

Hon. Sule emerges Plateau Assembly Speaker

P 2



Abbas elected Speaker House of Representatives Page 2

Fresh crisis breaks out in Benue Page 2

Customs seizes over 100 smuggled SUVs, other vehicles Page 2

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NNPCL issues new price to marketers

The Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited has issued a fresh circular to oil marketers on how much they will pay to get petroleum products.

This came about two weeks after the Federal Government announced the removal of fuel subsidy. NNPC Retail, in a

circular released recently directed marketers to consider merging their old orders which carry the old fuel price in order to buy a truck of 45 million litres of petrol.

Reports gathered revealed that marketers had before the deregulation ordered one truck of petrol for about N7.7m.

However, the new

circular by the company advised marketers who had probably ordered three trucks at N7.5 m (N171/litre old price), to merge their orders or ask for a refund.

"Following the full deregulation of PMS, NNPC Retail has made the following options available to help customers manage the impact of the additional

Marketters now have the option of consolidating pre-paid self-owned tickets for fresh tickets in line with the revised price. Interested marketers can engage their respective NRL Depot Representative for guidance on how to initiate this option.

"Also, there is an option for cash refund. Marketters who are interested in

should send in official request addressed to the MD NNPC Retail. The request should include evidence of payment and order details (RRR number, Sales quotation number and Meter ticket number). Upon receipt of official request together with the above supporting documents, your refund request will be made

NNPCL Retail read in part. Reacting to the report, the Petroleum Marketers Association of Nigeria, Mike Osatuyi, confirmed the development, said it might be difficult for some marketers to raise such huge funds required to place an order for petroleum products.

"Where do you want us to get such money from?" Osatuyi asked.

"The price difference is huge and most can't afford it. So what we will start seeing is that instead of ordering for one truck, marketers can now go for maybe a quarter or half truck just like it's being done for diesel," he said.

Akpabio beats Yari to become Senate President

Former Minister of Niger Delta Affairs and lawmaker representing Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial District in the National Assembly, Godswill Akpabio, has been elected new President of the 10th Senate.

Akpabio, a former two-term governor of Akwa Ibom, emerged as President of the 10th Senate after he defeated former governor of Zamfara State, Senator Abdulaziz Yari (Zamfara-West APC), during a secret ballot election that was

conducted before the swearing-in of 109 Senators-elect in the upper legislative chamber on Tuesday, June 13, 2023.

Even though both are members of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), Yari went against the party's decision to back Akpabio for the position.

Yari was nominated for Senate President by Senator Ishaku Abbo (APC-Adamawa) while Senator Ali Ndume nominated Godswill Akpabio and his nomination was supported by Solomon Olamilekan (APC-Ogun).

After all Senators present voted, the Clerk of the Senate declared Akpabio winner of the election.

Akpabio polled 63 votes to beat Yari, who finished with 45 votes. There was, however, one Senator-elect who abstained.



Nigeria's President, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu in a handshake with Plateau State Executive Governor, Barr. Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang after a meeting with the president at the Presidential villa, Aso Rock, Abuja last week

Mutfwang constitutes environmental sanitation task force

By PETER TITLE

The Executive Governor of Plateau State, Barrister Caleb Mutfwang has approved the constitution of a Task Force on Environmental

Sanitation with immediate effect to be headed by the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Mr Albert Chaimang.

A statement signed and made available to

Government House correspondents by the Secretary to the Government of the State, Arc. Samuel N. Jatau revealed that the task force would ensure the

speedy evacuation of waste garbage littering the streets of Jos/Bukuru metropolis.

The terms of reference according to the statement also include: clearing and

cleaning of all streets and drainages within Jos/Bukuru metropolis, monitoring the activities of streets cleaners to ensure that the environment was

Continued on page 2



Akpabio

News

Mutfwang constitutes environmental sanitation task force

By PAULINE DALLONG

Continued from page 1
kept clean, liaise with the judiciary to ensure the activation of the mobile courts immediately to prosecute defaulters.

Other terms of reference are: to liaise with relevant agencies to ensure that waste are promptly and properly evacuated, create awareness on the dangers of living in unhealthy environment and proper disposal of waste as well as

the need to clear drains of refuse.

The task force should also create a sustainability plan, guide for government in the implementation of these activities at the end of the assignment. They are to include any activity that would ensure the cleanliness of Jos and environs.

The SGS who said the task force which has four weeks within which to

conclude its assignment, urged them to carry out the assignment diligently. He revealed that other members of the task force include: the General Manager, PEPSA, Secretary, JMDB- member, Mr Hussein Gunok- member, Alhaji Bala Malele - member, Capt. Bitrus Golden (Rtd)- member, Mr Polycarp Datau- member as well as representatives of NARTO and NURTW serving as members.

A new Speaker has emerged for the tenth Plateau State House of Assembly (PLHA), in the person of Rt. Hon.

Moses Sule who is the member representing Mikang constituency, while the Deputy Speaker is Hon. Gwottson Fom Dalyop, representing Jos South constituency.

Election of the two principal officers proceeded the official declaration and commencement of the tenth assembly by the state

Hon. Sule emerges Plateau Assembly Speaker



Sule

Governor, Caleb Mutfwang which was contained in a communication read by Clerk of the House Ponven Wuyep.

The speaker and deputy after separately taking their oath of office, were adorned with the official regalia before taking the first official assignment.

The new Speaker, Rt. Hon. Moses Sule then administered the oath of office and allegiance to his other twenty two colleagues. The speaker in his inaugural speech, thanked his colleagues for the

confidence reposed in him to lead the House just as he spoke strongly on the unity of the House.

Plateau State House of Assembly is composed of twenty four (24) representatives each representing the four state constituencies.

Out of the twenty four lawmakers serving in the tenth assembly, four are returning lawmakers while twenty are first timers, among them are two female lawmakers.

Fresh crisis breaks out in Benue, houses on fire

Several houses were reportedly burnt on Tuesday as fighting intensified between two communities in Ikpayongo of Gwer East Local Government Area of Benue State.

Daily Trust reports that renewed rivalry between the warring parties - Mbakume (Mbaivur) and

Mbasombo people erupted at the weekend while one of the warring parties tried to bury their dead.

Witnesses said that the trouble escalated on Tuesday morning, as the market in the community was set ablaze amid sporadic gunshots.

Residents took refuge in a church in the community.

Immediate past governor of Benue, Samuel Ortom, tried different options to restore peace, including suspending traditional rulers, but there was no meaningful result.

The police also initiated dialogues to end the crisis but it continued unabated.

Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), SP Catherine Anene, confirmed the latest incident, saying houses were burnt.

Anene added that the situation was under control as operatives of the command had been drafted to quell the crisis.

Oshiomhole lobbies for ministerial position, to dump Senate



Oshiomhole

Customs seizes over 100 smuggled SUVs, other vehicles

THE Nigeria Customs Service has disclosed that it intercepted over 100 exotic vehicles, including various models of Sport Utility Vehicles, adding that 38 of them had been forfeited to the Federal Government.

It also called on stakeholders to synergise with officers and men of the Nigeria Customs Service to effectively suppress the menace of smuggling vehicles into Nigeria

The Deputy Comptroller of Customs, who doubles as the Coordinator, Rapid Response Squad Headquarters, Jack Okpabi, disclosed this in a statement issued in Abuja while providing updates on his team's quarterly achievements.

Commenting on the smuggled vehicles that were intercepted, he said the recent operation by the NCS, which led to the interception of over 100 Toyota Hilux, Toyota Landcruiser and other models of exotic vehicles, had saved the country from losing huge revenue that would have gone down the drain.

Okpabi was quoted as saying, "You can see that we have over 100 vehicles and 38 have been forfeited to the Federal

Government. The operation will lead to the recovery of over N400m from demand notices."

The customs officer expressed dismay over the determination of some persons to smuggle vehicles into Nigeria and

wondered why some individuals were patronising the smugglers.

"It is on this note that I want to emphasise that the service will not hesitate to bring to book any offender caught smuggling vehicles into Nigeria.

Abbas elected Speaker House of Representatives

Mr Abbas defeated two other candidates, Idris Wase and Sani Jaji, to emerge as the winner.

He polled 353 votes to emerge the winner of the speakership election.

The other contestants, former Deputy Speaker Idris Wase and Sani Jaji, polled three votes each.

Mr Abbas is the anointed candidate of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC). He represents Zaria Federal Constituency of Kaduna State, North-west Nigeria.

The new Speaker, a former lecturer, was first elected to the House in 2011. He succeeds Femi Gbajabiamila.

Throughout the voting, members were called upon one after the other, and votes were cast, with various members calling the name of who they were voting for among the aforementioned three members on the ballot.

As voting proceeded, Tajudeen Abbas was the

most pronounced name among the 359 members participating in the session. Upon introduction, members who voted eulogised Mr Abbas with his traditional title "Iyan Zazzau", and accolades.

During the process, two members observed that their names were skipped and could not participate in the voting process.

In his inaugural speech to members, Mr Abbas said under his watch, the 10th House should sustain and even surpass the gains of the Ninth House.

The new speaker said he would work with members to introduce reforms and innovations for the benefit of Nigerians.

In a few weeks, we shall be reeling out the legislative agenda that will shape the 10th House of Representatives," he noted.

Mr Abbas stated that they would work closely and interdependently with the executive and judiciary

107,110 votes to defeat Francis Alimikhena of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the incumbent, who scored 55,344 votes.

Top ranking sources within the ruling APC however informed the source that Oshiomhole is currently lobbying President Tinubu to be appointed as Minister representing Edo State in his cabinet when it is constituted.

"Now that APC has won the Presidential election, Oshiomhole, a close ally of President Tinubu is keen to serve as a minister and he has intensified his lobby to represent Edo in the Tinubu's cabinet",

It was also gathered that Oshiomhole feel that as the APC leader in Edo State, it will be more strategic for him to occupy a Ministerial position as he believes this will give him better chance not only to mobilise for his preferred candidate in the 2024 Edo governorship election but to assist APC to win the election.

to give Nigerians the good governance they deserve.

We stand at a crucial juncture in our nation's history, where challenges abound, but so do opportunities. We will champion legislation that will uplift the lives of our fellow citizens, promote social justice, and drive sustainable development.

"We will focus on strengthening our security apparatus, collaborating with relevant stakeholders to combat insurgency, terrorism, and all forms of criminalities. We aim to help create a safe and secure environment that fosters economic growth and social stability," he said.

Through legislation, the new speaker said the 10th House would promote entrepreneurship and support small and medium-scale enterprises and that they would diversify Nigeria's economy and provide



Abbas



Business & Economy

Tinubu's 1 million digital jobs

Nigeria has successfully transitioned to a new government on May 29th, 2023, and the new president, Bola Ahmed Tinubu in his manifesto and also in his inaugural speech, has made a pledge to create one million digital jobs in the first two (2) years of his administration. While this is a lofty and commendable goal, we are yet to get the details on how the government hopes to achieve this. LEKE SEWEJE writes.

HOWEVER, I would hope President Tinubu and his team don't go in the direction of giving handouts like the previous administration did with some of its programs. Such approaches create meagre and temporary positive results at best, while still being riddled with unaccountability.

The best approach to me will be to focus on more sustainable strategies through institutionalising widespread e-governance, expanding broadband access and creating effective partnerships with pre-existing key players in the digital skills acquisition space.

E-governance can extend into as many facets of government activities as possible including finance, payments (we are doing relatively well here), supply chains, healthcare, procurement and so on.

Aside from the more obvious information technology systems, more modern technology such as blockchain alone can revolutionise all these sectors of the government.

The true intersection of that with the government's goal is the spin-off of jobs that will be created because with more digital systems, more digital professionals are required for continuous developments, upgrades and maintenance.

For many developing countries, broadband access is a major game changer. With less than 30% of Nigerians having access to stable internet connectivity (Alliance for Affordable Internet —



A4AI), expanding our information and learning broadband access is a non-negotiable boost to development, so they can connectivity across the country to enable the growth of digital services and industries that will go on to create digital employment in various sectors of the economy and geographic areas of the country. Broadband access also provides new entrants into the digital space the

access to be prioritized. However, digital skill acquisition is not a core competence for the government or any of its agencies. The government will do better to partner with existing start-ups and training organizations that possess the core expertise as well as trendy tools and methodologies for teaching these digital skills. Such a partnership can be fashioned in various

"The best approach to me will be to focus on more sustainable strategies through institutionalising widespread e-governance, expanding broadband access and creating effective partnerships with pre-existing key players in the digital skills acquisition space. E-governance can extend into as many facets of government activities as possible including finance, payments (we are doing relatively well here), supply chains, healthcare, procurement and so on".

ways. The government can decide to subsidize training for specific strategic skills or for certain demography (e.g. fresh secondary school leavers) in society. It can also decide to have the training partners offer training for free and get refunded for their services rendered.

I firmly believe sustenance should be a keyword in pursuing this remarkable goal. Using these approaches will naturally create and sustain enough digital jobs to hit the mark set by the administration. Going this way is much better than using methods that only create short-term gains without established systems for long-term benefits.

Seweje is the chief solutions architect at Techie Planet LTD.



Food prices rise by 200% in eight years- NBS

THE National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) says prices of three products have risen by over 200 percent in the last eight years, contributing significantly to the surge and double-digit growth in headline inflation over the period.

NBS stated that the average prices of yam, rice, and garri have risen the most during this period, despite the disbursement of N1.09 trillion in eight years by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to boost staple foods production in the country.

Prices of the three products have risen by over 200 percent in the last eight years, contributing significantly to the surge and double-digit growth in headline inflation over the period.

Godwin Emefiele, former CBN governor had during the last monetary policy meeting said the apex bank has allocated N1.09 trillion to farmers under the Anchor Borrowers Programme (ABP), with rice growers accounting for the highest percentage of recipients of the money.

According to NBS selected food prices report across Nigeria's 36 states, the average price for one kilogram (kg) of yam tuber rose by 298.4 percent to N444.6 in April 2023 from N111.6 in January 2016, one kg of rice imported rose by 274.3 percent to N781.5 from N208.8 and one kg of white garri sold loose grew by 207.5 percent to N362.5.

Data from the NBS also show that the double-digit inflation rate started in February 2016 at 11.38 percent from the single digit of nine percent in January of that year.

And since then, it remained in double-digit territory at 22.22 percent in April 2023, one of the highest in the world. Before inflation got to double-digit territory, it was previously in that territory in December 2012 (12 percent).

Food inflation which constitutes more than 50 percent of the headline inflation rate has more than doubled from 9.78 percent in May 2015 to 24.61 percent in April 2023.

She recommended government implementation of fiscal measures, such as reducing/removing taxes on staple food items to protect the most vulnerable as well as spur demand-side growth.

Food inflation which constitutes more than 50 percent and has been the main driver of headline inflation rate has more than doubled from 9.78 percent in May 2015 to 24.61 percent in April 2023. Experts have blamed the surge in food prices on some of the unorthodox policies such as the border closure policy and FX restriction on some

importers of certain commodities among others.

Incomes have declined to \$2,065.7 in 2021 from \$2,679.6 in 2015, data from the World Bank show, and a continuous spike in prices is reducing the ability of Nigerians to afford some of the necessities of life such as food, water, shelter, and clothing.

Last year, the NBS put the number of Nigerians living in multidimensional poverty at 133 million, compared to 82.9 million considered poor in 2019 by national standards.

When people cannot meet the basic necessities of life, they will resort to social vices such as kidnapping, which is now a new business in Nigeria, Damilare Asimiyu, a senior analyst at Afrinvest Securities Limited, said.

Nigeria records N5trn oil sales in q1, 2023

THE National Bureau of Statistics report indicates that Nigeria recorded N5.14 trillion from crude oil sales in the first three months of 2023, from N4.9 trillion realised over the last quarter.

This is despite a six percent decline in oil prices from \$88.5 per barrel in the fourth quarter of 2022.

NBS data stated that Nigeria earned N5.1 trillion, N4.9 trillion, and N4.6 trillion in Q1 2023, Q4 2022, and Q3 2022, respectively.

Crude oil exports accounted for 79.37 percent of Nigeria's foreign trade.

Joshua Olorunmaiye, energy lawyer at Bloomfield LP said the Russia-Ukraine war has contributed to a growing demand for oil and gas, with EU countries and countries like the United States and India among others are searching for

alternatives to Russian supply."

Recent efforts to curb oil theft may have helped to boost production.

"Certain technologies have been deployed which help to monitor and report. There has also been more collaboration between security forces, community groups and the

FINANCIAL experts have called for more transparency and independence in the leadership structure at the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to enable it steer the nation's monetary policies towards an improved economy and a stronger naira.

Speaking during a virtual roundtable organised by the Association of Capital Market Academics of Nigeria (ACMAN) yesterday, the experts stated that there were flaws in the foundational structure of the CBN that saw its governors recommended by the President of Nigeria while members of the committee of its governors' board were nominated by the CBN governor.

They also stressed on the need for the country to improve production to subsidise the value of the naira rather than emphasise on exportation that would be used to attract dollars into the economy but later used to make purchases of more imported goods.

Speaking at the event, the founder of Cowry Assets Ltd, Johnson Chukwu, stated that the environment in which the CBN governors functioned beyond their mandates had become a recurring event that needed to be corrected by future governors.

He noted that the major responsibility of the CBN was to function within price fixing of the naira and the monetary decisions of the government, calling for a structure that "will prevent a future CBN governor to repeat the mistake of the immediate three CBN governors of intervening in the financial aspect of the economy and capital projects with the accountability of the CBN governor encouraged."

CBN requires transparency, independence to tackle Naira depreciation

Experts

Chukwu called for the introduction of a performance index for CBN governors that should be measured at time intervals to hold them accountable while in office.

He further said, "We must have an independent board for CBN, today, corporate governance is pushing that, big institutions are having more non-executive directors than executive directors. This is so that the governance system of CBN will have independent directors for people to speak their minds."

A former Chief Economic Adviser to former President Obasanjo, Prof Magnus Kpakol, said the problem of the country was that there was not enough production to meet the needs of the people.

Kpakol, while stating that there was nothing wrong with the unorthodox way the CBN intervened in the economy, said the reason for its inefficiency was the political

capture of the institution which prevented accountability.

He said, "Going forward, if we can have a CBN governor appointed that understands development, international and political economy, as well as understands how to work well with the fiscal side of the equation, I think they will do much better."

On her part, the CEO of Emerging Africa Group, Toyin Sanni, stated that the inability of the CBN to proactively manage the naira led to foreign investors shying away from the Nigerian bank.

She stated that choices made by the CBN to rescue states with funds affected the growth of the sub-national bond market.

While stating that a more harmonised management of the financial sector was needed, she added that gains made in the capital market could be eroded by the choices of the CBN.



March 2023.

Nigeria's output further fell below 1m bpd in April according to OPEC data.

Meanwhile, Nigeria alongside other OPEC and Non-OPEC members at the latest Joint Ministerial Management Committee (JMMC) meeting agreed to a cut in production volumes in order to ensure global oil market stability.

Under the new plan, Nigeria, Congo and Angola agreed that the highest production volumes of the last six months (November 2022 - April 2023) be used as the basis for the determination of their 2024 production quota, subject to a review in November at the 2nd annual meeting of the JMMC.

"However, the current OPEC quota would be maintained till the end of 2023; This implies that Nigeria can ramp up its production up to its current

quota of 1.743m bpd and subsequently be capped at 10 percent less as its quota for 2024 subject to verification by independent secondary sources," said Gabriel Aduda, permanent secretary Ministry of Petroleum Resources.

"This will be complemented by a condensate of about 400KBD ultimately upping Nigeria's crude oil and condensate production to about two million barrels per day in 2024."

Recall that Nigeria's revenue from crude oil export increased by N337 billion in March, hitting N1.8 trillion.

Also, the country had attained its crude oil production target of 1.6 million barrels per day in March, from 1.3 million barrels per day recorded in February. Output for January was 1.25mbp while that of February was 1.3mbp.



Unemployment and inflation: Fallout of Nigeria's subsidy removal

Consider the wonderful purpose of subsidies, a kind gesture that allows individuals and businesses access to petrol, an essential treasure, despite limited resources. However, in this tale, the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria have been dealt a huge misfortune by the subsidy removal, casting a shadow of uncertainty on their growth trajectory. OMOJO WADA writes.

NIGERIA, which is a country endowed with an abundance of 2.4 million barrels of crude oil every day, sadly sees its wealth sent abroad. This was made possible by a history of corruption and neglect which rendered our local refineries inactive, leaving the country to rely heavily on imports for more than 70% of its petrol consumption.

Recent realities demonstrate this. The elimination of subsidies has put small-scale business owners in a tough position only three days after a new government took office. These entrepreneurs, like battling fires without air, feel their profits dwindling and their survival threatened by this harsh approach.

In its most basic form, the fuel subsidy acts as a buffer, restricting the price of this petrol and insulating buyers from its true cost. The government, to its credit, bridged the gap between market pricing and regulated value per litre.

Now picture, if you will, the bustling streets that were once packed with the goals and aspirations of courageous entrepreneurs. These spirits forged ahead, inspired by the promise of financial relief, under the soothing shade of the subsidy tree. However, the withdrawal of this crucial lifeline has cast a dark cloud over the Nigerian business landscape, plunging SMEs into a maze of unparalleled difficulties.

Transport costs, like a raging fire, now eat their budgets. Entrepreneurs, who were previously helped by subsidised fuel, now face the hard reality of dedicating a considerable percentage of their cash to sustain operations. These additional expenses will eventually descend, like predatory birds in the sky, impacting consumer purchasing power and casting a shadow over economic growth.

According to a World Bank



analysis, MSMEs account for up to 45% of total employment and up to 33% of national income in emerging economies. As noted by the Financial System Surveillance 2020 (FSS2020), the MSME sector is considered strategic for the development of the Nigerian economy due to its enormous potential and contributions.

In this difficult environment, the difficulties encountered by businesses attempting to manage high petroleum operating costs, which are critical to their operations, are

worrying. Because of the costs imposed by the elimination of subsidies, small-scale business owners may be forced to lay off staff, dramatically raising the unemployment rate.

A worldwide consulting group predicted that Nigeria's jobless rate will reach 49.6% in 2023 by December 2022. As of the fourth quarter of 2020, the country's unemployment rate was 33.3%, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

The statistics office produced an inflation report in February, revealing a considerable increase in

the country's inflation rate to 21.91%. Unfortunately, this percentage is expected to increase much higher in 2022, reaching 37.7% and 40.6% in 2023.

Furthermore, the Bureau of Statistics had earlier predicted that the elimination of fuel subsidies and the adoption of the 2023 Fiscal Bill would exert additional pressure on domestic prices in 2023.

The headline inflation rate increased to 22.04% in March 2023, up from 21.91% the previous month, further exacerbating the problem. Nigeria's annual inflation rate resumed its continuous rise in April 2023, reaching an alarming 22.22%. This statistic was the highest in over 18 years.

This problem has a particularly negative impact on food prices, which have risen dramatically. Food inflation rose to 24.61% in March, exceeding the previous month's figure of 24.45%. Essential commodities like oil and fat, bread and grains, fish, potatoes, yams, fruits, meat, vegetables, and spirits all contributed to the population's load.

With the elimination of subsidies, providers of vital products are now confronted with the new problem of deteriorating infrastructure. Nigeria, once brimming with opportunity, today struggles with decaying roads and intermittent power supplies, both of which have a significant impact on small-scale business owners. These challenges stifle ambitions and inhibit

growth.

Transportation bottlenecks and power outages have become common occurrences in this turbulent environment. Entrepreneurs face logistical challenges that limit their ability to meet market demands efficiently. In an era when success is measured in millimetres, the lack of dependable infrastructure stifles productivity and creates uncertainty for countless SMEs.

In this absence of subsidies, the country is plagued by rising unemployment and soaring inflation. High food prices alienate the public, while the dreams of small-scale businesses, which are critical to economic growth, are jeopardised.

As we reflect on the plight of Nigeria's SMEs, it is evident that this enormous problem will necessitate more than just government intervention. It is critical to create a collaborative ecosystem that encourages inter-SME collaboration. Business associations, industry experts, and experienced entrepreneurs have the ability to steer the path forward. These guiding lights can provide support, resilience, and prosperity by sharing knowledge, promoting best practices, and mentoring. This collaborative endeavour will unlock entrepreneurs' true potential, reviving the nation's spirit and ushering in a new period of limitless prosperity.

"As we reflect on the plight of Nigeria's SMEs, it is evident that this enormous problem will necessitate more than just government intervention. It is critical to create a collaborative ecosystem that encourages inter-SME collaboration. Business associations, industry experts, and experienced entrepreneurs have the ability to steer the path forward. These guiding lights can provide support, resilience, and prosperity by sharing knowledge, promoting best practices, and mentoring. This collaborative endeavour will unlock entrepreneurs' true potential, reviving the nation's spirit and ushering in a new period of limitless prosperity."

Politics

PDP stakeholders defect to APC

Stories by
AMEDU JOSEPH,
Lokoja

STAKEHOLDERS and former executive members of the People's Democratic Party in Kabba/Bunu Local Government Area of Kogi State have again, officially joined the All Progressives Congress in the state. They were warmly received by Governor Yahaya Bello at the Banquet Hall of the Governor's office in Lokoja recently. Governor Bello, in his welcome address, emphasised that the APC provides equal opportunities for both old and new members.

He encouraged opposition politicians to join the party to contribute their quota to his administration's efforts at enhancing the socio-economic well-being of the people of Kogi State.

