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THE Nigeria Standard



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Email: nigeriastandarddailynewspaper@yahoo.com

Tinubu advances stronger economic ties with SA

President Bola Tinubu, on Monday, advanced his economic development diplomatic drive for investment attraction as he engaged extensively in a bilateral discussion with South African President, Cyril Ramaphosa.

A statement by his Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Ajuri Ngelale, informed that the Nigerian leader made the move in New York City, United States, ahead of the United Nations General Assembly.

In a meeting with his South African counterpart,

President Tinubu asserted that Africa must have a consensus view that the hundreds of billions of dollars spent through International Development Finance Institutions over the years must meet the specific needs of developing democracies in Africa, even if it is done

with exclusive regard for their own enlightened self-interest.

"During the end of the Second World War, the Marshall Plan was established for the reconstruction and economic restoration of European nations through Bretton Woods

institutions. Where has this presence been for Africa?

"We have to be careful not to replace the broken shackle of yesterday with a new set of shackles. You cannot have a stable democracy in the presence of a poverty of knowledge and a starvation of people. Democracy without food on

the table is a breeding ground for what will consume us if care is not taken. We must join hands and agree that International Finance Institutions require reform as Africa is not to be a ground for economic scavenging any longer, but it is a place with gifted people that is ready for investment and cooperation.

"We have all the human and natural resources

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We'll deal mercilessly with conspirators

BY PETER TITLE

Governor Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang of Plateau State has said they would deal mercilessly with any person found to be conspiring to scuttle the relative peace being enjoyed in the state.

He urged citizens not to be provoked by unguarded statements by those who do not mean well for the state and thereby overheating the polity.

According to him, recent developments have generated and have

continued to generate unnecessary tensions between the people of the state. The governor called on the people to remain calm and allow the lawful grievance resolution mechanisms to take its course devoid of threats or tension as some of the state saboteurs would love.

Governor Caleb Mutfwang made these clarifications in a state wide broadcast to the people of the state on the current political developments in the state on Monday at the New Government House, Little Rayfield Jos. He assured all and sundry to go about their lawful duties without any fear or intimidation.

To the youths, the Executive Governor urged them not to allow people with unexplained wealth instigate them into violence. "These are people who occupy positions of honour but are actually dishonourable. Unfortunately, their dubious wealth has not brought them the honour they crave for, hence their resolve to seek the destabilization of our dear

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Mutfwang



The Nigerian President, Asiwaju Bola Tinubu shakes hands with the President of the Republic of South African Cyril Ramaphosa during a bilateral discussion in New York Photo: STATE HOUSE, ABUJA

3 Diphtheria worsening in Borno, Bauchi, Kano States -MSF

The Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) has raised the alarm that Diphtheria is worsening in Nigeria, especially in the northern Nigeria states of Bauchi, Borno and Kano.

The international health organisation said thousands of people have been infected and

hundreds of others have died from the disease.

The MSF said its teams treated 6,707 suspected and confirmed cases in Kano, 110 cases in Borno and 21 cases in Bauchi. It said several other suspected cases are under surveillance across the country. However, around

4,000 suspected cases were recorded nationwide.

Diphtheria is a highly contagious and potentially life-threatening bacterial disease which can present in respiratory or cutaneous forms. Its breakout was announced by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) in

January this year.

"A serious diphtheria outbreak is tearing through Nigeria, where thousands of people have been infected and hundreds more have died. With low national vaccination coverage and a worldwide shortage of

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News

Tinubu advances stronger economic ties with SA

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required between our nations. We can collaborate in a mutually beneficial way that enriches our populations. South African Mining industries have a role to play in the Nigerian solid minerals development sector. Your business community has done well in Nigerian Telecommunications.

"We have great mineral wealth across our land, and you have good expertise in this area. We expect to deliver jobs and mutually beneficial results in this area as brother and sister countries," the President affirmed.

Referencing President Tinubu's quick implementation of what he called "brave" economic reforms, the South African President agreed that the two countries have much more wealth to create together in close and intentional partnership, with each nation leveraging on each other's respective strengths.

"We are two major economies on our continent, and it is important that we deepen economic ties, particularly in light of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement. We are very keen on the deepening of our economic relations," the South African President said.

President Ramaphosa emphasised that history has proven that Nigeria and South Africa can move the world on matters of mutual concern when the two nations operate on the same wavelength.

"We would love to see Nigeria and South Africa working closely together on a number of issues because whenever we join hands, we have made an impact globally through those joint positions. Together, we can move the global south forward. We are a continent that has been plundered and wealthy nations made so much of it from us, and we must seek out partners, who will help us to advance our own interests," he said.

Recognising President Tinubu's effective stewardship as the Chairman of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State, the South African leader said that Southern Africa needed to emulate the solidarity being demonstrated in West Africa, following the Niger Crisis.

"We believe that we have a lot to learn from ECOWAS and its unity in reaching consensus positions on sub-regional

matters. This is something we seek to emulate in the Southern African sub-region in view of events in Mozambique and other areas," President Ramaphosa said.

The South African leader also used the opportunity of the bilateral engagement to extend an invitation to President Bola Tinubu to visit South Africa, following President Ramaphosa's recent visit to Nigeria, as part of efforts to deepen economic ties and the broader relationship between both countries.

While accepting the invitation, President Tinubu affirmed that an

Africa, in which Nigeria and South Africa are working in synergy to advance their common interests, is the strongest version of the continent, which can make more impact on global affairs for the benefit of over one billion Africans with its enormous human and natural resource wealth.

"Our continent is the last untapped ground for accelerated, massive growth and new economic opportunity on earth. We must be in charge of our own resources, and we must work to use each other effectively to achieve what is best for all of us, Mr. President. We look forward to an era of economically productive relationships," the Nigerian leader concluded.

'We'll deal mercilessly with conspirators'



Mutfwang

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According to the governor, doing the bidding of such miscreants mistaken for honourables, would only ruin the God given potentials and destiny of the youth. He urged them to flee from such leaders who preach and scheme evil. Stressing, "We must not allow the modest gains we have made in the last three months to be settled by utterances of a few rascals in our midst who found themselves in positions of honour they do not deserve".

He revealed that among the issues they have been tackling since assumption of office, was the heightened security challenges and renewed attacks in some local governments areas on the eve of their swearing in that confronted them face to face, over bloated civil service with some questionable appointments on the eve of elections and four months backlog of salaries, among others.

Regardless of the aforementioned, the governor said they have put in place mechanisms to restore peace in the state and due process in the civil service, correct employment malfeasance

appointments and placement irregularities, saving people a significant amount of money monthly, that hitherto went into private pockets of some corrupt individuals who have been shortchanging and robbing the state through ghost workers and other illicit schemes deployed.

According to him, the government was not surprised when those benefitting from the criminality, sponsored elements on a social media to smear campaign targeted at the Government, all in a bid to veil their terrible actions. He explained that they have set a machinery of the law in motion which he said would soon take its course in bringing such individuals to account.

As part of the efforts to cushion the effect of the fuel subsidy removal on the people, Governor Mutfwang said work to reactivate rail transportation with the Greater Jos Master Plan, covering key locations within Jos-North and Jos-South was ongoing and was optimistic the services would commence soonest as well as expansion across other parts of the state would also kickstart.

He also assured that the

3 Diphtheria worsening in Borno, Bauchi, Kano States -MSF

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lifesaving antitoxin threatening to worsen the outbreak, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) urges the international community to immediately scale up support to improve treatment, preventive measures and contact tracing to control the outbreak's spread," Abdulkareem Yakubu, the MSF field communications officer said in a statement sent to our source.

"We're currently seeing more than 700 people with suspected diphtheria and admitting more than 280 patients on a weekly



basis in Kano State's two diphtheria treatment centres," says Dr Hashim Juma Omar, MSF emergency project medical doctor.

"Women and children aged under five are the most vulnerable groups and are the people most affected right now in Kano State. And they really need help," the statement added.

Mr Yakubu added that despite the increase in the number of infected people, medical response has been effective.

"MSF teams are responding to the outbreak in Kano, Borno and Bauchi states. However, responding to the outbreak has proved challenging, due to a worldwide shortage of lifesaving diphtheria antitoxin used in treatment, caused by dwindling production capacity.

"Funding for vaccines and implementation costs remains a barrier to scaling up; Kano State alone requires millions of doses to target at-risk groups," he said.

Mr Yakubu said the MSF

provided 2,000 doses of diphtheria antitoxin last month in Kano and added a 20-bed diphtheria treatment clinic to our paediatric hospital among other efforts to treat the cases.

"In light of these challenges, improved efforts to reduce the disease's transmission and to strengthen outbreak preparation and response in Nigeria are crucial. This includes vaccination; underlying the outbreak is a low vaccination rate, with only 70 per cent of children having received their first dose of diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis vaccine. The decline in immunisation led to a reported 25 million un- or under-vaccinated children in Nigeria in 2021.

In addition to urgent antitoxin and vaccination needs, we urge international organisations to immediately scale up improved surveillance and contact tracing, and measures to strengthen the local health system," Mr Yakubu said.

NNPC announces compulsory retirement for senior staff

The Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited, on Tuesday announced the retirement of all its management staff who have less than 15 months to their retirement.

The company disclosed this via its official X (formerly Twitter) handle, as it said, "In our bid to pursue effective organisational renewal to support the delivery of our strategic business objectives, it has become imperative to rejuvenate our workforce.

"Consequently, in addition to the recent exit of three Executive Vice Presidents, other management staff with less than 15 months to statutory retirement will be exiting the company effective September 19, 2023.

"This is in line with our commitment to scale up NNPC Ltd.'s capabilities

through targeted talent management and equal opportunity for all Nigerians."

The company explained the move was to reposition the organisation towards its new business orientations.

The oil firm had earlier announced the appointments of three new Executive Vice Presidents as part of the ongoing shake-up in the multi-billion-dollar national company.

It named Oritsemeyiwa Eyesan as the new Executive Vice President, of Upstream; Olalekan Ogunleye, Executive Vice President, of Gas, Power, and New Energy; and Adedapo Segun as Executive Vice President, of Downstream.

The announcement, which was posted on the company's X (formerly Twitter) handle early Sunday, stated that the

appointment of the new EVPs was with immediate effect.

"In line with NNPC Ltd.'s commitment and drive for organisational renewal, anchored on our business imperatives, standards of excellence, people development, and strengthening our competencies and capabilities through broad-based leadership exposures, the company wishes to announce the following executive appointments with immediate effect," the firm stated, before outlining the earlier stated names/designations.

With this, three former Executive Vice Presidents, including Abdulkabir Ahmed, Gas, Power and New Energies; Adokiye Tombomiyeye, Upstream; and Adeyemi Adetunji, Downstream were retired.



G20: Dawn of a new era for Nigeria

The G-20 summit held in New Delhi, India, is over. And by every metric of assessment, it was a great outing for the Nigerian delegation led by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. Too early to say Nigeria has, once again, regained its pride of place among nations that matter? Maybe yes, maybe no. But time will tell. ADE ADEFEKO writes.

BUT if morning tells how the day is going to pan out, then I have a hunch that Nigeria's redemption may have begun. The invitation of Nigeria as a guest to the G20 summit is itself a testament to the country's redemption being midwifed by the government of President Tinubu, a ringing endorsement of the renewed hope agenda coming from American President Joe Biden, who said, "Nigeria's invitation to the G20 Summit is a recognition of Nigeria's important global role as Africa's largest democracy and economic power." For the President, the summit represents perhaps his first significant international outing within the context of investment facilitation, resource mobilization and building economic partnerships across borders since his assumption of office on 29th May 2023. As an active participant at the Summit representing the private sector, I say without equivocation that President Tinubu and his team attended all the lined-up events and the bilateral meetings on the sidelines with the serious-mindedness of an impassioned apprentice determined to learn his craft excellently in order to become a master, the major indicator of the serious-mindedness of the Nigerian delegation at the summit was the leanness of the size, which was a radical departure from the usual practice in the past where every Tom, Dick and Harry who had no relationship with being at the summit, would find themselves there essentially doing nothing. While the President and four ministers – Finance, Foreign Affairs Ambassador Yusuf Tuggar, Industry Trade and Investment Dr Doris Anite, Communications Innovation and Digital Economy Dr Bosun Tijani -represented the Executive, while the governors of Ogun Dapo Abiodun and Abdulrazak Abdulrahman of Kwara State represented the sub-national government on the delegation who did not pay attention to the details of the meeting, the essence of Nigeria's participation in it, according to the Minister of Finance, Wale Edun, was attracting global capital and foreign direct investment to Nigeria which underscored the administration's commitment to job creation, inclusivity, economic diversification, and to announce to the world that



Nigeria is an attractive destination for business with many opportunities across various sectors of the economy. As the Coordinating Minister of the Economy, also reassured investors and global business dealers in one of the sideline panel meetings in conjunction with Confederation of Indian Industry that the administration of President Tinubu was working hard to remove all the bottlenecks associated with macro-economic elements such as inflation and exchange rate to smoothen the ease of doing business in the country. From the summit, about 14 billion US Dollars were pledges made to help reflate the Nigerian economy, which is practically comatose and in need of urgent rejuvenation. A further breakdown of the 14 billion US Dollars sectoral pledge is as follows: chemicals- Indorama Petrochemical Limited pledged \$8bn worth of investments to expand their petrochemical facilities in Rivers State creating more jobs for Nigerians. Steel and Power Limited pledged an investment of \$3bn in iron ore processing to aid Nigeria's drive for industrialization. Seil Limited

plans to invest \$1.6bn in the power sector by building 2000MW power plants across the country in 4 years. The Defence Industry Corporation of Nigeria (DICON) got a \$1bn investment pledge that will take its self-sufficiency to 40% by 2023. Bharti Enterprises pledged \$700m worth of investments to create jobs in telecom, space communications, real estate, insurance and hospitality, which would hopefully soon materialize as some of them already have existing investments in the country. President Tinubu also held bilateral talks, essentially to deepen economic ties, with the German Chancellor, Olaf Scholz, who has promised to visit Nigeria in October; the South Korean President, Yoon Suk Yeol, Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi and President Biden of the United States, who praised the economic reform policies of the President and also committed himself to help deepen the already existing good relations between Nigeria and the USA. A striking coincidence, which ultimately will become a historical reference in the

future, the G20 formally accepted the African Union as a member of the Exclusive club with President Tinubu, who leads a sub-regional bloc of the African continent – ECOWAS - in attendance. The G20 summit drew to an end, the President and his entourage headed off to Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, on a whistle stop tour rather than return home, and resolved the Visa ban, and Emirates/Etihad airline imbroglio, which, without a whiff of doubt, had been hindering aviation business relations between Nigeria and the United Arab Emirates. And again, it was important to have by his corner, the Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Festus Keyamo, SAN, who joined the President for the diplomatic cum bilateral engagement in UAE, next on the agenda of the President will be, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York, USA, for the first time since his assumption of office. He is already billed to be one of the early keynote speakers at the global assembly of heads of

state on the 19th of September 2023, a seismic shift from the past, when Nigerian leaders' speeches were either slated for the middle or at the tail end of the 'August' meeting. In addition, it is important to note that President Tinubu is scheduled to ring the closing bell of the NASDAQ (National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotations) on September 20th, 2023. This could be another signal that the world is now ready to listen to Africa's most populous and largest economy. As I pointed at the beginning of this article, if morning gives a clue about the outlook of the day, then I can say with cautious optimism that Nigeria has a real chance this time around to turn the corner and get the country working again, firing on all cylinders. The President has shown commitment by his own words is open for business, and all we need, as a people, is a mindset change. It is indeed renewed, and for Our tomorrow, we must always give Our today...



Dangote Refinery to start crude refining October

Dangote Refinery, billed as a game-changer for Nigeria and sub-Saharan Africa, will receive its first cargo of crude in the next two weeks and will begin producing up to 370,000 barrels per day (bpd) of diesel and jet fuel from October, a senior company executive told S&P Global Commodity Insights.

In an exclusive interview with S&P Global, Devakumar Edwin, Dangote Group Executive Director, who is overseeing the \$19.5 billion refinery, outlined a detailed production timeline, shed light on crude and product flows and laid out a litany of complications and delays to the project since it was first mooted in 2013.

"Right now I'm ready to receive crude," said Edwin, who previously ran Dangote Cement. "We are just waiting for the first vessel. And so as soon as it comes in we can start."

Edwin said the refinery, which was officially inaugurated by former president Muhammadu Buhari in May, will launch in phases, beginning with 350,000-370,000 bpd of diesel and jet fuel by October, when the crude distillation unit, sulfur block and hydrogen plant should be online.

Then on November 30, he said, the refinery will start the phased ramp-up to 650,000 bpd, around half of it petrol, the key area of Nigerian fuel demand.

S&P Global analysts predict the refinery will not hit full operating capacity until mid-2025, according to a recent note, with further delays still possible. Still, forecasts from S&P Global suggest Nigerian petrol production will exceed imports until the 2040s as a result of the refinery.

Although the refinery was designed to process light sweet Nigerian crude, state-owned Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC)



Dangote

Limited, which is a shareholder in the project, cannot supply the refinery until November, Edwin said, so Dangote is buying oil from trading houses. Vitol and Trafigura recently carried out inspections of the plant, he said.

"At the last minute [NNPC] said, 'We have actually committed our crude on forward basis to someone else', so immediately they

don't have the crude," he said. This is a temporary issue, and the refinery should run on exclusively Nigerian crude by November, he said.

That Nigerian oil will be purchased in US dollars, not naira as some reports had suggested, because it is located in a free zone on the outskirts of Lagos, Edwin said. However, NNPC will supply some crude at knockdown prices due to its equity stake.

How 23 states grew foreign loans

Twenty-Three Nigerian states grew bilateral loans by 64.26 per cent in six months to \$462.81m as of the end of June.

Most of the loans were taken from China, India, France and other countries. This was despite the persistent fall of the naira, making dollar-denominated loans more expensive.

In June 2023, the Central Bank of Nigeria directed Deposit Money Banks to remove the rate cap on the naira at the official Investors and Exporters' Window of the foreign

exchange market.

Consequently, the naira fell from 471/\$ to 750/\$ as of the end of June 2023, and had continued to fall.

The increase in bilateral loans showed a growing appetite for this type of loans by state governors. According to external debt data from the Debt Management Office, 23 states increased their borrowing from China (Exim Bank of China), India, France (Agence Francaise Development), Japan International Cooperation Agency, and

broadband penetration by the end of 2023, and 70 per cent broadband penetration by the end of 2025.

In a statement, he said, "Also, from 8 per cent contribution to the Gross Domestic Product in 2015, telecommunications sector now contributes 16 per cent quarterly to the Nigerian economy as of the second quarter of 2023.

He said, "Besides, following the authorisation of more telecommunications companies to operate in the Nigeria's telecoms sector, the investments profile has increased tremendously from \$38bn in 2015 to \$75bn currently

and this keeps growing daily. From the sales of 5G C-Band Spectrum, the NCC has generated over \$847.8m for the Federal Government."

Earlier, the Minister of Communications, Innovation, and Digital Economy, Bosun Tijani, said Nigeria was seeking partnerships to boost telecommunication connectivity in unserved and underserved communities.

According to the minister, connectivity was a catalyst for progress, and the country needed partnerships to close its digital divide.

The Nigerian The Federal Government, in collaboration with partners, has launched the Nigeria sub-national Food Systems Dashboard to guide actions and policy decisions on food systems and food security in the country.

The partners include the United States Agency for International Development, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN).

Speaking at the launch yesterday in Abuja, Aliyu Sabi Abdullahi, minister of Agriculture and Food Security, said it is not just a data storehouse but a simple-to-use tool that will drive the transformation of food systems at national and local levels.

In July, President Bola Tinubu declared a state of emergency in the food sector, signifying the urgency with which the government intends to address the growing food security concerns.

Abdullahi explained that the dashboard will guide Nigeria's policymakers and businesses at both national and sub-national levels to make informed decisions and address challenges in the country's food system.

The dashboard will also serve as a platform to promote collaboration and

FG unveils National Food Systems Dashboard



Abdullahi

synergy between different components of the food system, he said, adding that it is also linked to the dashboard controlling the Global Food System.

Abdullahi added that the dashboard incorporates 99 identified and tested indicators for a comprehensive view of Nigeria's food system at all levels.

The loan deal was signed by the then Minister of Finance, Mrs Kemi Adeosun, and the Chief Executive Officer of the Agence Francaise Development, Mr Rey Rioux.

The breakdown of the loan included a \$200m loan facility grant to Lagos for the execution of transport projects by AFD, another \$200m loan for land degradation project in Ogun State, and \$75m for the execution of water projects in Kano State.

While noting that the dashboard will help business leaders and entrepreneurs identify areas of investment, he said it will also inform basic research and reporting to the government, policy analysts, statistical agencies, and support partners.

Two days after changing three executive vice presidents, the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) Limited will be reshuffling another management team effective September 19, the company said in a release.

NNPC makes management changes again

According to the NNPC, other management staff with less than 15 months to statutory retirement will be exiting the Company.

"In our bid to pursue effective organisational renewal to support the delivery of our strategic business objectives, it has become imperative to rejuvenate our workforce."

Two days ago, the state-owned oil company made three changes to its senior management team.

It appointed Oritsemeyiwa A. Eyesan, Executive Vice President, Upstream, Olalekan Ogunleye, Executive

"It offers a list of suggested policy actions and decisions for each state based on thorough diagnosis of the data collected by the dashboard. These actions have the potential to improve the food system and advance national development efforts," he noted.

Michael Ojo, country director of GAIN in Nigeria, said the dashboard has created an opportunity for the government to examine areas in which Nigeria has not done well compared to other countries in Africa.

He added that researchers, scholars, and students will also have easy access to comprehensive data to identify and analyse emerging ideas and trends in the country's food system.

While noting that the dashboard will help business leaders and entrepreneurs identify areas of investment, he said it will also inform basic research and reporting to the government, policy analysts, statistical agencies, and support partners.

Vice President, Gas, Power, and New Energy, Adedapo A. Segun, Executive Vice President, Downstream.

"This is in line with our commitment to scale up NNPC Ltd.'s capabilities through targeted talent management and equal opportunity for all Nigerians," the release read.



Kyari



Business & Economy

Meter price hike compounds challenges of customers

Electricity consumers have expressed anger after the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) announced an increase in the price of prepaid electricity meters in the country. CHIKA IZUORA writes.

THIS is contained in a NERC 'order' signed on Tuesday by its chairman, Mr Sanusi Garba and the commissioner, Legal, Licensing & Compliance, Mr Dafe Akpeneye.

The commission, in the order, said that a single-phase prepaid meter would now cost N81,975.16k from the N58,661.69 while three-phase pre-paid meters would cost N143,836.10 from N109,684.36.

It said that "significant changes in macroeconomic indicators, such as inflation and changes in the foreign exchange rates necessitated a review of the regulated rates for MAP meters.

The commission also stated that the approved meter prices were exclusive of the 7.5 per cent Value Added Tax (VAT).

It said the new price regime was to ensure fair and reasonable pricing of meters to both MAPs and end-use customers

This is coming barely a month after the commission said the pre-paid meters software currently in use by consumers would crash next year.

Already, some Electricity Distribution Companies, DisCos have warned customers that they may not be able to load energy token by end of this year.

In a message on its Twitter/X handle the Commission noted that the process of updating would be free of charge with customers expected to approach the power Distribution Companies (DisCos) on how to go about it.

"If you have a prepaid meter, it may be time for an update. From November, 2024, you may not be able to recharge your meter. However, updating is easy and free.

"DisCos shall commence issuance of two free Key Change Tokens (KCTs) which will update your meter," NERC stated in the message.

In addition, it stated that the process will not in any way impact the units in the meters, urging consumers not to be apprehensive.

Managing director and chief executive of MOJEC International Holdings, Nigeria's foremost indigenous meter manufacturer Ms Chantelle Abdul, in a chat with me, confirmed that deadline for the TID rollover migration is November 2024 and not 2023.

Reacting to the commission's price review, Mr. Adetunji Adewale, who operates a barbing salon in Maryland area of Lagos, said he has made several moves to obtain a prepaid meter in the past but his efforts were frustrated leading to delay in getting one for his shop. He said the new price will further frustrate his efforts and business.

Also, Mr. Clement Ewullum, who operates an electrical shop said the new price is discouraging because he has been saving to get a prepaid meter for his shop.

"Now government has reviewed upward the price. When one phase meter was selling for N58,000 people still could not afford it and it has jumped to over N80,000 which is not pocket friendly," he cried out.

President, Nigeria Consumer Protection Network Kola Olubiyo,



Adelabu

said the NERC has failed in working out modalities of refund through token recharge for customers to recover cost of procuring the meter.

Meanwhile, a total of 7,017,809 Electricity customers are still on estimated billing despite various interventions by the government to bridge the metering gap, report has indicated.

Out of 12,378,243 registered customers as of 31st March 2023, only 5,360,434 have so far been metered.

According to the 2023 First quarter report released by the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC), in the quarter being reviewed a total of 171,107 user customers were metered.

Although this represented a slight increase compared to the 164,621 customers recorded in 2022 fourth quarter, the metering rate is still at 43.31%.

