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Lagdo Dam: FG moves to avert flooding

Following the opening of the Lagdo dam by the Cameroonian authorities, the federal government has constituted a high-level committee led by the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, Dr. Betta Edu, to proffer solutions to avert flooding and its consequences.

The minister made this known during a press conference held by the committee members immediately after the maiden edition of the stakeholder's meeting on the Lagdo dam, yesterday in Abuja. She said the meeting was at the instance of

President Bola Tinubu, following her presentation at the maiden Federal Executive Council, (FEC), meeting, on Monday. Edu explained that the federal government is interested in the prevention, mitigation and proffering solutions to flooding and its consequences hence the move to avert any negative

consequences. "Everyone is part of the engagement and sensitisation efforts of the federal government. "Persons in the affected areas of the flood are enjoined to move to high lands for safety and state governors are to stand up to their responsibilities on the evacuation of persons in such areas to protect lives and properties." She noted that some of the measures taken to avert flooding are for state governors and communities to ensure that drainages are cleaned and obstructions to waterways are quickly removed across the country. Other measures include sensitisation to begin from the Federal, States, Local



Tinubu
Government Areas and Communities. According to Education, federal government will be *Continued on page 2*

Reps decries mismanagement of Mass Transit Scheme funds



Ogene

The House of Representatives ad-hoc committee investigating the failure of Federal Mass Transit Schemes in Nigeria since 1999, has decried the serial mismanagement of government investments in Urban Mass Transit Schemes to ameliorate transportation challenges. The committee said the investments in the scheme have not shown the requisite results.

Chairman of the ad-hoc

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PLSG committed to peace and security of citizens



Piyo

The Plateau State Government has pledged to foster peace and ensure the security of lives and property of citizens. Attorney General and Commissioner of Justice, Philemon Dafi gave this indication after an emergency security meeting presided by the Deputy Governor, Mrs Josephine Piyo recently at Government House, Little Rayfield, Jos.

The emergency security *Continued on page 2*



President Paul Kagame of Rwanda with Plateau State Governor Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang in a handshakes during the Nigerian Governors Forum Retreat in Kigali, Rwanda recently Photo: OFFICE OF THE DIRECTORATE OF PRESS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS, GOVERNMENT HOUSE, JOS

News



Logda Dam

Lagdo Dam: FG moves to avert flooding

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working with Ministries, Departments and Agencies, (MDA's), states and Local governments to ensure that humanitarian services are provided as well as foods and non-food items, health and livelihood for recovery, reintegration and resettlement for the affected persons.

Minister of environment, Dr. Ishaq Salako, adds that Flood Early Warning System domiciled in his ministry, is on and working and issuing hourly warning alerts of floods not only on river Benue but most parts of the country including River Niger.

This he said, was aim at warning people and to let them know the level of water in their areas and

vulnerability to flood.

He stated that a platform has been created where environment correspondents are added and they can receive hourly alerts directly without waiting on Ministry's officials.

Also, the minister of Water Resources and Sanitation, Joseph Utsev, said the media is a critical stakeholder in advocating flood issues.

"The Media is an important partner in the struggle and encouraged them to continue the good work they are doing.

It is the media that disseminate the message of preventing and mitigating floods and as a government under President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, we are finding

solutions of the flooding to reduce the suffering of people, loss of lives and properties."

On his part, Minister of State for Water Resources and Sanitation, Bello Goronyo, called on all Nigerians to support government to ensure that everybody in the danger zone has vacated the areas and urged states to ensure that such people are evacuated immediately to preserve lives and properties.

Other members of the committee include Ministers off Foreign Affairs, Health and Social Welfare, Interior, Nigerian Immigration Service, Nigeria Police Force, NSCDC, NEMA, NIMET, NIHSA, Fire Service, among others.

PLSG committed to peace and security of citizens

Continued from page 1

meeting was at the instance of Governor Caleb Mutfwang with the Deputy Governor presiding.

The meeting was to review some security issues and respond to a publication alleged to have emanated from the Inspector General of Police declaring resumption of the former elected Local Government chairmen, councilors in the state.

Briefing news men shortly after the meeting attended by heads of security agencies in the state and the Gbong Gwom Jos, Jacob Gyang Buba, the Attorney General and Commissioner of Justice, Philemon Dafi said government has taken all measures to safeguard lives and property of citizens and workers of all the 17 Local Government Councils.

"Government decided on the points of actions that we have resolved as a sensible and responsible government, we are going to engage in a lot of consultations with all security agencies in the state to foster peace," Dafi stated.

He said the application for restoration by the former Council Chairmen and Councilors was still pending in court and urged all parties to maintain the status quo and remain calm.

"But you know the then Commissioner of Police, not this one, had already ordered that the LGAs be shutdown. So, I said as the Attorney General, I can't sit down and watch the Commissioner of Police do that. He does not have the power to close the Local Government. So, we went to Bukuru Upper Area Court and prayed for an order to open up the Local Government and the court heard our prayer and granted our orders, he stated.

"This is our order", he displayed it before the newsmen. They agreed with us that yes, the LGs should be opened up and this order was served on the Commissioner of Police. This order was served on the Inspector General of Police on the 15th of August 2023. It was served on the National Security Adviser, it was served on the Director

of State Security Service, it was served on the Office of the Attorney General of the Federation. So, everybody was aware of an order that LGs in Plateau should be opened," he explained.

The Attorney General and Commissioner of Justice further gave some clarifications on the former Local Government Chairmen. He explained that the State House of Assembly in its own wisdom invited the LG Chairmen to come and explain issues pertaining to appropriation of law and expenditure in the LGC. They issued the first letter, they refused to come, they issued the second letter, and they refused to come. They issued the third letter, they ignored. The House of Assembly in its own wisdom, decided it was going to suspend the LG, passed a resolution actually that it was going to suspend the Chairmen and actually suspended them, " he stated.

The Commissioner of Justice also disclosed that the IG of Police, Kayode Ogbetukun was yet to respond to the publication.

Reps decries mismanagement of Mass Transit Scheme funds

Continued from page 1

committee, Hon. Afam Victor Ogene, in a statement in Abuja yesterday warned that the committee would get to the roots of the mismanagement of the funds that run into billions of naira which was plowed into the scheme by successive governments, without commensurate impact since 1999.

He expressed displeasure at the seeming reluctance by line ministries and agencies, in releasing documents relating to public funds expended on previous Mass Transit Schemes.

"This becomes important especially at this period of grueling multifaceted economic challenges that have heightened the sufferings of the people and lowered the living conditions of many," he said.

Ogene, who represents Ogbaru Federal Constituency in Anambra state and who is also the Labour Party caucus leader in the House, disclosed that in 2012 alone, over N16 billion was released through The Infrastructure Bank (TIB), for the purchase of busses for Public Mass Transit, from the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme SURE-P funds, under the administration of former President Goodluck Jonathan, from the Public Mass Transit Revolving Fund, PMTF.

"A total of 1,179 vehicles were released to the beneficiaries under the scheme, with a repayment plan covering four years. But according to TIB, many of the beneficiaries defaulted and didn't repay the loans.

"For instance, records show that as at December 2015, only two of the beneficiaries, ABC Transport PLC and The Young Shall Grow Transport Limited, liquidated their loans. Most of the beneficiaries are yet to pay as stipulated in the contractual agreements signed between them and TIB.

"Perhaps because they see the funds as usual government bonanza. But this is where they get it wrong because they can't be living large with our collective scarce resources while the people suffer as a result of poor Mass Transportation. The Committee shall make the defaulters to account for every government money they have misapplied."

The chairman of the committee also said that on October 4th 2016, the then Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Okechukwu Enelamah announced that the federal government had also set up a N25 billion revolving loan scheme to enable transport companies in the country purchase Mass Transit Vehicles.

Just a year ago, August

2022, the immediate past Minister of State for Transport revealed that the former President, Muhammadu Buhari, had approved the establishment of yet another Mass Transit Scheme, and a committee set up for its implementation.

In view of these developments, especially with documented abysmal results, Hon. Ogene said that his ad-hoc committee has been mandated to look into all these developments, with a view to finding out what went wrong. Who did what. And why the people are being made to suffer as a result of what may likely be individual, corporate or



Ogene

institutional failures.

The Committee's brief covers road transport, waterways and rail transportation in Nigeria.

PLSG, please intervene in crisis between traders

By EZEKIEL DONTINNA

THERE seems to be a looming fracas that may result in the breakdown of law and order in Jos-North Local Government Area of Plateau State, if drastic actions are not taken immediately to arrest the time bomb that may explode.

Tempers are rising as members of Yam Sellers Association in the area elect their new executive.

Findings revealed that the outgoing executive of the association has been in power for twenty-eight years (28yrs) and has refused to hand over to any newly elected EXCO that might not be from their camp, all

this while, until pressure was mounted on them recently.

According to one of the contestants who is vying for the chairmanship position of Kasuwan Doya in next election, Alhaji Salisu Ibrahim Nayelwa, in an interview with THE NIGERIA STANDARD, he revealed that the outgoing EXCOs had earlier constituted illegal delegates that were not members of the association to participate in the election without the prior knowledge of their members and that they saw that it portends bad light that may cause the breakdown of law and order.

He said, it was for this reason that he and others from the other faction approached the court and obtained an injunction restricting them from conducting the election which was scheduled for Friday last week, the 25th of August, 2023 and it was suspended.

"But, information reaching us revealed that they planned to hold the election in four days' time even with the court injunction.

"We want to use this opportunity to call on Governor Caleb Mutfwang, to as a matter of urgency intervene in this fracas or risk another outbreak of crisis or breakdown of law and order in Jos-North LGA. We know Governor Mutfwang is a lover of peace and would not allow anything that will return the state to those ugly days.

"We want to put it straight that in the event of any breakdown of law and order which we forbid, the outgoing EXCOs should be held responsible. We have copied the leadership of Marketers Associations, the security and all the authorities concerned as an addendum ahead of the

purported elections", he appealed.

THE NIGERIA STANDARD understands the two factions are from different states in the North and the faction in question has been dominating the leadership position for 28 years and would not want to give the leadership to the other faction, hence what generated the fracas.

According to the aggrieved faction contestants, "When we approached them, intimating that it was our turn to produce the Chairman and other Executives, they ran to the community leader of Garba Na-Shehu Ward reporting that we want to cause a crisis and I was called to explain.

"When we came on a round table to find a solution to the problem, they connived with the leadership of Traders Association which is our umbrella body.

"All the delegates they brought were their members and children without a single from our side. I want to state here categorically that if any breakdown of law happens in Jos-North LGA, they should be held responsible because we are law abiding citizens and would not want anything bad to happen.

"We are appealing to the governor to intervene swiftly to stop them from conducting this illegal election and direct the state Ministry of Commerce and Industry to constitute a caretaker committee pending the resolution of the problem", Nayelwa appealed.

He, however, expressed worry that for the past 28 years, they have been committed to paying all dues to the Shendam LG where they buy yam, to Jos-North LG, where they offload and even to the union, but when it comes to leadership, they do not want them to be part of it. "We are citizens of Plateau State and we have the right to enjoy all privileges like them and we cannot be reduced to nothing".

Meanwhile, the state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), DSP Alfred Alabo, said they were aware of the development, but promised to investigate the matter immediately to forestall any breakdown of law and order in the state.

All efforts to reach the Chairman of Marketers Association proved abortive as it appeared he was out of town as his phone lines were not reachable.



Business & Economy

There is hunger in the land

There is no hiding the fact that there is severe, acute and chronic hunger in the land. People are finding it so difficult to feed and some are dying. I read of an alleged true story that happened last week in one of the states where a woman had to boil hot water and put salt in it for her five children to take. Because of the deadly combination on an empty stomach, the children were said to have all died after taking it. Perhaps the woman did not know that it was a dangerous combination and probably she knew but did it to relief herself of the burden of the pressure from the children. Whatever the case may be, the children took it thinking it was an alternative to food, but ended in the grave. What a pathetic and painful story. A lot of these stories are told everywhere. We are witnesses to the other dimensions happening across our communities and neighbourhoods. Golu Timothy Writes.

The federal, state and local governments are doing their best to provide palliatives to the poorest of the poor to cushion the effects of the removal of the fuel subsidy but because of the high population, the effort is like a tea cup in an ocean. The federal government should do something the more and release more funds to the states and local governments to purchase more foodstuffs for the people. The governments can equally plan ahead by encouraging farmers to plant more hunger-relieving crops like cassava, maize, potatoes, etc which are normally harvested in the first few months of the rainy season to cushion the effects of hunger. Governments can also encourage dry season farming by farmers so as to get additional foodstuffs and save for the rainy days. Communities where irrigation agriculture is done have less problems of hunger because they make harvests two times a year and by so doing, saved more food in the house.

What is happening in our communities leave much to be desired especially a situation where hunger will force people to steal fresh and unripe crops from the farm. People have to keep vigil on their farms to avoid such ugly humanitarian situations.

As an agricultural nation, the people don't need to wait for government to encourage them in agriculture. Farming should not be a pleasurable occupation for anyone living in Nigeria, not those within the middle class. No one needs to tell you the importance of having to put food on the table of your family. We have different types of farming these days and many don't need land the way its expected. Within the compounds, yams, maize, potatoes, cocoyam, and many other crops can be planted inside sacks. Many people are doing it and getting value for their investments. With just a borehole within, a lot of crops can be planted and harvested successfully. While government does its own, the people should do their own. Where government fails to do it, the people who are on the receiving end should not wait to blame anyone, but must move swiftly to help themselves. There is serious hunger in the land at the moment. A hungry man is an angry man and an angry man is automatically violent-bound.

The Subsidy removal has no doubt created a lot of problems for the people and things are no longer easy for them. The economic situation is getting worst by the day and yet, nothing concrete seems to be in place to cushion the effects of the pain.

When the President announced an 8k palliative for some selected families, he was immediately told of the unworkability of the scheme. He stopped it, and since then, nothing is heard from him again except for the recent release of 2 billion naira to the 36 states. The federal government should please do something urgently to wipe away the tears from the people. We commend the government for this effort, but its not enough to make it go round the millions of the suffering masses.

For years, the issue of subsidy has been a factor in our oil based monolithic economy and each time its been discussed, varied positions are expressed at the expense of the suffering masses.



When President Bola Ahmed Tinubu announced the withdrawal of the subsidy on his inauguration day and the scarcity of the product started, huge blames were poured on him for the hasty decision. But as the wise leader that Tinubu is, he quickly mobilise action against the tide to demonstrate remorse and show readiness to resolving the problem. The decision caused serious hardship leading to reckless hoarding of petroleum products by the marketers. But months after the removal, nothing has been put on the table for the people to get some relief. A litter of PMS now is between 615 and 617 naira while that of diesel is close to 1000. Transport fares and prices of basic food consumables have skyrocketed beyond the reach of the masses.

In the past, subsidy payments have milked the nation dry by collaborators within the oil industry and its withdrawal is long overdue. But withdrawing it without putting in place palliatives to absorb the pains of hardship compounds the economic problem of people. The situation in developed nations which is absent here, is that a lot of safeguards are always put in place to make it easy for the people whenever policies like this are being implemented. For instance, developed nations have good transportation systems covering good roads, viable aviation sectors and sound rail systems such that the people don't need cars to congest the roads. Trains are always on the move and even in your bedroom you know when a train has arrived a station or a bus near your house. You can plan your schedules smoothly based on the

reliability of the existing transport arrangements. You know when a bus will arrive your vicinity and Vice versa. But here in Nigeria, the opposite is the case. The nature of the transport system is such that its only when you get home that you thank God Almighty. Because of the absence of petroleum products transport fares go up in geometrical progression leading to exorbitant cost of foodstuffs and generalise conditions.

Its a good thing that those who had initially opposed subsidy withdrawal have come to terms with the reality of the situation, hence the desperate moves to tackle it.

Those who politicised it years ago and tormented the administration of former President Goodluck Jonathan, have suddenly made a U- turn. The unnecessary delay in removing the subsidy had slowed down so much progress for the nation. Many sectors have collapsed because of insecurity and past governments have chosen to look the other way round. There is no way key ministries like those of finance, budget and planning in connivance with some relevant agencies will feign ignorance of what was happening. They can not in all honesty be absolved of complicity because the approvals and releases go through them without any queries and questions.

Previous regimes kept singing the subsidy withdrawal song without any action. While the new mustered the political will, it is yet to ensure adequate safeguards and palliatives are put in place to reduce the sufferings of the people. The recent opening of the nation's borders is one way by which physical imports will

augment and serve as inherent palliatives for some bussiness groups who benefits from such international exchanges.

Up till now, the nation is byet to recover from the sudden subsidy withdrawal.

The fragile economic environment could not absorb the shock and the market situation immediately changed for the worst and soon the marketers began to hoard old stocks thereby creating artificial scarcity. That also forced government to rush in fixing prices for different locations.

The policy action is too sudden and too hard for the majority of the people to bear. It's almost impossible in some instances. This is because the gap in differentials is too big to be managed by many individuals especially that there are no palliatives anywhere and at any level to cushion the effects of such a sudden action.

The purchasing power of many individuals is still as poor as it was many years ago. People have not come to terms with the existing economic situation of unemployment, poor and lack of salaries and even the recently introduced currency changes and cash shortages. This can only compound the existing problems of the people under an extremely high cost of petroleum products regime. The labour community which is the most hit has mobilised and is insisting that without any palliatives in place, the policy should return to status quo.

Even though subsidy removal is long overdue because of the endemic corruption that has been in place, its sudden withdrawal without palliatives is creating more harm to the economy and the people than good. It has

heightened inflation without measures being put in place to fill the gaps. Already the purchasing power of the people is weak, and therefore they cannot cope with high cost of living, increase in prices of fuel itself and all other goods and services. Transportation cost has multiplied and the cost of housing, food, clothing, etc has also skyrocketed. Because of the corrupt nature of the marketers in our country, there will be continuous increase in the pump price as we witness today. Marketers keep conniving among themselves to hoard the product by creating artificial scarcity to escalate the suffering of the people.

In some countries where things are done right for the interest of the people, measures are normally put on ground before such policies are implemented. In Indonesia for instance, government was said to have commenced mass cash transfers to its citizens as palliatives so as to strengthen their purchasing power and cope with the subsidy withdrawal within the critical period. In the United States for instance, such massive cash transfers were witnessed during the COVID-19 crisis as palliatives to cushion the effects of COVID-19. People must not die in the process of implementing any good policy to address an economic problem. If it will take the people to die before addressing a nation's economic problem, then its not worth it. It behoves on the new government of President Tinubu to act fast to ensure that the ongoing hardship is halted.

The federal government must invite all ideas and think outside the box to free Nigeria and Nigerians of this avoidable calamity. The nation is so rich with numerous and endless opportunities yet the people are the most suffering in the world. Such should not be our story in Nigeria. We must work hard to change the narrative. There is no hiding the fact that there is severe, acute and chronic hunger in the land. People are finding it so difficult to feed and some are dying. I read of an alleged true story that happened last week in one of the states where a woman had to boil hot water and put salt in it for her five children to take. Because of the deadly combination on an empty stomach, the children were said to have all died after taking it. Perhaps the woman did not know that it was a dangerous combination and probably she knew but did it to relief herself of the burden of the pressure from the children. Whatever the case may be, the children took it thinking it was an alternative to food, but ended in the grave. What a pathetic and painful story. A lot of these stories are told everywhere. We are witnesses to the other dimensions happening across our communities and neighbourhoods.

News

OPDS clamps down on illegal refineries

By DORCAS PANKYES

IN continuation of efforts aimed at containing the activities of terrorists, militants and other criminal elements bent on destabilizing the nation and making life unbearable for peace-loving Nigerians, the air component of Operation Delta Safe (OPDS) carried out air interdiction missions on some illegal refining sites located at Cawthorne Channels, Bille and Gogokori in Degema Local Government Area of Rivers State on 27 August 2023.

This was conveyed in a statement signed by Air Commodore Edward G a b k w e t Director of Public Relations and Information Nigerian Air Force.

Having observed the sites to consist of illegal refining sites, the areas were attacked and destroyed. Specifically, at Gogokori, a Cotonou boat observed to be loaded with illegal refined products and heading into open waters was also engaged and destroyed.

Similar strikes were also extended to Idama in

Akuku -toru Local

Government Area and Omoma in Degema Local Government Area of Rivers State upon receipt of intelligence of refining activities at the 2 locations. Overhead both locations, active illegal refining sites with reservoirs suspected to contain illegally refined products were sighted. The reservoirs were subsequently engaged, destroyed and engulfed in flames.

On 25 August 2023, identified militants/pirates' camps in Cross River State were also attacked by the air component of OPDS. In the various militants/pirates' Camps identified as Big Joe's Camp, Sunny's Camp, Davids' Camp in Bakassi Local Government Area and Amos Camps in Calabar South Local Government Area, air strikes were authorized after confirming these locations to be littered with these criminals and their activities.

Those that attempted to escape through their various escape routes were also attacked. In one of the suspected kidnappers' camps, a lone structure suspected to be harbouring some kidnapped victims with

armed men roaming around the structure was also attacked using guns on board the aircraft. The strikes led to pandemonium with several kidnapped victims seen escaping.

In the Northeast, strikes were conducted on 25 August 2023, at Chinene, a persistent terrorists' hideout in Mandara mountains which has been struck on several occasions in the past. Having observed the area to continually host gathering of terrorists and their activities, the location was struck with several terrorists neutralized while others fled for their lives.

NAF aircraft have continued to give the requisite outcome while denying non-state actors the freedom to perpetrate their nefarious acts at will. While the NAF alongside other security agencies remain focused in undertaking their assigned tasks, the need for all Nigerians to see themselves as part of the solution to these challenges through the provision of actionable information to security agencies, cannot be overemphasized.

THE forum of National Union of Road Transportation Workers (NURTW) in Pankshin, Kanke and Kanam Local Government Area branches recently held annual quarterly executive officers meeting at the Pankshin branch secretariat of the union.

It called on the government at all levels to roll out palliatives to cushion the effect and hardship faced by the common man due to the removal of fuel subsidy by the federal government. Adding that the removal of subsidy is directly affecting the transportation industry nationwide.

The forum in the resolutions reached at the meeting and read by the forum's chairman, Mr. Nandir Danjuma who is also the branch chairman of the NURTW Kabwir said they are in support of the giant step taken by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for the removal of the fuel subsidy, which he said is long overdue. But called on the presidency to judiciously channel the fuel subsidy money to better the lives of the entire citizens of Nigeria through the execution of meaningful projects that

NURTW set to reposition union

By POLYCARP ISHAYA, Pankshin



Tinubu

have direct bearing on the lives of the people, especially in areas like road construction and maintenance, health, education, agriculture and the transport sectors among many others.

At the end of the meeting, the forum went for an advocacy visit to the zonal office of Pankshin, Kanke and Kanam Local Government Areas Vehicle Inspection Office (VIO) in Pankshin and later paid a courtesy visit to the office of the Pankshin Unit of Federal Road Safety Commission Commandant, CRC Abdullahi Santali Maikasuwa, and Pankshin Areas Command.

Speaking while in the different offices: the Zonal Inspection Officer's office, and those of the FRSC and Nigeria Police Area offices, the chairman of the forum, Mr. Nandir Danjuma said they were in his there to officially welcome the VIO boss and newly transferred FRSC boss to Pankshin to solicit for their support and cooperation in their activities as union officials and at the same time as transporters.

He added that they were also in the offices to solicit for a cordial/working relationship between the National Union of Road Transport Workers and officers and men of Pankshin Zonal Vehicles Inspection Office, that of FRSC and the Police Area Commands.

In his response, the Pankshin Zonal Vehicles Inspection Officer, Mr. Danladi Dakup Gokir thanked the officials of the union for the visit. He assured them of his maximum support and cooperation at all times, when the need arises. Gokir, however called on the union officials to always

advise their members to avoid overloading, high speed and warned that his office will not take it lightly with any of their members that refuses to adhere to the laid down rules.

He emphasized on the need for the union and their members to always give priority to the maintenance of their vehicles, especially defects in motors to include screen wipers, signal lights, headlights

While speaking in the office of the FRSC boss, the Pankshin unit commandant of the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) CRC Abdullahi Santali Maikasuwa said he appreciated the visit of the union to his office.

He advised them to keep on educating and enlightening their members against disobeying roads rules and regulations attached to road using, especially in areas such as over speeding, over loading refusal to use the seatbelts when driving, unnecessary over taking at dangerous bends, don't drink and drive and don't make phone calls while driving.

The newly formed forum officials of the union in Pankshin, Kanke and Kanam Local Government Area (PKK) include: Mr. Danjuma Nandir as chairman, Alh. Yahaya Garba as Deputy Chairman, Mr. Alex Deshi as Secretary, Alh. Hamza Zubairu as Treasurer, Mr. Zaya Gomam - ex-officio and Deputy Chairman, NURTW Forum Plateau Central Zone, Mr. Victor Dimka, Secretary Kabwir branch as member, Alh. AliyuIsah Maina, secretary Dengi branch - member and Mr. Tapshakka Dimka, chairman Kabwir branch (2) as members.

Appreciate Nigeria, shun negative stories on leaders

From ABBAS GUNGURA, Bauchi

BAUCHI State Governor Bala Abdulkadir Muhammed, has expressed concern over some Nigerians who for whatever reason, most often than not, have developed the habit of criticizing, condemning than commending whatever is Nigerian.

He pointed out that what they do includes negative and disturbing concocted stories about leaders and the country that is seriously de-marketing the country before the international community and prospective investors.

According to him, this lack of sense of patriotism is part of the factors that slow development of the country.

Governor Bala made the remark recently while speaking to journalists, at the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa International Airport, Bauchi, where he said on the contrary, Nigerians are innovative, hardworking, industrious and extremely intelligent beyond any iota of doubt.

out positive stories to make a difference", he said "I always feel proud; I raise my shoulders high anywhere in the world as a proud Nigerian that believes in everything Nigerian".

Governor Bala Muhammed added that: "There is that spirit called the Nigerian spirit, which is resilient, hardworking and innovative. But the problem with some Nigerians is that they consciously fail to speak beautifully about their country and the leadership as if we are a failed generation cursed by our ancestors which is not the

case". While admonishing Nigerians to believe in themselves and the country and confess positive things about the country, Governor Bala said: "Why should we always allow others to tell our stories for us while we have the capacity and the technicality at our disposal for positive use? The social media and the other conventional media should always be positively used instead of using them for misinformation, distortion of facts, hate, falsehood, and half-truths.

"The world is so diverse and there is the need to



Bala



Business & Economy

Govt efforts failing as food imports rise 122 per-cent

Despite continuous government efforts to shore up food production in Nigeria through various intervention programmes, the country recorded foods trade deficit worth N4.92 trillion between 2018 and 2022. Available data shows that Nigeria is not growing enough food for the populace, leaving the country with no option but to import. Writes Yinka Kolawole



Consequently, to feed its steadily rising population, the country recorded a 121.7 percent increase in the value of imported foods within the 5 year period, rising to N1.9 trillion in 2022 from N857 billion in 2018.