The governor also announced that the state university in Okunland, initiated under his administration, would enroll its first students before the end of his tenure. Furthermore, Governor Bello urged the people not only to unite for political participation but also to foster stronger bonds that could attract socio-economic development to the state, noting that a politically united Kogi State had a lot to benefit under the current administration, both at the federal and state levels.

Speaking on behalf of the defectors, a former member of the state House of Assembly and immediate past treasurer



Adamu

of the PDP in Kabba/Bunu Local Government Area, Hon (Barr) Alfred Bello, highlighted the governor's exceptional infrastructure development and exemplary leadership, characterised by inclusiveness, fairness, justice and equity as the reasons for their defection to the APC.

Hon Bello commended the governor for establishing a state-owned university in Okunland, stressing that access to tertiary education had been lacking for the Okun people in Kogi State under previous administrations.

He viewed the establishment of the university as a clear testament to Governor Bello's belief in a unified Kogi State, demonstrating his commitment to equity, justice, and fairness.

The former PDP chieftain

assured the governor that he and his fellow members, including other Okun individuals, would work towards the success of the APC in the upcoming gubernatorial election in the state.

According to Hon Bello, Hon Obamoh, Dr. Enimola Dare, Hon Olori Janet Ikusemo, Hon Joseph Ayeribe, Hon Aiyepoku Paul, Hon Joseph Olorunfemi, and others were past executive members of the PDP in Kabba/Bunu Local Government Area of the state who have abandoned their party and decided to join the APC.

The decampers assured the governor of their unflinching support ahead of the November 11 gubernatorial election in the state.

President Tinubu congratulate National Assembly

PRESIDENT Tinubu said the election of Distinguished Senator Godswill Akpabio, CON and Rt. Honourable Tajudeen Abbas as the President of the Senate and Speaker of the House of Representatives for the 10th National Assembly is a good development.

I heartily congratulate them and also rejoice with the new Deputy Senate President Jibril Barau and House of Representatives Deputy Speaker Benjamin Kalu for their well-deserved victories. Being elected by their peers as presiding officers and assuming the leadership of the National Assembly is a great honour that comes with huge responsibility. I trust that you will justify the confidence reposed in you by your members and many Nigerians.

I wish Senator Abdulaziz Yari, Honourable member Idris Wase and Honourable Aminu Jaji who enriched the process with their participation in the leadership election the best and a successful tenure in the 10th National Assembly.

I urge them to sustain the same level of enthusiasm they brought to the leadership contest in the discharge of their duties to their constituents and Nigeria.

My congratulations to all members of the National

Assembly, across party lines, who, today, enlisted into the service of the blessed people of our great country.

We have all been called upon and accepted the responsibility to diligently and faithfully serve our fatherland with the oath we took. It is time to get on and move swiftly with the business of governance in the service of Nigeria.

As your President, I am prepared to transparently work with the National Assembly. Nigerians expect distinguished Senators and Honourable members to make laws and carry out oversight duties that will enhance the performance of government to achieve successful outcomes including improving their quality of life.

In the course of our work together, disagreements may occur. When we disagree it will not be out of malice, ill-will and quest to diminish the institution of National Assembly or any individual member.

Our people across the length and breadth of our country expect so much from us. They want us to lift their economic burden. They want us to eliminate insecurity so our farmers in rural communities can go to their farms and produce the food we eat.

Our people look up to us to change the fortune of our

country for good and remove all barriers that impede progress. All of these we can make happen with dedication and commitment. We can only achieve all the good things we promised during our campaigns when we work together in harmony but with respect for our respective prerogatives and in the best interest of our country.

We cannot afford to waste this opportunity because Nigerians want us to make every day of the next four years count. Justifiably, our people want more from their government. They truly deserve progressive good governance that will improve their standards of living. We must give them our best.



Tinubu

THE newly inaugurated 8th Kogi Assembly on Tuesday elected Hon Aliu Umar Yusuf, representing Lokoja II as the new Speaker, Kogi State House of Assembly.

Yusuf emerged as the new Speaker shortly after Kogi State Governor, Alhaji Yahaya Bello issued a proclamation for the 8th Assembly.

The House also elected Enema Paul, member representing Dekina Okura Constituency as the new Deputy Speaker.

Other principal officers elected are Hon Suleiman

Kogi 8th Assembly: Yusuf emerges Speaker

Abdulrasaq, (Majority Leader), Hon. SeiduAmodu (Deputy Majority Leader), Baba Haruna, (Chief Whip), Bello Okuwaseyi, (Deputy Chief Whip), IdowuIbikunle, (Minority Leader), Sunday Daku, (Deputy Minority Leader) and Bode Ogunmola, (Minority Whip).

In his inaugural speech, the new Speaker, Hon Aliu Umar Yusuf thanked God Almighty

for the privilege to serve Kogi State.

The Speaker also thanked his colleagues for finding him worthy to champion the affairs of the legislative house. According to him, the state Assembly under his leadership will collaborate with other arms of government towards moving Kogi State forward. The House has adjourned its sitting to 1st August 2023.

Fish out vandals of Ochaja radio station

THE Kogi State government has condemned attack on Ochaja Radio Station where broadcast equipment and other valuables were carted away with a vow to fish out the perpetrators of the dastardly act.

Commissioner for Information and Communications, Mr Kingsley Fanwo and the Director General of the Kogi State Broadcasting Corporation, Alh. Ojo Oyila Ozovehe, paid an on-the-spot assessment visit to the station to ascertain the level of damage.

The commissioner while reacting to the ugly development, hinted that Governor Yahaya Bello has directed security agencies to ensure that the perpetrators were arrested and brought to book to serve as deterrent



Bello

to possible future occurrence. According to the commissioner, security agencies are receiving useful intelligence to aid their investigations as the Divisional Police Office in Egume is working round the clock to apprehend the perpetrators.

"With the level of damage at the station, it is regrettable to note that the Broadcasting Corporation would not be able to operate for the time being. Government is however, committed to returning the

station back on air as soon as possible.

"As we thank the royal father of the host community for his concern over the unfortunate incident, we call on communities where government infrastructure are located to ensure safety of the infrastructure as vandalization of such assets slows down the pace of progress.

"We shall continue to brief the public on the reports of ongoing investigations" Fanwo said.

Special Adviser harps on quality legislation

PRINCE Abdulkareem Suleiman Onyekehi, the Special Adviser to Governor Yahaya Bello on Special projects, has congratulated the newly Inaugurated members of the Kogi State 8th House of Assembly with a charge for them to ensure quality legislation. Onyekehi gave the charge in a statement made available to newsmen shortly after the inauguration in Lokoja. The 8th Kogi State House of Assembly was on Tuesday inaugurated through a Proclamation Letter from Governor Yahaya Bello, read on the floor of the House by the

Clerk, Ahmed SuleChogudo. Hon. Aliu Umar Yusuf representing Lokoja II, state Constituency emerged as the Speaker of the 8th Assembly. Prince Onyekehi charged the legislators to support His Excellency Gov. Yahaya Bello's programmes and policies for the greater development of Kogi State.

Onyekehi, who is the Deputy Director Humanitarian-Social Directorate (North-Central) in the Tinubu-Shettima Presidential Campaign Council, also implored the newly Inaugurated legislators to ensure quality and purposeful

representations of their constituencies. He commended the governor for his unmatched excellent leadership role he always played at every point in time, which has brought enviable transformation across the state.

Onyekehi, who is the Focal Person, National Social Investment Programme (NSIP) in Kogi, further advised the 8th Assembly members to make laws and move motions that would bring development to the state, thereby consolidating the governor's efforts in building Kogi that is safer for all.

Politics

Wallok: A House member with a difference

Hon. Barr. Wallok Phillip Goma is a specimen in leadership having been a House of Assembly member that represented Kanke State Constituency from June 2019 to June 2023. Leadership is a unique opportunity to serve but with responsibility to account as well. As a matter of fact, the pairs of vision and forthrightness; intelligence and emotional decorum; probity and accountability as well as courage and morality are key elements that make a difference in purposeful leadership but these demands are always hard to keep up with by most leaders. AYUBA YILGAK'HA, writes.

IN history, while anybody can be in a position of leadership; not all are accountable in such vantage position. It was Warren Buffet, one of the world's greatest Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) who aptly said that in hiring manpower, 'you are looking for three things, generally, in a person: intelligence, energy, and integrity. And if they don't have the last one, don't even bother with the first two.' This assertion underscores the superior importance of integrity also referred to as public accountability. Truth be told: It takes classical self discipline and high sense of morality for someone in leadership position to keep sharp focus on things that really matters while navigating through the tempting tendencies that come with it without failing or hurting badly.

Having been on the spotlight for four good years, Hon. Wallok has substantially demonstrated clear understanding of the dynamics of leadership and has tried to make a difference living the true meaning of such understanding as will be seen in this concised reflection or peer review that is before us. It is important to mention, upfront, that after serving his four years term in office, the focused legislator, on June 4, 2023, promptly brought together people from far and near for a thanksgiving service which took place at Church of Christ In Nations (COCIN), Golkung, Shiwer, his ancestral village.

The motivation for the thanksgiving service, in the estimation of the humble house member, was that it was a symbolic act of appreciation to God and his constituents. He used the platform to thank God for the great opportunity of serving Plateau people, generally, and Kanke State constituency, in particular. In the course of his representation at the state assembly, Hon. Wallok who became Deputy Majority Leader, Chairman House Committee on Finance (CHCF), Chairman House Committee on Judiciary Ethics and Privileges (CHCJEP) of the house as well as the Legal Adviser APC States' Assemblies Forum (ASAF) of Nigeria, went memory lane to tell the poetic story of his entrance into politics as he presented the scorecard of his stewardship before the people he served.

While telling the history of his entrance into politics, he said, it can only be God that guided his triumphant in-road into the game of politics. The people's legislator recounted how he left Kano where he was staying and practicing his noble law profession; his miraculous employment with the Plateau State Ministry of Justice (PLSMJ) where he met his lovely wife and, then, his voluntary resignation from the state civil service after serving for three (3) years to contest for the house of assembly seat which he won landslide and was sworn into office on June 10, 2019 to serve his people.

Daring to leave a government paid



Goma

job to dabble into uncertain and murky waters of politics is a clear pointer that Hon. Wallok is an adventurous man who believes in the audacity of courage. Even though some colleagues at the PLSMJ discouraged his decision to quit the civil service, he had the guts and tempered steel to try and it paid off. Perhaps, his sojourn at the justice ministry was just a point of contact for him to meet his heart throb, the wife he married. Who knows? Some mysteries can only be fathomed by God who knows everything about us and our destinies from the beginning.

Through practical experience, Hon. Wallok who is fondly regarded as the smiling legislator pointed out that leadership in an age where people are critical is a very difficult task. Outside leadership position, any favour one extends is appreciated but in power, you hardly can satisfy everyone. In fact, the best of charity can be betled and thrown back at you with insult but you have no freedom to defend yourself because you are the leader, especially, in a democracy under which the social contract was signed with the people. Anyway, Hon. Wallok has long learned to come to terms with the philosophy that 'critics are the unpaid guardians of our souls', be they objective or subjective critics. Objective or constructive criticism is to a politician what a mirror is in a barber's shop. It helps

in shaping the methods and moves of the politician toward becoming a celebrated servant leader.

In a social contract pact, that is, leader-followers set up, no monument can be built in honour of a subjective critic. The bad news for a subjective critic and goodnews for any objective leader which Hon. Wallok practically exemplifies, is captured in the words of former American President, Theodore Roosevelt who said: "It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat."

Leadership is practical politics within the contest of service. If

anything, it is about deliberate action(s) not utopian ideal which exists only in the imagination of lazy thinkers whose only joy derive from criticising others, just for the sake of it. In all honesty, Hon. Wallok acknowledges his infallibility when he noted that he could not have pleased everybody but God preserved him throughout his going out and coming in. In practical humility, the house member noted that whatever he was able to do for his constituents could not have been enough because the community he served was backward and in dire need of concentrated attention from government and other development partners. He, then, presented a comprehensive catalog of his achievements in line with his primary and secondary responsibilities as a house member.

Hon. Wallok co-sponsored many bills in the 9th assembly and was the main sponsor of the traditional remuneration bill which has since been passed and ascribed to by the executive. Amongst the motions he moved include the motion for the completion of Kanke cottage Hospital which has now been successfully completed and commissioned; motion seeking justice for Late Rinji Bala who was sadly killed by an STF police personnel and motion for a quick resolution of Somji -Dongha

community clash and was also part of all the resolutions reached by the 9th Assembly.

Hon. Wallok was a representative whose voice was loud towards ensuring Kanke people had full benefit of state resources and projects due to it. He organised town hall meetings to keep his constituents abreast with happenings in the state. The house committee chairmen and memberships he belonged to spoke about the over sighting functions he performed in ministries and agencies of government that led to improvement in Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) and the rehabilitation of all court rooms across the state.

Some of the community interventions by Hon. Wallok include successful construction and completion of 34 meters Shiwer-Golkung bridge, the first of its kind constructed by any legislator in plateau state; construction and completion of two classroom blocks at Nemel and Goktok with that of Dungle, Garram under construction; construction of a shed at Dawaki Dog international market; renovation of a classroom and office apartment at Primary School Belbu.

Others are sinking of 2 motorist boreholes at Amper Central and rehabilitation of some in many communities; donation of bundles of zinc toward renovation of Gyangyang clinic as well as the influencing of speedy completion of the community's access bridge; donation N200,000.00 towards of Gugur road construction; payment of counterpart funding for the construction of community library at Garram; repair of transformers at Shiwer and Munok; donation of 20 bags of cement and, also, cash support towards the reconstruction of a collapsed bridge at Tipik; distribution of farm inputs like fertilisers to constituents; donation of a printer to NANGS Business Centre as well as one year payment of school fees of selected secondary school students in Amper.

The legislator sponsored and supported the following skills acquisition and empowerment programmes: Training with start up capital of 300 women in the production and marketing of household products; empowerment of 500 constituents with cash and varying items like sewing, grinding and water pumping machines; barber clippers to boost the businesses; financial support to NDA skill acquisition centre towards youth training amongst others. He also gained sizable number of permanent jobs for his constituents and was always there to support all through thick and thin. No wonder, these gestures were appreciated with many awards which include but not limited to the award of Icon of Democracy in Africa by African Students Union Parliament (ASUP); Arewa Youth Council Award of Excellence; Award of Excellence by the forum of ungraded Village Heads, Kanke.

IMAGES

NATIONAL POPULATION COMMISSION HOLDS BREAKFAST MEETING WITH MEDIA

The National Population Commission (NPC) last week held break fast meeting with members of the media and stakeholders on the National head count that was suspended by the immediate past administration. The occasion took place at De-Bridge Ville Hotel, Jos



Federal Commissioner, NPC, Hon. Celicia Dapoet (middle) delivering her speech, flanked by the NTA Jos, Zonal Director, Mrs. Rifkatu Daniel (left) and the NPC State Director, Mrs. felicia James Mwelpun



Cross section of cameramen covering the meeting



Cross section of stakeholders at the meeting



NUJ State Chairman, Mr. Paul Jatau (right) putting heads together with the NUI Assignment Committee Chairman, Pam Musa



NUJ National Auditor, Ladi Dinci Emmanuel (left) with Federal Radio Corporation, Highland FM, Jos, General Manager, Patience Jatau



NPC Head of Unit Public Affairs Dept., Mr. Lawrence Jick with members of the Pen Profession



Cross section of members of the media at the breakfast meeting with NPC



Chairman of Committee, NPC Logistics (left) responding on some questions during the breakfast meeting

Politics

Nigerian government must cut cost of governance

Fuel subsidy is popular with ordinary Nigerians who regard it as a rare benefit of the country's oil wealth. President Bola Tinubu has picked a battle that many Nigerian leaders, military and civilian, in the past 30 years fought and lost in one way or another, writes KABIR YUSUF.

AT his inauguration on 29 May, Mr Tinubu, 71, announced the total removal of "fuel subsidy," saying the scheme has "increasingly favoured the rich more than the poor." He added that the subsidy could 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," Mr Tinubu said.

Barely two days after the announcement, the state oil company, NNPC Limited, reviewed the pump price of petrol from N189 per litre to between N480 and N570 per litre – a more than 200 per cent increase.

"The adjustment in petrol prices with market rates will promote competition and efficiency in the oil market and drop prices naturally," said MeleKyari, the group chief executive officer of NNPC. He said prices would "continue to fluctuate to reflect market dynamics."

Officially, there is a provision in the budget to subsidise fuel until the end of June. But MrKyari said the government does not have the resources to effect that payment.

FIRS

"The reality is that from today the government can no longer afford to pay for fuel subsidies as a nation," MrKyari said, noting that NNPC was owed N2.8 trillion in outstanding subsidy payments by the government.

The Subsidy Scheme

Fuel subsidy has been in place in Nigeria since the 1970s. It began with the government routinely selling petrol to Nigerians at below cost to minimise the impact of rising global oil prices on Nigerians.

Following the promulgation of the Price Control Act in 1977, fuel subsidies became institutionalised which made it illegal for some products (including petrol) to be sold above the regulated price. This law was introduced by the Olusegun Obasanjo military regime in order to cushion the effects of the global "Great Inflation" era of the 1970s, caused by a worldwide increase in energy prices.

However, the cost of subsidising petrol has ballooned over time and riots have broken out merely over rumours of any increase in the past.

In the eight years of the Buhari administration (2015 -2023), subsidy payments gulped about N11.4 trillion.

A breakdown of data from the civi-tech group, Budgit, shows that N316 billion was paid for subsidy in 2015. The figure dropped to N99 billion and N141.6 billion in 2016 and 2017 respectively.

By 2018, a staggering N722 billion was paid for petrol subsidy. Then in 2019, the government spent N578 billion and N134 billion in 2020.

The following year, 2021, the federal government appropriated N1.42 trillion for a petrol subsidy and N4.3 trillion in 2022. In the 2023 budget, the Nigerian government budgeted N3.6 trillion for petrol subsidy for six months ending in June. That's roughly N560 billion every month.

These amounts are more than what the government spent on education, health and infrastructure during the period under review.

Controversies on fuel subsidy removal



Tinubu

In the build-up to the 2023 general elections, fuel subsidy removal became one of the major issues in the campaigns. The three major presidential candidates promised to remove the subsidy.

Mr Tinubu of the All Progressives Congress (APC) won the presidential election in February with 37 per cent of the votes. His main rivals, Atiku Abubakar of the PDP who polled 29 per cent, and Labour Party's Peter Obi who polled 25 per cent are challenging Mr Tinubu's victory. All three men promised to remove the subsidy on petrol.

In its global outlook for Africa and Nigeria, the World Bank advised against retaining fuel subsidy in Nigeria, saying it is a source of wastage and leakage. Most Nigerian economists also agreed that the subsidy regime was unsustainable.

The subject also gained a legal imprimatur with the passing of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA), whose express purpose was to introduce a legal and governance framework to guide activities in the oil and gas sector.

By the tenets of the PIA, the subsidy regime was meant to go by February 2022, MrKyari said in a recent interview.

Similarly, fuel subsidy has long been the subject of abuse and corruption. It also encouraged smuggling into neighbouring Cameroon and Benin, where fuel can be sold for twice the price,

and even more, as international oil prices rise.

Within days of subsidy removal and the adjustment of petrol prices in Nigeria, data from Global Petrol Prices, which tracks the retail prices of refined petroleum products, reveals sharp increases in petrol prices in Nigeria's neighbouring countries.

In many parts of Nigeria, petrol is diverted to the black market before it is even delivered cheaply to the pump. Because Nigeria's refineries are barely functional, the country is forced to sell its unprocessed stock on the global market and import the refined fuel it needs for domestic consumption.

Why subsidy is popular among Nigerians

While there seems to be an elite consensus on the inevitability of subsidy removal, the subsidy payments are popular with many ordinary Nigerians, who regard them as a rare benefit of the country's oil wealth that otherwise bypasses them completely.

In 2012 when former president Goodluck Jonathan attempted to remove fuel subsidy, the move was greeted by weeks of strikes, mass rallies, industrial and labour shutdowns, street protests and several deaths and numerous injuries as mobs confronted law enforcement agencies in major cities across the country.

The protests brought the country to a standstill, forcing the government to lower the price and reintroduce the subsidy.

"Fuel Subsidy is gone"

President Tinubu's removal of fuel subsidy has inevitably raised the cost of living across the board and inflicted strain on the wider population. This newspaper reported how transport fares and prices of essential goods and services shot up significantly across the country last week as Nigerians grappled with the ripple effects of fuel subsidy removal.

Also, the fares for rides in buses, which are run by private owners and serve as the major means of public transport, rose across the country this week following the rise in petrol costs. The prices of ride-hailing services such as Uber and Bolt have jumped too.

"Subsidy removal must happen but it requires tact," says Oluseun Onigbinde, the founder of Budgit. "You have to figure out how to handle food inflation, provide alternative means of transport and ramp up social investment under a well-structured social investment programme."

The Nigeria Labour Congress agreed after a meeting with the government on Monday night to suspend a planned indefinite strike to protest the removal of the subsidy, a signed resolution of the agreement showed. A meeting between government representatives and NLC and TUC leaders agreed on Monday that the NLC would "suspend the notice to strike forthwith to enable further consultations."

The parties would continue

discussions on the union's demands, including the upgrade of state-owned refineries so they can produce petrol locally to keep prices low.

As inflation is already high and will increase further, more Nigerians will be pushed into poverty unless compensating measures to cushion them at least partially from the price shock are put in place.

TUC, in a statement on Monday, issued a raft of demands to the government, including an increase in the monthly minimum wage. Dele Alake, a government representative at the meeting, said most of the demands are not "impracticable."

What is the government sacrificing

It is almost certain the Nigerian government is not going back on the fuel subsidy removal policy. The government is asking Nigerians to be patient and endure the current hardship, promising that resources saved from the policy will be channelled to developmental programmes. However, the government has kept mum on what its officials would sacrifice.

Many Nigerians want the government to curb excesses like the outrageous allowances of federal lawmakers, selling off several planes in the presidential fleet, reducing the number of cars in the convoy of government officials, and pruning wasteful government expenditures and inflated budgets that are not grounded in reality.

"You can't remove subsidy without offering to reduce the waste in government," Budgit's Mr Onigbinde said. "You can't be living large while the citizens bear the higher cost of living. You are the leader. You show example and earn trust."

Owing largely to its inability to reduce the size of government bureaucracy, the recurrent expenditure of the federal government currently stands at over N8 trillion, according to details of the 2023 budget. This is an over 400 per cent increase between 2015 and 2023.

In the budget, the National Assembly got an allocation of N168 billion. Available data shows that the cost of running the government will take a large chunk of the N10.4 trillion revenue of the federal government for the year 2023.

Akinwumi Adesina, president of the African Development Bank (AFDB), in his speech at the inauguration lecture, implored Mr Tinubu to look critically at the cost of governance, which he said "is way too high and should be drastically reduced to free up more resources for development. Nigeria is spending very little on development."

It remains to be seen how the President Tinubu Administration will make good on its promise to finally end the PMS fuel subsidy permanently, manage the challenges in the transition and redeploy the resources to more important and impactful investments in critical infrastructure, health, education, security.

But, Mr Alake assures that the Tinubu administration will "cut down But, Mr Alake assures that the Tinubu administration will "cut down

News

Motor accident claims 4, 9 injured

From AMEDU JOSEPH,
Lokoja

FOUR persons died instantly in a motor accident which occurred at Elete community on Lokoja -Ajaokuta road in Kogi State recently. Nine other persons were critically injured in the road accident which involved a Toyota Hiace passenger bus. Mr Stephen Dawulung, Kogi State Sector Commander of FRSC, who confirmed the accident said

it happened around 6:30pm.

He said the bus, carrying 13 passengers, was going to Kano from Anyigba in Dekina Local Government Area of the state. Dawulung said the vehicle suffered a tyre burst at a section of the road at Elete community, making the driver to lose control and eventually led to a crash. "The fatal accident was caused by excessive speed and lack of adherence to traffic regulations by the

driver of the bus," Dawulung said. The Sector Commander said FRSC rescue team, in collaboration with police and other sister agencies, have since cleared the wreckage to allow for free flow of traffic on the road. He said the nine injured persons were taken to the Kogi State Specialist Hospital in Lokoja for treatment while the corpses of the four dead passengers were deposited at the morgue of the same hospital.

Bello inaugurates committee for establishment of 3rd university

From AMEDU JOSEPH,
Lokoja

GOVERNOR Yahaya Bello of Kogi State, on Wednesday, inaugurated a committee for the establishment of a state-owned university in Kogi West.

Chaired by Professor Olu Obafemi Nnom, an esteemed academician and Fellow of the Nigerian Academy of Letters, the committee has 17 distinguished professors as members.

The lineup, as announced by the governor, comprises renowned professors who bring diverse expertise and experience to the table in the administration's efforts at enhancing quality education within the state. Notable members include Professor Abayomi Oloruntoba, Professor Kehinde Imisi Eniola, Professor Sunmola Afolabi, Professor Godwin Tunde Arosayin, Professor Gabriel Kolade Olorunleke, Professor Joseph Olorunju Omolehin, Professor Kingsley Ologe, Professor Sumaila Abdulganiyu, Professor Abiodun Adeniyi, Professor Rotimi Ajayi, Professor

Yomi Monday Ayesimi, Professor Suleiman Omeiza Eku Sadiku, Professor Adams Oyuoze Umoru Onuka, Professor Igonoh Joshua A., Professor Mohammed Bello Yunusa, and Professor Hadiza Aguye, who will serve as the committee's Secretary.

