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May 29th, 2023 marked yet another milestone in the political history and development of Nigeria. Not only did the Buhari administration hand over power to the new Tinubu administration but 28 states made up of 18 new governors had a change of administration. This change in guard has given fresh impetus to Nigerians to rediscover themselves and strive towards growth and development.

Front Page Comment

Indeed, this is the longest civilian to civilian transition since independence. Twenty-five years of unbroken democratic transition

however, come at a price as Nigeria has over the years not only lost a lot of the gains it had recorded in the past but had

for them. To be sure, since the return to democracy, one form of problem or the other has blighted and stunted the democratic development of the country. From the Niger Delta insurgency to the Boko Haram, the religious crises in the various states and the amorphous yet complex farmer/herder crises, Nigeria has weathered the storm and has been able to remain knitted together despite the many challenges. *Cont'd on Page 2*

In the cusp of history

affirms that Nigeria has not only imbibed the democratic culture but is as a matter of fact, ready to defend and make it work. This, has

witnessed a change in its fortunes due to the activities of insurgents who had unleashed terror on the population, making life difficult

Mutfwang sworn-in as 6th Plateau Governor

By PALANG KASMI

Governor Caleb Mutfwang of Plateau State has promised to give citizens of the state quality leadership.

He has also pledged to unite the state, ensure peaceful coexistence and improve the economic fortunes of the state through Public Private Partnership (PPP).

Mutfwang made the promise during his official inauguration and swearing in ceremony as governor of the state, on May 29, 2023 at the Rwang Pam Township Stadium, Jos.

Mutfwang who emerged governor on the platform of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), took over from the 8-year reign of the All Progressives Congress (APC) led by Barr. Simon Bako Lalong.

Former Plateau Governor, Barr. Simon Bako Lalong represented by his Deputy, Prof. Sonny Gwanle Tyoden, Inspected Guard of Honour mounted by the Nigerian Police after which he performed the handing over rites to the new Governor. Governor Mutfwang received the salute and reviewed the parade.

Also sworn in at the ceremony was his deputy,

Hon. Josephine Piyo, a seasoned politician administrator.

Party supporters, clad in green and white attire, filled the stadium to the brim, as the event attracted past governors, government officials, political appointees, parliamentarians, political stalwarts, party faithful, business men and women, and guests from within and outside the state.

After the Chief Judge of Plateau, Justice David Mann administered the oath of office, the new governor said "It is with great pleasure and immense gratitude to God that I address you today as the 6th democratically elected Governor of Plateau State".

He appreciated Plateau people for the overwhelming support he got that brought him into office, emphasizing that his government will

promote brotherhood, interreligious harmony and unity.

He said "I therefore welcome you to a new Plateau where tribe, and faith will no longer be tools for division but rich multi coloured threads to be weaved into strong ropes that will pull us together for unity and progress".

"Conscious of the fact that I have been elected governor by *Cont'd on Page 2*



Plateau State Governor, Barr. Caleb Mutfwang acknowledging cheers on motorcade after being sworn-in as the elected Governor of the State at the Rwang Pam Township Stadium, Jos on Monday, May 29, 2023 PHOTO: DANLADI DUK

Put the interest of Plateau first -Lalong

By PALANG KASMI

Former Governor of Plateau State, Governor Simon Bako Lalong has tasked his successor, Barr. Caleb Mutfwang and the political class to put the interest of the state first above personal sentiments.

Lalong gave the advice during a Transition Thanksgiving Mass organised as part of activities lined up to mark the end of tenure of Governor Simon Bako Lalong to usher in the new administration of Barr. Caleb Mutfwang.

The event took place Sunday May 28, 2023 at the St. Monica Catholic Church Rantya, State Low coast Jos.

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News

Mutfwang sworn-in as 6th Plateau Governor

Cont'd from Page 1

the divine will of God and the great determination of the people, I promise by word and deed, to be an advocate and practitioner of justice, fairness and equity".

The governor appreciated the founding fathers of the state who have laid a solid foundation for its existence and promised to consolidate on their efforts to bring development to the state.

Mutfwang assured of revamping the health, education, agricultural sectors, mining and mineral sectors, sports, water sector, Information Communications Technology ICT, People with Disabilities, and collaborating with local governments on the PDP's policy of 5 kilometers of asphalt roads in each local government headquarters, despite an inherited debt

burden of 200 billion Naira.

He lamented the killings in Mangu, Bokkos, Riyom, Barkin Ladi, and Bassa Local Government in premeditated attacks, calling on citizens to embrace peace for the development of the state. He further promised to equip the state security outfit "Operation Rainbow" to augment the existing national security apparatus.

While extending an olive branch to other political parties that lost in the elections to join hands with his government to build the state, Mutfwang disclosed that he will turn Plateau to the economic hub of Northern Nigeria by creating a friendly environment and Ease of Doing Business for all business persons.

"We will deliberately explore Public Private Partnership as a

philosophy for the development of all critical sectors".

"We will give special attention to agricultural products in which the state has comparative advantage to address the scourge of poverty" said Mutfwang. He stressed that underperforming and moribund agricultural institutions like Agricultural Service Training Company (ASTC), Plateau Agricultural Development Programme (PADP) and the re-acquired Brewery Agro Research Company (BARC) farm among others will be reinvigorated.

Special prayers were offered by COCIN President, Rev. Dr. Amos Mohzo for God's guidance for the governor and progress of the state. There were also presentations by various traditional dance groups and artists who entertained guests at the inauguration.

The Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited has backed the removal of subsidy on petrol by President Bola Tinubu.

The Group CEO of NNPC Limited, Mele Kayri said in Abuja that payments for petrol subsidy has been a huge burden on the company's cash flow.

NNPC Limited was saddled with the payments for subsidy by former President Muhammadu Buhari, with the company carrying the cost in its books as petrol under-recovery.

The company however deducts the cost from the revenue due to the Federation Accounts from the sales of Federation Crude Oil.

Speaking to journalists, Kyari said NNPC Limited "welcomes the decision of Mr. President to announce that the subsidy on PMS (premium motor spirit) is over. This has been a major challenge for NNPC continued operations. We have been funding the subsidy from the cash flow of NNPC since the government is unable to

NNPCL backs Tinubu on petrol subsidy removal



Tinubu

defray the cost of the subsidy that is due to the corporation.

"We believe that this will free up resources for the NNPC to do the great work that this company is doing for our country and it allows us to continue to operate as

a commercial entity".

While assuring consumers that NNPC has enough stock of petrol in the supply system, he appealed the potential change in pump should not be enough reason for people to engage in panic buying.

Put the interest of Plateau first -Lalong

Cont'd from Page 1

The Mass attracted government officials and key party stakeholders from the All Progressives Congress and Peoples Democratic Party.

With the reading taken from John 20:19-23, Catholic Bishop of Jos, represented by Monsignor Cletus Gotan said the state Transition Thanksgiving Mass coincides with the Feast of Pentecost, which means peace, unity, self-control and other good virtues of the Holy Spirit.

Gotan said the mass, which gathered people across all facets of life, and stakeholders in Plateau was to offer thanksgiving worship for the successful tenure of Governor Simon Bako Lalong, who served successfully as Governor of the state for 8 years, Chairman of Northern Governors Forum, and Director General of the APC Presidential Campaign Council.

He said the mass was also to thank God for the successful and peaceful elections in the state that ushers in a new Governor, Barr. Caleb Mutfwang.

He lamented the high level of insecurity Nigeria is witnessing, stating "In our society today, there is lack of dialogue, breakdown of peace, horrendous poverty, senseless religious fanaticism, extremism causing people to be killed".

"But serving God means relating to people the way God maps out, not how we map it out. Nigerians need the Holy Spirit to teach them against bloodshed, religious fanaticism, ethnicity".

The man of God urged people of the state to embrace unity, spirit of brotherliness

and share inter-community early warning signals, mount road blocks to safeguard each other against invading killers rather than just sit and politicise security, and demonise each other on the social media.

He challenged the incoming governor to tap from the bulk of experience of the outgoing Governor, Lalong and build a unifying administration that will champion peace in the state.

"Time is too short and whatever we do with our time, we would give account of it to God", Gotan said.

Governor Simon Bako Lalong said: "I begin by giving all the glory and adoration to God who is the beginning and the end. Through his supremacy and sovereignty, he ordained this very day in which we are grateful for to mark the end of our administration. At this time in 2015, we were celebrating the beginning of an era in the governance of Plateau State. Today, it is the opposite".

"It is therefore appropriate to come back here after 8 years to thank God, lest we become like the 10 lepers who were healed but only one of them returned to appreciate Jesus. Besides, the Holy Bible in Ecclesiastes 7:8 tells us that "the end of a matter is better than its beginning and patience is better than pride".

"As Governor of Plateau State for the past 8 years, I have every reason to give all the glory and adoration to God for choosing me out of the millions of citizens who were very qualified to make me leader of the state. Like David who was in the bush tending his father's flock, I was taken out of my village in Ajikamai to occupy this exalted office despite my shortcomings".

"When we came into office, we inherited challenges that looked difficult to address but today we look back and see how far God helped us to tackle them".

Lalong said his rescue led government did its best to move the state forward and serve with the best of intentions. He went further, to on behalf of his team apologise for any shortcomings. And added "Nothing was done to intentionally toy with the people's expectations".

While appreciating his wife Regina, family, citizens and church for the support he got, Lalong challenged the citizens and especially the political class to put the interest of the state above personal considerations and rally round to support the administration of his successor, Mutfwang, to continue from where he stopped.

In his remarks, the incoming Governor, Barr. Caleb Mutfwang said it is possible for Plateau to be united.

He stated that the sermon challenged him and others to be Christians indeed. He explained that "The reason why our land is being ravaged is because we have lost the sense of brotherhood".

He promised to unite and build Plateau, stressing that contrary to the questions that kept popping up for him to probe the immediate past government, he will not, but only questions, where he needs clarifications.

"This cycle of aberration where we disgrace our leaders has come to an end in Plateau. If we have any issues, we will sit down and settle it", he said.

Mutfwang used the forum to wish the outgoing Governor the best in his future endeavours.

Plateau State Chairman of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Rev. Fr. Polycarp Lubo appreciated Lalong for doing his best with the opportunity God gave him to serve.

Lubo said CAN will continue to pray for him as he leaves office for greater opportunities, praying for wisdom for the incoming governor to lead the state well.

There was a procession of thanksgiving for the outgoing and incoming governor, their deputies, government officials as they walked to the altar to offer thanksgiving offerings.

Tinubu administration has come to redefine modern governance -Shettima



Shettima

Vice President Kashim Shettima on Tuesday declared that the new administration led by President Ahmed Bola Tinubu is poised to redefine the meaning and concept of modern governance in the country to facilitate development.

He is going to provide the leadership and we will rally round him, give him our unequivocally support and loyalty to see to the realization of the Nigerian dream—a Nigeria where every black man in the world should be proud of," Shettima said when he resumed office at the Presidential Villa, Abuja, Tuesday.

Waxing philosophical, the Vice President said "power to me is a humbling experience. It's all about how we can make life better for the common man."

He assured that

President Tinubu is poised to catapult the country to a higher pedestal while also providing the needed leadership that would bring about the desired development.

He is determined; he has the skills set; he has the temperament; the disposition and the purity of mind and commitment to give service to this nation."

On the controversy trailing the government's position concerning the issue of fuel subsidy removal, the Vice President retorted that "the president has already made pronouncements yesterday (Monday) on the issue of the fuel subsidy. The truth of the matter is that it is either we get rid of subsidy or the fuel subsidy gets rid of the Nigerian nation."

"In 2022, we spent \$10billion subsidizing the

ostentatious lifestyle of the upper class of the society because you and I benefit 90% from the oil subsidy. The poor 40% of Nigerians benefit very little. And we know the consequences of unveiling a masquerade. We will get fierce opposition from those benefitting from the oil subsidy scam.

"But where there is a will, there is a way. Be rest assured that our president is a man of strong will and conviction. In the fullness of time you will appreciate his noble intentions for the nation. The issue of fuel subsidy will be frontally addressed. The earlier we do so, the better."

On the issue of multiple exchange rates, he maintained that the government was determined to collapse it into one.

"We are going to collapse it into one. So these are two big elephants in the room and as the days go by we will be unveiling our agenda. He is going to unveil his agenda because as I have always said there can never be two captains in a ship.

"He is the president and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. I'm the vice president. Your relevance is directly proportional to the level of your loyalty to the president.

"This is a gentleman that I have known for well over a decade; that I have interacted closely with. Be rest assured that we are going to work harmoniously as a team, as a family for the greater good of our nation."





Business & Economy

Single exchange rate, lower borrowing cost Tinubu's priorities

President Bola Tinubu has highlighted the need for a unified exchange rate and a reduction in interest rates to drive up investment in the country. Tinubu, in his inaugural speech on Monday, said the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) must work towards a unified exchange rate. ANTHONY AILEMEN writes.

THIS will direct funds away from arbitrage into meaningful investment in the plant, equipment and jobs that power the real economy," he said.

He described interest rates as too high, and therefore "need to be reduced to increase investment and consumer purchasing in ways that sustain the economy at a higher level."

"Whatever merits it had in concept, the currency swap was too harshly applied by the CBN given the number of unbanked Nigerians. The policy shall be reviewed. In the meantime, my administration will treat both currencies as legal tender."

Tinubu said his administration will target a higher Gross Domestic Product growth rate and significantly reduce unemployment.

He said: "We intend to accomplish this by taking the following steps: First, budgetary reform stimulating the economy without engendering inflation will be instituted. Second, industrial policy will utilise the full range of fiscal measures to promote domestic manufacturing and lessen import dependency.

"Third, electricity will become more accessible and affordable to businesses and homes alike. Power generation should nearly double and transmission and distribution networks improved. We will encourage states to develop local sources as well."

Speaking on investment policies, Tinubu said he would work to attract more investors, both local and foreign.



"Our government shall review all their complaints about multiple taxation and various anti-investment inhibitions," the former governor of Lagos State said. "We shall ensure that investors and foreign businesses repatriate their hard earned dividends and profits home."

On jobs creation, Tinubu said his administration must create meaningful opportunities for

the youth. "We shall honour our campaign commitment of one million new jobs in the digital economy."

"Our government also shall work with the National Assembly to fashion an omnibus Jobs and Prosperity bill. This bill will give our administration the policy space to embark on labour-intensive infrastructural improvements, encourage light industry and provide improved social services for the poor, elderly and vulnerable," he said.

Tinubu also unveiled his agricultural policy, adding that rural incomes shall be secured by commodity exchange boards guaranteeing minimal prices for certain crops and animal products.

"A nationwide programme for storage and other facilities to reduce spoilage and waste will be undertaken."

He said his administration will create agricultural hubs throughout the nation to increase production and engage in value-added processing.

Tinubu said: "The livestock sector will be introduced to best modern practices and steps taken to minimise the perennial conflict over land and water

resources in this sector.

"Through these actions, food shall be made more abundant yet less costly. Farmers shall earn more while the average Nigerian pays less."

He said his administration will continue the efforts of the Muhammadu Buhari administration on infrastructure. "Progress toward national networks of roads, rail and ports shall get priority attention."

Commenting on the speech, Ayodele Akinwunmi, relationship manager, corporate banking at FSDH Merchant Bank Limited, said the single exchange rate will happen as soon as the President sets his cabinet and sets the direction.

He said the CBN and the fiscal authority can make it happen, adding that the market has been asking for this. "It is a good development and the market is going to receive it," he said.

Muda Yusuf, chief executive officer of the Centre for the Promotion of Private Enterprise, welcomes the decision of Tinubu to put in place a unified exchange rate regime.

"It should be clarified that this

is not a devaluation proposition. Rather it is a pricing mechanism that reflects the demand and supply fundamentals in the foreign exchange market which allows for rate adjustments as and when necessary," he said.

Taiwo Oyedele, head of tax and corporate advisory services at PwC Nigeria, said Tinubu has touched on the most pressing business issues in his inauguration speech, especially exchange rate harmonisation, multiple taxation, and high interest rates, among others.

He said it will be interesting to see how these critical issues are addressed in the coming days and months ahead.

"Clearly the approach to be adopted will be essential in driving the desired outcome without creating further market distortions," he said. "For instance, how do you harmonise FX rates without pushing up the parallel market rate in a way that sustains the margin for arbitrage? How do we reduce interest rates without fuelling inflation?"

According to him, these are not easy problems to solve but are necessary even if it means that things will get worse initially before getting better.



Tinubu



FG targets \$4bn from Abuja, Kano Airports concession

THE Federal Government is targeting a \$4bn revenue (about N1.84tn) from the ongoing concession of the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja, and the Mallam Aminu Kano International Airport, Kano.

It disclosed this in a statement issued in Abuja on Monday by the Head of Press and Public Affairs, Federal Ministry of Aviation, Oluseyi Odutayo, as it provided updates about the ongoing Nigeria Airport Concession Programme.

The ministry called for the co-operation of Nigerians towards the successful concession of the major airports, stressing that the expected gains of the exercise were enormous.

"Over the concession period, the projected nominal revenues from the combined concession of NAIA and

exceed \$4bn. With over 70 per cent of the projected revenues payable to the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria, the government will benefit from a substantial revenue stream that can be utilised for various developmental projects," it stated.

It said this infusion of private sector investment and the resulting financial benefits would enable Nigerians to implement the much-needed upgrades to airport infrastructure, technology, and services.

Providing more updates on the programme, the FMA said the successful bidder had pledged \$8.5m upfront payment for the Abuja and Kano airports.

"Under the concession agreement for Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport and Mallam Aminu Kano International Airport, the successful bidder, Corporacion America Airport Consortium, (a New York Stock Exchange Company), has committed to making upfront payments of \$7m for NAIA and \$1.5m for MAKIA.

"These immediate payments demonstrate their commitment to investing in the development and enhancement of these airports," the ministry stated.

The concession process of the airports, supervised by the Infrastructure Concession Regulatory Commission, was initiated in 2016 by the Federal Government to attract foreign investments and technical partnerships in the aviation infrastructure sector.

The Federal Government also reiterated its full commitment to addressing ongoing legal disputes transparently and promptly, while following due legal process and maintaining transparency throughout the resolution of the legal



Sirika

disputes.

The NACP envisions international best practices as a model to improve the quality and operation of airports, enhance the travel experience for Nigerians, attract foreign direct investments, and generate increased revenue for the government.

"We urge all stakeholders to support this transformative process and work together to

achieve our shared vision of a thriving aviation sector that benefits all Nigerians.

"By embracing the Nigeria Airport Concession Programme, we can create an aviation industry that drives economic growth, attracts foreign investment, and positions Nigeria as a regional hub for air travel and commerce," the ministry stated.

"On the economy, we target a higher GDP growth and to significantly reduce unemployment. We intend to accomplish this by taking the following steps: First, budgetary reform stimulating the economy without engendering inflation will be instituted.

"Second, industrial policy will utilize the full range of fiscal measures to promote domestic manufacturing and lessen import dependency.

"Third, electricity will become more accessible and affordable to businesses and homes alike. Power generation should nearly double and transmission and distribution networks improved. We will encourage states to develop local sources as well.

To foreign and local investors, the President said "Our government shall review all their complaints about multiple taxation and various anti-investment inhibitions. We shall ensure that investors and foreign businesses repatriate their hard-earned dividends and profits home."

Reacting further to the removal, IPMAN Chair added that "The government of President Tinubu should not adopt what is in the transition document handed over to it by the administration of former President Muhammadu Buhari. Someone (Buhari) who for eight years did not remove subsidy is advising a new government to remove it.

"That is not fair and should not be adopted. Rather the new government should sit and discuss with marketers and other stakeholders on how



Kyari

NEWLY inaugurated President Bola Tinubu, on Monday, said his administration will revisit the naira redesign policy of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and will treat the old and new banknotes as legal tender.

On October 26, 2022, the CBN announced that the high naira value of N200, N500 and N1,000 would be redesigned and introduced into the economy from December 15, 2022, while commercial banks were directed to return existing denominations to the CBN.

The currency swap was too harshly applied by the CBN given the number of unbanked Nigerians. The policy shall be reviewed. In the meantime, my administration will treat both currencies as legal tender," Tinubu said during his inauguration at Eagle Square, Abuja on Monday.

He said the monetary policy needed thorough house cleaning and that the CBN should work towards a

Tinubu to treat old, new notes as legal tender

unified exchange rate.

Muda Yusuf, chief executive officer of the Centre for the Promotion of Private Enterprise, welcomes the decision of the new president to put in place a unified exchange rate regime. It should be clarified that this is

not a devaluation proposition. Rather it is a pricing mechanism that reflects the demand and supply fundamentals in the foreign exchange market which allows for rate adjustments as and when necessary.



Tinibi

Universal Insurance pays N471.5m claims to supermarket

Universal Insurance Plc has paid N471,500 million as claims to Next Cash and Carry, a supermarket in the Federal Capital

Territory (FCT), that got burnt as a result of a fire incident that took place in December, 2021.

The Insurer said it has

remained steadfast to the issue of prompt claims payment to policyholders, having paid a total of N1.2 billion as claims to its policyholders who suffered losses from 2015 to 2020.

The breakdown of the claims paid showed the company paid N111.1 million in 2016, N330.3 million in 2017, N334.2 million in 2018 and N338.2 million in 2019 bringing the total claims to N1.2 billion on nine classes of insurance.

While speaking on the company's claims profile, Benedict Ujoatonou, managing director/CEO Universal Insurance disclosed that the Company's commitment to satisfying her clients is non-negotiable.

"We understand the importance of prompt claims settlement, and we remain steadfast in our resolve to deliver on our promises to our valued clients."

The insurer has, in the meantime, expanded its presence within Lagos to boost insurance accessibility in the country.

According to Ujoatonou, "Our key strategy to grow our business for this year is to expand our market. In pursuit of this strategy, we have opened up more offices in Lekki and Apapa areas of Lagos."

Universal Insurance Plc is one of the largest Nigerian non-life insurance companies with an asset base of about N12.3 billion, with 16 billion fully paid shares and issued share capital of N8 billion. The company's shareholders fund stands at over N9.7 billion.

No more fuel subsidy- Tinubu

economy and address multiple taxation that stymies foreign direct investment.

"On the economy, we target a higher GDP growth and to significantly reduce unemployment. We intend to accomplish this by taking the following steps: First, budgetary reform stimulating the economy without engendering inflation will be instituted.

"Second, industrial policy will utilize the full range of fiscal measures to promote domestic manufacturing and lessen import dependency.

"Third, electricity will become more accessible and affordable to businesses and homes alike. Power generation should nearly double and transmission and distribution networks improved. We will encourage states to develop local sources as well.

To foreign and local investors, the President said "Our government shall review all their complaints about multiple taxation and various anti-investment inhibitions. We shall ensure that investors and foreign businesses repatriate their hard-earned dividends and profits home."

Reacting further to the removal, IPMAN Chair added that "The government of President Tinubu should not adopt what is in the transition document handed over to it by the administration of former President Muhammadu Buhari. Someone (Buhari) who for eight years did not remove subsidy is advising a new government to remove it.

"That is not fair and should not be adopted. Rather the new government should sit and discuss with marketers and other stakeholders on how

to manage the fuel subsidy regime. We now have the Dangote Refinery, but all our refineries are still not working, so we don't think removing subsidy is the right thing to do now," Ukadike stated.

He said IPMAN was ready to work with the new government and would proffer measures to address the fuel subsidy regime, instead of effecting an outright halt in subsidy.

When contacted to state their position on the issue, the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria stated that it would not comment on the development now, as it was currently studying the new administration.

The General Secretary, PENGASSAN, Lumumba Okugbawa, said, "We wouldn't want to comment on the fuel subsidy removal matter now because we are still studying the situation and the new government of President Tinubu."

While IPMAN insisted that subsidy should not be removed without the repairs of Nigeria's refineries, the Major Oil Marketers Association of Nigeria maintained its position that fuel subsidy should stop.

The Executive Secretary, MOMAN, Clement Isong, said Nigeria was burning its earnings by paying trillions as subsidy on petrol.

"Currently, we are told that this year that we are to spend about N6tn on subsidy. I am sure that in our hearts we all know that if we invested that N6tn in sustainable programmes, it will grow the economy. It is a

better way to go than to burn it in fuel subsidy. We all know this," he stated.

Barely a few hours after Tinubu's announcement on subsidy, fuel queues resurfaced in Abuja, Lagos and some states.

Motorists besieged filling stations in Abuja, Nasarawa and Niger states on Monday afternoon following the news.

The announcement triggered a rush for petrol at fillings stations in Abuja and neighbouring states by motorists, as they struggled to get their tanks filled, over fear that once subsidy ends, the cost of PMS could rise above N500/litre.

Oil marketers had projected that the cost of the commodity could hit N700/litre, once the Federal Government ends subsidy on petrol in June this year.

"It is not out of place to rush and fill your tank now that you can get the product for less than N200/litre, since the new President has declared that subsidy is gone," a motorist in the long queue at Salbas filling station, Kubwa-Zuba Expressway, who simply gave his name as Ayoola, stated.

The Conoil filling station opposite the headquarters of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited in the Central Business District of Abuja, also had long queues on Monday afternoon.

In Zuba, Niger State, it was observed that many outlets were shut, as the few ones, like Mobil at Madalla, that dispensed petrol, had queues formed by motorists.

The Nigeria Labour Congress on Monday said Tinubu decision on fuel subsidy removal was not a well thought move



How Nigeria's agriculture sector fared under Buhari

Although some progress was recorded under the agric sector in the past eight years, this still does not reflect in the state of food availability, accessibility and affordability across the country. ABDULKAREEM MOJEED, writes.

EIGHT years ago, when President Muhammadu Buhari took office, one of his promises was to diversify the oil-dominated economy by upscaling agricultural productivity through viable investments and enhancing farmers' capacity to plug into untapped opportunities across the sector's value chain.

The new president said Nigerians should "grow what they eat, and eat what they grow," to boost local food production, increase foreign exchange earnings and reduce the country's food importation bill significantly.

In his inaugural speech in 2015, Mr. Buhari also promised to reduce the soaring unemployment figures in the country through the revival of the agriculture sector.

"Unemployment, notably youth unemployment, features strongly in our party's manifesto. We intend to attack the problem frontally through revival of agriculture, solid minerals mining as well as credits to small and medium size businesses to kick-start these enterprises. We shall quickly examine the best way to revive major industries and accelerate the revival and development of our railways, roads and general infrastructure," Mr Buhari's 2015 inaugural speech read in part.