In a breakdown, the data showed that out of the 171,107 metered customers, only about 9,924 were metered under the National Mass Metering Program (NMMP) while 2,515 and 34 were metered under the Vendor Financed and DisCo Financed schemes respectively.

However, more customers were metered under the Meter Asset Provider (MAP) intervention, with a total of 158,633.

Meanwhile, the state of revenue collection inefficiencies has continued to be a concern, especially on the part of the electricity Distribution Companies (DisCos).

The Regulator had attributed customers' apathy towards payment of energy billed to majorly to unsatisfactory DisCos services.

"This has led to mounting collection losses recorded by the DisCos. Collection efficiency of 70% for instance implies that for every N100 worth of energy billed to customers by DisCos, approximately N30 remained

unrecovered from the billed customers," it said.

For instance, in the report being reviewed, the total revenue collected by all DisCos in the 2023 first quarter was N247.09 billion

out of N359.38 billion billed to customers.

It said although this translates to a collection efficiency of 68.75%, the DisCos' cumulative collection efficiency reduced by 4.58 percent

from 73.33% in 2022/Q4 to 68.75% in 2023/Q1.

Similarly, the report showed that while the total collections increased by 1.41%, compared to N243.65 billion in 2022/Q4, the total energy billed increased by 8.15% compared to N332.28 billion in 2022/Q4.

According to NERC; "The overall decline in collection efficiency in 2023/Q1 could be attributed to the decline in metering electricity consumers. DisCos continue to implement various collection campaigns to improve remittance for post-paid customers.

"However, their low collection efficiency is a major threat to the NESI's financial sustainability. To address this the Commission plans to enhance its monitoring of metering programs, such as the National Mass Metering Program (NMMP) funded by the Central Bank of Nigeria and the Meter Asset Provider (MAP) scheme, being implemented by DisCos."

This underscores the need to intensify the push towards closing the metering gap, especially at a time when the DisCos were already pushing for a review of the electricity tariff.

Although tariff review is inevitable, this may further affect collections if: "the DisCos refuse to evaluate options for improving the optimisation of their energy delivery in line with the Service Based Tariff (SBT) regime," says NERC.



Politics

Taraba Tribunal: APC upturns Assembly seat, retains two

From
VICTOR GAI, Jalingo

THE All Progressives Congress (APC) candidate for Lau State Constituency, Emmanuel George, has created an upset in the Taraba Elections Petitions Tribunal sitting in Jalingo on Monday, upturning the victory of Nuhu Akila of the PDP.

Also, two other candidates of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Hajiya Batulu Mohammed Kaltume for Gashaka State Constituency and Rt Hon Abel Peter Diah of Mbamnga Constituency have retained their seats at the tribunal.

The tribunal presided over by Benson Ogbu had dismissed two cases against elected members of the APC at the Taraba State House of Assembly while a petition against Nuhu Akila of the PDP was granted in favour of the petitioner, Emmanuel George.

In a late night ruling, the judge thereby ordered that the certificate of return be retrieved and returned to Emmanuel George.

The suits instituted at the tribunal are against Hajiya Batulu Mohammed Kaltume of the APC for Gashaka State Constituency by Hon. Umar Mohammed Gayam of the PDP and Emma Bongo of the PDP against Abel Peter Diah of the APC for Mbamnga State Constituency.

The petitions were on two



Ganduje

grounds against which include: non qualification and non compliance to the electoral act which were dismissed by the tribunal.

In the suit by Mohammed Gayam of the PDP, counsel to the respondent, Mohammed Bashir said the petition was dismissed for "lack of merit".

"The tribunal entered judgement for the respondent that there was substantial non compliance as alleged by the petitioners. So the tribunal dismissed the petition for lacking in merit because they

were unable to prove their case," Bashir stated.

An elated Emma George expressed his pleasure over the judgement.

"Justice has prevailed. We have said it earlier that we have won majority of the lawful votes that were cast.

"It was sorted and counted out at the full glare of the public and the tribunal has affirmed that I am the true winner of that election. They went ahead to say INEC should retrieve the certificate of return and also return me immediately," he stated.

Tinubu appoints 18 aides in Vice President's office

PRESIDENT Bola Tinubu has approved the appointment of 18 Special Advisers and Senior Special Assistants to actualise the agenda of the Federal Government across the different sectors of the economy.

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

Abiola said that the team comprising six Special Advisers and 12 Senior Special Assistants would work in the

office of the vice president, Kashim Shettima, to support the "Renewed Hope Agenda" of the Tinubu administration.

He said that the appointments in the vice president's office include; Rukaiya El-Rufai, Special Adviser to the President on National Economic Council (NEC) and Climate Change as well as Tope Kolade Fasua as Special Adviser to the President on Economic Matters.

He said that Aliyu Modibbo was appointed as the Special

Adviser, General Duties; Hakeem Baba-Ahmed, Special Adviser, Political Matters and Jumoke Oduwale, Special Adviser to the President on Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council (PEBEC) and Investment.

Abiola said: "Others include: Sadiq Wanka, Special Adviser to the President on Power Infrastructure; Usman Mohammed, Senior Special Assistant to the President on Administration and Office Coordination and Kingsley Nkwocha, Senior Special Assistant to the President on Media and Communications.

"Also appointed were; Ishaq Ningi, Senior Special Assistant to the President on Digital Media and Emergency Management; Peju Adebajo, Senior Special Assistant to the President, Investment and Privatisation and Mohammed Bulama, Senior Special Assistant to the President on Political/Special Duties."

Similarly, the director said Mr Kingsley Uzoma is the Senior Special Assistant to the President, Agricbusiness and Productivity Enhancement and Gimba Kakanda, Senior Special Assistant to the President, Research and Analytics.

Abiola also said that Temitola Adekunle-Johnson, is the Senior Special Assistant to the President, Job Creation and MSMEs, Nasir Yammama, Senior Special Assistant to the President, Innovation and

From
AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

THE Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association, MACBAN, Kogi State Chapter, has publicly declared their firm support for the All Progressives Congress and its governorship candidate, Usman Ododo, ahead of the November 11 election in the state.

The state executives of MACBAN, along with national leaders and hundreds of Fulanis, representing all 21 LGAs of Kogi State, visited the Government House to pledge their unwavering support for the Bello-led administration and the APC's flag bearer.

They were received by Governor Yahaya Bello at the Glass House, Government House, Lokoja.

The Chairman of MACBAN, Kogi State, Umar Yusuf Damina, commended Governor Bello for his numerous achievements within the state and beyond.

He specifically noted that the firm decision of MACBAN to support the APC was a testament to the governor's unwavering commitment to the well-being of members and his extensive efforts in providing security for all citizens and residents of Kogi State.

Zainab Yunusa, Senior Special Assistant to the President on NEC.

"Others are Mariam Temitope, Senior Special Assistant to the President, Regional Development Programmes, and Bashir Maidugu, Deputy State House Counsel (Senior Special Assistant to the President).

Bayelsa Election: Group cautions against electoral violence

CREDIBLE Elections Project, a non-governmental group has called on all political parties and their candidates in the Bayelsa governorship election to be decorous in their acts and adhere to the provisions of the electoral laws.

The group, with strong interest in a free and fair elections in Nigeria, made the call in statement by its National Coordinator, Dr Fred Adams and the Public Relations Officer, Amina Musa, made available to journalists in Abuja on Sunday.

The group called for a violence-free election in Bayelsa, saying that the state in the Niger Delta can not afford to be engrossed in crisis due to interest of individuals.

It said there was no need to stoke crisis not originally contemplated by the people of Bayelsa.

The group condemned a statement of "brimstone and fire threat" attributed to candidate of one of the

Kogi guber : MACBAN drums support for APC



Ododo

The MACBAN chairman expressed the belief that the APC candidate, Ododo, would continue to build upon the solid foundation laid by the governor.

While receiving the MACBAN members, Governor Yahaya Bello welcomed their endorsement of APC and Ododo for the upcoming November 11 elections.

The governor, deeply moved by this display of unity, affirmed his administration's stance against any form of discrimination against the Fulanis in Kogi State, particularly those engaged in lawful businesses both within Kogi and across the country.

He lauded MACBAN for its valuable contributions in sharing information and gathering intelligence,

which had aided conventional security forces in identifying and eliminating criminal elements among the Fulani community in the state.

Governor Bello expressed his conviction that the Fulanis, known for their unwavering commitment to their word, would undoubtedly throw their support behind the APC during the November 11 polls.

He emphasised the government's resolute stance against the promotion of ethnicity and tribalism in the state.

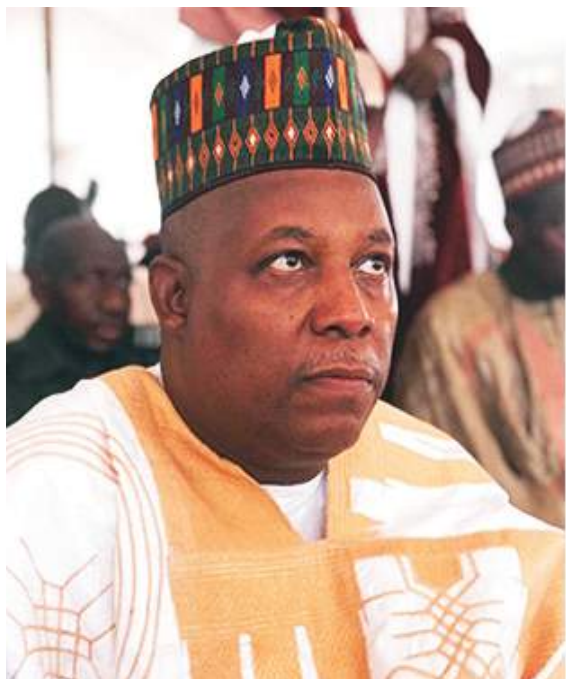
Furthermore, he urged law-abiding Fulanis residing in the state to remain vigilant and help identify criminal elements among them, thereby contributing to the overall peace and safety of all residents.

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Shettima



Yakubu

The group warned that it would petition President Bola Tinubu, the Inspector General of Police, the National Security Adviser, the Department of State Service and other security agencies with clips of utterances by any of the candidates should they refuse to refrain from attempting to stoke crisis before and during the election.

Politics

Akpabio's crucifixion and moves to thwart Tinubu's renewed hope

As Nigerians beam their searchlight on their leaders to see how they have fared so far within their 100 days in office, detractors are waiting in the wings for preys they can ravage politically. This is however not surprising, as it is archetypical of how politics is played in Nigeria. Senate President Godswill Akpabio is one of such leaders in the country that these hecklers and pistol-wielding cynics have chosen to drag to their political Golgotha to crucify, akin to what the innocence and perfidy of the biblical story of the cross stands for. GIDADO IBRAHIM writes.

IN a bid to get reasons to crucify him, these set of politicians, in cahoots with their members at the National Assembly, have been playing a series of scandals, ranging from the appointments he made on assumption of office, the constitution of committees and their chairmen to the latest report on plot in Saudi Arabia by some of his colleagues to impeach the Senate president.

According to the said media report on Saturday, some aggrieved senators have started making moves to impeach Akpabio when the red chamber reconvenes on September 26, 2023. Two prominent senators from the North-west and others are said to be already meeting and mapping out plans to carry out the daring move on grounds that the senate president is a rubber stamp for the presidency and may not be able to carry out his duty effectively.

But the said report capped it all by revealing the true intent of the impeachment plotters when it said "they are also planning to not only impeach the senate president but to make the leadership of the Senate not favourable to the presidency, thereby creating uncomfortable situation" for President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. This is a clear indication that the criticisms that have trailed the actions of the Senate president are coming against the backdrop of Akapio's firm position to actualise the Renewed Hope agenda of the Tinubu administration through effective legislation.

Opposition elements from within and outside the National Assembly have continued to fire at Akpabio from all cylinders. His sins, either by omission or commission: at a stage where every other lawmaker in the All Progressives Congress may have demonstrated some level of reluctance to step into the shoe of making President Tinubu's bid to ensure good governance in the country work, The senate president is bloody bold and resolute to bear the burden with Mr. President to rid Nigeria of corrupt elements in the system.

Since Akpabio was elected senate president before the watchful eyes of Nigerians at the inauguration of the 10th Assembly on June 13, it had been one form of tirade after another in the media, targeted at the vibrant and outspoken chairman of the National Assembly. But the plot by these political hawks to end his legislative career and tenure as leader of the country's federal



Akpabio

legislature will fall like a pack of cards.

In just three months in the life of the new National Assembly leadership, Senators are talking about impeaching the Senate president. One wonders why Nigerian lawmakers would choose to meet in Saudi Arabia to perfect plans to ensure that the senate president is impeached. It all stems from the discontent among some of the senators who are disgruntled about the constitution of the leadership of different committees in the red chamber, which apparently didn't favour them.

In other democracies of the world like the United States, Canada and even the ancient Roman Empire, the legislature symbolises the existence of democracy. The effectiveness of the legislature determines the status of democracy. The legislature of these countries are strong because their democracies are strong. They measure the effectiveness of their legislatures in order to know how strong or weak they are. The lawmakers in these countries have absolute respect and regard for the leadership of their legislature.

In these countries the parliament, as an institution, fosters democratic sustenance and ensure that it does not face the threat of being truncated. In the USA and the United Kingdom, citizens are always interested in the performance level of their legislators in advancing the interests of the constituencies on the floor of the Senate and the House and the numbers of developmental benefits the legislators are able to attract to their constituencies. The lawmakers

give priority to serving the interests of their people in order to win their sympathy for re-election.

However, the reverse is the case in Nigeria where our lawmakers are only interested in what they can grab for themselves. They detest the idea of effective legislation and are most willing to frustrate any attempt by the leadership of the National Assembly to ensure good governance.

While Senate President Akpabio and Speaker Tajudeen Abbas, as well as their deputies are working towards actualising the Renewed Hope agenda of the Tinubu administration, some of our lawmakers are busy pursuing their own interest, which is self-serving.

We all know that one of the main reasons for impeaching a senate president borders on misappropriation, embezzlement and other forms of corrupt practices. However, the Akpabio I know as our national coordinator of the Presidential Support Committee (PSC) is one who had always advocated transparency. Severally, he has always enjoined us not to be greedy and corrupt. He had insisted time without number that we should rise up and stand firm for democracy at all times.

But the character of the mental indolence of the impeachment plotters can be understood. Among those sabotaging Akpabio's effort to ensure the success of President

Tinubu's Renewed Hope agenda are corrupt lawmakers and politicians affected by the forensic audit report on the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) under his watch as Niger Delta minister.

Those who were found culpable of squandering state funds are bent on stopping the senate president in order to avoid being charged to court by the government in its fight against corruption. They are still not happy that he exposed their can of worms as NDDC, and if allowed to continue as Senate president, he will expose them the more and send them to jail. But they have failed woefully.

The efforts made by the Akpabio-led National Assembly to make sure President Tinubu delivers on his campaign promises are glaring. The Senate had to suspend their recess to screen and confirm ministers. The National Assembly leadership should be commended for this rather than the talk about impeaching Akpabio.

Already, with the support of the National Assembly chaired by Senate President Akpabio, President Tinubu is beginning to recalibrate the path to Nigeria's progress and the least anyone can do right now is distract them. Political power is not a do or die affair. As a politician, one way to earn respect of the citizens is by being patriotic. It should not be about selfish interest to the extent that if our lawmakers don't get juicy committees the roof must come down and the senate president must be impeached.



IMAGES

MUTFWANG COMMISSIONS JSC

Plateau State Governor, Barr. Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang recently commissioned the Judicial Service Commission, Jos. The Governor was represented by the Commissioner of Justice and Attorney General of the State



Representative of the Governor, Barr. Philemon Dafi cutting the tape to commission the project



Front view of the project commissioned



Secretary to Government of the State, Arc. Samuel Nanchang Jatau (left) with the Plateau State Chief Judge, Justice David Mann



Barr. Mutfwang, through the Commissioner, Justice, Barr. Dafi unveiling the plaque



Cross section of Judges and Lawyers at the ceremony



Barr. Dafi, Commissioner of Justice (right) Chief Registrar, High Court of Justice, Barr. Andrawus Maikai and other person

GOV MUTFWANG ATTENDS NGF MEETING

Plateau State Governor, Barr. Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang recently attended the Nigeria Governors' Forum meeting in Abuja



NGF Chairman and Governor of Kwara State, Abdulrazaq Abdulrahman presiding over the meeting, flanked by Prof. Umara Babagana Zulum of Borno and Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State



Plateau State Governor, Barr. Caleb Mutfwang, Kano State, Governor Abba Kabir Yusuf with other governors listening to the opening remarks

Politics

PDP @ 25: Leaders vow party will bounce back

The main opposition party, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), recently celebrated its 25th year of existence and declared that the 16 years the party was in power were the golden years for Nigeria and Nigerians.

LOOKING back to its creation in 1998, PDP leaders said they were very proud of the party and what it has achieved in the last 25 years.

The National Publicity Secretary of the PDP, Debo Ologunagba, said the party decided on a low-key celebration as, according to him, the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) had "frittered away all the progress the PDP made in 16 years within eight years."

"Today, the PDP celebrates the resilience of Nigerians in the democratic process and particularly the founding leaders and teeming members of our party for their sacrificial roles in returning, nurturing and sustaining democracy in our country."

"The belief that power resides with the people is at the core of PDP's sustained focus on guaranteeing the rule of law, adherence to the principle of separation of powers, personal freedom of citizens, a free press, credible electoral process, liberalisation of the economy, vast infrastructural development, massive employment and business opportunities, among other initiatives that made the PDP years in government the Nigerian Golden Years.

"The PDP administration guaranteed a stable economy that boosted domestic and international investors' confidence in all sectors, grew the Nigeria Stock Exchange into one of the most profitable in the world, achieved food security through massive investment in agriculture which increased the purchasing power of citizens, which ranked Nigeria as a major development hub with Fitch BB rating under the PDP administration.

"Sadly, all the gains achieved by the PDP have been rolled back by the APC, which in a space of eight years, wrecked our economy and turned our nation into the poverty capital of the world with a frightening 35 percent unemployment rate, where hunger, starvation, strange diseases and sudden deaths now ravage our citizens.

"Under the watch of the vicious, corrupt and incompetent APC, major multinational companies are exiting Nigeria; the Naira has fallen from N197 to US\$1 under the PDP to abysmal over N900 to US\$1; petrol, which sold at N87



Damagum

per liter by 2015, now sells for over N600 per litre. This is in addition to multiple harsh tariffs, taxes and levies imposed on citizens by the APC administration.

"Life in Nigeria under the APC has become very unbearable, such that Nigerians are now resorting to suicide and slavery abroad as options.

"The APC came to power through the instrument of lies and propaganda and seeks to sustain its hold with violence, intimidation, manipulation and election rigging.

"Nevertheless, the PDP urges Nigerians not to lose confidence in the nation but remain hopeful as our party continues to lead the charge for a country where the Will of the people prevails."

Former Vice President and the 2023 presidential candidate of the party, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, congratulated his party for attaining 25 years

and impacting positively on Nigeria's socio-economic and political landscape.

Atiku said, "The PDP is the progenitor of our contemporary democracy and therefore, the party shall ensure that democracy does not only survive in Nigeria, but that the country thrives through it."

According to Atiku, "being one of the founding fathers of our great party, the Peoples Democratic Party, I take great pride in having years.

participated in the process of nurturing the party from infancy to a deliberate agency of socio-political and economic development in Nigeria.

"In the 16 years that the PDP was at the helm of affairs in our country, the party offered quality leadership through various administrations and the achievements recorded in those 16 years have remained the benchmark for positive growth in our economy and other critical areas of our national life.

"Of course, the PDP took a leading role in the deconstruction of military rule in Nigeria and the peculiarities of our contemporary experiences both within Nigeria and other countries in Africa demand that the PDP should, once again, rise to the occasion in cancelling the economic hardship and other structural deficiencies that directly bear negatively on our people in the past eight and half years.

"I have every confidence that the PDP will bounce back to give Nigerians a responsive government," Atiku said. Also speaking with THEWILL, a former Deputy National Chairman of the party, Chief Olabode George, said it has been 25 years of experiences. We have been to the topmost mountain in Nigeria and we have also rolled back to the bottom of a deep valley to be in opposition," he said.

George commended the founding fathers of the party, saying, "I joined politics because of the tenets that I read about this party. And I am happy to tell you that the PDP is the first political party in Nigeria that has the full colours of our nation, from the Swampy region to the Savannah in the North.

"What did the founding fathers do? I remember a few of them. Late Chief Bola Ige was a founding father of the PDP. He attended the first meeting. You know what they did. They sat in

the same room with Dr Alex Ekwueme. Can you imagine that? With Papa Jim Nwobodo. Then Papa Solomon Lar sat with Alhaji Adamu Ciroma in the same room to discuss political union. They tried. When about 14 of them met. They sat and asked, 'What are these mitigating factors that have been preventing our nation from growing?' They said, 'Look, the majority always have their ways and their say while the minority are only onlookers. We can't be in an association where only one man will be the leader and others will just be following him'. That is why they decided to divide Nigeria into six geopolitical zones. And they came up with six top positions: President, Vice President, Senate President, Speaker of House of Representatives, Secretary to the Government and National Chairman of the party. So, each one of these positions will go to each zone and everybody will go home with something.

"That was how we started it in 1998. Everybody went home with satisfaction. There was a proviso: After eight years, all positions in the North will go to the South and all positions in the South will go to the North. We will be rotating. So that one day the minority will be president in Nigeria. You can't imagine that in 1960 that a minority will one day become the president of Nigeria. That was how the party started".

On the future of the party, George said "We will bounce back. Like I said we can disagree, but we should not be disagreeable. We have learnt our lessons. Let's get together. Let us get a management team that will be fair to all. After the Supreme Court, we can say let us meet, let us move forward. I don't think it is still late for us to meet. We can still get together. We don't want it to go the ANPP way".

While speaking on the 25th anniversary of the PDP, former National Chairman, of the party, Alhaji Abubakar Kawu Baraje, said it would mark its Silver Jubilee with joy, saying the party had reason to celebrate.

*Baraje described the 16 years of PDP in governance as unforgettable and one to be remembered by Nigerians when they compare it to eight years of the APC.

*"It was 16 years of unbroken democracy, revitalised economy and hope coming back to the country. There is a lot to celebrate; the past eight years by the APC in power can be compared with the 16 years of the PDP. And the difference is clear. Nigerians are now suffering. They could not eat well. Nigeria which was the giant of Africa under PDP is now the Poverty Capital of the World," Baraje said.

Culled from THEWILL.

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News

PS assures PLASCOFED of support

BY HOSEA NYAMLONG

PERMANENT Secretary (PS), Ministry of Commerce and Industry Plateau State, Mr. Felix Kopsuk has assured the leadership of Plateau State Cooperative Federation Limited (PLASCOFED) of his support in all their programmes.

Kopsuk made the promise while declaring a two day leadership workshop organised by PLASCOFED open. The workshop was tagged "Financial Management for Sustainable Cooperative Society Growth" held at the Nigerian Institute of Mining and Geoscience Hall in Jos, recently.

He added that the only way cooperative societies would grow and be sustainable is by constant training of leaders with the knowledge needed.

He urged participants during the workshop to use the opportunity of the programme to equip themselves with new ideas in order to better their societies.

In a welcome speech by the PLASCOFED President, Mrs. Hannatu Mershak, who was represented by Mr. Nimmyel Timloh, the Publicity Officer of PLASCOFED, she said that



Kopsuk

one of the core values of the body is to educate both leaders and members of the primary societies with the knowledge that will equip them in moving their societies to greater heights.

He encouraged participants to have an open mind as they cross fertilise ideas with others in sustaining their primary societies.

The resource person, Elder Daniel Usman, Managing Consultant, Sandstone Associates Limited in a paper presented with the theme of the workshop, stressed that finance is the lifewire of every

organisation. And this revolves around utilizing and creating finance for optimal performance.

He said that effective and efficient financial management is imperative in ensuring cooperative societies business sustainability and growth.

Usman maintained that financial management is a process that involves organising, controlling and managing funds effectively and efficiently.

THE NIGERIA STANDARD reports that the workshop was well attended by leaders of primary cooperative societies in the state and participants actively took part in the discussion sessions.

By DORCAS PANKYES

THE Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) has announced the commencement of the third edition of its Talent Hunt Research through Hackathon as part of its Strategic Vision Plan 2023-2025.

The initiative aims to encourage the development of new technologies and indigenous content through cutting-edge research, ultimately fostering sustainable economic growth and development in Nigeria.

In a statement issued by Reuben Muoka, Director, Public Affairs Nigeria Communication Commission, (NCC) stated that Tech Hubs and Innovation-Driven Enterprises (IDEs) in Nigeria are invited to enroll their startups and solutions in the Talent Hunt Research through Hackathon organized by NCC.

The focus areas for the Hackathon include Blockchain-enabled Data Protection Solutions for Enhancing Regulatory Compliance, Assistive Technology Solutions for the Elderly and People with Disabilities, and Technology Solutions for Renewable Energy in Rural Areas.