To ensure a comprehensive and coordinated approach, the committee includes several key government officials.

The officials are: the Kogi State Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice, Mohammed Sani Ibrahim, SAN; Secretary to the Government of Kogi State, Folashade Arike Ayoade, PhD; Commissioner for Education, Science and Technology, Hon. Wemi Jones; Commissioner for Finance, Budget and Economic Planning, Hon. Asiwaju Idris Asiru; Commissioner for Works and Urban Development, Hon. Bako Samson; and Auditor-General, Hon. Yusuf Okala.

Members of the committee have been assigned a clear set of terms of reference, which includes determining the nature of the university to be established, be it specialised or conventional, and proposing an

appropriate name for the institution. Furthermore, they are responsible for preparing the necessary academic brief, university law, and university master plan to be presented to the National Universities Commission (NUC) for recognition and approval. The committee will also identify an ideal location and a suitable site to ensure the immediate commencement of academic activities. In terms of sustainability, the committee will explore realistic and sustainable funding sources.

Additionally, any other activities required for the university's prompt establishment fall within the committee's purview.

Governor Bello stressed the importance of involving individuals who

Dangote Truck Driving School enrolls female trainees

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

FOR their strict compliance to rules and regulations governing road usage, the Dangote Cement Plc, Transport division, has quadrupled the enrollment of female truck drivers into the Dangote Articulated Truck Driving School.

The Dangote Articulated Truck Driving School, Obajana, Kogi State is considered unique, being the first of its kind in the history of Nigeria.

To this extent, the academy has enrolled 50 fresh trainee drivers, of which 10 are female trainees who are partaking in the 2023 Batch A session, Divisional Director Transport, Mr. Ajay Singh has said.

Mr. Singh said the intensive training is being conducted in collaboration with the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) and Fantiq Driving Training Centre of South Africa. According to him, experience has shown that female drivers are more careful, and have carted

THREE family members have been kidnapped by unknown gunmen in Kogi State.

It was gathered that, the incident happened on Monday night at Greenland community sporadically with the aim behind 500 Housing Estate, Ganaja in Ajaokuta Local Government Area of Kogi State. The Chairman of Greenland Community Ajaokuta Local Government Area Kogi State, Paul Atabor confirmed the incident to our correspondent on recently.

According to eyewitness account, the gunmen came with a Siena bus shooting

Gunmen kidnap 3 family members

From AMEDU JOSEPH,
Lokoja

of kidnapping their prime target who happens to be a retired security officer.

The Chairman of Greenland Community Ajaokuta Local Government Area Kogi State, Paul Atabor confirmed the incident to our correspondent on recently.

Atabor explained that the incident has been reported to C Division of the Nigeria Police Force and Department of State Services, (DSS). The chairman further hinted that the community on Wednesday morning received a notice from suspected kidnappers that they were coming back to kidnap more victims.

The letter as cited by our correspondent reads "Greenland community, get ready for us, we are coming to get someone".

One of the family members of the kidnapped victims who does not want his name to be mentioned because he was not authorized to speak, told our correspondent that the kidnappers have reached out to the family members and are demanding for ransom to release their victims.

When contacted, the Police Public Relations Officer in Kogi State, SP William Ovyeyaya said the headquarter is yet to be briefed about the incident.

He promised that the Command will reach out to our correspondent when they get detail information about the incident from the Divisional Police Officer, of C Division.



Alkali



Bello



Dangote

away most of the awards while emerging best in the past assessment conducted by the company. Speaking also, the school manager, Mr. Daniel Marcus Akuso, added that some of the courses taught in the school include: Civic Education, English, Mathematics, Defensive Driving, Truck Handling, Maintenance Technology, DCT Administration Procedures, Root Cause Analysis, Health and Science, Road Signs and Codes. Deputy Road Commandant, (OC Instructor) of the FRSC attached to Dangote Driving School, Engr Mukhtar Umar said his agency plays a significant role in the training and

certifying of old drivers and newly recruited trainees.

"We teach them defensive driving, road signs, responsibilities of the driver, driving culture, and then certify them," Engr Umar said.

Speaking, Oshile Victoria, 30, a female trainee and a graduate of Economics said she considered herself very lucky to have been selected to participate in the programme.

A 35-year-old trainee from Katsina State said it's a dream come true. In the same vein, Fatima Haruna Adamu, 27, who had wanted to join the army, said the driving school has helped fulfill her dream: "I believe what a man can do, a woman can do too." The Executive Secretary of the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) Professor Idris Bugaje had said that the NBTE was partnering the Dangote Cement Plc in the execution of the school's programme.

News

Governor Mutfwang undertakes facility tour

By PETER TITLE



Mutfwang

GOVERNOR Caleb Mutfwang of Plateau State recently undertook a facility tour of the Agric Services, Training Center and Marketing limited (ASTC), Plateau State Specialist Hospital and the Plateau State High Court Complex where he promised to look into their challenges as enumerated by the various organisations for them to enjoy good and friendly working environment.

The first port of call of the visit was the ASTC where the governor was received by the General Manager of the organization, Barrister Susan Bentu. The governor was saddened by what he saw at the facility which included dilapidated and abandoned tractors.

The GM intimated the governor that the organisation was no longer like before because of lack of finance and that if government would come to their aid by providing them with the required financial assistance, ASTC would bounce back to its former glory.

At the Plateau State Specialist Hospital, the Medical Director, Dr. Filimon Golwa who took the Executive Governor round various departments said the hospital had been rendering efficient service to patients and clients and promised to do more in that order.

Dr. Golwa took him to different laboratories and the staff of the hospital who were on strike came out in their numbers to welcome the governor and commended him for the

visit which he said would afford him the opportunity to come face to face with the reality on ground.

The Chief Judge of Plateau State, Justice David Mann and other Justices welcomed the governor and took him round the new High Court Complex as well as the Multi-Door Court House where he commended them for maintaining the judiciary integrity.

Speaking to reporters after the inspection, the governor, Barrister Caleb Mutfwang said he would ensure that he brought back the ASTC to life saying that what he saw was not good and that it had affected the people of the state negatively.

He also assured that he would do everything possible to ensure that the people of the state access health care without stress. And promised to look into the demands of the hospital.

A baby born before the arrival of the governor at the hospital was named Caleb, after the governor. The governor prayed that the baby grows in good health.

Governor Mutfwang further said the judiciary was a key institution for the development of any society and that it brings tranquility in the land.

According to the governor, he decided to visit the judiciary to see how they are faring and appreciated all the efforts that was put in the execution of all the projects.

Mutfwang promised to work and collaborate with the judiciary. He commended the Chief Judge and management for a job well done.

He was particularly proud of the Multi-Door Court House saying it would afford people to settle issues amicably, adding that it is a great avenue for settling issues.

NMA makes case for hazard allowance

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

THE Nigerian Medical Association (NMA), Kogi chapter, has appealed to the State Government to ensure speedy implementation of the new hazard allowance for doctors in the employ of the state.

The association made the call in a communique issued at the end of its second quarter of State Executive Committee (SEC) meeting held recently at its State Secretariat, Lokoja, Kogi State.

The communique was jointly signed by Kogi NMA Chairman and Secretary; Dr. Baoku Olusola and Dr. Emmanuel B.J Kelvin respectively, and made available to journalists recently in Lokoja. The communique also urged Kogi Government to domesticate and implement the Medical Residency Training Act in the state. According to the communique, after long deliberations and the observations made, the SEC resolved to do as follows: "Appeal to His Excellency, Gov. Yahaya Bello to instruct the relevant departments and

agencies in the state to speed up the bureaucracy in the path to achieving the implementation of the new Hazard Allowance for doctors in the employ of the state. "Urge the Kogi State Government to domesticate and implement the Medical Residency Training Act in the state", the communique said. The association congratulated the Governor on the award of the Commander of the Order of the Niger (CON) by the former President Muhammadu Buhari's administration.

The NMA also commended the governor for his giant strides in the infrastructural investments in the state's health sector.

The association, however decried serious human resources gaps in the various health institutions at all levels, including state-owned health institutions, alongside significant movement of doctors out of the state employ.

The communique also observed the slow responses to some of the correspondences with the state government on the implementation of the new hazard allowance. "Also observed was the wide

margin between the salaries and allowances of doctors under the employ of the state and those in the federal health institution which serves as a major culprit in the influx of doctors from the state employment. "Also implicated as contributing factor was the threat to the residency training in the Kogi State Specialist Hospital (KSSH). "The association observed that the major culprit to the threat of the residency training in the Kogi State Specialist Hospital is the non-domestication/non-implementation of the Medical Residency Training Act by the Kogi State Government, as it is being done/implemented in FCT and other states," the communique stated. The NMA, therefore urged the State Government to set up a high-powered panel to review and resolve these serious issues amongst others, affecting the medical profession and practice in the state.

The association further expressed their profound appreciation to God Almighty; the Governor, his Deputy, Government, officials and other stakeholders in the state.



Restructuring health care delivery

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

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

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

Our leaders have not helped in changing the narrative. They prefer to visit foreign hospitals when they fall sick rather than developing the infrastructure at home for all to take advantage of and enjoy. Doing so has left the health sector at the mercy of those who do not believe in it too, but would rather take advantage of the desperation of the people to skim them of their hard-earned money. This in turn has encouraged the migration of our best medical personnel to other climes in search of the golden fleece leading to massive brain drain.

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

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

Even when these are provided, constant training and retraining to help keep those to man these hospitals must be made part of the total package. For best practices to

evolve, our hospitals must seek international collaborations to keep abreast. Not reaching out in today's world would only spell doom as nobody knows it all.

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

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

All of these, however, will take a lot of political will on the part of the people and the leadership. As a people, Nigerians must resolve to set a timeline for themselves to reach these goals. We cannot continue to dwell on empty talks without following up with action. That would mean a complete change in attitude both from the government and the people. Those managing our hospitals must ensure that they are driven by the patriotic zeal to succeed at all costs. They must not focus on only making it for themselves but should ensure that government and employers provide the requisite tools for them to practice their trade. Deliberate measures too should be put in place to ensure that those in leadership positions and their family members patronize our facilities so that they too would feel the pulse of the institutions. Once they go to the same facilities with the rest people, they are likely to pay more attention to them other than jetting out of the country at the slightest opportunity to spend our hard-earned money when little effort would have served the general good here.

Local manufacture and fabrication must be encouraged so that resources can be saved on the importation of equipment. Indeed, research in local herbal usage should be encouraged, boosted by our local universities so that we can depend on what we have instead of importing from outside our shores. All of these, however, will take a lot of political will on the part of the people and the leadership. As a people, Nigerians must resolve to set a timeline for themselves to reach these goals. We cannot continue to dwell on empty talks without following up with action.

NEWS

President Tinubu seeks EU's support for security

From
JIDAUNA YANUNG Abuja



Tinubu

President Bola Tinubu has asked the European Union (EU) to support Nigeria in tackling insecurity and poverty challenges in the country and Africa.

In a statement by Abiodun

Oladunjoye, State House spokesperson, Tinubu spoke during a telephone conversation with Charles Michel, President of the European Council recently.

The European Council is the

EU institution that defines the general political direction and priorities of the European Union.

Tinubu asked the EU to consider the areas of insecurity, particularly, in the neighbouring country of Lake Chad and other coastal regions.

"The European Council is the EU institution that defines the general political direction and priorities of the European Union," the statement said.

"According to President Tinubu, Nigeria and the whole of Africa would require the help and partnership of her friends and development partners like the EU to address the excruciating poverty in the continent.

"While requesting the EU to look at specific areas of security challenges like Lake Chad and coastal areas, the Nigerian leader promised to remain in contact with the European Union and other member states.

PROF. Jacqueline Azumi Badaki, Professor of Parasitology and Entomology has called for establishment of a Center for Neglected Tropical Diseases with a focus on improved disease management in areas of diagnostics, preventive treatments, research and capacity building.

Prof. Badaki made the call in her Inaugural Lecture titled: "The Endless War Between Neglected Tropical Diseases and Overlooked Populations" at the Federal University Lokoja (FUL) on Wednesday.

In the lecture which is the 12th in the Federal University Lokoja Inaugural Lecture series, Badaki said that though the nation had recorded tremendous success in elimination of few NTDs, there were threats from parasitic diversity and resilience especially in rural population.

She said that such a center could also take the lead in advocacy for

Don calls for establishment of NTDs center

From
AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja



improved financing of NTDs control and health policy researches that could inform new strategies for the control and elimination of NTDs in the country. She called for political will on the part of government towards financing as well as institutional commitment and enabling working environment, urging that sensitivity of government towards the health situation of the people should go beyond rhetorics.

"We should begin conversations and research around what is going on in the world of the parasites so that we are not taken unawares in the future.

According to her, in 2015, the World Health Organization (WHO) recognized 20 NTDs and two years later, the Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH) recognized nine diseases as NTDs of public health importance in Nigeria.

They include; Trachoma, Buruli ulcer, Trypanosomiasis, Dengue Fever, Schistosomiasis, River Blindness, Lymphatic Filariasis (LF), Onchocerciasis and Soil Transmitted Helminthes (worm infections).

"As at 2020, according to WHO, 863 million people were at risk of lymphatic filariasis with 25 million men living with hydrocoele and over 15 million people with lymphoedema.

"Note that Nigeria is the highest contributor to these estimates. Yet, NTDs receive only 0.6 per cent health fund of official development assistance unlike HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis that collectively receive above

50 per cent", Badaki said.

She held that a lot of the diseases could be controlled with improved sanitation and hygiene and therefore, called for good and accessible sanitary facilities and safe water supply.

Prof. Badaki urged researchers to market their research findings, saying that it was not enough for them to publish their research works in journals but should go extra to market their research products using digital marketing.

She called on those with interest in infectious diseases research to explore WHO training grants rather than overload TETFund.

Prof. Olayemi Akinwumi, Vice Chancellor of Federal University Lokoja (FUL) commended the Inaugural Lecturer for the lecture saying that she had met one of the academic requirements that qualified her as a professor of FUL and declared: 'She is discharged and acquitted.'

Akinwumi also thanked the Governing Council of the university for the opportunity granted the professor and urged the academia and guests to get copies of the lecture for proper digestion and their libraries.

The Adamawa born Professor of Parasitology and Entomology has had over 22 years of community interactive research experience and has served on several WHO/APOC missions in different capacities such as technical adviser, independent monitor and Programme Evaluator, Consultant Evaluator/Scientist for several NTDs in different countries.

Anti-Christian video: Catholic priests task Governor

From JOHN FWAH, KADUNA

THE Nigerian Catholic Diocesan Priests Association (NCDPA) Kaduna State, has urged Kaduna State Governor, Senator Uba Sani, to clarify his position in respect of the anti-Christian viral video speech by former governor, el-Rufai.

This was contained in an open letter by the association to the new governor. The letter which read in part demanded that Uba Sani clarify the air by speaking on the content of the video thus "Having soberly considered the contents and implications of such communication by a former State Governor who is known to be your close ally, we feel compelled to write you, to know where you stand with regards to the commotions Mallam el-Rufai intends to propagate and perpetuate in our state."

Part of the letter also reads: "We write you today because we are responsible stakeholders in the affairs of our beloved state with our own congregations and followers. We cannot fold our hands and watch unpatriotic persons who neither live in the state nor care about it, come and set it ablaze at will. Moreso, we and our congregations have prominently been at the receiving end of the terrors of ineffective governance, especially in the last eight (8) years."

For the avoidance of doubt, the now-viral video in reference, is that in which ex-Governor Nasiru Ahmed el-Rufai among other things, speaking in Hausa language, categorically made the following points, that: most Christians in Kaduna do not vote his party (the APC), hence the reason why he orchestrated their exclusion from being

even Deputy Governor; APC can win elections without the Christians; for the same reason, he deliberately excluded Christians in all the top cadre of the governance of the state, to wit: Governor, Deputy Governor, Secretary to the State Government, Chief of Staff to the Governor, Commissioner of Finance etc, whom he bragged, are all Muslims.

Muslim dominated LGAs like Kubau benefit more from government than Christian dominated LGAs like Jaba; according to him, that is what Islamic clerics taught Muslims, and that is justice for him as a Muslim; in his campaign, he made the Christians believe that his party does not discriminate anyone on the bases of religious affiliation, but it was meant to deceive them as they would certainly discriminate; campaigns were not ran by their politicians but by the Islamic clerics, and this was done up to the polling booths with the assistance of the Islamic paramilitary group - Yan Agaji;

the policy of exclusion of Christians in governance has just begun, and will continue until the Christians cannot resist anymore; the ex-governor kept referring to the Christians as "Them" and the Muslims as "Us", to emphasize that the Christian does not belong, yet will still contradict himself by saying that his government is fair to all;

"Mr. Governor, this, to every discerning mind, is not only the evidence of discrimination and the provocation that most Christian communities and individuals have endured in our state, especially during the reign of former Governor Nasiru el-rufai. It is also an explanation for the many

unjust policies of his administration, uneven distribution of state resources, the wanton killings and kidnappings that afflicted the Christian dominated areas, and the nonchalance and sometimes scornful response of government to the distress calls of victims;

"It is important to call your attention to the fact (which we believe you already have details of), that during the pendency of the last administration, our association almost lost count of our members who were steadily being targeted, kidnaped and killed! In most cases, priests were executed after paying huge sums as ransom. This is apart from the several other pastors of other Christian denominations and countless whole Christian communities that are being steadily raided, ransacked, burnt down and their inhabitants either taken for ransom or slaughtered without any of the perpetrators brought to book, nor any support for the survivors from the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), or the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), nor from any other government agency. The only response that would usually come their way from government has been bizarre and inhumane accusations that they provoked their killers, tagging the atrocities as justified revenge killings, with punitive curfews and proscription of socio-cultural and developmental associations of some socio-cultural communities...

"We expect that you will use your good office to correct the fallacies that the former Governor's actions and comments have created and propagated. These fallacies

are, that: Christians and Muslims in Kaduna State are at war with each other; your party, the APC, is a party for Muslims; being a Christian in Kaduna State is a misfortune if not an offense, as religion automatically excludes one from certain state privileges which should be accessible to all citizens; the inter-religious dialogue promoted even by the state is a mere ploy to deceive non-Muslims and subjugate them to Islamic political domination; your campaign promises were insincere and not ever to be trusted;

against the provisions of extant laws, Muslim religious clerics and places of worship have become political campaign officers, and offices/hubs respectively, and so on;

"We are writing you because we want you to succeed. Religion occupies the place given it under the Constitution, and should never be used as a cover up for incompetence and failure. The peace and progress of our state should never be traded for some atrocious political expediency. We assure you of our unrelenting support and prayers, trusting that God will give you the wisdom to govern and give Kaduna State an enviable reputation among other states," the letter concluded.

Foreign Commentary

'Layers of vulnerability': Children growing up in urban war

Much more needs to be done for the estimated one in six children worldwide who have to navigate war, Red Cross says. Marwa, an activist who advocates for vulnerable communities, describes the terror of growing up during the war in Yemen at an event on protecting children in urban warfare organised by the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). She described having to live under air raids, never going to school without feeling anxiety or ever playing outside without the watchful eyes of her concerned mother on her. Maziar Motamedi, writes.



Children listen to a lesson about the risks of unexploded mines in Moli, Eastern Equatoria state, in South Sudan on May 12, 2023

Marwa, an activist who advocates for vulnerable communities, describes the terror of growing up during the war in Yemen at an event on protecting children in urban warfare organised by the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

She described having to live under air raids, never going to school without feeling anxiety or ever playing outside without the watchful eyes of her concerned mother on her.

"When the war erupted, I was 11 years old. Frankly, I don't remember much other than the fear and crying," she said of the conflict, which started about eight years ago.

"Nothing can save you from an air strike. The missile can kill you and all your family members while asleep at home, and there's nothing you can do to avoid dying under the rubble of your own home," she said.

In a report published late last month, the ICRC tries to address what it calls a gap in knowledge about the child-specific harms caused in increasingly urbanised conflicts – from Gaza to Syria and Ukraine – that it says can help better respond to children's needs in these complex environments.

The aid group said the report is the first holistic study dedicated

specifically to children's experience of urban warfare, drawing on existing literature in addition to dozens of interviews with experts and witnesses. It called the report necessary because an estimated one out of six children worldwide must navigate war as part of their lives.

It points out that children need to be assessed differently in war scenarios because they are less able than adults to accurately assess risks, are more vulnerable due to their physiology, will experience reverberating effects on their health in case essential services like water are disrupted and will undergo profound mental health changes that impact the rest of their lives.

Their experiences of urban warfare also vary based on criteria such as sex, age, disabilities and migration status while children could find their education disrupted in many ways, could be separated from their families in minutes, face displacement, or be subject to detention or even recruitment into armed groups.

The ICRC report also details how economic downturns caused by urban warfare can cause children and their families to adopt harmful survival strategies, such as child labour, early marriages, or relying on their children for things like evading checkpoints or picking

their way through rubble.

Another urban war has erupted since mid-April in Sudan, where two generals are fighting for control of the country and many ceasefires have failed to stop the conflict.

The deadly power struggle has triggered a significant humanitarian crisis with more than 1.2 million people displaced internally and another 400,000 fleeing into neighbouring states.

One of those states is Chad, Sudan's western neighbour, which has seen tens of thousands of refugees – many of them children – pour over its border on foot. Some have been placed in UN-organised camps, but many continue to live in dire conditions, unsure of their future.

Witnessing the situation firsthand in Adre, Chad, Al Jazeera's Zein Basravi described how he saw a mother fleeing war, carrying a boy who did not look older than one but was suffering from developmental issues and severe body contortions.

"There's no way that he is in the right place to get the kind of help that he needs, the kind of help that the most vulnerable of the vulnerable need. There's no way they can get the kind of help they need in a place like an impromptu camp in Chad," he said.

"So, there are layers and layers of vulnerability. Things are only

getting worse. These kids are going to continue to fall through the cracks and nobody knows when it's going to bottom out."

According to Basravi, children in Sudan and their families are facing a "generational uprooting" that is happening with increasing frequency and intensity compared with the past few decades and are being traumatised over and over again.

"We saw a child in the camp yesterday who lost a leg below the knee in fighting last year, and now he's been displaced from Darfur entirely into Chad," he said.

He also reported seeing children who were traumatised by seeing their fathers beaten, their mothers sexually assaulted and feeling certain they would die at checkpoints. That is not to mention the lack of clothing, food and water and exposure to diseases.

"When the kids arrive, they are completely shell-shocked, constantly crying," Basravi said.

Aside from constantly exposing children to bodily harm, urban conflicts could severely impact their mental health.

Children in these settings have regularly reported insomnia, stress, anxiety, panic attacks, grief, bedwetting, fear of loud sounds and nightmares, the ICRC report said.

It cited a 2013 study about the civil war in Syria that found 84 percent of adults and nearly all children considered the bombing and shelling as the main cause of psychological stress in children's lives.

A 2022 study in Gaza found that children lived in a "perpetual state of fear, worry, sadness and grief" and that more than half of Gaza's children have thought about suicide while three out of five reported practising self-harm.

To improve the situation, the ICRC sets out recommendations for states, fighting groups and humanitarian actors and for data collection and analysis concerning children in urban warfare settings.

It calls on states to put in place robust domestic legal frameworks and to implement higher standards as a matter of policy while drawing up recommendations for evacuations and for health and educational services and in connection with the detention of children.

It says armed actors should specifically address the protection of children in their urban warfare doctrine while calling on humanitarian actors to develop a fuller understanding of the risks and strengthen their capabilities in preventing and reducing harm to children.

SOURCE: AL JAZEERA

Foreign News

Li Shangfu: War with US would be unbearable disaster

CHINA'S defence minister has said war with the US would be an "unbearable disaster" for the world in his first major speech since taking on the role.

At a security summit, General Li Shangfu said "some countries" were intensifying an arms race in Asia.

But he said the world was big enough for both China and the US, and the two superpowers should seek common ground.

Earlier, the US accused a Chinese warship of carrying out "unsafe" manoeuvres in the Taiwan strait.

The US Navy said a Chinese destroyer had sailed near one of its destroyers on Saturday and forced it to slow down to avoid a collision. A Canadian ship was also sailing nearby.

China criticised both countries for "deliberately provoking risk". The US and Canada said they were sailing where international law allows.

In his speech, Gen Li, who became defence minister in March, accused the US of a "Cold War mentality" and said this was "greatly increasing security risks". He said China would not allow naval patrols by the US and its allies to be "a pretext to exercise hegemony of navigation".

Asked about the incident in the Taiwan Strait, he said that countries from outside the region were raising tensions.

In Washington, State Department deputy spokesperson Vedant Patel said that the US hopes to have a "predictable" relationship with China and avoid "any new Cold War".

"Our competition must not spill over into conflict," he added.

The Chinese defence minister's "moderate" tone signals that talks with his US counterpart are possible, but Washington has to lift sanctions against him, said Zhou Bo, a retired officer of the People's Liberation Army.

Gen Li was sanctioned in 2018 over the acquisition of military



Shangfu

hardware from Russia. His five-year term as defence minister started earlier this year, but the sanctions prevent him from travelling to the US, and also make it difficult for him to invite Gen Austin to China, Mr Zhou added.

Senior intelligence officials attended a meeting of spy chiefs at the Singapore summit, according to Reuters.

At the White House on Monday, National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said that the US believes it is important to maintain communications channels with China despite its military

showing an "increasing level of aggressiveness" Relations between Washington and Beijing have been strained in recent years over several issues, including China's claim over Taiwan, and territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

A senior PLA official, Lt Gen Jing Jianfeng, said there was no room for compromise on Taiwan, as he accused the US of meddling in the region.