In subsequent engagement with Nigerians, Mr Buhari said a database of unemployed but qualified youth had been developed under the National Social Investment Programme which can be used by the public and private sectors for recruitment purposes.

Cumulatively, nearly two million beneficiaries have received aid under this Programme apart from Anchors Borrowers Programme and School Feeding initiative each reaching two million recipients. And we will do more. Much more," he said.

"On food security, our farmers have made great strides in local production of rice, maize, cassava, poultry, fertiliser, fisheries and sesame. We remain resolute in supporting the private sector in emphasising backward integration and export expansion plans."

Under Mr Buhari, the agric ministry was managed by three ministers: Audu Ogbah, Sabo Nanono and Abubakar Muhammed.

Mr Ogbah assumed office in December 2015 with the stated aim of restoring the lost glory of the agricultural sector, which was the mainstay of Nigeria's economy in the 1970s before the oil-boom. He recorded some significant successes within the first four years of this



Buhari

administration but faced several criticisms following his approach to resolving the perennial farmer-herder clashes in the country. He was not returned as a minister after Mr Buhari was re-elected for a second term in 2019.

Mr Nanono, who succeeded Mr Ogbah, was himself removed in September 2021, about two years after he was appointed due to his underperformance at the ministry. Mr Nanono was replaced by Mr Abubakar, who was the Minister of Environment.

In this report, PREMIUM TIMES examines key events and data that shaped the country's agricultural sector under Mr Buhari's eight years in office.

Investment and food self-sufficiency

Mr Buhari launched the Anchor Borrowers Programme (ABP) initiative established by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) in November 2015, six months after his inauguration. The government intended to use the programme to create a linkage between anchor (companies) involved in the processing and small holder farmers (SHFs) of some specific agricultural commodities captured in the initiative.

Beneficiaries of the programme are smallholder farmers cultivating cereals (rice, maize, wheat etc.) cotton, roots and tubers, sugarcane, tree crops, legumes, tomato and livestock. Loans are disbursed to the beneficiary farmers through Deposit Money Banks (DMBs), Development Finance Institutions (DFIs) and Microfinance Banks (MFBs),

which the programme recognises as Participating Financial Institutions (PFIs).

Upon harvest, the farmers repay their loans by taking their harvest to 'anchors' who pay the cash equivalent to the farmers' accounts. The impacts of the initiative and the subsequent closure of Nigeria's border in 2019 were evident in the increased local production of some key staple grains like rice and maize.

While unveiling rice pyramids produced by rice farmers under the ABP initiative across the country in Abuja last year, Mr Buhari said over 4.8 million smallholder farmers have been financed under the initiative across Nigeria to boost production of 23 agricultural commodities in the country.

For instance, before the initiation of the ABP programme, Nigeria's average rice production between 1999 and 2015 was less than four million metric tonnes (mmt) annually. Between 1999 and 2015, the country's yearly milled rice production averaged 2.4 million metric tonnes. However, upon the implementation of the ABP initiative, milled rice production increased from 3.9 mmt in 2015 to 4.5 mmt (15 per cent increase) in 2016, data published by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) showed.

In 2017 and 2018, Nigeria's milled rice production averaged 4.5 mmt, and rose to 5.0 mmt (11 per cent increase) in 2019. In 2020, amidst the coronavirus pandemic and the devastating impacts of climate change and

insecurity, production decreased to 4.8 mmt but later rose to 5.3 and 5.0 mmt in 2021 and 2022 respectively.

Data also shows that Nigeria's yearly national production of maize (a major staple among Nigerians and a key raw material for livestock feed production) increased significantly between 2014 and 2022. Nigeria's production figures rose from 10.1 mmt in 2014 to 10.6 mmt in 2015 and 11.6 mmt (9.34 per cent increase) in 2016.

In 2017, the figure fell to 10.4 mmt but leapt in 2018 to 11.0 mmt. The country's maize production climbed further to 12.7 mmt in 2019 but depreciated slightly to 12.4 mmt in 2020 due to Covid-19 impacts on food systems. Eventually, production picked up in 2021 to 12.75 mmt and settled at 12.20 mmt last year, the data showed.

In the eight years under the Buhari administration, average yearly maize production stood at 11.7 mmt. Meanwhile, under the preceding administrations of presidents Olusegun Obasanjo, Musa Yar'Adua and Goodluck Jonathan, the yearly averages were 5.5 mmt, 7.3 mmt and 9.0 mmt respectively, implying that progress has been consistent in the last 20 years. The rate of production between 2015 and 2022 has improved Nigeria's ranking in the region and around the world. Nigeria now ranks 14th and 13th among global milled rice and maize producers, respectively. Likewise, the data also revealed that Nigeria is currently the highest producer of rice in Africa, ahead of Egypt and it occupies the second spot among maize producers in Africa, trailing South Africa which ranks ninth globally.

Despite the success of the ABP, it had significant challenges. A 2018 PREMIUM TIMES and Buharimeter investigation in five states - Lagos, Ekiti, Kebbi, Kaduna and Ebonyi - and in neighbouring Benin Republic, revealed that the ABP, which was touted as the answer to Nigeria's quest for self-sufficiency in rice production, failed in many places with the government unable to recoup a large chunk of the N55 billion loan, already disbursed. The ABP gave rise to a multitude of angry farmers who claim the programme was hijacked by local politicians who disbursed funds to fake farmers and became a means of rewarding political patronage.

An effort by the Rice Farmers Association of Nigeria (RIFAN) to salvage the programme was merely slogging by as complaints of the supply of expired herbicide, bad seeds and other funding, threatened to derail it.

Under Mr Buhari, other notable agricultural policies launched

include: Agriculture Promotion Policy (APP), Nigeria-Africa Trade and Investment Promotion Programme (NATIPP), Presidential Economic Diversification Initiative (PEDI), Zero Reject Initiative, Economic and Export Promotion Incentives, National Agricultural Technology and Innovation Policy (NATIP) and the Food security council among others.

The Presidential Fertiliser Initiative

Before Mr Buhari took office in 2015, Nigeria was a net importer of fertilisers. The major stock of blended fertiliser was usually shipped into the country as fully finished products. Even when Urea and Limestone granules, which constitute the raw materials required for the blending of fertilisers can be locally sourced, the existing blending plants in the country did not operate at their full capacity.

This took a turnaround after Mr Buhari launched the Presidential Fertiliser Initiative (PFI) in 2017 while making his budget presentation. It was in line with the effort to resuscitate Nigeria's moribund fertiliser blending plants in order to boost local production, and food production and as well achieve food security targets.

The launch was preceded by the visit of the King of Morocco, Mohammed VI, to Nigeria on 2 December 2016, during which several agreements were reached by the two leaders. One of these agreements concerned a partnership between the Fertiliser Producers and Suppliers of Nigeria (FEPSAN) and OCP, a state-owned Moroccan company and a world leader in phosphate production and its derivatives. The principal goal was to boost Nigeria's capacity to blend NPK fertilisers locally at a much-subsidised price and sell to farmers at less than N6000.

Checks by PREMIUM TIMES revealed that Nigeria's fertiliser value chain through the PFI initiative witnessed significant restructuring, different from what it used to be in the years prior. Within this period, fertiliser plants in the country increased from seven to over 50 blending plants in the last eight years. However, efforts to increase the supply and reduce the cost of the commodity were in some cases truncated by middlemen.

By implication, many farmers across the country complained that they could not access or purchase the products at government-approved rates.

Politics

Subsidy will get rid of Nigeria if we don't remove it - Shettima

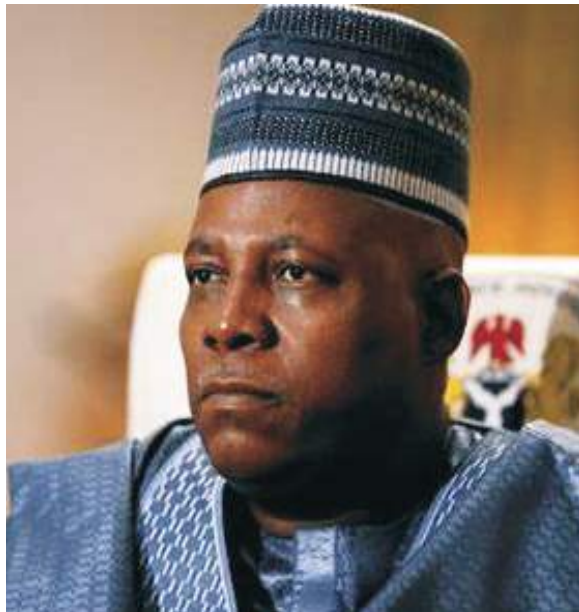
VICE President Kashim Shettima says that Nigeria will eventually suffer in the long run if President Bola Tinubu's administration fails to remove fuel subsidy.

Shettima said that the removal of the fuel subsidy would be in the interest of the masses as against the upper class that would protest it because they are the beneficiaries all along.

Reacting to the announcement on Tuesday, Shettima said, "The President has already made pronouncements yesterday on the issue of the fuel subsidy. The truth of the matter is that it is either we get rid of the subsidy or the fuel subsidy gets rid of the Nigerian nation.

In 2022, we spent \$ 10 billion subsidising the ostentatious lifestyle of the upper class of society because you and I benefit 90% from the oil subsidy. The poor 40% of Nigerians benefit very little.

"And we know the consequences of unveiling a



Shettima

masquerade. We will get fierce opposition from those benefitting from the oil subsidy scam. But where there is a will, there is a way. Be rest assured that our president is a man of strong

will and conviction. "In the fullness of time, you will appreciate his noble intentions for the nation. The issue of fuel subsidy will be frontally addressed. The earlier we do so, the better."

UK govt congratulates Tinubu, Shettima on successful inauguration

THE UK Government has congratulated Bola Ahmed Tinubu and Kashim Shettima, on their inauguration as President and Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, respectively.

In a statement issued by the British High Commission in Nigeria, British monarch, His Majesty, King Charles III, reiterated his commitment to building a stronger partnership with Nigeria.

"I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to you on your inauguration as President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and to send you every possible good wish as you assume the many responsibilities of your office.

"As Commonwealth partners with a deep bond, I look forward to building an even stronger friendship between our countries during your Presidency," he said.

Helen Grant OBE, the Prime Minister's Special Envoy on Trade to Nigeria and Girls' Education, said: "My priority is to strengthen our bilateral trade and investment partnership to the mutual benefit of our two great nations, and I look forward to working alongside the new administration to further that goal.

"In this, the land of my father, I hold a great affection for its people, and my work in ensuring every girl gets 12 years of quality education will also

remain at the top of my Nigerian agenda."

On his part, the British High Commissioner to Nigeria, Richard Montgomery, said: "The UK hopes to work with the new administration as we support a more prosperous and resilient Nigeria, and strengthen our partnership on trade, development, and security."

The UK delegation at the inauguration in Abuja was headed by the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Nigeria and Special Envoy on Girls' Education, Helen Grant OBE MP and the British High Commissioner to Nigeria, Dr. Richard Montgomery CMG.



Sunak

From **TERESE TUHWA, Makurdi**

NEWLY sworn in Governor of Benue State, Rev Father Dr. Hyacinth Iormem Alia has directed immediate freezing of all government bank accounts with immediate effect till signatories to the accounts are changed.

The governor gave the directive at the Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida Square Makurdi in his inaugural speech shortly after being sworn-in as governor saying any bank that flouts the directive does so at her risk.

Governor Alia who was administered the oath of office by the state Chief Judge, Justice Maurice Ikpambese while addressing people of the state said his administration will take decisive steps towards revamping the moribund state civil service. He gave the assurance that he will prioritise clearing of backlog of arrears of salaries, pension and gratuities.

He said the state was "faced with the challenge of insecurity, dampened morale from unpaid salaries, pensions and gratuities, dilapidated infrastructure, underdeveloped economy and even more broken civil service, massive unemployment and underemployment, endemic corruption and malaise." But assured that his government will act fearlessly and swiftly.

The governor disclosed that the state was broken and needed a reset, adding that nothing can be achieved in an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty.

The second Catholic priest to be elected Benue State Governor stated that as a governor, he was committed to working with security agencies to

Gov. Alia freezes all government bank accounts



Alia

ensure safety of lives and property of the state. And maintained that the root causes of insecurity were poverty, unemployment and social exclusion.

He said the state was on economic life support requiring intensive care and promised that his administration will prioritise job creation, economic empowerment by promoting private sector led industrialisation with particular emphasis on agriculture.

The governor who was flanked by his biological mother, nieces and nephews while taking oath of office revealed that he took a cursory overview of the state of infrastructure and found every facet to be in comatose and none performing story due to

deliberate gross negligence. But assured that he will review the state of roads, water, electricity, health, sports, education, public housing and telecommunications.

He promised that he will reconnect the state with the proverbial national grid of politics which has been severed over the years due to bad governance, disclosing that he has no magic wand to actualise the many beautiful things he has for the state but through collective ideas.

The governor was taken round the public square in a mother cage amidst tight security where he acknowledged cheers from jubilant citizens who trooped out in thousands to grace the occasion.

El-Rufai proscribes Atyap Community Development Association

THE Kaduna State Government has declared the Atyap Community Development Association, Southern Kaduna as an unlawful society in the state and signed an order to proscribe it.

The proscription order noted that the Atyap Community Development Association has constituted itself into a society that is inimical to the peace of the state and has been covertly involved in acts capable of endangering the peace, tranquility, harmonious coexistence and good governance of Kaduna State.

From **John FWAH KADUNA**

A statement signed by Muiywa Adekeye, Special Adviser to the Governor (Media and Communication) disclosed that the state Governor, Malam Nasir el-Rufai has signed the Atyap Community Development Association (Proscription) Order, 2023 in the exercise of the powers conferred by Section 60 of the Kaduna State Penal Code Law No. 5 of 2017, and Section 5 (2) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The proscription order became effective on

24th May 2023. The proscription order noted that Sections 38 and



El-Rufai

40 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria guarantee the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and also the right to the freedom of association and peaceful assembly to all citizens.

It also noted that Section 45 (1) of the 1999 Constitution vests in the Governor the powers to take such measures and actions as are necessary for the promotion and protection of public safety, public order, public morality or public health, or the rights and freedom of all persons in Kaduna State.

Politics

Buhari came, saw but was conquered

Nigerians now have a heavy sigh of relief as the eight years tenure of President Muhammadu Buhari comes to an end. First elected in 2015 for a four year term after three previously unsuccessful attempts, President Buhari who was also re-elected for another term of four years in 2019 would go down in history as the worst leader Nigeria ever had since its independence in 1960. MAJEED DAHIRU writes.

AS President Buhari hands over to Ahmed Bola Tinubu his successor in less than a week, he will be handing over to him a deeply divided, traumatized, pauperized and terrorized Nigerian country of 130 million multi-dimensionally poor people that are barely existing and not living. In addition, President Buhari will be leaving behind a desperately corrupt Nigeria whose national income has been swallowed by its excessively huge burden of debt.

Tired of the not so good, bad and ugly sixteen years of the People's Democratic Party rule in Nigeria since the advent of 4th republic in 1999, the Nigerian people defied the power of incumbency and heavy monetary inducements to vote out the incumbent government of Goodluck Jonathan and vote in the opposition candidate Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress in 2015 as president of Nigeria. In a feat that was described as the first democratic revolution of Nigeria's 4th republic, Muhammadu Buhari, a retired army general and former military head of state who had a rock solid reputation for discipline and incorruptibility was propelled to power mainly on the will-power of the Nigerian people who identified him as meeting the leadership need of Nigeria that was ravaged by the twin evils of corruption and insecurity.

By 2015, then ruling PDP had reached its apogee of leadership incompetence, which left the country reeling from an incurable form of endemic corruption, heightened insecurity arising from the Boko Haram insurgency and a shrinking socio-economic space that excludes the overwhelming majority of the Nigerian people while serving the self-interests of a privileged few thus setting the stage for a democratic revolution. Added to this was a power struggle within the political establishment of Nigeria over the issue of the violation of the power rotation between the north and south of the country by the PDP, which fielded Goodluck Jonathan, a southerner as its presidential candidate going into the 2015 presidential election at a time it was generally believed to be



Buhari

the turn of the north. To defeat the incumbent PDP in the 2015 presidential election, a competent northerner, who has the capability to defeat insecurity and cure Nigeria of endemic problem of corruption was required. And no one was a better fit for this purpose than Muhammadu Buhari, an incorruptible retired army general with a cumulative leadership experience as a former military head of state, military governor of the defunct north eastern state, petroleum minister and civil war veteran.

In taking up this challenge, President Buhari promised to bring "change" to Nigeria by containing insecurity, taming corruption and fixing the economy. His three pronged pledge to do the afore mentioned earned him enormous support as his long standing reputation, leadership antecedents and experience earned him the trust of the Nigerian people as the right man for the top job of a country in distress. Unfortunately, President will not only fail to fulfil his key campaign promises of containing insecurity, taming corruption and fixing the economy but through his actions and inactions will make worse a bad situation he inherited. In addition to the still raging Boko Haram insurgency in the north east of the country, President Buhari will be leaving behind the scourge of killer herdsman, which has turned sedentary communities across

Nigeria into the largest human slaughter slabs in Africa. The murderous activities of killer herdsman have also created a thriving rogue economy of mass abduction of Nigerians by armed groups for huge ransom payments in both local and foreign currency. According to a report by Vanguard Newspapers of 22nd May 2023, out of the 98,000 insecurity related deaths recorded in Nigeria between 2011 and 2023, a staggering 68,000 happened between 2015 and 2023 under the watch of President Buhari.

On the economy, President Buhari will be leaving an economy of 440 billion dollars in GDP down from the 500 billion dollars he inherited in 2015. And by 2022 Nigeria overtook India as the poverty capital of the world as about half of its 200 million people are said to be experiencing "serious" hunger. According to the World Bank, every minute of the day more than six Nigerians are plunged into extreme poverty as a result of double digit inflation, increasing unemployment and persistent underemployment, rising cost of living amidst stagnant wages that have been reduced in value by a free falling national currency against major world currencies among many other factors. The Buhari administration inherited an exchange rate of 190 naira to one dollar but will be leaving behind an exchange rate of 750 naira.

With a dwindling revenue arising from Nigeria's inability to maximise its crude oil exports as a result of oil theft in most the oil producing communities, the unproductive government of President Muhammadu Buhari resorted to endless borrowings that saw Nigeria's external debt rising from 10 billion dollars in 2015 to 40 billion dollars in 2022 just its domestic debt doubled from 8.8 trillion naira in 2015 to 16 trillion by 2021. By 2023 Nigeria's public debt stock had reached 46.25 trillion naira and if the 27 trillion naira "ways and means" advances from the Central Bank of Nigeria is added then President Buhari will be leaving behind a debt burden of over 70 trillion naira behind as he prepares to leave office in a matter of days.

In his eight year rule, President Buhari did not only betray the "change" democratic revolution that brought him to power in 2015 but left Nigeria worse than he met it. Numerous reasons and excuses have been advanced for being responsible for his phenomenal failure in power by pundits, supporters and critics of the Buhari administration. However, the most fundamental reason for President Buhari's acute failure of leadership was his aggravated sectionalism, which he elevated to a near state policy of his administration. President Buhari's sectional tendencies, which saw him prioritising his sectional Muslim northern and Fulani ethnic interest above national interest in the discharge of his duties as president and commander in chief of the armed forces was his greatest undoing.

President Buhari's sectionalism promoted nepotism, favouritism, tribalism, religious bigotry, cronyism and all other elements of corrupt practices, which eventually resulted in economic and financial crimes. While President Buhari maintained his posturing as a man of integrity who was incorruptible, his sectional tendencies did the right opposite, which resulted into unprecedented high levels of corruption, state capture and treasury heist under his watch as president of Nigeria. And because sectionalism promotes mediocrity over competence, President Buhari most ran his

administration with square pegs in round holes, which were mostly picked from his Muslim northern section of the country, resulting into severe underperformance of the simplest of tasks in his government.

Apart from deeply dividing Nigerians along ethnic and religious lines, nowhere was the adverse effect of President Buhari's sectionalism felt more than in his inability to contain insecurity. At a time that Nigeria was confronted by the menace of killer herdsman of mainly Fulani ethnic stock, Muhammadu Buhari, Nigeria's president and commander in chief could not rise up above the primordial sentiments of his Fulani ethnicity in overriding interest of national security to deal decisively with one of the world's most deadly armed groups that turned a country under his watch into a killing field. Rather than deal with these mass killers as the terrorists they are the Buhari administration designated their murderous activities as farmers/clashes as though Nigeria was fighting a cow war where it is legitimate to mow down human beings to make way for cattle to graze. President Buhari's response to grieving communities from the mass slaughter of the loved ones under the fire power of killer herdsman was to learn to live in peace with their "neighbours". When it mattered most President Buhari chose his Fulani ethnicity over his Nigerian citizenship and this error of decision rendered the apparatus of state ineffective in the face of continuous killings by the marauding Fulani killer herdsman across the country and this failure of leadership drove Nigeria down the road to Sudan.

As his tenure drags to an end, President Buhari has been demystified as an incompetent leader whose famous integrity is at best dishonest and at worst dubious. It can be said of President Buhari that he was the tragic hero of Nigerian democracy who came, saw but was conquered by Nigeria's problems of insecurity, economic woes and corruption.



GOODWILL MESSAGE



The Executive Chairman Plateau State Internal Revenue Service Mr. Dashe Arlat Dasogot, Board members, Management and the entire Staff of the Service, heartily felicitates with the Governor-elect, Barr. Caleb Mutfwang, the Deputy Governor-elect, Ngo Josephine Piyo on the occasion of your swearing-in and taking of oath of office as the Executive Governor and Deputy Governor of Plateau State respectively.

The Service is optimistic that your emergence as the Governor and Deputy Governor of our dear state will herald the economic and social turnaround of the fortunes of our state. We look forward to a harmonious synergy as we work towards improved IGR in Plateau.

As we celebrate Democracy Day and mark your swearing-in ceremonies, may the patriotic determination and resilience exhibited by our heroes' past permeate our minds and propel us towards the attainment of permanent peace and progress in our state and country at large.

Long Live Nigeria!
Long Live Plateau State!!
Long Live Plateau State Internal Revenue Service!!!

**Dashe Arlat Dasogot Fcti, Fcna
Executive Chairman**

Politics

Now that renewed hope is here

In his enriching leadership vade mecum, "From Third World to First", the Singaporean enigma, Lee Kuan Yew wrote he knew that Singapore would not survive the pressing challenges of the time if citizens' attitude to governance, communal responsibility, institutional constructs, and the country did not change. To break the conundrum, Kuan Yew embarked on a series of disciplined and seminal reforms — literally pulling water out of stone. FREDRICK NWABUFO writes.

SINGAPORE is a petite country — with a population of about 2 million at the time of Kuan Yew and over 5 million as of 2021. However, the country is diverse, multireligious, multicultural and multiracial. The critical problems of nationhood, schisms, ethnic and religious tension, racially motivated violence, recriminations, fear and suspicion of ethnic domination, mutual suspicion, lack of accord, and vicious conspiracy theories were a string of Gordian knots asphyxiating the country when Kuan Yew became Prime minister.

Although two disparate cases, these vexations in old Singapore are the obstacles in the way of Nigeria's social evolution, peace, and progress today. Principally, the Lee Kuan Yew example shows there is the place of leadership and there is the place of followership in building a country. Citizens have as much responsibility as the leadership. But it is fundamental for the leadership to be the rallying crucible; to be the trigger and nucleus for nation building.

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu is in the saddle. It is a new dispensation. Renewed Hope is here. And the hope and expectations of Nigerians will not be cut short. Under President Tinubu, Nigeria shall thrive and triumph over every devilry and sinister machination. Nigeria shall prosper and the land shall know peace. The land shall bear fruit for all citizens, and our democracy nourished, and unity strengthened by our commitment and persistent resolve.

President Tinubu has begun on a very fine note. His disposition since he won the 2023 presidential election has been one of a unifier, comforter, and builder. He said prior to his inauguration: "I seek a nation founded on justice, peace, prosperity for all, regardless of religion, region, ethnicity, and class. I seek a Nigeria that is for all Nigerians."

No Nigerian leader, in recent history, has shown this stuff of forthrightness, attainment and expansiveness at such a capricious time as now in the life of the nation. The president is clearly in full cognisance of the magnitude of today's pesky challenges.

He has started well with accenting that which binds us together; by emphasising our strengths and unity, by holding out a hand of fellowship to all,



Tinubu

and by affirming his place as the father of all Nigerians. A single speech can go a long way in determining the trajectory of things. It can establish trust, inspire hope, and patriotism. Martin Luther King Jr stirred a nation with his "I have a dream speech", and Abraham Lincoln mobilised American consciences with his Gettysburg Address. A single speech can go a long way.

We cannot minimise the enormity of the task before the president. There is a gasping economy that needs a fillip; there is insurgency, kidnapping and banditry gnawing at the entrails of the country, and there is discordance, prejudice, and strife. The president has a full plate already and he will need all the support he can get.

It may be a tall order for some, but we all need to support the government to succeed, and as well hold it to its promises. Nigeria making progress means the government must succeed. It is our bounden duty as citizens to ensure that Nigeria makes progress. This is not a time for needless distractions and

subterranean plots, but for solidifying and communalising.

Nigerians across stations, persuasions and ideological and political leanings will need to play their role to keep the wheel steady and in forward motion. The civil society, the media, and we, occupiers of the office of the citizen, have our part to play. Nigeria is our collective patrimony. It is our responsibility to make it work. It is our responsibility to help the country heal.

In the book mentioned earlier, Lee Kuan Yew said what I found to be profound about the evolution of the media in Singapore and how it helped in building the country.

He said: "In the 40 years since

1959, the Singapore press has evolved away from the norms set by the colonial government. We brought this about by laying down out-of-bounds markers, mostly for our English-language media. They had been influenced by the British editors and reporters who used to be their superiors in the Straits Times group. It took many years before a younger generation of journalists in the 1980s recognised that the political culture of Singapore was and will stay different from the Western reporting styles and political attitudes of the American media, always sceptical and cynical of authority. The Chinese and Malay press do not model

themselves on newspapers in the West. Their cultural practice is for constructive support of policies they agree with, and criticism in measured terms when they do not."

