege but judiciously utilize the kidney centre for the good of humanity and endowment prize as a determined world class university.

"I also thank Godwin Obla

Foundation for the generosity and commitment to the advancement of health care and medical education in Nigeria and I urge other philanthropists and NGOs to emulate Chief Obla's example and contribute towards the development of education and health care system of the university, Ujah charged".

Pro Chancellor and Chairman Governing Council of the university, Prof Abdullahi Alkali Abba said it was thoughtful of the Foundation to have set up the kidney centre saying the Governing Council was appreciative of the gesture. "This is extremely generous. You cannot imagine the kind of encouragement it will give to the students", Prof Alkali stated. Adding that the university was interested in the part that involves research and training since it was a vital component of the project.

The state governor, Samuel Ortom represented by his deputy, Engr. Benson Abounu observed that Judith Obla was no more but her name will continue to save souls through the centre and the endowment prizes.

Senator Aba Moro representing Benue South Senatorial District in a speech extolled the determination of Chief Obla whom he said left him years ago in politics to

News

May Day: Bello hails workers' sacrifices

From **AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja**

THE Governor of Kogi State, Yahaya Bello has commended sacrifices made by workers across the country for the development and progress of their father land.

Governor Yahaya Bello who spoke through his Chief Press Secretary, Mohammed Onogwu to mark this year's Workers Day said "This day provides an opportunity to recognize and appreciate the hard work, dedication, and sacrifices made by workers who form the backbone of our economy"

"Bello is proud of Kogi workers, which he considers second to none, and recognizes their significant contributions to the development of the state and the nation.

He acknowledges the critical role of workers in the growth of the country and assures them that their sacrifices will not be in vain"

"The governor's



Bello

administration recognizes the substantial contributions of workers in various sectors, including healthcare, education, agriculture, and manufacturing, and credits their tireless efforts for the success of the state"

"Despite the challenges of the past years, workers have remained committed to their work, and Bello pledges his administration's commitment

to continue supporting them, creating an enabling environment for them to thrive, and improving their working conditions and welfare," the statement added.

Governor Bello once again expressed his heartfelt appreciation to all workers in Kogi State, acknowledging their hard work, dedication, and sacrifices for the state.

EU trains 1000 youths on conflict management

From **ABBAS GUNGURA, Bauchi**

THE European Union (EU) has trained over 1000 young people in Bauchi and Yobe states on conflict prevention, mitigation, and management.

This was disclosed by the leader of EU delegation to Nigeria and West Africa, Mrs. Ngozi Felix recently. She opined that inequality can push young people into political apathy, radicalization, crime or irregular migration.

Mrs Ngozi Felix was speaking at a youth summit funded by the EU recently where she informed the gathering that the youth were trained in partnership with International Alert, Taimoko Community Development Initiative and the governments of Bauchi and Yobe states.

She said the project had achieved key results in enhancing youth

participation through training and equipping them with the required skills to prevent and manage conflicts.

"In addition, an increase in youth access to decision-making on local development and economic empowerment initiatives have been recorded," she said.

"This explains why today's Youth Summit is important to the European Union.

"Young people can and are already providing novel solutions to today's challenges.

"It is my hope that by the end of this summit, the young people in this hall will feel empowered; knowing that they have what it takes to successfully bring about positive change in their communities".

Felix assured that the EU will remain committed to partnering with all stakeholders to promote youth inclusion, human rights and civil society participation.

"Let me conclude by reiterating my gratitude for the invitation and thanking

International Alert and Taimako Community Development Initiative for their consistency in implementing the MatasakuTaso: Youth Arise project," she said.

Speaking earlier, Mary Hwiyere, the Northeast Programme Manager for International Alert, said with funding from the EU, International Alert in partnership with Taimako Community Development Initiative (TCDI), implemented the youth focused project titled "Matasa Ku Taso" which means 'Youth Arise! In Bauchi and Yobe states.

Hwiyere said the specific objectives of the project include to enhance youth participation in conflict prevention, mitigation, and management as well as increase youth access to decision-making on local development and economic empowerment initiatives.

"This youth summit is part of our efforts to create opportunities for young people to have more say in decisions that shape their lives," she said.

Hwiyere said the project has reduced grievances, addressed basic needs of youth, and rebuilt the fractured trust with community leaders, state authorities and security forces.

"Such trust is the foundation of long-term stability, as it encourages collaboration between different stakeholders in preventing and responding to conflict triggers," she said.

"As we all know, meaningful youth participation and leadership require that young people and young people-led organizations have opportunities, capacities, and benefit from an enabling environment and relevant evidence-based programmes and policies at all levels



Restructuring health care delivery

THE state of the healthcare delivery system of any society defines the level of the development of that society. When a society has a robust and functional healthcare delivery system, it saves and free for itself the fund to embark on developmental projects.

On the other hand, if its health care system is weak and only depends on others to help its people meet its basic healthcare needs, scarce resources would constantly be re-directed to take care of the people. This is because "a healthy people is a wealthy people."

It is in this regard that Nigeria has struggled to develop this all important sector so as to meet the basic acceptable minimum healthcare yet, this struggle has often, not work like it is expected. At all junctions, deliberate and man-made impediments are put in the way to ensure that whatever beautiful plan is made does not worked. This is not because these plans are not workable. No. It is because greedy and self-serving man wants to profiteer at the expense of the society. This tendency of being corrupt and self-serving has thus led the country to towing the path of stunted and arrested development leading to the lack of growth.

Our leaders have not helped in changing the narrative. They prefer to visit foreign hospitals when they fall sick rather than developing the infrastructure at home for all to take advantage of and enjoy. Doing so has left the health sector at the mercy of those who do not believe in it too, but would rather take advantage of the desperation of the people to skim them of their hard-earned money.

Our hospitals are, therefore, in very sorry states and have become "mere consulting clinics" that can hardly meet the yearnings of the people.

This state of affairs has in the past led to the government being toppled. Yet when in power, the same government shows no political will to completely depart from the old ways of doing things. So many hospitals have been built over time, yet healthcare delivery has become harder to access for the common person. It, therefore, means that structures do not add up if the manpower need is not matched. Neither are structures useful when empty medicine chest is the lot of the hospitals.

Even when these are provided, constant training and retraining to help keep those to man these hospitals must be made part of the total package. For best practices to evolve, our hospitals must seek international collaborations to keep abreast. Not reaching out in today's world would only spell doom as nobody knows it all.

If Nigerians could

Our leaders have not helped in changing the narrative. They prefer to visit foreign hospitals when they fall sick rather than developing the infrastructure at home for all to take advantage of and enjoy. Doing so has left the health sector at the mercy of those who do not believe in it too, but would rather take advantage of the desperation of the people to skim them of their hard-earned money.

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distinguish themselves elsewhere, it means provided with the same conditions at home, they are sure to do the same. But where they are left to work with next to nothing, no magic can bring out the best in them. This in turn means that technology should and must be deployed if we are to make any headway.

Local manufacture and fabrication must be encouraged and so that resources can be saved on the importation of equipment. Indeed, research in local herbal usage should be encouraged boosted by our local universities so that we can depend on what we have instead of importing from outside our shores.

All of these, however, will take a lot of political will on the part of the people and the leadership. As a people, Nigerians must resolve to set a timeline for themselves to reach these goals. We cannot continue to dwell on empty talks without following up with action. That would mean a complete change in attitude both from the government and the people. Those managing our hospitals must ensure that they are driven by the patriotic zeal to succeed at all costs. They must not focus on only making for themselves but should ensure that government and employers provide the requisite tools for them to practice their trade.

Purposeful measures too should be put in place to ensure that those in leadership positions and their family members patronize our facilities so that they too would feel the pulse of the institution. Once they go to the same facilities with the rest people, they are likely to pay more attention to them other than jetting out of the country at the slightest opportunity to spend our hard-earned money when little effort would have served the general



Lagard

News

Road mishap claims 2 lives, 12 injured

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

AS the world celebrated the 2023 International Workers Day on 1st May, Plateau Governor joined workers of his state to mark the day at the Rwang Pam Township Stadium Jos, where he blew his trumpet.

As the governor addressed workers, who converged for the event from across the state, he listed his achievements during his 8-year tenure saying he was not only able to clear the backlog of salary arrears he inherited from the previous administration but was the first Governor to implement the minimum wage, amid the Covid-19 pandemic and harsh economic challenges.

He received the salute from an avalanche of workers' unions clad in colourful regalia and 'asheobi' who displayed march pasts and dances.

In his remarks, Governor Lalong who was the Special Guest of Honour said he was highly honoured to mark the valedictory appearance, as the last before he exits office in May 29th.

The theme for the 2023 Workers Day is "Workers Right and Socio-economic Justice".

Lalong said: "You will recall that on coming into office, I assured you that the era of salary arrears will be a thing of the past. We immediately paid 5 months withheld wages under no-work-no-pay policy and cleared inherited salary arrears of 8 months from the past administration. The same story applied to pension arrears of over 10 months which we equally cleared".

"Little wonder, you the comrades of Plateau State gave me the title of "Governor Alert" which was affirmed and endorsed by the NLC under the leadership of immediate past President Comrade AyubaWabba. Today, it is with joy and thanksgiving to God that we are at the verge of fulfilling the promise I made to you which I must confess has not been easy to fulfill. But because of my passion for the workers, I have done everything possible to put smiles on your faces every month".

"I am sure that you have not also forgotten that despite the pandemic and the harsh economic realities, my administration was among the first in the country to begin the implementation of the thirty thousand naira minimum wage and consequential adjustments".

He said his Administration in collaboration with the Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria also provided home renovation loan to over 2,500 civil servants in the approximate sum of three million naira each across Ministries, Departments and Agencies to ease housing challenges they face, in addition to the assistance by government to the Nigeria Labour Congress in the purchase of the land for the NLC Housing Project in Jebbu Miango, with some blocks already completed and to be commissioned before he leaves office.

According to Lalong: "My administration still remains among the first and few in the country to grant financial autonomy to the Local Governments, the Judiciary, as well as Legislature. All these we did with a view to enhancing good governance, democracy and improving the welfare of our workers".

He also listed access to affordable healthcare to civil servants in the state through the Plateau State Contributory Healthcare Management Agency (PLASCHEMA).

Lalong said worried by the increasing wage bill despite exit from the service due to retirement, transfer of service, secondment, leave of absence, death etc, his administration constituted a high-powered committee on Staff Audit and Verification, and the



Lalong

subsequent White Paper revealed so many challenges in the system with many top officials resigning due to age falsification and other illegal acts. While his government was also able to ascertain the actual staff strength of the state, and identify the areas of need which has led to the approval for replacements and recruitments that were conducted recently in all MDAs and tertiary institutions.

On training, Lalong disclosed that his government through the Office of the Head of Civil Service in collaboration with GIZ, Jos Business School, and Absha Digital Access, has trained over three hundred Civil Servants across all cadres in the last two years to build the capacity of workers.

"As part of government's commitment to create a conducive working environment for civil servants, the State Executive Council also approved the domestication of 6 months maternity leave for reproductive, pregnant and lactating female mothers and 14 days paternity leave for serving male civil servants. Government will soon Commission a crèche at the Joseph Gomwalk Secretariat that will properly take care of these babies at the end of the six months' maternity leave," he added.

He appreciated the cooperation of the Organised Labour for enabling his administration to have a dynamic workforce and praised the leadership of the Plateau State House of Assembly and the House Committee on Labour and Finance for arranging the public hearing on the Contributory Pension Scheme which will go a long way in addressing the issue of pension and gratuities.

The governor used the forum to advise civil servants and other stakeholders to give the incoming administration the kind of support and cooperation they gave his government.

Presenting a joint statement of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and the Trade Unions Congress (TUC), Chairman NLC Plateau State, Comrade Eugene Manji commended the governor for spearheading many welfare packages for workers in the state including the health insurance and housing scheme.

He called for government's support to subsidise the housing scheme rates to enable workers afford, as well as implementation of the 65 years retirement age for teachers.

Guest Speaker, Director of Research and Planning, National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), Kuru, Prof. Pam Dung Sha, lamented the poor wages of Nigerian workers despite the nations enormous wealth, noting that there is injustice and inequality in the

system concerning wages, taxation, judicial system, and rights of workers.

He urged workers to know their rights as enshrined in International Labour Organisation (ILO) and NLC laws to prevent violation of workers' rights in the workplace.

He frowned at how some companies and organisations do not allow their workers to join labour unions. And commended Governor Lalong for coming on board in 2015 to offset all salary arrears.

He also tasked the Governor to leave behind a great legacy by fulfilling other promises made to workers while advising the incoming government at the state and federal levels to correct all injustices in wages, and allowances, and ensure improvement in working conditions at government ministries and workplaces.

Leader of civil societies in the state, Mr. Steve Aluko, called for observance of a minute silence for people who lost their lives in attacks and killings in parts of the state.

He urged the present administration to write its name in gold by ensuring that the Gender and Equal Opportunities (GEO) Laws and Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Laws which are critical to CSOs are domesticated.

Plateau NLC re-appoints Badung as secretary

THE Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) Plateau State Council has re-appointed Dr Yohanna Badung as State Secretary of the council for another four years.

The re-appointment was announced in a statement signed by Plateau NLC Chairman Com. Eugene Manji and made available to newsmen on Tuesday in Jos. Manji said that the decision to reappoint Badung was taken at NLC joint State Administrative Council (SAC)/State Executive Council (SEC) meeting held on April 25, 2023.

The chairman congratulated him on his re-appointment, urged him to sustain the high standards that earned him the re-appointment and wished him a successful tenure.

Meanwhile, the NLC chairman appreciated the SAC/SEC of NLC for the confidence reposed on the leadership of the congress in the state. He said that on February 24,

From VICTOR GAI, Jalingo

A leader of the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) in the troubled southern Taraba has dissociated the Fulani ethnic group from the wanton killings in southern Taraba saying criminal elements among the warring parties were responsible for the crisis.

While giving an insight into the nature of the crisis between the Fulani and Kuteb ethnic groups in Takum and Ussa LGAs, the Chairman, Southern zone MACBAN, Yau Ibrahim Barewa, said criminal elements were responsible for the crisis and therefore community leaders from the warring groups, government and law enforcement agencies must rise to the occasion by making sure those "evil people" don't dwell among the people.

Barewa regretted the non-adherence to the laws of the land by certain persons as well as the flagrant violation of the peace agreement signed between the two ethnic groups who had lived peacefully from time immemorial.

"I want you to understand something here. There are bandits that were driven from other places who are searching for where to settle down. Those evil people are looking for places of refuge. In our meeting with the Kuteb people, I made a reference to that. I pleaded with them for us to ensure peace and disallow such evil people from dwelling amongst us.

"Our area is a blessed land which is suitable for both farming and rearing of animals. There are rich water sources throughout the year.

"Now, this fight between Fulani and Kuteb started in 2017. So we allowed strange people to dwell amongst us. And they usually wrongly identify the Fulani people with those evil people. I want us to understand the situation. If we are not careful, God forbid, it has gone beyond what we are thinking. The Kuteb is not safe, the Fulani is not safe. In fact, other tribes are not safe in the whole situation. Whoever is within this territory; if he tells you he is safe, then I don't think

Taraba crisis: Fulani people identified with evil people- Miyetti Allah

he is telling the truth. When you ply the road from Takum to Mararaba, you are at risk of attackers and kidnapers. It's like a clash between Fulani and Kuteb but it has degenerated and is affecting other tribes including the security agents. We learnt of the death of some immigration officers. They are not members of any of the tribes here. Therefore, it has turned into banditry," Barewa disclosed.

He blamed in particular the Kuteb ethnic group for not adhering to the peace agreement earlier signed with the Fulani, saying lawlessness has become the order of the day.

"What is happening in Ussa, Takum and Yangtu Development Area; from our understanding, is a failure to obey directives on the part of the Kuteb people. If I can remember, last year there was a peace agreement that was signed and the killings stopped. It was agreed that whoever defaulted; whether on the side of the Fulani or on the side of the Kuteb, must be prosecuted according to the laws of the land.

"We have laws in the land and we have all signed an agreement. If something happens like this, why can't we

collaborate with the law enforcement people in order to deal with it? So there is the failure of adhering to the laws of the land. They want to make the place a breeding ground for banditry. If you ask a Kuteb man what his grouse with the Fulani is, he would have no concrete explanation to give. The reason he can give is "destruction on his farmland", he added.

The Nigeria Standard had reported that the KutebYatgso of Nigeria (KYN), the umbrella body of the Kuteb nation, had lamented the killing and displacement of their people.

In a press conference last week, the President of KYN, Emmanuel Ukwen,

described the crisis as having a political undertone.

"Dozens of innocent citizens have been killed by bandits in Takum, Ussa and Yangtu. Equally, thousands of people have been displaced from their homes.

"I want the whole world to know that about 80% of Kuteb people are farmers and with the current wave of attacks, if care is not taken to stop the conflict, farming activities may be grounded and famine will be inevitable in Takum, Ussa and Yangtu, he said.



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commitment to serve the workers of Plateau," he stated.

Manji also appreciated Plateau workers for coming out in their numbers to celebrate this year's Workers Day.

According to him, the massive turnout was another show of support and believe in the

Road mishap claims 2 lives, 12 injured

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

THE Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), Kogi State Command, said a road accident has claimed the lives of two persons while 12 others were critically injured.

The accident which occurred on Sunday involved a Toyota Hiace passenger bus conveying 18 persons, including the driver.

The Sector Commander in the state, Mr Stephen Dawulung, said that the incident occurred at about 3:30 a.m at Irepeni Village on Zariagi-Okene road.

Dawulung explained that the crash was caused by excessive speeding and tyre burst that made the vehicle to sommersault.

"The injured have already been conveyed to Kekere Hospital, Kabba Junction, Zariagi by our personnel who carried out the rescue operation.

"Already, the corpses of the dead passengers have been claimed by relations for burial," he said. The sector commander sympathised with families of the victims and urged drivers

to avoid night journeys, speed and use of worn out or expired tyres.

He also charged drivers to always observe 40 minutes rest after every four hours drive, to ward off fatigue and drowsiness. Dawulung thanked the military for the security cover provided for the FRSC personnel that conducted the rescue operation.

He solicited for more synergy with all security agencies to save lives and property on highways.

Foreign Commentary

Ukraine: Did Putin learn from Bush's Iraq horrors?

From Wagner's crimes and fake pretexts to the UN's inaction, the Iraq invasion offered a preview of the Ukraine war. But not all is the same. MICAH REDDY writes.

TWENTY years ago, on May 1, 2003, then-United States President George W Bush announced the end of major combat operations in Iraq, a giant banner behind him triumphantly screaming, "Mission Accomplished". Six weeks earlier, the US had invaded the Middle Eastern country illegally.

As US armour was rolling into Iraqi cities, international news networks replayed over and over again a scene from April 9 that year that in hindsight seems loaded with dramatic irony.

The toppling of the statue of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad's Firdos square — an event that turned out to be stage-managed — was meant to symbolise the liberation of Iraqis and the end of the Ba'ath Party's 35-year-long rule in Iraq. Yet it was not the grand finale of the US invasion but rather the prelude to a long and bloody revolt and armed uprising.

The US occupation that lasted eight years created aftershocks of regional instability and left hundreds of thousands of Iraqis dead — so many that no one has an exact count.

