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## World Bank approves fresh \$500m loan for FG



**The World Bank Group has approved a loan of \$500m to help drive women's empowerment in Nigeria.**

This became the second loan approved by the World Bank under the new President, Bola Tinubu.

It is a scale-up financing for Nigeria for Women Programme, which was

initially approved on June 27, 2018, with \$100m financing.

A statement by the World Bank read in part, "The World Bank has approved \$500m for Nigeria for Women Program Scale Up (NFWP-SU). The scale-up financing will further support the government of Nigeria to invest in improving the livelihoods

of women in Nigeria.

"The NFWP-SU will help to ensure better economic opportunities for women, which is essential for addressing gender inequality; guaranteeing better education, health, and nutrition outcomes for families; and building women's and communities' resilience to climate change."

The World Bank stressed the need for the government to address issues that inhibit women's economic empowerment and hinder inclusive, low-carbon, and resilient economic growth.

It noted that women's empowerment is essential to their ability to build resilience to climate change and, by extension,

the resilience of their households and communities.

The World Bank Country Director for Nigeria, Shubham Chaudhuri, was quoted as saying, "We have seen promising outcomes from the parent NFWP which has helped to create economic opportunities for thousands of rural women

**Banga**

through the Women Affinity Groups. NFWP's model is helping to improve livelihood opportunities for women and enhancing their capacity to adapt to climate change and to participate in local administrations for policymaking related to community empowerment.

"Closing the gender gap in key economic sectors could yield gains of between \$9.3bn and \$22.9bn, we are optimistic that this scale-up will help Nigeria to move closer to bridging this gap."

Also, the Task Team Leader for Nigeria for Women Project, Michael Ilesanmi, said, "The Program aims to mobilize poor and vulnerable women into different institutions and, using these institutional platforms, link them to markets as well as financial and non-financial services. Through participation in Women Affinity Groups, project beneficiaries build social capital that can then be leveraged to access



Plateau State Governor, Barr. Caleb Mutfwang (left) flanked by the State Commissioner for Justice, Barr. Philemon Daffi, SGS, Arc. Samuel Nanchang Jatau, Chief of Staff Government House, Engr. Jeremiah Satmak and others on Monday at the on-going Governorship-election Tribunal at the High Court, Jos  
Photo: DANLADI DUK

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## W/Bank tasks Tinubu to rebuild fiscal space

The World Bank has tasked the administration of President Bola Tinubu to rebuild Nigeria's fiscal space, following the removal of petrol subsidy and the unification of the Foreign Exchange (FX) rates.

The bank's position was contained in its latest Nigeria Development Update (NDU), released, recently.

The removal of the petrol subsidy and foreign exchange (FX)

management reforms, according to the report, were crucial measures to begin to rebuild fiscal space and restore macroeconomic stability, and the opportunity should be seized to take further, necessary policy reform steps.

It noted that the new administration had initiated critical reforms to address macroeconomic

imbalances.

Specifically, the organisation said that the president should seize the window of opportunity for a transformative impact on the lives of millions of Nigerians and establish a solid foundation for sustainable and inclusive growth.

The June 2023 edition of the NDU, titled "Seizing the

Opportunity", added that it was critical to implement a comprehensive reform package encompassing a range of complementary measures, including a new social compact to protect the poor and most vulnerable, to maximize the collective impact on growth, job creation, and poverty reduction.

The report showed that

in the first part of 2023, Nigeria's economic growth weakened, as real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth fell from 3.3% in 2022 to 2.4% year-on-year (y-o-y) in Q1 2023.

It added, "The challenging global economic context has put pressure on Nigeria's economy.

However, domestic

policies play a major role in determining Nigeria's economic performance and resilience to further external shocks.

The previous mix of fiscal, monetary, and exchange rate policies, including the naira redesign program, did not deliver the desired improvements in growth, inflation, and economic resilience.

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## News

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financial, political, and economic capital—thus leading to both social and economic empowerment.”

It was disclosed that NFWP has been implemented in six states and provides support to over 427,887 Women Affinity Groups' members through the formation and strengthening of 20,506 of these groups.

In about two years, these WAGs have saved about NGN 4bn (\$8.9m equivalent), with a significant percentage of these funds in circulation as loans at any given time. So far, 835,573 community members have benefitted from the NFWP through different interventions.

### W/Bank tasks Tinubu to rebuild fiscal space

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“The new government has recognized the need to chart a new course and has already made a start on critical reforms, such as the elimination of the petrol subsidy and reforms in the FX market.

“With the petrol subsidy removal, the government is projected to achieve fiscal savings of approximately 2 trillion naira in 2023, equivalent to 0.9% of GDP. These savings are expected to reach over 11 trillion naira by the end of 2025.

“However, compensating transfers will be essential to help shield the most vulnerable Nigerian households from the initial price impacts of the subsidy reform, as without compensation, many households could be pushed into poverty by higher petrol prices and have to resort to coping mechanisms with long-term adverse consequences.

Similarly, the move to harmonize the FX windows

will help to improve the efficiency of the FX market, unlock private investment, and reduce inflationary pressures, but it is crucial to complete this important reform by removing FX restrictions, clearly communicating how the new FX regime will operate, and implementing supportive monetary and fiscal policies.”

The report recommended specific, critical measures to build on the new government's bold start in making critical reforms, to ensure that Nigeria rose to its full potential.

These included: restoring macroeconomic stability by increasing non-oil revenue, reducing inflation through a sequenced and coordinated mix of trade, monetary and fiscal policies, and completing the FX reform; expanding social protection to protect the poor and most vulnerable; and developing and

The Debt Management Office report has shown that Nigeria's debt servicing cost increased by 55.71 per cent to N1.24tn in three months.

According to data obtained from the Debt Management Office, between October and December 2022, Nigeria spent N406.77bn on domestic debt servicing, while it spent \$312.27m (N143.74bn) on external debt servicing, giving a total of N550.51bn.

communicating how, as fiscal space recovers, resources will be redirected.”

In his remarks, Shubham Chaudhuri, World Bank Country Director for Nigeria also said, “The current move by the Government to implement long-anticipated reforms such as the removal of costly and opaque petrol subsidy, and efforts to harmonize the multiple FX windows, are timely and crucial to set Nigeria on the path of economic growth.

“These reforms should be accompanied by compensatory actions to mitigate the short-term impact on the poor,” said

Nigeria should now seize the opportunity to implement a robust, large-scale cash transfer program to provide quick relief to the poor, near poor, as well as low-income households which are most directly affected by higher petrol prices, as part of a broader compact to redirect scarce fiscal resources towards development priorities”.

### Debt servicing rises to N1.24tn in Q1 2023 –Report

However, between January and March 2023, Nigeria spent N874.13bn on domestic debt servicing, while it spent \$801.36m (N368.87bn) on external debt servicing, giving a total of N1.24tn.

The exchange rate of the DMO, which was \$1=N460.3 was used for the external debt servicing.

The International Monetary Fund recently said the Federal Government projected to spend 82 per cent of its revenue on interest payments in 2023.

According to the IMF, external debt (including that of the private sector) will rise to \$121.6bn, with external reserves climbing to \$37.5bn.

It disclosed this in a table of projections in its 'IMF Executive Board Concludes 2022 Article IV Consultation with Nigeria Summary.

The projections showed an improvement in the share of the government's revenue used as interest payment, with interest payment falling from 96.3 per cent in 2022 to 82 per cent in 2023.

It added that interest payment was 86.1 per cent and 87.8 per cent of the Federal Government's revenue in 2020 and 2021, respectively.

In a document by the DMO DG recently obtained by our correspondent, the DMO stated that high debt levels would often lead to high debt services and affect investments in infrastructure.



Oniha

According to the DMO DG, “High debt levels lead to heavy debt service which reduces resources available for investment in infrastructure and key sectors of the economy.”

In the document, she stressed the need for debt sustainability, which she defined as the ability to service all current and future obligations while maintaining the capacity to finance policy objectives without resorting to unduly large adjustments or exceptional financing such as arrears accumulation and debt restructuring, which could otherwise compromise the economy's stability.

A report by the Nigerian Economic Summit Group and the Open Society Initiative for West Africa has disclosed that Nigeria and 10 other Economic Community of West African States countries were currently in debt distress

based on debt sustainability analysis. The 10 other countries are: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Niger, Senegal, and Togo.

The World Bank recently said that Nigeria's debt, which might be considered sustainable for now, was vulnerable and costly.

According to the Washington-based global financial institution, the country's debt was also at risk of becoming unsustainable in the event of macro-fiscal shocks. The Chief Executive Officer of Centre for the Promotion of Private Enterprise, Dr Muda Yusuf, said that the Nigerian economy had been characterised by diverse economic vulnerabilities, which included rising public debt and debt service burden.

### FG deploys mini-grids to increase power in rural areas

The Federal Government has increased the deployment of mini-grids to boost power supply in rural communities and help cushion the effect of the recent removal of subsidy on Premium Motor Spirit, popularly called petrol.

It disclosed this in a statement issued in Abuja on Sunday by the Rural Electrification Agency, adding that the mini-grids

would provide 24/7 electricity in the communities where they were deployed.

The Managing Director, REA, Ahmed Salihijo, who just inspected the 200KWp Solar Hybrid Mini-Grid in Danchitagi Community, Lavun Local Government Area, Niger State, said the facility, just like others, would cut down the volume PMS purchased by

beneficiaries of the community.

He explained that through the Nigeria Electrification Project-Performance Based Grant initiative, over 80 similar mini-grids had been deployed across the country, ensuring equitable access to electricity.

Salihijo said the 200KWp mini-grid in Danchitagi Community was built to

supply uninterrupted electricity to the area, which hosts about 2,670 people who were predominantly farmers.

He explained that of the 534 consumers of electricity from the facility, 13 of them use it for

services such as tailoring, welding, refrigeration and milling of rice, as well as other farm produce.

“From the feedback we are getting, most people actually rely on petrol generators and with this mini-grid, it means that

they are going to buy less of that petrol.

“That means with the subsidy removal, this could serve as a palliative that will help them cushion the effects of the removal of subsidy,” the REA boss stated.

### Nigerians shouldn't be subjected to additional hardship -Obi

The presidential candidate of the Labour Party, LP, Peter Obi has reacted to recent demolition of some buildings by government, saying the Nigerian citizens should not be subjected to the additional stress of unexpected hardship.

Obi stated this in a statement via his verified Twitter handle on Tuesday. According to him, although some of the demolitions might be excusable, they had left many victims, mostly ordinary people, who are either innocently ill-informed or misguided.

Obi said the primary duty of any government is to care for and protect its citizens. The former Anambra State governor advised that “necessary corrective measures to planning or zoning violations by governments, need not be punitive or unduly insensitive.” He stated, “In Nigeria, we live in a time of extreme difficulties for citizens because of stagnated income, spiralling inflation, huge unemployment escalating socio-economic costs and high costs of living. “Nigerian citizens should therefore, not be subjected to the additional stress of

unexpected hardship. Moreover, the various concerned governments should consider paying compensation to those who have lost properties and livelihoods in these unfortunate demolitions to ameliorate their suffering.

Such compensation should fall under the rubric of eminent domain that is applicable for properties and assets acquired or demolished in the public interest.

“It cannot ever be overemphasized that the primary duty of any government is the responsibility to care for and protect her citizens.”



Power Transmission Grid



## Business & Economy

### Agriculture: Revolutionising catfish value chain in Nigeria

**The demand for catfish in Nigeria is on the rise by the day and the vast and fertile waters of Nigeria offers a hidden treasure that lies beneath the surface. Catfish with its immense nutritional value, economic potential has the power to transform lives and boost the economy. ADEGWU JOHN writes.**

However, unlocking the true value of the catfish value chain in Nigeria has been a challenge. Although a promising wave of innovation and entrepreneurship is sweeping through the industry which has offered a glimmer of hope and endless possibilities for Nigeria's catfish farmers and stakeholders.

Moreso, catfish farming has long been a traditional practice in Nigeria, mainly carried out by small-scale farmers but limited access to modern farming techniques, inadequate infrastructure, and fragmented markets have hindered the growth of the catfish value chain. Despite these challenges, catfish remains a symbol of opportunity, with its potential to alleviate poverty, create jobs and improve food security.

Besides being Africa's most populous nation, Nigeria is also the world's largest producer of African catfish, with an estimated annual production of one million tonnes in 2021, worth around \$2.6 billion.

The catfish value chain in Nigeria involves several stages: breeding, fingerling production, grow-out farming, processing, marketing, and consumption. Each stage presents its unique challenges and opportunities.

Currently, the industry is characterized by small-scale operations, with many farmers lacking access to quality fingerlings, feed, and modern farming techniques. This has resulted in low productivity and profitability and in addition, lack of proper processing and storage facilities often leads to post-harvest losses, further reducing the industry's profitability.

A value chain analysis conducted by FISH4ACP and the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development show that Nigeria has an estimated 285, 000 producers of catfish with small-scale farmers represent over 60 percent. The catfish value chain itself also offers employment to some one million people.

To unlock the catfish value chain's potential, a multi-faceted approach is required. This involves addressing the challenges at each stage of the value chain and leveraging the opportunities that exist.

Recently FAO in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development launched the implementation phase for the sustainable development of the catfish value chain in Nigeria.

The project, Fish4ACP which is



currently funded by the European Union and the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is an initiative of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OCAPS) to contribute to food security and nutrition, economic prosperity and job creation.

The initiative aimed to ensure the economic, social and environmental sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture in the aforementioned states and will analyse the catfish value chain, create employment opportunities, foster capacity development, facilitate access to business investment and enhance competitiveness in the sector.

At it launched in Abuja, FAO representative to Nigeria and ECOWAS, Fred Kafeero said the project remains an excellent opportunity to reiterate the organisation's commitment for a blue transformation of the catfish sub-sector, vital for food security, the economy and people's livelihoods.

Kafeero said Nigeria remains a very important and strategic member state in the development and upgrading of the catfish value chain.

According to the European Union (EU) delegation to Nigeria, by supporting the catfish



strategy, it strive to address the challenges faced by catfish farmers and entrepreneurs in Nigeria and beyond, including strengthening the capacities of African countries to sustainably manage their fisheries resources, enhance the competitiveness of the sector, and foster regional cooperation.

The delegation represented by Frank Okafor at the event said the union is committed to supporting Nigeria and other

African countries in achieving their sustainable development goals through technical assistance, capacity building, and financial resources to ensure the success of the African Catfish Strategy.

In his remarks, the permanent secretary, ministry of agriculture and rural development, Dr Ernest Umakhihe said the ministry is committed to further increasing aquaculture production by an additional 250.000 metric tonnes in order to meet domestic

demands and reduce fish import. Overall, unlocking the catfish value chain in Nigeria is a task that requires the collective effort of all stakeholders, including the government, farmers, researchers, and the private sector. With the right strategies and interventions, the catfish industry can become a significant contributor to Nigeria's economic growth and development. It's time to unlock the potential of the catfish value chain and reap the benefits that it holds.



# Business & Economy

## World Bank sees N3.9trn savings with subsidy removal

THE World Bank has projected that Nigeria will save N3.9 trillion in 2023 following subsidy removal and FX unification move, saying it will also stop the country from falling off a fiscal cliff.

This was made known by Alex Sienaert, chief economist at World Bank at the launch of the Nigeria Development Update for June 2023 themed seizing the opportunity.

He noted that although the reforms set the stage for a new and upward trajectory in terms of Nigeria's development path, there are some immediate short-term consequences such as inflation spike, and additional debts, among other issues.

"The recently undertaken PMS subsidy & FX reforms are historic, N3.9 trillion in savings in 2023 alone, stops Nigeria from going over a fiscal cliff and sets the stage for a new, upward investment, growth, and development trajectory," he said.

"While inflation will be higher in 2023, it will be lower in 2024-2025 if the right policy mix is sustained," he said.

Speaking about GDP performance in the first quarter of 2023, he said that the Naira redesign caused a cash crunch, exacerbating the drag caused by external conditions and other domestic policies.

He said the subsidy removal is preventing further deterioration, adding that Savings from the subsidy can also be used for other pro-poor service delivery such as health, education, infrastructure, among others; "The current coverage of Social protection programs (SPPs) is low at 19 percent of the population; Nigeria will continue to spend less than \$20 per person monthly," he said.

Siernat also said that Nigeria's debt to GDP ratio will increase to 46 percent, as he noted that the FG will be paying off subsidy arrears to NNPC will reduce the fiscal savings for 2023, in addition to other debts that must be serviced.

He added that if the savings from subsidy removal are not well utilized, over 7 million Nigerians will be further thrown into the poverty net.

In his remarks, Seyi Makinde, governor, Oyo state said the reforms are a step in the right direction however there is need to ensure that social safety nets are put in place



Banga

because other than the local disruptions, there are also global headwinds which affect Nigeria as well.

"Social protection programs must be taken with a systemic approach towards long term objectives," he said.

Wale Edun, Special Adviser to president Bola Tinubu on Monetary Policies said that

He said other than the 800 million loan from the World Bank, there may need for additional loans to ensure sustainability of the bold reforms by president Bola Tinubu.

"We have identified some sources of funding but we are going after many more," he said.

## Discos awaits NERC approval, backtrack on tariff hike

NIGERIAN DisCos Power distribution companies, on Monday, backtracked on their earlier announcement of a tariff hike projected to take effect from July 1, 2023, as they stated that the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission had yet to approve the hike.

Various public notices from some of the Discos seen on Sunday had stated that the electricity tariff would be raised by about 30 to 40 per cent for selected categories of consumers on July 1, 2023.

In a public service announcement from the Abuja Electricity Distribution Company, for instance, the Disco had said, "Effective July 1, 2023, please be informed

that there will be an upward review to the electricity tariff influenced by the fluctuating exchange rate.

"Under the MYTO (Multi Year Tariff Order) 2022 guidelines, the previously set exchange rate of N441/\$1 may now be revised to approximately N750/\$1 which will have an impact on the tariffs associated with your electricity consumption"

But in an appeal by the same AEDC, issued on Monday, the firm asked its customers to disregard the planned tariff increase as approval for such an increment had not been received.

"Please disregard the circulating communication, regarding the review of



Garba

THE National Commissioner for the Nigeria Data Protection Bureau, Dr Vincent Olatunji, has kicked against the regulation of the Central Bank of Nigeria mandating financial institutions to obtain social media handles, among other data, of customers.

While speaking on Channels Television's Politics Today programme on Monday, he described the collection of such data as unnecessary, noting that the Commission has written to the apex bank.

He said, "We have done a letter to the CBN about what they have done because in data protection and privacy issues, there are some basic principles to follow when you want to collect citizens' data."

"One, there is what is called data minimization. That is, you don't collect data more than for the purpose for which you want to use it. There is a limit to the level of data you must collect."

"Two, purpose limitation: what purpose? Why do you actually need somebody's data? In this case, it is for financial transactions. The issue of asking for their

## NDPB faults CBN social media handles request



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social media is not really necessary."

He noted that if the CBN wants to use such data under public interest as a regulator to monitor financial transactions, there are guidelines to follow.

One such guideline includes informing the customers and stating the purpose.

However, he noted that "ideally, that should not happen. We are engaging the CBN on

this."

He added that "You don't collect data more than what you need, so there is no point in collecting such data. So, we will definitely take them up on it and work with them and look at the best solution out of it."

The CBN had earlier mandated financial institutions to obtain the social media handle, e-mail addresses, telephone numbers, residential addresses, and more of their customers.

electricity tariffs. Be

informed that no approval for such increments has been received. We regret any inconvenience," the AEDC stated in its latest announcement.

A senior official in NERC confirmed that the regulator had not given the Discos approval to announce the

hike in tariffs.

"The commission did not give them such approval," the official, who pleaded not to be named due to lack of approval, stated.

Reacting to the development, a former spokesperson of the AEDC and seasoned expert in the sector, Olabode Fadipe, said, "NERC never publishes any position or makes any official statement. It is the Discos that

does that. Once the Discos receive approval from NERC, they effect the adjustment straightaway.

"Discos perhaps got approval for 1st July and chose to put their customers on notice only to be told that their action was hasty. That end users have been told to ignore the message does not mean that the increase won't.

## Naira gains 0.25% at official market

NAIRA on Monday appreciated at the Investors and Exporters (I&E) forex window, Nigeria's official foreign exchange market, gaining 0.25 percent following increased dollar supply.

After trading on Monday, the dollar was quoted at the rate of N768.17 as against N770.17 quoted on Friday at the I&E window, data from the FMDQ indicated.

The naira appreciation followed increased dollar supply from willing sellers, which include the banks, investors/exporters and the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN).

The daily foreign exchange market turnover rose by 57.91 percent to \$198.13 million on Monday from \$125.47 million recorded on Friday.

On June 14, 2023, the CBN abolished segments of the official FX market to the I&E Window, where the "Willing buyer and Willing seller" was re-introduced. Based on this adjustment, the official rate rose from N463.38/\$ to N768.17, the current rate.

Naira on Monday depreciated against the dollar by 0.38 percent (N3/\$1) at the parallel market, also known as black market following increased demand.

After trading on Monday, the dollar quoted at the rate of N773 as against N770 quoted on Friday at the black market.

Traders attributed the naira depression to increased demand for dollars, mostly from

## ... Rebounds 3% as equity investors gain N7

THE Naira opened the week on Monday at N768.17/\$ — stronger than it closed the previous week where it plunged to N770.17/\$ on Friday, June 23.

This represents a 3 percent gain as traded volume also expanded to \$198.13 million from \$125.47 million it did on Friday, showing a 57 percent rise.

This indicates increased confidence in the foreign exchange reform which kicked off on Wednesday, June 14, 2023 with the floating of the Naira and unification of the forex windows.

On the other hand, the Nigerian equities market kicked off this week's trading on a bullish note with market capitalisation hitting N32.3 trillion compared with N32.2 trillion in the last trading of Friday, reflecting a gain of N72 billion.

This followed increased demand for BUACEMENT (+2.5%) which closed at N92.25 from the share price of

individuals who want to travel for education, tourism or for business.

"The demand for dollars is rising and that is the reason the rate is lower today than Friday," said one of the traders.

N90.00 per share. Similarly GTCO (+4.0%) gained N1.25 to close at N32.70 from its N31.34 per share, among the other stock movements.

The All-Share Index advanced by 0.2 percent to 59,338.76 points as against 59,203.75 points last Friday.

Accordingly, the Month-to-Date and Year-to-Date returns increased to +6.4 percent and +15.8 percent respectively.

The total volume traded declined by 12.0 percent to 552.69 million units, valued at N13.06 billion, and exchanged in 8,052 deals.

ACCESSCORP was the most traded stock by volume at 74.60 million units, while BUACEMENT was the most traded stock by value at NGN3.86 billion.

From a sectoral perspective, gains in the Banking (+2.4%), Insurance (+1.7%), Industrial Goods (+1.0%), Oil & Gas (+0.5%), and Consumer Goods (+0.1%) indices reflected the overall market performance.



## Business & Economy

### Closing agric mechanization gap: The Tata-John deere strategy

**Agric Mechanization** "Nigeria is facing two key gaps in agriculture today: an inability to meet domestic food requirements, and an inability to export at quality levels required for market success. The former problem is a productivity challenge driven by an input system and farming model that is largely inefficient." **EBITAN EGBUSON** writes.

FOOD Security Cluster of the World Food Programme. In 2021, Indian farmers embarked on a campaign of mass action against agricultural reforms that introduced new sales, pricing and storage rules that put small scale farmers at the mercy of large agro-industrial firms. For a whole year, international news channels tracked the protest as they stormed the country's capital, New Delhi in their millions. In the end, the farmers had their way as they forced the government to abandon the controversial aspects of the reforms.

A defining aspect of the protest, while it lasted, was the sight of tractors of different makes, shapes and sizes with which the farmers blocked major roads. A news report described one of the protest events as a "tractor rally". The sight would have been unusual in Nigeria. The vast majority of Nigerian farmers are more familiar with machetes and hoes and shovels than tractors. And that lack of familiarity with a key implement of modern agribusiness is a major reason why Nigerian agriculture is underperforming so badly.

Tractors are a core component of agricultural mechanization and their large-scale absence in Nigerian agriculture is both a symptom and a cause of the failure of Nigerian agriculture to achieve the potentials that we talk about so much.

The statistics on Nigeria's agricultural mechanization gap are depressing. Nigeria's agricultural mechanization level is among the lowest in the world. According to the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Nigeria's mechanization status is at 0.027 hp/hectare, much lower than the Food and Agriculture (FAO) standard of 1.5 hp/hectare.

Admittedly, there have been some bright spots in Nigerian agriculture over the past decade. Innovative private sector players supported by a few progressive policies have made produced decent results such as the Lake Rice collaboration between the Lagos and Kebbi governments and some partners. Enterprising Nigerian agripreneurs are making strides in exporting a growing list of agricultural commodities. In 2022, according to data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the country generated N427.6 billion in revenues from exporting cocoa beans, sesame seeds, cashew and other commodities. This represents a 14.9% increase, year-on-year compared to N372.2 billion in the same period the previous year.

Despite this progress, the big picture for Nigerian agriculture is still quite poor. The mass of the about 38 million small scale farmers in the country, about 20% of the population are still using barely improved primitive tools that their grandfathers used



to eke out a precarious living from the soil. Productivity per hectare remains very low. Hunger and malnutrition rates are escalating as the recent figures by UNICEF show: one out of every three Nigerian households cannot afford a daily nutritious diet (estimated to cost N1687) daily. The capacity of Nigerians to feed themselves is getting worse and the exports are still a drop in the bucket compared to documented potential.

And that explains why mechanization must be central to any serious effort to improve this negative situation. Among other benefits, mechanization boosts productivity, saves time, promotes specialization, creates jobs and reduces the physical and health hazards associated with subsistence farming. In other words, for the country to achieve the critical goals of higher productivity and large-scale farming, mechanization is indispensable. Without a significant improvement in mechanization, Nigerian agriculture will continue to be an endless tale of unfulfilled potentials. There is an urgent need for the right policies that support the efforts of private sector organizations with solid track records working to bridging the mechanization gap in Nigeria.

In this respect, the consistent, rigorous and impactful initiatives of organizations like Tata

International Nigeria, the sole dealer in the iconic John Deere tractors and other agricultural equipment are significant. Tata/John Deere has been at the forefront of mechanization equipment provision in the country for the past ten years. With specialized solutions that take into account the specifics of clients' operations, design, terrain, funding, Tata's operations are targeted at making a difference both on the field and in the bottom-line of its expanding customer base.

The focus is on bespoke, custom-made solutions that work in the peculiar business environment of Nigeria through a proactive strategy. Among other John Deere brand solutions, Tata supplies Tillage (Plough, Harrow, Ridger, cultivators, rippers, rotavators, etc.), Crop care (Planters, Seeders, Sprayers, etc.), Harvesters and Trailed Trailers. These solid solutions and products are backed by a trained team of technicians and spare parts warehouse across Nigeria.

The evidence of Tata's impact can be seen in the positive results of the deployment of these John Deere products and solutions on the farms of its customers across the country – and by extension, on overall agricultural productivity in the country. The market response to its expertise and products has been robust over the past decade: John Deere is the most preferred mechanization brand in the country. Also, Tata/John Deere has supported agribusiness projects across the

public and private sector.

At the state level, it has supported agricultural schemes in Enugu, Ebonyi, Kebbi, Ondo, Cross River, Bayelsa, AkwaIbom, Kano, etc. Some of the notable projects that have benefitted from Tata strategies and John Deere products include Dangote Rice & Sugar, Olam Rice, Flour Mills cereal and sugar project, BUA Sugar, Coscharis Rice, Panda Agric, Pally Agro. Tata/John Deere has also collaborated with some of the most reputable cooperative associations within and outside the agricultural sector. They include: TOOAN, TOHFAN, Traxi, AGROPRO, KAMTRAC, AMBEL, etc. (GET THE FULL NAMES)

It is also on record that Tata/John Deere was the first brand to support farmer groups with equipment under structured payment plans. Some of the beneficiary associations which benefitted and the units they acquired include: RIFAN (100), NECAS (180), NACOTAN (93), and NWFMP (20).

