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appoints new
Permanent
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TRUTH EXALTS A NATION

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Nigeria: Vulnerable women, girl-child still can't breathe

The brain drain in the nation's health sector is now heading for the worse as skilled workers such as doctors and nurses are leaving the country in droves by the day. This bad situation is further depleting the manageable workforce that is struggling to salvage the deficit in Nigeria's health care system.

SUNDAY MAGAZINE, Pages 10,31



Tinubu

Piyo

Egbetokun



Need to address mental health issues in Nigeria

A report recently released by the Nigerian government indicates that three out of the country's citizens suffer from one form of mental disorder or the other. It is also estimated that 20-30 percent of the population suffer mental disorders. This is a significant number out of the estimated population of the citizens of this nation which according to the 2006 population census, stands at 200 million.

Unfortunately, little attention is given to mental health disorders in most recent years. Though the challenges of mental health have reached a crescendo in Nigeria, many Nigerians do not think that mental health is an issue to dwell on.

The World Health Organization (WHO) conceptualizes mental health as a "state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.

As a result of this development, the situation of life in many communities bring to bear the realities of everyday life and challenges faced by Nigerians, ranging from poverty, climate change, work pressure, technological advancement, historical trauma, perennial violent conflicts, extremism and human complexities.

Sadly, most Nigerians hardly go for mental checkups to ascertain their well-being. On the other hand, the area of mental health has not been properly explored. Presently there are few medical professionals that deal with mental health issues because some feel it is not necessary or the subject is a no go area.

With the hardship faced today, more Nigerians are pushed towards trauma which affects mental health adversely.

Consistent crisis and violence in societies have traumatized many to a state of mental challenge, yet the aspect of counseling by experts and psychologists have not been harnessed.

In most cases in the Nigerian situation, mental challenge is seen from the spiritual dimension as attributed by some that a spirit is behind the affliction. Why it could be so in some cases, it is not true in some. The need to get an expert to examine the patient and the root cause is essential.

We advise that government must give attention to medical experts in this field, by increasing funding and encouraging studies to help Nigerians. Also there should be deliberate policies on routine mental checkups by every Nigerian worker to ascertain their well-being periodically.

Furthermore, agencies saddled with the responsibility of checkmating sales of illicit drugs must be up and doing to help discourage its usage through strict punishment against users and sellers. Government must implement policies to help alleviate sufferings and improve the living standard of its citizens so that life will be worth living.

However, the sanity of human life and respect for all must be addressed no matter the situation. Government should ensure they create awareness on mental health in order to sensitize people. Also, psychologists should be employed and posted to schools, agencies so that they will help citizens know their mental state and fitness. This will bring about a better society devoid of mental challenges.

Tinubu approves payment of ASUU withheld salaries

Invoking the Principle of the Presidential Prerogative of Mercy, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has approved the partial waiver of the 'No Work, No Pay' order that was instituted against striking members of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) following the commencement of their eight-month industrial action, which began on February 14, 2022, and was terminated on October 17, 2022.

The President has also directed the grant of an exceptional last waiver of the 'No Work, No Pay' order on ASUU, which would pave the way for members of ASUU to receive four months of salary accruals out of the eight months, which was withheld during the strike.

The move, according to the President in a statement yesterday by his Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Ajuri Ngelale, is in line with his administration's determination to mitigate the difficulties being felt in the face of the implementation of key economic reforms in the country, as well as his recognition of the faithful implementation of terms, which were agreed upon during the fruitful deliberations between ASUU and the Federal Government.

Also, the President has directed the grant of the waiver with a mandatory requirement that the Federal Ministry of Education and the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment must secure a

Document of Understanding (DoU) establishing that this exceptional waiver granted by him would be the last one to be granted to the ASUU and all other Education Sector Unions.

Similarly, Tinubu has approved the waiver of the 'No Work, No Pay' order that was instituted against striking members of the National Association of Resident Doctors (NARD) on August 1, 2023, following the commencement of their industrial action, which began on July 26, 2023.

Recall that after several engagements between the Federal Government and NARD, the Resident Doctors called off the strike on August 12, 2023.

The Office of the Accountant General of the Federation was directed to withhold all salaries accruing to striking NARD members during the 17 days of their strike action.

The statement added: "Invoking the Principle of the Presidential Prerogative of Mercy, President Bola Tinubu has approved the waiver of the 'No Work, No Pay' order that was instituted against striking members of the NARD on August 1, 2023, following the commencement of their industrial action, which began on July 26, 2023."

"After several constructive engagements between the Federal Government and NARD, the Resident Doctors called off their strike on August 12, 2023. The Office of the Accountant General of the Federation was directed to withhold all salaries accrued by



Tinubu striking NARD members during the 17 days of their strike action.

"In view of the faithful implementation of terms which were agreed upon during the fruitful deliberations between the Resident Doctors and the Federal Government of Nigeria, President Bola Tinubu has directed the grant of an exceptional last waiver of the 'No Work, No Pay' Order on Resident Doctors, which will allow for the members of the NARD to receive the salaries, which were previously withheld during the 17-day strike action.

"The president has directed the grant of the waiver with a mandatory requirement that the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment must secure a Document of Understanding (DoU) establishing that this exceptional waiver granted by the President will be the last one to be granted to the National Association of Resident Doctors and all other Health Sector Unions."

FG to cater for survivors in new cancer plan

The Federal Government says it has made plans in a new policy plans for cancer survivors to be catered to adequately.

The Director-General, National Institute for Cancer Research and Treatment, Dr Usman Aliyu, disclosed this in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria on Saturday in Abuja.

According to him, the plan is contained in one of the three cancer policies aimed at aiding cancer prevention and treatment in Nigeria the Federal Government will inaugurate soon.

He said that the institute has since its establishment in January, been working on the policies that are expected to ensure that cancer

prevention, treatment and research into all cancer issues are put on the front burner.

"We have drafted our second National Strategic Cancer Control Plan. The first one that was ever drafted for the country was for 2018 to 2022 which has expired, but I'm happy to announce to you that the institute has drafted a new cancer plan.

"It is a five year plan that will span from 2023 to 2027 and that is all encompassing. The plan will be a leading guide to all the activities of cancer in the country and it cuts across the area of cancer prevention, diagnosis, treatment, palliative care and even survivorship for the first time.

"We are having this component of cancer survivorship in our plan for survivors, which is actually a neglected area."

Aliyu also said that the institute has finalised work with the World Health Organisation and other partners to develop the nation's first National Cervical Cancer Control plan 2023-2027.

He said that the plan would give direction on how the institute intends to follow in agenda of WHO in the elimination of cervical cancer by 2030.

He also said that being a research institute, research was a very strong component of NICRAT, but that it could not just dive into it without having an agenda.

FCTA to revoke houses converted without approval



Wike

The Federal Capital Territory Administration has disclosed its plan to withdraw and revoke houses and properties sold to individuals but converted for purposes other than residential.

Speaking at a press conference in Abuja on Friday, the FCT Director of Development Control, Mukhtar Galadima, said the

Federal Government had in 2005 initiated a monetisation programme but eventually sold the houses to occupiers so they could maintain them.

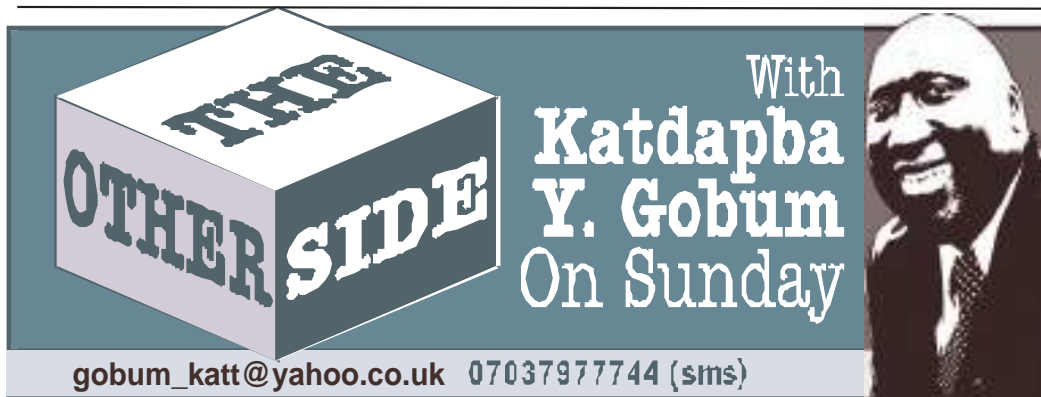
He added that after some time, owners converted the houses for other purposes, a development the FCTA said it could no longer condone.

Galadima stated, "It is on this note that the minister has approved and directed that all owners of such properties should revert the use of the properties to its original and designated land use, which is residential.

The minister has also directed that owners of properties, particularly along major streets that have converted their properties to other uses without approval, should either revert to original use or pay contravention charges.

"Failing to comply with this directive as of November 1, the house is considered revoked and returned to the FCTA."

He noted that the department had recorded more than 111 cases of land use conversion in respect of the sold houses.



With
**Katdapba
Y. Gobum**
On Sunday

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"They are today footprints that would remain for years having been ebbled in the sands of time; but more importantly, those Nigerians that benefitted from the numerous programmes would continue to be indebted to the Fund and Sir Joseph Ari who pursued them relentlessly. Hard work and loyalty are his middle name."

IT is likely that someone reading this piece may consider this material as a publicity stunt for the immediate past Director General/Chief Executive of the Industrial Training Fund (ITF), Sir Joseph Ntung Ari.

Such persons are at liberty to believe what they want. Truth is Ari deserves the recommendations he is receiving, especially on account of being able to turn around the fortunes of the Fund. If repositioning the institution is anything to go by, he deserves to be appreciated, and even much more.

Deep down me; yours sincerely convinced, he deserves what I am doing. Nothing can be as patriotic as to recall what Sir Ari has done for the Industrial Training Fund since he was made the Director General/Chief Executive on September 26, 2016. His two tenures were brought to an end on October 13, 2023.

Seven years down the road, while assiduously working to complete the final year of his second term as Director General/Chief Executive, he, together with other chief executives across the several agencies and parastatals under the Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment sectors were replaced by the Tinubu administration.

According to the statement by the Presidency announcing the new appointments, the changes were in line with Tinubu's 'resolve to base Nigeria's economic revival on the foundation of trade expansion through small, medium and large scale industry facilitation in the industry'; but 'to optimally deliver in accordance with new key performance indicating benchmarks as established' by the ministry.

Those who have the mental picture of what the nation's foremost training institution (ITF) used to be before 2016 are quick to mention the transformation that it went through in the last seven years, when Ari held sway.

To be fair to other Chief Executives that had been there since its creation by Decree 47 of 1971. It began as Parastatal B in the same year of its establishment, and headed by a Director. Ten years later; it became Parastatal A in 1981 with a Director General as the Chief Executive under the aegis of the Ministry of Industry.

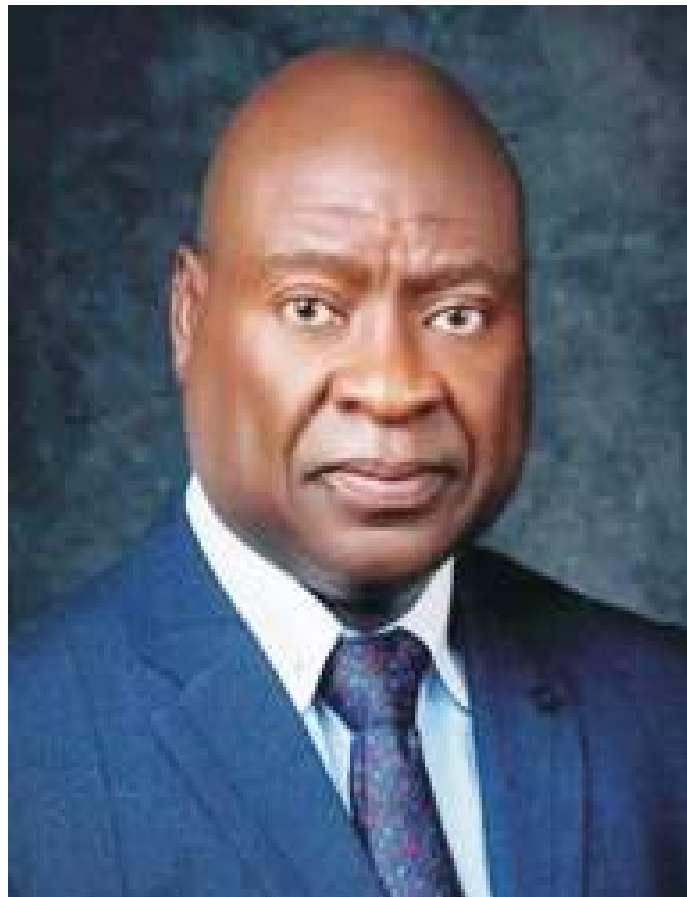
Considering the history of the 52 years old organization, several seasoned administrators had sat in the saddle. It will be instructive to note that he was just 11 years old when the Fund was founded, having been born on December 21, 1960.

They certainly left marks of different shapes and sizes, but fair enough, the shoes Sir Joseph Ari stepped into seven years ago were not too big as to enable him walk well to succeed in creating the space for the different transformations.

He had to recalibrate just so to match his vision. Many recall that on assumption in 2016, the tumultuous labour crisis that had characterized the Fund's working environment would have put off the zeal of any chief executive in the first instance. But that was one thing he needed to settle down to business quickly.

That done, he quickly went to work with a passion that confounded both workers and those who had waited with baited breath to see what he could do. Meeting a workforce that was restive, and the workers unions at daggers drawn with the management as a result of a

Celebrating Sir Joseph Ari, for changing ITF's fortunes



Sir Ari

combination of high-handedness and outright negligence by the immediate past management, it was not long that the issues that had taken time to be resolved were looked into; and amicably settled.

Above all, 'apart from the workforce, other external stakeholders also openly expressed dissatisfaction with the Fund's services'. With a man who had a clear mandate of the part the Fund should play, deployed all his administrative arsenals to resolve contending issues in record time.

That clearly endeared him to those he was going to be closely working with over the years. But, more at that, having gone round the Area Offices nationwide, it was easy to know what their challenges were; and apart from being eye opener, the ground was prepared to get him started on a sound footing.

When he was appointed the Director General/Chief Executive in 2016, the nation's financial predicaments were building to a pitch high that are able to clearly test the capacities of any public official in government on how the storm could be tackled. It was only a matter of time that those who had doubts would see how he could weather the storm and get things right and working well for the Fund.

Everyone knew at that time, 'the difficulties of a nation going through economic recession were sufficient to test the expertise of the man whose mandate in taking charge of the Fund included, job creation, wealth, skills acquisition and self reliance, through various models of skills acquisition programmes created to turn the fortunes of Nigerians.

They are today footprints that would remain for years having been ebbled in the sands of time; but more

importantly, those Nigerians that benefitted from the numerous programmes would continue to be indebted to the Fund and Sir Joseph Ari who pursued them relentlessly. Hard work and loyalty are his middle name.

It is on record that several hundreds of thousand youth were trained in the Fund's entrepreneurship and skills acquisition programmes. Many of them have set up their businesses and or have continued to be absorbed in various sectors of the economy that have need of their services.

Indeed, there are other sign posts which have helped in turning around the fortunes of the Fund in the last seven years. They include among many others: The Fund's presence in all states and the federal capital, upgrade of the Center of Excellence in Bukuru, to generate revenue an auditorium was constructed at the headquarters and also by ensuring that the Fund's Staff School play a greater role in advancing the frontiers of education, completed and commissioned all abandoned projects as well as expanded the Fund's infrastructure by initiating new ones.

From the onset, to get started, he got and assured staff that he 'came back to ITF to work, where hard work, punctuality, creativity, inputs by all members of staff will be noticed and in certainty recognized. I came back to heal wounds whereby all staff will be treated equally, irrespective of religion and tribe'.

The transformation of the Fund in his first four years was indeed noticeable; no wonder, by setting up of 'ITF Reviewed Vision: Strategies for Mandate Actualization. The implementation of the six-year plan, which was divided into quick wins, medium and long-term goals commenced in late 2016', which terminated in 2022 became in many respects what endeared him to

powers that be, staff and indeed stakeholders in the industry.

A number of people have, since 2016 insisted that he was indeed prepared for the new assignment. Their recommendations on his capacities for the job have several reasons attached to. Those who have tried to question or invalidated them continued to be surprised at what he has done over the years.

That Sir Joseph Ntung Ari OON was picked as the Director General/Chief Executive seven years ago was a departure of bringing and or hoisting someone without the knowledge of the industry as its head.

For those who do not know, he was 'at different times the Head, Public Relations, External Affairs and Publicity, Director of Administration and Human Resources Department, Corporate Planning Department and the Business Training Development Department at the ITF Headquarters', and at some point, 'Chairman of the Fund's Training and Research Committee (T&RC) of Management'. What better choice could the federal government have made for the Fund?

The fact that he nonetheless faced some nerve racking challenges on assumption of duty, failure was not on the lips of those who value his contributions in various sectors of the nation's economy. And given the fact that he joined the Fund in 2007 with an incredible reservoir of public service experience, which was largely accumulated during his tour of duty at various organizations; even rising to the peak of his civil service career as the Permanent Secretary to the Plateau State Government House, God helping him, proved his mettle with a stellar performance.

Just before long; and indeed, having had a firsthand understanding of how the mandate of the Fund could be achieved; without doubt he had made impact on the institution, to the admiration of staff and stakeholders. Therefore, to fulfill ITF's 'mandate of providing, promoting and encouraging the acquisition of skills in industry and commerce to generate a pool of indigenous trained manpower sufficient to meet the needs of the private and public sectors of the Nigerian economy' was the guiding principle of his vision.

Under his watch, a number of programmes have been executed for different categories of Nigerians. They include: National Industrial Skills Development Programme, (NISDP), Women Skills Empowerment Programme (WSEP), Training on Wheels and the Technical Skills Development Project (TSDP), Construction Skills Empowerment Programme, CONSEP, Passion to Profession Programme (P2PP), Infotech Skills Empowerment Programme and ITF Model Skills Training Center among several other initiatives. These initiatives have either been expanded and or introduced newly, to capture sufficient grounds of skills acquisition schemes for all categories of Nigerians.

It is on record that numerous trade areas were covered giving those who ordinarily feel they cannot be considered a place. The areas include: Event Management, Cosmetology, Poultry Farming, Bread Making, Baking and Pastry,

Soap/Disinfectant/Detergent Making, Hair Making, Food Processing, Tailoring and Fashion Design, Tie and Dye and Electrical Installations. The other areas are: Brick Making, Plaster of Paris, Tiling, Electrical Installation and Carpentry. The list is not exhaustive, as there are trade needs and Nigerians available to prove their industry.

As the Director General/Chief Executive of the Fund he was not bereft of fresh ideas; he had sufficient of them to run their courses; as he was ever willing to lay them on the table for the benefit of the organization. None of them has gone unnoticed; as they have been appreciated with numerous mention and conferment.

They include: Conferment as Kurnajam of Gamailand (Defence Minister), Oba Atunlese of Amuroland in Kogi State and Owuzo Upata 1 (benefactor of the Upata people) in Rivers State chieftaincy title; Award of Excellence, Micro Scale and Medium Enterprises MSME; conferment of 2022 Public Service Award by the Leadership Media Group Limited; conferment of national merit award of Officer of the Order of Niger, OON by former President Muhammadu Buhari among many other awards.

Ari is a fellow of five institutes as well as being member of the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) and Nigeria Union of Journalists, NUJ. Being a devout Christian, Sir Joseph Ari is a knight, and in recognition of his religious activities, Pope Francis conferred on him the title of Knight of Saint Sylvester (KSS).

For the first time in the history of the Fund, it 'organised the National Skills Summit which attracted over 500 participants from different sectors of the Nigerian economy including the academia. The summit, which provided a veritable platform for the articulation of specific strategies for developing employable skills in Nigeria also discussed the application of best practices for aligning skills development to market needs, spotlight and bring to public domain topical issues that have skills development implications and/or requiring skills interventions, bring together skills development agencies and practitioners to exchange ideas and facilitate professional networking and technical collaboration, propound policy guidelines for skills development, and identify and assess existing skills development and labour market contexts in Nigeria'.

The Fund's staff members were fully integrated and motivated for optimal performance through various training programmes as well as several copious welfare packages made available in large measures. History has been kind to him to have left indelible footprints wherever he worked; with ITF been the most profound.

Sir Joseph Ntung Ari, Knight of Saint Sylvester (KSS), father of five boys, is married to delectable Lady Victoria Selbyjen Ari. He has always had a staying spirit that enables him pull through challenges. He has been passionately prepared to lead ITF; just as he is determined to support Mr. Afiz Oluwatoyin, his successor settle in his new assignment.

He knows that even in this new development, God shall make it pass away too!



The enemy at home (2)

LAST week we looked at some activities of people that should naturally be trusted around our children that made our hearts bleed. Today, we are looking at more of such cases.

Sometime ago, in Abuja, a family which was kind enough to open its doors to an Almajiri (an Islamic student who moves far away from home, to live and study under the guidance of a Mallam or teacher), lived to curse the day they opened their hearts to that young boy.

At the beginning, it was a symbiotic relationship. He used to come around to help out with odd jobs around the house in exchange for a plate of food and a little money. Gradually, they began to send him to the market. Shortly afterwards, they began leaving him with their children anytime they ran errands around the vicinity.

One couldn't blame them, the young boy used to refer to them as Mama and Baba and treated the kids like his younger ones. That apart, he was so responsible and looked very innocent, like he could not hurt a fly.

One fateful day, the parents went out as usual and left this young boy with their 8 year old daughter. By the time they came back within the hour, they met their 8 year old almost lifeless. She had been mercilessly raped, her private part torn and bleeding. The clothes she was wearing were looking tattered as if they were torn by a tiger. Their nice boy was nowhere to be found.

Thankfully, the life of the girl was saved but she may never give birth due to the destruction the wolf in sheep's clothing did to her body. Nobody could explain what he used to penetrate the 8 year old's private part. But whatever it was, it must have been excruciatingly painful. The girl had since become a loner who never allowed her mother out of sight.

In the late 90s, in a high brow area in Jos, a lady came across 2 girls barely 6 and 7 years doing the unimaginable, one evening. She had just arrived home from the office and was settling down to rest for some time before going to the kitchen to cook. The lady said she was taken aback when she was hearing children groaning out of ecstasy. She laughed it away at first, thinking it was a bad joke. However, as it persisted, curiosity got the better of her and she came to her bedroom window to check. A terrible sight met her. Two familiar faces, one was lying down on her back with her legs wide open while the other one had her head in between the legs, leaking her private part.

The lady called another woman and together they pounced on the unsuspecting girls who were lost in ecstasy. The best they could do was to drag them to their parents for them to tell their parents what they were doing. They were severely dealt with. But there was something one of the girls said when asked how she learnt

what they were doing that hit home. She was the one from a rich home. The other girl's parents were peasants. The girl said she watched it in the films that her aunts and uncles watch anytime her parents retire to bed. This means her aunts and uncles were in the habit of watching pornography any time the master and the mistress were not around. They were not even careful to restrict it to themselves. It was OK for their niece to watch and learn. And learn she did and put it into practice, recruiting another girl in such an act.

Parents have to be very careful or else people that live with you can corrupt your child and make him/her more a child of hell than of God. This corroborates this next story.

A woman took in her brother to stay with her when she got married. It was before his eyes that she began to give birth, build her family and business. Her brother stayed with her until he got married. Some months after he got married, he visited his sister while she was at the market. Unfortunately, it was discovered he had ulterior motives. He was caught in the very act of having sex with his niece. Upon interrogation, it was discovered that he deflowered her before she clocked eleven and he had been molesting her ever since. It was only discovered when the girl was in her SS2.

The sad thing about this case is that the girl's mother, that is, the molester's sister, withdrew the case from the police station on the grounds that it would become a very serious issue if her husband discovered it and that could cost her her marriage.

A lady shared her experience living in her maternal uncle's house. She said the pervert deflowered her before the age of 10. He shamelessly used her as a sex machine but his wife never suspected. By age 12, he began giving her contraceptives since she had begun her monthly period but because she was just a child, she was never consistent which resulted in several unwanted pregnancies. By age 16, she had aborted several pregnancies for her uncle. His wife still never suspected.

She decided she couldn't take it anymore, and ran away. To fend for herself, she became a prostitute but later cleaned up when she met a man that loved her and she loved him back.

There is no doubt that a lot of girls are dying in silence, their lips held bound by shame or even guilt. Some of them blame themselves for their misfortune and their molesters help them to feel that way so that they remain their prisoners.

In some cases, parents have aided the molestation of their daughters. In situations where we allow boys and girls to sleep not only in the same room, but the same bed. We sometimes encourage them to bath together or see each other naked. If you are in this category, please stop it. The heart of man is dangerously wicked without your help. If you can, please train your daughter yourself.

The stories are too many and more are still happening but for want of space and time, let's save the stories for another day.

NEWS

By PETER TITLE

AS parts of efforts to reinvigorate the Civil Service for efficient service delivery, the Executive Governor of Plateau State, Barr. Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang has approved the appointment of eight Directors to the position of new Permanent Secretaries.

This disclosure was contained in a press statement signed by the Director of Press and Public Affairs to the Executive Governor, Gyang Bere, recently.

According to the statement, the newly appointed Permanent Secretaries are: Aliyu Tsoho Samuel, Esther N. Pwaspo, Mary C. Fom, Kelvin Bamshak, Tamba Nuhu Garba, Alexander Anlong Nyelong, Lydia Vonkat Nantim, Jummai Adamu.

Mutfwang appoints new permanent secretaries



Mutfwang

The Governor, the statement said, congratulated the newly appointed Permanent

Secretaries and urged them to bring their experience to bear in their new positions to move the state forward.

NSE Celebrates first black President of WFEO

From JOHN FWAH

IT was a moment of celebration for the Nigerian Society of Engineers (NSE) at the occasion of World Federation of Engineers Organization's (WFEO) Annual General Meeting (AGM), recently as engineers all over the world converged in Prague, Czech Republic to honour one of their own.

The occasion which marked the coming on board of the first black man as President, World Federation of Engineering Organizations was greeted with applause and cheers.

This prestigious position of the number one engineer in the world to a black man, Engr. Mustapha Balarabe Shehu of the Nigerian Society of Engineers, has been described as not only a pride to Nigeria, Africa, but the world at large.

The newly inaugurated President, Engr. Mustapha Balarabe Shehu, is the 17th President of the World Federation of Engineering Organizations (WFEO).

According to the firebrand, focused and determined president, who took over from his predecessor, Engr. Jose Vieira, he will keep the dream of the society burning by giving all it takes to move it to greater heights.

"To all the national and international members of the Association of Engineers, I extend my sincere appreciation to you for believing in my ability to serve as a global leader.

"I am mindful of the tremendous responsibilities entrusted to me."

He pledged to do all within his powers to promote and support all the regions as well as ensuring equity and diversity.

Speaking on the challenges faced as a result of climate change, such as flood, and that of conflicts resulting in the destruction of infrastructure and the displacement of people, the solutions he said, rest on the engineers, he urged.

"As engineers, we will always be ready to deploy our

knowledge and expertise to rebuild these damages or infrastructure."

To handle these challenges, there is need to be equipped with the right knowledge, he said.

As part of his agenda during his two years stewardship, he will ensure that engineers get equipped through trainings in order to have adequate knowledge to be able to handle challenges.

The new leader also will look into the issue of having a comprehensive data of engineers, specifying the total strength of the male and female engineers and their expertise.

Engineer Mustapha Balarabe Shehu was the 28th President of the NSE. He was also President of the African Federation of Engineering Organizations between 2015-2016.

The Executive Director, Alim and Associates Ltd., Engr. Muhyideen Alim Yusuf FNSE, a delegate at the event described Engr. Mustapha as a man of repute. He is of the

confidence that his wealth of experience will help in bringing growth and development to the society.

The newly inaugurated President of WFEO, Engr. Mustapha Balarabe Shehu, was a former president of the Nigerian Society of Engineers and has been an active participant in the WFEO.

Engr. Mustapha who was accompanied by family and friends had the support of Nigerian engineers both at home and in the diaspora.

It was indeed a historic event as everyone was in a high spirit as they looked forward to a successful and a fulfilled two years stewardship.

The World Federation of Engineering Organizations (WFEO) is the international organization for the engineering profession. Founded in 1968, under the auspices of UNESCO, WFEO brings together national engineering institutions from some 100 nations and represents more than 30 million engineers.



Vieira

SUNDAY POLITICS

Uproar in Kogi as gunmen disperse SDP rally

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

GUNMEN disrupted the governorship campaign rally of Social Democratic Party (SDP) in Ejule, Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State.

The rally was yet to commence in the early hours of the day when hoodlums suspected to be political thugs invaded the St. Matthews Primary School venue of the rally and started shooting sporadically.

Supporters who were still arranging chairs and canopies for the rally, scampered for safety as the hoodlums descended on vehicles parked nearby, destroying everything on their path.

In a swift reaction, Director, Media and Communications of Muri/Sam Gubernatorial Campaign Council, Faruk Adejoh-Audu, accused the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) of sponsoring the attacks.

"The gunmen led by one Mohammed Nasir Alfa said to be the Assistant State Chairman of the APC, (Kogi East District) descended on the rally venue at Ejule and started shooting sporadically to disperse a mammoth crowd of SDP supporters that had gathered for the event.