I know the Nigerian media is bubbling with a good number of patriots, and as an institution, it rises to the occasion when there is an urgency to steer the ship away from the tempest or the precipice.

We all need to rise to the occasion. We all have our part in healing Nigeria. But the leadership will need to set the tone and clear the path for citizens to follow. I believe it will.

God bless Nigeria.

“
We cannot minimise the enormity of the task before the president. There is a gasping economy that needs a fillip; there is insurgency, kidnapping and banditry gnawing at the entrails of the country, and there is discordance, prejudice, and strife. The president has a full plate already and he will need all the support he can get.
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NEWS

Governor promises all-inclusive government

From John FWAH, Kaduna

SENATOR Uba Sani, now Governor of Kaduna State, has promised to run an all-inclusive government in the state, saying that his government is for all irrespective of political party differences.

He averred that he would ensure that insecurity becomes a thing of the past in the state, while assuring of synergy with other governors in the zone.

Governor Uba Sani asserted this during his inaugural speech at the Murtala Square in Kaduna on Monday, where he pleaded with the residents of the state to work with the government towards achieving peace, safety and security across every community in this state.

"I will work assiduously to guarantee the safety and security of our hardworking farmers to actively return to their farms during the current farming season.

"The prevailing security situation in the country demands for a significant shift in the current structure. In this regard, I will work with my colleagues, governors and members of the national and state Assemblies to make state police a reality. I was in the forefront of advocacy for state police in the 9th Senate. I strongly believe that state police is the panacea for our perennial security challenges. Security is basically a local affair and it demands for a local approach.

"My administration will consolidate and build on the unprecedented infrastructural upgrade, which was targeted at enhancing public welfare and accelerated economic growth. Going forward, we shall promote accelerated rural development by extending infrastructure to all local government areas with the goal of supporting our rural communities to achieve rapid economic growth.

"Our governance agenda in the economic sector will seek to sustain the enviable status of Kaduna State as a foremost investment destination in Nigeria, attract investments across more sectors, create jobs and promote the transfer of technology.

"Kaduna State under my leadership shall continue to focus on agriculture for food security and economic prosperity. We have perfected plans for the expansion of support for agriculture in several areas," Uba Sani explained.

Speaking further, he said: "This administration will be devoted to building and empowering people for development and prosperity. Our commitment to human capital development shall entail detailed focus on social welfare and empowerment through dedicated funds for women and youths, robust social investment programmes for vulnerable persons and extensive pro-poor interventions. We shall also ensure access to



Sani

education for every child in the state from primary to secondary school; expand access to higher education through a multi-campus system for tertiary institutions; enhance teachers' welfare and teaching standards; improve school infrastructure; build ICT competence in our students from basic education level; and intensify investments in Technical and Vocational Education."

The governor who applauded the immediate governor, described El-rufai as a pace-setter, whose innovative has changed the face of Kaduna State and made it the envy of all.

"The high standards he has set is both a source of pride and a challenge to his associates and loyalists," Uba Sani noted.

Meanwhile, the Nigeria

Union of Journalists (NUJ), Kaduna Council, has congratulated the new Executive Governor of Kaduna State, Mallam Uba Sani and his Deputy, Dr Hadiza Balarabe on their peaceful and colourful inauguration.

In a congratulatory message jointly signed by the Council's Chairman and Secretary, Comrades Asma'u Yawo Halilu and Gambo Santos Sanga, it described the emergence of Governor Uba Sani as a sign of good tidings that will usher in genuine transformation, peaceful coexistence and renewed hope for the citizens of Kaduna State.

The statement also expressed confidence on the ability, capability and genuine intentions of the new administration in the state towards a more vibrant socio-economic and political prosperity.

Bauchi swears in governor for 2nd tenure

From Abbas Gungura, Bauchi

GOVERNOR Bala Abdulkadir Mohammed alongside his Deputy, Hon. Auwal Jatau on Monday, the 29th of May, 2023 took oaths of allegiance and office to serve the good people of Bauchi State for additional four years, assuring that his administration will improve security, infrastructure, youth purposefulness and welfare of the people of the state.

The colorful inauguration took place at the Sir, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa Stadium, Bauchi, around 11:30 am where the Chief Justice of Bauchi State, Justice Rabi Talatu Umar, administered the oath of office to Governor Bala Mohammed, under the watchful eyes of thousands of family and friends within and outside the state, party faithful, supporters and all manner of people.

After taking oath of allegiance and office, Bala Mohammed in his speech titled: "My Bauchi Project: Consolidating the Mandate to Place Bauchi First!" recalled with extreme joy and gratitude how four years ago, he took the same oath of office and allegiance as governor. He said that after forty-eight months, he is humbled to deliver his second and final inaugural address as governor of the state for another four years.

Mohammed said he has accepted the call to serve, not

because he sees himself as the most qualified but because it is a divine mandate over which he has no choice.

"Looking into the faces of the exuberant crowd of our patriots here present, I recognize the overwhelming significance of this moment. I appreciate the trust that has been reposed on our administration by the majority of our people who voted for me. I am conscious that my re-election signifies the endorsement of the manifesto of our great party and the "My Bauchi Project" agenda on which platforms I ran for election in 2019. I am honoured that today's inauguration represents a validation of the performance of our administration during the first term."

"I wish to recall with extreme joy and gratitude that on this day four years ago, I stood at this podium to take the oath of office and oath of allegiance as your governor and to deliver my first inaugural address to a mammoth crowd like this one."

"I find it indeed humbling that 48 months, (that is, 208 weeks or 1,460 days) later, here I am again to deliver my second and, by the provisions of our constitution, final inaugural address on the auspicious occasion of my swearing-in as Governor of our great state for another four years."

"But it goes beyond that. I see it as a summons to do more. Not as Governor of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) under

TARABA State Governor, Agbu Kefas has appointed Yusuf Ubandoma Danasabe as the Chief Protocol Officer and Yusuf Sanda as the Chief Press Secretary.

A letter dated 29th May, 2023 and signed by the Head of Service, Suzy Jemima Nathans (Mni), says the Executive Governor, Col. Dantala Agbu Kefas has

Governor Kefas makes two new appointments

From VICTOR GAI, Jalingo

approved the appointment. Before his appointment, Yusuf Ubandoma Danasabe was an Assistant Director (Admin) with the Ministry of Information.

'I will protect citizens from internal, external forces'

From VICTOR GAI, Jalingo

TARABA State Governor, Agbu Kefas has stated that his administration will focus majorly on security of lives and property. He also promised to run an inclusive government, carry out institutional reforms and address challenges faced by youth, women and people with disabilities.

Kefas made this disclosure in his speech on Monday during his inauguration as the 6th Executive Governor of Taraba State at the Jolly Nyame Stadium, Jalingo, the state capital.

Kefas and the Deputy Governor, Aminu Abdullahi Alkali, had taken the oath of office administered by the state acting Chief Judge, Justice Joel Agya.

He said: "One of the major challenges that bedevil us in this state is insecurity. A dominant objective of this government is to maintain security and protect



Kefas

citizens from internal and external forces. Security provides an enabling platform for the equitable distribution of resources and just living conditions for our people. We need safety and security to pursue our legitimate aspirations and goals. To ensure security, it is paramount that we work closely with local and federal security agencies".

The governor also stated that he was open to constructive criticism, social justice, welfare and equity and called on Tarabans to put their differences aside.

"I ask all to put our differences aside and come together as one to move Taraba forward. The task of governance can only be successful when it is inclusive. When it effectively serves and engages all people from all walks of life. When it effectively serves and engages all people from all walks of life. Our success demands that we carry out wholesale reforms of our institutions, policies, processes and services.

"My administration is open to working with all of you and would always welcome constructive criticism. We will work closely with civil society, the private sector and development partners to create a mutually beneficial relationship.

"My passion for Taraba is driven by a deep commitment to social justice, welfare and equity. As such, one of my key priorities will be to address the specific challenges faced by our youths, women, and people living with disabilities," Kefas stated.

He also promised to "work with the international community to showcase the opportunities that exist in our land" and lead the people "with vision, integrity, transparency and courage by fostering a culture of trust and ethics"



Chief Justice of Bauchi State Justice Rabi Talatu Umar centre in a photograph with Gov. Bala Mohammed and wife left, his Deputy Auwal Jatau and wife right after taking oaths of office

whose platform I ran or any partisan or sectarian interest but for everyone residing in Bauchi State: indigene and non-indigene, citizen and foreigner, rich and poor no matter one's station"

"Yet, while acknowledging the neutrality demanded of me in my position, it is only proper that I acknowledge with gratitude first, my political party that gave me the platform to run. Secondly, also deserving of my gratitude are members of my team: the SSG, my Chief of Staff, Commissioners, Special Advisers and Special Assistants who brought their expertise and competences and stood by me, all through both exciting and challenging moments, to

produce the performance that culminated in my re-election."

"I would like to say that, for me, the dissolution of the State Executive Council will not put a stop to the virile relationship that we cherish. On that note, should circumstances dictate the return of any of you, it is my sincere wish that you will avail the state the benefit of your patriotic service."

"Not the least, I want to thank our royal fathers, my Lords spiritual and temporal, civil society organizations, my colleagues, members of the fourth estate and all our compatriots without whose continuing prayers and support this day would not have been possible," he said.

News

Tribunal admits five exhibits from Peter Obi

PRESIDENTIAL Election Petition Court, PEPC, on Tuesday, admits five exhibits as Labour Party, LP and its Presidential candidate, Peter Obi open their petition challenging the victory of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu

The presiding justice of the panel Justice Haruna Simon Tsammani admitted the exhibits which were tendered through the bar led by Jubril Okutekpa, SAN who led Lawrance Uchechukwu Nwakaeti the first witness of the labour party in evidence.

The documents which were marked as exhibits PA (1 to 5) were a copy of the United state's court judgment on the alleged conviction of President Ahmed Bola Tinubu to a fine of \$450,000.

Also admitted in evidence is the deposition of the witness which he adopted as his oral evidence and other election papers before the panel

However, Tinubu and the All Progressives Congress (APC) announced that they have objections against admission of the judgment but reserved the objections to final address stage.

Under cross examination by Chief Wole Olanipekun SAN who stood for President Tinubu, the witness admitted that the judgment was not registered in Nigeria.

"Will you be surprised that not a single line or word relating to fine was in the US



Obi

Court Judgment?," Olanipekun also told the witness .

The Anambra based legal practitioner who was Obi's first witness also admitted that there was no certificate from any Consular in Nigeria or America in support of the judgment but insisted that "the judgment speaks for itself".but argued that were use of fine in the judgement.

He claimed to have been to the United States of America and read the judgment in its entirety adding that he would be surprised if no mention was made of \$460,000 forfeiture.

Also under cross examination by counsel to the

APC, Prince Lateef Fagbemi SAN, the witness said that the American Court judgment had no certificate given under the hand of any American Police Officer.

He denied knowledge of a February 4, 2003 Formal Clearance Report by Legal Attachee from American Embassy in respect of the alleged indictment and forfeiture.

When asked by Fagbemi SAN to produce a copy of the charges against Tinubu, the witness admitted not having any but maintained that the indictment and forfeiture are from civil proceedings.

Court okays suit seeking to sack Kogi APC's candidate

A Federal High Court in Abuja has agreed to hear a suit seeking among others, the disqualification of the candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Ahmed Usman Ododo in the forthcoming governorship election in Kogi State.

Justice Obiora Eguatu on Tuesday, fixed a hearing for June 14 in the suit marked:

FHC/ABJ/CS/584/2023, filed by Abubakar Achimugu, an aggrieved governorship aspirant of the APC

Justice Eguatu also ordered a hearing notice on the Independent National

Electoral Commission (INEC) in view of its absence in court on Tuesday.Achimugu is contending that Ododo is not qualified to fly the flag of the APC in the November 11, 2023 governorship poll, having failed to resign his employment with the Kogi State public service before contesting the governorship primary, which he won.

According to Achimugu, whose suit was filed by his lawyer, Josiah Daniel-Ebune, Ododo breached Section 182 of the Constitution, Section 84 of the Electoral Act, 2022, and Article 7 of the APC's

Constitution in participating in the April 14 governorship primary of the APC.

Listed as defendants in the suit are the APC, Ododo, the deputy governorship candidate, Salami Momodu Deedat and INEC.

The plaintiff wants the court to amongst others, declare that the 2nd and 3rd defendants are not qualified or eligible to have participated in the primary election being persons both employed in public service of Kogi State, they failed and neglected to resign, withdraw or retire from employment at least 30 days to April 14, 2023 when the primary election was conducted.

He also seeks a declaration that Ododo "is not eligible or qualified to contest for the office of Kogi State Governor, in the November 11, poll, being a person employed in the public service of Kogi State and failed to resign 30 days to the primary election.

Achimugu wants the court to make an order nullifying and setting aside the screening and participation of the second and third defendants in the April 14, gubernatorial primary election for the nomination of the candidate of APC, having been in breach of Section 182 of the Constitution and Section 84 of the Electoral Act, 2022, Article 7 of the APC Constitution.

He also wants the court to an order disqualifying the Ododo from contesting the office of Kogi State governor on November 11, 2023.



Ariwoola



Random
MUSINGS
With Paul Jatan
piringkwap77@gmail.com

Note to self

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

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

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

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

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

and change things for the better.

Let us do politics with reason

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

Do not fight. Do not put unnecessary pressure on the society. It already has myriad of problems to contend with. Let us not forget that it is because we failed to tame our ambitions that we are suffering from insecurity. Boko Haram, kidnappings, killings and the likes would have been minimal if we had been able to tame some of our ambitions.

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

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

Some of our religious leaders are to say the least, not supposed to be given the opportunity to address their congregations. Anything they spew out only shows who they are. They preach hate and destruction not salvation. Some of them are merchants who feed fat on the ignorance and gullibility of the people. There are some religious adherents who are so illiterate that once "mallam ya ce" it becomes the gospel. They can kill on behalf of that mallam and claim it is the will of God. Such commercial preachers must be helmed in to ensure peaceful coexistence and growth in the communities. If meaningful progress is to be made, therefore, these messengers of hate must be picked and cautioned no matter how highly placed they might be in the society. Afterall they are supposed to minister to and assist in saving the souls of the people from damnation not commercializing their preachments.

News

Senate expresses readiness to work with Tinubu, Shettima

THE Senate President, Ahmad Lawan, says members of the upper legislative chamber have shown commitment to work with the administration of Bola Tinubu.

Mr Lawan stated this at the resumption of the plenary session on Tuesday.

The Senate at an emergency session on Saturday amended the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Act to raise the total advances the bank can make to the federal government from five per cent to 15 per cent.

The Senate at the emergency meeting also passed a bill to extend the implementation of the 2022 supplementary budget to 31 December, 2023.

Mr Tinubu and Kashim Shettima were sworn-in as president and vice president of Nigeria on Monday.

The senate president at the resumption of the plenary session congratulated Messrs Tinubu and Shettima on their victory in the last presidential election.

He prayed to God to guide and protect them throughout their years in the office.

"We congratulate the President, Bola Ahmad Tinubu, GCFR, and his Vice President, Distinguished Senator Kashim Shettima, GCON for the swearing in of the two leaders yesterday," he said.

"We pray for more guidance, protection and we commit ourselves to the one or two weeks that we have to work with your administration."

Mr Lawan also congratulated state governors that were sworn-in on Monday.



Lawan

He prayed to God to guide and protect them throughout their years in the office.

"Let me equally congratulate all the 28 governors that were

sworn-in yesterday across our nation. We pray to Almighty God to guide them and protect them."

The ninth Senate will end by June for the senators-elect to be inaugurated into the 10th Senate.

Why Nigeria must prioritise birth registration - UNICEF

THE United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), has said registering a child at birth could help in addressing population crisis in Nigeria.

UNICEF's child protection specialist, Fatimah Adamu, while speaking during a two-day media dialogue in Kano State on Monday, said birth registration is the core part of identity document for every child.

Ms Adamu said the first right of every child is the identification of the child at birth which she noted can be done through birth registration.

"Birth registration helps in addressing a lot of issues like population, resource distributions, issues of planning, issues of access to services, hence it is important for every child to be registered at birth," she said.

Ms Adamu said Nigeria is evolving from paper-based registration to digital birth registration which she described as a step forward "towards ensuring more children are registered at birth."

She said UNICEF is providing support to Nigeria to ensure the

THE Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA) has cautioned Nigerians not to panic over subsidy removal, saying it has enough petroleum products to meet the country's demand.

The NMDPRA said this in a statement on Tuesday by its General Manager, Corporate Communications, Kimchi Apollo.

The statement was issued against the backdrop of the government's declaration that it will put an end to the fuel subsidy regime.

President Bola Tinubu on Monday in his inaugural address at Eagle Square, Abuja, declared that there would no longer be a petroleum subsidy regime as it was not sustainable.

He said the current 2023 budget only has provision for the fuel subsidy till June, adding that the funds meant for subsidies

success of the digital system.

Birth registration in Nigeria

Birth registration is the process of recording a child's birth. It is a permanent and official record of a child's existence which provides legal recognition of that child's identity.

According to the 2021 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), only 57 per cent of children born in Nigeria are registered at birth with civil authorities. The survey shows that Lagos State has the highest number of birth registration with 94 per cent, closely followed by the FCT with 87 per cent. States with the lowest registration are Jigawa with 23.6 per cent and Sokoto with 22.5 per cent.

The survey shows that three per cent of children under the age of five had their births registered, but do not have birth certificates.

It also indicates that two out of every three mothers and caregivers of children aged below five years whose births were not registered did not know how to register births.

It shows that the percentage of children under the age of five whose births are registered ranges from as high as 89 per cent for the richest wealth quintile to as low as 33 per cent for the poorest wealth quintile.

Fuel Queues: Nigerian regulatory agency warns against panic buying



Apollo

will be diverted to the creation of public infrastructure, education, health care and jobs. In its statement on Tuesday, the NMDPRA said contrary

to speculations and concerns, the announcement is in line with the Petroleum Industry Act (2021) which provides for total deregulation of the petroleum downstream sector to drive investment and growth.

"The Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA) wishes to address concerns regarding the announcement of the removal of subsidy on Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

"Contrary to speculations and concerns, the announcement is in line with the Petroleum Industry Act (2021) which provides for total deregulation of the petroleum downstream sector to drive investment and growth.

"We are working closely with NNPC Limited and other key stakeholders to guarantee a smooth transition, avoid any disruptions in supply as well as ensure that consumers are not short-changed in any form," the agency said.

The NMDPRA, however, assured that there is an ample supply of PMS to meet demand. "We have taken necessary steps to ensure distribution channels remain

uninterrupted and fuel is readily available at all filling stations across the country," the statement said.

"We, therefore, call on Nigerians to remain calm and resist the urge to stockpile as it poses a significant safety hazard."

The agency noted that the removal of subsidy on petrol is a step towards building a more sustainable and prosperous future for Nigeria.

"We will continue to monitor activities and implement necessary measures to enhance transparency and accountability in the petroleum downstream sector," it said.

Fuel queues returned to Nigerian cities Monday as many motorists scrambled

to get petroleum products hours after Mr Tinubu announced that the government will put an end to fuel subsidy. A PREMIUM TIMES correspondent who visited petrol stations across the nation's capital city Monday evening found that some filling stations were under lock and key while some were besieged by motorcyclists, tricycle owners, as well as private and commercial drivers.

The same trend was witnessed in Lagos, Ogun, and Ado-Ekiti, the capital of Ekiti State Lagos, Ogun.

Many filling stations in the Lugbe area of Abuja sold petrol at prices ranging between N194 and N198. Outside Abuja, residents said fuel stations sold petrol for N230.



Adamu

Foreign Commentary

The activists confronting period taboos in Pakistan

Facing threats and alienation, women push for menstrual awareness in a country where women's health taboos limit rights. In November last year, I met Razia* at a rice mill in Thul, a little over an hour from Jacobabad city in Sindh province. An international aid agency was distributing care packages there among families from the district who had been affected by the floods that raged through the province in the summer of 2022. Razia, her head covered with a red dupatta with white embroidery along its border, had a small face, her eyes lined with kajal and a gold piercing hugged the curve of her nose. Its little gold beads shimmered as she shook her head when I asked how old she was. She eventually guessed 25, but she looked younger. She had four children. When the waters entered their village, many people left their homes and sought shelter on the nearest main road. They squatted there in makeshift tents or under the open sky as it continued to rain. I asked Razia about the days on the road. How had she managed with her children? She stared at me. I had asked a silly question.

"MY husband brought a plastic sheet and some sticks home and told me to make some sort of shelter for me and the children," she said. "He did not let me leave our home." She had to use the sheet to cover their heads as rain poured in through the thatched roof. The water entered their home. Still, they could not leave. Razia's husband said there were too many men on the road, from their village and the ones around them. It was out of the question to go live among them, no walls separating the men and women. "Our men do not allow us to leave home like that," Razia said.

The monsoon season last year, from June to September, saw record-breaking rainfall. August saw three times as much rainfall as the 30-year national average. Sindh and Balochistan provinces were the worst hit. Sindh, home to 50 million people, received eight times its average rainfall. More than 33 million people were affected by torrential rains and flash floods – that's one in seven Pakistanis. The United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres described it as a "monsoon on steroids". "One-third of Pakistan is under water," said the federal Minister for Climate Change Sherry Rehman at the time.

Pakistan needed help on an unprecedented level. The United Nations called for \$816m in relief by October. In November, when I visited villages in Sindh and Balochistan, families were still crowded by the side of some main roads under worn tents bearing the names of aid organisations. As large local and international organisations, usually helmed by local male coordinators on the ground, assessed the needs of millions, others wondered about women like Razia. In September, an estimated 73,000 women were expected to give birth. They required birth attendants, newborn care and support, but many women were not allowed to leave their homes and were dependent on husbands or fathers to provide access to healthcare, or to travel with them to medical camps. And then there was the question of more basic needs: How were the 8.2 million women of reproductive age living in the flood-affected areas managing their menstrual needs? Who was considering this?

In July, Anum Khalid, a 24-year-old architectural engineering student in Multan, a city in southern Punjab province, posted a message on Facebook asking for help in gathering relief supplies. "I asked for any donations or help with period products," Anum recalled.

She shortly received a reply from Bushra Mahnoor, 22, a psychology student at a university in Lahore. The two had never met. "Let's do this together," Bushra wrote.

During the floods in 2010, the last time Pakistan had experienced anything close to the current disaster, 10-year-old Bushra had visited a relief camp in the town of Khairabad with her mother who volunteered to help out. A girl with blood stains on her clothes walked by them. She had just started her first period and said no one had explained what was happening to her body. She did not know about menstruation and did not have any supplies. The adults around her at



Bushra Mahnoor of Mahwari Justice works with flood affected communities in Foleji, Balochistan, in October 2022



Sana Lokhandwala holds up the placard at the 2019 Aurat March. This picture was the subject of a backlash instigated by an actor

the camp were frenzied as they sought help or shelter. Bushra could not stop thinking of that girl.

Bushra and Anum decided to set up a group to appeal for menstrual hygiene supplies like pads and underwear. They packed the supplies and coordinated with local aid groups to get the kits to the women in Sindh and Balochistan. They named the group "Mahwari Justice" – "mahwari" means menstruation in Urdu – and made a GoFundMe page and Twitter account.

When they contacted men coordinating relief efforts in both provinces, they often received the same reply: "Bibi [madam], we don't want to do this kind of work with

you." The men wanted nothing to do with the period supplies.

Bushra and Anum reached out to their own contacts and found other aid workers who were willing to help them speak with women in camps and villages. They learned they were using whatever they could find during their period: sand, dried leaves, cow dung, and cloth. In places with standing water, they had nowhere to wash or dry the cloth. They spoke with a mother in Lasbela whose daughters had shared the same rag.

In the past, Anum had worked with the trans community in Multan as an activist. Now, trans activists reached out to her and offered a space for

Mahwari Justice to do their work and store donations. Members of the trans community joined local volunteers – including fathers and daughters, husbands and wives, and young women – to pack kits. Through midwives and doctors travelling to the affected areas, and local contacts coordinating small-scale relief work, Bushra and Anum sent hygiene kits with pads, underwear, soap and detergent to 3,000 women in Balochistan within a few weeks.

Menstrual hygiene management (MHM) has been noted as an important part of relief efforts by international aid organisations for some time now. The United Nations Population Fund has emphasised the provision of "dignity kits" – such as the ones Bushra and Anum were providing – to adolescent girls and women in humanitarian crises. Meanwhile, the Sphere Standards, a key humanitarian reference, reaffirmed the need to include menstrual health in any assessment of needs after a disaster. MHM includes access to safe and private latrines and clean water, sanitary materials such as cloth or pads, and means of disposing of those materials.

Bushra and Anum considered the first batch of kits they sent with commercial pads an "emergency response". As they prepared for the second round, they spoke with relief workers and gynaecologists to better understand women's needs. They never presumed. "I never thought that I, a young woman in a university dorm in a major city, would understand what a woman affected by the floods in rural Sindh might want," Bushra explained.

To counter criticism that women wouldn't know how to use pads, they created a printed infographic explaining how to use and dispose of pads and added it to each kit. After activists and aid workers connected them with women in camps or at

medical clinics, they learned that some preferred reusable and washable cotton sheets or towelling fabric with a drawstring. They uploaded videos on Twitter showing people how to put a kit together to encourage independent donations. Eventually, they created four types of kits based on conversations with women in the affected areas. As winter approached, they added shawls, sweaters and socks to the kits. When Bushra met a woman at a camp in Balochistan who requested a comb, they decided to add a sewing kit, comb and mirror to the packages.

Mahwari Justice was not the only organisation working on such aid. But Bushra and Anum quickly became the target of criticism and anger on social media as their appeals for donations were shared widely and they were featured on international media outlets. People were angry they were focusing on menstrual health.

"Shouldn't food be a priority? Thanks for helping out but I see an agenda here," someone said on Twitter.

They were mocked as elitist young women with the wrong priorities, with some comparing pads to shaving kits or condoms, saying they were not the need of the hour.

"While people are dying for food and shelter, you are trying to shove your idea in the throats of rural women."

"Imagine having half your family dead due to floods, you are starving, and some girl gives you a panty and all is saved."

They were also criticised for "spoiling" women who may never have used pads before, making them dependent on products and doing away with "traditional" means of managing their period, and contributing to environmental pollution in the area as the pads would not be disposed of properly.