Another milestone: Tata/John Deere pioneered successful tractor rental business when it went into a successful partnership with AGRA(FULL NAME?) to develop service providers in the country, birthing TATA's asset rental business. This business model was tested in 2021 with 25 Tractors, and the success recorded provided the needed comfort to expand the pilot to 90 tractors in the second season (2022). The model has been developed to help the providers take ownership of the assets after successfully executing the rental program within the tenure agreed.

No doubt, Tata/John Deere – and the other players and partners in the agricultural space – have contributed to the reduction of the mechanization gap in Nigeria. Without their efforts, things would have been much worse. Their efforts are commendable because the Nigerian business environment is a challenging one. One key problem is general lack of interest from commercial banks to finance mechanization equipment acquisition, principally because they lack a deep understanding of the agricultural value-chain business and are reluctant to venture into it on a long-term basis. There is an urgent need for government and the organized private sector to put heads together on strategies and appropriate incentives to boost financial sector support for agricultural mechanization. Current policies on import tariffs which adversely affect the pace of adoption of mechanization have led to many vendors of equipment across the country have reducing their operations.

Finally, the country requires a more robust mechanization framework to encourage availability of finance to new service providers and facilitate the engagement of educated youths in agriculture as part of an overall strategy of taking Nigerian agriculture to the level that their tractor-riding counterparts in India and other developing countries are familiar with.

## Politics

# PLHA condemns incessant attacks on Mangu villages

By PAULINE DALLONG

In a matter of urgent public importance, the Plateau State House of Assembly (PLHA) has condemned in its totality, the continuous attacks on Mangu Local Government Area by Fulani herdsmen with the latest being Chisu and Bwoi villages where many lives were lost and properties destroyed.

This was contained in a motion moved by Hon. Bala Fwangje, member representing Mangu South constituency and seconded by Hon. Bala Noma, who is the member representing Kantana constituency.

Hon. Fwangje who called on his colleagues to lend their voices by condemning the act, wondered why his numerous calls for intervention to stop the unwarranted killings of his people has not yielded any result.

Members in their separate contributions condemned the killings, describing life as sacred which should not be taken by anyone, for whatever reason.

They called on the state government to ensure it fully funds and equips the Operation Rainbow, advising that the local vigilante and hunters groups should be encouraged and carried along in the fight against insecurity since they were closest to the people in the villages and communities.

The Rt. Hon. Speaker, Moses Sule in his submission resolved that security agencies in the state must



Sule

rise up to the occasion and defend the citizens, while also calling on NEMA and SEMA to come to the aid of affected communities by providing relief materials.

Also, members were instructed to visit the various IDP camps with the view to sympathising with the affected persons, sharing in their pains and encouraging them in this trying times, even as a one minute silence was observed for those who lost their lives in Mangu,

Riyom and Barkin Ladi recently.

Meanwhile, in view of the fact that Section 104 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended) provides that a House of Assembly shall sit for

a period of not less than one hundred and eighty one (181) days in a year.

And in view of the fact that the 10th assembly of the Plateau State House of Assembly commenced its first session on Tuesday 13th June, 2023, there was need to set out and adopt by resolution the first session of legislative calendar.

Subsequently, the House during Thursday's plenary resolved that the total sitting days for the first session of the 10th assembly, commencing 13th June, 2023 and ending 13th June, 2024 will be one hundred and eighty five (185) days excluding public holidays while total recess period will be ten (10) weeks.

CANDIDATES of the Young People's Party (YPP) in the recently concluded Langtang-North/Langtang-South Constituency National Assembly election, Hon. Yarnap, has withdrawn his case before the Election Petition Tribunal sitting in Jos, Plateau State, challenging the declaration of Hon Beni Butmak Lar, of the People's Democratic Party (PDP).

This took place recently when counsel to the petitioner, Micah Adaji, announced the withdrawal of his counsel's petition to the three-member committee of the tribunal led by Justice Muhammad Tukur, recently after every consideration and deliberation with the Prime Petitioner.

However, counsels to the 1st Respondent, H.N. Ugwaike, 2nd Respondent, S.Y. Tsok and that of the 3rd Respondent did not object the

# Yarnap withdraws petition against Lar

BY EZEKIEL DONTINNA

application seeking the court's order to withdraw their case before the tribunal but called on the panel to strike out, dismissing with a fine.

The counsels, therefore, urged the tribunal to consider their prayer of charging the petitioner to pay a fine for wasting the precious time of the tribunal all these while. But the tribunal struck the application and urged both parties to bear their respective losses since the petitioner has made bold to withdraw his case.

In a similar vein, the All Progressive Congress (APC)'s candidate for the February 15, 2023 National Assembly Election for Langtang-

North/Langtang-South Constituency, Hon. Vincent Bulus Venman, has testified before the tribunal that the candidate of People's Democratic Party (PDP) Hon. Beni Butmak Lar, was not supposed to be declared as winner of the election.

He disclosed that he should have been the rightful winner of the election because the PDP has no recognised State Executive Council in the state, but was announced as winner in an election that it was not supposed to participate in. He pointed out that, "I do not know how they were included in the election."

The case was adjourned to June 22, 2023 for the next hearing by 9am according.

# Suspended Benue chairmen stampfeet against directive

From TERESE TUHWA, Makurdi

THE 23 local government council chairmen in the state recently suspended from office as approved by the Benue State House of Assembly said they did not recognise the purported directive by the state House of Assembly and Bureau for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs suspending them and elected councilors from office.

This was made known recently at a press conference held at the state secretariat of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Makurdi the state capital by a selected suspended council chairmen on behalf of other chairmen. They said as elected council chairmen, they were



Alia

protected by the constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria as the third tier of government.

They argued that they were elected into office by the electorate of Benue State as guaranteed under the establishment law of the state. As such, it was therefore absurd to be sacked in a manner as purported by the state Assembly and Bureau for Government and Chieftaincy Affairs.

According to the council chairmen, their suspension from office was a subversion of justice and high level impunity since the National

Industrial Court, Makurdi division had barred Benue State Government at all levels from taking any action as it sought to temper with their lawfully recognised mandate as elected council chairmen.

They lamented that instead of leading the way on the quest for strengthening an order of law and respect for due process, Governor Alia was flagrantly promoting impunity and anarchy as seen in the actions of the state Assembly and Bureau for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs.

The embattled council chairmen insisted that they do not recognise the purporting of their suspension from office from such quarters and will not give heed to same or comply with directives that emanate from the two bodies.

The suspended council chairmen vowed that they will not surrender to illegality and impunity as being contrived against them, disclosing that surrendering to their unlawful purported suspension will amount to doing a disservice to Benue electorate who gave them their mandate.

It will be recalled that Mr. Aondona Dajo led Benue State House of Assembly on Wednesday June 21st, 2023 approved the suspension of all the 23 local government council chairmen in the state for financial misappropriation as sent to it by the Governor, Rev. Fr. Hyacinth Iormem

# PLHA approves #15bn loan for PLSG

By PAULINE DALLONG

THE Plateau State House of Assembly (PLHA), has during Thursday's plenary approved a loan facility of fifteen billion naira (#15bn) to the Plateau State government.

This is sequel to a communication from the state Executive Governor, Barr. Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang for the payment of backlog of salary arrears owed the state civil servants and for the purchase of agricultural inputs to assist farmers in the state.

A second communication was also received from the state governor, seeking the request of the House to rejig the 2023 budget to reflect the current economic realities being faced.

The state governor was asking for the virement of the sum of three point five billion naira (#3.5bn) to take care of MDAs subheads and particularly, tackle the issue of insecurity to which the House constituted a five-man committee headed by the Deputy Speaker, Rt. Hon. Gwotson Fom Dalyop.

Meanwhile the PLHA speaker has during Thursday's plenary, constituted the House presiding officers with Hon.

Ishaku Maren representing Bokkos constituency as majority leader and Hon. Ibrahim Agbalak representing Rukuba/Irigwe constituency as deputy majority leader.

While Hon. Bala Fwangje, member representing Mangu South constituency is now the chief whip, Hon. Nanbol Rimvyat representing Langtang North Central is the House deputy chief whip and Hon. Gabriel Dewan Kudanbgena, member representing Pankshin North,

the minority chief whip.

However, a little drama ensued with the mention of Hon. Ibrahim Adamu Galadima, member representing Wase constituency as the House minority leader when the member representing Shendam constituency, Hon. Joe Bukar raised an observation that the name mentioned by the speaker was a different name to that contained in the letter in his possession from the state

party, APC.

The Speaker, Rt. Hon. Moses Sule advised that they should go back to the state APC office and resolve whatever issues that may have arisen from the said letter.

Also during plenary, the House passed for first reading two executive bills which are 'A Bill for a Law to Establish the Plateau State Law Reform Commission' and 'A Bill for a Law to Establish the Plateau State Citizens Mediation Centre'.

# Governor Kefas probes financial activities of boards, commissions

From VICTOR GAI, Jalingo

IN an attempt to overhaul the civil service, the Taraba State Governor, Agbu Kefas, has set up a nine man committee to review the activities of boards, commissions and governing councils from 2019 to 2023.

In a letter signed by Secretary to the Government of the State, Chief (Barr.) Gebon Timothy Kataps, the committee has a seven-point terms of reference to work with. They include: To determine the

performance of all the boards/ commissions and the inflows/outflows of funds of the boards/commissions, to determine the performance of the boards/commissions in terms of service delivery as it affects such boards/commissions in the interest of the state, to determine the performance of boards/commissions and their performance indices, negative and positive as

they affect the various zones and components of the state.

Others are: To suggest to the government how best to reorganize such boards/commissions in order to function optimally and achieve their set objectives in the interest of the state, to determine if necessary to improve or retain the remuneration of members of boards/commissions to achieve maximum performance, to suggest the cost of their funding if

any, and other advise to improve these boards/commissions, to investigate/review performance of the consultants in payroll management of the state (starter point) to determine whether or not their performance meets the required standard and to advice the government.

The committee is headed by Polycarp Iranus, the Auditor-General of the state while Mr. Genesis Kwantar is the secretary. It has 21 days to submit its report.

## Politics

# El-Rufai: A toxic influence on Nigerian politics

**Mallam Nasir el-Rufai is an unrepentant religious bigot; a militant Islamic supremacist, who believes Islam is superior to Christianity, and wants Islam to dominate the leadership of Nigeria. He doesn't just hold these views, he actively pursues them. As governor of Kaduna state for eight years, until May this year, el-Rufai ran an Islamic government, with a Muslim-controlled administration, despite the state having a large Christian population. OLU FASAN writes.**

NOW, out of office, he prides himself on installing a successor on a Muslim-Muslim ticket, and entrenching Muslim dominance in the governance of Kaduna state. More significantly, el-Rufai boasts of foisting his Kaduna state Muslim-Muslim leadership model on Nigeria, and warns Nigerians to brace themselves for a prolonged Muslim leadership of this country.

I cringed at el-Rufai's recent comments on how Islam was used to secure "victory" for Bola Tinubu in this year's presidential election, and his call for entrenched Muslim presidency in Nigeria. Why would anyone behave with such utter recklessness and stoke inter-religious tensions in a country so ethnically and religiously polarised, and so unstable and fragile?

However, as much as some hate to hear it, the truth is that Nigeria began as an artificial construct and remains today, 109 years after the British cobbled it together in 1914, a state without nationhood. It is, essentially, still a mere geographical space, where ethnicity, religion and other primordial sentiments define most of the people.

Clearly, therefore, any responsible leader interested in nation-building should, in words and deeds, seek to bind this country together and not deepen its ethnic, religious and other schisms.

Apparently, however, el-Rufai is not such a leader: he wants a Nigeria whose leadership is controlled by Muslims, a Nigeria where Islam is privileged over Christianity in national leadership and governance. He wants, more or less, an Islamic Republic of Nigeria! If you think that's hyperbolic, hear it from his mouth!

In a recent viral video, el-Rufai told Muslim clerics in Kaduna that religion was used to give Tinubu "victory" in February's presidential election. He said Tinubu knew he "had no option" but to pick a Muslim running mate, otherwise "he would lose the election." Then, he gloated: "What we are able to achieve in Kaduna, has now been achieved in Nigeria." He went on to ridicule the Christian Association of Nigeria, CAN, saying it had "kept quiet" and "remained mute" since Tinubu's "victory".

The presidential poll, el-Rufai said, showed that Christians



**el-Rufai**

lacked electoral value and strength in Nigeria. "There's no liar that can say he will do politics of Christianity and win the election," he said, adding: "So, if we keep bringing Muslim-Muslim tickets, everything will go smoothly for us Muslims." Put simply, a Muslim-Muslim ticket would trump a Christian-Muslim ticket in any presidential election in Nigeria.

First, it's worth pointing out that even the highly disputed INEC results of the presidential election do not justify el-Rufai's triumphalism. It's not clear to me how securing 8.79 million out of 24 million votes, as Tinubu did, can amount to acceptance and legitimisation of the Muslim-Muslim ticket when the overwhelming majority of voters, 14.6 million, rejected that ticket. How can someone with 36.6 per cent of the total votes claim a strong mandate for a Muslim-Muslim ticket when a whopping 63.39 per cent of the voters rejected that ticket? Surely, el-Rufai must concede that, even with the INEC-declared results, Tinubu's Muslim-Muslim ticket did not receive the majority, let alone overwhelming,

support of Nigerians, and thus lacks true legitimacy.

But that aside, the truth is that, with el-Rufai, we are dealing with a dangerous and perverse influence on Nigeria's politics and polity. I once wrote that el-Rufai is a very smart technocrat and administrator.

Of course, he is! But so, in some ways, were Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin. And so are many autocrats and demagogues around the world today. Truth is, the world is full of evil geniuses!

I mean, when a smart person warned foreign election observers not to interfere in Nigeria's presidential election or "you will go home in body bags", as el-Rufai did in 2019, you must wonder about that kind of smartness. When, in a country split nearly 50-50 between Christians and Muslims, a smart person called for a Muslim-Muslim presidency, saying "if we do it again and again, everything will be normal", you must wonder if that "smart" person is, indeed, "normal" himself. Sadly, that's how one must view el-Rufai; smart but dangerous, a toxic influence on Nigerian politics!

But this is not just about el-Rufai. What about Mallam Bola Ahmed Tinubu, as the Supreme Council of Sharia in Nigeria, SCSN, calls him? He

told Nigerians that he picked Mallam Kashim Shettima as his running mate, not because he was a fellow Muslim but because he was a genius, whose abilities could not be matched by any Christian member of his party, APC, in the North! Of course, Tinubu was dissembling, his denial was deceptive. El-Rufai has finally put the lie to that denial. Truth is, the Muslim-Muslim ticket was about using religion to secure power. For Tinubu's Northern backers, like el-Rufai, it was about ensuring Islamic dominance in the leadership of Nigeria!

Ironically, the same Tinubu who said, albeit deceptively, that his Muslim-Muslim ticket was based on competence, not religion, then, once in power, used religion to push for Godswill Akpabio's election as Senate President. Tinubu's vice president, Shettima, put it starkly: "The worst and most incompetent Southern Christian is better than the most puritanical Northern Muslim for the presidency of the Senate." That comment enraged Shettima's fellow Northern Muslims, forcing him to apologise and reaffirm his Islamic pedigree. "My family lineage has faithfully followed the path of Islam for more than 1,400 years," he said.

Of course, the point Shettima and Tinubu were making regarding the Senate President position was that it had little to do with competence, but all to do with religion. In truth, given that Nigeria's legislature is typically a rubber stamp, the quality of a Senate president is irrelevant. Yet, the fact that Tinubu and Shettima used religion so opportunistically to grab power, both in the presidential election and in the election of the Senate president, reveals the dishonesty at the heart of their politics and, potentially, also at the heart of their government.

But we must return to el-Rufai. He said that having secured a Muslim-Muslim presidency in Nigeria, replicating his Kaduna model at the centre, he and his fellow APC Northern Muslims "have finished our work". He then projected that Nigeria would have a prolonged Muslim presidency. He may well be right. For, with Tinubu as president, if the Supreme Court validates his election, Nigeria may have a Muslim president for 24 years continuously.

Think about it this way. If Tinubu does eight years in office, he will, inevitably, be succeeded by a Northern Muslim, who may also do eight years. Thus, by 2039, Nigeria would have had a Muslim president for 24 consecutive years since 2015!

Sadly, some Nigerians are currently overexcited about Tinubu's exercise of presidential powers, which if anything, merely confirms how powerful Nigeria's president is. But the premature adulation will fizzle out and the implications of Tinubu's Muslim-Muslim presidency, and the potential for Muslim presidency for 24 consecutive years, will be unavoidable. Surely, in a climate where there's widespread persecution of Christians and hostility towards the Christian faith, as documented by Release International, a global NGO, it's inevitable that an Islamisation agenda will severely test Nigeria's fragile unity and stability.

El-Rufai says his "work is finished" with the emergence of a Muslim-Muslim presidency. Well, he will live with the consequences of his quest for Islamic domination of Nigeria!

# IMAGES

## GOVERNOR MUTFWANG SWEARS-IN PERM SECS, ADVISERS

The Plateau State Executive Governor, Barr. Caleb Mannaseh Mutfwang recently swore-in Permanent Secretaries in the State Civil Service and Special Advisers at the Victoria Gowon Multi-purpose Hall, new Government House Rayfield, Jos



Governor Caleb Mutfwang addressing the newly sworn-in Permanent Secretaries



Cross section of the newly appointed Permanent Secretaries



President of the Customary Court of Appeal, Justice Blessing Lyop Dalyop and the representative of the President, State Traditional Council, HRH Da John Putmang Hirse, mni, Miskhaham Mwaghavul at the ceremony



Plateau State Governor, Caleb Mutfwang (left) presenting appointment letter to Mrs. Helen Halima Chundusu after the oath taking ceremony



Plateau State CAN Chairman Fr. Polycarp Lubo and other invited dignitaries during the swearing in ceremony



Mr. Nanman Kparbong, newly sworn-in Permanent Secretary (right) receiving his appointment letter from the Executive Governor of Plateau State, Barr. Mutfwang



Newly sworn-in Special Adviser on Security Matters, Brigadier General Gakji Shipi being congratulated by Governor Mutfwang



Plateau State Governor, Barr. Caleb Mutfwang (left) congratulating his Chief of Staff Government House, Engr. Jeremiah Satmak after taking the oath



## Politics

# Nigerians tell politicians to share in pain of reforms

**From visiting home thrice a week, Akeem Olabode, a laboratory assistant with a private hospital in Lekki Phase 1, Lagos, now goes home once in a week. Olabode, like millions of other Nigerian masses, is adjusting to the hard times the citizens are passing through due to petrol price hike arising from fuel subsidy removal by the new government. EMELIKE OBINNA & IWOK INIOBONG writes.**

THE laboratory scientist, who abandoned his position as a senior laboratory supervisor in an Ikeja-based hospital for a juicier offer in Lekki last year, now lives in regret as the high cost of living, especially the unbearable transportation fares, has left his bank account empty before month end.

"With the high cost of everything, especially over 200 percent hike in transport fare across Lagos, the only option I have is to stay back in the hospital even when I am off duty. House rent, school fees, feeding allowances, car maintenance have all tripled in cost," he lamented.

Ndubisi Uchegbu, a civil engineer and CEO of a medium-sized construction company in Aba, Abia State, decried that the situation is not the same across the country. According to him, some places are more negatively impacted than others. Some people in the South-East region are buying fuel at over N650 per litre and that has impacted on the cost of everything and added to their suffering.

According to the engineer, the cost of transportation has tripled because of the subsidy removal and that has equally impacted on the cost of everything being transported from Lagos to the South-East and other parts of the country, resulting in people living farther from Lagos, paying more and suffering more.

"The masses have been suffering for a long time and the government has never been sensitive to their plight. The gift from the new government is hike in prices, inflation and more sufferings for the masses and the rich has always been exempted from the famine in the land because of the mass looting of the nation's treasury since 1999," Uchegbu said.

Expressing the same pain, Itorobong Edem, a pharmacist, who runs chains of pharmaceutical shops across Calabar, Uyo, Ikot Ekpene and Aba, noted that his company has stopped buying expensive drugs, though effective, because sick people are increasingly going for cheaper alternatives.

"We get direct supplies from pharmaceutical companies within the country, from Germany and India. But the prices are so high that we are scared that people will not buy them and that is the reality now.

"It is sad because many who cannot afford these drugs are likely going to die from taking cheaper and less effective options and I risk closing down some of my shops if they cannot generate money to pay staff," Edem said.

Looking at the very low purchasing power, which is negatively impacting on the health of many, Edem lamented that the suffering being witnessed by the masses today are unbearable.

But the most worrisome for many is that while Nigerians are in the season of price hikes, the reality is that their incomes are not increasing to match the inflationary trend.

Though the government promised palliatives to cushion the effects of the subsidy removal and salary increase, the Nigerian Labour Congress has to fight more to get the government fulfil its promises considering the many unfulfilled and forgotten promises by the government in the past.

Beyond the promises, pundits said that there is fear that government may



sort out the politicians and top government functionaries, instead of the masses who are already weighed down by the high cost of living.

The fear seems real with the recent report, now denied, that the Revenue Mobilisation, Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC) has approved a 114 percent pay raise for the president and other top executives of the government.

"They will deny it as usual, but will implement it silently. What has the masses really gained from our democracy since 1999 if not suffering. Government should rather cut the cost of governance, cut salaries of National Assembly members, top government functionaries, merge some parastatals and ministries, block leakages and use the recovered money for the masses welfare," Chijioke Umelahi, a former Abia lawmaker said.

The Abuja-based lawyer said that there was no reform being planned to benefit the masses yet, as a sensitive government should have allowed the subsidy removal to be instalment rather than the rash implementation that has tripled prices, soared inflation and further boost insecurity.

"Those who are waiting for palliatives will wait forever because it will not come. If you increase workers' salary, what about the private sector, business people and the unemployed? Are they not buying same fuel or are you asking businesses to hike prices after you increase the salaries of workers? The government should be sensitive to the plights of all Nigerians and not being selective because the private sector employs more than government today," Umelahi said.

Expressing same fear with Umelahi, Terfa Unongu, an education secretary in a local government area in Benue State, decried that there is no amount of

increment that will be enough for the civil servants as long as inflation is still soaring everyday.

According to him, the moment government increases workers' salary, the country will witness another round of price hike as business people will increase prices to reflect the salary adjustment.

"We have been in a series of bad season and the season in front seems worse than what we have experienced in the past. Families are going to be squizzed further as money may not be able to buy anything again. It will impact on our health and insecurity will increase," Unongu decried.

For pundits, the election is over and as usual, the masses have been abandoned as more hikes are planned from July 1, 2023 and more sufferings for the masses (the goose that laid the golden eggs).

Despite the reforms that are really affecting the masses, political office holders are still cruising about in long convoy of state-of-the-art vehicles at government expense.

"If this administration is sincere with the reforms, it must touch everybody, including the President. It means no more frivolities; no more medical tourism; no more long convoys; no more retinue of aides and endless parties that politicians revel in all the time," Chris Offor, a school proprietor, said.

According to Offor, "We are hearing rumours of possible increase of salaries of certain categories of politicians, I ask myself, what type of money does President Tinubu or Akpabio or Tajudeen Abass want again that they did not have? They have denied the increase, but I think they were just testing the waters. They would still carry it out without making noise about it. That's how government in Nigeria works, unfortunately

The questions to ask include, are the reforms good for Nigeria? Absolutely. What then is the problem? My thinking is the timing. They were not well-thought-out. The implementations are hasty. Since

they have come to stay, every Nigerian must be part of it.

"It is sad that it is only the poor that bears the brunt of government's policies. They provide for themselves and throw the masses under the bus. They have fuel dumps dedicated to them. They do not go to the market; government feeds them and their families; pay school fees of their children and pay for their domestic staff. So, the question is what do they do with the money they are being paid? Yet, we hear about so much stealing and embezzlement of public funds."

Indeed, Nigerians are feeling the pain as President Tinubu embarks on reforms to put Africa's largest economy back on track after years in the doldrums.

In the last few weeks, there have been increased criticisms of President Tinubu's reforms from Nigerians, with many saying that it lacked human face.

Although analysts have commended the President for the reforms which they say were capable of repositioning the economy, many Nigerians are of the view that reforms are weighing down on them and are coming too rapidly.

Ordinary Nigerians say that the Tinubu's administration should have outlined cushioning measures and palliatives before embarking on the current tough reforms to alleviate their sufferings.

Since assuming office on May 29, President Tinubu has taken some tough decisions which he aimed would regain investors' confidence and grow the economy.

Part of the reform includes floating and removing restrictions on the naira. The President had earlier scrap fuel subsidies that analysts said cost the country N10bn last year.

That was announced in the inauguration speech, amid outcries. Petrol prices across Nigeria have jumped more than 200% from 189 to N600 per litre depending where

you are in the country.

The President's move has been hailed by investors; they said it signals that he is keen to reset the country's economy on a path to recovery, but it comes at a huge price to ordinary citizenry, where the cost of living has risen astronomically in recent weeks.

In recent days, there are reports of a move to increase electricity tariff, however, the move has also elicited condemnations from Nigerians, including the main Labour Union, the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC).

Headline inflation rate has accelerated for the fifth consecutive time to 22.41 percent in May, 2023 from 22.22 percent in the previous month.

Inflation rate rose to a new 17-year high of 22.41 percent in May, 2023 from 22.22 percent in the previous month.

In recent weeks, food and transportation costs have doubled, with many more people finding it increasingly difficult to afford basic necessities at home.

"I work in Victoria Island, what I do now is to look for somewhere around my work place and stay during the week, it is not conducive for me, but I had to do it, so I can save something at the end of the month.

"The new petrol prices have led to an increase in transportation fares and I can't afford it because my salary remains the same, I stay around Iyana Ipaja," Mark Ogidi, a cleaner in a company, said.

Nigerians have faced severe economic hardship and mismanagement over the decades, so there is growing discontent about the government's tendencies to push any intended cost-saving measures on the masses.

Across the country, there are growing calls for a cut in cost of governance and reduction in lavish spending among government officials.

Nigerians say it is time for them to tighten their belt in these times of need.

"It should not be only the masses that should face subsidy removal; I am even hearing of electricity tariff removal or so.

"If Tinubu is sincere about the reforms, let see the reduction and cut in public officials' expensive lifestyle.

"Let us see a reduction in the presidential fleet and in the general lifestyle of those President Tinubu is going to appoint as advisers and Ministers.

"It should not always be the masses that should take the heat all the time," Gbenga Ashafe, public policy analyst, said.

Ungbon Otu, a financial expert, said that even though President Tinubu's reform may benefit in the long run, part of the problem was lack of trust from Nigerians about government policies.

"It is because of years of mistrust and failed policies; despite promises, the people want immediate action, because they have been sacrificing over the years without their situation getting better," he said.

News

# PLSG frowns at misleading news by Arise News

BY PETER TITLE

THE Plateau State Government has frowned at a misleading report which emanated from 'Arise News' claiming that the Plateau State High Court on Friday 23, June, 2023 ruled that the former Executive Chairmen of the 17 Local Government Areas of Plateau State should remain in office. It also said that the court ordered that the status quo be maintained.

The government of the state is therefore demanding the management of Arise News to retract the inciting news story as well as to investigate the activities of the reporter who misled the station on the said matter.

This was made known to journalists in a statement signed by the Director of Press and Public Affairs (DoPA), Gyang Bere. He further explained that the misleading media content reported by an unprofessional reporter was not only aimed at bringing acrimony but for a selfish interest.

According to the statement, ordinarily, the report was not worth the reaction of the people's centred government as it was not surprise as they believed it was coming from an untrained reporter who lacks the basic journalistic skills of reporting court matters.