Gabam

"Witnesses identified Dele Ademu; Daddy Ndah; Danladi Alaba from Umomi Village, Muhammed Nasiru Alfa (APC Zonal Chairman) Yahaya Ademu aka Kia Man; Mustepha Idris aka Ore; Besiru Mudi aka Para (all from Ejule Town) and other dreaded APC thugs among over 30 fully armed bandits unleashed by the APC Vice Chairman known to coordinate thugs in Ofu LGA for the governor of the state.

"The Muri/Sam Campaign Council is aware of a standing threat by Mr Yahaya Bello to his aides, appointees and senior APC officials that they will face his wrath if an SDP event is

allowed to hold in their home of origin.

"This brazen and desperate descent to violence by a sitting governor using his aides and thugs have gone unredressed so far despite our repeated outcries.

"The election date is barely three weeks away and the desperation of Mr Bello who is parading his cousin, a thoroughly tainted candidate as his successor, is escalating," he alleged.

The campaign council called on President Bola Tinubu and security agencies to urgently intervene and address the drift in Kogi State before it fatally undermined democracy in the state.

Kogi: AA candidate promises to prioritise women, youth

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

AHEAD of the November 11, governorship election in Kogi State, the candidate of Action Alliance, (AA,) Olayinka Buraimoh has promised to prioritise women and youth empowerment if elected.

He said the planned special attention for women and youth capacity building is targeted at stemming the multi dimensional poverty plaguing the state.

Buraimoh, while fielding questions from journalists after meeting with women groups in Lokoja, noted that women from time immemorial, have been the

bedrock of family prosperity, multiplier of incomes and so should be mobilised to multiply the resources of the state.

"I grew up to realise that women are multipliers of resources. Give them anything, they will multiply it. They are the ones that engage in petty trades and grassroot jobs. They also look after the family when the head is not around. That is why, they will be on the front burner of my administration" he said.

According to him, "Youths

on the other hand, forme the future of any state and should be carried along in the scheme of things. We will empower them through the instrumentality of job creation and engaging them in profitable ventures by taking them out of the streets to reduce crimes and criminalities in the state."

He also advised those

INEC seeks ties with media to curb fake news

THE Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has called for stronger collaboration with the media in the efforts to combat fake news.

The electoral body said on Tuesday in Akwanga, Nasarawa State, that the collaboration would also minimise misinformation and disinformation about the electoral process.

INEC made the call through the Chief Press Secretary to its Chairman, Mr Rotimi Oyekanmi, at a two-day capacity workshop for INEC Press Corps.

The workshop is focusing on "Ethics, Safety, Practices and Critical Issues Relating to the Kogi, Imo and Bayelsa governorship elections".

Oyekanmi's presentation

AHEAD of the November 11 Governorship elections in Imo, Kogi and Bayelsa states, acting Inspector General of Police, Egbetokun has warned political gladiators and their followers to be law abiding and play the game according to the rules.

The acting police boss said his men and other security agencies will never allow any act of hooliganism, political rascality and lawlessness in any part of the affected states. Egbetoku gave the warning recently at a high powered inter-agency consultative security meeting at the force headquarters Abuja.

The acting IG who was represented by the Deputy Inspector General of Police in charge of Operations, Ede Ayuba, underlined the paramount significance of cross fertilizing ideas among various security and law enforcement agencies towards elections

Acting IG warns politicians ahead of governorship elections

From JIDAUNA YANUNG, Abuja.

upcoming elections are secure, fair and credible . The meeting was attended by the representatives of all service chiefs, Chief of Defence Intelligence, DSS, DGNIA, DG, N CS

security. The meeting, he explained, was to develop a collaborative strategy that would ensure the



Egbetokun

'Declare 'State of Emergency' on drug abuse'

THE Senate has urged the Federal Government to declare a State of Emergency on illicit drugs and drug abuse in the country.

This followed adoption of a motion on "Urgent need to address the menace of drug abuse in Nigeria" at plenary on Tuesday by Sen. Babangida Hussain (APC -Jigawa). Presenting the motion, Babangida said that Nigeria was faced with rising cases of

drug abuse which had reached an unprecedented level.

He said Nigeria had transformed from a mere transit country in the 1990s, into a country filled with drug addiction and drug traffickers all over its land space.

"A population of between 30million and 35 million spends approximately 15,000 and 30,000 dollars annually on psychotropic drugs and alcoholic beverages in Nigeria," he said.

He said the statistics by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and the European Union on drug use in Nigeria, stated that about 14.3 million Nigerians between the ages 15 and 64, were drug users.

"The report stated that 10.6 million addicts were cannabis users, 4.6 addicts used pharmaceutical opioids and 238,000 abusers used amphetamines," he said.

He said the prevalence of

drug abuse per geo political zone in 2017 showed that the North-West accounted for 12 per cent, North-East 13.6 per cent North- Central 10.0 per cent, South-West 22.4 per cent South-South 16.6 per cent and the South-East 13.8 per cent.

Babangida said the main drugs abused in Nigeria were mood altering or psycho active drugs, performance enhancing drugs, dependency drugs and prescription drugs.

He said the side effects included addiction, trauma, mental illness and often times results in ill health, violence and involvement in criminal activities.

He said that a significant number of deaths from accidents and violent crimes had been traced to the activities of persons under the influence of drugs.



Buraimoh

Voter Cards and recruitment of staff for INEC.

There were also some falsehood related to ethnicity and the elections, he added.

He said that many journalists also fell for such fake claims because of sentiments and individual prejudices.

"We had many situations where fake news got published without any form of verification. No questions asked about their authenticity," he fumed.

He said that journalists had the responsibility to report facts without taking side on every matter, including election process.

"Facts are sacred. It is fundamentally important to present accurate and verifiable information.

"Journalists have a responsibility to report facts without distorting them to fit a particular narrative. The public relies on the media for truthful account of events," he said.

Oyekanmi added that a strong collaboration between INEC and the media was critical for a proactive approach to curbing fake news, disinformation and misinformation.

He urged the media to be factual, objective, truthful and fair in their reports on electoral process.

"Conducting free, fair, credible and inclusive elections is a collective responsibility.

"INEC will continue to provide the media with access to the relevant

SUNDAY POLITICS

As Ajaokuta Steel Company experiences fresh breath

Ajaokuta Steel Complex located in Kogi state is undergoing resuscitation as the present administration seems to have a lot in stock for the ailing company. The integrated steel complex was conceived with the vision of erecting a Metallurgical Process Plant with other auxiliaries and facilities to stand as the bedrock of Nigeria's economy. SALIHU OYIBO writes.

APPARENTLY, the project was embarked upon as a strategic company that would be viable in creating jobs as well as earn foreign exchange to boost the economy of the country.

Ajaokuta Steel Company Limited (ASCL), National Iron Ore Mining Company (NIOMCO), Delta Steel Company (DSC), among others, in 1979, were established under Section 2 of National Steel Council Decree No 60 of September 19, 1979 which was incorporated as limited liability companies.

Former President Shehu Shagari in 1979 laid the foundation stone of the integrated steel plant in Ajaokuta on 24,000 hectares of green-field landmass, built on 800-hectares and within his first tenure, the project reached 98 percent completion.

The steel company has four different types of rolling mills inside the plant. The Billet Mill produces billets; the Light Section Mill also produces round, square, strip and angles metals.

In addition, the Wire Rod Mill produces wire rods and rebars used in construction companies and production of nails, fencing wire, rope mesh, bolts and nut and netting and the Medium Section and Structural Mill produces parallel flange channels, equal angles, unequal angles and standard channels.

Sadly, despite the potentials Ajaokuta Steel Company has for the development of the country, successive administrations since 1984 paid lip service to the completion of the steel plant expected to be the source of diversification of the country's economy from crude oil.

Efforts to rejuvenate the giant steel

Evidently, the effort made by President Muhammadu Buhari was thwarted by Covid-19 pandemic that ravaged the entire globe, but despite the set back, his administration was able to clear all litigation surrounding the steel company as a result of failed concession.

The current administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has shown the political will to complete the ailing steel plant. This he demonstrated in the appointment of Prince Shuaibu Abubakar Audu the son of the soil as the minister of steel development.

The new minister who was desirous of making serious impact hit the ground running after his inauguration. His visit to the steel company few days ago has restored the hope of many Nigerians that life will soon be injected into the moribund steel industry to serve the purpose of its establishment.

Ministerial press briefing

The minister while addressing the staff of Ajaokuta Steel Company Limited (ASCL) at his maiden visit to the company, thanked President Tinubu for having the vision to create a steel development. Audu pledged his



Audu

commitment to ensure the production of steel from the multi-billion dollar company in three-year plan, disclosing that the federal government has plan to make the Ajaokuta environ a Free Trade Zone to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and to diversify the economy of the country.

The minister, who toured the facilities in the plant, said that the visit was aimed at getting a first-hand knowledge of the problems stopping production in the company in a bid to proffering solutions. He assured that President Bola Tinubu had also taken interest in the resuscitation of the complex by appointing him as the pioneer minister to show the world the importance of steel development to industrialisation.

According to him, the key point agenda of 'Renewed Hope' of President Tinubu are jobs creation, diversification of the economy and to attract Foreign Direct Investment, saying Ajaokuta steel has a significant roles to play in achieving the hope.

"If we are able to revitalise

Ajaokuta Steel company, it would help us to achieve this. This key point agenda would also help us eradicate poverty. To achieve this, we have put together two documents. A three-year plan for the revival of Ajaokuta Steel Company which would have a Small and Medium Term Plan. In addition to this, there was a five-year plan which would also see to ensuring the production of steel in other parts of the country.

"Part of the things is the roadmap to designate the 24,000 hectares land of Ajaokuta an Industrial Park, to create a Free Trade Zone that will further attract Foreign Direct Investment," he stated.

He said that his job is to ensure that all those typical issues that held the plant from producing be resolved.

"And by the first term of this administration, if we are able to produce some sheet of steel, it will be a significant achievement. I have taken an extensive tour of the complex and plants and there are lots of opportunities that if we are able to unlock, we would be able to create over 500,000 jo

that will benefit kogites a bit more importantly, Nigerians.

"This will also guarantee that everyone benefits from the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. I am on the tour with potential foreign investors and experts who have shown interest in bringing FDI to unlock these potentials.

"We have the Russians, Americans, Arabs and Chinese who are showing interest. They have come to show their desire to carry out an advanced technical audit to see what needs to be completed. After my findings from here, we will forward everything to Mr President for his approval," the minister said.

Enumerating potential benefits

In his welcome remarks, the sole administrator of the steel company Engr Sumaila Abdul-Akaba said the minister's visit would offer him a first-hand information about the factual truth of the steel plant.

Abdul-Akaba stated that the opportunities that would accrue to the state as the host in particular and the nation in general when the plant is completed and operationalised cannot be overemphasized.

"It is appropriate to mention a few here. The annual revenue generation from this project when commissioned will substantially impact significantly on accruals to the national revenue sources and help to galvanise development in Kogi, the host state and Nigeria generally.

"The required rail link between Ajaokuta and Oturkpo for bulk materials movement and the planned rail link from Jakura to Eganyi will open the limestone mines and pop up economic activities in Nigeria and open the rail transportation corridor of Kogi state, North-central states to coastal ports and international markets.

"The direct impact of these gargantuan investments on the socio-economic life of our dear state and Nigeria can therefore be better imagined as upstream, downstream and spin-off industries will spring up in the entire state.

"Thus from Idah to Ankpa, Anyigba to Adogo, Okene to Kabba, Egbe and from Ogori to Okene, Lokoja to Kotonkarfe and, indeed the entire

state, there would be vast industrial estate.

"Unemployment, the bane of our youths and its attendant security connotations would become a thing of the past in the state.

"Honourable minister, for the sake of posterity, we have therefore, before us, some mutually-beneficial and complementary roles to play in order that this massive national asset lives up to its tag as the bedrock of Nigeria's industrialisation.

"As you start this journey posterity beckons on you to write your name in gold," the sole administrator stated.

Speaking on the current status of the steel plant, Engr Abdul-Akaba said that the concept of engineering generally is universal, noting that technology and its application do not change or get obsolete rather they get improved for efficiency of operation and application with new ideas.

He added that in the case of Ajaokuta Steel industry, the key technology of application and process are the Blast Furnace (Basic Oxygen Furnace -BOF), Electric Arc Furnace (EAF) and a few others that are little known.

The sole administrator however noted that in Nigeria, the two major steel plants of Ajaokuta and Delta Steel Plants adopted the two major processes of steel making, saying that the choice of technology, that is Blast Furnace - Basic Oxygen Process (BF=BOF) adopted for Ajaokuta Steel Plant, as it is today, is still the best and the most popular worldwide, adding that for several years till date, over 70 per cent of world steel production is done through the Blast Furnace Process Technology.

"So the issue of Ajaokuta Steel Plant being obsolete does not arise because it is an engineering element that is flexible and amenable to improvement, but the main question would be whether the Blast Furnace process of iron and steel making is still relevant. The answer is 'Yes'. Is the Ajaokuta Steel Plant process amenable to upgrade and improvement especially in the areas of automation, 'yes' would be the answer.

"For our level of development, this process remains the best and most friendly to employment generation and downstream economic activities for a developing nation as even developed nations are still building blast furnaces," he stated.

Blueprint



SUNDAY POLITICS

'Tribunals found no merit in 74.5% post-election petitions'

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has said it can neither be blamed for pre-election cases arising from primaries of political parties nor litigations following the outcome of elections.

The Commission said out of the 1,196 petitions filed on the outcome of the 2023 election, 712 were dismissed and 179 withdrawn, explaining that in 891 cases (74.4%), the tribunals found no merit in the petitions and affirmed the result of the elections conducted by INEC.

It also stated that elections were conducted in 1,491 constituencies across the country made up of 1 Presidential, 28 Governorship, 109 Senatorial, 360 House of Representatives and 993 State Assembly constituencies.

The statistics were revealed by the Commission following a media report titled "INEC's credibility sinks as 94% contested posts awaits tribunal" and published by one of the national dailies (not Blueprint).

In a statement Thursday in Abuja, INEC National Commissioner and Chairman Information and Voter Education Committee Sam Olumekun said: "The claim that State Assembly elections were held in only 28 States of the country is made on the lazy assumption that no such elections were held in the eight States of the federation where executive elections are held off-cycle."

The statement noted that the tenure of legislators is tied to the legislative houses which is a fixed term of four years from the date the Assembly is inaugurated unlike the term of office of the executive which begins from the date they take the oath of office.

The statement said: "The Commission would have ignored the report if it did not emanate from one of our country's flagship newspapers which has over the years established a reputation for the quality of its stories, incisive analysis, factual accuracy, balance and lately the innovative use of infographics."

"However, its report under reference contains inaccurate figures; mix up of pre-election and post-election cases, skewed comparative perspective and a headline that suggests that election petitions draw from the action or inaction of INEC."

"First, basic fact check on the information regularly published by the Commission and available on our website would have shown that in 2023, elections were not conducted in 1,280 constituencies, including 782 State Assembly seats."

"On the contrary, elections were conducted in 1,491 constituencies across the country made up of 1 Presidential, 28 Governorship, 109 Senatorial, 360 House of Representatives and 993 State



Yahaya

Assembly constituencies.

"Similarly, the claim that State Assembly elections were held in only 28 States of the country is made on the lazy assumption that no such elections were held in the eight States of the federation where executive elections are held off-cycle."

"As every attentive Nigerian knows, the tenure of legislators is tied to the legislative houses which is a fixed term of four years from the date the Assembly is inaugurated unlike the term of office of the executive which begins from the date they take the oath of office."

"Secondly, the report blames the pre-election cases arising from the conduct of primary elections by political parties on INEC. These are intra-party cases involving party members in which they join the Commission and seek for reliefs binding on it. As everyone knows, INEC does not conduct primaries for political parties."

"Thirdly, in pursuit of their right under the law, many litigants in Nigeria unfortunately file election petitions over the most improbable cases and later withdraw them or they are dismissed by the tribunals. If the report had taken time to analyse the outcome of the cases decided so far by the tribunals, it would have discovered that out of 1,196 petitions, 712 were dismissed and 179 withdrawn."

"This means that in 891 cases (74.4%), the tribunals found no

merit in the petitions and affirmed the result of the elections conducted by INEC. It is surprising how the mere filing of petitions constitute a blot on the integrity of the recent elections conducted by INEC when in fact they constitute an integral part of the democratic process."

"Fourthly, the said report analysed the total number of petitions as if they were filed against the outcome of the election in 94% of all the elective positions without considering details of the cases."

"Multiple petitions were filed by candidates and political parties as petitioners in a single Constituency. For example, in one State in the South-South geopolitical zone of the country, eight petitions were filed challenging the governorship election out of which seven were dismissed and one withdrawn."

"Therefore, the number of election petitions filed in respect of all elective offices will certainly outnumber the total number of constituencies/elective offices. To spread them across the constituencies and proceed to calculate the percentage is to count some constituencies several times which is methodologically problematic and statistically illogical."

"Five, it is pertinent to note that the grounds for challenging the outcome of an election as provided in Section 134 of the

Electoral Act, 2022 are not limited to the conduct of election by the Commission. An election may be questioned on the ground that the winner of the election was not qualified to contest the election by virtue of his academic qualifications, age etc."

On the petitions proper

While absorbing the electoral body of any culpability in the petitions emanating from the outcome of the exercise, the national commissioner said: "Many of the petitioners did not challenge the conduct of the elections by INEC but the eligibility of candidates or their nomination by political parties. Under the law, INEC has no power to screen candidates. Similarly, only the Courts can disqualify candidates."

Between 2023 and other polls

Olumekun further said "a comparative analysis would have addressed the deliberate effort in the report to portray the 2023 General Election as regressive on account of litigation without empirical evidence."

"Over the last three electoral cycles, the number of election petitions may be rising but not the number of upturned elections. In 2015, 663 cases were filed at the tribunals, 87 (13.1%) were nullified and the Commission ordered to conduct re-run in some polling units or entire constituencies. In 2019, 807 petitions were filed but elections were only re-run in 30

(3.71%) constituencies (3 Senatorial Districts, 13 Federal Constituencies and 14 State Constituencies).

"While the 2023 post-election litigations are ongoing, all five petitions filed in respect of the Presidential election were dismissed while three are pending on appeal. As of Monday 16th October 2023, out of 82 Governorship election petitions, 72 (87.8%) were either dismissed or withdrawn by the petitioners."

"For Senatorial elections, 146 petitions were filed out of which 100 (68.5%) were dismissed or withdrawn. For the House of Representatives, 413 petitions were filed out of which 309 (74.81%) were dismissed or withdrawn while for State Houses of Assembly, 550 petitions were filed out of which 468 (82.4%) were dismissed or withdrawn."

"The Commission wishes to restate that it is inappropriate to solely assess the credibility of INEC or the conduct of the 2023 General Election on the number of petitions filed by litigants who, in any case, have the right to do so under the law."

"While we wish to restate our continuing partnership with the media, it is prudent to state that the pen should be used to strengthen rather than impugn the integrity of public institutions particularly where basic statistics demand that we should be circumspect."

SUNDAY PEOPLE

COCIN WOMEN FELLOWSHIP 2023

The First Lady of Plateau, Barr. Helen Mutfwang celebrated COCIN Women Fellowship Day at the COCIN Headquarters, Jos



Wife of the Governor, Barr. Helen Mutfwang (left) in a handshake with Ngo Talatu Jang



Barr. Helen Mutfwang, wife of the Governor Plateau State (left), Senato David Jonah Jang, with his wife Ngo Talatu Jang



COCIN President, Rev. Dr. Amos Mohzor (right) with Rev. Dr. Sylvester D. Dachomo, Senior Pastor, COCIN Headquarters



HRH John Putmang Hirse, mni, CON, Miskhaham Mwaghavul with his wife Mrs. Elizabeth John Hirse

PHOTOS: JOHN LAR

GLOBAL HAND WASHING DAY, 2023

The First Lady of Plateau State, Barr. Helen Mutfwang, flag off the Global Handwashing Day with the theme: "Clean Hands are within reach" at Old Government House, Rayfield, Jos



Barr. Helen Mutfwang, wife of the Governor of Plateau State (middle) performing the handwashing at the ceremony



A cross section of GSS Rayfield students watching keenly



Mrs. Maria Moses Sule, wife of the Speaker (left) with Barr. Olivia Dazyam, Special Adviser to the Governor on Gender/Chairperson Implementation Committee of Gender and Equal Opportunities, Law 2015



Barr. Helen Mutfwang, wife of the Governor in a group photograph with the wives of the top government functionaries and students

PHOTOS: JOHN LAR

THE Plateau State House of Assembly recently came up with two bills that are considered to be important to not only the people of Plateau, but the state at large. The executive bills include, 'A Bill for the Law to Establish the Plateau State Law Reform Commission, 2023 and the second is 'A Bill for a Law to Establish the Plateau State Citizens Mediation Centre', 2023

Having passed through second reading, an adhoc committee was set up to look into these bills, headed by the Deputy Speaker, Rt. Hon. Gwottson Fom Dalyop.

The Law Reform Commission Bill is to be saddled with the responsibility which among other things, is to generally research, take and keep under review all state laws, and local government bye laws, with a view to ensuring their systematic and progressive development and reform in consonance with the prevailing norms in the state, nation and international community including, in particular, the codification of such laws and bye laws which will be beneficial to all. In a nutshell, when passed into law it would serve as a coordinating center for all state laws and local government bye laws.

On the other hand, the Citizens Mediation Centre Bill seeks to establish a center that will be saddled with the responsibility of mediating between parties on disputes such as landlord and tenant matters, contracts of employment, family matters, debt related matters etc. The center shall also help in reducing the huge legal fees paid by citizens to access the services of lawyers over minor disputes. We cannot deny the fact that these are issues people deal with on a daily basis.

To set the ball rolling, the bill was subjected to the committee stage for proper scrutiny and study. It was thereafter, arrived at the decision to conduct a public hearing as is customary. The purpose of the public hearing is to get stakeholders inputs and contributions with a view to carrying everyone along, from where observations and recommendations on the proposed legislation will be deduced. The following stakeholders were invited as part of the hearing: Nigeria Law Reform Commission, Plateau State chapter of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Nigerian

Public Complaint Commission, Plateau State Local Government Service Commission and Plateau State High Court of Justice. Others are Plateau State Judicial Service Commission, the state Attorney General and state Auditor General.

Speaking on what the people stand to gain from this legislation, the Deputy Speaker of the House, who also doubles as the adhoc committee chairman, Rt. Hon. Gwottson Fom Dalyop while enumerating the benefits said they were quite enormous. For instance when fully operational, the commission will be like a library where all the state laws

On law reform and mediation center bills



and bye laws will be kept. To him, accessibility of laws will no longer be an issue because whoever wants any law on the Plateau can easily get them once he or she goes to the commission.

According to the lawmaker, there are laws that have been said to be obsolete, for example there are situations where some people have described certain punishments as common. Therefore, in order to make reforms on some of these obsolete laws, there needs to be put in place an agency of government that will harness the laws, bring them together and see how the House can come up with amendments to those laws.

At the public hearing, participants applauded the initiative by the tenth state assembly and for involving them in what they described as an epoch making event. One of the highlights was the unanimous agreement by stakeholders that the proposed legislation when passed, will improve the state legal system, revive the lingering dearth of obsolete legislations and enhance periodic reviews. However, The NBA speaking through Barr. Demon Dashe was quick to caution on the use of proper terminologies to dissuade any ambiguity.

On the part of the state Attorney General Barr. Philemon Daffi, he

defined law as an instrument of social engineering, adding that the mantra of the present administration which is 'the time is now', is not frivolous nor flippant but deliberate. To him, the importance of the Plateau State Law Reform Commission cannot be overemphasized, while giving his reasons that as attorney general, he has had cause to go around MDAs picking pieces of legislations concerning the state, which ought not to be so. Still wondering on why the state does not have its own reform commission, the attorney general said something went wrong because when the then northern Nigeria established her law reform commission, it was the then Benue/Plateau that became the warehouse of that legislation.

Barr. Daffi on behalf of the state government expressed desire to keep all laws in a single place for easy accessibility. As for the mediation center, he posited that there was need for the state to tap from global funds through the establishment of a center that will cater for mainly the needs of indigent members of the society. Even though government is aware of the existence of other organs that deals on alternative dispute resolution, the center which is about to be established has a

clear mandate in addressing needs of vulnerable members of our society.

The Plateau State Peace Building agency and the Multi Door Court House on the other hand, allayed fears of duplication of responsibilities given the establishment of the citizens mediation center. Both bodies however, understood the yet to be established commission as a complimentary body that focuses on the need of indigent members of the society. They called for closer collaboration in order to address the many societal ills bedeviling the state.

For Prof. Jummai Audi, Chairman of the Nigerian Law Reform Commission who could not hold back her excitement, The Plateau State House of Assembly has done quite well in coming up with this bill even though in her opinion, it ought to have been enacted long before now. She highlighted some of the benefits to include strengthening legislative processes in the state, simplifying and modernizing the law etc.

Other stakeholders who made inputs through their contributions and suggestions include Plateau Peace Practitioners Network, represented by the Chairman Mr. Pwajok Pwajok, the representative of Human Rights Commission in the person of Mrs. Veronica Abe amongst others.

"To set the ball rolling, the bill was subjected to the committee stage for proper scrutiny and study. It was thereafter, arrived at the decision to conduct a public hearing as is customary. The purpose of the public hearing is to get stakeholders inputs and contributions with a view to carrying everyone along, from where observations and recommendations on the proposed legislation will be deduced. The following stakeholders were invited as part of the hearing: Nigeria Law Reform Commission, Plateau State chapter of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Nigerian Public Complaint Commission, Plateau State Local Government Service Commission and Plateau State High Court of Justice. Others are Plateau State Judicial Service Commission, the state Attorney General and state Auditor General. Speaking on what the people stand to gain from this legislation, the Deputy Speaker of the House, who also doubles as the adhoc committee chairman, Rt. Hon. Gwottson Fom Dalyop while enumerating the benefits said they were quite enormous. For instance when fully operational, the commission will be like a library where all the state laws and bye laws will be kept. To him, accessibility of laws will no longer be an issue because whoever wants any law on the Plateau can easily get them once he or she goes to the commission."



SUNDAY MAGAZINE



Tinubu



Piyo



Egbetokun

Nigeria: Vulnerable women, girl-child still can't breathe

October 11 of every year is marked as International Day of the Girl Child globally. It is a day dedicated to recognizing and promoting the rights and well-being of girls worldwide. It emphasizes the importance of empowering girls through education, access to health care and protection from violence and discrimination writes Jennifer Yarima.

THE day also encourages girls to dream big, pursue their goals and contribute to building a more equitable and just world. Observance of this day gives opportunity for individuals, organizations and communities to actively participate in activities and initiatives the girls' rights and empowerment.

The International Day of the Girl child was established by the United Nations' General Assembly in 2011 to recognize the unique challenges girls face worldwide and to promote their rights. It emerged from the global women's rights movement and the need to address gender disparities and discrimination that affect girls' lives.

Since its inception, International Day of the Girl Child has gained momentum with various organizations and advocates working together to empower girls, eliminate gender based violence and ensure equal opportunities for all children.

This year's theme is "Invest in Girls' Rights: Our leadership, our well-being". This is a reminder to the countless girls who grapple with daily violations of their rights worldwide, stifled leadership potentials which rob them of their chances to blossom into their full potentials. In the world which is meant to nurture their dreams and aspirations, countless girls suffer in silence. Their pleas for help are often unheard and unanswered.

When girls are given the opportunity to thrive, not only do their lives change but their communities as well. In his message to mark this year's occasion, the United Nation Secretary General, Mr. Antonio Guterres emphasized the significance of women at all levels stressing that "women and girls can lead us to a fairer future—let us amplify girls' voices and recommit to working together to build a world where every girl can lead and thrive".

Recently, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu promised that his government will continue to support, nurture and empower the girl child. The president made the remark in his message to commemorate the 2023 International Day of the Girl Child thus; "she is not merely a gem, she is a treasure, a beacon of hope and resilience". Tinubu urged other stakeholders to join him in creating a world where every girl's potential is realized and celebrated.

Instead of celebrating the remarkable achievements and progress of our women and girls, it's sad that it has been years of unending sorrow for most female folk. The ugly incidences surrounding the lives of women and girls has left one wondering whether the birth of the girl child is worth celebrating at all.

This year's event is coming at the time when the plight of the girl child has increased. Young school girls have become victims

of sexual violence, ritual murder, kidnapping and abductions in many parts of the country. It has also come at a time that many young girls constitute the bulk of the over 13.2 million Nigerians out of school children.

Despite the prohibition of child marriages, it is still practiced in some countries including Nigeria. The same applies to child labour where the girl child is equally exploited. Available data from UNICEF shows that 1 in 5 girls do not complete junior secondary education and nearly 4 in 10 girls do not complete senior secondary school today. In certain regions, the numbers are even lesser.

The data also revealed that around 90 percent of adolescent girls and young women do not have access to internet in low income countries where their male counterparts are twice as likely to be online. Globally, girls between ages 5 to 14 spend more hours every day on domestic work than boys of the same age.

It's sad that many women face all manner of humiliation in our society today in spite of the awareness from every quarter to end these mishaps that impedes the progress of women and girls.

Have you ever told someone to do something for you and you hear them say it's against our tradition? Whatever the case is, these practices started with one person or group of people and over time became a custom. Many years have passed and the people could not do anything

against that tradition. The unfortunate thing about these traditional practice is that they started due to little or no enlightenment.