Like the US-led coalition in Iraq back then, the Russian government expected its illegal invasion of Ukraine in 2022 to end with a quick and decisive victory.

Foiled by a sense of its own invincibility, the Russian army entered Ukraine as if on parade, in long columns that became easy targets for US-made Javelin missiles. They expected to be marching through the streets of Kyiv within days, but a year later, the Russians remain bogged down in a protracted and bloody war.

So did Russian President Vladimir Putin end up repeating the mistakes — and for many, the crimes — of Bush in Iraq 20 years ago? How much do these two epoch-defining invasions have in common? What are the differences?

The parallels run deep, from the false pretexts under which they were launched and the failings of the United Nations system that the wars showed up, to the use of private military contractors. But key differences exist in the deeper motivations that triggered the wars, said military historians and analysts. And the US military proved more effective at fighting a conventional war in Iraq than Russia has in Ukraine.

Both the US-led coalition in Iraq and Russia in Ukraine were led to war by unbridled hubris — that is a "key element" that these two conflicts have in common, said Ibrahim al-Marashi, professor of Iraqi history at California State University. Both belligerents assumed it would be easy to launch "decapitation" attacks and replace the governments of the countries they were invading with friendly regimes that would simply serve their interests.

The outcome was the same in both cases — a "dogged national resistance that humbled both powers," he said.

The hubris showed up in many ways.

Once senior Bush administration officials had made up their minds about invading Iraq, their single-minded determination to topple the Iraqi regime rendered them oblivious to the unintended consequences of war, said analysts.

It also blinded them to inconvenient truths — something neatly encapsulated in what a White House official reportedly told journalist Ron Suskind. "We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality," the official said.

Creating their "own reality" meant ignoring international law and the United Nations Charter that the US and Soviet Union were original



Putin

signatories to. The inability to stop the two bellicose powers from attacking sovereign states starkly exposed the weaknesses of the post-World War II international order.

Both Russia and the US went to war off the back of bogus pretexts — alternate realities they created. In the case of the US and its closest ally in the invasion of Iraq, the United Kingdom, dubious intelligence painted Saddam Hussein's Iraq as a harbourer of al-Qaeda, a hoarder of weapons of mass destruction, and an all-around international bogeyman.

Al-Marashi has firsthand experience of this. A paper he wrote was plagiarised by the UK government in a 2003 document used to make the case for invading Iraq — the so-called "dodgy dossier". Al-Marashi said his work was used in "constructing the image of a dictator who had to be overthrown".

Russia constructed the image of a hostile administration in Kyiv that needed to be overthrown and took that lie to its absurd outer limits, portraying Ukraine's Jewish president Volodymyr Zelenskyy as a depraved addict presiding over a government of neo-Nazis.

"The first 'reason' for Putin taking Ukraine was that he was saving the Ukrainians from this drug-crazed criminal Nazi gang running the country," says Margaret Macmillan, professor of history at the University of Oxford. "And when it turned out that a lot of Ukrainians were supporting the drug-crazed criminal gang the war was now on the Ukrainians themselves, and then there was talk of re-educating them."

As a state where power is concentrated in one man, Russia's war in Ukraine is Putin's war — the brutal incarnation of his own imperial designs, said experts.

According to Jade McGlynn, research fellow at the Department of War Studies at King's College in London, and author of the book *Russia's War*, the invasion of Ukraine "at its heart is a war over identity and conceptions of the [Russian] nation".

Putin "conflated himself with the power structures of Russia," said McGlynn, and "constructed a post-Soviet Russian identity that is very dependent on Ukraine and the idea of a greater Russia".

For al-Marashi, who used to teach at Ukraine's Ivan Franko University, Russia's war has an undeniably imperial aspect to it that can be traced back to Ukraine's incorporation into the Russian empire and deliberate policies of "Russification", which attempted to deny Ukrainian culture and identity in the 19th century. This "imperial mindset" has a long history to it, said al-

Marashi, from Catherine the Great's description of Ukraine as 'New Russia' all the way to Putin. "Those are imperial linkages that I don't think you can deny," he said.

The US's imperial mindset towards countries it has invaded and occupied is also hard to ignore, said experts. But there is a key difference highlighted by the contexts that set the stage for the wars in Iraq and Ukraine.

Russia, said Macmillan, "is the last standing European empire". But it is a crumbling empire, and the speeches and revisionist historical treatises that laid Putin's ideological groundwork for the invasion of Ukraine are often shot through with a sense of historical loss. Putin has lamented the breakup of the Soviet Union as a "genuine tragedy" in which "tens of millions of our fellow citizens and countrymen found themselves beyond the fringes of Russian territory".

His war arose out of the perceived loss of Russia's greatness, its humiliation and betrayal at the hands of the West, and the desire to reclaim Russia's place in the world, according to experts. "Putin was a KGB agent when he witnessed the collapse of the Soviet empire from East Germany," said al-Marashi.

But it was very different for Bush, who "inherited the windfall" of the end of the Cold War and was "riding the emergence" of the US as the superpower in a unipolar world.

According to al-Marashi, the 2003 invasion of Iraq came at a "unique historical moment" for the US, when its hegemony was relatively unchallenged and it "sought to reshape the world" in its image.

When Bush ran for president, he was focused on domestic affairs, not foreign intervention, al-Marashi pointed out. But that changed with the 9/11 attacks, which emboldened the administration's hawks, who felt that the US had unfinished business in Iraq.

In much the same way, the Putin regime had unfinished business in Ukraine. Putin, said experts, felt the need for a lasting solution to the Ukraine question that had plagued Russian nationalists since the Soviet breakup in 1991. That question — namely, what to do about Ukraine drifting towards the West's embrace — had become ever more pressing since the 2014 war in the Donbas.

Russia's "Vietnam" — the disastrous 1979 invasion of Afghanistan, and retreat nine years later — was a cautionary tale about underestimating the resistance of an invaded people. But the memory of that war had faded,

and for Russia's foreign policy hawks, there were more encouraging historical examples closer to hand: the brutal suppression of Chechen independence, and more recent military successes in support of the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad.

For Bush Junior, returning to the Middle East was an opportunity to finish off what his father started in the First Gulf War. Key officials and ideologues of the second Bush administration had served under the elder Bush including his vice president, Dick Cheney, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, and US trade representative Robert Zoellick. They had long advocated for US military intervention abroad.

Wolfowitz, Armitage and Zoellick — three leading "necons" — together with another key war architect, Bush's Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, were signatories of a letter to President Bill Clinton in 1998 calling for regime change in Iraq.

"The only acceptable strategy is one that eliminates the possibility that Iraq will be able to use or threaten to use weapons of mass destruction," the letter read. "In the near term, this means a willingness to undertake military action as diplomacy is clearly failing. In the long term, it means removing Saddam Hussein and his regime from power."

"In any case, American policy cannot continue to be crippled by a misguided insistence on unanimity in the UN Security Council."

Security concerns, although they turned out to be highly exaggerated, played into the decisions of the US and Russia to embark on their illegal invasions.

Moscow has pointed to its fears of NATO expansion and the existential threat posed by a hostile Ukraine, describing its neighbour as merely a proxy for the West. It is, in Putin's view, the latest episode in a long history of Western attempts to cripple Russia.

To some extent, it has become a self-fulfilling prophecy. European support for NATO is far greater than before the invasion, and Russia is more isolated, more economically vulnerable, and faced with biting sanctions.

Similarly, in the aftermath of 9/11, paranoia crept into the US establishment. The first major attack on the US mainland exposed the vulnerability of the world's sole superpower and left the US public deeply shocked. Although Iraq had nothing to do with the attack.

Ultimately, both wars left the countries that started them — and the world at large — less secure than before, and as the costs and casualties began to mount, their citizens became predictably wary. The aftermath of 9/11 saw jingoism reach a fever pitch in the US but also galvanised an anti-war movement. By the end of Bush's final term, public support for the war had plummeted.

It is much harder to gauge Russian public opinion — criticism of the war has been banned and early shows of public disapproval were ruthlessly stamped out — but the exodus of hundreds of thousands of Russians fleeing abroad to avoid the draft gives some indication of the public mood.

When the war in Donbas started in 2014, "there was a nationalist revival", said McGlynn, "you saw people volunteering to go off to Donbas."

"In 2022 it was different, people were anxious".

Yet again, Putin appears to have followed Bush's example.

The US did not rely on conscription to fight its war in Iraq, but was nevertheless wary that a steady stream of body bags for regular troops would take a major toll on public opinion. Its widespread reliance on private military contractors in Iraq, however, helped solve that problem.

The war in Iraq presented a boon for security firms like Blackwater, whose mercenaries were implicated in civilian

killings. Russia has followed suit in Ukraine, outsourcing its war to private companies like the notorious Wagner Group that has recruited widely from prison populations.

Newly recruited, poorly trained prisoners have been pressed into service with the promise of freedom, and have reportedly been used as cannon fodder in some of the most intense fighting in Ukraine. Wagner's fighters have also been implicated in some of the worst atrocities in the ongo

The US did not have a sound exit strategy in Iraq and so got trapped in a grinding conflict, said Macmillan, adding that Russia has made the same mistake.

Yet the results of the Russian and US invasions have been felt most acutely by the invaded populations — Iraqi society was "shattered" by the US's "shock and awe" offensive, said Macmillan, while the costs of reconstruction for Ukraine will likely be higher than in Iraq.

Still, there are differences in the consequences that the US faced and that Russia will likely confront for years to come.

While the US was stuck in a quagmire of its own creation for nearly a decade, there were no significant economic hardships experienced by its population. The US economy did not suffer a war-induced shock, it faced no sanctions and diplomatic isolation, and its military was not humiliated in the way Russia's has been.

Condemnations of US actions were ultimately inconsequential. The US was simply too secure in its role as global hegemon to be treated like a pariah state, and the prospect of an International Criminal Court arrest warrant for Bush or any other senior US government official, as has been issued for Putin, was inconceivable.

For Russia, it is different. Russia is not the Soviet Union — it is a rump state with a struggling economy overly dependent on hydrocarbon exports. Its military, once seen as among the world's most sophisticated, increasingly looks like a Potemkin army when put to the test.

The consequences for the world at large may also be more severe this time.

War in Ukraine threatens to feed into global insecurity. In Iraq, apart from oil supply instability, the spillover from war was largely contained to the Middle East. Ukraine, on the other hand, is more integrated into the global economy and is a breadbasket that sustains global food markets, while sanctions on Russia have destabilised global energy supplies.

The conflict also comes at a time when the guardrails of an interconnected global order that disincentivised wars between major economies are falling apart. "Globalisation is unwinding," said Macmillan.

Global attitudes to flashpoint issues like Taiwan are hardening, as the US and China inch towards open conflict — their strategic decisions likely informed in part by every move on the Ukraine chessboard.

The world, in short, is a more dangerous place than it was two decades ago. A major nuclear power is engaged in a war that is sucking in NATO powers. And even superpowers cannot create an alternative reality.

Source: Al Jazeera

Foreign News

Sudan: Civilians facing 'catastrophe' as 100,000 flee fighting - UN

MORE than 100,000 people have fled Sudan since heavy fighting broke out between rival forces on 15 April, the UN has said.

Officials warned of an "all-out catastrophe" if fighting does not end.

A further 334,000 people have been displaced within Sudan.

Fighting is continuing in the capital, Khartoum, between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), despite a ceasefire due to be in force.

On Monday, the UN special envoy to Sudan, Volker Perthes, told the AP news agency that the two sides had agreed to enter into talks to negotiate a "stable and reliable" ceasefire.

Saudi Arabia was a potential venue for the talks, he added.

If talks take place, it would be the first meeting between the two sides since the conflict started.

A series of temporary ceasefires have failed to hold, with the military continuing to pound Khartoum with air strikes in a bid to weaken the RSF.

Heaving fighting has also taken place in Darfur in western Sudan.

UNHCR spokeswoman Olga Sarrado told reporters in Geneva that the 100,000 total included people from Sudan, South Sudanese citizens returning home, and people who were already refugees within Sudan fleeing the fighting.

Refugees have also been fleeing over Sudan's border with Egypt in the north and Chad in the west.

Most European states have completed the evacuation of their nationals, but Russia said on Tuesday that it was sending four military planes to fly out more than 200 people - including its nationals and those from "friendly countries" - from Sudan.

In Khartoum, food, water and electricity are running out, but desperately needed aid supplies - shipped by the



Al-Burhan

UN into Port Sudan - are being warehoused because the violence. Meanwhile, widespread looting means there is no safe way to deliver them.

World Health Organization (WHO) regional director Ahmed Al-Mandhari said that health facilities have come under attack in Khartoum, and some are being used as military bases.

"Up to now there were around 26 reported attacks on healthcare facilities. Some of these attacks resulted in the death of healthcare workers and civilians in these hospitals," he told the BBC.

"Also you know some of these hospitals are used as military bases and they have thrown the staff, they have thrown patients out of these healthcare facilities," he added.

On Monday, the UN's Humanitarian Coordinator in Sudan, Abdou Dieng, said that more than two weeks of devastating fighting risked turning the country's humanitarian crisis into a "full blown catastrophe".

"Even before the current crisis, one-third of Sudan's

population, nearly 16 million people, already needed humanitarian aid. Some 3.7 million people were already internally displaced people, mostly in Darfur," he said.

King Charles' coming coronation stirs memories of queen

PAMELA Tawse was 18 and still in her nurse's uniform and cap when she made her way to central London after her night shift, eager to catch a glimpse of the new Queen Elizabeth on the day of her coronation.

It was the huge crescendo of noise she remembers today, aged 88, twinkling in delight as she thinks back to a time when Britain, still enduring rationing eight years after the end of World War Two, turned out in force to see the opulence and glamour of the start of a historic reign.

A photograph from 1956 of Tawse in Montreal, after she became the coordinator for the Montreal Children's Hospital Home Care Programme, is seen in the library room of the Hawkwood Centre for Future Thinking in Stroud, April 20, 2023.

"We climbed over the

SANTIAGO Peña of Paraguay's ruling conservative Colorado Party has won the presidential election, beating a centre-left challenger.

With almost all ballots counted, Mr Peña, an economist, got more than 42%, electoral officials say.

Efraín Alegre, candidate of the Concertación Nacional coalition, had nearly 28%. He later admitted defeat.

The Colorado Party has dominated the political scene in the landlocked South American nation for more than 70 years.

Sunday's presidential poll was decided in a single round of voting.

Addressing his supporters, Mr Peña, 44, said: "Thank you for this Colorado victory, thank you for this Paraguayan victory."

He also called for nationwide unity and consensus. Paraguay's economy is expected to

Paraguay ruling party's Peña wins presidential election

grow by more than 4% this year, but the country has relatively high levels of poverty and corruption.

"We have a lot to do, after the last years of economic stagnation, of fiscal deficit, the task that awaits us is not for a single person or for a party," Mr Peña said.

Meanwhile, Mr Alegre, 60, said his coalition had made significant efforts but the election results showed this was not enough.

During his campaigning, he advocated austerity measures to combat the growing fiscal deficit and pledged to tackle corruption.

He also proposed dropping his country's long-running ties with Taiwan and instead aligning with China.

Paraguay is currently among only 14 countries who have official diplomatic relations with Taiwan.



Benítez

China regards the island as a renegade province, which should be returned - including by force if needed - to Beijing's control.

On Sunday, Paraguayans were also voting in parliamentary elections, with the Colorado Party securing the highest share of the vote



Charles

barricades and the crowds were really deep," Tawse recounted.

"Then suddenly, we heard an enormous roar, and we knew that probably the queen was coming by," she said, her eyes vividly lighting up at the memory through a pair of gold rimmed glasses.

Tawse had decorated the hospital bedpans in red, white and blue tape, a small symbol of the excitement greeting 27-year old Elizabeth as the new head of the royal family on the brink of a technicolour age.

For Brenda Piper, who slept on the pavement to secure a spot along the procession route, there was a sense of amazement at the sheer "spectacle" of the queen sweeping past in a gold state coach.

"This Elizabethan age, it really did begin that way," she said, clutching a black and white photograph of herself with friends on the day. "Next thing it was coffee bars, and then spaghetti bolognese, and then mini skirts. So it really was a beginning."

Tawse and Piper were two of 12 people who spoke to

Reuters about their memories of the queen's coronation on June 2, 1953 ahead of the crowning on May 6 of her son King Charles with much of the same pomp and pageantry but a scaled-down procession and a shorter ceremony.

They were either part of the estimated 3 million people who lined the processional route in London, among those who attended street parties, watching on television for the first time, or following from thousands of miles away in British colonies.

Elizabeth, who died last September aged 96 after 70 years on the throne, had become queen in 1952 on the death of her father: by tradition there is a gap of some time between the succession and the coronation.

Olive Goldsmith, who is now a retired Refugee Council employee, said her experience was shaped by two friends who provided an outsider's view, with one having spent a childhood in India under British rule, and another from Prague which had been occupied by Nazi Germany.

"They were both very intrigued to see how the native English behave," she said, adding that she didn't recall much "royalism" as they lived in an area known for its "socialist principles."

Milton Job, a clerk at the time in what was the British-ruled Nigeria, attended a local celebration where school children joined local chiefs, bosses and expatriate officers. "I will never forget it," he said.

He later moved to Britain, expecting to be there only for three years but still living in London in 2023 after he built ties in the country.

"I expected the best, and to me, I wasn't distracted by

anything that is negative, although you cannot just do away with some people who have not seen a Black man before."

"We were here to study, we were here for a purpose."

Harewood, 83, poses for a photograph in her bedroom at the Peartree Care Home in London, Britain, April 11, 2023.

Eve Harewood, who was 13 when she followed the coronation from Singapore, said that she remembered thinking she would love to move to England one day. "It was something I really wanted to experience," she said. She moved to Britain in her 30s.

Many of those who spoke to Reuters recalled the excitement of the time, seeing the young queen as the symbol of a new beginning for Britain.

They contrasted that with the sentiment of today, with Britons facing the biggest squeeze in living standards since records began in the 1950s.

Alex Falk, who worked with the coronation photographers, said Britain had fallen down the international pecking order since the 1950s, while others expressed regret that the country and its social fabric had changed so much.

"I feel sorry for the younger generation of today," Phillip Williams said. "I think things were probably much harder now than they were in my days."

Like others, he plans to watch Charles' coronation, and like others, he wished the king well.

But he cautioned: "This time, I should take it easy, especially at my age."

Dutch plans cut in nitrogen emissions

DUTCH government plans to drastically cut emissions of nitrogen pollution cleared a key hurdle Tuesday when the European Union's executive arm gave the green light to farm buyout schemes worth nearly 1.5 billion euros (\$1.65 billion).

The plans to reduce nitrogen deposits - mainly by livestock farms - on EU-designated areas of vulnerable nature have sparked heated debate and widespread protests by angry farmers in this small nation that is a major producer and exporter of farm products. Dutch agricultural exports were worth 122.3 billion euros last year, according to the national statistics office.

The Dutch ruling coalition wants to cut emissions of pollutants, predominantly nitrogen oxide and ammonia, by 50% nationwide by 2030. It was not immediately clear how much of that target could be met using the EU-approved funds.

