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Malaria death rate dropped by 55% - WHO



Pate

THE World Health Organisation (WHO) on Monday said malaria death rates in Nigeria dropped by 55 per cent between years 2000 and 2021.

The WHO Regional Director for Africa, Matshidiso Moeti, who made this known during the launch of the 2022 Nigeria Malaria Report in Abuja, said incidence recorded from malaria

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SPECIAL adviser to President Bola Tinubu on Media and Publicity, Ajuri Ngelale, has said that Nigerians know that there are no magic solutions to their...

Special adviser to President Bola Tinubu on Media and Publicity, Ajuri Ngelale, has said that Nigerians know that there are no magic solutions to their problem.

Ngelale stated this when discussing the benefits of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's trip to India to attend the G-20 meeting. He said the president had

Nigerians know there'er no magic solutions to problems - Tinubu's Spokesma



Ngelale

rolled out plans to alleviate the sufferings of Nigerians since the removal of fuel subsidy.

When asked what measures the President was taking to better the lives of the Nigerians considering the hardship in the country after the fuel subsidy removal, Ajuri Ngelale said, "Nigerians are very brilliant people. They understand that you don't have magic wand solutions to their problems which have been in place for over a period of more than 50 years.

They know that when you

inherit a deficit you have to take out that deficit. That is why the president has been very consistent in his doings during campaigns and now in office. He did it in Lagos.

He brought out a master plan. He said if we painfully and diligently implement this master plan it would take us there. And we know what Lagos is today. The present has distributed palliatives to states and now is trying to crush energy costs.

FG to increase funding for education by 25%

The Minister of Education, Prof. Tahir Mamman, made this known when he declared open the 2021 and 2022 Nigeria Annual Education Conference (NAEC), in Abuja, on Monday.

Prof. Mamman also expressed his commitment to bridge the gaps existing between education policy statements and their actualisation.

He noted that the country had a lot of good policies on what was required to do in the best interest of the nation, but

that those policies were not bringing values to the sector.

"President Tinubu has directed the return of the 10.5 million out-of-school children to school at the expiration of his tenure. We still have a long way to go. We are not matching the children in the country with the desired education and this is because our policies are not producing the values we need.

"What we need is the action on the ground and not the policy declaration. This is where I can tell you



Mamman

we intend to come in. We want to bridge the gaps

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Wife of Nigeria's President, Sen. Oluremi Bola Tinubu (left) with wife of Plateau State Governor, Barr. Mrs. Helen Caleb Mutfwang yesterday on arrival at the Yakubu Gowon Airport, Jos during Her Excellency visit to present relief materials for IDPs in the State **PHOTO: JOHN LAR**

Lalong wins as tribunal sacks Plateau PDP Senator

AN election petition tribunal in Jos has sacked the senator representing Plateau South senatorial district, Napoleon Bali, and the member representing Barikin Ladi/ Riyom federal constituency in the House of Representatives, Peter Gyendeng.

The tribunal subsequently declared the immediate past governor of the state, Simon Lalong, of the All Progressive Congress

(APC) as the validly elected senator of the Plateau South district.

The tribunal also declared Fom Dalyop of the Labour Party (LP) as the validly elected representative of the Barikin Ladi/ Riyom federal constituency.

The electoral commission, INEC, had declared that Messrs Lalong and Dalyop came second in their respective elections held on 25

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News

FG to increase funding for education by 25%

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between policy statements and actualisation of outcomes.

"This is to give them future training that will enable them to live their lives and make them employers of labour. Everybody deserves to live a life of dignity for the well-being of their family", he said.

Prof. Mamman further stressed the importance of basic and secondary schools being properly equipped, saying, "We know that society that had benefitted from education is known for nurturing of creativity and research which starts from the lower levels."

The minister emphasised the need for mechanisms that constantly monitor and evaluate the implementation of policies' strategies to be put in place to ensure the SDG goals were accomplished.

He called on the various stakeholders in the education sector to work with the Federal Ministry of Education and agencies as well as State Ministries of Education.

This, he said, would lead to the identification of innovative approaches for improved funding, and ensure that Nigerians enjoy inclusive equitable, quality education and life-long opportunities.

Meanwhile, the Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Education, David Adejo,

explained that the 2021 and 2022 edition of the conference could not hold because of COVID-19 recovery, which informed its delay till now.

Adejo, represented by the Director, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the ministry, Abubakar Isah, charged stakeholders to deliberate on ways of collaborating and partnership towards actualising the 2030 education agenda.

Also, the United Kingdom, through James

O'Donoghue, the Education Adviser of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), pledged to support Nigeria in achieving the 2030 SDG agenda, as well as to ensure every child gets quality education.

O'Donoghue urged the Federal Government to increase funding for education and strive to ensure that the money allocated for education is used for the overall education objective.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz to visit Nigeria

GERMAN Chancellor Olaf Scholz will visit Nigeria in October as part of moves to further strengthen economic ties between the two countries.

A statement by Ajuri Ngelale, Special Adviser to the President on Media and Publicity, said the decision was reached on the sidelines of the G-20 meeting in India, where President Bola Tinubu and the German leader met.

"Thank you for this important discussion, Mr. President. I appreciate this opportunity to advance our economic relations. Your market is unique and our companies have a history in Nigeria.

"We acknowledge the business-friendly reforms you have put in place. I'm

happy to inform you of my desire to visit you in October, which will allow us to carry forward these initiatives", Scholz was quoted as saying after Tinubu expressed his desire to expand the partnership between Nigeria and Germany.

On his part, President Tinubu said: "It is not, for us, only a matter of designing the financial architecture for an expanded economic partnership. It is also about the practicality of aligning the perspectives of your large-scale manufacturers, such as Volkswagen and others, with the reality of the new incentives my government is putting in place for them

until the conclusion of the appeals.

Mr Lalong is now a minister in President Bola Tinubu's administration and is expected to continue in that office despite Monday's ruling.



Lalong

Lalong wins as tribunal sacks Plateau PDP Senator

Continued from page 1

February.

Both the APC and LP candidates asked the tribunal to nullify the election of Mr Bali (PDP) and Mr Gyendeng (PDP) on the ground that the PDP did not have a proper party structure and, therefore, could not file candidates for the elections.

They added that INEC did not comply with the new Electoral Act and guidelines as of the time of conducting the election.

In their separate rulings at the court, Omaka Elekwo (for the Senate election) and Muhammad Tukur (for the Reps election) nullified the election of the two PDP candidates because of the party's refusal to respect the order of a Jos High court to conduct ward congresses before the last general elections.

The judges further said the evidences presented by the APC and LP

candidates were relevant and admissible, adding that all the votes cast for the PDP candidates were invalid.

The sacked lawmakers are, however, expected to appeal the tribunal's ruling and will remain in office

Continued from page 1

also dropped by 26 per cent within the same period.

Ms Moeti said although Nigeria accounted for about 27 per cent of the global burden of malaria cases, the country has made significant progress.

She noted that Africa carries a high proportion of the global malaria burden, accounting for about 95 per cent of all malaria cases, and 96 per cent of all malaria deaths in 2021.

"While Nigeria accounts for around 27 per cent of the global burden of malaria cases, the country has seen major progress," she said.

Malaria incidence has

to come and prosper across multiple value chains and sectors inside our country."

After meeting the German leader, Tinubu also held talks with his South Korean counterpart Yoon Suk Yeol who commended the President's regional leadership.

"I wish to commend your strong leadership, following the peaceful transfer of power to you from your predecessor and we see a stable country in West Africa that is growing in stature", he said.

Students protest over school fees hike

STUDENTS at the University of Jos (UNIJOS), Plateau State, are currently protesting against the 300 per cent increment in the school fees of the university.

The source obtained the protests photographs which showed the students bearing various placards with inscriptions such as "Our right, education must not be violated" and "Degree; not debt. Fees Must fall."

The source on July 29 reported that the University of Jos announced the increase of school fees from the current N45,000 to N213,000 an increment of over 300 percent.

According to new school fees chat signed by the Registrar of the university, the N213,000 fee is for 100 and 200 level students while the 300 level students and above will now pay N160,000.

The source reports that the university had in

Malaria death rate dropped by 55%

fallen by 26 per cent since 2000, from 413 per 1000 to 302 per 1000 in 2021. Malaria deaths also fell by 55 per cent, from 2.1 per 1,000 population to 0.9 per 1,000 population."

Malaria, a disease caused by a parasite spread to humans through the bites of infected mosquitoes, kills more than 400,000 people yearly, mostly children in sub-Saharan Africa.

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation also accounts for a high per cent of malaria burden globally.

Ms Moeti said drivers of this continuing disease burden include the size of Nigeria's population and inadequate funding, amongst others.

"Drivers of this continuing disease burden include the size of Nigeria's population, making scaling up intervention challenging; suboptimal surveillance systems, which pick up less than 40 per cent of the country's malaria data; inadequate funding to ensure universal interventions across all states; and health-seeking behaviour, where people use the private sector, with limited regulation, preferentially."

Ms Moeti noted that

addressing the prevention, elimination, and control of malaria and the burden from other diseases requires critical data and information gathering for evidence-based investment and decision-making.

In his remarks, the Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Muhammad Pate, said governance, not finance, is a major challenge hampering the fight against malaria in the country.

Mr Pate said his team intends to fix this by working with development partners and the private sector to garner the resources needed to tackle the menace

Mr Pate also commended the government of the United States of America, and other partners for investing about \$900 million in Nigeria's malaria, HIV/AIDS, and Tuberculosis programmes.

"We appreciate the generosity of the American people and American government and other governments that contribute to the global fund because the global fund comprises seven countries, not only the United States government," he said.

2017, increased school fees to N45,000 from N27,000.

The institution's Vice Chancellor, then, Professor Sabastian Maimako, had cited the dwindling budgetary allocations, rising bills and the need to upgrade some materials.

Maimako said the figure was endorsed by parents, old students and other stakeholders at a meeting in Jos, where all factors were considered.

The source could not immediately ascertain whether the current Vice Chancellor, Professor Tanko Ishaya, had the same agreement with the students Union Government, parents and the stakeholders before arriving at this humongous and outrageous school fees hike.

UNIJOS increment came a week after the University of Lagos (UNILAG) announced increment prompting parents and Nigerians in general to kick against the astronomical increase of school fees by universities in the country.

The Take-It-Back movement had described the current trend of fees hike by many universities in the country as a "neoliberal agenda" of the President Bola Tinubu-led Nigerian government while millions of Nigerians are in abject poverty.

"Following the neoliberal agenda of the administration of @officialABAT targeted at pricing education out of the reach of the poor, authorities of @UnilagNigeria and other campuses have resolved to astronomical increments in fees.

"This is coming at the time more than 150 million Nigerians lives in Abject poverty complicated also by unprecedented hardship occasioned by increase in price of fuel, and electricity tariff.

"We stand with students of the University of Lagos, their poor parents, and millions of Nigerian students who will become victims of the renewed neoliberal siege on public education," TIB had stated.



A comprehensive approach to Nigeria's forex crisis

In recent headlines, the Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Mr. Wale Edun, highlighted a significant point: vast amounts of Nigerian money, held in domiciliary accounts across various banks, remain untapped. The minister and his team are strategizing on how best to utilise these funds to rejuvenate Nigeria's economy. The resonances between his remarks and the principles outlined in my 'Afonomics' proposal are unmistakable, writes Afolabi Abiodun.

I may not be a trained economist, but a fundamental truth stands out: allowing the USD to overshadow the Naira in Nigeria's economic landscape poses a significant threat. No nation aiming for global competitiveness and economic sovereignty would permit a foreign currency to dominate its internal financial system. By not addressing this critical issue with the urgency and aggressiveness posited in the Afonomics article, we risk undermining our economic stability. Alarmingly, there are reports of banks enticing customers with alluring returns on USD fixed deposits. At the time of penning this, the exchange rate stands at 927 Naira to the USD, and without intervention, this could touch a staggering 1,000.

Considering Mr. Edun's participation in the G20 summit, it's paramount for him and his team to derive insights from nations like India and China, which have successfully managed their forex scenarios.

India's Robust Approach to Forex Stability: Reserve Management: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) holds an impressive cache of foreign exchange reserves. This not only provides stability during economic downturns but also helps maintain confidence in the Indian economy on global platforms.

Forex Market Intervention: The RBI has been known to proactively step into the forex market. Their occasional buying and selling of the Indian Rupee (INR) ensures that it doesn't experience abrupt volatility, thus providing a semblance of predictability and stability to traders and investors alike.

Trade policies & FDI: India has strategically formulated its trade policies to boost exports. By liberalizing its Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) norms across various sectors, the nation ensures a consistent inflow of foreign exchange, bolstering the economy. **Borrowings & bonds:** The innovative



Afolabi Abiodun

External Commercial Borrowings (ECBs) and Masala Bonds are significant tools in the RBI's arsenal. These financial instruments, by design, encourage foreign currency inflow, strengthening the country's foreign reserve pool.

Regulations & remittances: The combined regulatory oversight of the RBI and the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) ensures that derivative markets are not marred by excessive speculation. Additionally, by streamlining the remittance process for its vast diaspora, India guarantees a consistent source of forex inflow.

China's strategic forex Management:

Managed Float Regime: Instead of a free-floating currency, China has employed a 'managed float regime' for the Renminbi (RMB). This system involves the People's Bank of China (PBOC) setting a daily reference rate and allowing the currency to float

within a specified range.

Amassing Reserves: China, being one of the largest economies globally, has accumulated vast foreign exchange reserves, primarily dominated by the USD. This helps buffer its economy against potential forex volatility.

Capital Controls: Beijing implements rigorous capital controls, regulating money flowing in and out of the country. These measures prevent sudden massive outflows, which could destabilize their currency.

Belt and road initiative: China's ambitious global infrastructure plan, the Belt and Road Initiative, has facilitated trade deals in RMB,

promoting its use internationally and ensuring forex stability.

Internationalization of RMB: Over the past decade, China has made efforts to internationalize the RMB, striking deals with various countries to trade directly in RMB, bypassing the USD.

The Afonomics proposition for Nigeria:

Building on the aforementioned, my suggestions include:

Swift Conversion: Any USD payments received should be converted to Naira within a tight 1-2-week window. If this isn't done, an automatic conversion at the I & E Window rate should be enforced. This reduces room

for manipulation and fosters prompt economic activity.

Parallel market oversight: Transactions involving the USD for vendors through parallel markets or "aboki" should face stringent conversion mandates – a week at most. If this window is missed, the prevailing I&E Window rate should kick in, ensuring fairness.

Addressing underground concerns: Some fear that strict regulations might push USD transactions underground. However, this is unlikely to be a pervasive issue. Business imperatives necessitate formal transactions, bringing them back into the system.

With the implementation of such a policy, Nigeria can quickly discern the intrinsic value of the Naira, promoting clarity and confidence in the forex market.

In summation, I urge our international representatives, especially those at premier platforms like the G20, to actively engage and collaborate with nations that have successfully navigated their forex challenges. Nigeria's forex conundrum can find its solution in a blend of creative policymaking, domestic production incentives, and knowledge-sharing from global best practices. The Afonomics proposition, albeit debated, offers a refreshing approach to address our forex instability. As we look towards the future, let's prioritise adaptive, comprehensive strategies that reaffirm the Naira's prominence, recognising its genuine worth and firmly reinstating its place as Nigeria's singular legal tender.

"Instead of a free-floating currency, China has employed a 'managed float regime' for the Renminbi (RMB). This system involves the People's Bank of China (PBOC) setting a daily reference rate and allowing the currency to float within a specified range. Amassing Reserves: China, being one of the largest economies globally, has accumulated vast foreign exchange reserves, primarily dominated by the USD. This helps buffer its economy against potential forex volatility"



Business & Economy

MSMEs to deliver interventions for 1.3m beneficiaries

A group of partners in the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) space is set to execute various MSME-focused interventions, targeting 1.3 million beneficiaries across 17 States and the FCT.

The Director of Information, Office of the Vice President, Mr Olusola Abiola, made this known in a statement on Tuesday in Abuja.

Abiola said that the MSME's interventions was part of their efforts to complement the Federal Government's drive to improve the economy and create more jobs.

He said the MSME and Job Creation Unit of the Vice President's Office which was coordinating the interventions disclosed that the interventions were geared towards ensuring the realisation of the Tinubu administration's commitment to job creation.

The director also said that the interventions were expected to ensure the success of the Federal Government's economic diversification with the MSMEs playing critical roles.

Abiola stated that the interventions which were to be completed in 17 states and FCT were shared centres for MSMEs providing four markets with 300kva Solar Panels and mini grids.

This, according to him, will provide eight hours of electricity a day to six Fashion Hubs and 2 Furniture Clusters.

Abiola said: "Other interventions are for car painting/ drying hubs and cold rooms for sea food storage among others."

Following vice president Kashim Shettima's directives on the speedy execution of the projects, five of the interventions will be completed and delivered by December 2023.

"12 other interventions are scheduled for completion before December 2024."

"The states to benefit from the interventions include; Abia, Rivers, Jigawa, Benue, Borno, Lagos, Ekiti, Niger, Sokoto, Enugu, Gombe, Akwa Ibom, Yobe, Ondo, Osun, Bayelsa, Imo and FCT."

He said the MSME partners collaborating with the Office of the vice president to execute the



Shetima

interventions include; Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) and Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC).

Abiola said: "Others are: Industrial Training Fund (ITF), National Agency for Food, Drug Administration and Control, (NAFDAC), Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON) and the Bank of Industry (BOI)."

"Also among the partners are the Nigerian Export-Import Bank (NEXIM), Development Bank of Nigeria (DBN), Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC), Bank of Agriculture (BOA), and Raw Materials Research and Development Council (RMRDC)."

Similarly, he said that the Nigerian Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) and Federal Inland Revenue

Service (FIRS), were among the partners. (NAN)

FG fiscal deficit rises to N3.7tn in Q1 – CBN

THE Central Bank of Nigeria says the Federal Government's fiscal deficit hit N3.68tn in the first five months of 2023.

A report released by the apex bank on the personal notes of the Monetary Policy Committee showed the committee was worried about rising low revenue amid high fiscal deficit.

The report quoted a members of the Monetary Policy Committee, Mike Obadan, as saying that the government needed to reform its expenditure to address the huge fiscal deficit.

Obadan, "The fiscal deficit of the country is a structural factor that has

continued to drive inflation upwards. In the first five months of 2023, the Federal Government recorded a fiscal deficit of -N3.7tn and this has implications for inflation considering the monetary methods of financing it."

He added, "However, deeper and broader reform of public expenditure is imperative. The new government needs to beam its searchlight on the structure of public expenditure with a view to eliminating unproductive and wasteful expenditures."

"This means that the government should carry

out meaningful fiscal consolidation to

FG to cut 83% in taxes, levies

10 single digits. We think by having less than 10 that the magic is that people will actually pay less, and government will collect more because where you get the efficiency from is the collection that sometimes does not go to the government today."

"The Market Traders Association told us that you need seven tickets every day just to sell pure water. Seven tickets for what? That is from the Local Government, but it is not in the constitution."

He noted that most of these taxes were coming from the local governments, while the

money they got most of the time was not remitted to government coffers.

According to him, some local governments were taking advantage of the constitution levy payments such as wheelbarrow tax, and pure water tax on the poor in society, who were struggling to make ends meet.

Oyedele also said Nigerians did not trust the government, which was one of the reasons for not paying taxes.

He said Nigerians should focus on holding the government accountable and transparent.



Shonubi

out meaningful fiscal consolidation to

complement the Central Bank's tight monetary policy stance aimed at reining in the apparently stubborn inflation."

According to the economic report for Q1, 2023 released by the CBN, in first quarter of 2023, "A decomposition of FGN spending showed that recurrent expenditure, capital expenditure, and transfers accounted for 84.6, 9.8 and 5.6 per cent, respectively."

An MPC member, Omamegbe, Mo', stated that, "The combination of declining revenues and increasing expenditures has led to a growing fiscal deficit, necessitating borrowing and potentially fuelling inflationary pressures."

"The underperformance of the oil sector, coupled with unsustainable fuel subsidies, further exacerbates the fiscal issues."

Nigeria to explore opportunities at Africa-Korea business summit

— Udeagbala

FORMER President of Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (NACCIMA), Chief John Udeagbala, says Nigeria is set to explore opportunities provided by the Africa-Korea Business Summit.

Udeagbala who is to represent Nigeria at the summit said this in a statement recently in Abuja.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the 2023 Africa-Korea Business Summit scheduled for Tuesday is with the theme "Africa-Korean Partnership in an Era of Great Transformation".

Udeagbala, who is also an ex-officio member of the Council of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), said that Nigeria would synergise with Korean industry players for deeper trade integration in Africa.

"The summit would build a complementary partnership for the 21st century through its technological leadership across a wide array of sectors from agriculture, mining and



Udeagbala

renewable energy to manufacturing and digitisation.

"It would attract leading voices and decision makers from the African and Korean policy, business and investment communities," he said.

According to him, the Africa Continental Free Trade Area

(AfCFTA) reached major ratification milestones in 2023.

"It was on the back of unprecedented political momentum for closer regional integration to see the emergence of Africa as a global growth hub representing a quarter of the world's population and a 16.5

trillion dollar market by 2050.

"Two moderated panel and networking sessions will take place to explore the drivers and stumbling blocks to this formidable growth trajectory, teasing out risks and opportunities to Africa's trade partners with a focus on Korea," he said.

Udeagbala said that the summit to be hosted by the Korean Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Korea-Africa Foundation, in partnership with the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs would have Wamkele Mene, Secretary-General, AfCFTA as speaker.

"Other speakers are Sim Tshabalala, CEO, Standard Bank, Choi Kyong-lim, Former Chair of WTO Council for Trade in Goods.

"Seo Sang-hyeon, Senior Economist, POSCO Research Institute, Sohn Jie-Ae, CNN Correspondent in Seoul as session moderator," he said. (NAN)



Business & Economy

The gender financial inclusion gap in Africa

WHILE financial inclusion is growing in importance worldwide there is still a discrepancy between male and female financial inclusion – the so-called gender financial inclusion gap. At a global level, the World Economic Forum's 2022 Global Gender Gap Report estimates it will take an average of 132 years to achieve gender equality globally, KAIRI BRAND writes.

At a global level, the World Economic Forum's 2022 Global Gender Gap Report estimates it will take an average of 132 years to achieve gender equality globally!

The African continent is no exception. It appears that there are several reasons for this. In many African societies, it is men who handle the financial affairs in a family, with the woman managing the household and caring for children.

Women in emerging African economies also often have lower financial literacy levels on account of lower levels of education. Moreover, in some countries, legal and regulatory barriers in fact restrict women's access to financial services. These factors lead to limited awareness and understanding of financial products and services.