Harmful traditional practices have detrimental effects on people's physical, mental and emotional health. Female Genital Mutilation is a practice that involves partially or removing the female external reproductive organ or inflicting a certain kind of pains on it for no healthy purpose. 200 million females alive worldwide have had their genitals mutilated.

This ugly practice is widely believed to curb a woman's sexual urge. This act is still being practiced in some states in Nigeria. All effort to eradicate the practice have been futile because it is believed that a woman's urge for sex is insatiable if the clitoris is not removed. All it does is hurt the female gender through severe pains, excessive bleeding, infections, urinary complications, childbirth complications and even death.

Wife inheritance practice forces a woman to marry her late husband's brother or a close relative in the family when her husband dies. It is sorrowful when she is young and didn't give birth to children for the dead man or she gave birth and is not capable of catering for the children alone. They always claim that it is in order to bear children for the deceased or prevent the widow from living a promiscuous life.

Harmful widowhood practices: When a husband dies, the widow is expected to proof her innocence by sometimes wailing all day, drinking the water gotten from bathing her husband's dead body, having her hair shaved, being locked up in the same room with her husband's corpse. In some cultures, according to findings; the woman sleeps with the chief priest of the land believing that the act will cut off all ties she has with the dead. When the burial rites are over, she is expected to mourn her husband for about four months wearing black or white dress.

Wicked in-laws seize such opportunity to sell off her husband's properties under the guise of fund raising for the dead husband's burial. Some even go as far as kicking her out of the house and keeping what is left for themselves. This narrative is different from the men's experience. As a matter of fact, they make it essential for him to remarry almost immediately.

In most traditions, a woman is not termed a real wife until she bears her husband a male child. It's her business if she gives birth to female children because they are seen as insignificant and neither is the woman until she bears a son. The girl child has no inheritance in her father's house. Instead of giving his assets to the girl child when he dies without a son, his brothers will take his properties.

This obviously affects how the

Continued on page 31

NEWS

'We're yet to see impact of palliatives'

From
MUSLIUDEEN ADEBAYO

ANSAR-UD-DEEN Society of Nigeria has declared that the organisation is yet to see the impact of palliative on citizens in many of the states across the country.

National Vice President of the organisation, Alhaji Abdul Waheed Ajao, made this declaration while speaking at a press conference to herald the organisation's centenary celebration in Ibadan, the Oyo State capital recently.

The federal government has announced that it has released some amount of money to state governors so as to provide palliatives to the citizens in order to cushion the effect of the removal of subsidy on Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) also known as petroleum.

The organisation has however declared that it has not seen the effect of the palliatives in many of the states across the country.

Ajao who was flanked by Oyo State Chairman, Alhaji Tajudeen Oladejo,

State Secretary, Alhaji Teslim Adediran and Missioner Dr. Bashir Eleshimeta, urged state governors to monitor the distribution of the palliative so that it can reach the targeted people.

Ajao who announced that the organisation has consistently met people in government on the state of the nation, noted that the state governors have received enough money from the federal government to provide palliatives to the people.

- Ansar-Ud-Deen

Ajao while speaking further charged the federal government to keep to the agreement reached with the labour unions so as to avoid another strike in the country.

Piyo pledges collaboration with NAWOJ

By **DUMAH RANDONG**

PLATEAU State Deputy Governor, Mrs Josephine Piyo has pledged to partner with the Nigeria Association of Woman Journalists, NAWOJ towards fighting sexual and gender based violence among women and the girl-child in the state.

Piyo gave this indication when the Executive of NAWOJ led by their Chairman, Mrs Nene Dung paid her a courtesy call at the Old Government House, Rayfield in Jos recently.

She acknowledged their contribution to the society, particularly for being the voice of the downtrodden in the society.

Piyo described as worrisome, the number of rape cases and domestic violence being pursued by



Piyo

NAWOJ and assured the association that as the female Deputy Governor, she would collaborate with them to

ensure the menace was reduced to the barest minimum. She noted that their success was a success to the womenfolk and the society at large.

The Deputy Governor who maintained that she would support their activities, however promised to assist them as much as she could.

She appreciated them for identifying with the government and called for their continued support in their task of providing governance to the citizens of the state.

Earlier, Plateau State Chairperson of NAWOJ, Mrs. Nene Dung had informed the Deputy Governor that the association whose idea of establishment was birthed in the state 24 years ago, to play the role of informing and educating the public, has also delved into issues of sexual and gender based violence in the society.

She described as worrisome the rising cases of rape and domestic violence on the Plateau, noting that they have collaborated with the National Human Rights to seek for justice for those whose rights have been violated.

NAWOJ, she said, believes that now that a female is the Deputy Governor, she should add her voice to theirs by bringing to the fore issues affecting women and children in the state.

She expressed readiness to synergize with the government in different areas, however solicited for assistance with mobility to facilitate their activities as well as the National Delegate Conference coming up next month.

PSC clarifies role of Special Constabulary in Kano

THE Police Service Commission has addressed concerns regarding the operations of the Special Constabulary in Kano State, particularly regarding the recruitment of a repentant criminal into the organization.

The Commission in a statement issued recently by Ikechukwu Ani, Head, Press and Public Relations, explained that the Special Constabulary are not recognized as police officers by the Commission and the government. However, their operations are covered and recognized by the Police Act, and they play a crucial role in the ongoing fight against criminals across the country.

The Commission is in close contact with the Kano State Police Command and acknowledges that the Constabulary's purpose is to support the police in establishing a crime-free Kano State. The men and women recruited as Special Constabulary are assigned to work in their localities, where they are better positioned to identify and apprehend criminals causing havoc in those areas.

"It is worth noting that some of the repentant influential youths, who were previously used as political thugs and

subsequently abandoned, have recognized that crime does not pay and have voluntarily offered their assistance in creating a crime-free state".

The Commission is also aware that the Kano Special Constabulary has undergone adequate training and is working within their respective local government areas, under the strict supervision of the State Police Command. Their engagement aims to enhance visibility and promote sustainable peace, economic growth, and development in the state.

Dr. Solomon Arase, Chairman of the Commission and former Inspector General of Police, emphasizes the Commission's commitment to partnering

with the police to ensure improved security for lives and property across the country.

He emphasizes that security is not solely the responsibility of the government but also of every Nigerian, and calls for a citizen-based approach to security in Nigeria.

Furthermore, Dr. Arase discloses that the Commission, in consultation with the Inspector General of Police, will take measures to clearly differentiate the uniforms of the Constabularies from those of the Nigeria Police Force. This is to prevent cases of identity crisis and to define the specific roles of the Special Constabulary within the nation's security architecture.



Arase



Supreme Court to hear Atiku's application on fresh evidence against Tinubu Monday

The Supreme Court has fixed October 23 for the hearing of the appeal filed by the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) presidential candidate, Atiku Abubakar, challenging President Tinubu's victory in the February 25 election. Read more

Ondo PDP calls on Assembly to begin impeachment process against Gov Akeredolu

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Ondo State has called on the state House of Assembly to begin the process of impeaching the state governor, Rotimi Akeredolu for being away from the state for a long time. Read more

Tinubu appoints Issa-Onilu as NOA chief, names DGs for NTA, FRCN, others

President Bola Tinubu has appointed the former spokesman of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Lanre Issa-Onilu, as the Director-General of the National Orientation Agency (NOA). Read more

#ENDSARS: Police warns against gathering around Lekki tollgate

The Lagos State Police Command on Thursday warned youths in the state to stay away from the Lekki tollgate as they prepare to mark the third anniversary of the #ENDSARS protest in the state. Read more

No teacher should earn below N250,000/month, Reps makes case for salary increase for teachers

The House of Representatives Committee on University Education has advocated for an increase in the salaries of teachers from primary to the tertiary levels. Read more

Tinubu withdraws 24-year-old Imam's nomination as FERMA chairman

President Bola Tinubu has withdrawn the nomination of Imam Kashim Ibrahim Imam as the chairman of the Federal Roads Maintenance Agency (FERMA). Read more

Israeli minister takes responsibility for Hamas attack

The Israeli Defence Minister, Youvi Gallant, has taken responsibility for the October 7 attack by the Palestinian militant group, Hamas. Read more.

Peter Okoye drums support for bedridden Nollywood actor Mr Ibu

Peter Okoye aka Mr P, one-half of reunited music group, P Square has taken to social media to drum up support for bedridden Nollywood actor John Okafor popularly known as Mr Ibu. Read more

IGP approves posting of police PROs to commands, formations

The Acting Inspector-General of Police, Olukayode Egbetokun, has approved the posting of Police Public Relations Officers to commands and formations across the country. Read more.

SUNDAY FEATURE

Nigerian police, friend or enemy?

Nigerian Police Force spokespersons and top officials will always tell you that the police is your friend. Frank Odita, whom I knew personally and Frank Mbah (whom I encountered in the market square) did everything to assure us of the friendliness of our police. However, there is a wide gap between what is and what ought to be! (I think that is what Economists term positive and normative economics or what strategists call espoused and operative objectives). I am not a very boastful person but today, I boast that very few non-professional drivers have encountered the Nigerian Police Force in action(the good, bad, ugly and messy) on our roads as much as I have had. IK MUO writes.

IN the good old days, as a banker-bachelor based in Enugu, with my good old 504GR/AC(An3705ED, cost N8800), when the mind was willing and the body strong, when the roads were safe and fuel cost a few kobo a litre, I drove around Nigeria on several occasions. On one occasion, I drove from Enugu to Jos/Vom to Bauchi to Azare to Gombe to Maidugiri via Biu to Kano to Kaduna to Abuja to Ikare to Benin to Warri to PH to Aba to Owerri and back to Enugu. This took about one month. I had worked at Jos, Kaduna and Kano and as a 'village man' that I have always been, I drove regularly from those locations to my ancestral home whenever necessary and even when unnecessary!

30 years ago, I relocated to Lagos, a city that I had once loathed with passion(because of its traffic and disorderliness), and since then plying the Lagos-Onitsha route has become my 'daily bread'. All along, I have seen the police in their various colours, at their best and at their worst and at times, in their Zeburudayaist (buffoonery) moods as when a policeman in Kaduna charged me with 'attempted jamming' (attempting to jam him) and when another around Okigwe accused me of having an irregular plate-number. However, of late, the policemen- those on the road- so threw away the good and exhibited more of the bad and ugly, that I decided not to drive again on the Lagos-Onitsha expressway. That was when on an occasion, I encountered 102 police toll-gates and on another, I spent more time to cross the Niger-Bridge than I spent from Lagos-Asaba. But I still visited Igbo-Ukwu regularly. I was not trekking neither was I flying; I outsourced all the hassles to the commercial Sienna mini-busses.

The other day (11/10/23) however, I had a need to drive down to the east and I saw what has become of our perfidious friends, our fiends as they interface with their customers. The number of police toll-gates on the road from Ijebu-Ode to Onitsha is so uncountable that you need to see it so as to believe and appreciate. From Ijebu-Ode to Ore, they are stationed after every one kilometre, to the extent that while one set of policemen were 'attending' to you, you will see the next set close by and that was why on that particular day, The Ijebu-Ode-Ore route that took about 90 minutes, took 3 whole hours-and there was no hold-up. All of them have a sole objective: to optimise their EPV (earnings per vehicle), by all means fair and foul. Some will beg you, some will delay you, some would ask for papers that are no longer in existence and some would charge you of offences that do not exist in our books. But you watch people driving by easily with unnumbered vehicles! Anyway,



come along with me as I share my experiences on that day, when Ijebu-Ode to Onitsha that ordinarily took 5 hours, ended up 'costing' me and my emergency driver, about 9 hours. By the time I left Ijebu-Ode around 10 am due to an unfortunate combination of circumstances, I had expected that the road would be freer. It would have been but for the antics of our 'fiends' of the Nigerian Police Force. On that trip,, my vehicle was stopped on all the toll-gates but subjected to SAS or WUC (Stop and Search;Wetin U Carry) for more than 50 times but I will share with you a few of the experiences with our fiends. Immediately we left Ijebu-Ode, one of the policemen stopped us and asked for water. Luckily, I had an extra bottle of water, which I gladly handed over to him. However his colleague did not find it funny; he accused me of being mean and wicked! Mean and wicked? But he asked for water! As we were approaching Ore, one of them asked where we were headed to and I replied Anambra. He told me that he hated Imo people the most! A federal officer, working on a Federal highway, saying that he hated a particular set of people. In shock, I asked him why and he explained that they had not been able to control 'these boys'. By these boys, he meant the UGM and I wondered how an Imo man or woman would

checkmate the known and unknown gunmen who are also terrorising them. I asked one of them why he allowed all the vehicles before me to pass but stopped mine. He wanted to show his power and importance and asked if I was above the law? I agreed with him that he had a legitimate right to search and he started foraging through my papers and found out that I am a lecturer. He then declared gleefully that he would chop my money as I had chopped his hand-out money. I retorted that I had never chopped handout money from him or from anybody and he said that even if I did not, my 'brothers' chopped his money in 2013/2014 at UNIBEN where he graduated in Public Administration. So, this was educated up to University level.

Around Agbor, one of them got tired of searching the booth and asked for my CMR and allocation of plate-number. I told him that I did not have those documents and that without them, I would not have registered the car and been on the road for the 4th year running. I also told him that I didn't need this stress as I had been on the road since morning. He 'calmed down' and assured me that he would not want to bother me since he saw that I was an elder but that I should just help us fuel their vehicle with N15000. And I shouted at him: N15000? Have I fuelled my own car? As he was acting 'you will see', I went into the car and brought out ALL the papers he could possibly ask for in this world and the world

to come. He rudely shoved them back at me in frustration and disappointment!

At the next toll-gate, they started harassing the driver as usual and I alighted from the vehicle and asked the one who appeared to be the leader: 'What exactly are you looking for? At this age and stage, do you think that I have stolen this 4th hand car or that I am on my way to a thieving operation'? He retorted that 'nobody is above the law!' After Isele-Ukwu, one of them stopped us, peeped inside and exchanged greetings with me and then asked the driver to open the booth. However when I came down from the vehicle he asked in a surprised tone: were you inside this car? When I responded in the affirmative he replied: please go! How could somebody who saw and greeted me turn round to ask me if I were inside the car? One of them looked into the car and said: 'I have seen that you are an 'agbalagba' and also a chief. I don't know how to ask of anything from you. Go well' and I thanked him and we left. Some of them simply greeted: 'your boys are here' or 'anything for the boys' and I replied that in this BATified economy, I did not even have enough not to talk of something for the boys! That's is a snippet of my experience travelling from Ijebu-Ode to Onitsha on Friday, 11/10/23.

Few days later, the Police PRO

issued a statement that 'policemen who trot guns at Nigerians in order to extort them are not different from armed robbers!' So, what do we call all these who humiliated, delayed, and deliberately made things difficult for travellers so as to extract some 'water' from them, and they are all armed? It is a rape scenario because people are FORCED to give! They are armed and they are extorting (modified robbing) and they therefore should be classified as armed robbers as per the declaration by the PPRO.

When we were growing up, the Igbo term for bribery was 'aka-azu'(literally, back-hand, what you give behind your back) which means what one is so ashamed to do that he did it in secret. At that time, the policemen or the officers receiving should not even know what they were offered. Today, it is 'aka-ihu'(front-hand) as the policemen would collect the money, look at it very well to confirm the denomination and its genuineness and give change to the driver, and give you a number to quote on the next trip to indicate that you had done clearance for the day. It happens all over the country. If all or almost all of the policemen of our highways are now 'armed robbers', what then should we do? Should we adopt the Liberia option, when President Ellen Sirleaf Johnson sacked all the staff of their Central Bank?

SUNDAY FEATURE

By AJIJI AJANG JOHN

Tears of the sun

BRITAIN took control of the area known as Palestine following the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, which ruled that part of the Middle East, in World War One. The land was inhabited by a Jewish minority and Arab majority, as well as other, smaller ethnic groups. Tensions between the two peoples grew when the international community gave the UK the task of establishing a "national home" in Palestine for Jewish people. This stemmed from the Balfour Declaration of 1917, a pledge made by then Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour to Britain's Jewish community. The declaration was enshrined in the British mandate over Palestine and endorsed by the newly-created League of Nations - forerunner of the United Nations - in 1922. To Jews, Palestine was their ancestral home, but Palestinian Arabs also claimed the land and opposed the move.

Between the 1920s and 1940s, the number of Jews arriving there grew, with many fleeing from persecution in Europe, especially the Nazi Holocaust in World War Two. Violence between Jews and Arabs, and against British rule, also increased. In 1947, the UN voted for Palestine to be split into separate Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem becoming an international city. That plan was accepted by Jewish leaders but rejected by the Arab side and never implemented.

There are a number of issues which the two sides cannot agree on. These include: What should happen to Palestinian refugees whether Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank should stay or be removed, whether the two sides should share Jerusalem, and - perhaps most tricky of all - whether a Palestinian state should be created alongside Israel.

Israel-Palestinian peace talks were held on and off between the 1990s and 2010s, interspersed with outbreaks of violence. A negotiated peace did seem possible in the early days. A series of secret talks in Norway became the Oslo peace process, forever symbolised by a ceremony on the White House lawn in 1993 presided over by President Bill Clinton. In a historic moment, the Palestinians recognised the State of Israel and Israel recognised its historical enemy, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), as the sole representative of the Palestinian people. A self-governing Palestinian Authority was set up. Cracks soon appeared, though, with then opposition leader Benjamin Netanyahu calling Oslo a mortal threat to Israel. The Israelis accelerated their project to settle Jews in the occupied Palestinian territories. The recently emerged Palestinian militant group, Hamas sent suicide bombers to kill people in Israel and wreck the chances of a deal.

Gaza is ruled by Hamas, an Islamist militant group which is committed to the destruction of Israel and is designated as a terrorist group by the UK and many other countries. Hamas won the Palestinians' last elections in 2006, and seized control of Gaza the following year by ousting the rival Fatah movement of West Bank-based

President Mahmoud Abbas. Violence inside Israel has abated since the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) announced it had regained control of all territories along the border with Gaza on 10 October, mining the area to prevent any renewed incursion, more than 72 hours after the Hamas surprise attack. Despite the announcement, a small number of Hamas militants have remained inside Israeli territory, with sporadic clashes reported until 13 October. The official Israeli death toll for the initial day of the Hamas assault has continued to rise, surpassing 1,300. The majority have been civilians, with the IDF putting the number of military fatalities at 264.

Hamas has also continued launching hundreds of rockets into Israel. While the majority of rockets have been intercepted by Israel's Iron Dome air defense system, there have been a small number of direct hits. Two foreign workers were killed in Eshkol regional council on 10 October in a rocket attack, while about a dozen people were injured in Ashdod on 11 October. A further five Israelis were reported injured, two severely, in another rocket attack on 12 October in Sderot. At least one moderate and three light injuries were also reported on 13 October in Rehovot. Israel is still preparing for a potential ground invasion of Gaza, with a massive military buildup continuing along the border. But with Hamas holding an estimated 200 Israeli soldiers and civilians captured inside Gaza, the potential Israeli operation faces severe challenges. The Israeli military suggested on Thursday

morning that no political decision regarding the launch of the ground operation had yet been made. Israel, however, issued a warning to Palestinians in northern Gaza on 13 October to relocate to southern Gaza within the next 24 hours, suggesting that a ground operation may be imminent.

Since then, militants in Gaza have fought several wars with Israel, which along with Egypt has maintained a partial blockade on the strip to isolate Hamas and try to stop attacks, particularly the indiscriminate firing of rockets towards Israeli cities. Palestinians in Gaza say Israel's restrictions and its air strikes on heavily populated areas amount to collective punishment. This year has been the deadliest year on record for Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem. They also complain of the restrictions and military actions being carried out there in response to deadly attacks on Israelis.

Israel has also now put Gaza under a complete siege, with Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant announcing that the coastal enclave would receive "no electricity, no food, no water, no fuel." The majority of Gaza's electricity comes from Israeli power lines, and its only power station ran out of fuel Wednesday, meaning that Gaza will soon be without electricity. More than 420,000 Palestinians have been internally displaced. Egypt closed its border crossing with Gaza on Tuesday after Israeli forces bombed the area several times, and has said that it will not allow a mass exodus of Gazans

across its border. In the wake of a 16-year blockade that had severely restricted the movement of goods and people, Gazan civilians are facing a humanitarian crisis.

Practical solutions are needed in other to end the ongoing conflict, among such include, "binational state," this would create one democratic, secular state in which both Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs would live as citizens with equal rights. Those who support a one-state solution generally see separating Israelis and Palestinians into two states as just too hard. The populations are too intertwined, and reaching agreement on things like borders and Jerusalem and Palestinian refugees is too complicated (yes, we'll get into why these things are complicated in just a bit).

Further more, This plan would create two states for two peoples, Israel and Palestine. Hypothetically, the Israel state would retain a Jewish majority, thus remaining a Jewish state, and the Palestinian state would have a Muslim Arab majority. According to this Haaretz poll from 2019, just about 1/3 of Israelis support a two-state solution (19% support one-state, 9% a confederation (which we'll get to), and the rest fall under "don't know" or "other"). The majority of world powers support the two-state solution as well, as did, until only very recently, the United States and the Israeli government.

But the devil is in the details. Where would the borders be between these states? What would happen to Jerusalem, a city important to both peoples? What about all the Jewish settlements in the West Bank? What about Palestinian refugees?



Nentanyahu



Abbas

Continued from last week

The forgoing is from the business insider. Now that we have a clearer understanding of inflation, let us go back to how it relates to the increase in the salary of federal workers. It will not amount to much because inflation in our country is rife. To make things worse, immediately the government increases the salaries of its workers, the private sector increases the prices of its goods and services. I can bet you that market women and men have started increases the prices of their goods and services, thereby making stoking the inflation and creating an artificial variety, simply because federal workers are going to receive 35,000 increases.

Clearly, increasing worker's salaries does nothing to help them. What I expected to see before and after the subsidy removal was the development of infrastructure and the creation of a social welfare system to cushion the effect of subsidy removal for everybody.

If you ask me, I will tell you that we needed to have a pre, during and post subsidy removal strategy. We needed to have projected to see how badly the subsidy removal would affect us. One of the reasons for inflation is poor production and unemployment. Production and employment are tied together because production employs labour. So why are we having poor production? It is due to high energy costs amongst many other factors. The more we increase the pump price of petrol, the higher the cost of production, the higher the cost of production, the more expensive goods and services will be. The more expensive goods and services are, the lower our purchasing power. It becomes a vicious cycle particularly when you add the cost of transportation and the poor transport infrastructure to it.

I am of the opinion that government would help MAN and MSMEs in finding viable alternative sources of energy and also subsidizing the cost of petrol and diesel to enable them maintain production and keep jobs. Many companies are struggling because of the cost of energy such that they either reduce the quality or the quantity of their goods and services or they altogether, check out.

It is impossible for a N35,000 increase in salary to do anything meaningful thing in any household considering the vagaries that producers face before putting their end products in the market. Their overhead costs leave very little margin for profit, and they are compelled to increase the prices of their goods in many cases, thereby eroding our purchasing power.

We may have to revisit the removal of subsidy one more time. Subsidizing the cost of diesel and petrol for MAN and any company that demonstrate that it produces consumable goods and services will go a long way in guarding our purchasing power, ensuring that there are enough goods in circulation

and that there are enough employed people who can buy these goods and services.

In the same vein, the removal of subsidy must be fully accompanied by a total deregulation and privatization of the upstream and downstream petroleum sector. NNPC, the ministry of finance and the Petroleum Ministry should wave us goodbye. The petroleum sector should be fully privatized and so should the entire sector. Licenses should be issued to any persons or group of persons who demonstrate the capacity to build refineries. We must also look inward



An inflationary N35,000



and consider modular refineries. We should completely stop importing petrol because we lose the revenue that would otherwise go into our reserves if we were the ones refining crude and exporting same.

Increasing federal worker's salary by 35,000 is a little drop in the sea of our economic suffering. It will amount to nothing. How much is a mudu of rice and garri, our two staples? How much is a bag of rice? How much is a tank of petrol? How much is school fees? How much is hospital bill? How much is electricity?

Our Attempt at solving these problems of inflation using the usual superficial and fire brigade approach will not work. If we truly would like to halt this economic downturn. We must go back to the drawing table and address our energy cost.

Climate change should not be the reason why the cost of electricity and petrol keeps going up because energy is

a critical element in industrialization. Industrial nations are those who have low cost of energy in their production. If we are going to collect any loan and the terms of the loan requires that we increase the pump price of petrol, then we will do well to work away from that loan.

Yet again, we need to turn to exports. When the cost of our energy is good and we can produce, we will not only produce for domestic consumption but also for exports that would earn us revenue and foreign exchange. If we do not get our energy right, we may not be able to mine our minerals, process and export them according to global export standards. Me thinks that the people asking us to increase the cost of fossil fuel or creating the environment for such to happen, are strategizing and angling and we have been sold the narrative of climate change.

If the foundation is faulty, a house cannot stand no matter how colourfully

it is painted. It is the same thing with giving the federal civil servants a N35,000 salary. Where are the economic policies and the business policies that we have been waiting for? If truly, the government would like to alleviate this problem, there are measures to be put in place. There should be free education, free transportation, free health care, free buses and trains, grants to MSMEs, subsidy for all manufacturers, deregulation of the oil sector and removal of all government interest, especially at the level of NNPC, subsidizing alternative or green energy, refining fossil fuel, building modular refineries, building good transport infrastructure etc etc.

In conclusion, until the government finds a solution that pervades the entire society, it will be patching a hole in a worn-out garment with a new patch of cloth. We need a new garment. One that has no holes in it. It means that the economy has to be overhauled and new policies that will address the removal of subsidy should be formulated because increasing the salaries of federal civil service will not solve the problem of biting inflation. It will be nothing but a very superficial fire brigade window dress. We believe that the government possesses the intellect, wisdom and understanding required to derail inflation instead of increasing salaries that chase expensive goods and services.

Concluded

Yet again, we need to turn to exports. When the cost of our energy is good and we can produce, we will not only produce for domestic consumption but also for exports that would earn us revenue and foreign exchange. If we do not get our energy right, we may not be able to mine our minerals, process and export them according to global export standards. Me thinks that the people asking us to increase the cost of fossil fuel or creating the environment for such to happen, are strategizing and angling and we have been sold the narrative of climate change.

WHAT a pleasant moment it is to continue to share God's Word with you. It is a day for instructions, a day for illumination; it is a day for help, a day for grace, a day for mercy, a day for enlightenment. It is a great day for wisdom. I am confident that God's people shall leave better than they came. That is our covenant with God, our Father. **"But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more, and more unto the perfect day," (Prov. 4:18).**

I declare that by faith, you shall receive miracles, by faith, you shall receive signs and wonders, you shall receive an administration of the grace of God that will destroy yokes, that will remove burdens in Jesus' Name. I declare that doubts shall be destroyed here, confusion shall give way to clarity, questions shall be answered, and desires will be granted. Amen!

As we continue to look further into the series, 'I Shall Not Want', I sense in my spirit that God is bringing you into seasons of quietness. Praise the Lord! I tell you, some divine hand is at your back, propelling you into your place in life. God is bringing you into seasons of quietness. Praise the name of the Lord. He is touching things round about you, and He is bringing you into seasons of quietness. Remember, we go up with praise.

How many of you know that God has a particular place for you in this life? A place where there is no contention. One of the things I have come to learn, as I have been growing up, as a 'boy' of God, is that the more I know him, the sweeter it becomes. One of the things I know about the Lord is that he is associated with rest.

When you talk about rest, you are first and foremost talking about a state in your heart. One thing I want you to understand today is that you are so unique, you are so precious in God's eyes. Just like they say that there are no two human beings that have the same thumbprint, so also God is so rich, so wealthy He does not have a need, He is not bankrupt of creativity and ability to manifest destinies. There are no two destinies that are alike. So I want you to get into some form of rest because I discovered that one of the things that hinders us from receiving direction from God and seeing the hand of God is because we become so agitated in our life.

There are several enemies of rest. But there are two great ones that you have to contend with in your life, and you have to constantly put down. The first one is what I call, *unhealthy or ungodly competition*. The second is what I call *unhealthy or ungodly comparison*. The former is generated by the latter. Let me say it this way: usually, when you find that there is an unhealthy or ungodly competition in your heart, it is because somewhere or the other, you have allowed yourself to begin to compare yourself with somebody else.

As I start today, I hear the Lord telling me to let you know that you have a divine program, there is a plan, there is an agenda that God is running for your life.

And as it is, there are no two people running on your track. Actually speaking, when you get to the end of your course, whenever that is in life, and you get to Heaven, you are going to discover that, as far as you are concerned, there can only be one winner. That is why I keep saying that You are a champion! You are a winner, because you are not competing with anybody, you are not running on anybody's track. Hallelujah!

You see, nobody can fulfill my assignment because nobody can be DunkaGomwalk. So, I am telling you, in this race, I am the only winner. So right before I started, I know I am a champion. One of the things that we need to

get our hearts and our minds conditioned to, is to allow ourselves, to get into God's pace for our lives. There is a pace that God has for your life. Not only does God have a plan for your life, He also has a pace. Your life is a book that God is unfolding. So when you understand that God has a plan for your life, say God has a plan for my life.

God not only has a plan and program for your life, He also has a pace, and His pace for your life is based on His plan for your life. The Bible says in Proverbs 3:5-6 that, **Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.** Trust is a commitment word; you rule yourself upon Him. Trust in Him, believe in Him. Trust that He has your life in His hands and things are working on your behalf. The Bible specifically says: **Trust in the LORD with all of your heart...** not some of your heart, but **all**. Don't let the Lord be your Plan A or Plan B or Plan C. I like using the word "the Lord" because it endears me. It is a term of endearment. You can use the word God, that is far away. But when you use the word 'Father' or 'Lord', it is a term of endearment.