The NCC Talent Hunt Research through Hackathon leverages Emerging Digital Technologies to facilitate the development of

NCC launches talent hunt research

innovative solutions and relevant problem statement, solution, and roadmap to deployment.

Other requirements include providing a proof of concept, ensuring the novelty of the solution with a declaration of ownership of intellectual property, concluding the development of the solution within 6 months of receiving the grant, and proposing a detailed commercialization plan.

All applications must be submitted online in the specified entry format, and there will be no financial cost to participate in the competition. The Commission will retain full control and ownership of the intellectual property of the developed solutions.

All interested and qualified enterprises should submit requested documents in a zip folder to with the subject of the mail titled "Submission from business name" and the zipped file named after the business.

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Danbatta

Broadband penetration on fast-track, says Danbatta

By DORCAS PANKYES

THE national target to achieve 70 per cent broadband penetration by 2025 is receiving renewed attention from the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), which promises 50 per cent growth before the end of 2023.

In a press statement signed by Reuben Muoka, Director, Public Affairs, he said that the promise was one of the highlights of the special media chat with executive editors and media chiefs in the northern part of the country, hosted by the Executive Chairman of the Commission, Prof. Umar Danbatta, to unveil his achievements since the resumption of office till date.

At the occasion, where Danbatta informed the media chiefs that Fifth Generation (5G) services subscriptions have already hit half a million in subscription, the various efforts of the Commission to improve broadband penetration are yielding fruitful results with the current estimates as at July 2023 standing at 47.01 per cent.

Using the extant reviewed five-pillar Strategic Vision Plan as building block, the EVC spoke on 119 milestones achieved under the five strategic pillars, including regulatory excellence, universal

broadband, market development, digital economy and strategic collaboration.

Danbatta said through effective implementation of NCC's mandates under his leadership and cooperation of internal and external stakeholders since 2015, telecommunications industry in Nigeria has achieved remarkable milestones under his leadership.

Reeling out impressive statistics that have characterized his leadership at NCC from 2015 to date, the EVC said active telephone subscribers had increased from less than 150.7 million to 218.9 million, representing a teledensity growth of 115.70 per cent from 107.87 per cent in 2015.

Through stimulating broadband infrastructure across the country, Danbatta said broadband penetration, which stood at 6 per cent in 2015 has increased significantly to 47.01 per cent as of July, 2023, enhancing over 89.73 million subscriptions on 3G, 4G and 5G networks in the country.

Additionally, general Internet subscriptions have

reached 159.5 million up from less than 100 million in 2015.

Besides, following the authorization of more telecommunications companies to operate in Nigeria's telecoms sector, the investments profile has increased tremendously from \$38 billion in 2015 to \$75 billion currently and this keeps growing daily.

From the sales of Fifth Generation (5G) C-Band Spectrum, the NCC has generated over \$847.8 million for the Federal Government," he said.

Danbatta, who has received a gallery of awards nationally, regionally and globally in recognition of the outstanding performance of Nigeria's telecom industry also listed several achievements recorded since 2015.

Communications Satellite (NIGCOMSAT) Limited, and introduction of the Expanded Revenue Assurance Solution (ERAS) to address revenue leakages and improve government revenue from the telecoms industry.

to SpaceX Satellite, facilitating the landing of additional submarine Cables, such as the Google 2,000km Equiano subsea Internet cable in 2022, listing of MTN on the Niger

Also as part of NCC's

commitment under Danbatta's leadership, the Commission has endowed professorial chairs in Nigerian universities and committed over N500 million naira to Research and Development (R&D) in the telecoms sector.

Danbatta said other consumer-focused initiatives of the Commission have also centered on the establishment of Emergency Communications Centres (ECCs) in over 30 states of the federation and the FCT.

The NCC Chief Executive said the Commission has also taken very clear actions on consumer protection, advocacy, information-sharing and education. "These include introduction of data roll-over just before the expiration of subscribed data plans, introduction of the 622 toll-free number for lodging service-related complaints to the Commission, the Do-Not-Disturb (DND) 2442 Short Code for tackling the menace of unsolicited text messages, etc.

However, Danbatta said the industry still faces a number of challenges such as vandalism, securing equitable Right of Way (RoW) from governmental stakeholders, etc.

FRSC confirms one dead, 3 Injured in autocrash

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

AN auto crash involving two vehicles that collided at Elele village, Ajaokuta Local Government Area of Kogi State on recently left seven passengers unhurt, one dead with three others injured.

The Kogi Sector Commander, Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), Corps Commander Samuel Oyediji, who confirmed the incident to our correspondent in a telephone interview, described it as "very unfortunate incident."

Oyediji said that the accident which involved a Peugeot J-5 Bus and a Sharon Bus left the driver of the J-5 Bus dead.

He gave the cause of the head on collision as speed, reckless overtaking and carelessness.

"The Sharon bus had eight persons while the J-5 bus had three persons. But God in his infinite mercy kept seven persons unhurt."

"Our rescue team/personnel, who rushed to the accident scene, took the injured persons to the

Kogi Specialist Hospital, Lokoja for medical attention," he said.

The Sector Commander said that the corpse of the bus driver was claimed by the members of the community for burial.

Oyediji appealed to motorists to exercise caution while on the highway so as to avoid accidents that bring about untimely death and destruction of property.

According to him, motorists must exercise patience and caution each time they want to embark on over-taking to avoid head on collision that would bring about unnecessary destruction of lives and property.

"We expect every motorist to keep to the traffic rules and regulations to stay alive and safeguard the lives of innocent passengers on the highways," he said.

However, another source told our correspondent that the accident claimed more than one person. He added that it took the efforts of sympathisers who used objects to hack the body of one the vehicles to remove some bodies.

News

Vice President appoints NEF spokesperson as SA

From JOHN FWAH KADUNA

THE spokesman of Northern Elders Forum, newspaper columnist and social critic, Dr Hakeem Baba Ahmed, has been appointed Special Adviser (SA) on Political Affairs to Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Kashim Shettima.

Dr Hakeem who hails from Zaria, Kaduna State is from the same family with Yusuf Datti, the Vice Presidential candidate of the Labour Party.

He has been a strong critic of the All Progressives Congress (APC) administration over the years.

Baba-Ahmed's appointment was made known on Monday, September 17, via a social media post on X, where he formerly wrote "It is time to make it public that I have accepted the call to serve as Special Adviser (Political) to the VP, @KShettim. "This is not the time for fence-sitting or criticism when you can be useful in turning the country around. I am honored and humbled.



Please pray for me and Nigeria".

The appointment of Baba-Ahmed might likely raise eyebrows as he is the elder brother of Yusuf Datti Baba-Ahmed, the Labour Party presidential running mate of Peter Obi, an arch-rival of the All Progressives Congress (APC) and President Bola

Ahmed Tinubu.

It will be the second person the presidency is poaching from the camp of Yusuf Datti after the appointment of Professor Tahir Mamman as the Minister of Education.

Professor Mamman, before his appointment, was the Vice Chancellor of the famous Baze University, Abuja, owned by Yusuf Datti.

Security forces kill 10 kidnappers, rescue 39 captives

From ABBAS GUNGURA, Bauchi

COMBINED efforts of security operatives in Bauchi engaged in a serious battle with suspected kidnappers that led to the killing of 10 of them while 39 captives were rescued recently.

Those rescued were victims of last Thursday's kidnapping in Yankari forest of Alkali Local Government Area in Bauchi State.

Our reporter in Bauchi reports that the breakdown of the saved victims includes 28 adult males, eight adult females, and three infants who were safely rescued and subsequently reunited with their respective families after a medical check-up at the General Hospital in Alkali Local Government Area of the state.

A press statement signed and issued to journalists in Bauchi, by the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), SP Ahmed Mohammed Wakil, said on September 15, 2023, the Police Command's Operation Sharan

Daji team in conjunction with relevant stakeholders (Hunters) led by CSP Makama Magaji embarked on the rescue mission.

Bauchi police spokesman, Wakil explained that the security team acted on credible intelligence and swiftly ransacked the suspected kidnapper's enclave and engaged the culprits in a heavy gun battle.

"The police consequently emerged victorious as a result of superior firepower against the criminals, leading to the death of 10 criminals while others ran into different directions with bullet wounds", Wakil said.

Wakil gave the rescued kidnap victims as Muhammadu Sardauna of Sabon Layi, Meshack Isyaku of Kafi, Mustapha Muhammadu of Sabon Jiri; Marafa Kasu of Gargankufai, Sale Dan Asabe of Badakoshin Pali, Alh Amadu Hassan of Sabon Layi, and Saddik Isa of Sabon-Jiri.

Others rescued include Mannirul Hassan of Kafi, Aminu Alhaji

Baushe of Anguwan Gyero, Rabiu Adamu of Alkali, Yahaya Abubakar of Alkali, Hamisu Hashim of Gaji Gamu, and Muhammadu Bello of Anguwan Gyero, Babangida Makeri of Badakoshi, Yunusa Adamu of Kwalele, and Galadima Iliyasu of T o l l o n .

Others include Isa Dan-Biran of Tollon, Hashimu Sarkin Busa of Tollon, Muhammadu Shuaibu of Dan, Kalik Dahiru of Dagudi, Aliyu Yakubu of Gaji, Alhaji Kamilu of Unguwan Gyero, Ahmadu Yari of Duguri, Mohammad Ali of Dan, Dan Lami Samaila of Dan, Rabiu Barde of Sabon-Jiri, Yakubu Muhammad of Gaji, and Yakubu Musa of Mun.

SP Ahmed Wakil similarly gave the rescued female victims as Khadija Abbas of Gaji and Usaina ma Sunusi of Duguri, Maimuna Iliyasu of Duguri, as well as Aisha Yusuf of G a j i .

Muhammadu Sani of Duguri, Rose Bulus of Duguri, Hakuda Adamu of Gaji, Shamsiya Abdulhakim of Duguri; Fatima Sunusi of Duguri, Maimuna Iliyasu of Duguri, as well as Aisha Yusuf of Gaji.

According to the police spokesperson, the kidnappers demanded the sum of N50 million from each of the 39 victims. Giving a total lump sum of N1.95bn as a ransom before the successful rescue operation by the "Operation Sharan Daji" which put all their plans in f u t i l i t y .

The Bauchi State Police Commissioner, CP Auwal Musa Muhammad commended the operatives for their gallantry, and selfless service to the nation and humanity, reassuring the citizens of the state that the war against crimes and criminality will soon be w o n .

The CP Auwal Muhammad called for continuous support for the police and other law enforcement agencies, promising that the security agencies will not rest on their oars until normalcy is restored in every part of the state.

He called on the general public to provide the security apparatus with vital information on any suspected moves by any person or group in the s o c i e t y .



School fees, parents and the rest of us

It is that period when schools are resuming. September to many parents is that tumultuous period when they run from pillar to post looking for money to s e t t l e t h e i r ward/children's fees as they transmit to new classes. In view of the dire economic situation the country has found itself in, and the neglect public schools have suffered in the past years, parents have been made to sweat it out trying to sort out their children's school fees.

The state of our public schools has made matters worst as these schools hold no attraction for parents as they are in dilapidated and decrepit states. To fill in the gap, private schools have flourished and are milking parents to the bones and because parents have no option, they do everything in their power to ensure that their wards get an education. Unfortunately, these private schools are manned by people who do not have the requisite qualifications like those found in public schools. Indeed, owners of these private schools exploit their staff so much so that the mobility rate in these schools are very high.

It is sad to note that leaders who benefitted from free education in their days are the ones refusing to upgrade our public schools. They instead prefer to send their children to other countries to study so as to come back and lord it over the rest of the citizenry. One other disturbing issue is the lack of the provision of the needed environment for the citizenry to thrive. Electricity, for example which should help small business concerns to survive is almost at ground zero and cannot be supplied to homes and businesses. As the present administration unfolds its plans, therefore, it needs to look again at the different facets of the society and put in place measures

that would bring about deliberate growth and development to the country and its people.

That fuel subsidy was removed by a Presidential fiat, without concrete measures put in place to mitigate the effects of this removal, we must resolve to change the downward slide occasioned by the pronouncement. The purchasing power of the generality of the people had been frittered away and the money in the hands of most people is not enough to meet their demands. Because of this, people are struggling to make ends meet.

And, the dire straits occasioned by the skyrocketing prices of the essentials of life have put pressure on school fees and parents have been left

to bear the brunt of all these. As a result, if no creative manner of solving such issues is sought, things might not augur well with our society. Government needs to move as quickly as it can to meet the people at their points of needs, to nip in the bud likely grumblings which is not what we need at the moment.

Also, governments need to change the situation in schools owned by them. Deliberate measures must be put in place to ensure that these schools recover their lost glories and become the models they used to be. In fact, teachers in these schools must be put on their toes so as to achieve the needed results. Supervision is key and must be done in such a manner that no one is given the opportunity to mess the system up.

On their path, parents need to plan so that they are not taken unawares. They must endeavor to keep something apart so that they do not struggle to do their responsibility as at when due. Besides, owners of private schools should be made to know that they owe the citizens the responsibility of not hiking their school fees at any given opportunity. They should make whatever increment they need to do with a human face so as not to jolt the system and cause some disbalance.

As citizens, we must also do our responsibilities to the best of our abilities so that we can contribute to the growth of our economy and country. A situation where government work and property are treated as no one's business is unacceptable and should be discounted. In all we do, we must strive to strike a balance. When we remember the good old days when other countries saw value in our systems, we must take a look and rejig the system to work for us. We cannot continue to allow ourselves suffer to do those things that are basic.

As citizens, we must also do our responsibilities to the best of our abilities so that we can contribute to the growth of our economy and country. A situation where government work and property are treated as no one's business is unacceptable and should be discounted.



Bala

News

GAPS enthrones new Bishop of LCCI Plateau

By EZEKIEL DONTINNA

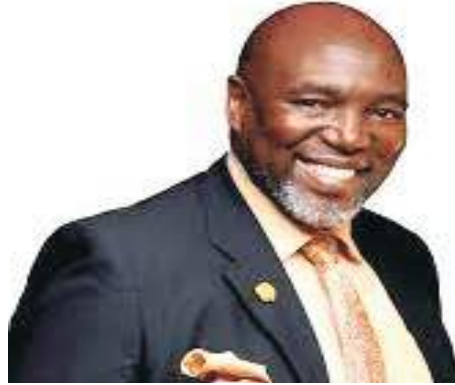
THE Perate of Bridging the GAPS College of Bishops, United States of America (USA), His Grace, Archbishop. Johnny Myles Riley, has enthroned Bright Samuel Otso, of the Lighthouse Communion Church International (LCCI) as the new Bishop to expand the church and bridge the gap between the church and communities.

This took place recently, on the occasion marking the Bishopric Consecration and Enthronement of Bishop Bright Samuel Otso, held at the Lighthouse Communion Church International along Okadum (Odus) Bauchi Ring Road Jos, Plateau State capital, Nigeria.

Speaking shortly after the consecration and enthronement of the new Bishop, the USA Archbishop said they were excited to have Bishop Bright to bridge the gap in the family. He pointed out that "I think, it is a significant role that we expand our Church here in Africa because that is the foundation of Christianity.

"This is also an opportunity for us to bring Africans who are in the diaspora (US) back to give us opportunity to bridge the gap in moving forward to make it easy for individuals to connect with other individuals in Africa.

"As you can see, the name of the Ministry is Bridging The Gaps Ministry. This is for us to foster the kingdom of God. We have to move pass our denominational boundaries and move to the point that we can come together along common ground", he enthused.



Dunka

Riley, therefore, called on all Christians to break down barriers that exist among them because of denominational differences, culture and move forward to help those who have issues of hunger or poverty because it is the responsibility of the church and not government or UN anymore.

"We gonna push forward, we gonna break down those barriers to continue to call on us to look at each other from a different perspective. We are all God's people and should make a difference in the lives of those that are less fortunate because of education, war and political issues. But as a church, we must be willing to come into the caox of the world and transform the world to be a better place".

On his part, the Plateau State Chairman of Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), Rev. Dunka Joseph Dechi Gomwalk, congratulated the new Bishop, Bright Samuel Otso. He described him as an active member of the PFN and also an asset to them.

"It is an honourable office and it becomes doubly honourable when men carry it

with honour. The man who is standing in the office today, I believe he is an honourable man and I am excited because I believe God is giving him this opportunity to express his gifts. It is a demonstration of the fact that his faithfulness to God has been recognised", PFN encouraged.

However, the newly enthroned Bishop, Bright Samuel Otso, (DCL, UNGPA, DKA, FFMN) said, "I feel elated, excited, fulfilled. It is a dream come true. My primary calling is to unite the body of Christ and one of the ways is to bridge the gap between the traditional and the modern churches and see how we can see the low and high, bring the poor and the rich together and see that Christ is the ultimate in the Church".

Meanwhile, a community developer from the United States of America (USA), Mama Rev. Barbara Pitts Riley, said they were into youth leadership development and providing affordable housing scheme for over 20 years. And that the project was globally and not only for Africa, but also for countries like Australia, Phillipine, Thailand and many more.

From **ABBAS GUNGURA, Bauchi**

Senator Bala Mohammed of Bauchi State, has sworn in 19 Special Advisers that will assist him in running the affairs of the state, warning that he will not hesitate to sack anybody that is found wanting in the discharge of his or her duties or bringing the government into disrepute.

Governor Bala made it clear during the swearing - in of the appointees at the Banquet Hall, Government House Bauchi, recently. He charged them to see their appointment as a challenge and prove their worth in their various areas of responsibilities.

He further urged them to bring to bear their wealth of experience in the discharge of their duties for them to make meaningful impact on governance, adding that they should acquaint themselves with the policy thrust of the government.

"As a government, we are duly committed to take Bauchi to greater heights than we met it, so that we can be proud of it.

"To this end, the blueprint called the Bauchi Project which was conceptualized before we resumed office in 2019, has been reviewed by a technical committee to address the current socio-economic realities of the state. The technical committee has already submitted its report to the government.

"The Special Advisers will do well to thoroughly study the report in order to be guided in the discharge of their duties"

"As a testimony of the sincerity of our administration to ensure an effective government, arrangements have been made to organize a retreat for Commissioners, Special Advisers, Permanent Secretaries, Local Government Chairmen and other stakeholders.

"This is a deliberate effort to

I haven't appointed you to enrich yourselves

- Governor Bala

avoid trial and error in the running of government affairs. I will therefore like to appeal to the Special Advisers and other participants to take advantage of the retreat to prepare themselves for the task ahead of them.

"As Advisers, you should be prudent in the management of resources that will be made available to you. You should make accountability and transparency your watchwords. Even though you do not generate revenue, you must block leakages and avoid waste.

As Special Advisers, your actions, inactions and utterances will be of interest to members of the public, so you must exhibit high moral standard in both your official and personal conducts," the governor warned.

He also warned the Special Advisers against rumour mongering and talking about official issues, saying that such actions will amount to violating the oath of allegiance that they were sworn into.

"Members of the public will view the government by the way you behave and relate with them and as such, we must not do anything or say anything that will soil the image of the government.

"You should not allow your personal interest to take precedence over your official duties. Remember that you have not been appointed to

enrich yourselves at the expense of the government, but to make sacrifices and selfless service for the socio-economic development of our dear state."

The governor urged them to exhibit loyalty to the government and the party, stressing that they should ensure that they always collaborate with party leaders, local government chairmen, legislators, traditional rulers and visit their communities regularly to establish trust and openness in the affairs of government.

The newly sworn-in Special Advisers and their respective portfolios are as follows: Ahmed Chiroma, Chief Security Adviser; Bakoji Aliyu Bobbo- National Assembly Liaison; Abdon Gin, Civil Service Matters; Zainab Rufa'I, Non-Governmental Organizations; Asmau Giade-Culture and Tourism, Adamu Manu Soro;-Housing, Hashimu Kumbala- General Service and Administration; Mohammed Bello; Multilateral Services, Isa Babayo Tilde - Local Government Affairs; and Mohamed Abdulkadir-Engineering and Project Management

Others are; Shehu Alhaji Wadaji - Pilgrims Affairs; Monica Musa- Poverty Alleviation; Yohanna uni Usman Yashi- Lands and Survey; Dr. Iiyasu Gital - Agriculture; Adamu Babayo Gabarin; Health.



Bala

Bello demands speedy completion of rural electrification project

From **AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja**

Contractors handling the installation of the 185mm2 XLPE Cable for the replacement of the undersized 75mm2 XLPE cable currently serving the people of Kogi/Koto Karfe Local Government Area have been told to ensure speedy completion of the project according to job specifications.

Governor Yahaya Bello gave the directive recently while on inspection of the project located at Muritala Mohammed Bridge near Koto-karfe.

The governor implored the contractors to intensify their efforts towards prompt and efficient project completion.

He expressed contentment with the accomplished work's quality and underscored the project's significance to his administration and the socio-

economic well-being of the local populace.

One of the site supervisors, Omachi Atayi, during the inspection, assured the governor that the project would adhere to the specified timeline.

According to him, "Governor Bello has demonstrated unwavering commitment to ameliorating the living conditions of rural Kogites across the state's three senatorial districts through rural electrification initiatives.

"His dedication has been steadfast, with the governor effectively addressing the longstanding issue of unreliable power supply in Kogi East through the 'Light-up Kogi East Project.' Subsequently, he extended his efforts to Kogi Central and most recently, to the Western Senatorial District of the state.

"In Kogi East, a persistent electricity challenge was the

absence of power supply expansion across Ajaokuta bridge into the Eastern part of the district. Governor Bello has faithfully fulfilled his promise to upgrade essential electricity distribution infrastructure, facilitating enhanced power transmission from the Ajaokuta substation to various areas within Kogi East.

"This upgrade has significantly augmented the power load capacity from 14.5 MW to approximately 45 MW, guaranteeing sustainable electricity for over 45 communities spanning nine Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Kogi East.

"In addressing electrification obstacles within Kogi Central Senatorial District, the governor's ongoing initiatives aim to interconnect rural communities in Kogi/Koto with the national grid, ensuring a reliable power supply for the entire area," he disclosed.

MAOSA laments wanton killings in Plateau

From **AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja**

The Mangun Old Students Association (MAOSA) has raised the alarm over the wanton killings and destruction of property in five Local Government Areas of Plateau State.

The association in a statement made available to our correspondent on Monday, named the affected council areas to include; Mangu, Barkin-Ladi, Riyom, Bokkos and Bassa

The statement signed by its Coordinator and Secretary, Mrs Philemon Dagwa and Waja

Nyalwat of Set 85, "The Pillar Set" of the association, described the development as callous and unacceptable

According to the statement, "We strongly condemn in totality, the consciously and well calculated evil attack and massacre of lives and destruction of property meted to Mangu LGC in particular, by some people who don't want peace for Plateau.

"Markets and several schools in villages like Washna, Jing, Lakas, Pushit, Kombun and others have been destroyed along with houses and Churches, making it near

impossible for students to resume studies.

"It's unfortunate that markets are closed and teeming pupils and students are still at home because their schools are no more, nor can they return to their homes that are destroyed due to the activities of the dare devil attackers.

"We hereby call on the Federal Government, corporate organisations and philanthropists to come to the aid of the affected villagers, many of whom are taking refuge in some churches and schools in various towns and nearby communities," the association said.

MAOSA commended the Caleb Mutfwang PDP-led administration for its quick response by arresting the situation and restoring the peace being enjoyed in Mangu LGA.

The pillar set added : "We're also grateful to the First Lady of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Oluremi Bola-Tinubu, for coming to the aid of the survivors and displaced persons with the donation of N500 million."



Mutfwang

Foreign Commentary

South Africa : Dudula hate foreigners

South African anti-migrant group Operation Dudula has become notorious for raiding businesses belonging to foreign nationals and forcing shops to close. Writes Ayanda Charlie & Tamasin Ford.

Foreign media has gained rare access to members of the country's most-prominent anti-migrant street movement.

In a school kitchen in Kwa Thema, a township east of Johannesburg, Dimakatso Makoena is busy making sandwiches. The 57-year-old single parent of three has been a cook there for more than 10 years.

"To tell you the truth, I hate foreigners. How I wish they could just pack and go and leave our country," she says, fighting back tears.

It is hard to understand the strength of this hate until Ms Makoena pulls out her phone to show a picture of her son. Emaciated with a glazed look in his eyes, angry burn scars spread over his body, up his arms and across his face.

"He started smoking drugs when he was 14 years old," she says, explaining how her son often goes out to steal things to feed his habit. One day he had tried to take some power cables to sell when he got electrocuted and burned.

Her son uses crystal meth and nyaope, a highly addictive street drug that has devastated communities across South Africa. It is not until she blames foreigners for selling the drugs that her reasoning and support for Operation Dudula becomes clear.

"Dudula, that's the only thing that keeps me going," she tells the BBC.

Operation Dudula was set-up in Soweto two years ago, the first group to formalise what had been sporadic waves of xenophobia-fuelled vigilante attacks in South Africa that date back to shortly after white-minority rule ended in 1994. It calls itself a civic movement, running on an anti-migrant platform, with the word "dudula" meaning "to force out" in Zulu.