Nitrogen pollution makes

climate change worse and can harm biodiversity, according to the UN Environment Program.

A key part of the Dutch strategy involves buying up and halting work at farms responsible for large-scale emissions of nitrogen. However, that required confirmation from the European Commission that the buyouts do not amount to state aid that is banned under EU rules.

Margrethe Vestager, Executive Vice-President in charge of competition policy, said in a statement that the two schemes approved would clear the way for the "voluntary closure" of farms responsible for major nitrogen emissions.

"The schemes will improve the environment conditions in those areas and will promote a more sustainable and environmentally friendly production in the livestock sector, without unduly distorting competition," she said.

The Dutch government had no

immediate reaction. The minister responsible is expected to inform lawmakers about the decision later Tuesday.

A pro-agriculture political party won Dutch provincial elections in March, underscoring the depth of discontent among farmers and other sections of society that has been fueled by the nitrogen reduction plans. The Dutch central government has tasked provincial legislatures with formulating and implementing exact proposals to reduce nitrogen emissions. Farmers have held several large demonstrations, blocking highways and supermarket warehouses last year to protest the reforms that they cast as an existential threat to their way of life. The demonstrations have also spread to neighboring Belgium, where hundreds of farmers drove their tractors into downtown Brussels last month to protest plans to cut nitrogen pollution.

Feature

A 'real' teacher, her burdens

She can be mistaken for a student the way she walks briskly to the classroom, if not for absence school uniform on her. On duty, she is a teachers' teacher, but beyond the class duty, greater burden lay on her slim shoulders, IGNATIUS CHUKWU writes.

MEET Bisola Uche-Nwichi (popularly called Mummy Bisola), the lady that is described by many as a 'called' teacher, a 'real' teacher. This is because of her extra passion, her other silent tasks of burrowing beyond the surface to dig out the real problems her students carry silently.

Some teenaged girls face frequent abuse where they live by relations or their Aunties' husbands, a situation they will never reveal, but which eats them up. Some teenagers are battling the guilt of masturbation while many are under drug abuse.

Some can't stop pilfering and tapping money, a scenario that exposes them to disgrace and dehumanization from time to time. The commonest situations are financial.

Often, a real teacher finds a very brilliant student fading or skipping classes. When Mummy Bisola probes deeper, she finds huge financial crisis chewing up the career of the brilliant teenager.

Trying to rescue these teenagers so they can face their studies has created a dual-duty roster to Mummy Bisola and other 'called' teachers.

Now, her other passion, a vocation as childcare and mentor seems to take the better part of her and her name is becoming a household one within Elenwo and Port Harcourt.

On her birthday last week celebrated in an orphanage (Priesthood Orphanage in Elenwo) to give motherless children a treat, Mummy Bisola admitted that she often comes across situation with teenagers or kids with needs outside academics.

She also admitted that her mandate is to teach academics but not outside it, and so, it poses a challenge whether to just ignore such ugly situations and teach and walk away or to deviate to find the root of the strange situation.

She retorted: "I meet this situation very often. Real teachers come across several matters beyond their mandate. The number one is financial matters. I teach in a public school where people come with mixed circumstances.

"People come with baggage (for want of better word). By God's grace, because of the nature of the ministry (God) assigned to me, so I hear quite a lot of situations; people struggling with addictions, home crisis, abuse both sexually and physically, people struggling with financial situations up to how to even eat. As a person, I have tried.

Sometimes, I have had to escalate to the parents' level (call them in to say, this is what this child is facing). "Some even have to do with money. That is what I say I am



Bisola

blessed with people that surround me. Sometimes, I have to raise support for both a child and the family. You don't have to look at your pocket because God does not look at the size of your pocket but your mind to give. The matter goes beyond the call for academic duty."

Mummy Bisola is known in her circles as a virtuous woman who gives freely, who rescues the needy, and who will not rest until a situation put in her hand gets solved. That could explain why on her birthdays, she tries to give to orphans, celebrate at orphanages, and does teaching and evangelism to touch lives especially teenagers.

Asked if rescuing derailing teenagers has become the burden of an 'called' teacher, Uche-Nwichi totally agreed: "Yes, I like the term, the 'called' teacher. You go into a class and prepare your lesson notes and identify the main objectives of a particular lesson, and you also list the subsidiary objectives.

Most times, before the end of a lesson, by the time you do evaluation, you will find that the majority of the students have met both your main and subsidiary objectives.

"But, in this other situation, it is not part of the objectives you listed, but a child is struggling, not because the child does not know. The child has several other distractions or unmet needs which are affecting your main

and subsidiary aims. You are not being effective for a whole lot of other things. Until you identify and tackle these other intrusions, you won't meet up. But God is helping us."

The self-imposed social worker said there are issues she just cannot resolve and demands she cannot meet, and it saddens her spirit. "Of course, it is not for us to solve all. It is God that equips us to do what we can do, and the rest we leave to the Holy Spirit to take control. All you do is to plant the seed, and as the child grows, you pray the seed grows along."

Sometimes, she stated, the efforts work fast, but in some, it takes time to manifest. "It is not easy teaching in public schools but we are doing our best, by God's grace."

Mummy Bisola said being a child of God is a huge privilege. "I had an encounter with Him early, so God didn't allow me get lost first. He ensured that I was drawn to Him. Lots of people my age are still wallowing in sin, but God ensured I am in Him. I have had experiences with Him; being alive is one, and being in Him is very important."

The social worker/evangelist tried to explain how those outside Christ can still feel and recognize the love of God enough to want to come in.

She stated: "There is an emptiness in those who do not know Christ yet. In the university, we heard about Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs and that needs are insatiable. But when you are in Christ, you experience this feeling of satisfaction. It is only in Christ that you get this feeling. Outside, you see those who have all the money, power, etc, but there is this void in their hearts only being in Christ can fill it."

She explained why she chose an orphanage to celebrate her birthday: "My calling is basically children, my assignment in life is on children. I am a teacher, that is my secular job. God has expressly told me that He wants me to do this. The very first time I heard from Him concerning my calling was, 'Partner with me for the Future of the World!' I said, I hope this is not too big for me, but over the years, He has equipped me.

"Over the years, I have had cause to come here to have different talks with the children, but this time, we came here two weeks ago, and I was looking for a place for reception for my birthday. I had issues with the venue. So, while we were having worship session two weeks ago, the Holy Spirit whispered to my soul, 'this is your venue'.

Every other venue had failed. God was behind it though I didn't see that at that point, I thought people were sabotaging it. All things work together for your good to them that love the Lord. That was exactly the situation. I came out and told Brother Jeremey, look, God has given me a venue. It is God that chose this venue, Priesthood Orphanage!"

Sexuality and purity She said this is an important teaching line for teenagers especially in the present era. "We came here and gave a message on 'Sexuality and Purity'. This is good topic for teens. We asked them several questions and encouraged them to express themselves, though they initially were not very free. Timidity! Now, they are comfortable expressing themselves. It's like a mini-debate.

"In the world of today, children need to be taught about sexuality, not to be allowed to pick pieces from other sources. They have to know what exactly to do.

"The world complains that kids are doing bad things, have we actually taught them what is right? It's not enough to complain that they are not doing the right thing. That is our mission. We teach teenagers the way God wants it, the manual in the Bible. It's to share with them and let them deeply realise that God loves them even as we love them.

"On what she has received from God to warrant giving, she said: "Plenty! I have received life, the blessings are numerous. God has blessed me. Humans may not see the blessings. The day before my birthday, I usually sit back to count my blessings. "My family, my spiritual and physical families. God has blessed me with such wonderful people, who genuinely love you, people who got your back. It is not people who have superficial love for you. That is the greatest blessing. People are not celebrating you in your presence but more at the back. "Apart from the physical blessings in this country, for you to be alive here, to have a roof over your head, afford basic meals. That is the most important. The best of all is; I am a child of God".

EVERYBODY'S WORLD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

Living

Understanding why women fall out of love

By
ALLISON KANALEY TRUDELL

WHEN it comes to relationships, there is nothing more magical or fulfilling than falling in love. It's the ultimate in emotion, the prize, the best part of being with another person. It's not surprising, then, that falling out of love is one of the most confusing feelings we can experience in life. Yet many women, for many reasons, find themselves in this unexpected place – feeling as if the magic of love has taken a nosedive. But evaluating the relationship midflight can be a tricky proposition. Before you decide if you are fully out of love, read on to see what matters can be changed. The notion that the grass is greener is notorious for creeping into, and destroying, relationships. Just because you've settled into a comfort zone with your partner doesn't mean there is excitement around the bend with someone else.

The devil on your shoulder may tell you differently, and listening to that voice will pull you away from listening to your partner. Communication is critical if a relationship is to grow, and it becomes even more important when there are bumps in the road. Concerns that love may be diminishing will start small, with subtle changes in the way you think. The following are all indicators that you need to work on your relationship: * You no longer enjoy thinking about your partner throughout the day like you once did. * You don't look forward to your time together. * You don't share the same goals and plans for your future, and you avoid talking about them. * The little "things" are beginning to annoy you in a major way. * You no longer think of new ways to please him. * You are thinking of someone else.

Evaluating Your Feelings There may be valid reasons for the way you feel, especially if your partner is not giving you what you need. But before you throw in the towel, take a good look at where you've been together, and take some time to decide if the relationship is worth saving. Feeling as if you're falling out of love may simply be a wake-up call that you need to catch each other and take the stairs – together – one by one. Before your relationship turns



from passionate to lukewarm, notice the warning signs that trouble may be ahead. Has sex become a distant memory for you and your partner? Is there only an occasional physical reminder of the passion you used to share? Sex is an important part of any relationship, so if your sex life has diminished, there is likely some underlying emotional reason for it. Communication issues and unrealistic expectations are two of the main reasons people find themselves falling out of love. But there are things that can be done to stop the fall. Relationships are hard work; they should be viewed as investments, particularly if there is a marriage. Take stock of your feelings, and do it often. Ask about his feelings, and do it regularly. Growing apart can happen quickly and unexpectedly, particularly if your lives involve changes in kids, work, hobbies, goals, and values. In marriage, falling out of love can have particularly devastating

consequences. It may be more difficult for women to come to terms with, or even admit, that they are having problems maintaining the feelings of love for their spouses. They have to make a decision to dissolve or save the marriage while battling conflicting emotions. Men seem to be getting all the attention when it comes to relationship muck-ups and falling out of love. Bestselling book, *Why Men Fall out of Love* (2005), by Michael French, was a big hit with readers, but no such book has been written about women. Women, meanwhile, often think they are the "fixers" of the relationship, and tend to seek out information to remedy the problem. They may perceive men to be indifferent and construe their lack of communication as cruel. As the women feel more neglected, the slow process of falling out of love begins. Neglect isn't as concrete as infidelity or physical abuse, so it is a tougher area to discuss directly. See

your partner for who he is. If he treats you poorly now, he will later. If he has a bad habit of putting you down in front of his friends, see it as a red flag. These actions may not make you feel like falling out of love now, but soon enough they will wear on you.

Looking at the Numbers Many marriage counselors advise waiting until after the age of 25 to tie the knot; others say waiting until at least 30 is best. Of course, the level of maturity is certainly more important than the calendar years, but give these numbers a little thought. Are you on the rebound? If so, beware of getting involved with a new partner too quickly. Regardless how right or perfect he seems, your heart needs time to mend, and your brain needs time to make rational decisions. Rebound romances tend to be hot and heavy at first, but you could find yourself in a sticky situation if things get out of hand. If the relationship is strong and worthy of going the long haul, a little caution is necessary. The same goes if he is the one nursing a broken heart. This leads to the topic of second marriages. Despite the notion that you learn from your mistakes and won't make them again, second marriages are not always the lucky charm. The added pressures of stepchildren and ex-spouses is one of the major stressors on relationships. Those who enter a relationship where children already exist face an even greater potential for problems down the road. Setting ground rules right away is necessary for the relationship to grow and succeed. Without them, falling out of love is an unfortunate possibility.

4 Reasons We Fall in Love, Falsely

Some of the reasons why women fall out of love is because they never fell in love for the right reasons to start. Check this list and see if you are a culprit.

The biological clock. That biological clock's tick-tock may be driving you nuts, but you're better off finding something to drown out the noise than give in to its chimes. With all of the technological advances we have seen in recent times, age is much less a factor today than it was a generation ago. If a family is part of your plan for the future, make yourself happy first. If that involves being in a healthy relationship, focus on making good choices; the rest will follow.

Don't just date someone because having a boyfriend makes your mother happy. Figure out what makes you happy and go with it. Take a class, participate in a new activity or take a trip by yourself. Whether you are hoping to meet a man or a friend, there are many great ways that don't involve bars. A growing number of women are finding that being single is fun. In fact, the 2005 census shows that there were more single women, 51 percent, than married women.

Sympathy. Who hasn't dated a guy because he had those sad puppy-dog eyes and looked like his heart would break if you said no? The problem is that one date turns into another and the next thing you know, he has moved into your life, your apartment and your checkbook. Don't play the martyr; it can lead to disaster.

Sex. Come on ladies, this isn't a reason to fall in love. If sexual intimacy is tops on your list of priorities, there may be other issues you need to work on first. Many women fall in love for the wrong reasons. That doesn't mean the love is any less passionate or meaningful; it just means women set themselves up for disaster by not paying close enough attention to the details. Wanting to fall in love is a normal, natural part of our social makeup. But if you are desperate to find love, for whatever reasons, you risk productive future relationships and your own happiness.



THE EYE'S WORLD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

Health

Treat menopause joint pain naturally

DO you feel stiff and achy when you wake up in the morning? Did you know that most women in menopause experience joint pain? Good news – there are several ways to get relief from aching joints during menopause.

Why do I have menopausal joint pain?

You might feel aches and pains in your knees, shoulders, neck, elbows, or hands. We start to feel uncomfortable in menopause as our estrogen levels drop. Estrogen is a natural anti-inflammatory so as it fluctuates and dips we feel joint stiffness and achiness.

Estrogen helps keep fluid levels balanced. Now our joints aren't as well lubricated so we suffer with joint pain and swelling. If you have an old injury it might flare up again.

How relieve menopause joint pain

There are changes you can make in your lifestyle and the food you choose to eat that can improve your discomfort and prevent things from worsening.

Stay hydrated

Our thirst signals aren't as accurate in menopause. In addition to that, the total amount of water in our body is decreasing. Drinking water will help skin and other body tissues to stay hydrated.

Plain water without added sugar or sugar substitutes is the best choice. Add a squeeze of citrus or a splash of pomegranate juice if you want some flavor.



Aching legs in menopause? Keep 'em moving

You may feel achy but exercise is actually a way to ease the pain.

Movement keeps joints lubricated. If you are uncomfortable, choose a low impact exercise like riding a

bike, yoga, or swimming. Give yourself adequate rest time between high impact workouts to allow your body to recover.

Supplements for menopause joint pain

The best supplements for menopause joint pain are those that have anti-inflammatory properties. Turmeric, omega-3 fatty acid, and ginger can help and offer additional health benefits. Magnesium helps maintain joint tissue and muscle function. It also helps strengthen bones. Topical CBD creams have also been found to offer joint pain relief.

Keep weight in the healthy range

Excess weight puts a strain on your joints. Adapting lifestyle habits like regular movement and eating nutrient-packed foods will help you stay in your healthy weight range.

Plan anti-inflammatory meals
Processed foods with cheap oils and foods high in sugar fan the flames of inflammation. Avoid inflammatory foods like white bread, cookies, and cake, fried foods, processed meats like hot dogs, soda and other sugary beverages, and foods with trans fatty acids like margarine. Plan meals with foods that soothe body tissues.

Phytochemicals and

antioxidants, which reduce inflammation, are in foods like broccoli, avocados, berries, tomatoes, spinach, kale, oranges, cherries, salmon, olive oil, nuts, 70%+ dark chocolate, olive oil, and green tea. Even seasoning ingredients can help reduce pain. Try a little ginger, cinnamon, garlic, cayenne, or turmeric.

Lift some weights

A regular resistance training routine helps to strengthen the muscles around your joints. When these muscles are strong they can absorb the impact of your daily activities and cushion your joints.

I try to plan for as many anti-inflammatory ingredients as possible when making my meals and snacks. If you'd like to try out some of my plant forward recipes I created a 7-Day Perimenopause Meal Plan to help with issues like joint pain as well as other symptoms.

Sometimes you're short on time and can't get a tasty, nutritious meal together as well as you'd like. Wouldn't having a personal chef around just be a dream! The next best option is a good quality prepared meal delivery or meal kit. I rely on Sakara when I don't have time for my usual food prep. Use my code XOFBN for 20% off your first order if you'd like to try. I've also enjoyed Sunbasket and Purple Carrot.



Editorial

May Day celebration and Nigerian Workers

THE 1st of May every year has been set aside to commemorate and celebrate the achievements of workers globally. Each year a theme is selected to reflect happenings around the world and for the 2023 celebration the theme is workers' Right and Socio-Economic Justice'.

IN line with this therefore workers in Nigeria joined their counterparts across the world to commemorate the day which affords them the opportunity to celebrate their contributions to the growth and development of the nation.

MAY Day in Nigeria is celebrated in a colourful way amidst pomp and pageantry marked with various events and activities ranging from match pass, cultural displays, rallies and symposium. Most importantly, it affords labour the opportunity to make their demands for better remuneration and working conditions.

NIGERIAN workers are currently facing enormous challenges ranging from poor working conditions, low salaries, job insecurity, disparity in wages, amongst others.

THE outgoing administration of President Muhammadu Buhari in an attempt to find a solution to the demand for upward review of minimum wage in Nigeria, set up a tripartite National Minimum Wage Committee to come up with a fair and decent wage for Nigerian workers. At the end of its assignment, the committee arrived at a new minimum wage of N30,000 which has since been adopted and Federal Government workers and some states have enjoyed it.

IT is however worrisome that years after, some state governments are yet to implement this sadly, some who started have not been able to be up to date in the payment of salaries to their workers as some states go for months without salaries. Yet state governors go cap in hand to collect monthly allocations from Abuja.

WITH the current state of things in Nigeria, the N30,000 minimum wage can not suffice given the rate of inflation across the world which was further worsened by the recent cash crunch that Nigerians were subjected to. At the moment, the reality on ground is that Nigerians are in for more of the suffering with the plan for subsidy removal by the government. Stakeholders in the sector have all been unanimous on the fact that with the current situation, what the Nigerian workers need at the moment is no longer a minimum wage but a living wage as the take home pay no longer takes them home.

ANOTHER worrisome situation faced by Nigerian workers is the disparity in the remuneration of workers. People working in different establishments like CBN, NNPC, Federal Ministries and Parastatals though all referred to as civil servants, but go home with different packages. Also, those in political offices go home with humongous amounts as salaries and are able to live large but at the end of the day, it's the same market they all go to. We call on the incoming government to look at workers plight with a human face. What is good for the gander is good for the goose.

IT is also a known fact that some workplace do not take into cognisance the safety and well-being of its workers as the work place environment is precarious.

THERE is also the need for labour leaders and government, as well as other stakeholders in the sector to hold regular talks, to constantly engage the Ministry of Labour from time to time as it concerns the welfare of workers and not only wait for Workers Day.