Trust in the LORD with all of thine heart also means 'trust your whole life upon Him'. You see, Christianity is not some sort of proposition. Christianity is not a test thing. We are not testing anything here. God cannot be tested. He cannot be put in a test



I shall not want (5) God is bringing you into seasons of quietness



That means your understanding may be telling you that in your own eyes, compared to somebody else, you are not making progress, but don't trust in that. Trust that the Lord is moulding your destiny, trust that He has your best interest at heart. Then something will come into your soul. Rest will come into your soul.

When serving the Lord does not become a burden to you, then breakthrough is on your doorstep. Psalms 100:2 says, **Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.** I am not serving Him because I have ten thousand members, or because all the seats in church are full, or because I always have a full bank account, no! I want to serve Him based on the relationship I have with Him.

Listen, I know that He has miracles in His store. I know that He does wondrous things, but that is not even the basis on which I am serving Him. Otherwise, my relationship with him becomes listless, formless and void. So He calls us to trust Him with all of our heart, then we don't live our lives like we are carrying a load. The burden bearer is carrying the load. So when something comes against me, because I have a relationship with Him, I know that it is not really my fight, it is His fight. When I am doing what I know to do as a tither, as a giver, I am serving Him the best I know to do; when I look at an obstacle, I know it is not my obstacle, but His. In Christianity the grand plan of God, is for us to live life from His strength and ability, not ours. That is His grand plan.



INTERNATIONAL

Could ICC deter war crimes in Israel-Gaza conflict?

CHIEF Prosecutor Karim Khan of the International Criminal Court (ICC) must send a message that he is monitoring developments and must warn against carrying out potential war crimes as heavy bombardment of Gaza continues, human rights groups and legal experts say.

Khan broke his silence last week on the Israel-Gaza war, which began with an October 7 attack by the armed wing of the Palestinian group Hamas on Israel, in an interview with Reuters, saying the ICC has jurisdiction over possible war crimes carried out in the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel.

However, analysts and rights groups said Khan should have explicitly warned Hamas and Israel against committing crimes by making it clear that they would be subject to investigation.

They added that Khan's voice may have the power to deter some war crimes and to send a message to both Palestinian and Israeli victims of this conflict that they will not be abandoned by the court.

"What I did not hear, and what I would have liked to hear, is a stronger statement [from Khan] that the office of the prosecutor is collecting evidence and is monitoring the situation," said Adil Haque, a law professor at Rutgers University in the United States.

Khan's office has already been investigating war crime allegations in the occupied Palestinian territory since 2021 – mainly from the Israeli war on Gaza in 2014. However, no formal statement about the ongoing war has been issued despite the office doing so in conflicts such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the atrocities carried out this year in Sudan's western province Darfur.

Since October 7, at least 3,361 Palestinians and at least 1,400 people in Israel have been killed.

Accusations of wrongdoing on both sides

Human Rights Watch (HRW) verified four videos from the Hamas attack where fighters killed people who appeared to be civilians and said these incidents "should be investigated as war crimes" while Amnesty International examined video evidence that also shows deliberate "shooting at civilians and taking civilians as hostages".

Israel has responded to Hamas's surprise attack by cutting off the supply of food, water, fuel and electricity into Gaza, which "will undoubtedly cost civilian lives and constitutes collective punishment", according to the United Nations.

Israel has also launched relentless air attacks on the Gaza Strip, killing entire families and destroying neighbourhoods. An HRW report also found that Israel has used white phosphorus, an incendiary weapon that can burn flesh down to the bone and set fire to all nearby structures. Its use magnifies the dangers for

A signal that ICC is monitoring would let victims know they are not abandoned amidst the Israel-Gaza conflict, experts say. MAT NASHED writes.



Khan

civilians in Gaza – one of the most densely populated regions in the world, said the report.

On October 17, an explosion struck the al-Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City – where thousands of Palestinians were seeking medical care and shelter from the ongoing bombardment – killing at least 500 people, according to Gaza's health ministry.

While Israel denies responsibility for the hospital attack, its actions in Gaza may already amount to war crimes under international humanitarian law, legal experts told Al Jazeera.

Balkees Jarrah, the associate director for HRW's International Justice Program, said a public statement is critical: "It is important [Khan] signals his willingness to expand his investigation into new crimes that are being committed right now."

In the past, former ICC Chief Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda issued warnings that deterred Israel from committing war crimes, said Ahmed Abofoul, a legal researcher and advocacy officer at Al-Haq, a Palestinian human rights organisation based in Ramallah in the occupied West Bank.

In 2018, Bensouda warned Israel not to forcefully evict a Palestinian community from Khan al-Ahmar, a village in the occupied West Bank sandwiched between illegal Israeli settlements, saying such action could constitute a war crime.

In a statement, Bensouda said that she would continue to keep "a close eye on the developments on the ground and will not hesitate to take any appropriate action".

Israeli officials delayed the eviction out of fear that it could invite an ICC probe.

"This [example] unequivocally shows that such preventative statements [from the ICC chief prosecutor] can provide sufficient deterrence [to war crimes]."

When asked last week by the BBC if Israel's ongoing aerial offensive on Gaza was excessive and violated the boundaries of international humanitarian law, Khan responded that he could not make an assessment about fighting that was just "a few days old".

But Haque told Al Jazeera that there is more than enough evidence to start an investigation against the Israeli army for its actions in Gaza.

"There are strong indications that the Israeli army has intentionally directed attacks against civilians, including medics, and civilian objects such as entire apartment buildings, and the war crime of launching attacks knowing that they will cause excessive or disproportionate harm to civilians," he said.

"Depending on the duration of the Israeli siege [on Gaza], and the effects on civilians, the war crime

Khan was quite vocal after Russia attacked Ukraine on February 24, 2022.

Four days after the invasion, he announced that his office would open investigations into possible war crimes committed on Ukrainian territory.

Abofoul, whose family is among the two million people trapped in Gaza, said Palestinians want the ICC to express an equal commitment to probing war

crimes that Israel may be committing.

"Palestinian victims in Gaza need to know that these crimes [against them] won't go unnoticed and that justice will be provided to them. They need to feel seen by the court, or they will feel abandoned," he said, speaking from his home in the Netherlands.

Mark Kersten, an assistant professor in criminology and criminal justice at the University of the Fraser Valley in Canada, agreed.

"I think, for many people who have experienced atrocities in Israel-Palestine or elsewhere, it's really powerful when a court reminds the world that it is on their side," he said. "I think that is an extremely powerful symbolic gesture."

However, political pressure could compromise any impartial investigation, even if Khan does launch a probe, analysts said.

Khan's approach to investigations in Afghanistan – where his office decided to "deprioritise" crimes committed by US personnel to focus on the Taliban's abuses – established a worrying precedent, the analysts pointed out.

Khan's decision followed years of US pressure against the court to drop a probe against its soldiers. Former US President Donald Trump even sanctioned Bensouda and other ICC officials in 2020.

Powerful Western countries that finance a number of the ICC's proceedings could use that influence to pressure the court into not investigating Israel, said Srinivas Burra, an assistant professor in legal studies at South Asian University in New Delhi,

India.

"[Western] political considerations may play a role in the ICC's whole process, which was evident in the context of Afghanistan," he said.

Further complications may arise from Israel's legal relationship with the ICC.

Because Israel is not a party to the Rome Statute – the treaty that established the ICC in 2002 – Burra suggested it had no legal obligation to cooperate with its proceedings.

"It will be difficult to say conclusively that there will be fair cooperation [with the court] from Israel's side," he told Al Jazeera.

Going forward, Khan's words and actions on Israel and Palestine have the power to restore – or damage – the court's credibility worldwide, according to some observers.

"It's ultimately up to ICC officials to guard their own independence," said Jarrah of HRW. "But ICC member countries can and should help to create the space for that independence by being firm and consistent in their support for impartial justice across the court's docket."

Haque believes Khan has leverage.

According to the Rutgers professor, Western states have specifically designated funds to facilitate an ICC probe of Russia's crimes in Ukraine. He suggested that Khan could "simply reverse" this arrangement and insist that any funding goes to supporting the court as a whole, not particular investigations.

"That would create a dilemma for the West because if states withdraw funding to investigate Israel, then they would also be withdrawing money to investigate Russia," Haque told Al Jazeera.

During Khan's interview with Reuters, he called for more funding for the court as a whole, including for the ongoing investigation in the occupied Palestinian territory.

"Palestine – like every other situation that we have – is underfunded and under-resourced and it is a challenge to state parties and the international community whether they wish to give us the tools to do the job," Khan told Reuters.

Khan's press office declined to speak to Al Jazeera and would not comment on whether a probe would be launched into any possible war crimes committed during the current conflict.

For now, Palestinians like Abofoul want the court to acknowledge the abuses in Gaza, where more than 1,000 children have been killed by Israel's offensive since October 7, and try to mitigate the extent of war crimes by telling the warring parties they are being monitored.

"How can Palestinians trust and expect justice from a court that doesn't try to prevent perpetrators by words?" Abofoul asked.

"That's the least the court could do."

Source Al Jazeera.

INTERNATIONAL

Biden condemns Putin, Hamas

UNITED States President Joe Biden has said he will ask Congress for more money to support Israel and Ukraine, asserting in an impassioned speech that both nations were fighting enemies of democracy.

Speaking to Americans from the Oval Office, Biden sought to make a link between the actions of Hamas in Israel and those of Russian president Vladimir Putin who sent his troops into Ukraine for a full-scale invasion in February 2022.

Biden said stopping such aggression was crucial not only for the security of the US but also for the wider world.

He said if the US walked away and aggressors succeeded, others might be "emboldened to try the same" spreading the risk of conflict to other parts of the world.

Biden was speaking hours after returning from a whirlwind trip to Tel Aviv, where he reiterated US support for Israel even amid its total blockade of Gaza and relentless bombardment of the Palestinian enclave of 2.3 million people.

The visit had been meant to include a meeting with Arab leaders but the talks were cancelled after Gaza's Al-Ahli Arab Hospital was hit hours before, killing some 500 people.

Amid calls for a ceasefire, Biden was able to secure a commitment from Israel and Egypt to open the Rafah crossing for desperately needed humanitarian aid.

Biden said he would be lodging an urgent request to Congress to support Israel and Ukraine on Friday. He did not put a value to the security package, but reports have suggested it could be as much as \$100bn.

Biden's address comes amid paralysis in Congress where Republicans, who control the lower house, have struggled to appoint a new House of Representatives Speaker after removing Kevin McCarthy earlier this month.

He said politicians needed to rise above "petty, partisan, angry politics" and meet their responsibilities.

A small group of ultra-conservative Republicans have become increasingly vocal about their opposition to continued funding for Ukraine, but analysts said the US public remained broadly supportive of the initiative



Biden

and Biden's speech would probably win over more people.

The conflict in Gaza erupted on October 7, when Hamas launched a surprise attack against Israel, killing more than 1,400 people and taking dozens captive.

At least 3,785 Palestinians have been killed in the bombing campaign.

He stressed the urgent need for humanitarian assistance to the enclave and noted the agreement secured to get food, water and medicine into Gaza.

Biden's speech at the Oval Office came after he

again reassured Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of US support for Kyiv in its bid to push Russian forces from Ukrainian territory.

He noted that the US was an "essential" part of a group of about 50 countries that have backed Ukraine since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion.

Will make sure Ukraine has the "weapons they need to defend themselves", he said, stressing to his domestic audience that there were no plans to send US troops to Eastern Europe.

China has sharply expanded nuclear arsenal, US says

CHINA has significantly expanded its nuclear stockpile over the past year and is now holding some 500 operational warheads, the US has said.

An annual report released by the Pentagon also said Beijing hopes to double its arsenal to over 1,000 warheads by 2030.

But it said China remained committed to a "no-first strike" policy.

While the report said the growth exceeded projections, China's stockpile is still dwarfed by Russia and the US.

Russia has a nuclear arsenal of some 5,889 warheads, while the US can field 5,244, according to the independent Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

In 2021 the Department of Defense estimated China

had around 400 warheads.

Thursday's Pentagon report said China's current drive to grow its nuclear arsenal was set to "dwarf previous attempts in both scale and complexity".

US officials said Beijing had probably completed the construction of three new clusters of missile sites in 2022.

These fields include at least 300 new Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBMs) silos, the report said.

ICBMs are ballistic missiles with a range greater than 5,500km (3,400 miles).

The People's Liberation Army rocket forces have also been seeking to develop ICBMs that "would allow the People's Republic of China to threaten conventional strikes

JOSEPH Felix Badio was caught as he was driving out of a supermarket car park in the capital, Port-au-Prince.

Mr Moise was murdered in his bedroom by Colombian mercenaries in 2021. Most have since been arrested or killed.

His death threw Haiti into a prolonged political crisis and led to unprecedented levels of lawlessness.

Within months, criminal gangs extended their control over the capital, including its infrastructure and main fuel port.

Mr Badio is accused of ordering hitmen to carry out the attack. He is charged with murder, attempted murder and armed robbery.

Local media said Mr Badio had been fired from his post as an anti-corruption official in the justice ministry a few months before the assassination, after he was allegedly bribed to release a prisoner.

Some of the hitmen arrested hours after the killing alleged that Mr Badio, 60, had given them their orders.

US forces repel Middle East attacks against Israeli

UNITED States forces are facing increased threats, raising concerns that the Israel-Hamas war

Haiti arrests key suspect in Moise's murder



Moise

Others implicated in the case have been convicted in the US. They include John Joel Joseph, a former Haitian senator, and Haitian-Chilean businessman Rodolphe Jaar.

The US has also accused Venezuelan-American Antonio Intriago, the owner of Florida-based CTU Security, of hiring the hitmen. He faces a number of charges including conspiracy to kill or kidnap.

Haiti's unelected government has struggled to provide even basic services since Mr Moise's death.

According to a UN report

this week, gangs have taken control of much of the capital, running schools and clinics but also terrorising the population and fighting turf wars.

Thousands of Haitians have fled their homes in Port-au-Prince amid the soaring violence, and thousands have already died this year.

The UN recently ratified deploying an international force to support Haiti's police, but few countries have committed personnel and it has yet to materialise.

It approved earlier this month Kenya's offer to lead a multinational force to help restore order.

may spill over across the region.

Drones and missiles were launched at bases hosting US troops in Iraq on Thursday. The attacks helped put Washington on heightened alert for activity by Iran-backed armed groups following similar incidents in Iraq and Syria on Wednesday, while a US warship intercepted missiles potentially heading towards Israel.

President Joe Biden has sent naval power to the Middle East in the past two weeks, including two aircraft carriers, other warships and about 2,000 marines.

There has been an uptick in attacks on US forces since the conflict in Israel broke out on October 7 when Palestinian fighters from Hamas, the armed group that rules Gaza, attacked southern Israel.

Earlier this week, US forces thwarted multiple drones targeting troops.

On Wednesday, a drone hit US forces in Syria resulting in minor injuries, while another was brought down.

During a false alarm at Ain al-Asad airbase in Iraq, a civilian contractor died from cardiac arrest.

However, on Thursday, drones and rockets targeted the base, which hosts US and other international forces in western Iraq. Multiple blasts were heard inside the base.

Rockets also hit a military base hosting US forces near Baghdad's international airport, Iraqi police said, without providing further details.

"While I'm not going to forecast any potential responses to these attacks, I will say that we will take all necessary actions to defend US and coalition forces against any threat," Pentagon spokesman Brigadier General Patrick Ryder told reporters.

A US Navy warship travelling near Yemen intercepted three missiles above the northern Red Sea and several drones that were launched by what Ryder said was the Iran-aligned Houthi movement. The official said it appeared that the projectiles were potentially heading in the direction of Israel.

Ryder claimed he did not see a link between the rise in attacks and the conflict between Israel and Hamas.

Two officials with Iranian-backed armed groups in Iraq, who spoke to the AP news agency on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to speak publicly about the issue, confirmed the attacks on the two US bases on Wednesday.

They said the groups were on alert and prepared to join the wider battle against Israel, but that Iran had not yet given approval for them to open



Jinping



Nollywood actresses who shaped film industry



The Nigerian film industry as Nollywood has come a long way since it started in the 1990s even though it was until the 2000s that the name of Nollywood was coined. The evolution of the industry has been thanks to many great actors and Nollywood actresses who have kept and continued to keep fans thrilled.

Nollywood is now the biggest film industry in Africa and one of the biggest in the world in terms of the number of films produced. It is reported that each month, as many as 200 films are produced in

the industry. This means that each year it produces more than 2400 films which dwarf the films produced by Hollywood which has produced a maximum number of over 870 films in 2018, which was the most films it produced in a year since 2000.

With this, it means that some of the best of Nollywood actresses have featured in hundreds of films, and have contributed significantly to the growth of the industry. We take a look at some of the best actresses in the industry.



Joke Silva

Joke Silva is arguably the greatest actress in Nollywood. Not only has she sustained in the industry for a very long time, she always delivers no matter the role you throw at her. More so, she has done everything from theatre to film and even TV. Together with her husband, Olu Jacobs, the pair are among the power couples of Nollywood.

Born on 29 September 1961, Silva started acting in the early 1990s although it was towards the end of the 1990s that she became famous. Also a

director and businesswoman, she has appeared in more than a hundred films and TV shows have been in the industry for more than three decades.

City People Movie Lifetime Achievement Award, She has won many awards including the African Movie Awards, and the SOLIDRA Award among others. She is also a recipient of the Order of the Federal Republic (OFR) merit award from the Nigerian Federal government.

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Hollywood rising young stars

Rachel Zegler and Madelyn Cline



Rachel Zegler and Madelyn Cline

From Daphne Bridgerton to "The Iceberg that Sank the Titanic," these 16 rising stars are behind the characters that entertained audiences through lockdowns and stay-at-home orders. Looking forward, they are fronting the titles that will bring audiences back to the multiplex.

Some talent, like *Bridgerton's* Phoebe Dynevor and Nicola Coughlan, had their break-out moments in the middle of the pandemic, while others like *West Side Story's* Rachel Zegler are still waiting for their delayed big breaks to hit reopened movie theaters. From breaking barriers in the superhero space, like *Batgirl* star Leslie Grace, to breathing new life into established franchises (see: *Dominique Fishback*, who will lead the new *Transformers*), this year's class will continue to play major roles in studio and streamer slates.

They join a list that, in years past, has included now-established stars like *Midsommar* actress Florence Pugh, *Atlanta's* LaKeith Stanfield and *Shang-Chi's* Simu Liu. All of them navigating an industry that is rapidly changing around them. As *Cobra Kai's* Xolo Maridueña puts it: "I don't have the handbook or 'Acting in Your Early 20s for Dummies' book just yet."

Simone Ashley



Growth is something Ashley relishes about being an actress, which is good being that the British up-and-comer, who is of Indian heritage, is on the rise. A bit part in Warner Bros. feature *Detective Pikachu* and a cadre of episodes in U.K. series like *Casualty* and *Broadchurch*, predated a recurring role in Netflix's *Sex Education*. The latter, which has been a

recurring fixture in Netflix's Top 10 over its three seasons, offered a "confidence boost," says the actress. Next up is an almost assured breakout role as the female lead in the second season of the streamer's global hit *Bridgerton*, an experience that Ashley says has her already feeling "like a different person."

Ronny Chieng



Chieng exemplifies Hollywood's growing commitment to a sense of authenticity, or what the actor calls the "street test": "Does what we see onscreen reflect what we see on the street?" Chieng was born in Malaysia and grew up between the U.K., U.S. and Singapore before heading to university in Melbourne, where he began performing stand-up comedy. A personal commitment to

AAPI representation is evident in his growing list of credits: *Shang-Chi*, *Crazy Rich Asians* and Disney+ series *Doogie Kamealoha, M.D.*. Next up — when he's not taking on Asian stereotypes and racism in his Netflix comedy special and viral segments as a *Daily Show* correspondent — is a martial arts action-comedy for Sony and Blumhouse horror *M3GAN*.

Harris Dickinson



The British actor, raised by a hairdresser and a social worker, once considered joining the Royal Marines before a drama teacher talked him out of it. The decision to focus on acting paid off, with Dickinson earning acclaim (including a Film Independent Spirit Award nomination) for 2017 Sundance drama *Beach Rats* and turning heads as Prince Phillip in Disney's *Maleficent*. He steps into his biggest roles yet with long-delayed *The King's Man*

from filmmaker Matthew Vaughn, whose previous discoveries include Taron Egerton and Aaron Taylor-Johnson. After that, it's Sony's adaptation of best-seller *Where the Crawdads Sing* and the Sam Rockwell-Saoirse Ronan murder mystery *See How They Run*, both due out in 2022.

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EVERYBODY'S WORLD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

Relationship

When your child goes to boarding school

It's that time of year again when young adults are making the transition to leave home and attend a university.

Alongside them, millions of parents are fielding the gamut of emotions as they prep and watch their children fly from the nest for the first time.

According to Therapistneworleans.com, last year, an estimated 19.9 million students attended colleges and universities, according to the National Center for Educational Statistics. And while it's true that the number of students heading "off" to college might be a little less than in previous years, the weight of this life transition is still the same.

"So whether your child has opted for distance learning, chosen to attend a school closer to home, or will attend a school across the country, use these four coping strategies to help you get a handle on the change. Know that it's perfectly normal and ok to feel sad. First, remember that this is a BIG transition. We know that sometimes it seems like in the blink of an eye, your child went from infant to young adult, ready to take on the world, and you just can't figure out where the time went. Remind yourself that it's ok to feel sad and it's perfectly normal! Trust that you're years of hard work bringing up your child, teaching him or her life's little and big lessons, and preparing them for this transition has been enough".

"If you find yourself having difficulty letting go of your feelings of sadness or even moving into depression after a few weeks, it might be a good idea to find a trained therapist to help you work through your feelings. Keep calm and let the plan take hold. Alongside with your child, you have no doubt read undergraduate guides, dorm reminders, class schedules, dining hall tips, dorm room shopping lists, and maybe even gone on an information overload to prep for moving day. Take a moment and remember that you've likely done everything you can to help craft the transition plan and that now is the right time to let it take hold. Let all you're planning play out and relax, knowing things will oftentimes naturally evolve and you can make adjustments to the "plan" as it rolls out".

"Let them fly and remind them (and yourself!) That you're still close by.

Your child, whether you're ready for it or not, is now a young adult who can make decisions on his or her own, advocate for themselves, and take care of themselves. It's important now to take just a little step back and let them shine while, of course, reminding them (and yourself) that you're still close by. Letting go even just a little bit is always tough and often feels strange. Make sure to stay connected with your child and ensure that they know you're there to help with any difficulties that arise. Now is their time to fly with a little more independence – and it's



your time to admire your child's strength in all they have become and their drive to bravely step out on their own".

"Take time to focus on your self-care and your needs after the transition. Remember self-care? It may have been a few years since you have focused on your needs and your goals. What are your dreams? Are there hobbies you've taken a step away from since becoming a parent and raising children? The so-called 'empty nest' period doesn't have to carry a negative spin along with it. Use this time to reconnect with your spouse, resume a loved hobby or start a new one, focus on your career goals or personal goals, or simply relax into rest and regrouping. It's OK to let yourself do these things and can be therapeutic as you handle the range of emotions you feel in letting your child step out into the world".

According to Suzanne Shaffer, there are so many milestones in any parent's life. Your baby's first

steps, their first words, the first day of school, and their first girlfriend. But there are few occasions more momentous than the day you send your adult child off to college.

"You will probably be feeling very bittersweet about it. You are delighted that they are on track to succeed in life and learning to become an independent adult. They will make lifelong friends, learn about the world, and finally discover who they really are. But on the other hand, you may be feeling a great deal of sadness that they are leaving home. You will no longer be able to see them every day and cook them dinner each night. They may be living hundreds of miles across the country and can't come to you if they need help. And with everything going on in the world right now, it may be harder than ever before. Student life in a pandemic can't be easy, and you are understandably concerned for their wellbeing".

"Many parents in this situation struggle with empty nest syndrome – the feelings of sadness and loss when a child leaves home. It can be debilitating and if you don't take good care of your mental health it could lead to more serious depression. But going off to college is a normal part of life and you can't expect your kid to live with you forever. It's important that you learn how to cope with your new circumstances and find ways to move on. Learn to view it as an opportunity rather than a tragedy".

"To help you make the most of your new life situation and look after yourself, here are five tips for coping when your child goes off to college. Accept your feelings. There's nothing wrong with feeling emotional about your child leaving. It's a big change and it will take time to cope with it. You must remember not to be too hard on yourself. Give yourself time to feel sad and let it all out. Talk to your partner or close friends about how you're feeling, and they may be able to offer you sound advice or a new way of looking at the situation. Make sure to take some time for yourself and indulge in some self-care. Do something that makes you feel good, whether it's going for a long walk, taking a hot bath, or pampering yourself".

"Keep in touch. It's important to keep things in perspective and remember that your son or daughter is not gone for good. They're living in another place but they will be back home to visit soon enough. In the meantime, there is nothing to stop you from picking up the phone and checking in. There is a good chance your child may be feeling homesick too, so they will welcome a call from their loving

parents".

"Occasional communication will help you feel less distant from your child and feel less like you've lost a part of your life. Give them space. Although communication is important, you should be careful not to be too overbearing. Your child will be enjoying student life and will be going out most nights, making friends, and maybe even fitting in a bit of studying too. If you are calling them every single night and messaging them constantly, they won't get to feel like an independent adult and you'll be getting in the way of their new life. A better solution is to arrange a regular time for a catch-up call, maybe once or twice a week".

"Reconnect with your partner. One of the benefits of an empty nest is that you get to spend a lot more time with your partner. Since your child or children were born, your life has probably been taken over by parenting responsibilities. As a result, you may have neglected to make time for each other. Use this opportunity to rekindle your relationship and rediscover what attracted you both in the first place. Cook dinner together, go out for romantic meals, travel, or start a new hobby".

"Find a new focus. If you're feeling down, it may be that a big part of your life is missing. You no longer have a child at home to provide and care for. As a result, you may feel like you're at a loose end. Find a new focus to fill this gap in your life and give you something meaningful to focus on. Start a new project, join a club, or train for a marathon. The choice is yours".

EVER'S WORLD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

Women's health

Do things differently change your routine

IT can be good to have a routine – after all, a routine helps to add structure to our lives. Nonetheless, it's important to step outside your normal way of doing things from time to time and take a different path.

Sometimes it's nice to have a closer look at the why attached to whatever we're doing and make sure that our habits are still good for us. Maybe now is the time to freshen up your everyday life?

A neurologist named Dr. Katz found that in order to stimulate brain activity, it's necessary to do things in completely different ways. That was his reason for developing Neurobics: it's a kind of brain training that gets you moving in new directions, thus activating the nerve cells in your brain. "Doing things differently" is the motto of the training. Just making small changes in the way you go about your day, or even adding unfamiliar activities, can have a big effect.

Sit over there
If you're the kind of person who always sits in the same place when you eat, it can be good to sometimes choose another seat. You can just sit on the opposite side of the table, or in the chair next to where you normally sit. You'll see that you take in the space around you in a very different way.



Rearrange your stuff
You don't have to buy any expensive furniture for this one; it would be enough just to hang a different picture on the wall. Small changes do a lot, and it's also a nice way to bring new energy into the place that you spend the most time.

Zig instead of zag
You most likely chose your route to work because it's the fastest way to get there. Even so, you should beware of too much routine in your life. Altering the way you get to

work or travel home at the end of the day, even just a little, can have positive effects on your brain activity.

Use your other hand
Try brushing your teeth with the other hand sometimes – this is a tiny change in your day that you'll really notice.

No lunch routine
Maybe you're in the habit of always having lunch in exactly the same way, for example always going to the break room at work or eating at the same restaurant. Do you normally just eat a sandwich while you

continue working at your computer? Mix it up a little from time to time: if the sun is shining, pack your lunch and eat it in the nearest park. You could maybe even somewhere that you wouldn't usually think of going. Another option is using some of your lunch break for a walk – who knows what kind of adventures you might have!

Rearrange your closet

Right now, can you get your T-shirt and socks without even looking at what you're doing because everything is always in the same place? It's time for a change. Put your clothes in different places, for example move the socks to the place your shirts normally go. As an alternative, you might want to move things around in your kitchen.

Source: hello@goalifyapp.com





Reality Bites

with Palang Kasmi
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X-raying International Day for Eradication of Poverty 2023

THE 2023 Theme for International Day for eradicating poverty is

"Decent Work and Social Protection: Putting dignity in practice for all".

The day is celebrated annually on October 17th, and it aims to promote understanding and dialogue between people living in poverty and the wider society. This year's theme draws on first-hand testimonials showing that those trapped in extreme poverty often work long, grueling hours in dangerous, unregulated conditions but still cannot earn enough income to adequately support themselves and their families. The theme also calls for universal access to decent work and social protection as a means to uphold human dignity for all people, and to emphasize that decent work must empower people, provide fair wages and safe working conditions, and fundamentally recognize the inherent value and humanity of all workers. Similarly, universal social protection is urgently needed to guarantee income security for everyone, prioritizing society's most vulnerable members.

Poverty is a major developmental challenge in Nigeria, and the recent subsidy removal has grossly affected Nigerians struggle with high living costs. The theme is also a call to political leaders and policymakers to use human dignity as the guiding compass in all decision-making processes, to ensure the advancement of fundamental human rights and social justice over the pursuit of corporate profits.