The development may not be unconnected with the heightening of insecurity in the country especially around the agricultural belt, which has forced many farmers to abandon their farmlands, thus prompting the government to spend millions of dollars importing food annually.

Data obtained from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) revealed that the total agricultural imports into Nigeria from 2018 to 2022 amounted to N6.916 trillion while total agricultural exports from

the country within the period was N1.997 trillion, resulting in an agricultural trade deficit of N4.919 trillion.

The data also show that there have been steady increases in agricultural imports into the country since 2018 which recorded N857 billion imports; and rose to N959 billion in 2019; N1.2 trillion in 2020; N2 trillion in 2021; before a moderate decline to N1.9 trillion in 2022.

However, within the same period, agricultural exports from the country amounted to N302 billion in 2018; N270 billion in 2019; N322 billion in 2020; N505 billion in 2021; and N598 billion in 2022, indicating a rise of 98 percent from 2018 to 2022.

Some analysts have attributed the increases seen in exports to the aggressive non-oil export promotion

programme of the government rather than increased output, a development which they see as counter-productive to the nation's food security.

A related report by the NBS also indicated that the downturn in food production in the country may not be attributable to the impact of insecurity alone.

The report indicated that prices of key farming inputs such as seeds, herbicides, pesticides, fertilizers, and agro machinery rose sharply within the period, making it increasingly hard for farmers to expand their production and forcing many to cut down on production.

The various interventions by the federal government through the agencies appear to have done little to address the situation.

The federal government has over the years spent billions of dollars on

various agricultural programmes to spur local food production.

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), earlier in this year, said that apex bank has disbursed a cumulative amount of N1.08 trillion to farmers through the Anchor Borrowers Programme (ABP) in the last seven years, between 2015 and 2022.

The bank further noted that between January and February 2023, CBN disbursed N12.65 billion to three agricultural projects under the programme.

ABP was launched in November 2015 in an effort to boost agricultural production, improve foreign exchange earnings and reverse Nigeria's negative balance of trade on food.

This is beside other schemes such as the Commercial Agriculture Credit Scheme (CACS) and Accelerated Agricultural Development programme, amongst others, all designed to boost the nation's food production.

According to analysts, these programmes, in addition to the ABP, have been valued at over N3.0 trillion over the years.

However, there is still no significant impact as the country still has a huge supply gap in most of its staple foods, even as the population growth rate continues to soar.

Although agriculture contributes 22 percent of Nigeria's total GDP and employs over 80 percent of the population, smallholder farmers who are responsible for 90 percent of food production in Nigeria lack the resources to improve their productivity.

Analysts attribute this situation to the operating environment characterised by low productivity, high post-harvest losses, low-value addition, fragmented markets, and inefficient value chain logistics.

Giving some insight into the situation, Chief Executive Officer, Centre for the Promotion of Private Enterprise (CPPE), Dr. Muda Yusuf,

said more active government intervention is required in agricultural inputs, adding that improvement in the security situation would surely boost performance of the sector.

His words: "Rising food import bill is extremely worrisome, especially for a country so richly blessed with arable land and numerous other natural resources.

"The basic problem is governance. Over the years, especially since the seventies, we have not instituted effective policies and programmes to promote investment in agriculture.

"There was practically no subsidy for agriculture for several years, whereas even in the advanced countries, billions of dollars are committed to subsidising agriculture.

"We need active government intervention with regards to agricultural inputs, technology adaptation, financing, processing, marketing, logistics, access to land and storage.

"There is a need to improve the efficiency in the entire agricultural value chain - production, processing, transportation, preservation, packaging, etc.

"It is impossible for the private sector to provide these support systems. These support systems existed in Nigeria before the incursion of the military into political governance in 1966.

"An improvement in the security situation would surely boost performance of the sector. This would impact job creation and food security in the country."

Engaging with Financial Vanguard on the situation, Director General, Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce Industry Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA), Sola Obadimu, attributed the increasing dependence on food imports on "insecurity, depreciating infrastructure, lack of power/preservation facilities for locally produced agricultural products, etc."

On the implication for the economy, especially the value of the Naira, Obadimu stated: "Naira will apparently continue to lose value.

"As I've said several times, if we want to strengthen the Naira, we have to export more than we import, demonstrate discipline and commitment to consumption of locally available products, and lessen our unnecessary tastes for imported luxurious items.

"Yes, we need to eliminate corruption surrounding the opaque fuel subsidy system as well as the dual forex rates. Also, it is true that people pay more for fuel and utilities elsewhere. However, we have to remember that, in those climes, infrastructure is far better and industries wouldn't have to worry so much about bad roads, insecurity/kidnapping threats, insufficient public power supply, etc.

"It behoves us, therefore, to lessen unnecessary expenses on the different arms of government and upscale the quality of our infrastructure to an appreciable level to justify our full adoption of liberal market forces."



Politics

SDP guber candidate, lauds gains of Kogi creation

From **AMEDU JOSEPH,**
Lokoja

THE Social Democratic Party Governorship candidate for the November polls in Kogi State, Alhaji Muritala Yakubu Ajaka has lauded the gains so derived from the creation of the state 32 years ago.

In his goodwill message, Ajaka said that the coming on board of the state has fostered unity and development among the benefiting communities.

"Indeed the creation of Kogi State has been very eventful and prosperous.

"In a momentous celebration, Kogi State marks a significant chapter in its history as it turns 32 years old today. The commemoration of the state's establishment on August 27, 1991, is a tribute to the foresight and determination of its founding fathers. Their vision to reunite communities previously divided among Benue, Kwara, and Niger States became a reality, uniting people under the banner of Kogi State.

"Before the state's formation, the inhabitants of this region thrived as a cohesive unit within the larger Northern Region. Known as the Kabba Province, this shared heritage, culture, history, and common ambitions were the ties that bound. Despite being considered minorities, the unity of the people was a strong unifying force.

"The desire to mend the fabric of the Kabba Province propelled an unwavering movement within the former Benue and Kwara States. This movement culminated in the birth of Kogi State on August 27, 1991, representing a triumph of collective will and a step toward reintegration.

"Over the last 32 years, Kogi State has braved diverse challenges and emerged as a resilient community with an unbreakable bond. However, the journey has not been without its hurdles, particularly in terms of infrastructural development and economic growth. This is often attributed to leadership and governance challenges.

"Despite the abundant natural and human resources that Kogi State possesses, the lack of effective leadership has hindered its full potential. A dynamic leadership that harnesses these resources for rapid and sustainable development, is the need of the hour, to lift the state from its current status as one of Nigeria's less affluent regions.

"As we commemorate this remarkable 32nd anniversary, the call for unity and a shared vision for progress resonates strongly. The state's individuals must collectively reject divisive tactics employed by self-serving politicians. Instead, the focus should be on advancing the state's interests and securing a prosperous future for all.

"The Social Democratic Party (SDP) is committed to providing the leadership that



Ajaka

can leverage Kogi State's resources to alleviate the persistent poverty affecting its citizens. Through strategic economic and social policies, the SDP aims to realize the dreams of the state's founding fathers for autonomy and substantial development.

"In anticipation of the upcoming November 11 election, Kogi State residents are urged to exercise their power by electing leaders who prioritize the well-being of their constituents. Putting

an end to unjust practices such as unpaid labor and inadequate compensation requires choosing representatives who are truly dedicated to progress.

"In closing, heartfelt congratulations are extended to every Kogite on the occasion of the 32nd anniversary of Kogi State's formation. The road ahead holds immense promise, and with collective effort, Kogi State's journey towards prosperity will continue to gain momentum."

From **AMEDU JOSEPH,**
Lokoja

GOVERNOR Yahaya Bello of Kogi State has appealed to voters in the state to allow Ododo Ahmed Usman, the governorship candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC) to succeed him as the next governor of the state.

Bello made the appeal recently during a statewide broadcast to mark the 32 years of creation of the state.

He said allowing Ododo to succeed him will keep the state on the track of growth and development it charted since assuming office almost eight years ago.

Bello said his concern is not to allow the state to fall into wrong hands, expressing confidence in the ability of Ododo to continue with his administration's legacies of good governance, accountability and transparency.

The INEC has fixed November 11, 2023 for the conduct of the governorship election in Kogi State.

"In this regard, and as I round up my time in office, I aim to ensure that Kogi State transits into the hands of a successor that is committed to continuity and consolidation of the far-reaching legacies of our administration and is able to keep providing our people with the empathetic, practical and transformational leadership that is so crucial to the next stage of our development.

"Alhaji Ododo Ahmed Usman is the candidate that we have selected and presented to Kogi State as the candidate for the 2023

Allow Ododo to succeed me -Bello



Yahaya

Gubernatorial Elections and our preferred successor to the GYB years.

"He is well known for his humility and humanness, underlined by professionalism and strong leadership skills.

"I am confident in his ability to continue the upward trend in our growth graph established by our New Direction Administration and I solicit your support for him in the November 11 Kogi State Governorship Elections," the governor said.

Bello also paid glowing tributes to the founding fathers and past governors of the state, saying that the growth and progress being witnessed was a collective effort.

"Kogi State emerged as an entity from parts of Benue, Niger, and Kwara States on the 27th day of August, 1991 full

of the promise and possibility of a new era for our people. Since that day, we have come a long way. In the process we have overcome challenges and though our history has been chequered, we have continued to journey towards a stronger and more vibrant Kogi State.

"On this anniversary, I have decided to reference my own contributions as a leader over the 8 years of my tenure which began on 27th of January, 2016 and will round up, by the grace of God Almighty alone, on the same day next year 2024.

"As for my predecessors, it suffices to say that their times in office, including their triumphs and failures, all contribute to the land and people we have become and are becoming as we march resolutely towards the greater future that we dream of.

"I salute each and every one of them and do thank them sincerely, on behalf of all of us, for their services – such as it may have been.

"Throughout my tenure as governor, my commitment to the 'New Direction' blueprint has been the major driver of our actions and decisions.

"We have been able to do so much irrespective of the back to back years of financial underdelivery which has characterized our tenure from start to finish".

Former Taraba PDP chairman is dead

From **VICTOR GAI,**
Jalingo

A onetime chairman of the PDP Taraba State chapter and governorship aspirant in the 2023 elections, Victor Bala Kona has died in Abuja after an illness.

A family source reportedly disclosed that Kona had been in a London hospital for treatment following "a complicated heart problem" and returned to Nigeria on Wednesday last week.

His health was said to have worsened again on Friday last week and was rushed to an Abuja hospital where he passed away in the early

hours of Sunday.

The People's Democratic Party, Taraba State had confirmed the death of Kona and expressed their sadness over the incident.

In a statement signed by the party spokesman, Andeta'rang's Irammae, says the death was a "colossal" loss to the party in the state.

"The People's Democratic Party, Taraba State chapter is deeply saddened by news of the death of its former Chairman, Chief Victor Bala Kona (Garkuwan Bakundi), which occurred early on 27th August 2023 in Abuja.

"Late Chief Victor Bala Kona

(Garkuwan Bakundi) was chairman of the Party from March 2012 to August 2020, during which he worked tirelessly for the growth and sustained leadership streak of the party in the state.

"His loss at this time of our political journey is sad and colossal as the government and party that he had

assiduously worked for would have continued to benefit from his fountain of wisdom and knowledge.

"May God grant us all the fortitude and succour to bear his absence and grant the party his replacement," the statement read.

Security operatives clash with PDP supporters

From **ANENE AIKE,**
Sokoto

THE premises of the Governorship election petition tribunal for Sokoto state witnessed pandemonium following a clash between operatives of Department of State Services (DSS) with supporters of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the state.

Our correspondent reports that the trouble started when the PDP candidate, Mallam Sa'idu Umar, and his running mate in the March 18, governorship election, Sagir Attahiru Bafarawa arrived at the premises of the tribunal to observe the seating.

At that point in time, the

SSS operatives wanted to prevent some supporters of PDP from entering the courtroom in the presence of the governorship candidate, when they tried to access the courtroom.

When the duo tried to access the Tribunal Room, a DSS operative shot in the air, which made one of the PDP supporters to accost him, accusing the operative of trying to kill the party's governorship candidate.

It took the intervention of its sister agencies, the Nigeria Police at the premises to calm the situation.

Following this development, there was tight security at the two entrances leading to the court over fear of a clash between supporters of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and that of All Progressive Congress (APC).



Egbetokun



Kona

Politics

The "Demolition Man" Wike

In 2003 when former President Olusegun Obasanjo was shopping for someone to clean up the vast mess that had become the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), a friend recommended a little-known Quantity Surveyor from Kaduna state, Mallam Nasir el-Rufai, MICHAEL JIMOH writes.

ACCORDING to those in the know, OBJ wanted a "mad man" to oversee the corrupt-ridden ministry, to put some sanity back into it. The perfect man for the job, he was told, is the surveyor from Kaduna state.

OBJ duly appointed el-Rufai as Minister of the FCT. By the time he was through four years later, the minister had done a thorough job of Abuja and its environs, a makeover so complete even his detractors grudgingly admitted he'd done a good job. El Rufai also got the name "Demolition Man."

Twenty-three years after, with another president and an altogether different political dispensation from OBJ, a new demolition man has arrived the FCT. He arrived through his nomination as minister then confirmation by the Senate. President Bola Ahmed Tinubu later assigned him the FCT portfolio. Welcome Barrister Nyesom Ezenwo Wike, erstwhile governor of Rivers state, as Minister of FCT.

In his first maiden meeting with the press which was also his first day at work, Wike outlined his plans for the FCT. Much of it has to do with demolition of buildings thus quickly earning him the soubriquet "Demolition man," just like el-Rufai.

"If you know you have built where you are not supposed to build," Wike declared, "it will go down. Be it a minister of anywhere, be it an ambassador... if you know you have developed where you are not supposed to, your house will go down. And those who have been given certificates of Occupancy (CofO) and failed to develop, and they have become land speculators, the land is gone. I will revoke them."

So far, about 30 slums have been marked down for demolition and makeover, ghettos in parts of Garki and Jabi. Also targeted are Apo Mechanic Village, Byanzhin, Dawaki, Dei Dei, Durumi, Dutse, Garki Village, Gishiri, Gwagwalada, Idu, Jabi, Kado Village, Karmo, Karshi, Karu, Katampe, Ketti Village, Kpaduma, Kabusa, Kpana Village, Kubwa, Lokogoma, Lugbe, Mabushi, Mpape, Nyanya, Piya Kasa, Jikwoyi and Galadima.

To those who have followed the combative politician closely, it is hardly a surprise he has embarked on a demolition exercise so soon after his appointment. Months to completing his second tenure as governor of the littoral state, Wike commissioned a batch of projects and buildings in and around Port Harcourt. Former President Muhammadu Buhari commissioned some. So did his successor President Bola Tinubu, both of them from the ruling party to Wike's opposition PDP.

As a rule, people destroy to create, that is to say, older and less enduring structures have to give way to newer and sturdier ones. In that sense, you could say Wike is only carrying on what he'd done for years, clearing and building.

According to reports from the minister's office, 6,000 illegal



Wike

structures in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) across 30 areas might be demolished by the Federal Government. "We will take back our land and give to those who want to develop, and you must sign that you must develop at so and so time."

Wike also made clear his intention to revoke land given to those with Certificate of Occupancy (C of O) who have yet to develop their property. They will lose such land to those ready to build. In his

maiden address, Wike insisted he made a nocturnal casing of the FCT to "see things for himself," after which he concluded that the master plan of the territory has been distorted with illegal structures in green areas of Abuja. They will all be demolished, the minister added.

The outspoken minister who never fails to say it as it is vowed "to restore the master plan of FCT, that all illegal structures would be demolished and that his administration was ready to end land speculations."

Muktar Galadima director of FCTA Department of Development Control agrees completely with the minister. "We would find time to go back and conduct a new survey." The last survey carried out was early last year in February.

Expectedly, residents of some parts marked for demolition have complained about the minister's intentions. Times are pretty difficult, they carp, especially in the face of removal of fuel subsidy which has made life generally unlivable for many

of them. The prospect of being evacuated from their homes, however decrepit they may be, will be a disaster they can hardly cope with.

Aside the residents, analysts have picked holes in Wike's demolition plan. One of them Professor Charles Nwekeaku of Department of New Public Management Nasarawa State University commented thus: "Our government and its officials are known for always acting before thinking and also threatening and issuing warnings to the people. President Tinubu announced the fuel subsidy removal without first thinking about how to implement it. Wike is going the same way."

Continuing, Nwekeaku said: "How much of the Abuja master plan does Wike know? What I think Wike should have done first and foremost was to sit down, study the master plan, understand it, and thereafter set up a committee to advise him on what to do where the master plan has truly been distorted."

For social affairs commentator Rockad Aderanti, Wike's "threat was uncalled for, especially now that Nigerians are suffering from a bad economy caused by bad leadership in the country." Abuja, he went on, was dominated by real estate developments which are largely owned by people in government."

Whether such sentiments might forestall the new minister's demolition plans is hard to say. Even so, his new nickname "Demolition Man" has stuck after less than a week in office.

Source: THEWILL



IMAGES

TRUST CAMPAIGN COUNCIL VISITS UJAH ANAGUTA, NUJ CHAPELS

The Trust Campaign Council of Ayuku Pwaspo for the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) Chairmanship and other aspirants visited the Ujah Anaguta of Jos North, His Highness, Pozoh Johnson Jauro Magaji at his Palace in Jos for royal blessing the Campaign team went to Reality and Federal Information Chapels to solicit for the votes on the 8th September, 2023



His royal Highness, Pozoh Johnson Jauro Magaji Ujah Angaguta (middle) flanked by members of his traditional council delivering remarks



From left are, Mr. Kenneth Dareng, secretary aspirant, Mr. Pam Musa, Vice Chairmanship and Ayuku Pwaspo, Captain of the team



Mr. Haruna Wada of State Information Chapel (left) with Mr. Sanusi Namu Sanusi of the PPC Chapel all members of the Trust Campaign Council listening to speeches



District Head of Laranto, Pozoh Bala Abiti Garba (right) praying for the success of campaign team of Ayuku Pwaspo and other Trust members



Co-DG of the Trust Campaign Council, Mrs. Lucy Chindaba (right) presenting posters of the Chairmanship candidate, Ayuku Pwaspo to the Head of Centre, Federal Ministry of Information, Sandra Taddy during the visit at the Federal Information Chapel



Mrs. Lucy Chindaba, Aminu Idegdu, Trust Campaigning candidates at the Palace of the Ujah Anaguta



Trust campaign team, CEO of Reality, Mr. Valentine Adese, Reality Chapel Chairman and members in a group photograph



Co-DG, Trust Campaign Council, Lucy Chindaba, Deputy DG, Aminu Idegdu, Head of Centre Federal Information, Sandra Taddy in a group photograph with Federal Chapel members and Campaign Council

Photos: DANLADI DUK

Politics



Expecting positive impact from Tinubu's ministers

Upon assumption of office as President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Bola Ahmed Tinubu's palatial house in Lagos, his home State, became a "Mecca" or so to speak, "Pilgrimage" for political appointment seekers. I am aware that his friends, associates including Governors, who served between 1999 to 2007, besieged only to have a heart-to-heart contact with him. SAMPSON UHUEGBU writes.

IN all, the President has picked his lieutenants and sworn them in as members of his cabinet. The newly appointed ministers include: Former Rivers State Governor, Nyesom Wike, as Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT); ex-Osun state governor, Adegboyega Oyetola, as minister for Transportation.

Other new Ministers are Dele Alake, Solid Minerals; Muhammed Idris, Information; Mohammed Badaru heads Defence Ministry; Bello Mattawale, as Minister of State, while the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security is being headed by Abubakar Kyari.

Abubakar Mohmoh was appointed Youths Minister, Communications and Digital Economy – Bosun, Yusuf Tuga, Foreign Affairs; Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy – Wale Edun; Minister of Works, Dave Umahi and the Coordinating Minister for Health and Social Welfare, Ali Pate.

Betta Edu appointed Minister of Humanitarian affairs; Poverty alleviation, John Eno; Sports, Marine and Blue Economy headed by Bunni Tunji Ojo, among others.

Not all that lobbied for these evitable appointments could get it. But the President has

inaugurated the favoured ones among the millions that sought for the positions.

Much jobs are expected from the newly-inaugurated ministers, especially now that we are in an economic quagmire. The country's economic situation is nothing to write home about. The citizens are deeply worried because of the fuel pump price.

Negative implications of the uprising has drastically affected the prices of food stuffs and other goods and services across the country. Everyone is feeling the harshness of the economy. Hikes have continued to be experienced on a daily basis due to the fact that fuel is a vital product on our daily activities.

The Federal Government should realise that one of the things that can endear them to the citizenry remains the ability to reverse the fuel pump price to the affordable reach of everyone. Only that bold move could make Nigerians to truly believe that the Tinubu-led administration has something to offer.

From the administrations of ex-President, Goodluck Jonathan, to the immediate-

past leader, Muhammadu Buhari, the ugly story appeared same. That is, Stagnancy in the system! When shall the story change for good? Hardship is never the anticipation of Nigerians from the Tinubu's government. Only a new normal is needed this time.

Ministerial appointments should no longer be regarded as a "Political settlement of the core loyalists". The Ministers should be closely monitored by the President with a view to ensuring that every single project by the Federal Government is completely executed devoid of excuses.

Also, a Federal Minister should see him or herself as a chosen one picked among the millions that qualified for the positions. It should not be taken as portfolios for jamboree sake or an opportunity garnered by a "gladdima" means. A federal Minister should work for the development of his state of origin. He must have become a development-conscious person whose interest should supersede that of self.

Down to Imo, the ministerial position favoured an Oguta-born Medical Doctor turned Banker; and immediate-past commissioner for Finance, Dr Doris Uzorka-'Anite. Congratulations, to her. This is

first of its kind since the creation of the state that and Imo indigene is having the portfolio as Minister for Industry, Trade and Investment.

Imo had produced Ministerial appointees right from the inception of democratic system of government. Former Minister of Information; Chief Walter Ofonagoro, Professors Fabian Osuji and Chinwe Obaji, were Education Ministers respectively.

Recall that Professors Anthony Anwuka, who was a one-time Vice Chancellor of the Imo State University, Owerri and wife of the late Vice-Chancellor of the Federal University of Technology Owerri (FUTO), Viola Onwuliri, had held the positions as Minister.

Achike Udenwa, who ruled Imo for Eight years; and the present Imo PDP Chairman, Chief Charles Ugwu, were in charge respectively as Ministers of Commerce and Industry. Former Imo Assembly Speaker, Rt. Hon. Goodluck Opiah and an ex-ANPP Imo governorship candidate, Barr. Chukwuemeka Nwajiuba, took over as Ministers for Education, State.

Now that Imo is flying the flag as the Honourable Minister for

Industry, Trade and Investment, Dr Doris Doris Uzorka-'Anite is at the front burner of that ministry, what would Ndi Imo vis-a-vis Nigerians gain from her appointment as the Honourable Minister?

Dr Uzorka should use her good office to attract investors to Imo. The Governor, Sen. Hope Uzodimma, as a bridge-builder, has always extended hands of fellowship to willing individual and groups that desire to partner towards the development of the State.

We had cried out in the past over the need to industrialise Imo and make it an industrial hub like Anambra State and other states. The defunct industries along Owerri-Onitsha road Industrial layout should be revived and furnished with a state-of-the-art equipment. Resuscitating the dead establishments would create jobs for the unemployed youths and reduce criminality in our communities.

Let us feel the positive impact of the Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment in all ramifications across the state as Uzorka-'Anite is now at the helm of affairs of that sector.

News

PLSG prosecutes over 250 sanitation defaulters

BY EZEKIEL DONTINNA

COMMITTEE set up for the monthly sanitation exercise by Plateau State Government, has arrested and prosecuted over two hundred and fifty (250) sanitation defaulters Saturday, in Northern Senatorial Zone of the state for not complying with the government directive of shutting down business activities from 8am to 10am.

The team led by the State Commissioner of Environment, Hon. Peter Kanang Gwom, consisting of over ten (10) Mobile Magistrates Courts stationed at respective positions, took off from Plateau Environmental Protection and Sanitation Agency (PEPSA)'s Office Jos, the state capital as early as 7:30am through Club Road and round the city to inspect the level of compliance.

While inspecting the exercise from Club Road through the Plateau State Specialists Hospital roundabout to the Old Airport and Miango junctions, over 56 motorists, tricycle riders and shop owners were arrested and arraigned before the Mobile Courts stationed along the two junctions as they proceeded to Bukuru Market where the team commended the level of their compliance.

Other defaulters arrested and prosecuted were from other Local Government Areas of the Northern Senatorial Zone, amounting to a total number of 250 defaulters which at the time of filing this report, that of the Central and Southern Zones have not been made available at the PEPSA Office Jos yet.

Speaking shortly after the exercise, the Plateau State Commissioner of Environment, Hon. Peter Kanang Gwom, who doubled as Chairman of the Committee said, "I feel impressed with Bukuru to some extent, Ahmadu Bello Way and some other areas and I hope it can be better.

"We are trying our best with the little resources we have as a government to see that Plateau is kept clean and healthy. We want to be a modern city in the long term and if we must be, we must involve the private sector. But for now, the Environment Ministry will take charge until we come up with a system that works so that the private sector can come in", he enthused.

On his part, the State Commissioner of Health, Dr. Cletus Bako Shurkuk, described lack of good sanitation and hygiene as having health consequences. He said "that was why the Governor declared a state of emergency on sanitation immediately he assumed office to ensure that Plateau is among one of the cleanest devoid of communicable diseases.

Also, the Management Committee Chairman of Jos-South LGA, Hon. Peter Dung Vwang, commended the



people of his area for complying with the exercise saying, "honestly, I am highly impressed with their level of compliance. I have gone round from Vom Junction to Mararaban-Jama'a Junction and discovered their level of compliance. I appreciate their outing and I hope they continue in that light".

Meanwhile, the Plateau State Head Of Civil Service, Mrs Rauta Dabuk, observed that most defaulters were not complying because the awareness was not enough and called on the Ministry of Environment to collaborate

with the Ministry for Information and Communication to create more awareness on the sanitation exercise day.

The Director of Water Sanitation and Hygiene of Jos-South Local Government Council, Sanitarian Nanchang Jonathan Luka, said they were able to dispatch their team to Mararaban-Jama'a, Kufang and all the areas in Jos-South, but the reports available to him proved that there was poor compliance and hoped that more awareness would be created next time.

Gov Inuwa orders immediate closure of night clubs

WILLIE ATTAH,
Gombe

GOMBE State Governor, Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya, has ordered the immediate closure of all nightclubs popularly known as 'Gala Houses' within the state.

Consequent upon the closure, the Governor has directed all security agencies to ensure strict compliance to the order.