It is therefore hoped that the government would be sensitive, responsive and accountable to the needs of Nigerian workers. There is need to prioritize the welfare of workers and ensure that they are adequately compensated for their resilience, patience, hardwork and dedication. Workers should on their part rise up to their responsibility.

ALCOHOL is a liquid substance containing chemical mixture that when consumed to the system it changes human behavior and mode of action, is a distilled or fermented drink that can make you drunk. Scientifically alcohol is a liquid made up of distilled hydrocarbon that is also known as ethyl alcohol or ethanol, alcohol beverages like whiskey are produced by fermentation of yeast, sugar and starches and also have the power to make a person intoxicated.

Knowing the effect of alcohol to the body system most especially the human brain, according to research alcohol slows down the central nervous system, the central nervous system controls thought and how the brain communicates to the body system, and also the most immediate effects of alcohol are on brain affecting the way they think, feel and behave any time they consume excess of it.

According to statistics, the number of mad people roaming around in markets and highways most especially the youths who are supposed to be our

leaders of tomorrow is all as the result of drug abuse and excess consumption of alcohol that affect their mental health. Taking, alcohol also impact on the ability to process thoughts and make rational and reckless decision which can lead to increase in violence or any form of aggressive behavior, this is because alcohol can make one lose self-control and self esteem and ability to

Consequences of alcohol intake on youth

process multiple issues and decreased the ability to resolve conflict.

Some people take alcohol to help them forget their worries and also enables them sleep peacefully, while alcohol may help induce sleep in short time and first half of the night, they likely experience more sleep disturbance in the second half of the night which is the heavier part of the night and the most importantly hour during sleeping hours.

Also, quality sleep is critical to positive mental health and wellbeing, and lack of quality sleep can



negatively impact to our daily functioning and reduce our overall quality of life.

He later added that some people take alcohol to make them courageous in terms of approach, for example some young boys that are not bold enough to stand confidently to express love advances to a lady, some of them take alcohol to help erase tension in terms of approach, in our tertiary institutions some students take alcohol before presentation on stage which may you maid end up staying something contrary.

Moreso, looking at the rampant cases of accidents on roads which is as the result of excess consumption of alcohol where driving under the influence of alcohol has send many young people to their early grave which is a great lost to the society.

Knowing the consequences of alcohol to the system, it is advisable that alcohol should not be taken in excess to the extent that will make someone lose self-control to avoid especially in facing some problems and challenges.

Ngot Bwehmasi Caleb I. is an IT Student from Federal Polytechnic Bauchi.

The collapse of our educational system

EDUCATION they say is the bedrock of every society and should be taken seriously, but the reverse is the case now because of how poor the system is being managed these days.

Instead of focusing on how to improve the system, we are busy politicizing the future of our children and it is gradually consuming us. It is sad that the educational institutions that have baked and groomed our leaders who are at the helm of affairs today are in dhambles.

Worthy of note is how our primary schools are left with pulpils sitting under trees on

stones to receive lesson, with half-baked teachers whose qualifications are questionable. In a country called "giant" of Africa, it is shameful that we are still operating a "stone-age" style where pupils still sit under the tree to learn in this modern age.

The secondary schools are not left out of the dilemma, most government owned school have poor structures poor funding, low quality teaching and are without enough teachers. Imagine, having a teacher, teaching all subjects that he or she is not professionally trained.

This has grossly contributed in producing students of low quality where could hardly read and write effectively. They had no option than to engage in examination malpractices to scale through to the University or any higher educational institution.

The most worrisome of all is how students are clustered in a room in the name of accommodation. It has been on record that, more than four to five students are kept in a room and it has forced so many to look for alternative means of renting an apartment off campus where

their safety is guaranteed.

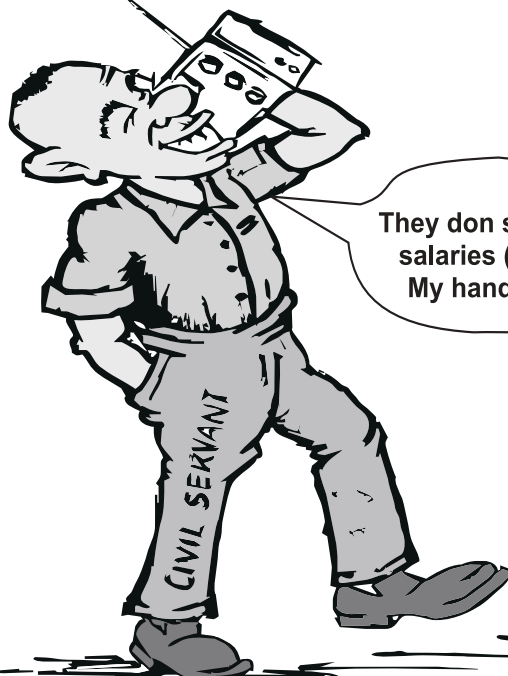
Therefore, we should stop playing politics with such asensitive sector and focus more on building strong and functional education system that will take off our younger generation off crime and vices.

Government should prioritize or put more funds on repositioning our educational sector so that, our schools will have other countries coming to learn in Nigeria instead of embarking on shameless educational tourism to other schools abroad.

Ayuba Bulus Apata, Jos.

Standard Cartoon

FED. GOVT. PLAN TO INCREASE SALARY



They don start again salaries (an fara). My hand no dey



We no want problems oh! go finish with ASUU, Jailbreaks, Subsidy and others. When they cannot pay 30K minimum wage, they are talking about increase. No carry us play politics.

Ylbiisa

Opinion

By
Daniel Ighakpe

The dignity of labour

"THERE is benefit in every kind of hard work..." – Proverbs 14:23.

A talented Nigerian musician, Adekunle Gold, in one of his popular songs entitled 'Work', encouraged people to work hard. This is in harmony with what God's Word, the Bible, recommends in Ecclesiastes chapter 9, verse 10, where it says: "Whatever your hand finds to do, do with all your might..."

Work – whether paid or unpaid, is good for our health and well-being. It contributes to our happiness, helps us to build confidence and self-esteem, and can reward us financially. Work is an essential tool through which individuals can achieve their goals, flourish, and live happy, meaningful lives.

Work has different dimensions, such as work for making a living and work for developing one's talent and potential. For example, a little girl in one of the corners of the world who goes to kindergarten and learns how to count, draw, or write, is working. Likewise, an adult, who goes to his/her job every day, and gets paid for that, is also working. Thus, based on the age, circumstances, needs and desires of individuals, work, or labour, takes different shapes.

Work is a virtue and necessity, which requires the utilisation of time and energy. Man is in control of his time and energy when he voluntarily and constructively works. The Bible emphasises the importance of work when it says, among other things, in 2 Thessalonians, chapter 3, verses

10 to 12 that "...if anyone does not want to work, neither let him eat..." this scripture condemns laziness. We need to work to make a living and provide for our families. Work provides the individual with the ability to be independent, flourish, develop, and most importantly, to find meaning in life.

However, there are many problems seriously affecting work and workers in Nigeria today. These include unemployment, poor remuneration/wages, poor working environment and conditions, and casualisation of workers, among others. Many people experience poverty and unemployment through no fault of their own. Many who are able to work, willing to work hard, and even actively searching for work, are still unable to find work – they are unemployed!

Unemployment and poverty are two of the major problems currently plaguing Nigeria's economy and its society. Nevertheless, despite the high rate of unemployment and poverty, the situation is not necessarily hopeless. People can still find some meaningful work to engage in, even though it may be small. And, as another talented Nigerian musician, Sonnie Smyth, sang in his music video entitled: "NO WAHALA": "No wahala, e go better, after today, I go see tomorrow o!" You can download and watch this music video, "NO WAHALA," performed by Sonnie Smyth and directed by Achor Yusuf, on YouTube.

If you are unemployed, or cannot find a job in your area of particular interest, it is wise to consider looking for a job in other areas, even if the job is considered 'menial' by the standards of some people. Do not allow false pride to let you look down on a job – as beneath your dignity. Any legitimate service that can benefit others, and that people are willing to pay for, can be considered as an alternative job opportunity when jobs are scarce.

People differ in terms of many characteristics such as intelligence, talents, academic levels, etc. Therefore, depending on human potential and the specific working environment, work can be equally beneficial to the person or demeaning. For example, prostitution, gambling, and drug dealing constitute work, as you get a kind of remuneration for the service you provide. But the money you get out of these kinds of work becomes useless, as

it neither contributes to human flourishing nor is the basis of a meaningful life. Work should be the key to human survival and flourishing, and not to the degradation of the individual and his moral values.

On the other hand, no matter how honest, working from dawn to sunset does not make your life flourish either. "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," goes the popular saying. Workaholics, the people whose only purpose in life is work, deprive themselves of the enjoyment of engaging in other activities. Productive work is not an end-in-itself, but a means of flourishing. If one pursues productive work to the exclusion of everything else in one's life, so that it becomes one's only purpose in life, this will undermine one's flourishing. On the other hand, those who keep their life balanced are likely to enjoy their work even more.

So, whether your work is mostly mental, mostly physical, or

somewhere in between, recognise that there is dignity in labour! Hard work helps us to care for our material needs. Moreover, it contributes to our self-respect, after all, hard work is just that – hard. When we discipline ourselves to stick with our work – even if it seems boring or difficult – we can have the satisfaction of knowing that we held ourselves to a high standard. We have won the victory over the inclination to take the easy way out. In that sense, work brings an intense feeling of satisfaction.

God wants us to enjoy the fruitage, or reward, of our hard work. His Word, the Bible says: "There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and find enjoyment in his hard work. This too, I have realised, is from the hand of the true God." – Ecclesiastes 2:24.

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Understanding agriculture, artificial intelligence

THEE is a link between agriculture and artificial intelligence. This piece of information was given by the Co-founder and Global Director of BudgiT, Nigeria's leading civil organisation, Mr. Oluseun Onigbinde, during a recent discourse on the economy. Onigbinde said that the world is now at a convergence point where soil scientists, nutritionists, extension workers and animal experts may have to learn coding, machine language, and other tools in order to belong to the emerging agri-conomy.

This reality comes to play because over the years, agriculture was relegated to the background as a means of foreign exchange earning for the country that is in dire need for transformation for the good of the nation and that of the citizenry. Onigbinde's intervention was noticed and should be given the He said this while speaking at the 25th Annual Convention and 24th Annual Lecture Series of the Alumni Association of the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Ogun State, with the theme 'Leading Agritech Revolution: The Role of Big Data, Artificial Intelligence and Blockchain in Agri-conomy'.

According to him, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming various industries, and agriculture is no exception, adding that the use of AI in agriculture had increased in recent years, bringing about significant improvements in the industry's efficiency and productivity. He explained that "it is essential to ensure that big data is collected, stored, and analysed responsibly and appropriately to protect individual's privacy and prevent data

By Adewale Kupoluyi

misuse", noting that blockchain could help small farmers access financing and reduce the risk of fraud.

On his part, the co-speaker, Mr. Femi Adekoya, widely known as Flying Farmer and founder, Integrated Aerial Precision and Precision Field Academy, has charged the University Management to incorporate drone technology into its curriculum, establish drone training centre, promote collaboration, between the university and industry partners, provide financial backing for research and development in the use of drone technology applications, and support local content in the manufacturing and assembling of agricultural drones.

The Pro-Chancellor and Chairman, Governing Council of FUNAAB, Alhaji Umar Ahmed revealed that alumni associations are known to be key stakeholders in the advancement of their universities, noting that in many institutions, including FUNAAB, "a seat is most reserved for the alumni body on the governing council, which places a burden on the association to, not just be involved in policy making for the good corporate governance of the university, but to also be involved in agenda setting for the University administration".

The Vice-Chancellor of FUNAAB, Prof. Olusola Kehinde disclosed that the University had continued to register and record giant strides in its continued growth and development, and in its

pursuit of excellence, which had been the hallmark of the institution since it was founded in 1988. The VC, who was represented by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Prof. Christian Ikeobi, said the alumni should be proud of their alma mater because it had continued to move forward in the global comity of universities, adding that FUNAAB had always registered landmark achievements in all fields of endeavours. The National President of the Alumni Association, Dr. Olusegun Ogundiran, has reiterated that the theme of the annual lecture was carefully crafted to address the opportunities embedded in applying emerging technologies of AI, stressing that big data, and blockchain in agriculture.

Earlier, Dr. Ogundiran, had assured the university management that the association is ready to assist the institution in the fulfilment of its mandate. Dr. Ogundiran noted that "there are benefits in joining an alumni association", saying it assists in making sure that the mentoring process continues and they are building a strong network, which was already yielding results. He added that the association "is connecting all FUNAABites across the globe by encouraging them to give back to their alma mater. We appreciate the management for the good work it is doing and for providing a conducive environment; they should be assured that the alumni association will always

be there for them".

Speaking on the programme, the Chairman, National Convention Organising Committee of FUNAABAS, Hon. Moruff Olalekan said Nigeria was getting closer to an era where universities in the country would have full financial autonomy, stating that as a specialised university, FUNAAB has both human and technical requirements to key into modern agricultural system. Also, the Director of Treasury (FUNAABAS), Alhaji Sikiru Salako said putting up a special programme like this was capital intensive, stressing "that there is synergy between the local and the international branches of the association", and with their support, they have been able to weather the storm.

In summary, agriculture can take its pride of place in national development when farming is taken away from the traditional practices by embracing artificial intelligence, which can go a long way in production and revenue generation. Not only that, the role of specialised institutions can add value when the various components such as the alumni are allowed to drive their activities by using their talents, time, and treasure for the development of their alma mater. By so doing, the quest for the diversification of the economy, employment generation, and favourable foreign exchange earnings for the Nigerian economy would be advancing.

Feature

Role of Estate Surveyors, valuers in environmental assessment

EIA is multidisciplinary activity requiring expertise from a wide range of professionals from the field of environmental sciences, natural resource management, ecology, natural science, engineering, computer science, statistics, sociology and anthropology. EIA is therefore a team work and its success is largely dependent on the composition of professionals involved in the EIA task. Thus, the involvement of the Estate surveyor and valuer as a member of the EIA team cannot be disputed. ABAH, CHRIS ONOJA. Writes

GIVEN the traditional functions of the Estate surveyor and valuer in the solid minerals industry, his inputs are therefore very relevant in the EIA process of any mining project or activity if a sound environmental impact statement is to be achieved at the end of the exercise. The Estate surveyor and valuer, in conjunction with other professionals in the EIA team, will primarily be involved in the identification of the likely socio-economic and environmental impacts of mining activities and the evaluation of such impacts with a view to determining their magnitude, extent and significance of the expected impacts as well as the formulation of appropriate mitigating measures.

The specific areas of interest of the Estate surveyor and valuer on the overall EIA exercise ranges from impacts/costs arising of land acquisition, right of way, relocation/resettlement, compensation costs of farmlands and buildings, costs of specific infrastructural and ancillary facilities that may



be required, property and facilities management functions necessary for the maintenance of mining assets and other support services, employment to economic gains. The Estate Surveyor and

valuer by virtue of his training and practice would also be well suited in the preparation of environmental inventory, which is a complete description of the existing environment around the

project site prior to the execution of the proposed mining activity/project. Such inventories are crucially important in determining the existing environmental conditions around the project area which will provide a guide to the likely environmental changes that may occur as a result of the implementation of the proposed mining project.

Public participation is an integral part of any successful EIA exercise. And the knowledge of the Estate surveyor and valuer in issues of compensation with claimants puts him in a vintage position to engage with those likely to be affected by a proposed mining project. Such engagements, when well-coordinated, provide vital information that is needed for sound decision making with regards to the extent of adverse impacts as well

as the overall acceptability of the proposed mitigating measures.

The Estate surveyor and valuer plays a significant role in the preparation of the final report of the EIA process known as *Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)*. The report, which is preceded by an executive summary, details all the positive and negative impacts of the proposed activity, the various mitigation measures to be taken to prevent/reduce/remedy or compensate for each of the adverse impacts evaluated as well as the environmental management plan.

The mining and processing of mineral resources undoubtedly has consequences on the environment. EIA ensures that those consequences are identified, in advance and appropriate mitigation measures are taken to minimize, reduce, remedy or compensated for prior to project implementation. Hence, EIA is not only a policy necessity, but an effective tool for the planning and management of major projects, which by their nature have significant adverse effects on the environment. It therefore follows that many of the existing environmental impacts of mining in Nigeria could have been avoided or minimize if EIA studies had been undertaken. Generally, the success of any EIA is strongly depended on the multidisciplinary team undertaking the EIA task.

**ESV.ABAH, CHRIS ONOJA
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News

Gombe: LGCs' minimum wage raise eyebrows

Willie Attah, Gombe

GOMBE State Government has promised to look into the issue of the implementation of the N30,000 minimum for Local Government workers when the need arise as the state chapter of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) demanded its full implementation.

The State Deputy Governor, Manasseh Daniel Jatau, who represented Governor Inuwa Yahaya at this year's International Workers Day celebration held at the Pantami Stadium, Gombe stated this.

Shortly after the inauguration of the new leadership of the NLC in the state few months back, new chairman of the union, Yusuf Aish Bello, made the same request when he led the new leadership of the union to the Deputy Governor.

However, during the Workers Day celebration, the Deputy Governor, who chairs the committee for the minimum wage, promised to engage the leadership of the union over the matter just the way he did when the NLC visited him in his office.

The Deputy Governor said, "On the issues of Minimum Wage Committee, the Deputy

Governor is the chairman of the committee and will engage the leadership of the Nigeria Labour Congress in the state when the need arises".

On the issue of the outstanding gratuity to some retired civil servants, the Deputy Governor said, "the State Government is doing its best".

While congratulating workers for the celebration of another International Workers Day, the Deputy Governor commended them for the significant roles they played in ensuring government carries out its programmes and policies.

He said "the significance of workers towards success of any government needs no further emphasis, as they carry out responsibilities of ensuring visible manifestation of developments of various government policies and programmes.

"I would like to assure you of our unwavering commitment to provide socio-economic infrastructure to improve the well-being of our people. There is therefore the need for labour to work closely with government to improve living standard of workers and citizens through constructive engagements", he

said.

In his address, the Chairman, Nigeria Labour Congress, Gombe State Chapter, Comrade Yusuf Aish Bello, congratulated the workers and appreciated the understanding existing between the government and workers of the state.

He then appealed to the state Wage Committee is a standing committee, we are appealing that the committee should reconvene with immediate effect to look into the implementation of minimum wage for local government employees, the outstanding balance to some ministries in the State Service and other issues associated with the implementation of the minimum wage across board in the state".

He also appealed for the payment of the outstanding arrears of gratuities saying, "Your Excellency Sir, gratuity is the last hope of a civil servant. We appeal to you to continue the good work you have been doing to pensioners in the state by releasing more funds to settle the outstanding arrears of gratuity in the state and local governments".

Willie Attah, Gombe

A group of new members-elect waiting for inauguration into the 10th Assembly of Nigeria's House of Representatives have formed a caucus aimed at getting the endorsement of President-elect, Bola Ahmed Tinubu to support Mukhtar Aliyu Betara as Speaker in the Green Chamber.

Spokesman for the group, Ismail Dabo (APC, Toro Federal Constituency Bauchi State), said, "We know politics is all about consultations not intimidation or confrontation. We are going to work with the new government, most especially the President-elect, Sen. Bola Tinubu to support him in actualising his dreams to reform Nigeria."