According to the UN, strong global partnerships between governments, businesses, and civil society organizations are vital to achieving equitable development and ensuring no one is excluded or left behind. Therefore, this year's observance is a chance to stand in solidarity with people living in poverty, truly listen to their daily struggles, and renew commitments to create a just economy focused on protecting human and environmental wellbeing over maximizing financial gains. The ultimate goal is to eliminate poverty



entirely by creating the conditions for everyone to live with dignity.

"In a world characterized by an unprecedented level of economic development, technological means and financial resources, that millions of persons are living in extreme poverty is a moral outrage. Poverty is not solely an economic issue, but rather a multidimensional phenomenon that encompasses a lack of both income and the basic capabilities to live in dignity" says the UN.

"Persons living in poverty experience many interrelated and mutually reinforcing deprivations that prevent them from realizing their rights and perpetuate their poverty, including:

dangerous work conditions, unsafe housing, lack of nutritious food

unequal access to justice, lack of political power,

limited access to health care. Extreme poverty is defined as surviving on less than \$2.15 per person per day at 2017.

The UN estimates that by the end of 2022, 8.4 per cent of the world's population, or as many as 670 million people, are expected to be living in extreme poverty.

An estimated 7% of the global population – around 575 million people – could still find themselves trapped in extreme poverty by 2030.

In response to the cost-of-living crisis, 105 countries and territories announced almost 350 social protection measures between February 2022 and February 2023, says SDG 1.

UN documents implementing 3rd Decade for Eradicating Poverty indicate that "As the world embarks on the Third Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, an estimated 783 million people lived on less than

\$1.90 a day in 2013, compared with 1.867 billion people in 1990. Economic growth across developing countries has been remarkable since 2000, with faster growth in GDP per capita than advanced countries. Economic growth has fuelled poverty reduction and improvements in living standards. Achievements have also been recorded in job creation, gender equality, education and health care, social protection measures, agriculture and rural development, and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

In addition, multiple crises set to plunge more children into poverty. The number of children without access to social protection is increasing year-on-year, leaving them at risk of poverty, hunger and discrimination, according to a new report by the ILO and UNICEF.

Nigeria's poverty ratio has been revealed by various studies. The Federal Government of Nigeria through the National Bureau of Statistics launched the results of the 2022 Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) Survey.

The survey, a collaborative effort between the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), and other organisations sampled over 56,000 households across the 36 states of the Federation and the FCT, was conducted between November 2021 and February 2022, provides multidimensional poverty estimates at senatorial district level.

The 2022 Multidimensional Poverty Index survey reveals that 63% of persons living within Nigeria (133 million people) are multidimensionally poor. The National MPI is 0.257, indicating that poor people in Nigeria experience just over one-quarter of all possible deprivations.

65% of the poor (86 million people) live in the North, while 35% (nearly 47 million) live in the South.

"Poverty levels across States vary significantly, with the incidence of multidimensional poverty ranging from a low of 27% in Ondo to a high of 91% in Sokoto. Over half of the population of Nigeria are multidimensionally poor and cook

with dung, wood or charcoal, rather than cleaner energy. High deprivations are also apparent nationally in sanitation, time to healthcare, food insecurity, and housing. In general, the incidence of monetary poverty is lower than the incidence of multidimensional poverty across most states. In Nigeria, 40.1% of people are poor according to the 2018/19 national monetary poverty line, and 63% are multidimensionally poor according to the National MPI 2022.

Multidimensional poverty is higher in rural areas, where 72% of people are poor, compared to 42% of people in urban areas,

The National MPI is reported with a linked Child MPI, which provides additional information on Multidimensional Child Poverty in Nigeria, said the survey".

According to the report: Two-thirds (67.5%) of children (0-17) are multidimensionally poor according to the National MPI, and half (51%) of all poor people are children.

The highest deprivations are in the indicator of child engagements – where over half of poor children lack the intellectual stimulation that is pivotal to early childhood development.

Child poverty is prevalent in rural areas, with almost 90% of rural children experiencing poverty.

Across the geo-political zones, the child MPI shows higher poverty in the North-East and North-West (where 90% of children are poor) and lower poverty in the South-East and South-West (74% and 65.1% respectively).

"The incidence of Child MPI is above 50% in all States and greater than 95% in Bayelsa, Sokoto, Gombe and Kebbi. Four million Nigerians – 2.1% of the population – live with a child aged 15-17 who is the first generation in that household to have completed primary school".

With these worrisome statistics, structures and programmes for alleviating poverty in the lives of Nigerians should be the paramount target of the Nigerian government at the Federal, State and Local Government levels.



EVER'S WORLD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

Relationships

Worst lies in relationship that can be damaging

By **DRAVEN PORTER**

BUILDING a good relationship requires a solid foundation of trust and honesty. However, certain falsehoods have the potential to cause significant harm to the connection that exists between couples.

In this piece, we will investigate some of the worst lies in a relationship and the ramifications these lies have for the dynamics of a couple's relationship. What are the worst lies in a relationship?

The worst lies in a relationship, leading to the destruction of trust and closeness, causing catastrophic consequences. Betrayal of trust and intimacy, whether through physical or emotional infidelity, always results in deep hurt. Lying about financial matters, such as concealing debt or reckless spending, causes stress and emotional turmoil, exacerbating the damage. Lies that betray trust and intimacy have severe consequences. Infidelity, both physical and emotional, deeply hurt partners.

Similarly, concealing debt or engaging in reckless spending in financial matters causes stress and hurt feelings. These harmful falsehoods erode the foundation of a relationship, leading to lasting damage and the need for repair.

11 worst lies in a relationship and what they mean:

So what does lying mean? Let's talk about all of them. What topic do people frequently lie about while they are in a committed relationship? Here is a little look behind the scenes.

1. Infidelity

When a person cheats on their partner and then lies about it, not only do lies destroy relationships and trust between the two of them, but it also leads to feelings of inadequacy and creates mental anguish that can linger for a significant length of time. Such are the effects of lying in a relationship.

2. Financial secrets

Keeping one's financial situation a secret not only puts one's stability in jeopardy but also increases the likelihood that one will become embroiled in conflict, stress, and resentment with the other partner.

3. Falsifying details

When someone lies about



significant details, such as their previous relationships, qualifications, or work history, it erodes trust and authenticity and reduces the likelihood that they will be taken seriously as a result of the deception.

4. Addiction concealment

It is fairly usual for people with a substance use problem to keep this addiction a secret. Whether it be an addiction to drug misuse or abuse of any kind, this hinders assistance and erodes trust in the individual and relationship.

5. Misrepresenting intentions

When a person tells falsehoods about their long-term objectives, such as whether or not they want children or their future aspirations, it sets expectations that are in direct opposition to one another and

cannot be fulfilled.

6. Creating false evidence of success

When a person exaggerates their own achievements for the sake of impressing other people or seeking validation, not only does it make it more difficult to develop true connections with other people, but it also fosters feelings of animosity in moments of being lied to in a relationship.

7. Concealment of emotional discontent

It is a waste of effort to give the appearance of being content while completely neglecting one's own emotional needs. Because of this, one may have feelings of dissatisfaction since it prevents them from becoming closer to other people.

8. Refusing to take responsibility and lying about personal faults

Refusing to accept responsibility for one's actions and lying about one's own shortcomings both have the impact of undermining trust and making it more difficult to learn from mistakes and forgive others.

9. The practice of hiding information regarding previous traumas

When substantial traumatic events from one's past are kept a secret, it significantly affects one's ability to understand and support, which in turn impedes the formation of connections with other people.

10. Taking on a false identity

Attempting to seem to be someone other than who you actually are or adopting a fake identity stifles true connections and closeness among people.

11. Refusing affection and intimacy

Employing deception or withholding physical contact as a method of exerting power over another person. The connection that already exists between couples can be weakened when one partner uses emotional connection, intimacy, and manipulation or the avoidance of physical contact as a method for exerting control.

How do secrets and lies affect relationships?

Relationships are severely harmed by secrets and falsehoods because they undermine trust and prevent vulnerability. Open expression is hampered when communication breaks down. As boundaries build, emotional connection decreases. Resentment and fury are created by unresolved secrets. Since honesty

and trust are necessary for true connection, intimacy suffers as a result.

Secrets and falsehoods undermine trust, which breeds mistrust and distrust. Open sharing is prevented because of communication barriers. As boundaries build, emotional connection decreases. Issues that go unsolved can lead to resentment and hostility. Intimacy suffers when there are secrets and lies present since it depends on trust and honesty. Curious about navigating the complexities of lies in relationships? Explore the next section for insightful answers to common questions about the impact of deception, trust restoration, and building healthier connections.

What are some examples of the worst lies that can severely damage a relationship? Among the worst lies in a relationship that may seriously harm the relationship are infidelity and financial dishonesty. Infidelity destroys trust and leaves emotional scars.

Arguments and betrayals result from financial dishonesty, such as hiding debts or engaging in wasteful spending. These falsehoods weaken trust, doing long-term harm. For the relationship to be repaired and become better, trust must be rebuilt, and these falsehoods must be addressed. So the first thing to do is know what are the worst lies to tell in a relationship.

Final thoughts. It is absolutely necessary to lay a basis of honesty and openness in order to provide the groundwork for the growth of a strong and healthy connection. One's worst lies in a relationship include failing to speak freely, refusing to take responsibility for one's behavior, and,



BUSINESS WORLD

Private sector employees' obligation to national housing fund

On 14th February 2023, the Business Facilitation Act 2023 (the "BFA") was enacted to address challenges faced by both entrepreneurs and regulators, thereby simplifying the Nigerian business landscape. Notably, the BFA amended various critical business and commercial-centred legislation including the National Housing Fund Act (the "NHF Act"). Enacted in 1992, the NHF Act established the National Housing Fund (the "Fund") to provide affordable housing for Nigerians. Section 3 of the NHF Act states that the sources of the Fund are: (a) contributions from individuals in the private and public sectors, (b) investments from commercial and merchant banks, as well as insurance companies, and (c) financial contributions from the Federal Government. However, the focal point of this article is regarding the contributions of the private and public sectors. DANIEL BUTER writes.



SECTION 4 of the NHF Act imposes an obligation, and the mandated Nigerian workers earning an income of N3,000 and above annually in the public and private sectors to contribute 2.5% of their basic monthly salary to the Fund. The NHF Act defined a Nigerian worker as an employee who receives salaries.

Crucially, the NHF Act required employers who employ a person with a basic salary of N3,000 and above to deduct 2.5% of their monthly salary as contribution to the Fund and default of which is an offence punishable upon conviction by a N50,000 fine.

That said, the BFA amended the NHF Act to the effect that (a) a public sector employee earning the minimum wage shall contribute 2.5% of his monthly income to the Fund; (b) a private sector employee may contribute 2.5% of his monthly income to the Fund; and (c) a self-employed person shall contribute 2.5% of his monthly income to the Fund. The controversy this stirs up is that while the word "shall" is used in the obligation for public sector employees and self-employed persons, the word "may" is employed for private sector employees.

Legally, when the word "shall" is used in a statute, it typically

word "may", connotes discretion. Under the NHF Act, although the word "may" is used regarding the obligation of private sector employees to contribute to the Fund, the obligation on employers to deduct contributions from their employees and the corresponding penalties for non-compliance have remained unchanged. Moreover, the BFA amendment fails to differentiate between employers in the private and public sectors, unlike how it distinguishes between employees. In light of these, the question is whether private sector employees are still obligated to contribute to the Fund.

The writer is of the view that private sector employees are no longer obligated to contribute to the Fund because (a) the word "may" connotes discretion; and (b) the BFA creates an ambiguity that can be resolved through the golden rule of interpretation.

First, differentiating between "shall" and "may" carries specific legal implications. As earlier stated, the word "may" when used in a statute, generally connotes discretion. However, the word "may" can impose an obligation in very limited cases including – penal statutes that confer power on the courts, where the law imposes an obligation for

a person to act for the public good and where the power is to effectuate a legal right – (Taiwo v FRN, 2022). While these exceptions are not exhaustive, lawmakers do not use words in vain – (Buhari v. INEC & Ors, 2008). Therefore, despite the existing obligation on employers, the absence of "shall" in reference to private sector employees indicates a deliberate choice by the legislature to make their contributions discretionary. If the legislature intended to impose an obligation on private sector employees, it would have used the word "shall," which connotes obligation.

Furthermore, the ambiguity created by the BFA amendment of the NHF Act can be resolved through the golden rule of interpretation which entails a wholesome examination of an entire statute to discern the legislative intent. Therefore, the obligation of private sector employers should be aligned with the discretion of private sector employees to contribute. In other words, the obligation on private sector employers should only be triggered when private sector employees elect to contribute to the Fund.

Interestingly, the National Employers Consultative Association ("NECA") issued a Circular ("Circular") informing members that employees can either decide to opt out or continue to contribute to the Fund. For employees who choose to continue contributions, the Circular directs employers to make deductions in line with the NHF Act. And for employees who choose to opt out, the employers are directed to process their refund in line with the NHF Act. In this regard, Section 20 of the NHF Act provides that any contributor who has (a) attained 60 years; or (b) is retired from employment and becomes incapable of contributing to the Fund shall be eligible for a refund within 3 months of an application to the effect. Therefore, a private sector employee who wishes to opt out of his contributions and seek a refund will be required to comply with these requirements."

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Buter is an associate with the Government Business Practice of Olaniwun Ajayi LP. He routinely advises both domestic and multinational clients on tax disputes and structuring, legislative and policy development, finance, regulatory compliance, and government relations.

BUSINESS WORLD

Nigeria, others to get £150bn for infrastructure -EU

The European Union (EU) is to disburse 150 billion Euros in four years by 2027 through its Global Gateway Initiative to Nigeria and other African countries to enhance infrastructure in over eight sectors.

The EU Commissioner for International Partnerships, Jutta Urpilainen, made this known during the launch of the Global Gateway initiative recently in Abuja.

According to Urpilainen, the Global Gateway initiative is crafted to enhance connectivity, promote sustainable development, and strengthen economic ties between the EU and its partner countries, including Nigeria.

She said that through the initiative, the EU would support Nigeria to achieve enhanced infrastructure connectivity, including transport, energy, digital networks; support agriculture, economic growth, health and education.

"It will also promote sustainable development and environmental protection; and foster cooperation and partnerships with Nigeria and other partner countries.

Urpilainen said that the EU would support the 5G rollout in Nigeria, as part of its efforts to support the digital economy and it is working on a potential loan to support Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the digital and print sectors.

She added that the EU has committed financial resources to support the energy sector, including



Tinubu

the setting up of mini grids and small hydropower plants for productive and public purposes.

Urpilainen said that education is the most transformative investment anyone could make so an empowerment project is being launched in North Western Nigeria in cooperation with government to promote quality basic education in the northern regions.

She said Nigeria is also a major beneficiary of the student mobility and higher education cooperation project under Erasmus+ with more than 2,020 students from Nigeria granted scholarships for studying in the EU in 2022.

The EU is committed to a long-term partnership with Nigeria under the Global Gateway to achieve shared goals and objectives.

"The EU's long-term commitment will see investments into the following sectors of the country: Agriculture (€42,000,000), Energy (€37,000,000), Health (€45,000,000), Digital (€55,000,000), Education

(€45,000,000), and Social Protection (€46,000,000)." Mr Bosun Tijani, Minister of Communication, Innovation and Digital Economy, said that the Global Gateway initiative aimed at achieving collective regional and global prosperity was in full alignment with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Renewed Hope agenda.

According to Tijani, the core of this administration's agenda is a developed Nigeria that is not only for a few, but for all, providing the Government the opportunity to actualize its plans in sectors that it wants to focus on.

"For us in the Ministry of Communication, Innovation and Digital Economy, our role takes on further significance as we have a portfolio that will be central to all we want to achieve under the Global Gateway programme.

Tijani said that the investment of the Nigerian government was to provide opportunities for young people to participate in the global economy.

Stakeholders recently in Abuja advocated for more community inclusiveness in reducing the menace of marine plastic pollution in the country.

They made the call at a Stakeholders' Engagement meeting with the theme "Reducing Marine Plastic Pollution Through Recycling".

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the programme was organised by Initiative for the Advancement of Waste Management in Africa (W.A.S.T.E Africa) and sponsored by the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme (GEF SGP), and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Ms Juliet Odhikori Programme Director, WASTE Africa, in her address said the programme was aimed at empowering women and others who are engaged in the recycling process.

Odhikori said the idea is to reduce marine pollution entering into rivers around Lugbe area of Abuja.

She said that the group has been to Lugbe and Gwagwalada areas and established nine clusters.

Also, Mrs Ibiroke Olubamise National Coordinator, Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme said plastic waste is a menace globally.

Olubamise said that plastic pollution in the country also leaks into international waters, hence the involvement of the UNDP in

Stakeholders advocate community inclusiveness to reduce pollution

building capacity of stakeholders.

She lauded WASTE Africa for impacting on local community women which is one of the objectives of GEFSGP.

Speaking also, Mr Olusegun Olusa, Director Environmental Services, Satellite Town Development Department, Federal Capital Development Authority, called for greater community inclusiveness in plastic pollution management.

The purpose of the engagement is to review the project's progress and deliberate on measures to improve its sustainability and effective waste management and collection in the areas.

NAN further reports that the project seeks to reduce plastic pollution in water bodies around Abuja, which is undergoing a fast pace of urbanisation and is struggling to adequately meet its waste management needs.

The target water bodies are the Wupa and Usuma Rivers in Lugbe and Gwagwalada areas.

The project is set to empower 500 women recyclers, over 100 local waste pickers, and 15 waste aggregators.

The monthly collection target is 52 tonnes of plastics, with a total of 468 tonnes in nine months.

According to National Geographic, 8 million tonnes of plastic enter the ocean each year and is estimated to increase between 23 to 27 million tonnes by 2040.

With 2.5 million tonnes of plastic waste annually, Nigeria is the 9th largest contributor of marine litter in the world and among the top African countries contributing to marine debris and mismanaged plastic flowing into the Gulf of Guinea.

(N A N)
(www.nannews.ng)



Lawal

Fuel scarcity: NNPC warns against panic buying

There was a disagreement between oil marketers and the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited on Thursday over the supply of Premium Motor Spirit, popularly called petrol, as queues by motorists for the commodity in filling stations grew worse.

Dealers stated that the queues in various parts of the country for petrol might continue to linger because many independent oil marketers had not been able to access the PMS for over one month.

But this was countered by the NNPC, as it argued that the company had 30-day PMS sufficiency, though the national oil firm admitted that it was aware of the fuel queues in Nigeria.

Many filling stations, particularly those operated by independent marketers were shut due to a lack of products to dispense in Abuja and neighbouring Nasarawa and Niger states.

The few outlets that dispensed products in these areas, mainly those of major dealers, were greeted with queues, for instance, the Conoil filling station in front of the Abuja headquarters of NNPC had queues on Thursday.

The same scenario played out in Lagos, Port Harcourt, and many other locations, as confirmed by marketers and motorists in the various areas.

On Thursday, dealers under the aegis of the Independent Marketers Association of Nigeria stated that they had been finding it tough to

access petrol from the NNPC for more than one month.

IPMAN controls over 70 per cent of retail stations that dispense PMS nationwide. Currently, many outlets operated by IPMAN members are shut due to a lack of products to dispense.

They also told our correspondent that independent marketers had to resort to major tank farm owners for products, adding that the ex-depot price at these tank farms had been raised from about N578/litre to N605/litre.

The National Public Relations Officer, Independent Petroleum Marketers Association of Nigeria, Chief Chinedu Ukadike, stated, "Many depots are dry. The NNPC normally keeps products in its storage that are meant to be on the ground for some duration before fresh products come in. But as we speak, I think the stored products are exhausted."

"This is because for some time now, for the past month now, NNPC has not been supplying petroleum products to independent marketers in the Port Refinery depot and some other depots across the country.

Gbajabamila seeks creation of gaming regulations

Mr Lanre Gbajabamila, the Director-General of the National Lottery Regulatory Commission (NLRC), has proposed the establishment of Africa Gaming Regulators Association to address money laundering and terrorism financing in Africa.

Gbajabamila made the

proposal while presenting a paper at the ongoing 2023 International Gaming Regulators Association (IGRA) Conference in Botswana.

He also called for the establishment of West Africa Gaming Regulators Association (WAGRA) to facilitate regional cooperation and

collaboration.

Gbajabamila said money laundering, terrorism financing and syndicate gaming were serious threat to the gaming industry in Africa.

He, however, called for an urgent need to address the issues.

He said the African gaming industry had demonstrated capacity to drive economic growth, generate employment, attract foreign investments, and promote tourism.

Gbajabamila said the industry had the risk of being exploited for money laundering and financing terrorist activities.

This, he said, called for the implementation of stringent regulations to combat money laundering, while fostering innovation



Gbajabamila

ENTREPRENEUR WATCH

WITH CELESTINE D. ATTSAR

Resilience and risk in the supply chain

In the fast-paced, interconnected world of global commerce, the supply chain is the circulatory system of businesses. It ensures that products reach consumers efficiently, like blood coursing through veins. Yet, as our world grows increasingly complex, so do our supply chains. They extend across continents, rely on an intricate web of suppliers, and are susceptible to many unforeseen challenges. This complexity and vulnerability can be likened to the vulnerability of a colossal ship in a tempest. One might wonder how such a ship, battered by winds and waves, stays afloat. The answer lies in understanding risk and building resilience. ADEDAYO ADELEKE writes.

THE tale of the SS El Faro, a cargo ship lost at sea in a hurricane, serves as a vivid reminder of the importance of supply chain risk management and resilience. On October 1, 2015, this enormous vessel, en route from Florida to Puerto Rico, found itself in the path of Hurricane Joaquin, a Category 3 hurricane with relentless fury. Despite warnings, the ship's crew faced a series of unfortunate decisions that ultimately led to disaster. This calamity illustrates how the lack of understanding, preparation, and resilience can lead to catastrophic consequences. In the world of supply chain management, the parallels are uncanny.

Defining supply chain risk

Supply chain risk is a multifaceted concept, encompassing a spectrum of challenges that can disrupt the flow of goods and services. Operational, financial, strategic, and compliance risks contribute to the complexity of supply chain management.

Operational risks involve the daily challenges businesses face, such as machinery breakdowns, employee shortages, and transportation delays. A hiccup in any of these areas can disrupt the entire supply chain.

Financial risks on the other hand, pertain to the monetary aspects of supply chain management. Fluctuating currency exchange rates, credit risks with suppliers, and volatile raw material prices all introduce financial instability to the supply chain.

Strategic risks involve the long-term plans and decisions made by a business. A shift in market dynamics, sudden changes in customer preferences, or entering new markets can all be fraught with strategic risk.

Compliance risks are associated with adhering to regulations and standards, both locally and internationally. Failure to comply with these can lead to legal troubles and disruptions in the supply chain.

To mitigate these risks effectively, it is crucial to understand them thoroughly, anticipate their occurrence, and establish contingency plans.

Identifying risk factors

External Factors: These are factors outside a company's immediate control. Market volatility, for instance, can lead to unpredictable fluctuations in supply and demand, which can be particularly challenging in industries with long lead times. Natural disasters, such as earthquakes, hurricanes, and floods, can devastate entire regions, crippling the production capabilities of suppliers. Companies must have robust

disaster recovery and business continuity plans to prepare for these eventualities.

Geopolitical factors: A number of factors, such as trade tensions and geopolitical conflicts around the world, can lead to the non-availability of crucial resources. As a result, established supply chain routes can be disrupted. It is imperative that companies closely monitor these developments and prepare for any contingencies that may arise.

Internal Factors: These elements within a company's control require careful management. Situations such as supplier dependencies, for instance, are a critical consideration. Relying heavily on a single supplier can lead to vulnerability if that supplier experiences issues.

Also, inventory management and quality control are other internal factors that can influence supply chain resilience. While holding excess inventory can be costly, having too little can lead to shortages in times of need too. So striking the right balance is essential.

These factors are where we can learn how to use rigorous quality control measures to help prevent issues of defective products which can lead to recalls, cause damage to a brand's reputation, and supply chain disruptions.

Assessing and measuring supply chain risks

Effectively managing supply chain risk begins with measuring and assessing it. Key performance indicators (KPIs) are essential tools for this purpose. These indicators may include on-time delivery rates, inventory turnover ratios, and supplier performance metrics. My advice is that companies should establish clear benchmarks for these KPIs and regularly assess their supply chain's performance against them.

Data and analytics play a pivotal role in risk assessment. Big data and machine learning algorithms can help predict potential disruptions by analysing historical data and identifying patterns. For example, by analysing past transportation delays, a company can predict future potential disruptions and make necessary adjustments.

Many risk assessment frameworks and models exist to aid companies in evaluating their supply chain risk. The Supply Chain Operations Reference (SCOR) model, for instance, provides a comprehensive framework to assess and manage various aspects of the supply chain.

A real-life example to further illustrate the importance of risk assessment is how Toyota suffered significant supply chain disruptions during the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan. Their production was severely impacted because of their

overreliance on Japanese suppliers. As a result of the disaster, it has become clear that understanding geographic concentrations of suppliers and diversifying them is essential.

Scenario planning involves preparing for a range of possible disruptions and having strategies in place to address them. This proactive approach allows companies to respond swiftly when a crisis occurs.

What is the role of technology in managing supply chain risks?

Technology plays a pivotal role in enhancing supply chain resilience. Supply chain management software and tools provide real-time visibility and automation capabilities to streamline operations. Blockchain technology enables greater transparency and traceability throughout the supply chain. This can be particularly important for industries with stringent quality and safety requirements, such as the food and pharmaceutical sectors.

IoT (Internet of Things) devices, including sensors and trackers, allow companies to monitor the condition and location of goods in transit. This real-time information helps in identifying and mitigating disruptions.

AI and predictive analytics provide companies with the ability to forecast disruptions based on a wide range of data inputs, facilitating proactive risk

management.

Training and education are essential for employees at all levels of the organization. This includes educating staff about risk management practices and ensuring they understand their roles in the event of a disruption.

To illustrate the principles of supply chain risk management and resilience, we can look at how Maersk, the global shipping company utilized blockchain technology to enhance the security and transparency of its supply chain. This move has improved the traceability of goods and reduced the risk of fraud.

Conclusion

In the world of supply chain management, understanding risk and building resilience is akin to equipping a ship to weather any storm. The tale of the SS El Faro serves as a haunting reminder that ignorance and neglect can lead to tragic consequences. By comprehending the various risks inherent in supply chains, companies can proactively take steps to mitigate these risks and bolster their resilience.

As our world grows more complex, and the challenges facing supply chains become increasingly intricate, it is paramount that businesses recognize the need for comprehensive risk management strategies. However, this is an ongoing journey, one that requires constant vigilance and





Nollywood actresses who shaped film industry

Continued from page 18



Genevieve Nnaji

AS far as Nollywood is concerned the only person that stands on the same stage as Joke Silva is Genevieve Nnaji. Considered by many to be the greatest of Nollywood actresses, Nnaji has neem in the movie business since she made her debut in 1987 when she was only 8 years old. Also a movie producer, director, and businesswoman, she became a household name in the country in the early 2000s.

Born on 3 May 1979, the University of Lagos graduate has appeared in more than 200 films many of which became great successes. After she was banned from the Nigerian movie scene in the 2000s, she tried her luck with music but that did not turn out well for her, forcing her to return to

her first love. Considered Nigeria's Sharon Stone, the legendary actress was referred to as Africa's Julia Roberts by Oprah Winfrey. She has appeared in films such as *Ripples* (1987), *Most Wanted* (1998), *Road to Yesterday* (2015), and *Lionheart* (2018). Her film, *Lionheart* was later bought by Netflix and it became the first Nigerian film to be bought by the streaming service. A recipient of the Order of the Federal Republic by the Nigerian government, she has won many awards including the Black Reel Awards, African Movie Academy Awards, Africa Magic Viewers Choice Awards, and Nigeria Entertainment Awards among many others.



Omotola Jalade Ekeinde

VERY close to Nnaji is Omotola Jalade Ekeinde who many consider being her archrival. A graduate of Obafemi Awolowo University, Omosoxy, as she is often referred to as has been in the Nigerian film industry since 1995 when she appeared in *Venom of Justice*. The first African celebrity to reach a million likes on her Facebook Page, she has earned the respect and love of many in Nigeria and beyond thanks to her unwavering talent.

Omotola was born on 7 February 1978 in Lagos State, Nigeria. Since she made her debut as an actress, she has come to appear in close to 300 films making her one of the most featured faces in Nollywood. The actress has also ventured into

music in 2005. She recorded a little success with her sing, *Naija Lowa*. She also got into the reality show scene in 2021 with her show, *Omotola: The Real Me*.

Among her most popular works are *Mortal Inheritance* (1997), *Blood Sisters* (2003), *Ije: The Journey* (2010), *A Private Storm* (2010), and *Last Flight to Abuja* (2012). Also a recipient of the Order of the Federal Republic, Omotola has won many awards in her acting career including the following: Africa Movie Academy Awards (AMAA), Ghana Movie Awards, Toronto International Nollywood Film Festival, and Golden Icons Academy Movie Awards.