It is important to note that these challenges vary across countries and regions, depending on factors such as socio-economic conditions, cultural contexts, and institutional capacities.

The irony is that, while the African financial literacy gender gap is very real, it does not mean that women are not entrepreneurs.

According to the fifth annual Mastercard Index of Women Entrepreneurs (2021), Sub-Saharan Africa has the world's highest rate of women involved in entrepreneurial activity at 26 percent.

In this, Botswana, South Africa, and Ghana are among the countries with the highest percentages. However, due to the various challenges women entrepreneurs across Sub-Saharan Africa continue to earn lower profits than men (32 percent less) according to a World Bank report.

One of the major inhibiting factors is the lack of capital on account of discriminatory practices. In Nigeria, according to the National Assessment of Women's Entrepreneurship Development, women are highly interested in becoming entrepreneurs but face unique challenges that prevent them from formalising and growing their businesses.

Addressing the gender financial inclusion gap is both a moral imperative and a strategic decision. Investing in equal opportunities yields positive outcomes, benefiting companies and contributing to economic growth.

Given the fact that so many women are entrepreneurs, and desperate to become financially independent, one can just imagine the economic growth that could be unleashed if more



women were given access to financial literacy.

Fast-tracking financial inclusion in terms of gender equality is therefore crucial for achieving economic empowerment and sustainable development.

So, what actions can be taken? Some progress is under way. Many microfinance institutions in Africa have specifically targeted women by providing them with microcredit and savings facilities.

These institutions have recognised the potential of women as entrepreneurs and have extended financial services tailored to their needs, including group lending methodologies.

The private sector is playing a pivotal role, with both local and global players already introducing innovative solutions to address and support the complex needs of this market.

As an example, Admirals, one of the world's leading fintech companies, reiterated its commitment to help fast-track digital financial inclusion in Africa with the opening of offices in Nigeria and South Africa.

The Estonia-based neo-broker provides a wide range of digital trading and investment products and financial services in accordance with its licenses from leading regulatory bodies worldwide.

Admirals prioritise financial literacy, education, and knowledge-sharing as essential drivers to encourage greater access to global financial markets.

Through its financial literacy initiative, Admirals Academy

provides access to diverse and straightforward education material and resources to equip clients with the knowledge and tools to make informed financial decisions.

Educating girls at a young age about financial concepts, including budgeting, savings, investments, and financial planning is important. Financial literacy programs can be targeted towards schools, communities, and workplaces to enhance girls' and women's understanding of financial services and products.

Setting up more bank branches and mobile banking services in under-served areas, particularly rural and remote regions where women face limited access.

Developing affordable and flexible savings, and micro-financing products that not only

address the day-to-day needs of women micro entrepreneurs, but also encourage greater discipline and support the sustainable growth of their businesses.

Drive digital financial inclusion, such as mobile money and digital wallets. This requires improving internet and mobile connectivity, promoting digital literacy, and addressing barriers like affordability and access to smartphones.

Providing training, mentorship, and access to capital through initiatives like business incubators and microfinance programs.

But there is no one-size-fits-all solution; it requires a strategic, multifaceted approach that considers social, cultural, economic, and policy barriers that stretch beyond borders.

As an international player with vast experience in both developed and emerging economies, Admirals has witnessed first-hand the successes emanating from the Group's approach to cultivating an inclusive environment across its regions.

Empowering people starts by investing in equality, respecting the individual, and encouraging and nurturing the growth of every person, regardless of gender.

With these principles as a foundation, strategies that promote inclusivity and enhance the economic participation of women, will have material, sustainable, and impactful results on societies the world over.

Brand is the head of Talent Management at Admirals, a global growing Fintech group.

"These institutions have recognised the potential of women as entrepreneurs and have extended financial services tailored to their needs, including group lending methodologies. The private sector is playing a pivotal role, with both local and global players already introducing innovative solutions to address and support the complex needs of this market. As an example, Admirals, one of the world's leading fintech companies, reiterated its commitment to help fast-track digital financial inclusion in Africa with the opening of offices in Nigeria and South Africa. The Estonia-based neo-broker provides a wide range of digital trading and investment products and financial services in accordance with its licenses from leading regulatory bodies worldwide."

Politics

NASS Tribunal: Bauchi APC vows to appeal judgments

From
ABBAS GUNGURA, Bauchi

THE National and State House of Assembly Election Petition Tribunals sitting in Bauchi recently dismissed 6 election petitions brought before them by APC as a party and defeated candidates of the All Progressives Congress (APC).

The two tribunals while delivering judgments on the petitions filed before them by APC and their defeated candidates in the last general elections, dismissed the petitions for lacking in merit.

The two tribunals headed by their Chairmen, Justices FolabiAjayi and A I Ebong respectively, passed judgments in their separate courts within the Bauchi State High Court Complex along Yandoka road.

Our correspondent in Bauchi reports that, at the National Assembly Elections Petition at High Court Two, where the judgments were passed by Chairman of the three man panel, Justice A.I Ebong, journalists covering the election tribunals were denied access to the tribunal.

According to the staff and security apparatus at the entrance of the courtroom, they were instructed not to allow journalists inside the courtroom.

The five petitions dismissed by the NASS Tribunal are those of Bauchi Central Senatorial seat between the defeated APC candidate, Uba Ahmed Nana (petitioner) and the winner, Sen Abdul Ahmed Ningi of the PDP joined by INEC, PDP as Respondents.

Also the Ningi/Warji Federal Constituency, between Abdulahi Sa' ad Abdulkadir, Petitioner of APC against AdamuHashimuRanga, INEC, PDP as Respondents as well as the Darazo/Ganjuwa Federal Constituency, between Bashir Bello, Petitioner of APC and Mansur Manu Soro, INEC, PDP Respondents.

Others were, Misau/Dambam Federal Constituency between Sabo Bappayo Ahmed, petitioner of APC against BappaAliyuMisau of the PDP, INEC, Respondents and Katagum Federal Constituency, Gali Mohammed, Petitioner, APC against AuwalGwallabe, PDP, INEC as Respondents.

The only State Assembly petition was for Dass State Assembly Constituency, between Bala Ali, the petitioner of APC and Ahmed Abdullahi, INEC, PDP as Respondents.

The Tribunals in their separate judgments on the petitions, declared that the petitioners and their witnesses failed to prove their allegations beyond all reasonable doubts.

The tribunals averted that most of the witnesses statements presented were based on assumptions which is not admissible, citing section137, paragraph 6 of the 2022 Electoral Act.

When journalists contacted the leading Counsels to the petitioners, to comment on the judgments of the tribunals, he said they will have to meet



Ganduje

with their clients first for the next line of actions.

The petitioners were awarded various sums of money ranging from N200,000 to N500 000 being fines imposed on the petitioners respectively.

However, the APC as a party has rejected the judgments delivered by the two tribunals against all its candidates who filed petitions against the declaration of INEC.

In reaction to the judgment, the Publicity Secretary of the APC in the State, Ali AdamuJalla described the judgments as laughable, wondering how the party will

lose all 6 petitions for the same reasons from two different tribunals.

He declared without hesitation that the APC will appeal the judgments, expressing hope and confidence that the APC candidates will get judgment at the higher court.

Ali AdamuJalla said that the tribunals abandoned all the reasons for the petitions and introduced new things which they cannot understand, appealing to the party's supporters to remain calm, peaceful, prayerful and hopeful.

Appoint young person as youth Minister

— NILDS D-G tells Tinubu

PROF. Abubakar Suleiman, Director General, National Institute for Democratic and Legislative Studies (NILDS), has urged President Bola Tinubu to appoint young person the Youth Minister.

Suleiman said this at a leadership conference to promote inclusive political party practices organised by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) in Abuja on Tuesday.

He commended Tinubu for appointing a substantial number of women into his cabinet, most of whom he said were youths.

"You can see what the president has done by bringing sizeable numbers of women into his cabinet. Now we need a youth as the minister of youth, not person of my age," he said.

He urged political parties to reflect on how to deepen democratic processes through their actions by giving women, youth and persons living with disability a chance in their operations.

He said a political party that excluded the youth, women and persons living with disability had excluded a good percentage of the



Suleiman

THE National Assembly Elections Petition Tribunal in Jos, Plateau State, has declared Minister of Labour and Employment, Simon Lalong winner of the

Plateau South senatorial district.

Chairman of the three-member panel, Justice Mahmoud Tukur, who declared the judgement on Monday, stated that the votes scored by the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP candidate, Napoleon Bali in the February 25 election were wasted.

The judge held that the PDP candidate was invalidly nominated, declaring Lalong, the immediate past governor of the state, who contested on the platform of the All Progressives Congress, APC, winner of the poll.

According to the judges, as of the time of the

Plateau: Tribunal Declares Ex-Plateau Gov Lalong winner of Senatorial Election, Sacks PDP Rep



Lalong

nomination, the PDP had no valid structure in the state.

The panel also ruled that candidates who petitioned the court on the ground of over-voting and non-compliance with the electoral laws could not prove the allegations.

In another judgement, the court also stacked the PDP

member representing the Barkin-Ladi/Riyom Federal Constituency and declared the Labour Party (LP) candidate Dalyop Chollom winner.

The tribunal ruled that Peter Gyenden of the PDP was not validly nominated at the time of his nomination due to his party's lack of a valid structure in the state.

PDP LGA Party Chairman dumps party

From
AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

A chieftain and Chairman of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in Okehi Local Government Area of Kogi State, Hon. Adinoyi Aroke aka 'Takeover' has officially resigned his membership of the party after 25 years sojourn in the party.

Hon. Aroke who served as former state financial secretary of the party and also former Special



Damagum

Appoint young person as youth Minister

— NILDS D-G tells Tinubu

population from participating in the democratic process.

"Political parties exist as platform where broad based ideas should be actualised and it's a fulcrum for inclusion where ambitions should be realised," he said.

He said the abysmal representation of women as candidates in 2023 election where 3.6 per cent women were represented in elective position was unacceptable.

According to him, Nigeria retrogressed from 25 women Senators to 15 Senators and nine to three House of Representative members from 2019 and 2023.

He said as long as persons living with disability, women and youths were left out of decision making, the country was still practicing monarchical government.

Mr Adebowale Olorunmola, WFD Country Director, said in 2027 Nigeria should have a totally different story contrary to what obtained in 2023, especially among the under-represented groups.

"Political party is the only platform where all, including the vulnerable, can contest for election because the country does not have independent candidate yet", he said.

Adviser to former Governor Ibrahim Idris on poverty reduction conveyed his resignation in a letter dated 7th September, 2023 and addressed to the Ward Chairman of the PDP in Oboreke Eba Ward in Okehi Local Government.

According to him, he has been a loyal and dedicated member of the party since 1998, noting that by the letter of resignation issued to the Chairman of PDP Oboreke Eba, his membership of the party has come to an end.

Hon. Aroke was the serving Local Government Party Chairman of Okehi, the home local government of Mrs Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan, the PDP senatorial candidate in the last National Assembly before his resignation from the party.

Part of the letter reads: "I hereby write to tender my letter of resignation from the People's Democratic Party (PDP), after my loyal and dedicated service to the party since 1998.

"With this resignation henceforth, my membership of the party has completely come to an end. I seize this opportunity to inform the ever growing, loyal and committed members of my political family and friends within and outside Kogi State, that my next political move will be made known after due consultation" he stated.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that some of the political parties present at the event included the All Progressives Congress and All Progressives Grand Alliance.

Others are People's Redemption Party, Accord Party Labour Party among others.

Politics

Rethinking democratic reversals in Africa

Democracy is simply put as the government of the people, by the people and for the people while government is said to be responsible for creating and enforcing the rules of a society, defence, foreign affairs, the economy, and public services. EMMANUEL OLONIRUHA writes.

GOVERNANCE similarly refers to structures and processes that are designed to ensure accountability, transparency, responsiveness, rule of law, stability, equity and inclusiveness, empowerment, and broad-based participation.

In a lecture titled "What is Democracy" in 2004, Larry Diamond posited that democracy as a system of government should have some basic elements such as a system for choosing and replacing the government through free and fair elections; and active participation of the people, as citizens, in politics and civic life.

Others are the protection of the human rights of all citizens and a rule of law in which the laws and procedures apply equally to all citizens.

These four major elements can be used as a yardstick to determine the strength of a democracy in a society because they contained the main ingredients that would bring much good to the majority of people through accountability and transparency.

Recently, at a webinar on the State of Democracy organised by the West African Elders Forum, an initiative of the Goodluck Jonathan Foundation (GJF), the body urged African leaders to put citizens' welfare, peace, and security at the centre of governance in order to consolidate democracy in the region.

With the theme, "Making meaning of democratic reversals in West Africa" the participants examined the challenges to democratic governance in the region and how best to advance democracy amid the growing trend of coups and unconstitutional change of government.

The speakers at the virtual meeting also urged governments, regional and sub-regional bodies, to invest more in citizen-centric initiatives that would help serve as a buffer against threats to democracy.

They also called for strengthening democratic frameworks in countries to ensure accountability and guarantee free and credible elections.

The panellists noted that a decline in the region because of the poor state of governance had led to frustration and trust deficit between citizens and government.

They called for the rethinking of democracy in the continent to address citizens' contemporary realities.

After the recent coup in Niger Republic, the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government rose against such unconstitutional takeover of democratically elected government and expressed the fear that if not properly handled it would form a pattern in the region.

President Bola Tinubu, who is the current Chair of the ECOWAS Authority, strongly condemned the situation and called for the immediate reinstatement of the deposed President Mohamed Bazoum, while putting in place several sanctions against the military leaders including the use of military actions as a last resort.

"We will not allow coup after coup in the West African sub-



Tinubu

region. We will take this up seriously with the African Union, European Union, America and Britain," he said in his acceptance speech as the Chair, adding that "we will take it up, it is a challenge."

Between August 2020 and now, five coups have occurred in three West African countries – Burkina Faso, Mali and Guinea with attempts in The Gambia and Guinea-Bissau foiled.

Nigeria's neighbour to the North, Chad, had an unconstitutional change of government led by Lt. Gen. Mahamat Idriss Déby after his father's death in 2021.

Mr Tinubu noted that although democracy is very tough to manage, it is the best form of government and countries of the region should ascribe to it.

"I make a pledge here that in furtherance of our region's economic recovery and growth, we will commit to democracy and promote democracy and the rule of law. I am with you and Nigeria, we are back," he pledged.

Acknowledging that he is the new kid on the block, the new Nigerian president said ECOWAS must bite back and cannot sit as a toothless bulldog, adding that "we will work collectively to pursue inclusive economic integration of the sub-region."

In an article, Sebastian Elischer, Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Florida, examined four key variables and their influence on coup outcomes.

These are: the internal coherence of the armed forces,

the ability of civil society organisations and political parties to mobilise against the junta, the deployment of donor leverage and trade dependency on regional and western partners.

Of these, he argues that the two that matter the most are: the internal cohesion of the military and the vibrancy of civil society groups.

Former Vice President Fatoumata Tambajang of the Gambia, who also runs a CSO, in her contributions at the webinar by the WAEF, attributed democratic reversal in the region to political leaders' disregard for normative values of democracy and inability to deliver on their political promises.

"It is time to rethink democracy within our context. First of all, what are the factors leading to democratic decline?"

"The context in the Sahel is complex because we have civil leaders who are not ready to respect the constitutions and civil institutions. They are also not ready to deliver on their democratic promises."

"Most of our leaders believe that after soliciting for votes and getting victory at the polls, they forget to deliver their promises to the people. Citizens are getting tired of voting and not seeing results."

"They are saying we want decent lives; we want food in our homes; we want security and competent people in the civil service who can deliver on services. They are equally saying we want equal

The Executive Director of Sahel Institute for Democracy and Governance, Mr Moussa Kondon, called on ECOWAS to redouble its efforts to protect democracy in the sub-region.

Kondon, also a panellist at the webinar, said that with ECOWAS, it was always negotiations and tonnes of negotiations while people were suffering.

"With globalisation, people have access to information and are more informed than before. ECOWAS must proactively engage and uphold its relevant instruments, especially those promoting democracy and good governance," he said.

The Executive Director, GJF, Ann Iyonu, described the views and opinions of the participants as not only commendable but enlightened and useful in addressing the menace.

Iyonu expressed GJF continued commitment to supporting and promoting critical projects and discussions that are capable of promoting good governance and deepening of democracy in Africa.

"We at GJF we'll continue to do the work we do on the foundation and try to protect the integrity of our democratic process."

"I assure you that on behalf of the Foundation and WAEF we remain committed to ensuring that democracy strives not only in the West Africa sub-region but the Africa continent."

Mr Ismail Abdulaziz, a senior editor with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), in his contribution, called on CSOs to strengthen democracy in Africa through the enlightenment of people and the leaders on what constitutes good governance.

"There is also need for the CSOs to hold power to account and to get the buy-in of the ruling party by not acting as alternative government."

Abdulaziz believed that WAEF was also growing into respectable leader's views in having good governance and constitutional government in the region.

"As democracy evolve in Africa, the issue of terms for leaders will be resolved and it will serve as a model for other democracies," Abdulaziz said

Some analysts said that the major reasons for coups and its acceptance in Africa cannot be divorced from the lack of democratic dividends for the population.

They, however, added that in spite of peoples hope for a better future with the coupists, they may not deliver the expectations of the people in the region.

Other analyst believes that a true form of democracy with an inbuilt checks and balance through separation of powers among the different arms of government is another way to ensure that reversal of constitutionally elected governments did not continue to gain ground in the region.

Out of at least 242 successful military coups that have occurred globally since 1950, Africa accounts for the largest number at 106. This is a trend that need to be contained by all stakeholders.

News Agency of Nigeria

REPEAT IMAGES

GOVERNOR MUTFWANG AT PLSG RETREAT

Plateau State Governor, Barr. Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang at PLSG retreat and On-boarding of Executive Arm of Government holding at the Unity Hall, NIPSS, Kuru, Jos South LGA recently



Governor Mutfwang (middle) his Deputy Ngo Josephine Piyo (left) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) State Chairman, Hon. Chris Adukuchili Hassan taking notes at the Retreat



Rev. Gideon Para-Malam, a resource person at the Retreat addressing participants



Cross section of Permanent Secretaries



Prof. Haruna Dabin, mni (right) with other PDP stalwarts



From left are, Barr. Rautha Dakok, HoS, Engr. Jeremiah Satmak, CoS and Arc Samuel Nanchang Jatau, SGS



Dr. Kachollom Gang, Commissioner, Higher Education (right) with other members of the State Executive Council



Kachollom Rita Pam, Acting General Manager, PRTVC (left) flanked by other Retreat participants



Barr. Mrs. Rebeccah Shaset, Permanent secretary, Youths and Sport with Hajiya Sadiya Yero, Permanent Secretary, Secondary Education

PHOTOS: DANLADI DUK

Politics

PEPT, judicial heist, and Nigeria's last bastion of hope

Corruption allegations are sticking stubbornly on the judiciary. Chairman, State and House of Representatives Election Petition Tribunal sitting in Kano, Justice Flora Azinge, recently raised the alarm that a senior lawyer was attempting to bribe her to influence judgement, writes KALU OKORONKWO.

THOUGH Justice Azinge did not disclose the identity of the lawyer allegedly trying to bribe the panel, she insisted that some senior lawyers arguing petitions before the tribunal were engaged in unwholesome moves to corrupt the system.

Visibly angry, she revealed in court how a senior lawyer offered a member of her staff N10 million to bribe the panel members. This was the second time the judge would raise such a weighty allegation. She had earlier accused an unnamed Senior Advocate of Nigeria of asking her to provide a bank account to send her "Sallah gifts."

A notable Nigerian lawyer, Mr Tunji Abayomi, recently also gave instances of corruption in Nigeria's judiciary, which he said had become a culture in the third arm of government.

To further buttress this allegation, Mr Abayomi said some time ago, a case that he had secured execution for was brought back to court and a judge stayed execution after he had allegedly collected money.

As at the last count two judges of the Federal High Court, Justice Mohammed Nasir Yunusa and Justice Hyeladzira Ajiya Nganjwa, are presently facing trials preferred against them by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) for allegedly receiving bribes from two senior lawyers, Rickey Tarfa (SAN) and Joseph Nwobike (SAN).

These are indeed a very dark period in Nigeria's history when the judiciary, which should have stood as an impartial and incorruptible pillar of justice, is facing a shocking assault on its integrity. Allegations of bribery, coercion, and political manipulation of the judicial process are surfacing on a daily basis.

Prior to the ruling of the Presidential Election Petition Tribunal (PEPT), there was a media hype against the person of the retired Justice Mary Peter-Odili, where she was alleged to be 'currently negotiating a pathway for Bola Tinubu' and that 'she meets regularly with Appeal and Supreme courts justices' in that regard, an allegation she had promptly denied.

"We deny every allegation contained in the publication and state that the publication is false, malicious, mischievous and a deliberate attempt at smearing the integrity and solid reputation of her lordship", said her media aide in a statement.

But the question is, with this kind of judgement by the tribunal, will it not be said that the old long adage "No smoke without fire" holds true?

With everything going on in Nigeria today, we should quickly come to terms with the fact that the independence of the judiciary is a cornerstone of any democratic society being the arm that acts as a check and balance on the executive and legislative branches of government, ensuring that the rule of law is upheld.

When the judiciary is compromised, democracy itself is at risk. Judicial heist not only jeopardizes individual cases but also the democratic principles upon which Nigeria is built.

Recovering from the judicial heist is a monumental task, but it is not insurmountable. It requires a multi-faceted approach including reforms as there would be a need to embark



on a comprehensive program of judicial reforms aimed at restoring the independence and integrity of the judiciary. These include the appointment of competent and

incorruptible judges, implementing transparent procedures, and enhancing judicial infrastructure.

Nigeria should also ensure that those responsible for undermining the judiciary must be held

Future elections at risk as citizens may rethink participation

THE enthusiasm with which Nigeria's young voters participated in the last presidential election may not be galvanised again in the nearest future. For many the Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) in their possession may have ceased to have any value following the decision of the Presidential Election Petitions Court (PEPC), NOSA IGBINODOLOR writes.

The run-up to the election saw increased youth participation in the discourse and campaigns. According to the South Africa-based Institute for Security Studies, there was a "connection between Nigeria's youth-led #EndSARS movement and the mobilisation in support of the Labour Party's presidential candidate, Peter Obi, referred to as the #Obidient movement. To his backers, Obi presented an opportunity for a new kind of governance with more transparency and accountability. Both the #EndSARS and #Obidient movements were dominated by mostly young middle-class Nigerians from urban areas."