Ramaphosa

Soweto was at the forefront of anti-apartheid resistance and home to Nelson Mandela, South Africa's first democratically elected president. Now, the township has become the home of the country's most-prominent

anti-migrant group.

With one in three South Africans out of work in one of the most unequal societies in the world, foreigners in general have become an easy target.

But the number of migrants

living in South Africa has been grossly exaggerated. According to a 2022 report by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), an independent research organisation based in the capital, Pretoria, there are about 3.95 million migrants in South Africa, making up 6.5% of the population, a figure in line with international norms. This number includes all immigrants, irrespective of legal status or where they come from.

The xenophobic rhetoric used by some public officials, politicians and anti-migrant groups has helped fuel the myth that the country is overrun with migrants. The South African Social Attitudes Survey for 2021 found that almost half of the population of 60 million people believed there were between 17 and 40 million immigrants in the country.

Current polling suggests support for the governing African National Congress (ANC), the party once led by Mr Mandela, could fall below 50% for the first time.

Operation Dudula has ambitions to fill that vacuum and has now transformed itself from a local anti-migrant group into a national political party, stating its aims to

contest next year's general election.

We must be realistic here that most of the problems that we have are caused by the influx of foreign nationals. Our country is a mess"

Zandile Dabula Operation Dudula president who was voted in as president of Operation Dudula in June 2023, is calm, charismatic and emphatic about the group's message: "foreigners" are the root cause of South Africa's economic hardship.

When it is put to her that this campaign is based solely on hate, she tells the BBC: "We must be realistic here that most of the problems that we have are caused by wrong."

"We don't promote violence and we don't want people to feel harassed," but adds: "We cannot be overtaken by foreign nationals and do nothing about it."

Hundreds of supporters travelled to attend its first national conference in Johannesburg in May, where members voted to register the group as a political party.

Operation Dudula gives Dimakatso Makoena a sense of purpose and hope about the future

Waving South African flags, dancing and singing their way through the streets to the City Hall, it feels like a celebration.

However, the songs they are singing carry a threatening message: "Burn the foreigner. We will go to the garage, buy some petrol and burn the foreigner."

The military clothing harks back to South Africa's liberation struggle. It all communicates a readiness for battle.

Ms Makoena is also there, smiling and dressed in her party T-shirt. "Operation Dudula is going to make history today," she says.

On stage, Isaac Lesole, Operation Dudula's technical adviser, has a question for the cheering supporters: "Do we make peace with illegal foreigners?"

"No," the audience shout back in unison.

According to South African law, registering a party does not mean it will automatically qualify to contest an election - it has hoops to go through.

Operation Dudula does not have a manifesto or any policy other than its stance on foreigners, though Ms Dabula maintains it has a presence in every province except Northern Cape.

Supporters of the new party who spoke to the BBC appear to genuinely want things to be fixed in their



BBC NEWS

Zandile

Foreign News

British parliamentary researcher arrested for spying

THE arrest of a British parliamentary researcher on suspicion of spying for China has reignited a fierce debate about the future of the United Kingdom's relationship with Beijing.

The firestorm erupted over the weekend, when London's Sunday Times newspaper reported the researcher was arrested alongside another man earlier this year under the UK's Official Secrets act.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said he raised "very strong concerns" about potential Chinese interference in Britain's democracy during a meeting with Chinese Premier Li Qiang at the G20 in the Indian capital New Delhi last weekend. The Chinese Embassy in London denied the spying accusations, describing them as "completely fabricated" and "nothing but malicious slander."

The arrested researcher, who has not been named by most media organizations, has released a statement via lawyers proclaiming his innocence. London's Metropolitan Police said both men were being investigated by counter-terrorism police and had been released on bail until October.

British PM raised 'strong concerns' over Chinese interference after parliament employee arrested

UK's Deputy Prime Minister Oliver Dowden said on Monday that there was a "strong case" to officially designate China as a greater security risk than it is at present, though there is no clear indication the government intends to do so any time soon.

This view is not shared entirely across the party – least of all in the government. Despite Sunak's condemnation of the alleged espionage, his spokesperson has strongly indicated that it wouldn't affect immediate diplomatic relations – including whether or not China would be invited to Britain's artificial intelligence summit in November.

"First, we will strengthen our national security protections wherever Beijing's actions pose a threat to our people or our prosperity; second, the UK will deepen our cooperation and strengthen our alignment with our friends and partners in the Indo-Pacific and across the world; and the third pillar of our policy is to engage directly with China, bilaterally and multilaterally, to preserve and create open, constructive and stable relations, reflecting China's global importance," Cleverly said in April, several months before his August visit to Beijing – the first by a UK foreign secretary to China in more than five years.

British Foreign Secretary James Cleverly, left, and Chinese Vice President Han Zheng attend a meeting at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China Wednesday, August 30, 2023.

But back to the question at hand: should the events of the past few days affect the UK's official policy?

First, it's worth noting that the arrests in question took place in March of this year – before Cleverly's visit to Beijing – so the government has long been aware of the issue. A number of lawmakers have expressed anger that they were not told earlier about the arrests, however, government officials told CNN that it was common practice not to comment on a live police operation.

The British government is also well aware of the fact that China – along with many other countries, both allies and adversaries – engages in espionage. Officials monitor it, they expect more of it



Sunak

and they raise the issue directly.

This was reflected over the summer when parliament's Intelligence and Security Committee released a report outlining in detail its view that China was seeing to target and influence people in the UK's political system.

And while allegations against the researcher are serious ones for the police to investigate, it is not entirely surprising that something like this could have

taken place in Parliament, or any other official building.

Russia urges International court to throw its case

RUSSIA has called on the International Court of Justice to throw out a case brought against it by Ukraine.

Kyiv accuses Moscow of falsely using genocide law to justify its invasion.

UKRAINE'S president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, is expected to meet with Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva in New York on Wednesday, according to two Brazilian government sources.

It comes as a senior Ukrainian official said Mr Zelenskyy plans to attend the United Nations General Assembly in the US city.

He is also expected to meet with President Joe Biden at the White House on Thursday.

A meeting between Mr Zelenskyy and Lula could be momentous, as when the Ukraine war first began, hopes were highest that Brazil might support the Western position.

But earlier this year, the Brazilian leader attacked the US for "encouraging" and "incentivising" the Ukraine conflict.

Also, when celebrating his first 100 days back in office, Lula went on a state

Brazil's president expected to meet with Zelensky



Zelensky

visit to China, and played host to the Russian foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov.

The country has since

maintained a neutral stance, with foreign minister Fernando Haddad saying they are "too big to be choosing partners".

Russia maintains that it intervened in Ukraine to prevent a genocidal attack on ethnic Russians in the east.

The court hearing in The Hague will not examine the legality of Russia's invasion,

but will instead consider whether the International Court is allowed to examine Ukraine's claims.

Ukraine says there was no risk of genocide in the east of the country, where it had been

fighting Russian-backed forces since 2014.

It adds that the genocide treaty does not in any case permit an invasion to stop an alleged genocide.

For its part, Russia describes Ukraine's case as "hopelessly flawed" and says that what Kyiv really wants is a ruling on the rights and wrongs of Russia's military action.

Ukraine brought the case days after the Russian invasion on 24 February last year.

In mid-March, the ICJ - the United Nations' highest court - called on Russia to suspend its military operations in Ukraine, but Russia did not accept this order, objecting to the court's jurisdiction and describing Ukraine's application as inadmissible.

In court on Monday, Russia's legal representative, Gennady Kuzmin, said that since Ukraine insisted no genocide had occurred, there could not have been a violation of the United Nations Genocide Convention.

"That alone should be enough to reject the case," he added.

In the coming days, the court will hear submissions from 32 other nations, all supporting Ukraine's argument that the court has the proper jurisdiction to handle the case.

The hearings are expected to last until 27 September.

The 1948 UN Genocide Convention defined genocide as crimes committed "with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such."

Russian officials continue to accuse Ukraine of committing genocide.

In a separate case before the ICJ that dates back to 2017, Ukraine accuses Russia of illegally annexing Crimea and illicitly funding separatist rebels.

That action, brought under UN anti-terrorism and anti-discrimination conventions, is still in progress.

Striking car workers deserve 'fair share'-Biden

US President Joe Biden has sided with workers who have gone on strike in a pay dispute with three of America's biggest car-makers.

Nearly 13,000 staff walked off the job on Friday at three plants owned by General Motors, Ford and Stellantis.

In remarks on Friday, Mr Biden said "no-one" wanted industrial action, but he understood worker frustration.

Existing labour contracts expired on Thursday, precipitating the walkout. Though currently limited, the strike is the first in union history to target all three companies at once.

The UAW, which represents more than 140,000 workers at the firms, has also warned it may widen the walkout, depending on how talks proceed.

The union is seeking a 40% pay rise over the four years of the contract, among other demands, far more than the roughly 20% that the companies have currently put on the table.

The union has justified its demands by pointing to the pay gains for company bosses, who each received compensation packages last year worth more than \$20m.

Full-time workers at their plants currently receive hourly pay up to roughly \$32, depending on seniority, as well as bonuses and other benefits. Temporary workers - a category the union is trying to reduce - earn less.

Demonstrating workers

said they were overdue for pay increases and other improvements, noting sacrifices - like foregoing automatic pay increases tied to inflation - made in 2009, when the firms faced severe financial distress.

"We gave our concessions up with the understanding that when things got better ... we would get our stuff back," said longtime Ford worker Sandy Kirkland. "We're having to now fight for it."

The dispute threatens to trigger higher car prices and major disruption for the motor giants.

The companies maintain that union demands are too onerous at a time when they are spending billions to shift production to electric

vehicles.

On Friday, Ford announced that it had laid off 600 workers at a Michigan assembly plant as "a consequence of the strike".

Sandy Kirkland, a longtime Ford worker who is now on strike, said pay increases are overdue

The fight is a test for Mr Biden, who has struggled at a time of stubborn inflation to convince voters of his leadership on economic questions.

The Democratic president said he would send top advisers, including Labour Secretary Julie Su, to Detroit, Michigan, to help with the talks.

Mr Biden has cast himself as the most pro-union president in history and he is

counting on support from organised labour for his re-election campaign next year.

But his relations have been strained at times, including last year, when he signed a bill to block a strike by US rail workers.

The UAW in May said it would not endorse his re-election campaign, citing concerns that government subsidies for firms working on electric vehicles had not been accompanied by commitments to workers.

As the strike started on Friday, union offices tied to the factories participating in the first days of the strike - a GM plant in Missouri, a Stellantis Jeep plant in Ohio and a Ford site in Michigan - were abuzz with activity, as people streamed in to sign up for picket responsibilities and get signs to demonstrate.

Many politicians headed to the scene, including Senator Sherrod Brown in Ohio and Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib in Michigan, who scoffed at the warnings from company bosses about the financial risks of granting worker demands.

"He makes \$20 million," she told the BBC, referring to Ford chief Jim Farley. "If he's worried about that, maybe he should take a pay cut."

Senator Bernie Sanders, the left-wing 2016 Democratic presidential candidate, was due at a UAW rally on Friday afternoon.



Biden

Feature

ACReSAL: salvaging 19 Northern States' land degradation challenges

IT would not be out of place to assert that our inability to maintain existing foundations laid by our past leaders in the area of managing our environments is what turns out to hunt us today. Our cognitive ability to imagine how we first came to settle on where we so claimed to be our ancestral land, never occurred to us that managing this free gift of God is a gap between life and our corporate existence. EZEKIEL DONTINNA writes.

IT is quite unfortunate that, our attitudes toward the environment in this part of the world is so poor that its rippled effect is gradually consuming us. We freely soared high without trying to understand the composition there in the beautiful God-given vegetations we live and feed on.

We became so comfortable and complacent to the point that, we pay less attention to the consuming wave of climate change that started like a distant drone decades ago. This is because of our poor land use attitude which has generated serious ecological and security problems in our communities, which we unknowingly blamed it to natural occurrences.

Before now, we used to hear from a distance, on air, some of these climatic change challenges happening across the shores of Africa and we thought their case was a peculiar one or rather, assumed to be some kind of sin committed by their ancestors and never dreamed that could come this close some day.

However, when we hear other countries crying of environmental challenges arising from climate change and land degradation, we thought it was not a sub-Saharan African problem because we so pride in how green our land is, believing that none of such problems would come any near us and we ignorantly kept resting on our oars comfortably.

It may interest you to know that, way back in the early 70s and late 80s, conscious plans and arrangements were put in place to avert any possible land degradation that might arise through climate change challenges. Yes, our forefathers were predominantly farmers and have better understanding of what it means to temper with their farmlands and never took chances.

They set up programmes that would help address such possible occurrences. In fact, there were earth dams constructed by previous governments specifically for agricultural purposes, but that later was not taken seriously and we lost it along the line.

Unfortunately, our forest were turned into money making centres where fire woods are extracted, exposing our forest to all manners of negative human activities. Our beautiful forest became so porous as a result of indiscriminate felling of trees for charcoal and fire wood without recourse to the ravaging effects on our existence as a people.

It is sad that authorities saddled with safeguarding our forest were not empowered to sustain the old practice of employing Forest Guards. Of course, there used to be Forest Guards under the Ministry of Environment and that of Agriculture, who inspect or monitor human activities around our forest and reserves to make sure that, serious penalties are meted on whoever fell down trees without license and it was well coordinated, but the story is quite different today.

What went wrong along the line is what craves for answer from those in authority before now. Where are those Forest Guards or Foresters who used to man our Forest Parks and Reserves? Where are those Extension workers who arrest people who fell trees illegally? Where are those agencies and institutions known for grooming landscape, architects and



From left are, Governor Mutwang; ACREsAL NPC, Abdulhameed Umar; World bank Representative and ACREsAL Project Task Team Leader, Dr. Joy Iganya Agene and Nigeria's Country Director, World Bank, Shubham Chaudhuri, at the flag off in Jos, recently.

gardeners who later enrolled in the system? All are today stories!

Today, millions of hectares of our beautiful forest are destroyed yearly and we can no longer see the forest for the trees anymore, because of how reckless we have been to our environment. We have as well been careless to the point that, we fell trees and do not see the need to plant as a replacement or fall back mechanism, to help protect our land for agricultural activities that happened to be our mainstay as northerners.

It is no longer news that, the consuming impacts arising from this carelessness is now knocking at our doorsteps. There is no much manpower these days to monitor our forest again, leaving our forest at the mercy of criminal elements who turned them into hubs for terrorism, kidnapping and banditry.

Apart from the activities of these criminal elements, it has also given rise to massive migration from desert prone areas toward the north central part of Nigeria and it has become a serious security challenge. There now exist herders/farmers clashes, unprovoked attacks, destruction of farm produce and land grabbing, generating series of reprisals with reports of bloodshed in rural communities.

However, the intervention by the World Bank through the Agro-Climatic Resilience in Semi Arid Landscapes (ACReSAL) Project, was a welcomed one. The project is World Bank assisted, aimed at addressing challenges of land degradation and climate change in Northern Nigeria on a multi-dimensional scale.

The vision, mission and Project Development Objective of ACREsAL are to address environmental challenges arising from climate change and poor land-use practices in Northern Nigeria and to also have strong practices and policies on ecological restoration and climate change resilient community.

It was approved by the World Bank Board of Directors December 16, 2022 with a slogan: "GREENING THE ENVIRONMENT, SAVING LIVES" and it became effective in June 2022. The project duration is set for

six (6) years and will be closed March 31, 2028. The states of implementation will be in the 19 Northern States of Nigeria, including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja respectively.

According to the ACREsAL FAQ, the World Bank has earmarked and approved over seven hundred million dollars (₦700b) for this intervention and the project will help restore 1 million hectares of degraded land in the northern part of the country.

"This will contribute to the Federal Government of Nigeria's objective/commitment of restoring four (4) million hectares of degraded land set for broader landscapes restoration by 2030. The Project will also help reduce the vulnerability of millions of the extremely poor people in northern Nigeria and strengthen their own role in line with achieving environmental sustainability", it disclosed.

Ironically, what supposedly should have gulped less money to recover or maintain has caused us hugely to the extent that, it affects both human and physical resources. If not for the World Bank magnanimity and intervention, what would have been our case in the near future, since all we do is paying lips service to even issues of great importance?

This ACREsAL Project according to information available, has four (4) Components which include: A- Dryland Management that deals with integrated watershed management planning and addresses challenges of large-scale watershed degradation in northern Nigeria. It will support the following subcomponents: Strategic Watershed Planning, Landscape Investments and Special Ecosystems restoration.

Some of these components to be implemented were, Community Climate Resilience; Institutional Strengthening and Project Management and Component Contingent Emergency Response Component (CERC) which has the financing mechanism available to Borrowers in Investment Project Financing (IPF) operations to enable quick deployment of uncommitted funds

to respond to an eligible crisis or emergency.

However, the proactive steps taken by the National Project Coordinator, Abdulhamid Umar, was a pointer to the fact that, respite has come to the communities affected by these land degradation and climate change. He, has since inauguration swung into action by reaching out to all necessary corners to formally kick start the project, as he engaged the National Space Research Development Agency (NASRDA).

The engagement was a Four-Day Training on the Application of Geographic Information System (GIS) and Remote Sensing Technology for Sustainable Landscape Management involving all critical stakeholders and Project Coordinators drawn from the 19 Northern Nigeria States and FCT, organised by the National Centre For Remote Sensing (NCRS) Jos, in collaboration with Agro-climatic Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscape (ACReSAL), held at Steffans Hotel and Suites, Rayfield Jos, Plateau State.

As if that was not enough, the ACREsAL National Project Coordinator, alongside the World Bank Representative and ACREsAL Project Task Team Leader, Dr Joy Iganya Agene, and the host Project Coordinator of Plateau State, Mr. Gabriel Gowon Gonkol, saw the dear need to embarked on a deep-dive Component B capacity building training for over 250 participants drawn from the 19 northern Nigeria states.

All these engagements and trainings were held in Jos, the Plateau State for almost two weeks ahead of the grand "Project Launch" last Thursday July 27, 2023 which witnessed the presence of the Nigeria Country Director of World Bank, Shubham Chaudhuri, and the Executive Governor of Plateau State, His Excellency, Barr. Caleb Manasseh Mutwang, at the occasion with both rural and urban communities participating.

Considering the important roles the Traditional Institutions will play in the smooth take off of this project, the team first paid homage to the Chairman, Plateau State Traditional Council and Gbong Gwom Jos, His Majesty, Da Jacob Gyang Buba, in his Palace at Jishe Jos, where the Paramount Ruler encouraged them to take advantage of this great opportunity to bring back the lost glory of an agritarian nature of northern Nigeria.

Meanwhile, as part of their continuous oversight programme, the workaholic Abdulhamid Umar, who is the National Project Coordinator, did not see it as enough after the hectic Grand Project Launch, but embarked on a Fieldwork to degraded sites in Plateau State.

It is our prayers that this project will help address some of the avoidable challenges that we have been facing. There is no part of these 19 States that has not been affected by land degradation and climate change and should not be taken seriously.

This is because of the numerous mining activities that took place in the past and other natural occurrences the region found itself, hence the need for the respective front tiers to operate an all-inclusive policy where all will benefit so that, no part of the north will be left behind. God bless Northern Nigeria! God bless Nigeria!

EVERYBODY'S WORLD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

Living

NGGA Trefoil Guide: Empowering girls to make reusable pads

By **PALANG KASMI**

AS the girls converged at the hall, over 50 in number, they appeared enthusiastic and eager to assimilate the new skills they were about to learn from their mentors and trainers.

The organisers of the forum was the Nigeria Girls Guild Association NGGA, Trefoil Guide Plateau State Chapter, who in line with its mission of empowering girls, organised the event, a one day reusable pads training workshop on Saturday, September 16, 2023 at the National Association of Nigeria Nurses and Midwives, Nurses Green House, Yingi Rayfield, Plateau State.

It was equally a significant forum and double celebrations for the organisers as NGGA used the forum to mark the event as part of activities for its 104 years anniversary.

While presenting her opening remarks, and declaring the event open, Zone C Coordinator, Trefoil Guild Coordinator, Grace Ojobo appreciated the support of their donors and partners for supporting the good cause.

Ojobo disclosed that through such partnerships, the girls organisation has achieve a lot by impacting in the lives of women and children.

"Today's event coincides with the 104 anniversary of the existence of NGGA in supporting girls through mentoring, leadership, moral, skills programmes, and advocating good menstrual hygiene practices. Therefore today, the trainees will learn how to use needles manually or sewing machines to make reusable sanitary pads ", the Coordinator said.

"We will continue to work together to sustain the mission and vision of NGGA Trefoil Guide in the state and country at large", she assured.

Speaking on "Understanding the importance of reusable pads: Benefits for the environment and personal health, Plateau State Commissioner of the Association, Mrs Judith Fidelis Tsenvel disclosed that the Reusable pad project was hatched because of the need to touch the lives of girls, especially indigent ones, to access reusable pads, and enhance a safe menstrual hygiene culture for them.

She said as stakeholders, they have done researches and come across girls in rural communities who cannot afford sanitary pads during their monthly menstruation. Such girls therefore had to employ use of grass, tissue paper or rags as an alternative to pads which causes infections, and poses fertility and other health infections to them in the future.

Parts of the training is to train girls on how to medically avoid poor menstrual hygiene, and make reusable pads, so that they train others.

She also explained that the reusable pads concept was explored when COVID came, posing a challenge to women to access sanitary pads to use.



Ojobo

"We had to get an alternative because pads became scarce, it is now very expensive due to the present economic challenges, not everyone can afford it".

"Therefore we have decided to teach our girls to fish, organise a train the trainer forum, and to ensure we train them, from across the 17 Local Government Areas, so that they train their other peers to get the same skills".

"The re-usable pads are durable, 2 or 3 pieces will last for a year if properly maintained and the aim of the reusable pads training is to reduce cost of sanitary pads on our girls. It is also echo and climate change friendly", said the Commissioner.

Plateau State Director, National Orientation Agency (NOA) Kaneng Tabitha Pam-Hworo commended the girls for taking up the challenge to be a part of the training that will positively change the lives of other girls.

The NOA Boss said "Impacting the lives of girls is a very serious business because girls are vulnerable" and commended the organisers of the training for the good job of teaching the girls on good menstrual hygiene.

She assured that her organisation, the NOA advocates for such positive impactful ventures and is ready to partner with the NGGA Trefoil Guild to champion the process.

In her remarks, Chairman, Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Ayuku Pwaspo said her union will partner with the National Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ) to step down the training to ensure more girls get the skills on reusable pad making.

"We will play our part to step down the training to change the

lives of girls on the Plateau positively", she said.

Also speaking Plateau State NAWOJ Chairperson, Mrs. Nene Dung assured that NAWOJ, will step down the training and organize a step down training for girls.

She urged women to emulate the laudable project, be a mentor wherever they find themselves, and commit themselves to sponsoring such impactful events instead of using monies for lavish celebrations.

"On your birthdays, you can use the day to sponsor girls on skills trainings, and empower them socially, economically and financially instead of throwing



Tsenvel

lavish celebrations. If you do so, you will not only make an impact in your communities and the world, but will be remembered for it".

Commissioner 1, Teachers Service Commission, Mrs. Victoria Jatau in her closing remarks tasked government to include making of reusable pads and fashion design as part of the school curriculum to impact economic stability and value in the lives of children, especially girls.

She appreciated all the organisations that graced the occasion saying she looks forward to partnering with them to advance the charitable cause.

There was goodwill messages from, Representatives of different groups like Women For Women, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), SIMJI Girl Child, Women Wing, Christian Association of Nigeria (WOWICAN), who all promised to use their structures to spread the reusable pads campaign.

They however tasked government at the State and Federal Government levels to ensure they make the project part of school curriculums so that after completing secondary their school education, girls will be able to come out equipped to sustain themselves with such skills.



Ojobo (Middle) flanked by NAWOJ Chair (left) and NUJ Chair (right)



The girls at work



Parenting

Ethical issues concerning Surrogacy

By **HALEY VORZIMER**

FOR many people, having a child is the ultimate dream. Sharing their love and raising a family can truly make their lifetime picture complete.

Unfortunately, though, for some, the inability to have children can be extremely heartbreaking and devastating to their future plans.

The good news is that by using the services of a surrogate mother, these couples and individuals can still have the children that they desire, oftentimes with gene characteristics from one or both parents.

What is Involved with Surrogacy?

In its most basic sense, a surrogate mother is used for the purpose of carrying and giving birth to a child for another person or couple when these individuals are unable to conceive and/or carry a child on their own in the natural manner.

There are a number of both medical and legal issues that are associated with the concept of surrogacy. These tend to be complex on many levels, with one key issue being the legality of the surrogacy process, which varies a great deal from one country to another.

In addition to ensuring that the surrogacy process is being carried out in a safe and legal manner, there are also a number of different ethical issues that are – or should be – considered by the biological



parent or parents and the surrogate mother prior to initiating the process.

The Ethical Issues that are Pertinent in the Surrogacy Process

While there are many religious organizations that frown upon the process of surrogacy, this concept is oftentimes the only option for some individuals to start a hly

family. It is for this reason that some highly controversial and key ethical issues be addressed.