Secretary to the State Government, Professor Ibrahim Abubakar Njodi, who announced the directive, said the measure followed a series of complaints from the general public on the incessant immoral, criminal activities and security breaches being perpetrated in such night clubs.

In a statement dispatched to newsmen by Ismaila Uba Misilli, Director-General (Press Affairs), Government House, Gombe, the Nigeria Police, Nigeria Civil Defence Corps and the Operation Hattara are by this order, expected to immediately mobilise their personnel to effect the directive and ensure strict compliance.

The statement reads, "For the avoidance of doubt, the affected Gala Houses are: Jami'a Gidan Wanka

located at Mile 3, Yola Road, Gombe; White House Theatre (Babban Gida), located at New Mile 3 Yola Road, Gombe; Gidan Lokaci General Merchant located at Mile 3 Reservoir Road, Gombe and Farin Gida Entertainment II located at Wuro Karal, Kalshingi Road, Gombe.

"Others are: Gidan Zamani Entertainment, New Mile 3, Yola Road, Tumfure, Gombe; Albarka Entertainment located at Wuro Karal,

A panel of discussants have called on stakeholders to look at the possibilities of reviewing Nigeria's technical schools and upgrading its curriculum to meet current realities.

The panelist were unanimous on this position during the commemoration of the 2023 International Youth Day organized by the Nigerian Youth Parliament (NYP) held at the Destination Hotel Abuja, Nigeria.

They noted that the emerging trends of Artificial Intelligence Technology which has taken over a lot of soft and hard-skill jobs from humans need to be considered by the stakeholders.

The panelist, during the Youth Day activities which ended with a conference with the theme "Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development: Unlocking Potentials, Driving Changes", emphasized the need to constantly build the capacity of teachers in basic education.

They stressed that it is very important to ensure that great skills are considered as technical skills that will both empower and contribute to the existing efforts to climate change.

Keynote speaker at the occasion, Hon. Olamijuwonlo Alao-Akala, Chairman, House of Representatives Committee on Youths in Parliament, charged young

NCC enumerates advantages of ECC

By DORCAS PANKYES

THE NCC has constructed and implemented 27 ECCs so far, with an additional

four centres set to commence services in September 2023. Furthermore, four more centres are expected to be operational before the end of the year, bringing the total to 31 ECCs nationwide.

They informed the public that NCC has equipped ECCs with advanced technology platforms, including Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) systems, to facilitate seamless communication between response agencies and emergency callers. The toll-free number, 112, was specifically designed for easy recall during emergencies.

It went further to say that, to ensure effective rescue services, ECC agents have undergone extensive training and are equipped with state-of-the-art communications equipment, such as digital radios and Internet-protocol (IP) and geo-location technologies. These tools enable responders to quickly identify incident locations and deliver prompt assistance to the public. ECCs operate round-the-clock, with agents working in shifts to ensure uninterrupted emergency services.

Pointing out that the Police Force, which plays a crucial role in crime prevention and control, has received additional mobile communication devices to instantly receive information from ECC call

NYP advocates upgrade of curriculum in technical schools

By DUMAH RANDONG

people to take up the responsibility of grassroots mobilisation and awareness.

He said, "Young people have to identify their electoral wards and units because these are the entry points of politics and all the inclusion we are advocating.

"Platforms like the Nigerian Youth Parliament also have to take responsibility of sensitisation and awareness to their communities on the duties of the legislative arms of government which will bridge understanding gaps of the arm," he stated.

Guest of honor at the programme and son of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Mr. Seyi Tinubu, presented cheques to the winners of the #NigeriaWeWant Video Challenge competition after announcing the winners at the conference.

Mr. David Ikani, who came first, was rewarded with the sum of One million naira; Imam Malik, the second position, won six hundred and fifty thousand naira while Emmanuel Uzoamaka who won the third position got the sum of Six hundred thousand naira.

Speaker of the Nigerian Youth Parliament, Azeezat Yishawu,



Oyefeso

appreciated all the partners that supported the programme, especially the International Alert, EU, Leap Africa, Nigeria Youth Futures Fund, Nigerian-German Center for Migration and Development, PeacefulSky Travels and Tours, Bridge Sygery, and all the special guests, panelist and participants that attended the programme.

Yishawu also pledged that the Nigeria Youth Parliament will be committed in ensuring that the recommendations of the conference are adopted as the resolution of the Parliament and also forward it to the concerned MDAs and stakeholders.

agents. This initiative facilitates better command and control during emergency situations across the country.

In addition to their primary role in emergency communications, ECCs have assumed a broader socio-economic responsibility by providing job opportunities for Nigerian citizens. Each ECC employs call agents, facility and IT staff, and administrators. The NCC has set competitive basic salaries to attract Nigerian youth and other employees to work at the centres.

Currently, over 1,200 individuals have been employed at the 27 operational centres, and as the additional eight centres become fully operational by 2024, more job opportunities will be created. The ECCs are managed by indigenous Nigerian consultants who oversee facility and operational management.

The ECCs' implementation by the NCC has not only saved lives but also demonstrated the commission's commitment to addressing unemployment among Nigerian youth. The integration of technology, trained staff, and seamless communication channels has transformed emergency response services in Nigeria and provided a much-needed boost to the country's workforce, NCC enlightened the public.



Inuwa

News

Breeze FM wins 2023 Courage in Journalism Award

By John FWAH, Kaduna

BREEZE FM 99.9 Lafia, Nassarawa State, North Central Nigeria, has emerged recipient of the 2023 Courage in Journalism Award, the Africa Media Development Foundation (AMDF) announced recently.

Breeze 99.9 FM is the first private radio station in Nassarawa State, commissioned in March 2017, and demolished the same year by the then Governor of the state, Tanko Al-Makura.

Also, in March 2023, a staff of the station, (Breeze 99.9 FM) was attacked by personnel of the Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC) while covering the 2023 general elections.

Reports revealed that the journalist was ordered to be beaten by Ibrahim Abdullahi, the Chief of Staff to the Emir of Lafia, leaving the journalist with a deep cut on the head and swollen body.

A statement by the Executive Director, Mrs Sekyen Dadik said the board of AMDF having considered these, decided to present this prestigious award to Breeze 99.9 FM Lafia.

The Courage in Journalism Award is presented to journalists and media



Sule

organizations that have demonstrated courage in the work they do, exhibiting resilience and courage despite facing various forms of attacks and oppressions.

The award will be presented at the 5th edition of the Bagauda Kaltho Media Lecture taking place on September 19th, 2023, 11:00 am West African time, via Zoom, the statement emphasized.

Named after a Nigerian investigative journalist that went missing, 'Bagauda Kaltho' Memorial Media

Lecture examines varying issues that impact on media practice in Africa, as well as its role in shaping democracy.

Africa Media Development Foundation (AMDF) believes the Lecture Series will serve as compendium and assist media professionals in finding bearing, as well as contribute to the body of knowledge.

Africa Media Development Foundation (AMDF) is an organisation that provides professional support to media and sustainable development initiatives.

Court decides on misunderstanding between NPC, PSC

By DORCAS PANKYES

ON the 11th of July, 2023, the Supreme Court decided and laid to rest the contentious issue and controversy between the Police Service Commission and the Nigeria Police Force, as to whose duty it is to recruit constables for the Nigeria Police.

In the judgment; the Supreme Court unequivocally pronounced the Police Service Commission as the agency statutorily mandated to do so.

Ikechukwu Ani, Head of Press and Public Relations, made this statement in a press release recently.

The statement stated that prior to the judgment, efforts were already in process and at advanced stage towards the amicable resolution of the issue between the two critical institutions, as it was highly embarrassing to government, and indeed other stakeholders for the duo which ought to work in harmony and mutuality to have engaged in such avoidable legal disputation over an issue that sought understanding, respect and compromise.

Reacting to the judgment, Commission's Chairman, Dr. Solomon Arase, CFR, retired Inspector General of Police said the judgment simply and legally cements

the resolution of the issue in a win-win situation for the two institutions which ordinarily cannot effectively function, and deliver on its respective mandates without the cooperation of each other.

It must be said and seen, therefore, that the judgment is delivered for the overall best interest of our national security, and goes to underscore the imperative need for harmonious working relationship and mutual trust amongst agencies of Government.

Consequently, it is important that all concerned de-escalate and eschew all forms of hostilities, misconceptions, preconceptions and prejudices against each other which were at the base of the hitherto characterizing of a no love lost relationship between the Commission and the NPF.

He noted that the unnecessary imbroglia impacted negatively on the staff of the Police Service Commission and officers and other ranks of the Nigeria Police Force.

Ging forward, he announced that a Recruitment Board has been constituted,

chaired by the Police Service Commission, with other relevant stakeholders

as members, and will be inaugurated in no distant time. The Board will screen and ensure that only able and qualified members of the public are recruited into the NPF, reflecting also the principle of Federal Character.

The imperativeness of peace, harmony and cordiality between the two institutions, according to him, cannot be overemphasized, as contemporary security, provisioning has become more tasking than ever, and demands a robust policy guideline from the Commission, if the Nigeria Police Force must be repositioned for greater efficiency and effectiveness in not only meeting up with the myriad of security challenges confronting our dear country, Nigeria, but also birthing a responsive, responsible and accountable police to our people.

Peace is essential for growth and success of any institution in delivering on its mandate. And it is hoped that the Commission and NPF will continue to build and consolidate on the emerging trust, confidence and mutual respect which will aggregate to foster and entrench a culture of love and symbiotic relationship between the two agencies, towards the attainment of our statutory mandates, for a greater, safer, prosperous and more secure Nigeria.



Pain as part of our existence

NIGERIA has a lot of existential challenges. Since the return to democracy, the country has grappled with so many of these challenges and it has shaped the experiences of leaders variously. We have struggled through the Niger Delta militancy to the demonstrations in the Western part of the country. Also, the Central part of Nigeria has not been spared the wrath of land grabbers nor has the North East and North Western Nigeria been free of the activities of insurgents who have revolted against the State first to protest against perceived injustices and later as a way of enforcing their religious beliefs.

In the midst of all these, the country has not been spared other equally devastating catastrophe. Fuel scarcity has remained a constant with the people. So too has been the challenge of insecurity. Our infrastructure are failing as our roads and other means of travels have become increasingly unsafe. The country seems to be on the precipice and something needs to be done fast to redeem it. We have been witnesses to the devastation done in other climes by nature but in our own case, we have been our own catastrophe.

We have demonstrated annoying lack of capacity to run our affairs even when we claim to have some of the best brains in the world. Our citizens are found everywhere in the world and in every profession yet we cannot translate what we give out there into tangibles at home. We compete with the best, yet wejapa at any given opportunity and leave the country expecting someone else to come and fix it for us. What can be done to redeem our self-inflicted

curse? There is need to change the process of our leadership recruitment process. Whoever wants to be given a leadership must be schooled in such a manner that he would see the country as first not minding where he comes from. Unless we remove our attachments to some of our primordial sentiments, we might not be able to build a strong and virile country. We must endeavour to demonstrate the Nigerianess in us by serving faithfully and being just and truthful in all we do.

Unless we begin to see ourselves as one people with shared destiny, we are not likely to move forward. When we reduce everything to our small localities, we will continue to be local champions. Our society is over ripe to start churning out leaders who can be trusted to deliver the goods. If we can only

To be sure, it is time to take back Nigeria from those who have held it captive and are struggling to kill and bury it. That is unacceptable and should not be allowed to happen. We owe our children and those unborn the responsibility of leaving a virile and strong country for them given the kind of resources at our disposal. Like our singers have often said, *Nigeria go survive*, ours is to make sure that happens.

replicate the good things we see outside our shores at home, we will build beyond the imagination of our detractors.

And the opportunity to take charge of our destiny is here. In a few days, the Presidential and national assembly elections will be held. It is up to us to take up the gauntlet and change the narratives. We have choices to make which would either mar or make our society. The choice is ours to make. If we want to repair our fractured society, here is the opportunity, if not it is all in our hands. We must look beyond our enclosures to find leaders who can work for the general good not those who would service themselves and their own.

We must resolve to end insurgency. Respect the mass who are the employers of the politicians and ensure they are held to account when they veer off the mark. No more region, no more religion, no more tribe and more who you know or don't know. All we need now is equal opportunities, capacity, ability and the drive to do that which is right. If we field the best in our society, we are sure to have quality results not what we have seen since the return to democracy in 1999 where rogues and loquacious characters have been occupying the political space and messing everyone else.

To be sure, it is time to take back Nigeria from those who have held it captive and are struggling to kill and bury it. That is unacceptable and should not be allowed to happen. We owe our children and those unborn the responsibility of leaving a virile and strong country for them given the kind of resources at our disposal. Like our singers have often said, *Nigeria go survive*, ours is to make sure that happens.

News

Plateau PFN gets new executives

By EZEKIEL DONTINNA

THE Plateau State Chapter of Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), has inaugurated its new Executives with Reverend Dunka Joseph Deschi Gomwalk as the new State Chairman to be deputised by Apostle Joseph Rims.

Also appointed were Reverend Bernard Kyengson, as Secretary and also to be assisted by Reverend Iyke Solomon, while Bishop (Mrs) Joy Okaro, and Reverend Nanmua Fale, are to serve as Treasurer and Financial Secretary respectively.

Others include: Ambassador Yemi Matthew, as the Publicity Secretary, Reverend Gloria Mokungah, as the Prayer Coordinator and the position of Welfare Officer went to Reverend (Mrs) Ann Jerry, in that order.

Also inaugurated Sunday, were the Zonal Vice Chairmen which have Bishop Dr. Ayuba Matawal, as Zonal Vice Chairman Central Zone; Reverend Jim Piomoki Stevens, Zonal Vice Chairman Northern Zone and Pastor Gopye James Cletus, as the Zonal Vice Chairman, Southern Zone respectively.

Inaugurating the newly appointed executives, the National Vice President of PFN, North Central, Prophet Dr. Isa El-Buba, commended the outgoing executives led by Rev. Dr. Steven Dangana, for their doggedness, resilience, great achievements and quality leadership exhibited within the space of time in PFN Plateau State.

"Also, I will like to commend you for bringing back the main vision of PFN which is fellowship and unity in the state. You stood by me and gave me every support I ever needed from the day I was appointed as the North Central



Dunka

Vice President till date.

"Plateau State PFN under the leadership of Rev. Dr. Steven Dangana, is a model for the North Central Zone. I, therefore, challenge the new state executives that would be inaugurated today to build on this legacy by ensuring that you maintain the vision and leadership of our National President, His Eminence, Bishop Dr. Francis Wale Oke", he enthused.

While administering the oath of allegiance through intercessory prayers, the National President of Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), His Eminence, Bishop Dr. Francis Wale Oke, said, he was proud of Plateau State Chapter of PFN for their diligence and unity and promised to support the Church in the North.

He, however, eulogized the leadership qualities of the Northeast Central National Vice President, Prophet Dr. Isa El-Buba, and that of State Chairman, Rev. Dr. Steven Dangana, appointing the outgoing State Chairman as the National Director, Northern/Southern for Strength as a link between North and South.

Bello appoints new Commissioner for Special Duties

GOVERNOR Yahaya Bello of Kogi State has approved the appointment of Yahaya Ade Ismail as Commissioner for Special Duties

A statement issued by the Secretary to Government of Kogi State which was made available to journalists in Lokoja recently, indicates that the appointment underscores

Governor Bello's dedication to recognizing exceptional individuals who have demonstrated unwavering commitment and service to the state.

According to the statement, Yahaya Ade Ismail, who has previously served as the Special Adviser to the Governor on Water Resources, has



Bello

Responding on behalf of the newly inaugurated executives, the incoming State Chairman of PFN, Reverend Dunka Joseph Dechi Gomwalk, thanked the National President, National Advisory Council, the Zonal Vice Presidents, State Chairmen, Women executives and members for finding them worthy to serve in the next four years. "We need your support and prayers to succeed, he told them.

Dangote Cement graduates 50 'special' truck drivers

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

Mr Ajay Singh said the Articulated Driving School was aimed at taming the tide of auto crashes in Nigeria.

He said the company has a zero tolerance for auto crashes, which informed the setting up of different programmes, in collaboration with the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC).

Head of Human Resources, Mr. Azeez Adeniyi said the Dangote Articulated Truck Driving School, is unique, being the first of its kind in the history of Nigeria.

He urged the graduates to maximise the advantages of the training, adding that it was a rare and golden opportunity to have passed through the school.

The school manager, Mr.

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

consistently shown outstanding dedication and an impressive track record of service. His deep-rooted commitment to the progress of Kogi State has earned him this esteemed recognition.

"It is important to note that the appointment of Yahaya Ade Ismail as Commissioner for Special Duties is currently pending confirmation by the State House of Assembly. This process aligns with established procedures, ensuring that the selection is carried out in a transparent and accountable manner.

"The Governor firmly believes that Yahaya Ade Ismail's extensive experience and insights will greatly contribute to the advancement of our state's development objectives" the statement said.



Dangote

Gov Alia condemns murder of Judge, orders arrest

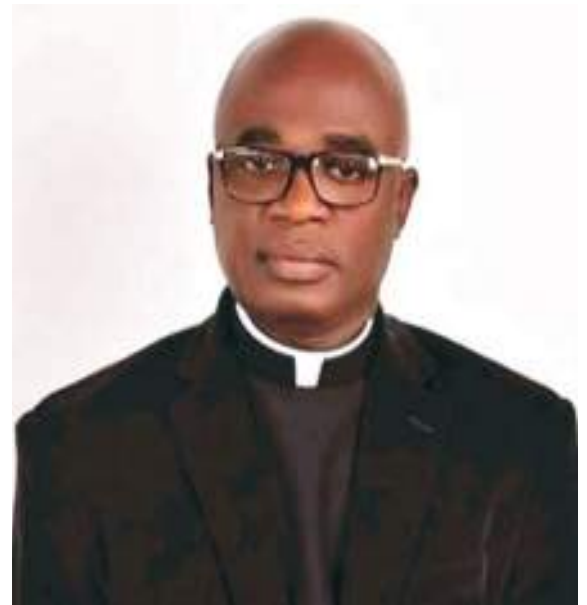
BENUE State Governor, Rev. Fr. Hyacinth Alia has condemned the murder of former President, Customary Court of Appeal, Justice Margaret Igbetar.

Igbetar was found dead in her Makurdi residence a few days after she was killed.

The governor in a statement by his Chief Press Secretary, Tersoo Kula expressed worry on why a citizen who has contributed her quota to the development of the society, especially someone like late Justice Igbetar would be murdered in cold blood.

She was not only a minister in the temple of justice but also fought hard in various capacities to ensure that the rights and liberties of all, especially vulnerable members of the society, are respected and upheld.

The governor who said the murder remains a



Alia

shock to him, directed security agencies to immediately swing into action and ensure the perpetrators of the heinous act are apprehended and brought to book.

Praying for the repose of her soul, Alia stated that Justice Igbetar's murder is indeed a great loss to her family, the judicial system, the state and humanity at large.

Daniel Marcus Akuso, said some of the courses offered for Batch A include: Civic Education, English, Mathematics, Defensive Driving, Truck Handling, Maintenance Technology, DCT Administration Procedures, Root Cause Analysis, Health and Science, Road Signs and Codes.

Mr Akuso said the graduates will now undertake a six-month attachment to enable them to acquire practical experience.

Speaking, Deputy Road Commandant, (OC Instructor) of the FRSC attached to Dangote Driving School, Engr Mukhtar Umar said his agency plays a significant role in the training and certification of old drivers and newly recruited trainees.

On his part, Col Ravig Kumar, Chief General Manager, Maintenance Department, expressed optimism that the female drivers, especially, will make Nigeria proud, while urging them not to disappoint the company, wherever they may find themselves.

Speaking on behalf of the graduates, Mr. Ajayi Kehinde Daniel said: "We are not just drivers, but defensive drivers. Throughout this period of training, we have been exposed to the causes of road accidents, and how to avoid them. Some of these causes, if not all, are actually avoidable."

Also present at the graduation ceremony was the Head of the Department, Post Trip Inspection (PTI), Mr Charles Theophilus, Head of Control, Mr Suresh Ramamoorthy, Col Hemant Rana, as well as other members of the Fantique Training Centre of South Africa: Pieter Momborg and Anton Schenk.

Foreign Commentary

Taliban stops girls leaving Afghanistan to study abroad

"After the Taliban shut universities for women, my only hope was to get a scholarship which would help me study abroad," says 20-year-old Afghan student Natkai. NOOR GUL SHAFaq writes.

NATKAI'S name has been changed for her own safety. The Taliban have cracked down hard on women who oppose them. Natkai says she kept studying even though there was little chance of her ever attending university in her homeland. Then she was granted a scholarship to study at the University of Dubai in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) from Emirati billionaire businessman Sheikh Khalaf Ahmad Al Habtoor.

The scholarships for Afghan women were announced in December 2022 after the Taliban banned women from university. The BBC understands a total of 100 Afghan women have been successful in gaining these scholarships. Some Afghan students living abroad have already travelled to Dubai.

On Wednesday 23 July, Natkai said goodbye to her family and set off for the airport. But her hopes were soon dashed. "When the Taliban officials saw our tickets and student visas, they said girls are not allowed to leave Afghanistan on student visas," she tells me, her voice breaking.

Natkai is one of at least 60 girls who were turned away from the airport. Photos show young girls wearing black hijabs or headscarves standing next to their luggage in a state of shock and devastation.

The Taliban has banned solo travel for women and only allow them to go abroad with their husbands or a related male companion such as a brother, uncle or father, known as a mahram, a male escort.

But even this was not enough. "Three girls who had a mahram were inside the plane," says Natkai. "But officials from the Vice and Virtue ministry took them off the plane."

The rest of the students were too frightened to talk to the media.

A young man we're calling Shams Ahmad, accompanied his sister to the airport and described the distress.

"The scholarship gave new hope to my sister after the universities were closed here. She left home with hope and returned in tears," he says. "All her rights have been taken away."

Mr Ahmad says some of the women even borrowed money to pay for a visa for a male companion to accompany them but were still stopped.

"Some of these girls are so helpless and poor. They don't even have 400 Afghani (£4; \$5) for the document verification fee requested by the foreign affairs ministry."

The University of Dubai and Mr Al Habtoor have confirmed the girls were stopped.

Mr Al Habtoor posted a video message in English on X, formerly known as Twitter. In it, he criticises the Taliban authorities, saying men and women are equal under Islam.

The video also contains a voice note in English from an Afghan girl who was stopped at the airport.

"We are right now in the airport but unfortunately, the government is not allowing us to go to Dubai," she says. "Even they don't allow those who have a mahram. I don't know what to do. Please help us."

This latest Taliban action has created dismay among rights groups and diplomats.

"This is an important and alarming step beyond the extraordinary level of cruelty the Taliban already engage in by denying girls and women education," says Heather



Despite the dangers, Afghan women have staged many protests but have not been able to change the ruling Taliban's policy

Barr of Human Rights Watch.

"This is holding them prisoner to prevent others from helping them study."

The former United Nations youth representative from Afghanistan, Shkula Zadran, has posted a message urging the university not to give up on the girls.

The Taliban have not issued any statement or clarification.

A spokesperson for the Vice and Virtue ministry, Mohammad Sadiq Akif Muhajir, told the BBC they were not aware of the incident.

A senior Taliban spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, also declined to comment, saying he was travelling and did not have any information.

Natkai is in a state of despondency.

She had graduated from high school and was preparing for the university entrance exam just as the Taliban took power on 15 August 2021.

Natkai thought she had found a way to follow her dreams. She says she has nothing to say to the Taliban because "they don't accept or respect women".

She calls on the world not to abandon Afghan girls or their education.

"I missed this opportunity in a country where it is a crime to be a girl. I'm very sad and I don't know what to do or what will happen to me next."

In her university room in Bangladesh, Nina, 19, holds her boxing gloves up to her face, staring into the mirror.

She is learning to protect herself. She says there is no other way. Nina is one of hundreds of Afghan women who have taken up the offer of an education abroad, despite knowing they may never be able to return home.

Nearly 12 months ago, walking through Kabul airport, she says she felt far less strong. She remembers her hands shaking. She knew it was dangerous to flee Afghanistan.

When airport officials questioned her, she lied: "The Taliban don't allow women to travel alone so I said my mother was sick in Pakistan."

She was relieved when they were

convinced, but a harder challenge was yet to come.

As Nina stepped onto the plane she stepped away from her home and family. "On the day when I left I was crying that I might never see my mother's face again, it was so hard for me," she says.

"It broke my younger sister's heart. When I think about them, it hurts."

Since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan two years ago - in August 2021 - life has drastically changed for women in the country.

They lost their right to be educated past the age of 12, their right to wear what they want or travel alone for more than 72km.

Nina is among those who was offered a way out - an education through programmes organised by the Asian University for Women (AUW).

As soon as the Taliban came to power, the AUW began receiving calls for help from their female students. Its founder, Kamal Ahmad, says he knew he had to get them out.

As western forces left the country they managed to evacuate a group of 148 women from Kabul as AUW students spread the word. Seven coaches made the dangerous journey to the city's airport a total of three times.

The women were in the departures area when a suicide bomb ripped through the crowd outside one of the airport's gates on 26 August, killing more than 150 people.

"After an extremely traumatic journey to the airport, they boarded a flight with the US military and successfully landed in Saudi Arabia," Mr Ahmad said. "All 148 women are now in universities across the United States. I just feel relieved that it wasn't a bad outcome."

Since then AUW has offered scholarships and organised the evacuation of hundreds more women out of Afghanistan - 450 so far. These students have been sent to AUW's own university in Bangladesh, or partner colleges

such as Brown University in the US, and Oxford and Manchester in the UK.

AUW hopes to help more women - the goal is 1,000 - to continue their education by offering scholarships and a safe exit from Afghanistan.

Safia, a journalist in her 20s, is another beneficiary of the scheme. She was heading to work the night the Taliban took over. The television studio where she worked was soon shut down and, with it, her career.

She says it was difficult to even leave her home for several weeks, amid the new restrictions placed on women.

"One day I decided to wear red and the Taliban tried to kidnap me, [putting me] in a box because I wasn't wearing all black. It was terrifying."

Safia's capturers told her to go inside the post office to hand in her ID, passport and mobile phone, but instead, she fled.

"I believed with all my heart that they would shoot me from behind," she said. "Despite the fact that I knew death is better than a Taliban capture in our culture, I screamed that I wouldn't go inside the post office, and with all my strength, ran" she added.

She says she ran past moving cars, nearly colliding with a few, but kept running until she reached a shop. She says by the time her husband found her, she could not speak.

The Taliban never came looking for her, she says, but it was a small reprieve: she no longer had a job and she mostly stayed home, afraid to step out.

Several months later she was offered a scholarship to study at AUW. She hopes that by continuing her studies she can help her family but she has no idea when she will reunite with any of them, including her husband.

She says he helped her to leave Afghanistan by lying to airport officials about where they were going. She says they were questioned hard, and had to show a marriage certificate just to enter the airport.