On Wednesday, Nigeria's presidential election petitions tribunal rejected challenges by opponents to President Bola Tinubu's victory in February's disputed presidential election. The five Appeals Court judges said they did not see irregularities in the 2023 Presidential election that left some dead and many others maimed. The tribunal judges held that Nigeria's main opposition parties failed to prove claims of electoral malpractice against the governing All Progressives Congress (APC) in the February 25th disputed election.

The main opposition parties both alleged that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the

country's electoral body, conspired with the ruling party to influence voter turnout and disregard the Electoral Act, which mandates an electronic transmission of results.

The challenges came after one of the country's most tightly-fought elections, in which former Lagos State governor, Tinubu, won 37 percent of the votes cast, beating Atiku Abubakar of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and Peter Obi of the Labour Party to secure the presidency of Africa's most populous nation.

The rejection of the appeal by the opposition parties who alleged that Mr. Tinubu stole victory from them, followed an unceasing pattern that has characterised previous elections in the country.

Africa's largest economy returned to democratic rule in 1999, after nearly sixteen years of uninterrupted military dictatorship. The country has a rich history of electoral fraud and despite obvious irregularities and allegations of voting fraud by local and international observers, no legal challenge to the outcome of a presidential election has succeeded in Nigeria.

Elections in Nigeria, Africa's biggest democracy, have been dogged by low voter turnout which has declined every year since the 2003 election. Less than three in ten Nigerians who had Permanent Voter Cards turned up at the poll on February 25, making it the lowest voter turnout since the country started conducting elections in 1999.

It is difficult to separate the judiciary's poor subpar adjudication of elections' challenges from citizens' turnout.

The low voter turnout trend is worrying for Nigeria's democracy. The

accountable. This includes not only the individuals involved but also any officials complicit in the heist.

Nigeria has the potential to rebuild its judiciary, restore public trust, and reaffirm its commitment to the rule

of law. The path to recovery will be challenging, but with determination, reforms and a collective commitment to justice, Nigeria's last bastion of hope can shine brightly once again.

"The total amount of money reported by the justice sector respondents as corruptly demanded, offered and paid between 2018 and 2020 was N9,457,650,000."

According to the study, percentage of those most responsible for bribe for judgement cases were: Lawyers (27.17%); litigants personally (21.96%) court staff (clerks, registrars etc.)— (21.54%); judges (16.88% cent), government MDAs (7.37%); no experience on the matter (3.06%); chose not to say (1.01%), and others 1.01 percent.

Until her retirement in March 2020, Justice Zainab Bulkachuwa was the President of the Nigerian Court of Appeal – a highly influential judicial office which has direct prerogative in the empanelling of Election Petition Tribunals at the end of every round of elections in Nigeria.

"There is no such thing as justice in Nigeria, only power," Remi Adekoya, a lecturer in Politics at York University, noted in an X post

Increasingly, the judgements of Nigeria's courts especially in election-related cases offend the conscience, common sense and basic justice of all Nigerians.

"Increasingly, Nigeria's courts have become courts of Mumbo Jumbo and technicality rather than courts of justice. Technical legal rules are supposed to be a guide to justice, not a tool to thwart justice. That was the track that imposed Hope Uzodimma as governor of Imo State, even though he came fourth in the governorship election," Castro Ginigeme, lawyer and former adjunct law professor in the United States, said.

Nigeria's judiciary, he added, "is not fit for purpose as the method for recruiting judges is nepotistic and political."

NEWS

Foundation trains journalists on climate change reportage

From **TERESE TUHWA, Makurdi**

A Non-governmental Organisation, Christian Blind Mission has organised a two-day training workshop for media practitioners in the state on environmental and climate change reportage.

The workshop which took place recently at Green Belt Hotel, Makurdi, the state capital with the theme "Enabling Resilience to Climate Change Related Risks through Local CSOs' Strengthening (ER2CC) Project" featured environmental experts who drilled participants on factors responsible for environmental degradation.

In a lead paper presentation, a lecturer in the Department of Geography, Benue State University, Makurdi, Dr. Elizabeth Jeiyol who took participants on "climate change and sustainable development nexus as well as media and climate change reporting", harped on the need for

people to avoid practices such as carbon emission, deforestation, building on water channels, blocking of drainage channels among others.

She said when gas is emitted, into the atmosphere, it depletes the ozone layer, a situation she maintained has been responsible for general global warming.

According to the environmental expert, indiscriminate felling of trees without replacement, has accounted for flooding, erosion and other forms of environmental degradation. She advised the people to be wary of practices that are detrimental to environmental safety.

The officer in charge of Communication and Branding (CB), Mr. Hilary Chwuku, in another presentation tagged "Visibility" educated participants on the importance of visibility in any project undertaken by the foundation.

He said, any organisation that enjoys funding from any foreign

donor, especially the European Union on any project, was duty bound to acknowledge such a donor, revealing that failure to acknowledge in most cases discouraged such donors from offering further assistance.

Earlier, Programme Manager of the foundation, Mr. Emmanuel Egbodo while presenting a historical overview of the foundation, gave some of the foundation's core values which include honesty, faithfulness, commitment, diligence, diversity, inclusion, integrity, respect, love, empathy, equity and fairness.

State coordinator of the foundation, Mrs. Mimi Rachel Dzever who told participants some of the projects the foundation has undertaken in some communities in the state including tree planting campaigns in some communities in Konshisha and Gwer West Local Government Areas emphasized the need for the media to be part of the foundation in propagating her activities.

From **ANENE AIKE, Sokoto**

THE Sokoto State Arabic and Islamic Education Commission with support from United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and funding from Eleva Foundation of the UK recently flagged off a 4 day training for 100 mallams of Tsangaya schools on child safeguarding and alternative care for almajiri in the state.

Mr. Williams Nwaokorie of UNICEF, Sokoto Office, Child Protection Officer while addressing the participants on, "Understanding Child Protection, The Ideal Almajiri Education, Child Protection said children are the primary beneficiaries of their works, hence, urging all implementing partners to ensure no harm of any form against them.

He also noted that the 100 malams drawn from 8 local government areas of Sokoto State will be trained to support the endorsement and adoption of alternative care minimum standards for almajiri out of family care. He further said that a framework for monitoring compliance with alternative care will be developed as well.

Earlier in his welcome address, the Arabic and Islamic Commission's Secretary, Dr Umar Altine Dandin Mahe said that what

AIEC, UNICEF, foundation train Tsangala school mallams



Aliyu

has been brought is not new but what the religion admonished them to do.

He explained that children in Islamiyya and Almajiri schools should be seen as very neat, comfortable and given the needed care to appease others.

While commending UNICEF for its genuine commitment to children welfare worldwide, irrespective of religion, race and nation, Umar Altine admonished the clerics to pay attention to every segment of the training and make it interactive for

better understaffing.

He also opined that a law be put in place to prescribe the acceptable age within which parents can take their wards to other places for Islamic education.

On his part, Sokoto State Executive Chairman of Zakkat and Waqf Commission, Mallam Lawal Maidoki, in a goodwill message, said the issue of Almajiri and its proliferation should be carefully studied.

Maidoki who was represented by the Director of Endowment Services of Zakkat Commission, Mallam Jabbi Ibrahim Illela Dabore implored people to differentiate between the large number of children floating the streets and who are almajiri.

Making his presentation on "Child Safeguarding from the Lenses of Islamic Law" and "The Ideal Almajiri Education and Child Safeguarding," a Professor of Islamic Law from University of Maiduguri and UNICEF resource person, Umar Alkali urged Islamic teachers to admit global realities in dealing with children under their care.

Prof. Alkali, while warning that God will ask parents over their responsibilities to their wards, reinstated that Islam bestowed certain rights on children.

He also advised that any ward to be taken out of parents' care for Almajiri school, should not be less than seven years. However, the participating Mallams unanimously suggested and agreed that the ideal year should be ten years.

Professor Umar Alkali also clarified that the child could be attending schools both western and Islamic from their parents homes even before attainment of the said age.

Participants at the training were divided into two with 50 from 4 local governments to be trained for 2 days while the remaining 50 trained for another 2 days at Dankeni Guest inn Sokoto.

NCC boss commends Swedish government, Ericsson

By **Dorcas Pankyes**

THE Executive Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer (EVC/CEO) of the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), Prof. Umar Garba Danbatta, has commended the Swedish Government and Ericsson for their commitment and consistency in a strategic partnership with NCC on capacity building which has strengthened the

Commission's regulatory activities.

Reuben Muoka Director, Public Affairs disclosed this to reporters in a statement in Abuja. Speaking at a workshop jointly organised by NCC and its Swedish partners within the framework of the Swedish Programme for Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in Developing and Emerging Regions (SPIDER), Danbatta stressed the

significant strides made by NCC in the field of ICT.

"This workshop signposts the vital role the Nigerian Communications Commission, as a regulator, has been playing in the West African sub-region. It also highlights the unending objective of keeping up with the times and ever-evolving dynamics of the telecommunications sector," Danbatta stated.

The NCC Chief Executive reiterated the enduring commitment of the Swedish Government and SPIDER to the cause of ICT development in emerging regions and acknowledged their roles in improving access to healthcare, education, income generation, and employment opportunities in West Africa, thereby contributing to poverty reduction.

"This periodic strategic engagement under the auspices of SPIDER over the years, has made the commission a more effective regulator and enhanced its contribution to the development of the telecommunications sector. This contribution will further support the creation of an ecosystem that is beneficial to the

economies and people of the region," the EVC said.

In her speech, the Swedish Ambassador to Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroun, and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Mrs. Annika Hahn, highlighted the significance of ICT regulation and capacity building as key drivers for economic development and social progress.

The ambassador also commended the NCC for hosting the event and fostering collaboration between the two nations. She acknowledged the pivotal role ICT has played in Sweden's economic growth being the birthplace of Ericsson, one of the world's oldest and largest ICT companies, with a rich history in the sector.

The ambassador stressed the global technological revolution and its potential to catalyse industrial and economic development. She stressed the need for modern and adaptable regulation to navigate this rapidly-evolving landscape.

Hahn also stated that, "To cope with this new and swiftly-developing environment, we need to regulate in a modern and

adaptable way. Therefore, human capacity building in ICT regulation is crucial for all of us."

The diplomat said the Covid-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of ICT across the globe, leading to an increase in Internet users as the shift impacted various sectors, including education, commerce, and financial services. She also said that e-learning practices on various platforms played a significant role in the transformation.

Speaking further, the Ambassador said Ericsson has reported that there were more than 900 million registered mobile subscriptions in sub-Saharan Africa in 2022, with a considerable portion of those in Nigeria.

The Swedish ambassador said that in driving growth and contributing to the ambitious goal of over a billion mobile subscriptions by the end of 2023 within sub-Saharan Africa, "Education must be an essential part of our regulatory development strategies and policies, hence the need for collaboration in knowledge-sharing and up-skilling of human resources by all stakeholders.



Danbata

News

NNPC, Chevron, donate computers to schools, train teachers

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

THE Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation Limited (NNPCL) and Chevron Lukoil Oil and Gas Nigeria Limited have donated 60 computers to secondary schools in Kogi, and trained 30 teachers.

The Commissioner For Education, Science and Technology, Mr. Wemi Jones, disclosed this during the official handing over of the items to Kogi Government by the donors, at GYB Model Secondary School, Adankolo, Lokoja.

The commissioner said, the gesture was part of the Education Intervention Programme, Kogi State 2023, to deliver quality education to the people of the state.

Jones further disclosed that the State Government had declared free education at public primary and secondary schools in the state beginning from the next academic session.

According to him, the free education policy of the State Government includes payment of examination fees for pupils writing the first School Leaving School Certificate, and students writing Junior WAEC examination, SSCE, NECO and JAMB examination.

He expressed appreciation that the public schools have become better positioned and competing favourably with private schools in the state.

Jones said the state government under the leadership of Gov Yahaya Bello, has since assumption of office made education



Kyari

topmost priority in its thematic areas, with annual 30 per cent of budgetary allocation to the sector.

He added that the gesture to pay examination fees for all public school students from next session was part of efforts to sustain education as topmost priority amongst the eight thematic areas of the present administration.

The commissioner thanked the donors for keying into the state's Schools Adoption and Mentorship Programme (SAMP), saying, "Gov. Bello has matched talk with action through practical demonstration".

Jones stressed that the deliberate policy by the present administration in the state is geared towards drastically reducing poverty and out of school children.

He added that the Kogi State Education Law enacted by the present administration had criminalised children and

parents who do not go or send their children to school.

In his remarks, the Director, Star Ultra Deep Petroleum Limited, Chevron Company, Michelle Pelueger, said the donation and training were aimed at assisting in high grade teaching, learning and empowering students in the state for the challenges of the future.

Also speaking,, the Chief Upstream Investment Officer, NNPC Upstream Investment Management Services, Bala Wunti, expressed NNPC's commitment to improving the lives of Nigerians through education.

The School Principal, Chief Yakubu Godwin, who spoke on behalf of the benefitting schools described the gesture as a milestone.

According to him, it would complement the unprecedented achievements of Gov. Yahaya Bello in improving learning and teaching.

Qua'an-pan flags of palliatives distribution

AUTHORITIES of Qua'an-Pan Local Government Council have distributed bags of rice and cartons of Indomie noodles as palliatives to selected households in the area.

This was disclosed in a statement signed by the Head of Information and Public Relations, Qua'an Pan LGC, Opiah O. Valentine.

Transition Committee Chairman in the area, Hon. Christopher Audu Manship who flagged off the distribution exercise at the Council's Guest House in Ba'ap, noted that the measure was one of the proactive steps of the administration of Plateau State Governor, Barr. Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang towards ameliorating the hardship caused to citizens as a result of the removal of fuel subsidy by the Federal Government.

Manship disclosed that one hundred and sixty-six bags of fifty kilogramme rice has been allocated for distributions to the poorest of the poor households in the area. He further said that the Council has purchased one hundred

cartons of Indomie noodles to support the palliatives aimed at reducing hunger among the people in the area.

The Council Chairman while handing the food items to the traditional council for onward distribution to citizens in the area, advised that the palliatives should be shared to deserving households, irrespective of religion, political or ethnic affiliations.

Speaking on behalf of religious groups, the Chairman, Ja'amatu Nasril Islam (JNI) in the area, Mamma Idi observed that though the removal of fuel subsidy by government to kill corruption in that sector is a welcome idea, he however called for more measures to reduce the pain caused by this policy.

Receiving the palliatives, food items from the Council Chairman, the Long Pan, Nda Emmanuel Dabang who was represented by the Long Bwall, Jerome Leklat, thanked government at all levels for coming to the aid of the poor at this challenging period and promised that the traditional institution in the area will not fail in handling this assignment.

In another development,

the local administration in Qua'an-Pan is to give priority attention to health-care development in the area.

Transition Committee Chairman, Qua'an-Pan Local Government Council, Christopher Audu Manship who disclosed this while inspecting facilities at the Local Government Specialist Snake Bite Health Centre, promised to upgrade health-care services in the centre to handle more critical cases and reduce the burden of high cost of accessing health-care service.

The chairman stated that a more conducive building will be constructed to accommodate the Specialist Snake Bites Health-Care Center while the present facility will be renovated and converted to Staff Clinic to service the health needs of workers in the Council Secretariat.

Earlier while conducting the council Chairman round the Snake Bites Health Center, Health Officer in-charge of the facility, Isaiah Morris complained that the center lacked enough space, beddings and other equipment needed and that expansion of the facility should be given priority by the Council administration.



Strange things are happening

A lot of strange things are happening in our society these days. From sons killing their fathers to people who are supposed to be trusted harvesting organs of those left in their care. Wonders they say shall never cease to happen. We are fast losing our humanity and the beast in us has taken over albeit gradually.

At a point, human sacrifices were considered a normal in most African societies but this changed with time. Instead of making progress, we are going back to those dark old days where only the strongest survived. We are gradually regressing and returning to the days when evil thrived at the expense of good.

In the past few days, Jos has been agog with the news that one Noah Kereke of Murna Clinic, Yanshanu, harvested a vital organ from one of his patients, while purporting to perform an appendectomy on her. She had gone to the clinic in 2017 to perform the procedure which lasted for about seven hours. However, six months after, she started experiencing pains, went back to the clinic but was given pain killers to assuage her pains.

Fast forward to 2023, the patient decided to seek alternative opinion, since Murna Clinic could not find any remedy for the pains she had been experiencing over time. She went to the Jos University Teaching Hospital, (JUTH) for proper medical check up.

According to a viral report on social media, "On Monday 4th of September 2023, a scan was conducted on her, to see what could have been responsible for the persistent pains around that area. When the scan result came out, Mrs Kahinde Busari was shocked when the doctor at (JUTH) who was attending to her asked her if she was aware that an organ has been removed from her body. She answered nope, that

she is not aware. The doctor now informed her that her kidney on the right side of her belly is missing. The same side Dr Noah Kekere claimed to have removed appendix. She burst into tears, because she had never gone under the knife before, not even during childbirth, so wondered how her kidney could have disappeared from her body".

Such is the fate of many other Nigerians who we do not get to hear their stories. Quacks have infiltrated all the professions and are doing grave damages to the lives of the citizens of the country. Thankfully, the Nigeria Medical Association, NMA, has since denied that the said doctor is their member. He, it has been found, is



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not fit to have been practicing medicine.

What is sad, too, is the fact that someone who should not be practicing medicine has been doing so for such a long time and those responsible for enforcing standards are nowhere to be found. Is it that the man and the clinic are ghosts? Most unfortunate too, is the fact that the clinic is still up and running even in the face of the accusation labeled against it. Where are the Federal and State ministries of health? Are they shying away from their regulatory responsibilities?

Something needs to be done fast to ensure that our people who are already traumatized by the difficulties of meeting their daily needs are not faced by another monster systematically plucking down their lives in their prime.

To say the fact, however, this issue reinforces the rot which is common place in our present -day Nigeria. Our society is notorious for disobeying our laid down laws. If you break the law, you are considered a champion and you are praised. But this cannot continue in that light if at all we want to succeed as a people. We must first accept that we are responsible for each other. If we show concerns to the happenings in our society, then we can hold to account leaders we elect to run our affairs. But because we pander to so many primordial sentiments, we are wont to look the other way when a wrong is done.

This, therefore, is a wake-up call to every single Nigerian to stand up and do what is right. The only way to get it right is to do right in our small corners even when nobody is looking. We go to civilized climes and enjoy their well-organized societies, yet we are not able to translate some of these ideas to change the plight of our citizens.

It is our hope that going forward from the various wrongs that have been done, we would turn a new leave and change our

News

NSCDC partners TANTITA on security

By DORCAS PANKYES

THE Nigerian Army, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), and TANTITA Security Services are stepping up their fight against criminal activities within Nigeria's oil sector.

Recently, troops from the 34 Artillery Brigade successfully uncovered and dismantled two revamped oil bunkering camps in Egbema West, Imo State.

In a statement signed by Brigadier General Onyema Nwachukwu Director Army Public Relations, he said, these illegal refining sites were completely shut down, resulting in the seizure of 44 drum ovens, three reservoirs containing an estimated 30,000 liters of illegally refined Automotive Gas Oil (AGO), and 53 sacks of AGO.

In another operation, troops from the 3 Battalion, accompanied by members of the NSCDC and TANTITA Security Services, targeted and destroyed four active illegal refining camps in Opumami community, Delta State. The crackdown led to the destruction of three wooden boats, six ovens, six reservoirs, and the seizure of 11 drums filled with illegally refined AGO. Furthermore, authorities uncovered a large reservoir holding stolen crude oil, along with 38 sacks of stolen crude oil and two tapping hoses.

In a separate mission to combat terrorism and insurgency in North East Nigeria, combined troops from the 192 Battalion and 26 Task Force Brigade Garrison in conjunction with Hybrid Force, recently conducted offensive operations within the general areas of Gobar, Ambaga and Madachi in Gwoza Local Government Areas of Borno State.

During the operations, troops neutralized 3 Boko Haram



Audi

terrorists (BHT) and recovered one AK 47 rifle, one Beretta Pistol, 17 rounds of 7.62mm special ammunition, 4 rounds of 9 mm ammunition and a Dane Gun.

Similarly, combined troops of 231 Battalion and 331 Artillery Regiment, while mounting a stop and search operation along Biu - Maiduguri road, intercepted five BHT logistics suppliers and recovered two vehicles conveying 20 bags of maize, 11 bags of soybeans, 11 bags of biscuits, 14 bags of rice, 46 bags of corn flour and the sum of three million, one hundred and eighty six thousand Naira (#3,186,000)

NAF boosts technical manpower with 628 personnel

THE Nigerian Air Force (NAF) has recently seen a boost in its technical manpower with the graduation of 628 personnel from the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT).

The graduation ceremony was held on September 9, 2023, and was attended by senior military officers,

only. Suspects are currently in custody helping with further investigation.

The Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General Taoreed Lagbaja has lauded the troops' high level of resoluteness and alertness. He urged them to sustain the momentum and ensure remnants of terrorists and oil thieves in their areas of responsibility are completely cleared.

North East youths pass vote of confidence on NEDC

THE North East Youths Discussion Cycle has described as unfortunate, baseless, unfounded and

government dignitaries, and traditional rulers.

In his speech at the ceremony, the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal Hasan Abubakar, highlighted the importance of the technical programmes offered by AFIT in enhancing the skills and capacity of NAF personnel. He noted that these programmes have contributed to the NAF's self-reliance in terms of platform and equipment maintenance, leading to cost savings and the conservation of foreign exchange.

Air Marshal Abubakar emphasized the significance of professional competencies in ensuring optimal aircraft serviceability and availability, particularly in addressing the current security challenges in Nigeria. He stated that criminal elements would no longer be treated with leniency and that the NAF would continue its efforts until they are brought to justice.

The CAS also expressed gratitude to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for his unwavering support to the Armed Forces and the NAF,

From JIDAUNA YAMUNG Abuja

SOCIO – Economic Rights and Accountability project (SERAP) has urged the Federal High Court in Lagos to compel President Bola Tinubu to reverse the revocation of the accreditations and ban on 25 journalist and media houses from covering the presidential Villa.

SERAP, in the suit marked **FHC/L/CS/1766/23**, is also asking the court for an order of Perpetua; injunction to restrain the President or any other authority, person or group of persons from arbitrarily and unilaterally revoking accreditations of any journalist and media houses from covering the presidential Villa.

The organization is further seeking a declaration that the withdrawal and revocation tags and ban on the journalist and media houses from covering the Presidential Villa without lawful justifications is inconsistent with the rights to freedom of expression, access to information participation, and media freedom.