SOURCE: AL JAZEERA

Foreign News

Japan's Kishida sacks son as aide over 'inappropriate behaviour'

JAPANESE Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has said that he will remove his son from the position of his executive secretary amid mounting public outrage over a private party held at his official residence last year.

Kishida told reporters on Monday that his son, Shotaro, would step down as his executive secretary for political affairs due to "inappropriate behaviour".

The move came after the weekly Shukan Bunshun magazine published photos showing Kishida's son and his relatives at the prime minister's official residence attending a year-end party on December 30.

The photos showed the guests posing on red-carpeted stairs in an imitation of the group photos taken of newly appointed Cabinets, with the younger Kishida at the centre – the position reserved for the prime minister.

Other photos showed guests standing at a podium as if holding a news conference.

"His behaviour at a public space was inappropriate as someone who is in an official position as a political aide. I've decided to replace him for accountability," Kishida told reporters on Monday night.

He said his son will be



Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, right, appointed his son, Shotaro, left, as policy secretary in October

replaced by another secretary, Takayoshi Yamamoto, on Thursday.

Kishida acknowledged that he had briefly greeted the guests, but said he did not stay at the dinner party.

He said he severely reprimanded his son for the event, but that failed to quell ongoing criticism from opposition legislators and public outrage, which have pushed down his support ratings.

Seiji Osaka, a senior legislator with Japan's largest opposition party, the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan, said the dismissal should have come earlier, Kyodo news agency reported.

"This is too late. I suspect [Kishida] appointed someone who is not capable [of being the] prime minister's aide to the post," Osaka was quoted as saying.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno earlier called the son's party at the official residence "inappropriate" and promised to ensure proper management of the facility to prevent future misuse.

The nearly 100-year-old building was previously the prime minister's office and became the living quarters in 2005 when a new office was built.

Kishida appointed his son as policy secretary, one of eight secretary posts for the prime

minister, in October. The appointment, seen as a step in grooming him as his heir, was criticised as nepotism, which is common in Japanese politics, long dominated by hereditary lawmakers.

Shotaro Kishida was previously his father's private secretary.

It was not the first time Kishida's son has come under fire for making use of his official position for private activities. He was reprimanded for using embassy cars for private sightseeing in Britain and Paris and for buying souvenirs for cabinet members at a luxury department store in London when he accompanied his father on trips.

Kishida has also lost four ministers in three months over allegations of financial irregularities or links to the controversial Unification Church.

Uganda passes new law against stealing of human organs

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni has approved a law to stop the stealing of human organs and tissues, his health minister said on Tuesday, in a nation where women have been reportedly duped into unnecessary surgeries.

Local media have in recent years reported cases of women recruited for domestic work in the Middle East being conned into medical procedures after which their kidneys are sold in global trafficking rings.

In a tweet, Health Minister Jane Aceng thanked Museveni for signing the Uganda Human Organ Donation and Transplant Bill 2023 to better regulate the area. "The door is now open for #Uganda to begin a new chapter of Organ Transplant," she said.

That came a day after

Museveni and his government drew widespread international condemnation for enacting one of the world's harshest anti-LGBTQ laws, which included the death penalty for "aggravated homosexuality".

The donation and transplant law, the first of its kind in Uganda, prohibits any commercial dealings in human organs and tissues. Punishments include life imprisonment and stiff fines.

The country's influential Catholic Church and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime have previously spoken about the prevalence of organ trafficking in the country.

In September 2022, Aceng admitted that the demand for organ transplants in the country was high, but there was no law in place.



A patient rests on a bed in a hospital in Kampala, Uganda

"I fled the conflict in Syria to seek refuge in Lebanon... Now Lebanon deported me back to Syria where the same

government I fled from continues to rule with an iron fist. I will either be arrested, conscripted, tortured, or starve to death. But it doesn't matter [which one] because the result is the same – I am doomed," Ashraf told me.

His despair echoes the sentiments of Syrian refugees across the world as they watch Arab states welcome back Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to the Arab League. Ashraf considers recent developments as the Arab world's "grand betrayal" of the

Arab states cannot whitewash Syria's human rights record

Syrian uprising.

Indeed, the rapprochement of Arab states with Syria is hypocritical, to say the least. After a decade of condemning the Syrian government's crimes and violations against its own people, Arab leaders are welcoming it back, disregarding the criminal responsibility it still holds.

The speech of Jordan's King Abdullah at the Arab League summit on May 19 is quite indicative of what Arab states seek to achieve. "The brotherly Syrian people paid a high cost [during the Syrian conflict] which had repercussions on us all. Today we welcome the return of Syria to the Arab League as an important step we hope will contribute to the efforts toward ending the crisis," he said.

But no matter how much Arab leaders invest in rehabilitating the Syrian government's image through invitations to global conferences and diplomatic overtures, they will not be able to erase 12 years of war crimes and crimes against humanity it committed.

It might seem naive to suggest that Arab states should be invested in the protection of human rights in Syria given that many have abysmal rights records at

home. However, they do have a responsibility to ensure that the recent thaw in relations does not embolden the Syrian government to further trample on human rights.

Some Arab states, such as Jordan and Lebanon, have already started exploiting Syria's return to the Arab fold to push for the return of refugees. Jordan is looking to garner regional support for its "voluntary return" scheme, while Lebanon has ramped up forced deportations.

Meanwhile, it does not seem that the Syrian government is interested in making serious political concessions or improving its rights record in order to "end the crisis". Instead of taking steps to ensure refugees' voluntary, safe and dignified return, Syrian authorities are using the refugee card to press Arab states for financial aid and support for reconstruction while continuing to inflict terror on returnees.

One refugee who had been sent back from Lebanon recently told me that he was arrested by the Syrian army and had to pay all his savings – about \$1,500 – to be released. His friends who had also been deported with him are still being held by the Syrian army's Fourth Division as they are unable to pay for their release.

Denmark boosts military spending, announces more aid for Ukraine

Denmark's government plans to invest 143 billion Danish crowns (\$21bn) in defence over the next 10 years, with an aim to meet its military and security goals as a founding NATO member.

The Nordic nation currently spends around 27 billion Danish crowns per year (\$3.89bn) on defence, and the government had said it will progressively increase this by up to 19.2 billion Danish crowns (\$2.8bn) by 2033, beginning with an increase of 6.9 billion Danish crowns (\$99.5m) next year.

"We must, to a greater extent, be able to live up to the demands and expectations that NATO and its allies have for Denmark," Troels Lund Poulsen, acting defence

minister, told reporters.

"This requires large investments in our armed forces to lift our share of the responsibility," he added.

On Monday, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen – who has emerged as a contender to become NATO's next chief – also announced that the country would be allocating an additional 21.9 billion Danish crowns (\$3.16bn) in military aid to Ukraine – a move that was welcomed by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

After the Cold War, Denmark scaled back spending on its defence capability.

But since Russia invaded Ukraine, Copenhagen has acknowledged shortcomings

in its ability to defend its territories and last year pledged to permanently boost its defence spending to 2 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP) – an integral NATO goal.

In February, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg also called on member states to invest more in defence as Russia's war in Ukraine continues.

"It is obvious that we need to spend more," Stoltenberg said after a meeting with NATO defence ministers in Brussels in February.

However, the Danish government highlighted that the latest defence budget announcements will only help the country reach NATO's target in 2030.



Denmark's Leopard 2A7 tanks move during the Winter Camp 23 military drills near Tapa, Estonia

Feature

How Buhari failed Nigeria a second time

By CHARLES IGBINIDU

ABUJA, Nigeria – Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari has handed over the reins of power to fellow party man Ahmed Bola Tinubu of the All Progressives Congress (APC), leaving charge with a legacy very different to the one voters had hoped for when they elected him eight years ago.

His 2015 victory over Goodluck Jonathan, the first defeat of an incumbent president in Nigerian history, was his second time in power after an August 1985 palace coup ended his 18-month stint as military ruler.

Success at the polls came after three consecutive failed attempts by Buhari to return to the presidency as the electorate turned to a man from its past out of frustration with Jonathan, a meek leader who critics said was better suited to his previous life as a zoology lecturer than as president of Africa's largest democracy.

Buhari's winning campaign had emphasised three key promises: to tackle insecurity, stem corruption and fix economic troubles. But as he leaves office after two terms, not many rate his scorecard as being better than the man he succeeded despite embarking on a vast infrastructure drive.

Under Buhari, Nigeria became the world's poverty capital – 133 million of his compatriots now live in abject poverty.

When his staunch ally, outgoing Kano Governor Umar Ganduje was seen stuffing dollar notes believed to be contract kickbacks into his robe in a viral video, Buhari defended him, claiming the videos were doctored.

This year, even Tinubu, credited as the strategist behind APC's 2015 victory, criticised the government and distanced himself from Buhari's achievements, or lack of them, on the campaign trail.

"It is only a person who is deaf and dumb that will say Nigeria is doing well ... and it is disappointing that the president is not seeing it the way we are seeing it," said Frank Kokori, an APC leader, in August 2022. "People were ready to die for Buhari in 2014 to 2015, but unfortunately, Buhari has squandered all his goodwill."

'Baba Go Slow'

The first indication that the Buhari presidency would be an exhaustive exercise in long-suffering was his failure to announce a cabinet until five months in office. That delay earned him the moniker "Baba Go Slow", a cheeky reference to the signature traffic jams in Nigeria's commercial capital, Lagos.

The cabinet list was a roll call of has-beens and geriatric party stalwarts, including one minister who returned to office three decades after he was first appointed.

"Some of his appointments were not ideal, and he may have not appointed competent individuals for key roles in government," Ayodeji Dawodu, a director at the London-based investment group BancTrust & Co, told Al Jazeera. "In addition to this, he may have been ill-advised in some of his own decision-making."

In Buhari's eight years in office, he also appointed at least six deceased people to boards of federal agencies. A series of similar missteps and inaction throttled the economy, leading to two recessions in five years, analysts said. As Buhari leaves office, the naira has lost 70 percent of its value to the dollar compared with 2015, and inflation is at an 18-year high.

According to data from Nigeria's Debt Management Office, debt is at a record of about \$150bn. This has forced Africa's largest economy to use 96 percent of its revenue to service these ballooning obligations.

In October, the central bank announced a redesign of the 200, 500 and 1,000 naira notes to mop up excess cash in circulation and rein in inflation ahead of the election. The Buhari-backed move led to a cash



Buhari

shortage. Seven months later, the policy was suspended.

In 2019, he ordered the closure of land borders to restrict imports, end smuggling and boost local production. Instead, inflation spiked as food costs soared, and relations with neighbouring and dependent economies – like Benin, Ghana and Niger – were strained.

The economy never recovered from that, according to Wilson Erumebor, senior economist at the Nigerian Economic Summit Group and a doctoral researcher at SOAS University of London.

"Since the border closure, quarterly trade data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed that the value of non-oil exports has never attained its peak of 1.08 trillion naira (\$2.34bn) in the third quarter of 2019 over three years after the border closure was introduced," he said.

The move also undermined Nigeria's commitment to the African Continental Free Trade Agreement, the continent-wide free trade area, and freedom of movement in the 15-nation Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS).

"It was not in tandem with Nigeria's foreign policy ... [so] ECOWAS were not too happy," Remi Ajibewa, director of political affairs at the ECOWAS Commission at the time, told Al Jazeera. "Why would the big brother who calls himself the giant of Africa be closing its border against them, given the fact that there is a large market in Nigeria and they see Nigeria as one of the countries they could rely on?"

The administration seemed to lack a coherent foreign policy and failed to act swiftly on matters concerning Nigerians abroad. The government was slow to evacuate its nationals in South Africa during xenophobic attacks there in 2019 as well as when conflict broke out in Ukraine in 2022 and Sudan in April.

Over time, Nigeria's international standing dwindled.

"I can see countries don't respect us much given the fact that they see that we have not been able to be dynamic and strong enough," Ajibewa said.

'Uniquely selfish'

Local daily Punch estimated that the president spent 225 days on medical leave, including a three-and-a-half-month stretch in 2017. Another absence spurred a conspiracy theory that he had died in London and was replaced in Abuja by a body double from Sudan.

Even when he was healthy and in Abuja,

Buhari was widely seen as uncaring because of the presidency's slow response – or none at all – to nationwide tragedies. Some insiders in the presidency suggested he was "uniquely selfish" and showed an inability to keep up with the times.

"The president does not delegate responsibilities – he abdicates responsibilities," the governor of a northern state and close ally to the president lamented to his advisers once, as one of them told Al Jazeera on the condition of anonymity.

When Buhari's chief of staff died of COVID-19 in April 2020, things fell apart even more for the presidency. Tensions between cabinet members and heads of government agencies routinely spilled into the public domain, sometimes including accusations of graft and misuse of office.

Buhari's seeming aloofness to all the crises around him inspired viral memes. After his office posted a photo on social media showing him sitting barefoot in the presidential palace while using a toothpick, a meme replaced the palace background in the picture with the scene of a mass killing.

That perception of nonchalance extended to matters of security too.

Buhari came to power on the promise of reversing armed group Boko Haram's gains in the northeast, relying on his experience as a civil war veteran and general in the Nigerian army, long respected for its strength in peacekeeping operations across Africa.

Soon after he was sworn in, he issued a deadline of December 31, 2015, for defeating the rebels. When the deadline expired, information minister Lai Mohammed famously declared that the group had been "technically defeated" even though it was still carrying out attacks.

"There was a false sense of success [this] administration basked in instead of building on the success the previous administration had led," Malik Samuel, an Abuja-based researcher at the Institute of Security Studies, told Al Jazeera, referring to the Jonathan government's last-minute successes in recapturing some areas controlled by Boko Haram before leaving office.

Nigeria's overburdened security agencies are now battling multiple armed groups across the country, including Boko Haram factions like the Islamic State West Africa Province.

There are also violent secessionist groups in the southeast and ransom-hungry armed bandits kidnapping and killing in parts of northern and central Nigeria.

According to the Nigeria Security Tracker, a project of the Council of Foreign Relations, 98,083 people have been killed in documented cases of violence by armed state and non-state actors in Nigeria since the count began in May 2011. Two-thirds of those fatalities happened during Buhari's eight years as president.

"With the experiences people have had from when he came into office to date, I will say we have not progressed with regards to dealing with the threat, which was one of

the reasons behind his success at the polls," Samuel said.

Human rights

In his first stint in power in the 1980s, Buhari pushed through laws that introduced the death penalty for drug trafficking and empowered law enforcement agencies to clamp down on the media for reports considered detrimental to the government. They also applied retroactively.

Ahead of the 2015 vote, he was marketed as a democrat who had shed his past authoritarianism. Even Nobel literature laureate Wole Soyinka branded him as a 'reformed dictator'.

But the administration went on to perpetuate a litany of human rights abuses, ignoring court orders as routinely as it targeted journalists and dissidents.

The National Broadcasting Commission frequently punished television and radio stations for any views deemed critical of the government with fines and suspensions of licenses. Twitter too was not spared. After the platform removed one of Buhari's tweets, it was banned for seven months.

Security agencies carried out multiple extrajudicial killings, including the 2015 deaths of more than 300 Shia Muslims in the northwestern state of Kaduna. Three years later, the army opened fire on Shia protesters in Abuja, justifying it with a video of US President Donald Trump suggesting that American soldiers could respond with force to migrants at the country's southern border who throw rocks at the military.

There were also multiple reports of murders of civilians in areas where the military was ordered to contain communal violence.

"His body language has given encouragement to security agents, which has resulted in massive human rights violations that we continue to see on a daily basis," Samuel said. Had Buhari held officers in key positions responsible for their actions, he said, "I don't think we will [be] talking too much about these issues."

In October 2020, at least 10 people were killed, according to Amnesty International, during a week of peaceful protests by young people against police brutality. There was a "lack of adequate measures for accountability for security forces abuses," Anietie Ewang, Nigeria researcher at Human Rights Watch, told Al Jazeera. "These are very emblematic cases that show how [the] Buhari administration rolled [back] some of the fundamental rights that we had been able to almost consolidate."

Calling card infrastructure

Still, Buhari supporters say no other president has focused on infrastructure as much as he did – there was a construction spree of rail lines and crucial bridges and dozens of interstate highways.

They also point to social protection programmes targeting low-income households. One such programme, the conditional cash transfer programme, doled out a monthly stipend of 5,000 naira (\$13.83) to more than 784,000 of the country's most vulnerable people.

But even those achievements have drawn scrutiny for their poor implementation.

The Abuja metro, commissioned with fanfare in 2018 after construction with Chinese-funded loans, is barely used today. Other rail projects have dragged on for years.

Despite the launch of several power plants and signing of agreements for more, the national grid has crashed more than 100 times in eight years, repeatedly throwing the country into darkness.

For some Nigerians, a new era cannot come soon enough. For others, Buhari's failures have only reinforced their scepticism.

"At this point," 57-year-old bus driver Olusegun Badmus told Al Jazeera, "I have my faith in God and not politicians."

EYE'S WORLD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

Living

Who will rescue our men?

By **EUGENIA ABU**

I had jocularly told one of my gorgeous daughters to quit being ridiculous and go and get married. We all fell about laughing. Having just come through the mandatory youth service, my girls and I are always having interesting conversations about the future. So, who is the man I would say and they would all laugh heartily and tease me and my spouse instead. Okay, so how did you meet daddy, all manners of jokes and jabs.

Anyhow on this day, they told me 'hmmm, mummy good men are far and few between. Most of the ones walking around are either into Yahoo or are too self-entitled or are doing self-adulation podcasts'. It was a joke but I saved it up in the recesses of my brain.

On another day they wanted to know how their Dad had proposed and on another how I knew he was the one. But it's hard to explain to young people today that the way that courtship took place in our time was totally different.

In fact, I explained to my daughters that generations before my Dad, the men would farm for their in-laws' family before they could take their daughter as wife. They would laugh. It was funny to them as it was funny to me when my mom told me.

But they translated to symbols, virtues and values. In a nutshell, it is all about valour, hardwork and dedication to family. A man brought home the bacon, protected his family and was in charge. Those things still hold true but clearly it is a much more complex world.

Remember to tell your son, brother, husband that you love him today. It is not easy for our men

Today men are in a complex field where women hitherto unseen are also in the mix. A lot of men are pressured to succeed and psychiatrists are telling us they are not coping that well anymore. Men are less resilient and more vulnerable and the Internet has worsened the situation where men are displaying wealth and intimidating ordinary



hardworking young men. A lot of the bugatti and ferrari are hired to make a loud presence online and many young men and I daresay women as well paying for a slice of a parked private jet to pretend they have arrived.

People without a dime are showing off online and giving the impression that they will be rich till they die. The pop culture, music, songs, movies promote get rich quick syndrome; get rich or die trying. The rap culture of drugs, feuds, diamonds, girls and fast culture imported from America is not helping matters. So our men

the girls whose newest mantra is have the dough or don't talk to me.

If you really do like a girl and you want to impress then you can rob a bank to make it happen. If that is dangerous then try and win an election and be the man. To be there and get there, you now are ready to do anything so you do not as they say chop breakfast.

All of this fast paced life is having a toll on the young men whose thoughts are slowly translating into hard work does not pay. To get the soft things of life they erroneously believe, you need to live fast, live large and live on the edge.

In between all of this, if the stress is getting to them, they are advised to use something to calm them down and another to perk them up. The fancy and eternally damning drug life would have begun. Our men today are between the devil and the deep blue sea.

Parents need to keep an eye on our boys and find the balance. Generally, fathers expect too much. It is not the same world and wives want to have babies abroad, where are they to get the money? Living like the Joneses helps no family. Living within your means is the Answer. There is the issue of school fees now and the men are under pressure to place children in kindergartens requesting two million naira.

Question is why do you want to imitate Ismail or Kingsley. Stay in your lane. The number of men falling off the wagon due to insane pressure is astronomical. Then they are not as resilient as their forebears in things of the heart, things of finance, things of disagreement.

Life generally gives them a tough time. They don't manage. And sadly we are hearing of suicides and

double deaths as in the case of the policeman who took his life and that of his girlfriend's life in Ogun state. So sad! A fully married man. He just could not put it all together. And in between all of this, there is a thriving gutter juice market in Lagos.

Yes, a juice of boiled marijuana, blackcurrant juice and other illicit drugs sold in jerry cans by regular women on the streets and bought in the dozens by working class men and some young turks. The scene as I read from The Nation newspapers one afternoon is armageddon personified. Drugs, sleaze, prostitution, madams keeping 14 year olds for the kill. Mindless young men are destroyed on the altar of trying too hard and then getting lost in the maze. Were it not better that they farmed for their inlaws?

Decent hotels are now crawling with young men with deep pocket scamming companies and individuals on the computers and living large. Their cars fast, their girls cheap, their hotel rooms

expensive, their trousers halfway between their bums and their knees. They certainly don't fit the hotels. Hair dirty, nails black, silly looking colourful shirts, illicit, fraud and drug money talking. It's a sad world we live in.

Where are the good men with values and valour, sharp with hard work and smart brains? Who would rescue our men slowly disappearing in the rabbit hole? It's not helping that women are strong, earn strong And are ready to get to the finish line, head held high.

Let us teach our boys the values we hold dear. We need money but money is not everything and quick and illicit ones lead you down another hole. Let us teach them resilience, the power of family, faith, kindness, and ethical competitiveness. Let us teach them to respect women. Misogyny is everywhere.

And as we go to the polls, let us do right by voting right. Remember to tell your son, brother, or husband that you love him today. It is not easy for our men. Hold them up for our collective tomorrow. Too many depressed men, full of anxiety. Chin up. I see you. Be strong, it is going to be alright.



THE NIGERIA STANDARD'S WORLD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

Health

Nutritional health value of dates

DATES are dry soft fruits with a sweet and delicious taste, which come from the date palm trees that grow in the desert.

Date palm is among the most ancient fruit trees that have been growing in the Middle East and the Indus valley for thousands of years. It was considered as the staple food for people living in those areas. Date palm was later introduced to different parts of the world starting from South East Asia, Northern Africa, Spain, Italy, and Mexico, and then to the United States during the 18th century.

Dates are of endless varieties. It can be classified as soft, semi-soft and dry dates. Like other fruits, dates are also seasonal products and therefore, the supply of fresh dates is always limited. Dates can also be used as 'survival food' on long trips or on hiking as it contains lots of nutrients, which boost the energy level, and it is easy to carry and ready to eat.

Health Benefits of Dates

- **Helps in Weight Loss:** Dates are rich in dietary fiber that free us from cholesterol and contain very low fat that results in weight loss. It also helps in keeping weight at a normal and balanced level for diet conscious people.

- **Prevents Digestive Problems:** Fresh dates are soft and easily digestible. It helps improve your digestive system, as it contains soluble and insoluble fibers and different types of amino acids.

- **Keeps your Heart Healthy:** Dates have high levels of potassium and low levels of sodium that helps keep your heart and nervous system healthy.

- **Prevents Anemia:** The high iron content in the fruit is beneficial for those suffering from anemia and boosts the amount of iron in their blood.

- **Reduces Constipation:** Dates are a healthy laxative food item that can prevent chronic constipation. Soaking dates overnight in water and having it with water reduces constipation.

- **Cures Eyesight Problem:** It helps improve your eyesight and reduces the chances of getting night blindness.

- **Energy Booster:** Dates contain natural sugars like glucose, sucrose and fructose that help in boosting your energy level. It has low



calories and it is very suitable for health conscious people.

- **Strengthens Bones:** Dates strengthen your bones and keeps them healthy because they contain selenium, manganese, copper and magnesium.

- **Relieves from Intoxication:** Dates are commonly used as a remedy to cure alcoholic intoxication. You can soak dates overnight and have them next day to prevent from severe hangovers.

- **Allergies:** Dates contain organic sulfur that helps in reducing allergies in general and seasonal allergies.

- **Diarrhea:** Ripe dates contain a high amount of Potassium that is effective in preventing diarrhea.

- **Healthy Pregnancy:** Dates are rich in iron, so consuming the fruit by the pregnant mother can protect the mother and the baby from anemia. It also prevents several problems such as bloatedness, bowel pain and intestinal difficulties that occur in women during pregnancy. It improves the uterus muscles and smoothens the passage during delivery. It also prevents hemorrhage soon after childbirth.

- **Healthy Hair:** Want to have healthy hair? Dates are rich in iron content that promotes healthy circulation of blood flow to your scalp thereby helping healthy hair growth.

- **Makes your Skin Look Younger:** Looking for quick tips for a natural face pack? Well, date fruit is the new face pack. First, take 5-10 pieces of fresh dates and add half a lemon or orange to it. Remove the seeds and grind the dates along with lemon or orange till it turns thick like a paste. Before applying, wash your face with cold water and then apply. You can splash your face lightly with

water to prevent the pack from drying up. Leave the pack for 10-15 minutes and wash your face with cold water. Use a towel and

wipe your face dry. Try out dates face pack for instant glowing skin.

Source: Medical news



Editorial

In the cusp of history

As we mark yet another civilian- to -civilian transition therefore, this period provides the country with an opportunity for introspection and deep thinking to help find a way out of the many self- imposed problems faced by the country. Why, for example, are the agitations for self- determination growing louder and louder by the day? Are our leaders fair and just in their dealings with the populace?

Are our leaders leading from the front and showing examples to the citizenry? Are they just in the application of the resources of the country and the states? Have they been able to live exemplary lives as expected by the people or have they continued to see themselves as ethnic champions and zealots?

Our leaders owe Nigerians better life considering the enormous wealth that God has blessed our country with. A situation where the citizenry has to eke out a living because of the misapplication of resources is not acceptable and should not be the case. With prudence and frugal use of funds, Nigerians should be able to have the basic minimum to cater for themselves.

Nigerians cannot continue to suffer in the face of plenty. Our leaders must throw off wastefulness and begin to imbibe the culture of frugal spending. Besides, our priorities must be set right so that with focus, we can change the fortunes of our people. Initially, our leaders had said that our problem is not money but how to spend it. However, the country lost focus and did not do the right thing, making it difficult for us to provide the basics for our people.

As a matter of fact, capital and economic flight became the bane of our society, leading to the relocation of major industries which had hitherto betted in our clime leading to job losses and a contraction in the economy of our country. We failed to maintain our status as the giant of Africa where Africans sought and found shelter. We have moved from a favoured country to one that has become beggarly and shunned by those it had extended a hand of friendship to, in the past.