"Nigeria is in a critical stage and we need people who matter to pilot the affairs of this country. Having good knowledge of Betara's antecedents, we are convinced that being a speaker, he is capable of making the NASS work, make good budget for the nation and pass the budget on time as well as embark on critical oversight functions and to also make laws that will bring sanity to the country", he stressed.

According to him, the group which goes by the name "New Vision, New Nigeria" has unanimously agreed to support Aliyu Betara who is not only competent, but is capable of providing the desired leadership change in the House of Representatives which will in turn reflect on a better living standard for Nigerians.

He said, "Who is not suffering

Members-elect root for Betara as Speaker



Member-elect Ismail Dabo, addressing Journalists in Gombe on Monday.

in Nigeria today? Who is not losing wealth and money? Even Dangote is reducing, he is no longer having what he has because of the crisis.

"We all understand, that is why we all have to support leaders that are competent. That is why you see all of us here and everyone understands this now, and wants change. People are suffering and we the new members of the National Assembly are out for the masses," Ismail Dabo stated.

He said, "New vision" will continue to function as a body in the National Assembly and will serve the interest of Nigerians. "This is one of our agendas. We have lot of agendas that we will present to the executive to make reforms. Our agenda is to make sure we produce most competent leader then we look at others to work on".

Asked if they have observed the power sharing favouring the

Northeast and Borno State particularly, having the Vice President and the Speaker from the same place, Ismail Dabo said, "Nigerians are after results, competence. They are after good representation and not issue of zoning or where you come from."

"Our economy is destroyed. You can check the level of inflation in this country. Neighbouring countries are performing better than us. Nigerians should be talking about good representation not issue of region or where you come from. We should face our problems head-on and resolve our problems", he pointed out.

The group, "New Vision, New Nigeria" Dabo stated earlier, had visited South East and South West stakeholders and are now in the Northeast to continue the consultation for the Speakership of the House of Representatives.

Fervent prayers responsible for successful conduct of elections -Mutfwang

By PETER TITLE

THE peaceful and successful conduct of the 2023 general elections has been attributed to the fervent prayers offered by religious bodies.

The church has also been tasked to sustain the prayers for the incoming administration in

Plateau State to peacefully take over the reins of power and to commence governance on the right footing.

The Governor -elect, of the state, Barrister Caleb Mutfwang stated this in Jos recently at the Award and 2023 Support Dinner organized by the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), Plateau State Chapter.

Represented by the Deputy Governor -elect, Hon. Mrs. Josphine Piyo, he further noted that the prayers offered by the church helped in thwarting the plans some elements had in derailing the electoral process.

He noted with satisfaction the immense contribution of the church towards ensuring progressive and united Plateau where citizens flourished in prosperity.

The Governor -elect said "I appreciate the PFN, Plateau State Chapter for the good work you have been doing towards promoting peaceful co-existence among citizens. I appreciate you also for your prayers before, during and after the 2023 general elections and I appeal to you to sustain it for the incoming administration to succeed".

Mrs Piyo who was accompanied by the former Chairman of Jos South Local Government Council, Hon. Peter Vwang Dung expressed the determination of the governor -elect to run an all inclusive government where all shades of opinions and interests would be considered and given a sense of belonging.

Reverend Dr. Stephen

Dangana, the Plateau State PFN Chairman said the occasion was organized to show appreciation and recognize high profile dignitaries who had contributed to the service to God and humanity.

"The Word encourages us to give honour to whom honour is due but even more double honour to the deserving. It is in response to this that we have gathered here to joyfully acknowledge and recognize very distinguished individuals who have contributed and greatly impacted the church and society," the man of God stressed.

Senator Istifanus Gyang who represented the Gbong Gwom Jos, His Majesty Da Jacob Gyang Buba who was honoured with a meritorious award for immense contribution to the church and service to humanity, expressed delight for the recognition.

Governor Ifeanyi Okowa of Delta State, who was represented by the Speaker, PLHA, Rt-Hon Nuhu Abok Ayuba who was also honoured with the award of Selfless Service pledged to continue to support the church in building a formidable society where peace and justice reign.

Other awardees include Rev. Prof. Gideon Para Mallam, President and Chief Executive Officer of Gideon and Funmi Para Mallam Peace Foundation, Pastor Dr. Williams Kumuyi, Rev. Dr. Tor Ujah, President M i s s i o n House, HRM. Prof. James O.



Gombe State Deputy Governor, Manasseh Daniel Jatau, presenting a gift to outstanding worker during the International Workers Day celebration.

Emir calls for harmony in electing Taroh ruler

From Israel Lar, Langtang

TAROK nation has been told to work together towards electing its paramount ruler towards bringing sanity and progress to the land.

The advice was given by Emir of K a n a m , M u h a m m a d u M. Muhammad at the 2023 I'lumO'Tarok, the Tarok Cultural Festival held in Langtang last Saturday.

The festival with the theme: Sustaining Peace and Cultural Solidarity for Economic Growth: Tarok Nation in Focus, the Emir who doubles as the Royal Father of the day while describing this year's Tarok day as unique said he knows the Tarok people for maintenance of culture. He urged the older ones to teach the younger ones how they would continue with the sustenance of the culture.

The Royal Father of the day also admonished the Tarok people to continue to live in peace with their neighbours and visitors, and appreciated them for extending their hand of friendship to other tribes within and outside Plateau State.

In his speech, the chairman of the occasion, Hon Ahmed Idris

Wase, the Deputy Speaker in the House of Representatives represented by one of its aide, Nanven Nimfel used the occasion to advice Tarok and its neighbours to continue with the peaceful nature they are living. He expressed happiness with the support Hon Beni Lar is giving him. And used the occasion to give kudos to Ngwangishi Otarok and Central Planning Committee of the Tarok Day for a fantastic organisation.

The Chairman of the Tarok Elders Forum, Air Marshal Jonah D. Wuyep while thanking all non-Taroks for their show of solidarity, promised to ensure peace and neighbourliness with the surrounding local government areas.

He further said without peace and unity, there would be no progress and urged the youths to ensure peace to reign in the land.

While welcoming people to this year's Tarok Day, the National President of the Ngwangishi O'Tarok NIO, Ambassador Danjuma Sheni appreciated the state government for the restoration, creation of districts, which he described as well deserved.

On the National Population that was suspended, he urged people to be cautious while performing their civic duty. He pointed out that NIO under his watch has been committed to peaceful coexistence and warned Tarok against taking arms. He however, called on Tarok to work towards installing their paramount ruler for the Tarok nation.

Highlights of the occasion was the performance of different traditional dances from within and outside Tarok land. Goodwill messages from the Chairman of the Central Planning Committee of illumO'Tarok, Dr Nanzing Nden, Chairman of Langtang North LGA Barr Bitrus Zulfa amongst others, rounded up the event.



Nimnan Langnim

Feature

Recall of Nigeria's ambassadors, high commissioners: Matters arising

As the Muhammadu Buhari administration enters its last days, many key stakeholders in the incoming Bola Tinubu administration have commenced diverse schemes to position themselves in positions of reckoning in the next dispensation. Emmanuel Aziken writes.

ESPECIALLY involved in these schemes to bag government appointments are those who were not elected into statutory offices in the legislature or executive branches of government at the state and federal levels.

Nothing unusual. With hundreds of government parastatals, agencies, and departments offering plush positions on their respective boards, there is a lot to go around.

After all, Buhari emphasised that many of the political appointments he made were from the ranks of people he knew so the thinking is that they should be packing their bags as well since Tinubu knows quite a bunch of people as well.

For some strange reasons, perhaps owing to a particular lack of knowledge, Nigeria's ambassadors and high commissioners serving abroad, especially the so-called non-career ambassadors, have been classified among those that should escort Buhari out of Aso Rock Villa on May 29.

Indeed, some of the All Progressives Congress' big wigs have demanded that such ambassadors be recalled pronto, ostensibly to create space for those from their ranks to bag such appointments with all the prestige that comes with it even if many have complained of underfunding of our foreign missions for decades.

While it is true that the president has the prerogative to appoint ambassadors and high commissioners, such appointments must be confirmed by the Senate, which means that their appointments are not tied strictly to Buhari's tenure in office. If we recall, the last non-career ambassadorial appointments made by Buhari were in July 2020, when 41 distinguished Nigerians were accorded such honours. Foreign Service regulations clearly provide that ambassadorial postings are for a four-year tenure, though this does not preclude the President from recalling any ambassador for sundry reasons.

The problem really is the perception that those suggesting now that ambassadors appointed by President Buhari should be recalled appear not to have studied constitutional provisions guiding presidential appointments.

The provision of the Constitution on Presidential Appointments under Chapter 6, Part I, Section 171 clearly spells out the powers of the President to appoint and remove the persons so appointed under this section.

For clarity, the provision of the constitution as outlined under Chapter 6, Part I, Section 171 on Presidential Appointments is as follows:

171(1) Power to appoint persons to hold or act in the offices to which this section applies and to remove persons so appointed from any such office shall vest in



the President.

(2) The offices to which this section applies are namely:

(a) Secretary to the Government of the Federation.

(b) Head of the Civil Service of the Federation.

(c) Ambassador, High Commissioner or other Principal Representative of Nigeria abroad;

(d) Permanent Secretary in any Ministry or Head of any Extra-Ministerial Department of the Government of the Federation howsoever designated; and

(e) any office on the personal staff of the President.

(3) An appointment to the office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation shall not be made except from among Permanent Secretaries or equivalent rank in the civil service of the Federation or of a State.

(4) An appointment to the office of Ambassador, High Commissioner or other Principal Representative of Nigeria abroad shall not have effect unless the appointment is confirmed by the Senate.

(5) In exercising his powers of appointment under this section, the President shall have regard to the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity.

(6) Any appointment made pursuant to paragraphs (a) and (e) of subsection (2) of this

section shall be at the pleasure of the President and shall cease when the President ceases to hold office; Provided that where a person has been appointed from a public service of the Federation or a State, he shall be entitled to return to the public service of the Federation or of the State when the President ceases to hold office.

Under Section 171 (6) of the constitution, it is clearly stated that the appointment of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation and any office on the personal staff of the president are the appointments where the recall of such officers is at the pleasure of the president because they cease to exist when the President is no longer in office.

Ambassadors clearly do not fall within the category of those holding office at the pleasure of Mr. President and one can only imagine how ridiculous it would be for Nigeria to start recalling ambassadors, less than two years after they were posted, and simply because Buhari is going.

Another point is that the categorisation of "non-career ambassadors" and "career ambassadors" by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is not found in any law or regulation of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and therefore cannot determine which "type" of ambassador should be subject to recall. Appointment of ambassadors is premised on the

same constitutional provisions, hence their recall must also follow suit.

The Constitution does not discriminate concerning designation of ambassadors and it is trite knowledge that this recent categorisation was invented by civil servants in the foreign affairs ministry and the National Intelligence Agency to protect their turf from invasion by politicians.

The four-year tenure as provided in the Official Gazette of the Foreign Service Regulations of Nigeria should be accorded to all ambassadors and Nigeria should stop making a fool of herself at every turn of the political clock. What many do not know is that a premature ambassadorial recall can be damaging to our national interests abroad, which is why an ambassador must be replaced by another ambassador officially designated as an accredited principal representative of the country. That is the norm in diplomatic postings all over the world.

Nigeria has lost out on many occasions by failing to follow her own rules governing ambassadorial postings and by allowing officials below the rank of ambassadors serve as principal representatives of Nigeria abroad.

The import of the anomalous practice is that such

representatives are not accorded due privileges of ambassadors by the foreign countries. Indeed, it has stripped Nigeria of the leadership of the diplomatic corps in many foreign countries in the past.

As a country, we should desist from certain actions that are not in concert with the spirit of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties guiding diplomatic service. Ambassadors in a "Career" or "Non-Career" designation are not appointees classified as personal staff of the president in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) as amended, and as such, not holding their positions at the pleasure of the President.

President Buhari should just keep to his promise and retire to his farm by the end of the month and not allow himself to be goaded into some last-minute blunders, which the same people whispering to him now will use to haunt him later.

The Tinubu administration should be allowed to make its own choices at the appropriate time but should be guided against familiar blunders of recalling, prematurely, diplomats appointed by the same political party. Those fighting selfishly to create juicy ambassadorial positions can do the nation a lot of good by waiting patiently for another two years.

Water scarcity and health hazard



By VICTOR ALI

WATER is life, goes a very popular saying: This cannot be distant from the truth. "No homo sapiens and even animals and other things can survive without the usage of water. It is an inescapable necessity for human existence.

Its multi-purpose usage is legendary we need water to

bath, we need water to wash our dirty cloths we need water to cook, we even need water to wash our cars and fill the water tanks.

Of recent, Jos city and its environs have been enmeshed with water scarcity. Virtually, all the communities in Jos have been witnessing unprecedented, severely biting water scarcity. People cannot property undertake their domestic chores because of scarcity of this very "essential commodity". While being austere with the usage of water, if available at all some domestic chores are left undone.

Needless to say, water vendors nay water tankers have now taken the centre stage, in the provision of this necessity. Apart from makng brisks business, the water vendors have become lords onto themselves. An ugly incident was averted recently in one community in Jos.

The story goes thus: A desperate person who was desirous of water to cook his meal came across a water vendor to buy. The water vendor reported that the water was not available. Angered by the reply from the water vendor while he was seeing jericans full of water, the man lost his temper and was ready for fist-cuff.

It took the intervention of a passer by before the looming fight was aborted. Why the refusal to sell the water to the patronize? The water vendor dutifully reveals that, they said water had been booked. You find it funny and ridiculous? No, that was visibly the home truth because the water vendor saidhe was in business and if the water was not booked, he would have sold same and went back for another round of water supply. And what about the cost of the water, Hitherto, a 50 liters jericans of water in the said



community sold for twenty (25) to thirty (30) naira, has now lip-frog to fifty (50) naira and above. In the face of the economic hardship, the poor folks who can not afford this "exorbitant" costs have only one rescuer only water-the dirty river of streams in the neighborhood.

Though boreholes (with all the attendant effects on the earth surface) abound in some of these vicinities, water scarcity still persists. It is either the boreholes are malfunctioning or those being powered by NEPA (sorry, JED) are out of use as a result of the "usual" power outage. In spite of this, whenever the water is available at the borehole, it is the same typical story of the Nigerian shylock. Must sell at the same price like the known water vendors.

Indeed, apart from the boreholes, where those water vendors and the water tankerdrivers ferry their products' to the un suspecting consumers remain unknown. No kidding, yours sincerely, feeling thirty attempted to drink water in one household

at the neighbourhood, lo and behold, the

water smells. what about the rains? We are already at the twilight of April which by ordinary estimation, the heavens should have opened with bounteous rains. Alas, it has been some isolated cases of drizzling. The other day we were discussing with a friend on this precarious situation of water scarcity. What he offers was not hope but stark gloom. He asked me rhetorically. Don't you know that there is climate change? He said what used to be obtainable then, may not be feasible now.

With this scurry scenario of water scarcity, particularly in a densely populated city like Jos, the propensity of the outbreak of water borne diseases is high. The committant effect, sure would be monumental. Without having hospital records at one's disposal, one can say that, this water scarcity might have sent some innocent citizens to their early graves. May the good Lord help us all.

“It took the intervention of a passerby before the looming fight to finish was aborted. And why the refusal to sell the water to the patronize? The water vendor dutifully reveals that, they said water had been booked. You find it funny and ridiculous? No, that was visibly he was in business and if the water was not booked, he would have sold same and go back for another round of water supply.”

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By KENNETH DARENG

Mothers Day is considered as a very auspicious moment to celebrate the daily role of mothers in shaping not only the home front but also the society at large. It is indeed an occasion that calls for reflection on who a mother is.

If one is to ask every individual to narrate the story of his or her upbringing, 8 out of 10 would ascribe their success in life to their mothers. The fact remains that a typical Nigerian mother represent many things to different folks. These mothers may be married yet are sole bread winners, some are teenage mothers, some are widows, some are barren, while some are called mothers simply because they are married despite all forms of neglect, bitterness and frustration.

Some are barely hanging on in

failed marriages just for the sake of their children while some are afraid of the way society will look at them if they quit the institution called marriage. Unfortunately, many of them are suffering in silence from the hands of some mindless husbands who see nothing good about their wives no matter the effort and no matter the sacrifice put in by their spouses.

A good mother may be described as one who is God fearing, honest, faithful, patient, loyal, loving and caring among other virtues. Must often she is the Chief cook of the house whereby she ensures that the family meals are well prepared, sometimes she sacrifices her own portion incase the food wouldn't be enough to go round, she does not sleep if the children go to bed on empty stomach.

She is the teacher of the family who makes sure the children do their school home work. She is also the chief law officer who enforces disciplinary measures in case there is any breach of the house rules. A mother also serves as the Director of finance and supplies of the family by making sure financial expenditure and income is well appropriated while she also in most cases is the chaplain of the family who ensures that prayers

are observed. Don't forget she is the nursing mother of the home who makes sure no one in the family goes sick and above all, she plays the role of a mother to both the husband the children while still stepping up her role in the other room just to keep body and soul together.

Looking closely at the bulk of our mothers in our present day Nigeria, one may not be wrong to say that our mothers in the villages and even in the urban centers are yet to find the desired respite particularly on the part of the illiterate ones whose day begins with toiling from morning to sunset just to make ends meet for their families. Nowadays women who are mothers are involved in menial jobs such as mason farming, stone crushing, taxi/keke driving house cleaning apart from those who are involved in petty trading in the market and so on.

Although mothers can be referred as the conscience of the family, here I am talking about mothers who will not abandoned their responsibilities and end up being mothers who are found hanging in brotels drinking, smoking and prostituting. And not mothers that would compromise moral standards to tolerate their children hanging out with bad company or those of them who chastise their wards for coming back home late at night or those mothers who will always call their children to order. Also, a good mother will not allow her children to become armed robbers, bandits, kidnappers and terrorists. Good mothers are not busy bodies who will destabilize peaceful homes and destroy relationships among relatives, friends and associates. What about mothers who roundly condemn abortions by their daughters because, such

negative aspects endangers the well-being of the family circle which a woman is expected to play a good motherly role for the moral rejuvenation of the family and indeed the society especially where the husbands are either absentee heads of household or are just sitting on the fence.

Today our mothers either dead or alive should be celebrated for their sacrifice, love and care. Some could not even live to see what the fruit of what their labour have become. But I owe them a debt of gratitude for raising us up in both good and bad times. Let those fond memories of our sweet mothers inspire us to greatness while we must in return take proper care of them as a matter of responsibility and good conscience. **SMS ONLY-kennethd1966@gmail.com, 08098181805**

Tribute to Nigerian mothers

“A good mother may be described as one who is God fearing, honest, faithful, patient, loyal, loving and caring among other virtues. Must often she is the Chief cook of the house whereby she ensures that the family meals are well prepared, sometimes she sacrifices her own portion incase the food wouldn't be enough to go round, she does not sleep if the children go to bed on empty stomach.”

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By **BULUS GAMBO**

EVERY May 1st of each year, the Nigeria Labour Congress, (NLC) joins its other counterparts across the globe in celebrating the contributions of workers towards the development of the nation. This unique day which is set aside to help acknowledge the contributions of workers to the growth and development of the nation is usually marked with a public holiday declaration and impactful events and activities.