Washington's decision to increase the number of troops on rotational deployment in the region could heighten the risk of a confrontation, he told reporters on the sidelines of the summit.

WAR crimes were possibly committed during last month's fighting between Israel and Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip, Amnesty International says.

A report by the human rights group concludes that Israeli forces conducted apparently disproportionate air strikes which killed Palestinian civilians. It also says indiscriminate Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) rocket fire killed both Israeli and Palestinian civilians.

Amnesty is calling on the International Criminal Court to investigate. A spokesman for PIJ said the group welcomed the report, while there was no immediate response from the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Thirty-four Palestinians and one Israeli were killed in the latest round of cross-border fighting, which erupted on 9 May and ended five days later with an Egyptian-brokered ceasefire.

It began when Israeli warplanes carried out

INDIAN wrestler Sakshi Malik says she is "hurt" that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has not yet commented on the allegations of sexual misconduct against the outgoing wrestling federation of India (WFI) chief.

She is among a group of top Indian wrestlers who have been protesting for months, demanding the arrest of Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, who is also an influential MP from Mr Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Mr Singh denies all the allegations against him.

Delhi police have opened two cases against the MP based on the testimonies of seven athletes who accuse Mr Singh of harassing them for years. As one of the complaints is from a minor, police have invoked the stringent Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Pocso) Act. Mr Singh has said that the law was being misused. He has been questioned by police but not arrested yet.

Malik and other top wrestlers temporarily suspended their agitation last week after they met Sports Minister Anurag Thakur who promised to complete the investigation against Mr Singh by 15 June.

"Depending on how strong the charges against him are, we will decide our next course of

Malik: Hurt by Indian PM silence on wrestlers

action. But our fight for justice is far from over," Malik said.

The wrestlers first began protests in January but called it off the same month after India's sports ministry stripped Mr Singh of his administrative powers for a few weeks and the government promised to investigate their complaints.

But the protests restarted in April, with the wrestlers calling for his arrest.

Last month, the protest site was cleared and several wrestlers were briefly detained as they tried to march to India's new parliament. The police also filed cases including of rioting against them.

Visuals of the athletes being dragged and carried off in buses went viral, sparking criticism from top athletes and opposition politicians. The International Olympic Association also weighed in, calling for an impartial probe.

On 30 May, the wrestlers threatened to dump their medals into the Ganges - India's holiest river - following which a delegation of protesters met Home Minister Amit Shah at his residence last week.

Malik said it was hurtful to watch the prime

minister do nothing throughout this period: "We were on the streets for about 40 days... There was nothing even though he was well aware of what we were protesting about."

Last week, Indian media reported that the minor athlete had withdrawn her allegations against Mr Singh.

Malik said she was not in touch with the complainant, but believed that "the player was pressurised into withdrawing the charges".

"Even if charges under Pocso are not applicable, there are still plenty of complaints against Mr Singh for which he should be arrested. But it seems that laws are not equal for everyone," she added.



Malik

Amnesty: Possible war crimes in recent Israel-Gaza fighting

Amnesty also said it "identified a pattern of extensive destruction of property" in Gaza as a result of the Israeli strikes that "failed to meet the exceptions under which attacking homes and other civilian objects would be justified".

It cited the targeting on 13 May of a four-storey building in the Jabaliya refugee camp that was home to 42 people from the extended Nabhan family.

Amnesty found no evidence that the building had been used to store weapons or any other military equipment, or that rockets had been launched nearby. "In our investigation, we heard vivid accounts of bombs obliterating homes, of fathers digging their little girls out from under rubble, of a teenager fatally injured as she lay in bed holding a teddy bear," said Amnesty's Middle East director Heba Morayef.

"More frightening than any of this is the near certainty

that, unless perpetrators are held to account, these horrifying scenes will be repeated."

PIJ responded to the Israeli strikes by firing more than 1,400 rockets towards Israel, forcing tens of thousands of civilians to take cover in bomb shelters.

The IDF says 1,139 crossed into Israeli territory in total and that about 430 headed for populated areas were intercepted by its missile defence systems.

An Israeli woman and a Palestinian labourer from Gaza were killed by rockets that hit an apartment in Rehovot and a building site in Shokeda respectively.

Amnesty says rockets that fell short in Gaza also appear to have killed three Palestinian civilians, including two children.

The report cites relatives of the children as saying they died when a rocket hit al-Sahaba street in Gaza City on the afternoon of 10 May.

PIJ denied at the time that a rocket hit the area and blamed Israeli strikes, but

witnesses told a researcher that individuals associated with the group removed remnants of a rocket in the immediate aftermath of the incident.

"Known for their inherent inaccuracy, rocket attacks by Palestinian armed groups are indiscriminate; these attacks must be investigated as war crimes and victims be granted prompt and adequate redress," Ms Morayef said.

PIJ spokesman Tariq Salmi did not comment on that allegation. But he told the BBC that Amnesty's report "proves that the occupation [Israel] was the one that began the aggression by committing grave crimes".

"The enemy uses the weapons it has to kill Palestinian civilians and we are doing our part to defend ourselves against the crimes committed by Israel against the Palestinian people," he added.

Israel has said it takes extensive measures to try to avoid harming civilians.

Feature

CBN Gov's suspension'll usher monetary policy reform

The suspension of Nigeria's Central Bank governor by President Bola Tinubu, will usher in the much needed monetary policy reform and strengthen exchange rate at the parallel market, analysts are saying.

PRESIDENT Tinubu, on Friday suspended Godwin Emefiele, governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) following the ongoing investigation of his office and the planned reforms in the financial sector of the economy.

Tinubu had in his inaugural speech on May 29, 2023 signalled plans for a single exchange rate. He said monetary policy needs thorough house cleaning and that the Central Bank must work towards a unified exchange rate.

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

According to the CBN, monetary policy refers to the specific actions taken by the Central Bank to regulate the value, supply and cost of money in the economy with a view to achieving the government's macroeconomic objectives.

Interest rate or cost of credit is currently at 18.5 percent from 12 percent in June 2014, when Emefiele assumed office as the CBN governor.

Nigeria's inflation rate has risen to 22.2 percent as of April 2023 compared to a single digit rate of 8.2 percent in June 2014, data from the CBN indicated.

Exchange rate at the official window has depreciated by 66.36 percent from N155.7 per dollar in June 12, 2014 to N462.9/\$1 as of June 8, 2023, data from the CBN show.

The foreign exchange pressure continued at the parallel market where naira depreciated by 38.81 percent to N760 per dollar as of Tuesday, June 10, 2023 compared to N465/\$ in 2016.

Analysts have predicted that naira will weaken to N700 per dollar at the parallel market.

A source close to the matter said the parallel market should somewhat firm up against the US dollar, all other things being equal.

"I expect that [the dollar firms up], as the sound bite from the parallel market is so far encouraging," the source said.

"But this may be impacted by the upcoming NASS elections. The lobbying price for the Senate president starts from \$500,000 per person.....and the House is a bit lower.

"Most of the dollar [for bribing lawmakers] will be sourced from the parallel market. There are doubts that any of the contenders will offer such an amount to 109 & 360 members respectively. Not quite conceivable even where a lower amount goes to the latter," the



Emefiele

source said.

Taiwo Oyedele, head of tax and corporate advisory services at PwC Nigeria, talked about the President's inauguration speech where he promised to clean up the CBN and reform the monetary policy regime to harmonise exchange rates which has been a major economic distortion as one basis for his projection.

"In addition, the President also signalled his preference for a low interest rate regime in order to stimulate growth and create employment. The suspension or departure of the CBN Governor is expected to pave the way for these much needed reforms at the CBN and more broadly in the monetary policy management of the country. By implication, this will not only impact on the financial

sector positively but also the broader economy," he said.

Uche Uwaleke, professor of capital market at the Nasarawa State University Keffi, said a number of programmes Emefiele was driving and was passionate about will likely suffer some setbacks.

These include the Anchor Borrower, the eNaira, RT 200,

and the unpopular currency redesign.

"Monetary policy is likely to change course from tightening to a little dovish which supports economic growth. In forex management, exchange rates are much likely to be unified bringing more transparency and opening up prospects for foreign investments. But the inflation rate is likely to soar," he said.

'Stop consumption of pomo, bush meat'

THE Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Dr. Ernest Afolabi Umakhihe, has cautioned Nigerians against the consumption of hides (pomo), smoked meat and bush meat.

A statement signed by Umakhihe explained that Anthrax, which has claimed some lives, is a zoonotic bacterial disease that affects both animals and man.

Anthrax spores are naturally found in the soil and it commonly affects domestic and wild animals.

The statement reads in part: "The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development hereby alerts the

general public on the outbreak of Anthrax in some neighbouring countries within the West African Sub-Region; specifically, Northern Ghana, bordering Burkina Faso and Togo.

"The Disease, which has claimed some lives, is a bacterial disease that affects both animals and man, that is, a zoonotic disease. Anthrax spores are naturally found in the soil and commonly affect domestic and wild animals.

"People can get infected with Anthrax spores if they come in contact with infected animals or contaminated animal products. However, Anthrax is not a contagious disease and so, one

cannot get it by coming in close contact with an infected person.

"Signs of Anthrax are flu-like symptoms such as cough, fever, muscle aches and if not diagnosed and treated early, lead to pneumonia, severe lung problems, difficulty in breathing, shock and death.

"Being a bacterial disease, it responds to treatment with antibiotics and supportive therapy.

"The general public is strongly advised to desist from the consumption of hides (pomo), smoked meat and bush meat as they pose serious risks until the situation is brought under control.

"Meanwhile, the public is urged to remain calm and vigilant as the Federal Government has resuscitated a Standing Committee on the Control of Anthrax in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

"Furthermore, relevant institutions and collaborators have been contacted with the aim of controlling the outbreak. This is in addition to the sensitization of state directors of veterinary services nationwide."

According to Umakhihe, it is primarily a disease of animals but because of man's closeness to animals, non-vaccinated animals

with Anthrax can easily be transmitted to man through the inhalation of Anthrax spores or consumption of contaminated/infected animal products, such as hides and skin, meat or milk.

The Permanent Secretary also called on border States of Sokoto, Kebbi, Niger, Kwara, Oyo, Ogun and Lagos to intensify vaccination of animals, because of their proximity to Burkina Faso, Togo and Ghana.

"However, infected animals cannot be vaccinated but animals at risk can be vaccinated. So, in this present case, there is a need to intensify animal vaccinations along the border States of Sokoto, Kebbi, Niger, Kwara, Oyo, Ogun and Lagos because of their proximity to Burkina Faso, Togo and Ghana. Other states of Nigeria are equally advised to join in the exercise.

"Infected dead animals should be buried deep into the soil along with equipment used in the burial after applying chemicals that will kill the Anthrax spores. Annual vaccinations with Anthrax spore vaccines are available at National Veterinary Research Institute Vom, Plateau State and is the cheapest and easiest means of prevention and control of the disease in animals."

"People can get infected with Anthrax spores if they come in contact with infected animals or contaminated animal products. However, Anthrax is not a contagious disease and so, one cannot get it by coming in close contact with an infected person. Signs of Anthrax are flu-like symptoms such as cough, fever, muscle aches and if not diagnosed and treated early, lead to pneumonia, severe lung problems, difficulty in breathing, shock and death."

THE WORLD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

Health

Effective ways to child health and survival

By **CHRISTY TAMAI**

BREASTFEEDING gets one of the most effective ways to ensure child health and survival. However, nearly 2 out of 3 infants are not exclusively breastfed for the recommended 6 month - a rate that has not improved in 2 decades.

WHO and UNICEF recommend that children initiate breast feeding within the first hour of birth and be exclusively breastfed for the first 6 month.

Breastfeeding Motherhood is a blessing. The word breastfeeding week is organized every year by the world Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA). This year's theme is Step up for breastfeeding, educate and support. The world Alliance for breastfeeding Action is a global network aim to protect, promote and support breastfeeding around the world.

Breastfeeding has a lot of benefits to the mother and the baby which makes it mandatory for the mother to breastfeed her child for the stipulated time.

Breastfeeding is celebrated world wide to encouraged mother's to seen the need of breastfeeding at all time. It was first celebrated in 1992 and it is observed every 1st



to 7th of August in more than 120 (one hundred and twenty) countries. Breast milk helps keep your baby healthy. It supplies all the necessary nutrients in the proper proportions. It protects against allergies, sickness, and obesity, it protect against diseases like diabetes, and cancer, it protect against infections like

ear infections. Every woman dream is to see her baby growing healthier, and the joy is found in exclusive breastfeeding which is very paramount. The benefits for breastfeeding for mother and child include, The breast milk provide ideal nutrition for babies. The breast milk contains everything baby needs for the first 6month's of life, in all the right proportions.

Its composition even changes according to the baby's changing needs, especially during the first month of life. During the first days after birth, the breast produce a thick and yellowish fluid called colostrum, its high in protein, low in sugar and loaded with beneficial compounds. Colostrum is the ideal first milk and helps the newborns immature digestive tract develop. The breast milk contains import antibodies, antibodies helps the baby fight off viruses and bacteria, which is critical in those tender, early months.

It may reduce the baby's risk for many illnesses and disease which includes;

(i) Middle ear infections - Breastfeeding may protect against middle ear, throat and Sinus infections well beyond infancy.

(ii) Respiratory tract infections- Breastfeeding can protect against multiple respiratory and gastrointestinal acute illness.

(iii) Exclusive breastfeeding for six months lower the risk of getting serious colds and ear or throat infections.(iv) It is linked with the reduction in gut infections.

(v) Allergies disease - breastfeeding helps to reduced risk of asthma, atopic dermatitis, and eczema.

(vi) Breast milk promotes baby's healthy weight, it promotes healthy weight gain and helps prevent childhood obesity.

(vii) Breastfeeding makes children smarter, exclusive breastfeeding helps baby to become more intimate with the mother due to touch, and eyes contact associated with breastfeeding as well as nutrient content. Breastfeeding helps

some women to lose weight while some gain weight during breastfeeding. The uterus grow immensely, after delivery, it goes through a process called involution which helps it return to its previous size. The body secretes high amounts of Oxytocin which helps deliver the baby and reduce bleeding. It can also help the mother bond with her new born baby. Oxytocin also increase during breastfeeding. Mothers who breastfeed have a lower risk for depression, women who breastfeed seems less likely to develop postpartum depression (PPD), this type of depression that can develop shortly after childbirth. Women are advised to see a doctor as soon as they have any symptoms of PPD. Breastfeeding is paramount because it lower risk for high blood pressure, Arthritis, high blood fats, heart disease and type 2 diabetes. It saves time and money because it is natural,

New horns often wants to feed every two, three, hours. By two months feeding every three to four hours is common, and by six months, most of the babies feeds every four to five hours. Mother's you and your baby are unique and the decision to breastfeed is up to you, based on the benefits attached to breastfeeding. The tips called ABCs of breastfeeding will help the mother and the baby get comfortable with the process of breastfeeding.

A= Awareness: watch for your baby's sign of hunger, and breastfeed whenever your baby is hungry. This is called on demand feeding. The first few weeks, the mother may be nursing eight to 12 times every 24 hours.

B=Be patient: Breastfeed as long as your baby wants to nurse each time, don't hurry your infant through feedings, they typically feed for 10- 20 minutes on each breast so be patient.

C= Comfort: This is the key. Relax while breastfeeding and your milk is more likely to let down and flow, get yourself comfortable with pillows as needed to support your arms, head, and neck and footrest to support your feet and legs before you breastfeed.

Challenges of Breastfeeding include; Sore nipples, mother's can expect some soreness in the first weeks of breastfeeding, make sure your baby latches on correctly, and use one finger to break the suction of your baby's mouth after each feeding, that will help prevent sore nipples.

Dry and cracked nipples, women should avoid soaps, perfumed creams, or lotions with alcohol in them, which can make nipples even more dry and cracked.



EVER'S WORLD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

Parenting

Ways to build confidence in your kids

By **SYLVIA SMITH**

WHEN it comes to raising kids, there are likely many things you want to teach them, including being confident and well-rounded.

How do I make my child more confident?

You may be at a loss when it comes to how to build self-confidence in a child, but there are some things that you can try which aren't difficult to incorporate into your routine.

For instance, when you are confident, this can show your children what it looks like. You may also need to show them love, patience, and kindness, no matter the situation. These things can go a long way in terms of raising confident kids.

Building confidence is quite important as your children are growing since there are many aspects of life where confidence can be helpful. For instance, a confident child will be better able to make friends and have meaningful relationships. Without confidence, they might not be able to have conversations with others or meet goals they set for themselves in life.

When you want to know how to build confidence in kids, there are some tips that you will likely need to follow.

Be a good example

One tip on how to raise confident kids that can't be overlooked is a good example. This means that you need to be confident outwardly, so your child can identify this and see that confidence is attainable.

Encourage them

Another way to think about when it comes to building confidence in kids is that they must be encouraged. When they do something well, you need to tell them that you are proud of them or that they have done a good job.

Although this may seem like something small, it can make a big difference in the long run.

Help them learn from mistakes

Everyone makes mistakes from time to time, and your child is no different. However, instead of getting upset with them when they make a mistake, you should help them learn what they did wrong and how to make it better next time.

Let them try new things

Another way that you can try in relation to how to build confidence is when it comes to allowing your child to try new



things.

When they have the ability to try new things, this can help them decide what they like and what interests they would like to pursue.

Help them meet goals

Everyone needs to learn about goals and how to meet them, and children are no exception. When it comes to growing confidence in kids, meeting goals can make a big difference.

Ask them for help

You can ask your child for help with tasks as one of the ways to build confidence in a child. Just be sure that you only ask them to help with things they can do. This can be something small like setting the table or telling their siblings it's dinner time.

Show your love

Raising confident teenagers is something that is possible and can be accomplished by showing your children love. You should try your best to tell them you love them and be there for them when they have a problem or need help.

While it may be challenging to determine how to let your child know you love them, it will be worthwhile to figure out what works and what doesn't.

Let them make decisions

It is okay to ask your child's opinion on things. You can inquire about what movie they want to watch on movie night or what vegetable they want to eat for dinner.

While these seem like things that don't matter, they will likely matter to your little one since they can feel they have contributed to the family and have a say.

Spend time with them

Once you are wondering how to raise a confident child, one of the necessary things is spending plenty of time with them.

Take small steps

As you are learning how to raise confident kids, you can take small steps. You don't have to figure out everything overnight. Again, many of these tips will take some trial and error to get just right.

Limit negative influences

If you have noticed that your child's behavior has changed recently and don't know why, it may be necessary to limit the negative influences on their life.

This could be programs they are watching on television, games they are playing, or even family members they are exposed to that don't follow your morals or belief systems.

While you don't have to take these things away from your little ones, teaching them how you want them to act may be necessary.

12. Listen to them

Many parents have busy lives and don't always have the time to spend with their families that they want to. However, when your kids come to you and need something or want to tell you something, it is necessary to hear them out.

They might require help with a problem or need your advice. Once they find out that you can and will help, they can gain confidence knowing that you will be there for them.

Acknowledge hard work

Have you ever wished that you would be recognized for your hard work? Ensure you notice when your child is doing hard work, even if they haven't met

their goal yet.

This is another top way on how to raise confident kids that can't be undervalued. You can offer them a kind word and tell them to keep up the good work.

Ask for their input

You may be familiar with how children ask many questions while learning. They are inquisitive and may also have a

lot to say. You can turn this around on them and ask them questions about how their minds work.

Ask them what they think a grasshopper thinks about or how many trees are in your city.

Please pay attention to their answer and let them know when they have given you a good answer. You may not think about this when you are pondering how to raise confident kids.

Show them affection

When you want to know how to boost a child's confidence, one of the most important ways is showing them affection.

There are a number of ways you can go about how to raise confident kids, but it is very important to love them, interact with them, encourage them, and be confident in yourself.

You can also opt for a parenting class or a meeting with a therapist for guidance through the parenting process.

Remember that it is possible to raise confident kids, and the list above provides you with a starting point when it comes to how to raise confident kids. Use it as your guide through the process and see what works for your family.



Editorial

June 12 and Nigeria's democratic journey

NIGERIA'S democratic journey has been a long and eventful journey at an attempt to entrench principles and values that ensure liberty, justice and equality which are qualities that have to be evident in all aspects of our political life as a nation.

Nigeria's Democracy Day was originally held annually on May 29, as a national holiday which marked the day the military handed over power to an elected civilian government in 1999. It has been a tradition that has been held annually, and it began in the year 2000.

IN the past, June 12 was known as Abiola Day and was mostly celebrated in Lagos, and some other south western states of Nigeria. On June 6, 2018, eight days after May 29, 2018, had been celebrated as Democracy Day, the President Buhari-led administration declared June 12 as the new Democracy Day.

Democracy Day in Nigeria is a public holiday to commemorate the restoration of democracy in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. May 29 was initially the official democracy day in Nigeria, marking when the newly elected Olusegun Obasanjo took office as the President of Nigeria in 1999, ending multiple decades of military rule that began in 1966 and had been interrupted only by a brief period of democracy from 1979 to 1983.

As a result of the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election, which has been adjudged to be Nigeria's freest and fairest election, civil unrests broke out in the south western states of Nigeria. It was, however, believed to have been wrongly cancelled by the Ibrahim Babangida Junta, leading to the subsequent detention of MKO Abiola, after he declared himself president. Abiola died mysteriously after drinking tea during the negotiation of his release.

The annulment denied Nigerians the opportunity to witness the realization of their aspirations for democracy. Abiola himself was courageous enough to come out in defense of his mandate, by leading other Nigerians who refused to accept the perceived injustice, who came out and fought for their democratic rights. He is today seen as a symbol of Nigeria's fight for democracy.

HOWEVER, sacrifices made by the fighters for democracy at that time can be said to be a turning point in Nigeria's history. A struggle that should not be forgotten, and the President, and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, His Excellency, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, was very much a part of that struggle.

In his Democracy Day speech, he paid glowing tribute to the people of Nigeria for exercising "their inalienable right to elect a President of their choice to lead the transition from military dictatorship to a representative government of the people.

As reflected in the speech, civilization and societies experience progress as they are forced to respond to challenges posed by the environment, a postulation of the 19th century historian, Arnold Toynbee. The annulment, which elicited resistance by civil society was a factor that led to the attainment of the return of democratic governance in 1999.

JUST like the other leaders in the past, President Tinubu rounded up by looking back at the expectations of Nigerians vis-a-vis the pledges made by his administration. He restated his commitment to diligently fulfilling every component of the electoral pact made with the people in the 'Renewed Hope' agenda.

WE hope to see fairness and respect for the rule of law, and a commitment to upholding the dignity of the Nigerian people.

The President had reiterated that democracy cannot be taken for granted, and must be protected as such, adding, we have come a long way, and are hopeful that the future would be much better than the past. Our elections cannot be seen as mere sacred rituals from now on. We need to go back to that point which we got it right.

IT is commendable that President Tinubu concluded on this note, 'Truly, Chief Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola remains that symbol, and the June 12 factor means democracy in Nigeria can be eternal.'

WE admonish that our leaders will, at all times, demonstrate an unwavering commitment to the real essence of democracy, and see to it that the dream of an all-inclusive, strong, and prosperous Nigeria does not elude us.

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

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

According to statistics, the number of mad people roaming around in markets and highways most especially the youths who are supposed to be our leaders of tomorrow is all as the result of drug abuse and excess consumption of

alcohol that affect their mental health. Taking, alcohol also impact on the ability to process thoughts and make rational and reckless decision which can lead to increase in violence or any form of aggressive behavior, this is because alcohol can make one lose self-control and self esteem and ability to process multiple issues and decreased the ability to resolve conflict.

Consequences of alcohol intake on youth

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

Also, quality sleep is critical to positive mental health and wellbeing, and lack of quality sleep can negatively impact to our daily functioning and reduce our overall quality of life.



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

Moreso, looking at the rampant cases of accidents on roads which is as the result of excess

consumption of alcohol where driving under the influence of alcohol has send many young people to their early grave which is a great lost to the society.

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

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

The collapse of our educational system

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

their safety is guaranteed.