However, the statement further explained that in order to correct the erroneous impression in the minds of the public and present court proceedings as they were, the state government wish to make it known that the Plateau State High Court on Friday 23rd June, 2023 sat over the suit No. PLD/J257M/2023 between Hon. Miskoom Alexander Naantuan, former Chairman, Shendam Local Government Council and 24 others versus the Governor of Plateau State, Barrister Caleb Mutfwang and Attorney General of Plateau State.

As a result, according to the statement, there was no pronouncement by the presiding Judge that the former local government chairmen in the state should remain in office and that the status quo should be maintained.

They further elaborated that the matter in contention was not an Appeal and that the presiding Judge did not deliver judgment on the matter as was reported by the Arise News.

There was no pronouncement whatsoever according to the DoPA from the presiding Judge restraining the Executive Governor of Plateau State, Barr. Caleb Mutfwang from sacking the former chairmen of the 17 Local Government Council's on the allegations of financial embezzlement. He added that the matter was adjointed to 22nd September, 2023 and not 18th September, 2023 as stated by the Arise News for all pending



Mutfwang

applications and substantive originating summons to be taken to enable the court to deliver a composite ruling.

It said the reporter in question failed to interrogate the two leading counsels involved in the matter for clarity but opted to interview and framed the story from the point of view of his alleged paymaster, Alexander Naantuan, former Chairman of Shendam Local Government Council simply for the purpose of misleading the public.

For further clarity, the statement revealed that the former chairmen were suspended from office based on the advice of the 9th Assembly whose majority were members of the All Progressive Congress (APC),

for their inability to provide financial expenditure for the 17 Local Government Councils.

According to the statement, it was evident that the reporter was not in court during the said proceedings and consequently demanded that the management of Arise News retract the inciting news story and investigate the activities of the reporter who misled the station on the said matter.

The members of the public were advised to disregard the misleading news story from Arise News as the transition chairmen appointed by His Excellency, Barrister Caleb Mutfwang are fully in charge of the affairs of the 17 local government councils of the state.

## 'Reverse proposed plan for electricity tariff hike'

From WILLIE ATTAH, Gombe

THE Nigerian Youth Parliament (NYP) has described the proposed plan to increase electricity tariff by the Nigeria Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) as an anti-masses move that is capable of getting Nigerians into a deadlier hardship in addition to what they are already facing.

Speaking through their Speaker, Dr. Azeezat Yishawu, in a press statement, the Parliament said, it will cause undue hardship to Nigerians coupled with the fact that many are still grappling with the oil subsidy removal.

She said, just like the fuel subsidy removal, the increase in electricity tariff will have dirrect negative consequences on every person, business and other key sectors.

According to her, the hike will further tip the socio-economic life of the majority of Nigerians to the edge. From small businesses to giant production companies, the health sector, education, and agriculture, especially in the processing and storage

chain to mention a few, everything will be affected.

Dr Yishawu who called for the distribution of more prepaid metres to underserved communities, said the increment will hit a heavier blow on the everyday struggling and hard-working Nigerian youths.

She explained that, "as of 2020, only about 50 per cent of Nigerians had access to some sort of electricity and this does not mean adequate regular power supply.

"In 2006, prepaid meter was introduced to aid revenue collection and discard estimated billing system. However, after 17 years with trillions of Naira in investment, purchase and distribution of these metres by NERC through its various programmes, it is yet to provide prepaid metres to 5 million Nigerians," she decried.

She further revealed that, according to NERC, only about 10 million Nigerians were registered customers in 2022 while about 5 million were using the prepaid metres.

She lamented that despite claims by the government to ensure access to prepaid meters through the Meter

From ABBAS GUNGURA, Bauchi

THE Executive Governor of Bauchi State, Senator Bala Mohammed has confirmed the reappointment of Comrade Mukthar Gidado as his Special Adviser on Media and Publicity.

The former media man's reappointment was conveyed in a letter signed by Danjuma Garba, Permanent Secretary General, Services Department for Secretary to the State Government, stating that Muktha Gidado will remain and continue to serve as the Special Adviser on Media and Publicity to the Governor.

According to the letter, " His Excellency, Sen. Bala Abdulkadir Mohammed, CON, (Kauran Bauchi), the Executive Governor of Bauchi State has approved your exemption from the disengagement order.

"Accordingly, you are to remain and continue serving as the Special Adviser, Media and Publicity."

Garba said the exemption of Gidado was based on his track records, of hard work, trustworthiness, dedication, loyalty, commitment and of course as well as his wealth of experience.

# Governor Bala re-engages Gidado as spokesman



Mohammed

While congratulating Gidado for his well deserved reappointment, he pointed out that, "It is therefore expected that you would continue to

bring these qualities to bear in the discharge of this onerous responsibility and justify the confidence repose in you," the letter reads.

## Health workers advocate for supporting pregnant wives

From ABBAS GUNGURA, Bauchi

IN a 3 day training on the theme Maternal, Perinatal and Child Death Surveillance Response in Misau, health workers in Bauchi State advocated for active and serious involvement of men in supporting their pregnant wives to reduce complications such as

Antepartum and Postpartum hemorrhage as well as maternal and child deaths in the state.

This is among the contributing factors identified during the 3 day training organized for journalists by the USAID funded Integrated Health Programme (IHP) held recently at Misau Local Government Area of Bauchi

State. They identified this among other issues that include inadequate human resources for health, women non adherence to antenatal and postnatal visit protocols, as well as poor means of transportation, among others.

These problems according to the health workers, if not fully tackled, maternal and child deaths would persist.

The Facility Manager, Misau Town Primary Health Care Centres (PHCC), Suwaiba Garba Gumau, said most pregnant women don't visit health facilities early, due to husbands' restrictions and or self denial.

A nurse - midwife, Fatima Bashir, Staff of General Hospital, Misau, told the visiting journalists who were on a field trip, that delay in the issuance of referral letter to secondary health care facility also contributes to maternal, perinatal and child deaths.

Fatima Bashir also said pregnant women face a number of challenges before getting to Primary Health Care Centre due to distance and bad roads.

These issues according to the health workers in the long run prevent the women from accessing health care services at the facility.

They called on journalists to intensify and strengthen their already existing awareness creation mechanism towards arresting the problems.

Asset Providers Programme, many Nigerians are still frustrated and exploited by the estimated billing system.

"This year alone, many Nigerians who have requested this metre still face challenges due to ambiguous delivery systems carried out by Distribution Companies, coupled with the long waiting periods and technical issues which prevent customers from using metres when purchased," she decried.

"If the NERC is concerned about generating revenue, it should rather ensure and facilitate procurement and the actual delivery of prepaid metres to Nigerians and increase the number of people who are registered under the agency rather than be a cause of calamity to the Nigerian people.

Dr Yishawu noted that, "By making prepaid metres available to more Nigerians, NERC can increase its revenue while ensuring fairness rather than choking 10 million Nigerians who are on their database and allowing for fraudulent bill estimates.

"Nigerians should also be fully aware that this proposed action is not

necessarily the only available option to NERC as the agency itself is not efficient in its mandate to provide nationwide access to electricity. It will be wise for NERC to discard the tariff increase as a means of increasing revenue," Yishawu's statement added.

She then advised that, "In the wake of the new Electricity Act signed by the president, which allows states to generate their electricity, NERC and other related agencies, should deploy strategies that will encourage state licensing to companies that can provide electricity.

"This will promote what I call the electricity market, where one can subscribe to any electricity-providing company based on preference just like you have for Airtime network, cable TV subscription as well as your favourite gadget company.

"Further engagement with this potential investor can help with the distribution of prepared meters to new customers just like anyone who is subscribing to cable TV will have a decoder. This method will be quite effective as service providers can be res

## News

### Key into skills acquisition

- Helen Mutfwang

WIDOWS in Plateau State have been encouraged to key into skills acquisition so as to enable them to become self-reliant.

Wife of the Plateau State Governor, Mrs. Helen C. Mutfwang, stated this during the commemoration of this year's International Widows Day, held at the Women Multipurpose central Jos, recently.

Mrs. Mutfwang who was represented by the Wife of the Speaker, Plateau State House of Assembly, (PLHA), Mrs. Maria Moses Sule, said that Governor Mutfwang's Mantra "Time is now" is aimed at doing everything possible to ensure that women particularly widows, are carried along in his administration so as to move the state forward.

Our correspondent report that the International Widows Day is observed as declared by United Nations (UN) in 2010. It is celebrated every June 23, every year-globally.

Mrs. Mutfwang maintained that the aim of the day is to empower widows who faced injustice and poverty as a result of widowhood.

In their separate remarks, former commission for Women Affairs and Social



Helen

Development, Barr. Mrs. Olivia Dazyam and People's Democratic Party (PDP) Plateau State women leader, Mrs. Martina Dakur said that the governor would not disappoint women when it comes to their inclusion in governance in the state.

Speaking on behalf of the Widows in the state, Pastor. Paulina John Ekpe thanked the wife of the Plateau State Governor, Mrs. Helen

Mutfwang for according attention to the plight of the widows in this years celebration urging her to sustain the tempo.

Pastor Ekpe said that many widows were passing through different challenges. She then, called on the widows to always look up to God in whatever they are looking for in life. She emphasized that God is the husband of widows and father of the fatherless.

Also, in a press briefing by the Ministry for Women Affairs and Social Development, Plateau State, by the Ministry's Director, Women Affairs, Mary Mark Chuwang, she welcomed and appreciated all the invited guests for honouring their invitation.

Mrs. Chuwang affirmed that the theme of this year's International Widows Day celebration is "Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality". She noted that every woman needs technical knowledge as far as technology is concerned globally.

She said Governor Mutfwang is committed to strengthening the full implementation of the existing legal framework, policies, national and international protocol and conventions that protect women and children in the state.

Chuwang pointed out that traditional and religious inheritance laws are no doubt responsible for the suffering of widows and their children in the state.

She disclosed that the Ministry is currently working with UN Women, a United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of women, particularly in the area of promoting women engagement in peace and security with established structures.

She added that, other donor agencies include International Organization for Migration and Mercy Corps.

Chuwang thanked Mrs. Mutfwang for supporting and making this year's celebration a reality in the state with Ministry by ensuring that resources are mobilized for the activities.



### Reintroduction of road tax

RECENTLY, I had the misfortune of traveling from Jos, the Plateau State capital through Kaduna, Nasarawa, Benue, Kogi to Benin, the Edo State capital. The grueling journey can best be imagined than experienced. Traveling through the roads that traverse these states are not only dangerous, they are extremely strenuous. If anyone dares to undertake such a misadventure, he had better think twice because he must be ready to visit the hospital and pay to have himself fixed in our ill-equipped and understaffed hospitals.

In most parts of these states what passes for our roads are mere death traps. A journey which ordinarily would take about twelve hours can take almost twenty-eight hours barring unexpected breakdown of the vehicle you are travelling in. If you want to gauge the performance of Nigeria's leaders one out of the many barometers is undertaking a road trip. It is here that you would come into contact with the reality that they are bereft of ideas or they are outrightly not interested in working for the good of the ordinary people but are more interested in lining their pockets and those of their cronies.

Roads that were built in the seventies and eighties are the only evidence that Nigeria once had governments that attempted to meet the yearnings of the people. There have been scarcely no projections made about the future. For example, what could be done to sustain and maintain these roads for the benefit of all? What other alternatives could be provided to take off some of the projected pressures off these national assets?

In the early days, toll-gates were built by the governments to collect road tax which were used to maintain these roads. But with the return to democracy in 1999, these toll-gates were done away with because they were considered not to be serving their purpose. Those saddled with the responsibility of managing the resources gotten from this form of taxes mismanaged them and fed fat on them. In scrapping

the toll-gates however, no alternatives for the maintenance of these critical infrastructure were put in place. So they were left to their fates.

In the course of the years, some of these roads were washed away and nothing was done by the government to remedy the situation giving the impression that the leadership had run out of ideas and were helpless and hapless. One would have thought that as an alternative our rail system would have been developed to provide an option and an alternative. But far from thinking in that manner the elites did all they could to kill the railway. This they did to pave the way for their heavy-duty trucks to take over the roads. Sadly, these trucks helped in no small measure to ensure the destruction of whatever was left of our old roads.

From the foregoing, our leaders seem not to be capable of strategic thinking and planning for the future.

They seem to be shortsighted and myopic. They are not interested in ensuring that the general good is elevated above their individual interest but would rather amass wealth they truly do not need.

They forget that whatever they amass would one day

finish. They forget that beneficence leaves lasting impressions and impact on the people and they seem not to be interested in making a name for themselves and their families.

Some of our past leaders who had left enduring legacies saw beyond the self and their contributions are still referred to years after their demise. Indeed, some of them have become the yardstick for measuring the success or otherwise of administrations after them.

And, whether we like it or not, they would never be only footnotes when the history of their states is written.

And to think that the time they spent in power was infinitesimal compared to what we have now make them seem to have been more strategic than the mess we have as leaders now.

The long and short of all the above story is that Nigerians need to be seriously re-orientated. We need to reset our thought patterns and pursue the general good rather than what we have at the moment. We need to attack corruption headlong because corruption is at the root of all of our problems be it kidnapping, insurgency and banditry. We insult leaders yet we do same or worse when given opportunities. We must not put ourselves above the general good. Wherever we find ourselves we must see ourselves as only messengers sent to do the biddings of the majority not the lords. When we put service above self then things would change for the better.

In this regard therefore, we must return the toll-gates and find a way of constantly using the funds generated to repair the failed portions of our roads since government seem to have bitten more than it can chew. On the other hand, our railways and waterways must be developed as quickly as possible to provide alternatives to the roads. Also, government must regulate the number of trucks that ply these roads. They might do this through creating a special tax regime for them. These and a lot others can help give our roads longer lifespans to serve those who do not have the capacity and means to fly

**Some of our past leaders who had left enduring legacies saw beyond the self and their contributions are still referred to years after their demise. Indeed, some of them have become the yardstick for measuring the success or otherwise of administrations after them. And, whether we like it or not, they would never be only footnotes when the history of their states is written.**

### Lawmaker postpones inauguration thanksgiving indefinitely

From DORCAS PANKYES, Abuja

SENATOR Simon Mwadkwon has postponed his earlier planned thanksgiving for his senate Inauguration indefinitely. He said, this is in view of the current security challenges and the mood of the people in Barikin Ladi, Riyom LGAs and Plateau State at large.

This was contained in a statement issued by Friday Bako, Director, Media and Publicity to Senator Simon Mwadkwon recently.

The senator representing the People of Plateau North said this decision became necessary to show empathy to the people and

use this period for prayers for the return of peace and security in the affected areas, state and nation at large.

He added that, constituents, friends and well wishers will be duly informed when arrangements have been made.

While praying for the restoration of peace in the state, the Senator appreciated the citizens of Northern Zone for the mandate and admonished them to continue to live in peace with each other in order to attract rapid development.



Mwadkwon

## News

### PLASU VC cautions SUG officials on negative influence

By EZEKIEL DONTINNA

VICE Chancellor of the Plateau State University Bokkos (PLASU), Professor Malau Matur Bernard, has cautioned the newly sworn-in Executive Council of the Students Union Government (SUG) to not allow themselves to be used as agents that would hinder smooth academic activities in the institution.

This came in a press statement signed by the university's Public Relations Officer (PRO), John K. Agam, and made available to **THE NIGERIA STANDARD** in Jos, the State capital Sunday shortly after the inauguration of the union's new executive council.

The Vice Chancellor said, "The management of the university is looking forward to a cordial working relationship with the Student Union Government as well as other unions in the institution towards enhancing uninterrupted academic activities to enable you graduate within the stipulated academic calendar.

"Therefore,, we urge you to adopt dialogue as a way of mitigating misunderstanding on campus. We want to use this opportunity to thank the Peter Arin led officials for their meritorious services and wish them success in their future endeavors", Matur prayed.

Earlier In a welcome address, the Dean, Faculty of



Bernard

Student Affairs, Doctor Felix Masok, expressed hope that the new crop of SUG officials would come with more refined ideas that would bring in good tidings to the institution and the university community.

On his part, the newly sworn-in President of the Students Union Government, Plateau State University, Bokkos, Comrade Gomos Mundi Timothy, thanked the management and students of the university for the confidence reposed in them. And promised to stand as a link between students and management of the institution.

Those sworn-in alongside the SUG President included:

Comrade Bulus Sarah Davou, (Vice President), Comrade Jeremiah Abel Dung, (Secretary General) and Comrade Isaac Patience Bimorit, (Assistant Secretary General) with Comrade Buba Titus Nankap and Comrade Diship Plangnan as Financial Secretary and Treasurer respectively.

Others include: Comrade Danjuma Noknaan, as the Public Relations Officer (PRO), Comrade Samuel Ayuba Wash, Director of Socials, Comrade Rwamko Dyanin Godwin, Director of Sports, Comrade Nnaemeka Blessing Nkechinyere, Welfare Officer, and Comrade Stephen Zwalsuk Ezekiel as the Sales Secretary in that order.

From  
WILLIE ATTAH, Gombe

CARETAKER Committee Chairman of Shongom Local Government Area of Gombe State, Mr Yohanna Nahari has recounted how his administration has been winning the fight against kidnapers in his area.

Speaking in an interview with our correspondent, Mr. Nahari said his people had faced devastating effects of the activities of the dreaded criminals in the past as the kidnapers strike once in every two to three days.

He said despite facing some challenges in overseeing the largely agrarian populace of the area, especially in the aspect of insecurity, his work had been made a lot easier due to financial autonomy the LG chairmen in the state enjoy, courtesy the State Governor, Muhammad InuwaYahaya.

According to him, "Boundary clashes have been very minimal even though we share direct boundary with Taraba and Bauchi States and indirectly with Adamawa and Plateau States. However, what has bedeviled us in the past was the issue of kidnapping.

"It has been the problem because we are an area that has so many hills and mountains which become a good hiding place for the hoodlums.

But by the help of God and our Governor, Muhammad Inuwa Yahaya, collectively, we put in our best to see that we reduce the acts of the hoodlums.

"When I came on board, no

### LG Chairman recounts victory against kidnapers



Yahaya

day or two passed without the case of kidnapping. But with joint and collective efforts between the State Government, Local Governments and also the neighbouring Local Governments in the other states, we have reduced the menace of these kidnappings", he stated happily.

Speaking on Local Government autonomy, Mr Nahari stated that in Gombe State, "It's an issue that we in Gombe can say we are autonomous.

"What is autonomy? It is for you to be given the rights to your finances and my finances comes directly into my account. All that our Governor does is to make sure there is no misappropriation. He has to put his eyes and that is why we were able to pay our salaries.

"When we came, we were

not able to pay salaries or even do some projects. But now, we are not owing salaries. I think that's the best he could do for us as a governor. For us, we are autonomous", he stressed.

He also argued that even though the constitution or the bill of the National Assembly does not indicate that they are autonomous, he however asserted by asking, "What autonomy do you need if your FAAC will come into your own treasury?"

"But what is needed is to regulate you, to see that he (Governor) exercises his supervisory function upon you and that is good. That is what makes the the LGA's moving alive now", he reiterated.

Mr. Yohanna Nahari, Caretaker Committee Chairman of Shongom Local Government Area, Gombe State.

### Engage media in NEPWHAN project- stakeholders

By EZEKIEL DONTINNA

STAKEHOLDERS at the Biannual Media Roundtable Meeting under GF RSSH/C19RM Grants, have unanimously thrown their weight behind the engagement of media in all Network of People Living With HIV and Aids on Nigeria (NEPWHAN), to help promote their intervention work in communities.

This position came during the round table discussion session of the meeting organised by NEPWHAN at the Green Valley Suites Jos, the Plateau State capital recently, where stakeholders were drawn from Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) as well as local government areas, to proffer solutions to challenges being faced.

Earlier, while declaring the meeting open, the State Programme Officer (SPO), Mohammed Umar, disclosed that the project started during the Covid-19 pandemic. And that the five covering intervention local government areas were: Langtang-North; Bassa; Jos-South; Mangu and Jos-North respectively.

On his part, the State Director, Public Health of the Plateau State Ministry

of Health, Dr. Bunah Mafwala, represented by the State Vocal Person, Non communicable Diseases, Agwom A. Izang, commended NEPWHAN for the wonderful work they were doing in communities. He promised to partner with them to see to the sustainability of the projects.

Also, the District Head of Tudun-Wada, HRH Nyam Peter, expressed happiness that such projects were coming at the time when they were needed most. He appealed to the organisers of the meeting to engage or invite more traditional rulers next when such important meetings were held so that more awareness would be carried out.

However, stakeholders like Nanmak D. Bali, of Langtang-North LGA, Pastor Julius Arabo, Director of Audit of Plateau Aids Control Agency (PLACA), Mr. Pomak Michael Zacharia, the Publicity Secretary of Jama'tu Nasril Islam, Jos-North Branch, Umar Farouk Musa, and many others unanimously suggested the need for effective engagement of the media in all their projects.

They also called on the

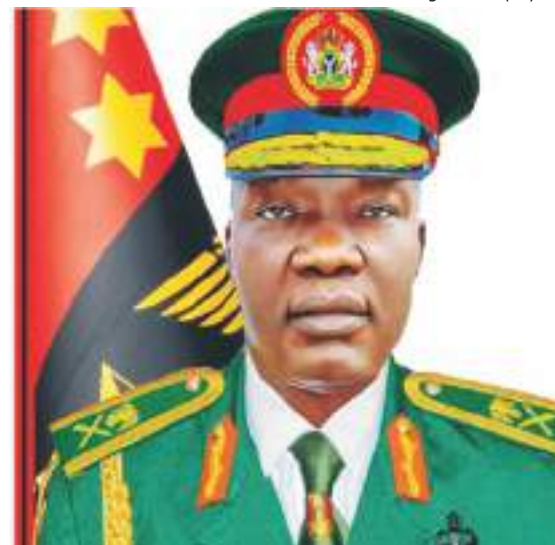
organisation to, as a matter of importance create a Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Unit that would help in assessing their achievements and a social

media blog in collaboration with the media to help attract spirited individuals who would want to support their project.

### Physical fitness boosts productivity

From  
ABBAS GUNGURA, Bauchi

THE Nigerian Army, Armoured Corps Bauchi, under the Command of Major General Sani Ahmed, has said that the best way to serve the cause of peace and defend the territorial integrity of the nation is by being physically and psychologically fit to carry out responsibilities as defender of the country.



Lagbaja

According to him, "For sound minds, we should have sound bodies and that is why the military world over attaches so much importance to the physical fitness exercises and bodybuilding culture."

The Army General made the remarks at the 10 km Walk/Jog for NAF personnel of the Special Operations Command, Bauchi that took place during the weekend. He urged the officers not to wait for the Nigeria Air Force to organise physical

fitness exercises and programmes before engaging in sports.

General Ahmed also urged the personnel to always create time to engage in activities that would build their strength such as cardiovascular endurance, agility, flexibility and coordination to ensure optimal performances of responsibilities.

The commander who was represented at the occasion by his Chief of Staff, Brig. Gen. AbubakarHaruna, further charged the NAF personnel to always ensure physical fitness through active participation in group exercises.

The General, who was the Guest of Honor at the occasion, observed that physical fitness can benefit personnel through boosting their productivity, help with stress and build teamwork in the entire Force.

On his part, the Air Officer Commanding (AOC) Special Operations Command, Air Vice Marshal (AVM) AbubakarAbdulkadir said that the 10 kilometer Walk/Jog was designed by NAF to foster discipline regimentation and esprit de corp among service personnel.

The AOC who was represented by his Chief of Staff, AVM EnebongEffiong,

- General Ahmed

explained that NAF places high premium on fitness and has the interest to see personnel represent the nation at national and international events.

He commended sister security agencies for attending the annual walk and jogging exercise in the NAF base, and enjoined the personnel to take care of their health as, according to him, it is cheaper to maintain a healthy body by participating in regular exercises.

AVM Offiong appreciated the AOC Special Command for organizing the walk and jogging exercise, saying this would strengthen the relationship among the sister agencies.

In the 10 km jogging, Brig. Gen. FawoleOlawale who represents the Commandant Nigerian Army Armoured Corps Centre and School, and Maj Gen. Wale Adekeye took first position among all the security and paramilitary agencies, and emaged third overall among all the participants respectively.

The NIGERIA STANDARD reports that highlights of the occasion were awards and prizes distributed to different categories of winners at the end of the successful and exciting exercise.

## Foreign News



Voters on Saturday are faced with a choice between the same two leading presidential candidates

### SL election results: Julius Maada Bio leading Samura Kamara

EARLY results from Sierra Leone's presidential election have been branded "daylight robbery" by the main opposition challenger Samura Kamara.

He alleges that his electoral agents were not allowed to verify the ballot counting.

With the votes from 60% of the polling stations tallied, the electoral commission says that the incumbent Julius Maada Bio has a 56% share.

He has called on Sierra Leoneans to reject violence and "keep the peace".

Mr Kamara, of the All People's Congress (APC), is currently trailing on 42%. In order to win in the first round a candidate needs more than 55% of votes.

Mr Bio's success can likely be attributed to a series of strategic electoral alliances he made in the course of the campaign, including in opposition strongholds.

But European Union observers have criticised the electoral commission for a lack of transparency, and noted incidents of violence in some regions during the vote on Saturday.

The APC had previously made complaints about the conduct of the election and the electoral commission.

On Wednesday, Mr Kamara's All People's Congress (APC) alleged that one of its supporters was shot dead by police,

which the police have denied.

Supporters of both main parties have been accused of attacking opponents.

Accusations of election irregularities were also being thrown on Saturday, after Mr Kamara alleged ballot stuffing and voter suppression in some parts of the country.

However, the electoral body had insisted, in a press conference, that it had mechanisms in place to ensure a fair vote. Local media reports that arrests were made.

The election took place against the background of a troubled economy, the rising cost of living, and concerns about national unity.

The voters were

choosing a president, MPs and councillors in the West African country's fifth election since the civil war ended in 2002.

The 11-year conflict cost an estimated 50,000 lives, but since then the country has a tradition of largely peaceful, free and credible elections, according to Marcella Samba Sesay, chairperson of the NGO National Elections Watch.

With strong party loyalty among the 3.3 million registered voters, the campaigns have focused on shoring up their parties' bases rather than articulating and debating policy issues.

However, voters have told the BBC they want to see concrete change in the country.

### Israeli drone strike kills Palestinian militants in West Bank

THREE Palestinian militants have been killed in a rare Israeli drone strike in the occupied West Bank, amid escalating violence in the territory.

The Israeli military said it targeted "a terrorist cell inside a suspicious vehicle" that carried out a shooting attack near Jalama on Wednesday night.

It was the first such strike in the West Bank since 2006, it added.

Palestinian first responders said they found three bodies in a burned-out car but soldiers prevented their removal.

Palestinian news agency Wafa identified them as Mohammed Bashar Uweis, 28, Suhayb Adnan al-Ghoul, 27, and Ashraf Murad Saadi, 17, and said they were all from the city of Jenin.

The militant group Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) said Ghoul and Saadi were its fighters, while Uweis was from the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade, the armed wing of the Fatah movement.

PIJ warned Israel's leaders that they would "bear responsibility for their stupid decision to strike these operatives with drones and... keep their bodies".

Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant tweeted: "We'll take an attacking and proactive approach against terror, we'll use all means at our disposal and exact the heaviest price from every terrorist."

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said its soldiers identified a vehicle carrying gunmen who had carried out a

A unilateral ceasefire declared by the head of Sudan's paramilitary Rapid Support Forces is due to come into effect today for the Muslim holiday of Eid-al-Adha, which starts on Wednesday.

The pause in the conflict with the Sudanese army was announced in an audio

### Sudan's RSF announces unilateral Eid ceasefire

recording broadcast on Al Arabiya television by the leader of the RSF, Muhammad Hamdan Dagalo, better known as Hemedti.