Attachment with the Gestational Mother – In a surrogate situation, the gestational mother is the woman who carries the baby to term. This can be a very taxing process both physically and emotionally – and unique in that after the surrogate mother physically carries the baby throughout the pregnancy, she needs to physically and emotionally detach herself from the child once it is born.

Involvement with the Gestational Mother – Because the gestational mother will not likely be the child's primary caretaker, there could be legal questions that arise in terms of what – if any – involvement she will have with the child once born.

Identity of the Child – There are also ethical considerations that are brought to mind in terms of informing the child of his or her surrogate mother, as doing so may have an effect on the child's self-identity.

In addition to the above issues, there is also the factor of surrogate mother compensation. It is typically expected that the intended s

parents of the child will reimburse the surrogate mother for her medical and other related expenses. This can include a dollar amount for her hospitalization as well as incidentals such as her maternity clothing, meals, and other similar costs that she may be out during her time of pregnancy.

There are also surrogate situations where the individual or couple who are the intended parents will pay a fee to the surrogate mother for carrying

their baby. With this in mind, it is thought by some that surrogacy could be thought of as being a luxury that is only available to the wealthy – and in some cases it could even be thought of as pregnancy-for-hire.

In any case, however, the process that allows for a loving individual or parents to have a child of their own can allow intended parents to follow through on their intentions of starting a family, regardless of any medical or other factors that would otherwise prevent them from being able to do so.



Editorial

Organ harvesting on the rise

Jos, the Plateau State Capital and indeed the entire state were awoken with a rude shock of an organ harvester at the Nasarawa Gwom suburb of Jos North Local Government Area. According to reports, one Noah Kekere, a purported medical doctor with his facility named Murna Clinic and maternity home, allegedly operated on one Mrs. Kehinde Kamat sometimes in 2018.

According to the report, Mr. Kekere supposedly diagnose Mrs. Kamal with appendicitis. After the operation, unbeknownst of her, he reportedly harvested her kidney. With this unfortunate medical mishap, Mrs. Kamal started witnessing deterioration in her health condition and total discomfort. This was to take her to the Jos University Teaching Hospital where it was discovered that her kidney had been harvested.

We note with dismay that organ harvesting have been on the rise not only in Nigeria but elsewhere and it involve both the low and mighty. The widely reported case of Ike Ekweremadu, Nigeria's former Deputy President of the Senate readily comes to mind and for that medical malfeasance, he is serving time in a United Kingdom jail. That a Nigerian high official was caught in this despicable act speaks volumes.

For Mr. Noah Kekere, said to be practicing for almost twenty (20) years, only God know how much damage he had done to his unsuspecting victims. The issue of Mrs. Kamal may just be a tip of the ice-berg. Sure, for him to have been practicing that long, a lot of people may have fell prey to his diabolical antics. In the not distance future, many victims of the nefarious act of Mr. Kekere may come forth with their own ordeal.

We believe that the medical profession is a noble one in which the health and lives of the citizenry depend on. Therefore it is not a profession for quakes and miscreants. It is equally heart-warming that the Plateau State chapter of the Nigeria Medical Association (NMA) has come out to condemn this despicable act and to also clear the air that the said Mr. Noah Kekere was not its member.

Perhaps, people like Mr. Kekere maybe acting in concert with some powerful forces against the health of Nigerian. It is high time the Nigerian security agencies swing into actions to apprehend the perpetrators of this ugly, inhuman act and bring them to book. People should not be suffering from avoidable ailment and even deaths on the altar of materialism.

While government and security agencies, are task with the onerous duty of bringing perpetrators of this heinous acts to book, people should equally be wary of the medical facilities they visits. Though it be a herculean task to know the evil nature of some of the so call "doctors", the umbrella body of the doctors should do, assiduously, the needful by identifying their genuine and qualified members before this merchant of death cause collateral damage to the health of the nation.

ALCOHOLISM has rendered many youths in different communities to be unproductive, as well as caused serious damages to their well being.

Alcohol and tobacco are among the top causes of deaths in Nigeria today. The use of alcohol is associated with an increased risk of injuries and accidents even a single episode of excessive drinking can lead to negative outcome. Alcoholism and chronic use of alcohol are associated with numerous medical, psychiatric, Social, and family problems. Family members including children are exposed to a first degree related alcohol problem.

Children of a parent with alcohol addiction, for example, show higher rates of alcoholism then children who do not have parents with alcohol addiction.

It is important for social workers to keep in mind that alcohol and alcohol problems affect the health safety, and well being of people. Smoking is not good for the health; it causes so many illnesses, like cancer, heart disease, stroke, lung disease, diabetes, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

There is need for government to prevent diagnosis and treat alcoholism in communities throughout the country.

For example, bringing in educational campaign to middle and high-school students help raise awareness of the dangers of alcohol.



Effects of alcoholism among the youths

There are many ways civic groups and community organizations can develop programmes and services to promote long-term recovery to bring about change in policy to increase education and awareness of alcohol misuse.

Health fairs, rallies, festivals, running races, prevention campaigns and other wellness events. Help raise awareness and limit the social impact of alcohol use. Most times when you see those that smoke or drink, you can't compare them with someone that doesn't smoke why, because, smokers even in their appearances you

can't compared to some one that doesn't.

So am pleading to all the youths that know they drink or smoke should please try and stop, so that your future will be better. I know it will be hard, but there is a saying that says, a journey of a thousand miles begins with a step.

Over thousands of youths out there do smoke and abuse drugs why? Because they don't have job opportunities, most of them are graduates so am pleading on behalf of them, let the government do something about this to employ more youth so that our country will be free from all this abuses. **Nansel John, is an IT student from PLAPOLY Jos**

High cost of living leading to food crisis

PARENTS lament the high prices of food stuff and transportation fare with no increment on salaries and wages from the government which leads to parents' not being able to afford three square meal for their families.

You can imagine the prices of food like rice and beans suddenly increased by more than 50 per cent, it is really hard for parents to cater for their families.

Checking also the tuition free of students, we depend on our parents for transport fare with the high fuel price, imagine spending a thousand naira each day if not

more. Consider the poor, they won't be able to afford it and that can lead to their wards being withdrawn or dropout of schools.

These are some of the reasons why some school dropouts choose to be irresponsible in the society, engaging in drug trafficking, human trafficking, kidnapping, prostitution or even drug addiction.

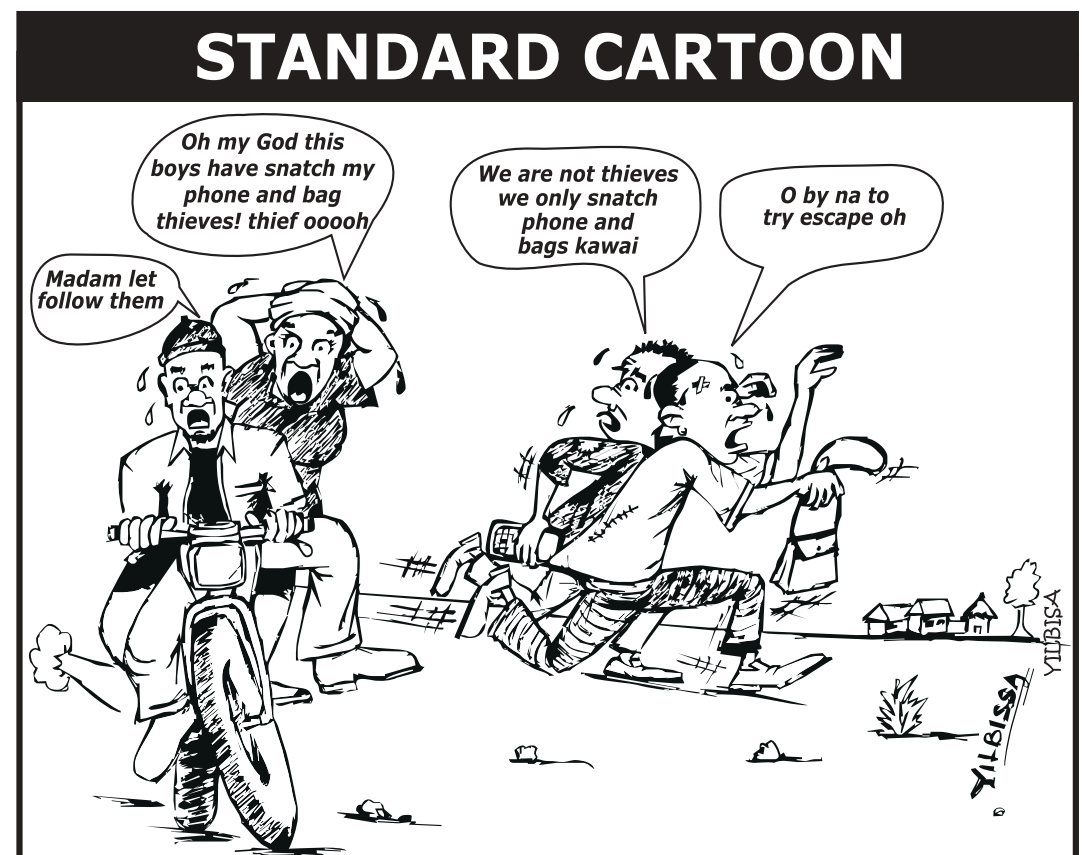
Some of the causes of the high cost of living is as a result of high cost of production like land, labor etc. Another is the cost of transportation looking at factors

like distances and fuel hike.

Way to help parents as things get higher is to increase salaries and wages of workers so that they can afford to take care of their family needs and their duties as parents to their children.

Government should try and pay off staff that worked and are still yet to be paid.

Peter Sawa Rahab, IT students from Federal Polytechnic Bauchi



Opinion

There's poverty in the land

By AYUBA, YILGAK'HA

ABJECT poverty is when people are living below 2.15 dollars a day based on the new World Bank benchmark. Based on the current exchange rate of ₦890 to a dollar, any Nigerian that is living below the spending power of ₦1,913.50 per day is abjectly poor.

The question now is how many of the over 200 million Nigerians could sustainably afford just ₦500 a day? Nobody is talking about spending ₦1,913.50 in this country not even the elites with the exception of the political class or a solely drawing from tax payers money.

I read a book, "Diezmo" which talks about the story of survival. In the story, there aroused a time when a people lived in famine where those who afford a grain of rice a day were perceived lucky.

Reading the story I told myself this cannot be real but a concocted take from imagination, a fictional piece that have no place in reality. Little did I know that the reality of lack where even a grain of rice is not even there for most families is here with us today.

Most Nigerians are not only living in abject poverty but dying from it. The evidence of the reality of the citizens dying in abject poverty and hunger abounds.

There was this old but hardworking man who should be in his 80s. He sells blankets on one of the streets around the

Terminus area, Jos.

One day he told me 'they' who were selling in that market relied solely on their trade for daily living but 14 days counting, he has not sold a single blanket.

I used to give him my 'widow's might' when passing around his place but I was told when I didn't see him and asked that he had died.

Age is there but the story he shared with me about his inability to sell kept telling me that hunger might have killed him.

In the man's dead, hardwork also dies on the altar of hunger!

Just yesterday, I watched a video which reported a young lady in Kano State who died of hunger. The video has it that the deceased family were passing through unbearable hard times and were living on one meal a day. Therefore, the lady decided that she was going to fast and use the one meal to break her fast but while doing that, ulcer caught her and that led to her untimely death.

The father of the late girl narrated the saddest story at the grave side before she was buried. This lady died of conditional fasting!

The story of the deceased old man and this young lady are just but specimen of many dying of hunger. Abject poverty and hunger is snuffing life out of us one by one. So sad!

These are desperate times for Nigerians. This excruciating

hunger and hunger must not be allowed to continue. Something desperate but, also, strategic has to be done.

A nation that has been overtaken by hunger and starvation cannot even afford to cope with crimes and criminality. Poverty and hunger are springboards for crimes and even violent conflicts.

Nigeria is already sitting on a time bomb. The security situation in the country is already delicate and if the citizens are pushed to the wall, they will have no option but to fall back on the rich few and it will be sorry for the rich and the leaders.

Rightly or wrongly, what puts food on the table of suffering Nigerians is what matters. As the government tries to encourage production in the country, price control, provision of palliatives in transporting and the relaxation of border closure are the way to go in the short-run.

Deregulated exchange rate in an import driven economy is a direct invitation for hyper and imported inflation. In order to import, import consuming nations need the currency of international exchange, especially, the dollar to go to the international market. This will raise the value of that currency far and above the domestic currency, the naira in the case of Nigeria.

Apart from disease and conflict, abject poverty and hunger have become some of the leading causes of death in Nigeria. No statistic is required to proof this; the reality is staring us in the face.

If we do not not kill abject poverty, hunger and starvation in Nigeria; these monsters will kill us. Good policies have no meaning if they do not translate into the welfare and wellbeing of the citizenry. May God help us to step out and conquer the worse

enemy of man: Hunger. Let the poor not only breathe but live functional lives!

These are austerity times and we have to treat them as such. Poverty is not a crime except if we are not doing anything to address it. The political class must not live under the delusion that they are comfortable and the poverty of the poor is an exclusive woe of the poor. The poor are not only watching but scheming to deal with hardless rich within their reach which they, rightly or wrongly, perceived as the architect of their poverty.

If the poor cannot feed, the rich are in trouble. In other words, when a poor man lives in the neighbourhood of a rich man, the tendency is for the poor man to steal because of the aroma that is arising from the kitchen of the rich. In abject poverty, if the hungry poor does not kill the rich, then, the rich is lucky and should thank God. Watch it!

"In the man's dead, hardwork also dies on the altar of hunger! Just yesterday, I watched a video which reported a young lady in Kano State who died of hunger. The video has it that the deceased family were passing through unbearable hard times and were living on one meal a day. Therefore, the lady decided that she was going to fast and use the one meal to break her fast but while doing that, ulcer caught her and that led to her untimely death."

Is education expensive in Nigeria?

EDUCATION remains an integral part of our growth and development as a nation. There is no nation that can rise above its educational level. A well informed public reduces the rate of vices in our society. Education form the bedrock of our growth and development, it's a quest to liberate the mind and purge out ignorance. The importance of education in our contemporary society can not be overemphasize.

Over the years, the quest to obtain knowledge has risen significantly with

By AJIJI AJANG JOHN

individuals enrolling in public and private schools, base on the capacity of an individual to meet up with the financial requirement. With the inconsistency in frequent industrial action by labour unions, privilege individuals have resorted into attending private schools, in other to graduate at the stipulated time.

With the Advent of new administration at the helms of affairs both at the federal and state level, we have witnessed the

skyrocketing and roof blowing school fees hike. This has kept alot of students and prospective student wondering whether their quest to attain knowledge will actually be achieved. Federal Unity schools have also hike their tuition fees with the salary of parents not corresponding. This is a puzzle left for parents to unravel.

Due to the withdrawal of the fuel subsidy, it has further increase the hardship and pains families are facing. It has invariably increased the cost of living and transportation. Families are bewildered by the survival technique to adopt to evade the eminent hardship at stake. The tuition fees for federal Unity schools was increased to one hundred thousand (#100,000), those that can't meet up will definitely have to withdraw their wards to a more cheaper school where they can afford.

But is education really expensive in Nigeria? Average tuition fees at Nigerian public University is fifty thousand naira (#50,000), an equivalent of \$65 dollars, average tuition fees in a Ghanaian University is GHS 17,145, an equivalent of \$1,503

dollars, an average tuition fees in British University cost £9,250 pounds, an equivalent of \$11,900 dollars, an average tuition fees in Europe public University cost £10,000 pounds, an equivalent of \$11,128 dollars, an average tuition fees in an American public University cost \$10,400 dolt.

Ghana has a minimum wage of GHS446 or \$40 per month, yet, Ghanians pay twenty-five times what we pay in tuition fees. It cost \$1.1million dollars to train a doctor in America, it cost \$300,000 dollars to train a doctor in England, it cost \$85,000 dollars to train a doctor in Ghana. It cost less than \$15,000 dollars to train a doctor in Nigeria. The federal government have introduce a student loan scheme, where indigent student who can't afford their tuition fees goes to borrow and pay thereafter when they secure job. This is a laudable scheme to mitigate issues of drop out in universities as a result of inability to meet up with school fees payment.

So, is education really expensive in Nigeria?

"The national minimum wage is still at thirty three thousand (33,000) an average of \$38 for government workers, with no corresponding upward review thus far. Lagos State University have increased their tuition fees from nineteen thousand naira (19,000) to one hundred and ninety thousand (190,000). This is quite bizzare and unimaginable, what is the date of the common man on the street? The middle class have obviously been eroded. The time to buckle the belt beckons, the poor must be allowed to breath."

Feature

Much ado about hundred days in office

I am not sure from whence the parameter of 100 days for the evaluation of the performance of political office holders came from. There are 365 days in a year, and the person holding public office often has about four years to prove himself or herself. Holding public officers to account in 100 days after they take office certainly cannot reasonably assess the worth and value that this public officer brings to bear to the instruments of governance. The matter is all the more pertinent in Nigeria where politicians actually serve for just two years of their tenures and use the remaining two to plan to either perpetrate themselves or their cronies in power. BOB MAJIRI OGHENE ETEMIKU writes.



Tinubu

I have found out that this practice of monitoring and evaluating public officers within just a hundred days in office is not even a Nigerian thing. Part of the things politicians all over the world say to the gullible public within just a 100 days of their elections, they would do this

and do that. But you see, that seems to be all that the public gets these days – 100 days instead of 1,460 days.

But then here we are with the 100 days of President Bola Tinubu. In some of the videos that I have seen, Nigerians have scored him from zero to six over ten. Even though I

have no idea upon what parameters or indices or standards have been used to judge him, one thing I can tell you for free is that they were based on the increased suffering in the land. Mr Tinubu took over from one of the most inefficient and primitive administrations

that Nigeria has ever had since independence. From a time of boom where a bag of rice sold for only eight thousand naira, and bread for one hundred naira, things shot up to rice and bread being sold for almost N50,000.00 and one thousand naira respectively. We do not want to belabor the obvious but know that Nigerians expected a lot

from the man who claimed that it is his turn to be president. Nigerians expect that within the shortest time at least, the heavy burden we all carry will be reduced a little bit. But no, it didn't. It grew exponentially with the unplanned removal of the subsidy on fuel.

I will not be looking at Mr Tinubu's 100 days as president for the short term. If I do that, I will be falling into the same trap as the good folk who are looking at the bravado with which he has conducted himself as president in one hundred day Tinubu. I say bravado advisedly. Why? Here's someone under the intense scrutiny of his opponents over his Chicago State University credentials, a suspected drug past, and the weight of age and a presidential petition dogging his heels. Another person would have caved in under such weight but there appears to be no such thing at the moment. And that perhaps is why we must not take these short-term assessments of political performances any seriously.

Many years ago, after leaving university, most of us served as assistant examiners for the West African Examinations Council, WAEC to assess English. We were given a rubric, COEMA, as a yardstick for the assessment of a candidate's essay. With that rubric, COEMA, we were asked to ask ourselves several questions before we awarded any marks to the candidates. Some of the questions included the following, and in accordance with the COEMA rubric: Did the candidate have content, that is, did he or she answer the question? In answering the question, was the

candidate organised to the extent that the content and his Expression, gave a hint that he had a mastery of the subject matter or question? Are there mechanical accuracy issues – spelling errors, punctuation, et cetera?

All of these considerations ultimately help the assistant examiner to arrive at a score over 50 points. In most or all cases, candidates often have issues in the area of mechanical accuracy – wrong spelling and irregular punctuation.

For the long term, I may want to ask myself these questions, concerning the short- and long-term assessment of Mr Tinubu – in 100 days, and beyond, do I think that Mr Tinubu has the capacity to lead Nigeria out of the woods? Do I think that he can articulate his agenda within the context of carrying Nigerians along? Does he look organised? Are there instances of mechanical accuracies that may affect his overall ability to take Nigeria forward?

Yes, I do believe that Mr Tinubu scores pass marks in the areas of content and organisation. He has put in place a cabinet very Nigerian and has demonstrated a capacity to listen. We have called on Mr Tinubu to rev the railways. He is doing that now. We believe though that in the areas of how he goes about communicating his agenda, and management of his human errors, there are very serious issues. In the short term, Mr President barely scores 4 over ten. In the long term, however, given the fact that he has given a hint to his ability to put square pegs in square holes, I would recommend we give him a score of 5 over 10.

"All of these considerations ultimately help the assistant examiner to arrive at a score over 50 points. In most or all cases, candidates often have issues in the area of mechanical accuracy – wrong spelling and irregular punctuation. For the long term, I may want to ask myself these questions, concerning the short- and long-term assessment of Mr Tinubu – in 100 days, and beyond, do I think that Mr Tinubu has the capacity to lead Nigeria out of the woods? Do I think that he can articulate his agenda within the context of carrying Nigerians along? Does he look organised? Are there instances of mechanical accuracies that may affect his overall ability to take Nigeria forward?"



KANAM LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCIL

INVITATION TO TENDER FOR WORKS

Kanam Local Government Council desire to engage the services of suitable and qualified contractor for the works below;

- a) Roofing of Civil Defence Office
- b) Fencing of grave yard about 300 square meters and a gate house
- c) Solar Light Inverter in the Guest House
- d) 3 Cell Culver and 2 Cell
- d) Purchase of laptops and furnishing of JAMB Center

PRE-QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENT

- a) Evidence of Registration with the Local Government
- b) Evidence of Registration with CAC
- c) Evidence of Financial Capability from Reputable Bank
- d) Evidence of Technical know-how and good performance
- e) Any other information that will enhance the chances of the contractor company

COLLECTION OF TENDER

Since the pre-qualification and tender stage are to run simultaneously, this advertisement serves a notification for both pre-qualification and tender. Interested contractors should apply and collect un-priced BOQs and other details in respect to the project from Kanam LGC works and Budgets Departments on payment of Twenty Thousand Naira (N20,000.00) only non-refundable fee.

SUBMISSION OF PRE-QUALIFICATION AND TENDER DOCUMENT

Submission of pre-qualification and completed tender documents shall be returned on or before 14 days from the date of this advertisement sealed spiral binding of three (3) copies addressed to the office of the Executive Chairman Kanam LGC Dengi, Plateau State.

Note: Only short listed contractors will be contracted.

ADO B. ISHA
For Transition Committee,
Chairman Kanam LGC.

News

Bala kicks off palliatives distribution

From **ABBAS GUNGURA, Bauchi**

THE Executive Governor of Bauchi State, Senator Bala Abdulkadir Muhammed, has recently, kicked off distribution of food, non-food items and cash as palliative to beneficiaries across over five thousand polling units in the state.

The palliatives distribution ceremony which kicked off at the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa Memorial Stadium Bauchi, includes eighty nine thousands bags of rice shared to twenty local government areas of the state, provision of Mass transportation busses to ease hardship, payment of #10,000 each to the most vulnerable citizens in the state and payment of students' scholarship.

Other beneficiaries of the palliatives are state and local government retired and active civil servants who will be paid their outstanding gratuities and leave grant as well as payment of special allowances to volunteer health workers, casual workers and environmental sanitation agents.

Governor Bala Mohammed, while launching the exercise, said the intention was to alleviate the economic hardship being experienced by citizens following the recent removal of fuel subsidy



Bala by the federal government. While appreciating President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for responding to the feelings of the people, the governor stressed that the gesture would complement his administration's economic empowerment initiatives which, according to him, lifted a number of families out of poverty.

The governor assured that proper and adequate arrangements have been made to deliver the federal government's message to the targeted beneficiaries in both urban and rural areas.

Bala Mohammed, however commended the chairman of the Palliative Committee, his Deputy Hon. Auwal Jatau and his team for a job well done. He also appreciated the Chairman of the Palliative Distribution Committee, Dr Rilwanu Sulaiman Adamu, the Emir of Bauchi and his members for

doing justice to the exercise.

Earlier in their separate remarks, the Commissioner, Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Hajara Yakubu Wanka and Emir of Bauchi, Alhaji Rilwanu Sulaiman Adamu, who is the chairman of the Palliatives Distribution Committee, assured of transparency in the distribution process.

They commended Governor Bala Mohammed for the opportunity accorded to them to serve their dear state.

Some people living with disabilities who are part of the beneficiaries, described the move as apt, noting that it would go along way in alleviating their suffering.

They however appealed to the state government to sustain inclusion of people living with disabilities in its economic employment programmes.

From **ABBAS GUNGURA, Bauchi**

BAUCHI State Government with support from World Bank kick started the construction of 19 kilometers Liman Katagum-Luda-Leka road.

Governor Bala Mohammed, while launching the commencement of the construction project at Liman Katagum in Bauchi Local Government Area of the state recently, reiterated his administration's commitment towards improving the living conditions of citizens of both rural and urban areas.

He announced that he will soon embark on construction of additional smooth roads for the safety of motorists and economic development of the state.

Bala Mohammed assured the gathering that Bauchi under his leadership has witnessed massive changes in the area of education, roads, health, agriculture and roads network in the last four years, and used the occasion to commend the World Bank for its interventions.