Source: Primenews

Hollywood rising young stars

Continued from page 18

Ariana DeBose



Moving to New York City from North Carolina at 19, DeBose's Broadway debut came in 2011's *Bring It On: The Musical*, which featured lyrics from Lin-Manuel Miranda, who would later tap DeBose for early workshops of *Hamilton*. "To see the fruits of your hard work, become an international phenomenon, I don't think you can ever fully process it," says the actress, who remembers helping Daveed Diggs escape a mob of fans during a lunch

break as the show was gaining popularity. It was in the middle of her Tony-nominated run as Donna Summer in the musical *Summer* that DeBose was called in to audition for Spielberg's *West Side Story*, eventually landing the part of Anita, originally made famous by Rita Moreno. Ahead of filming, Moreno offered the actress some advice: "Lean into everything that makes you special." DeBose surmises, "She basically was like, 'Don't get in my shadow.'"

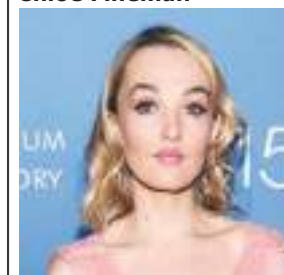
Phoebe Dynevor



A week after Dynevor wrapped filming on the six-month shoot for Netflix's *Bridgerton*, the quarantine began. "I went from one intense thing into another," says the actress, who only recently grasped the reach of the pandemic's biggest breakout: "It wasn't until the world has gone back to normal that I have realized the enormity of the show." The English Dynevor, who has been performing for over a decade and was previously best known stateside for TV Land-turned-Paramount+ darling

Younger, is set for Amazon's U.K. remake of French series *Call My Agent* and Sony feature *I Heart Murder*. And, of course, there is *Bridgerton's* much anticipated second season. Dynevor is happy to be back at work, noting, "The noise that comes after what we do for a living is a whole separate thing."

Chloe Fineman



On SNL, Fineman has impersonated everyone from Drew Barrymore to Timothée Chalamet. She was upped to repertory status this season and is also making the jump to the big screen this year with Warner Bros.' *Father of the Bride* remake, where she will take on Martin Short's wacky wedding planner role, minus the signature accent. "I felt like it was too much if I was German," she teases. "Now I'm the out-of-touch but likable white girl." And, in a more dramatic turn, Fineman will appear

opposite Brad Pitt and Margot Robbie in Damien Chazelle's Hollywood epic *Babylon*. The goal for the NYU grad is to straddle the worlds of both comedy and drama, while also eyeing a future in producing. She explains, "The more hands-on I get to be, the more I enjoy it."

Dominique Fishback



When Fishback was working a retail job at New York's famed Drama Book Shop, she found out that the pilot she filmed titled *The Deuce* had been picked up to series by HBO. She kept signing up for shifts. "I still wanted to be grounded and wanted to be with everyone," says the East New York, Brooklyn, native of the decision. "Then my schedule got too busy and I had to give all of my shifts away." Her schedule has stayed busy with a variety of high-concept features (*Project Power*), Oscar-nominated titles

(*Judas and the Black Messiah*), and prestige television (Apple's *The Last Days of Ptolemy Grey*). Now, she has just wrapped filming on Paramount's next *Transformers* movie, which she co-leads with fellow Brooklynite Anthony Ramos.

Leslie Grace



"It's something that I was itching for — to be able to play a role that didn't necessarily have anything to do with music," says Grace of her latest role in the highly anticipated DC feature *Batgirl*. The three-time Latin Grammy nominee made her onscreen debut earlier this summer in Lin-Manuel Miranda's NYC-set musical *In the Heights*, but is currently in training in London to play the superhero and alter ego *Barbra Gordon* ("I am stretching for fun now"). *Batgirl* is only the second onscreen role for the Bronx-born and Florida-raised actress, and her first time on the top of the call sheet. But Grace is no stranger to performing, having started her career as a singer-songwriter when she was 16 years old. She says, "I use all of that experience in one way or another to fuel all the things that I'm doing now."

Source: Hollywood Reporter

SUNDAY FEATURE

Character as the cradle for Nigerian leaders

The most valuable component of leadership is not power, position, influence, fame, talent, giftings, dynamic oratory, intellectual superiority or even management skills; character is the cradle of credibility for the leader. KALU Writes

Leadership is a solemn responsibility that carries the weight of a nation's hopes and aspirations. For a diverse and dynamic country like Nigeria, leadership is not just a position; it is a stewardship of a nation's future. Leaders are expected to be exemplars of integrity, vision, and ethical conduct, but the history of Nigeria's leadership has been of leaders who have fallen short of these expectations.

Nigeria has repeatedly had leaders lacking in character, who erode trust, perpetuate unethical behaviour, and fail to uphold the principles of accountability and empathy. This does not only hamper their ability to lead effectively but also burdens the people with disillusionment and unfulfilled promises.

A nation so blessed with immense human and material resources, a diverse, resilient population, should be occupying the top echelon of the comity of nations. Nigeria remains a nation in search of true leadership – a leadership that can harness this potential and steer the country towards greatness.

Nigerian leaders are defective in character when it comes to the discharge of their responsibility and this is almost traceable to every leader occupying prominent position in the country and cutting across; politicians, captains of industry, clergy, celebrities, etc.

For instance, Nigeria's political landscape has, over the years, witnessed its fair share of controversies and scandals, but few have been as persistent and intriguing as the "certificate saga" surrounding the educational qualifications of many of the nation's leaders.

The certificate saga in Nigeria's politics is as old as the nation's democratic history. It dates back to post-independence era when the qualifications of political leaders were questioned. The first major certificate scandal emerged in 1964 when Obafemi Awolowo, a prominent political figure, was accused of presenting fraudulent academic qualifications. Although Awolowo was later cleared of the charges, this incident marked the beginning of a long history of certificate controversies in Nigeria's politics.

The certificate saga has, over the years, embroiled a myriad of political figures, including presidential candidates, governors, and legislators. The controversies often revolve around claims of forged certificates, discrepancies in educational records, or allegations of incomplete qualifications. Former presidents Muhammadu Buhari, Goodluck Jonathan, and President Bola Tinubu, among others, have faced certificate scrutiny.

The certificate saga has profound implications for leadership in Nigeria. On one hand, it raises questions about the integrity and honesty of leaders. When leaders are perceived as lacking transparency or credibility in their educational qualifications, it erodes the trust of the people – a critical component of effective leadership. On the other hand, it can also divert attention from more pressing issues, obscuring the focus on governance and policy-making.

When this happens, diverse views will emerge. While some argue that educational



Tinubu



Akpabio

qualifications are essential for leadership, others believe that leadership should be judged based on performance and the ability to deliver on promises. This diversity of opinion reflects the complexity of the issue.

Certificate saga is not just a matter of personal integrity; it is a reflection of broader challenges facing Nigeria. The nation's educational system, accountability mechanisms, and political processes all come under scrutiny.

Greater transparency in educational records and a more stringent vetting process for candidates have to grow louder to avoid the perennial distraction that follows its occurrence while accountability and ethical conduct in public life are also seen as important facets of addressing the issue.

Nigerians are not exclusive in their yearning for effective leadership. Around the world, citizens seek leaders who are principled, transparent, and devoted to the welfare of the people. People yearn for leaders who rise above the lure of self-interest and are committed to the common good. This hunger for legitimacy is universal, but in Nigeria, it is a hunger that has yet to be fully satiated.

As a country characterised by an interplay of diverse ethnic groups, interests, and socio-economic disparities, this complexity has often led to a struggle for power that overshadows the core tenets of leadership, service, accountability, and progress.

Another challenge to effective leadership in Nigeria is the pervasive corruption. Corruption has seeped into various aspects of the nation's governance and institutions, eroding trust, stifling development, and thwarting the aspirations of millions. Effective leadership stands as the antidote to this plague, promising accountability, transparency, and commitment to eradicating corruption at its roots.

Nigeria's leadership requires a compelling vision for the nation, one that transcends the divisions that have held its destiny back. This vision must unite Nigerians under a common purpose, instilling hope and faith in a shared future. The challenges are many – from ethno-religious tensions to economic disparities, but a true leader is called to confront these challenges with a commitment to unite the nation.

As Nigeria continues its search for true leadership, it is essential to remember that leadership is not the sole responsibility of those in power; it is a collective endeavour. Citizens, civil society, and the international community all play vital roles in nurturing and holding leaders accountable.

It is time for Nigeria to break free from the cycle of unfulfilled potential and missed

opportunities. It is time for leaders to rise, not for personal gain, but for the greater good. Nigeria's journey towards effective leadership may be long and arduous, but it is a journey worth undertaking, for the destiny of a nation and the aspirations of a people hang in the balance.

Nigeria's potential is undeniable. It is the most populous Black Country in Africa, a hub of economic activity, and home to a burgeoning youth population. With natural resources, a burgeoning tech industry, and a dynamic creative sector, the nation has all the ingredients for success. But potential alone cannot shape destiny.

Nigeria's diversity is both strength and a challenge. For a nation of over 250 ethnic groups and multiple religions, unity is often elusive. Yet, unity is the foundation of a brighter destiny. An inclusive vision that brings all Nigerians together, regardless of their background, can foster a sense of shared purpose. Economic disparities must be addressed. Nigeria's wealth should be shared equitably, and policies that promote sustainable development must take center stage. An inclusive economic framework can uplift millions and serve as the basis for a prosperous future.

Security remains a concern. Addressing terrorism, insurgency, and communal violence is crucial for stability and progress. A secure environment is a prerequisite for any nation's destiny to flourish.

Leadership is the fulcrum upon which a nation's destiny pivots. Effective leadership, characterised by integrity, transparency, and dedication to the welfare of the citizens are the needs of the hour. It is leadership that places the interests of the nation above personal gain and works to overcome the obstacles to progress.

Nigeria's destiny is not etched in stone; it is an evolving narrative written by its leaders and citizens. The nation stands at a crossroads, where the choices made today will reverberate through generations. Nigeria's destiny is not predetermined; it is waiting to be woven with the threads of unity, progress, and resilience.

The destiny of Nigeria is in the hands of those who believe in the nation's potential, who are committed to forging a united, inclusive, and prosperous future. The nation is in search of true committed leadership. The story is still being written, chapter by chapter. It is a story of hope, resilience, and the belief that Nigeria's best days are yet to come.

Okoronkwo, leadership a good governance advocate Lagos Nigeria. okoronkwo@gmail.com



JOS NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCIL
Local Government Secretariat,
PMB. 2020, Jos,
Tel: 073.45017, 457372

INVITATION TO TENDER

Jos North local government council wishes to invite competent and reputable Contractors with good track record of performance to submit tender for the execution of the under listed projects.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF WORK

- Lot1 Sinking of Boreholes at Sabon Gari Tudun Wada, Angwan Rukuba, Holazah, Chel Nyap and Jenta Mangoro.
- Lot 2 Transformers, at Sabon Gari, Angwan Rukuba and Dong.
- Lot 3 Street light across the 20 wards of Jos North
- Lot 4 Road Grading and laterite, Culverts and drainage at Holaza Farin Gada.
- Lot 5 Culverts and drainage across the 20 wards of Jos North
- Lot 6 Purchase of Tractor.
- Lot 7 Purchase of veterinary drugs
- Lot 8 Purchase of vehicles for Traditional Rulers
- Lot 9 Creation of sick bay in the Local Government Council Secretariat.
- Lot 10 Production of School Desk and Books

3.0 TENDER REQUIREMENTS /QUALIFICATIONS

Documents to be submitted includes:

- a. Evidence of registration with Jos North LGC
- b. Evidence of registration with Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC).
- c. Evidence of registration of staff with Pension Commission of Nigeria
- d. Evidence of tax Clearance certificate for the last three years.
- e. Evidence of registration of both company and key personnel with relevant professional bodies.
- f. Provision of VAT Certificate.
- g. Three years audited account of the company.
- h. Evidence of financial capability /reference letter from a reputable bank.
- i. Evidence of appropriate documentation fees.

4.0 SUBMISSION OF DOCUMENTS:

The Pre-qualification documents shall be submitted to the office of the Sole Administrator Jos North local Government Council, with evidence of payment of a non-refundable tender fee of #50,000:00 (fifty thousand Naira only). To be submitted on or before 6th, November 2023.

5.0 OPENING OF BID DOCUMENT:

The pre-qualification document shall be opened by 1pm at Jos North Local Government Council Secretariat on the closing date of November 6th, 2023.

All contractors are invited to attend the opening exercise.

Please note that Jos North is neither committed nor obligated to short list any contractor or to award contract to any of the contractors, Jos North has the right to reject any bid.

Signed:

Hilary Shown Secretary, Tenders Board,
For Sole Administrator Jos North LGC

NEWS

PLSG commits to ease of doing business

By DUMAH RANDONG

THE Plateau State Government says it is committed to implementing reforms that would improve the ease of doing business, streamline regulatory processes and enhance transparency in governance.

Governor Caleb Mutfwang gave this indication while inaugurating the Plateau State Ease of Doing Business Council at Government House, Little Rayfield, Jos, recently.

He said they would do everything within their power to create an enabling environment where entrepreneurship and innovation could thrive.

Represented by his Deputy, Mrs Josephine Piyo, Mutfwang noted that the state was in need of circulating businesses to compellingly revolutionize value added initiatives to bring up the state positively.

"We are all aware that fostering a conducive business environment is paramount to economic growth and development. It is a collective responsibility to ensure that businesses thrive and flourish, leading to increased job opportunities and a higher quality of life for our citizens," the governor pointed out.

"This forum holds great significance to us as it provides us with an opportunity to discuss the current state of the Business Enabling Environment and delve into the intricacies of the state business environment reform



Mutfwang

programme.

"It is time for us to align our efforts and deepen collaboration among stakeholders to improve the state of business on the Plateau," the governor stressed.

The state, he said, was blessed with abundant resources and untapped potential. And tasked all to leverage on this strong foundation to build upon by working together to enable the state to unlock its potentials.

He noted that small and medium businesses were the backbone of the country as well as benefit the community by creating job growth and providing locals with job opportunities. He also stressed that the insights, experiences and expertise of the stakeholders was valued by the government as they would serve as vital inputs in shaping the future of the state business environment.

The terms of reference for the council are to among others, coordinate

and supervise the implementation of business enabling reforms, establishing linkages with the Presidential Business Environment Council and ensure Plateau State was among top states in terms of ease of doing business in the country as well as coordinate and ensure the development of business environment reforms and action plans.

Secretary to Government of the State and Chairman of the Plateau State Ease of Doing Business Council, Architect Samuel Jatau, said the government was determined to move the state from a civil service state to a private sector driven-economy.

Jatau urged members of the newly inaugurated council to work together as a team and ensure that the state remains among the top ten states ranked as having the enabling environment for ease of doing business.

Members of the Council cut across relevant MDAs and the private sector.

By
JIDAUNA DARING

AS the world observed Global Handwashing every October 15 of each year, citizens of Plateau State have been called upon to work together to ensure healthy society-when it comes to handwashing in the state.

Plateau State First Lady, Barrister Mrs. Helen M. Mutfwang made the call on the occasion of Global Handwashing Day, organized by the office of the state's first lady in collaboration with the state ministry for Women Affairs and Social Development, held at Old Government House Rayfield Jos, on Monday.

Barrister Mrs., Mutfwang remarked that Global advocacy day is dedicated to increase awareness and understanding about the importance of handwashing with soap as an effective and affordable way to prevent diseases in order to save lives.

She pointed out that the initiative aims to curtail germ transmission and reduce the prevalence of diseases such as diarrhea, respiratory infections and cholera. She added it was also aimed at motivating people from all works of life around the world to improve handwashing habits for a better hygiene.

The First Lady said that the theme for this year's celebration was "clean hands are within reach". She explained that the theme serves as a comprehensive Platform for educating people, especially children about the significance of hand hygiene and proper handwashing techniques.

"I am glad to say that our children are here to witness the celebration of the event today." She then encouraged people to always take their hand hygiene seriously.

She emphatically state that trequent washing of hands with soap should be seen as a collective task that must be taken with utmost importance, She added that it was the most effective and affordable way to prevent

Citizens urged to ensure healthy society
-Mutfwang



Mutfwang

spread of communicable disease to save lives.

First Lady also affirmed that the present administration in the state under the leadership of the captain of "The Time is now", Barrister Caleb Mutfwang is committed to partnering with International Organizations, Civil Society Groups and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) among others was not only to promote hand hygiene and curtail germ transmission, but to also ensure the general health and wellness of the citizens.

She appreciated the participated schools and students who represented other schools during the event and urged the students to extend the message of imbibing the culture of clean hand to all schools in the state.

Earlier in his welcome remarks, state Epidemologist ministry of health Plateau State, Job Maren emphasized the need for people to go back to hand hygiene practice because the hand

transmit different kind of diseases.

Maren advised students to be ambassadors of hand hygiene both in schools and homes.

He then urged the students to take the campaign serious, saying that prevention is better than cure.

Also given a talks on handwashing, state disease surveillance and notification officer ministry of health, Solomon Barnabas Bikwat said that the hands are the main tools for work. He advised people not to take the issue of handwashing for granted, saying that hand hygiene helps a lot in reducing the cases of contracting disease through hand.

Given vote of thanks, commissioner for women Affairs and social Development, Hon. Mrs. Caroline Panglang Dafur thanked the first lady and other invited guests for gracing the occasion, describing such support as a move that is geared towards taking the state to a greater height.

Dafur while scoring the importance of education advised students to concentrate on their studies.

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Dafur while scoring the importance of education

Mutfwang advocates inclusive governance for effective service delivery

THE Executive Governor of Plateau State, Barr. Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang has reaffirmed his administration's dedication to fostering an all-inclusive government, for efficient service delivery to the benefit of all citizens in the state.

In a statement by the Director of Press and Public Affairs to the Executive Governor, Gyang Bere, recently, and made available to journalists, he stressed the importance of inclusivity in governance, citing its role in promoting social cohesion, fostering peace, and driving economic progress.

Governor Mutfwang shared these insights during his speech at the Wilson Woodrow Presidential Center in Washington D.C.

He highlighted the vital role that subnational governments in Nigeria and Africa play in

facilitating meaningful engagements with development partners and managing international relations, especially concerning issues directly affecting citizens' lives and living conditions.

Governor Mutfwang reiterated his commitment to providing transformational and visionary leadership, to generate socio-economic benefits for all residents of Plateau State.

He emphasized the significance of the US strategy towards sub-Saharan Africa, launched in 2022, which underscores the renewed commitment to subnational capacity building to unlock Africa's urban potential.

Commenting on the status of Plateau State as an agricultural hub in Nigeria, Governor Mutfwang pointed out that the state has a comparative advantage in promoting the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGO), set for renewal in

2025.

Governor Mutfwang appealed to the United States to engage extensively with Nigeria's subnational governments, particularly Plateau State, to realize the shared vision,

Governor Sani approves gratuity, death benefits

KADUNA State Governor, Senator Uba Sani has approved the release of the sum of N3.1 billion for the payment of gratuity for retirees and death benefits for families of the deceased under the Defined Benefit Scheme and the Contributory Pension Scheme.

This was contained in a press release signed by

Muhammad Lawal Shehu, Chief Press Secretary to the Governor of Kaduna State and made available to our

leveraging Plateau's vast potential.

The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (WWICS) or Wilson Center is a Washington, D.C.-based think tank named after former U.S.

payment of

what is rightfully theirs.

The Kaduna State Government through the State Pension Bureau is resolute in ensuring the continuity of the release of these payments for gratuity and death benefits to beneficiaries in the state.

The release of these funds will aid in ameliorating the ripple effects of the current economic realities, especially for the elderly who have retired from active service.

The full list and details of beneficiaries will be released by the State Pension Bureau in the coming days.

From JOHN FWAH
Kaduna

correspondent.

This announcement is in tandem with Governor Sani's commitment in easing the hardship faced by the elderly, who are among the state's most vulnerable.

Governor Sani remains committed to ensuring that upon retirement, workers who have served Kaduna State diligently, have full access to

News

New NAHCON boss appreciates Governor Inuwa's support

From **WILLIE ATTAH, Gombe**

PRESIDENT Bola Ahmed Tinubu's newly appointed Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON), Alhaji Jalal Ahmed Arabi, has paid a thank you visit to the Gombe State Governor, Muhammad Inuwa Yahaya.

He told Governor Inuwa at the Governor's Lodge in Abuja that the visit was to register his appreciation to the Governor over his support and encouragement towards his appointment as NAHCON's new Chairman and Chief Executive.

Alhaji Jalal Arabi was accompanied on the visit by the Presidential Adviser and former FCT Minister, Dr. Aliyu Modibbo Umar as well as the former NAHCON Chairman, Barr. Abdullahi Mukhtar.

Governor Inuwa Yahaya had shortly after Ahmed Arabi's appointment recently, expressed delight at the appointment of the new NAHCON boss in a press statement.

Governor Inuwa applauded President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for appointing the Gombe son



Arabi

to head NAHCON, describing Alhaji Ahmed Arabi as a highly experienced technocrat and a seasoned administrator of impeccable repute.

In the statement, the Governor noted Arabi's distinguished career as a retired federal Permanent Secretary, emphasizing the

new chairman's ability to excel in this new role.

He encouraged Alhaji Jalal Arabi to leverage his wealth of experience and knowledge to revitalize the National Hajj Commission and elevate it to new heights of excellence and effective service delivery.

By **HOSEA NYAMLONG**

ECWA President visits Labour Minister

AS part of efforts to cement relationships and build bridges across the human facets, President of Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), Rev. Dr. Panya Baba has paid a courtesy visit to the Minister of Labour and Employment Hon. Simon Bako Lalong at the Federal Secretariat, Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja recently.

Baba pointed out that peace, progress and development still remain the hallmark of the development of Nigeria, considering our rich cultures and diversity.

He prayed for God's guidance and a successful tenure of office for Lalong, the former Governor of Plateau State, as he continues to pilot the affairs of the ministry for a better

labour relationship across all levels.

Rev. Baba was accompanied by the

Minister of Special Duties and Intergovernmental Affairs, Hon. Zephaniah Bitrus Jisalo and other high powered delegation during the visit.



Panya

PLASU: Miri-led panel enters day-2 public interaction

BY **EZEKIEL DONTINNA**

IN continuation of its interaction with stakeholders in and around

the University community, Professor Angela Miri-led seven-man panel to Plateau State University, Bokoos, has entered day-2 interaction with those who submitted memos before it.

This came in a press statement signed by the university's Public Relations Officer (PRO), John K. Agam, and made available to SUNDAY STANDARD in Jos, the Plateau State capital recently, shortly after the interaction session

involving stakeholders from the host communities, staff and students' unions.

The Chairman of the Visitation Panel, Professor Angela Miri, reiterated on the fact that the panel was not constituted to witch hunt, but was on a fact finding mission to ascertain the level of problems affecting the optimum academic and physical development of the university.

She said, the mission was with a view to give informed recommendations to government for possible intervention as it was customary to engage both the internal and external stakeholders to give them a sense of belonging to the growth and development of the institution, based on the terms of reference given to the Panel for the period between May 2015 to May 2023.

Prof. Miri, however, thanked the stakeholders for identifying with the state government in responding to the invitation and making valuable submissions to the panel. She assured the people that the Mutfwang led government was determined to reposition education at all levels in the state.

Meanwhile, the Secretary to the Panel, Julius Shinkur who was directed to read the terms of reference to the hearing of all stakeholders, said, "the Panel draws its strength from the power vested in the Visitor, His Excellency, the Executive Governor, in Section 16, subsections (1) and (2) of the Law establishing the university.

Governor Sani tasks chairmen on security meetings

From **John FWAH KADUNA**

KADUNA State Governor, Senator Uba Sani has urged the local government heads to conduct bi-weekly or at least, monthly security meetings in their respective councils,

He said this during a meeting with local government chairmen in Kaduna, stressing that "it is significant to partner with religious and traditional leaders to improve intelligence gathering and combat emerging security challenges such as kidnapping, armed robbery and other social vices."

Sani remarked: "I urge you to support and work closely with security agencies and provide them with the necessary information needed in carrying out their duties. I also want to thank you for working with the State Government in the recruitment of over seven thousand personnel of Kaduna State Vigilance Service".

Besides, the Governor drew the attention of the meeting to the detrimental impact of rural-urban migration on rural development. He urged the local government chairmen to collaborate with relevant stakeholders to tackle the issue.

Acknowledging the significance of the rural economy, he assured the leaders of his administration's commitment to identifying and resolving the challenges faced by farmers to promote rural development as part of his initiative for rural transformation.

On Financial inclusion, Governor Sani stressed that the high number of underserved and vulnerable individuals in the state was worrisome. He emphasized his commitment to addressing this issue by signing his first Executive Order on financial inclusion.

In a statement by the Governor's Chief Press Secretary (CPS), Senator Sani assured the local government chairmen that his

administration would respect and uphold their autonomy.

He encouraged them to utilize the resources at their disposal effectively, to promote development within their respective local government areas.

Responding, the local government chairmen pledged their commitment to working

closely with the State Government to fulfill its 7-point SUSTAIN agenda, which focuses on rural economic transformation and overall development.

They also expressed their appreciation to the governor for his dedication to rural development and requested his consideration for essential

Nigeria spends ₦171b on electricity subsidies

By **DORCAS PANKYES**

- **NERC**

THE Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) has revealed that the federal government paid a total of ₦171.25 billion in electricity subsidies during the first half of 2023.

These subsidies were necessary due to the absence of cost-reflective tariffs across all distribution companies.

According to NERC's second-quarter report, dated October 17, 2023, the subsidy was divided into ₦36.02 billion in the first quarter (Q1) and ₦135.23 billion in the second quarter (Q2). The increase in Q2 was primarily attributed to the government's policy of harmonizing exchange rates.

To bridge the gap between the cost-reflective and allowed tariffs, the government utilized tariff shortfall funding. This funding was applied to the invoices from the Nigerian Bulk Electricity Trading (NBET), which were to be paid by the Distribution Companies (DisCos).

The government's subsidy obligation for Q2 amounted to ₦135.23 billion, a significant increase of ₦99.21 billion (275%) compared to the ₦36.02 billion incurred in Q1.

NERC highlighted that this meant DisCos were only expected to cover 53.25% of the total invoice received from



Adelabu

NBET during Q2. The report also revealed that the average monthly subsidy incurred by the government in Q2 was ₦45.08 billion.

In terms of DisCos' financial performance, the report stated that their revenue for Q2 reached ₦267.86 billion, achieving a collection efficiency rate of 75.5%. This marked an improvement from the 68.75% collection efficiency recorded in Q1.

Collection efficiency is the ratio of the amount collected from customers, compared to the amount billed by DisCos. In this case, a collection efficiency of

75% implies that approximately 25% of the billed amount remains unrecovered from customers.

The report further highlighted that all DisCos, except for Yola DisCo, experienced an improvement in collection efficiency during Q2. Notable increases were seen in Kaduna, Ikeja, and Enugu DisCos, with collection efficiency ranging from 44.27% to 76.29%.

On the other hand, Yola DisCo witnessed a slight decrease in collection efficiency from 45.71% to 45.27% during the same period.



Sani

NEWS

PLSG assures social workers association of recognition

By DUMAH RANDONG

THE Plateau State Government has assured the Nigerian Association of Social Workers that it will work with relevant agencies to ensure the establishment of the Nigerian Council of Social Workers for better recognition.

It equally promised to ensure the domestication of the law establishing it in order to regulate the activities of the council.

This, the government noted, was imperative in view of the role they play in championing the cause of humanity.

Governor Caleb Mutfwang stated this when the Plateau State Chairperson of the Association, Mrs Martha Kurniap and other executive members paid him a visit at the Old Government House, Rayfield, Jos, recently.

Represented by his Deputy, Mrs Josephine Piyo, Mutfwang said social workers play a critical role in the society, such as monitoring the orphanages to address challenges affecting the disadvantaged children and other societal issues.

While reiterating government's support to the group, the governor used the occasion to congratulate three of their members from the state who emerged as National officers and appreciated them for identifying with "The Time is Now" administration. He urged them to support the government in its quest for good governance.

Earlier, Chairperson, Plateau State chapter, Mrs Martha Kurniap who through the National Secretary of the Nigerian Council of Social



Mutfwang

Workers, Mrs Esther Nasarawa, disclosed that the social work profession had been in existence since 1975 but without the recognition it deserved.

She said a bill to that effect was passed in December, 2022 and signed into law by the former President, Buhari and was gazetted in December, 2022.

With these, social activities have become legal according to her but what is being awaited is the establishment of the council that would regulate their activities.

She appealed the governor to use his good office to influence the establishment of the council for better recognition as well as the domestication of the law at the state level.

She disclosed some activities of the council to include attending to the needs of individuals and group issues, monitoring of orphanages among others.

Also on courtesy call was the Women Leadership Institute Network led by

their Chairperson, Barrister Jummai Tardy who came to brief the government about their activities.

According to her, the institute was established in June this year to train young women in leadership positions, politics and vocational skills.

She added that building the capacity of women will help them aspire to leadership in different sectors.

According to Tardy, the institute was leaving no stone unturned to make sure young women were trained and mentored to discourage them from engaging in unwholesome acts.

Responding, Plateau State Deputy Governor, Josephine Piyo said she was delighted to see people coming up with laudable ideas that better the lot of women and groups in the society.

Piyo assured of partnership with any organization or group whose programmes are tailored towards uplifting the living standards of women in the state.

From ABBAS GUNGURA,
Bauchi

A validation meeting on assessment of Public toilets in markets and motor parks, including user feedbacks, was recently held in Bauchi organized by WaterAid Nigeria in collaboration with the Women Development Association (WODASS) including partnership with the Bauchi State Environmental Protection Agency (BASEPA).

SUNDAY STANDARD gathered that the project known as the Impact Accelerator is being implemented in Bauchi State by WaterAid Nigeria in collaboration with the Bauchi State government through the Ministry of Environment (BASEPA) and Bauchi State Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (RUWASSA).