He said it would be in force on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Gen Hemedti also condemned abuses carried out against civilians - including those perpetrated by his own forces.

The RSF has been accused of being behind violations in Darfur.

### How Modi and Biden turbocharged India-US ties

THE US's relationship with India - the world's most populous country - is "stronger, closer and more dynamic than any time in history", Mr Biden said at the completion of a pomp-filled state visit by Mr Modi to the White House.

The remark may not be an exaggeration. "This summit suggests that the relationship has been transformed. It underscores just how broad and deep it has become in a relatively short time," says Michael Kugelman of The Wilson Center, an American think-tank.

A key reason is that Washington is keen to draw India closer so that it can act as a counterbalance to China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific. India-US ties had not lived up to their promise following a landmark civilian nuclear deal in 2005 because a liability law passed by India three years later hobbled purchase of reactors.

"This followed a fading commitment to the relationship during [former prime minister] Manmohan Singh's second term as the leader of a coalition government. With Mr Modi there has been a lot more enthusiasm about embracing the US. Mr Biden



Following a lavish state visit by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Washington, US President Joe Biden

has also given an overall broad directive to make it work," says Seema Sirohi, author of Friends With Benefits: The India-US Story.

Ms Sirohi says the US put in a "lot of effort to make Mr Modi's visit substantive and have a lot of deliverables". Defence-industrial cooperation and technology topped the list. Consider this: General Electric and India's state-owned Hindustan Aeronautics Limited will make in India advanced fighter jet engines for the country's indigenous light combat aircraft. This means a "greater transfer of US jet engine technology than ever before" - a clear

sign that Washington not only wants to sell arms to India but is also comfortable with sharing military technology. India will proceed with a \$3bn purchase of the battle-tested MQ-9B Predator drones from General Atomics, which will also set up a facility in India. The drones will be assembled in India, which fits into Mr Modi's 'Make in India' campaign.

The US supplies only 11% of India's arms - Russia is the biggest (45%) supplier - but hopes to become the primary provider in the coming years. Mr Kugelman says Washington's immediate goal is to "strengthen India's military capacity to counter China".

Mr Modi wants to make India a semiconductor base. US memory chip giant Micron Technology will invest up to \$825m to build a semiconductor assembly and test facility in India, creating thousands of jobs. US semiconductor equipment maker Lam Research will train 60,000 Indian engineers through a network of interconnected labs and research centres to speed up India's semiconductor education and workforce development. Also Applied Materials, the biggest maker of machines for producing semiconductors, will invest \$400m to establish an engineering centre in India.

"It is all about the future now. Both sides are talking about cutting-edge technologies and how to seed and shape the future," says Ms Sirohi.

securing firefighters when residents "rioted" and troops fired at a man who shot at them.

The attack on Turmusaya followed the funeral in a nearby settlement a 17-year-old boy who was among four Israelis shot dead by two Palestinian gunmen from Hamas at a petrol station and restaurant on Tuesday.

Hamas, in turn, said that shooting was a response to an Israeli military raid in Jenin on Monday during which seven Palestinians were killed.

It saw the IDF's first use of an Apache attack helicopter in the West Bank in years. The helicopter fired missiles at militants who had targeted troop carriers with explosives, wounding seven soldiers.

shooting at a checkpoint near Jalama, a town about 3.5km (2 miles) north of Jenin.

Witnesses said they heard gunfire shortly before the strike. Video footage posted on social media showed what appeared to be several emergency vehicles near the burning wreck of the car targeted in the strike.

The drone strike came hours after a Palestinian man was shot dead during a rampage by hundreds of Israeli settlers who torched homes and cars in the town of Turmusaya, about 50km to the south.

The Palestinian health ministry said the man was shot dead by Israeli forces "while confronting the settlers". Israel's paramilitary border police said its forces were

## Feature

# Role of masquerades among Igbo of South East

*Man does not exist in a cultural vacuum; he lives with a set of social expectations, norms, constraints and obligation which he calls culture. Okpara (2004) refers to culture as the peoples way of live to their traditional behaviour in a broader sense, including their ideas, arts and artifacts. Thus, Kalu (1978) indicated that culture is man-made rather than God given. The manmade aspects of culture as much as possible are transferred from one generation to another. In Igbo land, there are many spectacular festivities and cultural performances with certain ideas explicit in the interaction of different elements which in turn sometimes play different function with which different cultural segments are held together. One of the most notable, very popular, vibrant and dynamic of these culture is "Iti Mmanu". "Mmanu" means masquerade in Igbo dialect. "Iti Mmawu" (to show case) has been an integral part of life in Igboland and all over Nigeria, as well as in most African societies. AHANONU, LINUS N.C and EKE, OBINNA F., writes*

THE Igbo speaking people is one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria with a population of over 30 million. They inhabit east of the Niger and beyond mainly Enugu, Abia, Imo and Eboyi states. Other states where they can also be found include Delta, Rivers, Cross Rivers and Akwa Ibom located in south eastern Nigerian between latitude 5 and 7 degrees North and longitude 5 and 7 degrees east. They occupy a continuous stretch of territory of about 25,280 square kilometers (Ifejiagwa, 2016). The neighbours of Igbo's according to Ukegbu (2005) are the Igala and Tiv in the North, the Ekoi and Ibibio in the east, the Ijaw and Ogoni in the south and the Benin and Isoko in the west.

## CONCEPT OF MASQUERADE AMONG THE IGBOS

Akubor (2016) noted that scholars have literally defined masquerade as a covering, concealment and a disguise device by an individual or group with the view to represent a spirit, an animal or an idea. Akubor however noted that the African perception of the masquerade is completely different from the view of the European counterparts who limit masquerade as anything under a mask for pleasure and entertainment. To Africa and Africans (which include the Igbos), the masquerade are the dead ancestors among the living, which is hinged on the belief that human life is made up of the body and soul; and the soul is conceived as the spirit, and the soul is also conceived. In this way, at the death of any man, the spirit continues its existence in some indescribable environment, where they also continue with the living.

"Mmawu" as it is called in Igbo dialect, is believed to be an embodiment of the spirit and human world, hence the name Mmawu in Igbo means "spirit of the dead". It is a combination of the two Igbo words, "mmuo or maa" which means "spirit" and "onwu" which means "death" (Anaedonline,2018). The Igbo traditional masquerade is believed to be a spirit that comes from a tree or the ground. A popular theory attributes masquerade as spring from the soil, making them higher than human and regarded as a superior being.

Depending on the locality in Igbo land, masquerades can be replica images of deities and important ancestral relatives of the society. Consequently, the identities of them are well-kept secret from children, women and the uninitiated men of the society. Only strong, exclusive and trusted men of society are allowed to perform any masquerade with high reputation. Ugobude (2021) posited that masquerading require a one person team or a team of more people which may include vocalists who hail the masquerades, drummers and players who play the instruments, advisers and then the masquerade itself. Most of these masquerades has a mask on their face and are covered from head to toe with some piece of clothing or/and bamboo rafters.

There are different categories of masquerades that are meant to serve various purposes in the community. Each masquerade possesses particular attributes and specializes in one or more skills like dancing skills, acrobatics, show of mysterious powers, etc.

Some masquerades are meant to be only heard, it is forbidden for any human to see them. There are dire consequences for anyone who comes face to face with such "mmanwu", the penalty can be severe as death. These type of masquerade move under the cover of the darkness and they mostly serve as regulatory or a punishment medium (Anaedononline,2018).

However, some masquerades appear only on one festival, others appear



more regularly while a few do not appear at all during festivals or occasions, but only when they are on a mission.

The list of masquerades in Igbo land is inexhaustible. Here is some list of popular ones found across various communities: Agaba, Igariga, Ulaga, Izaga, Okonko, Achiukwu, Omaba, Ijele, Enyi, Mmanu Ugo, Ojionu, Okwomma etc.

## MEANS OF ENTERTAINMENT

Masquerade is the biggest entertainer in Igboland coming from the cultural setting of the tribe (Nwankwo, 2016). Festival like New Yam (Iri Ji, Ahinjoku, Ifenjoku, etc) festival which happens to be the most popular among the Igbos to others and ceremonies like burial, chieftaincy titles, etc, different kinds of masquerades are displayed and play important role from the beginning to the end. They are always the first to start the ceremony patrolling nooks and crannies of the community adding glamour to the keen eyes of the visitors and the villagers who are expecting the wonderful act of the gods in manifestation of masquerades.

They differ in styles, shapes, and dance steps from one community to the other. Some are accompanied with harmonious beat of musical instruments, spectacular episodic dramatic bits of enhancements, incantations and colourful costumes. It is always a beehive of activities as several cultural group of masquerades trill the audience ranging from the big fierce looking and violent Agaba, Okwomma, and Mgbadike, the Ojionu with its creative and energetic dancing, the Igariga scaring children and women away with its long canes and to the beautiful adorned Adamma masquerade.

Also, we have the Okwa-Ebu masquerade which accompanies other masquerades and serves as mouth piece or praise singer for the masquerade it accompanies. Another masquerade that behaves like the Okwa-Ebu is the Omewaluigwe known as the wisest masquerade. It entertains the crowd with its talkative nature, serving proverbs and parables unprovoked in his chants to the applause of the crowd.

The greater the terror exhibited by some of these masquerades, the more they pull crowds of people who laughed, jumped, cried, yelled,

stamped only to refrain and watch at a distance either soberly or in a deranged manner.

The role of masquerade as entertainer is unquantifiable; it is these masquerades that massively present themselves as the chief celebrant in the festivals. This is because, at the end of the celebration people never cease to stop telling how they are being thrilled by the groundbreaking performance of these masquerades.

Basically, in most Igbo societies, every serious occasion, ceremony or festival where masquerade is not presented, the participants of the occasion do see the event as a mockery or inconclusive.

## CUSTODIAN OF COMMUNITY LAWS AND ORDER

Masquerade played important roles of keeping laws and order in the communities, because people regard masquerade a powerful spirit who the powers of give and take rests upon, they are promptly and religiously obeyed. Consequential to this fear and obedience, these categories of masquerades assume both legislative and executive functions, working hand in hand with the blessings of the Council of Elders (Ndi Ichie). They execute administrative and judicial duties.

Masquerade has various ways in which it governs and protects the society. At times, they assume the place of judge and peace maker. For instance, the Odo masquerade of Ukehe people of Enugu state, when there is a divorce in traditional marriage and all efforts in reconciliation fails; Odo intervenes and unfaithfully brings back the woman and at the same time provides them with code of conduct. The Awuru masquerade was historically a means of providing security against crimes such as stealing, poisoning, killing of persons, crop destruction, etc. Whenever there is such crime, the masquerade was consulted and the main suspect was asked to swear to Awuru to prove his innocence. In some cases, the victim of the crime could ask the masquerade to kill (that is "ili mmonwu") whoever was responsible for the crime.

Some categories of masquerade act as sanitary spectators by making sure those important places are tidied up. This is done by coercing women and

children to sweep and clean important arena. They also check and control the movement of women especially those who are regarded as unfaithful to their husbands. Children and young adults were bound to tell the truth and be of good behavior at all times to avoid the wrath of masquerade.

Masquerade like the Ekpo or Ekpe popular among the person of Abia, Imo and Eboyi States act as policemen who enforces the laws of the land. Being a means primarily used as unbiased law enforcement agents, it is not unusual to witness tough masquerade walk up to a certain individuals and loudly berate them publicly to their hidden abominable bad habits such as coveting a friend's wife, serious crimes such as poisoning someone or other adjudged misbehavior to the society.

## INITIATION INTO MANHOOD

In Igbo traditional society, masquerade is only displayed by men and so also is initiation into it is strictly for men. Masquerade is the only means of initiating or turning of an Igbo boy to "Igboman". This initiation is generally known in the entire Igbo land as "Ima mmuowu" (knowing the spirit) or "Iba mmuowu" (to enter the spirit). The initiation rituals associated with "Ima mmuowu" were mostly violent – reason women were rarely part of the cult. The essence of initiation is to stress on the social importance of the transmission from childhood to adult life with its privileges and responsibilities. It is believed that the moment a child is initiated into masquerade cult, he will be regarded as a full-fledged man, for no matter the age, wealth and social status, one is taken as a child as long as he is not an initiate. But once the ceremony is completed, he becomes eligible to sit with the elders of the land, he could express his feelings in the community gathering and can only be denied of this right if the matter arising is strictly for elders.

The issue of initiation brings about role segregation and social stratification of every Igbo male child. Initiates are accorded with certain roles and obligations unlike the armatures that are yet to be initiated. They impress among the novice and society at large at the importance of this change, their spectacular dramatic and impressive character is undoubtedly a fact in maintaining respect for moral codes, religious observance and traditions vital for the social life of the people.

Masquerade play the role of ascribing maturity and show of strength, endurance, keeping secrets, standing the site of blood and being brave to people into it. Through this separation of the strong from the weak, the community is able to raise strong and fearless warriors that protect the communities from immediate enemy.

## FORM OF SPORTS, UNITY AND TOURISM

Nwankwo (2015) noted that masquerade is another means Igbo societies integrate with each other. Masquerade in those days are like today's intercontinental football and Olympic game. They also play the role of unification among people of different cultural heritage in the African society. This very masquerade game or festival still exist in many Igbo communities and Africa society.

During the celebration of festivals and other occasions by an Igbo community, it is not unusual that they invite other neighboring communities to come and celebrate with them. When these invited communities attend, most times they go with their masquerade to grace and showcase their cultural heritage. These invited communities usually go home with different prizes won by their masquerade, either as the best dancing, best entertaining, most

beautiful masquerade as the case may be.

The popular Ikeji festival of the Izuogu people of Abia State serves as a reference point. During the festival, people from near and far of Izuogu do come to Izuogu to witness and show their cultural heritage. There is always a price to be won at the end of the festival; any masquerade that is able to untie a ram that is being tied to a stick with a single thread become the winner of this annual festival and the entire crowd sing songs of praise to the masquerade as it goes home with the ram and other prizes.

In 1987, the old Anambra State government organized the first edition of "Mmawu" festival held in Enugu. To enlarge the scope, the organizer's extended the invitation to other states for full participation. The reason was to afford the public the opportunity to watch and witness various types of masquerades including important masquerade as "Ijele" the king of masquerade on stage and to promote more unity and progress, make it a tourist event of note and uphold our difference culture. Apart from winning prizes during these festivals, neighboring communities, villages, clans, kindred's and families have come together to know each other better, by name and by the beauty of their diverse cultural heritage.

## DISPLAY OF SPIRITUAL POWER

As far as the Igbo's are concerned, masquerades are ancestral spirits who periodically visit their living fore-bears in masquerade forms. Their visits are regarded as spiritual intervention to the world of the living and as a result are highly venerated. They are symbolic resurrections of the ancestors. Thus, the masquerade in Igbo society (just like any African communities) is the process of man's attempt to give being to those very significant aspects in the depth of thought in this universe.

Speaking on the role of masquerade in Achebe's "Things Fall Apart", Nwodo (2007) quoting Emenyeonu stated that the masked spirit in traditional Igbo society was a vehicle than manners. It was held secret, mystical, mysterious, magical, and supernatural in Igbo culture.

Masquerade is one of the frameworks of showcasing one's spiritual power publicly without attracting unnecessary attention among the Igbo. During festivals, masquerades and people around exercise their spiritual powers publicly. It is an act and a game also. With these powers, some performs wonders that are awe-inspiring. How can one explain of Izaga masquerade (known as Ebum in some areas and Akujane in Onitsha) folded like a paper and carried into an arena in a board or wooden box for performance can grow up to 30 feet tall and can also make itself to be short and minute within moments?

The Osimiri masquerade that always carry a smoking pot of charm on its head, it is believe that it rains anywhere it appear.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is clear that masquerades in Igbo land, Nigeria and in most Africa is far more beyond the mask. They are unique properties of the Igbo people. Their role and importance to the people is unquantifiable and cannot be over emphasized. This is due to the vary actions and activities they perform. The masquerade is seen as adjudicator, entertainer and a strong advocate of good moral values in their communities.

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## Feature

# Journalism on trial: Fortitude and fake news

**Powerful elites are using the fake news narrative to target journalists and evade accountability. The world of journalism has been somewhat emboldened since 7 June when judges in a South African High Court threw out a private prosecution brought by the country's former president Jacob Zuma. His target was journalist Karyn Maughan, whom the court heard he'd developed an 'extraordinary animosity' towards. KAREN ALLEN writes.**

MAUGHAN'S reporting included references to documents about Zuma's health that were already on public record as part of the twists and turns surrounding his medical parole. In response, the court heard that Maughan was the victim of a systematic campaign to silence her, including intimidation and physical threats waged both on- and offline.

Intimidation of journalists persists across Africa. Since the start of this year and against a backdrop of civil war and a slow political transition, three journalists have been killed in Cameroon. Despite a large media presence, Cameroon is one of the most dangerous environments for journalists, according to Reporters Without Borders. In Senegal journalists have faced arbitrary arrest, and in many settings including Congo the media is controlled by powerful governing elites.

South Africa has a reputation for taking its journalism seriously, considering it an important pillar of democracy. The South African National Editors' Forum describes the case against Maughan as a SLAPP case – a strategic lawsuit against public participation – and part of a wider strategy by Zuma to limit his own time in prison.

The country has a proud history of impact journalism – article 16A of its Constitution makes clear that the media is intrinsic to a functioning democracy. While its High Court rejected what many considered crude bullying tactics, however, across much of Africa such robust legal endorsement is largely absent or ignored.

Laws and regulations in other parts of the continent, including the Southern African Development Community region, that limit the freedom of the press in the digital age signal a disturbing trend. They open up a new front in curtailing press freedom in the name of national security. Amnesty International recently described what it calls a 'worrying' trend of attacks on journalists in East and Southern Africa.

**"In today's information environment, both digital and analogue, journalists risk being personally attacked or their stories dismissed as simply 'fake news'. This means powerful elites can operate without accountability. A recent investigation by CBS News into the dubious operations and financing of the Russian mercenary Wagner Group in the Central African Republic is a case in point. Painstakingly gathered shipping records, business documents, and import and export permits formed the backbone of the CBS investigation."**



In today's information environment, both digital and analogue, journalists risk being personally attacked or their stories dismissed as simply 'fake news'. This means powerful elites can operate without accountability.

A recent investigation by CBS News into the dubious operations and financing of the Russian mercenary Wagner Group in the Central African Republic is a case in point. Painstakingly gathered shipping records, business documents, and import and export permits formed the backbone of the CBS investigation.

The report claims that Wagner exploits African resources to fund wars, focusing on illicit timber sales. In response to the report, CAR officials gazetted a statement that made the front pages of pro-government media, claiming it was being

attacked by 'fake news'. It's worth noting that the founder of Wagner, Yevgeny Prigozhin, is the mastermind behind a sleek propaganda machine that uses action films, cartoons and documentaries to support a pro-Russia narrative. Many of these

are relayed to the countries where the Wagner Group is present. The CAR's strategy to deny, deflect and defame comes straight out of the playbook of counter-information practitioners. It also bats away any semblance of accountability for allegations that may have serious geopolitical ramifications. Unpicking what's fake and what's not has spawned a growth industry of fact checkers such as Africa Check and FactCheckHub. Furthermore, with the rapid expansion of social media in Africa, the prospect of inauthentic narratives – 'fake

news' polluting the information environment and triggering real-world consequences – is significant. Xenophobic narratives directed at South Africa's social media audiences are an example.

'We are seeing a double-sided problem,' says Herman Wasserman, Professor of Journalism at the University of Stellenbosch. 'On the one hand, disinformation and genuine inauthentic news need to be corrected. But the fake news narrative is being weaponised by government actors to provide a smoke screen or alibi for failing to be held accountable.'

That false narratives can spread online rapidly is partly the result of legacy (traditional) media's inability to keep pace with news online and correctly source such claims. A fall in advertising revenue is partly to blame, say many newsroom insiders, as it reduces the number of experienced staff able to check facts and corroborate sources.

But there is also a despondency among professionals who often struggle to make a living as journalists working in Africa. This is one of the reasons foreign donors are hardwiring journalism training into their governance programmes, hammering home the codes of practice and ethics that underpin the journalism profession worldwide.

While Reporters Without Borders in its 2022 report says

its media landscape has opened up slightly in countries like Angola and Zimbabwe, 'in most cases the repression of dissident journalists persists.' It points out that new laws criminalising online journalism have 'dealt a blow to the right to information. At the same time, the spread of rumours, propaganda, and disinformation has contributed to the undermining of journalism and access to quality information.'

The report signals an urgency for professional journalism to reclaim its position as a custodian of truth. Newsrooms must resist the urge to chase audiences or clickbait and consider new funding models. They must also censure professional journalists who cave in to the offer of 'brown envelopes' or sell their influence and online networks to political actors, rather than hold power to account. While the economics of the traditional news business makes for dismal reading, where journalism is robust and reasonably funded it should be showcased.

South African journalism could be a champion for the rest of Africa. Exchange programmes and mentorship schemes can help to share best practice. But ultimately, journalism in Africa needs more funds at scale to thrive and support a new generation of professional reporters and investigators tasked with bearing witness and holding powerful elites to account.

# THE NIGERIA STANDARD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

## Health

# What can you do about sensitive teeth?



By **ALFRED D. WYATT**

IF you pass on hot or cold drinks because you know they'll make your teeth hurt, it may be time to talk to your dentist about the possibility that you have sensitive teeth. Sometimes other things can aggravate them, too, like sweet and sour foods or even cold air. To be able to treat these tooth twinges, it helps to know what might be

behind them. Once you've nailed down the cause, you can find a solution.

### Take care of your tooth enamel

That's a hard, protective layer that helps your teeth deal with everything you put them through. When it's gone, nerve endings that cause pain are exposed. If you have sensitive teeth, it's possible some of your enamel has worn away. To

prevent or put the brakes on that damage:

### Don't brush too hard

Do you clean your teeth with a heavy hand? You might be taking off more than just plaque. Side-to-side brushing right at the gum line can make your enamel go away faster. You should use a soft-bristled brush and work at a 45-degree angle to your gum to keep enamel clean and strong.

Recommended Avoid acidic foods and drinks. Soda, sticky candy, high-sugar carbs -- all of these treats attack enamel. Instead, snack on: Fiber-rich fruits, and vegetables Cheese Milk Plain yogurt These will moisten your mouth and help fight acid and bacteria that can eat away at your teeth.

Saliva is one way your mouth deals with them. You can also drink green or black tea or chew sugarless gum. If you do eat something acidic, don't rush to brush. Wait an hour or so to strengthen before you scrub.

### Unclench your teeth

Over time, teeth grinding wears away your enamel.

Sometimes, addressing your stress can stop the problem. If that doesn't work, your dentist can fit you for a splint or a mouth guard. If the problem is severe, you may need dental work to change your teeth's position, or

other problems, like gum disease.

Serious cases may need a gum graft. That moves tissue from somewhere else to cover the bare area. Gum disease. Plaque and tartar buildup on your teeth can make your gums pull back.

Sometimes, disease can set in. It can destroy the bony support of your tooth. Don't smoke. It can lead to gum disease. To treat it, your dentist may do a deep clean of your teeth, called planing or scaling, that scrapes tartar and plaque below the gum line. You could also need medication or surgery to fix the problem.

A cracked tooth or filling: When you break a tooth, the crack can go all the way down to your root. You'll notice pain when your tooth is cold. How your dentist fixes the crack depends on how deep it goes. If it's a small crack



a muscle relaxant.

### Take a break from bleaching.

The quest for pearly whites may cause your pain. Thankfully, sensitivity from bleaching is usually temporary. Talk to your dentist about how the treatment might be affecting you, and whether you should continue it.

### Get to the root of the problem.

Sometimes, tooth sensitivity can be a sign of other issues,

like: Naturally shrinking gums. If you're over 40, it could be that your gums are showing signs of wear and tear by pulling away from your teeth and uncovering your tooth roots.

Those roots don't have enamel to protect them, so they're much more sensitive than the rest of your tooth. Tell your dentist if your gums look like they're receding. It can be a sign of

that ends before your gums start, your dentist can fill it. If it's below your gum line, your tooth will have to be pulled.

### Treatment

Once you've found the problem, there are things your dentist can use to help ease your pain, including: Toothpaste for sensitive teeth Fluoride gel Fillings that cover exposed roots Sealants Desensitizing pastes (not used with a toothbrush) you can get from your dentist Mouth guard to protect teeth if you grind If your case is serious, your dentist might suggest a root canal. It's also important not to shy away from dental care because of tooth pain. Ignoring your teeth can make things worse. Brush and floss twice a day to help keep your smile bright and pain-free. And see your dentist for a checkup twice a year.





# EVER'S WORLD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

Living

## Kickstart your new life after divorce

By **ANN HEATHCOTE**

AFTER staying awake night after night, thinking, contemplating and sometimes even getting panic attacks, you have finally made the decision to file for a divorce. Still, you can't help but be worried about what your new life after divorce will be like. However, getting cold feet at the thought of not being able to be with the man or woman you wed, is natural.

After all, you committed to a life together and not a relationship with an expiry date. Thinking about a new life after divorce can be terrifying. Yes, there are reasons you should stay and work on your marriage. But, there are also benefits to pulling the trigger and moving forward with divorce. Check out these 6 ways.

### Make yourself a priority

After having spent time with someone you love and making him or her the center of your world, it is time to change the rules. Start by giving yourself the attention, care and love you deserve. Stop worrying about what their new life after divorce will be like and start re-examining your life. Start doing the things you once enjoyed doing but couldn't because of your obligations after marriage.

It may be as trivial as bingeing late night television or as big as getting yourself enrolled in a college course you always wanted to take. Also, make it a

habit to pamper yourself. Go for retail or beauty therapy, a spa treatment or a long drive, whatever makes you happy. Haven't gone to a movie alone or eaten at a restaurant by yourself? Well, do it now. It's important to start enjoying your company and start living life your way, with no conditions. Prioritize yourself.

### Learn to let go

"The truth is, unless you let go, unless you forgive yourself, unless you forgive the situation, unless you realize that the situation is over, you cannot move forward." Hence, it's time to let go of the past and the grudges. The more you hold on to them, the more you will get into the rigmarole of why's and how's of things not working out. But, it's time to face the reality, and it's over.

Holding on will only hurt you more. However, it is absolutely fine to give yourself some time to let go. But, keep reminding yourself that your marriage is over and for a reason. Therefore, let this process be natural and if you occasionally remember the good memories you had with your ex, don't be hard on yourself.

### Reconnect with old friends

It's normal to have friends in common with your spouse. However, after divorce, like a lot of things, friends get divided too. They tend to choose one of the two and rarely stay in touch with both partners. So, losing friends in a



and it has nothing to do with you as a person. It is a choice they make so worrying about it will only lead to pain. But, what you can do is connect with old friends that you lost touch with. It might seem like a task but a simple message or a call can reconnect you with your old buddies. And don't forget, you need to build your social circle so it is worth the effort.

### Learn to manage Your own finances

Understanding finances and investments may not be your responsibility when you were married, but, after the split, it is. So, start managing your



financial life and make a list of your income, expenditure, expenses and assets and liabilities. This will help you keep tabs on your incoming versus outgoing flow of money and thus plan your monthly budget. However, if you are not working, then look at going back to your career or find a career that interests you. This will not only give you financial stability but will also keep you engaged. By making slight modifications and being conscious of the expenditure and savings will help you keep your financial life on track.

### Take a break and travel

Going through a separation isn't easy and getting used to your new life after divorce can be fairly tough. To come out of this emotional mayhem take a short break and travel. It could be to a place you always wished to visit but couldn't till now or even a nearby resort. You can plan a trip with close friends or look at tour groups for single people and book

yourself for an adventure. A trip by yourself or alone with your children might sound scary but it is a great way to gain retrospection your life and realize that you are stronger than you expected. Always remember you survived a situation you thought you couldn't and are now even considering traveling with a group of strangers or alone.