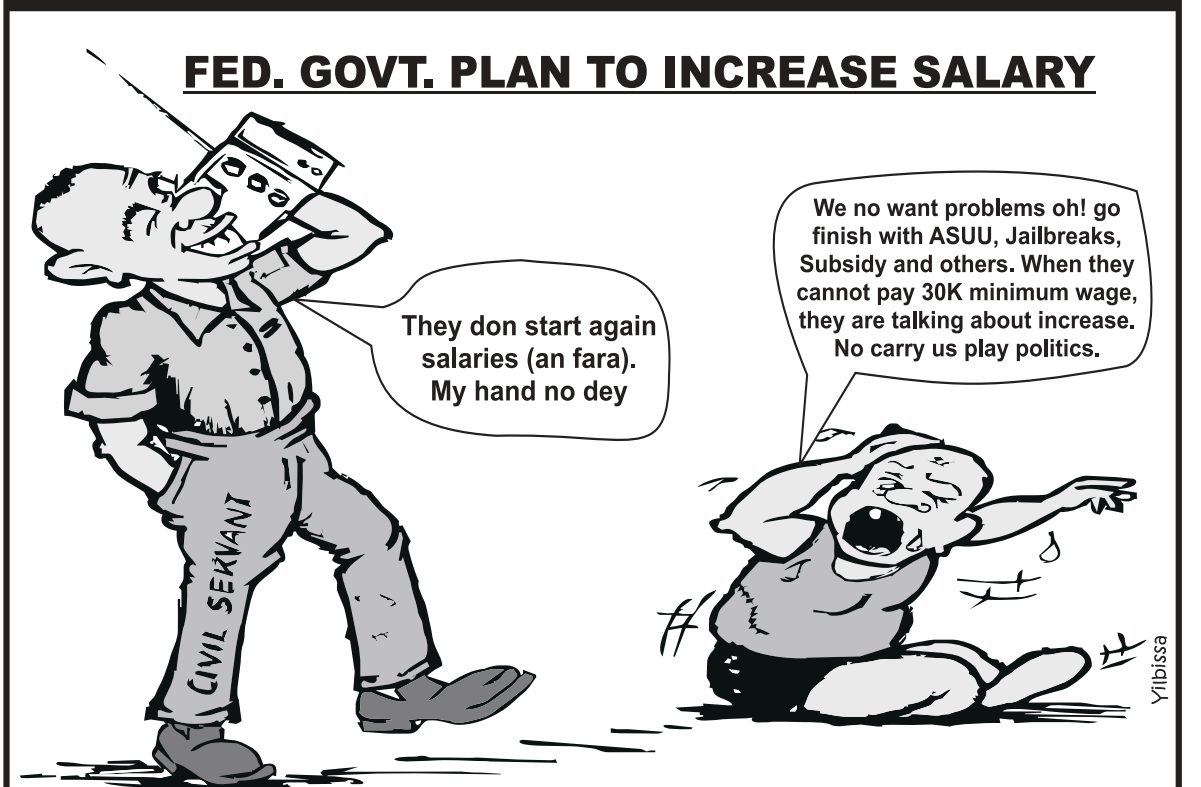
Therefore, we should stop playing politics with such a sensitive sector and focus more on building strong and functional education system that will take off our younger generation off crime and vices.

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

Ayuba Bulus Apata, Jos.

Standard Cartoon

FED. GOVT. PLAN TO INCREASE SALARY



Opinion

Emefiele arrested; when will naira devaluation be arrested?

By **KUNLE WIZEMAN AJAYI**

While I do not covet this Tinubu Regime for the arrests over the \$1billion allegedly borrowed from Afrexim after the elections, I believe that Emefiele and other CBN governors before him from Soludo to Sanusi should be in jail by now. In succession, what they have done to the Naira is to delete its values systemically. This is what is called "Naira Devaluation" in neo-liberal language. It's quite a simple but hazardous scheme, to keep the Naira far worthless so that the dollarization of the Nigerian economy can be easier and faster to wit.

As the news of the arrest of Central Bank Governor Godwin Emefiele filtered in, I smiled and paid tribute to the late foremost Currency Economist, the late Henry Boyo who had written after many debated with some of us hardened Left Economists that "Naira Devaluation Be Like 419!"

While I do not covet this Tinubu

Regime for the arrests over the \$1billion allegedly borrowed from Afrexim after the elections, I believe that Emefiele and other CBN governors before him from Soludo to Sanusi should be in jail by now. In succession, what they have done to the Naira is to delete its values systemically. This is what is called "Naira Devaluation" in neo-liberal language. It's quite a simple but hazardous scheme, to keep the Naira far worthless so that the dollarization of the Nigerian economy can be easier and faster to wit.

Sadly, economic terms like "Devaluation", "deregulation", "liberalization" and the rest are used in such sugar coated manners that Nigerians think they would perform miracles on revamping the economy. Whereas, simple studies show that these terms are all

substructures of the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) forced on Nigeria from the early eighties.

Simple history also shows that these policies never work anywhere, either in developing or developed countries. They are meant to undermine and underdevelop an economy. Currency Devaluation was forced on Germany after the loss of the 1st World War by US and European giants. The German Mark got to almost a thousand in exchange for a dollar. This outrightly killed the economy and helped to prop up Fascist formations like Hitler's Nazi party. So, those who are devaluing the Naira are doing same to totally destroy the economy. No wonder, all trades in the Nigerian oil economy is done in dollars!

Whether it's Buhari or Tinubu, they all know that the continuous devaluing of the Naira pays only big businesses and monopolists like Dangote and his cohorts. Nigerian rulers all know that the answer to building a true economy is to revalue the Naira and force all exports and sales to be done in the local currency, not dollars nor pounds nor Rands nor Yens. But what matters to the Nigerian ruling and business class is to get more gains, and also accumulate wealth in such primitive manners.

As to those who claim for fixed rates, the answer to resolving an issue is not to keep swimming in same. The way to go is to get the state to massively produce and sell locally. Instead of waiting for rogue private profiteers and the ever funny Foreign Direct Investments (FDI,) Nigeria should go back to its state captainship of industries from

Cotton to Oil to Steel. This will not only help to skyrocket the Gross Domestic product (GDP) to a spectacular high globally, it will greatly and swiftly resolve the unemployment palaver where Nigeria rates top with 33%. Millions will be lifted from poverty, instead of the rubbish of making a few billionaires and trillionaires who live off the people's collective patrimony.

Naira is now about #750 in the black market. Arresting Emefiele is great, but won't change the status of the Naira. So, any serious president who wants to revamp the Nigerian economy and make sure the GDP is proportional to the Human Development Index (HDI) should not just arrest Godwin Emefiele and his accomplices like Buhari and Lucky Irabor, the Chief of Defence Staff, the wicked and poverty weaponizing policy of Naira Devaluation must be arrested and thrown into the dustbin of history!

How Nigeria's aviation industry support climate action

By **CHIAMAOKA OKAFOR**

EVEN though it was excluded in the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) submitted by the Nigerian government to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Nigeria's aviation sector is thinking of ways to reduce its contribution to GreenHouse Gas (GHG) emissions.

Although not delineated, Nigeria's transport sector (including the aviation sector), according to the NDC document, accounts for 21 per cent of GHG emissions within Nigeria's energy sector in 2018.

Nigeria said it is committed to becoming a low-carbon economy as a means of promoting sustainable development as well as contributing to global efforts to reduce GHG emissions released into the atmosphere.

The NDCs speak about mitigation in road transport alone excluding air transport which according to the National Bureau of Statistics contributed 20 per cent in the first quarter of 2023 to GDP growth indicating the functionality of the sector.

The Director General of Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA), Musa Nuhu, at the second National Aviation Conference last month (May) said the sector was the second-fastest growing sector in the economy pre-covid.

Globally, the aviation sector, researchers say, contributes around four per cent to human-induced global warming, more than most countries do and an estimated 2.4 per cent of global annual CO2 emissions, most of it from commercial travel.

Aeroplanes emit around 100 times more CO2 per hour than a shared bus or train ride, and the emissions of global aviation are around 1 billion tons of CO2 per year — more than the emissions of most countries, including Germany, a Mongabay report said.

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) estimates that the number of air passengers will more than double in two decades, from 3.0 billion in 2012 to 6.4 billion in 2030. This implies that more air pollution will be recorded which accounts for an estimated 16,000 premature deaths per year.

Aside from carbon emissions, planes also contribute to global warming through the creation of water vapour, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, and soot. These non-carbon pollutants contribute twice as much to global warming as the carbon produced by aircraft.

What industry regulators are saying

At the National Aviation Conference, Mr Nuhu in his presentation on aviation sustainability said his agency "seeks solutions to improve the societal and environmental impacts of air transportation, reducing the

sector's contribution to climate change through new practices and innovation while increasing the sector's contribution to the national economy."

He said the regulatory body is committed to preserving nature and demonstrating environmental leadership among its peers in the region to ensure that Nigeria achieves the ambitious goal of a 50 per cent reduction in net carbon emissions by 2060 through collaboration with all industry stakeholders.

One of the key ways it plans to do this is through the Fly2green initiative which is in the final stage of launching.

According to Mr Nuhu, the initiative is the first sustainable aviation Eco-Label programme in Africa designed to generate innovative climate finance, climate advocacy and climbing resilience projects to meet the NDCs target.

He added that Nigeria is working towards developing conversations around the use of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) which for him is the future of aviation.

The Nigerian Airspace Management Agency (NAMA) Director General, Matthew Pwajok at the same conference noted that given the responsibilities of his agency, "we can play a very significant role in reducing flight time, fuel consumption and carbon emission which is environmental sustainability."

He added that collaboration is needed to achieve sustainability of all kinds within the sector.

What is the world doing?

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has developed Net Zero roadmaps that provide step-by-step detailing of critical actions for aviation to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. These roadmaps address aircraft technology, energy infrastructure, operations, finance, and policy.

"The roadmaps are a call to action for all aviation stakeholders to deliver the tools needed to make this fundamental transformation of aviation a success with policies and products fit for a net-zero world," Willie Walsh, IATA's director general, said.

The sector has made some progress on energy infrastructure with the development of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF), a biofuel used to power aircraft with similar properties to conventional jet fuel but with a smaller carbon footprint.

SAF reduces carbon emissions by up to 80 per cent, according to IATA. It can be produced from several sources (feedstock) including waste oil and fats, green and municipal waste

and non-food crops. It can also be produced synthetically via a process that captures carbon directly from the air.

"It is 'sustainable' because the raw feedstock does not compete with food crops or water supplies, or is responsible for forest degradation. Whereas fossil fuels add to the overall level of CO2 by emitting carbon that had been previously locked away, SAF recycles the CO2 which has been absorbed by the biomass used in the feedstock during its life," IATA said.

One question asked by members of the industry is, when will sufficient SAF be available to all parts of the world?

As of 2021, SAF use was at less than 0.1 per cent. To increase its usage to around 10 per cent by 2030 in line with the Net Zero Scenario, investment in production capacity and new policies such as fuel taxes, low-carbon fuel standards and mandatory blending is required, an International Energy Agency report states.

Producers have keyed into SAF production and some have signed agreements with airlines to begin supply. However, supply remains scarce and highly concentrated among a few producers.

If producers start producing SAF, the output capacity could exceed 2.5 billion gallons by 2026, according to BloombergNEF. Yet, this would only be a fraction of the around 100 billion gallons aircraft around the world use every year, or at least they used to before the pandemic.

What may be an alternative while airlines await large-scale availability of SAF, is what France did in May. It formally banned domestic flights on short routes that can be covered by train in less than two-and-a-half hours in a move aimed at reducing airline emissions.

Can Nigeria adopt the same? The simple answer is no as there are many factors inhibiting such legislation including inadequate transport networks and insecurity.

The Executive Director Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development (CJID) and energy expert, Tobi Oluwatola, noted that there are several challenges confronting the sector that may impede decarbonising the sector.

It is difficult to replace that," he said, referring to jet fuel which perhaps accounts for the bulk of emissions from the sector.

"It is hard to make aviation electric because batteries are too heavy and the plane will not take off; and hydrogen, which is also being considered, is too light," Mr Oluwatola

continued.

He noted that what many in the sector do is to cut down on how often they fly.

Although biofuels like SAF are still quite expensive, Mr Oluwatola believes there is a future, albeit distant, where these fuels will be more available and affordable.

In the case of Nigeria, he noted that the country often follows the lead of other countries that have the technology and know-how.

"The trajectory of decarbonising Nigeria's aviation sector will have to depend on what Boeing and others end up doing with decarbonising their fleets," he said.

He also noted that Nigeria's Energy Transition Plan (ETP) does not state how the aviation sector will decarbonise like it did with road transport for example.

Peter Dia of the Aviation Fuel Marketers Association of Nigeria (AFMAN) noted that the shift to SAF will be expensive. This he said may lead to an increase in fare tickets thereby reducing patronage, and reducing the amount of carbon emitted by aircraft.

"The current production of SAF is low. Last year, there were only 300 million litres while we are consuming over 300 billion litres of jet fuel," he said, adding that the SAF does not make up for one per cent of what the industry needs.

The use of SAF though at its pilot stage in different parts of the world aims to tip at 30 billion litres by 2030, "with the right supporting policies", IATA said in a report last year. A production capacity of 450 billion litres annually in 2050 is required for the industry to meet its goal.

Speaking about the ideas of the regulatory agencies, Mr Dia agrees about the feasibility of the initiatives. He, however, questioned the political will and sustainability.

"If SAF is available today, the current infrastructure we have on the ground for handling jet fuel will not change. The marketers are ready to handle it if and when available," he added.

Also, Mr Dia fears that moving to SAF may affect food security considering the mode of production. However, the US Department of Energy says "By growing biomass crops for SAF production, American farmers can earn more money during off seasons by providing feedstocks to this new market, while also securing benefits for their farms like reducing nutrient losses and improving soil quality."

This report is produced in fulfilment of the UNESCO & CIJ London Climate Change in News Media project facilitated by the Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF NIGERIA



PLATEAU STATE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT PLATEAU STATE ACRReSAL PROJECT (PLS-ACRReSAL)

Request for Bids (RFB) for:

SUPPLY OF LAPTOPS, DESKTOP COMPUTERS, PHOTOCOPIERS & PRINTERS, AND ACCESSORIES FOR SPMU AND CORE IMPLEMENTING MINISTRIES.

RFB No: NG-PLATEAU STATE ACRESA-309410-GO-RFB.

Project ID: P175237
Credit No: IDA 70150

Issued on: 14th June, 2023
Closing Date: 5th July, 2023.

1. The Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has received a credit from the International Development Association toward the course of Plateau State Agro-Climatic Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscapes Project (PLS-ACRReSAL) and intends to apply part of the proceeds of this credit to payments under the Contract for the Supply of Laptops, Desktop Computers, Photocopiers & Printers, and Accessories for SPMU and core implementing Ministries of Plateau State ACRReSAL Project (PLS-ACRReSAL).

2. The Plateau State Agro-Climatic Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscapes Project (PLS-ACRReSAL) now invites sealed bids from eligible and qualified bidders for the Procurement of the following:

S/N	ITEM	SPECIFICATION	QTY	S/N	ITEM	SPECIFICATION	QTY
1	LAPTOPS PCs	HP Spectre 11 th GEN. Core i7 16 Gb Ram, 1TB Gb SSD. Windows	25	8	VGa	Hisense 85" Smart QLED 4K TV+Bluetooth	1
		HP Pavilion 14 dy0063nia 11 th Gen. Intel Core i3 8GB/1TB14 touch Windows.	12	9	Cables (Adaptors)	HDMI – HDMI HDMI – VGA	5 5
		HP Pavilion 15x Intel Core i5 – 16 Gb Ram 512 SSD – Backlight Keyboard – Windows 11	20	10	Speaker + Microphone	USB Desktop Microphone 360° Adjustable Microphone Support. USB Connected Computer Stereo Speaker Portable Mini Sound Bar for Windows PCs Desktop Computer Laptop Richer Bass	5 3
2	DESKTOP COMPUTERS	Lenovo V30a All in One – 10 th Gen. Intel Core 3 – 4GB Ram 1TB HDD – 21.5-inch Wi-Fi Windows 10 Pro	15	11	USB	USB HUB 7 in 1 USB 3.0 3.1 And 3 Ports USB Hub Combo MS/ M2/ SD/TF 64Gb OTP scandisk 128GB OTP scandisk	10 20
3	Printers	Laser Jet M107a	10	12	Antivirus	Mcafee Livesafe Unlimited 1 Years - License Key.	10
		Laser Jet 135a All-in-One Printer	5	13	Office	Office 365 (6 users) family	8
		Hp Color LaserJet Pro MFP M479fdn A4 Multifunction Laser Printer	2	14	CD External Drive		2
4	Photocopier	Sharp BP 20M 31 with stand	2	3. Bidding will be conducted through the Open National Competitive Bidding using a Request for Bids (RFB) as specified in the World Bank's "Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers" Investment Project Financing revised August 2018 ("Procurement Regulations") and is open to all Bidders as defined in the Procurement Regulations.			
		KYOCERA 3in1 COPIER SYSTEM Model: FS-3640/3140MFP High speed durable and reliable multifunctional (Photocopier, Printer & Scanner) system Features: * Automatic duplex (front & back) print & photocopy * Print/Copy speed: 40 pages per minute * Monochrome (black & white) laser system * Paper size: A4, A5, B5, Letter, Foolscap	1	Interested eligible bidders may obtain further information at the address below and inspect the Bidding Documents from 10:00am to 4:00pm Mondays to Fridays, excluding public holidays.			
		Kyocera Full Colour A3 D.I Machine Model: TRIUMPH ADLER 3505ci Taskalfa 3551ci FEATURES: *Full colour Direct Image (D.I) Printing/Photocopy/Scan *Print speed: 30 to 35 pages per minute *Colour Laser system *Automatic Duplex (front & back) Print & Copy *Media size: A3, A4, B5, B6, Letter, Foolscap... *Media type: plain paper, glossy, heat transfer, envelop & thick paper of up to 250g/m ² .	1	4. Qualifications requirements include: - Evidence of previous supply (sale) of similar Equipment proposed for the last 5 years. - Provide evidence of firm's corporate registration in Nigeria or overseas. - Audited Financial Statements for the last 5 years to demonstrate the financial capability of the Bidder in terms of Profitability and adequate working capital. - Have a minimum of Two (2) similar supplies of or related equipment with at least a value of NGN100 million each, that have been satisfactorily or substantially completed as prime supplier between January 1, 2018 and the submission deadline. The qualifying contracts must be in above listed equipment or related to the assignment. - Minimum average annual turnover in the last Five (5) years of at least: NGN50 million , - Have liquidity and/or evidence of access to or availability of confirmed positive credit facilities of not less than NGN50 Million - After Sales services facility Centre in Nigeria - A margin of preference for eligible national contractors shall not applied			
5	Tablets	Tab S6 Lite 10.4" 128GB Android Tablet, S Pen Included, Slim Metal Design, AKG Dual Speakers, Long Lasting Battery	15	5. The bidding document in English Language may be purchased by interested eligible Bidders upon the submission of a written application to the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of Fifteen Thousand Naira (N30, 000.00) . The method of payment will be Bank draft in favor of The Project Coordinator, Plateau State - Nigeria Agro-Climatic Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscapes Project or pay directly into this Bank account; Plateau State ACRReSAL Government Counterpart Fund Acct , Account Number: 5030131651 and bring the payment evidence to the address below. The bidding document will be sent to the bidder by email or courier on request at the cost of the bidder.			
6	External Hard Drive (1TB)	Transcend External Hard Disk 1TB	15	6. Bids must be delivered to the address below on or before 11.30 am on Wednesday, July 5th, 2023 . Electronic Bids submission will not be permitted. Late Bids will be rejected. Bids will be opened at 12.00 am local time on Wednesday, July 5th, 2023 at the address below in the presence of Bidders representatives who choose to attend.			
		Key features: • USB 3.1 Gen 1 interface • Military-grade shock resistance • Up to 1TB storage space • Slim form factor for greater convenience and portability • One-touch auto backup button • Quick reconnect button • Exclusive Transcend Elite software • SKU: TR784EL1HE6SFNAFAMZ • Product Line: Nec Tech • Weight (kg): 1 • Hard Disk (GB): 1000 • Internal Memory(GB): 1000 • Memory Size (GB): 1000		7. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid –Security of 2.5% of bid price			
7	UPS	Mercury 6kva Online UPS, Single Phase Online Mercury Uninterruptible Power Supply HP960C-S	1	8. The address referred to above is: The State Project Coordinator State Project Management Unit Plateau State Agro-Climatic Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscapes Project (PLS-ACRReSAL), No.19 Apollo Crescent, GRA, Jos. Telephone: 08036154305 E mail:plateauacresal@gmail.com			
		Mercury Elite 3000VA Pro Line Interactive Ups (3kva)	8	Mr. Garba G. Gonkol State Project Coordinator			

News

Youth rapes 5 years old girl

By WILLIE ATTAH, Gombe

POLICE in Gombe parades 20 year old for luring, raping a 5 year old. Another suspect for cattle rustling.

The Gombe State Police Command has paraded a twenty year old man, Babangida Isa, for luring a five year old girl and raping her behind a Tsangaya (Almajiri) school in Bajoga town, Funakaye LGA of the state.

In a release made available to newsmen in Gombe, the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) of the State Command, ASP MahidMuazuAbubakar, said the suspect was reported by the girl's father, Yahaya Isa.

According to police report, "on the 6th of June 2023 at about 5 pm, one YahayaIsah, male of Bajoga came to the Division and reported that Babangida Isa lured his 5-year-old daughter, whose name was withheld, behind one Almajiri school and forcefully raped her". He said, on receipt of the complaint, the said suspect was arrested where he voluntarily confessed to the crime, adding that both the suspect and the victim were taken to the hospital for a medical examination.

The suspect, according to Mahid, will soon be charged to court for prosecution.

In another development, the Command said they were able to recover 21 cows rustled by a 30 year old Sale Kabo, of Bandila village, Gulani LGA, Yobe State who was equally arrested.

According to Police report, "On 6th June 2023, oneJauroAhmadu, a 75 - year-old man of Shuwari village via BajogaFunakaye LGA, reported to the Bajoga Divisional Police Headquarters that his 21 cows valued at 7 million naira had been stolen from his village at night.

Mahid said, the Divisional Police Officer detailed his personnel who immediately commenced investigation. After conducting a thorough investigation, the suspect was arrested in connection with the theft which he confessed he had committed.

All the stolen cows and other relevant exhibits were recovered. The suspect is currently in police custody and will be charged to court as soon as the investigation is concluded.

ASP Mahid also expressed the State Commissioner of Police, OquaEtim's commendation over the efforts of the detectives attached to the Bajoga Division who were involved



in the investigation for their swift action and dedication to duty.

He assured the public of the Command's readiness in ensuring the safety and security of all citizens and urged them to report any suspicious activities and to cooperate with the police in

their efforts to maintain peace and order in the community.

The CP also encouraged officers and men of the Command to work tirelessly in ensuring that criminals are brought to justice and that the state remains safe and secure for all residents.

Former governor honored by ATBU students

From ABBAS GUNGURA, Bauchi

GRADUATING students of Faculty of Environmental Technology, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University (ATBU), in Bauchi State have conferred an Award of Excellence on the immediate past governor of Bauchi State, Mohammed Abubakar (SAN).

The students made the presentation of the award to the ex governor during a public lecture and magazine launch organised by the students.

Speaking during the ceremony, the Vice Chancellor of the institution, Professor Muhammad AbdulAzeez, said that the students recognized and appreciated Abubakar for the priority given to education during his regime from 2015 to 2019.

Also speaking shortly after receiving the award, the former governor said he felt elated to have received the award, especially coming from the youth and students

of the state. Abubakar explained that he held the education of the youth very dear in his heart, particularly, the type of education provided to the students by the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi State.

Speaking on the status of basic education four years after leaving office, Abubakar said that "I don't have the statistics in respect of the success in the West African Examination Council or the National Examination Council in the state.

"However, in terms of physical infrastructure, the present government of the state has done its best. The inner workings, I wouldn't know but the one I have seen, I have talked about.

"Education generally is still being faced with a lot of problems in the Northern parts of the country, partly because of the culture of our people and partly because of growth, meteoric rise in the population of this country.



Mohammed

KOGI State Ministry for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs has officially flagged off the distribution of farm imputes to farmers in the state.

Materials distributed include: fertilizer, pesticides, herbicides and sprayers.

The Technical Assistant to the Commissioner, Ministry for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Elder Alfa Arome who performed the ceremony on behalf of his boss, said that the distribution of farm imputes to farmers is geared towards ensuring food security in the state.

Arome commended Governor Yahaya Bello's gesture in the provision of essential needs for the people of the state.

He expressed appreciation to local government officials for being supportive to the GYB

led administration and implored them to ensure that the items were distributed to the targeted beneficiaries free of charge.

Receiving the items on behalf of the farmers, the Local Government heads of

Kogi flags off distribution of farm imputes to farmers

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja



Bello

Agriculture Department and DLGs of Local Government Councils in the 3 Senatorial Districts of the state, in their various responses, expressed profound gratitude to the governor for the farm imputes

distributed, adding that it is a timely event during this farming season.

They pledged their commitment towards ensuring fairness and equity in the distribution of imputes to farmers.

availability of the infrastructure.

"We need to pay in. Education is so important that it should not be left to the government alone," he said.

He, however, called on government at all levels to be more dedicated towards improving the education system, especially, by accruing 20 per cent of its budget to education, adding that a lot needs to be done in the field of education in the country.

Muazu Usman expressed

confidence that Governors Mohammed and Fubara would use their positions to bring unity, sustainable growth and development to the party and country at large.

He said the emergence of the new leaders of the Forum was well-deserved considering their antecedents and leadership pedigree.

Muazu, however, urged the two leaders to work assiduously towards rebuilding the party at all levels and to provide Nigerians with a viable alternative.

Bauchi Governor okays recruitment of 1,684 workers

From ABBAS GUNGURA, Bauchi

IN fulfilment of his campaign promises, Governor Bala Mohammed, of Bauchi State has lifted the embargo on employment in to the State Civil Service and granted approval for the recruitment of over one thousand six hundred and eighty workers in critical areas in various Ministries, Departments and Agencies across the state.

The state Head of Civil Service AlhajiYahuzaAdamuHaruna, made this known recently while addressing journalists on the development.

He explained that the priority of applicants to be recruited are one thousand teachers of core subjects such as English, Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Physics and ICT as well as one hundred and fifty four staff at Aminu Saleh College of Education Azare.

The state Head of Service, added that the governor also

granted approval for Ministry of Agriculture to recruit two hundred and six extension workers and farm managers in fulfilment of his promise during the launch of this year's farming season and sales of fertilizer at Azare.