"They kept checking for proof that we were husband and wife. They eventually let us through but it was tough. Then I had to travel through Iran, Dubai and then ended up in Chittagong. I had to leave my husband in Iran, it was so hard."

Safia, who is currently enrolled in a pre-undergraduate programme, say she never wanted to leave. She believes Afghanistan needs journalists to speak up for ordinary people.

"I personally wanted to be a voice for the women who had lost their rights but my family wanted me to leave for my own safety."

Nina's parents also encouraged her to go to Bangladesh. But she says she worried about leaving them behind and the risk to them. She also found it difficult to adapt to a whole new culture and language.

But by her second semester she had created a boxing club. Now she has 50 female students in her class.

She believes self-defence and strength for women is important: "I've always wanted to be able to protect myself and I want to teach others to do the same."

She says for seven years, she worked hard at school and regularly boxed at the gym.

"But then in August 2021 I couldn't go to the gym, I couldn't continue my education, I couldn't even go outside."

She says the Taliban took Afghanistan 20 years into the past: "I cried. The situation is horrible."

Now she wants to empower other women at the university to find strength and confidence. Like Nina and Safia all of them have left their lives behind and are trying to step into their future - but, for now, they have had to give up those they love.

"I wish for the women of Afghanistan to be free because I know they are trying so hard. I hope one day they can all continue their dreams," Nina says.

Each of these women say they have something in common. They will never forget the women they've left behind.

Source: BBC News

Foreign News

Judge sets March 2024 for Trump subversion trial

The decision from US District Judge Tanya Chutkan denied a defense request to push the trial back until April 2026, about a year and a half after the 2024 election.

With the White House in the background, President Donald Trump speaks at a rally in Washington, January 6, 2021, before his supporters storm the US Capitol.

A judge has set a March 4 trial date for Donald Trump in the federal case in Washington charging the former president with trying to overturn the results of the 2020 election. The decision from US District Judge Tanya Chutkan denied a defense request to push the trial back until April 2026, about a year and a half after the 2024 election, but also sets it later than the January date proposed by special counsel Jack Smith's team. Chutkan made it clear to both sides at the outset of Monday's status conference that she considered neither proposal acceptable. "These proposals are obviously very far apart," she said. "Neither of them is acceptable."

The decision puts the trial opening just one day before Super Tuesday, when more than a dozen states vote in the Republican primary contest, which Trump is leading comfortably, to pick the party's candidate for the 2024 presidential election.

Chutkan has so far appeared not only cool to Trump's efforts to delay the case but also concerned by social media comments he's made outside court. This month, she warned Trump's legal team that there were limits on what he can say publicly about evidence in the investigation. She also reiterated her intention Monday for Trump to be "treated with no more or less deference than any defendant would be treated."

Trump was charged earlier this month in a four-count indictment with scheming to undo his loss to Joe Biden in the 2020 election. The federal election subversion prosecution is one of four criminal cases against Trump. Smith's team has brought a separate federal case accusing him of illegally retaining classified documents at his Palm Beach, Florida, property, Mar-a-Lago, and refusing to give them back. That case is currently set for trial



Trump

next May 2024

Trump also faces state cases in New York and Georgia. Manhattan prosecutors have charged him with falsifying business records in connection with a hush money payment to a porn actor who has said she had an extramarital affair with Trump, while prosecutors in Fulton County, Georgia, have charged Trump and 18 others in a racketeering

conspiracy aimed at undoing that state's 2020 election.

Trump surrendered Thursday in that case, posing with a scowling face for the first mug shot in American history of a former US president. He has claimed the investigations of him are politically motivated and are an attempt to damage his chances of winning back the White House.

Modi calls for African Union to join G20

The Indian prime minister said the African bloc should become a permanent member of the group representing 20 major global economies.

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the gathering on the third day of the three-day B20 Summit in New Delhi on August 27, 2023.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi called on Sunday, August 27, for the African Union to be made a G20 member, while also pitching his country as the solution to supply chain woes ahead of the bloc's summit in New Delhi next month.

The Group of 20 major economies consists of 19 countries and the European Union (EU), making up

about 85% of global GDP and two thirds of the world's population – but South Africa is the only member from the continent. In December, US President Joe Biden said he wanted the African Union "to join the G20 as a permanent member," adding that it had "been a long time in coming, but it's going to come." On Sunday, current G20 host Modi also called for including the pan-African bloc, which collectively had a \$3 trillion GDP last year.

"We have invited the African Union with a vision to give permanent membership," Modi said at B20, a business forum and prelude to the September 9-10 G20 summit.



Modi

The opposition Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) refused to ratify President Emmerson Mnangagwa proclaimed re-election victory while asserting that they won the election.

Zimbabwe's opposition leader Nelson Chamisa on Sunday, August 27, contested the official re-election of President Emmerson Mnangagwa and claimed victory in an election that international observers said fell short of democratic standards.

Mnangagwa, 80, won a second term with 52.6 percent of the ballots against 44 percent for his main challenger, Chamisa, 45, according to official results announced late Saturday by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC).

The opposition Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) refused to ratify the results, asserting that they were "false". "We have won this election. We are the leaders. We are even surprised why Mnangagwa has been declared a leader," Chamisa, a lawyer and pastor who heads the CCC, told a press conference in the capital Harare.

Zimbabweans voted Wednesday and Thursday for a president and new

Zimbabwe's opposition challenges election results



Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) supporters

parliament, in polling marred by delays that sparked opposition accusations of rigging and voter suppression. "We knew we were going into a flawed election. We have a flawed voters roll, a flawed delimitation report. We had a flawed ballot. It was a flawed electoral environment," Chamisa said.

Earlier in the day at the presidential palace, Mnangagwa challenged those who contested his re-election to go to court. "Those who feel the race was not run properly should know where to go to," he said.

The vote has been watched across southern Africa as a test of support for Mnangagwa's ZANU-PF party, whose 43-year rule has been accompanied by a moribund economy and charges of authoritarianism.

The UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres voiced concern on Sunday about "the arrest of observers, reports of voter intimidation, threats of violence, harassment and coercion." Guterres issued a statement urging all sides to "peacefully settle any disputes through established legal and institutional channels" and resolve disputes "in a fair, expeditious, and transparent manner to ensure that the results are a true reflection of the will of the people".

Foreign monitors announced Friday that the elections had failed to conform to regional and international standards.

That did not stop Mnangagwa from thanking "various election observation missions who have been witnessing our electoral processes without

bias". However, he also countered criticism by saying "we have demonstrated that we are a mature democracy". "As a sovereign state, we continue to call on all our guests to respect our national institutions," he said.

But for political analyst Rejoice Ngwenya: "The CCC has good grounds to go to court and challenge the outcome."

In the streets of Harare, some people expressed their disillusionment. "The results were no good, there's something wrong somewhere,"

Another man, who asked to remain anonymous, confessed he hadn't looked closely at the results. "We accepted them for as they are, it's the decision of the majority and we respect it," he said.

ZEC chairwoman Justice Chigumba said Mnangagwa had garnered more than 2.3 million votes and Chamisa more than 1.9 million. By securing more than half the votes cast, the president avoided a run-off. Voter turnout was 69 percent, the commission said.

This time, voting was forced to stretch into an unprecedented second day because of delays in the printing of ballot papers in some key districts, including the opposition stronghold Harare.

A former British colony, Zimbabwe gained independence in 1980 after a long guerrilla war. But under Mugabe, its first leader, the fledgling democracy spiraled into hardline rule and economic decline, with hyperinflation wiping out savings and deterring investment.

The opposition had hoped to ride a wave of discontent over corruption, rising prices, unemployment and entrenched poverty.

Feature

Food chemical: Implication on Nigeria's trade

According to Nigerian Agricultural Quarantine Service (NAQS), Nigeria loses about \$362.5m yearly in terms of foreign exchange to the ban on the exportation of beans in the last eight years. The banned beans were found to contain between 0.03mg kilograms to 4.6mg/kg of Dichlorvos; a pesticide activity ingredient ban in the EU since 2006 and many other countries (like Japan, China, India, Canada, Australia, etc) due to its health and environmental effects. According to the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), over 76 per cent of the country's commodities are often rejected by the EU for not meeting required safety standards. DONALD IKENNA OFOEGBU writes.

AGRICULTURAL products like beans, sesame seeds, melon seeds, dried fish, dried meat, peanut groundnut, palm oil and yam, exported from Nigeria have in the past 10 years been banned by the EU due to the presence of dangerous pesticide residues.

In 2013, 24 agro-products originating from Nigeria but exported to the United Kingdom were rejected, the figure increased to 42 in 2014. In 2016, 24 exported food products were also rejected. Recent data on similar rejections are yet to be reported as the ban persists on our food export markets.

Recently, the Japanese government have given Nigeria a warning signal of a possible rejection of Nigeria's sesame seed due to the presence of pesticide residue; with Nigeria accounting for 30% of Japanese sesame import, this will spell huge loss for the country. In fact, over 48 per cent of pesticide active ingredients still registered in Nigeria have been withdrawn from the European market, in part because of their high human and environmental toxicity. The export of crops grown with such pesticides to Europe or other target markets with similar regulations is automatic rejected.

The European Council of the European Union (EU) presented their 'farm to fork' strategy in May 2020, as one of the key actions under the European Green Deal. The strategy intends to shift the current EU food system towards making their food systems fair, safer, nutritious, healthy, environmentally friendly, organic and sustainable. The strategy foresees a number of initiatives and legislative proposals, among others, to cut pesticide use by 50% by 2030, improve organic farming, improve front-of-pack nutrition labelling and sustainable food labelling, etc. With more countries making similar shifts away from hazardous pesticides to a safer, organic and sustainable farm system and food. What is the implication of this on Nigeria's future trade balance; and how should agribusinesses and farmers respond to this? Can the Nigerian government, her farm communities and businesses take advantage of the global shift and become the world capital of safer nutritious food?

The rejection of Nigeria's agricultural food export is a major setback for a country desperate to expand its export basket, increase FOREX earnings and create jobs. Aside the money lost by exporters and the Nigerian government, the continuous rejection of Nigeria's food export is a dent in the country's image.

The forbidden fruits – tested, and rejected internationally, are traded and consumed locally by Nigerians. A recent survey shows that 7 out of the 13 active ingredients in the most common pesticide brands used to grow food by small-scale women farmers in Nigeria are cancer-causing. 75% of the surveyed women farmers report health challenges which they attribute to pesticide use. 25% of registered pesticide products as of 2019 have been proven carcinogenic, 63 mutagenic, 262 neurotoxicity and 244 show clear effects on reproduction. The lab results on crops, water and soil samples collected from farms,



markets, and rivers in Nigeria show the presence of highly hazardous pesticide residues, which are injected by consumers and used by communities. Shreds of evidence of pesticide-related mortality abound in Nigeria's media space – with the latest case of 270 people dead in Benue State as a result of pesticide contamination in 2020.

Over 85% of smallholder women farmers do not use personal protective equipment (PPEs) in pesticide application, due to their unavailability and exorbitant prices. This is also the case for farm workers in corporate farms or contacts farming agreements who are mostly neither provided with the necessary PPEs and/or informed with the full knowledge of pesticide risk by their employers/contractors/aggregators or agrochemical companies.

This is a violation of contractual laws and the right to occupational safety and health as derived from Nigeria's Constitutional right to life and safety. How should Nigeria react to the fact that most of the internationally banned pesticides used in Nigerian and many other developing countries are produced and exported by more developed countries in EU and Asia – who reject our food exports and are deliberately turning developing countries like ours into a dumping ground for their banned highly hazardous pesticides?

Agricultural training programs for farmers either by the government, agrochemical companies, private sector extension farm workers and/or international development partners are packed with techniques to enhance agro-mechanisation, use of genetically engineered seeds,

improve safety in the application of chemical pesticides and fertilizers, but largely fail to give farmers and trainee a full knowledge of the dangers and consequences of pesticide hazards.

The full disclosure of the consequences of wrong application of pesticide and its impact on the environment would most likely cause more responsible use of pesticides or better shift towards more nature friendly and safer pest control methods and inputs like use of biopesticides, nature pest control methods, and fairly mild pesticide brands.

The use and dependence on Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHP) and monoculture is a huge threat to Nigeria's food sovereignty and security because pesticides linger in the soil for years or decades after they are applied; harming soil health continually and forcing farmers to depend more on Genetically Modified Seeds (GMO), synthetic agro fertilisers and pesticides, all imported as local indigenous plant species and biodiversity are lost from monoculture and pesticide-based farm systems. The implication of this is a threat to the country's future food production capacities – her food sovereignty.

Despite the mounting negative human health and environmental impacts of the high use of pesticides, Nigeria still lacks dedicated pesticide legislation that protects Nigerians and clarifies the regulatory structure and process for pesticide registration and regulation in Nigeria. Government agricultural support programmes for farmers and budget appropriations continue to favour chemical agricultural inputs, and

international agrochemical companies and their local affiliates press to ease pesticide trade and use in the country.

Farmers associations and the wider public are largely unaware of the consequences of the high usage of pesticides on their health, environment, culture, food security, and the economy. Access to and knowledge of alternatives to chemical pesticides such as agroecology and organic inputs remain very limited in the country.

The list of banned pesticides by the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) is outdated and is now under review for updating. The VMAP department of NAFDAC is making a striding effort to improve regulations on pesticides and improve access to information but is confronted with implementation challenges.

Similar efforts are being made by relevant government agencies like FISS-Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) to stop the entry of banned pesticides, increase sensitization on pesticides, seek alternatives to HHPs and improve local production of pesticides, just like the Federal Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry, who is now engaging agrochemical companies on the need to shift towards the production of products that are safe for Nigerians and also give Nigerians agro-exporters the leverage to take advantage of the shifting global food market.

What measures should be explored to improve pesticide regulation and awareness in Nigeria to ensure that farmers, consumers, local and online markets, associations, cooperatives, labour unions, financial institutions

and future farmers–youths are well informed, guided in their consumption, taking advocacy actions and get protected and access redress and justice from the use of banned and highly hazardous pesticides in Nigeria?

To ensure that agrochemical companies, pesticide lobbyists and promoters are not putting profits before Nigerian lives, and selling the false narrative of pesticide safety through sponsored research, lack of disclosure on pesticide risk, and biased legislative proposals, what should be the role of legislatures, social influencers, consumer protecting agencies, owners of market platforms and spaces, farmers and consumer cooperatives and regulators in the pesticide debate and trade?

These questions and more should inform our policy actions stemming from the relevant ministries, departments and agencies. The answers to these questions should reflect in the choice of pesticide brands promoted and given to Nigerian farmers by the Central Bank Farmers Anchor Borrowers Program, the farmers associations in the country, the consumer protection agencies and groups, as well as private farmers.

There is another way to deliver safer, nature friendly and more sustainable food – our fathers know this and recent experiences of successes across Nigeria suggest its scalable – agroecology.

Ofoegbu is Lead Coordinator Alliance for Action on Pesticide in Nigeria (AAPN)

EVERYBODY'S WORLD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

Parenting

Smart ways to handle teacher troubles

It's hard to know what to think (or do) when your child comes home clearly upset, or with a specific beef. "You hear things like, the teacher plays favorites, we all get punished if somebody's bad, Some of the complaints can be about social issues—for instance, there's a problem with another child and the teacher isn't stepping in, said..

Depending on your style and whether or not your child is particularly sensitive, it may be tempting to advise him to grow a pair. More likely, however, a part of you will want to elbow your way into the classroom.

T o t a l l y understandable—although more likely to get you branded as the cuckoo mom to be humored than to resolve the problem. Instead, use our step-by-step guide to sorting out your child's trouble with his teacher.

Play reporter

Sometimes kids will make generic claims, like "The teacher's mean to me." You want to find out what that means. "unpacking" what your child is saying. Try to get as much detail as possible.

Ask, "What exactly did she say? What was happening in the class when she said it?" (You might want to inquire casually, so your child doesn't clam up or exaggerate.) "Mean" might mean "She makes me do my work," in which case you could explain that the teacher is trying to show the kind of behavior you need to have at school; after all, some things are very reasonable under the circumstances, but they may not seem that way to a 6-year-old. The idea is not so much to uncover "the truth" of what went down but to get a more concrete sense of what your child is seeing.

Play advocate

Tell your child that you're going to write down what she's saying so you can go have a conversation with the teacher.

"Let the child understand that you, her teacher, and the principal are partners working to help make school a great experience for her."

It's your child's feelings you're dealing with. Until you talk to the teacher, you don't have the whole picture. You might also be able to give your older kid some tools to handle the situation herself. Suggest options, such as approaching the teacher after class and pointing out, for instance, that she doesn't think she gets called on very often. Sometimes the teacher may not be aware of how your child feels.

Play the diplomat

If you decide you need to speak with the teacher, set up a time (not at dropoff or pickup), and go in as someone seeking help in solving a problem. Using inclusive language is important. Say something like "I'm coming to you with a problem I don't completely understand, but I'm hoping together we can best figure out ." Here's where you



explain what your child told you and when, using his words as often as possible.

Despite your light touch, the teacher might feel criticized—some people are sensitive, particularly beleaguered, tired and underpaid educators who do occasionally deal with parents who are a little overzealous on behalf of their perfect little angels. Do your best to reassure her that you're not blaming her.

Ideally, the teacher will shed light on why your child feels as he does, and you can have a mutually informative conversation that will help her teach your child most effectively. If your child says the teacher "never" calls on him, when you talk to her she might tell you that your son often knows the answers, but she's trying to give the shier kids a chance.

A pleasant face-to-face helps in other ways: The teacher will see you as an ally and be more likely to confide in you, of course. But if the teacher is, let's say, better suited to another line of work, you're sending her a signal that you're paying attention and are involved. If the teacher is, in fact, singling out your child, a little I'm-onto-you might be enough to get her to lay off.

Play tattletale

No one wants to go to the principal's office, and that includes parents, but if you've raised your concerns with the teacher several times and you feel she isn't doing her best to resolve the problem, you have a choice to make: You can decide to turn the unpleasant situation into a sometimes life sucks, kiddo" learning opportunity for your child, or you can go over the teacher's head. The first tactic,

while perhaps not as just as the second, might ultimately be what's best for your kid. The truth is, most kids will do fine" even if they don't like their teacher. Ask yourself, is she learning what she needs to be?

Explain how you've tried waiting and discussing it with the teacher, but what's going on is interfering with your child's education. Depending on the principal's style, she either will arrange for you to have another conversation with the teacher or will speak with him herself.

When things reach this point, of course, you may not exactly be the teacher's pet parent, which may cause problems for your child. But if it's something important, as in case, advocating for your child is more crucial than being labeled the annoying mom.

Play hardball

If you suspect the teacher is taking her frustrations out on your child, especially after you speak to the principal, that's the time to make it clear to the principal, firmly and calmly, that you're not going

away. As a last resort, request a change of classroom. Schools are very reluctant to do that, but may if a child is truly suffering and the situation is unlikely to change.

If you do nothing but defend your child and don't investigate the issues, you are not helping matters". "But if a problem is repeated year after year and you've done what you need to do with your child, you know it's the school."

Source: [Parents.com](https://www.parents.com)



EVERYDAY'S WORLD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

Living

Taking the right path in life

HAVE you ever wondered if you're on the right path in life? I think everyone does at one time or another.

If you think about it, you've probably noticed that you don't spend a lot of time pondering this question when things are going really well.

That's because there's a certain sense of ease when you're heading in the right direction that doesn't feel like it needs to be questioned. You just go with the flow effortlessly and without hesitation because things just seem to be working out as they should.

Some people describe it as having a sense of just knowing that things are the way they are supposed to be. But even if you're on the right track, sometimes you may feel like your life is going nowhere, and end up with very little energy and no real motivation in things that you used to be motivated in.

How To Tell If You're on the Right Path – or Not

Things start aligning for you.

When you're on a course that's taking you where you want and need to be, it can be as if the universe starts sending you what you need to accomplish your goals.

People or events show up to support and further your cause. Required money comes in from a donation or an unexpected source. Things just seem to fall into place and work out.

You don't allow obstacles to stop you.

Being on the right path doesn't mean everything will automatically and magically fall into place 100 percent of the time. But when obstacles do arise, you'll often find yourself diving right in and coming up with creative solutions on how to overcome or work around them.

Consider an opposite situation: have you ever been in a miserable job or a horrible, failing relationship that you absolutely KNEW you wanted to leave? Think about how thrilled you'd have been if an opportunity had shown up that provided you with a perfect



excuse to make an easy escape.

You care less than usual about what other people think.

When you're feeling aligned and in the flow that comes with it, you'll feel less of a desire to seek the approval of other people. You won't need to get confirmation as to whether or not what you're doing is acceptable or right because you'll already be able to feel it.

While you might still seek opinions, advice or feedback from people you respect, criticism from naysayers will be easier to get over – or to even completely dismiss.

You feel motivated, energized, and excited about what you're doing and where you're headed.

You're proud of what you're doing and you get very excited to talk to others about it. You look forward to waking up in the morning and feel eager to get

back to the task. Is this happening for you? Take this as a good sign that you're doing exactly what you should be doing!

Decision-making seems easier when you're on the right path.

Deciding between two options or what your next best steps should be is often easy when you're on the right track. Even if you're unaware of it, heading in the right direction and feeling good about it usually means that you've tapped into, and are able to access, your intuition.

You lose track of time doing what you're doing.

When you look up and see that you've lost a few hours or more, you can bet what you're working on is truly in line with your soul's desires.

Hard work doesn't feel hard – but rather, it's exciting, rejuvenating, and energizing.

Some people describe themselves as going into a sort of creative trance: losing hours or a whole day when they're working on something that lights them up and feeds their soul.

Your overall "bad stress" levels are low.

Even if you're required to handle multiple tasks simultaneously, you feel excited and motivated instead of stressed out and overwhelmed.

If you've ever been at either end of this spectrum, you can clearly tell the difference. Being in "bad stress" situations take a toll on you, mentally and physically. Whereas being busy and active in something you love, pumps you up and feeds your energy and drive to get

things done.

Your health seems to support you.

Chronic stress raises the level of cortisol and other hormones in your body that ultimately lead to a weakened immune system. Studies link stress to digestive disorders, headaches, insomnia, depression, and anxiety.

This makes it easy to understand how the reverse would also be true: **a reduced stress level means a healthier immune system and a stronger ability to fight off illness and disease.** Thus, leading to feeling healthy, strong, and ready to find the right path in life.

There's no need to compromise your morals or beliefs.

When you're choosing the right path in life for you and your soul, you won't feel like you're selling out, or doing things that you'll later have to apologize for or regret.

A key way to determine if your actions align with your soul's

purpose is to check in with how you feel after a long stint of working. When forging down a path of alignment, you may feel tired at the end of the hour, day or week, and that's okay! Being a woman or man on a mission requires a LOT of mental and physical energy and we all need to rest.

Are You on the Right Path?

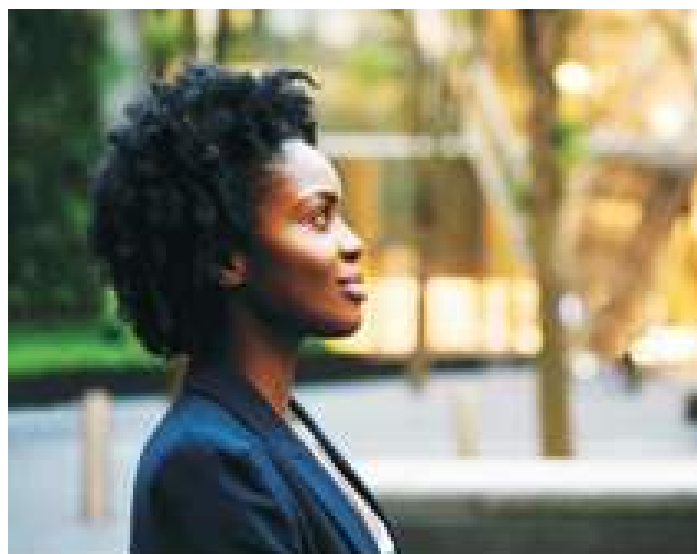
Ultimately, **deciding which path to take, and whether it's right for you, is something only YOU can determine.**

There isn't necessarily only one right path for each individual as many roads may lead to the same destination.

Circumstances and direction can change along the way and there's certainly NO rule that says you have to stay locked into any particular course of action.

The important thing to remember is that, if you notice you're questioning whether or not you're on the right path, the fact that you're asking might be a good indication that a change is needed.

Source: Everyday Power.



Editorial

Nigeria's preparedness and the Lagdo Dam issue

THE Nigerian government was recently notified by Cameroonian government of its plans to release the Lagdo Dam floodgates. They said they will open the dam in days ahead due to heavy rainfall around the dam catchment areas in the northern part of the country.

IT should be recalled that a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was entered between Nigeria and Cameroon after the 2012 aftermath flooding that occurred when the dam was released without prior notice. Both countries had agreed to a notice for preparedness and plan for the excess water that flows into Nigeria any time the dam is released.

SINCE 1982, when the Lagdo Dam was built by the Cameroon government to contain the excess water in the country, Nigeria also had planned to construct a dam twice bigger than the Lagdo Dam in Adamawa State to absorb and contain the excess water without adverse effect on the nation.

UNFORTUNATELY, till date, nothing has been done to that effect and states along the water ways have suffered floods and environmental disaster especially along coastal rivers that are linked to the waterways.

Apparently, NIMET had predicted flood and water disaster in some states because of the volume of rainfall that will be recorded. The effect of the release of water from the dam will be felt in the surrounding regions in about 13 states in Nigeria. This will not only cause environmental havoc but sanitary problems.

INVARIABLY, NEMA has had its hands on deck having to reach out to affected families who have lost so much. With this new development, the states will have so much to contend with in the coming weeks ahead.

Federal Government has proffered policies to cushion the effect of environmental degradation and find lasting solution and also turn it to economic fortune for the nation. Some of the policies include the demolition of buildings along water ways and canals, dredging of water ways to open up for smooth and easy passage of water, building of small water reservoirs to reduce the volume of water coming into the states.

SADLY, most states have not done the needful. Experts have advised that with the right thing done, the release of water by the Cameroonian authorities should translate to wealth for Nigeria as the volume of fishes that will be pushed will create economic fortune in fish supply and also irrigation activities will be boosted

REGRETTABLY, FG has refused to take permanent measures to mitigate flooding every time the Lagdo Dam is opened. They have always used a fire brigade approach at the 11th hour. It is vested with the responsibility to dredge rivers and yet it does not.

NIGERIANS on their part continue to build on water ways in spite of sensitization. They dump refuse indiscriminately which end up blocking drainage after heavy downpour thereby causing floods.

NIMET should be commended for early warning to flood prone areas earlier in the year. The problem being faced is that FG is not taking permanent measures that will mitigate the menace.

WE call on government to take advantage of this early warning to see how they can salvage states through opening of water ways for easy passage, destroying buildings that will pose as a challenge or blockage to flowing water. Sanitation must be done to remove all elements of hindrance. Government should have the will power to carry out laid down policies.