The history of Workers Day in Nigeria dates back to the 20th Century when labour movements began to emerge in the country. With the passage of time however, the movement began to redefine complex multidimensional approach to highlighting the holistic plight of workers to the attention of the government and other critical stakeholders.

However, this Worker's Day celebration was first recognized as a public holiday in Nigeria in 1980 by the Peoples Redemption Party, (PRP) of Kano State on May 1st 1981. It thereafter become a national holiday on May 1st 1981 and has been celebrated ever since.

The celebration of this epoch making day is held to appreciate the hard work and dedication of the Nigerian workforce, who are no doubt the backbone of the nation's economy. It is also held to reflect the contemporary challenges which workers in this country face and also to help renew their commitment to fighting for their rights.

Over the years, workers in all the 36 states including the Federal Capital Territory Abuja stakeholders gather to brainstorm on the way forward for the Nigerian worker.

Though it has not historically been palatable for the workers in the country in the past few decades, no proper attention has been paid to the consistent plight of the workers of this nation. Aside the obvious that the take home pay of the Nigerian worker is nothing tangible nowadays, many states in the country have continued to dogged from their responsibilities to their workforce.

Consequently, each time the Nigerian worker demands for pay increase, the usual response from the government is that there is no money. Most of these workers have therefore significantly been demoralized knowing too well that they are not well appreciate in the country.

In recognition of the event, the Federal Government through the Minister of Interior, Ogbeni Rauf Aregbesola commended workers for their hard work, diligence and sacrifice noting that their efforts are largely responsible for the greatness of the country and the respect Nigeria now commands in the comity of nations. According to the minister, "there is dignity in labour, we have to have dedication and commitment to the work we do, because it is vital to nation building.

He therefore enjoined workers to imbibe the culture of productivity saying "the end of work is productivity. It is productivity that leads to satisfactory provision of goods and services and wealth creation. It is therefore the path to national and individual prosperity."

In Plateau State, the incumbent Governor, Rt. Hon. Simon Bako Lalong was at hand to celebrate this year's Workers Day celebration which is certainly his

last as the Governor of the state. Governor Lalong tagged Governor Alert, joined the workers at the Rwang Pam Township Stadium to celebrate the occasion.

Speaking during the event, Lalong noted that "this event focusing on the theme, Workers Rights and Socio-economic Justice", presents me with another opportunity to not only bid you farewell but reflect on the great relationship we have shared as well

"little wonder, you the comrades of Plateau State gave me title of "Governor Alert" which was affirmed and endorsed by the NLC under the leadership of the immediate past President Comrade Ayuba Wabba. Today, it is with joy and thanksgiving to God that we are at the verge of fulfilling the promise which I made you which I must confess has not been easy to fulfill. But because of my passion for the workers, I have done



As Governor Lalong bids Plateau workers farewell



as the challenges we confronted together. For me, this is most appropriate as it captures the essence of what we have been doing in the past 8 years of the Rescue Administration to enhance a solid foundation for a strong and stable economy."

In this words, "I want to specially thank you my dear comrades for standing up to be counted in the task of rescuing Plateau from the clutches of underdevelopment and despondency. Looking back at 2015, it is clear that a lot of difference has been made not only in the civil service, but the entire sectors of the economy."

Lalong further mentioned that

everything possible to put smiles on your faces every month."

"I wish to again thank the Nigeria Labour Congress and Trade Union Congress in Plateau State, Comrade Eugene Manji drew the attention of the Governor on the need to release and implement all pending promotions, annual increments and prompt release of all workers benefits including the third party deductions such as cooperative society money deductions, release and payment of worker's gratuity both at state and local government council levels and the implementation of the harmonized retirement age for teachers in Plateau State."

me."

Earlier in his remarks, the Chairman of Nigeria Labour Congress/Trade Union Congress in Plateau State, Comrade Eugene Manji drew the attention of the Governor on the need to release and implement all pending promotions, annual increments and prompt release of all workers benefits including the third party deductions such as cooperative society money deductions, release and payment of worker's gratuity both at state and local government council levels and the implementation of the harmonized retirement age for teachers in Plateau State."

He also appealed for the

immediate approval and release of the various approved salary tables in the state after the last National Minimum Wage negotiations and the full implementation of the National Minimum Wage for Local Government Councils in the state."

In his contribution, Guest Speaker at the occasion, Director of Research NIPPS in Kuru, Prof. Pam Dung Sha explained that the "workers' rights addressed by the International Labour Organization include the freedom of association, the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour, the effective abolition of child labour and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment."

He noted that "for industrial peace, government must engage with labour and other stakeholders on the direction of the economy and governance, respect right to negotiations and collective bargaining regulations, welfare of workers and citizens, security of work places for farmers, workers and students, stop the leakages in government, improve condition of work environment so that workers' productivity will increase and constitute a strong honest labour advisory team."

Certainly this year's celebrations on the Plateau will continue to linger on the minds of workers for a long time to come knowing too well that it will be Lalong's final official celebration while in office. It is however left for these workers to assess government-labour relations while setting a vibrant agenda for the forthcoming administration in the state.

IMAGES

2023 MAY DAY CELEBRATIONS

Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), Plateau State Council and Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (TUC) on Monday celebrated the 2023 May Day with the theme: Workers Right & Socio-Economic Justice at the Rwang Pam Township Stadium, Jos



Governor Lalong, CON addressing the Nigerian Workers during the 2023 May Day



Cross section of workers listening to the Governors address



Members of the organised Labour during the 2023 March-Pass at the Stadium



Commissioner of Health, Dr. Nimkong Lar Ndam (left) with the Ministry's Permanent Secretary, Engr. Benjamin Gotan at the Workers Day celebration



From left are, Comrade Steve Aluko of the Civil Society Group, Chief Benjamin Zoyong Jang, Commissioner, Science and Technology and the Commissioner for Information and Communication, Hon. Dan Manjang



NLC Chairman, Comrade Eugene Manji, TUC Chairman, Comrade Kenneth Shammah and others applauding the Governor, Simon Bako Lalong, CON for personally attending the 2023 May Day celebration



From left are, The Nigeria Standard newspapers, Government House Correspondent, Palang Kasmi, News Agency of Nigeria Correspondent, Government House, Martha Agas and the NUJ Assignment Editor, Pam Musa, Telegraph Newspaper State Correspondent



State Chief Judge , Justice David Mann, Rt. Hon. Yakubu Yackson Sanda with other members of the State Assembly

PHOTOS: DANLADI DUK

Odd World

'My date ditched me at a bus stop'

A woman was left outraged when her date left her at a bus stop in the 'freezing cold' instead of giving her a lift - and called her clingy for wanting to get home safely

The world of dating can be tricky to navigate, but one woman has been left furious after her date seemingly had no idea how to treat someone he was supposed to care about - as he left her stranded at a bus stop in the snow instead of offering her a lift home in his car.

In an anonymous post, the woman shared text messages between herself and her date, in which she called him out for "dumping" her at a bus stop in the "freezing cold", and also said she had felt unsafe while waiting for the bus as she was on her own and in the dark.

And although she expected her date to understand his mistake, he instead called her "needy" and "clingy" for expecting a safe ride home.

The text messages, which were shared on Reddit, began when the man asked the woman why she had "unmatched" with him on Tinder, to which she said: "Well, dumping me at a bus stop in the freezing cold

without an explanation is a d**k move."

Her date initially tried to excuse his actions by claiming his roommate had a "medical emergency" and that he needed to rush home to take him to the hospital, but then added at the end of his message: "Didn't realise you're needy asf**k..."

The woman then replied: "I'm sorry to hear that. I hope your roommate is okay. But I don't think making sure I have a safe ride home after a date is being needy, especially when it was dark and freezing/snowing outside."

Then, the bloke took another turn as he accused her of creating "drama" and said that giving her a lift home shouldn't have been expected because he didn't see their date as serious.

He said: "Drama much? It was a hook-up, let's face it. Thought we understood each other. Don't be so clingy."

After the woman told him he was "missing the point", he ended the conversation with another message which read: "I'll let you calm down a little and dial down the drama before we talk again. I'm sorry you had these lofty

expectations.

"Let's meet up later this week and we can talk about it."

When posting the screenshots on Reddit, the woman wrote: "My Tinder match dumped me off at a bus stop in the freezing cold in the middle of the night. Apparently, I'm needy for wanting a safe ride home."

Commenters on the post urged the woman to block the man and not talk to him again, as many of them said he had no "respect" for her.

One person said: "Please block him and never communicate with him again, he clearly doesn't have an ounce of respect for you. Run and never look back!"

While another added: "He's absolutely devoid of respect. Even worse, he's blaming you for his a**hole behaviour and proceeds to not take any responsibility."

And a third wrote: "This was infuriating to read. As much as an asshole move this was, I'm kinda glad he didn't drive you home so he doesn't know where you live (assuming he didn't pick you up there). Bullet dodged."

Source: The Mirror



Pharaohs and the rest of us

AS a Christian, I have formed the habit of looking at historical Biblical stories with keen interest in most recent times. For sure, some of these stories of great men and women of the old have taught us a lot about the changing signs of our time. While in some cases, such stories have taught us to guard our loins, be diligent and continue to exhibit high sense of responsibility in our anticipated obligations, some have continued to remind us that nothing in this world last for ever. Each of these Biblical stories have served as pragmatic source of inspiration in our journey of life.

As such, one of these exciting stories of the Holy Bible found in the Old Testament is none other than that of Pharaoh of Egypt. In the days of Moses who was called by God to liberate the people of Israel from captivity, the end of the entire episode of the liberation of the people of Israel did not turn out a child's play. While for the people of Israel, it was a perfect situation of answered prayers, the Egyptians perspective was that of anguish and sorrow. Come to think of it however, the liberation of the children of Israel in the Red Sea was one of the significant Biblical stories which has continued to remind us not to conclude that God is not interested in the affairs of men.

Pharaoh was so influential and wealthy to a point that he lost touch with reality. Aside the slaves he had working in several fields across Egypt, he also managed spontaneous wealth and power as a ruthless ruler in his time. Amid sycophants who were praising him even when he goes wrong, many were able to benefit from his acts of personal aggrandizement and wealth as the case may be. Unfortunately, he was unable to decode the fact that a moment of transition had come after Moses requested he set the people of God free. Since he had all which humanity needed and could eat and have almost everything at his disposal, he never gave it a thought about other vulnerable subjects of his who had perhaps nothing. Pharaoh had no clue that whatever had a beginning must definitely have an end. Pharaoh must have also forgotten that his time was up even as he had transformed himself into a monster and one of the wicked leaders of ancient history.

Yet, Pharaoh was too power-drunk to appreciate the reality of the fact that his time was up and that he must unconditionally let the Israelis go back home. On the contrary, Pharaoh had concluded that diamonds are forever. At the end of it all however, one of Egypt's wicked rulers was destroyed alongside his family, regiment and other unrepentant sycophants right from his city center to the epic stage of the drama in the Red Sea.

Fast forward this scenario to our contemporary times, we also had rulers in the likes of Idi Amin of Uganda, Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, Gaddafi of Libya, and even our own General Sani Abacha of Nigeria who became tyrants and never imagined that power had its eventual end. Throughout their reign, these tyrants never gave it a thought that there is a time and season for everything in this fragile world of ours. Without the fear of God, these ruthless rulers decided the fate of thousands and killed many innocent souls who opposed them.

At the end, all these despots and tyrants were eventually humbled by God in a miserable way and manner. Their fall from grace to grass was a lesson which would not be forgotten for more decades to come. Unfortunately, some of them have been inducted into our history books as leaders who were barbaric and complete failures as far as their obligations to changing humanity for the better was and or is concern.

Fast forward this development to our today, most of our politicians have not learned any lesson from these obvious experiences of the past. Many of them have continued to think that any opportunity given them by God to serve will not go with the wind someday. Some of them also think such lucrative positions which they occupy is but an opportunity to subjugate the common man and make him subservient for life. One is not surprised as many of them have been too engaged to read their Bibles and understand the benefits of becoming servant leaders. Worse of it all is that when an elected official has no developmental blueprint for the possible transformation of his immediate community; the electorate suffers the most. In this case, while such an office holder is knee-deep into looting the scarce economic resources, his people are left wallowing in abject poverty and unending lamentations. No doubt, over 90 percent of the unprecedented difficulties and challenges Nigeria is facing today is attributed to the issue of administrative ingenuity by the political class. It is also not far-fetched that the selfish interest of our political class couple with their retrogressive ideological disposition have contributed to crippling the prospects of this nation. It is unimaginable for instance that despite the huge human and natural resources this country is blessed with; we are still struggling to find our footings in the scheme of things. If one should put into use the amount of monies stolen from our national treasury since the advent of this democratic dispensation in 1999, no Nigerian citizen would have been suffering the way and manner more than half of our population are experiencing at the moment.

Unfortunately, many citizens of the nation have become lovers of themselves and careless about the progress of the country. Though we all know that it would be difficult to entrench monarchical democracy and or regional political gimmick in a heterogeneous nation where everyone needs a sense of belonging, some cynics have continued to tow this path to plunge the nation in chaos and a state of anarchy. We cannot continue to dwell on issues which promotes disunity, political imposition and or disrespect to one another and think that it shall be well with us as a struggling developing nation of the world.

The truth is; nothing last forever and even this tenure of elected political officeholders and the offices they occupy shall always pass away. I wish our political juggernauts and those who govern us with iron fist including those who loot our common resources will have a rethink and fear God by doing the needful so that their names will be written in gold when they are no longer occupants of such offices. I wish that our political officeholders will see reason that Nigeria is at the moment sitting on a time bomb where any wrong move will lead to our complete disintegration. Knowing too well the various challenges this country is managing to overcome, it is becoming obvious that we must all sacrifice the little we can for the general interest of the citizens of the nation.

If the late President Nelson Mandela who had the opportunity to continue leading South Africa on a platter of gold refused to do so when the ovation was high, it should serve as a lesson to many of our political leaders to emulate. Our leaders must desist from any form of manipulation which is aimed at promoting elitism to the detriment of the common man as has been the case all these years. We must begin to believe in our nation and its prospects and sacrifice the least we can towards laying a solid foundation for national integration and growth of our beloved motherland.

View Point

Nigeria: Waiting for workers' requiem

Since the present administration led by President Muhammadu Buhari assumed the throne of leadership, the citizens of the nation have continued to witness an overwhelming hardship never envisaged after the present democratic dispensation took over the mantle of leadership of the country in 1999. Though the present administration has done its best in the past towards turning around the fortunes of the country for the better, the precarious and ridiculous manner the citizens of this country have found themselves in as a result of unabated global economic meltdown and unprecedented rate of inflation has cast doubts on the minds of many people as to whether things will ever get better in the nearest future. BULUS GAMBO writes.

AS I was wondering on how my daughter would return back to school after the break, my mind was full of troubles considering the text I had earlier received from the authorities of the school warning all parents that all those who had not settled their outstanding school fees should not even think of showing their faces at the gate of the school as no defaulter would be given access to the premises. Though I had to split my last salary into two to ensure each of my children had something to give to their school authorities as a possible bail-out, I was troubled deep down my mind that something was and is still wrong with the unfortunate unfolding developments in the country. This is all linked to the issue of the epileptic payments of salaries to civil servants in Nigeria.

Feeling so embarrassed about my daughter's school resumption saga, I had to cunningly lure my wife to help me take the girl to school and beg the authorities for more time to enable me complete the rest of the required fees, which she did. Our daughter was allowed passage but with an assurance of a specific grace of time frame to settle the fees. Unfortunately for me, the girl on getting to her school subsequently discovered that she had forgotten some of her books at home and common sense this time round convinced me to shoulder the responsibility of taking the books to her. As I drove to the school the following morning, I could see students in some secondary schools adjacent to that of my daughter which have refused defaulters entry for study.

Shocked about what I was witnessing, I turned to my left and



Nigerian workers are suffering and smiling

asked a colleague of mine who accompanied me as to why should government schools knowing too well that salaries had not been paid for months also send students out of school. Both of us thus kept on wondering why these innocent students would go through this traumatic experience for no fault of theirs.

Mind you, a day earlier, my wife had complained that she was in pains and anguish because of a suborn tooth which had refused to allow her sleep. Immediately after I got to know the predicament confronting her, I decided that it is only money that would solve this problem. Without wasting much time, I had to call a dentist friend of

mine who told me to bring her to his hospital for treatment.

Without a kobo in my pocket, I drove my wife to the hospital and even summoned the courage to ask my dentist friend about the bill for the entire treatment. His response added to my already troubled mind.

After taking a look at me for a long time, my dentist friend smiled and informed me, "let's save your wife first after which we can talk of the bill later"

After my wife's tooth was eventually removed, I still summoned the courage to ask my dentist friend the second time about the bill which I was obligated to settle. Perhaps knowing too well the struggles in my life, he smiled and ask; have

you been paid any salary? Please take this prescription and get to the nearest pharmacy for the drugs, she needs it urgent.

So stung to my marrow with surprise, I was left in between thanking him for the treatment he had just offered without reciprocation and or saving my face before my wife as the bread winner of the house who should have with all pleasure pay this fee without much stress. After noticing how troubled I was, my wife's kind words temporarily restored the remaining hope left of me.

These experiences further humbled me beyond comprehension and further tempted me to take a glimpse into the sufferings of my other fellow workers in the country who hardly have anything to eat at their various homes in this moment of tremendous trail. I cannot imagine that the Nigeria we used to know is not the one we are experiencing as a people today.

Just a few days back, it was announced in our church that we should pray for one particular woman who was suffering from organs failure and was unable to settle her hospital bills running into four hundred thousand naira. I was eventually informed that the woman died a few days later at home living behind this huge bill for her family to settle.

Even as I mourn the demise of this courageous woman, her death kept on reminding me of many others who have found

themselves in such a precarious predicament in this country. People who due to lack of salaries are unable to buy drugs for themselves and are left at the mercy of death.

During the good old days, we used to rush paying lunch bills amongst ourselves in the office after we visit any restaurant at break periods. This time around however, hardly do I see any colleague of mine going for lunch break but rather prefers to remain in their offices taking pure water and a few biscuits instead.

It is against the background of this unfolding development that the Nigeria Labour Congress, NLC is keeping mute. This development has left me gasping for breath as almost all the states of this country have not paid civil servants salaries constantly.

Just imagine a situation whereby a civil servant has not received his or her salary for close to four months and hungry mouths are waiting at home not wanting to believe that salaries are not forthcoming.

It seems therefore, this is perhaps the painful price we must all pay for the sins of voting our political class who care less about us and only loot our treasury at will so as to keep their family members in luxurious homes while the rest of us languish in abject poverty begging for bread to keep our body and soul together.

“Just a few days back, it was announced in our church that we should pray for one particular woman who was suffering from organs failure and was unable to settle her hospital bills running into four hundred thousand naira. I was eventually informed that the woman died a few days later at home living behind this huge bill for her family to settle. Even as I mourn the demise of this courageous woman, her death kept on reminding me of many others who have found themselves in such a precarious predicament in this country. People who due to lack of salaries are unable to buy drugs for themselves and are left at the mercy of death.”