It could be recalled that the announcement of lifting the employment embargo by Governor Bala Mohammed was made during his inaugural speech on 29th May at Abubakar Tafawa Balewa Stadium Bauchi.

Yahuza commended the governor for the gesture and expressed hope that the employment would provide the manpower needed in relevant sectors and enhance the economic status of the state.

He therefore warned

applicants to be wary of fraudsters, stressing that government and security agents would be monitoring the process with a view to identifying culprits..

" Lastyear Government recruited staff in the health sector. He is going to recruit more, and even SUBEB will also submit the critical areas to recruit more teachers", Yahuza said.

The HOS said, ministries and government offices, have been asked to submit requests for employment in critical areas in their offices.

The state Chairman of the Nigeria Labour Congress (N L C), Comrade DaudaMaidaraShu'aibu, commended the Governor for his effort to reduce the unemployment rate in the state and assured that the government and labour would wax stronger.

News

CP Aminu Alhassan pulls-out of service

**From
ABBAS GUNGURA,
Bauchi**

IN a respective and honourable manner, the Bauchi State Police Command recently pulled out the immediate past Commissioner of Police (CP) Aminu Alhassan (Rtd), out of service into retirement, as he attended the stipulated 60 years of age while serving the Nigeria Police Force for 33 years.

In a well attended pull out ceremony shortly after his last review of parade mounted by the State Police Command on Wednesday 8th June, 2023 at the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa Stadium Bauchi, that marked his official retirement date, the former commissioner expressed

his gratitude to Allah (SWA) for sparing his life to witness his retirement after 33 years in the service of the police.

The retired commissioner equally thanked his superiors and all those that worked under him when he was in service, saying that he enjoyed their tremendous support and goodwill.

There were goodwill messages from the Bauchi State Government, State Security Chiefs, Bauchi Emirate Council and

friends of the CP Alhassan (Rtd).

THE Nigeria Standard at the venue of the event gathered from his citation, that CP Aminu Alhassan psc(rtd) was born on the 8th of June 1963 in Kano, Kano State and was enlisted into the Nigeria Police Force on 3rd March 1990.

Adding that he is a thoroughbred professional with a record of 33 years working experience spanning across administration, intelligence, and operations.

Alhassan stated his active police service in the

Nigeria Police Force after his Commissioning in 1991 at Enugu State Police Command, South-East Nigeria where he served as Patrol and Guard Officer at Ogui Division, Enugu, Patrol Officer Abakpa Nike Division, Traffic Officer at Trans-Ekulu Division, 2ic Narcotics State CID Enugu, Homicide Detective Zone 4 Headquarters, Makurdi-Benue State, Divisional Crime Officer A Division Jos, Plateau State, Failed Banks Inquiry FCID Annexe Victoria Island, Lagos, DPO Talata Mafara & Tsagera Divisions, Zamfara State, CSP

Admin, Police Headquarters Gusau, Zamfara State, 2ic State CID, Gusau, Zamfara, OC CIB Benin, Edo State.

He also served and held different positions which include but not limited to Command and staff positions, AC Intelligence FIB Force Headquarters, Abuja and AC State CID Abeokuta, Ogun State.

He was an Area Commander Hadejia-Jigawa State, an active member of the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners, and a member of the African Forensic Science Association.

During his career in the

police, he served in four (4) different Commands as a Deputy Commissioner of Police. He was DC Liberals Police Staff College Jos, DC State CID Abeokuta Ogun State, DC SCID Delta State Asaba, and moved to DC Operations Yenagoa-Bayelsa State respectively. Soon after his promotion to the enviable rank of Commissioner of Police, he was posted to Cross River State as the Commissioner of Police. He was redeployed to X-Squad Lagos Force CID as CP X Squad before finally he was posted to Bauchi State Command as the 44th Commissioner of Police.

CHANGE OF NAME

<p>GOTOM</p> <p>I, formerly known as MICHAEL FILLANKAT GOLIS, now wish to be known and address as GOTOM FILLANKAT NENCHINI. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>RAMNAN</p> <p>I, formerly known as RAMNAN BRIGHT, now wish to be known and address as RAMNAN SARGWAK. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>KENABE</p> <p>I, formerly known as ROTKA RITJIMWA GOTOM, now wish to be known and address as KENABE RITJIMWA GOGWIM. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>CHRISTOPHER</p> <p>I, formerly known as CHRISTOPHER RUTH, now wish to be known and address as CHRISTOPHER RUTH NANYI. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>MARTINS</p> <p>I, formerly known as NANSOH RAMNAP, now wish to be known and address as MARTINS EMMANUEL. My correct date of birth is 07/08/2001 not 01/01/1992. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>MUHAMMAD</p> <p>I, formerly known as MOHAMMED YAHAYA HASSAN, now wish to be known and address as MUHAMMAD YAHAYA SAKA. My correct date of birth is 15/01/1998. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>
<p>VICTOR</p> <p>I, formerly known as VICTOR ILIYA ZARI, now wish to be known and address as VICTOR ILIYA. My correct date of birth is 28/10/2002. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>YAKUBU</p> <p>I, formerly known as YUSUF AJANG ADAMU, now wish to be known and address as YAKUBU YUSUF. My correct date of birth is 02/03/2002. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>DAMYAGHAL</p> <p>I, formerly known as MARK RAYMOND, now wish to be known and address as DAMYAGHAL, RAYMOND MARK. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>LAR</p> <p>I, formerly known as LAR NENDELMWA NANDIR, now wish to be known and address as LAR NENDIRMWA NANDIR. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>BAUSHE</p> <p>I, formerly known as BAHAUSHE SAMUEL, now wish to be known and address as BAUSHE SELMAN SAMUEL. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>NANSHEP</p> <p>I, formerly known as NANSHAP ILIYA NANVEN, now wish to be known and address as NANSHEP NANVEN. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>
<p>GWONG</p> <p>I, formerly known as HELEN GWONG, now wish to be known and address as GWONG LAPEHE HELEN. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>PHEBEAN</p> <p>I, formerly known as PHEBEAN OLOLADE EGBUNIWE, now wish to be known and address as PHEBEAN OLOLADE IKWU. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>NWANKWO</p> <p>I, formerly known as BLESSING EZIAMAKA KINGSLE, now wish to be known and address as NWANKWO BLESSING EZIAMAKA. My correct date of birth is 20/10/2003. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>YAHUZA</p> <p>I, formerly known as MARIYA YAHUZA, now wish to be known and address as YAHUZA MARYAM NADABA. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>NASUK</p> <p>I, formerly known as PEACE MIWENA ADAHA, now wish to be known and address as NASUK PEACE DASHE. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>AHMAD</p> <p>I, formerly known as AHMAD ABBA, now wish to be known and address as AHMAD ISMAIL. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>
<p>DAPKA</p> <p>I, formerly known as JOSEPH AYITMWA JENNIFER, now wish to be known and address as DAPKA AYITMWA JOSEPH. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>CHANGTIM</p> <p>I, formerly known as DANJA SUNDAY, now wish to be known and address as CHANGTIM SUNDAY. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>ORAEKWE</p> <p>I, formerly known as EZENWA JENNIFER CHIKA, now wish to be known and address as ORAEKWE JENNIFER CHIKA. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>MALLAN</p> <p>I, formerly known as ABASS NAOMI YUSUF, now wish to be known and address as MALLAN NAOMI YUSUFU. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>GODSPOWER</p> <p>I, formerly known as MISS OLAREWAJU IKEMEH GLORY, now wish to be known and address as MRS. GODSPOWER GLORY OBOJADE. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>YUNUSA</p> <p>I, formerly known as INUSA YAHUZA ABDULRAHMAN, now wish to be known and address as YUNUSA YAHUZA ABDULRAHMAN. My correct date of birth is 20/10/2001 not 03/07/1995. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>
<p>MUHAMMAD</p> <p>I, formerly known as MOHAMMED HAMZA ABBA, now wish to be known and address as MUHAMMAD HAMZA. My correct date of birth is 30/11/1986. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>SALIMU</p> <p>I, formerly known as SALIHU ADAMU, now wish to be known and address as SALIMU ADAMU MAIBANKI. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>SARATU</p> <p>I, formerly known as SARATU SHUAIBU ANANI, now wish to be known and address as SARATU ANANI. All former documents remain valid. Wase Local Education Authority, Unity Bank PLC, all concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>SHUAIBU</p> <p>I, formerly known as SHUAIBU ADAM, now wish to be known and address as SHUAIBU ABUBAKAR ADAM. My correct date of birth is 01/05/1998 not 01/01/1991. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>PAUL</p> <p>I, formerly known as PAUL KWADA ISA, now wish to be known and address as PAUL ISA. My correct date of birth is 28/08/1997. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>ROSE</p> <p>I, formerly known as ROSE RITMWA SOLOMON, now wish to be known and address as ROSE RITMWA ISA. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>
<p>MONDAY</p> <p>I, formerly known as MONDAY SABIN, now wish to be known and address as MONDAY JOSEPH SABIN. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>MOHAMMED</p> <p>I, formerly known as ABBAS GARBA MOHAMMED, now wish to be known and address as MOHAMMED ABBAS. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>PWOL</p> <p>I, formerly known as JOHN GYANG, now wish to be known and address as PWOL JOHN GYANG. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>BESSAN</p> <p>I, formerly known as ELKANA BASSAN YOHANA, now wish to be known and address as BESSAN ELKANAH ELVIS. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>DAPAN</p> <p>I, formerly known as LIVINUS HAPPINESS DAPAN, now wish to be known and address as DAPAN HAPPINESS LIVITICUS. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p>ALKASIM</p> <p>I, formerly known as KASSIM MOHAMMED, now wish to be known and address as ALKASIM MUHAMMAD. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>

NOTICE OF NEXT-OF-KIN

I, **MR. NASARA MATAWAL SOLOMON**, the bonafide son of late **MRS. DINATU MATHIAS** who died on the July 27, 2022. Before her demise, she made me, **MR. NASARA MATAWAL SOLOMON (SON)** as her next of kin.

Authorities concerned and the general public to please take note.

**Signed:
MR. NASARA MATAWAL SOLOMON**

LOSS OF DOCUMENT

This is to notify the general public of the lost of **Original Right of Occupancy (R of O) No. PL 34269** of his land situated at Rantya Jos-South LGA.

All efforts made to traced the missing document proved abortive, hence this notice.

Authorities concerned and the general public to please take note.

**Signed:
SOLOMON MUSA PELEM**

JENNIFER

I, formerly known as **JENNIFER JOSPHE JAMES**, now wish to be known and address as **JENNIFER JOSHUA GWOM**. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.

**THIS SPACE
IS FOR SALE**



By FRANCISCA ADIDI

NIGERIA is a country of over 200 million citizens with two major religions, and over 500+ different tribes and ethnic cultures. The too many tribes and ethnic groups has led to a continuous increase in division among many people who are residents of the country.

The ethnic diversity has presently made Nigerians not to ignore the differences we have as a people. This is to say that while we recognize these differences, we must not allow them to lead us in to discriminating against others

who may not belong to our "clusters". That is why today the ethnic diversity has gained entrance comfortably into Nigeria's democracy which has led us to where we are today with everyone rooting for his own brother,

stereotypes and the otherization of realities of having Berom agenda, Mwuaghavul caucus, Gamai click, Southern agenda or central agenda in Plateau State.

The irony of this assertion is that as Nigerians, we all know



The discrimination of Nigerians by Nigerians

ethnicity or religion.

The differences to some based on assumptions and stereotypes have fueled the differences of Nigerians by Nigerians which has eaten deep for years.

In spite of the imperfections of our democracy, it remains the best option for us in electing our leaders. But the diversity of our ethnicity and religious differences has led to deeper divide between us.

We even see this in political movements. Political ideas that may suggest that just because you belong to one political crusade, you have to be more patriotic than others who uphold their constitutional rights to disagree with you. One way or the other, we have been guilty and are criminals to

this, but we are all still strong perpetrators of these menace. From the subtle assumptions that "Igbos are money mongers and cannot rule Nigeria to the belief that some people are "room and parlour" or that this political party is greedy.

And these differences are birthed from our struggles to attain higher positions which most times discredit good people for bad ones. That is why things are not just right with us in Nigeria as a people. We often refuse the best leaders, best people and best candidates to lead because of our political differences, ethnic divisions and religious beliefs.

In Plateau State, the hatred in the polity has eaten so deep that we forget governance is

continuous. We are so much blinded and have given a damn to what others do, all because of our political differences and ethnic divisions forgetting the part of religion. All of these hinders progress and Unity.

In Nigeria, stereotypes are pervasive and can be found across various aspects of society. Within our context, the first point of stereotypes are ethnic and religious bigotry, then in social concepts. The sad part is that these stereotypes are often perpetuated through social interactions, media representation, and cultural biases, which are hinderance to social cohesion and impede progress.

Stereotyping does not only distort the perception of

individuals but also limits opportunities and creates barriers to success. It assumes before you know, and it projects before you actually see and because of that we are blinded and do not see people for who they are or what they have to offer.

What we need today is Unity and peace which is necessary to sustain the essence of every struggle of our existence as well as, sustain democracy and build a greater Nigeria.

The task before us as a people and as a nation is to strive towards perfecting ourselves and our democracy, especially in critical areas such as transparent and credible elections, accountable governance and citizen participation.



By KENNETH DARENG

I monitored closely how events unfolded at the just concluded national convention of the Peoples Democratic Party [PDP] and the political intrigues that led to the emergence of former Vice President Atiku Abubakar who picked the party's nomination for the 2023 Presidential election after defeating his closest rival Governor Nyesom Wike with a hundred plus votes.

All that is now confined to the history books but what has remained a talking point is, how Governor Aminu Tambuwal of Sokoto State, also a Presidential aspirant decided at the 11th hour to abandon his close ally Wike

Between betrayal and ambition

and stepped down for Atiku Abubakar which automatically threw the spanners in Nyesom Wike's political ambition to fly the PDP's flag as its presidential candidate at the convention.

Many political observers have ascribed Tambuwal's action as an act of betrayal. Wike himself at a reception organized for him shortly on his return to Port Harcourt from the convention alluded that he was on his way to victory if not for Tambuwal.

Perhaps, by now the word "BETRAYAL" should not be strange to most individuals as husbands, wives, brothers, friends, colleagues friends, political associates or generally as Nigerians or as Africans who might have at one point or the other felt betrayed. Indeed such a pain does not go away, it serves as a constant reminder to the person carrying such burden which can be for a life time.

Ironically if Wike felt betrayed, then what would Chibuke Amaechi be telling him? I heard supporters of

Asiwaju Ahmed Bola Tinubu calling Vice President Yemi Osibanjo a traitor then forgetting what their principal did to former Lagos state Governor Akinyemi Ambode.

History has shown betrayal has lived with mankind from ancient days till date with the

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examples in ancient Rome BC, Julius Ceasar was betrayed by his closest friend Brutus who at the point of dying after being stabbed by his friend, asked; "etu Brute..."[even you Brutus?].

Jesus Christ was betrayed by one of his disciples Judas and so it has been with different forms of betrayals across all strata of society today. Sometimes it is the quest for personal or group interest that leads to such actions which also depends on the motive and at what cost. Some would even smile and say it is matter of interest with no permanent friend nor enemy. But whether we like it or not our conscience must prick us at that moment when a betrayal is about to be committed that is if that individual has any.

In Africa, we have seen quite a number of such instances like that of Thomas Sankara who was brutally assassinated by his childhood friend Blaise Campaore who later took over power in Burkina Faso. And here in Nigeria we have had many of such right from

the post- Independence era where Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe was said to have been betrayed by the power brokers of the South West by supporting the North in installing Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa as Prime Minister while he was a mere ceremonial President. So it went during the 1966 military coup which changed the narrative from one betrayal to another which has today succeeded in creating a deep wound in some cases. For example, the Coup that toppled General Gowon was announced by his friend and fellow Plateau man Major General Joseph Nanven Garba, while the coup that terminated General Muhammadu Buhari was spear headed by General Ibrahim Babangida.

Therefore, it may be right to say that betrayal is always driven by ambition which not only hurts the other person it also creates a gulf of personal hatred and anger with dire consequences which now penetrates across political, ethnic and religious divide with the potency to divide even what is call Nigeria.

THE move was considered as a posthumous National Honour to the foremost politician, Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola, who is widely believed to have won the June 12, 1993, presidential election.

Former president, Muhammadu Buhari, in 2018 declared June 12 as Nigeria's new Democracy Day as opposed to May 29 which was recognised in the past.

The move was considered as a posthumous National Honour to the foremost politician, Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola, who is widely believed to have won the June 12, 1993, presidential election.

At the time, the presidential election was being held for the first time since the 1983 military coup. Many observers described the election as the most significant in Nigeria's post-independence political history.

It is still viewed as the freest, fairest and most peaceful election ever held in Nigeria.

The election recorded an estimated 14 million Nigerians, irrespective of ethnic, religious, class, and regional affiliations, (in a period when religious acrimony and tension had reached its zenith), who defied bad weather to elect their president with the hope of ending eight years of military dictatorships.

However, the election was annulled by the government of former military ruler, Ibrahim Babangida.

The cancellation led to nationwide protests which led to the death, injury and incarceration of hundreds of Nigerians.

About a year later, MKO Abiola, after waiting endlessly for the announcement of his victory, declared himself president. Below is the full speech, delivered on June 11, 1994, and dubbed the 'Epetedo Proclamation'. This was because the speech was made in the Epetedo area of Lagos Island. "People of Nigeria, exactly one year ago, you turned out in your millions to vote for me, Chief M.K.O. Abiola, as the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. But politicians in uniform, who call themselves soldiers but are more devious than any civilian would want to be, deprived you of your God-given right to be ruled by the President you had yourselves elected.

"These soldier-politicians introduced into our body politic, a concept hitherto unknown to our political lexicography, something strangely called the "annulment" of an election perceived by all to have been the fairest, cleanest and most peaceful ever held in our nation. "Since that abominable act of naked political armed robbery occurred, I have been constantly urged by people of goodwill, both in Nigeria and abroad, to put the matter back into the people's hands and get them to actualise the mandate they gave me at the polls. But mindful of the need to ensure that peace continues to reign in our fragile federation, I have so far tried to pursue sweet reason and negotiation.

"My hope has always been to arouse whatever remnants of patriotism are left in the hearts of these thieves of your mandate and to persuade them that they should not allow their personal desire to rule to usher our beloved country into an era of political instability and economic ruin.

"All I have sought to do, in seeking dialogue with them, has been to try and get them to realise that only real democracy can move our nation forward towards progress, and earn her the respect she deserves from the international community.

"However, although this peaceful approach has exposed me to severe censure by some who have mistaken it for weakness on my part, those with whom I have sought to dialogue have remained like stones, neither stirred to show loyalty to the collective decision of the people of their own country, nor to observe Allah's injunction that they should exhibit justice and fair-play in all their dealings with their fellowmen. "Appeals to their honour as officers and gentlemen of the gallant

be rightfully ours, is all but lost. For who will vote for Nigeria to get the seat if Nigerian military rulers do not respect the votes of their own people? "Enough of military rule. We are sickened to see people who have shown little or no personal achievement, either in building up private businesses or making a success of any tangible thing, being placed in charge of the management of our nation's economy, by rulers who are not



Is this the Nigeria we want? — MKO Abiola



Abiola

Nigerian Armed Forces, have fallen on deaf ears. Instead, they have resorted to the tactics of divide and rule, bribery and political perfidy, misinformation and (vile) propaganda.

"They arrest everyone who disagrees with them. Even the 71-year-old hero of our nation, Chief Anthony Enahoro, was not spared. How much longer can we tolerate all this? People of Nigeria, you are all witnesses that I have tried to climb the highest mountain, cross the deepest river and walk the longest mile, in order to get these men to obey the will of our people.

"There is no humiliation I have not endured, no snare that has not been put in my path, no 'setup' that has not been designed for me in my endeavour to use the path of peace to enforce the mandate that you bestowed on me one year ago. It has been a long night. But the dawn is here.

"Today, people of Nigeria, I join you all in saying, 'Enough is Enough!' We have endured 24 years of military rule in our 34 years of independence.

"Military rule has led to our nation fighting a civil war with itself. Military rule has destabilised our nation today as not before in its history. Military rule has impoverished our people and introduced a dreadful trade in drugs which has made our country's name an anathema in many parts of the world.

"Even soccer fans going to watch the Green Eagles display in America are being made to suffer there needlessly because Nigeria's name is linked with a credit card and fraud and "419." Politically, military rule has torn to shreds the prestige due to our country because of its size and population. "The permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council that should

accountable to anyone. "Enough of square pegs in round holes. We are tired of the military's repetitive tendency to experiment with our economy: Today, they say 'no controls.' Tomorrow; they say 'Full controls'. The day after, they say 'Fine tuning'.

"The next day, they say 'Devaluation'. A few days later, they say 'Revalue the same naira upwards again Abi?' All we can see are the consequences of this permanent game of military 'about turns' high inflation, a huge budget deficit and an enormous foreign debt repayment burden, dying industries, high unemployment and a demoralised populace. "Our youths, in particular, can see no hope on the horizon, and many can only dream of escaping from our shores to join the brain drain. Is this the Nigeria we want? We are plagued also by periodic balance of payments crises, which have led to a perennial shortage of essential drugs that has turned our hospitals and clinics into mortuaries.

"A scarcity of books and equipment has rendered our schools into desolate deserts of ignorance. Our factories are crying for machinery, spare parts and raw materials. But each day that passes, instead of these economic diseases being cured, they are rather strengthened as an irrational allocation of foreign exchange based on favouritism and corruption becomes the order of the day.

"Enough is enough of economic mismanagement! People of Nigeria, during the election campaign last year, I presented you with a programme entitled HOPE '93. This programme was aimed precisely at solving these economic (problems) that have demoralised us all. I toured every part of Nigeria to present this programme to the electorate. I was questioned on it at

public rallies and press conferences and I had the privilege of incorporating much of the feedback that I obtained from the people.

"Because you knew I would not only listen to you but deliver superb results from the programme, you voted for me in your millions and gave me an overwhelming majority over my opponent. To be precise, you gave me 58.4 per cent of the popular vote and a majority in 20 out of 30 states plus the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Not only that, but you also enabled me to fulfil the constitutional requirement that the winner should obtain one-third of the votes in two-thirds of the states.

"I am sure that when you cast an eye on the moribund state of Nigeria today, you ask yourselves: 'What have we done to deserve this when we have a president-elect who can lead a government that can change things for the better?' Our patience has come to an end.

"As of now, from this moment, a new Government of National Unity is in power throughout the length and breadth of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, led by me, Bashorun M.K.O. Abiola, as President and Commander-in-Chief. The National Assembly is hereby reconvened. All dismissed governors are reinstated. "The State Assemblies are reconstituted, as are all local government councils. I urge them to adopt a bi-partisan approach to all the issues that come before them. At the national level, a bi-partisan approach will be our guiding principle. I call upon the usurper, General Sani Abacha, to announce his resignation forthwith, together with the rest of his illegal ruling council. We are prepared to enter into negotiations with them to work out the mechanics for a smooth transfer of power.

"I pledge that if they hand over

quietly, they will be retired with all their entitlements, and their positions will be accorded all the respect due to them. For our objective is neither recrimination nor witch-hunting, but an enforcement of the will of the Nigerian people, as expressed in free elections conducted by the duly constituted authority of the time.

"I hereby invoke the mandate bestowed upon me by my victory in the said election, to call on all members of the Armed Forces and the Police, the Civil and Public Services throughout the Federal Republic of Nigeria, to obey only the Government of National Unity that is headed by me, your only elected President.

"My Government of National Unity is the only legitimate, constituted authority in the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as of now. People of Nigeria, these are challenging times in the history of our continent, Africa, and we in Nigeria must not allow ourselves to be left behind. Our struggle is the same as that waged by the people of South Africa, which has been successfully concluded, with the inauguration of Mr. Nelson Mandela as the first African President of that country. "Nelson Mandela fought to replace MINORITY rule with MAJORITY rule. We in Nigeria are also fighting to replace MINORITY rule, for we are ruled by only a tiny section of our armed forces. Like the South Africans, we want MAJORITY rule today, that is rule only by those chosen by all the people of Nigeria as a whole in free and fair elections.

"The only difference between South Africa and Nigeria is that those who imposed minority rule on the majority rule whether it is by black or white remains minority rule, and must be booted out. I call on you, the heroic people of Nigeria, to emulate the actions of your brothers and sisters in South Africa and stand up as one person to throw away the yoke of minority rule forever.

"The antics of every minority that oppresses the majority are always the same. They will try to intimidate you with threats of police action. But do not let us fear arrest. In South Africa, so many people were arrested, during the campaign against the Pass Laws, for instance, that the jails could not hold all of them. Today, apartheid is gone forever.

"So, let it be with Nigeria. Let us say goodbye forever to minority rule by the military. They talk of treason. But haven't they heard of the Rivonia treason trial in South Africa? Did those treason trials halt the march of history? People of Nigeria, our time is now. You are the repository of power in the land.

"No one can give you power. It is yours. Take it! From this day, show to the world that anyone who takes the people of Nigeria for fools is deceiving himself and will have the people to answer to. God bless you all. Long live the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Long live the Government of National Unity."