The governor stated that his administration has

BASG, World Bank commence road construction

generated resources and constructed rural and urban roads across the state. He further said that the Liman Katagum-Luda-Leka road when completed, will provide lasting solutions to problems facing farmers and merchants over the years, in addition to providing them with access to basic social amenities for better living as dividends of democracy.

Governor Bala expressed happiness with the tremendous support his administration receives from various stakeholders and development partners across the globe.

He said the project will be executed under the Rural Access And Agricultural Marketing Project (RAAMP), a World Bank-assisted initiative. Governor Mohammed said the beneficiaries of the 19 kilometres road will forever remain grateful considering its importance in the economic development of the areas and Bauchi State as well.

The coordinator of the

Rural Access And Agricultural Marketing Project (RAAMP), Engr. Mohammed Aminu Bodinga, expressed delight with Governor Bala for collaborating with the agency towards the development and transformation of Bauchi State especially in terms of infrastructure.

Mohammed Aminu assured Governor Bala of quality project that when it is completed, Bauchi people will live to benefit for a very long time.

Also the Commissioner of Rural Development and Special Duties, Hon. Faruk Mustapha and Caretaker Mustapha and Bauchi Local Government, Hajiya Zainab Baban Takko among other stakeholders at the event, appreciated Governor Bala for such developmental initiative towards expanding the state and establishing rural roads projects across the state considering the economic importance to the affected communities.

Gov Alia assures of more federal attention

From **TERESE TUHWA, Makurdi**

THE Benue State Governor, Rev. Fr. Hyacinth Iormem Alia has assured people of the



Hyacinth

state that the state under his leadership and federal government under President Bola Ahmed Tinubu will witness construction and rehabilitation of more road networks across the state.

The Governor's assurance has come after the federal government recently gave approvals for the general rehabilitation of some key federal roads across the state following requests from him.

Some of the federal roads to be rehabilitated include general rehabilitation of Aliade-Gboko-Yandev federal road, general rehabilitation of Gboko- Lessel- Ihugh- Tse Mker federal road and general rehabilitation of Oju-Otukpo federal road.

The governor disclosed that he is already in constant contact with the federal government for speedy completion of Makurdi-Ugbema road as well as rehabilitation of some failed portions of Katsina-Ala-Vandeikya- Ogoja federal

road. The governor in a statement by his Chief Press Secretary, Sir Tersoo Kula quoted the governor as further saying that apart from the ongoing construction of roads/streets within Makurdi metropolis, some other metropolis in the state, including Gboko, Otukpo and Katsina-Ala will soon receive similar attention.

He added that opening of rural roads is also prominently featured in the plans.

The governor calls for more support for his administration as well as that of the Tinubu led federal government to enable them deliver good democracy dividends.

Change of Name

DOMBIN

I, formerly known as **DOMBIN LOHBYEN DORFA**, now wish to be known and addressed as **DOMBIN LOHBYEN BINFA**. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.

PDWA holds inception meeting

By **JIDAUNA DARING**

PROJECT Officer, The Rights Way, (an organisation which enlightens deaf girls about their rights and empowers them), Plateau State, Mrs. Patricia Joshua Gyang has said that the Community mobilization and inception meeting with key stakeholders was aimed at creating awareness to the participants on the project in the state.

Mrs. Gyang who also doubles as chairperson, Plateau Deaf Women Association (PDWA) stated this during a one day inception meeting organized by PDWA under the

supervision of Development Exchange Center (DEC), Supported by Bread for World Protestant Development Service (Brot), held at COWAN office, Sabon-Barki Jos, recently.

She disclosed that the thematic sector of the project include: education which focuses on adolescent girls with deafness and economic empowerment which also focuses on vocational/skills acquisition for 20 women with deafness. Adding that the locations of proposed projects are Jos North and Bassa Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Plateau State.

Mrs. Gyang revealed that a lot of women with deafness have no means of survival, adding that such condition has posed serious problems to the deaf women. She stressed that they depend either on their older parents or husbands at all times which places them under untold hardships and domestic violence.

She maintained that giving the deaf women vocational skills and some business tools would make them to become independent.

The project officer further explained that the strategies/activities of the project include; training of secondary school girls with disabilities on adolescent reproductive rights, skills training for deaf women, community sensitization rally, training of adolescents girls with deafness and peer educators and distribution of startup kits.

She remarked that some of the issues on sexual violence against deaf women to be addressed by the project are the high incidence of deaf girls contracting HIV/AIDS, saying that deaf girls are more vulnerable to be contacting the disease due

to lack of adequate information on reproductive health and rights among others.

Presenting the overview of the project M&E Jenebu Anyebe, said that the project overall goal is to reduce incidence of sexual violence against girls with deafness in primary and secondary schools and also to increase income in families that have deaf girls by empowering their women.

Anyebe explained that with the execution of two programme activities and the outcomes of the outputs so far in the first quarter assessment, the Rights Way project is moving steadily towards meeting its stated goals and objectives 2023.

Our correspondent reports that the inception meeting also featured the presentation of an overview of PDWA by charity James among others.

In the same vein, the inception meeting for the project title "The Rights Way" is billed for October 5th to 7th, 2023 for the training of deaf-girls at Plateau School for the Deaf.

It revealed that the overall activities that concern the project will be discussed. It added that the meeting will be an opportunity for the



Gyang

Feature

Nigeria: Reasons for humanitarian and philanthropists intention

As at the time of writing this report, the United States (US) Dollar exchange rate to the Nigerian Naira is nine hundred and seventy (N970). The price of petrol has also increased to six hundred naira (N600) per litre, and transportation fares in all parts of the country have skyrocketed. SAMPSON UHUEGBU writes.

THIS ugly development is drastically reflected in the prices of foodstuffs, diesel, liquid gas, electricity bills, mobile phone tariffs, university tuition and hospital bills.

The unprecedented difficulties being faced by Nigerians have forced them to engage in profitable activities that can add value to their lives. Everybody is struggling to make ends meet for the proper upkeep of the family.

Businessmen and women, Civil and public servants, Artisans, religious cum traditional leaders, and entrepreneurs are finding it difficult in times like this. Farmers across the country are battling the cattle rearers that have wreaked havoc on farmlands. In fact, herders' activities have immensely contributed to the shortages of foodstuffs in all parts of the country.

Also, flood, as a natural phenomenon, is another factor that is threatening farm crops, thereby leading to scarcity of food. In all, there is a problem. The Summary is that things are hard in Nigeria! If the President Bola Ahmed Tinubu-led administration can, at least, boldly tackle the epileptic electricity supply in the country, the issues of constant blackouts and removal of fuel subsidy should not be worrying Nigerians, who are bitterly facing the brunt. Nigerians are hardworking people and resourceful. They can comfortably create something out of nothing only if electricity is restored steadily.

Federal and State



Governments are disoriented about what to do as measures to quell the challenges facing the citizenry get worsened. The hardship is biting harder on Nigerians. It was heartwarming that President Bola Tinubu announced the sum of N54 billion to be shared among the States in Nigeria. It was shared among the Governors, who also distributed the largesse to groups in many States.

This is a critical time when the aid of international foundations is needed in health, education, agriculture, commerce and industry,

finance, human capacity development, skills acquisitions and empowerment of the poor in Nigerians. Even the media practitioners (qualified Journalists) are not exempted from getting foreign assistance to cushion the negative effects of the fuel subsidy removal.

In times such as these, philanthropists in Nigeria and outside the country should not cease to keep up the tempo of exhibiting their humanitarian activities of ensuring the needy in society are made happy with handsome gifts.

As part of corporate social

responsibility, medical doctors some organisations have, should always temper justice with mercy while billing their patients. In times like this, the rich should give aims to the poor, and those in the high places should remember those people whose lives appear to be miserable.

Millions of Nigerians are down with cancerous diseases, which require urgent attention for their health is the key to a survival. These patients have continued to wallow in pain because of little or no attention to their difficulties. Also, many of them had gone to the world beyond due to a lack of proper care.

I could remember years back, in 2012, when former President Goodluck Jonathan tried to remove subsidy on petroleum products, the Nigerians were so heavy that the leader was forced to do the needful. Everyone was against the system, arguing that it would not be favourable to Nigerians.

This is a call to other patriotic Nigerians to immediately engage in this noble cause of empowering Nigerians. Saving the lives of others is one of the greatest things one can offer irrespective of social status.

Private companies in Nigeria The Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) are sacking their workers because of the high cost of raised the alarm that the maintenance of their establishments. The removal of fuel subsidy will lead to inflation. This is the employee can no longer pay problem that we face today. Their inability to Commercial activities, offices, pay salaries has led to their schools, and various programmes are hampered. top earners. There is no time In Owerri, commercial bus when Nigerians need fares doubled because of this. assistance than now. May God Let me emphasise here that help us.

"As part of corporate social responsibility, medical doctors should always temper justice with mercy while billing their patients. In times like this, the rich should give aims to the poor, and those in the high places should remember those people whose lives appear to be miserable. Millions of Nigerians are down with cancerous diseases, which require urgent attention for their survival. These patients have continued to wallow in pain because of little or no attention to their difficulties. Also, many of them had gone to the world beyond due to a lack of proper care. I could remember years back, in 2012, when former President Goodluck Jonathan tried to remove subsidy on petroleum products, the knocks from Nigerians were so heavy that the leader was forced to do the needful. Everyone was against the system, arguing that it would not be favourable to Nigerians."

Forex market woes : Plight of Nigeria's mega businesses



By YVONNE ISHOLA

ONE of the worst fates that has befallen Nigeria's mega companies in recent times, is the scarcity of foreign exchange resources (forex). The market has been characterised by fluctuation in forex prices due to the federal government's decision to allow the market forces determine the rate. As a consequence, the value of the Naira has been plunging.

Another issue that has aggravated the situation is the oil subsidy removal by the Federal Government.

The foreign exchange market is the largest financial market with daily trading volume of approximately 5 trillion dollars. Nigeria's economy has suffered a blow due to the sharp decline in the inflow of foreign currencies entering its economy from different sources. Consequently, this has led to scarcity of forex even as the Naira has been devalued in the parallel market. Unfortunately, until such a time that Nigeria's goods and services are competitively priced to attract international customers.

Undoubtedly, this poses a host of concerns for the economy. Impaired export, inflation rate and Naira's purchasing power.

Nigeria's rising exchange rate has adversely impaired its trade balance. Most big firms who rely on commodities or raw materials that they import from abroad have been devastated by the turn of events. They are in a predicament since they need foreign currency to pay clearing fees associated with

clearing their products and other customs fees. In the long run, they drive up the prices of their goods and services to accommodate all that. And the end consumer bears the brunt.

Nevertheless, as to be expected, in some cases, quality has dropped due to hurdles in the supply chain of raw materials and the cost difference. It could be, to maximise profit at all costs.

However, we are all impacted by the chain of deficiencies. Producers have had to raise the prices of their goods to cover up the cost of production. The end result is their business experience poor patronage.

It is heartrending that Nigeria's mega businesses that operate international businesses have been recording massive losses due to challenges associated with forex. The companies include MTN Nigeria, GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), Unilever Nigeria, Julius Berger, Nestlé, Cadbury, Lafarge Africa, Dangote



Cement, to mention a few.

Sadly, GSK Consumer Nigeria Plc has ceased commercialization of its products in Nigeria. Its parent body, GSK UK, made the announcement recently through its chairman (Nigeria), Mr Edmund Onuzo. He explained that they were ceasing commercialization of their products in Nigeria due to non availability of forex, high cost of doing business among other challenges. This is a very big loss to the country. GSK is one of the leading pharmaceutical companies in the world. Already, its absence is being felt due to the disappearance of its products in the market. Those available have doubled or tripled in price. Similarly, oil marketers recently in Abuja called on the Federal Government to act urgently to halt the consistent slide in the value of the Naira against the dollar as it has

pump price of petrol. The president of the Natural Oil and Gas Suppliers Association of Nigeria (NOGASA), Mr Benneth Okorie warned that the pump price will rise in the coming days.

Okorie suggested to the government to come out with a uniform price for forex and not leave it to the whims of the market as that spells doom for the masses.

Let the mantra of the Tinubu administration - 'Face of hope' reflect also in this matter to attract Foreign Direct Investment.

The Central Bank of Nigeria should adopt a flexible exchange rate regime. The lack of confidence, uncertainties felt by the business world is infiltrating every aspect of life. Nigeria cannot afford to lose more companies to business friendly climes.

Beyond 100 days in Office



By HOSEA NYAMLONG

THE concept of one hundred days in office, came in 1933, amidst the Great Depression, President-elect Franklin D. Roosevelt passed 15 major bills and 76 new laws during his first 100 days in office, among them measures to revive the economy, get Americans back to work, and even end Prohibition.

This was a landmark achievement to help a reeling nation. A president's first 100 days in office has been a key timeframe ever since for evaluating their performance.

However, Roosevelt set out to make significant and quick changes in economic

and social policy, through both legislative and regulatory actions.

On taking office, he summoned the U.S. Congress to a three-month special session and, by the end of his first 100 days, had passed 76 new laws, mostly aimed at easing the effects of the Depression.

Since then, U.S. presidents have understood the concept and they would be measured by how ambitious and successful their first 100 days in office would be either to achieve or not.

Similarly, the 100-day milestone is mostly arbitrary to the early days of a presidency and can be a choice time for new presidents to make big gains in their agenda. A new president is usually still popular with the public, and lawmakers often have an incentive to cooperate with a new leader, creating an opportunity for a president to pass major legislation.

Nevertheless, today, many countries that practice democracy, tend to measure up with the idea of the first 100 days in office, which Nigeria is part of the ideology.

About 100 days ago, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu assumed office after his inaugural ceremony as the 16th Nigeria's President on May 29, 2023, in Abuja the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

Since then, Tinubu has been in the business of governance to pilot

the affairs of the country, both domestic and foreign, working assiduously to deliver on his campaign promises mandate, tagged "Renewed Hope" which was his slogan to his electoral victory at the last general elections on February 25, 2023.

His journey to rebuild the country's economy took a bold step in the decision to remove the fuel subsidy to avert the nation's economic catastrophe that would further place the country on a negative pedestal.

The decision has generated mixed reactions from citizens, considering that his decision was too early for a new government to kick-start the administration.

Tinubu deemed it fit that the removal of the fuel subsidy is the prize that everyone would have to pay in other to have a better economy and to also save the country from total collapse.

In addition, President Tinubu said that there are more plans to roll out more intervention programmes for the betterment and welfare of citizens that would help to cushion the negative effects of the economy which includes the new minimum wage to support both Federal, State, and Local Government

recently. Citizens expect to see more of the actualization of Tinubu's political will that would drive political stability and economic development growth, which would have a direct bearing on the citizens in cushioning the effect of the fuel subsidy removal three months ago.

The government should be seen walking the talk on their campaign promises and now that the Presidential tribunal case is over now. The government should get back to work and ensure that the needful is done to salvage the country's economic quagmire.

The significance of the 100 days in office should not be over emphasize, but should go beyond the rhetoric. He needs to improve on the quality of decision-making and the quality of advice he gets from his cabinet members and his special Advisers

He needs to speed up on the learning curve. And most importantly, he needs clear, robust and sustainable strategies for his key interventions. A strategic and sure footed president is what Nigeria needs at this very critical period. God bless Nigeria.

President Tinubu became the Head of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), within 100 days in office has raised the profile of Nigeria, mostly in the West African sub-region and globally, standing in the gap and ensuring that military intervention does not see the light of the day in the Republic of Niger, where the elected democratical government was toppled by the military Junta.

Recently, Tinubu embarked on a journey to India for the G20 Summit which was aimed at rejuvenating the economy of member nations with the aim that Nigeria is ready for development growth.

To this end, the Nigerian citizens are hoping to see more of the dividend of democracy in all the facets of the country's Ministries, departments, and Agencies.

Despite the mixed reactions by citizens on the 100 days in office

By HOSEA NYAMLONG

COOPERATIVE education is essential for the success of the cooperative movement. A cooperative cannot rise far above the level of understanding of, its key mandate of cooperative principles and values, which one of the principles of the Cooperative Society is education training and information.

On this note, the Plateau State Cooperative Federation (PLASCOFED) has taken it upon itself to ensure that leadership of the primary cooperative societies in Plateau State are fully trained and equipped with the right information that would help in the sustenance of the movement even beyond Nigeria.

This year's theme for the PLASCOFED 2023 leadership workshop "Financial Management for Sustainable Cooperative Society Growth", was carefully selected and considered apt due to the global economic challenge.

Leaders of various primary cooperative societies in Plateau State were gathered in a two-day leadership workshop training at the Nigerian Institute of Mining and Geoscience Hall, Jos recently, which witnessed several members at the program.

The two-day programme Slated for September 13th and 14th had series of events ranging from paper presentations, discussions, and responses from participants during the workshop.

One of the resource persons, Elder Daniel Usman, Managing Consultant, Sandstone Associates Limited and also a Principal Partner of DANUSMAN & PARTNERS presented a paper on the theme "Financial Management for Sustainable Cooperative Society Growth".

He categorically stated that the main aim of a cooperative society is to promote the economic interest and well-being of its members and finance is the life wire of every organization whose activities revolve around its members.

He added that in 2021, the Cooperative Rating and Award Society of Nigeria (CRASON) stated that Cooperative Societies contributed 1.2 trillion naira yearly to Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (G.D.P).

"While over 300,000 cooperatives were existing with over 31 million members and over 600,000 were created directly and indirectly".

Usman emphasized that sustainable growth is attainable through a sustainable growth rate (SGR), which refers to the maximum growth that a cooperative can sustain its operation without having to increase external funding.

He maintained that this can be presented by the formula $SGR = \frac{\text{Return on members funds} \times [1 - \text{Dividend payout rate}]}{1}$. For example, if a cooperative society returns on members' funds is 10% and a dividend payout ratio is 20%.

However, in this case, the cooperative society can sustainably grow at 8% per year, if the capital is left unadjusted by management and operation remains consistent with the past performance.

According to the resource person "It is important to understand the financial management to enable a cooperative sustain its growth needed to take certain steps very important by planning through projections of needed cash flow for

organizations needs in order to maintain a positive cash flow, allocate funds optimally for the cooperative societies to cope with unexpected events that may occur.

In addition, decision making process can be improved through provision of timely and accurate information available, also Control practice can be improved upon through monitoring, setting targets and operating within budget and in alignment with the overall strategy.

Another key area to financial management is the strategic identification of what needs to be done financially for the cooperative

flow, allocation of funds optimally to grow business within the operation of the society.

Budgeting to facilitate an effective allocation of funds to meet up the cost of investment, rent, salaries, loans etc. It is very important to have a master budget and sub-budget list

Nonetheless, budget could be static or flexible depending on the degree of reliance to the underlying assumptions.

Again, regular bank reconciliation of bank statements and cashbook to ensure that the book-keeping of all financial operations are appropriate to the global



Cooperative society: Sustaining growth through financial management



Elder Daniel Usman and Prof. Chris Pinwuna resource persons at the workshop



Cross section of participants at the workshop

society to achieve its objectives. Managing relationship effectively with members, management and other stakeholders through a comprehensive reliable and time information is important.

Nevertheless, he pointed out some impediments to sustainable growth of cooperative societies which includes low and limited capital due to principal reliance on members periodic contributions which is relatively small when compared to the needs of small-scale business ventures. Lack of transparency and accountability discourages members from making consistent contribution. Funding mismatch in using short term funds for long term projects with resultant cash flow and liquidity challenges.

Meanwhile, Inadequate record keeping of financial transactions and wrong investment of funds is another challenge that affects the growth of cooperative society.

By way of extension, he proffered some vital steps that would be considered in tackling the challenges stated above by ensuring that planning takes the centre stage of the cooperative society to maintain a positive cash

accounting best practice, and all resolutions and other important regulations made during the Annual General Meeting (AGM) are implemented immediately without delays.

More so, management should ensure that auditing of accounts yearly by an external auditor in other to identify all weaknesses

that would be identified by external auditor in the cause of his or her work be remedied in good time.

In capacity building, the cooperative society should not only provide funds to members, but have capacity building plans to train members especially in personal financial planning, small scale business management and entrepreneurial skills.



Registered cooperators under PLASCOFED

In conclusion, he advised that cooperative societies should always strive to consider various factors such as sound financial planning, robust risk management, strong corporate governance, continuous capacity building, amongst others in developing efficient and effective financial management strategies to ensure sustainable growth in an increasingly complex and dynamic business environment.

Prof. Chris Piwuna from the University of Jos was another resource person during the program, who educated participants on the danger of drugs and substance abuse mostly within our communities.

He pointed out that the level at which drugs abuse has affected the vast population of the citizens in the country, mostly the youths is becoming alarming.

Piwuna stated that the family remains the primary source of attachment, nurturing, and socialization for humans in our current society. Therefore, the impact of substance use disorders (SUDs) on the family and individual family members needs attention. Each family and each family member is uniquely affected by the individual using substances including but not limited to having unmet developmental needs, impaired attachment, economic hardship, legal problems, emotional distress, and sometimes violence etc.

He encouraged members during the event to ensure that they take good care of their wards to discourage them from taking part in the consumption of illicit drugs and to also expose the dealers of such harmful substances within their communities.

He said that the cost of rehabilitating such persons with mental disorder is very expensive and most families cannot afford. So, he advised that prevention is better than cure.

IMAGES

LONG JAN CELEBRATES 3 ON THE THRONE

The Long Jan of Namu Chiefdom, Quaan Pan LGA, HRH Engr. Miskoom Safiyanu Suleiman Allahnana celebrated 3 years on the throne as the Long Jan recently in his Palace, Namu, Quaan Pan LGA



HRH Engr. Safiyanu Suleiman Allahnana, Long Jan of Namu (right) welcoming Highnesses Dagwom Pagyang of Ibass Chiefdom and Agwom Izere, Jos North, Emmanuel Ajik



Long Kwo Chiefdom of Kwande, Quaan Pan LGA, HRH Miskoom Fidelis Attahiru on arrival at the event



Long Gamai, His royal Highness, Miskoom Martin Shaldas (left) putting heads together with the celebrant, Long Jan, Miskoom Engr. Safiyanu Suleiman Allahnana



Cross section of traditional rulers at the ceremony



Cross section of royal fathers and invited dignitaries



HRH Long Kwa, Da Ignatius Didel with other Royal Fathers at the event



HRH, Long Jan of Namu Engr. Safiyanu Suleiman Allahnana with HRH, Rekna of Bashar, Alhaji Adamu Idris



Chief Imam of Dadin Kowa Mosque, (left) with other invited personalities

Odd World

Covid patients seriously ill with specific Neanderthal gene

NEW research from scientists in Italy has found people with Neanderthal genes are up to twice as likely to become seriously ill after contracting the virus reconstruction of the environment of a Neanderthal man in the mid-Paleolithic period

The Neanderthals are our ancestors - a now extinct species of humans who died out around 40,000 years ago. The primitive humans lived in Eurasia, a bloc of land that covered what we now know to be Europe and Asia.

The Neanderthals lived in caves, hunted for their food and were tough and accustomed to harsh climates and weather. But according to a new study, if you have Neanderthal genes, you are twice as likely to develop a very dangerous and even life-threatening form of Covid.

Neanderthal DNA is already associated with autoimmune diseases, type 2 diabetes, and prostate cancer. However, when researching the links between Neanderthal genes and Covid, Italian researchers discovered people with three specific Neanderthal gene variations were twice more likely to get severe pneumonia and three times more likely to be hospitalised with a ventilator after contracting the virus.

The new study, published in the journal *iScience*, was led by researchers with the nonprofit Mario Negri Institute for Pharmacological Research. The team analysed a sample of nearly 1,200 people in the Bergamo province, home to the epicentre of Covid in early 2020.

Scientists found that 33 percent of people in Bergamo with the Neanderthal haplotype, a set of DNA variants along a single chromosome

that tend to be inherited together, developed severe cases of Covid. More than 75 percent of the participants were born in the Bergamo province, chosen as the sample region due to the severe cases and deaths associated with Covid.

In March 2020 alone, 670 people died in the city of 120,000 inhabitants and almost 6,000 in the province died - five or six times the normal toll for that time of year. The team conducted an ORIGIN test during the experiment, which included breaking down each subject's ancestry.

The three variants were identified on chromosome 3, known as the 3p21.31 locus. The study says: "The lead variant at this locus lies in an intron of LZTFL1 and is in linkage with markers spanning a cluster of inflammatory genes, including CCR9, CXCR6, and XCR1."

A previous study, conducted in 2020, found similar results and stated having Neanderthal genes could make you more at risk from severe Covid. In a study of 3,199 hospital patients with coronavirus in Italy and Spain, researchers found the genetic signature was linked to a more severe illness.

Lead author Professor Hugo Zeberg, from the Karolinska Institutet in Sweden, said: "The increase in risk is 60 to 70 percent if you carry one copy of the Neanderthal variant and three times the risk if you have two copies - one from your father and one from your mother.

Later studies estimate the risk increase to be even higher, with twice the risk if you have one copy and up to a five-fold increase if you have two copies."

Source: Mirror



News

WHO releases report on devastating impact of hypertension

THE World Health Organisation (WHO) has released its first-ever report on the devastating global impact of high blood pressure, along with recommendations on the ways to win the race against the disease.