In an affidavit filed alongside the suit, SERAP averred that if not reversed, the arbitrary ban on the journalist from covering the presidential Villa would open the door to other cases of arbitrariness and would restrict people's right to freedom.

The applicant further claimed that the withdrawal of the accreditations of the journalist is without any lawful

SERAP urges Tinubu reverse journalists ban



Tinubu

justifications, it is inconsistent media plays an essential role and incompatible with plurality as a vehicle or instrument for of voices diversity of voices, the exercise of freedom of non-discrimination, and just expression and access to demands of a democratic information, in its individual society, as well as the public and collective aspects, in a i n t e r e s t . democratic society.

Its maintained that the ban The applicant also argued on journalists from covering that the existence of a free, the Presidential Villa fails to independent, vigorous meet the requirements of pluralistic, and diverse media is legality, necessity, and essential for the proper p r o p o r t i o n a l i t y . functioning of a democratic SERAP insisted that the s o c i e t y .

composition of the selection process for its management and Board of transparency and the North - East inclusivity.

Development Commission "Furthermore, we wish to (NEDC) as published in the categorically state that the Sahara Reporters online allegations made by the medium dated 10 aforementioned group September 2023.

In a quick response to the credibility. The North East publication, the North East Development Commission Youths Discussion Cycle Act was meticulously through its leader, Prince followed during the board's Mohammed Sani Hassan, reconstitution, and there is stated that the recent no basis for the claims of baseless petition was issued violation.

by an unknown group of "We call on the relevant individuals under the security agencies to platform of "Northern Youth investigate the individuals Rights Protection" alleging behind this baseless violations of the North East petition, as their actions Development Commission only serve to sow discord Act in the just reconstituted and mistrust within our board.

The Chairman, should be held accountable Mohammed Sani, while for their attempts to addressing journalists in destabilize the peace and Bauchi, expressed progress we are striving to satisfaction with the achieve.

appointment of the "In conclusion, the North reconstituted board of the East Youths Discussion North East Development Cycle would like to pass a Commission (NEDC).

"We firmly believe that the management of the newly individuals chosen to serve appointed Board of the on the board, are highly North East Development qualified and capable of Commission. We believe in steering the region towards their ability to work much-needed development. diligently for the

"This board represents the betterment of our region, collective wishes of the and we pledge our support majority of stakeholders in to their efforts and pray to the North East subregion, Almighty Allah to guide and and we commend the protect them", the chairman said.

Some protesters on Tuesday haNAF boosts technical manpower with 628 personnel

THE Commander 5 Brigade Nigerian Army, Brigadier General Mutiu Abiola Oloyede, has donated 950 exercise books and other teaching aids to three local governments in Borno State: Mobbar, Magumeri, and Gubio.

This initiative aims to enhance the quality of education for children in the area and strengthen the relationship between the military and the host community.

General Oloyede emphasized that the fight against insurgency is a collective responsibility, and the military cannot achieve success without the cooperation of the community.

The Chairmen of Mobbar and Gubio Local Governments, as well as a representative of the



Lagbaja

Foreign Commentary

US denies War with China in Vietnam visit

President Joe Biden has denied that the US is attempting to stem China's international influence, after signing a new historic deal with Vietnam, writes

MORE than 50 years since the last American soldier left Vietnam, Mr Biden travelled to Hanoi to sign the agreement that will bring the former foes closer than ever before.

The Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with Vietnam is a major relationship upgrade for the US. It is the culmination of a relentless push by Washington over the last two years to strengthen ties with Vietnam, which it sees as key to counter China's influence in Asia. It is also no small feat. The partnership with Washington is the highest level of diplomatic ties extended by Vietnam.

Mr Biden told reporters in Hanoi that American actions were not about containing or isolating China, but about maintaining stability in accordance with international rules.

"I think we think too much in terms of Cold War terms. It's not about that. It's about generating economic growth and stability, Mr Biden told reporters in Hanoi on Sunday, in response to a question from the BBC.

"I want to see China to succeed economically, but I want to see them succeed by the rules," he said.

Signs of improved ties had already irked Beijing, which called them more evidence of America's "cold-war mentality".

But Hanoi has thought this through, says Le Hong Hiep from Singapore's ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, adding that the agreement with the US is "symbolic rather than [one of] substance".

The title may be symbolic but closer ties could mean better business deals, and less reliance on China.

Vietnam has a young and highly educated workforce. It has also fostered a spirit of entrepreneurship which makes it highly attractive to US investors - especially those who are looking to move their manufacturing bases out of China.

Big names including Dell, Google, Microsoft and Apple have all shifted parts of their supply chains to Vietnam in recent years. The US also considers it a promising market for weapons and military equipment as Hanoi tries to wean off Moscow.

Washington is also keen to help Vietnam become an integral part of the world's semiconductor supply chain and develop its electronics sector - areas which have become contentious as the US tries to restrict China's access to advanced tech.

And yet Vietnam may not see its new partnership with the US as choosing one side or the other. As Beijing's economy slows, Hanoi's closer relationship with Washington is only pragmatic.

"I was in America for seven years and I knew about the



Bidan

American dream and I got that opportunity. But I thought, I have a bigger dream. The Vietnamese dream," says Nguyen Huu Phuoc Nguyen, co-founder and CEO of Selex Motors.

He is standing in the company's warehouse pointing at his e-scooter production line.

Mr Nguyen started the business five years ago. Now he has contracts with major delivery firms from Grab to Lazada.

He grew up in a tiny village in central Vietnam without electricity. In his lifetime, he has seen his country develop from one of the poorest in the world to one of the fastest growing economies in Asia.

"I wanted to contribute to build a prosperous and sustainable Vietnam, to fully utilise our opportunities and potential. We have missed a lot of opportunities. But I feel that it is the right time and we are the right generation to make it happen."

While he talks, bosses of a Chinese delivery company are waiting in the wings to discuss a deal. Also watching are Foreign Ministry officials who accompanied the BBC throughout its rare visit to Vietnam.

Mr Biden will be under pressure to juggle strategic interests with the defence of human rights and freedom.

Vietnam's government critics face intimidation, harassment and imprisonment, according to Human Rights Watch.

The Communist Party has a stranglehold on the media and the state controls all print and broadcast outlets.

But there is quite a lot riding on this for Washington.

The greatest win is that this partnership puts it more firmly in Beijing's backyard.

The administration has worked hard to win Hanoi over. Mr Biden has dispatched his vice-president, his secretary of state, his secretary of defence and others to woo Vietnam over the last two years. US aircraft carriers also made stops in Vietnamese ports.

"It reflects the leading role that Vietnam will play in our growing network of partnerships in the Indo-Pacific as we look to the future," Jake Sullivan, the White House national security adviser, said at a briefing before Mr Biden's visit.

That "network of partnerships" across Asia has certainly grown in the last few months. Washington has negotiated the use of four new military bases in the Philippines and remarkably, it managed to broker a trilateral agreement with rival east Asian allies, Japan and South Korea.

Even getting those leaders in the same room was once

impossible. It has also signed security pacts in the Pacific with Papua New Guinea.

•US secures deal on bases to complete arc around China

• Japan-S Korea summit is coup for Biden, but will relations hold?

The speed of this diplomacy appears to have "taken the Chinese by surprise", said Dr John Hemmings, senior director of the Indo-Pacific Foreign and Security Policy Program at the Pacific Forum.

"Beijing perhaps didn't realise how quickly Washington would capitalise on these successes," Dr Hemmings says. "Washington doesn't want to say it is in a Cold War. Instead, it is making appeals to countries with liberal democracies or countries where sovereignty is at risk. This double-handed approach is becoming more attractive to the region."

Vietnam may also be sending a warning shot to Beijing as the latter continues to encroach on its claims in the South China Sea.

Just last week, state media reported Vietnamese fishermen's claims that a Chinese coastguard ship had fired a water cannon at their boat near the contested Paracel Islands.

Vietnam's young workforce makes it an alternative to China as a manufacturing hub

But Vietnam does not want to break up with China to be friends with the US, says Le Hong Hiep.

"In Vietnam's calculation, enhanced ties with the United States should not lead to a deterioration in its relationship with China. We are already seeing some indications that Vietnam may even be receiving President Xi soon," he added.

Hanoi has certainly preempted China's response. Before Mr Biden's visit, Nguyen Phu Trong, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam, went to the border with China, where he met the Chinese ambassador and praised the countries' friendship.

"No third country wants to take sides in a great power rivalry, but most countries in the region badly need international co-operation in various areas that are important for their prosperity and security," said Alexander Vuving, professor at Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies.

"Leveraging these needs of regional countries is key to great power competition," he added.

But there is no doubt that the US and Vietnam have become better friends, as Washington recruits more allies in Asia.

Polls suggest that the US is hugely admired in Vietnam. The horrors of one of the most brutal wars of the 20th Century are not forgotten, but mutual trust has grown since diplomatic ties were normalised in 1995.

Both countries have worked together to help recover the remains of US soldiers missing in action, and Washington has also assisted Vietnam in identifying the remains of its own soldiers.

And each year, tens of thousands of Vietnamese students travel to study in the US, and that has supported the road to reconciliation.

Luong Hong Duong believes engagement with the US will improve Vietnam's prospects

"We are students of HUST, we are bright, we are young, we have strength," a group of students chants at the Hanoi University of Science and Technology, under the watchful eye of the government officials escorting the BBC.

Elsewhere one young man has grabbed a guitar and plays a popular Vietnamese song about appreciating what you have.

"Korean and Japanese technology firms are pumping money into Vietnam to develop technology centres, and now comes the US," says Luong Hong Duong, a second-year student.

"I can see in the future Vietnam will become another Silicon Valley for the US and everyone will come here and work. I can't wait for it to happen."

Source: Al Jazera

Foreign News

Israel Court protests over judicial reform

AFTER months of protests against the hardline Israeli government's highly controversial judicial overhaul, an historic showdown is taking place.

All 15 Supreme Court judges are convening for the first time to hear petitions against a legal amendment that limits their own powers.

Thousands of Israelis gathered for a rally outside the court in Jerusalem on Monday night in support of the judges.

Critics argue the move will weaken judicial independence and democracy.

"We want to make sure [the judges are] not intimidated by all the threats that this government makes," said Yaron, a father-of-two from the coastal city of Netanya. "This is about democracy."

For Orly, who came from Modiin with her friend, it was more emotional. She felt the fundamental character of Israel was at stake.

In July, the nationalist-religious governing coalition led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pushed through an important change as part of its radical judicial overhaul.

It cancelled the ability of all courts to block government actions and appointments using the legal standard that they were "unreasonable".

Image caption, Supporters of the judicial overhaul say it will rebalance the branches of power

However, supporters of the overhaul argued that the move strengthened democracy by preventing the court from overturning the actions of an elected government.

The Supreme Court - which could take weeks or months to deliberate - is under pressure to strike down the law.

If it does so, though, members of Mr Netanyahu's government are threatening to ignore its decision. That could lead to a constitutional crisis over who has the greater authority.

At a far-right protest last week, Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich warned the chief justice not to dare overturn the "reasonableness" legislation which affects a basic law in Israel - part of a set of laws that have a key role in the absence of a national constitution.

"Invalidating a Basic Law is a deviation from all your



Netanyahu

authority and will be the end of Israeli democracy," Mr Smotrich declared.

In a grim reminder of the social divisions that have opened up, a young demonstrator in the crowd told the BBC:

Activist Yiftah Golov says he will not be reporting for voluntary duty with Israel's military

Mr Netanyahu, who is on trial for corruption charges which he denies, has been vague when asked whether he would stick to a ruling that would quash the new law.

The launch of his coalition's judicial campaign at the start of the year has brought hundreds of thousands of Israelis onto the streets. It has also led to expressions of concern from international allies and dented the economy, amounting to Israel's worst domestic crisis in years.

The military has been badly affected with a large number of reservists saying they would not report for voluntary duty. Defence officials warn that Israel's readiness to fight wars could be impaired.

"It is probably the most powerful, unimaginable thing we have ever imagined that we need to do," said Yiftah Golov, an activist with a reservist group called Brothers in Arms.

Other hearings in coming weeks will also put Israel's top judges in the uncomfortable position of ruling on their own fate.

A former intelligence division chief for Israel's spy agency Mossad suggests the Netanyahu government is playing with fire, and that it could face a serious pushback.

"I believe based on, let us say hunches and hints from inside, that Mossad, [the internal Shin Bet security force] Shabak, police and chief of staff when there is a dilemma, they will say we obey the Supreme Court,"

Haim Tomer explained.

So far, attempts to reach a compromise deal between Mr Netanyahu and his political opponents have failed. However, the Israeli President Isaac Herzog has continued to try to bring the two sides together.

On Monday, the prime minister said he was working to "exhaust every possibility" to reach a broad agreement and there were positive remarks from the leader of one opposition party.

However, Mr Netanyahu's other political rivals reacted with scepticism and there were tough stands from some in his own coalition with one far-right minister, Itamar Ben Gvir, insisting he would not "surrender".

Trump asks judge to step aside

DONALD Trump has asked the judge overseeing his federal election meddling case to step aside due to previous statements she made in court.

He said in a legal filing some past comments create a perception of bias against the former president.

The request for a recusal was filed to Judge Tanya Chutkan on Monday.

She is overseeing the case being brought by special counsel Jack Smith, who accuses Mr Trump of a conspiracy to overturn his 2020 election loss.

Mr Trump has pleaded not guilty to the charges.

The former president said last month that he planned to petition Judge Chutkan for a recusal.

The Monday filing does not expressly call the judge prejudiced against Mr Trump, but says certain statements she has made in her court "create a perception of prejudgment incompatible with our justice system".

"Although Judge Chutkan may genuinely intend to give President Trump a fair trial - and may believe that she can do so - her public

BEIJING claims an American citizen jailed for life in China earlier this year is a decorated spy who had worked for US intelligence for more than three decades, as it ramps up a campaign warning citizens to guard against foreign espionage. John Shing-Wan Leung, a 78-year-old US citizen who also holds permanent residency in Hong Kong, was sentenced to life in prison by a Chinese court in May on espionage charges. At the time, authorities provided no details about his case, except that he was detained by state security officers in April 2021. Months after the sentencing, the Ministry of State Security, China's main civilian spy agency, claimed in a social media post Monday that Leung had been recruited by US intelligence agencies in 1989 and received what it termed a "merit medal" for the large amount of intelligence he allegedly collected. The ministry accused Leung of spying on Chinese diplomats and Chinese officials visiting

People died in Libyan flood. More than 2,000 people are believed to have died in devastating floods in eastern Libya, the country's military spokesman said in a press

conference on Monday. Authorities have declared the city of Derna, the worst hit area, a disaster zone. Officials said the city has become inaccessible as electricity and communications have been cut off.

The spokesman also said 1,200 people were injured in heavy floods. Over 2,800 killed in rare, powerful quake

The cities of Al Marj, Susah, Shahat and Al Bayda also have several people who died, an official

said.

"Entire neighborhoods have been wiped out...with their residents," Libya's head of military said.

Mediterranean storm Daniel is behind the widespread flooding in the North African nation as it swept away entire neighborhoods and destroyed homes in several coastal towns.

"I am deeply saddened by the severe impact of [Storm] Daniel on the country and have tasked an emergency response team to prepare to support local authorities and partners in the region," Georgette Gagnon, the U.N. humanitarian coordinator for Libya, posted on social media.

Gagnon said early reports showed the storm damaged dozens of cities and villages in the area.

"I call on all local, national and international partners to provide urgent humanitarian assistance to those affected at this difficult time."

In 24 hours, over 16 inches of rain fell in the city of Bayda, Libya's National Center of Meteorology reported, according to the flood tracking website Floodlist.

"We are in close contact with the United Nations and with authorities in Libya to determine how quickly we can bring assistance to where it is most needed," the U.S. Embassy in Libya.

Daniel is forecast to bring rain and bad weather to west Egypt on Monday.

Last week, the storm hammered the southeastern Mediterranean, killing at least 26 people in Greece, Turkey and Bulgaria.

She later added: "It's statements unavoidably taint these proceedings, regardless of outcome," it says.

The petition highlights several comments, including one she made in October 2022 while sentencing a 6 January Capitol rioter.

How big are Donald Trump's legal problems?

"This was nothing less than an attempt to violently overthrow the government, the legally, lawfully, peacefully elected government, by individuals who were mad that their guy lost," she said.

American jail in China is US spy.



Jinping

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Feature

Artificial Intelligence and the conundrum ahead

Artificial Intelligence is the simulation of human intelligence processes by machines, especially computer systems. Specific applications of AI include expert systems, natural language processing, speech recognition and machine. Artificial intelligence leverages computers and machines to mimic the problem-solving and decision-making capabilities of the human mind. AJIJI AJANG JOHN writes.

ARTIFICIAL Intelligence (AI) is a wide-ranging branch of computer science concerned with building smart machines capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence. While AI is an interdisciplinary science with multiple approaches, advancements in machine learning and deep learning, in particular, are creating a paradigm shift in virtually every sector of the tech industry.

Broadly speaking, artificially intelligent systems can perform tasks commonly associated with human cognitive functions — such as interpreting speech, playing games and identifying patterns. They typically learn how to do so by processing massive amounts of data, looking for patterns to model in their own decision-making. In many cases, humans will supervise an AI's learning process, reinforcing good decisions and discouraging bad ones. But some AI systems are designed to learn without supervision — for instance, by playing a video game over and over until they eventually figure out the rules and how to win.

One of the biggest advantages of Artificial Intelligence is that it can significantly reduce errors and increase accuracy and precision. The decisions taken by AI in every step is decided by information previously gathered and a certain set of algorithms. When programmed properly, these errors can be reduced to null.

Another big advantage of AI is that humans can overcome many risks by letting AI robots do them for us. Whether it be defusing a bomb, going to space, exploring the deepest parts of oceans, machines with metal bodies are resistant in nature and can survive unfriendly atmospheres.



Moreover, they can provide accurate work with greater responsibility and not wear out easily.

There are many studies that show humans are productive only about 3 to 4 hours in a day. Humans also need breaks and time offs to balance their work life and personal life. But AI can work endlessly without breaks. They think much faster than humans and perform multiple tasks at a time with accurate results. They can even handle tedious repetitive jobs easily with the help of AI algorithm. Some of the most technologically advanced companies engage with users using digital assistance, which eliminates the need for human personnel.

Many websites utilize digital assistance to deliver user-requested content. We can discuss our search with them in conversation. Some chatbots are built in a way that makes it difficult to tell whether we are conversing with a human or a chatbot.

In practically every field, AI is the driving force behind numerous innovations that will aid humans in resolving the majority of challenging issues. For instance, recent advances in AI-based technologies have allowed doctors to detect breast cancer in a woman at an earlier stage.

Human beings are driven by emotions, whether we like it or not. AI on the other hand, is

devoid of emotions and highly practical and rational in its approach. A huge advantage of Artificial Intelligence is that it doesn't have any biased views, which ensures more accurate decision-making.

We will be doing a lot of repetitive tasks as part of our daily work, such as checking documents for flaws and mailing thank-you notes, among other things. We may use artificial intelligence to efficiently automate these menial chores and even eliminate "boring" tasks for people, allowing them to focus on being more creative.

Today, our everyday lives are entirely dependent on mobile devices and the internet. We utilize a variety of apps, including Google Maps, Alexa, Siri, Cortana on Windows, OK Google, taking selfies, making calls, responding to emails, etc. With the use of various AI-based techniques, we canOne of the main benefits of artificial intelligence is this. By creating an AI robot that can perform perilous tasks on our behalf, we can get beyond many of the dangerous restrictions that humans face. It can be utilized effectively in any type of natural or man-made calamity, whether it be going to Mars, defusing a bomb, exploring the deepest regions of the oceans, or mining for coal and oil.

Faster decision-making is another benefit of AI. By automating certain tasks and providing real-time insights, AI can help organizations make faster and more informed

decisions. This can be particularly valuable in high-stakes environments, where decisions must be made quickly and accurately to prevent costly errors or save lives.

The ability to create a machine that can simulate human intelligence is no small feat. It requires plenty of time and resources and can cost a huge deal of money. AI also needs to operate on the latest hardware and software to stay updated and meet the latest requirements, thus making it quite costly.

One application of artificial intelligence is a robot, which is displacing occupations and increasing unemployment (in a few cases). Therefore, some claim that there is always a chance of unemployment as a result of chatbots and robots replacing humans. For instance, robots are frequently utilized to replace human resources in manufacturing businesses in some more technologically advanced nations like Japan. This is not always the case, though, as it creates additional opportunities for humans to work while also replacing humans in order to increase efficiency.

AI applications automate the majority of tedious and repetitive tasks. Since we do not have to memorize things or solve puzzles to get the job done, we tend to use our brains less and less. This addiction to AI can cause problems to future generations.

Since early childhood, we have been taught that neither computers nor other machines have feelings. Humans function as a team, and team management is essential for achieving goals. However, there is no denying that robots are superior to humans when functioning effectively, but it is also true that human connections, which form the basis of teams, cannot be replaced by computers.

Humans cannot develop artificial intelligence because it is a technology based on pre-loaded facts and experience. AI is proficient at repeatedly carrying out the same task, but if we want any adjustments or improvements, we must manually alter the codes. AI cannot be accessed and utilized akin to human intelligence, but it can store infinite data. Machines can only complete tasks they have been developed or programmed for; if they are asked to complete anything else, they frequently fail or provide useless results, which can have significant negative effects. Thus, we are unable to make anything conventional.

Human beings are driven by emotions, whether we like it or not. AI on the other hand, is devoid of emotions and highly practical and rational in its approach. A huge advantage of Artificial Intelligence is that it doesn't have any biased views, which ensures more accurate decision-making. We will be doing a lot of repetitive tasks as part of our daily work, such as checking documents for flaws and mailing thank-you notes, among other things. We may use artificial intelligence to efficiently automate these menial chores and even eliminate "boring" tasks for people, allowing them to focus on being more

EVER'S WORLD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

Dental Health

By **NORA AVARIANTOS**,

Facts about bad breath

BAD breath, medically called halitosis, can result from poor dental health habits and may be a sign of other health problems. Bad breath can also be made worse by the types of foods you eat and other unhealthy lifestyle habits. You can take steps to prevent and treat halitosis, at home and with the help of your dentist or doctor.

Does Food Affect Breath? Basically, all the food eaten begins to be broken down in your mouth. Also, foods are absorbed into your bloodstream and move to the lungs, affecting the air you exhale. If you eat foods with strong odors (such as garlic or onions), brushing and flossing – even mouthwash – merely covers up the odor temporarily. The odor will not go away completely until the foods have passed through your body. Other common foods that can cause bad breath include:

Cheese, pastrami, certain spices, orange juice or soda, alcohol, likewise, dieters who don't eat often enough can have bad breath. When your body breaks down fat, the process releases chemicals that can give your breath an unpleasant smell.