The aim of the project is to ensure that women and girls are able to use toilets in public places without worries and concern with funding from a donor from Australia called "Who gives a crap".

The meeting was meant to validate the findings of toilet assessment taken in 6 local government areas of Shira, Katagum, Ningi, Misau, Bauchi and Alkaleri from 54 public toilets as part of efforts to establish a User Center design of public toilets and end open defecation in the state.

Mrs Sarah Mkeryi Amahson, who is the WaterAid Nigeria Lead Consultant, while presenting the report on the findings on public toilets in the state at Yimir Hotel in Bauchi, said that the aim of the research in the 6 LGAs was to produce

them to serve would be justified.

During the congress meeting, committees saddled with responsibilities were inaugurated. The committees include: Advisory, Ethics, Training, Press Centre, Sport and Assignment.

Former FRCN news caster heads radio Benue

From TERESE TUHWA,
Makurdi

A former newscaster with the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, Mr. Terseer Mzuulga has been appointed the new Director General, Radio Benue Corporation, Makurdi, Benue State and 28 others by the state Governor, Rev Fr. Dr. Hyacinth Iormem Alia.

The new Radio Benue DG retired from the services of the nation's highest radio about five months ago before his new appointment.

'Provide women public toilet facilities at motor parks'



Bala

a report based on the analysis of the assessments to identify the general features of toilet as well as arrangements for tariffs, operation and maintenance that will enable women and girls to access toilets in public places with dignity and privacy, including recommendations for appropriate arrangements for participation in decision making and customer feedback regarding the toilets.

She informed that the method of the research involved the collection of quantitative data using a structural questionnaire survey in addition to facility usability testing that involved users making use of the toilets while notes are being taken by either a male or female facilitator about the ease with which the facilities are used and associated challenges.

According to the Consultant, in many of the toilets visited, the needs of girls and women were not taken into consideration, including those with disabilities. Factors such as lack of awareness about female needs for public toilets, lack of enough space to demarcate

sections for females and persons Living with Disabilities, perception that public toilets were originally designed for men and lack of regulations to guide toilet operators are contributing to the challenge.

Sarah said that government can be influenced to prioritize the provision of safe and hygienic public toilets that meets the needs of women and girls through advocacy and awareness creation, sustained media engagements and constant dialogue facilitated by international partners.

Mr. Mashat Mallo, the Programme Monitoring Evaluation, and Report Officer of WaterAid, explained that the objective of the validation meeting was to influence the Bauchi government to provide public toilets facilities that women and girls can use with dignity and without concerns, using evidence from the research conducted on the public toilets as well as develop scenarios and the challenges women and girls go through in accessing toilets in public places using Watch, Do and Ask templates.

Monarch charges journalists to be role models

By HOSEA NYAMLONG

PATRON of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Plateau State Council, His Royal Highness (HRH), Emir of Wase, Alhaji Mohammad Sambo Haruna has urged Journalists to be role models in the journalism profession.

Haruna disclosed this during the union's first congress meeting held after the election of the council, at the NUJ Secretariat in Jos recently.

He congratulated the new Exco and expressed confidence that they would take the union to greater heights.

The royal father encouraged them to be strong and ready for the task ahead. He noted that leadership is a responsibility and advised Exco to carry everyone along, as they pilot the affairs of the union for progress and development.

Haruna assured the union of his support at all times and also called on members to support the new Exco in their new place of assignments.

Earlier during the congress, the Chairman of the council, Ayuku Pwasp appreciated members for their support during and after the elections and assured members that Exco would not fail them as they discharge their duties.

She maintained that the confidence reposed in



Haruna

SUNDAY MAGAZINE

Nigeria: Vulnerable women, girl-child still can't breathe



Plateau NAWOJ EXCO and members during a courtesy call on the Deputy Governor, Ngo Josephine Piyo recently

Continued from page 10

girl child is treated in the home. Society puts the blame on the woman forgetting that the man is responsible for giving 'Y' chromosomes that makes a son while the woman gives back whatever she receives from the man.

The girl child is mostly given out in marriage to a man who is much older than her especially when she is less than 18 years. Due to the belief that most women are for child bearing, girls are given out in marriage at an extremely young age. They are usually not allowed to go to school for fear that they might spend more years in school and would therefore be exposed and confident to make decisions for themselves. This has gone against the Child Rights Acts that illegalizes marriage before 18 years.

The issue of Obanliku marriage among the Becheve people of Cross River State rings obnoxious bell as girls are sold into marriage for debts settlement. Becheve is about eight hours drive from Calabar, but it is stuck with an age long bizarre culture. The heart touching stories of young Becheve girls is that bad that they are sold into marriage in exchange for goats, food items and in settlement of their parents' debt.

Despite sharing location with the popular Obudu Cattle Ranch and Resorts which attracts tourists across the world, men in this community have refused to give up the ancient custom. The ancient custom is called 'money marriage', and the victims are called 'money woman' or 'money wife'.

The girls here are sold into money marriage for cash as low N10,000 and food items like tubers of yams, livestock like goats and pigs, all depending on the bargaining power of the 'groom'. Money wives are sold into marriage but they don't enjoy the luxury or the money involved. Their purpose in the marriage is to work hard mostly on their husband's farms as labourers.

Faith Ikpe is a survivor who openly shares her story to the world of how her parents lured her into money marriage. "I wrongly thought money woman was a good practice. I was sold when I was in primary four, my mother and dad deceived me that if I follow the man he will send me to school".

First term and second term went and they didn't allow me to start school. I then sold banana to raise money to buy a few books so I can go to school. However, my husband didn't allow me, every time I tried to go to school he will beat me. I will

pass through the window and run to school. Every time I returned from school he will beat me".

Sounding helpless, she's begging for help through possible intervention of the government and organizations that are fighting such discrimination.

Throwing her weight behind the significant roles women play in leaving a land mark, the Deputy Governor of Plateau State, Ngo Josephine Piyo said, anywhere you go and if there are women you will obviously notice the difference. "When you enter a home it is complete because there is a woman but in her absence, it's a house". She applauded NAWOJ for standing in the gap to speak for the voiceless and following up on cases that affect women and girls. Piyo assured the association of possible synergy with the present administration of Barr. Caleb Mutfwang to end all forms of violation against the female gender in the state and that as a mother and a woman, her support will be massive.

On the Plateau, there are lots of issues of gender based violence ranging from wife batteries, rape, children abandonments, child trafficking etc, that have sent many women and young girls to the grave or left them with permanent deformity. The state chairperson of Nigeria

Association of women Journalists (NAWOJ), Nene Dung highlighted activities of the association since its establishment thirty-four years ago and the idea was conceived here on the Plateau for the mere fact that journalism was regarded as men's profession with few women in practice. It was tough for women then to aspire to managerial position.

The chairman of the association reiterated that since journalism is a noble profession, women should be given the opportunity to practice and rise to managerial positions. "Today ma, we have hurdles that we need to cross. NAWOJ has been in the forefront of campaigning against sexual and gender based violence. We have had cases in court, we have been taken to court because we are speaking for those whose rights have been trampled upon".

"The number of rape cases on the Plateau is quite worrisome. Parents are neglecting their responsibilities of taking care of their children and are left to fend for themselves as young as four and five years."

Dung gave an instance in Gyel where a young girl was severely punished, her hand burnt with hot iron by her own father because she picked N1,000 to buy what she could eat and kept the change for him. He was angered that she tempered with the money that was reserved to pay electricity

bill.

Sad enough, a man allegedly killed his wife at Furaka community in Jos North LGA and the man was detained. Following up on the matter, the police said they didn't have money for autopsy, women Journalists in collaboration with National Human Rights Commission solicited assistance of Pathology General of Plateau state, he agreed and conducted the autopsy at a discounted rate because NAWOJ was involved.

Amazingly, the man is back on the street as a free man. The children have lost a mother in the hands of a brutal man called a husband, her parents have lost their daughter and the state has lost its citizen and such a matter has been handled with a kid gloves as if such a life does not matter.

The question that needs urgent answer from appropriate authorities is, what is happening to our laws and are offenders being punished in accordance with the stipulated laws available? How long shall we wait to salvage women and girls from archaic and barbaric practices that only truncates and rubbish the relevance of the female gender.

The time to correct these anomalies for a meaningful impact is now.

METRO-FOCUS

Education amidst harsh economic realities

By
HOSEA NYAMLONG, GWAMNA
NEHEMIAH,
and BLESSING EMMANUEL

FIRST-term school resumption is a nightmare for parents. Aside from other material assets, education remains the best thing to bequeath a child that in order to have a better future and a great nation.

Today, apart from the rich, most parents, guardians and caregivers are finding it difficult to pay for standard and quality education for their children or wards.

While striving hard to secure a bright future for their children through quality education, the harsh economy appears to be challenging, making that goal a herculean task. Inflation is the order of the day.

Mostly, the first term of the academic year is the most challenging for parents. This is not unconnected with the fact that most students in primary and secondary schools transit to the next level of their education. Traditionally, that involves buying books and or materials for their new level.

To add salt to injury, the federal government's removal of fuel subsidy, a move that sent shockwaves throughout the nation has continued to deepen the economic hardship of citizens as the prices of goods and services are on the increase day by day. It would seem, parents of returning students are feeling the heat more intensely.

METRO FOCUS reporters gathered that while many parents and guardians lament the high cost of school materials like textbooks, exercise books, school uniforms, bags, and other materials, there is also the excruciating cost of transportation, etc.

It was revealed that private schools within the Jos metropolis and environs have increased their school fees to meet up with the current economic realities. Government schools, which are the last resort of the poor man, are yet to increase that fees.

Our investigations also revealed that many parents and guardians are currently withdrawing their children and wards from private to public schools due to increases in school fees and education materials.

METRO FOCUS interviewed parents, guardians, and caregivers with children in both government and private schools. Among those interviewed was Mrs. Badabo Blessing Ale, a principal with Royal High School, Mista Ali. She opined that one of the major challenges for parents today is the school fees, especially in the first term.

Lamenting, Ale said "Some parents would pay part payment with the promise to pay the remaining balance before the end



SCHOOL CHILDREN

of the term, but most times, you discover that they carry over the payment to the next term".

Parents are eager to send their children to school, she observed, especially first term, but the irony of sustaining the payment is another problem.

According to this principal, "Some parents pay piecemeal, which most times is discouraging because we are faced with the salary of staff and other development projects. And the annoying part of the story is that such parents would want quality education for their children while they are not making efforts to do the needful that is expected of them".

She also added that when it comes to the third term, knowing that the child won't be allowed to write exams if he/she has outstanding fees, neither would the child be allowed to proceed to the next class. Parents would and beg to balance second term fees, promising to pay for third term when they are buoyant. Before you know it, you're owing them a lot of school fees and there's nothing you can do about it."

A parent, Mallam Munsur Isa told METRO FOCUS that he doesn't want to think of the country's economic situation.

children's education.

"The increase in the school fees is not even a major headache, to be honest. The books and back-to-school supplies are where the problem is. Every single thing has doubled and in some cases, tripled in price. It's unbelievable. Everyone knows children grow very fast and we need to keep changing things but everything is so expensive. I don't know how we are going to manage.

"The school my children attend increased the fees by about 20 percent. The cost of books and other materials have also shot up. When we asked why the increase, we were told that the publishers increased the prices of the books, due to the cost of production," he explained.

Mrs. Rita Andrew, mother of two, stressed that the recent economic change in the country has increased hardship for the citizens. Paying school fees for two is not easy, let alone for parents that have more than two children.

Mrs. Patience Awuya stated that the negative impact of the fuel subsidy has caused most families to adjust their way of life. Even with the adjustment,

fees, textbooks, new uniforms, and feeding. She calls on the government to look into the situation because it gets out of hand.

A tailor by the name Benkat Abraham also lamented that her son's fees were jerked up by almost 50 percent. She said: "I wouldn't want to blame them, the government should be blamed. It is the fault of bad government policies that are making life unbearable for the common citizens. Our leaders want to destroy this country. Imagine education getting out of the reach of average Nigerians. The standard of education in public schools is nothing to write home about and the private schools we are trying to send our children to are becoming too expensive. The fees and the price of uniforms, school supplies, and bus fare have increased significantly", she complained.

To this extent, the increasing cost of education in Nigeria, exacerbated by economic challenges and the removal of fuel subsidies, is taking a toll on parents.

Parents are calling for government's intervention and the need for school proprietors to exhibit understanding and

the issue with Human face. Education is the bedrock of the society. Children, who are the future of tomorrow need it. It is either that or our commutes would be over-run by criminal elements. Because 'an idle man, is the devil's workshop.

METRO FOCUS gathered that according to the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) report, Nigeria holds the unenviable position of being the country with the largest number of out-of-school children of primary school age: 10 million in 2022, 9.6 million in 2020, 7.5 million in 2010 and 6.4 million in 2000. The out-of-school rate among adolescents and youths of lower and upper secondary school age has been increasing since 2008, reaching 31 and 40 percent respectively by 2022.

Nigeria has signed up to the promise of ensuring free quality primary and secondary education for all children by 2030, committing to reduce the percentage of out-of-school children of primary school age to 17 percent by 2030 and youths of upper secondary school to 26 percent by 2030.

SUNDAY PEOPLE

PLATEAU STATE NUJ INAUGURATE COMMITTEES

The Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) Plateau State Council recently inaugurated Advisory, Ethics, Press Centre, Training, Assignments and Sports Committees at its first Congress at the NUJ Hall, Press Centre, Jos



Patron of the NUJ and Emir of Wase, His Royal Highness, Alhaji Muhammad Sambo Haruna being welcomed by the Chairman, Mrs. Ayuku Pwaspo, former Chairmen, Paul Jatau and Katdapba Gobum



Patron of the Union and Emir of Wase, His Royal Highness, Alhaji Muhammad Sambo Haruna delivering remarks, flanked by NUJ National Auditor, VC Chairman, Ayuku Pwaspo and Secretary



Mrs Ayuku Pwaspo making some remarks in her office while NUJ Patron, HRH Emir of Wase, Alhaji Muhammad Sambo Haruna listen



Ayuku Pwaspo inaugurating the NUJ Advisory Board



Cross section of NUJ members at the first Congress by the new EXCO



Cross section of chairmen and committee members at the inauguration



NUJ Chairman, Ayuku Pwaspo (right) receiving report from the Credentials and Screening Committee Chairman, Mrs. Hannatu Dushu flanked by the Secretary and member



Cross section of NUJ members of the state council listening to the remarks by the Patron

Photos: DANLADI DUK

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Driving an Automatic Transmission Vehicle

THE term "automatic" simply means that a vehicle with a gear ratio between the engine and the wheels can only be varied by the use of the accelerator or the brakes. Finding a driving school with an automatic transmission tuition vehicle may be difficult. However, if you have an automatic transmission vehicle, you can hire a licensed driving instructor to coach you on the use thereof. Upon undertaking and passing a driving test on an automatic vehicle, you will be issued a certificate of competence for automatic transmission vehicles bearing the words "Limited to vehicles with automatic transmission".

In all automatic vehicles, there are only two-foot pedals, an accelerator and a brake. These will be operated by the right foot. There is a gear selector in place of a gear shift. The typical selector has the following gear positions:
P = P a r k
D=Drive
R = R e v e r s e
2=Second Gear
N = N e u t r a l
1=First Gear

Driving an automatic vehicle is fundamentally different from a manual gear change vehicle in that all controls are operated by the right foot. The left foot is redundant. You must therefore train your left foot to do absolutely nothing.
D: When the "D" is selected, the gears will change automatically, this is governed by the pressure applied to the accelerator pedal. The gear change is commonly known as kick down and takes into account the road conditions the load the vehicle is carrying. The gear box will automatically change downward if the vehicle is travelling uphill and a lower gear is required. If you begin to slow down and then wish to

move fast again the gear will automatically adjust to the correct gear suitable for the desired speed.
1 and 2: these are known as the lock up positions. In an automatic vehicle, you may desire to hold a position in 1st or 2nd gear. Choosing 2nd, the gear will still make automatic gear changes, but only as high as 2nd. Lock up prevents an untimely gear change when overtaking, or on an icy uphill movement, or steep descent, where the engine resistance would or could be desirable. However, you should not select a lock-up position to slow you down.
P: When the Park position is selected the transmission is in neutral and the vehicle is locked mechanically against any movement. This position should always be selected along with handbrake whenever you park your vehicle. It will hold the vehicle in place. You may also start the vehicle in this position. Never select "P" while the vehicle is moving as this could damage the vehicle's transmission and gear box.
N: The Neutral position enables the vehicle to remain in neutral. You may also start the vehicle in this mode. When stopped at traffic lights, the normal routine is to leave the transmission in gear or in the "D" position for short stops. However, always maintain your footbrake. In traffic and especially for an uphill start, also use the handbrake. For longer periods of stops, the handbrake should be applied and the gear selector returned to neutral position. You may then release your foot from the brake pedal so as not to dazzle the following driver with the glare of your brake lights especially on a wet or dark night.

Driving: After starting the engine with the selector lever in the "N" (Neutral) or the "P; (Park) position, select the range desired and depress the accelerator.
"P" (Park): This position is to be used with the parking brake. It must never be used when the vehicle is in motion. There are basically two gear positions in which you can start the vehicle, name the "P" (Park) and the "N" (Neutral) positions.
"R" (Reverse): For backing up/reversing, bring the vehicle to a complete stop before shifting into this range. Never select this gear position when the vehicle is in motion. If your moving and you decide to turn back, ensure the vehicle comes to complete stop before engaging the reverse gear; otherwise you damage your gear box.
"N" (Neutral): this position must be used when the vehicle is being towed and can also be used when starting the vehicle. It is one of the only two options for starting an automatic vehicle, the other being the "P" park position.
"D" (Drive): this position is for all normal forward driving. if more speed is needed for overtaking, press the accelerator pedal hard to the base or floor. This will give you the required acceleration at once.
"2" (Second): You may choose this position when going down a moderate gradient (hill) where you want to slow down a little without using brakes. Shift back into the "D" position to return to normal driving.
"1" (Low): Use this position when strong retardation effect is needed on a steep descent. Shift back to "D" (Drive) range so that the vehicle will upshift into direct drive again.

The use of gears in an automatic vehicle

Driving: After starting the engine with the selector lever in the "N" (Neutral) or the "P; (Park) position, select the range desired and depress the accelerator.
"P" (Park): This position is to be used with the parking brake. It must never be used when the vehicle is in motion. There are basically two gear positions in which you can start the vehicle, name the "P" (Park) and the "N" (Neutral) positions.
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"1" (Low): Use this position when strong retardation effect is needed on a steep descent. Shift back to "D" (Drive) range so that the vehicle will upshift into direct drive again.

NEWS

NGO gives palliatives to 500 widows, vulnerables

AS part of its humanitarian gesture, an NGO, Doyin and Suzan Foundation, has again donated food items to widows and vulnerable women in Kogi.



Adedoyin

The palliatives were distributed to some rural communities of Isanlu, Yagba East Local Government Area of Kogi.

Addressing the beneficiaries in Isanlu, the Executive Director of the NGO, Chief Mrs Adedoyin Ibikunle-Eshanumi, said the gesture was to support the vulnerable women during difficult periods like this.

Ibikunle-Eshanumi said the initiative was part of her routine humanitarian programme to ease the current economic hardship occasioned by the removal of fuel subsidy.

She added that it was also a way of appreciating the women for their massive support for President Tinubu/Shettima during the February 25 presidential election.

The Executive Director said that the palliative was a way of also mobilising support for the candidate of the All Progressive Congress (APC) in preparation for the November 11 governorship election in the state.

She stressed that vulnerable women and widows, who lack visible means of livelihood, were the most affected group in the society.

"This is a routine humanitarian programme that we carry out from time to time. We empowered over 400 widows during the Easter celebration and 300 women immediately after the removal of fuel subsidy in June.

"We usually distribute food items during all festive periods and we will continue to do that as part of our humanitarian services.

"The humanitarian gesture is part of our foundation's vision to

reach out to the indigent and vulnerable in the society, to alleviate their sufferings," she said.

Some of the beneficiaries, Mrs Modupe Johnson, and Mrs Rukayat Abdullahi, appreciated the NGO for its humanitarian programme to assist the widows and vulnerable women in the society.

"We are very grateful to Chief Doyin Ibikunle-Eshanumi for always alleviating our sufferings and making us happy. May God bless her," Johnson prayed.

Items distributed were: semovita, rice, maggi, noodles, salt, spaghetti, clothings, among others.

New NCC Chairman pledges commitment to Tinubu's vision
From DORCAS PANKYES

THE new Executive Vice Chairman (EVC) of the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), Dr. Aminu Maida, has pledged to align the Commission's regulatory focus to achieve the promises of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Renewed Hope agenda to advance the nation's digital transformation agenda.

Maida, who spoke to the Senior Management team of the Commission at the Commission's Head Office in Abuja, recently, said there is a need to ensure that the NCC activities align with President Tinubu's agenda for digital transformation. He emphasized the importance of aligning regulatory efforts with the government's goals to maximize the impact of the NCC's work in advancing the nation's digital transformation.

Maida also highlighted the importance of improving Nigeria's digital infrastructure to support the growth of the digital economy. He stressed the need for the NCC to collaborate with relevant stakeholders to accelerate

the deployment of the telecommunications broadband infrastructure industry, encouraging innovation and investment.

Furthermore, Maida He stressed the importance of maintaining a competitive market that fosters protection and innovation and provides empowerment. He stated opportunities for both small and large players in the industry.

He expressed his high-quality commitment to working closely with the government services, as well as protect and stakeholders to achieve their rights and interests. the objectives of President Maida also pledged to Tinubu's Renewed Hope promote a conducive agenda and drive Nigeria's regulatory environment for digital transformation.



Maida



SUNDAY FEATURE

Broadcasting commission and social media regulation in Nigeria

Evidently the present government is already threatened by social media contents and discussions. Nigerian youths do not just bully but they expose every pretender, accomplice in the social media. Many of these people stalked and monitored are government officials, politicians and solicitors. It is part of taking back their country which the youths are willing and ready to undertake. Incidentally, the government has posited that young people could be misguided by such contents if not regulated. OBIOTIKA WILFRED TOOCHUKWU writes.

The National Broadcasting Commission has so far hounded media houses for broadcasting what they considered injurious to the public consumption. The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) Act is the major legislation on broadcasting in Nigeria. Just as the administration of Muhammadu Buhari made every effort to scuttle criticism, undermine opposition, gag the press, censor information, minimize accountability, control freedom of speech and ignore youth's restiveness with unemployment; the present government might as well toe the same line. In 2019, the Senate passed a bill; "Hate Speech Bill" through which many opposing voices were silenced. Again, in June 2021, the Federal government banned the use of Twitter in Nigeria. The then Minister of Information, Lai Mohammed, was always at work to impose sanctions on media houses through Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC) all in a bid to monitor freedom of speech.

The 1999 Constitution has freedom of speech as an inalienable right of citizens. The United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights equally noted freedom of speech as a basic right of individuals. Significantly, banning social media sites might be the next target of a government that doesn't want to be held on its toes or show to be accountable to the people. Nigerian youths have in October 2020 mobilized themselves on Twitter to protest against police brutality. Also, the 2023 general elections had mobilization on social media which the ruling party jeered at knowing fully what they had planned to do.

The term social media refers to a computer-based technology that facilitates the sharing of ideas, thoughts and information through virtual networks and communities. Social media is internet-based and gives users quick electronic communication of content, such as personal information, documents, videos and photos. Users engage with social media via a computer, tablet, or smartphone via web-based software or applications. While social media is ubiquitous in America and Europe, Asian countries like Indonesia lead the list of social media usage. More than 4.5 billion people use social media, as of October 2021. The largest social media networks include Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok. Social media typically features user-generated content and personalized profiles.

Presently, the citizens in the country just have only the social media sites to communicate their feelings, pains, discontent and express their assessment of the



Idris

government

Billions of people around the world use social media to share information and make connections. On a personal level, social media allows you to communicate with friends and family, learn new things, develop your interests and be entertained. On a professional level, you can use social media to broaden your knowledge in a particular field and build your professional network by connecting with other professionals in your industry. At the company level, social media allows you to have a conversation with your audience, gain customer feedback, and elevate your brand.

Eventually, in the whole of Africa, Nigeria and Zambia are seen championing the course to quench the internet revolution of social media. We can see in some African countries that democracy has been sidelined or just on paper. The intention of the far-right governments to regulate and censor the social media network could be judged as the end of democracy and freedom. Of course, there are negative impacts or abuses of social media but that doesn't discredit its usefulness. Presently, the citizens in the country just have only the social media sites to communicate their feelings, pains, discontent

and express their assessment of the government. In Nigeria, pump price of petrol has no fixed amount, the Naira floats (devalued), citizens are to pay car ownership proof, 24% inflation, 40% increase on electricity tariff, demolition of properties, sacrifices by citizens which are never enough, high cost of living, suffering, moaning and weeping as many households starve.

The internet revolution has been a significant transformation and the impact is ongoing and evolving. With the introduction of the World Wide Web in the 1990s which made the internet accessible and easy to navigate for non-technical users, we started having smartphones in the late 2000s and the subsequent rise of mobile internet making people access and interact with the internet. With the IoT and AI, a

lot more is yet to happen in the world of technology, even 5G networks. Some governments have justified the banning of social media sites by citing concerns about the spread of misinformation, hate speech, incitement to violence, or the need to maintain control over the flow of information.

The approach to regulating social media sites varies significantly across countries, reflecting the diverse legal, cultural, and political context in which they operate. More importantly, social media companies often develop their own policies, guidelines, and community standards to regulate user behaviour and content on their platforms. They may establish rules regarding hate speech, harassment, violent content,

nudity, and other forms of prohibited content. Self-regulation can involve setting up mechanisms for reporting and flagging content, as well as implementing automated content filtering systems.

Nigerians can learn to make proper use of the social media by taking breaks when needed to avoid addiction. They can use the platforms to share meaningful and positive content, develop a critical mind when consuming content, manage their time, verify every information before sharing, avoid engaging in online harassment, cyberbullying, or spreading hate speech. They can always use their common sense by thinking before posting and always define their purpose.

Just as the tax collectors were despised and hated by the Jews because they were regarded as greedy mercenaries and traitors working for the Roman conquerors, so have Nigerians been fed up with the political structure in their country wishing and praying for a change of narrative and the birth of a new Nigeria. Nigerians have adjudged every politician of the old order as enriching themselves at the expense of the people. Nigerians have regardless of their anger and the wrath they feel within remained law-abiding, waiting for justice to take its due course. But the political class need to understand what leadership entails. It is about lifting the people who are still down to come up but the average politician in Nigeria feels he has risen and no one can bring them down. Change, improvement, growth, success, and victory don't happen because they're admirable concepts or desirable options. No, they happen because you're totally committed and willing to pay the price. However, despite these challenges, social media remains a valuable platform for citizens to express their voices, mobilize for change, and hold governments accountable.

The internet revolution has been a significant transformation and the impact is ongoing and evolving. With the introduction of the World Wide Web in the 1990s which made the internet accessible and easy to navigate for non-technical users, we started having smartphones in the late 2000s and the subsequent rise of mobile internet making people access and interact with the internet. With the IoT and AI, a lot more is yet to happen in the world of technology, even 5G networks. Some governments have justified the banning of social media sites by citing concerns about the spread of misinformation, hate speech, incitement to violence, or the need to maintain control over the flow of information.

SUNDAY SPORTS

Is Neymar a player with a legacy unfulfilled?

By GARY ROSE

SIX years ago, Brazil legend Neymar left Barcelona to join Paris St-Germain in a record-breaking £200m deal.

And in August, aged 31, the forward moved again, this time leaving European football behind - at least for now - and joining a number of high-profile players in Saudi Arabia.

He was reportedly offered 150m euros (£129m) a year at Al-Hilal - six times the amount he earned at PSG - having signed a two-year contract.

However, just two months in and the forward is facing an extended period on the sidelines after rupturing his anterior cruciate ligament and meniscus in his left knee while playing for Brazil.

He was taken off on a stretcher in tears during Tuesday's 2-0 defeat by Uruguay, having landed awkwardly following a challenge in the first half of the 2026 World Cup qualifier in Montevideo.

Neymar had surgery two days later and **posted a message on Instagram** to his followers. "It's a very sad time, the worst," he said.

"I know I'm strong, but this time I'm going to need my family and friends even more."

During his time in France, Neymar made 173 appearances for PSG, helping them win 13 trophies, including five Ligue 1 titles.

But it was to win Europe's elite prize - the Champions League - that Neymar was signed for, something he was unable to help the French giants achieve, coming closest when they reached the 2020 final.

"It hasn't worked out in the eyes of many of his compatriots. He is abandoning the battlefield by leaving top-class European football," South American football expert Tim Vickery told the BBC World Service.

"Neymar himself will not see this as anything other than an au revoir - not necessarily to Paris St-Germain, but with a view to coming back to Europe in two years' time - because at this moment it's hard to see what other option he had."

It is the latest chapter in a career of highs and lows. Here, BBC Sport



charts Neymar's journey from Santos to Saudi Arabia.

2009 - Senior debut at Santos

Neymar started his career in his native Brazil, signing his first professional contract with Santos at 17.

He made his senior debut at the same age, coming on as a second-half substitute in a 2-1 win against Oeste on 7 March 2009.

One week later he scored his first goal for Santos against Mogi Mirim and finished the season with 14 in 48 games.

Just over a year after making his professional debut, the teenage Neymar was called up by Brazil.