The report made available on Tuesday showed approximately four out of every five people with hypertension are not adequately treated.

It said that if countries could scale up coverage, 76 million deaths could be averted between 2023 and 2050.

According to the report, hypertension affects one in three adults worldwide, as the deadly condition leads to stroke, heart attack, heart failure, kidney damage and many other health problems.

"The number of people living with hypertension (blood pressure of 140/90 mmHg or higher or taking medication for hypertension) doubled between 1990 and 2019, from 650 million to 1.3 billion.

"Nearly half of the people with hypertension globally are currently unaware of their condition. More than three-quarters of adults with hypertension live in low and middle-income countries.

"Older age and genetics can increase the risk of having high blood pressure, but modifiable risk factors such as eating high-salt diet, not being physically active and drinking too much alcohol can also increase the risk of hypertension.

"Lifestyle changes like eating a healthier diet, quitting tobacco and being more active can help lower blood pressure.

"Some people may need medicines that can control hypertension effectively and prevent related complications," it said.

It said that prevention, early detection and effective management of hypertension are among the most cost-effective interventions in health care and should be prioritised by countries as part of their national health benefit package offered at a primary care level.

The report said that the economic benefits of improved hypertension treatment programmes outweigh the costs by about 18 to one.

Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General, says "Hypertension can be controlled effectively with simple, low-cost medication regimens, and yet only about one in five people with hypertension have controlled it.

"Hypertension control programmes remain neglected, under-prioritised and vastly underfunded.

"Strengthening hypertension control must be part of every country's journey towards universal health coverage, based on well-functioning, equitable and resilient health systems, built on a foundation of primary health care."

Ghebreyesus said that the report was launched during the 78th Session of the United

Nations General Assembly.

According to him, the assembly addresses progress for the Sustainable Development Goals including health goals on pandemic preparedness and response, ending tuberculosis and attaining Universal Health Coverage

"Better prevention and control of hypertension will be essential to progress in all of these.

"An increase in the number of patients effectively treated for hypertension to levels observed in high-performing countries could prevent 76

million deaths, 120 million strokes, 79 million heart attacks, and 17 million cases of heart failure between now and 2050," he said.

Mr Michael Bloomberg, WHO Global Ambassador for Noncommunicable Diseases and Injuries, said that most heart attacks and strokes in the world today can be prevented with affordable, safe, accessible medicines.

"Treating hypertension through primary health care will save lives, while also saving billions of dollars a year," Bloomberg said. (NAN)

President Tinubu assures AU, OIC of Nigeria's support

PRESIDENT Bola Tinubu says the African Union (AU) is strategically positioned to secure consensus positions for the continent on economic and socio-political relations with the world.

The president, in a bilateral discussion with the President of the Union of Comoros and Chairperson of the AU, President Azali Assoumani, on Monday in New York, said this is possible with Nigeria's strong of the continental body.

"There is nothing that can bring development and prosperity, outside of the embracing freedom and constitutional order. It is a critical hallmark of sustainable development.

"We appreciate that the AU is working hard to bring about peace in the Sahel and is actively negotiating between the warring factions in Sudan. Peace in Sudan will be a great achievement. I appreciate your effort in Burkina Faso and our effective cooperation on Niger.

"You can call me at any time and we will discuss the peace and stability of AU member states. We need stability and prosperity for the black race.

"This is our era. We must be peaceful in order to take maximum advantage of the developmental opportunities presented to Africa in this era. We must build a model of sustainable development.

"Nigeria will collaborate with you. But we must move beyond those whose vision of Africa is narrow and evil. We are not afraid of confrontation, but we prefer to be restrained for now, at this time," the President declared.

Assoumani said that the AU seeks to complete Nigeria's effort in securing peace and prosperity in Africa, rather than competing with it.

"We have told China and Russia that they have a responsibility to ensure that there is stability in these countries, as there will be no developmental partnership where there is a lack of stability in countries being impacted by coupists.

"We appreciate your stand on these matters," the AU Chairperson said.

As President of the Union of Comoros, the AU Chairperson said that Comoros seeks to learn from Nigeria's

experience concerning the steady improvement in diversity management, electoral process and economic growth over many years.

"We want to turn our country into an emerging economy and we need the experience of Nigeria as we seek your cooperation to conduct an election that will win us the respect of the international community and allow us to develop at the right speed and quality," he said.

Tinubu also met with the Secretary-General of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Hissein Brahim Taha, and reiterated that the Islamic world has a strategic role to play in the sustenance of peace and development in Africa, and across the globe.

"The effort we are making in the Sahel is very important. We know we must double our efforts. We must tell our Muslim brothers who are struggling to steal power that only Allah chooses leaders. We must respect the will of Allah.

"I am ready to collaborate with you. Your effort in supporting agricultural growth and food security through the provision of resources from Islamic banks has been most commendable and our region is appreciative.

"I am determined to work with you in uplifting Nigerians and Africans," the President said.

The leader of the 57-nation body of cooperation praised the Nigerian President for his active effort in bringing African states to a place of common understanding.

"We must gain consensus on the need for peace, especially amongst our member states.

"When you were elected as ECOWAS Chairman, it gave us confidence and hope that the situation in the Sahel region would improve because you are bringing people together.

"We were also happy about your election as President of Nigeria and we see the changes," the OIC leader stated.

The OIC Secretary-General extended an invitation to Tinubu to participate at the OIC Heads of State Summit, expected to hold in a few months. (NAN)

For the Record

'I owe Plateau a debt of good governance'

Being the text of a state broadcast by His Excellency, Barr Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang, Executive Governor of Plateau State, on the current political developments in the state.

My dear people of Plateau State,
It is always a joy and honour to address you as your chosen Governor. Let me start by restating that I count it a great privilege and honour to be bestowed with this sacred trust of serving you as Governor. I give God all the glory and do not take for granted your collective decision to have me lead you at this critical time. As a testimony of my gratitude, I wish to re-affirm my unwavering commitment to work tirelessly for our collective good and progress.

I am glad to address you today out of the need to keep you updated on our efforts towards rebuilding the foundations of our dear state. You will recall that I have stated at several fora that upon being sworn-in, we met a state in dire need of attention and repair with so many institutional and physical structures at the verge of collapse. This is in spite of the beautiful and blessed land bequeathed to us by God with abundant human and natural resources. Our potential for growth and development is huge with limitless opportunities.

The remembrance of your uncommon celebrations since my lawful declaration as Governor of this Great State, ensured that my team and I decided to hit the ground running, by urgently undertaking certain efforts to retrace our steps and correct fault lines left by the administration we took over from. Of course, we have never been under any illusion that our job will be easy. That is why we decided not to complain or dwell on blaming the previous administration for the appalling state in which we met things. However, as your leader in service, I owe you a duty and responsibility to regularly update you on the state of affairs as we continue to put in place the right approaches and strategies to ameliorate the challenges we face.

Among the issues we have been tackling since assumption of office, was the heightened security challenges and renewed attacks in some local governments on the eve of our swearing in that confronted us in the face; an over bloated civil service with some questionable appointments on the eve of elections; 4 months backlog of salaries remained unpaid to civil servants. A huge debt profile which exerts pressure on every income of the state and; A Jos metropolis in dire need of urgent cleaning, reorganisation and repairs. We inherited a state engulfed in daily renewed attacks of our beloved ones, Civil servants were on strike due to unpaid salaries in the neighbourhood of N11bn and unfulfilled obligations. The debt burden was in excess of N300 billion, constituting huge debt servicing burdens. Indeed, the problems were enormous.

Regardless, we have so far put in place mechanisms to restore peace in the state and due process



Mutfwang

in the civil service, correct employment maleficence, appointments and placement irregularities saving Plateau people a significant amount of money monthly, that hitherto went into the private pockets of some corrupt individuals who have been shortchanging and robbing the state through ghost workers and other illicit schemes deployed. We were not surprised when those benefitting from this criminality, sponsored elements on a social media smear campaign targeted at us, all in a bid to veil their terrible actions. We have set the machinery of the law in motion and it will soon take its course in bringing such individuals to account. After a painstaking process of identifying these leakages, we cleared the backlog of salaries and have paid up to July 2023, while that of August will commence in the coming days.

By the Grace of God, the daily attacks on our people have significantly reduced. I must at this point express gratitude to His Excellency, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, President, Federal Republic of Nigeria, who granted me audience within his early days in office during which His Excellency immediately made a commitment to address the security challenges in our state. I sincerely appreciate Mr. President for the support provided so far and look forward to sustained collaboration with the Federal Government towards eliminating all security challenges on the Plateau. I want to also extend appreciation to all security agencies for their cooperation and immediate response to the isolated attacks. I want to seize this opportunity to specifically express appreciation to the Chief of Defense Staff; General Christopher Musa, Chief of Army Staff; Lieutenant General Taoreed Lagbaja, Chief of the Air Staff; ... , Inspector General of Police;

Egbetokun Olukayode Adeolu, PhD, Director General of the DSS; Mr. Yusuf Magaji Bichi, Commandant General of the Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corps; CG Ahmed Audi, and other security chiefs and operatives for their patriotism and professionalism which has allowed us to cultivate about 900 hectares of land of attacked communities.

Significant progress is also being made by my administration through the Plateau State Direct Labour Agency in road maintenance across Jos-Bukuru metropolis. Several roads are undergoing maintenance to ensure their utility whereas, and as professionally advised; road renewal projects will commence in the dry season to ensure durability of constructed infrastructure. Furthermore, the Jos metropolis is wearing a new outlook, following the evacuation of refuse heaps that had littered our neighborhoods. This will be sustained with the monthly sanitation exercise for which I encourage total compliance and active citizens' participation. Our values of cleanliness must be upheld so that we reset our state to global standards of hygiene and tourism.

Fellow citizens, I am very aware the expectations are high. The celebrations that greeted my declaration as Executive Governor of Plateau State are a constant reminder that my team and I must not fail you. By the Grace of God, I dare say we cannot fail.

We have constituted the State Executive Council; several appointments have been made, while others are yet underway, towards providing a full complement for the vehicle of government to operate. Therefore, I enjoin you to keep faith with us as well as constructively engage with all government institutions as we

refocus them to provide service to the people. I want to also implore you not to allow anything alter the trust and confidence you have in this administration. I owe Plateau a debt. A debt of good governance, for which my team and I intend to pay and that by God's grace we shall.

As part of the efforts to cushion the effect of the fuel subsidy removal on our people, work to reactivate rail transportation with the Greater Jos Master Plan, covering key locations within Jos-North and Jos South is ongoing. We are hopeful these services will commence soon and expansion across other parts of the state would also begin. Similarly, the 5-Billion-Naira palliative received from the Federal Government will also be distributed along a comprehensive and systematic format, upon broad consultations with stakeholders towards ensuring the most effective deployment and utility of the funds, as well as ensure the most disadvantaged among us receive support and care.

It has also become expedient to address the recent developments in our polity. We must not be tempted to throw away the baby and the bath water. We must continue to have faith in the Three Arms of Government, and believe that God will still use this great and necessary institution to affirm His will which you, my dear citizens, graciously and resoundingly expressed on March 18th this year.

Recent developments have generated and continue to generate unnecessary tensions between our people. We are not unaware of activities by some who are busy conspiring to scuttle the relative peace we are enjoying. We must not allow them! We must not allow ourselves to be provoked into making unguarded statements that will only overheat the polity. We must allow the lawful grievance resolution mechanisms to be brought to a logical conclusion in an atmosphere devoid of threats or tension as some of our saboteurs would love. As a government, we wish to restate our commitment to protecting lives and properties. We therefore assure all and sundry to go about their lawful duties without any fear or intimidation.

To my dear youths, I urge you not to allow people with unexplained wealth instigate you into violence. These are people who occupy positions of honour but are actually dishonourable. Unfortunately, their dubious wealth has not brought them the honour they crave for, hence their resolve to seek the destabilisation of our dear state. Doing the bidding of such miscreants mistaken for honourables will only ruin your God given potentials and destiny. I entreat you, flee from such leaders who preach and scheme evil. We must not allow the modest gains we have made in

the last 3 months to be scuttled by utterances of a few rascals in our midst who found themselves in positions of honour they do not deserve!

At this juncture, I hereby appeal for calm and restraint. Do not pay attention to merchants of destabilisation who are bent on reversing the gains made so far. As Chief Security Officer of Plateau State, let me sound a note of warning that; I will not tolerate any attempts at unsettling the peace of our dear state and hereby call on any individual or group (s) involved in such conspiracies to desist forthwith. Consequently security agencies are investigating various leads to track down the sponsors of crime and to promptly deal with any criminal tendencies. Let us maintain our focus on the path of unity, peace and development.

Let me appreciate the unwavering support I have enjoyed since assumption of office. I have never been under any illusion that I can run the state on my own capacity. Rebuilding the State requires collective action. We must be intentional and united in purpose towards building a Prosperous Plateau where everyone will dare to dream and succeed.

It is on this note therefore, that I call on everyone to journey with my team and I in this task of uniting and building a new prosperous Plateau, which will be at par with regional and global giants. Let me restate that the principles of equity, fairness and justice will continually be our watchwords. We shall continually be fair to all irrespective of party, ethnic or religious affiliation. Let me reassure you, dear citizens of Plateau that I will work assiduously to leave indelible marks, build on successes of the past administrations and set a new performance measurement standard for successive leaders.

Finally, let me offer special thanks for the support received from my Deputy, Her Excellency, Ngo Josephine Piyo, Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly, Members of the National Assembly, Commissioners and members of my cabinet, appointed office holders, all Plateau citizens within and outside Nigeria, making a difference and positively impacting the society, our dear supporters and most importantly you my fellow citizens. Plateau is ours to be proud of. Together, let us journey to greatness.

Once again, welcome to a new dispensation and welcome to a new Plateau. We are and shall remain committed to the Peace and Prosperity of our land.

The Time to Rebuild the Plateau of our dreams is Now! Let us not be provoked to it give it away. The Time is Now!

Long live the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Long live Plateau State.

NEWS

Cleric urges citizens to allow reformation of Nigeria

AN Anglican Church cleric, Ven. Kehinde Aremu, on Monday urged citizens to allow a reformation of the country to ensure development of its economy. Aremu, the Sub-Dean in Charge of the Cathedral Church of St David, Kudeti, made the call at a news conference in Ibadan.

The conference was organised as part of a week-long activity lined up for the anniversary of the 170 years old Church with the theme: "Jesus Christ The Same Yesterday, Today and Forever".

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the Church of St. David Kudeti, Diocese of Ibadan South, Church of Nigeria, Anglican Communion was founded by the late German missionary and evangelist, David Hinderer on April 27, 1853.

According to Aremu, political leaders and the entire citizens should return to God, repent and allow a national rebirth to produce a country everyone will be proud of.

He said that to address the situation in Nigeria, leaders should note that righteousness exalted a nation and sin was a reproach to any people.

"Our leaders must know that nobody has any wisdom of himself except it is given by God. That is why we need to turn to God, the problems facing the country is not beyond what God can solve.

"We have neglected God for long, we depend so much on our own wisdom and so we are left on our own. We must know that without the help of God, we can do nothing," he said.

The cleric said that increase in the rate of crime in spite of large number of churches was sign that the world was about to end.

He noted that the church had impacted on many lives economically, aside spreading the gospel for 170 years and being a place where christianity started in southwest apart from Lagos end.

"We are not relenting in our welfare programmes, big institutions such as Emmanuel College of theology, St Anne's School and many more which emanate from the church.

"We ensure that our Computer and Innovation Centre is open to all irrespective of religion or tribe," he said.

Earlier, Chairman, Anniversary Planning Committee, Mogaji Olutunde

Aboderin, said that the anniversary presented opportunity to families, friends and associates to identify with the enduring history and legacy of faith, nurtured by perseverance that the church represented.

He added that adequate security had been put in place to ensure safety of lives and properties during the programme.

NAN reports that the week long anniversary will hold between Sept. 18 and Sept. 24.

The event will feature medical outreach, youths variety day, unveiling of the Baobab tree where the first service was held in April 27, 1853 and planting of new trees.

It will also feature book launch, reopening of first storey building in Ibadan land, the David and Anna Hinderer House

Court dismisses case against NUJ, says it lacks jurisdiction

THE legal efforts by three aggrieved members of the Bauchi State Council of the Nigeria Union Journalists (NUJ) to stop the election and inauguration of new leadership for the Council has ended as the High Court on Tuesday, struck out the case.

The State High Court No.10 struck out the suit filed against the State Council of NUJ for lack of jurisdiction and awarded a cost of N100,000 against the plaintiff.

Recall that, the State Correspondent of Voice of America (VOA) Abdulwahab Muhammed and three others had filed the case challenging the decision of the recent Congress attended by registered members of the Union.

The complainants also sought the legal interpretation of some sections of the NUJ Constitution in relation to the complaints as contained in their claims before the Court.

However, counsel to the defendants, Barr. Rilwanu Jibrin argued that the State

THE Mangun Old Students Association (MAOSA) has decried the wanton killings and grievous effects of incessant attacks on Plateau educational and economic growth.

Set 85, "The Pillar Set" of the association, made the lamentation in a statement issued in Jos on Monday by its Coordinator and Secretary, Messers Philemon Dagwa and Wajal Nyalwat shortly after its meeting at Plateau Polytechnic.

The pillar set of the school, which is now known as Government Science Secondary School (GSSS), Mangun, described as callous and unacceptable the continuous destruction of lives and property across five local government areas of Mangu, Barkin-Ladi, Riyom, Bokkos and Bassa.

"We strongly condemn in totality, the consciously and well calculated evil attack and massacre of lives and destruction of property meted on Mangu Local Government in particular, by some people who don't want peace for Plateau.

"Markets and several schools

Association decries incessant attacks on Plateau educational growth

in villagers like Washna, Jing, Lakas, Pushit, Kombun and others have been destroyed along with houses and worship places, making it near impossible for students to resume studies.

"It's unfortunate that markets are closed and teeming pupils and students are still at home because there schools are no more, nor they can return to their homes that are destroyed due to the activities of the dare devil attackers.

"We hereby call on the Federal Government, corporate organisations and philanthropists to come to the aid of the affected villagers many of whom are taking refuge in some churches and schools in various towns and nearby communities," the association said.

MAOSA commended the Caleb Mutfwang PDP-led administration for its quick

response by arresting the situation and restoring the peace being enjoyed in Mangu LGA.

The pillar set added. "We're also grateful to the First Lady of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Oluremi Bola-Tinubu, for coming to the aid of the survivors and displaced persons with donation of N500 million."

The association, however, commiserated with the families of those who lost their lives in the crisis and prayed God to grant them the fortitude to bear the irreparable loss and trauma.

The set, whose meeting reunited mates after 38 years, resolved to make their impact felt by their Alma mater by meeting up some of the needs of the school, to make it a conducive study environment. (NAN)

labour-related issue.

While delivering the judgement on the arguments before him, Justice Muktar Abubakar affirmed the submissions of the defendants that indeed, the High Court lacks jurisdiction to entertain the matter.

Report Ad

He therefore dismissed the case for lack of merit and ordered the plaintiffs to pay the sum of money for wasting the time of the court and that of the defendants.

While the case was on, the Advisory Committee of the NUJ had called for peace meeting to settle the matter amicably out of court but the Plaintiffs rejected the move insisting that their conditions for settlement must be met.

The National Secretariat of the NUJ had directed for immediate swearing-in of the New EXCO having concluded the processes by the Credentials Committee.



Isiguzor

High Court lacked the National Industrial Court is jurisdiction to entertain the the appropriate court to case noting that only the entertain the issue being a

Gunmen attack another Benue Link vehicle, abduct passengers

GUNMEN on Sunday night attacked a Benue Link passenger bus and abducted at least 11 persons, multiple sources said on Monday.

The driver of the vehicle and four passengers were however said to have escaped after the attack which occurred at about 10pm along Ogbokolo-Otukpa road in Okpokpwu Local Government Area of Benue.

A competent source said that the kidnapers had initially demanded for N60 million, but came down to N16 million as ransom to release the passengers.

A similar incident involving two buses of the transport company occurred on Sept. 10, and 28 people were kidnapped. A total of 26 of those abducted had been released

while two are still with the kidnappers.

Mr Omale Omale, the Commissioner for Power, Energy and Transport confirmed the development to newsmen in Makurdi.

He however said details of the incident were still sketchy.

Meanwhile, the Makurdi Zonal Centre of Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), said among the passengers abducted was a staff member of the organisation.

The Zonal Director of the Centre, Mr Pam Nyam, has notified the police of the incident and requested urgent action to rescue all the abducted passengers. (NAN)



Police warn against possession of prohibited firearms in Bauchi

BAUCHI State Police Command has declared that it will clamp down on the proliferation of prohibited firearms as the Commissioner of Police, Auwal Musa Muhammad, ordered strict enforcement, warning that persons and groups should voluntarily submit prohibited firearms in their possession as offenders will attract severe punishment.

This is a sequel to the directives of the Inspector General of Police, Acting IGP Kayode Adeolu Egbetokun, with regard to the proliferation of Prohibited firearms in the country.

CP Auwal Musa Muhammad therefore ordered all strategic managers consisting of Area Commanders, Divisional Police Officers (DPOs), and Heads of Tactical and Operational Units of the Command to clampdown on all quasi-security outfits and private security bodies to identify, disarm, arrest, investigate, and prosecute any individual or groups found wanting in Possession of Firearms Prohibited by Law.

The CP further directed all Divisional Police Officers (DPOs) to organise an

enlightenment meeting for members of the Vigilante groups, forest guards, hunters, and all other Local quasi-security outfits within their areas of responsibility with immediate effect.

They are to be notified of the IGP's directives and work within the ambit of the laws guiding their establishment, operations, and the nation, and any contravention will attract severe sanctions.

Also, Area Commanders are to coordinate, supervise, and report the outcome of the meetings to the CP forthwith.

It is also very categorical on this note that all local Quasi-security outfits that operate offices where they arrest and detain persons are hereby

Sports



Amusan

Right now, I need to rest, says Amusan

Britain's Harriet Dart won her opening match of the Guangzhou Open as the Women's Tennis Association resumed competition in China.

Newsnow said that, the 27-year-old beat Germany's Jule Niemeier 6-3 6-2 to reach the last 16.

Compatriot Jodie Burrage was knocked out by Polish top seed Magda Linette.

The Guangzhou Open is the first WTA event since January 2020 to take place in China. Covid-19 disruption of the tour was followed by a boycott over allegations made by Peng Shuai.

Former doubles world number one Peng said in November 2021 she was "forced" into a sexual relationship with former China vice-premier Zhang Gaoli.

As a result, the WTA suspended its end-of-year

events in China and said it would not return until there was an investigation and it had proof of Peng's safety.

She later denied making the allegations though she has not been seen outside China since. Zhang has not commented publicly on the allegation.

In April 2023, the WTA announced it would resume tournaments in China having accepted an investigation into the sexual assault allegations will not be carried out by the Chinese government.

"We've been in this for 16 months and we are convinced that at this point our requests will not be met," WTA chief executive Steve Simon told BBC Sport at the time.

"To continue with the same strategy doesn't make sense and a different approach is needed. Hopefully, by returning, more progress can be

made."

Qualifier Dart will face Belgian seventh seed Greet Minnen in the last 16 on Wednesday.

Burrage took the first set in her match but went down 6-7 (3-7) 6-0 6-2 to Linette.



Dart beat Fang Ying Xun of China and Valeria Savinykh in straight sets to qualify for the Guangzhou Open

Diamond League final: Tsegay, Duplantis set world records

Ethiopia's Gudaf Tsegay and Sweden's Armand Duplantis set world records as the Diamond League final concluded in Eugene, Oregon on Sunday.

BBC SPORT maintained that, World 10,000m champion Tsegay shattered the women's 5,000m record as she won in a time of 14 minutes 00.21 seconds.

Duplantis then clinched the men's pole vault title before clearing his first attempt at 6.23m at Hayward Field.

Britain's Keely Hodgkinson was second in the women's 800m as Shericka Jackson made it a sprint double in the 200m.

Jakob Ingebrigtsen won his

second Diamond League title of the weekend after running the third fastest time in men's mile history on Saturday.

The Norwegian long-distance star held on to win the men's 3,000m in a thrilling photo finish after a late surge by Ethiopia's Yomif Kejelcha.

Ingebrigtsen, 22, won in 7:23.63 - one hundredth of a second ahead of Kejelcha - for the third fastest time ever, a marginal improvement on his previous best of 7:24.00, which he set at the Paris Diamond League meet on 9 June.

Tsegay, 26, knocked almost five seconds off the previous women's 5,000m record of 14:05.20 set by Kenyan star

Faith Kipyegon, also on 9 June in Paris. Kenya's Beatrice Chebet was just outside the previous mark as she finished second in 14:05.92.

It is the seventh time Duplantis has broken the pole vault record over the last four years. The fifth of those records was set at the same Eugene track when the Olympic champion, 23, won his first world title in July 2022.

Sunday's action also included a silver medal for GB's Zac Shaw in the men's para-athletics 100m final.

Keely Hodgkinson won the Olympic silver medal and the Diamond League title in 2021, before winning silver at the last two World Championships, behind USA's Athing Mu here last year and Kenya's Mary Moraa last month in Budapest.