THE attitude of government towards lives and properties should be changed. They should be seen to be on top of the situation and not only issuing warnings. Despite warnings by NIMET, so many lives lost to flooding each year. Adequate provisions should be made in order to assist victims if such disasters occur and not left to bear the brunt alone.

CONTENTMENT is said to be the state of happiness and satisfaction and also being grateful to what one has.

However, some individuals take to crime and other vices as a result of discontentment.

Parents should inculcate a habit of talking to their children as they grow on the need to be contented and also share the little they have with others for there is great gain in Godliness with contentment. For we brought nothing into the world and cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and do good, we will be contented.

A Jerad Anthony Higgins, An American rapper popularly known as JuiceWorld in his song titled, anxiety, he expresses gratefulness for the gift of life, he said money doesn't really matter to him, although he has money, but still struggling with anxiety heartbreaking and substance abuse.

My point is, despite his wealth he is still facing issues. We often envy celebrities and people who are living in affluence without considering the fact that they are human like us as also have physical, psychological and emotional issues.

Furthermore, Bible verses should be read in Christians homes in order to help children in their spiritual growth, which include Hebrews 13:5, and I Timothy 6:6-8, Luke 12:15 and so on.

The spirit of contentment often results to true happiness therefore, it is expected that for one to strive be contented, no significant amount of gratification can be compared to being happy. While being contented brings about peace of mind, most especially with one's dear ones.

Pause for a minute and have a deep thought to see how misappropriation of public funds are being done by public officials due to discontentment. Does it mean they do not have enough? With all the assets they have in their possession, what else do they want to acquire?

All these is due to their selfish interests without even considering the poor who are living in object poverty and feeding from hand to mouth and do not have any hope of getting their next meal.

We often talk about ways to eradicating corruption in Nigeria, when the monster behind it is discontentment.

Sensitizing the general public on the damaging effects not such vices can go a long way in eradicating corruption in Nigeria.

Furthermore, when we settle

for unhealthy and unfulfilling limitation of what we really desire our appetite can begin to get out of control whose consequence forces us to either give in or indulge in social vices that will lead to a bitter end.

But the truth is if you chase money in order to be contented it will only plunge you into destruction and will alienate you from God and people around you little by little until strangles you.

Let us try to focus our attention on doing good such as



Contentment: The great virtue

helping people improve in the overall interest of our society.
Jonathan Rabo Dammo,

writes from the Plateau State Polytechnic Jos, Department of Mass Communication.

Child abuse and neglect

should be bought up strictly and with religious training which in most cases favours the male above female children. Some parents, having entrusted their children to religious teachers, never visit them or inquire about them and subsequently the children are forced to the streets to beg or become food vendors. The mallams often move some of these almajiris from city to city as beggars while some end up as prostitutes.

The Muslim religion which prohibits girls from becoming pregnant before marriage recommend that a girl should take a husband before her second menstruation. The

tradition of early marriage is very difficult to change and has led to abusive practices which are condoned by some parents. May parents send their children out to the streets to trade in order to make enough money for their mothers to buy house-hold goods for them when they marry. It is for this reason that some children may thus be exposed to any kind of suitors and. Hawking by boys and girls is now widespread and parents clearly recognize that the practice spells dangers for the children.

In the eastern and western part of Nigeria children may attend

morning or afternoon school and hawk goods out of school hours. Some are even exposed to trading on the streets the whole day to make income for their families.

Although most Nigerian children return home at the end of the day, a growing number, including girls, have been confined to a life of street children whose future has already been destroyed by the same society they all belong and depend for care and succor.

By Mu'azu Adam Hudu
Is an IT student from Federal Polytechnic Bauchi

Flouting of government order by truck drivers in Jos

IT appears government's directives are no longer respected in our society today because of how reluctant and unserious the system is. It is sad that, this lukewarm attitude has become a habit in each and everyone of us to the point laws are mere directive and not a rule.

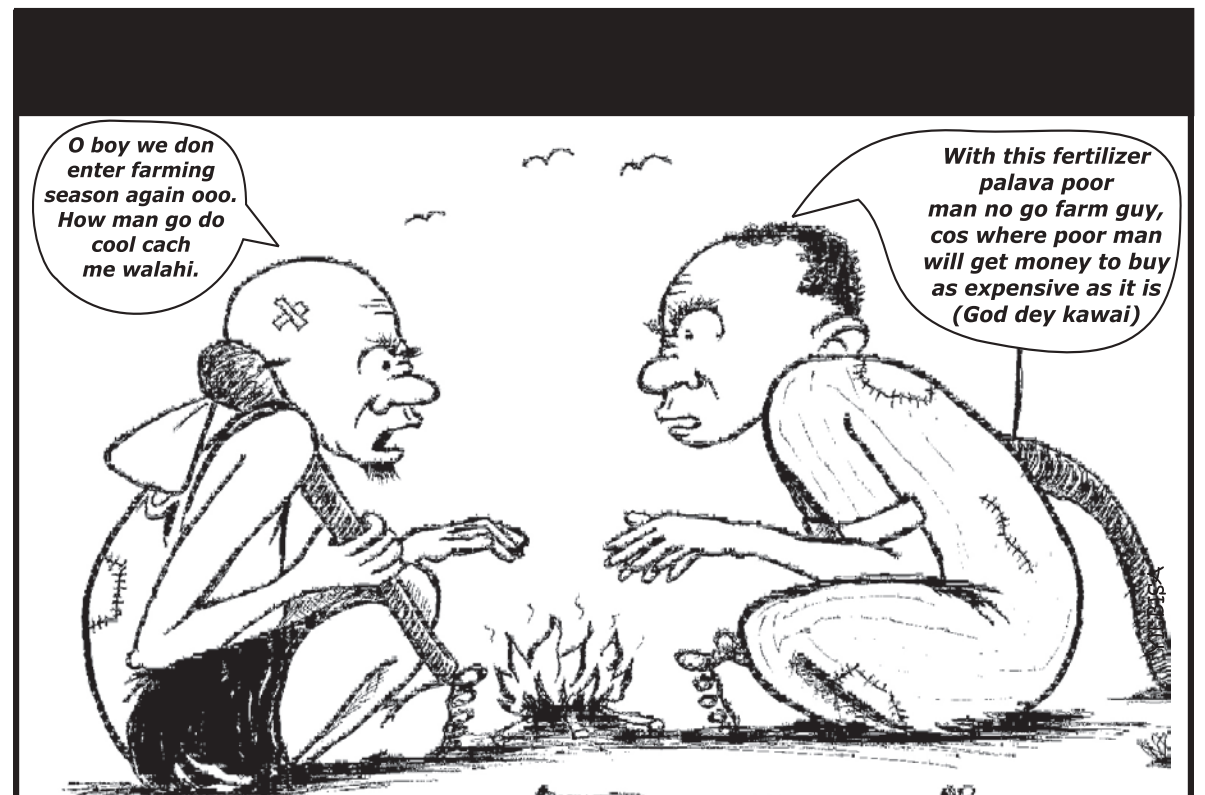
However, recently, the Plateau State Government had issued press statement banning truck drivers from plying the road in the heart of Jos city from 6am to 6pm, but it was no order was issued at all. You see these truck drivers without regards to the constituted authority's order in the state breaking the law at any time of the

day. This action has generated a lot of argument because many lives have been lost daily as a result of their reckless driving. No week goes by without reports of truck running into moving small cars, buildings and roadside shop. It would be recalled that, the Polo Roundabout has been a "pit trap" to these truck drivers whose truck lose control.

It was in this regard that the Executive Governor of Plateau gave a restricting order to these drivers to save the lives of citizens, but it seems they are above the law. Unfortunately, the agencies saddled with the responsibility of arresting flouting this order are not doing much to control this ugly situation.

They are always busy concentrating on cars and tricycle riders who are using the road legitimately and allowing these truck drivers plying at odd hours against the government's directive making it look as if there were no laws restricting them from plying the road in the day time. Stringent actions should be taken by the State Government to put a stop to this unlawful act. A Special Squad should be caved out specifically to handle that aspect of disrespect. Again, a heavy fine as high as #20,000 to #30,000 should be charged on whoever flouts the law. This will generate huge revenue to the state government and also save the lives of citizens.

Written by Golching Golek Jenta-Adamu



Opinion

Towards ending farmers/herders clashes: The Abuja declaration

FOR years, Nigeria has witnessed conflicts between farmers and headers leading to loss of over 4,000 lives within seven years, with several injured. The conflict caused tensions and negatively affected the image of the country.

Government at the centre had taken various initiatives to end the problem, but fruitlessly. It however took the initiative of Kano State government recently to gather 500 experts from across the country, including researchers, security experts, government officials, academia and representatives of international agencies to prepare a blueprint on what should be done.

The state Governor, Dr Abdullahi Umar Ganduje, set up a 27-man committee led by the former Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Prof Atairu Jega to "work towards planning and organising a befitting national conference on farmers-herders conflicts in Nigeria and select appropriate theme for the conference, select chairman, paper presenters/speakers, panelists, special guest(s) of honour, guests of honour, other dignitaries and delegates for the conference, as well as appropriate date and venue for the event.

The committee was also to provide adequate publicity before and after the event, submit a report with observations and recommendations for appropriate action. It was also to examine ECOWAS protocol pertaining to the movement of cattle across member countries, of the sub-region.

The committee also had Pro-chancellor, Yusuf Maitama Sule University, Prof Jibrila Dahiru Amin, former SSG, Niger state and professor of Veterinary Medicine, University of Ibadan; Prof. Muhammad Yahaya Kuta, managing director, Guardian Newspaper, Mr. Martins Oloja, executive secretary, National Commission for Nomadic Education; Prof Bashir Haruna Usman; managing director L&Z Integrated Farms Ltd; M. D. Abubakar; chairman, All Farmers Association of Nigeria, Arch Kabiru Ibrahim, former Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) representative in Nigeria; Rabe Isah Mani, Usman Danfodio University, Sokoto; Prof. Aminu Ibrahim Danjeji, Department of Sociology, Bayero University, Kano (BUK). Prof Isma'ila Zango, among others as members while the

By
Bode Olagoke

commissioner for information, Malam Muhammad Garba, served as secretary.

The governor recalled that in 2019, the federal government launched a 10-year National Livestock Transformation Plan to curtail the movement of cattle, boost livestock production and control the country's deadly herder-farmer conflict, but inadequate political leadership, delays, funding uncertainties and a lack of expertise derailed the project alongside COVID-19 pandemic challenges.

According to Ganduje, the move by the federal government to establish the Ruga Settlement-which was received out of misconception with massive criticisms resulted in the suspension of the project in which contracts had already been awarded.

"There is also a clear sense which I think must be appreciated. That the federal government cannot dictate to states what to do with their land. This is so because the Land Use Act of 1978 puts land under the control of governors on behalf of their states. Even for use of federal lands in the states according to the Supreme Court, building or development control, permit must be sought from the governors of the states.

"I am a strong proponent of restriction of herders' movements into Nigeria from neighbouring countries as part of solution to tackling herder/farmer clashes. However, another issue worth taking into account is the ECOWAS Protocol which Nigeria signed in 1998. This guarantees free movement to pastoralists, herders across the sub-region. As signatories to that protocol, Nigeria is obliged not to restrict the movement of herders and their cattle from other ECOWAS countries. This is an issue to be looked into.

"This has added a further complication to the problems we already have; besides most foreign herdsmen are exposed to the firearms market and are unknown to the local farming populace."

The governor said his administration since inception has led the way and have been pioneering the initiation of development-oriented interventions at reformation of the livestock sector to mitigate farmer/herder conflicts by tackling the issue headlong.

"You may wish to know that until our

intervention, activities of cattle rustlers such as rape, killings, abduction and banditry had paralyzed economic activities in communities particularly in Sumaila and Doguwa local government areas, which left a lot of cattle farmers in a state of despair.

"We started by mobilising security agencies and hence the formation of a Police Anti-Cattle Rustling Squad, Ambush Squad and Tactical Observation points along the Falgore Forest. The police teams were deployed to Tundun Wada, Doguwa and Sunmaila local government areas of the state, and were given all the support they need to arrest the rustlers and prevent further loss of cattle in the state.

"A military formation was also established in the forest to further reinforce the police effort, in addition to the construction of four prototype security dormitories at Kano entrances that included rearing industry from socio-cultural to socio-economic venture.

It also aimed at putting an end to the persistent wandering of herdsmen and also help expand them economically. The Kano State Bureau of Statistics has undertaken a statistics of all herdsmen in Kano for planning purposes."

The two-day conference had in attendance traditional rulers, government officials, other major stakeholders and experts.

The Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Sa'ad Abubakar, used the conference to declare that people were angry and hungry, hence the need to look for ways of dousing tension in the country.

The Sultan said the clashes between farmers and herders in Benue state has continued because all the suggestions made to the government were not implemented.

"Let's keep politics aside. The issues of development especially for the common man should not be prioritised. These people that God Almighty gave leadership over, one day, God forbid, will rise up against us.

"I have been to Benue at least two times as Sultan to sit with the governor and traditional rulers to discuss peace in the Benue valley. At the end of it, the suggestions were thrown away. Let this conference not be in the same manner, let's do it and

let's do well and now.

In his speech, Governor Ganduje said there is need for aiding information, education and strategic communication on the development of grazing reserves to mitigate the consequences of these conflicts.

According to him, "Modernising the livestock sector is not only key to resolving the herder-farmer conflict, but was envisaged that this economic investment pillar would support and strengthen the development of market-driven ranches for improved livestock production through breed improvement and pasture production."

"It is also very important that we avoid the dangers of allowing these conflicts to harden religious or ethnic conflicts. This is the responsibility of political, religious and all other parts of our leadership elite in Nigeria. It is my hope that this conference will produce a working document that would go a long way in mitigating conflicts between herders and farmers in this country."

In his keynote address, the vice President of Islamic Development Bank, Dr. Mansur Muhtar, said various farmers-herders clashes that took place at various times across the country have claimed the lives of 4,000 people with several thousand others injured.

He said while fatalities were initially confined to the North-central, it has since spread across the country.

Muhtar said northern Nigeria has been the epicentre of this conflict, given the relatively poor performance of the region in terms of education, health and other human development indicators, this situation, he said is untenable.

In his opening remarks, chairman of the organising committee, Prof Jega, said the conference was designed as an all-inclusive process to generate ideas that would contribute to addressing an acute national problem.

"As Nigeria searches for sustainable ways and means of diversifying its economy, a national strategic focus on the livestock sector and its perennial challenges is an imperative that has assumed significance."

Recommendations

At the end of the two-day conference, it was recommended for the establishment of a Ministry

of Livestock Resources.

According to a communique signed Prof Jega, it said, "In the alternative, federal and state governments should expand the scope of existing Departments of Livestock Production to address the broader needs of the industry.

Similarly, they stressed the need for the creation of additional research institutions for beef, dairy and pasture production as a strategy for expanding funding and enacting policies and programmes for the development of the sector at all levels of government.

They called on the united nations (UN) Agencies, Bilateral institutions, regional organisations (AU and ECOWAS), national and international CSOs and other support organisations to increase the level of funding and support to Nigeria in mitigating the impact of climate change, addressing technology gaps, addressing poverty and skills gap and improving people's livelihoods.

They also stressed the need to strengthen and improve the security architecture for the prevention of violent crimes including cattle rustling, raiding of villages, kidnapping of persons for ransom and trade in illicit arms and drugs.

"There is need to strengthen the process of litigation for more effective dispensation of justice and handling of the various litigations relating to violent crimes and other perpetrators of violent conflicts.

"There is the need to reform the security and judicial architectures to ensure the curtailing of farmer-herder conflicts, cattle rustling, illegal arms trade, importation and proliferation in the country.

"Political leaders at all levels need to refrain from politicizing the issue of farmer-herder conflicts and other associated issues while pursuing inclusive processes that will strengthen unity and cooperation in the country."

While appreciating the state government for the conference, participants urged Governor Ganduje to use his good office and influence to present the resolutions to the National Council of State and Nigeria Governors Forum (NGF).

Climate justice, health equity in Nigeria

CLIMATE change poses current and increasing threats to human health. As the climate continues to warm, the risks to human health will grow, exacerbating existing health threats and creating new public health challenges.

Many disadvantaged communities currently bear the brunt of climate-induced health risks from extreme heat, poor air quality, flooding, extreme weather events, and vector borne diseases.

Food insecurity, the result of climate change is related with accelerated dangers of beginning defects, spreading diseases, terrible oral health decrease vitamin intakes, and even persistent stipulations such as depression, worry disorders, back pain, persistent pain, arthritis, asthma, behavioural problem, hypertension and even suicide thoughts. In infants, food insecurity is related with diminished academic efficiency, mental development, and underweight, minimizing emotional, stunting and iron imperfections.

It is important to say that vulnerability to these health effects will increase as people get older and are less able to adapt to climate change. In addition, the level of vulnerability to certain health impacts will vary by location. The co-benefits of improving health while addressing climate change will improve public health infrastructure today, while mitigating the negative consequences of a changing climate for future generations.

For example, food insecurity comes with

By
CLAIRE NWACHUKWU

factors of mental misery and well tense, when people are no longer aware when they will eat their subsequent meal and this impacts negatively on tens of millions of people in Nigeria whose suffering may also now, not show up on the outside, however whose intellectual and bodily fitness are nonetheless threatened by way of starvation and weak nutrients. On top of all this, monetary obstacles to clinical care capacity means that many people who are food insecure frequently are identified a lot later, when an affliction might already have advanced and then then, it becomes a greater problem. Additionally, there is every tendency that the effect climate change has on agriculture is in all likelihood to make extensive contributions to not only the deficiency of food supplying the nearest future, however, it could also lead to the continuous increase in food prices.

The incessant level of stress related to being food insecure adjusts the way we consider and acquire food; changes the methods we eat, how we eat and leads to worse physical and mental health outcomes over time. Another mechanism whereby food insecurity can have an impact on health outcomes is via its impact on adherence to clinical recommendations. Again, considering diabetic food-insecure adults, it has proven that they encounter difficulties affording diabetic weight loss programs and decrease competences to tackle

issues pertaining diabetic.

Food is emaciated for the most part due to the fact of wasteful developments, rough or bad roads, over discriminating customers and incompetent storage facilities. If storage services are multiplied and also upgraded and their ample preparations for how the food will be used, less food will be emaciated and there will be a greater food impervious community.

Most of our farming lands are exhausted of their natural fertility levels and cannot produce a whole lot as they did years ago and even so, some farmers find it hard to get their produce to the market due to the fact of poor infrastructure including roads, storage facilities and food processing equipment. Sometimes because of the difficulty involved in transporting their produce, they tend to transport in bits and this can have negative effects on the produce because farm crops are perishable. If the infrastructure is improved, more food will be available in the market and the food insecurity levels will go down.

The ultimate goal of beating food insecurity should devote a focal point on constructing stable, sustainable and local food systems. In targeting global hunger, all-encompassing exertions need to be created to both improve agriculture results, processing, trade and people's monetary capacity to collect nutritious food.

For climate change and its impact on

health, two main strategies are proposed to tackle it. First, mitigation or reducing the greenhouse emissions and secondly, adaptation or enhancing the capacity to cope with health consequences resulting from climate change. There is a need to place more emphasis on renewable energy such as solar, wind and hydropower, and nuclear power. In addition, citizens can contribute through lifestyle changes such as switching to efficient lighting, solar heating, and use of public transport. These mitigation efforts can also bring direct health co-benefits such as by reducing the risk of heart diseases and other non-communicable diseases.

Adaptation on the other hand requires efforts to prepare for, and minimize the health burden of climate change. Health sector can take a lead in these efforts specifically to carry out comprehensive assessments of climate risks and vulnerabilities, establish an integrated environmental and health surveillance, and ensure mechanisms for efficient delivery of health interventions. Health system should be made climate resilient and ready to be able to anticipate ill effects and remain ready and prepared for an effective response. The national programmes on diarrhea disease control, vector control, and zoonosis must be strengthened and capacity to respond to disasters and emergencies ramped up.

Nwachukwu writes from the Centre for Social Justices (CSJ), Nigeria.

Feature

Approaches against crimes for safety of zoological garden

A zoo is an organization that maintains collections of wild animals, typically in a parks or gardens for study, conservation research, entertainment or display to the general public. The zoological garden Jos was established in 1950 by the department of Antiquities now National Commission for Museums and Monuments. JOHN FOM GWOT and LADI BATURE, writes.

THE zoological garden sometimes called zoological parks Institution in which wild animals are kept in captivity. Their primary object is to gratify the pleasures most persons take in viewing at close range the curious and beautiful living products of Flora and Fauna, but they serve also as means instruction in Natural History, providing material for Museums and for investigation in comparative anatomy and pathology, while they may have a commercial value as pleasure resorts, or as saw grounds for the display of animals that have been imported or hired for sale.

Crime can be described as a deliberate act that causes physical or psychological harm, damage to or loss of property and is against the law. The Oxford dictionary of Law defines crime as being (An act or sometimes a failure to act) that is deemed by statute or by the common law to be a public wrong and is therefore punishable by the criminal proceedings.

Safety is the condition of being protected from or unlikely to cause danger, risk or injury. Safety is a concept that includes all measures and practices taken to preserve the life, health and bodily integrity of individuals.

The approaches against crimes for the safety of the zoological garden Jos are the provision of perimeter fencing on the zoo fence for crime prevention and safety. The perimeter fence is a structure that circles the perimeter of an area to prevent access and crime. These fences are frequently made out of single vertical metal bars connected at the top and bottom with a horizontal bar. They often have spikes or barbed wire on the top to prevent climbing into the zoo to commit crime.



All animal enclosures in the zoological garden should be designed such that it fully ensures the safety of animals staff (zoo keepers) and the visitors. All animals should be kept in enclosures so constructed as to avoid escape gates and doors to enclosure must be securely locked so as to prevent crime and unauthorized opening.

Dangerous animals like chimpanzees and baboons in cages must have three (3) doors. The first or outermost door should open outwards. The second or middle door should be a release door (dropping downwards), and the third or inner door should open inwards.

Further approaches against crime for the safety of zoological garden is by the provision of standoff barriers and protection all around the cages to keep visitors at a safe distance from the animals and also free from crime. Emergency exits or doors to be constructed and well-marked. Each main exit must be kept clear and be capable of being easily opened from inside to should be capable of being closed and secures to prevent access to crime and the escape animals.

The zoological garden Jos should have a full-fledged veterinary facility including a properly equipped veterinary hospital. Such a hospital should have basic diagnostic facilities and comprehensive range of drugs, and have isolation and quarantine wards for sick animals and newly acquired animals respectively. These wards should be located at a hidden area, so as to minimize the chances of infections spreading to other animals of the zoo and also have facilities

for restraining and handling of sick animals including tranquilizing equipments and syringe projectors.

Close Circuit Television (CCTV) and Security Staff also known as Antiquity Protection officers should be on ground 24 hours every day to secure the zoological garden staff and visitors and animals for their safety and from crime by patrolling and inspecting buildings, equipments and access points and permitting entry as needed. The use of Close Circuit Television cameras is also important in monitoring of crime activities going on in the zoological garden and minimize risk of theft, malicious treatment on the animals or release of animals by intruders. Antiquity protection officers to provide adequate warning signs for safety and gates and doors to animal enclosures where the public are admitted, and any enclosure or stand-off barrier must be designed, constructed and maintained so as not to trap or otherwise injure visitors, particularly children or those with disabilities, where electric fencing is installed it must conform to the appropriate British and European Standards Electric fencing used for animals containment must be checked daily and have back-up power in case of a power cut.

Where a zoo holds any primate, carnivore, elephant or hoofed mammal, appropriate firearms must be available unless a risk assessment has shown that a firearm would not provide the most appropriate means of safety to the public from that animal and other arrangement have been made, and every person licensed to use a firearm, ammunition and darting equipment must undergo formal training by a suitable qualified person.

Every effort must be made as it is reasonably practicable to ensure the recovery, live or deed of any escaped animal the procedures to be adopted in the event of escapes within or from the zoo or of accidental or unauthorized releases of any animal should be brought to the attention of an available to all members of staff and other relevant personnel as considered necessary in a written document.

Procedures relating to escapes of animals should be establish and reporting of every escape by the quickest possible means to the most senior member of staff available and will organize how the animal can be recapture and also protecting staff and visitors, alerting the police and where necessary the licensing authority and also control the visitors and reassuring them of safety, ushering them into a building, closing doors and windows and evacuating the zoo.

The zoo must establish a clear chain of responsibility which should be written and update regularly and zoo operators to ensure that all members of staff are familiar with emergency procedures when animals escape. In particular, emergency drills must be carried out at least four times a year, recorded and regularly reviewed. All escapes must be recorded and detailed reports made The Police authority must be notified as soon as possible and in any case, not later than 24 hours following the escape from the confines of the zoological garden of any non-domestic animal.

In conclusion crime prevention and safety is paramount in the zoological garden as adequate number of safety signs giving warnings of the hazard either by symbol or a combination of symbol and words should be provided on any electrified fence and strategic locations. Security also called social safety or public safety addresses the risk of harm due to intentional crime acts such as assault, burglary or vandalism and to minimize the risks of theft, malicious attacks on animals.

JOHN FOM GWOT and LADI BATURE are staff of National Commission for Museum and Monuments, Zoological Garden, Jos.



News

Destruction of lives, properties render Mangu farmers homeless.

By AKINSOJU BENJAMIN

The rise in destruction of lives, properties and farmlands in Mangu Local Government, Plateau State and other parts of the state have continued unabated over the years.

In recent times, Mangu has witnessed incessant killings, attacks and destruction of lives, properties and farms. Obviously, this will cause food shortage, loss of revenue to both government and farmers. This has an immediate effect on the price of maize from N25,000 to above N50,000 as at the time of this report. Certainly, if nothing is done, the people might be left with nothing to feed themselves and communities.

The popular case of one Mr. Emmanuel Egole who lives in Mangu Local Government Plateau State has become a subject of worry. This farmer lost all his farm investments and home.

Other survivors said Mr Emmanuel, has been a successful farmer for years but devastated, despondent and displaced due to various degrees of wanton killings and destruction of farm and homes as a result of farmer/herder clash, unknown gun men attack, religious crisis and some other unbridled causes that have left him homeless.



Mutfwang

They confirmed that Mr Emmanuel Egole, a giver of money to the people both for farming and humanitarian services have now become a beggar and homeless.

In the midst of those crises, many lives were lost, farms destroyed, houses burnt and whole lots of colossal damage done to the people of Mangu and its environs. Many farmers and their families are displaced for some time now with no hope of relief.

The people implored the government at all levels, to

rise up to their core responsibility of protection of lives and properties to enable them go about their farming business without fear of being killed. They also begged the government at all levels, well-meaning individuals and the international community to assist those that lost everything like this young man bounce back to life.