Why do poor habits cause bad breath?

If you don't brush and floss teeth daily, food particles can remain in your mouth, promoting bacterial growth between teeth, around the gums, and on the tongue. This causes bad breath. Inflammation of the gums (gingivitis) from poor dental hygiene can also cause bad breath.

In addition, odor-causing bacteria and food particles can cause bad breath if dentures are not properly cleaned.

Smoking or chewing tobacco-based products also can cause bad breath, stain teeth, reduce your ability to taste foods, and irritate your gums.

What health problems are associated with bad breath? Persistent bad breath or a bad taste in the mouth may be a warning sign of gum (periodontal) disease. Gum disease is caused by the buildup of plaque on teeth. Bacteria cause toxins to form, which irritate the gums. If gum disease continues untreated, it can damage the gums and jawbone.

Other dental causes of bad breath include poorly fitting dental appliances, yeast infections of the mouth, and cavities. The medical condition dry mouth (also called xerostomia) also can cause bad breath. Saliva is necessary to moisten the mouth, neutralize acids produced by plaque, and wash away dead cells that build up on the tongue, gums, and cheeks. If not removed, these cells decompose and can cause bad breath. Dry mouth may be a side effect of various medications, salivary gland problems, or continuous breathing through the mouth. In fact, morning breath is worse for people who sleep with their mouths open.

Many other diseases and illnesses can cause bad breath, including: Seasonal allergies, respiratory tract infections such as pneumonia or bronchitis, long-term (chronic) sinus infections, postnasal drip, diabetes, chronic acid reflux, gastrointestinal issues, chronic lung infection, liver or kidney problems.

What Can I Do to Prevent Bad Breath?

There are some quick and easy ways to banish bad breath. Just remember,



the odor from what you eat can stick around until the food works its way completely out of your system – up to 3 days later! Bad breath can be reduced or prevented if you:

Brush and floss more often. Practice good oral hygiene. Brush twice a day with fluoride toothpaste to remove food debris and plaque. Brush your teeth after you eat. (Keep a toothbrush at work or school to brush after lunch.) Replace your toothbrush every 2 to 3 months or after an illness. Trapped food also adds to the problem. Use floss or an interdental cleaner to remove food particles and plaque between teeth at least once a day.

Rinse your mouth out. A mouthwash adds extra protection by getting rid of bacteria. You can also help your breath if you swish your mouth with plain water after you eat. It can help to at least loosen up and free those trapped bits of food particles that get stuck in your teeth.

Scrape your tongue. The coating that normally forms on your tongue can be a host for smelly bacteria. Tongue scrapers are designed specifically to apply even pressure across the surface of the tongue area and clear any buildup. Avoid foods that sour your breath. Onions and garlic are big offenders. But brushing after you eat them doesn't help.

Skip after-dinner mints and chew gum instead. The bacteria in your mouth love sugar. They use it to make acid. This wears down your teeth and causes bad breath. Chewing sugarless gum or sucking on sugarless candy also stimulates the production of saliva, which helps wash away food particles and bacteria. Gums and mints containing xylitol are best.

Keep your gums healthy. Antiseptic mouthwash can help kill bacteria that cause bad breath and plaque that can lead to gingivitis, an early, mild form of gum disease. Moistening your mouth. You can get tooth decay and bad breath if you don't make enough saliva. If your mouth is dry, drink

plenty of water during the day. You can also try a humidifier at night to moisten the air in your house. Keep your dental devices clean. Dentures should be removed at night and cleaned thoroughly before being placed in your mouth the next morning. Clean braces and retainers as directed by your dentist. See your dentist regularly – at least twice a year. They will do an oral exam and professional teeth cleaning and will be able to find and treat periodontal disease, dry mouth, or other problems that may be the cause of bad breath. Stop smoking and chewing tobacco-based products. Ask your dentist for tips on kicking the habit.

Eat more fruits and vegetables and less meat. Apples, carrots, celery, and other hard fruits and vegetables help clear odor-causing plaque and food particles from your mouth.

Keep a log of the foods you eat. If you think they may be causing bad breath, bring the log to your dentist to review. Similarly, make a list of the medications you take. Some drugs may play a role in creating mouth odors.

Who Treats Bad Breath?

In most cases, your dentist can treat the cause of bad breath.

If your dentist determines that your mouth is healthy and the odor is not of oral origin, you may be referred to your family doctor or to a specialist to determine the odor source and treatment plan. You can go over a list of your medications with them to see if any of them could be adding to the problem. Work with them to keep diabetes, allergies, and other conditions under control.

If the odor is due to gum disease, for example, your dentist can either treat the disease or refer you to a periodontist, a dentist who specializes in treating gum conditions.

What Products Can I Use to Get Rid of Bad Breath?

An antiseptic mouthwash can help eliminate bacteria that cause bad breath. For dry mouth, your dentist might recommend artificial saliva. Ask your dentist about which product is best for you.



EVER'S WORLD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

Health

Surprising ways to fight asthma symptoms

By **Lou Schuler**

Asthma is a sneaky foe. One minute you're enjoying a walk or a bike ride. You're breathing easy, your symptoms under control.

The next minute you feel things change. It might start with a cough. Or labored, wheezing breaths. Or tightness in your chest and lungs. They're all telltale signs of an asthma attack.

"Asthma may appear controlled until someone exercises," says Maureen George, PhD, a professor of nursing at Columbia University and a spokesperson for the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America.

Asthmatics should have an asthma action plan in place and know the difference between myth and fact when it comes to treatment. But that doesn't mean exercise should be avoided, she said.

Exercise, in fact, is one of the best ways to reduce asthma symptoms. Research over the past 2 decades has shown that physical activity can help improve lung function and boost quality of life for someone with asthma. As their fitness improves, asthma patients report better sleep, reduced stress, improved weight control, and more days without symptoms. In some cases, they're able to cut down their medication doses.

Exercise reduces inflammatory cytokines – small protein molecules that help cells communicate – and increases anti-inflammatory cytokines, according to a 2023 review from researchers in the United Kingdom. That could help calm chronic airway inflammation, easing symptoms of asthma.

A few simple guidelines can help you reap those benefits while staying safe. Make Sure the First Steps Aren't the Last Steps

For someone who's new to exercise, there's only one way to begin: Carefully.

The Global Initiative for Asthma recommends twice-weekly cardio

and strength training.

"You always start low and slow," says Spencer Nadolsky, DO, a board-certified obesity and lipid specialist and medical director of Sequence, a comprehensive weight management program.

"Low" means light loads in the weight room. "Slow" means short, easy walks.

Many have been put "through the

wringer" when starting out, discouraging them from continuing, Nadolsky says. "They were too sore, and it felt more like punishment."

An even bigger concern is triggering an asthma attack. Take steps to lower the risk. Have your rescue inhaler with you, and keep up on your medications, Nadolsky says.

"A health care professional should be consulted" before you start a new

activity or ramp up a program, or anytime asthma interferes with a workout, George says.

If you exercise outside, you need to be aware of the air quality, especially at a time when smoke and particulates from a wildfire in Canada can trigger asthma symptoms in people thousands of miles away.

The harder you work, the higher your "ventilation," meaning you're taking more air into your lungs, and potentially more allergens and pollutants. Temperature and humidity also become risky at the extremes. Cold, dry air can dehydrate and constrict the airways, making it hard to breathe.

How to Choose the Best Type of Exercise

Step one: Be realistic. People with asthma often have less exercise capacity than those who don't – understandable when shortness of breath is your default setting.

Second, give yourself plenty of time to warm up. A solid warm-up routine – particularly one with a mix of lower- and higher-intensity exercises – may help prevent exercise-induced asthma (bronchoconstriction), a narrowing of the airways during hard physical activity that causes shortness of breath and wheezing.

For example, if you warm up on a treadmill or exercise bike, you could mix in a few short bursts of faster running or cycling, with a couple of minutes of recovery at a slower pace in between. You can also expand that concept into a full-blown workout.

High-intensity interval training (HIIT) is a promising option for

people with asthma. A 2021 study showed that three 20-minute interval workouts a week significantly improved asthma control.

"The benefit of HIIT is that ventilation is able to recover intermittently," says Carley O'Neill, PhD, an exercise scientist at Acadia University in Nova Scotia and the study's lead author.

That's a key difference from conventional cardio, where the constant exertion can evaporate water from the lungs faster than your body can replenish it. "Dehydrating of the airways can, in some, trigger exercise-induced asthma," O'Neill says.

HIIT, conversely, allows your airways to recover and rehydrate between exercise bouts. Another recent study found that people with asthma who did HIIT workouts had fewer breathing problems and felt less fatigued, compared to a matched group who did cardio training at a constant pace. (Both types of cardio led to similar improvements in aerobic fitness.)

You can also choose other types of intermittent – or stop-and-go – exercise. Strength training, for example, requires relatively short periods of exertion, with plenty of rest in between.

The One Choice You Don't Want to Make

While there are lots of good exercise options for someone with asthma, there's one clearly bad choice, according to George: "Avoiding exercise." Being inactive puts you at higher risk for obesity and all the



Editorial

Nigeria's preparedness and the Lagdo Dam issue

THE Nigerian government was recently notified by Cameroon 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 Cameroon 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 state of happiness and satisfaction and being grateful over what one has.

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

Parents should inculcate a habits of talking to their children as they grow on the need to be contented and share the little they have with others for there is great gain in Godliness. For we brought nothing into the world and cannot take anything out of this 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, 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 heartbreak 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 humans like us and also have physical, psychological and emotional issues.

Furthermore, Bible verses should be read in Christian homes in order to help our children in their spiritual growth, which include scriptures from 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. 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 of 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 would 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 helping people improve in the



Contentment: A great virtue

overall interest of our society. *writes from the Plateau Department of Mass*
Jonathan Rabo Dammo, State Polytechnic Jos, Communication.

Enhancing skills amongst undergraduates

SKILLS is said to be the capacity to do something well, technique ability it is usually acquired or learned.

While grade can be defined as the performance of an individual or a group or an examination or test.

I therefore admonish undergraduates in tertiary institutions to be experts or professionals in their various area of specialization, most especially students of mass communication.

Mass Communication is indeed a broad course which has lot of branches, firms and organizations are after undergraduates who are more specialized in their field of study which includes journalism, broadcasting reporting and so on. So they can improve on the' growth of their organization.

However, grades are of top

priority for students in tertiary institutions which can make their parents proud. But the truth must be told, nowadays people tend to buy certificates due to unemployment in the nation, and can't perform effectively in their offices.

Meanwhile they do not have certain qualities of either a broadcaster, reporter or a journalist, and do not have the ethics of a professional media practitioner.

Undergraduates should have a though on how they impact to the growth and development of their various organizations or place of industrial training. Lecturers are advised to put more efforts in lecturing students on how to improve their writing reading and listening skills as they dream to be great media professionals or practitioners.

Lastly, critical thinking and

problems should be well admonished by lecturers, where by everyone experiences problems in their daily life. Some may be small which can be solved in an easier way but some may be in a complicated stage.

From a student life, we should make our minds critically and for solving problems, which helps to make our challenges in a positive way in our future job.

Either in a job or in organisation exposure should be given an is experiencing though situations with the task with our co-workers, and in working place are the main challenges in our routine life. Facing the tasks in a manner is a skill.

By Jonathan Rabo Jaimo Plateau State Polytechnic, Jos Mass Communication Department.

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 issued press a statement banning truck drivers from plying roads in the heart of Jos city from 6am to 6pm, but is as if was no order was issued at all. You see these truck drivers without regard to the constituted authority's order in the state breaking the law at any time of the

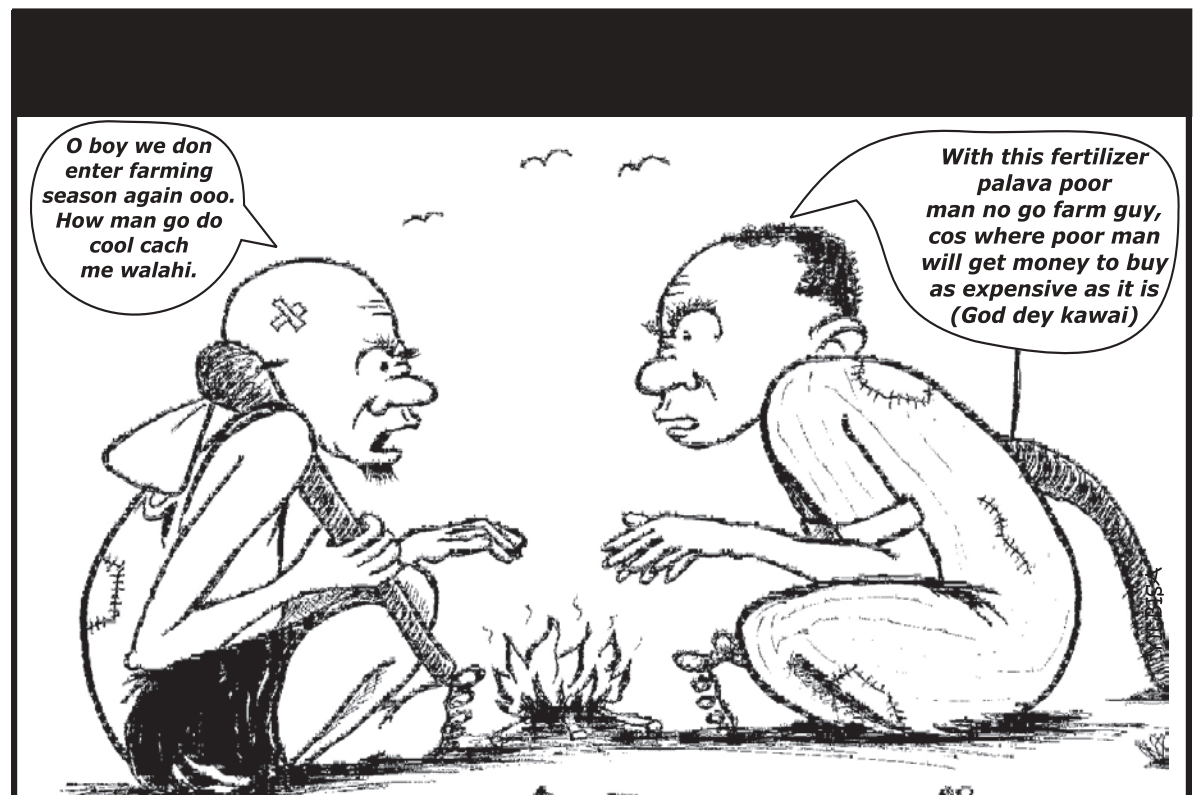
day. This action has generated a lot of arguments because many lives have been lost daily as a result of their reckless driving. No week goes by without reports of truck running into moving small cars, buildings and roadside shop. It would be recalled that, the Polo Roundabout has been a "pit trap" to 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 flaunting this order are not doing much to control this ugly

They are always busy concentrating on cars and tricycles riders who are using these road legitimately and allowing these truck drivers plying at odd hours against government's directive making it looks 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 reveue 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

By
Bode Olagoke

FOR years, Nigeria has witnessed conflicts between farmers and herders 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 to also 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 Danjaji, Department of Sociology, Bayero University, Kano (BUK). Prof Isma'ila Zango, among others as members while the

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 ommunique 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

By CLAIRES NWACHUKWU

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

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.

News



Tinubu, stockbrokers' pain points and market reform

The Itowards the development of financial infrastructure and increase in effectiveness of the existing institutions. Pension Administrators should be made to invest more in the market. Tax reform should reduce transaction costs to attract investors into the market. Sola Oni writes.

Stockbrokers need an transparent regulations Nigerian financial Administration should default. effective capital market and predictable market. create a deliberate policy The Federal Government that is deep with a range en f o r c e m e n t , The City Gentlemen should take a cue from the of product offerings that introduction of tax have a lot to offer on the tiers to invest in Lagos State Government meet the diverse needs of policies and incentives policies that shape the infrastructure by raising which has the trajectory of investors. and building of market Nigerian financial funds from revenue sourcing long-term funds infrastructure and market. from the market to build infrastructure. The reform should clip infrastructure and market. They play a pivotal role in the development of the Municipal Bond was floated to build the popular Sura Market over three decades ago. The State Government has floated a N100 billion bond this year to finance priority projects. the wings of corporate technology. These should They play a pivotal role in the development of the Capital Market Master Plan of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). The Nigerian Government bonds are usually a delight to risk-averse investors as the bond is protected with an Irrevocable Standing Payment Order (ISPO), issued by the Accountant-General of the State through a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) to hedge against partnership with Lagos raiders who deploy new serve as a compass for those who will be saddled with the responsibility of market reform under the new administration. The reform must attract private equity. It must encourage more listing of blue chip companies across diverse sectors of the economy. It must McKinsey & Company address the issue of privatization of moribund government parastatals and the listing of their shares on the secondary market of securities exchanges. The market is their institutions, awaiting NNPC Limited. Stockbrokers should be allowed to play key roles ownership, ensuring in the reform of the

"The Federal Government should take a cue from the Lagos State Government which has the trajectory of sourcing long-term funds from the market to build infrastructure. Municipal Bond was floated to build the popular Sura Market over three decades ago. The State Government has floated a N100 billion bond this year to finance priority projects".

Feature

Think tanks: Brokers of great ideas



By M.A. JOHNSON

BESIDES attitudinal change which is not negotiable, we equally need the ideas of brilliant men and women if the nation wants to carry out reforms. We have think tanks in the country that are not optimally used by politicians and policymakers to solve our numerous economic, political and technological challenges. I strongly feel that we are not making optimal use of these research institutions that have been established to play vital roles in making, influencing and shaping global, regional and national policies.

"It must be part of the Nigerian tragedy that the first generation of Nigerian leaders established and got NIIA, for instance, to be known globally but only for the current generation to not even know why a NIIA was considered a crucial component of independence and nation building."

We have new ministers who have just been appointed to advise the government on various issues affecting the country. Rather than seeking relevance and fine-tuning their policies using in-house "think tanks" like the NIIA, Nigerian Economic Summit

Group (NESG), National Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), National Defence College Centre for Strategic Research and Studies, Nigerian Institute for Social and Economic Research (NISER), Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON), Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) among other private and state-owned think tanks that are Nigeria-centric, we look outside often. Our policymakers should Is this not demeaning? If this

have a rethink. The engine

"In my view, more think tanks are better for democracy. But as a scholar once said: "Think tanks are all about influence. They are not, as much as they pretend to be, neutral ivory towers that undertake entirely value-free research and value-free advice.... Think tanks help their case by presenting themselves as neutral academics Domestic or foreign funders, nobody hands over money to think tanks without wanting something in return. They all want something." Could it be the crisis of funding that is affecting the invisible nature of these brokers of great ideas? Funding plays a crucial part in helping these think tanks. How can they generate brilliant ideas when there is a lack of financial support? They need to be well-funded. Think tanks, however, should be transparent and must not be under unnecessary pressure to accept funding that may impinge on their intellectual and political independence."

room of ideas in any country, according to a public intellectual, are think tanks, especially those privately funded, and a civil service filled with brilliant people at all levels, constantly asking questions, constantly analysing and constantly proposing brilliant ideas to Ministers who trust and also work closely with their civil servants.

In my view, more think tanks are better for democracy. But as a scholar once said: "Think

thanks are all about influence. They are not, as much as they pretend to be, neutral ivory towers that undertake entirely value-free research and value-free advice.... Think tanks help their case by presenting themselves as neutral academics Domestic or foreign funders, nobody hands over money to think tanks without wanting something in return. They all want something."

Could it be the crisis of funding that is affecting the invisible nature of these brokers of great ideas? Funding plays a crucial part in helping these think tanks. How can they generate brilliant ideas when there is a lack of financial support? They need to be well-funded. Think tanks, however, should be transparent and must not be under unnecessary pressure to accept funding that may impinge on their intellectual and political independence.

In as much as think tanks make positive contributions to debates and decision-making processes in the country, they should avoid what scholars refer to as "idea laundering". We strongly believe that the time is ripe to put these engine rooms of great ideas back to work. Thank you.

Feature

Why Tinubu must show interest in e-customs project

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu recently thumbed down the practice of servicing Nigeria's humongous loans with huge national revenue. Remi Adebayo writes.

The President's description of that practice as destructive is indeed apt considering Nigeria's rising population and comparable resources needed to cater for the citizens.

Available records indicate that Nigeria's foreign and domestic liabilities were in excess of US\$100 billion as of 2022; a burden which experts have blamed on successive governments, especially the immediate past administration.

"Can we continue to service external debts with 90% of our revenue? It is a path to destruction. It is not sustainable. We must make the very difficult changes that are necessary for our country to get up from slumber and be respected among the great nations of the world," the President told lawyers while declaring open the annual conference of the Nigerian Bar Association in Abuja.

Although the president is under pressure to allow massive food importation as a short-term measure to arrest rising cost of living, the porous nature of Nigeria's borders dictates otherwise. Taking such route will amount to reversing the gains made in curbing insurgency and cross-border banditry especially along Nigeria's border up North.

This is where the e-Customs Project conceived but later stalemated under the former President Muhammadu Buhari should be re-examined to help boost the operations of the Nigeria Customs Service, NCS, for improved efficiency, block loopholes and increase revenue accruing to government.

The NCS Modernization Project, otherwise called e-Customs Project was given anticipatory approval by President Buhari on



Tinubu

September 17, 2019 and subsequently stamped by the Federal Executive Council as a Public Private Partnership model in September 2020.

The project was conceived in 2015 to address the challenges of dysfunctional scanners and other gadgets, tax evasion, lack of monitoring system, smuggling of goods across the borders, inflow of banned items, lack of transparency and cumbersome functions of the Customs Service.

It is untidy and smacks of high handedness that the Buhari Administration will override its first approval

without cancelling a previous approval by the President-in-Council.

It is on record that Messrs E-customs HC Project Limited and Bionica Technologies (West Africa) Limited, the original concessionaires, have jointly challenged the alleged unlawful and fraudulent replacement of their names in the concession agreement earlier approval by President Buhari and ratified by FEC on 2 September, 2020.

The firm had raised the alarm of "a sinister plot" to scheme it out as the approved concessionaire and replace it will an unknown

entity registered at the Corporate Affairs Commission on 5 April, 2022, almost two years when the project was first ratified by the Federal Executive Council!