IMAGES

COURTESY CALL

Former Plateau State First Lady, Professor Mary Lar visited the First Lady of Plateau State Barr. Helen Mutfwang, at Government House, Rayfield, Jos recently



Barr. Helen Mutfwang, wife of the Governor (right) responding to the message of Professor Mary Lar



Left, Mrs. Rose Fom, wife of member representing Jos South, PLHA with Mrs. Diana Mwadkon, wife of the Senator Representing the Northern Zone



Professor Mary Lar, presenting a gift to the First Lady of Plateau State, Barr. Helen Mutfwang



Barr. Olivia Dazyam, Former Commissioner of Women Affairs and Social Development

COURTESY CALL

Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (MOWA) recently paid a visit to wife of the Governor of Plateau State, Barr. Helen Mutfwang, at Government House, Rayfield, Jos, led by the Ministry's Permanent Secretary, Mrs. Hassana Ayika



Barr. Helen Mutfwang delivering speech during the visit



Mrs. Hasana Ayika, Permanent Secretary, (right) with her directors



From left are, Mrs. Martina J. C. Dakur, PDP State Women Leader, Barr. Olivia Dazyam, former Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Development and former member PLHA, Hon. Esther Simi Dusu



Barr. Helen Mutfwang (middle) in a group photograph with the wives of top government functionaries after the meeting

Odd World

People in stitches after pregnancy announcement

A woman has opened up about how she broke her pregnancy news to her best friend while simultaneously asking her to be godmother, through an adorable gift that left her friend feeling emotional. It can be a nerve-racking moment - revealing to your best mate that you're pregnant. But one woman proved just how important female friendship is after sharing a heartwarming video of her presenting a gift to her female friend on Galentine's Day. The celebration traditionally takes place the day before Valentine's Day - and one woman used the day to announce her pregnancy while asking her to be godmother to her unborn child.

Hilariously, a waitress in the restaurant got the wrong end of the stick after coming over - leaving people in hysterics at her comment. TikTok user Alexys - who goes by the username dyslexya - shared a clip of her best friend opening up her gifts, which included a cute box of chocolate with a cat picture on it. Reaching into the gift bag once again, the friend pulled out a black cup wrapped in pink tissue paper. She initially looked stunned, reading a message that followers couldn't see. Then she finally opens up the lid, revealing a positive pregnancy test inside. It was at this moment that the waitress came over, getting

completely the wrong end of the stick and - to their great amusement - asking if it was "something kinky". All the while, the friend appears to be nearly speechless with joy and surprise, tearing up as Alexys captured the moment on camera. In the comments section, Alexys - a boudoir photographer - explained that the cup bore the words, "Spooky Godmother" in purple glitter. The emotional clip has been liked more than 1.4 million times and left people feeling very emotional at the sweet clip. One follower added: "What a sweet best friend!!!" while another approvingly commented: "And this is why she's the godmum".



'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

Don't take democracy for granted - Tinubu

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, on Monday, urged Nigerians never to take democracy for granted. Tinubu gave the admonition in his nationwide broadcast to mark the 30th anniversary of the annulment of the June 12, 1993, presidential election. He noted that the winner of the June 12, 1993, annulled presidential election, Chief MKO Abiola, sacrificed his life for it. CROSS UDO writes.

TINUBU said the abortion, by military fiat, of the decisive victory of Chief Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola of the defunct Social Democratic Party (SDP) in the June 12, 1993, presidential election, up to that time, the fairest and freest election in the country's political evolution, led to a prolonged struggle that led to the return to democracy in 1999.

Noting that the 2023 polls had come and gone, Tinubu said those who won today may lose tomorrow, and said those who cannot endure and accept the pains of electoral defeat do not deserve the joy of victory if they triumph.

He warned the judiciary against illegal orders to truncate democracy and promised to be fair to all. He also urged those elected at the polls to deliver the dividends of democracy to the citizenry.

The broadcast read in part: "It is exactly three decades today that Nigerians went to the polls to exercise their inalienable right to elect a President of their choice to lead the transition from military dictatorship to a representative government of the people.

"The abortion, by military fiat, of the decisive victory of Chief Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola of the defunct Social Democratic Party (SDP) in the June 12, 1993, presidential election, up to that time, the fairest and freest election in the country's political evolution, turned out, ironically, to be the seed that germinated into the prolonged struggle that gave birth to the democracy we currently enjoy since 1999.

"In rising to strongly oppose the arbitrary annulment of the will of the majority of Nigerians, as expressed in that historic election, the substantial number of our people, who participated in the struggle to de-annul the election, signified their fierce commitment to enthroning democracy as a form of government that best ennobles the liberty, the dignity of the individual and the integrity as well as the stability of the polity.

"The fierce opposition to the annulment of the June 12, 1993, presidential election and the unrelenting pro-democracy onslaught it unleashed was the equivalent of the battle against colonial rule by our founding fathers that resulted in the gaining of Nigeria's independence in 1960.

"Just like the anti-colonial movement, the pro-June 12 vanguards demonstrated, once again, the enduring validity of the 19th-century historian, Arnold Toynbee's eternal postulation that civilization and societies experience progress as they are forced to respond to challenges posed by the environment. The unjust annulment of a widely acknowledged free and fair election was a challenge that elicited resistance by a resurgent



Tinubu

civil society, leading ultimately to the attainment of our 'second independence' as exemplified by the return of democratic governance in 1999.

"We celebrate a day that has remained a watershed in our nation's history, not just today, but for every June 12, for the endless future that our beloved country shall exist and wax stronger and stronger, generations of Nigerians will always remind themselves that the democracy that is steadily growing to become the defining essence of our polity was not gifted to us on a silver platter.

"We can easily recall the sacrifice and martyrdom of Chief MKO Abiola, the custodian of the sacred mandate that was so cruelly annulled. He sacrificed his life in unyielding, patriotic defence of the ideals of democracy as symbolized in his choice, by his fellow countrymen and women, as their duly-elected President. There was an easier

choice for him. It was to forgo the justice of his cause and opt for the path of ease and capitulation in the face of the tyranny of power. To his eternal credit and immortal glory, Abiola said no. He demonstrated the time-

tested eternal truth that there are certain ideals and principles that are far more valuable than life itself

"Every day, on this day, down the ages, we will recall several other heroes of democracy such as Kudirat Abiola, wife of Chief Abiola, who was brutally murdered while in the trenches fighting on the side of the people. We remember Pa Alfred Rewane, one of the heroes of our independence struggle and Major General Shehu Musa Yar'Adua (rtd), who were silenced by the military junta while in pursuit of democracy. They gave their yesterday for the liberty that is ours today.

"The point is that we must never take this democracy for granted. We must forever jealously guard and protect it like a precious jewel. For, a people can never truly appreciate the freedoms and rights democracy guarantees them until they lose it.

"We have traversed the dark, thorny path of dictatorship before and those who experienced it can readily testify to the unbridgeable gap between the dignity of freedom and the humiliation and degradation of

tyranny. True, rancorous debates, interminable wrangling, ceaseless quarrels, and bitter electoral contestations may be perceived by some as unattractive features of democracy. But, they also testify to its merit and value.

"This year, we held the seventh in the cycle of elections that have become sacred rituals of our democratic practice in this dispensation since 1999.

"That the polls were intensely contested is in itself positive evidence that democracy is well and alive in our land. It is only natural that even as those who won and experienced victory in the various elections are elated and fulfilled, those who lost are disenchanted and disappointed. But, the beauty of democracy is that those who win today can lose tomorrow and those who lose today will have an opportunity to compete and win in the next round of elections.

"Those who cannot endure and accept the pain of defeat in elections do not deserve the joy of victory when it is their turn to triumph. Above all, those who disagree with the outcome of the elections are taking full advantage of the constitutional provisions to seek redress in court and that is one of the reasons why democracy is still the best form of government invented by man.

"For Chief MKO Abiola, the symbol of this day, in whose memory June 12 became a national holiday, democracy is eternal.

"It is about the rule of law and vibrant judiciary that can be trusted to deliver justice and strengthen institutions. It has become imperative to state here that the unnecessary illegal orders used to truncate or abridge democracy will no longer be tolerated

"The recent harmonization of the retirement age for judicial officers is meant to strengthen the rule of law, which is a critical pillar of democracy. The reform has just started.

"The democracy that will yield the right dividends to the people, who are the shareholders, means more than just freedom of choice and the right to get people into elective offices. It means social and economic justice for our people. To the winner of June 12,

democracy offers the best chance to fight and eliminate poverty. Thirty years ago, he christened his campaign manifesto, 'Farewell to Poverty' because he was convinced that there is nothing divine about poverty. It is a man-made problem that can be eliminated with clearly thought-out social and economic policies.

"It is for this reason that, in my inauguration address on May 29, I gave effect to the decision taken by my predecessor-in-office to remove the fuel subsidy albatross and free up for collective use the much-needed resources, which had hitherto been pocketed by a few rich. I admit that the decision will impose an extra burden on the masses of our people. I feel your pain.

"This is one decision we must bear to save our country from going under and take our resources away from the stranglehold of a few unpatriotic elements.

"Painfully, I have asked you, my compatriots, to sacrifice a little more for the survival of our country. For your trust and belief in us, I assure you that your sacrifice shall not be in vain. The government I lead will repay you through massive investment in transportation infrastructure, education, regular power supply, healthcare and other public utilities that will improve the quality of lives.

"The democracy MKO Abiola died for is one that promotes the welfare of the people over the personal interests of the ruling class and one where the governed can find personal fulfilment and happiness. That is the hope MKO Abiola ignited throughout our country in 1993.

"On this year's Democracy Day, I enjoin us all to rededicate ourselves to strengthening this form of government of free peoples that has been our guiding light these past 24 years. In particular, those of us, who have been privileged to be elected into public offices at various levels in both the executive and legislative arms of government, must recommit ourselves to offering selfless service to the people and delivering concrete democratic dividends in accordance with our electoral promises.

"On my part and that of my administration, I pledge anew our commitment to diligently fulfilling every component of our electoral pact with the people – the 'Renewed Hope' agenda.

"We shall be faithful to the truth, faithful to equity, and faithful to justice. We shall exercise our authority and mandate to govern with fairness, respect for the rule of law, and commitment to always uphold the dignity of all our people."

The democracy that will yield the right dividends to the people, who are the shareholders, means more than just freedom of choice and the right to get people into elective offices. It means social and economic justice for our people. To the winner of June 12, democracy offers the best chance to fight and eliminate poverty. Thirty years ago, he christened his campaign manifesto, 'Farewell to Poverty' because he was convinced that there is nothing divine about poverty. It is a man-made problem that can be eliminated with clearly thought-out social and economic policies.

Feature

Restoring the spirit of June 12

By DAKUKU PETERSIDE

DEMOCRACY is taken for granted as the best form of government. At least the West told us so. We have also accepted it by default. We have tried multiple facets of democratic systems – parliamentary and presidential systems, two-party and multi-party systems – and some are arguing we have a bespoke democracy that is uniquely Nigerian. Homegrown in every shape!! It gives us a sense of participation. It allows for fair representation, and many argue that the representation is not yet wholly free. But whatever and whichever form of democracy a nation elects to practice, the ultimate objective is freedom, law and order, and to deliver public goods, in my view. Nigerians expect and deserve nothing less.

since Nigeria's Independence in 1960, she has gone through three dominant democratic interregnums and a few quasi-democratic experiences. Nigeria has witnessed a blend of militarism and democratic tenets of voting and some representation. This 4th Republic democratic dispensation is significant because it has lasted for 24 uninterrupted years. That stable, we can comfortably argue that our democracy is no longer a baby but attained teenage at least. Thus, our democratic journey calls for introspection and a critical review of the structures and processes in order to identify inherent weaknesses and strengths to correct and reinforce respectively.

Truth is, the nation laid the foundation of our current democracy on June 12, 1993. On that day and season, we established the elements of legitimate democracy. The election, widely regarded as one of Nigeria's freest and fairest, became the symbol of democracy in Nigeria and offered hope that Nigeria could hold a free, fair and rancour-free election.

The critical elements of that election made it unique in all ramifications: Free and fair electoral process; and a two-party system. The choice was binary (for either SDP or NRC), which promoted real competition. Though achieved by an unelected military regime with an outspoken professor of Political Science, Humphrey Nwosu, as midwife heading the arguably independent electoral Commission, the security apparatus of State was manifestly impartial; citizen participation was intense, and their trust in the system was high enough. Besides, citizens guarded the process and owned it. Voting was unhindered while collation and tabulation of results were open and transparent. Money played a minimal role in electoral choices. The outcome of that election blurred north-south division and muslim-christain dichotomy.

Sadly, these elements, commendable as they were, could not stop the doom that the election faced in the long run. This is the reason the dashing of that national hope and the momentum gained in our march to democracy with the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election in Nigeria remains a significant event in the country's political history. It would remain so for years unend. The military government annulled the national unity election, thereby depriving the winner, Chief Moshood Abiola, the fulfillment of assuming office as President and Commander-in-Chief.

Beyond Abiola, the annulment of June 12 had far-reaching consequences for Nigeria's democracy. Amongst others, it



Abola

fractured the national fabric but we mended fences in 1999; it led to years of political instability and disillusionment. Nigeria has struggled to hit that altitude of electoral performance ever since! Therefore, restoring the spirit of Nigeria's democracy after the June 12 annulment requires a multifaceted approach that addresses both immediate and long-term challenges. Even though Nigeria is still learning to improve her electoral democracy, it is clear that we learnt from that annulment experience. We appear to have made significant progress since June 12. So significant, the immediate past Administration of President Muhammadu Buhari in yielding to national conscience renamed June 12 as our nation's Democracy Day instead of the May 29 day for transition of power from one democratically elected Government to another. However and sadly so, whenever we move two steps forward, some forces pull us another step backwards. This pattern is becoming established.

Our democracy has made significant progress in some areas, and I will focus on four major areas.

First, we have been holding periodic elections, no matter how imperfect they are, since 1999. This has led to electoral representation at all levels. Representative democracy has been established though no entrenchment of a democratic culture. Also, Nigeria witnessed for the first time in its history that an opposition party won a general election in 2015. Thirdly, we have established freedom of expression owing to a robust and resilient media. Evidence is found at least in the mainstream media, civil society and social media spaces. But

we have also experienced at various times governments at the Federal and State levels impinge on the rights of Twitter users and some broadcast stations to express their voices freely and responsibly on various contentious issues in the country through deployment of coercive institutions. Happily however, this censorship has not been a constant feature of the government.

The fourth is that we have put all necessary institutions of the State in place. These democratic institutions are the instrumentality for delivering State functions. Nevertheless, these institutions are weak and fail most of the time to deliver on their mandate. They are often captured by State actors and used to perpetuate actors' hegemony on fragile people. Nigeria's democratic conundrum is an aberration in the sense that it has strong actors and weak institutions. This has allowed for State capture by these influential actors. We need to strengthen these four crucial areas to reap the full benefit of democracy.

First, the Nigerian brand of democracy must be transformed. A democracy that has failed to translate to governance success must be recalibrated. The indicators are there. From widening poverty, ignorance to insecurity. Most citizens do not have access to basic things of life. This itself constitutes a threat to democracy. Second, Nigerian democracy has failed to provide most citizens with basic physical, social, economic and psychological security. This has untold implications because protecting the citizens and Nigeria's territorial integrity is the State's primary function. Insecurity has caused the loss of many lives and property, destroyed economic activities and potential in many parts of the country, especially in the

ungoverned areas.

Third, the State has failed to engender respect for law, order and equality of persons before the law. Thus, there remains in our country's democracy a derogation of the rule of law as a fundamental principle of democracy. The rule of law simply means that the law rules supreme; no one is above the law no matter their status in society and the law is no respecter of persons. In some instances, the law has been trampled upon by influential individuals and entrenched interests within society with impunity. Fourth, the weak institutions of the State set up to enforce democracy: the Judiciary, INEC, Law enforcement agencies as public accountability framework have wreaked havoc on the system. We must strengthen these institutions to fulfil their mandate to the people and the State or our democracy would remain imperiled.

As we forge on with our democracy, we must pause and reflect on the lessons we must learn from our June 12 experience. June 12 gave us a significant leap towards legitimate democracy. However, it would be unconscionable not to admit that we have also taken some steps backwards where same was avoidable.

The celebration of democracy day today should afford us the opportunity for sober reflection on the state of our democratic journey and the urgent need to identify reforms that could strengthen democracy. The important lessons we must learn from June 12 are outlined below.

The first lesson is the Importance of Free and Fair Elections. The June 12 election underscored the significance of conducting free and fair elections. It demonstrated that when the will of the people is disregarded, it can lead to social and political unrest. The

lesson here is that governments must ensure transparent electoral processes that reflect the genuine choice and will of the people. The second lesson is the importance of accountability and transparency in governance. The lack of transparency surrounding the annulment process created suspicion and eroded public trust. Leaders must be accountable to the people and ensure transparency in their actions and decision-making processes. Trust builds confidence, legitimacy, and unity. The third is the power of civic engagement and activism. The June 12 election and its aftermath witnessed significant civic engagement and activism by the Nigerian people. It highlighted the power of citizens to advocate for their rights and demand accountability from their leaders. The lesson is that active civic participation is essential for developing and preserving a stable democracy. The next lesson is managing ethnic diversity and political pluralism. Leaders must work towards fostering national unity, promoting dialogue and finding common ground to prevent the escalation of our undeniable fault lines.

Furthermore, we must learn to build strong democratic institutions. The June 12 event revealed the weaknesses in Nigeria's democratic institutions, particularly the electoral and judicial systems. It underscored the need for building and strengthening institutions that can withstand political pressures and ensure the integrity of democratic processes. Even 30 years after the June 12 debacle, Nigeria still struggles with weak institutions. This new administration must work to correct this anomaly.

Finally, the June 12 annulment showed the importance of upholding democratic values such as freedom of expression, association and the right to vote. These values are fundamental to a functioning democracy and should be protected and promoted. Leaders and institutions must be committed to safeguarding democratic principles.

June 12 serves as a reminder that nations should learn from their history to avoid repeating past mistakes. It is crucial to reflect on the lessons from such events and take proactive measures to safeguard democracy and prevent similar situations. It is crucial to reflect on the lessons from such events and take proactive measures to safeguard democracy and prevent similar situations.

Restoring the spirit of Nigeria's democracy after the June 12 annulment is a long-term endeavour that requires sustained efforts from both the government and the Nigerian people. It demands a commitment to democratic values, active citizen participation and a collective determination to build a more inclusive Nigeria. Now is the time to promote good governance, fight corruption, foster national reconciliation, enhance freedom of speech and conscience, strengthen democratic institutions, encourage citizen participation and engagement as well as ensure further electoral reforms to consolidate on the progress made thus far as we work to deepen our democracy. The signs we see from this new government suggest that we have a government that may push Nigeria forward. The actions of the government in the right direction in the few months to come will surely lay the foundations of a more robust, better democracy.

Dakuku Peterside is a policy and leadership expert.

Sports

Djokovic raises bar: Is he the GOAT?

IT has taken Novak Djokovic two decades, but he's surpassed the high bar set by rivals Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal to clinch a record-setting 23 men's Grand Slam titles, and he's got the next one in his sights.

Does his victory at the French Open settle the debate about who's the greatest men's tennis player of all time? It depends on who you ask and which metrics you use.

"What does 'the greatest' mean? It's hard to say because great can mean on the court, it can mean off the court, it can mean a lot of stuff. It's just a matter of how you want to frame the question," sports journalist and author Christopher Clarey, who has reported from more than 100 Grand Slams, told Al Jazeera.

"But in a sense, in terms of results on the court, if you want to reduce it to that, I think Djokovic has got a really strong case."

The 36-year-old Serbian, the oldest man to win the French Open, refuses to be drawn into the discussion.

"I don't want to say that I am the greatest because I feel it's disrespectful towards all the great champions in different eras of our sport that was played in a completely different way than it is played today," Djokovic said after winning his third French Open title in Paris on Sunday.

Wearing a red jacket with the number 23, he added: "I leave those kind of discussions of who is the greatest to someone else," and spoke only of his "faith and confidence and belief" in what he is "capable of doing".

The debates about the greatest of all time – the so-called GOAT – are always fun, more so if they draw fans into the conversation, tennis commentator Ravi Ubha said.

"Greatest can go from subjective to factual if we look at the numbers. Even then, some might argue that some records and statistics should be given more weight than others. You could look at it from the perspective of greatest player on court. That narrows things down and doesn't, for example, take into consideration the impact they've had on the sport, whether he or she transcends the sport," Ubha told Al Jazeera.

Clarey thinks of the GOAT status as a "bit of an artificial construct," but he agrees it's fun to discuss.

"I've been talking about it for 20 years, and I think people enjoy it, but it may not be resolvable," said the author of the bestselling book on Federer, *The Master*.

"Let's face it, who does the most to popularise tennis, who creates the most good feelings about the sport while winning – those are arguments you can make. In terms of the results and the most successful player of the Open era, I've got to go with Novak on the men's side. ... He has the numbers now," Clarey said.

Having won the Australian and French opens this year, Djokovic is halfway to a calendar-year Grand Slam, or winning all four majors in one season. The last man to have done that was Australian Rod Laver in 1969 after achieving the feat the first time in 1962.

"The next question for him is if he can do all four in one year. That's the big elusive thing that no one's done in so long on either side since Steffi Graf in 1988," Ben Rothenberg, host of the tennis podcast *No Challenges Remaining*, told Al Jazeera.

"Djokovic came within one match of it two years ago – in the US Open final he lost to [Daniil] Medvedev."

Djokovic is the only man to win each Grand Slam three times and



Novak Djokovic makes history at the French Open



heads to Wimbledon next month, where he's won seven times and is the defending champion. He's also won 10 Australian Opens and three US Opens.

He has won each of the Masters 1000 events twice, a feat no other player has achieved. On Monday, he reclaimed the world number one ranking, starting his 388th week in the top spot.

He's keeping count and is not stopping.

"Of course, the journey is still not over. I feel if I'm winning slams, why even think about ending the career that already has been going on for 20 years?" he said.

However, some say it's unfair to

compare results across men's tennis through the ages because of the differing circumstances for the top players.

Laver or Ken Rosewall, another Australian playing in the 1950s and 60s, did not play the majors as frequently. Laver didn't play a Grand Slam for five years. Even in the 1980s, Bjorn Borg only played the Australian Open once.

"So this whole idea of trying to base everything on the Grand Slams record count, I think is unfair to the guys in the past, because that wasn't their metric," Clarey said.

Earlier, players grappled with different technology, didn't have the sports science available today, had

shorter playing careers and had to deal with a greater degree of variation in the speed of playing surfaces.

"If it was just comparing Djokovic against Laver, that would be a lot less interesting ... and a lot less tangible," Rothenberg said.

Meanwhile, players whose careers overlap may peak at different times and injuries are also a factor. Federer, who won 20 slams, announced his retirement last year.

Djokovic broke his 22-slam tie with Nadal on the Spaniard's favourite surface at Roland Garros, which Nadal missed this year due to surgery that will keep the 37-year-old off court until 2024, when he is expected

to retire.

Djokovic has said Federer and Nadal defined him as a player and even contributed to his success: "It was just those two guys who were occupying my mind for the last 15 years quite a lot in a professional sense."

For all his success, Djokovic has also been a polarising and divisive tennis star, and he is not loved by fans in the way that Federer and Nadal are.

Djokovic chose to remain unvaccinated against COVID-19, organised a *Adria Tour* of exhibition matches in the Balkans in the midst of the pandemic and has been strident on the status of Kosovo.

"Kosovo is the heart of Serbia. Stop the violence," he wrote in Serbian on a camera after his first-round victory at the French Open during a flare-up in tensions in the region.

Rothenberg said that while "there's a lot to admire about Djokovic, ... he's a very complicated person," adding that it "was kind of shocking to see him make this very overtly political, nationalistic message on the screen" on the Philippe Chatrier court in Paris.

While "Nadal and Federer are a lot less complicated as superstars of the sport", he said Djokovic "is more in that kind of category who inspires a lot of feelings, both positive and negative, and some of them are fair and some are not fair".

For Ubha, "Novak is a polarising figure, no question. There doesn't seem to be middle ground. Either you are a substantial fan of his or not a fan at all and can't be swayed".

Yet, "given his background and growing up in a war-torn nation, to become one of the greatest athletes of all time is a testament to his work ethic, resilience – and, of course, ability," Ubha said.

"The way he handles adversity on court is remarkable. And he leaves no stone unturned in trying to become the best player he can."

SOURCE: AL JAZEERA

Sports

Tori Bowie: American three-time Olympic medallist dies

BOWIE, who won 4x100m relay gold at the Rio Olympics in 2016, plus 100m silver and 200m bronze, died at her home in Florida in May at the age of 32.

Her agent Kimberly Holland told CBS News that speculation over Bowie's death had been "very hurtful".

"So hopefully, now knowing the truth, there will be many apologies," said Holland.

According to an autopsy report obtained by USA Today Sports, the manner of former 100m world champion Bowie's death was ruled "natural".

The report said she was estimated to be eight months pregnant and undergoing labour at the time of her death.

It added possible complications Bowie had included respiratory distress and eclampsia - when a person develops seizures, or convulsions, during pregnancy.

In May, the Orange County Sheriff's Office said deputies had attended a home in the area "for a well-being check of a woman in her 30s who had not been seen or heard from in several days." A woman "tentatively identified as Frentorish 'Tori' Bowie was found dead in the home".

Bowie converted from long jump in 2014 and had an immediate impact on the track, becoming the fastest woman in the world that year.

She was the only American woman to have won an Olympic or world 100m title since Carmelita Jeter in 2011.

The CDC defines maternal



American sprinter Tori Bowie died from complications in childbirth, her agent has said.

mortality as a death that occurs while pregnant or within 42 days of the end of a pregnancy.