Insecurity: Kaduna College of Education gets N550 Million

THE Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) says it has disbursed N550 million to the Kaduna State College of Education, Gidan Waya, for the purpose of addressing

insecurity. The Executive Secretary, TETFund, Sonny Echono, made this known in Abuja on Monday when the Kaduna State Government delegation, led by the

Army troops rescue 25 hostages from Boko Haram captivity



Zulum

81 Division Task Force Battalion at Dikwa Local Government Area of Borno in a separate operation on Sunday. "In an anti-banditry operation on Sunday in Kaduna State, troops of 2 Battalion, Nigerian Army, acting on actionable information, neutralised one criminal and freed four kidnap victims in Kwana Shehu

Village in Birnin Gwari Local Government Area.

"The rescued victims had since been reunited with their families.

"Members of the public are please enjoined to support the troops with credible information to enhance ongoing operations across the country," he said.

state's Governor, Sen. Uba Sani, paid him a courtesy visit. Echono said the disbursement was beyond the normal allocations, as the fund also disbursed N500 million to Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, for the completion of a project, in addition to making it a centre of excellence.

He added that the same amount was also given to Kaduna State University to complete some projects in its Kafanchan Campus to complete some critical projects. He assured the state government that one of the public tertiary institutions in the state would benefit from the TETFund special high impact intervention in 2024. "This year already, we made some special allocation beyond the normal allocations that all institutions get.

"ABU Zaria for example, again, not only was it recognised as a centre of excellence, where we want to have a special centre in the area of education, but we also gave them some additional fund about 500 million to complete one project. "The same amount was also given to Kaduna State University to complete some projects in your Kafanchan campus.

"The Kaduna State College of Education you mentioned, that had issue of security, I can confirm to you that in matter of weeks ago or some days ago, we released N550 million to them to address the issue of security.

"There is a sequence that we designed for the special high impact projects on zonal basis and I know the commissioners has been following," he said.

He described Kaduna as one of the states that had enjoyed the most support from the fund, adding that Kaduna hosts the North West headquarters of TETFund.

According to him, the Kaduna State Government allocated a very prime location for the fund's headquarters with a building on it and the contract for the construction projects will be awarded in the next one month. Earlier, the Kaduna State Governor, Sani, requested for more interventions and supports from TETFund in some of the key institutions in the state.

Sani said that he was also at fund's headquarters to make more effort to ensure that interventions to institutions within the state are released soon.

Wike to get all contractors back to site

THE Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), **Nyesom Wike**, says he will get all contractors back to site under his direct supervision and office of the minister of state.

Mr Wike, who stated this at the opening of a meeting with contractors handling different projects in the FCT, added that Abuja would soon become a construction site as promised.

"After our inauguration, we outlined our short-, medium-, and long-term plans to reposition the capital city, after which we went out to inspect projects that were awarded before us but

abandoned for one reason or the other. Now time has come for action.

"First of all, on the metro light train, President Bola Tinubu has given us a matching order that he wants to ride on the metro light train. So, it is a key project that we must achieve," he said.

Mr Wike added that Mr Tinubu had equally complained about abandoned projects, particularly roads, which were part of critical infrastructure.

Describing road networks as "key infrastructure" that makes a city, the minister pointed out that the issue of

sanitation, streetlights and shanties were being addressed.

"But the roads are very key, and so, we are trying to see how we can map out strategies and structure funding so that we do not have problems with completion.

"I am determined to get every contractor back to the site with direct supervision from my office and the office of the minister of state.

"The major problem we are having in this country is the problem of supervision, and so we are not going to tolerate anything below standard.

"If there are people you have been working with that have compromised standards, too bad, too bad; not with me. I am not going to accept anything that is below standard," he said.

The minister said that together with the contractors, they would restructure how to fund projects so that all contractors could go back to the site and work.

He added that the ministry would not fund projects depending only on the national budget, adding that projects would also be funded with resources from the Internally Generated Revenue (IGR).

"I want to achieve results, so I will not award a contract when I do not have money to fund it.

"We are going to fund you, and you will tell us the time within which the project will be completed. If we agreed three

months, it is three months; If I give six months, it is six months.

"We do not want to hear this happened, and this did not happen. I do not want to hear any excuses at all," Mr Wike told the contractors.

He assured the commencement of all abandoned projects in all sections of the FCT, stressing that the measure would create employment.

He noted that when contractors are working, they create more employment but sack staff when they are not working, thereby creating problems for the country.

PPC GM assures whistle blowers association of synergy

By HOSEA NYAMLONG

of who you know, not on merit which was known in the past.

Earlier in a speech by the state Coordinator, Mr.Oti-king Elvis, he stated that the aim of the organization is to have a better Nigeria, because Nigeria today is under the heavy weight of corruption. He pointed out that the country needs to be free from corruption.

He maintained that the organization is accredited by the Federal Government, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offense(ICPC).

Elvis stressed that

leadership is key and integrity should be seen in the style of leadership. It is unfortunate that when a leader is fighting corruption today, such a leader is being tagged by all sorts of names by people of the same faith, ethnic groups or association.

He stated that the organization is not only interested in whistle blowing, but also interested in creating awareness programmes that would enlighten the general public. And pointed out that "prevention is better than cure".

Highlights of the event was the presentation of the certificate of membership to the Acting General Manager by the state coordinator.



Wike

News

Ahmed's stamp of excellence at NYSC

IT is said that, "Leadership is often defined by one's ability to inspire, influence, and drive positive change". Ahmed's journey is a testament to this definition, as he seamlessly embodies excellence in every endeavour he undertakes. From his early life to his current role in the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC). WILLIAMS OCHONU Writes.

FROM a humble beginning, Yushau Dogara Ahmed, the NYSC director general, has emerged as a beacon of excellence. With his dedication and commitment to the betterment of Nigerian youth, Ahmed has left an indelible mark on the NYSC, and has become a symbol of inspiration for generations to come.

Born and raised in a small town in Northern Nigeria, Ahmed's journey to the top of the NYSC was not an easy feat attained on a platter of gold. Growing up in a modest household, he faced numerous challenges and setbacks.

Brigadier General YD Ahmed was born in Kagarko, Kaduna state, on December 28, 1971. On that day, a new dream to the world was set on the pace and path which life has placed him. Little was it known that this gift of a child would later become a pillar that would support a great nation of over 200 million citizens.

Ahmed's association with excellence can be traced to his early life. From a young age, he exhibited a natural curiosity and determination to excel. Born into a family that valued education, Ahmed's parents instilled in him the importance of hard work, discipline, and continuous self-improvement.

As he progressed through school, his academic achievements were a testament to his dedication and drive.

With an existing burning zeal in him, he was not content with merely meeting expectations; Ahmed consistently went above and beyond. His insatiable appetite for knowledge pushed him to explore various subjects and develop a well-rounded skill set. This foundation of excellence in his school days paved the way for his future leadership roles, setting the stage for his transformative journey within the NYSC.

Ahmed's transition into the NYSC marked a new chapter in his life. Armed with his principles of excellence and leadership, he approached his role with dedication. As he settled into his responsibilities, it became clear that Ahmed was not content with maintaining the status quo. He envisioned a revitalised NYSC experience that would have a lasting impact on the lives of the youth and the communities they served.

Ahmed's passion for youth development and empowerment was evident from an early age. Recognising the potential of the Nigerian youth, he created opportunities for their growth and success.

As NYSC director-general, Ahmed has implemented several transformative initiatives that have had a profound impact on the lives of Nigerian youth. One



of his notable achievements is the introduction of vocational programmes for underprivileged youth, his projects addressed pressing issues while fostering a sense of empowerment among participants. By combining only enhanced their creativity with meticulous employability, but also execution, Ahmed elevated the NYSC's relevance and reach.

Ahmed is instrumental in promoting inclusivity diversity within the NYSC. He championed initiatives that foster unity and understanding among corps members from different backgrounds. By creating an environment that celebrates diversity and encourages dialogue, Ahmed not only strengthened national unity but also nurtured a sense of belonging among young Nigerians.

Under Ahmed's visionary leadership, the NYSC has witnessed significant improvements in infrastructure and facilities. He understands the importance of creating a conducive environment for corps members to thrive. As a result, he spearheaded the renovation and construction of NYSC camps across the country. These upgrades not only enhanced the living conditions of corps members but also provided them with access to modern facilities and resources necessary for their personal and professional development.

Ahmed's relentless efforts and exceptional leadership have

garnered recognition both nationally and internationally. His dedication to youth development and empowerment has earned him the respect and admiration of his peers, as well as the gratitude of countless young Nigerians whose lives have been positively impacted by his initiatives.

Under Ahmed's leadership, the NYSC has also witnessed significant improvements in its infrastructure and facilities. He spearheaded the renovation and construction of NYSC camps across the country. These upgrades not only enhanced the living conditions of corps members but also ensured that they have access to modern facilities and resources necessary for their personal and professional development.

Just like the great Aristotle said, "Excellence is not an act but a habit."

Ahmed's stamp of excellence as the NYSC helmsman is undeniable. From his humble beginnings to his remarkable achievements, Ahmed has proven himself to be a true champion of youth development and empowerment. Through his innovative programmes, inclusive leadership, and commitment, he has transformed the NYSC into a beacon of hope and opportunity for young Nigerians.

Ahmed's approach to leadership is characterised by

sustainability. His initiatives are not short-lived bursts of enthusiasm; they were carefully planned endeavours designed to create lasting change. By involving local communities, partnering with NGOs, and building networks of support, he ensured that his projects would continue to make a difference long after his departure.

Ahmed's journey inspires others to embrace leadership roles with the same spirit of excellence. His story is a motivational tale shared within the NYSC and beyond, demonstrating the power of dedication and visionary thinking. As individuals read about his journey, they are empowered to take ownership of their roles and push the boundaries of what they could achieve.

Ahmed's transformative impact on the NYSC extends beyond his tenure. His commitment to excellence laid the foundation for a lasting change within the organisation. The culture of excellence he cultivated would continue to thrive, with successive batches of NYSC participants striving to emulate his dedication and passion.

For a fact, Ahmed has brought a new breed of excellence to the NYSC. His initiatives serve as models for future projects, ensuring that his legacy and that of NYSC would endure for time immemorial.

Ochonu, a public affairs commentator, writes from Abuja.



By FRANCISCA ADIDI

THE random killings across the country especially in the North is a thing of concern in the society, especially for the present administration.

So many lives are being lost and property worth millions of Naira destroyed from attacks by terrorists on a daily basis. This is because insecurity has become order of the day.

It seems the present administration of President Buhari does not appear to have answers to the challenges of security which the society is facing today.

Should we continue like this? How long? And when should Nigerians expect an end to these killings? Nigerian roads are not safe as most people are being kidnapped on their journey. The killers on the roads and other criminals in the society appear to be comfortable as not enough is being done to stop their activities by the government. That is why they have gained more confidence in their

attacks.

The security situation in the country has gone worst under this administration such that the cry of the common man is for Nigeria to have a messiah to take over from Buhari. This is because it seems our leaders are more concerned with politicking than the wellbeing of

Nigerians are tired of recycled politicians who are moving themselves from local government to state and from state level to National Assembly and to the presidency without tackling the security situation.

Today politicians are cross carpeting and switching from one political party to the other



The need for leaders to act

its populace.

Nothing is being taken serious today as everything is being politicized because of the greedy nature of politicians. Remember, Nigeria is bigger than all of us. The country needs to be fixed before it is being governed.

Everyone wants to contest into leadership position and not because they want to govern and fix things but rather because of position, money and fame that comes with it.

Everyday, the media reports killings here and there. They are also tired of reporting such news. They also love Nigeria and would want to report good things about the country.

Nigerians are saying enough of the bloodshed. Enough of kidnapping, enough of terrorism. Government should therefore wake up to its responsibility. Nigerians are not asking for too much, they need peace, they need security of lives and property.

Today Nigerians are praying for good and genuine leaders who will be totally committed to free the country from the numerous challenges the nation has been battling with.

just to get elected into leadership positions.

Former President Goodluck Jonathan was accused of being the architect of insecurity in the country. As a way out, a retired General of the Nigeria Army was brought in thinking he would change the narrative. But the situation got worst day by day that some Nigerians are calling for his resignation as insecurity has grown worst.

Nigerian government is duty bound to protect the lives of its citizens as enshrined in the constitution. But this can only be achieved if government reconstructs the security architecture of the country, by bringing modern technology to

bare so as to keep the security forces ahead of the insurgents.

The recent attacks on Kaduna/Abuja road and that of Plateau State in Kanam Local Government Area, where so many lives were lost and property destroyed, is pathetic and unfortunate. These attacks show the helplessness of our security personnel. Yet it is, only when terrorists strike before the presence of police or military will be seen.

And each time an attack is made, government is quick to condemn such attacks without apprehending those culprits. Are they invisible? Where are the perpetrators?

Nigerians only talk about

elections without tackling the issue of insecurity which has gained grounds in the Nigerian society. The leadership does not come closer to the people for effective management of the situation.

We are a people that are suffering and smiling. They are killing us yet we are not tired of lining up under the sun to elect leaders that allow terrorists to kill us without being caught.

Security issue needs to be tackled fast to save the lives and property of the remaining Nigerians.

Is there nothing to be done to curb this insecurity in the country? Why are our leaders so quiet and nonchalant about the issue of security and lives are being wasted everyday as if human lives are valueless?

Our leaders should not allow the country to be battered and buffeted as in the words of Father Kukah. Our leaders should not inflict morals, psychological and emotional damage on Nigerians that will take a long time to heal.

Our leaders should not allow Nigeria to bleed as insecurity grows worst everyday.

“

Our leaders should not allow the country to be battered and buffeted as in the words of Father Kukah. Our leaders should not inflict morals, psychological and emotional damage on Nigerians that will take a long time to heal.

”

What is the fate of the Nigerian child?



By HOSEA NYAMLONG

THE dream and hope of the Nigerian children must be kept alive for a brighter future. Every year, May 27th is marked as International Children's Day to celebrate the well-being of the children and to assess their development both physically and mentally.

Sadly today, the child development is often hampered by numerous challenges that threatens their future, especially in a developing nation like Nigeria.

Some of the challenges facing the Nigerian child includes early child marriage, sexual exploitation, child labour, illiteracy, domestic violence, child trafficking, rape, torture, etc

It is worrisome that many children today have died as a result of such ill-treatment across the country either from their masters, mistress or care givers. And many of the ages of such children are from one to sixteen that have being reportedly defiled, mostly are the female children that are raped.

On the other hand, the male child is also a victim of sodomy sexually abused by some and mindless adults. The crux of the matter is that only a few of such cases of abuse are heard or reported to constituted authorities, because of the fear of the unknown from the perpetrators who mostly threaten to harm such children, if the case is expose in the public domain

However, in such situations,

children are left with a physical and psychological trauma in their lives, if not being handled immediately, such victims might likely end up being hostile or brutish and this would affect the well-being of the society

Again, the trouble being face by Nigerian children is their educational as some parents cannot take care of their welfare, as a result of poverty or divorce. The Nigerian child cannot develop without education.

Education is a major tool for national development and without a good foundation, they won't be bright, if children lack quality education

It is on record that the Nigerian Child Right Act Bill was signed into Law in 2003 by the National Assembly and about the well-being of the Nigerian Child to have free education and 19 years down the line only 28 states have signed the Bill into Law, but the challenge is the implementation process is been viewed very slow since

inception.

According to the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund(UNICEF)," one in every five of the world's out of school children is in Nigeria". About 15 million Nigerian children work the highest rate of working children in West Africa and mostly are engaged in street hawking, car wash, etc.

Over the years, the Almajiri programme by the former president Goodluck Jonathan, school system has failed to take effect as a formal school for the Almajiri boys, it was reported that N15 billion was spent for the project, this was to integrate the basic education into the Almajiri school system.

In addition, such structures built for the purpose of the Almajiri programme was not being used for conventional educational purpose, the pupils have gone back to their old ways of street begging, which would further expose the children to inhumane conditions and vulnerability to abuse.

To this end, despite the Child Right Act Bill being signed into law, many children are still experiencing violence across the states of the federation. No day passes without a reported case of child molestation and these perpetrators are not punished according to the Law.

The Government and security agencies should ensure they do the needful in order to stop such abuse of the Nigerian child ,because the future of the country belongs to them. To achieve these children's lives must be protected and safe guarded from criminals that would want to destroy their future.

Parents, care givers, should ensure that they educate their children or wards to stay off any danger that would lead to abuse or molestation. Government alone cannot fight this menace in society, it must be a collective effort by all to see that offenders are punished according to the law of the country.

The future is bright, we must protect it.

By **ABDULSALAM MAHMUD**

IDIROKO Border Smuggling of goods into the country did not start this year, last year or the penultimate year. It has always been perpetrated by criminal elements and economic saboteurs. It is what the aforementioned have illegally carried out for decades, in our beloved country.

The smuggling business is a crime. Every where in the world. But in this part of the universe, it appears to be unending. It has, and continues to defy every practical solution.

Among the commodities and goods imported illegally into the country is rice, a staple carbohydrate food. Rice smuggling into Nigeria has since assumed a frightening proportion. The criminal activity has continued to damage the country's economy. Domestic production of the agricultural commodity, also, has since been hampered.

Personnel of the Nigeria Customs involved in anti-smuggling operations have lost their lives while engaging armed groups smuggling rice into the country. Reports abound of how the precious lives of some Nigerians have been cut short after consuming unhealthy and toxic rice varieties imported into the country.

Many citizens would not have forgotten about the 'plastic rice' brought into the country from China, in 2016. It took the intervention of the Customs to curb the inflow of the adulterated rice into Nigerian markets.

Another incident again happened in 2017, when the Federal Government (then) warned that there were some brands of poisonous foreign rice in circulation. Reacting then, Col. Hameed Ali (rtd), the Comptroller-General of Customs, described rice imported into Nigeria as poisonous, advising Nigerians to stop consuming it.

He had said: "A chemical must have been added to sustain its freshness and that chemical is harmful. Also, it has been re-bagged with a new date given as the production and expiry date and that is what we consume here which causes diseases.

"So, I appeal to Nigerians to please patronize our own rice; it is available, more nutritious and if you do that you will assist Customs by making sure these people are put out of business".

Illegal rice importation, Ali said, remains one of the biggest challenges facing the Nigeria Customs Service. As part of finding a permanent solution to the menace, a worried President Muhammadu Buhari in August 2019 ordered the closure of the country's border over illegal importation of drugs, arms and agricultural products into Nigeria from neighbouring West African countries.

But in December 2020, the immediate-past Nigerian leader, ordered the reopening of four land borders. For about a year that our land borders were shut local rice production was boosted. According to the Rice Processors Association of Nigeria, RIPAN, the Border Restriction Policy implemented by the Buhari government caused the demand for Nigerian

home-grown and locally-processed rice to increase quite immensely.

This caused an increase in both the production of paddy rice, as well as rice processing facilities. In 2020, during the COVID era, Nigeria farmers produced as much as 8.2 million tons of paddy rice and another 8.4 million tons in 2021. At the time, all of the paddy produced were taken by the rice processors/millers who

stopped at the figure given.

The NCS strides in tackling rice smuggling must be sustained. The Nigerian government should however know that some unscrupulous elements are bent on frustrating the anti-smuggling war of the Customs and advocacy of groups such as RIPAN.

About a week or even less, the old video showing how Customs personnel re-opened the Idiroko border in 2021 was everywhere



Idiroko border re-opening 'saga' and desperation of smugglers



processed them and supplied good quality finished rice to Nigerians.

Even as the borders were closed and the COVID pandemic raged on, Nigeria didn't suffer lack of food, particularly rice. The numbers in metric tons of paddy rice produced by Nigerian farmers began to decline after the borders were reopened in 2021, and smuggling commenced again in earnest, causing a drop in the volume of paddy offtake by the rice processors/millers.

It is on record that upon the reopening of our borders, official rice import to Benin republic from Thailand rose from meagerly monthly average of 5,000 metric tons in 2019, to a monthly average of 26,861 metric tons in 2022. Last month, PRNigeria reported that about 35,749 bags of foreign rice were impounded by the NCS, between January and April this year.

It is however due to the renewed war that personnel of the Customs launched to give rice smugglers a bloody noose, that the quantity of what were seized

on the social media. The mischievous elements behind the release of the old border re-opening video apparently wanted to denting the early days of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, who they claimed ordered the re-opening immediately after taking over power.

But whatever was the goal of those who re-circulated the old video, it failed. First to disprove the authenticity of the video was the spokesperson of the Nigerian Customs, Abubakar Maiwada, in a chat with PRNigeria said Nigeria presently 'has no closed border.'

According to him, all the borders have been opened months ago to allow exports and imports. "All our major borders are open. The video showing the Idiroko border opening is a very old video that a mischief maker just repackaged to create a wrong narrative," he explained.

Meanwhile, the Area Controller of NCS in Ogun State, Mr Bamidele Makinde also dismissed the viral video. While addressing the newsmen in Abeokuta,

Makinde stated that the Idiroko Border had been reopened for import and export business since 2022.

While lending credence to the statements of the NCS officials, RIPAN accused enemies of the Nigerian economy of circulating the fake video. It said that those behind the video are individuals or groups who seek to undermine the new government and promote illegal activities such as rice smuggling, from Benin Republic, Cameroun and Niger Republic for their personal gain.

Andy Ekwelem, Director General of the organisation, in a statement obtained by PRNigeria, said their RIPAN is dedicated to supporting the efforts of the federal government to improve the food security well-being of Nigerians, and also, remain committed to facilitating communication and collaborations towards this goal.

Ekwelem urged the government and all stakeholders to remain watchful and to avoid falling prey to the machinations of those who seek to sabotage the nation's

economy, and exploit Nigeria's big brotherly role within the West African sub-region for their narrow interest.

It is imperative for the Nigerian Customs and other sister security agencies to sustain, and perhaps, increase the tempo of dealing with rice smugglers and other economic saboteurs. The damage these criminals have done to the country's economy is unimaginable. Citizens must not continue to battle all sorts of health challenges occasioned by consuming unhygienic foreign rice.

The circumstances surrounding the circulation of the old video, also needs to be thoroughly investigated. Those behind must be fished out, and made to face the music. That would send a message to their cohorts. Today and now, is the right time to wage another merciless battle against the unending importation of foreign rice in the country. It cannot be tomorrow.

Mahmud, the Deputy Editor of PRNigeria, wrote in via: babasalam1989@gmail.com

IMAGES

GENERAL MANAGER PPC RECEIVES WARN

The Plateau Publishing Corporation, General Manager, Mr. Paul Jatau yesterday received on a courtesy call the state Coordinator, Whistle Blowers Anti-Corruption Reporting Network (WARN), Mr. Oti-King Elvis in his office, Jos



Plateau State Coordinator of Whistle Blowers Anti-Corruption Reporting Network, Mr. Oti-King Elvis delivering his message



General Manager, Mr. Paul Jatau listening keenly to the message by Mr. Elvis



PPC General Manager, Mr. Paul Jatau (right) being presented with the certificate of membership of WARN by Mr. Oti-King Elvis



General Manager, PPC Management and the State Coordinator, Whistle Blowers Anti-Corruption Reporting Network in a group photograph

Photos: DANLADI DUK

NUJ TRUST CAMPAIGN TEAM STORMS PPC CHAPEL

The Nigeria Union of Journalists, NUJ, Plateau State Council, Trust Campaign Council for Ayuku Pwaspo, Kenneth Dareng, Pam Musa and Danjuma Dickson Auta yesterday stormed the The Nigeria Standard Newspapers, Jos to interface with the PPC Chapel to canvass for support towards the 8th September 2023 NUJ elections



Trust Campaign Council, Director General, Wika Gofwen (left) presenting campaign posters of the Trust Candidates to the NUJ, PPC Chapel Chair, Mr. Israel Nanjul Lar



NUJ State Chairman, Mr. Paul Jatau (right) in a warm handshake with Trust Campaign Council, D.G. Mr. Wika Gofwen



Deputy DG of the Council, Mr. Aminu Idegü (standing) making some remarks while the PPC General Manager, Mr. Paul Jatau and NUJ PPC EXCO listening



Members of the Trust Campaign Team, NUJ, PPC Chapel EXCO and members in a group photograph

Photos: DANLADI DUK

Odd World

Woman faces backlash during wedding

A woman faced a huge backlash from her family after telling her sister that only three of her 10 kids could go to their wedding. The woman took to Reddit to explain that she got married in August and did not want their wedding to be too big so only kept it a small event.

She explained in the post: "We kept it small and simple and didn't want too many guests due to budget, so we only invited close family members and friends."

However, an issue arose over the invites as the bride's sister has 10 children.

"My parents and the rest of my family aren't religious, but my sister and her husband are very hardcore Christians and believe that having lots of children is God's will," explained the woman. "Obviously, inviting all of my nieces and nephews would be quite a cost. My wedding isn't child-free, but my husband and I decided it would be fairest if we only invited her three eldest kids."

The sister was less than impressed and called the bride a 'Bridezilla'.

But the sister was less than impressed to hear this restriction and suggested the bride was being totally unreasonable and even called her a 'Bridezilla'.

"I talked to her about it and explained

our reasoning, but she was really offended and said that I'm picking favourites," explained the woman who remained anonymous.

"I told her I'm sorry but 10 kids is a big cost on our wedding budget and that we tried to be as fair as possible."

When it came to the big day, the sister brought her three eldest kids along but had to face questions from the rest of the guests asking where the other kids were.

The newlywed said: "After the wedding, my sister has been very off around me lately. She told me she 'understands how I feel about her babies' and said that I'm a bad sister and a terrible aunt, and has accused me of not respecting her religion and lifestyle."

In response, many have been quick to support the newlywed bride with one person writing: "If your sister was so upset she could've offered to contribute towards the costs. A consequence of having a load of kids is that people aren't going to want to cater to all of them at events because it is a big cost."

While another wrote: "I'm thinking the older children might be happy to attend the wedding where they can enjoy themselves without having to watch over their brothers and sisters."

THE MIRROR



When the media is muzzled

LAST week, the Russian government went for the arrest of a television journalist Marina Ovsyannikova for allegedly carrying out a grievous offence against her country. Even though she left the country after authorities put her on wanted list, the defiant journalist under the protection of a European state has continued to stick to her guns on her stance over the ongoing war in Ukraine. Before Ovsyannikova fled, she was placed under house arrest even as Russia is still insisting on her prosecution over allegations of distribution of information deemed false by the government.

Trouble started for Ovsyannikova after she staged an on-air protest over the ongoing war on Ukraine by her country. The journalist who was the former Editor at Channel One last March busted into the studio during a TV broadcast with a placard reading "Stop the war" and "They are lying to you".

Should the journalist be convicted, she will at least spent the next 10 years of her life in prison. For many who have not been following unfolding developments, some months back, Russia's President Vladimir Putin had unjustifiably invaded neighboring Ukraine against international laws and justified such a move.