It is inconceivable that the nation's highest decision-making body which in September 2020 approved a 20-year Public Private Partnership - PPP concession, valued at \$3.1 billion to Messrs E. Customs HC Project Limited as initial concessionaire, will allow a few selfish government officials to convince it in approving an illegal concession. How does a company benefit from a process in which it didn't participate? It is disconcerting that less than five weeks to the end of the Buhari Administration, the Federal Executive Counting did close its eyes to a valid court order and allowed itself to be misguided.

The willingness to sidetrack due process and best practice methods by top officials of the Buhari administration on the e-Customs project through a second and hurried FEC approval was nothing but a desperate bid to empower cronies of retiring President

Buhari before the end of his administration. With the recourse to litigation by the parties involved in the project, it is now coming to light that President Buhari may have been misled to override an earlier approval granted by the FEC, where he presided on 2 September, 2020.

While government officials can be parochial in their actions, majority of Nigerians are waiting to reap the benefits promised by the project, especially full automation of Nigeria Custom's business processes and procedures through the development and implementation of a robust and secure ICT platform, implementation of modern customs border stations, airports and marine posts as well as revenue enhancement.

President Tinubu, now wooing international investments from across the globe, must show more than a passing interest in the e-Customs Project where Nigeria stands to reap huge revenue. More importantly, Nigeria cannot be a laughing stock among international investors!

***Adebayo is ED, Accountable Leadership for Better Nigeria Initiati**

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Avoiding Judicial ambush by politicians



BY KENNETH DARENG

WITH the aftermath of the 2023 General elections, and as a common tradition with the outcome of every election circle in Nigeria after all is set and done, attention will definitely shift to the courts.

This is a time the Judiciary as usual becomes the last resort and hope for losers who would approach it for justice to be served in order to retrieve their mandate through the use of all available legal fire frameworks.

Perhaps sensing that the 2023 elections might be the toughest battle for the Nigerian political class as well as for the Judiciary in

view of the mirage of litigations that are likely going to accompany it, the Chief Justice of Nigeria [CJN], Justice Olukayode Ariwoola, had recently on three separate occasions issued serious warnings to politicians to refrain from interfering with the operations of the Judiciary.

The CJN who also spoke at the 2022 Conference of the Nigerian Bar Association on Public Interest and Development Law [NBA SPIDEL], said; "The electoral process has been set in motion and the 2023 elections are just stone throw away.

"We are fully aware that it is in a period like this that the executives or those seeking and aspiring for political positions will not threaten the path of rule of law, the Electoral Act and the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, but will rather act on their whims and fancies to clinch to power.

"Interestingly, the Judiciary shall be at the centre stage of this to equipose between the electoral players and further catalyse and administer justice, fairness and equity in the courts where their petitions shall flow."

According to the CJN, "past and present political regimes in Nigeria have not ceased to intervene and interfere in the premises of the Judiciary and have almost diluted its supposed

sanctity." He also accused the politicians of whittling down its powers and authority and tampering with its Independence and autonomy through various means.

The second time Justice Ariwoola warned was shortly after he was sworn in as the substantive CJN where he directed his plea to both politicians and other Nigerians urging them to allow the Judiciary to function because law is not static, and that is why you have seen that the National Assembly continues to amend laws. "And it is the laws that the courts apply to the facts available."

And for the third time during a reception organized in his honour by the Oyo state Government the CJN again warned the politicians, "Let them do their things and allow us do our things. The laws are not static. What we apply is the law as it is made. But our dockets are full. We have asked for a amendment to our Constitution over and over again.

"There are many matters that should not find their way to the Supreme Court in 2022. Many are indeed domestic matters of political parties. Why bring that to the court for us to adjudicate when your constitution has shown the way?"

Clearly, the signals coming from the CJN, is an indication that given the past experiences in the country and the embarrassing revelation made by some judicial



officers after the 2015 general elections where Judges gave details of how politicians pestered them to tilt or scale down justice in favour of some political interests and failure to abide could be met with dire consequences as was the case with the invasion of the residences of some Judges by the Department of State Services [DSS].

A recent report by the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission [ICPC], Titled; "Nigeria Corruption Index: Report of a Pilot survey covering 2018-2019, placed the Judiciary on top of the Nigeria Corruption Index."

The report estimated that N1.4 billion was exchanged in a bribe-for-judgement scheme in the Judicial sector between 2018 and 2019. It also stated that lawyers were mostly responsible for offering bribes for favourable judgements mostly in electoral and political matters.

Therefore, the CJN's persistent caution to the politicians might have been informed by the dangerous trend because as an insider operating at the pinnacle

of the nation's Judicial arm, apart from knowing what is going on, he also understands what is actually happening.

And to borrow from the words of Hon, Justice S.O. Uwaifo a former Supreme Court Judge, in his valedictory speech on January 24, 2005, opined that; "A corrupt Judge is more harmful to the society than a man who runs amok with a dagger in a crowded street. The later can be restrained physically. But a corrupt Judge deliberately destroys the moral foundation of the society and causes incalculable distress to individuals through abusing his office while still being referred to as honourable."

This also means that the Nigerian Judiciary has a crucial role to play in 2023 and beyond by resisting any attempt to play into the hands of some unpatriotic and selfish politicians. A just, fair and equitable Judiciary will at the very end be to the benefit of the politicians and indeed other Nigerians at large.



By DUMAH RANDONG

THE recent appointments of new Service Chiefs by President Bola Tinubu and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces was seen by Nigerians as the right step in the right direction. It is no doubt a departure from what we have witnessed in the past eight years. It will not only be an under statement but a crime against the state for anyone to project Nigerian state as a single faith by whatever claim and criteria he or she uses. A country with a population of over 200 thousand people, is a multi religious, ethnic and other regional affiliations.

The biggest problem associated with these issues when it comes to appointments is the lack of adherence to the Federal Character principles which stipulates that all the people must be represented. But over the years, this principle has been violated giving room for suspicion on the powers that be. The appointments of the present Service Chiefs reflects the realities in Nigeria. Whether you want to look at it from the ethnic or religious angle. Unlike in recent past where such appointments were made disregarding due process.

Against politicizing security in Nigeria

Taking a look at the appointments, it is fair to say that they are not only appropriate but patriotic looking at what has taken place in the past. As it were, you hardly would find the Service Chiefs being picked based on premedial consideration but on merit with regards to ethnic and religious biases. The Chief of Defence Staff for instance, Major General Christopher Gwabin Musa is of the Christian extraction from Southern Kaduna, Maj General Taoreed AbiodunLagbaja, a Yoruba from the SouthWest, Chief of Army Staff, Rear Admiral Emmanuel IkechukwuOgalla, Chief of Naval Staff, an Igbo from the SouthEast as well as Air Vice Marshal Hassan (AVM) BalaAbubakar, the Chief of Air Staff, a Hausa-Fulani from the Northern part of the country and the Deputy Inspector General of Police, DIG, Kayode Ogbetukun, as the Acting Inspector General of Police while Adeniyi Bashir was also appointed as the Acting Comptroller General of Customs.

These appointments in the true sense of the word were devoid of sentiments which usually characterize such exercise in the past as far as the six geo-political zones of the country are concerned. Nigeria has never been so deeply divided before like in the last eight years of the Buhari administration. His leadership style was divisive in nature and this buttresses the comments made in different quarters that he wasn't a just leader but a pretender. So, some of his actions and attitude were responsible for the lopsided appointments carried out with impunity and nepotism. Nothing could have been responsible for this deep division most especially along ethnic and religious lines if not for this high handedness by the President who despite calls by different individuals and groups, remained adamant.

It's recalled that when the

immediate past President won the Presidential elections in 2015, people of goodwill in the country including both Christians and Muslims trekked far distances in solidarity with the Buhari victory, hoping that they have found in the Buhari a messiah who will salvage the country. To further boost their hope during his inaugural speech at the Eagle Square on 29th May, 2015, President Muhammadu Buhari said to the admiration of Nigerians that he belongs to nobody but to everybody. It then bits one's imagination if the President of a country could give such a reassuring speech not to live by it at the end of the day, then it goes to show that something is fundamentally wrong.

This alluded to the fact that the Buhari's administration only hoodwinked Nigerians into believing that he was a man of his words when he painted a picture of what he truly is not. Before the country's return to democracy, the military has kept to it's tradition of securing the territorial integrity of the nation and never delved into politics. They have to some extent, remained apolitical professional institution until they were dragged into politics of some sorts. No wonder, there have been complaints in the internal security by the military while they were drafted to protect the citizens in the wake of security threats and insurrection in some parts of the country especially in the Middle-Belt posed by acts of terrorism, banditry and other criminal activities where allegations of complicity by personnels of the military in several attacks against the civillian population became rife. States where this ugly situation was persistently witnessed includes Plateau, Benue, Southern Kaduna, Taraba and a host of other places across the country.

Having had its fair of this imbroglia by the North East region of the country especially Borno, Yobe and Adamwa states, when the Boko

Haram issue started which lasted several years. A similar security problem started in the Northwest region which Kaduna state became the epicenter which was believed to as a result of the remnants of the jadists who were dislodged from the Northeast. Since then Kaduna state became almost a no go area until it spread to other states within the region. The people behind these activities were given different nomenclature such as bandits, kidnappers and terrorists who held sway inflicting havoc on locals and passersby on the Kaduna-Abuja way with BirninGwarri as their base. The identity of these criminals were later to be known as the Fulani herdsmen. This is deliberate because they have not been officially pronounced as such.

Even Armnesty International has severally called on President Buhari for it's declaration as a terrorists organization but upto the time he the President, raising a lot of suspicion of being backed by the powers that be. Like the Boko Haram debacle, the banditry consumed the entire country leading to collapsed of many businesses in Nigeria. There were accusations and counter accusations as to the motive behind the killings going on. While some claimed it was a farmer-herder clash others believe that this was just a cover up. The agenda goes beyond that. It was an expansion move to take over the lands using these Fulani militia. Uptil today, this question is still begging for answers.

The Buhari administration did not care to deal with the problem head long as he kept telling Nigerians that the banditry will soon be brought to an end by bringing the perpetrators to book. No wonder, all calls by eminent people to declare the Fulani as a terrorists group by the Buhari government fell on deaf ears.

Two time Minister of Education and Health respectively, Professor Ihechukwu Madubuike said the ex-

President unlike any other President since the history of Nigeria, placed the interest of his ethnic Fulani above any other consideration. The former lawmaker and Commissioner for Finance in the Old Imo State, further said he would not be surprised if Buhari sacrificed national interest at the altar of ethnic, party or personal interests in some of his actions and inactions while in office. His words: Buhari was and is still an ethnic bigot. Everything Fulani was his interest. Anything that will advance the fortunes of the Fulani he will do, he achieved that through his party.

At the end of the day Nigeria must rank him as the most ethnic-chauvanist President that the country has ever produced. If Nigerians can have the courage to investigate the eight years of Buhari's leadership, then the outcome will determine what the next step will be. He was quoted to have raised these issues in the Vanguard of 1st July, 2023. The continued invasion of several communities in rural Communities without arrest and prosecution of the perpetrators leaves much to be desired. Nigerians deserve a radical change and a departure from the old order.

This is pertinent for the country's development. The marauding Fulani have wrecked havoc in this country for too long. They should know that no one has the monopoly of violence in this country. The President should consummate this with the appropriate orders being the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces to avoid the avoidable situation as the case has always been. The Service Chiefs and the National Security Adviser, NSA, can not afford to fail Nigerians given the hope and expectations from President Tinubu to change the old order of this hostage position the country has been put into by the terrorists and other criminal elements.

By **MARIA DIAMOND**

YEARLY, September 5 has been set aside to highlight the most current issues of concern for spinal cord injured (SCI) individuals by the International Spinal Cord Society, ISCoS.

For the 2023 occasion with the theme, 'Access to SCI Services – A lifeless complicated', the Spinal Cord Injuries Association of Nigeria, SCIAN, an organisation established in 1984 to support SCI Nigerians has brought the attention of members of the public to the challenges faced by Nigerians with spinal cord injury.

SCIAN who urged the three tiers of government, MDAs and corporate organisations to respect the Discrimination Against Persons With Disability (Prohibition) Act 2018, and ensure that policies, appointments and facilities reflect the provisions of the Act, said disability is ubiquitous and as such it should be the concern of everyone. "Anything can make anyone disabled, and anyone can be disabled at any point in time. Hence, Disability is and should be everyone's Business."

"The difference between what spinal cord injured persons in the developed and some developing countries can do and what we can do here in Nigeria is determined by access to post-injury rehabilitation facilities which they have, but which

remained a mirage in Nigeria."

The association revealed that many decades after SCIAN was allocated a piece of land to build a Rehabilitation Centre in Lagos, they have been unable to put up the building or procure the necessary equipment.

"The lack of access to rehabilitation has seriously affected our level of functionality,

to address their physical and mental health challenges. We recall, with a deep sense of appreciation, that as the then Governor of Lagos State, Bola Ahmed Tinubu now the President gave us a fixed portion of his monthly salary and also assisted SCIAN in some landscaping and perimeter fencing.

Now we are also calling on him



2023 international spinal cord injuries awareness day



thus making life quite difficult and complicated for us. Many spinal cord injured persons rot away at home after leaving the hospital, as there is no public and affordable rehabilitation centre

as the President of Nigeria to graciously consider the construction of our Rehab complex as a major intervention in the health sector. This will undoubtedly empower SCI

persons to live independent and productive life and thus contribute to the socioeconomic development of the country."

They continued: "We also call on corporate entities and

philanthropists to come to our aid so that Nigerians who suffer injuries to their spinal cord can be as functional and productive as our counterparts in other countries."

Ugwudoro Cultural Festival of Unity

BY **JANE FRANCES CHIBUZOR**

THE residents of Evuazu community displayed their cultural heritage at the Ugwudoro Cultural Festival, which attracted arts and culture custodians and tourism stakeholders seeking adventure. The guests at the event were excited by the diversity of the people's cultural displays that range from the masquerade dance to musical performances among other competitions.

This year's edition of the annual cultural fiesta was better organized. The festival planning committee laid down certain rules to ensure that the event held smoothly and without hitches. It is on record that anyone who goes contrary to the stipulated rules should be punished.

Every participant and guest at the festival is expected to be treated with respect due to the inherent dignity and value as human beings.

The festival, which had attracted personalities from every facet of life, is targeting to become the people's money-making machine, if well harnessed.

However, the annual festival brought together government officials and stakeholders in the private sector.

Although the festival faced some challenges, especially in the planning stage, it nevertheless lived up to expectations. Some stakeholders were able to invest in the festival, as they were adorned with expensive clothes and ornaments to elevate the masquerades status.

To ensure that the activities kept visitors enthralled, the President-General of Evuazu Community in Obeleagu Umama, Mr. Sunday Ekwo, with support from the executive



members, provided the community with infrastructural facilities. The facilities included electricity and potable water, among others.

Under the leadership of Mr. Ekwo, the people organised a mini-festival known as Evuazu Day, a move aimed at promoting peaceful coexistence among the people. Ekwo noted that when he took over office, the community was in a state of disorderliness as the whole system was not functional.

Speaking with journalists on the last day of the festival, he assured

them of the readiness and determination of members of the community to raise the standard of the festival by 2024.

Earlier, The National President of the Nigeria Union of Pensioners (NUP), Mr. Godwin Abumisi, stated that the Umunwanke people had more and bigger masquerades performing than the previous years, assuring that he would be presenting big masquerades to his village. "I have fulfilled that and they all performed during this festival. If you come to Umunwanke, we have about

seven big masquerades that performed today," he said.

Ekwo noted that despite the unfortunate experiences encountered by the community in the past, the 2023 celebration was the best festival ever celebrated since the beginning of the annual cultural festival. He promised that the 2024 edition of the event would be better organized.

"I know the festival is older than me. It is our inheritance," he said.

On security, he said the fact that nobody was injured, there was no kidnapping on that day and no vehicle was stolen meant the community is safe.

Appealing to the state government to support the community with infrastructure, the president-general noted that residents of the community had for long depended on their own self-help efforts without assistance from the government.

"We have not got any support from the government in terms of infrastructure.

One of the honourable members that graced the occasion had promised the organisers that by 2024 he will make sure that the Nigeria Television Authority is invited to cover the event," he added.



REPEAT IMAGES

VC KARL KUMM UNIVERSITY VISITS FEDERAL COLLEGE OF VETERINARY

The Vice Chancellor, Karl Kumm University (KKU), Prof. Nanven Audu Gambo and Management staff visited the Provost, Federal College of Veterinary and Medical Laboratory Technology Vom, Jos South LGA, Dr. Chukwu O. O. Chukwu recently



Vice Chancellor, KKU, Prof. Nanven Audu Gambo (right) received by the Provost, Dr. Chukwu O. O. Chukwu



Dr. Chukwu (right) making some remarks



Provost of the College, Dr. Chukwu (left) taking the Vice Chancellor KKU, Prof. Gambo round facilities at the College



Cross section of KKU Management Staff that accompanied the Vice Chancellor



Dr. Chukwu (middle) flanked by his Management and the VC KKU and team



KKU Registrar, Benjamin Davou Dachomo (right) flanked by other Management Staff listening to remarks



Vice Chancellor, Prof. Gambo, Provost of the College, Dr. Chukwu in a photograph with Management team of KKU and FCVMIT



Prof. Gambo (right) signing the visitors, register

PHOTOS: Media Unit, KKU Vom

Odd World

'My husband sees our dead relatives'

A woman has insisted she and her spiritual medium husband share their home with the ghosts of her dead relatives, who often sit on the sofa with the couple and have even shared their bed at night. Jane Drew, 59, claims the spirits of her mum, Mary, and grandmother, Clara, often hang around in the couple's living room, while her husband David Drew, 68, has also seen the ghost of Jane's father standing behind the bar they used to have.

Jane - who met David at one of his clairvoyant shows - even believes she was once poked in the back by her late mum, who passed away in 2019. And in the early days of her relationship with David, Jane said the couple would be visited by various spirits several times a week.

David, from Llandudno, Wales, has worked as a psychic medium for more than 50 years, and although he is now in a wheelchair and has to rely on Jane as his full-time carer, the man still receives "hundreds" of requests from people asking him to help with their spiritual cases.

The man explained: "I'm 70 next year and my earliest experience was when I was three years old. I see people all the time and nine months after Jane's mum's passing I saw her smiling, looking at me. I never really see my relatives but in 1979 I saw my mother soon after she passed over and I've never seen her since. The only thing you can take with you when you pass on is spiritual mindfulness. It's an unusual life I would say looking back."

While Jane added: "He sometimes sees my mum and grandma sat in the lounge when he walks past. We used to have a bar and David would sometimes see my dad behind the bar too. We'd be in bed and feel the bed dip down and I'd ask who that would be and he would just go to sleep and I'd be lying there in the covers scared under the duvet. Sometimes it would just be a small dip and then other times it would feel like someone really bouncing their bum down on the bed.

"It just became normal over the years. My mum's not been dead quite so long - only a couple of years - but she had this habit of poking me in my back to get my attention. One night I was sitting in bed and felt a poke in my back so I knew it was her.

"There have been some hair-raising things. What tends to startle me is when things in the house move. David kept a shaving mirror at the back of the counter and it jumped off and hovered for a second above the floor and then dropped and that happened three times. This happened when David wasn't here and if he was here, he'd have been able to explain it, but because I can't see who's there, that's what makes it scary."

David claims to have been able to see spirits since he was a child, and initially believed that everyone could see ghosts as he didn't know any different. And after he began working as a medium when he was an adult, he met Jane when she attended one of his stage shows in Blackpool in 1984.

Jane recalled: "I've always been vaguely interested in spirits and my grandma used to have premonitions with different members of the family seeing ghosts. I did believe that there was something after death, but that doesn't mean to say that everybody did and so when I went to see David I was open to the concept but had half a sceptical eye if this was genuine.

"So, my mum had bought me tickets to go and see him in Blackpool. I felt like I knew him, he was passing on all these messages to people. In the interval, he said to me 'You're the girl I'm going to marry'. I gave him a call a few weeks after that for a reading and instead of that, he took me for a drink. We got married a year later."

And Jane also said David's biggest source of joy in his work is helping people, including one woman who claimed she was being tormented by a spirit in her home until David and his "spirit helpers" were able to help the spirit cross to "the next dimension" and leave the woman alone.

But David's work doesn't come without backlash, as Jane explained: "Usually the feedback he gets is very positive and very often you get someone who'll say it's the work of the devil, but you never get it from anyone who's actually seen him. When he was due to appear at a theatre one time, he'd had a phone call from the police saying born-again Christians were threatening to slash his tyres."

Source: Mirror



Why are marriages evaporating?

I couldn't sleep last night after trying to save my friend's marriage from evaporating without any success. Though I will not disclose some vital information so as to protect what is left of the integrity of the family, I feel the pains this woman will go through if a miracle does not take place.

To make matters worse, the woman had lost both parents, she is jobless but only engage in petty trading, living in a rented house which is due and she was suppose to be operated this week but with no money at hand.

The husband after having three children together decided to add a second wife recently. He left their matrimonial home a couple of days ago and only gave the wife three hundred naira to feed the entire family, she told me. After my little discussion with him, the option he is giving her is to either join his second wife in a rented house or go back to her parents' house, (both of them are dead)

As I kept encouraging her to remain strong facing this traumatizing predicament, I was heart full of tears wondering why should he abandon his three children together with his wife after all these wonderful years of togetherness.

After investigations on this particular matter, I discovered that they both got married in a church accompanied with beautiful promises which is now gone with the wind and today, their marriage is about to hit the rocks.

Please don't get me wrong as there is no marriage on earth which has no problems including mine of course. Sometimes, problems make us wonder whether it was the right choice we made of each other but the next minute, we are dying in love for each other.

However, what beats my imagination is the excuse some people give to facilitate their marriage breakups. On several occasions, you hear the men folks say, "my wife is illiterate and I cannot cope, she does not dress to suit our contemporary times or she turns her back against me at night". These are some of the pertinent excuses which men give to do away with their wives.

As my friend's wife sat across my parlour, left in this condition, I knew she was already in deep trouble. My prayer however is that she does not do anything stupid or hurt herself under any sort of imaginable pressure. On the contrary however, one is tempted to ask as to how do women who snatch husbands of others feel each time they succeed in separating these beautiful homes? Are they really concern about these innocent children who are always left at the receiving end due to this unpopular and cruel decision of theirs?

Where is the place of the church in the middle of these family problems if I may ask please? How can our women who fall victims of this unimaginable experience be taken care of by the church and our society in the first place?

Though I can never claim to be a saint, I am really torn apart that this particular woman is presently left in "hell" waiting

for a redeemer to come her way. I have never experienced such a thing so close to me in my life though; I also came out of a near broken home before God took over things.