His first game was a friendly with the USA on 10 August. It took him

only 28 minutes to mark his debut with a goal, heading Andre Santos' cross beyond Tim Howard.

Neymar has scored 77 goals in 124 appearances for Brazil, but his first remains one of the favourites of his career.

Having helped Santos win the Copa Libertadores in 2011 - their first since 1963 - Neymar joined Barcelona after being linked with a string of top European clubs.

Playing alongside Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez in a front three that became known as 'MSN', Neymar helped the Spanish giants win La Liga, the Copa del Rey and the Champions League in only his second season.

Shortly after joining Barcelona, he also helped Brazil win the Fifa

Confederations Cup and was named the tournament's best player.

By now Neymar's star was shining brightly and, with Brazil hosting the World Cup in 2014, he was seen by many as the player to lead his country to glory.

His image was everywhere before and during the tournament, but a nation held its breath when, in the quarter-final against Colombia, Neymar went down clutching his back after he was kneed by Juan Zuniga.

Archive: Zuniga challenge ends Neymar's World Cup

Brazil won 2-1, but it came at a huge cost as Neymar was ruled out of the rest of the World Cup with a fractured vertebra.

It was to get worse in the semi-final as Brazil suffered a **humiliating 7-1 loss** to eventual winners Germany.

Neymar, Messi and Suarez continued to be one of the most deadly strike trios in club football and in 2015-16 they combined to score 131 goals - the most in a season for an attacking trio in Spanish football history.

Those goals helped Barcelona complete the domestic double of La Liga and Copa del Rey, before Neymar linked up with the Brazil team for the 2016 Olympics in Rio.

Two years after his injury heartbreak at the World Cup, Neymar scored the decisive penalty as **Brazil beat Germany** in a shootout to win their first men's Olympic football gold medal.

After scoring 105 goals in 186 appearances, Neymar made world football headlines by leaving Barcelona to join PSG for an eye-watering £200m in 2017.

His debut against Guingamp in August featured one goal and an assist. Going on to be part of a formidable attacking trio of Kylian Mbappe and Edinson Cavani, Neymar scored 28 goals in 30 matches as PSG won the treble of Ligue 1, French Cup and League Cup.

But his season was cut short when he suffered a fractured metatarsal, the first of a number of injuries that would blight his time in Paris.

After two years with PSG, Neymar

was linked with a return to Barcelona and the summer of 2019 was dominated by rumours of his potential departure.

He **angered PSG** after failing to turn up for the first day of pre-season training in July, but ultimately stayed in Paris.

Although injuries once again impacted his season, he helped PSG win Ligue 1 and reach the Champions League final for the first time, when they lost 1-0 to Bayern Munich.

Neymar once again teamed up with former Barcelona team-mate Messi when the Argentina star joined PSG in August 2021, but that season was a disappointing one for Neymar as he finished with 13 goals in all competitions - his worst return since moving to Europe.

Alongside Messi and Mbappe, Neymar appeared to rediscover his form, scoring and assisting 13 goals in his first five league games in 2022-23, but in March he was ruled out for the remainder of the season after ankle surgery.

A 4-3 win against Lille in February, in which he scored PSG's second goal, would be his final game for the club.

Seen as Brazil's great hope, Neymar is still yet to lead them to World Cup success.

The disappointing end to his time at PSG meant he left with a question as to whether his spell there hampered his legacy.

"He's certainly judged as a disappointment, which in some ways is harsh as there have been lots of injuries," said Vickery.

"But let's remember this man has scored as many goals for the Brazil national team as Pele. That's not a title that's given away in a sweet shop. That's been done over years and years and years, so maybe the expectations placed on him were always a little bit too high.

"Even if he never kicks another ball, there are plenty of great moments that he's given us. And he would hope, both in Saudi Arabia and in top-class European football and in the next World Cup, there are plenty of great moments still to come."



Neymar won trophies at PSG but also struggled with injuries

SUNDAY SPORTS

Kwande to improve grassroot development

By ANDRE D. BISYIT

HON Suleiman Kwande has assured that he will improve the grassroot football to enable the discovery of hiding talents in Plateau State.

He gave the assurance after elected as the Chairman, Plateau State Football Association, noting that he will also introduce the Secondary School Football games, in order to give the younger players the opportunity to showcase themselves.

"My vision is brought, but in the nutshell, I'll make sure the grassroot football is giving the required attention. We'll also ensure the introduction of the secondary school and female football in the state," he said.

The election which held at the Mess Palace Hall in Ray fried, Jos Plateau State, Kwande emphasized that been one time a legislator who always want people around him, will work collectively with the Congress and the Board members to achieve their objectives.

"As you know been a former legislator I like seeing people around me and of course two heads are better than one. Like I mentioned earlier, we'll constitute advisory committee, which will include elders who have been in football affairs and all the former FA chairmen will also play a vital role", he stated.

"I had a meeting with the SWAN EXCO and I assured them of their inclusion in the board, because I know in the past SWAN were included in every board, even in the NFF board. I'll discuss with my Congress, board members and write to the Federation to see how we can bring them in, not just SWAN but also other associations," he ended.

Also, Babagana Kalli, the representative of Nigerian Football Federation, who is also the chairman of Borno State Football Association, opined that he was at the venue of the election to observe and to ensure that the election process was done inline with the PFA, NFF, CAF and FIFA electoral guidelines.

"We arrived the State earlier and sad with the authority in charge with conducting the election, to make sure that the guidelines were strictly followed."

On his part, Joseph Gokum, member representing Kanke Local Government in the House of Assembly and also Chairman House Committee on Sports, said he will collaborate with the new PFA board in order for them to succeed, seeking for more inclusion of the indigenous football players at the national level.

"My prayer is to see our Plateau indigenous players at the Super Eagles and other International Clubs, because football is now a big business. We'll collaborate with them to achieve that," he concluded.

Meanwhile, those elected into the PFA board include, Hon. Suleiman Kwande, Chairman, Ezra Godit Simon, first vice Chairman, Habu Patrick Pakwai, second vice Chairman and Don Maren, Chairman of Chairmen.



Hon. Kwande

Others are, Godfrey Ayuba and Salisu Anan, board members representing Southern Zone, Salisu

Shuaibu Muhammad, representing Central Zone and Ajiji Ibrahim and Jonah Maren Mafwalal, board members representing

Olagunju reveals four defenders he loves

CHELSEA'S Golden Eaglets-eligible player, Saheed Olagunju, has named two Real Madrid stars past and present in the shape of Sergio Ramos and Antonio Rudiger as the defenders he loves the most.

Described as a defender who is technically proficient in playing out from the back, Olagunju has also cited current Chelsea star Thiago Silva and club legend John Terry as his roles models.

A left-sided central defender by trade, Olagunju joined Chelsea from Charlton Athletic as an U12, rising through the youth team ranks to sign a scholarship deal in the summer of 2023.

Although he has yet to make his season debut for the Blues in the U18 Premier League, the highly-rated center back scored his first competitive goal for Chelsea U18s in their

4-2 win over Barnsley in a Premier League Cup match last month.

Five minutes from time, Olagunju headed home from a corner to score Chelsea's fourth goal of the contest.

Asked the defenders he loves the most, Olagunju said to Chelsea's official website: "I think away from Chelsea my favourite defenders are Sergio Ramos in his prime

and Antonio Rudiger. They are both unbelievable players.

"Here at Chelsea, Thiago Silva and John Terry are definitely blueprints of the modern day defender for someone like myself."

Olagunju is in contention to make his second appearance for Chelsea in the U18 Premier League Cup in Saturday's clash against Tottenham Hotspur.



MFM wins 2023 Zenith Women's Basketball League

MFM defeated Nigeria Customs 64 - 60 in the final of the Super 4 playoff at the indoor sports hall of the National Stadium, Lagos on Thursday.

The MFM Women's Basketball Club have emerged as the winner of the 2023 Zenith Women's Basketball League.

Premium Times said that, they defeated Nigeria Customs 64 - 60 in the final of the Super 4 playoff at the indoor sports hall of the National Stadium, Lagos on Thursday to emerge champions.

This is MFM's maiden title after coming close and finishing second last season.

The keenly contested final was a befitting climax for the season that started months ago after a long wait.

In the first quarter of the final, MFM and Nigeria Customs were tied at 15 points apiece.

MFM, however, established a four-point gap after the second quarter 32-28 and they appeared to be coasting away when the third quarter ended 50-40 still in their favour.

However, Nigeria Customs mustered a comeback in the final quarter as it ended 58-58.

The development meant five minutes extra time was needed to decide who would

carry the day and it was the Olukoya Girls that emerged tops; winning the tension-soaked encounter 64 - 60.

To make it to the Super Four in Lagos, Nigerian Customs and Air Warriors, emerged from the Savannah Conference, while MFM Women Basketball Club and Bayelsa Blue Whales made it to the final from the Atlantic Conference.

Nigerian Customs braved the odds in their conference, winning all their games to come to Lagos unbeaten but they faltered when it mattered most on Thursday against MFM.



Nasarawa United prevail over CKD Academy

Chris Yakubu, delivered a spectacular goal.

Yakubu mesmerized CKD Academy's goalkeeper, Eze Chukwuma, chipping the ball over him following a pass from right back, Abubakar Abdullahi.

Despite their hard efforts, the host could not muster a leveller. It was the Solid Miners who needed the win more in the rain-drenched

setting, earning Coach Adams Usman's side their first win in their Abuja Pre-Season tour.

The solid miners are expected to play more friendly matches in the days ahead before returning to Lafia to play their first home game of the 2023/24 Nigeria National League, NNL, season against Jedo FC on Saturday, October 28,



Nasarawa United

IGC set for maiden SS28 Championship

NO fewer than 30 golfers have so far registered for the maiden edition of the Senior Special (SS28) Golf Championship slated for this weekend at Ibadan Golf Club (IGC), Onireke, Ibadan.

Speaking at a press briefing, the organising committee headed by the second Vice Captain of the club, Mr Seyi Alaba, disclosed that the competition is for members playing 28 handicap in IGC.

The committee stated that the tourney will feature the likes of SS28 Ojay, Mishinn, Vsop, the celebrity golfer, Iron-bender, hulk hogan, Shigo, Deacon, Science master, Science student, and Awake, among others.

Alaba, said the championship which is first of its kind in the history of the club was borne out of the need to engage and encourage the golfers in the category of handicap 28 to step up.

"We have some new members in this category and it's essential for them to play so as to ascertain their skills and capabilities. It has also been observed that we have many members who have stayed so long playing 28 handicaps.

"With this tournament, some of them who play better would be upgraded to the next handicap," Alaba said.

He said that 30 golfers have so far registered and that registration was still ongoing.

"We have what it takes to accommodate 70 participants who would compete for trophies and cash prizes," he said.

Also a member of the committee, Mr Tony Gbegbaje, urged all participants to put in their best, adding is essential for them to adhere to all rules and regulations guiding the game.

"In the golfing community there's comrade rivalry and this competition is a good avenue to know the best

among the boosters," he said.

IGC treasurer, who is also a member of the committee, Mike Babalola, said that the one-day tournament will feature guest players so as to participate in the tournament.

Babalola said that the guest players are members of other handicaps who are better than handicap 28.

"I'm hopeful that before the end of registration, we would have more participants and this would make the competition more competitive," he said.

Meanwhile, the course officer, Mr Bunmi Oladimeji said the course is in good shape to help the golfers enjoy rounds of golf.

Other members of the organising committee are Ayo Lijinrin and Mr Olaide Oladipupo.

Nigeria's Tobi Amusan has emerged winner of the Diamond League trophy for an astonishing third consecutive time. On Sunday night at Oregon in the U.S., Amusan with a time of 12.33 seconds emerged winner of the fiercely-contested 100 metres hurdles event....

There's no doubt that the Premier League is one of the most competitive football leagues in the world, filled with extraordinary talent, tactical brilliance, and captivating storylines. However, few things rival the exhilaration of a title race that comes down to the wire....

SUNDAY SPORTS



'Provoking questions contributed to turnover of coaches'

FORMER British number one Emma Raducanu says her "provoking" and "challenging" questions could explain why she has had a high turnover of coaches.

BBC SPORT said that, the 2021 US Open winner split with her fifth coach in two years in June when she parted ways with Sebastian Sachs and is yet to confirm a new coach.

"I ask my coaches a lot of questions," she told BBC Radio 4's Today programme.

"On certain occasions they haven't been able to keep up with the questions I've asked and maybe that's why it ended."

The 20-year-old added: "It's something I've always done. I keep provoking and asking questions to coaches and challenging their thinking as well. I'm not someone that you can just tell me what do and I'll do it, I need to understand why and then I'll do it."

Raducanu started her career with Nigel Sears, who left shortly after she reached the fourth round of Wimbledon in July 2021, before Andrew Richardson guided her to her famous victory at Flushing Meadows a couple of months later.

Torben Beltz was appointed in November 2021 but left in April 2022. He was replaced by Dimitri Tursunov, who warned of "red flags" and potential problems if Raducanu continued to listen to too many voices.

The Brit has struggled to hit the levels she found when winning the US Open as an 18-year-old and has not played since losing 6-2 6-1 against Jelena Ostapenko in Stuttgart in April.

After undergoing surgery on both wrists and an ankle in May, Raducanu is hoping to get back into competitive action by the time the new season starts.

"I will be coming back with probably a lower ranking, but I'm actually looking forward to starting again, kind of resetting," she told Karthi Gnanasegaram.

"I still have new goals, new things I want to achieve. But I've still got like 15 years left in my career, so there's no rush."

Raducanu also has an ambition to represent Great Britain at the Olympics, although Paris 2024 might come too soon.

"Obviously, the Olympics is such a big thing in sport," she

said. "I think I could play another four if I really wanted to, so this one isn't the immediate rush or pressure, it's just about getting back on court."

Juventus offer midfielder 'full support' after betting breaches

JUVENTUS have offered their "full support" to midfielder Nicolò Fagioli after he was banned for seven months for breaching betting rules.

BBC SPORT said that, the 22-year-old was given a 12-month ban, with five months suspended, and fined 12,500 euros (£10,850).

The Italian will also have therapy to tackle his gambling problem.

Juventus said they will be "providing the player with the necessary support in carrying out the indicated therapeutic plan".

The therapy plan will last for at least six months, with the Italian football federation (FIGC) saying Fagioli broke rules about placing bets on football events organised by them, European governing body Uefa and world ruling body Fifa.

Fagioli is alleged to have used a variety of identities to place bets on illegal websites.

Juventus said in a statement on their website: "The club has noted the official press release from the FIGC and confirms its full support for Nicolò Fagioli in tackling this path."

"We are firmly convinced that Nicolò, with the support of the club, his team-mates, his family and the professionals who will assist him, will face the therapeutic and training process with a great sense of responsibility and, once the disqualification has been served, will be able to return to competing with due serenity," the statement added.

Fagioli is one of several players being investigated, along with Newcastle's Sandro Tonali and Nicolò Zaniolo, who is on loan at Aston Villa from Galatasaray, as part of a probe into Italian football betting.

Newcastle confirmed on Wednesday that midfielder Tonali is being investigated by the Italian Prosecutor's Office and that he is co-operating with the enquiry.

"I love the Slams but I do want to have the Olympic experience. I'll just see how it goes, if I even qualify and how it goes from there."

Ramos continues to divide opinions before meeting former club

while Fagioli, who has one senior international cap, was not part of their squad for their



Fagioli has made 45 appearances for Juventus

RAMOS won 22 major honours during his time at the Bernabeu and was responsible for one of the most iconic moments in club history - a towering header to equalise in stoppage time of the 2014 Champions League final against city rivals Atletico, spectacularly salvaging Real's long-coveted quest for a 10th European crown.

Ramos was born and raised in Camas, on the outskirts of Seville, and joined his local team at the age of 10 before advancing through the ranks to make his first-team debut in 2004, aged just 17.

His talent was plain to see and the following year he was snapped up by Real for €27m, then a Spanish record for a defender.

The rest is history, but the final chapter is still being written because now, after two mixed years with Paris St-Germain, Ramos has made an emotional return to his boyhood club, signing a contract until the end of this season - quite possibly his last - on a free transfer.

But his supposed dream homecoming has been far

NEW Birmingham City boss, Wayne Rooney, has called rumours of his reported salary "a load of rubbish" as he prepares for his first game in charge.

BBC SPORT said that, it has been reported that Rooney, who turns 38 next week, is earning £1.5m a year - three times as much as predecessor John Eustace.

Rooney's first game for Blues is against ex-team-mate Michael Carrick and his Middlesbrough side on Saturday.

"There's lots of stuff, especially with it being me," he told BBC Radio WM.

"I understand that. There's a lot of rumours which go round, but what's been out there is a load of rubbish, to be honest."

"As I said last week I came here because I really like the project."

"I've turned down jobs which would have paid a lot more but I've come here because I want to be successful. And I want to get this club back to the Premier League."

Rooney calls salary rumours 'a load of rubbish'



Michael Carrick has 22 wins in his 41 games as a Championship manager, while Wayne Rooney enjoyed 24 victories in 81 games at Derby

"But, as for some of the rumours, I just don't get involved with it."

Rooney allowed himself a wry smile that his first game should be against Carrick, with whom he played alongside more than any other Manchester United player in their time at Old Trafford.

"Michael's a good friend of

mine," he said. "And he's doing a fantastic job at Middlesbrough. I'm pleased for him in that respect."

"We spoke early last week, but we then said we'd get this game out of the way and speak again after."

"To come up against him first time is great but we both want to win."

"I'm looking forward to seeing him. But, over the 90 minutes, it's Middlesbrough v Birmingham City - and we'll both be doing our best to win the match."

Rooney says that any trip to Teesside is never easy, especially not now last season's beaten play-off semi-finalists Boro have got over their poor start to win four games on the bounce.

Carrick also has the edge of being able to claim he is a former Birmingham City employee, having made a couple of appearances in a royal blue shirt on loan from West Ham United under Trevor Francis in February 2000.

Despite the interruption of his first week in charge being international week, Rooney is content with his first few days on the training ground in Henley-in-Arden.

"We've had a few players away," he said. "And Juninho

Championships either side of it. But the extreme divergence of views about his arrival shows that Ramos's long-established ability to drastically divide opinion remains intact, even at the age of 37.

On the pitch, things have been equally challenging, with Sevilla only winning two of this season's 11 competitive games to result in the sacking of manager Jose Luis Mendilibar during the international break, less than five months after he led the team to victory in the Europa

League.

His surprising and risky replacement is Diego Alonso, who has never previously coached outside South America and whose last job, managing his native Uruguayan national team, ended in failure with a group stage elimination from last year's World Cup finals.

Before his first game in charge, at home to league-leading Real on Saturday, one of the main questions facing Alonso is whether Ramos should be named in the starting line-up.



Sergio Ramos signed for boyhood club Sevilla from Paris St-Germain in the summer

SUNDAY SPORTS

The 16-year-old living her motorsports dream

By
**CHARLOTTE SIMPSON &
MANISH PANDEY**

WHEN Chloe Chong thinks back to her childhood, her six-year-old self would never have dared to dream she would be where she is now.

This weekend the 16-year-old will be competing at the United States Grand Prix in Austin, Texas, as part of the F1 Academy support race.

The F1 Academy was launched this year as an entry-level series for women drivers taking their first steps in motorsport.

It has featured 15 women competing across five teams, with the first race taking place in Austria in April.

And this weekend for their season finale, Chloe will be sharing the race weekend with her hero Sir Lewis Hamilton.

"Lewis has done an amazing job, being able to inspire so many people. And I think that really drives me to keep pushing as hard as I can," she says.

It's not the only connection Chloe has with the legendary British driver, having taken her first racing steps at the same karting track as him.

"It's so cool to start in the same place because he inspired me from a young age to start karting," she tells BBC Newsbeat at Buckmore Park Kart Circuit in Kent.

"I'm really grateful for everything he's done not only to help women in F1, but also to help diverse ethnicities come into sports in general."

Chloe says the memories start "flooding back" when she's on the track.

"This place feels like home, but it also feels like a different world to me. Racing in such big cars, you kind of forget where you came from," she adds.

"And I think it's always nice to come back, build on those memories and stay grateful for where you are today."

The teenager says her decision to start racing at the circuit came about when she was as young as five.

She remembers "always wanting to go into a car", and that eventually happened when she "begged and begged my parents".

"My parents weren't into racing, really," she points out. "We watched F1 and that brought about a passion for sport in me."

Chloe did think about going straight into the F1 big league, but her dad reminded her of the hard



Chloe will be competing in three races across Saturday and Sunday in the final weekend of the F1 Academy

work needed along the way - and told her to start in karting.

"He told me that there was this track where Lewis Hamilton [started], and that all champions start in karting," she says.

"So it was an automatic yes for me to start at the same place as one of my heroes. And I think that also ignited more passion in me for the sport."

And it's not just Chloe and Hamilton who learnt the ropes at Buckmore Park Kart Circuit.

It was also where other successful British drivers like Lando Norris and Jenson Button learnt how to tackle bends and speed down straights.

"It's super inspiring to learn the same things that they did at the same track that they did," Chloe says.

But moving from karting to racing cars has been a "massive adjustment".

"You can only get so much from karting, it builds the rhythm and the overtaking," she explains.

"The real difference between cars and karting is that there's just a whole different level of detail."

"I think it causes a lot more analysis. You've got to be more communicative with your



Chloe and the rest of the F1 Academy drivers met Lewis Hamilton ahead of the US GP this weekend

engineer, with your team.

"And there's more strategy and I think that was the biggest adjustment for me and probably the hardest one that took the most time."

At 16, Chloe is too young to legally drive on British roads but has been flying along at 150mph in her F1 Academy car on the track this year.

When she reflects back on her rookie year and her first time driving proper racing cars, she feels the season has "gone pretty well".

"We always had that expectation, being the youngest driver on the grid, that there was no point in thinking that you could beat drivers that had six to seven years of car racing experience," she says.

"You've got to respect those little gains, because in reality when you're racing against girls with so much more experience, that's always going to be the challenge."

Chloe's aims for the season were just to complete races, but after finishing sixth in her first race she



The teenager started karting after begging her parents to let her try when she was five years old

created "a moment that will live with me forever".

"In general the season's been really great, really progressive," she says.

The race in Texas this weekend is the only support race for the F1 Academy, but that will change from next year with the all-female junior category holding all its rounds as support races for grands prix.

F1 teams are also going to pick a driver each to race in the F1 Academy - with Chloe keen to be

picked up by McLaren, Mercedes or Williams.

She feels these types of moves in motorsport are a "massive step forward" for women, "especially in terms of budgets, I think that's one of the biggest challenges that we face".

But for now, Chloe says she's keen to live in the moment and appreciates "spending time with the team, learning a lot of stuff".

"I'm just taking everything in and living that opportunity because I'm so grateful for what's happened."



Chloe says she's keen to keep learning and improving after her rookie season



30 invited Falconets players to resume today



Super Falcon selected

Head Coach, Christopher Musa Danjuma has called up goalkeepers Faith Omilana and Linda Jiwuaku, defenders Jumoke Alani and Tumininu Adeshina, midfielders Taiwo Afolabi, Chinyere Kalu and Chidera Okenwa, and forwards Chiamaka Okwuchukwu, Yina Adoo and Opeyemi Ajakaye among a roster of 30 Falconets for next month's 2024 FIFA U20 Women's World Cup qualifying fixture against the U20 girls of Tanzania.

Following the withdrawal of Mauritius from the second-round attrition with Nigeria, the 2022 World Cup quarter-finalists drew a bye to the third round, where Tanzania await, with the first leg away in Dar es Salaam on a date within 10th – 12th November and the return leg in Abuja on a date within 17th – 19th November.

Danjuma has picked a few of his World Cup quarter-finalists from Costa Rica last year, and an impressive number from the Flamingos squad that won the bronze medals at the FIFA U17 Women's World Cup in India a year ago.

The invited players have been told to report at the Chida Hotel in Utako, Abuja on today, 22nd October.

World football-governing body, FIFA has increased the number of finalists for next year's FIFA U20 Women's World Cup final tournament in Colombia to 24, from the 16 that participated in Costa Rica, and also increased the number of Africa's flag bearers to four.

This means that after the Tanzania fixture, the Falconets will have one round to go before qualification for the big houseparty in Colombia in September 2024.

All the invited players: Goalkeepers: Linda Jiwuaku (Bayelsa Queens); Faith Omilana (Naija Ratels); Anderlin Mgbechi (Delta Queens); Shukurat Bakare (Nasarawa Amazons) Defenders: Jumoke Alani (Edo Queens); Oluwabunmi Semilore (Naija Ratels); Oluchi Ohaegbunam (Nasarawa Amazons); Tumininu Adeshina (Naija Ratels); Shukurat Oladipo (FC Robo Queens); Comfort Folorunsho (Edo Queens); Monica Elejo (Nasarawa Amazons); Alake Kasali (Bayelsa Queens)

Midfielders: Taiwo Afolabi (Delta Queens); Chinyere Kalu (Nasarawa Amazons); Vera Samuel (Delta Queens); Shukurat Sobowale (Nasarawa Amazons); Esther Inyang (Delta Queens); Aminat Folorunsho (Rivers Angels); Gloria Evans (FCT Academy); Chidera Okenwa (Delta Queens).

Forwards: Chiamaka Okwuchukwu (Rivers Angels); Chinasa Ogor (Delta Queens); Opeyemi Ajakaye (FC Robo Queens); Adaobi Okoh (Remo Queens); Chioma Olise (Edo Queens); Chisom China (Bayelsa Queens); Lydia Joshua (Heartland Queens); Delight Isaac (Dannz Ladies); Jenat Akekoromowei (Asisat Academy); Yina Adoo (Nasarawa Amazons).

Meanwhile the MatchDay 4 fixture in Lafia between hosts,

Lobi Stars and Abia Warriors earlier scheduled for Saturday, October 21 will now be played on Sunday, October 22, BSNSports.com.ng reports.

The Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) granted the 24hours shift following the tragic robbery incident in Makurdi, home base of Lobi Stars.

"Everything and all officials involved in this fixture, including the crew of our broadcast streaming partners, Propel Sports are on ground in Lafia but this is a huge human tragedy that deserves our sympathy and support, not just for Lobi Stars but the entire people of Benue State", remarked Davidson Owumi,

the Chief Operating Officer of NPFL while announcing the date shift.

"The NPFL commiserates with the families that lost loved ones and the greater people and Government of Benue State on this unfortunate incident", he further stated.

Owumi disclosed that the

Kamaru Usman denies injuring himself in workouts

Kamaru Usman has flatly denied injuring himself during open workouts ahead of UFC 294 after fans suggested he said: 'Something popped'.

The 'Nigerian Nightmare' was seen grappling with Justin Gaethje in front of media before taking him down, saying something and ending the session shortly after.

Usman, who has had various issues with his knees in the past, was suggested to have said 'something popped', but he denied that on social media.

The former welterweight champion said: 'This is why no one reads this sh***y ass blog.

'At what point while I was lightly drilling did you hear me say that to Justin. Stop with the clickbait you idiots.'

Gaethje added: 'He said 'I'm good' or something like that. I thought he hit his head on the mat. I asked if he hit his head in this clip when we got up and he said no.'

His match-up against undefeated Chimaev is widely thought to be more interesting than the original match-up

between the Chechen-born Swede and Paulo Costa.

The Brazilian pulled out injured after suffering a nasty infection to his elbow, the gruesome pictures of which he shared online.

There was no clear indication from the footage that Usman's knee gave out after taking Gaethje down to the mat.

The pair were enjoying a light session for the cameras and applauded those surrounding the elevated stage before making an exit shortly after the supposed incident occurred.

Usman is in the unfamiliar position of coming into the fight having lost two back-to-back.

Leon Edwards took his crown and then defended it in the London trilogy bout, prompting this short notice move up to middleweight for Usman.

He believes he is in line for a title shot at Sean Strickland if he manages to find a way past Chimaev, who is regarded as one of the most dangerous up and coming fighters in the

League has sought the understanding of the Match Officials and the visiting team, Abia Warriors whose schedule and logistics would directly be impacted by the shift. He added that "all other fixtures will be played as scheduled".

Lafia will then join seven other fixtures to be played today with that between Doma United and Enyimba International already postponed owing to the latter's involvement in the prestigious Africa Football League (AFL).

Also, clubs' hierarchy in the Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) has been charged to provide a conducive atmosphere at all times during the matches of the 2023/24 season.

The charge came through a memo to the clubs and signed by the NPFL Chief Operating Officer, Davidson Owumi who observed that there has been a number of disturbing incidents reported around the Changing Rooms of the Referees at some venues.

"It is becoming increasingly worrisome that unauthorised persons are encroaching to restricted areas during matches of the ongoing season," the memo began.

The Club bosses were reminded that no club official is allowed access to match Officials before, during and after any fixtures.

"It has become necessary to remind our Chairmen, General Managers and other top officials of the clubs that no club officer is permitted to visit or talk to Match Officials in their Changing Rooms at halftime or at any time in the course of a league match.



Usman sport.

The 36-year-old said: 'He's very skilled. He's strong, he's big, he's fast, he can wrestle, he can grapple, he can strike.'

'He has everything – but so do I. At the end of the day, we're all human beings. Everybody feels invincible until someone comes in and pokes that balloon.'

'It's a built-in,' Usman said of a potential title shot.

'Sean Strickland's the champion. I've already taken care of him. Not to say he's not better – he is.'

'But I've got a mountain in front of me that I need to scale and climb, so we'll get through that first and then we'll worry about what's next.'