Even as the global community was trying to come to terms with Russia's recent move against this journalist, a state in northern Nigeria also launched an attack against some media organizations including the Nigeria Television Authority, (NTA) and Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, (FRCN) over what was described by stakeholders as the highest degree of unprofessional conduct ever imagined. Giving reasons for the closure, the Zamfara State government had alleged that these media organizations violated its provisions of the law and should be disciplined as such.

It's no longer news that media organizations in the world have in recent times been subjected to one form of intimidation or another. Just recently, an Aljazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh on assignment in Jenin in the occupied West Bank was killed by Israeli forces while performing her lawful obligations. Another Al Jazeera journalist, Ali al-Samoudi was also wounded by a bullet in the back at the scene.

According to the Committee to Protecting Journalists, about 34 journalists have been killed so far in 2022. Many others have also been attacked and wounded or found themselves in unpleasant situations while carrying out their legitimate work.

In Africa, unwarranted attacks on media organizations and journalists have been more pronounced in recent years. Even in practicably democratic nations of the continent, the media and journalists are not tolerated by the powers that be.

In most cases, media organizations and journalists are not accommodated by these leaders owing to the fact that many of them do not want their acts of personal aggrandizement and misrule be highlighted for people to see. For record purposes, of the many media organizations and journalists unjustifiably sanctioned and or incarcerated, leaders of such nation states have not for once been condemned for carrying out any of such brutal acts.

Some days back, while lamenting over the precarious conditions media organizations and journalists in developing nations of the world are going through, a friend of mine confided in me that such deliberate sanctions are deliberately employed by our leaders to muzzle the media from performing its constitutional roles. Most of these leaders who have no clue of transparent leadership and self centered are

convinced that they are above the laws of the land.

While many of them patronize the media during campaigns, most of them think that the operational activities of the media ends after they win their elections. It is therefore in their ideology that the press which is regarded as the fourth estate of the realm lacks obligatory mandate to supervise and monitor activities of the political class.

Thus, the hostile trending disposition of our political leaders and their consistent hostility towards the media and journalists has kept many issues away from public glare. For the fact that there are continuous problems of misinformation and lack of public understanding of government policies and programmes; this situation goes a long way in suggesting the fact that the media has unabatedly been muzzled and not allowed to perform its constitutional responsibility.

Evidently, the systematic backwards experienced in Nigeria today could be attributed to the way and manner media organizations and journalists are negatively treated in this country. When human rights are violated, the media is looked upon as a voice for the voiceless. Each and every time there is a disaster, the media is seen as the only tool anticipated to disseminate sufficient undiluted information to garner support for vulnerable victims. The media has also continued to play its role in the sustenance of democracy and ensuring that dividends of democracy are equally shared amongst the multifaceted and heterogenous communities in the country.

In terms of good governance which we are all desperately yearning for, it is only an independent media that can monitor and supervise the behavioral attitude of our political class to ensuring better comprehensive attitudinal change in our society. Since this same media and journalists fought for the liberation from the shackles of colonialism of many countries of the world securing democratic principles, any enemy of press freedom is not a friend to our global comity of nations.

This is the more reason why journalists should and or must be respected owing to the obvious fact that they have continued to sacrifice their all for the betterment of our society. Consequently, it's high time the media and its practitioners are provided an enabling environment for them to contribute to the betterment of our global community.

In this case, we must all rise in condemnation of acts of brutality and disrespect accorded media practitioners wherever they find themselves. If we intend to create a more civilized communities and establish nations based on good governance, the media must be respectively acknowledged and given the opportunity to play its constitutional role.

Practicably seeing the unending negative unfolding developments as regards unpleasant treatments meted vulnerable journalists across the world, stakeholders must begin to sanction countries that deliberately embark on unwarranted attacks against media organizations and journalists. Its high time stakeholders in the media industry also begin to hold political leaders to account on how they have unconstitutionally muzzled the media the world over.

Since we all agree that the media and journalists have sacrificed a lot towards transforming our respective societies for the better, we must also do the best we can towards protecting journalists and encourage them do their work efficiently. The bottom-line however is, nobody should be allowed to muzzle journalists as their expected obligations are aimed at transforming nations of the world for the better.

Feature

Portrait of a Pastor as a politician

A Christian convert from Islam, Pastor Tunde Bakare has also taken up politics alongside his pastoral duties. Successful beyond any measure in his ecclesiastical calling, the same cannot be said of his venturing into politics. Bakare lost the 2011 presidential election as running mate to Muhammadu Buhari of the Congress for Progressive Change. By the time Buhari won the same presidential election four years later as candidate of the All Progressives Congress, Bakare was not anywhere near him. A pastor of a rival Pentecostal church made it to Aso Villa with the general. MICHAEL JIMOH writes.

SO it was in 2019 when Buhari and Yemi Osinbajo were re-elected. Unwavering in his assurance of divine backing and unrelenting in his, some now say, Quixotic quest, Bakare made a stab at the presidency in 2023 and recorded zero vote in the APC primaries. Notwithstanding, his political pronouncement do not count for nothing. In January 2012, he spearheaded Save Nigeria Group to protest proposed removal of fuel subsidy by Goodluck Jonathan's Administration at the now famous Ojota sit-in. Three years later, Jonathan's government was booted out like an irritant pollutant from Nigeria's political space. Exactly a week ago and still on oil subsidy removal, this time from the inner recesses of a swanky church he presides over at Oregon – a glancing distance away from Ojota – Bakare made his by now famous State of the Nation address. To what end?

As a preacher, Pastor Tunde Bakare already has what politicians crave most: the ability to make people not only believe what he tells them but also take him seriously. Every Sunday without fail, thousands of worshippers rise to their feet at his command, pray, sing or dance as it is done in most other Christian worship centres.

The Citadel Global Community Church on 30 Kudirat Abiola Way Oregon where he holds court is one of the swankiest religious centres in Lagos, boasting of 5,500-seater auditorium and an events centre with over 2000 seating capacity. There is a free e-library, a swimming pool, parking space for over 500 cars as well as 250 toilet facilities. There is a pharmacy, hospital, banking halls, shopping malls and kindergarten school.

The capacious compound just by First Bank Bus stop is packed every day of the week with sundry visitors but mostly so on Sundays when worshippers fill the pews and traipse the aisles. For hours, they listen raptly to the Sunday sermon, look up to him as he paces right and left, back and forth, exhorting worshippers to follow the righteous path to become better Christians or better human beings. In bespoke suits, nifty shoes and fancy-framed spectacles, it is impossible to not listen up to this man of modest build with the physique of a jockey. Nimble as a tennis player, Pastor Bakare holds his audience spellbound with his mesmerizing performance, spouting off philosophers and theologians many of his congregation scarcely know or have heard of. No matter. Congregants do get the message anyhow, as they did on Sunday August 13 when Bakare surprised all with a State of the Nation speech.

"Vice, Virtue and Time: the three things that shall never stand still" was the theme of his special message,



Bakare

covering everything from President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's removal of fuel subsidy, arrest and detention of two former principal officers and holdovers from President Muhammadu Buhari's government to the recent coup in Niger and ECOWAS's response to the change of government.

One thing must be said for Pastor Bakare though: he has the daring of prophets of pre-Christian era even though some of his predictions never come to pass. "God told me I will be president," he boasted in 2018. On another occasion, he declared that he would become the 16th president of Nigeria after Buhari's 15. Both failed. But what he had to say this time were far from out of context revelations from God.

The trouble was not so much with removal of fuel subsidy by PBAT as the problem of corruption, Bakare thundered from the pulpit. An obvious question to ask is: Why was he against the same subsidy removal in 2012 that he now supports? He seemed to provide an answer himself.

"Kill corruption," he told his audience and, by extension, the rest of the world, "and not Nigerians."

The removal of the subsidy has made life more challenging for Nigerians. "What is further clear concerning our domestic challenges is that by imposing hardship on Nigerians without going after those corrupt individuals, corporations and government officials, who have plundered Nigeria over the years in the name of subsidy, the president has picked the wrong fight."

Worse still is that while PBAT devoted so much time to the faceless individuals behind the subsidy scam, he neglected to mention any one of them. It got the pastor's goats, prompting him to ask: "Who are these select groups

of individuals into whose deep pockets our national treasury has been funneled? Who are these smugglers and fraudsters that have been defrauding our nation in the name of subsidy? Who are these nameless characters that have fed fat at the expense of the poor? Or are they all sacred cows?"

As a card-carrying member of the APC and as a concerned Nigerian, Bakare has every right to question some of the government's policies he isn't quite comfortable with. Besides, in the body of the speech itself, he explains what progressive politics ought to be, ought to contend with and put squarely in its sightline.

"As progressivism eliminates a corruption-ridden subsidy regime, it would not hesitate to boost or underwrite access to factors of production such as energy, infrastructure, and human resource in an atmosphere of transparency and accountability.

"A progressive approach to the subsidy conundrum would have been characterised by a phased removal of subsidy, buffered by transparent investments in local refining capacity and social welfare, while the corrupt individuals and corporations that have bled the nation are compelled to return their loots."

Rather than do this, the continued detention of Godwin Emefiele and Abdulrasheed Bawa of the CBN and EFCC respectively has a ring of vendetta to it. Citing the incident in a Lagos High Court where the DSS brawled with officers of the Nigeria Correctional Service of Ikoyi Prisons over who should have custody of Emefiele, Bakare pointedly noted that "the actions of the DSS have raised concerns about professionalism and adherence to the rule of law. Instances such as the reported invasion of the premises of the EFCC and the handling of the case of the suspended Governor of

the Central Bank of Nigeria, CBN, Mr Godwin Emefiele, have sparked discussions regarding the need for due process and equitable application of justice."

The preacher equally criticized the continued incarceration of Bawa. "The same can be said of the detention of the suspended chairman of EFCC...Mr. Bawa was not only linked to the naira redesign policy, but he had also disclosed that the anti-graft agency would arrest and prosecute some outgoing governors after the expiration of their immunity on May 29, 2023."

In both cases, Bakare averred, the DSS "has reduced itself to a pack of Napoleon's dogs let loose on perceived opponents of the president when, in this same country, a militant like Asari Dokubo is openly breeding an armed militia in open support of the president, doing so with impunity and without as much as a slap on the wrist from the security agencies."

On the international front, Bakare expressed his misgivings about ECOWAS military intervention in Niger. It will be counterintuitive on the regional body because it could turn out to "be a protracted conflict."

For all his well-rehearsed and spot-on SoN address, some in the APC have dismissed Bakare's special Sunday sermon on August 13. Responding on the same day, National Secretary of the party Senator Ajibola Basiru accused Bakare of "incompetence to speak on the economic reforms" of the president. The lawmaker availed himself of Channels Television's "Politics Today" hours after Bakare's SoN address to counter his claims.

"I must quickly comment on what Pastor Bakare said," Basiru began by telling his interviewer on Channels. "Although I don't see him as a politician and with respect to him, I

don't see him as being competent to say what he has said. The fact that we are talking of palliatives does not mean we are not talking about the dysfunctions, imbalances in the economy and addressing the fundamental problems. We are not limiting our problems to the issue of palliatives."

Explaining further, Basiru insisted that the fact that the pastor is a Nigerian "does not mean he is an authority on all issues. I said competence on what he is talking about. The fact that you have ideas doesn't mean you are competent in what you are saying. But he is entitled as a citizen."

Which brings up the question of the pastor as a politician. As a politician, Bakare simply lacks what many politicians require to rise up in the political ladder: victory at the polls. In the minds of many, Bakare has not fared well in that regard. Despite his claims to commands from God himself to never give up his political career, he has not quite advanced from where he was in the beginning. In his New Year sermon at Latter Rain Assembly Ogba in 2018, Bakare told his congregation of 12 revelations received from God, the last of which concerned his political career.

"This twelfth one is a difficult one for me," Bakare said at the time. "It may draw excitement or condemnation. I have tried my best to keep it to (myself) but the Holy Spirit will not allow me to do so. In my study around 4am on Sunday morning, God told me 'you cannot bring your political career to a close; there is still more to do. Run for presidency. I will do it at the appointed time.'"

Of course the appointed time, as most people now know, did not come in the 2019 presidential election. Nor did it in 2023 after boasting that he will succeed Buhari. "I will succeed Buhari as President of Nigeria, nothing can change it. I am number 16, Buhari is number 15. I never said it to you before. I am saying it now and nothing can change it. In the name of Jesus, he (Buhari) is number 15. I am number 16. To this end was I born and for this purpose came I into the world. I have prepared you for this for more than 30 years."

Men of God in Nigeria making predictions about others or themselves that never quite come to pass are aplenty. The outspoken senior pastor of CGCC is not alone in that. Still in the same Oregon, his colleague and co-traveller on the same political path Chris Okotie of the Household of God Church also boasted he would be elected president of Nigeria. It never got to be, making both of them dreamers as far as the presidency of the country is concerned.

Even so, there is nothing wrong in dreaming. The charismatic senior pastor's dream of becoming president of his own country may never get to be. But one thing is for sure, as certain as the worshippers listening to him right now at CGCC. Pastor Bakare is the president of his own church, which possibly accounts for why he prefixed paragraphs of his State of the Nation address with "My fellow citizens."

Source: THEWILL

News

OPDS clamps down on illegal refineries

By DORCAS PANKYES

IN continuation of efforts aimed at containing the activities of terrorists, militants and other criminal elements bent on destabilizing the nation and making life unbearable for peace-loving Nigerians, the air component of Operation Delta Safe (OPDS) carried out air interdiction missions on some illegal refining sites located at Cawthorne Channels, Bille and Gogokori in Degema Local Government Area of Rivers State on 27 August 2023.

This was conveyed in a statement signed by Air Commodore Edward G a b k w e t Director of Public Relations and Information Nigerian Air Force.

Having observed the sites to consist of illegal refining sites, the areas were attacked and destroyed. Specifically, at Gogokori, a Cotonou boat observed to be loaded with illegal refined products and heading into open waters was also engaged and destroyed.

Similar strikes were also extended to Idama in

Akuku -toru Local

Government Area and Omoma in Degema Local Government Area of Rivers State upon receipt of intelligence of refining activities at the 2 locations. Overhead both locations, active illegal refining sites with reservoirs suspected to contain illegally refined products were sighted. The reservoirs were subsequently engaged, destroyed and engulfed in flames.

On 25 August 2023, identified militants/pirates' camps in Cross River State were also attacked by the air component of OPDS. In the various militants/pirates' Camps identified as Big Joe's Camp, Sunny's Camp, Davids' Camp in Bakassi Local Government Area and Amos Camps in Calabar South Local Government Area, air strikes were authorised after confirming these locations to be littered with these criminals and their activities.

Those that attempted to escape through their various escape routes were also attacked. In one of the suspected kidnappers' camps, a lone structure suspected to be harbouring some kidnapped victims with

armed men roaming around the structure was also attacked using guns on board the aircraft. The strikes led to pandemonium with several kidnapped victims seen escaping.

In the Northeast, strikes were conducted on 25 August 2023, at Chinene, a persistent terrorists' hideout in Mandara mountains which has been struck on several occasions in the past. Having observed the area to continually host gathering of terrorists and their activities, the location was struck with several terrorists neutralized while others fled for their lives.

NAF aircraft have continued to give the requisite outcome while denying non-state actors the freedom to perpetrate their nefarious acts at will. While the NAF alongside other security agencies remain focused in undertaking their assigned tasks, the need for all Nigerians to see themselves as part of the solution to these challenges through the provision of actionable information to security agencies, cannot be overemphasized.

THE forum of National Union of Road Transportation Workers (NURTW) in Pankshin, Kanke and Kanam Local Government Area branches recently held annual quarterly executive officers meeting at the Pankshin branch secretariat of the union.

It called on the government at all levels to roll out palliatives to cushion the effect and hardship faced by the common man due to the removal of fuel subsidy by the federal government. Adding that the removal of subsidy is directly affecting the transportation industry nationwide.

The forum in the resolutions reached at the meeting and read by the forum's chairman, Mr. Nandir Danjuma who is also the branch chairman of the NURTW Kabwir said they are in support of the giant step taken by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for the removal of the fuel subsidy, which he said is long overdue. But called on the presidency to judiciously channel the fuel subsidy money to better the lives of the entire citizens of Nigeria through the execution of meaningful projects that have direct bearing on the lives of the people,

NURTW set to reposition union

By POLYCARP ISHAYA, Pankshin

especially in areas like road construction and maintenance, health, education, agriculture and the transport sectors among many others.

At the end of the meeting, the forum went for an advocacy visit to the zonal office of Pankshin, Kanke and Kanam Local Government Areas Vehicle Inspection Office (VIO) in Pankshin and later paid a courtesy visit to the office of the Pankshin Unit of Federal Road Safety Commission Commandant, CRC Abdullahi Santali Maikasuwa, and Pankshin Areas Command.

Speaking while in the different offices: the Zonal Inspection Officer's office, and those of the FRSC and Nigeria Police Area offices, the chairman of the forum, Mr. Nandir Danjuma said they were in his there to officially welcome the VIO boss and newly transferred FRSC boss to Pankshin to solicit for their support and cooperation in their activities as union officials and at the same time as transporters.

They further pointed to them that the advocacy visit shall also afford them the opportunity to interact and explore areas of collaborating with their offices amongst other benefits, so that together they can move the Pankshin Zonal Office forward.

He added that they were also in the offices to solicit for a cordial/working relationship between the National Union of Road Transport Workers and officers and men of Pankshin Zonal Vehicles Inspection Office, that of FRSC and the Police Area Commands.

In his response, the Pankshin Zonal Vehicles Inspection Officer, Mr. Danladi Dakup Gokir thanked the officials of the union for the visit. He assured them of his maximum support and cooperation at all times, when the need arises. Gokir, however called on the union officials to always advise their members to avoid overloading, high speed and warned that his office will not take it lightly with any of their members that refuses to adhere to the laid down rules.

He emphasized on the need for the union and their members to always give priority to the maintenance of their vehicles, especially defects in motors to include screen wipers, signal lights,

headlights While speaking in the office of the FRSC boss, the Pankshin unit commandant of the federal road safety corps (FRSC) CRC Abdullahi Santali Maikasuwa said he appreciated the visit of the union to his office as it was timely because he needed to get acquainted with the relevant stakeholders in the road safety sector as he is newly posted to the unit command, and this will make his work easier for the benefits of the entire road users and the transporters as they are the sole stakeholders in the sector.

Maikasuwa was quick to remind the union officials to keep to their words earlier mentioned by the forum chairman, adding that if they failed in discharging their duty as the union officials, then officers and men of the road safety corps will leave no stones unturned in the discharge of their duties and he advised them to keep on educating and enlightening their members against disobeying roads rules and regulations attached to road using, especially in areas such as over speeding, over loading refusal to use the seatbelts when driving, unnecessary over taking at dangerous bends, don't drink and drive and don't make phone calls while driving.

He assured the union officials of a cordial working relationship between his office and the NURTW forum, he added that the FRSC and NURTW are partner in progress for a long time since the establishment of the corps in 1988 and promise that the existing relationship will continue for the sake of the safety of the people in Pankshin unit command of FRSC and the state at large.

The newly formed forum officials of the union in Pankshin, Kanke and Kanam Local Government Area (PKK) include: Mr. Danjuma Nandir as chairman, Alh. Yahaya Garba as Deputy Chairman, Mr. Alex Deshi as Secretary, Alh. Hamza Zubairu as Treasurer, Mr. Zaya Gomam - ex-officio and Deputy Chairman, NURTW Forum Plateau Central Zone, Mr. Victor Dimka, Secretary Kabwir branch as member, Alh. AliyuIsah Maina, secretary Dengi branch - member and Mr. Tapshakka Dimka,

Appreciate Nigeria, shun negative stories on leaders

From **ABBAS GUNGURA, Bauchi**

BAUCHI State Governor Bala Abdulkadir Muhammed, has expressed concern over some Nigerians who for whatever reason, most often than not, have developed the habit of criticizing, condemning than commending whatever is Nigerian.

He pointed out that what they do includes negative and disturbing concocted stories about leaders and the country that is seriously de-marketing the country before the international community and prospective investors. According to him, this lack of sense of patriotism is part of the factors that slow development of the country.

Governor Bala made the remark recently while speaking to journalists, at the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa International Airport, Bauchi, where he said on the contrary, Nigerians are innovative, hardworking, industrious and extremely intelligent beyond any iota of doubt.

"As Nigerians, we are enterprising, organized and so, we must push agenda for values and reel

out positive stories to make a difference", he said "I always feel proud; I raise my shoulders high anywhere in the world as a proud Nigerian that believes in everything Nigerian".

Governor Bala Muhammed added that: "There is that spirit called the Nigerian spirit, which is resilient, hardworking and innovative. But the problem with some Nigerians is that they consciously fail to speak beautifully about their country and the leadership as if we are a failed generation cursed by our ancestors which is not the

case".

While admonishing Nigerians to believe in themselves and the country and confess positive things about the country, Governor Bala said: "Why should we always allow others to tell our stories for us while we have the capacity and the technicality at our disposal for positive use? The social media and the other conventional media should always be positively used instead of using them for misinformation, distortion of facts, hate, falsehood, and half-truths.

"The world is so diverse and there is the need to

- Gov. Bala

break the walls; there should be a paradigm shift from consumption to aggressive production. Nigeria is a safe destination for investment and that lends credence to our efforts for security to lives and property and a healthy environment", he added

According to the governor, there is absolutely nothing wrong or offensive for people to criticize their leaders and the system with facts, not the usual wishful thinking or crass ignorance of policy implementation. He insisted that such criticism must always be in corrective ways tailored for the good of all that will support the efforts of leaders to perform better.

Commenting on his second term blue-print for Bauchi State, he said: "We have accomplished several feats in our first tenure which were acknowledged by the people that served as our launching pad for the landslide victory we recorded in the March 18th election. We shall redouble our efforts in our second tenure for lasting legacies for posterity to be fair to us".



Bala

Sports

SFF leaders call for the resignation of Rubiales

SPANISH Football Federation regional leaders have called on president Luis Rubiales to immediately resign after he kissed player Jenni Hermoso.

Rubiales, 46, has been widely criticised after the incident following Spain's Women's World Cup final win.

Hermoso, 33, said the kiss on her lips was not consensual.

Earlier, Spanish prosecutors opened a preliminary investigation into whether the incident amounts to a crime of sexual assault.

In other developments on Monday, Rubiales' mother Angeles Bejar locked herself in a Spanish church and went on a hunger strike in protest of the treatment of her son. In the evening, hundreds of people gathered in the centre of Madrid in protests called by feminist groups in support of Hermoso and against Rubiales.

Rubiales was suspended on Saturday by world football's governing body Fifa, a day after he had insisted he would not resign and claimed the kiss was "mutual and consensual".

"After recent events and the unacceptable behaviour that has seriously damaged the image of Spanish football, the presidents request that Luis Rubiales resign immediately as president of the RFEF," the federation (RFEF) said in a statement on Monday, after an extraordinary meeting of its regional presidents.

Interim RFEF chief Pedro Rocha called the "extraordinary and urgent" meeting to discuss the federation's response to the incident.

The regional presidents gave "unanimous support" to Rocha in a statement released after the meeting, though they disagreed with an earlier statement requesting Uefa to strip Spanish clubs of their places in Europe because of government interference in the Rubiales saga.

They asked Rocha to withdraw the statement, that could have seen Real Madrid and Barcelona thrown out of the Champions League, though European football's governing body had already rejected the request anyway.

The statement also called for an overhaul of the federation's management.

Uefa has been in contact with Fifa but has not commented because the incident took place at a Fifa event, so the European organisation feels it is right the world governing body takes the lead on the investigation.

The suspension Fifa has imposed also has global status, so that already means Rubiales will not be in Monaco for the Champions League draw on Thursday or the Uefa executive committee meeting in Cyprus next month.

When Fifa announced Rubiales had been suspended on Saturday, it ordered him, the RFEF and its officials and employees not to attempt to contact Hermoso, whom the RFEF had threatened with legal action earlier that day.

Meanwhile, Spain's Sports Tribunal (TAD) also met on Monday to discuss the Spanish government's request to suspend Rubiales, with a decision yet to be announced.

Spain's top criminal court said it was opening its investigation in light of the "unequivocal nature" of Hermoso's statements, saying it was necessary "to determine their legal significance".

"Given the public statements made by Jennifer Hermoso, the sexual act she was subjected to by Luis Rubiales was not consensual," a statement said.

Legal experts will also contact the



Pressure has been growing on Luis Rubiales from many quarters



Protestors applaud during a demonstration called by feminist associations in support of Spain's midfielder Jenni Hermoso

player "to offer her the option of legal action, giving her the chance to contact National Court prosecutors within 15 days for information about her rights as a victim of an alleged sexual assault should she wish to file a complaint".

The statement added: "In order to proceed with a case for sexual assault, harassment or sexual abuse, it will be necessary for the injured party or their legal representative to file suit, or the public prosecutors' office."

Rubiales' mother Angeles Bejar has locked herself in the Divina Pastora church in Motril on the southern Spanish coast - the town where her son was raised - and says she has gone on a hunger strike because of the "inhuman hunt"

against him. She told Spanish news agency EFE the strike would continue "indefinite, day and night" - and added the "inhuman and bloody hunt that they are doing with my son is something he does not deserve".

Rubiales' cousin Vanessa Ruiz, who acts as a family spokesperson in Motril, said: "We are suffering a lot for him. He has been judged before his time."

"They [the media] don't stop harassing us. We had to leave our house. We want them to leave us alone and for Jenni to tell the truth. It's not fair."

Spain's acting labour minister Yolanda Diaz said on Monday that

male chauvinism was "systemic" in the country and had been shown in its worst form in the incident involving Rubiales.

Diaz, who is also deputy prime minister and head of the far-left Sumar coalition, called for social attitudes to change more generally in the country - and for victims of sexual harassment and violence to be better protected. "On Friday we saw the worst of Spanish society, of the structural machismo of this country," she said after meeting with representatives of the women's players' union Futpro, which represents Hermoso.

"They clapped and humiliated and made fun of a person they had the obligation to protect under the sports law and far from doing that,

they inflicted more damage, more pain, more vexation."

During the ceremony following the World Cup final, Spanish forward Jenni Hermoso is first embraced and then kissed on the lips by Luis Rubiales.

Hermoso later reacts to the kiss during a live stream and says she "did not enjoy" it.

Rubiales issues an apology saying he is "sorry for those who were offended" after being fiercely criticised by other footballers, the media and even the Spanish prime minister, some of whom called on him to step down.

World football's governing body FIFA opens disciplinary proceedings to examine Rubiales' actions.

Players and fans have shown their support for World Cup star Jenni Hermoso after she was kissed on the lips by Spain's Football Federation (RFEF) president Luis Rubiales.

Slogans such as "we are Jenni" and "we're with you" took centre stage at some La Liga and Copa de la Reina matches over the weekend.

The shows of support were not just confined to the football pitch. Protests gripped Spain after Luis Rubiales kissed the player following Spain's win over England in Sydney a week ago.