### Give romance a second chance with online dating.

If you have recently been divorced, then the thought of dating may seem bizarre. But, it there is no harm in using online dating sites to connect with others and possibly find a new relationship. However, remember two important things about dating after divorce: Do compare others to your ex. Be cautious and don't invest too much time and energy into someone until you know them well. And don't forget is all about you so make some rules and break some but give love a second chance it deserves.



Editorial

The need to open up more avenues for revenue

Nigeria is richly blessed with tremendous amount of human and natural resources, so much that it is the envy of many other nations on the planet. States in Nigeria are battling with the economic realities occasioned by the lack of adequate influx of revenue generation and of recent, the removal of petroleum subsidy and other economic policies by the Tinubu administration. Sustaining themselves economically has become an almost impossible task for some states.

Apparently, sustaining fiscal activities in states with internally generated revenues is not a thing that can see the light of day anytime soon. This, however is not unconnected with the brazen manner in which government is ran, in visionless manner. Priorities are not placed right, and on many occasions are made manifest in leakages in the award of questionable and over inflated contracts, filling up the Civil Service with ghost workers thereby having grossly inflated payrolls. Not to mention the gross misappropriation of state funds.

This situation cannot be allowed to continue unabated. States have to bail themselves out of this quagmire one way or another. State governors have to adopt workable and more profitable strategies in governance. There has been so much already said about the need to trim down the size of their cabinets in order to reflect the realities of current times. The fight against corruption should be taken to a whole new level, and done differently from past practices which have yielded little results. States need to look beyond rhetoric and commit to reductions in operating costs. They have to significantly slash unreasonable overheads to free up more fund for other needs.

Although those at the helm have to link future borrowing to sustainable projects which can pay back capital costs of current loans, and improve the overall income profile of states. It is imperative for states to create conducive environments to foster foreign capital inflow.

The agricultural sector has about the biggest capacity for job creation and for revenue generation. Agriculture remains an area not well harnessed in states. There are states who are already taking advantage and are moving in the right direction. Anambra State is an example of a state taking advantage of this opportunity and investing in agriculture. The government imported two million Malaysian palm oil and coconut seedlings hoping that it can generate a yearly revenue of N160 billion from these to lessen dependence on allocations from Abuja.

However, we advise that states ensure financial prudence by subjecting debts and other liabilities their states inherited from immediate-past governors to serious scrutiny. In the twilight of past administrations, there was a crazy rush to appropriate billions in supplementary budgets and contract approvals. These acts must be investigated, and inappropriate actions must be reversed so as to save public funds, which must be channeled correctly.

In order to reduce the hardship Nigerians are passing through, Edo and Kwara states recently reduced their working week to three days. This and other measures were taken to lighten the burden of increased transportation fares, and other goods and services.

States and local governments collect tax revenues from three primary sources: income, sales, and property taxes. Income and sales taxes make up the majority of combined state tax revenue, while property taxes are the largest source of tax revenue for local governments, including school districts. Tax revenues fluctuate in response to changes in economic conditions and tax policies. There is no doubt that these taxes represent the largest single source of revenue for state and local governments.

Labour has made it clear that the N30,000 minimum wage is no longer realistic in terms of being adequate, and is now clamouring a sum of N200,000 minimum wage which would be a reflections of the times we find ourselves in. Being able to accommodating that is another matter altogether.

We recommend that a reduction in the cost of governance must be pursued to a logical conclusion. The issue of ghost workers and pensioners has to be checked. With the dwindling resources of states, the practice whereby billions are being spent on former governors' retirement benefits has to be stopped. Already these Governors are comfortable by virtue of positions held. Accepting this largesse would only go on to display how insensitive and greedy they are.

ACCORDING to data, Nigeria is a country of the young with almost half the entire 180 million strong populations, 46percent, currently under the age of 15.7million babies are born. While a little over one in three of Nigerians population lives below the poverty line, among children, this proportion surges to 75percent.

Nigeria is the eighth most populous country in Africa with over 200million populace, accounts for 20% of all global maternal deaths with a daunting maternal mortality and terrorism.

The Boko Haram humanitarian crisis has led to over 37,500 deaths with 2.4million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) Adamawa, Yobe and Gombe predominantly leading to physical and food insecurity. The deleterious effect of conflict on maternal and child health has a broad expanse such as lack of shelter, safe and sanitary facilities, food shortage, lack of health care personnel and reduced access to quality health services. Socio-economic inequalities such as maternal, education, sanitary conditions and family health are non existent in these areas. It is paramount to buttress on the aspect of insecurity as it affects maternal and child health of the population.

There is need for Nigerian government to pay attention to this region in timely manner. Essential health services should be improved in those regions, funding should be allocated in abating conflicts and insecurity in Northern Nigeria.



Insecurity: The challenge of women and children

Some of the insecurity includes bombing, suicide bomb attack, sporadic shootings of unarmed and innocent citizens, burning of police stations, churches, kidnapping of school girls and women etc kidnapping, rape, armed robbery and political crisis, murder, destruction of oil facilities by Niger Delta Militants, alongside the attacks carried out by Fulani herdsmen on some communities in the North and South have been another major insecurity facing the country.

Nigeria has been included among one of the terrorist countries of the world. Many lives and properties have been lost and a large number of citizens rendered homeless.

Families have lost their love ones. Many women are now widows. Children become orphans with no hope of the future.

The Nigerian military should be empowered with more sophisticated arms to fight this insurgency. Government should beef up security in the eastern and southern parts of the country to curb the menace of insecurity. Crazy grounds and ranches should be built in all states of the country for Fulani herdsmen who rear cattle. All is in a bid to curb the senseless killing and attacks; peace is as veritable tool to embrace.

By AJIJI AJANG JOHN, Jos  
Email:ajang.ajiji@yahoo.com.

Tribute should be directed to the living

GIVING honour is a virtue we all need to cultivate. It comes in different shades and forms. Gestures are shown or at best tributes are given to show how much we admire, appreciate and would want to honour people.

When we give tributes, we are literally praising the recipients. However, if the recipients do not get to read or hear these words which are meant for them, the aim may be defeated. Thus, it will be more appropriate to let people know how much we appreciate them while they are still with us. This is because it is very important to receive the praise one deserves and not just have them documented and possibly read at their funerals.

We must learn to acknowledge what people have done in the

course of their lifetime.

Interestingly, one part of a funeral programme is the tribute section. It is difficult to grab a funeral programme and drop without reading a portion or at best, the whole tributes written in there. While that might paint a picture and enlighten people on a person's past life, these are only secondary reasons.

Tributes would serve better when they are written to the living and not for the death. And since they are accolades, they should be written to a person rather than about them. As a matter of concern, the deceased do not rise up to read or listen to tributes written for them. Even if they do, of what use is that to them after they are gone?

The call here is for us to learn

the act of acknowledging who people are and honoring them here and now rather than wait till they are gone. Thus, tributes ought to be to the living and not for the dead.

Accolades are motivational; when we appreciate people, they tend to do more. And even if the idea we portray about them is false in our tributes, they get the chance to make things right while they are still alive. If we nurture the intention to praise people, we should also have the courage to rebuke them when they go wrong. We should honor those to whom honor is due as at when due and not necessarily afterwards. Our tributes are served best when the recipient is able to access them.

Kachollom Rwang from Hwolshe, Jos South.

Standard Cartoon



## Opinion

## Fuel subsidy and the common man

BY ABDULLAHI ABDULLATEEF

"BUT I venture to assert that they will not be exorcised, and indeed they will be firmly entrenched, unless God Himself imbues a vast majority of us with a revolutionary change of attitude to life and politics or, unless the dialectic processes which have been at work for some twenty years now, perforce, make us perceive the abominable filth that abounds in our society, to the end that an inexorable abhorrence of it will be quickened in our hearts and impel us to make drastic changes for the better. There is, of course, an alternative option open to us: to succumb to permanent social instability and chaos," late Chief Obafemi Awolowo said.

Nigerian government has over the years struggled to devise better ways of governing the Nigerian people. The stride led to the provision of fuel subsidies in 1970s by the Olusegun Obasanjo regime in order to cushion the effect of global energy prices on Nigerians.

Following the promulgation of Price Control Act in 1977, fuel subsidies became institutionalized and made it illegal the sales of products like petrol above regulated prices.

Study revealed that the hike of petrol prices started in 1978 when it was sold around 0.5 naira a litre and it took major shift during Ibrahim Babangida regime rose to 3.25 naira per litre and down to 1999 (during

Abdulsalam military government and the emergence of democratically elected government) was sold at 20 naira per litre. From 2000 to 2015, petrol prices rose from 22 naira to 145 naira which increased over 100 percent in 15 years.

Nigerians witnessed the first subsidy removal in January 2012 by the federal government. The Jonathan administration faced lots of controversies as Nigerians decried its negative effect on the economy.

In the eight years of the Buhari administration (2015-2023), the federal government spent N11.34 trillion on financing fuel subsidy for Nigerians. Many compatriots have faulted fuel subsidy and opted for its removal so that the money could be directed to other non-oil sectors such as health, education and agriculture.

Meanwhile, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu in course of his inaugural speech said categorically that "fuel subsidy is gone."

He pulled above board to make such a controversial pronouncement and vowed that "we shall instead re-channel the funds into better investments in public infrastructure, education, health care and jobs that will materially improve the lives of

millions."

What is the plight of the Common Man?

The aftermath of the removal of fuel subsidy has prompted untold challenges and hardships on the ordinary Nigerians as the Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) popularly known as fuel significantly increased.

It is no longer news that the Nigeria National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL) released the official market cap for fuel in all the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Lagos got the lowest fuel pump price pegged at N488. But Borno and Yobe got the highest rates pegged at 557 naira per litre. These have generated a lot of uncertainty in the lives of many Nigerians.

Despite the moribund refineries and insecurity in these states, the government has not adequately provided palliative measures to cushion the effect of the removal of fuel subsidy.

According to Picordi report, it estimated that N40,980 value of basic food products met the nutritional level of people living in Nigeria as at the beginning of 2022. The food items include milk (10 litres) valued at N11,470, Bread (10 loafs 500 gram each) cost N4,310; and Rice (1.5kg) valued at N1,470,

eggs (20 pcs) sold at N1,120 ; Cheese (1 Kg) cost N1,950; poultry and beef (6Kg) valued at N9,790. Fruits of 6kg valued at N4,680 and vegetables (8kg) valued at N6,190.

Even in the previous years that the government financed fuel subsidy yet Nigerians could not live off the minimum wage of N30,000. This indicated that as at beginning of 2022 the purchasing power of Nigeria's civil servants was significantly low yet another blow from the current administration which has increased the pump price flew higher more than 200 percent since May 31, 2023.

The controversy would remain unless the government provides palliative to cushion the effect on common Nigerians.

Stressing the frustrations over the removal of fuel subsidy, Trader in Abuja expressed overwhelming dissatisfaction in an interview with News Agency of Nigeria.

A corn seller, Agatha Emmanuel, expressed how she was unable to get fresh corn from farmers due to the hike in transportation fares.

"We buy daily from the farmers, but since Tuesday, I have not been able to go to the farm because from Dutse Alhaji to Bwari, where I buy the corn from, it is now N400.

"How much do I make in a day to spend that amount just for transportation? I make a little profit from the boiled corn I sell.

"I can't make it," she said.

Another trader at the Area 1 Shopping Centre in Garki, who lives in Kuje, FCT, Mrs. Edna Oke, said that the transportation fare from Kuje to Area 1 has increased from N400 to N1,500.

"By the time they see my sack of plantains, the car owner will charge me between N2,000 and N3,000. How much will I add on the plantains I am selling?

Will people buy it? I am begging the government to do something about this. "Maybe they should bring buses that will carry passengers at reduced rates," she said.

In view of the foregoing, the government should further strengthen the economy by providing palliative measures such as reduced the cost of train fares, fast track the implementation of the student loans and more importantly subsidized the cost of health care services across the country.

Observing the atmosphere in the country, Nigeria being a low trust society despite the challenges faced by the common men they have remained optimistic and I think proper implementation of these policies would make Nigeria work again. I must say that it is better to suffer now than suffocating in the future.

**Abdullahi Abdullateef**  
Faculty of Communication  
Bayero University, Kano

## eNaira: On high expectations, hasty conclusions

THE rate of adoption, acceptance and spread of eNaira has come under attack in recent times over what looks like the failure of critics to understand monetary system in Nigeria, Nigerians' sentimental attachment to physical cash and other social problems like illiteracy.

In October 2021, Nigeria recorded a milestone by being the first African country to launch an official digital currency named eNaira. The then Governor of the apex bank, Godwin Emefiele, was clear in his reason for introducing the digital currency. He said eNaira would serve exactly the same purpose the physical cash was serving but with advantages like saving the business man the risks of holding plenty cash which include armed robbery, theft, fire incidents etc.

While the existent conventional banking was supposed to take care of the above risks, the unreliable network and the exorbitant charges the customers had to pay still created gaps for the eNaira to come and fill. While the eNaira platform has no such thing as network failure, transfer from one eNaira wallet to another attracts no charge at all, thus making transactions free for Nigerians. This is at micro level.

The eNaira came with massive promises and prospects on the macro level too. That was why it was launched with pomp and pageantry by ex-President Muhammadu Buhari. It has capacity to boost and ease payment of bills, health insurance, diaspora remittances and financial inclusion for

BY ABDULRAHMAN ABDULRAHEEM

the downtrodden.

By the time eNaira becomes the prime choice for transactions in Nigeria, it will boost and hasten the country's transition into cashless economy which helps in curbing inflation, tracking money laundering and saving the country billions of naira it spends in printing physical cash.

The beauty of having a platform with the above ingenuity may have however intoxicated some stakeholders both within and outside the country into expecting that after six months, all Nigerians are supposed to be on the platform.

Such high expectations are however inconsistent with the reality of the Nigerian situation. Nigeria is a country of nearly a million square kilometres which is one of the most difficult countries in the world to govern.

A typical Nigerian farmer, herder, hunter, trader etc would prefer to sell and buy in cash and even the wealthy ones among them would prefer to keep their millions of naira in the drawers and wardrobes, and be seeing it every morning and night, rather than have the money in one so-called bank account or e-wallet that they can neither see nor touch. For them, there is absolutely no feeling of being wealthy if the money cannot be seen in physical cash.

Nigeria is a country of about 206 million people out of which 76 million, representing 37 percent, are said to be

illiterate and 160 million, representing 78 percent, have no smart phones. Out of the population also, about 73 million, representing 35 percent, are said not to have bank accounts.

Nigeria has 774 Local Government Areas, out of which more than 300 are said not to have bank branches or cash centres at all.

Even though the eNaira platform is accessible and usable for people with no bank accounts and smart phones because the CBN came up with the idea of USSD code through which people with any phone at all can join, the message will still take years to sink properly. Even though the eNaira platform is built in such a simple manner that people with minimal education can make use of it, they will still need guidance by CBN officials who have to take their time to go round such a massive country like ours to meet different categories of Nigerians in clusters and groups.

Talking about eNaira advocacy and publicity, a lot of investments and work have gone into this. The CBN has a massive eNaira advocacy team that moves round the country to meet market people, youth groups, women groups, drivers, tricycle operators etc and also students who they meet in university campuses.

The Bank has also engaged several individuals and organisations as partner-agents across the country for the purpose of recruiting, training other agents for the purpose of ultimately

spreading the gospel of eNaira.

The progress the eNaira acceptance rate has recorded is largely due to the painstaking work the apex bank has done as well as the viability and versatility of the eNaira platform itself.

On the other hand, the 'slow' pace of the progress being recorded – according to the harsh and hasty judgement of some critics – is not in reality due to any fundamental defect in the entire Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) idea. There is also nothing wrong in the CBN's implementation strategy for its digital currency. The only factor that can possibly be responsible for that is the huge size of Nigeria and the fact that a lot of more work needs to be done on the side of enlightenment.

Criticisms without contexts, without indepth understanding of situations and circumstances, is the bane of intellectualism in this part of the world. The eNaira project cannot be dubbed a failure just because it has failed to arrive at its destination as quickly as you erroneously envisioned. It is work in progress. It will get there.

Critics and analysts seem to be seeing the implementation of eNaira as a 100 metre dash that must start and end with good results in split seconds. In reality, the pursuit of success for the eNaira is a marathon that will take time, efforts and more investments in publicity and advocacy. The CBN knows this.

**Abdulrahman Abdulraheem is the Managing Editor of PRNIGERIA and Economic Confidential.**

**CHANGE OF NAME**

<b>NANDIR</b> I, formerly known as <b>SAMBO NANDIR LIRFA</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>NANDIR NANSEL SAMBO</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.	<b>ISHAKU</b> I, formerly known as <b>ISHAKU MOSES</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>ISHAKU MUSA</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public please take note.	<b>SHIKJIL</b> I, formerly known as <b>DANJUMA JOSEPH SANDA</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>SHIKJIL LAMKA SHEDRACH</b> . Correct Date of birth is 23/03/2002 not 23/03/2001. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.	<b>GYANG</b> I, formerly known as <b>ESTHER SAMUEL</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>GYANG ESTHER SAMUEL</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.	<b>MUHAMMAD</b> I, formerly known as <b>HAMISS ISA ALI</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>MUHAMMAD NURA USMAN</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.	<b>BULUS</b> I, formerly known as <b>BULUS CHRISTIANA BALA</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>BULUS TONGRIYANG JATAU</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.
<b>DANIEL</b> I, formerly known as <b>DANIEL JUSTINA ACHOB</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>DENIEL JUSTINA OMEDE</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.	<b>UMAR</b> I, formerly known as <b>UMARU ABUBAKAR</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>UMAR ABUBAKAR</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public please take note.	<b>OJELEKE</b> I, formerly known as <b>AFOLABI TEMITOPE CELINA</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>OJELEKE TEMITOPE CELINA</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.	<b>JOSEPH</b> I, formerly known as <b>JANET JOSEPH DABIT</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>JOSEPH JANET BULUS</b> . Date of birth is 14th March, 1994. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.	<b>KISKI</b> I, formerly known as <b>HELEN KEZIAH KISKI</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>KISKI HELEN CHRISTIAN</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.	<b>AFAMEFUNA</b> I, formerly known as <b>EJIM PATIENCE UCHE</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>AFAMEFUNA PATINECE UCHE</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.
<b>DAYIL</b> I, formerly known as <b>LEKUK TERDANG KUMYEN</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>DAYIL TERDANG SIMDI</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.	<b>NWADOBU</b> I, formerly known as <b>ONYEBU NKECHI MARGARET</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>NWADOBU NKECHI MARGARET</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.	<b>MONICA</b> I, formerly known as <b>MONICA JOHN</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>MONICA JOHN DAKSUN</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.	<b>MARK</b> I, formerly known as <b>DANFULANI MARTHA MARK</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>MARK MARTHA DAMAKI</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.	<b>LAWALI</b> I, formerly known as <b>LAWALI BINVYAP NDAM</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>LAWALI SALIHU UMUR</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.	<b>CHALNAN</b> I, formerly known as <b>CHALNAN ZINGVEN BAKO</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>CHALNAN SELMAN BARKO</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.
<b>NANMI</b> I, formerly known as <b>JAPAN NANMI</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>NANMI NANCWAT TALI</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.	<b>OBASI</b> I, formerly known as <b>IJEOMA CELINA OBASI</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>OBASI IJEOMA CECILIA</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.	<b>MUKTARI</b> I, formerly known as <b>IDRIS UBALÉ</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>MUKTARI UBALÉ</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.	<b>MUDUUTKAP</b> I, formerly known as <b>PETER MUDUUTGAP</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>MUDUUTGAP PETER LONGYEN</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.	<b>DAVOU</b> I, formerly known as <b>JUGU HANATU MUSA</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>DAVOU HANATU DANIEL</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.	<b>YUSUF</b> I, formerly known as <b>ADULRAHAMAN MUSA</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>YUSUF MUSA ABDULLAHI</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.
<b>HARUNA</b> I, formerly known as <b>GYANG DEBORAH ILIYA</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>HARUNA DEBORAH AMOS</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.	<b>MRS LINDA</b> I, formerly known as <b>MISS LINDA BENCHI KAKHAM</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>MRS LINDA PUKAT SHEHU</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public please take note.	<b>NUHU</b> I, formerly known as <b>HARUNA AISHATU</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>NUHU AISHA HARUNA</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public please take note.	<b>ILIYA</b> I, formerly known as <b>ILIYA MAINASARA AUDU</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>ILIYA AUDU</b> . Correct date of birth is 28/5/1068 not 5/5/1968. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public please take note.	<b>DAUDA</b> I, formerly known as <b>DALYOP YOP CHOLLOM</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>DAUDA TABITHA PAM</b> . Correct date of birth is 18/11/1998. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.	<b>AZI</b> I, formerly known as <b>AJIK ATANG</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>AZI AJIK ATANG</b> . Correct date of birth is 24/09/1982. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.
<b>AGYAMAS</b> I, formerly known as <b>JOSHUA CALEB</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>AGYAMAS JOSHUA CALEB</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.	<b>ILIYA</b> I, formerly known as <b>ILIYA YOHANNA</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>ILIYA YOHANNA</b> . My correct date of birth is 25/11/1964. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public please take note.	<b>ESSIEN</b> I, formerly known as <b>ESSIEN UBOETOK DICKSON</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>ESSIEN JOSHUA UBOETOK</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public please take note.	<b>SUNDAY</b> I, formerly known as <b>KUDU REBECCA YENGEN</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>REBECCA SUNDAY</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public please take note.	<b>ABDULSALAM</b> I, formerly known as <b>OLADELE IYANDA</b> now wish to be known and addressed as <b>ABDULSALAM SULEIMAN OLADELE</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.	<b>NANFE</b> I, formerly known as <b>NANFE GLADYS RAMSON</b> now wish to be known and addressed as <b>NANFE GLADYS KAIKEH</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.
<b>PAM</b> I, formerly known as <b>NANCY NTAZI PAM DAFEI</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>NANCY NYAZI PAM</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.	<b>UMMI</b> I, formerly known as <b>UMMI ALIYU NAWAS</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>UMMI SALMA ALIYU MUHAMMAD</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public please take note.	<b>JOSEPH</b> I, formerly known as <b>SIMI DUNG</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>SIMI RUTH JOSEPH</b> . My correct date of birth is 04/07/1987. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public please take note.	<b>KYEMTING</b> I, formerly known as <b>JAMES JESSE</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>KYEMTING JESSE JAMES</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public please take note.	<b>HWERE</b> I, formerly known as <b>HWERE MAGDALENE DANLADI</b> now wish to be known and addressed as <b>HWERE MAGDALENE PHILIP</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.	<b>EMMANUEL</b> I, formerly known as <b>MAREN FUKI STEPHEN</b> now wish to be known and addressed as <b>EMMANUEL FUKI</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.
<b>DASHE</b> I, formerly known as <b>LEPSUK DASHE</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>DASHE ROSEMARY LEPSUK</b> . My correct of birth is 21/07/1991. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.	<b>SIMBAMI</b> I, formerly known as <b>BENSON BLESSING SIMBAMI</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>INNOCENT BLESSING SIMBAMI</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public please take note.	<b>DACHI</b> I, formerly known as <b>DANJUMA YILYOK</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>DACHI YILYOK DANJUMA</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public please take note.	<b>DANIEL</b> I, formerly known as <b>DANIEL P. TITUS</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>DANIEL PIRMAN LAR</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public please take note.	<b>DINCHI</b> I, formerly known as <b>DINCHI LAR NDAM</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>DINCHI SAUL LAR</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.	<b>SALISU</b> I, formerly known as <b>SALISU AISHA FAVOUR</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>SALISU AISHA</b> . All former documents remain valid. WAEC, JAMB, NIN AND BIRTH CERTIFICATE. All concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.
<b>AYUBA</b> I, formerly known as <b>AYUBA ZACHARIA</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>AYUBA ZACHARIA KUMBEN</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.	<b>OKAFOR</b> I, formerly known as <b>ANASOH QUEEN CHIZZY</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>OKAFOR QUEEN CHIZZY</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public please take note.	<b>DENDEN</b> I, formerly known as <b>JEMKUR ANGELA NANYA</b> , now wish to be known and addressed as <b>DENDEN ANGELA NANYA</b> . All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public please take note.	<b>THIS SPACE IS FOR SALE</b>		

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

**ADONAI CHRISTIAN EMBASSY**

The general public is hereby notified that the above named organization has applied to the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) for registration under Part "F" of the Companies and Allied Matters Act, 2020

- TRUSTEES:**
- Rev. Chidi Michael. - Chairman
  - Blessing Ebere Nwobodo - Trustee
  - Pastor Emeka Agu - Trustee
  - Rebecca Danladi - Secretary

**AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:**

1. To preach the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.
2. Recovery of lost and battered destinies through the power of the Holy spirit.

Any objection to this registration should be forwarded to the Registrar General, Corporate Affairs Commission, Plot 420, Tigris Crescent, Off Aguiyi Ironsi Street, Maitama, Abuja within 28 days of this publication.

**Signed: Rev. Chidi Michael, Chairman.**

**LOST OF DOCUMENT**

I, **ESV. SAMUEL NDUKWE**, I was in possession of Certificate of Occupancy (C.of O) with **Plot No. 32431** situate at Naraguta Avenue, Jos North LGA, Plateau State belonging to Leventist Motors and Technical Plc issued by Ministry of Lands, Survey & Town Planning, Jos, Plateau State and it got lost at Lagos to Jos road sometimes in 2012.

Effort to trace same proved abortive.

**Signed:**  
**ESV Samuel Ndukwe**

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News

## Deputy Governor pledges support for women, lauds CNM

By **DUMAH RANDONG**

PLATEAU State Deputy Governor, Josephine Piyo has assured women of the needed support as care givers to ensure stability at the home front.

Piyo gave the assurance when she received on a courtesy visit, wives of former Permanent Secretaries in the state.

The Deputy Governor who was elated with the visit commended them for their prayers, encouragement and support, which have helped them begin the governance process on a firm foundation.

She explained that she would carry the women along in the discharge of her duties. And added that government will look passionately at the issues of unpaid emoluments of retired civil servants in the state.



Piyo

Leader, wives of former Permanent Secretaries in the state, Christiana Agaldo explained that the group is a non partisan one which was formed long before their husbands disengaged from action service.

She expressed joy and gratitude to God for uplifting one of them to the exalted position of number two citizen in the state.

The group congratulated the Deputy Governor and assured her that they would rally round her to ensure she delivers on her mandate.

Similarly, Plateau State Deputy Governor, Josephine Piyo has commended the Provost and management of the College of Nursing and

Midwifery Vom for the giant strides being recorded in the institution.

Piyo gave the commendation when the Provost, Bako Sambo led Management on a courtesy visit to Government House, Rayfield, Jos.

The Deputy Governor who described them as colleagues in the nursing profession assured them that she will not disappoint them.

She noted that she would continue to partner with the college to create a conducive environment for staff and students.

The Deputy Governor appreciated God and Plateau people for entrusting in their hands the leadership of the

state and solicited more prayers to enable them succeed.

Earlier, Provost of the College, Bako Sambo said they were in her office to felicitate with a teacher, a mentor and a senior colleague who by providence is the number two citizen in the state.

He commended the Deputy Governor for her service to God and humanity through the nursing profession and assured her that they will support the programmes and policies of the present administration in the state.

The Provost prayed for more wisdom, good health and enablement for her to succeed in the new assignment.

From **ANENE AIKE, Sokoto**

## Blasphemy: One killed

A victim, Buda of Rugar Fulani in Gulmare Village of Gwandu Local Government Area of Kebbi State has been killed by his fellow butchers after making a blasphemous statement about the person of prophet Muhammad and refused to repent when asked to do so by his colleagues.

Buda who was confirmed as a resident of the Gidan Igwe area, lived with his family in Sokoto metropolis at the time of the event.