This exchange of the baton of administration therefore provides the opportunity for Nigeria to turn a new leaf and ensure that the encumbrances which had held us back are removed. We must fashion new ways to ensure that we grow our economy and emphasize on production and not consumption.

But to succeed, our leaders must determine to show the way by living above the sentiments that had served as baggage and drawbacks to the growth and progress of our country. Serious work must be done to unite the disparate groups that are found all over the place.

Tribe and tongue should not matter. Capacity and the ability to perform should be uppermost as our leaders strive to build a new Nigeria. We had in the past pandered so much to these sentiments and they have led us nowhere. We thus must throw them off and start from the basics.

We cannot pretend that some of our institutions have not failed us, yet we keep acting like the ostrich by burying our heads in the sand and hoping that situations take care of themselves. It is high time we face up to these problems and deal with them frontally.

Take the case of our police force for instance, we need to create an alternative to complement it to help deal with our security situation otherwise we would only be groping in the dark. For us in the Middle Belt region, we do not seem to have an option but to take our destiny in our hands so as to stem the precarious security situation we have found ourselves in. It was thus pleasing listening to the Plateau State Governor Caleb Mutfwang saying that he would strengthen the Operations Rainbow to help entrench peace and peaceful coexistence on the Plateau.

It is also gladdening the peaceful manner in which the handover was done. Indeed, the picture of the outgoing Governor of Plateau State and the present governor on the social media dancing to the rhythm of Plateau is gladdening as it portends a new dawn in the history of Plateau and its people.

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

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

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

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



Government should renovate Bukuru cattle market

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

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

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

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

Rikkos community needs portable drinking water

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

People of Rikkos community have

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PLSG, please place priority on early child education

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

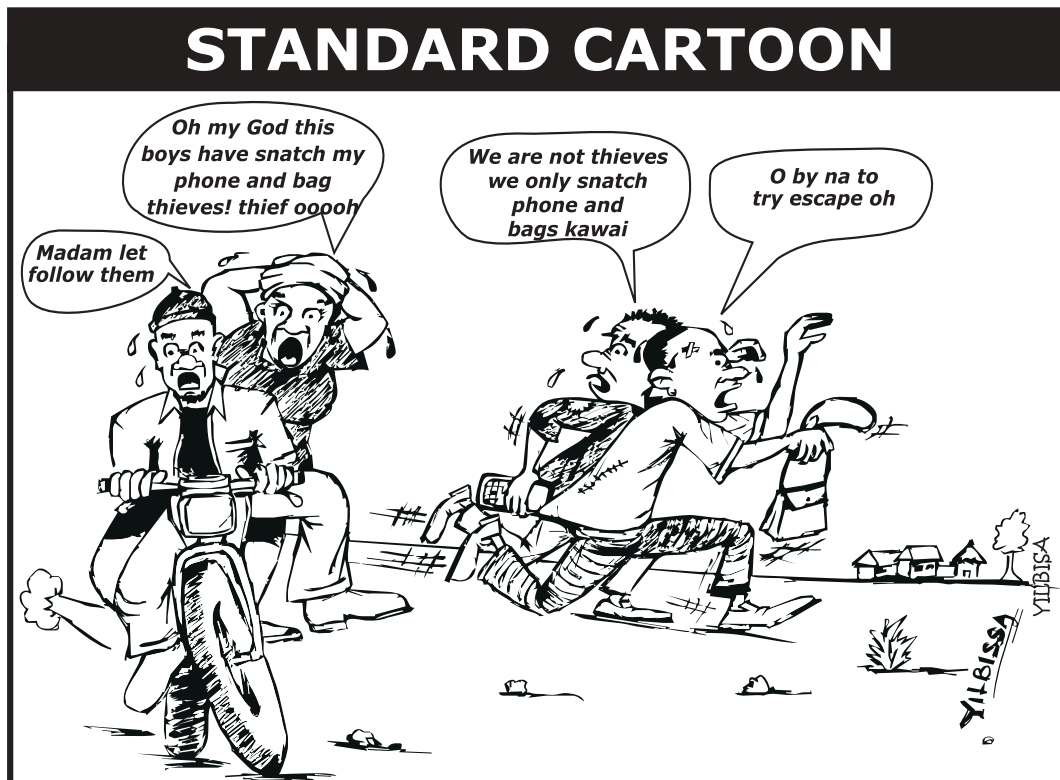
Children who are enrolled in every child education programme tend to achieve more success at school with better career opportunities. This is necessary for holistic development of a child's social, emotional and physical needs in order to build a solid and broad foundation for life long learning and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

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

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

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

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



Opinion

Nigeria tripped in 2015, then stumbled for eight years

BY OWEI LAKEMFA

THE misfortune of the last eight years that was the Buhari regime was foretold. No, not by a fortune teller who might have degrees of inexactitude. But by the exactitude of lived history. A history that opened the book of remembrance reminding us that this taciturn general who was being propped up on stilts of profane propaganda, wrapped in the borrowed robes of a democrat and falsely presented as an unmatched fighter against corruption, is the same man who for 20 months from 1984 subjected the country to terrors of military misrule.

Today, Nigeria stands ragged and worn out on the global highway. Should it look back at the last eight years and try to make sense of the rough road it had been dragged through? Or simply pick itself up and face the future?

The misfortune of the last eight years that was the Buhari regime was foretold. No, not by a fortune teller who might have degrees of inexactitude. But by the exactitude of lived history. A history that opened the book of remembrance reminding us that this taciturn general who was being propped up on stilts of profane propaganda, wrapped in the borrowed robes of a democrat and falsely presented as an unmatched fighter against corruption, is the same man who for 20 months from 1984 subjected the country to terrors of military misrule.

In 2014, there was an Economic Commission of Africa, ECA,

conference in Marrakesh, Morocco and we were some two dozen Nigerians attending from across the globe. We had a joint lunch to discuss the approaching 2015 presidential election. I argued that given his past service, Buhari was not a fit candidate. Part of my arguments were that as Military Head of State, he had no atom of respect for peoples' rights or the rule of law. I cited his anti-media Decree 4 of 1984 in which the publication of falsehood or truth were criminal offences and two journalists were actually jailed under that decree.

There were retroactive laws under which, for instance, three young Nigerians were tied to the stakes and shot for drug trafficking, a crime that did not attract capital punishment when it was committed. I cited his indefinite closure of the country's borders for no logical or economic reasons, his change of currency which led to much hardship and huge losses as many Nigerians could not change their old currencies due to very poor planning by government. I questioned the integrity he was flaunting; how come he was unable to account for his tenure as Chairman of Abacha regime's Petroleum Trust Fund? After discussions, the group agreed that the country will be better without a Buhari presidency.

Indeed, how can a country like Nigeria which produced its first university graduate, Olu Atuwase, in 1611, be bogged down with whether candidate Buhari has school certificate or not?

As President, his government failed woefully on security matters. Bandits

had so much free rein that it became dangerous to travel in any part of the country. He came into office wondering how a government worth its salt would allow students to be abducted in school as happened in Chibok. But under his administration, we lost count of the number of schools sacked with students abducted. In 2021 alone, students, including children, were abducted from schools in places like Kagara, Afaka, Greenfield (Kaduna) Maranban Damishi and Yauri. Some states like Benue, Plateau and Zamfara have become killing fields.

In terms of welfare, we have never had it so bad with an annual inflation average of 20 per cent. Yes, Buhari increased the National Minimum Wage from N18,000 to N30,000 but in terms of value, the pre-Buhari wage was far higher. For instance, in 2015 a bag of rice was N6,500, now it is N45,000. So while the N18,000 wage could buy about three bags of rice, the N30,000 minimum wage can only buy two thirds of a bag.

I am not saying that Buhari did nothing positive in the last eight years as President; but if a pupil scores an overall 10 per cent in examinations, he cannot declare himself a genius. Therefore, when Buhari in bidding Nigerians farewell declares that he ran a good race as President and had a "sense of fulfilment", he is merely being delusional.

In a sense I feel sorry for him. Whatever legacy he thought he had over the decades, have been

destroyed by the poor advice he accepted to run for the presidency. That was after he had wisely declared in public, following three consecutive electoral defeats, that he would never contest again.

Whatever was left of his much-vaunted integrity was completely incinerated three days before leaving office when his government enacted the sickening drama of launching a bogus airline using a company that is still in gestation.

Another of his integrity deficits is that in his second term, he forgot to carry out the annual audit of the country's accounts. Of course, we have not forgotten that in claiming that he had carried out an agriculture revolution in Nigeria, his regime constructed some wooden pyramids in Abuja, decorated them with bags of rice and falsely claimed Nigeria was now producing rice pyramids like the groundnut pyramids of the colonial era which we exported. Still on agriculture, bandits have so made the country unsafe that many farmers have abandoned the farms and become internally displaced persons.

By the way, what was the hurry in Buhari declaring open the private Dangote refinery two months before the plant is supposed to be ready for preliminary refining?

As part of his farewell speeches, Buhari praised former military ruler General Sani Abacha. This is not surprising because even when the funds Abacha looted are being returned by various Western governments, Buhari says Abacha never stole. He also praised

outgoing Customs and Excise boss, retired Colonel Hamid Ali. Some of us see Ali as that military governor of Kaduna State who without following rules, procedures or engaging in discussions, arbitrarily sacked some 23,000 civil servants in the state. We see him as that officer whose name propped up in the Abacha phantom coups designed to eliminate opponents.

Nigerians could hardly wait for this May 29, 2023 date when Buhari departs, and, the mass of the people can, hopefully, begin to breathe properly again. But admittedly, this is mutual. He himself has expressed a number of times that he could hardly wait to flee the Presidency and return to Daura where he has, at the expense of other parts of the country, stacked resources and institutions. He told us in his last week as President that he is in so much hurry to return to the cows he left in Daura in order to tend to the Nigerian people.

There may be a plethora of reasons for this, but an obvious one is that cows can be used as beasts of burden and they hardly complain. Buhari also told us that if we worry him in Daura with complaints, he would relocate to neighbouring Niger Republic which he claims will defend and protect him. So much for a retired Nigerian General who stakes a claim to being a patriot. Goodbyes are usually difficult; Nigerians say goodbye to retired General Muhammadu Buhari. Parade dismissed!

By TOYIN FALOLA

LEADERSHIP is pivotal to development; as such, every election is taken seriously, and the transition of power is especially given attention in Nigeria. Nigeria is coming from a place where its leadership has been in question because of the failure of past leaders to remedy several of the problems they have met. So, in every election circle, with 29th May as the handover of power, there is so much expectation, anticipation, and delight, except for the current one. But over the years, those anxieties have been met with disappointments.

Nigeria saw a new semantic twist to the word "change" from its mantra in 2015. The year was supposed to be the beginning of hope; the citizens thought Buhari, the messiah, had come, not knowing that things were just about getting messier. It has been a long eight years, and the nation has taken two steps backward in several ways, an inch forward in some ways, while the others stay in their stagnant, deteriorated states. It has been a long ride, and the score sheet is quite discouraging in the spirit of speaking truth to power.

One of the selling points of the *change mantra* was the readiness to fight any corrupt practice in the country. The citizens had expected that many politicians would be put in jail or get several of their properties confiscated. Well, for those not on the good side of the President and the party, those promises were kept regarding them, but the big-bellied politicians eating from the pots of corruption and sitting in influential political offices became saints stacking away copious quantities of the national treasures. There are lists of those who got their sins "forgiven," as stated a the former chairman of the All Progressives Congress. No one hears of David Umahi's alleged N400 million diversion of public funds, Godswill Akpabio's alleged N100 billion diversion, Stella Oduah's alleged N9.4 billion, and other accusations. There is Orji Uzor Kalu's N3.2 billion graft accusation, Adebayo Alao-Akala of blessed memory's N11.5 billion theft allegation before his death, Lt. General Azubuike Ihejirika's alleged connection with Sambo Dasuki's \$2.1 billion theft, and several others, after they had moved to the ruling party, the cleansing fount that all sinners can come to. The corruption ranking of the country reached a record of 154th in 2021 and Nigeria has currently become the 150th least corrupt country in the world. One would have thought that the nation was ready to fight corruption under Buhari's tenure, considering a report that the country could lose about 30% of its GDP by 2025. We are edging toward this problem, and Mr President and his appointees indulged the causes too much.

One needs to check whether the poverty rate has been reduced as promised by the *change mantra*,

Buhari: The illusion of hope

but the country is in a dreadful situation than it was eight years ago. The margin between the rich and poor grew, while citizens were left with no buying power. The past eight years have left one wondering if there has truly been the availability and access to the supposed public goods and services within "a united, peaceful and secure nation," as the former president stated in his farewell speech. As expected, the supposed global recession and economic downturn, as Buhari alluded to, would never be enough excuse for the incapability of at least giving the citizens steady lives. First, Nigeria is not the only country that faced the challenge, but the propensity of its effect seems higher here than in other countries. Secondly, the administration has been in place since 2015, and laying claim to the incidents of 2020 and 2022 is outrageous.

One of the reasons former President Buhari showed more enthusiasm toward the nation's petroleum sector was first to ensure that there are sustainable changes to its different problems and to reduce the rate of corruption in that sector. Despite all the various promises to revive the sector and the refineries and make things easier for the citizens, the petroleum sector continued to worsen. The fuel prices now are not just lacking in uniformity in practice but they have increased by almost 200% of what obtained before the administration's commencement. The refineries have remained in their moribund state while we export crude oil and purchase petroleum products in an inconsiderate state. The subsidy on fuel has not been removed, but prices are still not favourable to the people. Buhari as minister for Petroleum and those who served as minister for state for Petroleum Resources found themselves in limbo, while millions of Nigerians queued to buy petrol at high prices, year in and year out. Fuel scarcity is no more a phenomenon; it is a festival and people are not surprised it happens.

While you preached democracy, even in your farewell speech, I am not certain all its tenets were well kept or practiced as they should have been. Maybe the president does not know that the practice and presence of democracy is not the absence of military or despotic rule, as it was during his first administration, but the recognition of the people's sense of belonging in the leadership, the obvious practices of the system, especially in the face of antagonism. What are the tales around elections in Nigeria, what has happened to the freedom of expression, and how best can one describe the prevalence of the tenets of democracy in the country? Nigeria saw one of the worst levels of suppression of human rights under the Buhari administration in a democratic dispensation. Police

brutality has increased to incite a high rate of citizen's resistance to the police. The government's body language has been more of beating a child and still beating him when he cries. The advent of the EndSARS protest was not just the youth showing readiness for a better Nigeria, but it was an expression of the insults of oppression of the injuries of lack of facilities and a low standard of living.

I believe those who thought the former president was a reformed and repentant democratic would be close to disclaiming such assertions by now. Government institutions became havens of witch-hunting and the hands of political strategies to intimidate those in the way of the government or anyone at all. Should one refer to the popular Twitter ban from 5th June, 2021, to 13th January, 2022? The killing of several EndSARS protesters and the darkened truth about what happened on that fateful night at Lekki Tollgate. And if elections alone are what Mr Buhari understands as democracy, I am not sure Nigeria can boast of the 2019 and 2023 elections conducted under its administration. A report stated that the DSS, the Army, and other security operatives were used to intimidate voters and several other intimidations from children of the dark worlds during the 2019 elections. The 2023 elections were worse, with different public intimidations and obvious rigging, violence, and other vices during the electoral processes.

One may need to ask where the jobs promised or seemed to have been produced are, who are employed, and who are the employers. While there is considerable progress in this instance, the conditions have not changed, as most of the steps taken are not sustainable. With an unemployment rate of about 33%, those who try to establish themselves face a toxic environment. A report shows that about 80% of small and medium enterprises failed in Nigeria in 2020. While efforts, even where they are not sustainable, are still efforts, the Buhari administration forgot to provide a more enabling society for businesses to thrive. In the name of business interventions, the momentary Christmas gifts are mostly embezzled by the officials and gotten by party members and associates; they are not enough if self-subsisting systems are not built around them to ensure they serve the purposes for which they are given out.

The argument of certain people during the pre-election change mantra before the 2015 election was that because of the military background of Buhari, the nation might have enough hold of its security problems. One of the great sins of

Goodluck Jonathan was his inability to combat terrorism and the growing security challenges. Of course, a General was coming, and it was reasonable to see people with some comfort level. The Buhari agenda and propaganda were sold to the nation, and security was the weak spot of many of the citizens. The ride for the past last years has been worse; while the news about Boko Haram has become normal incidences that do not even get to make newspaper headlines in the country, other forms of insecurity have become strengthened. The anxiety of fear on an average Nigerian road is enough to give one high blood pressure. Prisons were broken into in most undignified ways, there were mass massacres and kidnapping, and several other unspeakable disgraces. Mr Buhari, Nigerians *never saw you coming*.

When the common and seeming colloquial saying, "What is worth doing is worth doing well," is said, it is a big message that even Buhari should have learnt from. There are excuses that the anticipated rot was worse, as almost all government says when resuming after an opposition predecessor. And where it seems that the water of the Nigerian problem is fast becoming more than the garri of your power, it would have been an honourable thing to step down for others to try; well, the phrase, although never reflected, "politics is not a do or dies affair," does not extend to those in office. But Yoruba would say, *Akukuu joye, o san ju enu mi o kalu lo*.

While Nigeria has been on fire, it seemed the president had more enthusiasm for tourism than the nation's state. From 2015 to December 2022, our *Ajala* president spent no less than 225 days on medical trips, aside from attending other summits and official trips. This is against the promises of ensuring the president and other politicians explore local medical options. But most importantly, if a president could spend such several days on unofficial journeys at different intervals, there is little to say about how settled and ready he has been for the job.

However, it is my message to the next president of Nigeria that the nation needs real change and that the duty is to at least make things stable. He should take clues from the mistakes of Buhari and other past leaders to make wise decisions that will transform the nation. More so, the 2023 election has threatened the nation's unity, so he must rule with this consciousness at heart. I say "Amen" to the oft-repeated prayer: *May a Buhari never happen to Nigeria again*.

Toyin Falola, a professor of History, University Distinguished Teaching Professor, and Jacob and Frances Sanger Mossiker Chair in the Humanities at The University of Texas at Austin, is the Bopapan of Ibadanland.

News

Rainstorm destroys houses, properties worth millions

OVER 300 houses have been destroyed following a devastating rainstorm in Misau Local Government Area of Bauchi State.

In a telephone chat with the Caretaker Chairman of Misau Local Government Area, Hon. Salisu Hussain Hardawa, he confirmed the incident where he said the affected households have found themselves in a difficult and sympathetic situation that need quick response.

He explained that the rainstorm destroyed over 300 houses and properties

From ABBAS GUNGURA, Bauchi

worth over 500 million Naira.

The Caretaker Chairman who sympathized with the victims of the rainstorm, prayed God to avert future occurrence and replace what they lost as a result of the natural disaster.

Hon. Salisu Hussain Hardawa, called on the Bauchi State government for intervention through provision of relief materials to cushion the effect of the unfortunate incident on the

victims.

The chairman who expressed gratitude to God that no life was lost in the incident, attributed the sad development to poor tree planting attitude by people in Northern part of Bauchi State.

The LG boss appealed to the general public to imbibe the culture of tree planting in order to address desert encroachment.

He lamented that despite the present economic hardship, the affected people in Misau lost



Hardawa

properties worth millions of Naira.

In an interview with one of the victims, Ibrahim Abubakar Yunusa, he said that the rainstorm destroyed fences and houses completely.

"Today, we found ourselves in this situation of rainstorm which wreaked havoc here in Area one, Misau. You can

see how fences and houses have fallen, some houses have been destroyed completely. We are in difficult situation now", he said.

According to him, the rainstorm may not be unconnected with global warming as well as indiscriminate felling of trees which is resulting to desert encroachment.

While appealing for assistance from the government, Yunusa urged the government and the civil society organizations to embark on vigorous sensitization and awareness creation campaign on the need for people to plant trees around them in order to address the situation.

Commenting on the incident, the Misau Local Government Secretary of the Red Cross Society of

Nigeria, Mohammed Yakubu (KANI), confirmed that the incident affected many houses.

Kani who said, in some places, walls collapsed on the occupants of the houses, leading to minor injuries, expressed gratitude to God that no life loss has so far been recorded.

The secretary of the Red Cross in the local government said that the injured ones are receiving treatment in the hospital.

Kani while cautioning residents to stop felling trees indiscriminately, maintained that desert encroachment, indiscriminate dumping of refuse, building on waterways as well as blocking drainages are some of the factors responsible for the tragic incident.

PUBLIC NOTICE
FEDERAL MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT

PUBLIC DISPLAY EXERCISE ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) OF THE PROPOSED SHEMANKAR INDEPENDENT POWER PROJECT (SIPP) AT RANDA RIVER, JING IN PANKSHIN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, PLATEAU STATE BY SHEMANKAR VALLEY LIMITED.

In accordance with the provisions of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Act Cap E12 LFN 2004, which makes it mandatory for proponents of all new major development activities to carry out Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for their proposed projects, the Federal Ministry of Environment hereby announces a twenty-one (21) working days public notice for information and comments on the draft EIA report of the above subject submitted by Shemankar Valley Limited.

The Display Centers are: -

- Headquarters, Pankshin Local Government Area, Pankshin, Plateau State
- Plateau State Ministry of Environment, State Secretariat Joseph Gomwalk Complex, Jos, Plateau State
- Federal Ministry of Environment Office, Federal Secretariat, Jos, Plateau State
- Federal Ministry of Environment, Environment House (Brown Building), Independence Way,
- www.ead.gov.ng

Brief Project Description: -
The Proposed project is a Shemankar Independent Power project at Randa River, Jing, Pankshin LGA, Plateau State on a land area of 1213km². The project is a run of the River hydropower plant with a total installed capacity of 8.5MW, consisting of a weir structure, intake & penstock, power house, switch yard and transmission lines, also to harness the renewable hydropower potential of the Shemankar River Basin, generate electricity, while providing economic & social benefits.

Duration of Display: -
Date: 26 May- 27 June, 2023.
Time: 8:00am - 4:00pm daily.

ALL COMMENTS RECEIVED SHOULD BE FORWARDED TO THE HONOURABLE MINISTER, FEDERAL MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT MABUSHI, ABUJA ON OR BEFORE 4 JULY, 2023.

SIGNED
PERMANENT SECRETARY
FOR: HONOURABLE MINISTER.

Subsidy Removal: IPMAN fires back as queues return

THE Independent Petroleum Marketers Association of Nigeria has opposed the plan by President Bola Tinubu to enforce his predecessor's decision to remove fuel

subsidy by June ending. The National Public Relations Officer, IPMAN

He said, "We are not in support of the removal of fuel subsidy at this time. We have said it repeatedly that our refineries should be fixed before taking such decision that will cause galloping inflation and inflict more hardship on the masses.

Tinubu had earlier on Monday, in Abuja, affirmed that his administration would not continue to pay subsidy on petroleum products.

The President said given the high opportunity cost the Federal Government was suffering to fund subsidies, it was no longer justifiable to continue.

AUCTION! AUCTION!! AUCTION!!!

The Nigeria Police Force Divisional Headquarters, Riyom Plateau State Command Jos is notifying the general public to come and claim this accidental vehicle, a **Nissan Motor Iberica Model L-6009 with Chassis No. 0660138** white in colour and with **Registration No: KWL 260 ZZ** within two weeks from the date of this publication.

Signed:
Adamu Yahaya
08166116199

CHANGE OF NAME					
<p style="text-align: center; background-color: black; color: white; margin: 0;">GERSHON</p> <p>I, formerly known as PHILIP, ALTINE, now wish to be known and address as GERSHON, ALTINE PHILIP. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p style="text-align: center; background-color: black; color: white; margin: 0;">EDET</p> <p>I, formerly known as AUGUSTINE EDET ARCHIBONG, now wish to be known and address as EDET AUGUSTINE ARCHIBONG. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p style="text-align: center; background-color: black; color: white; margin: 0;">GARBA</p> <p>I, formerly known as ABUAKAR GARBA ADO, now wish to be known and address as GARBA ADO. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p style="text-align: center; background-color: black; color: white; margin: 0;">EMMANUEL</p> <p>I, formerly known as AMUSA BLESSING KWENDE, now wish to be known and address as EMMANUEL BLESSING YAKUBU. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p style="text-align: center; background-color: black; color: white; margin: 0;">EZEKIEL</p> <p>I, formerly known as EZEKIEL, MANGA NYAM, now wish to be known and address as EZEKIEL, MATTHEW NYAM. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p style="text-align: center; background-color: black; color: white; margin: 0;">UGWUOKE</p> <p>I, formerly known as ONYEKACHUKWU UGWUOKE, now wish to be known and address as UGWUOKE ONYEKACHI. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>
<p style="text-align: center; background-color: black; color: white; margin: 0;">JACOB</p> <p>I, formerly known as VICTORIA JACOB TWA, now wish to be known and address as JACOB VICTORIA DURUMTWA. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p style="text-align: center; background-color: black; color: white; margin: 0;">CHARLES</p> <p>I, formerly known as OKOLIE CHARLES, now wish to be known and address as CHARLES RAY. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p style="text-align: center; background-color: black; color: white; margin: 0;">NIKORO</p> <p>I, formerly known as NIKORO RAPHEAL, now wish to be known and address as NIKORO RAPHAEL. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p style="text-align: center; background-color: black; color: white; margin: 0;">MARIAM</p> <p>I, formerly known as MARIAM ADAM, now wish to be known and address as MARIAM SULEIMAN. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p style="text-align: center; background-color: black; color: white; margin: 0;">TSALHA</p> <p>I, formerly known as TSALHA IBRAHIM, now wish to be known and address as ABDULLAHI DALHA. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p style="text-align: center; background-color: black; color: white; margin: 0;">TUGAP</p> <p>I, formerly known as SHUEPBIN NDAM NYENTONG, now wish to be known and address as TUGAP NYENTONG. My correct date of birth is 02/02/2000 not 01/09/1999, my phone number is 07010941023 not 08022541220. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>
<p style="text-align: center; background-color: black; color: white; margin: 0;">ALIYU</p> <p>I, formerly known as ALIYU MOHAMMAD, now wish to be known and address as ALIYU MUHAMMAD. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p style="text-align: center; background-color: black; color: white; margin: 0;">CLEMENT</p> <p>I, formerly known as CLEMENT PONZIP BINDAP, now wish to be known and address as CLEMENT PONZIP DAMILE. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p style="text-align: center; background-color: black; color: white; margin: 0;">GEOFFERY</p> <p>I, formerly known as EBELE MOSES OKAFOR, now wish to be known and address as GEOFFERY EBEL MOSES. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p style="text-align: center; background-color: black; color: white; margin: 0;">GEOFFERY</p> <p>I, formerly known as OKAFOR JOY ADAORA, now wish to be known and address as GEOFFERY JOY ADAORA. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 10px; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">THIS SPACE IS FOR SALE</p>	<p style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 10px; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">THIS SPACE IS FOR SALE</p>

Feature

Nigeria: A country smiling in tears

From
AYUBA, YILGAK'HA

IN present day Nigeria, only a few are happy with the way things went in the last decade plus. You must have seen the sarcastic "Survivor Certificate" that is trending on social media these few days. The content reads: "The Bearer ... of this Certificate is Hereby Proclaimed as a Survivor of the Muhammadu Buhari led Administration from May, 2015 - May, 2023, in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. We made it alive." The insinuation and implication is that the eight years of president Muhammadu Buhari have been hell as far as survival in Nigeria was concerned.