Palang K. Kasmi

Sights and sounds from a valedictory workers day

FOR the Lalong led rescue administration, the 2023 International workers day was marked as the last before it's exit on May 29.

Therefore the governor who was the special guest of honor at the May day workers celebrations said he was so excited and delighted to be a part of it.

He attended the celebrations held at the Rwang Pam Township Stadium alongside top officials of his cabinet including Speaker, Plateau House of Assembly Hon. Yakubu Sanda, Chief Justice of the state Justice David Mang, Head of Service of the state, Engr. Sunday Hyat, Commissioners, Permanent Secretaries, Heads of security agencies and Civil Society Organisations.

Labour leaders also mobilised their members from different offices and the workers were seen all clad for the celebrations in their different attires. Some wore t-shirts, others sewed same-patterned 'ankara asheobi' to stand out.

Governor Lalong stood and waived as he received the salute and march-past displays and procession by heads and members of different unions, organisations across the state.

The largest Union that displayed an almost endless procession was Nigerian Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE) attracting ovation from the crowd.

But for the pensioners Union, as they marched past the governor, they held placards with inscriptions "Pay us our gratuity and arrears, implement pension minimum, and our death benefits".

Members of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) played their part while their counterpart, the Radio Television Theatre and Arts Workers Union of Nigeria (RATTAWU) rounded up the session with a traditional dance display in the Governor's dialect Goemai as a mark of honour, enticing him to display his dance steps as they marched past the podium.

As he spoke chanting the heroic workers solidarity songs of "Alluta Continua", Lalong started his speech by describing himself as a comrade and friend of workers because he has done his best for them after offsetting past backlog of salaries and pensions he inherited from his predecessor, and putting welfare schemes in the health and housing sector, among other achievements.

He said despite owing workers few months salaries, and not being able to meet up other wages and entitlements due to challenges, he felt it was best to come and be with his workers knowing he has done his best, looking at his past antecedents, records and performance that has earned him the nickname "Governor - alert".

He described the theme for the day "workers right and socio-economic Justice" as apt pledging not to leave any pending salaries before exiting office. "God forbid to leave any salary arrears before I leave" he said and the workers cheered.

The Governor however said he has done his best despite the numerous challenges he met on ground, is not perfect and whatever he has done is what God has asked him to do for the state.

He told the workers that contrary to insinuations, although pension for governors was signed in Plateau state since 2008, when he came on board in 2015, he did not implement it, and will leave office without implementing it because he inherited backlog of salaries and pensions.

He however promised to domesticate retirement age of teachers from 60 to 65 as approved by the Federal Government as well as their salaries.

Also speaking at the forum, Comptroller Federal Ministry of Labour and employment, Omatolu Augusta, said the day is special to celebrate Nigerian workers and their efforts because no nation can process without a vibrant workforce.

Chairman Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Plateau State, Comrade Eugene Manji, Chairman, TUC, Plateau State, Comrade Kenneth Shammah, in a joint speech on behalf of Plateau workers, Comrade Steve Aluko on behalf of Civil Societies Organisations, and the Guest speaker, Prof. Pam Dung Sha, Director of Research and planning, National Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies, commended the governor for being worker-friendly by setting up laudable health and housing schemes.

They also urged him to try to end his administration well by writing his name in the sands of time, by clearing salaries, pensions, and ensuring he puts in place some of the pending worker policies and legislations before leaving office.



News

Gombe Police Command parades criminals

Willie Attah, Gombe

THE Gombe State Police Command has paraded some notorious criminals terrorizing some parts of the state including a two-man gang of alleged kidnapers in Nafada LGA over the week.

The police also reported that two victims kidnapped within same Nafada were rescued unharmed through a collaboration of the police and local hunters who raided the kidnapers den in another area of Nafada.

Parading the suspects on behalf of the state Police Commissioner, OquaEtim, the Command's Public Relations Officer (PPRO), ASP

MahidMuazuAbubakar, said one AlhajiAdamu Bello reported the kidnap incident at the Nafada Police Division on the 15/04/2023 that some unknown persons armed with guns and cutlasses stormed his residence at Papa Village, attacked his relatives inflicting various degrees of injury on them and kidnapped one FatsumaBuba 'f' and Manu Adamu 'm' both of the same address to an unknown destination.

He told journalists that upon receipt of the complaint, the police operatives activated its intelligence platform and traced the hideout of the suspected kidnapers.

MahidMuazu said on

19/04/2023, police tactical team in collaboration with hunters raided the kidnapers' den where they successfully arrested one AdamuBubaBaje 'm' 30 years old of Jauro Musa village and rescued the two victims unharmed.

He said other suspects fled to an unknown location. Exhibits recovered during the raid include: Seven (7) cows, four (4) donkeys, nineteen (19) sheep, ten (10) goats, one (1) Techno handset, chain and padlock. Victims were later taken to hospital for medical checkup.

Other suspects paraded by the police were Joshua Dogo, 27 years and MuazuAbdullahi, 22 years who were arrested for criminal conspiracy, armed robbery and being in possession of illegal firearm.

He said, the duo criminally conspired among themselves and attacked one Abubakar Usman 'M' 18yrs old of GarinBarde in Kwami LGA with a pistol and a knife and robbed him of his Bajaj motorcycle.

According to the PPRO, the tactical team attached to Tumfure Division arrested the two suspects, and recovered one locally made pistol, (2) a knife and one motorcycle. He said the case has been transferred to SCID for investigation and that the suspects will soon be charged to court.

Also paraded by the police was Salisu Ahmed Yahaya alias Lebel, 26 years while Murtala Mohammed, Adamu Dodo, Abba Wuro, AdamuHarka who were all at large, were alleged to have conspired among themselves while armed with cutlasses and knives.

The suspects were said to have attacked one Abdullahi

Mohammed 'm' in his shop in new Market Gombe, stabbed him severally on his neck and hand with intent to kill him. They thereafter robbed him of the sum of #200,000. Investigation is ongoing and the suspects will soon be charged to court for criminal conspiracy, attempt to commit culpable homicide and armed robbery.

Also arrested and paraded for same offence above were Salisu Ahmed Yahaya alias Lebel, H a l a d u A b d u l s a m a d , WalidBabawuro and one Muazu whose surname is unknown.

Another set, Mohammed Adamu 20years, Sani Mohammed Kembu, 27 years and Suleiman Umar, 28 years all 'm' of Kumo town were paraded for criminal conspiracy, causing grievous hurt, attempt to commit culpable homicide and armed robbery when they attacked one Usman Mohammed and Sadiq Umar all of Kumo town. The attack inflicted severe injuries on the duo with an intention to kill them. The criminals thereafter robbed them of their assorted handsets.

For Abdulmajid Muhammed 'm' 20 years of HayinKwari BCGA Gombe, he was arrested and paraded after he was said to have armed himself with cutlasses and knives and entered 6 different houses and criminally intimidated his victims and carted away with their properties.

Members of the community upon good suspicion went to the house of the suspect and raided the compound and arrested him. Men of Operation Hattara were called and the suspect was handed over to them. Exhibits recovered from him included ten phones, one cutlass and one knife.

THE Chairman of Kogi Chapter of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Comrade Amari Gabriel has lamented the scourge of percentage salaries for the staff of local government councils and basic education teachers in the state with a call on Governor Yahaya Bello to end the ugly development.

The NLC boss who made the call in a speech to mark this year's Workers Day celebration in the state on Monday, said that the demand has become imperative in view of the untold hardship faced by concerned workers as a result of the poor salary p a c k a g e .

Gabriel noted that the percentage payment has crippled the third tier of government and rendered Basic Education in Kogi State ineffective. "Your Excellency, as your tenure draws to the end, we urge you to compel the authorities in charge of local government to restore payment of full salaries to workers to bring them at par with their state counterparts."

The NLC chairman however, commended Governor Yahaya Bello for regular payment of workers' salaries and pensions for pensioners on the pay roll of Kogi State government.

Also we wish to thank Governor Yahaya Bello for supporting the building of a magnificent Labour House in Lokoja after 32 years of the state creation

"OrganisedLabour commends the giant strides of this administration in the provision of infrastructure in the state. These legacy projects include General Muhammadu Buhari Civic Centre, Ganaja Flyover, the Graphic Building, Model Science Secondary

Workers Day: NLC demands end of percentage salaries

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

Schools and Reference Hospital, Okene among others

"We plead with government to live up to its responsibility in tackling insecurity, unemployment, conduct of credible elections and payment of gratuity of pensioners, to mention but just a few"

He charged workers to remain committed to quality service delivery in their various spheres of duties to justify government's huge investment on them. Governor Yahaya Bello who was represented by the Secretary to Kogi Government,

Dr. Mrs Folashade AyoadeArike at the event, appreciated sacrifices made by workers for the development of the state since his assumption of office. The Governor assured workers that their sacrifices would be rewarded accordingly as his administration will continue to accord priority to their welfare.

"We as government will not relent in complementing the efforts of the organisedlabour in advancing for the betterment of the living condition of their members. We will therefore, remain committed to the sustenance of the prevailing regular payment of workers' salaries and pensions for retirees of the state government."



Abubakar

Sports

Can Barcelona sign Messi this summer?



By Thomas Hindle

For months, Barcelona have been drawing up a viable financial plan to sign Lionel Messi. The club, which reportedly has to shed nearly €200 million (£176m/\$220m) before they can make any financial moves this summer, has supposedly plugged away on a miracle solution to circumvent La Liga's strict financial rules, and bring their club legend back home.

Despite the Blaugrana doing all they can to get the seven-time Ballon d'Or winner back to Camp Nou, they still have financial obstacles to overcome.

The finest financial minds the club could assemble got together and decided, rather shrewdly, that they would simply agree to cut costs over a three-year period — gradually reducing salaries or engaging in other moves to raise the funds they need immediately. In return, the club told La Liga, they wanted to be able to sign Messi immediately.

So, the Blaugrana are stuck once more. Last summer, club president Joan Laporta famously activated a series of economic levers to cut costs and free up financial flexibility. He auctioned off one set of TV rights, flogged another, sold nearly 50 percent of the club's merchandising rights and encouraged a number of senior players to either defer or forgo large chunks of their salary.

It just about worked — at least, enough for the club to first stay afloat and then bring in a host of summer signings.

But now, they have their eyes on

another one, a potential arrival that will require far more effort than the flimsy plan formed by Barcelona's brain trust.

And the conditions, pieced together, make a Messi return to his boyhood club seem incredibly unlikely, with financial barriers once again blocking the Argentine from a Catalan swansong.

The Blaugrana did enough last summer to afford a number of big names, a host of newcomers that have helped Barca likely wrap up their first La Liga title in three years.

But Laporta's famous levers were short-term solutions. Although Barca aren't in any imminent danger as a club, their financial flexibility is more limited than ever, and league president Javier Tebas will not budge on his €200m demand.

The reason for the lofty figure is the Blaugrana's bloated salary and transfer expenditures this year. La Liga outlines how much a club can spend each year, a de-facto salary cap that runs in relation to how much the club itself makes.

In other words, if Barcelona make more cash through sporting success, matchday revenue, or player sales, they can spend more money. But if the two numbers are too far apart — if the club are vastly outspending what they raise — then the league can cap their financial activity.

Right now, under those regulations, there isn't any immediate room for movement. Meanwhile, the league have repeatedly insisted that they will

not make any exceptions for Messi.

Barcelona, then, will have to play by the rules.

(This year, Barcelona are spending around €650m (£532m/\$713m) on transfers and wages. La Liga rules stipulate the Blaugrana will need to trim that number down to roughly €450m (£399m/\$493m) in order to spend this summer, according to *The Athletic*.

That, in footballing terms, doesn't have to be immensely difficult. Indeed, Barcelona could perhaps generate the cash from player sales, and if they clear some big salaries off the books, it's not an impossible number to reach.

However, before they can get into saving, there's more spending to be done. The Blaugrana are yet to register the new contracts they have agreed with Gavi, Ronald Araujo and Sergi Roberto. They have already agreed a deal to sign Athletic Club centre-back Inigo Martinez, who will also need registering. How much those moves would cost isn't exactly clear yet, either.

There are further complicating factors, with expected losses in the club's future. Camp Nou is undergoing a massive renovation next season, and the club will have to play at the nearby Olympic Stadium.

That ground is far smaller than Barcelona's usual home, and could impact the club's matchday revenues by up to a massive €90m (£79m/\$99m), according to *The Athletic*. Although the stadium still holds a respectable 55,000 spectators, recapturing

all of that cash simply won't be as easy in a smaller, less attractive venue.

Messi, and the immense financial benefits that will come from his potential arrival, is surely something of a solution to expected woes. But Barcelona will have other issues to fix before they can turn to the Argentine.

A return, a sequel, Levers 2.0, isn't possible. That's due to a La Liga rule change from December 2022, which outlined that only 5% of asset sales can count towards salary limits. Simply put, raising money by those levers from last summer — TV rights, sponsorships, merchandising — can no longer seriously impact how much money a club can spend on player funds. Barcelona would have to raise billions in order to manage one big name in today's market.

Still, they have found some ways to cut costs. For one, they benefited from the sudden retirement of Gerard Pique, a few months after Xavi told the Barcelona legend that he would no longer be a first-team regular.

The centre-back had already deferred a handsome chunk of his salary, but by retiring 18 months before his contract ended, gave up even more. The permanent sale of Antoine Griezmann to Atletico Madrid also helped balance the books.

Director of football, Mateu Alemany, insisted in February that those two moves, as well as the sale of dead-weight striker Memphis Depay, saved the Blaugrana around €90m (£79m/\$99m).

The club has also cut costs elsewhere. Last week, it announced the surprising move to slash its in-house media outlet, Barca TV. Getting rid of the channel, which provided regular matchday content and exclusive programming, slashed €8m (£7.0m/\$8.8m) from the budget. But it also saw Blaugrana make 150 employees redundant and removed a platform that is immensely popular among some of Barca's most devoted fans.

In all likelihood, then, it will come down to player salary reductions and sales. And the Blaugrana do indeed have some potential candidates in that sense. Clement Lenglet, Sergino Dest and Samuel Umtiti have all spent the season out on loan, and are all up for sale this summer.

There are also some options when it comes to contract renewals. Sergio Busquets' deal expires this summer, and he has previously admitted that he would be open to accepting more favourable terms than his rumoured €37m (£33m/\$41m) yearly salary. Veteran left-back Jordi Alba has also expressed his willingness to adjust his pay in order to facilitate the club's financial well-being.

The club have also reportedly discussed salary deductions with Marc-Andre ter Stegen and Frenkie de Jong, according to *Mundo Deportivo* — but neither player has publicly expressed their desire to forgo any of their expected earnings as of yet.

Player sales, at this point, are tricky. Barcelona don't really have any dead weight on their squad; or, at least, no players of immense value that are immediately expendable.

Raphinha has repeatedly cropped up in various transfer reports. Though the winger has enjoyed a reasonably successful first season at Camp Nou, with 13 goal contributions in La Liga to his name, it's not clear how much the Blaugrana could get for a player they paid €59m (£50m/\$65m) for last summer. It's felt, though, that they will struggle to make a profit. The club owe Leeds United up to 80% of the fee they paid for the winger, according to AS. Only a massive offer would make his sale worthwhile.

Ansu Fati, then, is perhaps the most likely player to move. Once one of the world's most promising wingers, the Spain international has seen his career stunted by a series of knee injuries. And although there have been flashes of the teenager that was once compared to Messi, Fati simply needs regular minutes to recapture his electric best — something Barca cannot offer him.

Barcelona could perhaps ask for a handsome return for the 20-year-old, but potential buyers could be wary of an injury-prone player. Revenue for the Blaugrana to top off a relatively low base wage agent.

Sports

Nigerian athletes excel in sprints event

Long jumper, Djoma Oghenefejiro Praise, won Nigeria's first gold medal at the ongoing African U-18, U-20 Athletics Championships in Zambia.

Team Nigeria has made giant strides in the city of Ndola, Zambia, venue of the ongoing 2023 African U-18 and U-20 Athletics Championships, winning 12 medals on the second day of the competition.

The Guardian reports that, Nigerian athletes won five gold, three silver and four bronze to take their medals haul to seven gold, five silver and five bronze.

Before the recent medals, the duo of Joma Oghenefejiro Praise and Oshiooku Grace had grabbed two gold medals for Team Nigeria on the opening day of the competition (Saturday) in the U-18 and U-20 triple jump events.

Two more medals, one silver and one bronze, also came from the boys in the high jump event. The best came on Sunday when the athletes set the entire city on fire, capturing medals in all the events they participated in.

Ogazi Samuel won gold in the 400m boys' U-18 in 46.01 seconds, just as Okwose Faith overpowered all opposition to win Nigeria's fourth gold of the tournament in the 100m girls' U-18 with a time of 11.57seconds.

Tima Godbless finished second in the 100m women U-20 event, while Ajayi Koyinsola also triumphed in the 100m Men U20 in 10.42secs.

In the 400m U-20 event, Nigeria's Opeyemi Oke Deborah raced to the gold medal in 52.61 seconds, while Ewa Peace (High Jump U-18), Tiana Justina (100m Girls U-18) and Onyah Favour in the 400m Girls U18 won silver medals.

The country's bronze were Rukewe Godsgift (Long jump Boys U-18), Ada Bright in the 400m Girls' U-20, Kingsley Nnorji in the 100m Men's U-20 and Rejoice Sule in the 100m Women's U-20.

A total of 42 athletes are flying the nation's flag at the combined fourth African U-18 Championships and the 15th African U-20 championships.

Speaking on the country's performance, so far, in Ndola, Athletics Federation of Nigeria (AFN) President, Tonobok Okowa, who has just been elected as one of the vice presidents of the



Some Nigerian athletes

Confederation of African Athletics (CAA), told The Guardian that the seven gold medals won in just two days of the competition was a clear indication that Nigerian athletes were well prepared for the battle of Ndola.

"I am confident we will win more medals on Monday (yesterday), and our target is to improve on our previous outings in the competition. Technical Director of the AFN, Samuel Onikeku praised the athletes for their performances so far in the competition.

As at yesterday, Team Nigeria and South Africa were neck to neck in the

Monday (yesterday), and our target is to improve on our previous outings in the competition. Technical Director of the AFN, Samuel Onikeku praised the athletes for their performances so far in the competition.

As at yesterday, Team Nigeria and South Africa were neck to neck in the

Leeds set to sack Gracia for Allardyce

Leeds United are set to sack manager Javi Gracia and are in talks to appoint former England boss Sam Allardyce as his replacement.

Director of football Victor Orta is also set to leave the club.

BBC SPORT said that, Leeds are 17th in the Premier League, above the relegation zone only on goal difference, with four games left this season.

Gracia, appointed in February as Jesse Marsch's successor, has won only three of 11 league games in charge.

Leeds have lost four of their past five matches and face leaders Manchester City on Saturday.

Spaniard Gracia joined Leeds on a "flexible contract", but the board is considering bringing in former Bolton, West Ham and Everton manager Allardyce.

The 68-year-old has been out of work since the end of the 2020-21 season when his West Brom side were relegated from the Premier League, the first top-flight relegation of his career.

Allardyce worked with Leeds chief executive Angus Kinnear at West Ham.