An eye witness to the event who spoke on condition of anonymity, said Buda in his words said he aligned himself with the statement credited to Sheikh Abdul Azeez of Bauchi State, where he said he neither seek help from any mortal including the Prophet of Islam, except the Almighty God.

That Buda was asked to review his statement and repent, but said he stands by his statement and what the Sheikh said is right.

That he supported the statement a hundred percent which led to the provocation of the Muslim Ummah around him and he was stoned to death.

It would be recalled that what happened to Buda came barely a year after when a similar



Egbetokun

incident occurred and a girl named Deborah Samuel was killed for alleged blasphemy against the prophet of Islam.

The acting Police Public Relations Officer, Rufa'i Ahamed could not be reached for comments despite several calls, as his line was not

reachable to make a statement on the matter. Efforts to speak to Chairman Sokoto State Butchers Association proved abortive as the Abattoir was deserted and no one was willing to comment on the matter.

## We'll reform, introduce electronic voting

From **WILLIE ATTAH, Gombe**

NEWLY elected Chairman of the Gombe State branch of the Nigeria Bar Association (NBA), Benjamin Sati, says apart from vigorously pursuing the implementation of his manifestos, he'll ensure

that the branch introduces electronic voting system in subsequent elections.

He told our correspondent shortly after he was declared winner of the branch's election, held recently. Furthermore, holding election electronically will greatly improve the electoral procedure and give confidence to the members as well as contestants.

Benjamin, who polled 134 votes to beat three other chairmanship contenders said, "I feel it doesn't cost much money to have an electronic voting system".

According to him, "Many people could not come out to vote because of the rain. When we assume office, we will make efforts to consult professionals in that regard. If our income or purse can afford it, why not? We live in a digital age, we are a generational people. We should go in tandem with contemporary realities. "A colleague in another branch told me that they held two elections electronically. When we do election digitally, it is more transparent, seamless and simple. So, if alive, we're going to do a lot more like we presented in our manifestos", he stated.

He said his intentions for which is to give his contribution to the progress and development of the Gombe State branch of the NBA. He pointed "I feel I have a lot to give if given the opportunity and that is the reason why I contested

that the branch introduces electronic voting system in subsequent elections.

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and I got the assurance in almost all quarters".

He promised to carry all members along including the losers in the election, vowing to treat them with respect and appreciation. He also described the journey to his electoral victory as a tough one having contested and lost in 2021.

"I summoned the courage, bearing in mind the level I'm in, in the Bar, I felt I have a lot to offer, as such, I gave it a try again.

In the keenly contested election for the chairmanship position, Benjamin Sati polled 134 votes against Abdullahi Inuwa who polled 100 votes. Others are, Chief MK Gurumyen 09 votes while Abdullahi A Kumo polled 03 votes.

Other winners in the election were: Mwalin Abdulnaomi, Vice Chairman; Abdulmutalib Babawuro, Secretary; Muazu Danjuma, Assistant Secretary; Ramatu Ibrahim Hassan, Treasurer; David Ishaku, Financial Secretary; Anbore Banes, Welfare Secretary; Bashir Abdullahi, Publicity Secretary; Abubakar Baba Peto, Legal Adviser and Abdullahi Suleiman Kulani, Social Secretary.

Out of the 395 registered lawyers expected to vote during the election, 246 got accredited and voted amidst the persistent rainfall which may have hindered the others from coming out to vote at the Amina hall, Gombe.

## Distance yourselves from temptations

From **ABBAS GUNGURA, Bauchi**

PRESIDENT of the National Industrial Court of Nigeria (NICN), Benedict Kanyip, has counseled newly appointed judges of the court to distance themselves from the temptations that go with the job.

The president gave the advice while welcoming the new judges into the NICN family during a dinner organized by the court in their honour. He noted that it's the first time an indigene of FCT is being appointed to this

prestigious office of a judge in the court.

The Solicitor General of the Federation, Beatrice Jedy-Agba who was also at the dinner, advised the new judges to be fair in dispensing justice in their various courts. One of the Supreme Court Judges also admonished them to live above board, saying there are the good, the bad and ugly side of the appointment.

In his response on behalf of the judges, Barrister Subilim Emmanuel Danjuma, pledged that they would perform their

duties with utmost integrity, fairness, dedication, and commitment to uphold the principles of justice, safeguard the right of every individual in their courtrooms and make decisions that are just and equitable.

Justice Subilim, assured that they are ready to embark on their new roles to contribute to the administration of justice and make positive impact in the lives of those who seek justice, as they strive to ensure that justice remains a beacon of hope and fundamental pillar of the Nigerian society.

Danjuma, who was before his new appointment, the Chief Registrar of the Bauchi State High Court, said that it is through the impartial application of the law that they could ensure equality, protect the vulnerable, and maintain the trust and confidence of the people they serve.

According to him, "We are indeed honoured to be entrusted with this responsibility and we are fully committed to serving the public with the highest level of professionalism and integrity".

He told the gathering, "It is not just a celebration of collective efforts that have brought us to this point. We are grateful for the guidance, support, and love we have received from each and everyone of you. We firmly

- **NICN President**

believe that the judiciary in today's Nigeria plays a crucial role in preserving the fabric of our society".

The judges also expressed gratitude for the honour bestowed on them by the President of the Industrial Court by the trust placed on them, as they are appreciative of the opportunity to service justice and uphold the principles of the legal system.

They further told the chief echelon of Nigeria's judiciary, "We want to express our gratitude to the Honourable Chief Justice of Nigeria, members of the National Judicial Council, members of the Federal Judicial Service Commission, President of the National Industrial Court, colleagues, and the legal community for enduring the meticulous procedure that produced the six of us today".

"We believe it is through your collective wisdom, commitment to justice, and tireless efforts that our legal system maintains its integrity and fairness", Danjuma said, and appreciated the Bauchi State Chief Justice, Justice Rabi Talatu Umar and the management of the state judiciary for what he described as 'their unwavering support,



Kanyip

**PROBATE NOTICE****IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE OF PLATEAU STATE OF NIGERIA  
PROBATE DIVISION**

WHEREAS the person whose name is set out in the first Column hereunder died into on the date and place state in the said column.

AND WHEREAS the person whose name(s) and addressed and relations to the deceased are set out in second column hereto has/have applied to High Court of Plateau State if grant of letter administration of the Real and personal properties/ estate of the said deceased NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that letters of Administration will be granted to such person/persons unless a "NOTICE TO PROHIBIT the grant is filed in the Registry within twenty one (2) days of from the date hereof.

NAME OF DECEASED PERSON	NAME OF ADDRESS OF APPLICANT'S FOR GRANT	NAME OF DECEASED PERSON	NAME OF ADDRESS OF APPLICANT'S FOR GRANT	NAME OF DECEASED PERSON	NAME OF ADDRESS OF APPLICANT'S FOR GRANT
<b>INSP. YUSUF AHMED</b> , late of Kaduna State, died on the 17th Feb., 2021. At Gwantu, Kaduna State	<b>YUSUF ASAMA'U AHMED</b> of Gwantu Numbu, Sanga LGA, Kaduna State. Lawful daughter of the said deceased.	<b>RAPHEAL FELIX</b> , late of Delta State, died on the 13th June, 2022. At Busa Delta State.	<b>ROMANDA FELIX</b> , No. 11 Dangchibi Rwang of Fatima Street Rayfield, Jos South LGA, Plateau State. Lawful daughter of the said deceased.	<b>DANLADI BAKO</b> , late of Plateau State, died on the 10th Feb. 2023. At PSSH, Jos.	<b>FATIMA DANLADI &amp; RABIU MOHAMMED</b> of Rafin Bauna, Jos South LGA, Plateau State. Lawful brother/daughter of the said deceased.
<b>JOSHUA NELSON</b> , late of Kaduna State, died on the 14th June, 2022. At Jos, Plateau State.	<b>YARISON MUSA BAYERO</b> of Kissa Yhip Newlayout Jebbu Bassa LGA, Plateau State. Lawful Uncle of the said deceased.	<b>UMAR AYU DANLADI</b> late of Plateau State, died on the 22nd May, 2023. At Jos, Plateau State	<b>IDRIS UMAR</b> of Rikkos Yan Cement, Jos North LGA, Plateau State. Lawful son of the said deceased.	<b>JONAH ANCHE</b> , late of Plateau State, died on the 5th Nov. 2021. At Jos, Plateau State.	<b>MANASSAH JONAH</b> of Yohanna Dalyop Avenue, Bukuru, Jos South LGA, Plateau State. Lawful son of the said deceased.
<b>UMARU SABO</b> , late of Plateau State. Died on the 5th June, 2023. At Jos Plateau State.	<b>SABO UMAR UMAR</b> of No. 81/5 Ndu Street, Jos, Plateau State. Lawful son of the said deceased.	<b>AYUBA YAKUBU</b> , late of Plateau State, died on the 5th June, 2023. At BHUTH, Jos, Plateau State	<b>NYAM AYUBA YAKUBU</b> of Angwan Paul Gindiri Tudun Wada, Jos, Plateau State. Lawful son of the said deceased.	<b>GONSUM GABRIEL GWAKSHIWA</b> , late of Plateau State, died on the 31st March, 2023. At Wuse Pankshin LGA, Plateau State.	<b>GONSUM DOMINIC NENFORT</b> of Bwandang Bukuru, Jos South LGA, Plateau State. Lawful son of the said deceased.
<b>YA'U HASSAN DOGUWA</b> late of Plateau State, died on the 24th October, 2019, at Jos, Plateau State.	<b>HASSAN ABDULAZEEZ</b> , of Behind Sharna Hotel, Bauchi Road, Jos North LGA, Plateau State. Lawful son of the said deceased.	<b>JIMMY DUNG GYANG</b> late of Plateau State, died 15th October, 2022, at Abuja, FCT.	<b>JONATHAN CHOLLOM GYANG</b> of JG 56, Apata Street, Jos North LGA, Plateau State. Lawful brother of the said deceased.	<b>MARCEL NICHOLAS</b> late of Plateau State, died on the 19th May, 2013, at Bokkos, Bokkos LGA, Plateau State.	<b>NENGAKE NICHOLAS</b> C/O St. Thomas Catholic Church, Bokkos Plateau State. Lawful son of the said deceased.
<b>MICHAEL JOSHUA ADAMU</b> late of Bauchi State, died on the 12th November, 2020, at Abuja.	<b>PATIENCE MICHAEL YELIM</b> of Plot 45, Off Tengele Road, Karu Site, Abuja. Lawful daughter of the said deceased.	<b>AUDU JIBRILLA AUDU</b> late of Damawa State, died on the 16th October, 2022, at Gen. Hospital, Adamawa State.	<b>AMINA AUDU JIBRILLA &amp; AUDU HURAINA</b> of Sabon Gari Narabi Toro LGA, Bauchi State. Lawful widow/daughter of the said deceased.	<b>KOFFA BABALE JOSEPH</b> late of Kaduna State, died on the 26th February, 2023, at Jos, Plateau State.	<b>ISAH BABALE JOSEPH</b> of behind PHC Kabong, Rukuba Road, Jos North LGA, Plateau State. Lawful son of the said deceased.
<b>JOHN EMMANUEL LUKDAP</b> , late of Plateau State, died on the 10th November, 2018, at Jos, Plateau State.	<b>FAVOUR JOHN &amp; RITKATMWA JACOB GOYER</b> behind Melody Hotel, Gadabiu, Jos North LGA, Plateau State. Lawful widow/daughter of the said deceased	<b>DAWANG JANET</b> , late of Plateau State, died on the 16th September, 2016, at Namu, Qua'an Pan LGA, Plateau State.	<b>STEPHEN NALONG</b> of Namu Qua'an Pan LGA, Plateau State. Lawful brother of the said deceased.	<b>BATURE MANGAI</b> late of Plateau State, died on the 2nd October, 2021, at Rim, Riyom LGA, Plateau State.	<b>MANGAI JOHN BATURE</b> of Rim Riyom LGA, Plateau State. Lawful son of the said deceased.
<b>LENGSHAK PETER</b> late of Plateau State, died on the 5th November 2022, at Kapil (HIP).	<b>JOHN PETER</b> of COCIN LCC, Gandong Kwang, Jos South LGA, Plateau State. Lawful brother of the said deceased.	<b>YAKUBU SANKEY</b> late of Plateau State, died on the 25th May, 2023, at Kafanchan, Kaduna State.	<b>HON. JUSTICE JUMMAI HANNATU SANKEY &amp; BABANGIDA JOHN SANKEY</b> of Miango Road, Jos North LGA, Plateau State. Lawful widow/son of the said deceased.	<b>SUNDAY SHWANDANG RETYIT</b> late of Plateau State, died on the 20th April, 2023, at JUTH, Plateau State.	<b>LONGDI SUNDAY SHWANDANG</b> of ECWA Church Farin Gada, Jos, Plateau State. Lawful sister of the said deceased.
<b>REV. PROF. IBRAHIM MUSA AHMADU</b> late of Taraba State, died on the 28th February, 2023, at Jos Plateau State.	<b>ALICE IBRAHIM MUSA &amp; GRACE IBRAHIM MUSA</b> of Plot 90T Mazaram Rayfield, Jos South LGA, Plateau State. Lawful daughters of the said deceased.	<b>MARGIT HARUNA</b> late of Plateau State, died on the 6th March, 2022, at Gada Bui, Jos Plateau State.	<b>MARGIT SAMUEL</b> of No. 50 Angwan Soya, Jos North LGA, Plateau State. Lawful son of the said deceased	<b>JATAU HAGGAI TUHUNMANG</b> late of Plateau State, died on the 28th May, 2022, at Jos, Plateau State.	<b>DR. HAGGAI PHILEMON TUHUNMANG</b> of No. 15 Old Legislative Quarters, Jos North LGA, Plateau State. Lawful son of the said deceased.
<b>PAM SAMUEL JATAU</b> late of Plateau State, died on the 21st September, 2022, at Vom Christian Hospital.	<b>DUNG PAM SAMUEL</b> of COCIN LCC Tya, Vom, Jos South LGA, Plateau state. Lawful son of the said deceased.	<b>ISIYA USMAN</b> late of Plateau State, died on the 12th August, 2013, at Jos, Plateau State.	<b>SAKINATU ISIYA USMAN</b> of Rikkos, Jos North LGA, Plateau State. Lawful daughter of the said deceased.	<b>GAMBO MUHAMMAD MAKARFI</b> late of Kaduna State, died on the 27th October, 2022, at Kaduna State.	<b>ALMUSTAPHA MUHAMMAD</b> of Katakoto Junction, Jos North LGA, Plateau State. Lawful son of the said deceased.

**Signed**  
**(ANDRAWUS MAIKAI)**  
**PROBATE REGISTRAR**  
**PLATEAU STATE OF NIGERIA, JOS**



By JENNIFER YARIMA

THERE are certain professions that bring one in close contact with realities of what victims or survivors experience before others get the details. They mostly get first hand information by either witnessing incidences at the scene of occurrence or they are given narration by eye witnesses or survivors themselves. This looks attractive from outside because the public relies on the outcome of findings to be better informed. Some of these categories of people are health personnel, security agencies, Psychologists and Journalists etc.

Recently, yours sincerely was attracted to a lecture I keenly listened to online which highlighted the trauma

journalists who report gender based violence go through as they discharge their lawful duties. It's so good to keep the public well informed about certain things that are happening in the society, but no one understand the stress and pressure you undergo for the celebrated stories. That is to say that one should be mindful not to allow himself to be overworked.

The mental state of someone's well being is necessary towards achieving greater feat in everything one does in life. Health, welfare and emotional stability of the journalist need to be given attention to enable one does the work with ease. Every journalist should endeavor to make regular medical checkup a priority. This if done will help in understanding one's status to enable such a person work within specification. Don't be deceived by the remarks of people who term you a super person, the work is a thankless job. So go slowly and carefully.

Certain stories no doubt get one to think uncontrollably around the event. It didn't happen to you directly but because of your experience, you start thinking differently. It was interesting to note that it's not a weakness for one to say no to a story if your emotion is not strong enough to carry you through. The challenge here is that a reporter is mostly assigned to a bit or instructed to report an incident. This therefore means that in most cases; it's not optional but a must do work.

In journalism profession, the

significance of dateline need not be over emphasized because the editor gives the timeline that certain stories should be given due consideration for publication or to be aired depending on the medium where one works. This development entails that at certain times, one must work under pressure to meet up these



## Relevance of mental health for journalists

datelines. The biggest question however is; what stories get you traumatic?

One is reminded of the much celebrated photojournalists Kevin Carter, whose fame in photography earned him a Pulitzer Prize award that he was globally recognized but it did not go down well with him at the end because he ended up killing himself as a result of the traumatic experience of his work. The agony of the photojournalist emanated when he reported the severe famine in Sudan where many lives were lost and many people struggled for survival.

While covering events that unfolded then, one of his best shots captured by New York Times on March 26, 1993 captured a vulture waiting for a starving Sudanese girl to die and feast on her carcass. He was celebrated on major news channels and networks world for such an exceptional photographic skill. The readers' reactions were intense and not positive. Some people said the photographer who took the photo was inhumane. That he should have

dropped the camera to run to the little girl's aid.

The interesting thing about journalism and the society is the fact that negative stories are best sellers for the public than any other. That of course was probably the driving force that diverted the humanity of Kevin than the thought of rendering immediate help. His depression started when during one of his interviews which he granted, someone asked him what happened to the child, Kevin replied that he didn't find out after the photograph because as he had a flight to catch. They replied him that there were two vultures on that day, one had a camera.

His constant thought of that statement and the gory images he saw almost on daily basis turned out that it took its toll in Carter's case fatally. Carter grew up in South Africa during apartheid; he became a photojournalist because he felt he needed to document the sickening treatment not only of the blacks by whites but between black ethnic groups as well like

those of Xhosas and Zulus.

In a few years, he saw countless murders from beatings, stabbings, gunshots and neck lacing, a barbaric practice in which a tyre filled with oil is placed around the victim's neck and lit on fire. It was evident that even if he had offered to help, the armed Sudanese soldiers wouldn't have allowed him. He talked about the guilt of the people he couldn't save because he photographed them as they were being killed.

To avoid trauma that comes with the stress of the work, experts have suggested some therapy to keep one on the job relevant. You need to know your limit or how far you can go. Disconnect from your normal schedules and do what works for you. Talking to a confidant is a healing balm, sharing your problem with a loved one matters a lot. Of course good time to hang out and have proper rest is of essence.

Celebrating yourself and the work you are doing gives you reason to keep on.



By YVONNE ISHOLA

HOW time flies. It was just like yesterday that we lined up under the scorching sun to vote leaders at different levels. Recall the emotional outbursts, the name calling, fighting and even violence by which die-hard supporters expressed themselves. No one seemed to be indifferent. We all wanted our own to be there so that the goodies would flow down to us.

The preparation to any event is usually full of promise. They rolled out their manifestos and wowed us. They won us with smiles plastered on their faces. The muscles on their faces must have suffered. Their doors then were open to all, and in their homes, drinks flowed like a river and food like Christmas day. They personally welcomed every visitor. The Absoloms of our time.

## Two-faced politicians and the electorate

We felt loved because they showed genuine concern for us. They were interested in everything of interest to us - our families, jobs or lack of it, our comfort etc. They celebrated with us when we celebrated anything and wept with us when aggrieved. The Absoloms of our time.

When we launched a fundraising campaign in our churches, mosques, they came and generously supported us. We predicted that the incoming government would favour us.

Some of us were bought with wrappers, rice, and or as little as seasoning- Maggi/Royco or salt. They knew we had a price because we were still dazed from the blows we received from the last administration. Like Esau, we sold our birth right.

A group of peasant yam farmers told of their ordeal with a politician. He was so humble and down to earth that out of admiration for his humility, they all rallied around him, campaigned for him to enable him become a lawmaker at the national level. Their joy knew no bounds as he had a landslide victory. They saw it as their victory.

The lawmaker passed once and waved frantically at the peasant yam sellers to say thank you. However, that was

the last time they saw his face at close range. From then henceforth, anytime he was passing to or from Abuja, all his car glasses would be wound up. He never stopped again to rub minds with them or even to say hello.

They felt used and dumped. They were a means to an end to the lawmaker. It was like now they were stinking. It was

**"Out of the blues, the two faced legislator appeared. He made his entourage stop and he got out of the car to personally greet the peasant yam sellers. The lawmaker noticed their coldness and to pacify them, he bought almost all their yams and left more than half of it for them to share it among themselves. That action loosened them a little.**

**From then onwards, the lawmaker stopped on his way to Jos or from Jos to Abuja to chat with them and or make them feel important."**

as if he was ashamed of them.

They recalled all the promises he made to them to better their lot and decided to use their power as electorate to make their point. These peasants were eagerly waiting when the years quickly rolled by and it was campaign year again.

Out of the blues, the two faced legislator appeared. He made his entourage stop and he got out of the car to personally greet the peasant yam sellers. The lawmaker noticed their coldness and to pacify them, he bought almost all their yams and left more than half of it for them to share it among themselves. That action loosened them a little.

From then onwards, the lawmaker stopped on his way to Jos or from Jos to Abuja to chat with them and or make them feel important.

After a few stops, the politician started broaching the issue of his re-election. They smiled at the idea as if it pleased them. Shortly afterwards, he dropped his posters and some stipends. They didn't refuse his gift but on top of it, gave room to his competitor to come and sell himself. After weighing the two, they made their decision.

The peasant farmers used

legislator. And they said they have no regrets. Once beaten, twice shy.

A colleague told me that after their votes ensured the victory of a lawmaker in the state, they decided to go and congratulate him as his supporters. But to their surprise, they were stopped at the gate and told that he was sleeping. And that was how it continued, he even changed security guards and brought professionals who were very unfriendly.

They forget that without people, one is nothing. That is where the Hausa man beats us hands down. He builds people, empowers people around him who become very loyal to him and ensure he never lacks and that he remains relevant all the days of his life. We forget that he who eats alone, dies alone.

Our style is for us to sit on our high horse and give out stipends every now and then. The worse case scenario is that of one who has deprived his/ her constituents the dividends of democracy and is unapproachable. How can such an evil person even come back and seek for votes a second time? Do they take the electorate for fools? If you are in this category, abeg, carry go! We need people with the heart of flesh, ready to serve not play God.

By AYUBA YILGAK'HA

WHEN transition speaks, guilty men quivers. This hypothesis is a classical reality during adolescence stage in humans and governance transitions as we are currently witnessing in Nigeria and many states of the country. On June 9, 2023, news filtered on social media in relation to embattled CBN governor, Mr. Godwin Emeziele. As it stands, I do not know whether he should be

vendetta, what the president is likely to do with those who are at cross purpose with his highest political ambition. Things are happening very fast, it has been reported that Godwin Emeziele is already in the drag net of the Department of State Security Service (DSS) for interrogation. For me, if he is found wanting, then, the law should take it cause but which law are we talking about here? Nigeria is full of ironies. Ideally, those who come to equity are

the United States of America (USA). The paradigm has to shift because the burden of proof in any case is often very heavy and criminals could easily leverage on it to escape justice. If anything, such a heavy burden should be on suspected persons.

Born on August 4, 1961, Godwin Ifeanyi Emeziele, CFR is a Nigerian economist, banker and, most recently, politician who served as governor of the Central Bank of



# Is Emeziele a victim or culprit?

addressed as former governor of the apex bank or embattled head of the institution that could be returned when found innocent after investigation.

The press that floated the media was signed by one Willie Basse, Director, Information on behalf of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation. The title and fulltext of the press release is reproduced verbatim for readers' appreciation:

"OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE FEDERATION

"PRESS RELEASE

"PRESIDENT TINUBU SUSPENDS EMEZIELE FROM OFFICE AS CENTRAL BANK GOVERNOR

"President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has suspended the Central Bank Governor, Mr Godwin Emeziele, CFR, from office with immediate effect.

"This is sequel to the ongoing investigation of his office and the planned reforms in the financial sector of the economy.

"Mr Emeziele has been directed to immediately hand over the affairs of his office to the Deputy Governor (Operations Directorate), who will act as the Central Bank Governor pending the conclusion of investigation and the reforms."

For obvious reasons, upon seeing and reading the press paper, I placed a puzzling reaction on my WhatsApp status aimed at gauging the mood of the public on the latest news in town. It reads: "CBN GOVERNOR, GODWIN EMEZIELE IS DOWN, WHO SHOULD BE NEXT? YOUR GUESS IS AS GOOD AS MINE:....! Modest Thought is just thinking!"

Many replies started pouring in but I found one attractive. It was a question from one of my contacts which reads: "Who plsoo!"

No guess here o!! Help out!!!". My initial take was that the person asking the question might either not be in Nigeria for a while, secluded or could he be out of touch with recent happenings around the country? Just as Cleopas and Simon would ask Jesus on their way to Emmaus from Jerusalem as recorded in the book of Luke 24: 18 - 35.

Anyway, I replied him promptly saying: 'Professor Mahmud Yakubu on my mind but will the president sack him having been the alleged beneficiary of the former's alleged abracadabra associated with the management of 2023 electoral processes and outcomes?' It is no news that some frontline presidential candidates are in court to challenge the declaration as winner and the consequent swearing-in of Tinubu as President of Nigeria by the Independent Election Commission (INEC) which Mahmud chairs!

Anyway, the mind of the man who asked the referenced question could not have gone the way of the professor Mahmud because those who are likely to politically sweat under this present regime are perceived political enemies who did not support Tinubu's most cherished political ambition, that is, presidential ambition, especially, those who served in the former administration of Buhari.

I cannot hold brief for Emeziele but because of trends in politics of



Emezele

expected to come with clean hands but, substantially, this is not the case in Nigeria!

In this country, state institutions are so weak to the advantage of corrupt elements. It seems, with illicit wealth, a criminal is likely to escape justice effortlessly. It is so sad to observe that in Nigeria, the dubious survival strategy is for a potential criminal to learn to steal big and, then, use the elicited wealth to bribe his or her way into vantaged corridors or position of power where crime is seemingly protected and legitimised.

Nigerians are living witnesses to how highly placed people in government who shortchanged the system in the most wicked manner faked ill-health while appearing before panel of enquires or oversight or special committees at the National Assembly and after those staged comedy, nothing will be heard about the issue or issues again because alot of water has gone under the bridge. Bribery and corruption, that is, dubious giving and taking, call it exchange of blood fortune has taken place and the matter dies naturally without any mention of again!

The legal and prosecuting system or philosophy has to be changed if any progress can be made in stemming all manners of corruption in the system. Left for me alone, the idea of declaring a suspect innocent until proven guilty by the accused which is the practice in the Nigerian legal system should be changed so that any suspected person is declared guilty until such a person proves himself innocent as it is the case in

Nigeria and unsuccessfully aspired to be Nigeria's president during party primaries leading the just concluded 2023 general poll. He will go down in history as the only serving CBN Governor, who against all odds and the conservative nature of his banking profession, contested to be president of Nigeria.

From the plump job of a CBN Governor, Godwin Emeziele is entering a new but trying phase of his life. The question which begs for answers at this juncture is thus: Is Godwin Emeziele a victim of circumstance or a culprit caught in the web of institutional corruption? Recall, the embattled CBN governor was appointed by former President Godluck Ebele Jonathan on June 14, 2014 following the removal of Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, who later became Emir of Kano under former governor Kwankwaso's regime but deposed by the just concluded Ganduje's administration.

Perhaps, Emeziele is the longest serving CBN Governor in Nigeria who presided over many monetary policy decisions in the country including full implementation of the cashless policy which started in 2010 under sanusi's watch and the currency redesign that has summersaulted.

In particular, the currency redesign and cashless policy which were concurrently implemented by the apex bank closed to the 2023 general election which produced Bola Ahmed Tinubu as president were perceived, in some quarters as a deliberate ploy by former president Buhari who recently handed over power to the incumbent with his political associates to frustrate the

incumbent's chance of becoming Nigeria's president. Whether this insinuation was true is a matter of conjecture. What is in the public space is the excuse the apex bank gave for the implementation of the policies.