Under the regime, Boko Harm insurgency which was prevalent in the North East was minimised but other forms of insecurity such as armed banditry and kidnapping escalated in other parts of Nigeria, namely, the North West, North Central, South West as the violent activities of separatists agitators, Indegenous People of Biafara (IPOB) intensified in the South East with needless fatalities. This is not even to mention the brazen bunkering and crude oil theft in the South South.

Under the administration still, Nigeria became the poverty capital of the world after overtaking India with over 133 million Nigerians living in abject poverty in 2019. The country's problems were existential, complex and practically hydra-headed in nature.

Nigerians literally went through the valley of the shadow of death. It was as though the citizens were under the sceptre of death. The country's situation could better be described in terms of the words expressed by Nora Roberts in his novel, 'Ceremony in Death' which was published in 1997. The first paragraph of the novel's chapter one reads: "Death surrounded her. She faced it daily, dreamed of it nightly. Lived with it always. She knew its sounds, its scents, even its texture. She could look it in its dark and clever eye without a flinch. Dead was a tricky for, she knew. One flinch, one blink, and it could shift, it could change. It could win." When Nigerians stepped out of their home, they were not sure if they could return safely. The citizens had to die to live. It was that bad!

Buhari's regime as democratically elected president of Nigeria began on May 29, 2015 after his historic defeat of the then incumbent president Goodluck Ibele Jonathan in a keenly contested poll. It was the first time an incumbent president was soundly defeated in any president polls in the country. Prior to the contest that brought Buhari on power, he had made three consecutive but fruitless attempts at becoming in Nigeria. The first was in 2003 when he stood election against former President Olusegun Obasanjo in 2003; the second was when he contested against Late Umaru Yar'Adua in 2007 and the third was when he attempted the contest against former President Jonathan in 2011 and serially lost the bids. It is pertinent to note that in all the three (3) Buhari has never lost the



north where he had cult followership.

After the third unsuccessful attempt in 2011, president Buhari vowed never to try it again. He lamented and even cried publicly as to why Nigerians were suffering under failed or underperforming governments and how his planned mesianic effort at becoming president was being frustrated. He literally wept over the level of exalating issues of insecurity, corruption and economic failures in Nigeria and said Nigeria and Nigerians shall miss the great president he could have been at the time. It is important to note that Nigerians, especially, northern electorates believed Buhari and when he lost the poll in 2011, there was violent protest where many lives and properties were destroyed under the guise that the poll was rigged in favour of former president Goodluck Jonathan.

After vowing never to contest for presidency again following the third unsuccessful attempt in 2011, President Buhari backtracked on his words and tried again in 2015 under the platform of the All Progressives Congress (APC) which was a coalition of Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP), Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), a faction of All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA). A splinter group from the then ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) called the new, nPDP which later joined the coalition with seven (7) governors. The coalition deployed its strategic propaganda machine, worked and Buhari became president with the firmed promise to fix Nigeria's security woes, ailing economy and corruption. It was the first time a coalition party could win any election in Nigeria's chequered history and, therefore, it made Buhari a jinx breaker and a historic legend also.

Even though some Nigerians, especially, the older generation were sceptical about Buhari's ability to deliver as president; vast majority of the citizens were lured and convinced to believe that

Nigeria will automatically work under a Buhari presidency. Part of the hope-trigger was when Buhari insinuated that, 'if corruption was not killed, it would kill Nigeria'. This insinuation was not only true but politically correct and it was the kind of thing Nigerians were eager to hear.

Buhari's campaign in 2015 was successful because of it populist appeal. It was masses-centred campaign which promised to reorganise Nigeria in favour of the toiling masses, frontal fight against corruption that was believed to be more prevalent amongst the country's elites. At Buhari's inauguration on May 29, 2015, the populist president thrilled anyone who cared to listen that 'he was for everybody but for no one.' In other words, he was saying he was going to be neutral, a president for all irrespective of social status, tribe, region or religion. After serving eight years (2015 - 2023), Nigerians now know better.

After serving two (2) tenures of eight years, Buhari's hyped integrity is under critical scrutiny. How are Nigerians viewing the president today? Is Buhari now a better person, in terms of his public image, than if he were never elected president? Has the president kept his promises to the citizenry? These are germane questions that begs for answers and, trust Nigerians, every one of them has a view to express on those questions. The regime promised so much but delivered so little.

President Buhari promised to conduct most freest and fairest election in Nigeria before leaving office; now the citizens know better. Buhari promised to end Boko Haram (BH) insurgency and, also, rescue Chibok and Dapchi girls including Leah Sheribu, the Dapchi lady who refused to denounce her Christian faith in captivity; now Nigerians know better. Buhari promised to end insecurity in the country but BH which was narrow in scale has only metamorphosed into wide scaled kidnapping and banditry; Nigerians now know better. Buhari promised to end corruption but

snakes were swallowing billions of naira under his watch; Nigerians now know better. Buhari promised to fixed the economy but the country's macroeconomic indicators have shown worrisome signals; Nigerians know better.

Nigerians have stories to tell in respect of inflation, unemployment, poverty rate, exchange rate, subsidy, industrial actions, insecurity, corruption, issues of marginalisation, religious division, selective justice, just to mention a few. Senator Shehu on his varified Twitter handle, @shehusani, chronicles the regime as follow: "He led the country without economic direction. He presided over a government that failed to secure the lives of Nigerians, 63 thousand dead, 3 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and 366 thousand refugees in neighbouring countries. He failed to restructure as he promised. He granted waivers to the rich and empoverished the poor. He closed the borders for those who import bags of rich on motorcycles and permitted those who use ships. He built magical pyramids that disappeared after 3 days. He left uncompleted projects with huge debt to service for decades. He enabled, enriched and reinforced a cabal for eight years. He announced and and retained failure and rewards them with extensions. He was weak in taking decisions and run away when it is tough. He has no house in London but made London his home. He left behind record inflation, record devaluation, record, unemployment, record fall in Gross Domestic Product (GDP), record figures in poverty and record plunder of state resources. He left behind a nation with 60 million people suffering from mental illness. He is leaving behind the health workers on strike. He setup traps for the next government in order to make his own look better."

To say the least, Nigerians are victims of extended-broken promises under Buhari's government. Many who could not survive had died through controversial and needless existential struggles. Nigerian

citizens who survived saw their survival as a miracle. The regime was practically very tough in all ramifications. It is leaving Nigerian youth with bruised ego and the entirety of the citizenry in survival limbo.

In an oxymoron fashion, Nigerians are smiling in tears and there are, possibly, three theoretical explanations for this classic and pratical expression of this oxymoron in the country: Survival Strategy Hypothesis (SSH), overwhelming hypothesis (OH) and Religion as Opium Hypothesis (ROH). The SSH argued that 'If you worry about a trouble it becomes double but when you smile at it, it disappears like a bubble

so always smile at your problem.' The OH has to do with smiling in tears because one is overwhelmed with a challenge which left him smiling like a mad person. The idea is that even when the victim cries; it would not change anything and, therefore, the best he can do is to smile in utter shock and bewilderment. The RHO derives from Karl Marx's hypothesis that religion is like a soothing balm that massages the pain of a suffering people and make them see all misfortunes as acts of God. It is a fated disposition constructed by a conceding belief system.

In Marx's days, religious leaders who were in active collaboration with the state were always in the habit of encouraging suffering people to see their frustrations as acts of God and, so, were not doing anything to change the harsh conditions of their congregation. This way, the people were constrained and conditioned to smile in tears. There nothing wrong in propagating hope but religious leaders must learned to speak in defence of the defenseless and not the other way round. They must shy away from being cowards and be frontal in condemning evil when they see one to make the society an all inclusive and just one.

After representing all that he truly is for eight on Nigeria's most coveted seat, Buhari had given himself and regime a solo pass mark saying, he is fulfilled and will be remembered as that president who laid a solid foundation for enduring national development in Nigeria. He also noted that his successor and president-elect, Bola Ahmed Tinubu (BAT) was "the best candidate among all the contestants and Nigerians have chosen well". These assertions were made in his Sunday broadcast and valedictory speech to Nigerians on May 28, 2023. How Nigerians receive this self assessment by the president is left to be seen and a matter for another day!

Leadership is transient and whether president Buhari performed creditably or not shall be at the mercy of history. God rules in the affairs of men. Today Nigeria is heralding the end of an era and the beginning of another. Buhari is stepping out; Tinubu is stepping in. There is no vacuum in governance and time as a natural order and changer of seasons has spoken. May Nigeria triumph over its most daring travails and grow into greatness!

IMAGES

GOVERNOR MUTFWANG INAUGURATION 2023

The official inauguration of Barr. Caleb Mutfwang and Hon. Josephine Piyo as Governor and Deputy Governor respectively on Monday, May 29, 2023 at the Rwang Pam Township Stadium, Jos the state capital



Outgone Plateau State Governor, Rt. Hon. Simon Bako Lalong through his Deputy, Prof. Sonni Gwanle Tyoden (right) presenting the handover notes to the Governor of Plateau State, Barr. Caleb Mutfwang (left)



Plateau State Governor, Barr. Caleb Mutfwang delivering his acceptance speech after being sworn-in



Plateau State Governor, Barr. Caleb Mutfwang (left) displaying the handover notes after receiving from Prof. Tyoden



Governor Caleb Mutfwang (front row) acknowledging cheers from invited personalities



Cross section of members of the State Traditional Council at the ceremony



Plateau State Governor, Barr. Caleb Mutfwang and his wife, Barr. Helen Mutfwang displaying the certificate after the oath taking ceremony



Mammoth crowd gathered to witness the inauguration ceremony of Barr. Caleb Mutfwang and Hon. Josephine Piyo



Plateau State President, Traditional Council, His Majesty, Da Jacob Gyang Buba, CFR, wife, Mrs. Rakiya Gyang Buba and other dignitaries at the ceremony



VICTOR ALI

IT need to be stated from the set here that Nigeria has virtually everything in abundance. The abundance of its God-given resources is fantastically amazing. In all sectors of human socio-economic endeavour, Nigeria can hold its head high. Hence the quoloqual saying that "Naija no dey chop last" is a truism. What about its cashcow, petroleum? Think about myriad mineral resources under its earth? What about its seemingly unhindered agricultural exploits? And fancy the many tourists sites that adorn the length and breadth of the country then you are already in paradise.

In spite of all these potentials, Nigeria is a paradox. For instance, with its vast landmass and the farm produce therein, food shortages have been the

country's difficulty and where available, the exorbitant prices of the food items are prohibitive to the common man. Eating thrice a day is out of the menu arrangements in majority of homes in Nigeria. Hence, families now adopt the eating decided to release water through its pipes perhaps after two or three months, the residents scavenge as if it is not the same water board that affirmed "water is life." And the committing repercussion of not having a clean, safe drinking water is certainly the



Nigeria as Federal Republic of scarcity

formular we used in the university over three decades ago -101,110,011. It is so sad, indeed.

Water they say is life . In my neighbourhood and environs, water scarcity has become a dreadful nightmare to residents. Simply put, residents rely on water vendors whose sources are quiet questionable. Or boreholes where such exists. Even at this commotion and confusion that usually ensure calls for concern. For the water vendors one has to give advance booking in most instances. And for the borehole whose price is relatively cheaper, one has to wake up as early as 4:00 a.m. get the piece of the action.

One is talking from a position of a participant observer. Since money is involved it is alleged that those who do not have the cash often resort to stream and polluted rivers nearly for cooking, washing and bathing in their households. Whenever the water board

outbreak of diseases.

Petroleum and its other sister products have remained the live-wire of the nation's economy since independence. The persistent and consistent scarcity of the product over the years has had monumental negative effects on the lives and well-being of the people. Virtually all sectors of the economy depends on the petroleum sub-sector, therefore, the stability of that sector is of paramount importance. However, the vulnerability of the sector is all too discerning. Scarcity of petroleum and petroleum products in Nigeria has constituted a big dent on the image of the country. Sad, indeed!

Needless to say, the prices of commodities and services are closely tied to the prices and availability of petrol and its sister products in the market. Whenever there is hike in the price of petrol, certainty, there would be a spiral effect on other goods and services. Alas, the poor masses on the

streets must groan under the suffocating condition.

Then, enter the almighty naira scarcity. In organized and decent climes, the country's currency is a thing of pride. Periodic branding and redesign of such currencies is therefore in line with global financial best practices. However, the Nigerian experience recently proved a disaster. To say that Nigerians suffered with the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) policy of Naira rebranding and redesign under the governorship of Mr. Godwin Emele is an understatement. Indeed, Nigerians are still licking their wounds.

As stated earlier, there is nothing bad about the policy of rebranding and redesign of the Naira as it is in conformity with international best practices. This is not the first time that the country had embarked on this policy. What went wrong this time around? Was the Central Bank of

Nigeria really prepared for the exercise? Or was there sabotage along the way?

It is disheartening that depositors cannot have access to their monies. Imagine a situation like this: You have in your account one hundred thousand naira and you are confronted with a serious problem of fifty thousand naira. You go to the bank and you are told you can only access twenty thousand naira only. For crying out loud, how are you going to solve the problem? Rationing naira for depositors as a result of cash crunch? What a shame!

It is high time government puts its acts together, look at the pros and cons of its intended policies before implementation. The latest Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Naira rebranding and redesign has provided a monumental disaster and shame. And of course, policy somersault is not a good image for any country under the sun!

Social Media and a divisive Nigeria



By Ezekiel Dantinna

IT first came to us as a new born baby over two decades ago and we so accepted it with great nostalgia because it brought a new dimension that eased communication and connectivity. At first, there were no smart phones and it somehow regulated the possible excesses of the present days' predicament that has to do with internet fraud that is causing great harm to the political journey as Nigerians.

It would be recalled that, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo in

the year 2001, took Nigerian Communication Sector to a new dimension after decades of living without global link. When the Global Satellite Mobile Network popularly known as GSM was introduced, Nigerians embraced it with both hands, because they felt they were part of globalized information technology.

Today, the number of people using smart phones have out weigh those using the analogue phones and the percentage of Mobile Telecommunication subscribers in Nigeria is over 90% and it proved how much we have accepted GSM as our way of communication.

It has no doubt impacted positively on the lives of Nigerians considering the fact that it enables for effective communication not only in cities but even in rural areas where network is available and they can now use their mobile phones to do many things including making voice calls, sending short messages, services and other high level of services like, transmitting and receiving still and line images, watching live events from any part of

the world etc.

However, this celebrated fits has also come with its ills that started impacting negatively on the overall gains. We are now miss-using GSM and it is impacting negatively on us both politically and otherwise. It has become a practical tool for self-destruction to the point that every smart phone user can sit down in his comfort room and cook any fake news, unguided story and send to the open internet space not minding the cost implication.

When INEC came out with the Presidential, National Assembly, Governorship and State Houses of Elections' Time Table, all the dried leaves from the desert forced themselves to survive using dew to push their ways to the battle field. That was the beginning of throwing missiles at each other up till date.

The most worrisome of it all is, how religious leaders also key into this act of character assassination that has caused all forms of unrest in our communities. Religious leaders who by right are supposed to be apolitical now

use the internet to sent messages that are unguided and misleading or fake information.

It is quite unfortunate that the display of our shameless extremism in everything has been what denied us the opportunity to logically think before rushing to publish what we know nothing about. It was for this reason that President Muhammadu Buhari, was brought on board because of the series of hate speeches and character assassination using the internet against former President Goodluck Jonathan.

Unfortunately for PMB, the same train and tools used against GEJ resurfaced and all through his tenure, the good intention he might have had for Nigerians was distracted with volumes of unpalatable condemnations and his 8 years in office went down the drain without anything reasonable. Whether it is for the good and development of citizens, no reasonable consideration was given to change our suffering.

There is no denying the fact that, more of this ugly incident will continue because we have deliberately positioned our

mindsets on celebrating bad news than the good one's and it has denied us the opportunity to see things from positive perspectives than just hearsays and has affected the mindsets of so called respected personalities who have gone through the peak of the four corners of class rooms.

In fact, right thinking minds keep asking questions if there were any regulatory structure in Nigeria that monitors the excesses of those who pour out inciting words causing disaffection among people? Could it be that the regulatory body is part of it and cannot arrest those causing disharmony among us? This question needs to be answered to give Nigerians hope that the future is safe.

The 10th National Assembly should swing into action and ensure that a Special Bill is sponsored and passed into law to address the ills in it this internet misuse for us to nip in the bud. We have no any Country or home than Nigeria and if we destroy it, it will not only affect our generation, but generation to come and we may not be safe to contain it. May God save Nigeria!

By **ADETOLA BADEMOSI & HAKEEM GBADAMOSI**

FUEL queues have resurfaced in the nation's Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and Ondo State while Stakeholders have also expressed diverse views over President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's pledge on removal of petrol subsidy while presenting his inaugural speech on Monday in Abuja.

The President had hinted that one of his major moves would be removal of subsidy on petroleum products as there was no provision for subsidy in the national budget from June 2023.

However, industry stakeholders have expressed diverse views on his pronouncement even as fuel queues resurfaced in filling stations shortly after his address.

Speaking with our correspondent on the development, the National Public Relations Officer of the Independent Petroleum Marketers Association of Nigeria (IPMAN), Mr. Chinedu Ukadike said the announcement was sudden adding that the development could lead to profiteering.

He said: "...I also believe that the new government should have conducted an investigation to be able to know if Nigeria is actually subsidizing products or not because this announcement is abrupt and triggers profiteering.

"If you are not sure of where you are buying your next petroleum product and the rate it will be supplied to you, you will be very economical to be able to dispense."

He noted that although subsidy removal was imminent, the process to achieving this should also be considered.

"We know that subsidy is imminent but the process of subsidy should also be considered and also knowing clearly that Nigeria is dependent on petrol importation and domestic goods and services are triggered by Petroleum products.

So the announcement on the removal of fuel subsidy by Mr. President is sudden because we at IPMAN believe that in line with our discussion with him, he would have looked at the system and be able to engage Stakeholders and address the system once and for all," he said.

Ukadike further noted that the pronouncement might also being a warning to Nigerians on what to expect saying: "His pronouncement on the removal of subsidy does not remove fuel subsidy because factors on the removal of subsidy as opined by the Federal Government and oil marketers have not been met.

"We all agreed that before removal of subsidy the three or four refineries in the country should be efficient and working. Dangote refinery should have

come upstream, the modular refineries must also be encouraged to be able to cushion the heavy dependence of Nigeria on importing fuel from foreign countries."

On his part, Prof. Adeola Adenikinju, Director, Centre for Petroleum, Energy Economics and Law said there was no better time to make such pronouncements.

They said they will remove subsidy because that is the best thing to do. "NNPCL in the last two years has not remitted a dime to the national treasury and we are spending our little foreign exchange to import fuel. The country is bleeding, that is why and this subsidy has to go. Though it will be hard, we have gotten to a level where we just have to



Petrol queues resurface, stakeholders divided on subsidy removal



According to him, this was one of the campaign promises of other presidential candidates at the elections. "If he doesn't do this now, then that is the end! We can't continue the way it is. We have come to an exponential point where we don't have a choice. In the last election all the leaders, both Obi, and Atiku all

survive," he added. Meanwhile, upon Tinubu's announcement on subsidy removal on his resumption of office as President of Nigeria, it was speculated that fuel queues returned to Abuja filling stations. A survey of filling stations in Abuja revealed that some filling stations were not selling

because they were out of product. One of the staff who spoke to our correspondent on the condition of anonymity at a filling station in Karshi, disclosed that they were not dispensing because their product was not available. In another filling station in the Nyanya area of Abuja, it was

gathered that fuel was last dispensed for almost three days. In Garki, Area 11, Total filling station, near Force Headquarters, was dispensing normally at the official rate. In NIPCO filling station, in Lugbe area of Abuja, car owners were fueling their vehicles normally. There were however no signs of fuel queues. Most of the fuel stations are under lock and key while the few ones who are selling the product were filled up with vehicles. The development caused traffic gridlock and most of the filling stations selling fuel are selling between N200 and N250. It was noticed that most of the fuel stations selling fuel to the public were owned by major marketers, while most of the independent stations were closed and not selling the product. Most of the motorists lamented that the development is just too early and called for the review of the subsidy removal. The motorists expressed fear that the removal of the subsidy will add to the economic hardship being experienced in the country.

IMAGES

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Plateau State Governor, Barr. Caleb Mutfwang (right) being congratulated by the Chief Judge of the State, Justice David Mann



Governor Caleb Mutfwang of Plateau State taking the oath of office, flanked by his wife, Barr. Mrs. Helen Mutfwang



Deputy Governor of Plateau State, Hon. Josephine Piyo displaying her certificate after being sworn-in as Deputy Governor



Cross section of invited dignitaries at the inauguration ceremony



Ven. Selcan Miner, an elder statesman and wife on arrival



L - R are, COCIN President, Rev. Dr. Amos Musa Mohzo, Catholic Bishop of Jos, Rev. Dr. Matthew Ishaya Audu and the TEKAN President, Very Rev. Moses J. Ebuga



General Officer Commanding and Commander, Operation Safe Haven, Maj. Gen. Abdulsalam Ali taking the salute on arrival



Colour party mounted by the Nigerian Police Force during match pass

Odd World

Next pandemic could be 50 times deadlier than Covid

A looming "great pandemic" could be 50 times more deadly than coronavirus, top scientists warned today.

Latest figures show 223,906 people in the UK who died had Covid-19 on their death certificates.

Millions more were infected, leaving hundreds of thousands thought to be suffering from Long Covid.

But experts fear another pandemic could infect and kill even more.

American virologist Dr Robert Redfield, who served as director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention from 2018 to 2021, feared his grandchildren would be faced with an even bigger crisis.

He told the BBC : "I think they are at high risk for a great pandemic in the next decade or two and I think that pandemic is going to be caused by man not nature - either intentional bioterrorism or possibly just a lab accident."

Oxford University's Regius Professor of Medicine, Professor Sir John Bell, said the Covid-19 pandemic "could have been a lot worse".

"What are we going to do about detecting and managing the next pandemic, because that's where trouble comes from?" he said.

"I don't want to dismiss this last pandemic - a lot of people suffered a lot, there were lots of lives lost and it was a great tragedy ... it could have been a lot worse."

He said that if the Omicron variant had hit before the original Wuhan strain - which gave those it infected and who survived some immunity, and allowed vaccines to be developed - it would have claimed many more victims.

Modelling suggested that "if the first virus that appeared in Wuhan had not been the Wuhan strain but had been the Omicron strain - which we all know is much, much more infectious - and that

had hit an immunologically naive population - in other words a population that had never seen the virus before - the peak mortality in the UK would be about five times what it was with the original Wuhan strain," he said.

"Those were pretty dark days in April and May 2020 and I don't think we would have wanted five times the number of people dying.

"Had it been avian flu it would have been 50 times, so I think when we hear there's a great pandemic coming - if either one of those things were to happen it would be a great deal worse than what we saw."

Sir John warned the next pandemic could come either from zoonotic transmission - where it is passed from animals to humans - or an accidental lab leak.

He pointed to the 2002-04 outbreak of severe adult respiratory syndrome which was first identified in China and killed 774 people worldwide.

"We know historically that we do get pathogens that come from the animal kingdom that get into man that cause these sorts of outbreaks - the previous Sars outbreak is one but also occasional avian flu cases have come from animals," he said.

"We know that happens. We also know that labs that look after these very pathogenic viruses do leak."

He even raised fears of terrorists trying to steal viruses and use them as biological weapons.

Sir John said: "Don't forget that most terrorist organisations around the world have seen the havoc that can be provoked by these kinds of pathogens, so the concept that this is a biosecurity issue more widely shouldn't be a new one, it should be something that we are thinking about all the time."

The Mirror



'Leaders with ideas not in power'

ONE of the most respected erudite scholars of recent times, Prof. Patrice Emery Lumumba was once quoted as saying, "The tragedy with Africa is that those with ideas are not in power, while those in power have no ideas. When the people have a chance, they still vote for those with no ideas." For many who have followed with keen interest the silhouette criticisms offered by this scholar, it is daunting on us that some African states are far off the track of progress and or systematic integration. Therefore, much needs to be done in terms of implementing strategic policies of good governance to salvage our nation states from plummeting into anarchy, chaos and or total collapse.

During several of his lamentations, Prof. Lumumba always apportioned blames on our leaders who due to acts of administrative ingenuity contributed to the socio-economic and political retardation of this continent. Evidently, the continuous clinching to power of these visionless and corrupt leaders in Africa have but only succeeded in turning back the hands of time.

Some of these leaders who got the opportunity of leading their nations on the platter of gold have regrettably not been able to justify such opportunities. Between the early 1960's to late 70's, successive military takeover of governments across the continent saw the growing number of military dictators which led to the emergence of stooges and evil men of thoughts brutally engaging many democratic oppositionists leading to the death of hundreds of thousands. Few lucky ones were however able to escape into exile after knowing too well that their lives were in danger.

Most of these despots including the late Idi Amin of Uganda, Mubutu Sese Seko, Charles Talyor, Muammar Qadhafi including Joseph Kony, the Ugandan warlord, all never gave a thought about the nation's collective wellbeing.