Experts say the vast majority of the maternal deaths happen shortly after giving birth, when many women are forced to return to work and are unable to continue with post-partum care.

Black Americans in particular are often employed in low-income jobs that offer little-to-no health insurance coverage and minimal time off for maternity leave.

Many of those same jobs, like food service, were deemed essential during the pandemic and workers were unable to work from home. This increased black women's chances of exposure to Covid-19 and, without adequate access to healthcare, contributed to higher rates of death.

"Women are saying, I can't come in for this bleeding, for this headache, because I don't have the support afterward," said Dr Rochanda Mitchell, a Howard University physician

who specialises in maternal-foetal medicine and high-risk pregnancies.

"During the pregnancy everybody is there, celebrating the pregnancy," she added. "But if most of our mothers are dying after delivery - then we need help after delivery."

But without the systems in place to support employees of low-income jobs, many mothers are forced to ignore early signs of health concerns.

Some mothers, even those with health insurance, can be discouraged from seeing a doctor post-partum because of the potentially high cost and may wait until the most dire circumstances, she said, which in many cases can be too late.

Dr Mitchell explained that until there is a vast overhaul of how the health care system in the US functions, the situation is unlikely to improve.

"It's really difficult to narrow it down to one thing," she said. "I think some of the poor outcomes and disparities that we see are all part of the bigger picture of health disparities."

TAYLOR, 35, becomes the first Canadian to win the event at Oakdale Golf and Country Club since Pat Fletcher in 1954.

"I don't think it's going to sink in for quite some time what happened today," said Taylor.

English duo Tyrrell Hatton and Aaron Rai shared third place on 16 under.

Fans celebrated wildly in rainy conditions in Toronto as Taylor's eagle putt dropped in to hand the home-grown player his third tour victory.

"This is for all the guys through the years, this is for my family at home," he said. "To kind of break that curse, if you want to call it is, I'm pretty speechless."

"With the rain coming down, the slope, obviously, we knew it was going to be slow. To get it there was, obviously, a bit of a surprise honestly."

"For that to drop is - it was a huge surprise but an amazing one." Taylor overturned a three-stroke deficit on the final day to post a six-under 66 and set a clubhouse target of 72, which was matched by Englishman Fleetwood.

Tommy Fleetwood beaten by Nick Taylor's 72-foot



Tommy

Fleetwood, 32, matched Taylor's birdie on the first play-off hole, with both players making pars on the following two extra holes to extend the contest.

Taylor then claimed a thrilling victory with his dramatic putt at the par-five 18th hole as Fleetwood watched on.

"Nice moment for Nick and the fans here," said Fleetwood, who has finished runner-up in

five PGA Tour events. "So it's great to be a part of that Sunday and that play-off. I had my chances, really. It wasn't to be this time. But yeah, congratulations to him."

Rory McIlroy's bid for a third consecutive Canadian Open faded after a final round of 72 left the Northern Irishman joint ninth, while England's Justin Rose ended the tournament on 13 under to finish eighth.

Evans' route from reluctant cyclist to world champion

EVANS was a latecomer to the velodrome. She was a horse rider and hill runner before and worked as a vet. But eventually taking up cycling as a student changed her life.

"My dad has always cycled," Evans told BBC Scotland. "When I was hill running he said: 'You'd be better at cycling than running.'"

"But I was like: 'Whatever dad, I don't care, I don't like cycling.' And somewhat ironically I'm now a professional cyclist."

And a good one at that. At 26 she stopped working as a vet to become a full-time athlete, having balanced both for a while, and six years later she



Evans

has national, European, world, and Olympic medals.

The crowning moment so far came at the World Championships in Paris last October, when Evans sprinted to a thrilling points race gold.

It was her first global gold medal in an individual event. In cycling, the extra reward is you get to wear the famous rainbow jersey when you race for the rest of the season, to signify your status as reigning champion.

For Evans, the novelty is yet to wear off. "Every time you go 'oh' and find yourself with an extra smile," she says, grinning.

So how has Evans managed to break the mould and enjoy such success despite having such a short professional career?

Natural fitness and talent - mum Ros competed in cross-country skiing at the 1984 Winter Olympics - has run alongside hard work and a calm determination, fuelled by a healthy dose of perspective.

"I know how hard I train and how much time and effort I've put into it," Evans says. "I think: 'If I've done all this, I've got to be fairly good.' And then you get on the start line and you think: 'I can beat these people.'"

"I really did think it would just

be a year or two and then I'd be found out as not being good enough and I'd go back to having a proper job. But I'm still winging it - so long may it continue."

There is plenty more Evans wants to achieve, starting with defending her world title in Glasgow this August. The chance to do so in front of a home crowd is even more mouth-watering for the Scot.

At the same time, she admits it brings more pressure than she's ever faced before. Then there is the biggest goal of all, the Paris Olympics next summer and a potential tilt at madison gold with her friend Katie Archibald.

Those are the things Evans has in mind whenever she pauses to reflect on everything she has achieved in just six years.

"I don't do it too often because I very much feel I'm on the up," she says. "I'm still developing and have so much more I want to achieve."

"So as much as I do take little moments and go 'I have achieved a lot over a short space of time', I don't feel I'm finished by any stretch of the imagination. So I'm not ready to sum up what I've done."

If Evans' results keep trending upwards, it could be a very special career to reflect on.

Harriet Dart beats Rebecca Marino in first round

DART, ranked 143rd, is one of five players who could end the event as the British women's number one.

Katie Boulter, who replaced Emma Raducanu at the top this week, faces compatriot Emily Appleton in round one.

Katie Swan and Jodie Burrage will also play on Tuesday in one of the grass-court tournaments before Wimbledon.

Boulter is 126th in the

world rankings, with Raducanu, currently out of action after hand and ankle surgery, 128th, while Burrage and Swan are 131st and 134th respectively.

Heather Watson, who won her first-round match on Monday, is 195th and a former British number one and could also regain top spot, but would need to reach the final to have a chance to do so.

Boulter became the 23rd woman to become British

number one since the rankings began in 1975 and needs to reach at least the quarter-finals in Nottingham to have a chance to stay there.

In a post on Instagram, she wrote: "Been mulling over whether I was going to post this today."

"It's not my highest ranking nor my best career moment however someone reminded me today that this little girl would be proud if I told her

she would be British number 1 one day.

"Whether it be for one minute, one day or one year, it's not my biggest goal but shows I'm heading in the right direction. Now I've got work to do as my main goals are pending."

Three-time Grand Slam champion Andy Murray will also be in action in the men's Challenger event, fresh from his win at Surbiton last week.

Murray claimed his first title on home soil since Wimbledon in 2016 and is looking to build on that before the grass-court major starts on 3 July.

The 36-year-old took part in a light practice on Monday with coach Ivan Lendl by his side.

Murray plays Belgian qualifier Joris de Loore on Tuesday and you will be able to watch live coverage of that match on BBC Red Button, the BBC Sport website and app.

Britain's Liam Broady, Arthur Fery, Jan Choinski, Ryan Peniston and George Loffhagen are all scheduled to play on Tuesday as well.

Play at the Nottingham Tennis Centre began on time at 11:00 BST, despite a series of knife and van attacks. In the city in the early hours of Tuesday in which three people were killed.



Britain's Harriet Dart reached the Nottingham Open second round with a comfortable 6-4 6-2 victory over Rebecca Marino of Canada.

Sports

Messi: Can Argentine's Inter Miami change football in US?

"I think Miami needs a star," David Beckham said in 2018 when his new Major League Soccer franchise was born. "Miami would expect us to bring in a star. That's what we plan on doing." Five years later, with Inter Miami currently playing its fourth season in MLS, Beckham and co-owners, brothers Jorge and Jose Mas, delivered the biggest star of them all. Arguably the greatest player of all time. The World Cup winner, Lionel Messi.



Messi could be a catalyst, building momentum for the sport in the United States in the three years before they co-host the 2026 World Cup with Canada and Mexico.

Before that, the USA will also host the 2024 Copa America, meaning Messi could not only play his final game in club football in the States but likely his final major international tournament too.

These are big moments for Messi at the end of his playing career - he'll be 36 by the time he's eligible to play his first game for Miami - but they are potentially even bigger moments for football in the USA.

The move has echoes of Beckham, who joined LA Galaxy in 2007, and of Pele, who was drawn to the American soccer package at New York Cosmos in the old NASL in the 1970s.

Oshoala move will partly be judged, whether he likes it or not, on the growth of soccer in America during his time there. Propelling it to the front and centre of the conversation in American sports, rather than an appendage.

The depth of influence Messi has will depend on whether his impact goes beyond the superficial. Will the enthusiasm end when he leaves or will Messi's magic see domestic soccer strengthen across the nation?

At the moment, North American men's professional sports consist primarily of the 'Big Four' major leagues - basketball (NBA), baseball (MLB), American football (NFL) and ice hockey (NHL).

MLS is not always taken as seriously as these and is often an afterthought in general sports coverage, if it is thought of at all.

Since Messi's announcement, though, it has featured regularly as a main story. No-one can overlook the biggest name in world sports. That this big name happens to be a soccer player is significant.

Anticipation of Messi's arrival will be the first stage of his American story, when the effect he's having on the game there will be seen in real time. Inter Miami's social media following has already skyrocketed beyond those of many NHL, MLB and

NFL teams.

Cumulative ticket sales for their games from July to the end of the season which, unlike the European leagues, runs within a calendar year rather than across two, have seen an almost 28-fold increase since Messi's announcement.

Tickets for the NBA Finals in Miami last week cost less than those for Messi's possible debut against Cruz Azul in the Leagues Cup. Team line-up announcements are already being met with a barrage of comments, most asking 'where's Messi?'

The move will be good for MLS, especially in the short term while Messi is there - but being good for MLS isn't necessarily the same as being good for soccer in America. Much will depend on how much of the excitement and interest filters down to the grassroots.

That can be difficult when there is no connection between the leagues at different levels across the country. There is no direct continuation from the NASL of Pele to the MLS of Beckham and Messi, and no link between MLS and the country's other pro-soccer league, USL.

Neither is there promotion and relegation, though this is handy for Miami who currently sit bottom of the Eastern Conference before Messi's arrival.

If Messi's impact on the sport in the US is to go beyond the league in which he plays, MLS might have to open up somewhat, paying some mind to other soccer organisations running parallel to and below it - and it may benefit from doing so.

Its rules and regulations have helped forge steadier foundations than previous pro-soccer leagues, while single-entity single-mindedness has facilitated self-preservation, but it might now be time to remove some of the shackles. Messi's arrival could encourage that.

The league has already needed some flexibility to attract Messi in the first place. A combination of factors, including a new broadcast deal with Apple TV starting this season, a shared kit supplier in Adidas and a Beckham-owned club in Miami - a city where Messi himself owns property -

have provided favourable circumstances.

It is fitting that Beckham is the owner bringing Messi to MLS as his own arrival as a player in 2007 changed the game. To facilitate Beckham's signing, the league created the 'designated player rule' - sometimes referred to as the Beckham rule - which allows clubs to acquire up to three players whose wages can exceed the salary cap.

Beckham's rule now facilitates his team's move for Messi, the details of which are yet to be disclosed but, as expected, there will be more to it than just a standard designated player contract.

Messi's added extras will take to new levels what MLS and its partners can offer a player. It will be reminiscent of the landmark deal NBA star Michael Jordan signed with Nike in 1984 when Nike took the unprecedented step of offering Jordan a percentage of sales.

As well as deals with Adidas, and Apple for a four-part documentary, there are rumours Messi could take a club ownership stake, while there is talk he could get a percentage of sign-ups to Apple TV's MLS Season Pass.

To compete with the billions on offer in Saudi Arabia, MLS had to think outside the box. If Messi's presence is to transcend the league and impact American soccer as a whole, MLS might have to think outside MLS.

Asking one player to change the landscape of a sport in a region so large and varied is an impossible task. Soccer is not unpopular in the United States, it just isn't as religiously followed domestically as it is in most of the rest of the world.

Fans might obsessively follow the national team or a club from Europe or Mexico, but the structure of American club soccer on a national level doesn't rouse the same mass intrigue or devotion. Pele or Messi increasing the popularity of soccer in the US is not the same as increasing the popularity of the domestic game.

America has its own sports and its own 'football' adapted from the same

unruly 19th-century English games as association football. Overtaking them culturally is a huge task.

Even Pele couldn't turn a nation of (American) football fans into a nation of soccer fans, though in some ways he and Beckham laid the groundwork for Messi to give it a go.

Messi's arrival will mean higher attendances, global attention and increased awareness of MLS, but for the effects to be permanent in American soccer, something will need to be built at a local level on the ground on the back of this momentous, magic move.

Argentina legend Lionel Messi will join American side Inter Miami after his exit from French champions Paris St-Germain.

Messi, 35, had a more lucrative offer from Saudi Arabian side Al-Hilal while a return to Barcelona became an impossibility because of Financial Fair Play (FFP) limitations.

"I've taken the decision that I am going to Miami," Messi told newspapers *Diario Sport* and *Mundo Deportivo*.

"[I decided] to leave Europe."

He added: "It's true that I had offers from another European team but I didn't even think about it because in Europe, my idea was only to go to Barcelona."

"After winning the World Cup and not being able to go to Barca, it's time to go to MLS to live football in a different way and enjoy my day to day life more."

"Obviously with the same responsibility and desire to win, and to do things well, but with more calm."

The ex-Barcelona forward was keen on a return to the Catalan club this summer but the FFP limitations that will be in place for next season in La Liga made any ambitious plan to bring him back an impossibility.

The Spanish club were unable to keep Messi in 2021, leading to a tearful news conference as he left the Nou Camp and signed for PSG.

"I was afraid that it would happen again," he said.

"I really wanted, I was very excited to be able to return [to Barcelona],

but after having experienced what I experienced and the exit I had, I did not want to be in the same situation again - waiting to see what was going to happen.

"I heard that they had to sell players or lower players' salaries and the truth is that I didn't want to go through that, nor take charge of obtaining something that had to do with all that."

Barcelona later released a statement saying Messi had chosen a Miami move over an offer from the Catalan club.

"President [Joan] Laporta understood and respected Messi's decision to want to compete in a league with fewer demands, further away from the spotlight and the pressure he has been subject to in recent years," it added.

The Miami deal includes collaboration from brands like Adidas and Apple.

Messi won the Ballon d'Or award for the world's best player **seven times** and is expected to win it later this year after World Cup success.

This is the first time Barcelona icon Messi has played outside Europe.

With a Barcelona return failing to materialise, he had the straight choice between Inter Miami or Al-Hilal.

He was heavily tipped to be favouring a move to Saudi Arabia, where he would have joined Cristiano Ronaldo and Karim Benzema in the league in a deal that could not be matched financially.

But Messi was ultimately tempted to Major League Soccer (MLS) side Inter Miami for a variety of reasons including lifestyle, and a deal with big brands that extends beyond football.

He already owns a house in Miami, which he rents out.

Paris St-Germain won Ligue 1 in both his seasons at the club but went out in the Champions League last 16, which means his time in France was not seen as a huge success.

He netted 32 goals in 75 games for the club - and ended this season with 16 goals and 16 assists in Ligue 1.

Messi's two-year contract comes to an end this summer and both parties agreed to go their separate ways, with the forward suspended for two weeks in May for an unauthorised trip to Saudi Arabia.

His legacy comes from his time at Barcelona and winning the World Cup with Argentina in December.

He left Barca in 2021, after 21 years with the club, because of the club's financial problems.

Messi is Barcelona's record scorer with 672 goals and won 10 La Liga titles, four Champions Leagues and seven Spanish Cups.

Messi said he had chatted with close friend Xavi, the Barcelona manager, about returning to the club but "very little, once or twice at most" with president Joan Laporta.

"We were very excited, because when something came out we would discuss if he really wanted me to come back, if it was good for the team and for him, and we kept in communication," Messi said.

"We never even got to talk about the contract. A proposal was passed over, but never a formal, written, signed proposal, because there was still nothing and we did not know if it was going to be possible or not."

"There was the intention, but we couldn't advance anything, we didn't even talk about money formally."

"If it had been a matter of money I would have gone to Saudi Arabia or elsewhere."



Quest



writer

FRAGMENT

"It is about rule of law and vibrant judiciary that can be trusted to deliver justice and strengthen institutions. It has become imperative to state here that the unnecessary illegal orders used to truncate or abridge democracy will no longer be tolerated. The recent harmonization of the retirement age for judicial officers is meant to strengthen the rule of law, which is a critical pillar of democracy. The reform has just started."

BOLA AHMED TINUBU

Bola Ahmed Tinubu

Democracy Day: President Tinubu's speech

IT is exactly three decades today that Nigerians went to the polls to exercise their inalienable right to elect a President of their choice to lead the transition from military dictatorship to a representative government of the people.

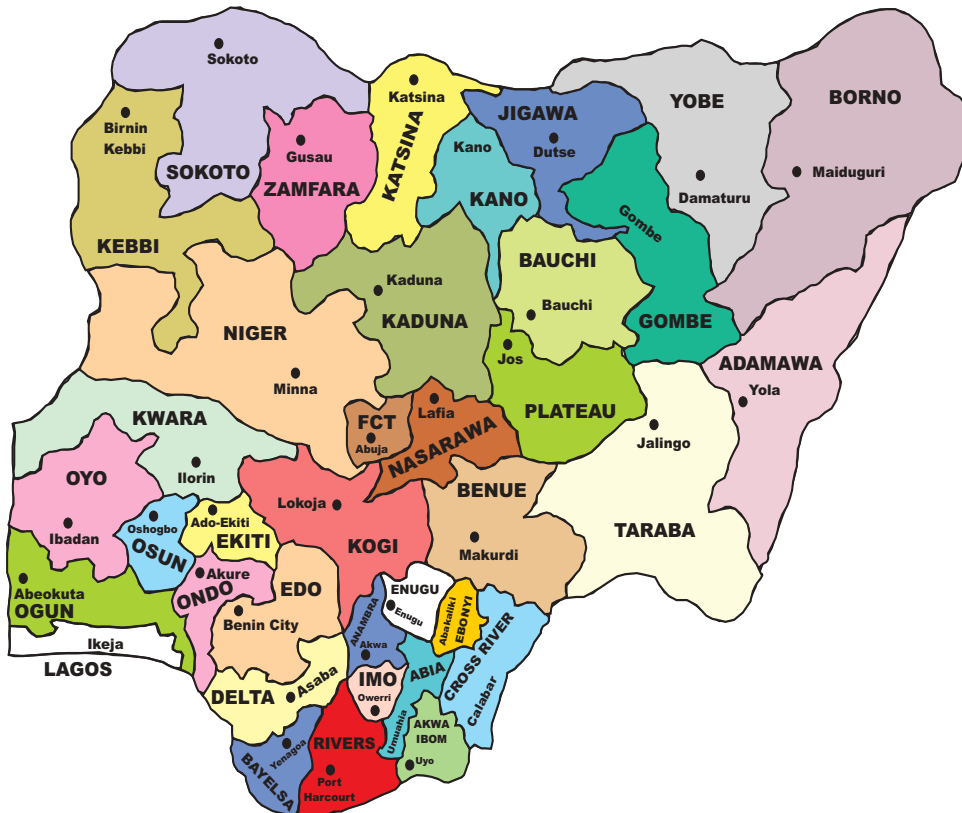
The abortion, by military fiat, of the decisive victory of Chief Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola of the defunct Social Democratic Party (SDP) in the June 12, 1993, presidential election, up to that time, the fairest and freest election in the country's political evolution, turned out, ironically, to be the seed that germinated into the prolonged struggle that gave birth to the democracy we currently enjoy since 1999.

In rising to strongly oppose the arbitrary annulment of the will of the majority of Nigerians as expressed in that historic election, the substantial number of our people who participated in the struggle to de-annul the election signified their fierce commitment to enthroning democracy as a form of government that best ennobles the liberty, the dignity of the individual and the integrity as well as the stability of the polity. The fierce opposition to the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election and the unrelenting pro-democracy onslaught it unleashed was the equivalent of the battle against colonial rule by our founding fathers that resulted in the gaining of Nigeria's independence in 1960.

Just like the anti-colonial movement, the pro-June 12 vanguard demonstrated, once again, the enduring validity of the 19th century historian, Arnold Toynbee's eternal postulation, that civilization and societies experience progress as they are forced to respond to challenges posed by the environment. The unjust annulment of a widely acknowledged free and fair election was a challenge that elicited resistance by a resurgent civil society, leading ultimately to the attainment of our 'second independence' as exemplified by the return of democratic governance in 1999.

Fellow compatriots, we celebrate a day that has remained a watershed in our nation's history, not just today, but for every June 12, for the endless future that our beloved country shall exist and wax stronger and stronger, generations of Nigerians will always remind themselves that the democracy that is steadily growing to become the defining essence of our polity was not gifted to us on a silver platter.

We can easily recall the sacrifice



and martyrdom of Chief MKO Abiola, the custodian of the sacred mandate that was so cruelly annulled. He sacrificed his life in unyielding, patriotic defense of the ideals of democracy as symbolized in his choice, by his fellow countrymen and women, as their duly-elected President. There was an easier choice for him. It was to forgo the justice of his cause and opt for the path of ease and capitulation in the face of the tyranny of power. To his eternal credit and immortal glory, Abiola said no. He demonstrated the time-tested eternal truth that there are certain ideals and principles that are far more valuable than life itself.

Everyday, on this day, down the ages we will recall the several other heroes of democracy such as Kudirat Abiola, wife of Chief Abiola, who was brutally murdered while in the trenches fighting on the side of the people. We remember Pa Alfred Rewane, one of the heroes of our independence struggle and Major General Shehu Musa Yar'Adua (rtd) who were silenced by the military junta while in pursuit of democracy. They gave their yesterday for the liberty that is ours today.

The point is that we must never take this democracy for granted. We must forever jealously guard and protect it like a precious jewel. For, a people can never truly appreciate the freedoms and rights democracy guarantees

them until they lose it. We have traversed the dark, thorny path of dictatorship before and those who experienced it can readily testify to the unbridgeable gap between the dignity of freedom and the humiliation and degradation of tyranny. True, rancorous debates, interminable wrangling, ceaseless quarrels, bitter electoral contestations may be perceived by some as unattractive features of democracy. But they also testify to its merit and value.

This year, we held the seventh in the cycle of elections that have become sacred rituals of our democratic practice in this dispensation since 1999.

That the polls were intensely contested is in itself positive evidence that democracy is well and alive in our land. It is only natural that even as those who won and experienced victory in the various elections are elated and fulfilled, those who lost are disenchanted and disappointed. But the beauty of democracy is that those who win today can lose tomorrow and those who lose today will have an opportunity to compete and win in the next round of elections.

Those who cannot endure and accept the pain of defeat in elections do not deserve the joy of victory when it is their turn to triumph. Above all, those who disagree with the outcome of the elections are taking full advantage of the constitutional provisions to

seek redress in court and that is one of the reasons why democracy is still the best form of government invented by man.

For Chief MKO Abiola, the symbol of this day, in whose memory June 12 became a national holiday, democracy is eternal.

It is about rule of law and vibrant judiciary that can be trusted to deliver justice and strengthen institutions. It has become imperative to state here that the unnecessary illegal orders used to truncate or abridge democracy will no longer be tolerated.

The recent harmonization of the retirement age for judicial officers is meant to strengthen the rule of law, which is a critical pillar of democracy. The reform has just started.

The democracy that will yield right dividends to the people who are the shareholders means more than just freedom of choice and right to get people into elective offices. It means social and economic justice for our people. To the winner of June 12, democracy offers the best chance to fight and eliminate poverty. Thirty years ago, he christened his campaign manifesto, 'Farewell to Poverty' because he was convinced that there is nothing divine about poverty. It is a man-made problem that can be eliminated with clearly thought out social and economic policies.

It is for this reason that, in my inauguration address on May 29, I

gave effect to the decision taken by my predecessor-in-office to remove the fuel subsidy albatross and free up for collective use the much-needed resources, which had hitherto been pocketed by a few rich. I admit that the decision will impose extra burden on the masses of our people. I feel your pain. This is one decision we must bear to save our country from going under and take our resources away from the stranglehold of a few unpatriotic elements.

Painfully, I have asked you, my compatriots, to sacrifice a little more for the survival of our country. For your trust and belief in us, I assure you that your sacrifice shall not be in vain. The government I lead will repay you through massive investment in transportation infrastructure, education, regular power supply, healthcare and other public utilities that will improve the quality of lives.

The democracy MKO Abiola died for is one that promotes the welfare of the people over personal interests of the ruling class and one where the governed can find personal fulfillment and happiness. That is the hope MKO Abiola ignited throughout our country in 1993.

On this year's Democracy Day, I enjoin us all to rededicate ourselves to strengthening this form of government of free peoples that has been our guiding light these past 24 years. In particular, those of us who have been privileged to be elected into public offices at various levels in both the executive and legislative arms of government must recommit ourselves to offering selfless service to the people, and delivering concrete democracy dividends in accordance with our electoral promises.

On my part and that of my administration, I pledge anew our commitment to diligently fulfilling every component of our electoral pact with the people - the 'Renewed Hope' agenda.

We shall be faithful to truth. Faithful to equity. And faithful to justice. We shall exercise our authority and mandate to govern with fairness, respect for the rule of law, and commitment to always uphold the dignity of all our people.

On this note, I wish us all a happy Democracy Day celebration and pray that the light of liberty shall never be extinguished in our land.

Thank you all and may God continue to bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.