According to the press released by the CBN on October 26, 2022, the justification and attraction for the currency redesign was predicated on glaring contradictions arising from the management of the current series of banknotes and currency in circulation, particularly, those outside the banking system in Nigeria. It explained that in recent times, currency management in the country has faced several daunting challenges that have continued to rise in magnitude and sophistication with attendant and unintended implications for the integrity of both the CBN and the country. One of such primarily challenges include significant hoarding of banknotes by members of the public with statistics showing that over 80 percent of currency in circulation are outside the purview of commercial banks. The cashless policy and the currency redesign were, particular, targetted at the repositioning of Nigeria's monetary policy towards better performance for inclusive growth, stability and sustainable economic development to take place.

Not satisfied with the justifications provided, however, the matter was challenged and tested in court up to the supreme court by mostly pro-Tinubu governors like for governor Nasir El-Rufai of Kaduna, Atiku Bagudu of Kebbi and

Nyesom Wike of Rivers amongst others. The currency redesign was consequently scuttled but the CBN stuck to its decision of continuing with it. The reality now is that the policy has badly summersaulted or halted and it is no news that Tinubu won the presidency has since been sworn-in on May 29, 2023!

A week or there about before the inauguration of President Tinubu's, it was widely rumoured that former president Buhari had granted study leave for Emeziele to travel for school abroad. Some public observers felt that if the leave rumour turns out to be true, then, the suspended CBN boss will be planning escape from perceived vendetta that could come from the new government. The truth or otherwise of this insinuation is a matter of speculations too and only time shall tell.

What is known is the list of weighty allegations the government have against Emeziele which include money laundering, politically motivated employment to power brokers toward brightening the chance of his presidential ambition amongst other weighty breaches of public trust. Anyways, sceptics have their reservations about the objectivity of the investigation against Emeziele but time shall tell who is right and who is wrong and what can be done about it.

As Nigerians watch the investigation unfold, what is fresh on their minds is the possibility of another high profile government official going down the abyss or travels the road of the former National security Adviser (NSA), Ibrahim Dasuki code named "Dasuki Gate" and the fall of the former Deputy Senate President, Ike Ekeremadu. At a point, these men were powerful movers and shakers of things in the politics and governance of Nigeria but the table has turned against them with far reaching lessons for us all to learn that power is transient and no matter how powerful you become, the passage of time can bring you down to nothing, especially, when you have skeletons in your cupboard!

Let me project that the Emeziele's travail might end up becoming the Dasuki Gate of the present time and should that happens, then it will be proper to code name it Emeziele Gate which will provide a leadway into the Pandora's box of the immediate past regime. Let me assert that genuine and thorough investigation/interrogation of the past regime of Buhari and its extended legacies (those appointed by him but their tenure extends into the current time) is a welcome development. However, it is only good that the searchlight be put everywhere without any political bias, sentiment or vendetta.

Corruption is a menace in Nigeria and any initiative or action that could help the country root out this hydra-headed monster is expressly welcome. Godwin Emeziele has nothing to fear if his hands are clean. I wish all Nigerians happy June 12 democracy celebration!



# IMAGES

## BARR. MRS. MUTFWANG MARKS 2023 WIDOWS DAY, NGO COMMISSIONS BOREHOLE AT NUJ

Plateau State First Lady, Barr. Mrs. Helen Mutfwang last week celebrated the International Widows Day 2023 at the Twin Theatre Hall, new Government House Rayfield, Jos



First Lady of Plateau State, Barr. Mrs. Helen Mutfwang addressing widows during the International Widows Day 2023



Cross section of widows listening attentively to the speech by the First Lady



Wife of the Speaker, PLHA, Mrs. Maria Moses Sule (left) with one of the widows, Pastor Mrs. Paulina Joh



Plateau State First Lady, Barr. Mrs. Helen Mutfwang, Government officials and widows in a group photograph

PHOTOS: JOHN LAR

## Non Governmental Organization commissions borehole at NUJ Plateau State Council, premises recently



Patron of TASTE United Kingdom, Dan Walker presenting documents for the borehole to Paul Jatau flanked by the Secretary, Peter Amine



State Chairman, NUJ, Mr. Paul Jatau appreciating the NGO for the gesture



Journalists tasting water from the commissioned borehole



Overhead tank donated by the NGO at the Nigeria Union of Journalists, Plateau State Council, Jos

**Odd World**

**Beard competitions, wife takes home first place**

A man and his wife have found a new way to bond - by sporting beards at the same time as each other. They've even taken to entering beard competitions, with great success on the podium.

Aaron, 40 and Natali Johnston, 42, travel the world competing in bearding contests, and Aaron recently placed second in the Goatee category of the 2023 world championships in Burghausen, Germany on June 11.

His wife also took home first place in the 'realistic freestyle' category, for beards that are not real, and she won best in show.

Aaron began beard competitions in 2014 after watching a TV show called Whisker Wars and feeling inspired, despite the fact he didn't have a beard at the time.

The couple from Aiken, South Carolina, competed in the same competition just one year after - with Natali designing and making her own creations from scratch.

The couple met in 2001 and were neighbours for seven years before their friendship blossomed into romance. After dating for just six weeks, they decided to wed in 2008.

Neither of them expected facial hair to become their common interest - but they both admit the hobby has "brought them closer as a couple."

Aaron and Natali compete in different categories, but in the same competitions worldwide.

Natali said: "I'm what's called a whiskerina in the bearding world. You can either compete in the realistic full beard or the creative full beards.

"They can be made of absolutely anything. For a realistic beard I use synthetic or real hair. But you can make them from absolutely anything like cutlery or bacon - anything you can imagine so long as it's in a beard shape!

"It's not an obvious hobby for a woman to have but I absolutely love it. I see so many women come to competitions with

their husbands but don't want to go on stage.

"What I love about it is when you put a beard on your face you're a whole different person. You can just go on stage and have fun. You get to spend the weekend hanging out with the people you love too. It's just a good time."

Aaron and Natali have competed in over 170 competitions together since 2015 - spending most weekends travelling to another city to take part.

They compete full time as Aaron began working with the beard grooming company Honest Amish after winning the 2017 world championships.

Aaron didn't have a beard before he began competing, but his beard now measures a huge 27 inches, and his grooming routine means he "takes longer to get ready" than his wife.

He said: "I've always liked facial hair but before 2010 I had to be clean-shaven for my previous job.

"It really is a lot harder to maintain the beard than you'd think. Some people are just luckier than others.

"I tie it up when I sleep and when I get out of the shower I have to use oil and balm.

"In 2017 once we figured out what we were doing I shaved my cheeks and have been competing in the goatee category ever since."

Natali added: "The bearding community is fantastic. We're supportive of each other no matter what. All the competitions are for charity - so when we pay our entrance fee it goes to a good cause.

"Beard clubs don't just do competitions either. Some go and clean roads or help out the homeless - it's just a great community.

"I'd definitely recommend individuals, women, or couples to take up bearding as a hobby."

*The Mirror*



**News**

**2 journalist became millionaires, as GYB Essay winners**

**From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja**

TWO journalists in Kogi State became millionaires recently at the presentation of prizes to the different categories of winners in the maiden edition of the GYB Essay Competition for journalists in the state.

The correspondent of **The Sun Newspaper** in Kogi State, Emmanuel Adeyemi, won the competition with a total score of 75.8 per cent. He was followed closely by Richard Elesho of **The News**, who scored 72.6 per cent.

The correspondent of **Independent Newspapers** in the state, Julius Atabor, was the second runner-up, with a total of 70.6 per cent, while Adeiza Momohjimoh of **Nigerian Link** and Bashir Muhammad of **New Telegraph** were tied for the fourth place, each scoring 70.4 per cent.

At the prize presentation ceremony in Lokoja, which was well attended by top government officials, including journalists in the state and across the country, the winner went home with N2 million.

The first runner-up got N1 million, second runner-up, N500,000, while the two journalists who tied for the fourth place prize went home with N250,000 each.

There were consolation prizes, ranging from N20,000 to N100,000 for many other journalists that participated in the competition.

The President of the Nigeria Union of Journalists, Chris Iziguzo, in his goodwill message, commended the Governor for his unwavering support for journalism in Nigeria and the recognition of the importance of the profession in building a better Kogi State.

"By establishing this essay competition, you have indeed demonstrated your unwavering commitment to nurturing and empowering journalists to excel in their craft," he said.

He noted that this would not be the first time Governor Bello would be empowering, and at the same time, rewarding



**Isiguzo**

outstanding journalists with cash and other prizes, but that he was particularly glad that the beneficiaries of the event were journalists practicing in Kogi State.

The NUJ President said the feedback from the state was that the government of Governor Yahaya Bello had placed premium interest on the welfare of journalists in the state, adding that the result was visible in terms of positive reportage.

While thanking the Governor for putting smiles on the faces of journalists, he congratulated winners and encouraged practitioners to continue in their pursuit of excellence while adhering to the highest standards of professionalism.

The Chief Host, Governor Yahaya Bello, expressed confidence in the professional capacity of journalists in Kogi State. He said, "They are my own special people. If I don't embark on capacity building and empowerment for them, no outsider will."

He assured media practitioners that the essay competition would be institutionalised and would outlive his administration.

He said he would want to be remembered as a leader who was determined and dogged in fighting for his people and providing visionary leadership.

The governor added that at the end, he would be satisfied that he left the state better than he met it and handed over to a

successor that will sustain his legacies in the person of Alhaji Usman Ododo.

The governor congratulated the winners of the essay competition and encouraged those who won consolation prizes to strive harder and sharpen their skills towards the next competition.

In his vote of thanks, the overall winner, Emmanuel Adeyemi, who was highly elated, expressed gratitude to God almighty and Governor Bello.

According to him, the N2 million prize was "a big shock".

"Such gesture is an encouragement to media professionals in the state and also an eye opener for better performance," he said.

Dr. Tunde Akanni, Associate Professor of Journalism at the Lagos State University, led the panel of five judges.

General Manager and Deputy Director, Radio Nigeria, Bimbo Oyetunde, who presented the scores on behalf of the panel, listed the criteria for the award of marks to include Grammar, Content and Flow, among others.

Other members of the panel include Eddy Odivwri, member, Editorial Board of **This Day Newspapers**; Ayo Olesin, Editor-in-Chief, **The News Matrix** and member, Nigerian Guild of Editors; and Gabriel Akinadewo, Managing Director, Freedom Online and Asst. Gen. Secretary, NGE, among others.

## View Point

# Cleaner fuels key to future of sustainable mobility

THE future of mobility is green and electric, of this there should be no doubt. As the first automotive manufacturer to commit to the Paris Agreement, Volkswagen Group knows and understands this well. The Group has set ambitious targets and has invested significantly to become a global leader in e-mobility.

In Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), Volkswagen is similarly dedicated to paving the way for a future of sustainable production and mobility. At its production site in Kariega, Volkswagen Group South Africa (VWSA) plans to run production 100% carbon-neutral by 2030.

Furthermore, the company is actively pursuing a regional drive towards sustainable mobility across SSA. This push includes e-mobility in Ghana, Kenya and Rwanda, all of which have already committed to the goals set by the Paris agreement and the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26).

However, the future does not exclude the internal combustion engine (ICE) and this has been confirmed with the planned introduction of Euro-7 vehicle emissions standards in Europe from 1 July 2025. VWSA's approach is therefore two-fold; to facilitate the transition to e-mobility, but also to improve the conditions that would enable the use of more advanced internal combustion engine technology.

For many years, Europe has periodically introduced higher vehicle emissions standards, from Euro-1 through to its current standard of Euro-6. With each subsequent update, the development of modern emissions after-treatment technology has been preceded with the improvement in fuel quality; in other words, has been specified to be 'cleaner' and more environmentally friendly.

The converse is thus also true; cleaner fuels promote the sale and trouble-free operation of Volkswagen vehicles with higher emissions standards while sub-standard, or 'poor' fuel quality, will negatively impact both new and old technology vehicles, is worse for the environment and have a negative impact on the vehicle technology.

Another challenge for Africa is that regulations governing emissions and roadworthiness in most SSA countries have been non-existent for many years; however, the regions of East African Community (EAC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have started to develop such regulations.

Two markets leading the way are Morocco and Kenya, who have already reached Euro-4 emissions standards and have Euro-5/6 in their sights.

As stated earlier, it all starts with improved fuel quality. Over the last 20 years Africa has seen the removal of lead from automotive petrol, a great success no doubt, and now the focus has turned to the reduction in sulphur. At the African Petroleum Ministers meeting held in Nairobi on 29-30 November 2022 the focus was to find ways for Africa to fast-track the realisation of low-



sulphur fuels across the continent.

Sulphur occurs naturally in crude oil and should be removed during the refining process. Its presence in fuel reduces the efficiency of catalysts and therefore reductions in sulphur would immediately translate into reductions in vehicle emissions and particulate matter, and subsequently increase the life of the catalyst itself.

In addition to sulphur, markets in Africa are challenged with the removal of high levels of metallic additives, like manganese and phosphorus, which poison the catalytic converter and irreversibly reduce the efficiency of the emissions after-treatment technology in vehicles, thus no longer ensuring the vehicle remains within the prescribed emissions standards in which they were designed to operate and leads to higher emissions.

The fuel specifications for automotive petrol cover many other components that need to be controlled in order for trouble-free vehicle operation and impact positively on the environment and human health. Some examples include fuel octane, olefins, aromatics, benzene and diesel contamination.

The octane rating is a measure of the fuel's capacity to resist auto-ignition, meaning a low octane rating can cause engine damage from auto-ignition in harsh cases. High levels of olefins lead to engine deposit formation, while high aromatics increase engine wear, particle formation and tailpipe emissions, and as benzene is a known human carcinogen, its levels should be strictly controlled. The availability of cleaner fuels would therefore greatly improve emissions from vehicles in SSA.

Today, with poor quality fuels, vehicle manufacturers, importers and traders can only offer older model vehicles with older emissions limits and higher fuel consumption. The introduction of



sub-50ppm sulphur fuels, free of metallic additives and contamination, at 95 octane and with the correct levels of olefins, aromatics and benzene will promote the risk free sale of low emission and more efficient Euro-4 emissions vehicles. This needs to be in conjunction with ongoing sampling and analysis of fuels in the market (not only at point of entry) and a process of dealing with poor quality fuels.

Coupled with having lower fuel consumption the ultimate benefit from cleaner fuels is a cleaner environment. Higher emissions technology vehicles that meet Euro-5 and Euro-6 emissions limits do so in conjunction with 10ppm sulphur fuels. This is precisely why the VWSA team has started engaging with various governments and other stakeholders across Africa – particularly in the countries where

Volkswagen already has assembly facilities and a sales footprint- in order to improve fuel quality and help create the required legislative framework.

The most successful example has been that of the shift to Euro-4 fuels and emissions standards in Kenya. This shift came about from the initial application of the Euro-4 enabling fuel countrywide, specifically with the introduction of a 2mg/litre limit for manganese, followed by the introduction of Euro-4 emissions standards for motor vehicles. Other examples are Ghana, South Africa and Rwanda. While dates for implementation of the updated fuels and emissions standards are still open, the intention shows how important higher emissions standards are for these markets.

For countries that rely on fuel importation that would mean an updated 'shopping list'; one that includes the limits mentioned

before combined with the full requirement as specified in the Euro-4 enabling standards. A region as vast and diverse as SSA will not change to zero emission mobility overnight – but Volkswagen's key markets are definitely willing. Many African governments are taking up the challenge of finding the right mobility solution that works for their market – and Volkswagen wants to find out what it can contribute to these markets.

While the promotion of e-mobility has made it to the top of many countries' agenda, cleaner fuels are also necessary in the interim to enable the use of newer and more modern and efficient engine technologies. To enable this step forward towards lower emission mobility, the hurdles of poor fuel quality must be overcome.

Sources: THEWILL

News

# Governor constitutes Advisory Council

From Willie Attah, Gombe

GOMBE State Governor, Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya has constituted an Advisory Council to assist him in developing and implementing policy initiatives for the state.

The policy initiatives, according to the State Government, are aimed at promoting economic growth, combating poverty, unemployment and other socio-economic challenges facing the state.

A statement by the Director General, Press Affairs, Gombe Government House, Ismaila Uba Misilli, noted that a number of eminent sons and daughters of the state are to serve as members of the council.

The Council is chaired by Prof Idris Mohammed, a veteran academic and health policy expert with extensive experience spanning decades in Nigeria and overseas.

"Additionally, Professor Mohammed has been actively engaged in harnessing the vast potentials that Gombe State possesses, especially in the fields of health care and higher education," Misilli stated.

He noted that all the honorary advisors, who are people of proven integrity and have reached the zenith of their respective careers, "are expected to bring to bear their individual expertise in their various fields of endeavors in the task of facilitating and consolidating the gains of good governance in Gombe State for a secure future."

The statement further listed members of the committee as follows: "Dr Ibrahim Jalo Daudu (member): A retired Federal Permanent Secretary. He is also a former head of the Gombe State Civil Service. A recognized leader in civil service reform and institutional capacity building for sustainable development, Dr Jalo is known for championing reforms within the civil service.

"Malam MK Ahmad (member): A highly accomplished technocrat and expert in economic development with extensive experience in finance, fiscal responsibility, accountability, and the development of human resources. He is considered one of the nation's leading reformers in both the public and private sectors.

"Micah I Jimeta (member): A seasoned public administrator with a strong community leadership background, he brings considerable experience in the public sector.

"Prof Fatima B.J. Sawa (member): A former provost of the Federal College of Horticulture, Dadinkowa. She is an academician of repute, environmentalist and agricultural development specialist who has been involved in the formulation of environmental protection and



Yahaya

agricultural development policies.

"Engr. Sa'idu Aliyu Mohammed (member): He has been an important figure in the oil and gas industry, contributing greatly to the implementation of significant reforms in the natural gas and energy sectors of the country.

"Arch Suleiman Mohammed Kumo (member): Having served as a director of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Kumo has extensive working knowledge in the field of infrastructure financing and development.

"Prof. Baba Yusuf Abubakar (member): He is a highly regarded professor of animal

science who has been at the forefront of research and policy for the advancement of agriculture in Nigeria and across the globe.

"Engr. Abubakar Bappah (member): The immediate past Commissioner of Works and Transportation, has been involved in the development of critical infrastructure in the state since its creation in 1996.

"Dr Muazu U. Shehu (Secretary): The Director-General of Research and Documentation, Gombe State, is a professional researcher with considerable experience in policy-oriented research in Europe and Africa."

# Dangote donates health, educational facilities in Kogi

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

THE Dangote Coal Mines Limited has donated multi-million naira health and educational facilities to the coal mining communities of Ankpa, Kogi State.

The newly launched facilities are located in the host communities of Awo Akpali and Awo Ojuwo, General Manager, Special Duties, Mr. Nuhu Elujah said.

Fielding questions from newsmen, Mr. Elujah said the projects were contained in the mutually consented Community Development Agreement (CDA) earlier signed by the Dangote Coal Mines Limited and the host communities.

He said the facilities were part of the Corporate Social Responsibility schemes of the company,

He added that the company will be responsible for staffing of the clinic as well as provision of initial funds for its initial take-off.

The commissioning was conducted by the Chairman, Ankpa Local Government Area, Alhaji Ibrahim Abagwu, who was represented by the Education Secretary, Prince Yakubu Ishiaka before they were handed

over to representatives of the two communities.

The Chairman expressed delight over the successful completion of the projects and stressed the need for the communities to maintain the facilities in order to impact positively on the lives of rural communities.

In his remark, the representative of Federal Ministry of Mines and Steel Development, Samuel Olaetan commended management of the company for fulfilling its promises and urged the



Dangote

THE Kogi State House of Assembly has approved the appointment of Hon. Timothy Ojoma as the new Commissioner for Agriculture.

The 8<sup>th</sup> Assembly gave the approval during the House plenary held in Lokoja recently.

Ajuma replaces former Commissioner David Apeh who was sacked for anti party activities by Governor Yahaya Bello of Kogi State.

The Governor sent his name to the House for the Assembly to screen him.

# Kogi Assembly confirms new Commissioner for Agriculture

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

During the screening of the commissioner, the member representing Ibaji Local Government Area, Hon. Ojoma said she has what it takes to make the ministry to move forward.

In her submission, she appealed to her colleagues for the nominee to the commissioner to take a bow and go, which was granted by

members of the House.

Speaking with Assembly correspondents, the newly appointed Commissioner for Agriculture and Natural Resources said she will ensure mechanized agriculture as against subsistence practice in the state.

She promised to boost food security during his stay in office.

# Sokoto Assembly to adopt Standing Orders

From ANENE AIKE, Sokoto

THE Sokoto State House of Assembly recently adopted Standing Orders to regulate its procedures.

This followed a motion moved by the Deputy Speaker, Alhaji Kabiru Ibrahim (APC-Kware), and seconded by Buhari Haliru (PDP-Sokoto North I).

The Deputy Speaker Ibrahim said the adoption was in view of the provision of Section 101 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as amended.

According to him, a House of Assembly shall have power to regulate its own procedure, including procedure for summoning and recess of the House.

That in pursuant to this provision, the House has to

adopt its Standing Orders amendment 2019.

The Speaker, Alhaji Tukur Bala (APC-Bodinga South) put the motion into a voice vote which was unanimously adopted by the lawmakers.

Meanwhile, the state Assembly in separate letters by the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), has received the nomination of the House Principal Officers.

The letters, presented at the assembly plenary by the speaker, nominated Bello Idris (APC-Gwadabawa) and Abubakar Magaji (PDP-Bodinga North) as the House Majority and Minority Leaders, respectively.

Mustapha Abdullahi (APC-Sokoto South I) was nominated Deputy Majority Leader while Atiku Liman (PDP-Silame) emerged as

Deputy Minority Leader.

Abdullahi Zakari (APC-Rabah) and Habibu Modachi (PDP- Isa) were nominated Majority and Minority Whips, while Abubakar Shehu (APC-Yabo) and Abdullahi Randa (PDP-Tureta) are the Deputy Majority and Minority Whips,



Achida

Agagwu appreciated Director Finance, Mr. Michael Etu, General Manager Human Asset Management, Mr. Abrauna Keri, Mr. Aluka Bem, (Community/Governmental Relations) Yahaya Zakari and Engr. Umar Mohammed.

His Royal Highness, Onu Ojoku, represented by his Council Secretary, Alhaji Usman applauded the efforts of Dangote Group for ensuring that the agreement signed by both parties in his palace few years ago has come to fruition.

In his reaction, the National Chairman, Awo Community Development Association, Mr. Robert

Agagwu appreciated Director Finance, Mr. Michael Etu, General Manager Human Asset Management, Mr. Abrauna Keri, Mr. Aluka Bem, (Community/Governmental Relations) Yahaya Zakari and Engr. Umar Mohammed.

He assured the company of his association's cooperation.

Also present were the following Dangote officials:

# Sallah: FRSC deploys 925 officials, 25 patrol vehicles

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

THE Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) has mobilised 925 personnel, 25 patrol vehicles, four ambulances and towing trucks on highways for an accident free Sallah celebration in Kogi.

Corps Commander Stephen Dawulung, the Kogi FRSC Sector Commander, who made the disclosure in a statement issued in Lokoja on Sunday, said the Special Patrol became imperative due to the recklessness of some motorists during festivities like Sallah.

Dawulung said that the officials deployed comprised well trained Regular and Special Marshals that were equipped with breathalysers and other surveillance equipment to keep watch over traffic on the highways.

"This deployment is in line with the mandate to ensure free and safe vehicular movements within and across the state during the Sallah holiday.

"FRSC Kogi Sector Command is set to commence

the six-day 2023 Eid-el-Kabir (Sallah) Special Patrol Operation in earnest from June 26 to July 1.

"Preparatory to this, the Command has deployed 925 men, 25 patrol vehicles, 4 ambulances and tow trucks to critical road corridors within Kogi.

"The objectives of this Special Patrol is to ensure drastic reduction of road traffic crashes, fatalities and injuries, and prompt rescue of crash victims," he said.

The sector commander disclosed some strategies to be deployed to achieve the desired objectives of the special patrol to include robust public enlightenment, enforcement against critical offences, clearance of obstructions and traffic control.

He, however, affirmed the readiness, capabilities and commitment of his men in resolving all vehicular traffic encumbrances within the state towards ensuring that motorists enjoy free and safe travels within and across the state.

## Feature

# Masquerades' role among South East Igbo

*Man does not exist in a cultural vacuum; he lives with a set of social expectations, norms, constraints and obligation which he calls culture. Okpara (2004) refers to culture as the peoples way of live to their traditional behaviour in a broader sense, including their ideas, arts and artifacts. Thus, Kalu (1978) indicated that culture is man-made rather than God given. The manmade aspects of culture as much as possible are transferred from one generation to another. In Igbo land, there are many spectacular festivities and cultural performances with certain ideas explicit in the interaction of different elements which in turn sometimes play different function with which different cultural segments are held together. One of the most notable, very popular, vibrant and dynamic of these culture is "Iti Mmanu". "Mmanu" means masquerade in Igbo dialect. "Iti Mmawu" (to show case) has been an integral part of life in Igboland and all over Nigeria, as well as in most African societies. UGWUOKE JULIANA UCHENNA, writes.*

THE Igbo speaking people is one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria with a population of over 30 million. They inhabit east of the Niger and beyond mainly Enugu, Abia, Imo and Ebonyi states. Other states where they can also be found include Delta, Rivers, Cross Rivers and Akwa Ibom located in south eastern Nigerian between latitude 5 and 7 degrees North and longitude 5 and 7 degrees east. They occupy a continuous stretch of territory of about 25,280 square kilometers (Ifejiagwa, 2016). The neighbours of Igbo's according to Ukegbu (2005) are the Igala and Tiv in the North, the Ekoi and Ibibio in the east, the Ijaw and Ogoni in the south and the Benin and Isoko in the west.

## Masquerade concept among the Igbos

Akubor (2016) noted that scholars have literally defined masquerade as a covering, concealment and a disguise device by an individual or group with the view to represent a spirit, an animal or an idea. Akubor however noted that the African perception of the masquerade is completely different from the view of the European counterparts who limit masquerade as anything under a mask for pleasure and entertainment. To Africa and Africans (which include the Igbos), the masquerade are the dead ancestors among the living, which is hinged on the belief that human life is made up of the body and soul; and the soul is conceived as the spirit, and the soul is also conceived. In this way, at the death of any man, the spirit continues its existence in some indescribable environment, where they also continue with the living.

"Mmawu" as it is called in Igbo dialect, is believed to be an embodiment of the spirit and human world, hence the name Mmawu in Igbo means "spirit of the dead". It is a combination of the two Igbo words, "mmuo or maa" which means "spirit" and "onwu" which means "death" (Anaedonline, 2018). The Igbo traditional masquerade is believed to be a spirit that comes from a tree or the ground. A popular theory attributes masquerade as spring from the soil, making them higher than human and regarded as a superior being.

Depending on the locality in Igbo land, masquerades can be replica images of deities and important ancestral relatives of the society. Consequently, the identities of them are well-kept secret from children, women and the uninitiated men of the society. Only strong, exclusive and trusted men of society are allowed to perform any masquerade with high reputation. Ugobude (2021) posited that masquerading require a one person team or a team of more people which may include vocalists who hail the masquerades, drummers and players who play the instruments, advisers and then the masquerade itself. Most of these masquerades has a mask on their face and are covered from head to toe with some piece of clothing or/and bamboo rafters.

There are different categories of masquerades that are meant to serve various purposes in the community. Each masquerade possesses particular attributes and specializes in one or more skills like dancing skills, acrobatics, show of mysterious powers, etc.

Some masquerades are meant to be only heard, it is forbidden for any human to see them. There are dire consequences for anyone who comes face to face with such "mmanwu", the penalty can be severe as death. These type of masquerade move under the cover of the darkness and they mostly serve as regulatory or a punishment medium (Anaedonline, 2018).