In fact, Kony was one of the tyrannical warlords who disrupted, dehumanized and terrorized the people of the continent through his brutal leadership style. No doubt, his atrocities left a deep-seated hatred and ethnic divide amongst the citizenry.

Interestingly, Nigeria also experienced such acts of brutality when the military held sway. While several innocent citizens of this country were unjustifiably jailed and or killed, others who escaped these despotic regimes went on exile to save their lives.

In most recent years however, the transition of most of these African nations into democratic nation states have further entrenched democratic governance with great expectations. Many scholars had however hoped at initial stage that the democratization of African nation states would create fundamental stability and add value to the people of the continent. Thus, the coming of democracy to most nations of the continent after so much struggle and sacrifice was initially regarded a great relief to pro-autonomy and visionary scholars.

While democratic establishments in

some countries have led to the actualization of concrete pillars revamping basic institutional structures for greater prospects, some unfortunate nation states have equally been left aloft at the mercy of their corrupt and visionless leaders. Today, many of such emerging leaders based on greed and acts of personal aggrandizement have looted resources meant for the betterment of their citizens. Consequently, while their citizens continue to wallow in dehumanizing abject poverty, they have only concentrated on buying expensive castles abroad and participating neck-deep into more acts of economic sabotage.

In Nigeria, I have taken more time to scrutinize the long list of our leaders who have governed this nation for decades but not made the desired impact. In the midst of both economic and human resources Nigeria is blessed with; more than half of the nation's population is today living far below poverty line. Aside the biting difficulties of unemployment, insecurity and economic uncertainty, our educational sector is in total muddle. Just within a month, our national grid failed us twice sending strong signals that all is not well with our power sector.

Aside the rampaging activities of terrorists that have refused to allow us have a sound sleep; hardly a day passes-by without any of us being told of one act of kidnapping and or armed robbery in this country. These unpleasant phenomena are completely overwhelming us because of the simple fact that we are yet to put our act together. To say the least, many have attested to the obvious fact that the citizens of this country have not allowed God to bless us with good leaders.

When our founding fathers were struggling to liberate this nation from the claws of colonial subjugation, they dreamed of a nation which after them would navigate itself and become a giant of Africa. Many of these past leaders of ours never anticipated for once that after they had gone, this country would be left fumbling in such an woeful and disgusting manner today.

After Nigeria's independence, the tales of this nation state has frighteningly continued to create an atmosphere of uncertainty as well as bash the hopes and aspirations of many. Today, Nigeria has become a nation state which requires all our prayers for it to overcome these difficult contemporary challenges. Some of these problems bedeviling us as a people were however unfortunately created by us.

Even as many citizens are yet to comprehend where the leaders of the country went wrong for us to deserve these unending calamities, some of them buried under the rubbles of a near failed state do know that only the citizenry can open a new chapter when the needful is done. Therefore, all we need to do to change Nigeria's disgusting narrative is to vote leaders with visions and intellectual capacity. Though it may take a long time to bring the nation back on track, with sincere commitments, sacrifice and total disregard to religious and regional sentiments, we can navigate the nation out of its present predicament for the better.

View Point

Medical tourism, dilapidated PHCs, others show Buhari's failure

Public analysts consistently criticised the President's medical trips abroad, blaming him for "championing the distrust in Nigeria's health sector," especially by the members of the elite class. NIKE ADEBOWALE writes.

NO Nigerian leader spent more time in hospital abroad than President Muhammadu Buhari's approximately 232 days. It took him only two years in office to **beat the record** set by one of his predecessors and Katsina kinsman, the late Umar Yar'Adua, who spent 109 days on medical trips abroad in his 32-month stay in office.

Public analysts have criticised the outgoing president's medical tourism, blaming him for "championing the distrust in Nigeria's health sector", especially by the elite class.

"The president as the symbol of the nation has consistently breached the oath of allegiance and the people's trust in him by his distrust in the health facilities at home. And that is very unfair for a leader who was elected by the people to provide the very best care in health and other sectors of national development," said Lekan Oladapo, Project Director for Lygel Youth and Leadership Initiative, a non-governmental organisation.

He said the president's conduct encouraged medical tourism abroad, which according to an earlier report by PREMIUM TIMES, costs Nigeria an estimated N576 billion (\$1.2 billion) yearly.

But this was not what Mr Buhari and his political party promised Nigerians.

Campaign manifesto

Ahead of the 2015 general election, Mr Buhari, candidate of the then opposition All Progressives Congress (APC), presented his party's manifestothemed: "Building a New Nigeria."

A major promise in the manifesto – described at the time as one of the most ambitious and elaborate in the nation's political history – was the provision of robust healthcare services by an APC administration.

The specifics of the promise for the health sector include nationwide domestication of Child Rights Act, free antenatal and maternal care for pregnant women; free healthcare for babies and children up to 12 years old and the aged, and free treatment of persons with infectious diseases; raising the gross national health expenditure per person per annum from less than N10,000 to about N50,000, and raising federal government-owned hospitals to world class standard within five years through investments in infrastructure, diagnostic equipment and continuous



professional development.

Mr Buhari also promised to improve healthcare in the country by prioritising Primary Health Care, ensuring increased budgetary allocation, and improving welfare for health workers, among others.

Speaking specifically on the challenge posed by medical tourism, the president, in April 2016, months after his first medical trip to London, said the government's hard-earned cash would not be spent on treating officials overseas, especially when Nigeria has the expertise.

While this administration will not deny anyone of his or her fundamental human rights, we will certainly not encourage expending Nigerian hard-earned resources on any government official seeking medical care abroad, when such can be handled in Nigeria," former Health Minister, Isaac Adewole, said at an event where he represented the president.

However, President Buhari is leaving behind a legacy contrary to those promises. Beyond medical tourism, he will be remembered for poor performance in industrial relations in the sector and primary healthcare development, and scary maternal and infant mortality

statistics.

On health infrastructure

Despite promises by Mr Buhari's administration to revitalise PHCs and improve the quality of government-owned hospitals, many health facilities across the country still lack basic equipment and infrastructure required to provide quality health care.

Various reports have revealed the dilapidated state of PHCs across the country, especially in rural communities.

Going by the **blueprint** of the National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA), a PHC should have one or more doctors, a pharmacist, a staff nurse and other paramedical support staff to provide outreach services.

It should also have a well-equipped open ward, labour room, children and female wards, doctor's office and staff quarters, an ambulance for referrals and drugs and equipment for immunisation, preventive and basic curative care. The centre is also to provide monitoring and evaluation, as well as maternal and child health services.

Meanwhile, this is not the situation in PHCs across the country. The majority of these PHCs are short-staffed, poorly equipped, lack

electricity and water, and cannot effectively cater for the people.

Many pregnant women still seek the services of traditional birth attendants for delivery. Many children in the rural areas also miss out on routine immunisation which is meant to be one of the responsibilities of a functional PHC.

In January 2017, President Buhari flagged off a scheme to revitalise 10,000 PHCs across the country to enhance the access of Nigerians to qualitative and affordable health services. However, six years after the flag-off many PHCs are still not functional and those that are functional are offering health services below standard.

Various investigations carried out by PREMIUM TIMES between 2018 and 2022 reveal that the majority of these PHCs are still in a poor state.

The director, PHC system development, NPHCDA, Ngozi Nwosu, also confirmed this during a health dialogue organised by this newspaper in November, 2022. Ms Nwosu said some PHCs facilities across the country are poorly equipped, with only a quarter of about 30,000 facilities having more than 25 per cent of the minimum equipment package.

Ms Nwosu said the limited

coverage of important PHC interventions is further aggravated by poor quality care, with poor performance of health workers also contributing to this.

The Executive Director of the agency, Faisal Shuaib, at a recent event also reiterated the poor state of PHCs especially in rural areas.

Mr Shuaib said there is an unequal distribution of available Skilled Birth Attendants (SBAs) among the PHC facilities, noting that only 463 (1.8 per cent) out of 25,380 **PHCs** in the country possess the required number of SBAs.

The story is not different at federal government-owned secondary and tertiary hospitals in the country. These health facilities lack basic medical equipment, such as diagnostic equipment, patient monitors, and surgical instruments, making it difficult for health workers to provide quality health care to patients.

For instance, over 300 radiotherapy machines are needed to cater for cancer patients in Nigeria but the country has only 13 according to the Nigerian Cancer Society (NCS).

Cancer patients travel across states and also join a waiting list to access radiotherapy machines.



Plateau's smooth transition on May 29

FINALLY, Nigeria's long awaited May 29, 2023, the day for the official transition of government has eventually come and the President and governors-elect across the country were sworn in to take over the mantle of Leadership.

Simultaneously on that day, as the President, Bola Ahmed Tinubu was taking his oath of office to collect the baton of leadership from former President Muhammadu Buhari, in Abuja, in Plateau State, Barr. Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang was also being sworn in as new Governor of Plateau State to take over power from former Governor Simon Bako Lalong, at the Rwang Pam Township Stadium.

Also sworn in was President Kashim Shettima, and Plateau Deputy Governor, Hon. Josephine Piyo, among others across the country.

Barr. Mutfwang won the governorship seat under the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) beating his major opponent from the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), Dr. Nentawe Yilwatda.

A mammoth crowd of party supporters, clad in green and white 'Adire' signifying the party's philosophy and a symbol of the PDP logo, filled the stadium to the brim, as they excitedly chanted party slogans.

The Deputy Governor, Prof. Sonni Gwanle Tyoden represented Lalong and performed the ceremonial transition and military rites, handing over power officially to the new Governor.

Earlier, there was a State Banquet for the incoming administration at Government House Little Rayfield on May, 27th 2023.



Attendance at the Banquet drew party stakeholders from both the PDP and APC. One of the key side attractions was the display of the "Goemai Dance steps" by the outgoing and incoming governors, to the admiration of the crowd.

Stakeholders of the state, including Plateau Traditional Council, Plateau Elders Forum, all called for unity among Plateau Citizens irrespective of religious, ethnic or political differences to make the state develop.

The Banquet was followed by a transition Thanksgiving mass on Sunday May 28, 2023 at St. Monica's Catholic Church, to mark the end of Lalong's tenure and the beginning of the Mutfwang's led PDP government.

Governor Lalong, at the forum specifically welcomed his predecessor, former Governor Jonah David Jang and on a lighter mood, said he (Lalong) is the next person to be addressed as immediate past governor, therefore becoming the

baby of the club of former Plateau Governors.

Lalong said his experiences in politics and other spheres has been put together in a book, "40 days and 40 nights" urging people to grab a copy and read it to know how he rose from grass to grace.



Recalling how his church, St. Monica's had played a role in his life by christening his children, he thanked God for the children who have all grown up, and are striving in different spheres of their career. He also appreciated the support of citizens, leaders and his wife, who have worked hard to keep his family together.

He promised the incoming Governor of offering his advice when necessary to move the state forward.

"This thing called party has divided us, the incitement, bitterness, propaganda is too much and has done a lot of damage but after elections we must come together for the interest of the state", he said urging citizens to give his successor support to continue leading the state.

He advised citizens against ethnic sentiments pointing out that during his tenure, his Doctor was Mwaghavul, Chief Detail from Kaduna, and Chief Security Adviser (CSO) was a Mupun. He also disclosed that during his tenure, he was sandwiched by members of Gindiri Old Students Association (GOSA), and on another lighter note, he said he had joked about GOSA replacing him as governor, and eventually like a soothsaying, his prediction has eventually come to pass with the emergence of Mutfwang.

Before presenting his remarks at the mass, Mutfwang sang a popular hymn "To God be the glory..." to the cheers of the congregation.

"It is possible for Plateau to unite. Unite and build Plateau, and make sure we are one", the Governor said as he sang the popular song



"I don't care what tribe you belong to, for as far as in Plateau you live....you're my brother just give me your hand", and the congregation sang along.

"This cycle of aberration where we disgrace our leaders has come to an end in Plateau" the new Governor announced adding that if he has any issues, with the former Governor, he will meet him and ask questions. "If we sit and cannot settle, we will call our father Monsignor Gotan to settle the issue for us", he added.

Mutfwang called for interreligious and inter-ethnic tolerance and wished the Governor Lalong who earlier humorously announced that he is looking for a job in Abuja the best in his future endeavours.

Mutfwang who took his oath of office at 1:07 pm, with Chief Judge of the State, Justice David Mann officiating, and promised to govern Plateau State with honour. He was born into a humble background on the December 12 1965, he graduated from Boys Secondary School (BSS) Gindiri in 1982. He also graduated from the University of Jos, in 1988, and the Haggai Institute for Leadership Development Hawaii USA in 2006. He was called to the Nigerian Bar, as a solicitor and advocate of the Supreme Court on the 14th of December 1989.

He contested and won Chairmanship of Mangu Local Government in 2014 and held the post of Secretary, Association of Local Governments (ALGON) in Plateau State.

Governor Mutfwang is a legal luminary, a consummate administrator, a member of various professional bodies including the Nigerian Bar Association, International Bar Association, Christian Legal Society of America, and the Nigerian Institute of Management among other others, before emerging as the Gubernatorial Candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party for the 2023 elections.

He is married to his wife Barr. Helen and they are blessed with three children.

His deputy, Hon. Josephine Piyo took her oath at 12:46 promising to serve the state and country faithfully in accordance with the Nigerian Constitution.

With over 3 decades experience as a registered Nurse, Hon Piyo, graduated from St. Louis College Jos in 1974, and School of Nursing and midwifery in 1978.

She delved into politics and won the seat for member representing Riyom state constituency in the Plateau House of assembly in 1999, she held other numerous posts including Chairman of Riyom Local Government in 2014-2015.

She is married to her husband Mr. Bitrus Piyo and the marriage is blessed with 6 Children.

News

Gov Inuwa sworn-in for second term...

From Willie Attah, Gombe

GOVERNOR Muhammad Inuwa Yahaya of Gombe State has vowed to put more effort in economic empowerment and job creation for his people shortly after being sworn-in for a second term in office by the state's Chief Judge, Justice Halima Mohammed.

Also sworn-in by the Chief Judge was the Deputy Governor, Manasseh Daniel Jatau, who was accompanied at the occasion by his wife. Governor Inuwa was also accompanied by his wife at the ceremony.

In his address during the ceremony at the Pantami

Stadium Gombe, venue of the inauguration, Governor Inuwa sought for continued support, active engagement, and constructive feedback for the administration in order to succeed.

The governor who thanked the people of the state for giving him another opportunity to serve them, said his administration will continue with the ease of doing business policies so as to consolidate on its position as the most business-friendly state in Nigeria thereby creating economic empowerment for the people.

He said, "these policies are designed to foster conducive business environment, attract investments and stimulate economic growth. We shall also train and upskill our youth, invest in ICT skills and innovation, and harness our agri-business potentials in order to enhance food security and create employment opportunities".

Governor Inuwa also promised that education and human capital development will be given priority through continuous upgrade of school infrastructure, provision of instructional materials and improving the capacity of teachers and administrators.

According to him, "We are committed to expanding

access to education, particularly for out-of-school children, girl-child and other marginalized groups, through various initiatives like the Adolescent Girl Initiative for Learning and Empowerment (AGILE).

"We are also committed to enhancing vocational and technical education to align with the needs of the rapidly evolving job market, particularly the agriculture, energy and oil and gas sectors which are fast taking shape in Gombe State, especially with discovery of oil and gas at Kolmani", he assured.

On health and social welfare, Governor Inuwa told the people of the state that, "we are going to leverage on Go-Health and GSPCHDA to strengthen healthcare systems and infrastructure in order to ensure accessible and quality healthcare services for all.

"We shall improve the capacity of our healthcare professionals by investing in training and capacity building, as well as partner with FG and other relevant stakeholders to implement social welfare programmes that support vulnerable groups and alleviate poverty", he stressed.

He said the administration in the next four years will not relent in its infrastructural development efforts. "We are

going to consolidate on our existing achievements by investing in the development of critical infrastructure such as roads, bridges, water supply, and electricity.

"We shall improve our rural and urban transportation networks, and investing in climate-friendly and sustainable projects. Urban renewal and redevelopment, especially in the state capital and the local government headquarters will be pursued vigorously in order to ensure decent living and also attract the much-needed investment in hospitality and tourism", he assured.

Above all, the governor stated that the administration will maintain its Good Governance and Accountability policies by sustaining the principles of people-driven, needs-based and participatory governance.

"We shall continue by improving our open government policies which enabled us to become one of the top 7 states in the country in the 2022 Transparency and Integrity Index. The efficient use of public resources through blocking leakages and reducing wastage will foster a culture of meritocracy and inclusivity in governance, thus improving the efficiency of the system.", he stated.

KOGI Commissioner of Information and Communications, Kingsley Fanwo has commiserated with families of the victims of an accident which led to the death of 5 as a result of the vehicle that plunged into a canal, around Omi Dam in Yagba West Local Government Area of the state recently.

Fanwo in a statement made available to journalists on Monday, said that Kogi Government received the news of the death of five people over the incident with rude shock.

The Commissioner disclosed that government had since launched investigations into the circumstances leading to the unfortunate incident.

"The State Government is willing and ready to cooperate with the Lower Niger River Basin Development Authority to improve the safety of people working around the canal and passengers traveling along the routes around the canals. We cannot afford to lose the lives of our citizens to such avoidable deaths.

"The State Government has received preliminary reports from the Yagba West Local Government authorities who moved swiftly to salvage the situation to no avail. We will communicate our observations and recommendations to the

Govt commiserates with families of accident victims

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

authorities of the LNRBDA to avert future occurrence.

"Our hearts are with the families that lost their loved ones and the people of Yagba West and Yagba East Local Government Areas over the unfortunate and sad accident. May God repose their souls.

"The Kogi State Government will liaise with relevant authorities to offer support to the victims' families," the commissioner said.



Inuwa



Fanwo

Sports

Barca Ladies lose to Lyon

ASISAT Oshoala and her Barcelona Ladies teammates lost their Women's Champions League title after losing 3-1 in the final to French giants Olympique Lyon, BSNSports.com.ng reports. Oshoala, who recently won the award for the most goals in the Spanish women's league, played as a substitute role in the game as she came on in the second half.



Oshoala

ALL four goals were scored in the first half, with Amandine Henry, Ada Hegerberg and Catarina Macário netting for the Frenchwomen while Alexia Putellas pulled a goal back for the Spaniards.

Lyon is clinching the women's Champions League title for the sixth time in seven years, with eight Champions League trophies overall to their name.

Lyon boss Sonia Bompastor also becomes the first woman to win the Champions League as both a player and a manager.

The 41-year-old former midfielder was part of the successful Lyon side in 2011 and 2012.

Hegerberg's goal means the former Ballon d'Or winner has scored an unmatched 59 goals in 60 Champions League games.

Barcelona came with a better fight in the second half but Lyon held on to reclaim the title they last held in 2020 before losing it to Barca last season.

Asisat Lamina Oshoala MON (born 9 October 1994) is a Nigerian professional footballer who plays as a striker for Spanish Liga F club FC Barcelona and the Nigeria women's national team. Widely regarded as one of the greatest African female footballers of all time and one of the

best in the world, she is one of the most celebrated African female footballers of all time, and she won African Women's Footballer of the Year a record five times.

Asisat previously played for English clubs Arsenal and Liverpool, Chinese club Dalian, and Nigerian clubs Rivers Angels and FC Robo. She won the 2015 FA Women's Cup with Arsenal; two league championships and a cup title with Dalian; and the 2019–20 Copa de la Reina and 2019–20 Supercopa de España Femenina with Barcelona. She was the first African (and Nigerian) player to score a goal in a UEFA Women's Champions League final and has helped Barcelona reach the semi-finals three consecutive years, and one final. On 16 May 2021, Asisat became the first African woman to win the UEFA Champions League, after Barcelona defeated Chelsea 4–0 in the finals. The following season, she became the first African woman to win the Primera División's Pichichi Trophy, and in August 2022 became the first African woman nominated to the Ballon d'Or.

Asisat was the highest goal scorer at the 2014 FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup and was named best player at the tournament. She was also named best player and second

top goalscorer with the Super Falcons team who won the 2014 African Women's Championship.

In September 2014, Oshoala made a Member of the Order of the Niger by President of Nigeria Goodluck Jonathan. In 2021, she was named in the Forbes 30 Under 30. She is popularly called "Ágba Baller", which means in her local palance, "Legendary Footballer".

On 23 January 2015, Oshoala joined Liverpool in England's Women's Super League. The club's manager, Matt Beard, called her "one of the best young players in the world". Although rumours had linked her with other clubs, she was very happy to join Liverpool. She was the first player from an African nation to compete in the top women's league in England.

Despite missing two months of the 2015 season with a knee injury, Oshoala scored three goals in the nine games in which she played as defending champions Liverpool finished in seventh place. Her first goal of the season was the game-opener of a 2–1 win against Birmingham City on April 1. During the club's 2–1 win over Manchester City, she scored the game-opening goal in the tenth minute. She scored the club's third goal of a 3–1 win against Arsenal on 12 July.



In January 2016, Liverpool reported that a transfer bid from Arsenal had activated the release clause in Oshoala's contract and that she was discussing personal terms with the London club.

Arsenal: 2016–2017

In March 2016, Oshoala signed with Arsenal. Arsenal manager, Pedro Losa said of her signing, "Asisat is a fantastic talent and will be a great addition to our squad. She is quick, with excellent feet and has proven she can score goals so it's very positive she has decided to join us."

Oshoala helped Arsenal win the 2016 FA Women's Cup Final on 14 May. The win marked the club's 14th title. Oshoala made 13 appearances for the club during the 2016 season and scored two goals. She scored the game-winning goal in the 2–0 win against Notts County on 28 August. Arsenal finished in third place with a 16–4–2 record.

Dalian Quanjian: 2017–2019

On 10 February 2017, Oshoala signed with Chinese club Dalian. During the 2017 season, she scored 12 goals helping Dalian Quanjian win the league championship. She was awarded the league's Golden Boot award for most goals scored. The same year, she scored four goals during the 2017 Women's Super Cup and helped the club defeat Shanghai 5–3 to win the championship. In October 2018, she helped the club win the league championship for the second consecutive year.

FC Barcelona: 2019–present

On 31 January 2019, Spanish club FC Barcelona Femení signed Oshoala on a loan deal until the end of the season. On May 31, 2019, Barcelona announced her full transfer to the club and extension until 2022. She scored seven goals in her seven appearances for the club during the 2018–19 season. Barcelona finished in second place during the regular season with a 25–2–3 record.

Oshoala dribbles the ball during the 2019 UEFA Women's Champions League Final

Oshoala scored Barcelona's only goal in a 4–1 defeat to Lyon in the 2019 UEFA Women's Champions League Final. She was the first African (and Nigerian) to score in a Champions League Final.

During the 2019–20 season, Oshoala scored 20 goals in her 19 appearances for Barcelona. She scored her first goals of the season with a brace against Atlético Madrid on 19 September 2019. In October, she scored another brace against Madrid lifting Barcelona to a 4–0 win. On January 11, 2020, Oshoala scored four goals in a 6–0 win against CD Tacon. Barcelona finished in first place during the regular season with an undefeated 19–0–2 record. Oshoala's 20 goals ranked second in the league following teammate Jenni Hermoso with 23.

Oshoala scored the game-opening goal in the fourth minute of the 2019–20 Copa de la Reina semi-finals against Sevilla. She provided assists on two of the goals to lift Barcelona to a 6–0 win. Barcelona defeated Logroño

3–0 to clinch the championship.

On 21 August 2020, Oshoala provided the assist for Kheira Hamraoui's game-winning goal in the 2019–20 UEFA Women's Champions League quarter-final against Atlético Madrid lifting Barcelona to the semi-final.

On 24 March 2021, Oshoala scored the game-winning goal in the team's 3–0 win over Manchester City during the first leg of the 2020–21 UEFA Women's Champions League quarterfinals. On 16 May 2021, Oshoala became the first African woman to win the UEFA Champions League, after coming on in the 71st minute of the finals with Barcelona defeating Chelsea 4–0.[8]

On 10 March 2022, Oshoala signed a two-year contract extension that would keep her at Barcelona until 30 June 2024.

Oshoala found success as a forward for Nigeria's youth teams but made most of her early appearances for the senior national team as an attacking midfielder. She was nicknamed "Seedorf" after male footballer Clarence Seedorf and has also been referred to as "Superzee" by her teammates.

Oshoala's club coach Edwin Okon was serving as the national team interim manager when he gave her a debut senior cap in a friendly defeat by world champions Japan in September 2013.

Oshoala was named as the best player at the 2014 FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup and was the top goalscorer at the tournament with seven goals. She was also named best player and second top goalscorer with the Super Falcons team who won the 2014 African Women's Championship. She also won the BBC Women's Footballer of the Year 2015. In September 2014, Oshoala was made a Member of the Order of the Niger by President of Nigeria Goodluck Jonathan.

On 8 June 2015, Oshoala scored her first 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup goal when she scored the team's second goal in a 3–3 draw with Sweden in Winnipeg. After the team was defeated 2–0 by Australia and 1–0 by the United States, they did not advance to the knockout stages.

Oshoala was also a member of the Super Falcons team who won the African Women's Championship in 2016 and 2018. She scored three goals in the 2018 Edition in Ghana.

Oshoala vice-captained the Super Falcons at the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup in France. During the team's second group stage match against South Korea, she scored in the 75th minute lifting Nigeria to a 2–0 win. Oshoala was named Player of the Match.[53] Her goal was nominated for Goal of the Tournament by FIFA. Nigeria finished third in Group A and advanced to the knockout stages where they faced two-time champions Germany and were defeated 3–0 in a controversial match heavily influenced by video assistant referee (VAR).

Source: www.fcbarcelona.com

Sports

Scorecard: Dare leads Nigeria to winning 254 Medals



The immediate past Minister of Sports and Youth Development, Sunday Dare through some of his policies (Adopt-an-Athlete, Adopt a pitch, etc) that laid the foundation for his excellent performance led Nigeria to unprecedented achievements in international competitions in the last four years. It was under him that Nigeria dominated Africa and indeed took the world by storm in Athletics, Wrestling, Basketball, Table Tennis, Cycling, Para-Athletics, Hockey, Powerlifting, Boxing, Para-table Tennis, Volleyball, Scrabble, and indeed Football. During his nearly four year tenure, he led Nigeria to winning 95 gold, 71 silver and 88 bronze medals (274 medals in total).