The women's 800m trio renewed their rivalry in Eugene and although Hodgkinson, 21, broke her own British record she again had to settle for second in one minute 55.19seconds, as Olympic champion Mu held on to win in a US record of 1:54.97.

Women's 200m world champion Shericka Jackson

Sao Tome and Principe withdraw from 2024 qualifiers

Sao Tome and Principe's women's national team has reportedly withdrawn from the qualifying race for the 2024 Africa Women's Cup of Nations, Soccer.net.ng reports.

The Central African side was initially scheduled to face the 11-time AWCON champions in a first-round qualifying fixture slated for later this month.

Reports from Daily Posts indicate that the country's football authorities have communicated their decision to the Confederation of African Football (CAF).

As a result of this withdrawal, the Nigerian women have automatically advanced to the second round without having to play any matches.

The Nigerian ladies demonstrated their strength in the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup, progressing unbeaten from the group stage rounds and holding England to a draw before exiting in a penalty shootout.

McIlroy says Wentworth form good news for Europe's Ryder Cup

Rory McIlroy says Europe will head into the Ryder Cup

Sao Tome and Principe withdraw from 2024 qualifiers



The Super Falcons of Nigeria

The Super Falcons will now await the winner of the tie between Cape Verde and Liberia in the second round of qualifiers. The victorious team from that contest will earn a spot in the 2024 WAFCON, which is set to be hosted by Morocco.

In the previous edition of the tournament, also hosted by Morocco, the Super Falcons finished in fourth place.

Now, they have another opportunity to showcase their talents and vie for the championship title in the upcoming competition.

buoyed by the performances of the team's players at the BMW PGA Championship.

BBC SPORT said that, While New Zealander Ryan Fox won the title at Wentworth, seven of Luke Donald's side finished in the top 10.

Tyrrell Hatton was joint runner-up as Jon Rahm, Viktor Hovland and Tommy Fleetwood occupied fourth, fifth and sixth, with McIlroy sharing seventh.

"It's awesome. We're in a good spot," said world number two McIlroy.

Northern Ireland's McIlroy joined all the other members of the team in making Friday evening's cut after a closing birdie but then surged up the field over the weekend with rounds of 67 and 65.

"We had a really good day in Rome on Monday, the team's been shaping up really well for the last couple of months, everyone's been in pretty good form," said McIlroy, before he headed to Mykonos for a friend's stag party on Monday.

"It's still almost two weeks away until the first ball is hit on the Friday morning but I'm sure you'll ask all the boys that

are coming in here they are all just so excited to get to Rome and get going."

McIlroy began the final round in Surrey 10 shots off the lead held by Ryder Cup team-mate Ludvig Aberg but closed to within two after covering his first 15 holes in seven under.

However, the 2014 champion was unable to birdie either the 17th or 18th, both par fives, to put more pressure on the players still out on the course following an 82-minute weather delay.

"It's not disappointment that I haven't won, I'm more disappointed that I couldn't take advantage of the positions I put myself in on 17 and 18," McIlroy added.

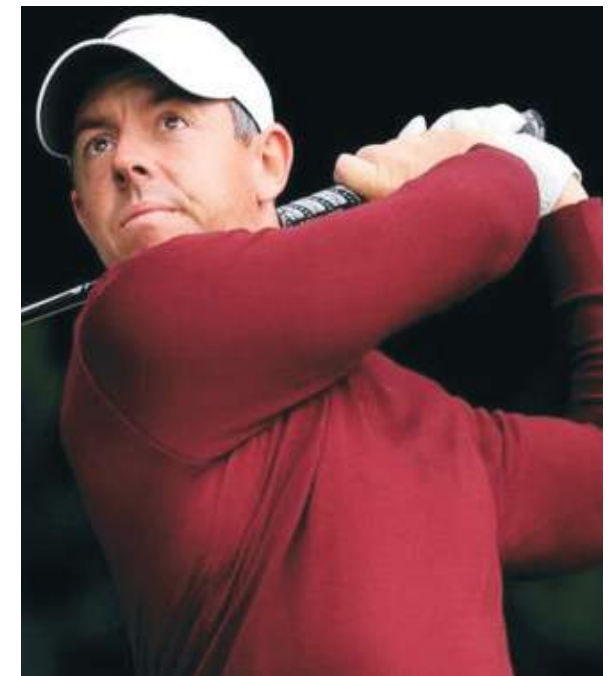
"There's a couple of things to work on and to try and iron a couple of the misses out of my game.

"I'm getting a little quick in transition with some iron shots and leaving some out to the right but apart from that I feel like everything is in pretty good shape."

Europe's Ryder Cup team take on the United States at the Marco Simone course in Rome from 29 September to 1 October.



Gudaf



Rory McIlroy was among seven members of the European team to finish in the top 10 at Wentworth

Sports



Andy Griffin played 11 games for Newcastle in the Champions League, scoring once

Newcastle's historic Champions League campaign 20 years on

By HARRY DE COSEMO

As Alan Shearer wheeled away, arm aloft in typical style, to celebrate yet another Newcastle United goal, something felt different.

At the San Siro in March 2003, Shearer had just scored his second to put Sir Bobby Robson's Magpies in front against Inter Milan in the Champions League, before Ivan Cordoba levelled minutes later.

Newcastle had battled hard across two group phases in that campaign to show they were equals to Juventus, Inter and Robson's former club Barcelona.

Though they would ultimately fail to progress further, drawing 2-2 with an elite side in an iconic stadium created memories that will last a lifetime.

On Tuesday, Newcastle return to face AC Milan in their first Champions League appearance for 20 years, evoking all those memories again.

"What a game," former defender Steven Caldwell tells BBC Sport. "The San Siro is the stadium you think of if you grew up watching Italia 90; it is the stadium of my generation.

"To see what it was like was amazing. It was an iconic moment for a football club that I love.

"It was a proper football match; there was a lot on the line, high stakes, against a world-class team. For us to compete was so incredible, we were so close, right in it, it could have gone either way."

By the time Newcastle made it to Milan, they had more than left their mark in the competition, becoming the first team to lose their first three group games against Dynamo Kyiv, Feyenoord and Juventus and still progress, with famous wins against all three in the reverse fixtures.

Back then, there were two group stages in the Champions League. And as they went to San Siro, Newcastle needed a victory as, after a heavy defeat by Inter in the first game, a sobering loss to Barcelona in the Nou Camp rain had followed before successive wins over Bayer Leverkusen.

The draw was compounded by another loss to Barcelona at home and the dream ended, but the night in Italy has become famous for the atmosphere than the football.

"The San Siro had an aura; it was an iconic, mythical place. Watching Newcastle play there was not on the horizon," Matthew Philpotts, writer for the True Faith Fanzine, says.

"It was about the experience as much as the result. Shearer's goal in front of the away end is etched on the memory. It seemed like everyone you knew was in Milan. The sheer number of fans was impressive."

Robson had masterminded a meteoric rise after replacing Ruud Gullit as manager in September 1999. The Dutchman's reign had ended after a dispute with Shearer reached boiling point, the manager dropping the striker for a derby defeat by Sunderland, and the club were heading into the abyss.

But the squad Robson built, mixing youthful exuberance with the experience he inherited, was as unpredictable as it was talented. They finished fourth in 2002.

"We had a lot of really energetic players like Jermaine Jenas, Kieron Dyer, Craig Bellamy and Laurent Robert," Caldwell recalls. "The balance of that with Alan [Shearer], Shay [Given], Gary [Speed], was really unique

and it made us difficult to play against.

"That squad was combustible. It wasn't the same kind of people; it was hard to keep everyone on track and Bobby did that excellently."

The speed of the turnaround, driven by the sheer force of County Durham-born Robson's personality and passion for his club, initially caught up with Newcastle.

After making light work of Bosnian side Zeljeznicar Sarajevo in the qualifiers, a 2-0 defeat in Kyiv was compounded by a retrospective ban for Bellamy, before they were beaten at home by Feyenoord and, perhaps unluckily after a Shearer header was wrongly ruled offside, Juventus away.

Victory over the Old Lady at St James' Park re-lit the fire. Defender Andy Griffin was the unlikely hero, helping Newcastle win by a single goal, with a little help from a deflection off goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon.

"People will remember me for that goal and that game. Whether I scored the goal or not, it doesn't matter," Griffin asserts. "The fact I started against Juventus, played 90

minutes and was involved in the goal and a win, was good enough.

"[Buffon] made a bit of a blunder. We managed to keep a clean sheet; people talk about the goal, but I put in a very good tackle right at the end when someone was through on goal. I almost pride myself on that as opposed to the goal."

Shearer inspired them at home to Kyiv but it was the match away at Feyenoord which went down in folklore. Newcastle were 2-0 up thanks to Bellamy, back from his ban, and Hugo Viana before the Dutch side hit back quickly to level. Needing a goal to have any chance of progression, Bellamy scored in stoppage time to send everybody wild.

"It was crazy," Caldwell recalls. "It is not often you lose yourself and become like a fan. We were so engrossed in the game."

"It was very much an emotional rollercoaster," adds Griffin. "The final whistle went and our celebrations had to be put on hold because we had to wait for the result from Kyiv. Juventus beat Kyiv, which meant we qualified for the second group phase.

"We are all in the changing room, singing 'we are Champions League' and dancing around,

totally enjoying the moment. It was one of the best games and highest highs I experienced."

Bellamy would get sent off in the defeat at home by Inter, incurring another ban. Nobody embodied the difficult nature of that squad more, but Robson was the man to get the best from him when it mattered.

"Bellamy was a feisty little character," chief scout Charlie Woods, says. "That was what made him so good. His contribution to the team was huge.

"Bobby wanted Shearer to play between the lines of the 18-yard box and he'd get Dyer and Bellamy to make runs in behind and get balls into the box. Alan was a great finisher.

"Bobby's man management was always great. He knew when to have a go and when to put his arm around people when it was necessary. He dealt with Bellamy superbly."

For two decades, Robson's team has been immortalised for their exploits, but the anticipation on Tyneside as Eddie Howe's men look to emulate them is palpable.

SOURCE: BBC SPORT



Alan Shearer is Newcastle's leading scorer in Europe with 30 goals

Sports

Tuchel won't be in Bayern Munich

THOMAS Tuchel will not be present on the Bayern Munich bench as they face Manchester United in their Champions League opener.

Goal maintained that, the German coach is serving a one-match suspension and as a result he will not be present in the Bayern dugout in their Champions League opener against Manchester United on Wednesday.

Tuchel was sent off the last time Bayern Munich played in a Champions League fixture. It was against Manchester City in the second leg of their quarter-final clash in Munich. In a match that resulted in a 1-1 draw with the Cityzens clinching the tie 4-1 on aggregate, the Bayern manager lost his cool and got involved in an altercation with referee Clement Turpin which resulted in him being sent off. As a result, he will miss



Tuchel

attending Wednesday's clash from the bench.

Despite not having their manager in the dugout, Bayern appear to be the favourites going into the clash as they are yet to be beaten this season. Erik ten Hag's United, on the other

hand, have suffered defeats in three out of their first five Premier League games.

After the Champions League fixture against the Red Devils, Bayern will next take on VFL Bochum in the Bundesliga on Saturday.

SANDRO Tonali has opened up on his "difficult" start at Newcastle ahead of the club's Champions League opener against his former club AC Milan.

Goal said that, despite scoring on his debut for the Magpies after a club record £60 million (\$75m) move from Milan, Tonali admits he had difficulties settling into a new environment and that he felt "lost". The Italian midfielder has thanked his team-mates and manager Eddie Howe for helping him adjust to English conditions after his two year spell in Serie A with Milan.

Speaking to reporters ahead of facing his former club in Newcastle' first Champions League group stage match of 2023-24, Tonali said: "This summer has been hard and I've had a difficult start. In the beginning, it was not easy to find my place in Newcastle but people have supported me and still helping me now. Since the

Tonali admits to 'difficult' start at Newcastle



Tonali

first match, I felt at ease. I was happier thanks to the help of Mr Howe and the whole staff.

"They really helped me out in my personal and professional life. My teammates have been amazing, especially with the language! That was very difficult for me."

He added: "On the pitch, everything changes when you switch from the Italian championship to the Premier League. In the beginning, I was kind of lost

and I received so much help from everybody in every aspect, language, sport and tactics."

Newcastle returned to the Champions League after an absence of 20 years after finishing fourth in the Premier League last season. They have been drawn in a difficult group alongside AC Milan, Paris Saint-Germain and Borussia Dortmund.

Tonali will be in action for Howe's side against his former club AC Milan at San Siro on Tuesday.

Kompany says he 'switches off' during law explanations

BURNLEY have endured a tough return to the Premier League - and even boss Vincent Kompany admits they are having to get used to the complexities of the top flight.

BBC SPORT said that, after cantering to the Championship title last season with 101 points, Kompany's side have collected just one point from their opening four games this term.

The Claretts started the campaign in torrid fashion, losing three games at home and conceding three or more goals each time.

But they got off the mark in Monday night's 1-1 draw at Nottingham Forest, only missing out on all three points after home debutant Callum Hudson-Odoi superbly cancelled out Zeki Amdouni's first-half opener.

The outcome could have been so much better for Burnley had Lyle Foster's late strike not been ruled out by the video assistant referee (VAR), who picked up on a handball by Sander Berge in the build-up.

"I have to get used to it," said Kompany. "In the Championship if it's in, it's in."

"I have a decent business and coaching brain, but when it comes to laws and legality I

switch off.

"Handball this way or that, they come and explain it to us but I have made a decision to trust what they are doing and have the right intentions."

"It is not something I want to discuss too much, I cannot change it now."

Foster was sent off late on for an elbowing offence, described by Kompany as "a mistake".

It looked like lightning was going to strike twice at the City Ground.

Swiss striker Amdouni had scored a late winner to dump Forest out of the Carabao Cup on 30 August and his opener looked like snatching all three points.

The former Basel player seemingly enjoys playing at the City Ground, with his two goals at the stadium being more than any Forest man has managed on home turf this season. Meanwhile, teenage Burnley winger Luca Koleosho was a constant menace and set up the opening goal.

Kompany said: "You have to fight for every point in this league, but there are a range of teams we can compete with from what I have observed in the four games."

"We have not had a complete performance yet, but today was at least even and depending on which side of the

fence you sit, you feel you deserved the win.

"If we can keep improving, our team has so much progress to go and that is the exciting part. In the future there is room for much further improvement."

After Hudson-Odoi's stunning 61st-minute equaliser, the game opened up and luck did not go for the away side when searching for a winner.

Foster could have been the hero when his close-range finish was ruled out, before the striker turned villain by being sent off in injury time for a mindless elbow on Ryan Yates.

The South Africa international has contributed two goals and an assist this season, but he will miss three games through violent conduct starting with Saturday's meeting against Manchester United.

"It is a shame," Kompany said of the red card. "The effort he puts in for the team, how he is establishing himself in the league you have to put forward first."

"He made a mistake and my take is being a bit cautious. He has been open about mental health in the past so I will step away from it and make sure he is ready for the next game."

"He knows that himself and we have to get him back to the level he was at before the red card."

Vincent Kompany is yet to taste victory as a Premier League manager

MAJOR League Soccer has terminated the contract of Montreal midfielder Matko Miljevic following claims he played for an amateur team under a fake name.

BBC SPORT said that, widespread reports in Canada also alleged the player was banned indefinitely for punching an opponent while turning out for the local side.

He was "engaging in conduct detrimental to the league and violating his standard player agreement", MLS said.

Montreal confirmed the 22-year-old American was no longer with the club.

Montreal head coach Hernan Losada last week confirmed an investigation was under way following the reports.

It was claimed Miljevic had played three games for a friend's team in a Quebec amateur league - scoring six goals - after becoming frustrated with a lack of playing time at Montreal.

Zeki Amdouni scored the winner in the Carabao Cup against Nottingham Forest just 20 days ago

Meanwhile, Callum Hudson-Odoi scored a glorious equaliser on his Nottingham Forest debut to earn a Premier League draw against Burnley.

The Claretts looked to be controlling the game but deadline day signing Hudson-Odoi had other ideas, curling a stunning strike into the top corner on the hour mark.

Burnley had taken a first-half lead through Zeki Amdouni's well-taken shot into the bottom corner after fine work by the lively teenager Luca Koleosho.

Swiss striker Amdouni, who scored the winner here in the Carabao Cup just 20 days ago, had already given goalkeeper Matt Turner a warning sign with a



Miljevic joined Montreal in August 2021 after leaving Argentine side Argentinos Juniors

stinging drive from range before netting a cool finish.

Vincent Kompany's visitors thought they had grabbed the winner 12 minutes from time when Lyle Foster stroked in from close range, but it was ruled out for a handball by Sander Berge in the build-up.

Burnley's night then ended on a sour note when top scorer Foster was sent off for violent conduct in injury time, after a needless off-the-ball elbow on Ryan Yates.

These two sides met at the City Ground for the second time in three weeks and it seemed like a repeat result was on the cards.

Burnley's club record signing Amdouni converted a 90th-minute winner to send his side through to the EFL Cup third round at the expense of Forest last month.

And he netted again on Monday night with a drilled effort from the edge of the box after being set up by Italy youth international Koleosho, who outpaced home skipper Joe Worrall close to the byeline.

Koleosho impressed, giving Argentine World Cup winner

Gonzalo Montiel the runaround throughout the game before being replaced by Belgium international Mike Tresor.

This was a solid showing from Kompany's men in their first away game of the campaign after conceding three or more goals in all their matches so far.

A club-record five consecutive Premier League defeats was avoided but their return to the top-flight has been a struggle after cantering to the Championship title last season.

Forest, though, hit back in the second period through Hudson-Odoi's brilliant finish with the side highlighting their prowess in front of goal by scoring in their 12th straight top-flight game.

The equaliser came from Taiwo Awoniyi's knockdown and the Nigeria striker is becoming an integral part of a Forest side that keeps changing personnel, now contributing a goal or assist in his last nine league games.

The two sides face Manchester clubs on Saturday - Forest travelling to Treble winners and league leaders Manchester City (kick-off 15:00 BST), while Burnley host United on the same day (20:00).



Vincent Kompany is yet to taste victory as a Premier League manager



Quest



writer

CHRIS GYANG

FRAGMENT

"Herein lies the critical challenge for African leaders such as President Tinubu of Nigeria who sits over one of the largest democracies in the world. The fact that most Nigerians applauded the military take-overs in west and central Africa says a lot about the way they perceive their own democracy and the manner in which the politicians have handled it so far. There is no denying the fact that these Nigerians, just as their fellow Africans in Gabon, Niger, Burnkina Faso, Mali, etc, see themselves as cheap pawns in the hands of the self-serving political elite."

CHRIS GYANG

100 days, 1 cup of rice, 2 coups

IN Niger Republic, just as in most of Francophone Africa, France has continued to exert undue control over all matters of state, especially its huge natural resources. Not only is its national currency slavishly tied to the French Franc, their political structures exist at the pleasure of the former imperial power.

It is a sad testament to the level African leaders are beholden to their foreign backers in Europe that Ali Bongo's first response following his overthrow on August 30 was an appeal to his friends and allies outside the country while ordinary Gabonese celebrated on the streets.

He had sent out a video published by Mefo Info on Facebook with this appeal: "The people here have arrested me, my family. My son is nowhere. My wife is in another place.... Right now, I am at the residence. Nothing is happening, I don't know what's going on. I am calling you to make noise."

Unfortunately, both regional and continental blocs such as the Economic Community of Central African States, ECCAS, the Economic Community of West African States, ECOWAS, and the African Union, AU, stand by and watch so-called democratic governments all over the continent trample on the democratic and civil rights of Africans without raising a finger.

They only react when citizens resort to self-help through mass protests, violent unrests or, in extreme cases, unconstitutional change of government.

This malaise of the abuse of democratic privilege is likewise deeply entrenched in other African countries. The 78-year-old Ugandan President, Yoweri Museveni, has been in power for 37 years. His son, Muhoozi Kainerugaba, now a retired General, had confirmed in a tweet on March 22, 2023, that he was going to contest for the presidency after his father's inordinately prolonged rule.

He had said: "You have wanted me to say it forever! Okay, in the name of Jesus Christ my God, in the name of all the young people of Uganda and the world, and in the name of our great revolution, I will stand for the Presidency in 2026."

The pompous and

swashbuckling 48-year-old, who was a presidential adviser at the time, had expressed frustration at his own father's long stay in power. But that was not for any altruistic reason. It was because the older Museveni was delaying his own personal ambition for the perpetuation of their dynasty!

So, on another occasion, he tweeted: "The Prime Minister of UK is 42 years old, the Prime Minister of Finland is 37 years. Some of us are hitting 50 years old. We are tired of waiting forever." Apparently, he was riding roughshod over suffering Ugandans who had endured his father's brutal dictatorship for more than three decades.

Ironically, the son was celebrating the youthful leaders of other countries while his own father was unleashing state machinery of coercion to viciously hound the 41-year-old Bobi Wine and other opposition figures who dared to contest the presidency.

Paul Kagame of Rwanda has been in power since 2000. In that period, he has jailed opposition leaders and forced others into total submission or exile. Praised for his extraordinary economic exploits in a country ravaged by the 1994 genocide, Western countries appear to condone his soiled human rights and democratic credentials.

ALJAZEERA (September 4, 2023) reported that, in Zimbabwe, the incumbent, President Emerson Mnangagwa, was declared winner of the August 23 presidential vote which the regional block, Southern African Development Community (SADC) said "fell short of regional standards." Also, the European Union observer mission declared that the elections were held under a "climate of fear." The main opposition party had described the results as a "gigantic fraud."

With the lingering litigations challenging most of the results the 2023 general elections, especially the presidential vote, the scenario painted above may well have been describing the Nigerian situation. Most people here strongly feel that the electoral system is deeply flawed. Which is why it is so open to manipulation. As a result, the entire democratic process and politicians are widely viewed with



Tinubu

great suspicion, even scorn.

But even in these deserts of desolation, there are prosperous oases of democracy all over the continent. The May 25, 2023, AFRICA DEMOCRACY INDEX ranks Africa's 10 leading democracies in the following order: Mauritius, Botswana, Cape Verde, Namibia, Ghana, Senegal, South Africa, Tunisia, Kenya and Madagascar.

Among the criteria used to arrive at this ranking are strong commitment to political participation and effective governance, robust and inclusive electoral processes, a vibrant multiparty system, dedication to democratic principles and functioning government, among others.

When military dictatorships were the order of the day in Africa in the 70s, 80s and early 90s, this was the popular refrain among the forces of democracy and civil rights activists: "The worse civilian regime is better than the benevolent military dictatorship." But from the late 90s to the present day, it is becoming clear that there is a growing sense of disenchantment with the democratic structures that were

instituted. The uptick in military coups is a clear testament to this.

Nigeria's President Tinubu has spared no efforts in making sure that the Niger coup is reversed and democratic structures restored. Understandably, he is, first and foremost, the current ECOWAS Chairman. Second, he had a raw taste of military rule in his NADECO days and so has a firsthand knowledge of what military rule really holds for the general progress of citizens and the country as a whole.

No doubt, military rule is not the best form of government ever. In fact, we must never forget that the current brutal and atrocious civil war going on in Sudan today has its roots in a military take-over which citizens thronged the streets to celebrate. The country has had 35 military coups in its modern history which has earned it the epithet, 'laboratory of coups'.

But, in order to avoid turning this into an academic exercise, it must be admitted that most of the so-called elected African leaders have not allowed democracy and all of its accompanying values to properly thrive. Selfishness has persistently watered it down.

Nigerians continue to watch in utmost wonder, pain and disgust as their elected leaders live in unbelievable splendor, squander mania and opulence as they struggle to get hold of a cup of rice or garri whenever government decides to remember them. Added to that, their votes are seldom allowed to count during elections.

Herein lies the critical challenge for African leaders such as President Tinubu of Nigeria who sits over one of the largest democracies in the world. The fact that most Nigerians applauded the military take-overs in west and central Africa says a lot about the way they perceive their own democracy and the manner in which the politicians have handled it so far.

There is no denying the fact that these Nigerians, just as their fellow Africans in Gabon, Niger, Burnkina Faso, Mali, etc, see themselves as cheap pawns in the hands of the self-serving political elite.

But, certainly, it is not yet sunset for democracy in Africa. However, the key players on this slippery turf must desist from shifting the goal post to suit their proclivities. Whenever we wish to caution politicians against engaging in the kinds of wanton political heists that have characterized our system so far, we always resort to these evergreen words of J.F. Kennedy: "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable."

For me, however, it is this profound foundation upon which the above eternal truth is built that matters most: "For too long, my country, the wealthiest nation on a poor continent, failed to carry out its full responsibilities to its sister republics. We have now accepted that responsibility. In the same way those who possess wealth and power in poor nations must accept their own responsibilities. They must lead the fight for the basic reforms which alone can preserve the fabric of their own society."

(GYANG is the Chairman of the N.G.O, Journalists Coalition for Citizens' Rights Initiative - JCCRI. Email: info@jccri-online.org)

Concluded from last week