However, some masquerades appear

only on one festival, others appear more regularly while a few do not appear at all during festivals or occasions, but only when they are on a mission.

The list of masquerades in Igbo land is inexhaustible. Here is some list of popular ones found across various communities: Agaba, Igariga, Ulaga, Izaga, Okonko, Achiukwu, Omaba, Ijele, Enyi, Mmanu Ugo, Ojionu, Okwomma etc.

## Entertainment

Masquerade is the biggest entertainer in Igboland coming from the cultural setting of the tribe (Nwankwo, 2016). Festival like New Yam (Iri Ji, Ahinjoku, Ifenjoku, etc) festival which happens to be the most popular among the Igbos to others and ceremonies like burial, chieftaincy titles, etc, different kinds of masquerades are displayed and play important role from the beginning to the end. They are always the first to start the ceremony patrolling nooks and crannies of the community adding glamour to the keen eyes of the visitors and the villagers who are expecting the wonderful act of the gods in manifestation of masquerades,

They differ in styles, shapes, and dance steps from one community to the other. Some are accompanied with harmonious beat of musical instruments, spectacular episodic dramatic bits of enhancements, incantations and colourful costumes. It is always a beehive of activities as several cultural group of masquerades thrill the audience ranging from the big fierce looking and violent Agaba, Okwomma, and Mgbadike, the Ojionu with its creative and energetic dancing, the Igariga scaring children and women away with its long canes and to the beautiful adorned Adamma masquerade.

Also, we have the Okwa-Ebu masquerade which accompanies other masquerades and serves as mouth piece or praise singer for the masquerade it accompanies. Another masquerade that behaves like the Okwa-Ebu is the Omewaluigwe known as the wisest masquerade. It entertains the crowd with its talkative nature, serving proverbs and parables unprovoked in his chants to the applause of the crowd.

The greater the terror exhibited by some of these masquerades, the more they pull crowds of people who laughed, jumped, cried, yelled, stampeded only to refrain and watch at a distance either soberly or in a deranged manner.

The role of masquerade as entertainer is unquantifiable; it is these masquerades that massively present themselves as the chief celebrant in the festivals. This is because, at the end of the celebration people never cease to stop telling how they are being thrilled by the ground-breaking performance of these masquerades.

Basically, in most Igbo societies, every serious occasion, ceremony or festival where masquerade is not presented, the participants of the occasion do see the event as a mockery or inconclusive.

## Custodian of laws and order in community

Masquerade played important roles of keeping laws and order in the communities, because people regard masquerade a powerful spirit who the powers of give and take rests upon, they are promptly and religiously obeyed. Consequential to this fear and obedience, these categories of masquerades assume both legislative and executive functions, working hand in hand with the blessings of the Council of Elders (Ndi Ichie). They execute administrative and judicial duties.

Masquerade has various ways in



which it governs and protects the society. At times, they assume the place of judge and peace maker. For instance, the Odo masquerade of Ukehe people of Enugu state, when there is a divorce in traditional marriage and all efforts in reconciliation fails; Odo intervenes and unflinchingly brings back the woman and at the same time provides them with code of conduct. The Awuru masquerade was historically a means of providing security against crimes such as stealing, poisoning, killing of persons, crop destruction, etc. Whenever there is such crime, the masquerade was consulted and the main suspect was asked to swear to Awuru to prove his innocence. In some cases, the victim of the crime could ask the masquerade to kill (that is "ili mmonwu") whoever was responsible for the crime.

Some categories of masquerade act as sanitary spectators by making sure those important places are tidied up. This is done by coercing women and children to sweep and clean important arena. They also check and control the movement of women especially those who are regarded as unfaithful to their husbands. Children and young adults were bound to tell the truth and be of good behavior at all times to avoid the wrath of masquerade.

Masquerade like the Ekpo or Ekpe popular among the person of Abia, Imo and Ebonyi States act as policemen who enforces the laws of the land. Being a means primarily used as unbiased law enforcement agents, it is not unusual to witness tough masquerade walk up to a certain individuals and loudly berate them publicly to their hidden abominable bad habits such as coveting a friend's wife, serious crimes such as poisoning someone or other adjudged misbehavior to the society.

## Initiation into manhood

In Igbo traditional society, masquerade is only displayed by men and so also is initiation into it is strictly for men. Masquerade is the only means of initiating or turning of an Igbo boy to "Igboman". This initiation is generally known in the entire Igbo land as "Ima mmuowu" (knowing the spirit) or "Iba mmuowu" (to enter the spirit). The initiation rituals associated with "Ima mmuowu" were mostly violent - reason women were rarely part of the cult. The essence of initiation is to stress on the social importance of the

transmission from childhood to adult life with its privileges and responsibilities. It is believed that the moment a child is initiated into masquerade cult, he will be regarded as a full-fledged man, for no matter the age, wealth and social status, one is taken as a child as long as he is not an initiate. But once the ceremony is completed, he becomes eligible to sit with the elders of the land, he could express his feelings in the community gathering and can only be denied of this right if the matter arising is strictly for elders.

The issue of initiation brings about role segregation and social stratification of every Igbo male child. Initiates are accorded with certain roles and obligations unlike the armatures that are yet to be initiated. They impress among the novice and society at large at the importance of this change, their spectacular dramatic and impressive character is undoubtedly a fact in maintaining respect for moral codes, religious observance and traditions vital for the social life of the people.

Masquerade play the role of ascribing maturity and show of strength, endurance, keeping secrets, standing the site of blood and being brave to people into it. Through this separation of the strong from the weak, the community is able to raise strong and fearless warriors that protect the communities from immediate enemy.

## Form of sports, unity and tourism

Nwankwo (2015) noted that masquerade is another means Igbo societies integrate with each other. Masquerade in those days are like todays intercontinental football and Olympic game. They also play the role of unification among people of different cultural heritage in the African society. This very masquerade game or festival still exist in many Igbo communities and Africa society.

During the celebration of festivals and other occasions by an Igbo community, it is not unusual that they invite other neighboring communities to come and celebrate with them. When these invited communities attend, most times they go with their masquerade to grace and showcase their cultural heritage. These invited communities usually go home with different prizes won by their masquerade, either as the best dancing, best entertaining, most

beautiful masquerade as the case may be.

The popular Ikeji festival of the Izuogu people of Abia State serves as a reference point. During the festival, people from near and far of Izuogu do come to Izuogu to witness and show their cultural heritage. There is always a prize to be won at the end of the festival; any masquerade that is able to untie a ram that is being tied to a stick with a single thread become the winner of this annual festival and the entire crowd sing songs of praise to the masquerade as it goes home with the ram and other prizes.

In 1987, the old Anambra State government organized the first edition of "Mmawu" festival held in Enugu. To enlarge the scope, the organizer's extended the invitation to other states for full participation. The reason was to afford the public the opportunity to watch and witness various types of masquerades including important masquerade as "Ijele" the king of masquerade on stage and to promote more unity and progress, make it a tourist event of note and uphold our difference culture. Apart from winning prizes during these festivals, neighboring communities, villages, clans, kindred's and families have come together to know each other better, by name and by the beauty of their diverse cultural heritage.

## Spiritual power display

As far as the Igbo's are concerned, masquerades are ancestral spirits who periodically visit their living fore-bears in masquerade forms. Their visits are regarded as spiritual intervention to the world of the living and as a result are highly venerated. They are symbolic resurrections of the ancestors. Thus, the masquerade in Igbo society (just like any African communities) is the process of man's attempt to give being to those very significant aspects in the depth of thought in this universe.

Speaking on the role of masquerade in Achebe's "Things Fall Apart", Nwodo (2007) quoting Emenyeeonu stated that the masked spirit in traditional Igbo society was a vehicle than manners. It was held secret, mystical, mysterious, magical, and supernatural in Igbo culture.

Masquerade is one of the frameworks of showcasing one's spiritual power publicly without attracting unnecessary attention among the Igbo. During festivals, masquerades and people around exercise their spiritual powers publicly. It is an act and a game also. With these powers, some performs wonders that are awe-inspiring. How can one explain of Izaga masquerade (known as Ebum in some areas and Akujane in Onitsha) folded like a paper and carried into an arena in a board or wooden box for performance can grow up to 30 feet tall and can also make itself to be short and minute within moments?

The Osimiri masquerade that always carry a smoking pot of charm on its head, it is believe that it rains anywhere it appear.

In conclusion, it is clear that masquerades in Igbo land, Nigeria and in most Africa is far more beyond the mask. They are unique properties of the Igbo people. Their role and importance to the people is unquantifiable and cannot be over emphasized. This is due to the vary actions and activities they perform. The masquerade is seen as adjudicator, entertainer and a strong advocate of good moral values in their communities.

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Sports



Boulter

## Katie Boulter beaten by Petra Martic in first round

BRITISH number one Katie Boulter suffered a first-round exit at the Eastbourne International as she lost to Croatia's Petra Martic.

Lucky loser Martic, ranked 30th in the world, secured a 6-4 7-5 victory over Boulter in blustery conditions.

It is Boulter's second consecutive first-round defeat after an early exit at the Birmingham Classic last week.

In the men's draw, Liam Broady beat Jan Choinski 6-3 6-4 in an all-British encounter.

Broady needed just one break to take the first set and went an early break up in the second, before Choinski forced the set back on serve.

World number 147 Broady instantly responded with a break of his own and served out the match to set up a last-

16 tie with Sweden's Mikael Ymer.

Boulter, who has received a wildcard to play at Wimbledon next week after her Nottingham Open triumph, started well against Martic but lost her serve in the fifth game with a long forehand.

Four break points came and went for the Briton in the next game and Martic, who has featured in the fourth round at Wimbledon three times, ultimately clinched the first set.

The wind made for difficult serving conditions for both players and Boulter found herself having to save two break points at 5-5 - the first with a floated drop shot and the second with a stunning forehand down the line under pressure.

Yet that good work went to waste as Boulter smacked a backhand into the net to give Martic a crucial break that allowed her to serve out the match.

Earlier, Latvian Jelena Ostapenko, fresh from winning the Birmingham Classic on Sunday, continued her Wimbledon build-up with a 6-4 6-3 victory over Czech player Barbora Strycova.

Ostapenko was due to play defending champion Petra Kvitova in the first round, but the Czech world number nine pulled out following her triumph at the German Open on Sunday.

Last year's Wimbledon runner-up Ons Jabeur cruised through to the last 16 with a 6-3 6-2 win against Italy's Jasmine Paolini.

BRITISH sprinter Zharnel Hughes says "the sky is the limit" after breaking the 30-year British men's 100m record, with his next target securing a place on the World Championships podium.

Hughes, 27, ran 9.83 seconds to take 0.04 off Linford Christie's long-standing mark in New York on Saturday.

That time is the fastest time in the world this year, and the second fastest ever by a European athlete.

"It was a surreal moment," European 200m champion Hughes told BBC Sport.

"I'm just so happy to achieve a major milestone in my career," he added.

"It is something I have been working towards but my main focus wasn't to go there and break the record, it was to execute my race properly."

Despite the British record not being his primary aim, remarkably Hughes did predict his exact time, which he wrote down prior to his race accompanied by the words "have faith".

"I wrote it down but you still have to go there and do it," Hughes said.

"When I saw that exact time come up on the board, it was surreal. I wrote 9.83 down and now I'm seeing it.

"I'm still in shock about it, manifestation is real!"

Christie set his former record in becoming Great Britain's first - and to date only - world men's 100m champion in Stuttgart in 1993.

The 1992 Olympic gold medalist is no stranger to Hughes, who he assists in training whenever the Jamaica-based athlete is in the UK.

"It feels good because every time I'm over in the UK Linford

## Zharnel Hughes: 'The sky is the limit'

will catch my times for me, but we never actually spoke about the record," Hughes said.

"I'm looking forward to being in the UK next week, shaking his hand and giving him a big hug. We have a really good relationship."

Hughes is coached by Glen Mills, the man who helped retired Jamaican sprinting legend Usain Bolt, holder of the 100m world record, achieve his eight Olympic medals.

He described Mills, head coach of the Racers Track Club in Kingston which was also the home of Yohan Blake, the second fastest man in history, as a "perfectionist".

"The guy sees every single error that needs to be corrected," Hughes said. "He has been drilling my technique into me every single day."

Hughes will be returning to Britain before July's UK Championships, which also includes the world trials.

There, he is plotting a sprint double in the 100m and 200m.

Understandably after his record-breaking run, he says the 100m will likely be his main target at the World Championships in Budapest, which begin on 19 August.

However, he is yet to finalise those plans and, should he secure his place, another double-up there is not out of the question.

"We're still in June, and the World Championships are in August, so I'm pretty sure I can still go a lot faster," Hughes said.

"I just need to stay focused and consistent and we'll get there. The sky is the limit."

He added: "When we get closer we'll decide what we'll do in Budapest, maybe even a double."

"But I'm looking forward to running the 100m and I think my time would be enough to get me on the podium



Hughes

## Stephanie Meadow: NI player 'proud' of performance

THE world number 151 ended two shots behind winner Ruoning Yin after a final round where she shot a one-under 70.

"I did my best - I laid it out there and that's all you can do," said the 31-year-old from County Antrim.

"I'm happy I gave myself the opportunity. It's been a great week and I am proud of myself."

Meadow played in the final group on Sunday alongside

friend and fellow Irish player Leona Maguire, who started with a one-shot lead but slipped to a disappointing 74 to finish joint 11th.

A birdie on the 17th left Meadow needing an eagle on the par-five 18th to force a play-off with Yin, but she carded a par to end on six under for the tournament.

Meadow's best finish in a major came in 2014 when she was third in the US Women's Open on her professional

debut.

It was welcome return to being in contention for one of golf's biggest prizes and with it a financial reward of \$423,000 - her entire career earnings before Sunday were \$1,054,811.

"It's obviously not the outcome that either Leona or I wanted but we fought hard and did our best," added Meadow.

"I know she will be right back at it and I wouldn't be surprised if she does great in the US Open.

"It's been a long time since 2014 - it's been a long journey with lots of ups and downs, both personally and professionally.

"I definitely saw some better iron shots and apart from the final round I rolled the ball really well, I putt good. Overall, a combination of both is exciting.

"I hit some great shots to give myself some birdie looks and it was nice to make that one on 17. It's been a fantastic week, I've had so much support and the cheque's not bad either."



Pidcock

Slovenia's Tadej Pogacar of UAE-Team Emirates or Denmark's Jonas Vingegaard of Jumbo-Visma - last year's victor.

But Ineos, who won cycling's biggest race seven times between 2012 and 2019, will also hope Bernal can contend in the general classification.

"Making my return to the Tour has always been a major goal for me," said Bernal. "I'm so excited to be able to experience every kilometre of this race again."

Bernal failed to retain his title in 2020, which was won by Pogacar. But after an imperious win at the 2021 Giro d'Italia, Bernal suffered serious injuries in January last year when he collided with the back of a bus while riding a time-trial bike in Colombia during training.

The crash left him in intensive care as he recovered from surgery on his spine and several other fractures.

"I'm sure many people have followed everything that has happened to me since my accident in January last year, and the journey I've been through to overcome the greatest test of my life," he said.

"Being a part of this year's Tour team reassures me that I'm on my way to returning to my best."

Ineos Grenadiers squad:



Meadow

## Sports

## Will Brighton player join Chelsea, Arsenal, ManUnited?

**Brighton midfielder Moises Caicedo is the subject of a three-way transfer battle between Chelsea, Manchester United and Arsenal - so where should he end up? The 21-year-old Ecuador international has become one of the most highly rated players in his role in the Premier League, helping Albion to qualify for next season's Europa League. So BBC Sport looks at how good Caicedo is and where he would fit in at those clubs next season. EMLYN BEGLEY, writes.**

CAICEDO joined Albion from Ecuadorian side Independiente del valle for a reported £4.5m in February 2021 but did not play that season.

He spent the first half of the 2021-22 season on loan with Beerschot in Belgium before being recalled in January because of injuries to other Albion midfielders.

He made his Premier League debut in April 2022 and a year and 26 appearances after his return to England, Brighton rejected a £70m bid from Arsenal.

Caicedo, who informed Brighton in an open letter he wanted to leave but then signed a new deal afterwards, has played 53 times for the club in all competitions, scoring twice.

He is a central midfielder by trade, who played further back in a holding midfielder role when Roberto de Zerbi replaced Graham Potter as manager last September, and also featured at right-back on a handful of occasions.

Caicedo ranked highly among Premier League players in several metrics last season.

His 100 tackles was below only Fulham midfielder Joao Palhinha, while only West Ham's Declan Rice made more interceptions than Caicedo's 56.

Only Manchester City's Rodri and Rice made more interceptions in the middle third of the pitch than Caicedo's 142.

He ranked seventh for passes (2,209), sixth for successful passes (1,961) and eighth for touches (2,735).

"I think that can be the last game of Alexis [Mac Allister] and Moises, I'm really sorry," said De Zerbi after Brighton's final game of the season.

"They can play in every competition and are ready to compete for a big team and I hope for them they can play in the best team in the world."

Mac Allister has since joined Liverpool. It feels unlikely, but not impossible Caicedo stays at Brighton - they will need a bigger squad now they are in Europe.

Could Moises Caicedo and Declan Rice be a £180m Arsenal midfield duo next season?

Caicedo looked set to join Arsenal, who were challenging for the title, in January but Brighton held firm because they wanted to boost their own European ambitions. In fact in April he said he had been "really close" to joining the Gunners.

He is one of two of the Premier League's top defensive midfielders who Arsenal are chasing - along with West Ham's Rice. They are competing with champions Manchester City for

the England international.

They are also close to signing Chelsea's attacking midfielder Kai Havertz for £65m.

"Although Rice is a big target for Arsenal, the signing of him should it go through would not end the interest in Caicedo," says BBC Sport reporter Alex Howell.

"The Ecuadorian ended the season occasionally playing at right-back for the Seagulls before moving into midfield and would give Arteta another option.

"Oleksandr Zinchenko did it well for the team from left-back as they finished second in the Premier League.

"With Havertz looking likely to sign, Rice if completed, and Martin Odegaard as midfield options, that position could be a way for Arteta to include all of his potential new signings."

Thomas Partey and Jorginho were Arsenal's defensive midfielders last season.

Chelsea also tried to sign Caicedo in January, reportedly having a bid of £55m rejected, when Potter - the manager who brought him to England - was in charge.

There are a lot of midfield changes going on at Stamford Bridge this summer under new boss Mauricio Pochettino.

They are set to sell Mateo Kovacic to Manchester City for £30m, N'Golo Kante is leaving for Al-Ittihad as a free agent, Denis Zakaria's loan spell from Juventus is over and Ruben Loftus-Cheek is close to joining AC Milan.

Attacking midfielder Havertz is close to joining Arsenal, while Manchester United are trying to sign Mason Mount.

Howell says Potter and his backroom staff were "blown away" by Caicedo when he signed for Brighton at the age of 19.

"With Kovacic and Kante leaving and Mount the subject of long-term interest from Manchester United, Caicedo could be the ready-made Premier League quality player the Blues need to come in," Howell added.

Caicedo would feature alongside £107m record British signing Enzo Fernandez if he did join Pochettino's side.

United could make a move for Caicedo if they fail with their £55m bid for England's Mount from Chelsea.

It appears as if they will only try to sign one of them - even though Mount plays a lot further forward than Caicedo.



Moises in action

"As Casemiro proved himself to be far more than that in his debut season, Caicedo is someone who can go into the engine room of a Premier League midfield and get United moving forward in a way Fred and Scott McTominay tried and failed to do and Christian Eriksen patently can't," said BBC reporter Simon Stone.

"It is interesting United are looking at him as an alternative to Mason Mount as the Chelsea man is clearly far more of a goalscoring threat and more elusive with the ball at his feet.

"However, if Caicedo did make the Old Trafford switch it would release Eriksen to move further forward,

something many United fans feel that club should have been looking at in the first place."

Former Premier League midfielder Nigel Reo-Coker told BBC Radio 5 Live: "Caicedo is the one that fits in what they need in the midfield. He is a way better version of Fred in terms of football intelligence, energy, ability to see danger and be very defensive-minded.

"Caicedo is what Manchester United need more so than a Mason Mount."

Brighton midfielder Moises Caicedo - heavily linked with Arsenal, Chelsea, Man Utd and others - ranked highly among Premier League players in several metrics last season:

His total of 100 tackles was below only Fulham midfielder Joao Palhinha, while only West Ham's Declan Rice made more interceptions than Caicedo's 56.

Only Manchester City's Rodri and Rice made more interceptions in the middle third of the pitch than Caicedo's 142.

He ranked seventh for passes (2,209), sixth for successful passes (1,961) and eighth for touches (2,735).

Some Premier League faces are excelling at the Euro Under-21 Championship and it got us wondering, who is the young star ready to break through at your club?

Chelsea have reached a full agreement on personal terms with £80m-rated Brighton midfielder Moises Caicedo - but will now need to settle on a fee with the Seagulls. It's pretty well known Tony Bloom owns

both Brighton and Belgian club Union Saint-Gilloise.

When he bought them, he could scarcely have imagined they would end up in the same European tournament.

Yet that is exactly what has happened, with Brighton's sixth-place Premier League finish last term earning them an historic place in the Europa League group phase.

Union Saint-Gilloise are in the play-off round of the same competition.

Uefa rule 5.01 (c) states: "No individual or legal entity may have control or influence over more than one club participating in a Uefa club competition."

Before applying to take part in any competition, clubs have to explain their ownership structure.

It will be interesting to see how that situation is resolved.

James Milner says he has joined Brighton to "add value" as Roberto de Zerbi's side prepare for the first European campaign in their history.

Albion's stellar 2022-23 season secured a place in the Europa League and De Zerbi moved swiftly to snap up 37-year-old Milner from Liverpool.

The former England utility man told Brighton's website, external he has plenty left to offer.

"Playing in Europe is something I feel I can help the group with," said Milner. "I am fortunate enough to have played in the Champions League and Europa League many times and I want to add that value.

"I think we're going to see some good things this coming season and I can't wait to be involved. I want to push as hard as I can to help the team on and off the field."





**"On the other hand, our debt stock to the extent that they are due to sources outside the country will double. I have already seen figures being bandied around but suppose that it is premature as the situation is yet to crystallise. Therefore, all calculations of familiar indices; budget outcome, debt to GDP, debt to revenue, tax to GDP ratio remain uncertain until the situation settles."**

**BONIFACE CHIZEA**

**Quest**



**writer**

**DR. BONIFACE CHIZEA**

## Nigeria's Economy and consequences of floating the naira

**I** say so because several times in the past, attempts had been made to float the exchange rate in response to the prodding by International Monetary Fund with the appreciation of the sheer difficulties with demand management; but as the consequences begin to unfold, the authorities did not have the political will to persevere and stay the course.

This is so because nobody wants to be accused of unleashing hardship on the citizens as inflationary pressures pile up. And therefore, like it or not, as the rates fall and the Naira appears to be going into a free fall and the touted benefits are slow at materialising, panic sets in and we beat a retreat and reverse the process.

Often in response, innovative approaches are dreamt up as escape route. It is often so as besides the fact of the inflationary implications of the rates, most leaders are worried about the judgment of history when it is going to be recounted how the exchange rate depreciated under their watch. But at this point in time, the reality of the Nigerian economy, so badly mismanaged, is that we do not have much of a choice.

Unfortunately, this development is following closely on the footsteps of corruption infested subsidy removal which has seen pump price of fuel increase in some instances by over 200 per cent. The full impact of the extent of this increase in price was brought home to me when I went to buy fuel just after the increase.

I bought fuel in three 25-litre Jerry cans as well as filled the tank of my car. I was staggered when the amount to pay was indicated at 84,400 Naira. Of course, it is the first time in living memory that I will have to pay such a staggering amount at a fuel pump.

The fuel pump increase, if truth must be told, has far more effect on the escalation of prices of goods and services across the board. And the impact is almost instantaneous as no sector of the economy and no one for that matter is excluded. But for compatriots wanting to cash in and take undue advantage, most economic agents already used the parallel market rates in determining the prices they charged and therefore the impact of floating the exchange rate on prices should not cut across the board. But there again, what do I know?



A word of caution here about the pump price of petrol. What we needed to do was to allow the major marketers to source independently and import products under the oversight of the relevant regulatory bodies for purposes of guiding against collusion and for product quality assurance; and no more. By this approach the market will then determine the prevailing pump price at each point in time. There are indications already that this is the planned approach going by recent pronouncements.

But in my earlier paper, afraid of the consequential impact on the misery index in the land I had argued that the best way forward was to aggressively push for Dangote Refinery to come on stream, and for the local refineries to be quickly privatised and for licences for modular refineries to be issued generously so that capacity for local production of fuel will be boosted.

And while we are at it we must not forget the imperatives of climate change and the need for cleaner sources of energy such as solar, wind, thermal etc, and therefore we should be gearing up aggressively to develop these sources as energy sources of the future. My position was that if we were able to do all that, the issue of subsidy payments will be redundant as product importation will no longer be necessary.

But as we have bitten the bullet now, we must struggle to avoid any costly reversals; although it

is obvious that the pump price will be in the near future will depend on the extent to which the authorities are able to resist the inevitable pressures that are bound to be piled up by entrenched interests.

The Central Bank, it has been reported, has now removed the cap on rate movement at the Importer/Exporter Window. Banks can now buy at the going market price and sell subject to a spread of one Naira. For travel allowances for both businesses and individuals, those in need will still approach the banks for their requirements.

The rate would also be market determined based on the weighted rate from the previous day. Therefore, travelling outside the country will now realistically going forward be strictly restricted particularly when you factor in the out-of-reach costs of tickets.

For government transactions the rates would also be determined by the market. And therefore, to all intents and purposes we have now berthed a single rate of exchange in the country depending on to what extent we are able to manage the inevitable challenges along the way. What would now be of interest is for us to speculate on the likely far-reaching consequences.

Some of the consequences are already manifest, such as erratic price increases which we hope will soon stabilise. What one suspects are that economic agents for now have tended to

over react as prices are increased. There are bound to be adjustments downwards as the impact on demands hits home. But at the level of individual households, there will be the need for inevitable adjustments following negotiations.

At the fiscal authorities' level, this is where this development will have far reaching implications. For the budget, it will translate to quantum leap in revenue calculations. Therefore, all estimations of revenue flows from oil will increase in Naira terms by more than 200%. Unfortunately, for some time now the revenue from oil, we were told, was spent for the payments of phantom subsidies. Otherwise, such inflows will double on paper under the prevailing scenario which should have an overall effect on the whole position of our budget and therefore there should be the possibility of a balanced if not surplus budget.

On the other hand, our debt stock to the extent that they are due to sources outside the country will double. I have already seen figures being bandied around but suppose that it is premature as the situation is yet to crystallise. Therefore, all calculations of familiar indices; budget outcome, debt to GDP, debt to revenue, tax to GDP ratio remain uncertain until the situation settles.

We hope that the anticipated massive inflow in foreign exchange with related Direct Foreign Investments will

materialise to cushion the inflationary effect of sudden price increases. Other related issues that will impact the economy will be tackled, particularly insecurity which has negatively impacted the agriculture supply chain.

I have heard the President allude to the fact that he will be open to collaboration with the international community for the urgent need to end banditry, kidnappings and other organised foreign militant agents contesting Nigeria geographical territory and most certainly, that is the way forward.

Similarly, we must not underestimate the negative consequences of lack of reliable infrastructure such as power on the fortunes of the economy. In the case of power availability, it is a welcome development that power supply is now on the concurrent list. Therefore, sub national entities can now generate, transmit and distribute power. This is a welcome development expected to be impactful in this regard.

We must also arrest the big elephant in the house: CORRUPTION. It is a welcome development that the President has taken off on the right note in this respect. These are exciting times for the country as we experience these fast-paced developments, even as we wish us all the very best of luck.

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