I want to urge the church and anyone near any of such women who are going through such a horrible experience to provide a shoulder for them to lean on. We must do something on this issue to save many women who are presently traumatized as a result of this anomaly in our society.

Left for me, the church is not doing enough to protect vulnerable women on this matter, at this period.

Please I must beg you all to pray for this woman including many others who have been abandoned by their husbands for no fault of theirs. I feel the pains more because of what I saw my mother went through after my father left us for fifteen years unattended to. At a point, my mother had to surrender her portion of food for us to eat and survive.

I had vowed not to have anything to do with my father not until my mother put her knees on the ground asking me to forgive her husband.

Of course, I had long forgiven and forgotten about the bitterness I and by extension my other siblings went through and my father is today enjoying my benevolence more than my mother to her complete delight. However, with all sense of responsibility, women are really suffering in this country and some of us are left with no other option than to speak out against this unabated dehumanization meted them.

All that I can say this moment is to pray to God to please restore broken homes and bring back all that the devil has stolen from our families in Jesus name.

“

Though I can never claim to be a saint, I am torn apart that this particular woman is presently left in "hell" only if a redeemer comes her way. I have never experience such a thing so close in my life though I also came out of a near broken home before God took over things. I want to urge the church and anyone near any of such women going through such a horrible experience to provide a shoulder for them to lean on. We must do something on this issue to save many women who are traumatised as a result of this anomaly in our society.

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Feature

Phobia of Retirement: Real or imaginary

AS one looks forward to retirement, the obvious feeling is that of agitation, apprehension, nervousness, anxiety and unease. A cursory look at those that have retired paints a confusing picture of the whole scenario. Some retired senior citizens look bright, agile, vibrant and happy; while on the other hand, some look worn-out, sad, depressed or in a state of trepidation. Some are in-between or neither here nor there. Looking at retired persons as a predictor of what it will look or feel like is therefore confusing; whether it is a thing to look forward to or a situation to avoid?

But it is clearly a thing of reality just as the book of Proverbs in the Scriptures talks about a time for everything. A time to be born and a time to die; a time to build and a time to tear down; a time to sow and a time to reap, and so on. Similarly, one expects a time to start work and a time to retire. But this appears to be a difficult scenario to come to terms with; or so I feel, or see in some climes.

Retirement is therefore a phenomenon to be afraid of because of the uncertainties. Why should one not be afraid of retirement? Just as one can see, the uncertainties appear to be too many. Just like marriage, whose certificate is dished out before a couple embarks on the marital life, and the process of leaving, cleaving and becoming one body is learnt or actualised along the way; and so, is retirement. You do not have the experience before you actually retire. A retired life is actualized when you are retired from service.

Retirement has been defined as an action or fact of leaving one's job and ceasing to work. It is also said to be that part of a person's life when they choose to leave their work life behind permanently. It is expected that this is embarked upon when people are old, or sick enough to no longer contribute to their workplace. Different countries have different ages for retirement, and in the same country, the age at retirement is different for different professions or duties. One can also retire voluntarily when the person chooses to do so at any age of his or her choosing. There is also the compulsory retirement when an organization decides to retire a person for a reason or the person reaches the age of compulsory retirement. Organizations that need the continuing service of an officer, being 'essential' or no one



available to do the job, re-engage the person but on 'contract' appointment. It is pertinent to say here clearly that retirement appears to be only for the employed or in a structured type of job. I am not sure whether the people in private businesses ever retire.

Because of the seaming uncertainty surrounding retirement, some individuals are so perturbed that they make effort to actually push forward the date of birth and therefore the age at retirement. This is because the birthdate determines the retirement date. Some persons are actually caught in their own craftiness of doctoring birthdates. They do this several times and sometimes forget where they started from. Their retirement benefits have therefore been eaten into, and receive little or just a fraction of their entitlements at retirement. This is unfortunate to say the least.

The greatest fear of retirees is

the loss of regular resources; where and how to get money or funds to afford the costs of living standards. This fear is worsened by the fact that savings from the pension funds from the employers are either not paid early, paid in bits, partly paid or not paid at all. Funds which have been deducted from a person's earnings over the years for this purpose appear to have disappeared into thin air and not accessible to the person who had save the said money. Reasons are many. Deducted monies are not remitted to the Pension Boards, the remitted monies do not get to the pension board, government borrows from the pension board without paying back or the pension board simply 'sits' on the money.

The fear of retirement can be changed or modified by a change in the mind-set. Most workers have fixated their minds on a structured, regularised form of work. In addition, there has been the concept of the cycle of work

and receipt of pay. You work for a month and receive salary or wages at the end of the month. Why and how should this cycle be broken? This is unthinkable and rather imagined. Remember that good health is an immeasurable resource if God blesses you with it.

The fear of Retirement could be the beginning of wisdom. This wisdom can be put into action by many propositions. First, God is in control of this dark side of life of yours particularly being a child of God. Secondly, fall back on plans put on ground during the 'working period'. There are other resources at your disposal if you have adequately invested in them; and include the family; friends, colleagues, co-workers. Building and sustaining your workplace or workplaces that provided you with the opportunity to be a worker may also be a huge asset. Destroying these in the course of your work would do the opposite. Investment in people, materials, assets may douse the apprehension of retirement. Having a positive mindset about retirement may be another wisdom to fall back to, as it is not the end to life or livelihood.

Before my retirement benefits get stalled somewhere along the processing and payment chain, it would not be out of place to passionately appeal to relevant authorities to have a change of heart withholding the payments for whatever reason. Pension and gratuity are not a gift or a form of

favour. They are a right! These are cumulative savings from the salaries of workers. When the need for it arises, God expects it to be given to them. The writer has worked assiduously during the duration of service and therefore deserves his 'wages' in the form of pension and gratuity from his savings. This will go a long way in making retirement something to look forward to. The pension office staff should stop making life difficult to pensioners or retirees by making very unreasonable demands on these already apprehensive individuals, and further compounding their problems. They should remember that however long it takes, they will also be retirees if God tarries. What is 'good for the goose is also good for the gander', they say!

All these are theoretical, the writer speaking from the side of a prospective retiree with no experience whatsoever. This article can therefore be taken as a preamble to retirement. The writer hopes to write another article in this regard about 12 months later, after I would have tested and tasted retirement for some time. The content then may be that of actualized hope and satisfaction. But as of now, it is a virtual thing. An imagination or a procrastination!

Mutihir is Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology, University of Jos.

Because of the seaming uncertainty surrounding retirement, some individuals are so perturbed that they make effort to actually push forward the date of birth and therefore the age at retirement.

“This is because the birthdate determines the retirement date. Some persons are actually caught in their own craftiness of doctoring birthdates.”

News

Security forces set to sanitise North-East of terrorists

By DORCAS PANKYE

In a bid to further dislodge the remnant of terrorists in the Northeast and clear the region of the remaining terrorists, insurgents and other criminals, an early morning air strike was conducted by the Air Component of Operation Hadin Kai at Suwa in Kala Balge Local Government Area (LGA) of Borno State on 11 September 2023.

Air Commodore Edward Gabkwet,

Director of Public Relations and Information, Nigerian Air Force disclosed this yesterday in a statement.

It may be recalled that Suwa was a stronghold of Boko Haram terrorists in Gezuwa general area near Sambisa Forest until its dislodgement by the military and other security agencies. Recent intelligence, however, revealed the massing up of terrorists within the area with likely plans to attack troops on patrol along major routes to Bama and Mafa LGA.

Further intelligence also revealed that the same group of terrorists had perfected plans to attack troops stationed around Rann in Kalabalge LGA.



Abubakar

Accordingly, air strikes were authorized with confirmatory assessments revealing several terrorists neutralised and structures destroyed, thereby degrading their ability to attack friendly forces and innocent law-abiding civilians.

It has now become evident that the efforts of the entire security agencies operating in the Northeast have, to a large extent, yielded the requisite outcome, though a lot still needs to be done. The need to sustain the momentum is thus expedient, just as

the support of all Nigerians to the Armed Forces and other security agencies is essential as they clear the region of all criminal elements.

For the Air Component Commanders in all joint operating theatres, the directive of the Chief of Air Staff (CAS), Air Marshal Hasan Abubakar, remains clear and unambiguous: Stop at nothing in going after these criminals and ensure they are brought to justice. The era of treating them with kids' gloves is long over.

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

HEALTH Initiative, a Non-Governmental Organization in Kogi State, North-central Nigeria, has organised a medical outreach for the underprivileged in Bassa Local Government Area of Kogi State.

During the outreach, nearly five hundred persons with different ailments were given free medical examinations and drugs, worth millions of naira.

The executive director of the civil society organization, Mr. Suleiman Abubakar, said that the medical outreach is part of the free healthcare provision to disadvantaged communities by the voluntary health provider, aimed at reducing the burden of primary healthcare on the state government.

Suleiman, says U&I is committed to providing free medical examination and treatments for the rural poor to support disadvantaged communities attain healthful environmental influences such as free regular health education, medical examination and treatment of indigent citizens towards healthcare improvement of the poor to reduce poverty.

According to him, the health organization has undertaken the medical outreach in three health facilities in Bassa Local Government Area, where the U&I medical team of 10 medical specialists and consultants from the National Hospital, Abuja, attended to the beneficiaries with various health conditions.

Mr. Abubakar added that the programme was organized in support of the campaign programme of the APC Governorship candidate in the

Less privileged in Kogi get free medical outreach



Bello

state, Ahmed Usman Ododo in the November 11 Governorship election.

"Alhaji Ahmed Ododo has demonstrated keen interest in providing medical facilities and free medication to some rural communities across the state. And in line with Ododo's spirit of philanthropy, our programme is designed to encourage him to adopt his philanthropic policy on health in the governance of the state to shape the policy direction of his administration when elected as Kogi State Governor come November 11," he said.

Abubakar stated that the NGO is determined to support the candidacy of Ododo in the provision of educational materials, agricultural services, sports, youth and women empowerment in the rural areas. Also, Bassa LGA was chosen for the flag off of the exercise, as the most rural and disadvantaged rural community in the state.

Speaking at the event, the Special Adviser to Governor Yahaya Bello, on Primary Health Care Services, Alhassan Salisu Adakeke, stressed that Usman Ododo is 'evidently' disposed to the service of communities in the state.

Adakeke says Governor Bello's administration has provided Health facilities and medical equipment to the 239 political wards in the rural areas in accordance with the standard of the World Health Organization (WHO).

Chairman of Bassa Local Government Area, Mutari Shaibu and the traditional leader of Bassa Area Traditional Council, the Aguma of Bassa -komo and the Chairman Bassa aArea Traditional Council, Mr Williams keke, were full of appreciation for the medical outreach. They all separately endorsed Usman Ododo as the candidate of APC.

Rev Pam lauds Tinubus first 100 day in office

FROM JIDAUNA YANUNG Abuja

The Executive Secretary of the Nigeria Christian Pilgrims Commission (NCPC), Reverend Yakubu Pam, Has said one of the major successes of the Bola Tinubu/Kashim Shettima administration's first 100 days in office is their defusing of electioneering period tensions.

The cleric said the tensions were created by politicians who falsely claimed that persecution of Christians would begin with the victory of the joint Muslim ticket.

Addressing reporters at

the weekend in Abuja, Pam said he was at the presidential Villa on Friday to thank president Bola Tinubu for his administration's steady support for the NCPC, which is Nigeria's sole facilitator of Christian Pilgrimage. "the first 100 days of the Tinubu/Shettima administration have been marked by a resounding message of unity and inclusivity that shows the current administration as a beacon of peace and unity in Nigeria.

"Last Friday. We briefed Mr. President on the activities and mandate of the NCPC and

plants for Christian Pilgrimages to Israel, Rome, Jordan and Greece. It was an opportunity for hundreds of Christians to have prayer retreats, and we are immensely appreciative of this administration's unwavering support.

Many will recall that during the electioneering period few months ago, some politicians stirred up dangerous sentiments and apprehensions by alleging that Nigeria was about to be converted to one religion. But we thank God that this administration embraces all," he said Pam. Who is also the North central zone's Chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) comprising Plateau, Nasarawa, Benue, Niger, Kogi, Kwara and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Noted that the aggressive use of disinformation and misinformation against Nigeria's political leadership posed a threat to democracy, unity and peace.

The NCPC boss said Nigeria faced numerous challenges in its bid towards actualizing genuine populist developmental goals of the current administration. "The commissioner has directed men of the CIB to investigate the matter and ensure that the criminals are unveiled," he said.



Pam

NDLEA interepts illicit substances

FROM JIDAUNA YANUNG Abuja

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), has intercepted various quantities of ephedrine, skunk and nitrous oxide, popularly known as laughing gas concealed in semovita packs and dry pepper being shipped to south Africa and Kenya through the Murtala Muhammed international Airport (MMIA), Ikeja Lagos.

These consignments were owned by members of Transnational Drug trafficking Organization (DTO), the suspects were promptly arrested, their mansions raided and their luxury vehicles seized.

The NDLEA spokesperson Femi Babafemi said in statement in Abuja said that the NDLEA operatives a notorious drug trafficker, Suleiman Babatunde Oba who is a member of a cartel distributing Cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine and ephedrine between Nigeria, Brazil, Ghana, South Africa,



Marwa

Mozambique, and Europe.

He was arrested while attempting to board a Rwanda Air flight to South Africa two boxes loaded with ephedrine sealed in semovita packs. The recovered substance is a precursor chemical and active ingredient in the production of methamphetamine.

The NDLEA stated that "in his confessional statement, Suleiman who holds a South

African passport, married to a South African lady and has lived there for over 20 years, identified hakeem Babatunde Salami who equally lives in Lagos and South Africa as the head of the drug ring. A follow up raid in the house of Salami located at 75 wosilatu Dawodu Street, Lagos on Monday 28th August revealed that he had fled the country on the same day Suleiman was arrested.

Sports

US Open 2023: How far will Novak Djokovic go?

"I don't know, when are you planning to slow down a little bit?" the Russian enquired. It is a fair question.

Overcoming Medvedev in straight sets on Sunday, 36-year-old Djokovic equalled Margaret Court's all-time record of 24 major singles titles to stand at the pinnacle of his sport.

And it appeared to mean more than any other before it. The emotion came pouring out of Djokovic as the magnitude of his achievement sank in, before the celebrations with his family and team members commenced.

"This is one of the biggest achievements in sport history," his coach Goran Ivanisevic later declared. "We're not talking about tennis. We are talking generally, in sport."

He added: "If he wins 25, he's going to think 'why not 26?' It's always one more, something more."

"He's taking care of his body, he's taking care of everything, every single detail has to be perfect."

Perhaps most remarkably, the Serb - who is peerless in the Open era (since tennis went professional in 1968) - has accomplished such remarkable heights despite competing in the greatest era the men's game has witnessed.

A 24th Slam extended his lead over rival Rafael Nadal to two titles in the ongoing race for supremacy, after Swiss great Roger Federer retired with 20.

But while Spain's Nadal has announced his plans to stop at the end of the 2024 season, there are no signs of Djokovic's remarkable career coming to an end.

"I don't put any number right now in my mind on how many Slams I want to win," Djokovic said.

"Knowing that I play at such a high level still and I win the biggest tournaments, I don't want to leave this sport if I'm still at the top."

Djokovic gets US Open revenge to match Court

Djokovic admitted that the weight of history contributed to an underperformance when, on the brink of a stunning calendar Grand Slam in 2021, he lost to Medvedev in the US Open final to miss out on winning all four major titles in the same year.

But, two months after being denied a 24th title by Carlos Alcaraz in an epic five-set Wimbledon final, he would not allow his latest opportunity to pass him by.

The possibility of winning all four majors in the same year was not on the line here - although matching Rod Laver in that regard is no doubt an achievement he will have on his mind after losing just one match in Grand Slams in 2023.

However, a 24th major represented the most significant trophy of his illustrious career to date.

The only player to have previously reached 24 titles is Australian Court, whose achievements came during tennis' transition to a professional sport.

It was a factor that Serena Williams alluded to when she spoke about falling agonisingly short of Court's tally when she



Margaret Court's (right) record of 24 major singles titles has stood for 50 years while Djokovic has won his Slams in the Open era, the majority of Court's titles - 13 to be precise - arrived before 1968. Until that point, Grand Slams were contested by amateurs while top players sought the prize money on offer at private events.

retired last year.

"I think [Djokovic is the greatest of all time]. How can you argue with these numbers?" said BBC Radio 5 Live commentator David Law.

"He's got the same number as Court and, let's be honest, they were registered at a time when tennis was a different sport. Many of them were at the Australian Open, when there wasn't a huge amount of competition."

"He has had to come after Federer and Nadal, play against them when they have been at their best. He had to hunt them down, despite being considerably less popular with the crowds."

Court won her first singles Slam on home soil at the 1960 Australian Open, where she triumphed on 11 occasions, with her last coming in New York in 1973.

Similarly, Djokovic has won an all-time record 10 men's titles in Melbourne since clinching his very first Slam there in 2008.

Wimbledon is his next most successful tournament, where he is just one title behind Federer's men's record eight triumphs.

One feat achieved by Court which Djokovic is yet to match is that elusive calendar Slam.

Court is one of five people to have won a calendar Grand Slam - winning all four majors in 1970. Rod Laver and Don Budge are the two men to have done it.

'Superhuman' Djokovic 'not stopping soon'

It is the fourth season of Djokovic's career in which he has won three Grand Slam titles, becoming the first man to achieve that on as many occasions.

The records continue to fall and the numbers involved become more staggering with each success.

Victory over Medvedev came in Djokovic's record-extending 36th

ALL-TIME GRAND SLAM TITLES	
24	Novak Djokovic, Margaret Court
23	Serena Williams
22	Rafael Nadal, Steffi Graf
20	Roger Federer

On Monday, Djokovic will return to world number one, replacing 20-year-old Spaniard Alcaraz - beaten by Medvedev in the semi-finals - who now appears the biggest threat to his bid for an all-time record 25th major.

Grand Slam final, and record-tying 10th US Open final - equalling Bill Tilden's total.

He is the oldest man to triumph at Flushing Meadows in the Open era, surpassing Ken Rosewall, who won in 1970 aged 35.

Overall, he is the fourth-oldest Grand Slam champion. By next

time soon," British former player Annabel Croft said on BBC Radio 5 Live. "Why would he? It was almost a perfect season."

"We witnessed something incredibly special tonight. We witnessed him tying Margaret Court with 24 titles. It has taken him time to get there but he's done it. He's superhuman, isn't he."

The Serb has spent the most weeks at number one in ATP ranking history (since 1973) and next week will be his 390th at the top of the men's game.

"You need to reinvent yourself, because everyone else does," Djokovic said. "As a 36-year-old competing with 20-year-olds, I probably have to do it more than ever."

The four-time US Open champion added: "It's a constant, evolving process of me trying to implement certain things that will give me an edge over the young guns."

It is difficult to comprehend what he may have achieved in another era.

Since Wimbledon 2003, Djokovic, Nadal and Federer have together claimed 66 of the 81 Grand Slam titles available over that period.

That is more than 81% of the available titles, with just 15 Slams in 20 years going to other players.

Now Djokovic will intend on increasing that share further when he returns to his favourite Grand Slam in January.

"To make the history of this sport is something truly remarkable and special," Djokovic said.

"I never imagined that I would be here, talking about 24 Slams. I never thought that would be the reality. But the last couple of years I felt I had a chance, a shot at history - and why not grab it if it's presented?"

year's US Open he will be old enough to beat Rosewall for that record.

And with his 96th career title overall, he reduced the gap to Federer (103) and Jimmy Connors (109) for the most by male players in the Open era.

"I don't think he's stopping any

Sports

Sports Minister begins assessment meetings with sports federations

By Dorcas Pankyes

IN a move to reposition sports in the country, Minister of Sports Development, Senator John Owan Enoh, has announced his plan to engage with all sports federations in Nigeria. These engagements, which have already commenced on Tuesday, will entail a comprehensive assessment of the state of affairs within each federation.

Senator Enoh highlighted the need to withdraw all sports cases currently pending in court to create an atmosphere conducive to settling disputes in a manner that serves national interests and the welfare of athletes. With an open and neutral mind, the minister intends to evaluate each federation individually during the meetings.

"I have an opportunity to assess the federations one by one and identify areas of dispute as well as instances of normalcy," stated Enoh. He further stated that "As a measure of goodwill and good faith, I will require that all disputes currently in court be withdrawn, allowing us to resolve them within the ministry."

The minister believes that providing disputing parties with an opportunity for resolution will not only serve the interests of the sports industry but also



Enoh

demonstrate the nation's commitment to its athletes. "Without the athletes, all of the disputes and fights will have no meaning," he added.

Senator Enoh aims to shift the focus away from positions and offices, directing attention towards athletes and their development. He expressed his willingness to consider suggestions and approaches that can address the lingering issues and teething problems that have plagued the sports industry.

To initiate this process, the minister instructed Alhaji Ismaila Abubakar, the Permanent Secretary of the ministry, to request all sports

federations to submit comprehensive reports on their current state of affairs. The reports will lay the groundwork for further engagement and evaluation, starting this week.

This initiative by Senator John Owan Enoh, Minister of Sports Development, demonstrates a commitment to reforming sports in Nigeria by addressing existing disputes and focusing on the well-being of athletes. Through open dialogue and a collective effort, the ministry hopes to achieve the desired results and elevate the nation's sporting standards.

Afcon 2023: The Gambia qualify in earthquake-hit Marrakesh

THE Gambia secured their place at the 2023 Africa Cup of Nations (Afcon) with a dramatic 2-2 draw against Congo Brazzaville in Marrakesh on Sunday night.

The match went ahead despite the devastating earthquake which hit the city Moroccan city on Friday, killing over 2,000 people.

Gambia's Belgian coach Tom Saintfiet said several of his squad members did not want to play the game.

Fearing that "a plane had crashed into the hotel" and calling the experience "very scary", Saintfiet and his squad slept outdoors next to the swimming pool of their hotel as they were concerned about remaining indoors.

Despite the team's disturbed preparations, the Scorpions showed their mettle and fought back from two goals down with just over ten minutes remaining to book their place at January's finals in Ivory Coast.

An early goal from Gaius Makouta was quickly followed by a Silvere Ganvoula penalty to give Congo a 2-0 lead, before Newcastle United teenager Yankuba Minteh score in the 79th minute to spark the comeback.

On the stroke of full-time, Muhammed Badamosi hit a last-gasp equaliser to ensure The Gambia finished behind group winners Mali in second, qualifying for the Afcon for the second time in their history.

After nearly half a century of trying but failing to qualify for Africa's flagship sporting event, The Gambia has now reached back-to-back finals and will hope to build on their surprise quarter-final run last time out.