The unprecedented achievements were recognized by former President Muhammadu Buhari when on Sunday 28th May 2023 conferred on Sunday Dare Commander of the Order of Niger (CON), to end his blissful tenure in style.

In his first assignment as Minister of Sports, Sunday Dare led Nigeria to winning 127 Medals at the 2019 All African Games in Morocco.

2023 Women Afrobasket: Rwanda to host Nigeria, others

Ahead of the 2023 Women Afrobasket competition, the organizer FIBA has announced Rwanda as host of the championship, BSNSports.com.ng reports.

Since the completion of the BK Arena in Kigali, the country has hosted numerous basketball competitions including the much-publicized African Basketball League (BAL).

Nigeria's D'Tigeress is among the teams that have booked their participation in the upcoming tournament.

Despite missing out on the Women's Basketball World Cup, D'Tigeress are still a strong force in the Women's Afrobasket and they remained a strong favorite for the competition.

Nigeria finished Second on the log with 46 gold, 33 silver and 48 bronze medals.

Top moments under his reign as Minister of Sports was when Tobi Amusan became the first ever Nigerian World Athletics Champion and World Record Holder winning the women's 100 m hurdles gold medal at the 2022 World Championships in Oregon-United States, setting the current World Record of 12.12 seconds in the semi-final, followed up by a wind-assisted 12.06 seconds in the final. Tobi Amusan is one of beneficiaries of Adopt-An-Athlete initiative.

The unprecedented achievements of Nigeria at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, are the country's best outing in the competition with 35 medals consisting of 12 gold, 9 silver, and 14 bronze.

All facets of Nigerian sports experienced a 'Dare tsunami', from the upgrade of iconic sporting facilities around the country to the revival of dormant sporting association-to to being result-driven thus winning medals for Nigeria.

Athletes' and coaches' welfare was the number one priority of the Sports Ministry under Dare, as his Adopt-an-Athlete and Adopt-a-Pitch now become a model for some African countries, that have seen the immediate gains such model.

At competition proper, the Nigerian flag was hoisted at major champions, as well as the country's anthem was sung on the podium. Our athletes were not making up the numbers but winning gold with reckless abandon.

In his first assignment as Minister of Sports at the 2019 All African Games, Nigeria raked in 127 medals consisting of 46 gold, 33 silver and 48 bronze medals.

In the beautiful round leather game, Nigeria excelled in both male and female championships across cadres.

The Super Eagles who couldn't defend the AFCON title won in 2013 in South Africa, couldn't qualify in back-to-back editions in 2015 (Equatorial Guinea) and 2017 (Gabon).

Things took a twist in 2019 as Nigeria qualified for the edition in Egypt and went on to claim the bronze medal.

At the male cadet level, both

the Flying Eagles and Golden Eaglets won gold at the WAFU B U20 tourney (Niger Republic) and WAFU B U17 (Ghana)

Eaglets -Gold (2022), with both serving as qualification platforms for the AFCON U20 (Egypt) and AFCON U17 in Algeria.

Flying Eagles, under the guidance of Ladan Bosso claimed Bronze and a qualification to the FIFA U20 World Cup in Argentina.

Female football also got the needed attention as the Nigeria U17 girls, Flamingoes won Bronze at the 2022 FIFA U17 Women's World Cup while Super Falcons qualified for the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup.

On the home front, the domestic football leagues in Nigeria also had a fell of the 'Dare Tsunami'

Bayelsa Queens became the first women's team to win bronze in the CAF Women's Champions League in Morocco, following a 1-0 win over Tanzanian side Simba Queens in the third-place match.

In Basketball (Women's Afrobasket),

D'Tigress ruled Africa as back-to-back champions in 2019 and 2021. The D'Tigers, Nigeria male senior national team became first Africans to beat USA.

The Nigeria Volleyball U19 boys were African Champions for two consecutive years in 2021 and 2022, winning gold medals on two occasions.

Nigeria Hockey men's national team won Bronze Medal at the 2022 African Nations Cup in Ghana.

The National Scrabble team in 2019, did make a mark in World Scrabble, by winning Gold at the WESPA Championship, while Nigeria won the African Cup Track Cycling competition in 2019 with 12 gold, 18 silver, and 12 Bronze medals with Egypt and Morocco coming 2nd and 3rd respectively.

At the just-concluded Confederation of African Athletics, Team Nigeria finished second behind winners South Africa at the 2023 African Under 18 and 20 Athletics Championships, winning 17 Gold, 10 Silver and 9 Bronze medals, in Ndola.

Plateau United looks set to take a huge step toward winning a major trophy this season, but they have a Rangers hurdle to cross on Thursday in one of the semi-finals of the Federation Cup, reports BSNSports.com.ng.

The blockbuster fixture between the Nigeria Premier Football League top guns takes place at the Otonba Dipo Dino Stadium, Ijebu-Ode.

Fidelis Ilechukwu has tagged the match as tough and expects an explosive encounter with both teams hoping to unleash their arsenals on themselves, with a target to play either Bendel Insurance or Warri Wolves in the grand finale.

The 'Working One', and his Plateau United squad stormed Ijebu-Ode on Monday evening, 24 hours after they edged Kwara United in a quarter-final fixture played at the FIFA Go Project Pitch in Abuja on Sunday.

"We have had a tough season, as we missed out by whiskers for a place in the NPFL Super 6, the Federation Cup is a good chance for the team to redeem itself and make the fans smile," Ilechukwu said.

"I expect a tough duel from Rangers, as they have won it six times while Plateau United have scooped the FA Cup title once, so pundits would perhaps rate us the underdogs.

Plateau Utd, Rangers FA cup game like final -Ilechukwu

"Having come this far shows the quality in both teams but not playing each other in the NPFL this season, owing to the abridged format, might be a key factor in the game. "I'm expecting my matchday squad to give their hundred percent, as at this stage of the Federation Cup, only the best gets to the final."



Plateau Utd, Rangers FA Cup Game Like Final -Ilechukwu Ibraheem Lateef

Swiatek begins title defence; Medvedev, Rybakina also in action

Defending champion Iga Swiatek begins her French Open campaign on day three as she chases a third Roland Garros title in four years.

The Polish 21-year-old is one of the favourites to lift the trophy but suffered an injury scare in the build-up to the clay-court Grand Slam.

Top-10 seeds Ons Jabeur of Tunisia, Kazakh Elena Rybakina and American Coco Gauff also feature on Tuesday.

Daniil Medvedev opens against qualifier Thiago Seyboth Wild in the men's draw.

The Russian second seed is among four players who could finish the fortnight as men's number one, with Novak Djokovic and Stefanos Tsitsipas also capable of replacing Carlos Alcaraz.

Elsewhere, Norway's 2022 finalist Casper Ruud and 20-year-old Danish sixth seed Holger Rune begin their respective campaigns.

Tuesday's night session will once again feature a men's singles match, with France's Gael Monfils taking on Argentine Sebastian Baez on Court Philippe Chatrier (not before 19:15 BST).

Britons Neal Skupski, Jamie Murray and Lloyd Glasspool are all involved on the first day of the men's doubles tournament.

First up for Swiatek, winner of titles in Doha and Stuttgart this season, is a meeting with Spain's Cristina Bucsa in the third match

on Court Philippe Chatrier.

Swiatek, who must reach the last eight at Roland Garros to have a chance of extending her stay as world number one, is beginning a tournament with her ranking on the line for the first time since she took the top spot in April 2022.

She is still recovering from the right thigh injury which forced her to retire from the Italian Open quarter-finals earlier this month, although she is optimistic it will not impact her title defence.

"Luckily nothing serious happened," Swiatek said. "I'm still recovering from the injury but I'll be good for my first round. That's the most important thing."

"Having this time to reset, think about other stuff and just calm down for a couple of days was really helpful, and also to analyse what happened during the whole clay season."

Jabeur begins proceedings on the main show court at 10:45 BST against Italy's Lucia Bronzetti.

The Tunisian, who reached the Wimbledon and US Open finals in 2022, also picked up an injury in the build-up to the tournament but insisted she is "definitely" back to full fitness.

Wimbledon champion Rybakina, who claimed the biggest clay-court title of her career in Rome earlier this

month, faces Czech 16-year-old Brenda Fruhvirtova on Court Suzanne Lenglen after Gauff's match against Spain's Rebeka Masarova.

Two-time major winner Victoria Azarenka, seeded 18th, goes up against Canada's Bianca Andreescu, while 2021 champion Barbora Krejickova meets Ukraine's Lesia Tsurenko.

Medvedev has never previously advanced beyond the quarter-finals at Roland Garros, but he will feel confident of changing that this year.

The Russian has won a Tour-leading 39 matches in 2023, along with five titles - including the first of his career on clay in Rome - and begins his tournament against Brazilian qualifier Seyboth Wild.

Ruud, beaten by Rafael Nadal in last year's final before finishing runner-up to Alcaraz at the US Open, is first up on Court Suzanne Lenglen at 10:00 BST against Sweden's Elias Ymer.

Denmark's Rune, who prepared for Roland Garros by beating Ruud and Djokovic on his way to the Italian Open final, starts against American Christopher Eubanks after German former world number two Alexander Zverev meets Lloyd Harris.

Britain's top-ranked men's doubles player Skupski and team-mate Wesley Koolhof will begin their bid for a first major triumph as a pairing against Kazakh Andrey Golubev and Ecuador's Gonzalo Escobar.

Fifth seeds Glasspool and Finland's Harri Heliövaara take on Austrian duo Alexander Erler and Lucas Miedler.

Murray and New Zealand partner Michael Venus, the 13th seeds, face Diego Hidalgo of Ecuador, and Spain's David Vega Hernandez.

Elsewhere, Dutchman Jean-Julien Rojer and Argentine Marcelo Arevalo, the defending champions, meet Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas - who is seeded fifth in the men's singles - and his younger brother Petros Tsitsipas.



Swiatek

Sports

NBA Play-offs: Miami beat Celtics

The Miami Heat halted the Boston Celtics' remarkable fightback in the Eastern Conference Finals, clinching the deciding match 103-84 to reach the NBA finals. Jimmy Butler starred, scoring 28 points, seven rebounds and six assists, as the Heat, who led the seven-game series 3-0 before being pegged back to 3-3, reached this year's showpiece.

THE first eighth seeds to reach the finals since the New York Knicks in 1999, the Heat will play the Denver Nuggets in the best-of-seven finals.

Game one will be played in Denver on Thursday (01:30 BST Friday).

Derrick White's dramatic buzzer-beater in game six had tied the series, giving the Boston Celtics hope of becoming the first side in NBA history to overturn a 3-0 deficit in a play-off final.

But alongside Butler's efforts, Caleb Martin scored 26 points and Bam Adebayo recorded 12 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists as the Heat silenced a passionate Boston crowd.

Butler, 33, was named MVP of the series after averaging 24.7 points, 7.6 rebounds and 6.1 assists.

"We stayed together as a group," he said.

"We talked about going to get a tough one on the road and we did just that. [My team-mates] are the reason we're here. I know how good a team we are and we made it happen."

Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said he never doubted his squad's resilience.

"Sometimes you have to suffer for the things you really want," he said.

"This group has shown fortitude when there are inevitable let-downs and failures, but had that perseverance to pick yourself up, that collective spirit to keep on forging ahead."

The Heat are seeking a fourth NBA title and first since 2013, while the Nuggets, who beat the Los Angeles Lakers in the Western Conference play-offs, are in search of a maiden championship.

Derrick White scored a dramatic buzzer-beater as the Boston Celtics continued their remarkable fightback from 3-0 down to level the Eastern Conference semi-finals against the Miami Heat.

With the Celtics trailing 103-102, Marcus Smart's last-gasp three-point attempt bounced off the rim but White tipped it in moments before the buzzer.

No NBA team has come from 3-0 down to win a best-of-seven play-off series.

The decisive final game takes place on Monday (01:30 BST Tuesday) in Boston.

The winners will face the Denver Nuggets in the finals, which start on Thursday (01:30 BST Friday).

Although the Celtics led for most of

the contest at the Kaseya Center in Florida, the Heat looked to have secured the win - and the series - after Jimmy Butler was fouled by Al Horford when attempting a three-pointer with three seconds remaining.

Butler kept his cool to sink all three free throws and give Miami a one-point lead before White's late intervention.

"Ball came to me, I made the shot. That's what I saw," said White.

"It felt good. Everybody was asking me, 'did you get it off?' And I was like, 'yeah, I think so,' but it was so close, you never know."

"I'm happy we won. Whatever it takes. We got our backs against the wall."

Jayson Tatum scored 31 points and made 11 rebounds and five assists for the Celtics with, while Jaylen Brown ended with 26 points and 10 rebounds.

"It gives you a supreme boost in confidence," said Brown. "It doesn't get too much worse than being down 0-3. We feel like we've been to hell and back."

"We feel like we can face any adversity that gets thrown at us in the

duration of the game or the duration of the season or in the post-season.

"It all means nothing if we don't come out and give our best effort on our home floor on Monday."

Butler scored 24 points, including 15 in the final quarter, and Caleb Martin 21 for Miami.

Jimmy Butler III (born September 14, 1989) is an American professional basketball player for the Miami Heat of the National Basketball Association (NBA). Nicknamed "Jimmy Buckets", "Himmy Butler", and "Playoff Jimmy", he is a six-time NBA All-Star, a five-time All-NBA Team honoree, a five-time NBA All-Defensive Second Team honoree, and an Olympic gold medalist (2016 Summer Olympics). He played one year of college basketball for Tyler Junior College before transferring to Marquette University.

Butler was drafted with the 30th overall pick in the 2011 NBA draft by the Chicago Bulls. In 2015, he was named the NBA Most Improved Player. After six seasons in Chicago, he was traded to the Minnesota Timberwolves in June 2017. Butler was again traded in November 2018, this time to the Philadelphia 76ers. In July 2019, he signed with the Heat. During his first season with the team, Butler reached the NBA Finals. In 2021, he led the league in steals. In 2023, he led the eight-seeded Heat to their second NBA Finals in four years.

Butler was born in Houston on September 14, 1989. His father abandoned the family when Butler was an infant. By the time he was 13 years old and living in the Houston suburb of Tomball, his mother kicked him out of the house. As Butler remembered it in a 2011 interview, she told him, "I don't like the look of you. You gotta go." He then bounced between the homes of various friends, staying for a few weeks at a time before moving to another house. Despite all of this, Butler maintains a close relationship with his parents, saying, "I don't hold grudges. I still talk to my family. My mom. My father. We love each other. That's never going to change."

In a summer basketball league before his senior year at Tomball High School, he was noticed by Jordan Leslie, a freshman football and basketball player at the school, who challenged him to a three-point shooting contest. The two immediately became friends, and Butler began staying at Leslie's house. Although his friend's mother and stepfather, who had six other children between them, were reluctant at first, they took him in within a few months. Butler would later say, "They accepted me into their family. And it wasn't because of basketball. She [Michelle Lambert, Leslie's mother] was just very loving. She just did stuff like that. I couldn't believe it."

As a junior at Tomball High, Butler

averaged 10 points per game. As a senior and team captain in 2006-07, Butler averaged 19.9 points and 8.7 rebounds per game and was subsequently voted his team's most valuable player.

Butler was not heavily recruited coming out of high school and chose to attend Tyler Junior College in Tyler, Texas.

After his freshman season at Tyler, where he had averaged 18.1 points, 7.7 rebounds, and 3.1 assists per game, Butler drew interest from Division I programs. Considered a two-star recruit by 247Sports.com, he was listed as the No. 127 junior college prospect in 2008.

Butler accepted an athletic scholarship to attend Marquette, where, as a sophomore in the 2008-09 season, he averaged 5.6 points and 3.9 rebounds per game and recorded a free-throw percentage of 76.8%. He moved into the starting lineup as a junior during the 2009-10 campaign to average 14.7 points and 6.4 rebounds per game, and he earned All-Big East Honorable Mention honors. His season was highlighted by two game-winning shots versus UConn and St. John's, to help Marquette finish 11-7 in the Big East and earn its fifth consecutive NCAA tournament appearance. As a senior in 2010-11, he averaged 15.7 points per game and earned an All-Big East Honorable Mention for the second straight year.

Butler was selected with the 30th overall pick in the 2011 NBA draft by the Chicago Bulls. He saw limited opportunities in his rookie year, playing 42 games during the lockout-shortened 2011-12 season. The following season, he played all 82 games for the Bulls. After playing limited minutes to begin the 2012-13 season, he saw significant minutes over the second half of the season, including starting all 12 playoff games. In an April 9, 2013, regular season game, Butler scored a then career-high 28 points in a 101-98 loss against the Toronto Raptors. Two days later, he recorded his first NBA double-double game with 22 points and a then career-high 14 rebounds against the New York Knicks.

The 2013-14 season saw Butler miss 15 games due to injury, limiting him to 67 games. He averaged a career-high 38.7 minutes per game, which ranked first in the NBA. He scored a season-high 26 points against the Memphis Grizzlies on December 30. He set a franchise record when he played 60:20 in a triple-overtime game against the Orlando Magic on January 15 and finished with 21 points, seven rebounds and six assists. At the season's end, he was named to the NBA All-Defensive Second Team.

Source: BBC Sports



Butler was named series MVP for his match-winning performances





Quest



writer

FRAGMENT

Today, let us recommit our very selves to placing Nigeria in our hearts as the indispensable home for each and every one of us regardless of creed, ethnicity, or place of birth. My supporters, I thank you. To those who voted otherwise, I extend my hand across the political divide. I ask you to grasp it in national affinity and brotherhood. For me, political coloration has faded away. All I see are Nigerians.

PRESIDENT BOLA AHMED TINUBU

BOLA TINUBU

Full text of President Bola Tinubu's inauguration speech

My Fellow Citizens,
I stand before you honoured to assume the sacred mandate you have given me. My love for this nation is abiding. My confidence in its people, unwavering. And my faith in God Almighty, absolute. I know that His hand shall provide the needed moral strength and clarity of purpose in those instances when we seem to have reached the limits of our human capacity.

This day is bold and majestic yet bright and full of spirit, as is our precious nation.

As a nation, we have long ago decided to march beyond the dimness of night into the open day of renewed national hope.

The question we now ask ourselves is whether to remain faithful to the work inherent in building a better society or retreat into the shadows of our unmet potential.

For me, there is but one answer. We are too great a nation and too grounded as a people to rob ourselves of our finest destiny.

This nation's journey has been shaped by the prayers of millions, and the collective sacrifices of us all.

We have endured hardships that would have made other societies crumble.

Yet, we have shouldered the heavy burden to arrive at this sublime moment where the prospect of a better future merges with our improved capacity to create that future.

To the surprise of many but not to ourselves, we have more firmly established this land as a democracy in both word and deed.

The peaceful transition from one government to another is now our political tradition. This handover symbolizes our trust in God, our enduring faith in representative governance and our belief in our ability to reshape this nation into the society it was always meant to be.

Here, permit me to say a few words to my predecessor, President Muhammad Buhari. Mr President, you have been an honest, patriotic leader who has done his best for the nation you love. On a more personal note, you are a worthy partner and friend. May history be kind to you.

For many years, Nigeria's critics have trafficked the rumour that our nation will break apart, even perish. Yet here we are. We have stumbled at times, but our resilience and diversity have kept us going.

Our burdens may make us bent at times, but they shall never break us. Instead, we stand forth as Africa's most populous nation and as the best hope and strongest champion of the Black Race.

As citizens, we declare as one unified people devoted to one unified national cause, that as long as this world exists, NIGERIA SHALL EXIST.

Today, Fate and Destiny join together to place the torch of human progress in our very hands. We dare not let it slip. We lift high this torch so that it might shine on every household and in every heart that calls itself Nigerian. We hold this beam aloft because it lights our path with compassion, brotherhood, and peace. May this great light never



extinguish.

Our administration shall govern on your behalf but never rule over you. We shall consult and dialogue but never dictate. We shall reach out to all but never put down a single person for holding views contrary to our own.

We are here to further mend and heal this nation, not tear and injure it. In this vein, may I offer a few comments regarding the election that brought us to this juncture. It was a hard fought contest. And it was also fairly won. Since the advent of the Fourth Republic, Nigeria has not held an election of better quality.

The outcome reflected the will of the people. However, my victory does not render me any more Nigerian than my opponents. Nor does it render them any less patriotic.

They shall forever be my fellow compatriots. And I will treat them as such. They represent important constituencies and concerns that wisdom dare not ignore.

Some have taken their concerns to court. Seeking legal redress is their right and I fully defend their exercise of this right. This is the essence of the rule of law.

Over six decades ago, our founding fathers gave bravely of themselves to place Nigeria on the map as an independent nation.

We must never allow the labor of those who came before us to wither in vain but to blossom and bring forth a better reality.

Let us take the next great step in the journey they began and believed in. Today, let us recommit our very selves to placing Nigeria in our hearts as the indispensable home for each and every one of us regardless of creed, ethnicity, or place of birth.

My supporters, I thank you. To those who voted otherwise, I extend my hand across the political divide. I ask you to grasp it in national affinity and brotherhood. For me, political coloration has faded away. All I see are Nigerians. May we uphold these fitting and excellent notions as the new Nigerian ideal.

My fellow compatriots, the Nigerian ideal which I speak of is more than just an improvement in economic and other statistics. These things are important; but they can never convey the fullness of our story.

Our mission is to improve our way of life in a manner that nurtures our humanity, encourages compassion toward one another, and duly rewards our collective effort to resolve the

social ills that seek to divide us.

Our constitution and laws give us a nation on paper. We must work harder at bringing these noble documents to life by strengthening the bonds of economic collaboration, social cohesion, and cultural understanding. Let us develop a shared sense of fairness and equity.

The South must not only seek good for itself but must understand that its interests are served when good comes to the North. The North must see the South likewise.

Whether from the winding creeks of the Niger Delta, the vastness of the northern savannah, the boardrooms of Lagos, the bustling capital of Abuja, or the busy markets of Onitsha, you are all my people. As your president, I shall serve with prejudice toward none but compassion and amity towards all.

In the coming days and weeks, my team will publicly detail key aspects of our programme. Today, permit me to outline in broad terms a few initiatives that define our concept of progressive good governance in furtherance of the Nigerian ideal:

The principles that will guide our administration are simple:

Nigeria will be impartially governed according to the constitution and the rule of law.

We shall defend the nation from terror and all forms of criminality that threaten the peace and stability of our country and our subregion.

We shall remodel our economy to bring about growth and development through job creation, food security and an end of extreme poverty.

In our administration, women and youth will feature prominently.

Our government will continue to take proactive steps such as championing a credit culture to discourage corruption while strengthening the effectiveness and efficiency of the various anti-corruption agencies.

SECURITY

Security shall be the top priority of our administration because neither prosperity nor justice can prevail amidst insecurity and violence.

To effectively tackle this menace, we shall reform both our security doctrine and its architecture.

We shall invest more in our security personnel, and this means more than an increase in number. We shall provide, better training, equipment, pay and firepower.

THE ECONOMY

On the economy, we will target a higher GDP growth and to significantly reduce unemployment. We intend to accomplish this by taking the following steps:

First, budgetary reform stimulating the economy without engendering inflation will be instituted.

Second, industrial policy will utilize the full range of fiscal measures to promote domestic manufacturing and lessen import dependency.

Third, electricity will become more accessible and affordable to businesses and homes alike. Power generation should nearly double and transmission and distribution networks improved. We will encourage states to develop local sources as well.

I have a message for our investors, local and foreign: our government shall review all their complaints about multiple taxation and various anti-investment inhibitions.

We shall ensure that investors and foreign businesses repatriate their hard-earned dividends and profits home.

JOBS

My administration must create meaningful opportunities for our youth. We shall honour our campaign commitment of one million new jobs in the digital economy.

Our government also shall work with the National Assembly to fashion an omnibus Jobs and Prosperity bill. This bill will give our administration the policy space to embark on labour-intensive infrastructural improvements, encourage light industry and provide improved social services for the poor, elderly and vulnerable.

AGRICULTURE

Rural incomes shall be secured by commodity exchange boards guaranteeing minimal prices for certain crops and animal products. A nationwide programme for storage and other facilities to reduce spoilage and waste will be undertaken.

Agricultural hubs will be created throughout the nation to increase production and engage in value-added processing. The livestock sector will be introduced to best modern practices and steps taken to minimize the perennial conflict over land and water resources in this sector.

Through these actions, food shall be made more abundant yet less costly. Farmers shall earn more while the average Nigerian pays less.

INFRASTRUCTURE

We shall continue the efforts of the Buhari administration on infrastructure. Progress toward national networks of roads, rail and ports shall get priority attention.

FUEL SUBSIDY

We commend the decision of the outgoing administration in phasing out the petrol subsidy regime which has increasingly favoured the rich more than the poor. Subsidy can no longer justify its ever-increasing costs in the wake of drying resources. We shall instead re-channel the funds into better investment in public infrastructure, education, health care and jobs that will materially improve the lives of millions.

MONETARY POLICY

Monetary policy needs thorough housecleaning. The Central Bank must work towards a unified exchange rate. This will direct funds away from arbitrage into meaningful investment in the plant, equipment and jobs that power the real economy.

Interest rates need to be reduced to increase investment and consumer purchasing in ways that sustain the economy at a higher level.

Whatever merits it had in concept, the currency swap was too harshly applied by the CBN given the number of unbanked Nigerians. The policy shall be reviewed. In the meantime, my administration will treat both currencies as legal tender.

FOREIGN POLICY

Given the world in which we reside, please permit a few comments regarding foreign policy.

The crisis in Sudan and the turn from democracy by several nations in our immediate neighbourhood are of pressing concern. As such, my primary foreign policy objective must be the peace and stability of the West African subregion and the African continent. We shall work with ECOWAS, the AU and willing partners in the international community to end extant conflicts and to resolve new ones.

As we contain threats to peace, we shall also retool our foreign policy to more actively lead the regional and continental quest for collective prosperity.

This is the proudest day of my life. But this day does not belong to me. It belongs to you, the people of Nigeria.

On this day, Nigeria affirms its rightful place among the world's great democracies. There, Nigeria shall reside forever.

The course of our past and the promise of the future have brought us to this exceptional moment.

In this spirit, I ask you to join me in making Nigeria a more perfect nation and democracy such that the Nigerian ideal becomes and forever remains the Nigerian reality.

With full confidence in our ability, I declare that these things are within our proximate reach because my name is Bola Ahmed Tinubu, and I am the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

May God bless you and May He bless our beloved land.