He was provisionally suspended by Fifa for 90 days on Saturday, after 33-year-old Hermoso said the kiss prior to the team lifting the trophy was not consensual, despite Rubiales's claims to the contrary.

The 46-year-old called it "mutual, euphoric and consensual".

Rubiales's refusal to quit and insistence he would "fight until the end" overshadowed Spain's win and the wider conversation around women's sport.

An internal investigation has been launched by the RFEF, but only after it initially said it would take legal action over Hermoso's comments and questioned her version of events.

The RFEF will hold an urgent meeting on Monday. The country's sports court will also meet.

Sports

Djokovic replace Alcaraz as world number one

NOVAK Djokovic will replace young rival Carlos Alcaraz as the men's world number one after a routine win on his US Open return.

BBC SPORT said that, Serbia's Djokovic, who lost the Wimbledon final to Alcaraz, won 6-0 6-2 6-3 against France's Alexandre Muller in Monday's night session in New York.

Djokovic, 36, was not allowed to play in the United States last year because he was not vaccinated against Covid-19.

He has returned knowing another title will be a record-equalling 24th major.

Matching Australian Margaret Court's all-time tally is Djokovic's target and he made a statement start by breezing past 84th-ranked Muller.

"I started tremendously well, we started quite late but nevertheless I was excited to go out on the court - it has been a couple of years," said Djokovic, who will spend a record-extending 390th week at the top of the ATP rankings.

"In the second and third sets I dropped the level of my serve and I had to work for the points a bit more. Nevertheless I played great and I liked the level."

Having not started until 23:00 local time, the three-time US Open champion showed he did not want to



Djokovic

hang around and only dropped eight points in a 23-minute opening set.

A smiling Muller raised both arms in celebration when he finally got on the scoreboard for 2-1 in the second set but the 26-year-old could not stop Djokovic from moving further ahead.

Muller offered more resistance in the third set before Djokovic won the final four games to wrap up victory in one hour and 34 minutes.

Djokovic, who won the Australian Open and French Open earlier this year, is aiming for a fourth title at Flushing Meadows and will play Spain's Bernabe Zapata Miralles in the second round. He will return to world number one after the tournament.

Top seed Alcaraz, 20, won his first major at the US Open in

Djokovic's absence last year and starts the defence of his crown against Germany's Dominik Koepfer on Tuesday.

Alcaraz and Djokovic are the joint favourites for the men's singles title having developed a fascinating rivalry over the past 12 months.

It was bubbling at the start of the season but without both present at key tournaments there was little chance for the pair to go toe-to-toe on the court.

Now the match-up has ignited over the past few months following three compelling contests in the French Open semi-finals, the Wimbledon showpiece and this month's Cincinnati final.

Alcaraz and Djokovic cannot meet at the US Open until the final as a result of being the top two seeds.

WORLD number one Lilia Vu and second-ranked Nelly Korda are among nine automatic qualifiers who will represent the United States at the Solheim Cup next month.

BBC SPORT said that, LPGA Tour rookie Rose Zhang, who won the Mizuho Americas Open on her professional debut in June, is also named.

The team, captained by Stacy Lewis, is made up by Allisen Corpuz, Megan Khang, Jennifer Kupcho, Danielle Kang, Andrea Lee and Lexi Thompson, Ally Ewing, Cheyenne Knight and Angel Yin.

"I am so excited to have these nine players on the team," said Lewis.

"The last year has been exciting - and challenging - and to have these players locked in has me pumped for the week in Spain.

"Even the rookies aren't true rookies in my eyes. Over the last two years they have proven to be great competitors and I have no doubt that they won't be overwhelmed by the experience."

Thompson, who is making her sixth appearance at the tournament, and Zhang qualified as the two highest-ranked Americans who were not in the top seven of the country's Solheim Cup standings.

Ewing, Knight and Yin round out the team as Lewis' captain's picks.

"It's an honour to be on this team, for me to be with the best players in the world as well as be an athlete that

Solheim Cup: Vu among nine qualifiers for US team

represents her country," said Zhang.

"I can't wait to go to Spain and tee it up with these amazing girls, and at the same time represent the red, white and blue."

The tournament starts on 22 September at the Finca Cortesin in Andalusia, Spain, as the US look to dethrone reigning champions Europe.

It is the first of two huge events for the sport, with the Ryder Cup beginning on 29 September in Rome, but Lewis told BBC Sport that more could have been done to promote the game as a whole.

"I would have liked to see more collaboration between

the men's and the women's games," she said.

"We have two weeks of team golf, of patriotism, of playing for your country in back-to-back weeks. We could have done more to try to promote it."

"This is two great weeks for golf in general. Not just women's golf, not just men's golf but golf - let's band together and have two great weeks of crazy, fun golf and promote it."

"We are never going to have this opportunity again when both events are in the same year. I wish more had been done, especially to get fans to watch ours first and go to see the guys play."



Vu

Miyazaki wins on New York main-draw debut

BRITISH qualifier Lily Miyazaki says earning £98,000 in prize money from her US Open first-round victory means she may not have to travel around the world on her own to play.

BBC SPORT said that, Miyazaki, 27, earned her first Grand Slam win with a confident display against Russia's Margarita Betova.

"The financial side is huge because obviously tennis is a very expensive sport," she said.

"Maybe now I can travel a bit more with a coach."

British number seven Miyazaki won 6-3 6-3 on the opening day in New York and her reward is a second-round match against Swiss 15th seed Belinda Bencic.

Miyazaki, who was born in Japan and moved to London aged 10, had never previously qualified for a major.

She usually plays on the second-tier ITF Tour and often travels to tournaments by herself.

Miyazaki shares her coach Craig Veal with fellow British player Jodie Burrage, with both of them watching the world number 198 at Flushing Meadows over the past week.

After coming through three qualifying matches to reach the main draw, she continued that form against an out-of-sorts Betova.

"Coming into the tournament I didn't expect to be at this stage. I'm so happy and proud of myself," said Miyazaki, who began representing Great Britain last year.

"For sure it definitely helps financially and obviously points-wise with my ranking."

Watched on by a healthy number of British fans, Miyazaki played solidly throughout and forced Betova into a number of mistakes.

When Miyazaki sealed victory on her second match point, she broke out into a beaming smile and lapped up the appreciation of the crowd, some of who were waving Union Jack flags.

Miyazaki's greater confidence against a Russian

opponent who has not won this season showed throughout.

She regularly posed Betova problems with her consistent returning, using the cross-court forehand in particular to good effect in a smart tactical performance.

Betova reached a career-high ranking of 41 in 2016 before a serious knee injury derailed her career.

She also took time away from the tour to have her son in late 2021 and, now outside the top 1,000, is playing under a protected ranking.

After Betova broke for 3-1 in the first set, she was unable to consolidate in her next service game before a poor volley and double fault at 3-3 swung the momentum towards Miyazaki.

Winning five successive games put Miyazaki ahead and she showed composure to fight back from 0-40 down at 2-2 in the second set before decisively breaking Betova in the sixth game.

Unable to take a match point on Betova's serve at 5-2, she took another opportunity on her own serve to become the first Briton to reach the second round.

"My phone is blowing up. It's in my pocket and I can feel it going right now," said Miyazaki, who has an undergraduate degree in maths and did an IT management master's which focuses on data science.

"I've literally only messaged my parents and one of my friends as well."

"They're over the moon, they have obviously sacrificed a lot for me at a young age."

Six other Britons - Andy Murray, Katie Boulter,

Cameron Norrie, Burrage, Dan Evans and Jack Draper - play their opening matches at Flushing Meadows on Tuesday.

Gauff win, Maria Sakkari out

American hope Coco Gauff survived a scare as she fought back to beat German qualifier Laura Siegemund in the US Open first round.

BBC SPORT said that, Gauff, 19, was outplayed in the first set but turned things around to win 3-6 6-2 6-4 in the New York night session.

Earlier, Polish top seed Iga Swiatek began her title defence with a 6-0 6-1 win over Sweden's Rebecca Peterson in just 58 minutes.

Greek eighth seed Maria Sakkari was the biggest casualty on day one.

Sakkari, 28, has now lost in the first round of three consecutive majors after she was beaten 6-4 6-4 by Spanish world number 71 Rebeka Masarova.

Elsewhere, fourth seed Elena Rybakina - who had struggled in the build-up with a shoulder injury - beat Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk 6-2 6-1, while Brazilian 19th seed Beatriz Haddad Maia beat 2017 champion Sloane Stephens.

Danish former world number one Caroline Wozniacki, who retired in January 2020 and has since had two children, marked her return to Grand Slam action in style with a 6-3 6-2 win against Russian qualifier Tatiana Prozorova.

"It feels amazing to be back. I was nervous coming out here but to get a win under my belt feels so special," said two-time

US Open runner-up Wozniacki, who plays 11th seed Petra Kvitova next.

Sixth seed Gauff is among the favourites to challenge Swiatek at the final major of the season, having won the two biggest titles of her career - at Washington and Cincinnati - in the build-up.

But she was made to dig deep against 35-year-old Siegemund, who has fallen down the rankings amid injury struggles.

Gauff was unable to match Siegemund's intensity in a first set where the German played with variety and was particularly clinical at the net.

With a star-studded crowd including former United States president Barack Obama, his wife Michelle, 2006 US Open

champion Maria Sharapova and boxer Mike Tyson, Gauff had some problem-solving to do.

The teenager broke in a 26-minute first game of the second set, an epic that saw Gauff finally convert an eighth break point.

That proved pivotal as she used the momentum to quickly level the match.

Gauff broke twice to lead 3-0 in the decider and, after losing patience with Siegemund's time-wasting, overcame a late wobble to progress.

The pair shared a terse handshake after a fiery third set where both argued with umpire Marijana Veljovic about the time Siegemund was taking between points.

Asked on court to describe the match, Gauff, who will face 16-year-old Russian Mirra Andreeva in the second round, responded: "Slow. It was a tough match, I wasn't playing my best tennis."

"Laura is not an easy opponent and fights until the end. I overcame a lot of adversity so I was happy to get through."

In contrast, Swiatek made quick progress against world number 86 Peterson.

The world number one, who could lose the ranking to Aryna Sabalenka at this tournament, earned her 16th consecutive straight-set victory in the first round of a Grand Slam.



Miyazaki



Gauff

Sports



Super Eagles

Super Eagles' coaching in uncertainty

SUPER Eagles defender Kenneth Omeruo has shed light on the looming question of who will lead the Nigerian national football team for their critical 2023 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) qualifier against Sao Tome and Principe, Soccernet.ng reports.

The uncertainty surrounding the head coach position has been a topic of discussion over the past few months.

Newsnow said that, Back in June, Ibrahim Gusau, the president of the Nigerian Football Federation (NFF), stated that a public vote would determine the fate of current head coach Jose Peseiro.

However, as of now, no definitive decision has been made regarding this public vote, leaving the situation hanging in the balance.

Rumours have also circulated about the NFF's intentions to line up a temporary replacement for Peseiro, adding to the ambiguity surrounding the coaching staff.

While the Super Eagles have secured their spot in the 2023 AFCON, their final group game of the qualifier against Sao Tome on September 10 remains a must-honour fixture.

In a recent interview with Arise TV, Omeruo expressed his frustration with the situation, describing it as "crazy" and calling for an "urgent fix."

The former Leganes star emphasised the importance of stability within the team's technical crew, stressing that it is vital for Nigeria to have a consistent and reliable coaching staff to achieve their potential.

"When it comes to talent, Nigeria have amazing players,"

the Turkey-based centre-back said.

"Even those that are on the bench in the national team go to their club sides and bang in goals week in, week out.

"We need to have a stable technical crew. A technical crew will take us to where we are supposed to be and give us exactly [the guidance] that we get in Europe.

"We do not even know who will be the coach in the next game. It is crazy, and it has to be fixed."

As it stands, the Super Eagles are leading Group A of the qualification round with 12 points from five games, followed closely by Guinea-Bissau with 10 points.

Sierra Leone occupies the third position with five points, while Sao Tome sits at the bottom of the group with just 1 point.

'Moyes does not get enough credit for West Ham'

DAVID Moyes does not get the credit he deserves for his achievements at West Ham, says Hammers forward Jarrod Bowen.

BBC SPORT said that, Moyes, 60, has led the club to two top-seven finishes, a Europa League semi-final and the Europa Conference League since returning for a second spell.

Now the Hammers are sitting second in the Premier League after taking seven points from their first three games.

"What he's done for this club I don't think any other manager would come close to," Bowen told 5 Live Sport.

The east London club were one point and one place above the relegation zone when the Scot took charge in December 2019.

After leading the club to safety, Moyes guided the Hammers to finishes of sixth, seventh and 14th, as well as scooping last season's Conference League title - their first major trophy since the FA Cup in 1980.

"When I joined, they were in a relegation battle," said Bowen, who arrived from Hull in January 2020. "He kept the club up, then we had two seasons of finishing sixth and seventh, getting to a Europa League semi-final, going all the way and winning the Conference League.

"What he has done for the club probably doesn't get enough credit. But that's just noise. The players respect the manager, respect his ways."

West Ham won 3-1 at Brighton on Saturday, with Bowen joined on the scoresheet by James Ward-Prowse and Michail Antonio.

"Since I've signed we've had a really good group and that's spearheaded by the manager," Bowen said. "He believes in what he wants around the dressing room and training ground every day.

"Discipline, routines. Everyone has bought into that and you can see what



Moyes

CHELSEA striker Romelu Lukaku is set to join Serie A side Roma on a season-long loan.

BBC SPORT said that, The deal includes an £8m loan fee and Roma will be covering the 30-year-old Belgium international's wages.

Inter Milan had hoped Lukaku, who is not part of Mauricio Pochettino's plans at Chelsea, would return to the club where he spent last season on loan.

But the forward was unhappy coach Simone Inzaghi did not start him in the Champions League final.

Juventus were also keen to sign Lukaku but were unable to make the changes required to their squad.

There are still some details to be finalised but the agreement for his return to Italy is essentially done.

A source close to Roma owners the Friedkin family, who took over the club in 2020, said the transfer demonstrated their commitment and desire to "achieve the glory the club and the fans deserve".

The move to Roma means Lukaku will be reunited with Jose Mourinho, who persuaded him to join

Lukaku closes in on Roma loan move

Manchester United ahead of Chelsea when he moved to Old Trafford from Everton in 2017.

Lukaku moved back to Chelsea from Inter Milan for £97.5m in August 2021 on a five-year-deal for his second spell at Stamford Bridge, but has struggled to establish himself and this season has been training away from the first team.

He has scored 15 goals in 59 games for the Blues in two spells.

"When he is conditioned and fit he is a real handful," former Chelsea striker Chris Sutton told BBC Radio 5 Live's Monday Night Club.

"He has had a brilliant career but, at 30, he has to prove himself again.

"The Chelsea thing is baffling in some respects, that he seemed to be frozen out and Chelsea have a striker crisis, yet they weren't bringing him back into the fold which was slightly odd."



Lukaku

Liverpool will be Man City's closest title challengers - Sutton

Liverpool will be Manchester City's closest challengers in the Premier League this season, says Chris Sutton.

BBC SPORT said that, Jurgen Klopp's side completed a remarkable turnaround with 10 men on Sunday as substitute Darwin Nunez scored twice in a 2-1 win at Newcastle.

Speaking on BBC Radio 5 Live, Sutton said the result was a "major statement".

"They are probably the ones who I think can push

Manchester City the most," said Sutton on the Monday Night Club.

Defending champions City are currently top after three wins in their three games, with Liverpool two points behind, having drawn at Chelsea in their opener.

Sutton added: "I think in terms of, they went down to 10 men against Bournemouth last week and saw them off pretty well, but to do it at Newcastle - I thought that was a major statement.

"I still think City will win the Premier League, but Liverpool needed that yesterday and will go from strength to strength - if they can keep hold of Mohamed Salah."

Egypt forward Salah, 31, has scored 187 goals in 308 games for Liverpool since joining from Roma in 2017, but has been linked with a move to Saudi Arabia, despite Klopp insisting he is not for sale.

Liverpool brought on forwards Nunez and Diogo Jota against Newcastle, while Luis Diaz and Cody Gakpo started the match against Eddie Howe's side in a front three, alongside Salah.



Sutton

Portugal's Jota and Colombia's Diaz were injured for large spells last season as Liverpool finished fifth.

But Sutton says with all five forwards fit, Liverpool have the strongest attack in the Premier League.

"If you look at Liverpool's frontline and the fact they can leave Jota [and Nunez] on the bench, that's a formidable frontline," he added.

"It's hard to think of another team in the Premier League who have that strength in depth.

"Diaz was out for a large part of last season, Jota was out [while] Salah has always been super reliable. Nunez, it was a strange season, but you saw signs there was a player there.

"You wonder if the nature of [Nunez's] goals, with both goals clinically taken, if that will give him the boost and really kick Liverpool on. He's physically strong, he can run, he looks a handful."

Sutton also praised Klopp's work in the transfer market this summer.

The Merseyside club signed Hungary midfielder Dominik Szoboszlai from RB Leipzig in a £60m deal, and Argentina's World Cup-winning midfielder Alexis Mac Allister from Brighton for £35m.

Japan international Wataru Endo also joined from Stuttgart as fellow midfielders Fabinho, Jordan Henderson, James Milner, Naby Keita and Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain left the club.

"We've all spoken about Liverpool's signings, Szoboszlai and Mac Allister," said Sutton. "They're an upgrade on Henderson and Fabinho - Liverpool have a more creative midfield."

The Reds, who are fourth in the Premier League, host Aston Villa at Anfield on Sunday.



Quest



writer

REUBEN ABATI PhD

FRAGMENT

To mark his 70th birthday, Bishop Kukah is announcing his plans to build a befitting edifice for the Kukah Centre, one of Africa's leading policy think-tanks. He and the Centre deserve every possible support on a sustainable basis. The Centre would be a major legacy offering from a priest who is on way easily to becoming a legend.

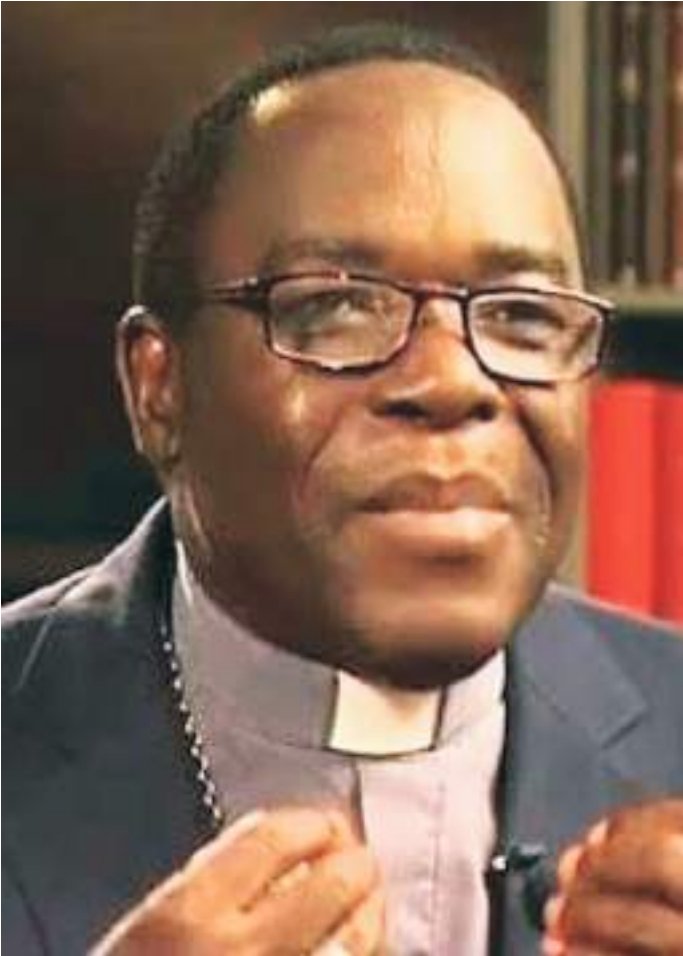
REUBEN ABATI

Hassan Kukah at 70: A tribute

The Catholic Secretariat in Lagos served the Catholics as an intellectual power house. Kukah had able lieutenants: Fr. George Ehusani, his then Deputy who would later succeed him as Secretary-General. There were others too: Rev. John Uba Ofei and Rev. Fr. Iheanyi Enwerem.

On a regular basis, the Secretariat issued press releases and also organised seminars and conferences on various topics of interest with stakeholders brought together to chart the way forward for Nigeria. I was a familiar participant at those Sunday evening sessions. Many of us became so close to the Catholic priests, we began to also talk about liberation theology. Nigerians had been so badly treated many priests felt it was their obligation and ecclesiastical duty to help free the people from the shackles of oppression. Even when there was no seminar, the doors of the Catholic Secretariat were always open. I later developed the habit of stopping by whenever I was in that part of the city. On a good evening, there was always sumptuous dinner. And the fridge was always full. Beer, wine...And there was Fr. George often twanging away on his guitar, trying out a new song, or reading a poem. He would later succeed Kukah as Secretary General and indeed that period – the Kukah-Ehusani – could be remembered as the golden years of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria. Kukah left behind a legacy that raised the profile of the Secretariat and the Church.

Beyond his public intellectualism and duties as a priest, Bishop Kukah has also been very active within the general community as an agent of peace and promoter of good governance and the common good. He is a compulsive bridge-builder, with friends in virtually every corner, and so well established is he among the political and private sector elite of Nigeria that many of his critics try to take pot-shots at him that he would still need to make up his mind whether he wants to be a priest or a politician. In recent years, through his major project, the Kukah Centre, he has been working in Nigeria's post-military dispensation to promote the cause of peace, good governance, and stability. The Centre in collaboration with General Abdusalam Abubakar, Nigeria's



Kukah

last military ruler up until 1999 to date, has jointly promoted a National Peace Committee, which gets politicians before elections to sign peace accords and give undertakings that they would embrace peace, as well as promoting peace in Nigerian communities. Kukah was a member of the National Human Rights Investigation Commission, Nigeria's equivalent of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, also known as the Oputa Panel 1999 – 2001, Secretary of the National Political Reform Conference under the Obasanjo administration in 2005, Chairman of the Ogoni-Shell Reconciliation Committee since 2005, and member of the committee for electoral reform, 2007 – 2009.

In addition to this, Bishop Kukah is a strong advocate for inter-religious harmony, using every opportunity to promote tolerance and peace. For his efforts, he has been appointed to the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue at the Vatican and as Chairman of the Commission on Inter-Religious Dialogue of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria. He has

also enjoyed a level of visibility and influence that many priests can only dream about. He has probably given as many homilies at events organized by other churches as he has done on Catholic occasions. Political leaders seek his counsel. The intellectual class and the commentariat respect him as one of their own.

The establishment at state and national levels seek his attention and counsel because they know that he can be trusted to say the truth without fear or favour. He is not a prosperity or attention-seeking priest. He and others like him including those that I mentioned earlier are cut from a different cloth. Priests of his type present a different model from that other Catholic priest: Fr. Ejike Mbaka of the Adoration Ministries in Enugu. It is a measure of the diversity of the Catholic Church that it is even possible to mention an Ejike in a tribute to Bishop Matthew Kukah.

As it were, virtually every Nigerian government has learnt to respect Bishop Matthew Kukah. The only exception has been the Buhari administration whose agents and spokespersons recently

developed a passion for harassing the priest. He has challenged them to an open debate. They have not been able to take on that challenge. Meanwhile, Kukah has remained unrelenting in his chosen task of speaking truth to power and exposing chicanery, hypocrisy and the stupidity of hegemony no matter how dandified.

It is not surprising that Kukah is a much sought-after public lecturer. He has given lectures on virtually every important platform in Nigeria, from convocation ceremonies to funerals to anniversaries. He stands out as a consistent man of intellect, with a transparent public spirit. He likes to tell stories: his usual style is to tell a story, catch the attention of his audience with some humour, of course except he is discussing such grim subjects as the killing of his kith and kin in Zango-Kataf in Southern Kaduna or members of his diocese in Sokoto state, or any form of religious persecution, or the failings of the power elite, having learnt the art of choosing his topics with purpose.

To mark his 70th birthday, Bishop Kukah is announcing his plans to build a befitting edifice for the Kukah Centre, one of Africa's leading policy think-tanks. He and the Centre deserve every possible support on a sustainable basis. The Centre would be a major legacy offering from a priest who is on way easily to becoming a legend. Ahead of tomorrow's event, he recently released a book titled *Broken Truths: Nigeria's Elusive Quest for National Cohesion*. Author of many articles in academic journals, Kukah remains conscious of his training and exposure as an academic: diploma, University of Ibadan, B.A., Pontifical Urban University, Rome. M.A., Peace Studies, University of Bradford, (1980), Ph.D, Political Science, University of London (1990), Edward Mason Fellow, Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government; Rhodes Fellow, St. Antony's College, University of Oxford, Honorary Fellow, Nigeria Academy of Letters.

The harvest from his fecund mind has been rich and impressive including some of the most authoritative books on aspects of Nigerian history such as: *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria* (1993) –

perhaps his most seminal work, *Religious Militancy and Self-Assertion: Islam and Politics in Nigeria* (1997); *Democracy and Civil Society in Nigeria* (2001); *Witness to Justice: An Insider's Account of Nigeria's Truth Commission* (2011), and *Broken Truths* (2022).

At 70, Bishop Kukah can reminisce with a strong measure of contentment that he has been able to impact many lives, using his chosen vocation of priesthood to make a difference in the lives of those to whose spiritual health he ministers and the larger community of men and women who have drawn inspiration from his wealth of knowledge, humility and accomplishments. As a person, Bishop Kukah is friendly, kind-hearted and always ready with a listening ear. Nobody has given him any national honour. He probably does not need it. Nigeria's security agencies have stalked and questioned him. He has been abused and threatened for his no-holds-barred homilies. He has been labelled a religious bigot. He is, however, not afraid of authority figures because of his own commitments to a higher cause and his understanding of the dynamics of power. Those who use power and position to oppress the harmless, do so only for a while until they are reminded of the ephemerality of their advantages. Whatever may have been his travails, Kukah's critics lay the blame at the doorstep of the ambivalence of his insider-outsider relationship with power and politics.

But it can be said of Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah that he has lived a life entirely of service and that is the best kind of life. He deserves to be celebrated. What we will be celebrating is not material things and the celebrant is not likely to be decked out in flowing babariga or agbada, the accent would be on service, innovation, ideas, goodness, justice, peace and humanism. I join others in wishing Bishop Kukah many happy returns of the day. He is one of the few redemptive figures in a community of pastors and priests where sometimes it is difficult to truly know what has happened to Christian leadership in our land. To Bishop Kukah: 70 Hearty Cheers!

Abati, a former presidential spokesperson wrote this tribute to mark the 70th birthday anniversary of Rev. Matthew Hassan Kuka, some years back.

Concluded from last week