Friday's earthquake occurred 71 kilometres south-west of Marrakesh, and Sunday's game was able to take place as the Stade de Marrakesh is located 11 kilometres to the north of the city.

The fixture had been held in

Morocco because none of The Gambia's stadia meet the standard required by the Confederation of African Football to host international fixtures.

Osimhen hat-trick

In other Africa Cup of Nations qualifiers on Sunday, Nigeria ended their Group A campaign on a high with a resounding 6-0 home win over Sao Tome and Principe.

Napoli striker Victor Osimhen was in great form with a hat-trick, taking his tally to seven goals in the group against Sao Tome, as the Super Eagles flew high in Uyo.

Ademola Lookman, Taiwo Awoniyi and Samuel Chukwueze completed the scoring for Nigeria against a side they beat 10-0 in the reverse fixture.

Elsewhere on Sunday, Cape Verde - who had already qualified from Group B with Burkina Faso - lost 3-2 away to Togo in Lome.

On Monday, Guinea-Bissau, who had already wrapped up second place behind Nigeria in Group A, finished their campaign with a 2-1 home win against Sierra Leone

There are only two more spots up for grabs in the tournament which will be settled in Group C on Tuesday.

Cameroon meet Burundi and the outcome of the match in Garoua will determine which two of Burundi, Cameroon and Namibia go through.

Already qualified are Algeria, Angola, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, DR Congo, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, The

FIVE African players are vying to win the Ballon d'Or, one of the most prestigious awards in the football world.

Nigeria's Victor Osimhen, Egypt's Mohamed Salah, Cameroon's Andre Onana and Morocco's Yassine Bounou have dazzled their way to the 2023 men's shortlist, after impressing football fans and pundits over the past season.

They are up against global favourites such as Kylian Mbappé, Erling Haaland and Lionel Messi.

5 African footballers nominated for Ballon d'Or

Asisat Oshoala, a forward for the Nigerian national women's football team and the Spanish club FC Barcelona, is the only woman from the continent nominated in the female category.

She has won the Confederation of African Footballer's African Women's Player of the Year award a stunning five times.

The Ballon d'Or is an annual celebration of the most exceptional footballing talent of the season and the winners this year will be announced at a ceremony in Paris on 30 October.

To date, Liberian President George Weah remains the only African to have won the Ballon d'Or, which he did as an AC Milan player in 1995.

Emenalo says door not closed on Salah move

THE door to Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah joining the Saudi Pro League is not closed, says the SPL director of football Michael Emenalo.

Al-Ittihad had a £150m offer for the 31-year-old rejected last week, with the Reds insisting he was not for sale.

A move for Salah did not materialise before the SPL transfer window closed on 7 September.

"First and foremost, Mohamed Salah is one of the best players on the planet," Emenalo told Sky Sports.

The bid for Salah, who signed a new three-year contract with Liverpool last summer, was for in excess of £100m, with add-ons taking it up to £150m.

Emenalo added: "I've said before, privately and publicly that we welcome anybody that wants to come [to the SPL] and that includes Salah." But we have to do things in a very professional and respectful manner. That's what we're there for, it's what the SPL has



Salah joined Liverpool from Italian side Roma in 2017

been refined to do - bring professionalism, respect of efficiencies, and to do things in a competent way."

The Al-Ittihad offer came just before the English transfer window closed on 1 September and gave Liverpool little time to bring in a replacement.

Nevertheless, the Reds, and manager Jurgen Klopp, maintained Salah would be staying at the club.

"You can't imagine how much fuss the world has made but how calm we are with it," said Klopp after his side beat Aston Villa on 3 September. "He is our player and wants to play

here."

Salah scored against Villa to take his tally for Liverpool to 188 goals in 309 games. "If it didn't happen, it's not because we no longer fancy the player, or because we have a problem with Liverpool," added Emenalo.

"It's because certain things that need to align for all the parties involved in the process didn't align.

"Nobody is angry, we move on, but we absolutely close no doors and if the opportunity is there to do things and do it well - and it brings Mohamed Salah to the Saudi Pro League we will all be very grateful."

Weightlifting: Debutant Ayodele wins three medals

NIGERIA weightlifter, Ruth Ayodele, won three medals in the women's 64kg category at the just concluded IWF World Championship in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on Sunday.

The 23-year-old won two silver and one bronze medals lifting 100kg in the Snatch event, 122kg in the Clean and Jerk as well as 222kg in the Total.

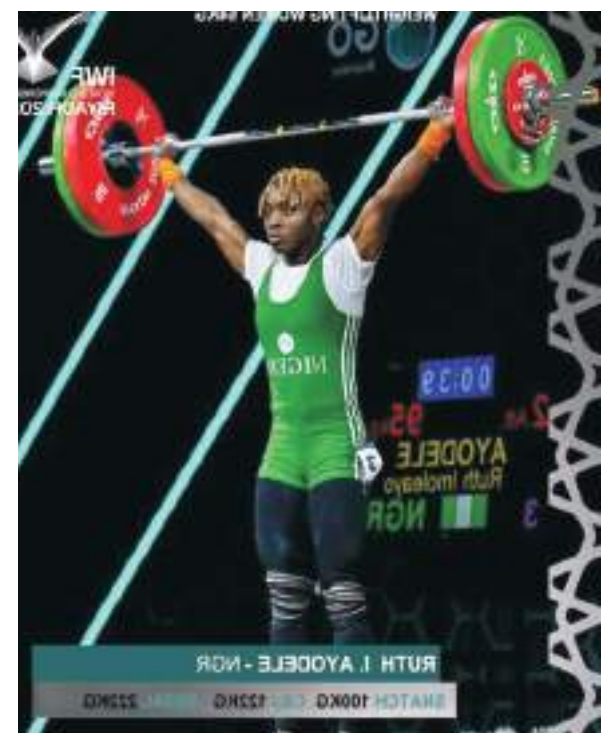
Mosquera Llamasa of Colombia won three gold by lifting 101kg in the Snatch event, 122kg in the Clean and Jerk as well and 223kg in the Total, and Korea's Minkyung Park won one silver and two bronze medals in the women's 64kg.

In the women's 59kg, 2022 Commonwealth gold medallist Rafiatu Lawal finished sixth position lifting 100kg in the Snatch event, 125kg in the Clean and Jerk as well as 225kg in the Total, while Adijat Olarinoye placed 15th position with a lift of 95kg in the Snatch event, 120kg in the Clean and Jerk as well as 215kg in the Total. Far below their best

Meanwhile, Edidiong

Umoafia with a lift of 140kg in the Snatch event, 170kg in the Clean and Jerk as well as

310kg in the Total finished in the 18th position in the men's 73kg category.



Ayodele



Muhammed Badamosi's last-gasp equaliser against Congo Brazzaville earned The Gambia a place at Afcon 2023

Sports

Gibb: The Boston Marathon pioneer who raced a lie

THOSE nine words leapt off the paper like a slap to the face. "The audacity," thought Roberta 'Bobbi' Gibb.

The letter she held was the response to her request for an official entry to run the 1966 Boston Marathon - a flat-out refusal, but also a derogatory sideswipe of her capabilities as a woman, particularly given she was now running up to 40 miles at a stretch.

The 1960s were mid-swing, but attitudes towards female athletes and their participation in long-distance running remained archaic. The question of whether women could run 26.2 miles had been answered countless times before, and yet female runners remained barred from practically every marathon event around the world.

"To hell with them," she thought as she crumpled the letter and threw it on the floor. Bobbi Gibb would run the Boston Marathon - whether they'd let her or not.

In the mid-1960s, women's long-distance running was still considered dangerously radical. Female runners had completed 26.2 miles many times, but groundless ideas lingered that a woman's body was not built for such extreme exertion. It was feared that allowing women to take on the distance would lead to dangerous levels of indecency.

"Running was considered a breeding ground for impropriety that would overly sexualise women," said Jaime Schultz, Professor in Kinesiology at Penn State University.

Names that should be etched on plaques as great marathon pioneers are now almost lost. The day after the men's marathon event at the first modern Olympic Games in Athens in 1896, Stamata Revithi, a 30-year-old mother from Piraeus, ran the same course unofficially in five and half hours.

Practically no reliable information exists on Revithi, except that she came from poverty, had a 17-month-old child and had lost an older child the previous year. Her achievement received little to no attention, with the Athens Messenger reporting briefly that "an active and determined woman made a trial run of the classic route in early March, without any stops except a momentarily rest to eat some oranges".

Nothing is known about this trailblazing woman, often labelled as the 'first female marathon runner' after that day. As Greek author Athanasios Tarasouleas puts it: "Stamata Revithi was lost in the dust of history."

Thirty years later, in 1926, an English woman, Violet Piercy, ran the London Marathon course unofficially in 3:40:22 and completed two official marathons in 1933 and 1936. The Sunday Mirror quoted her as saying her 1936 race was to "prove that women could stick the distance."

It was clear to all with their eyes open that women could run 26.2 miles, but cynical attitudes lingered based on imaginary evidence and often outright lies.

The 1928 Summer Olympic Games saw women compete in track and field events for the first time, and on 2 August three of the nine women who ran in the 800m final broke the world record, with Germany's Lina Radke claiming gold.

However, what should have been a giant stride forward for women's athletics degenerated into a remarkably nasty media campaign in which newspapers worldwide reported incorrectly that many women had collapsed with exhaustion after the race and that such exploits were far beyond the female sex.



The start of the women's 800m final at the 1928 Olympics in Amsterdam - the event wasn't staged again for another 32 years

The New York Times falsely reported that "six out of the nine runners were completely exhausted and fell headlong on the ground", while the Montreal Star shrieked that the race was "obviously beyond women's powers of endurance and can only be injurious to them". The Daily Mail even pondered whether women running over 200 metres would age prematurely.

The media firestorm led officials to cut the 800 metres from the women's Olympics, with the event not appearing again until 1960. Women's perceived fragility was underpinned by some preposterous medical theories that wound their way into the public consciousness.

"There were fears that women would become more 'masculine' if they played sports and that they had a finite amount of energy. If they expended it on education, politics and sport, it would draw away from their reproductive capabilities," said Schultz.

"I didn't know what to do. I didn't have a coach, no books, nothing. I didn't have any way of measuring distance, so I just went by time. My boyfriend would drop me off on his motorbike and I would run home," says Gibb.

In 1964, her parents went on sabbatical to the UK, leaving 21-year-old Gibb their VW campervan. With a summer ahead of her and a longstanding dream of seeing more of the country, she packed up the van and spent the next 40 days moving slowly from the east to the west coast.

"At night, I would sleep out under the skies, and each day I would run in a different place. Over the Berkshires, along the Mississippi River and across the Great Plains, over the Rocky Mountains and the Continental Divide, and down into California - before jumping into the Pacific Ocean - all in one summer. That was my training for the 1966 Boston Marathon," says Gibb.

A few months before the marathon, she applied for a runner's number to be one of the 540 that would eventually start the race, but was rejected with the now famously curt assessment of women's physiological capabilities.

"I realised that this was my chance to change the social consciousness about women. If I could prove this false belief about women wrong, I could throw into question all the other false beliefs that had been used to deny women opportunities," says Gibb.

Four days before the race, she boarded the first of several Greyhound buses and arrived at the family home 72 hours later.



Gibb's trained on trails and paths as she prepared for her Boston Marathon

Her mother drove her to the start line the morning of the race that would catapult her into the limelight.

"My dad thought I was nuts and refused to come. I was wearing my brother's Bermuda shorts, a swimsuit underneath, and a big sweatshirt with a hood that I pulled around my head," says Gibb.

After running a few warm-up miles she returned to the starting area, where she did her best to hide by creeping into a set of bushes nearby.

When the starting pistol cracked, Gibb loitered, allowing the faster runners to move down the road before joining the moving crowd.

"Very quickly, the men behind me could tell that I was a woman - probably by studying my anatomy from the rear," says Gibb. "I was so nervous. I didn't know what would happen. I thought I might even be arrested."

Her fears were unfounded. Instead of hostility, camaraderie quickly flourished. When it became clear she needed to take off her sweatshirt or suffer the heat in it, she expressed her fears of being ejected from the race to the men around her. "We won't let them," came their unified assurance.

"There was this myth that men were always against women, but it wasn't true. Those guys were great, upbeat, friendly and protective; they were like my brothers," says Gibb.

Buoyed by the companionship, Gibb removed her outer layer and ran freely and proudly - her blonde ponytail swinging from side to side. Spectators lining the street - men,

women and children - applauded her as she passed, with news of her participation spreading along the course via radio bulletins.

As she approached Wellesley College, a women's university on the route, pandemonium erupted. The momentous event was described 30 years later by Wellesley College President Diana Chapman Walsh, who was present as a student spectator that day.

"Word spread to all of us lining the route that a woman was running the course," she said.

"We scanned face after face in breathless anticipation until, just ahead of her, through the excited crowd, a ripple of recognition shot through the lines, and we cheered as we never had before.

"We let out a roar that day, sensing that this woman had done more than just break the gender barrier in a famous race."

"The women were crying and jumping up and down. One kept shouting 'Ave Maria, Ave Maria'. It was an emotional moment for me," says Gibb.

Gibb was not only blazing a trail, she was doing it quickly. She ran the first 20 miles at a sub-three hour pace, but with her newly-bought men's running shoes cutting into her feet, her speed began to drop.

Her race had changed. Anxiety over being pulled out by officials was now replaced by that feeling all too familiar to any long-distance runner - painful determination and a longing for the finish line.

As she made her way through

Boston, spurred on by the tremendous noise that accompanied her, Gibb still had no idea how close she was to the end.

"I didn't know where I was or how far I had left - I just gritted my teeth and ran," says Gibb.

Turning right on to Hereford Street, the noise seemed to ratchet up, and a final left on to Boylston Street revealed the finish line that she had been dreaming of for so long.

Gibb completed her first Boston Marathon in an impressive three hours, 21 minutes and 40 seconds - faster than two-thirds of the competitors.

A now iconic image shows her running alone, her face grimacing as she nears the finish line. On both sides, spectators crane their necks, ignoring other runners passing by, desperate to glimpse the first female finishing the storied race.

Crossing the line, she was greeted warmly by Massachusetts State Governor John Volpe, who shook her hand and offered his congratulations before being ushered into a hotel room where the world's press waited breathlessly.

After the interviews, the group of men she had been running with invited her to join them for the traditional post-race stew, but as they reached the door, Gibb was barred from entry: "Sorry, men only."

It had been a day of dramatic change, but any notion of true equality was still a distant dream.

The famous photo of Gibb closing in on the finish as massed ranks of spectators watch on at the 1966 Boston Marathon

Gibb ran the Boston Marathon twice more. In 1967, she was joined by Switzer, the runner often portrayed as the first woman to run the race, who she beat by more than an hour. The following year, five women ran the Boston Marathon, with Gibb winning once again.

For many years, Switzer's participation in the 1967 race overshadowed Gibb's achievement, a fact that never sat well with the true first woman to run the Boston Marathon. The famous photo of Switzer became emblematic of women's struggles to gain equality in sport, but it is an image and a context that deserves careful examination.

It appears to show Switzer being harassed by a group of men as she runs, but in fact, it was only one man, race co-director Jock Semple, who was trying to remove her race number rather than physically assault her, as is often reported.

"She had gained her number illegally by disguising her gender on the application and having her male coach pick it up," says Gibb, who ran without a number or official entry once again.

Switzer, for her part, has always claimed that she never intentionally pretended to be anything other than a woman, and that using her initials, rather than first name, on the entry form was her usual habit.

She adds that her male coach picked up her race number as the nominated leader of the group, rather than part of a deliberate ploy.

Gibb says she had some sympathy for Semple, who she believes was motivated by preserving his race's status, rather than outdated social norms.

"Jock was simply worried that the race could lose its accreditation with the Amateur Athletic Union by having women run in a men's division race."

Unsurprisingly, it was the image of Switzer that made the headlines, fuelling anger and controversy, despite Gibb once again receiving a warm welcome.



Quest



writer

CHRIS GYANG

FRAGMENT

"Moreover, the Tinubu government has not clearly informed most Nigerians that only 52% of that N5billion is a grant while the remaining 48% is a repayable loan. Daily, you see millions of gullible and poverty ravaged Nigerians on national television desperately queueing up from dusk to dawn to get paltry crumbs of these so-called palliatives. At the end of the day, they effusively thank the Federal Government for 'coming to our aid.'"

CHRIS GYANG

100 days, 1 cup of rice, 2 coups

IT is entirely fortuitous that as the current governments at the state and federal levels marked their first one hundred days, the sudden removal of fuel subsidy was having devastating effects on the lives of citizens and the world was coming to terms with the aftershocks of the military coups executed in two African countries, among other events.

But, when you look below the surface, you will find some salient but incredible nexuses between the three. So, can we extract some sense from these seemingly unrelated situations?

During the commemorations of the first one hundred days of these administrations, those politicians whose intense lobbying, pulling of strings and boot-licking earned them appointments, contracts and all sorts of patronage celebrated along with the new people in government.

But those who felt sidelined and given the short shrift have started plotting how to take their pound of flesh come 2027. They feel that the efforts and sacrifices they made to bring the new incumbents to power did not merit the ignominy and contempt with which they have been so openly rewarded. They patiently bide their time for the day of reckoning.

In July this year, President Tinubu unveiled plans to pay N8,000 to 12 million families to cushion the effects of the fuel subsidy removal. In fact, the Senate had approved his request to borrow \$800 million from the World Bank and amended the 2022 Supplementary Appropriation Act to accommodate another N500 billion for the same purpose.

But this was met with stiff resistance by organized labour, professional bodies, economists and prominent and not so prominent Nigerians. They insisted that government's penchant for blindly throwing money at social and economic problems had woefully failed to curb poverty in the last eight years. Instead, it had only exacerbated penury by pushing Nigeria to the lowest rungs of the global poverty ladder.

Nigerians suggested that government should invest such funds in providing infrastructure to make citizens stand on their feet economically; invest in agriculture to make it more viable;



Tinubu

subsidise education, health and public transportation; make the power and communication sectors more efficient; and improve roads to make them yield more value to the economy.

Realising the futility of that initial gamble, President Tinubu resorted to another deceptive ruse. This time around, he dressed the so-called palliatives in gaudy and sinister robes and hurled them at the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory Authority to implement.

That came in the form of the N5 billion which was approved in early August for each state to purchase truckloads of rice, foodstuff, other grains and assorted essential commodities and distribute to that amorphous entity that government loves to call 'the poorest of the poor'.

This time around, the so-called palliatives amounted to a paltry N185 billion. Compare it to the initial \$800 million they had intended to borrow from the World Bank and the N500 billion the Senate had approved for the same purpose through the amended 2022 Supplementary Appropriation Act. What do you see?

Now, state governments have

been abandoned to struggle with the almost impossible task of sharing so little to a large population of hungry and equally angry masses.

Moreover, the Tinubu government has not clearly informed most Nigerians that only 52% of that N5billion is a grant while the remaining 48% is a repayable loan. Daily, you see millions of gullible and poverty ravaged Nigerians on national television desperately queueing up from dusk to dawn to get paltry crumbs of these so-called palliatives. At the end of the day, they effusively thank the Federal Government for "coming to our aid."

Apparently, the entire package and the spirit behind it has not pleased a majority of Nigerians. Which was why, on September 1, 2023, the Nigeria Labour Congress, NLC, President, Joe Ejiro, picked holes and rubbished it on a CHANNELS TV programme.

He said: "If you share that N5billion or even the five trucks of rice or grains, people will not get one or half cup of rice. If you share the N5billion, many people, probably within the working class or the poor of the

poor, may not get N1,500. Now, is that palliative?"

We leave the reader to kindly answer that question. But it must be said that it was on that basis that NLC members embarked on a two-day nationwide warning strike on September 5 and 6. And although the NLC was seen to be doing too little very late, most Nigerians saw it as better than taking the Federal Government's glaring disregard for the welfare of the masses lying down.

Now, let's look at the two military putsch in Niger Republic and Gabon. But first, a little snippet that may give us a bit of an insight into some of the underlying catalysts behind these resurgent military take-overs.

Recently, President Emmanuel Macron of France was said to have flared up against the constitutional provision that barred him from seeking office for a third term. BREITBART (September 2, 2023) reported: "During a closed-doors meeting with leaders of opposition parties on Wednesday in Seine-Saint-Denis, the 45-year-old leader reportedly declared: 'Not being able to be re-elected is disastrous bullshit,' participants of the meeting told the Le Figaro newspaper."

The publication explained that, in line with constitutional reforms passed in 2008, the French presidency is now limited to only two consecutive terms of five years each. Macron is in his second term. The president was said to have been miffed by a suggestion that the constitution be further amended to limit the president's tenure to a term of seven years.

In fact, there have been insinuations that Mr. Macron may be planning to go as far as changing the constitution to allow him take a third shot at the presidency. But BREITBART quoted the French essayist, Maxime Tandonnet, as warning about the dire consequences: "A formula allowing three mandates, i.e. fifteen years – and why not twenty years? – would risk amplifying the scourges of self-to-one, cronyism, clannism and corruption."

He further pointed out that the longer a leader remained in power, the more likely they could lose sight of existing reality,

adding: "Life in palaces and planes, surrounded by servants and courtiers, in the obsession with the curve of popularity polls, translates into a radical break with the daily life of the French."

Do you see any parallels between Macron's contempt for constitutional values and the way some African leaders, especially those in Francophone Africa, have approached democratic governance in their respective countries?

But even if Macron does not succeed in changing the constitution before the next election in 2027, that would not be end the French people would have heard from him. BREITBART gives the reason: "As opposed to the United States, the term limit rule in France only prevents politicians from serving more than two consecutive terms, meaning that Macron could theoretically run for president again in 2023."

Could this fluidity in the French democratic system and its leaders' open disdain for it have rubbed off so perniciously on some of their former colonies? Ali Bongo came into power in 2009 after the death of his father who had ruled for 45 years.

Ali had just 'won' a much disputed third term. During the election, foreign observers and journalists were barred just as it was marred by vote rigging and widespread violence. Those were some of reasons that prompted the military to strike.

In Cameroon, 90-year-old Paul Biya, who has been in power for 41 years, is plotting for his son to take over from him while Theodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea, who is 81, has been in power for 44 years.

President Alassane Quattara of Cote d'Ivoire contested and 'won' a very contentious election for a third term in 2020. In these countries, the cult of personality is so strong that it overshadows all institutions of state. The leader is feared and revered as a god.

In the face of all these, the former colonial power, France, would only raise an eyebrow when its economic and political interests are threatened. Its strangle hold of the erstwhile colony is firm, complete and asphyxiating.

To be concluded