Leeds face arguably the toughest end to the season of the clubs battling relegation, with City and Newcastle up next before a visit to West Ham and then Tottenham at Elland Road to end the campaign.

They conceded 23 goals in April - a Premier League record for a single month and the most by any top-flight side since Birmingham also let in 23 goals in April 1965.

After Sunday's 4-1 defeat by Bournemouth, the Leeds United Supporters Advisory Board issued a statement of no confidence in the club's management.

Spaniard Orta was appointed by Leeds chairman Andrea Radrizzani in 2017, and was responsible for the



Sam Allardyce

hiring of former head coach Marcelo Bielsa, who led them to promotion to the Premier League after a 16-year absence.

Radrizzani also brought in

Klopp should receive touchline ban, says Sutton

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp should be handed a touchline ban for his behaviour during Sunday's match against Tottenham, says Chris Sutton.

BBC SPORT said that, Klopp was shown a yellow card for running towards the fourth official and celebrating Liverpool's 94th-minute winner in the 4-3 victory at Anfield.

"For the way he acted on the touchline, he should be banned from the technical area," Sutton said.

"I don't think a fine is enough. He's got previous."

The Liverpool boss, who injured himself in running towards fourth official John Brooks, later said the way referee Paul Tierney spoke to him when he received his booking was "not OK".

But referees' body the PGMOL said it "strongly refutes" Klopp's suggestions that Tierney's actions were "improper".

Speaking on BBC Radio 5 Live's Monday Night Club, Sutton added: "It's a big deal. There will have been coaches and kids watching and

thinking it's OK to run towards and abuse officials.

"As far as I'm concerned, Klopp should be banned. He knows what he did was wrong."

Martin Cassidy, chief executive of Ref Support UK, echoed Sutton's call for Klopp to receive a touchline ban.

The charity has also called on the Football Association to consider more severe punishments to deter such behaviour in future - including points deductions.

"We believe the ban should be at least three games," Cassidy told BBC Sport.

"We also believe the FA should look at bringing in points deductions at all levels for those who regularly abuse match officials."

Klopp was given a one-match ban after he was sent off against Manchester City in October for berating the referee's assistant.

The German also received a £30,000 fine, in addition to being warned about his future conduct.

Cameroonian striker Dorinel Yondjo does not hide his ambitions. He wants to score at least five goals at the TotalEnergies U17 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON), Algeria 2023, and beat the record set by Nigeria's Victor Osimhen, who scored four and won the golden boot in 2015.

Yondjo believes he has what it takes to set a new mark, and he is confident in his abilities and that of the team, that they can make history together in Algeria.

"Coming to this competition, to tell you the truth, I did some research to know the very recent top scorers of this tournament. I realized that the best had never exceeded four goals and I will try to work to break this record," the striker said, adding that he is inspired by Osimhen's story and keeps tabs of his club and country performances.

"I have followed the story of Victor (Osimhen). After shining with Nigeria during the 2015 U17 AFCON and the FIFA World Cup, he signed for Wolfsburg in Germany and my dream is also to be able to sign for a big club after this competition," he said.

Yondjo is not just inspired by

Yondjo wants to beat Osimhen's record



Osimhen

Osimhen alone, but also Real Madrid and France forward, Karim Benzema.

"I watch all his matches, I follow him on Instagram, I download his videos to learn about his movements, the state of mind he brings to the group, his fighting spirit, his leadership when he is on the field, and so on,"

"I really hope to play for this club (Real Madrid) one day because they are fabulous. Each season, they show that it is the best club in the world and that motivates me to pursue my dream of playing in this team one day," said the young forward.

Yondjo is one of the players who the Cameroon public has huge faith ahead of the tournament.

The young striker is personally aware of this and seems to have prepared accordingly.

"With these expectations, I am ready to respond. It is my duty as a striker since I showed during the UNIFFAC tournament who I am and I understand that the people have expectations of me in this competition here in Algeria," he said, speaking to CAFOnline.com.

Since the beginning of his adventure with the U17 team, the center-forward of the Cameroon Brasseries Football School (EFBC) has always been able to step up when called upon.

Yondjo was the X factor of the Cubs during the qualification tournament of the UNIFFAC zone played in January in Limbe.

He scored twice and assisted once in the 4-0 win over CAR and then played another starring role with a goal and an assist in a 2-0 win over Congo. The returns enabled him finish as the tournament's top scorer and Most Valuable Player.

The striker also showed his qualities during friendly matches played by the Cameroonian team in their pre-tournament camp in Sousse, Tunisia.

The question now is, can he replicate the form at the tournament where Cameroon hope to retain the title and book a ticket to the World Cup?

"Personally, I want to give everything to move the team forward. I want to help the team and also individually, try to win the Golden Boot award. Teamwork will be crucial in this if we are all to achieve our goals," the striker said.

He has admitted there is pressure, not just on himself but the team as well, but notes he has taken it positively.

"Being the defending champion is not easy and we came here with good motivation to be able to retain our trophy," he added.

Cameroon have been drawn in a tough Group C where they will tackle Mali and Burkina Faso, two teams who have already won the U17 title.

Sports

Madrid Open: Norrie beaten by China's Zhizhen

British number one Cameron Norrie was knocked out of the Madrid Open as China's world number 99 Zhang Zhizhen's history-making run continued.

BBC SPORT said that, Zhang - the first Chinese man to break into the top 100 - had never before recorded an ATP Masters 1,000 win prior to this year's tournament in Madrid.

But the 26-year-old battled back from a set down to beat Norrie, ranked 13th, with a 2-6 7-6 (7-2) 7-6 (7-2) win.

He is the first Chinese man to reach round four at a Masters 1,000 event.

Meanwhile, it is a fifth defeat in seven matches for Norrie, who lost in the second round at the Barcelona Open last month following first-round exits at both the Monte Carlo Masters and Miami Open.

Zhang backed up his first ATP 1,000 win in the opening round in Madrid with a notable victory over Canadian Denis Shapovalov for his first win against a top-30 ranked player.

He went one better on Monday, upsetting the odds to eliminate Norrie after recovering impressively from a one-sided first set, which the Briton sealed by winning five successive games.

Norrie was punished for not managing to take one of his five break points in the second set, with Zhang



dominating the tie-break and levelling the match with a sixth straight point.

With neither player able to find a way through in the deciding set, Zhang once again held his nerve in the tie-break to upgrade his biggest career win and extend his dream run to a fourth match.

Zhang, who received a standing ovation for his efforts on court three, will face American number one Taylor Fritz for a place in the quarter-finals.

"I didn't even think I was going to be here in the second week of Madrid," said Zhang. "Now I've made it. This is a big victory because it was an amazing match."

Fritz progressed with a 6-1 7-6 (7-4) over Chile's Cristian Garin.

Elsewhere, Russian world number two Daniil Medvedev and Greek world number five Stefanos

Tsitsipas both progressed in three sets.

Medvedev had to come from behind to beat compatriot Alexander Shevchenko 4-6 6-1 7-5, while Tsitsipas overcame Argentine Sebastian Baez 7-5 3-6 6-3.

But American ninth seed Frances Tiafoe lost 6-1 7-6 (7-2) to Pedro Cachina, of Argentina.

In the women's draw, first and second seeds Iga Swiatek and Aryna Sabalenka are both through to the quarter-finals.

Sabalenka made light work of her 6-3 6-1 win over Mirra Andreeva, the Russian wildcard who celebrated her 16th birthday on Sunday by

stunning Poland's world number 19 Magda Linette, having already beaten

world number 14 Beatriz Haddad Maia and 2021 US Open finalist Leylah

BBC SPORT revealed that, the 23-time Grand Slam singles champion told reporters at the New York fashion show there were "three of us" on the red carpet when she arrived with her husband Alexis Ohanian.

The couple welcomed their first daughter, Olympia, in October 2017.

Williams wrote in Vogue magazine last year that she wanted to move away from tennis and focus on growing her family.

The Met Gala is an annual invitation-only fundraiser for the Costume Institute, held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

In a TikTok post on Monday, Williams said she was "so excited when Anna Wintour invited the 3 of us to the Met Gala".

Vogue editor-in-chief

Williams confirmed She is pregnant with her second child

Anna Wintour is the chair of friend of Williams, who is a the evening, and a close frequent attendee of the annual event.



Djokovic to play at US Open

World number one Novak Djokovic will be able to play at this year's US Open after the United States confirmed international travellers will no longer need to be vaccinated against Covid-19.

BBC SPORT said that, the 22-time Grand Slam winner, 35, was forced to miss last year's tournament because of his vaccination status.

He also missed the past two Masters events in Indian Wells and Miami.

But US policy will change on 12 May, allowing Serb

Djokovic to return to Flushing Meadows in August.

"Today, we are announcing that the Administration will end the Covid-19 vaccine requirements for Federal employees, Federal contractors, and international air travellers at the end of the day on May 11, the same day that the Covid-19 public health emergency ends," the White House said in a statement.

Despite applying for special permission to enter

the United States, Djokovic withdrew from Indian Wells in March because he was still unable to enter the country.

He won the Australian Open in January, a year after he was deported from the country on the eve of the 2022 tournament because he had not been vaccinated.

Although injury kept him out of the ongoing Madrid Open, Djokovic is due to begin his bid for an overall men's record 23rd Grand Slam title at the French Open later this month.

Wimbledon: Kudermetova to remove Russian sponsorship

Russian player Veronika Kudermetova, who is sponsored by one of the country's oil and gas giants Tatneft, says she will be able to play at Wimbledon by removing the company's logo from her kit.

BBC SPORT said that, the All England Club (AELTC) will allow Russians and Belarusians to compete this year as neutrals, if they agree not to show any public support for the invasion of Ukraine.

But the conditions also prohibit players receiving funding from either state.

This includes "sponsorship from companies operated or controlled by the state" - but only "in relation to their participation in The Championships".

The conditions were drawn up by the AELTC and the Lawn Tennis Association in

consultation with the UK government.

The European Union issued sanctions against Tatneft last June by freezing the company's assets within the bloc.

"For the moment, I don't break a rule," Kudermetova said, having worn the Tatneft logo on her chest in a fourth-round victory over compatriot Daria Kasatkina at the Madrid Open.

"For Wimbledon, yes, I know we are not allowed to wear badges from our country. I agree with that, but for the moment I can wear that badge."

The rules may be open to interpretation, but appear easy to circumvent by putting an unsuitable arrangement on hold for the few weeks of the grass-court season.

Kudermetova, 26, says she has already signed Super Eagles

the personal declaration required of all Russians and Belarusians who wish to enter any UK grass-court events.

And she has done so on the understanding she will not wear any Tatneft branding.

"If I would like to play

Wimbledon, I need to take the badge off," she added.

There is nothing in the WTA rules to prevent the world number 13 playing

in Madrid, or anywhere else on the tour, while carrying sponsorship by a Russian firm of this nature.

But individual tournaments have the right to take a similar stance to the All England Club and the LTA, and it is understood the WTA would support them in that eventuality.

Kudermetova also detailed how she previously had links with CSKA - the traditional sports club of the Russian armed forces.

"When I was young, I was practising there," she said.

"It was my tennis club - when I was in Moscow I practised there, but for the moment I am not practising there."

"I don't have a contract with them, I don't have a salary from them - for the moment we are separate."





TRUTH EXALTS A NATION

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1972

WEDNESDAY, May 3, 2023

www.nigeriastandarddailynewspaper@yahoo.com

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FRAGMENT

"Trading is one of the best worldly works in which people get their livelihoods to cater for themselves, their families and dependents, and also to serve their communities, and what distinguishes the Muslim trader from others is his adherence to the core values of his religion, and his constant trust in his Lord, Allahu Subhanahu Wa-Ta'ala."

Dr. Yusuf Abdullahi Yusuf

Role of Muslim trader before, during Ramadan

ALL thanks and adorations are due to Allah, the Most-High, the Sustainer and Cherisher of the universe. May His bounties and blessings be upon His noble Prophet, Muhammad *Sallallahu 'alaihi Wa- Sallam*, his households, companions and all that followed his footprints till the day of Resurrection.

Mr. Chairman Sir, invited guests, dignitaries, and members of the general public present here, permit me to join other well-wishers in congratulating the Muslim Ummah for witnessing yet another blessed month of Ramadan.

It indeed gives me pleasure to be here today, not because I am the best, or the best person that can do justice to this topic, but rather to contribute the very little I have in the struggle of re-defining and re-awakening the Muslims, traders, businessmen and women.

Mr. Chairman Sir, the topic chosen for today's presentation is timely, taking into consideration the numerous challenges we faced as individuals and communities in the way we conduct ourselves, before, during and after Ramadan. The role and duties or the expectations of a Muslim trader should not be overemphasized. We all agree, as individuals and communities that, in some quotas today, all is not well in terms of the proper way of handling or managing our businesses.

Mr. Chairman Sir, it is my firm belief that, as Muslims and followers of the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad SAW we will get it right, now and forever, when we submit totally to the teachings of Allahu *Subhanahu Wa-Ta'ala*, and align ourselves with the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad *Sallallahu 'alaihi Wa- Sallam*, we will overcome these challenges and have a brighter future. This paper shall look at Islam and Trade, Ethics and Characteristics of a Muslim Trader.

Ethics and Characteristics of a Muslim trader



Trust, is the first quality of a Muslim trader, rather, it is more important than financial wealth (cash). His trustworthiness shall earn him moral immunity and an unshakable balance in his life. An adage says: "He who fulfills the trust, shares with people their money".

What is the benefit of a trader who lacks trust, even if he has a lot of money, as long as whoever deals with him is not safe from treachery or betrayal? And what about his faith and religion: when he prays in a place that does not belong to him, or performs ablution with water that he does not own, or sleeps while the oppressed is busy complaining about him to Allah, the Almighty? Said the Most High:

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمْتِهِمْ وَعِبَادِهِمْ زَاهُونَ ۚ
(المعارج: ٢٢)

And those who are faithful to

their trusts and their covenant (Q 70, 32)

Trading is one of the best worldly works in which people get their livelihoods to cater for themselves, their families and dependents, and also to serve their communities, and what distinguishes the Muslim trader from others is his adherence to the core values of his religion, and his constant trust in his Lord, Allahu *Subhanahu Wa-Ta'ala*.

Therefore, it was imperative for every Muslim trader in this time to know the morals, commands, and prohibitions that are related to his business. This is due to the spread of taboos, and the large number of suspicions that plague most transactions, that made some traders and businessmen and women to deviate from the pure teaching of Allahu *Subhanahu Wa-Ta'ala*, and His noble Prophet,

Muhammad *Sallallahu 'alaihi Wa- Sallam*.

One of the first things that a Muslim trader is reminded of in this regard is that his trade (business) should not distract him from remembering Allah, the Almighty, nor from prayer, nor from reciting the Holy Qur'an, nor from fulfilling Allah's right to his money (alms giving). Allahu *Subhanahu Wa-Ta'ala* has praised His faithful servants whose trade does not distract them. Said the Most High:

رَجُلٌ لَا تَشْتَبِيهِ تَجَرَّةٌ وَلَا يَبْتَغِ عَنْ نَسْرِ أُمَّةٍ وَلَا يَمُوتُ
أَعْمُورَهُ وَيُؤَدُّ أَرْكَانَهُ بِخَيْرٍ يَوْمًا تُنْقَلُ فِيهِ الْقُلُوبُ
وَالْأَبْصَارُ ۚ (النور، ٣٧)

Men whom neither merchandise nor selling diverts from the remembrance of Allah and the keeping up of prayer and the giving of poor-rate; they fear a day in which the hearts and eyes shall turn about. (al-Nur, 37)

And he cautioned those that are being carried away by their businesses to remember Allah and His teachings in their business premises, said the Exalted:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّبِعُوا أَمْوَالِكُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادِكُمْ عَنْ
نَسْرِ أَعْمَارِكُمْ مِمَّا قَدْ قَضَىٰ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ فَذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ عَاذِرِينَ ۚ (البقرة، ٢١٨)

O you who believe! let not your wealth, or your children, divert you from the remembrance of Allah; and whoever does that, these are the losers. (al-Munafiqun, 9)

He is the one who asks and investigates not to enter into an unlawful and forbidden transaction, whatever it is, and does not eat the money of the people with falsehood, and has fully submitted himself to the commandments of his Allah, while He addressed him and says:

وَلَا تَلْقُوا أَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبُطْلِ وَتُلْقُوا بِهَا إِلَى
النَّاسِ مُتَحَدِّثِينَ ۚ (البقرة، ٢٨٨)

And do not swallow up your property among yourselves by false means, neither seek to gain access thereby to the judges, so that you may swallow up a part of the property of men wrongfully while you know. (al-Baqarah, 188).

Some of the Characteristics of a Muslim Trader includes:

First: Honesty and trustworthiness. The Prophet

of Islam, may the peace of Allah be upon him, said:

التاجر الصدوق مع التيسيرين والصفتين
والشهادة رواد الترمذي وقال حديث حسن
"The honest and trustworthy trader is with the prophets, the truthful ones, and the martyrs". (Narrated by Tirmidhi)

قد خرج النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم إلى المدينة
وما قرأ الناس يتبايعون، فقال: يا معشر التجار،
استجابوا الرسول الذي صلى الله عليه وسلم، ورفعوا
عناقههم وأبصارهم إليه، فقال: "إن التجار يُسألون
يوم القيامة فجاءهم إلا من اتقى الله ورسوله وصديقه".
(الترمذي، ١٢١٠)

In similar vein, Rifa'ata Bn Rafi' narrated that "Prophet Muhammad *Sallallahu 'alaihi Wa- Sallam* went out to pray, he saw people trading, and he said: "O our traders". So they responded to the Messenger of Allah, raised their necks and looked at him, he said: "On the day of Resurrection, (merchants (traders, men and women) will be resurrected as ungodly, except for those who fear Allah, righteous, and are truthful. (Tirmidhy, 1210).

Second: Keeping away from suspicions.

عن أبي محمد، الحسن بن علي بن أبي طالب
رضي الله عنهم، قال: حفظت من رسول الله صلى
الله عليه وسلم: "مخ ما يربك إلى ما لا يربك، فإن
الصدق حمداً، والكذب ريباً". رواد الترمذي،
وقال حديث حسن.

On the authority of Abu Muhammad, al-Hassan Bn Ali Bn Abi Talib, May Allah be pleased with them, said: "Leave what makes you doubt for what does not make you doubt, for truthfulness is reassurance, and falsehood is distrust", (Tirmidhy, 2442)

Third: Giving more alms, and not being satisfied with the obligatory.

عن قيس بن أبي حازمة، قال: كان في عهد رسول
الله صلى الله عليه وسلم نسبي السمسرة فخر بنا
رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فسمعتنا باسم هو
حسن منه، فقال: "يا معشر التجار، إن السبع
حضره القوم والحلف، فهو يبيع بالصدق. (سنن أبي
أوبيد، كتاب البوع، باب في التجار، يخاطبها الحلف
والقوة، حديث رقم: ٢٢٢٦)

On the authority of Qais bin Abi Ghazra, he said: during the Prophet's time, we were called brokers, so the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, passed by us and called us by a better name, and he said: "O business people, selling is attended by idle talk and swearing, so mix it with charity". (Abu Dawood, 3326)

To be continued next week