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Federal Government signs 15-point memorandum with organised labour

The President Bola Tinubu-led Nigerian government on Monday night signed a 15-point memorandum with the organised labour – the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and the Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (TUC) – in Abuja

after an emergency session.

The source had earlier reported that the organised labour suspended its indefinite, nationwide strike which was billed for Tuesday, October 3.

This was after both parties signed a 15-point

memorandum of understanding as a last minute effort to avert the planned nationwide strike.

The memorandum of understanding was signed by the representatives of the Nigeria Labour Congress, NLC, the Trade Union Congress, TUC, and the Federal Government.

The memorandum reads, "Arising from the withdrawal of subsidy on Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) by the Federal Government and the resultant increase in the price of the commodity, the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and the Trade Union Congress

(TUC) issued a strike notice which had elapsed and they were poised to embark on a strike billed to commence on Tuesday, the 3rd of October, 2023. Consequently, a meeting was called by the Federal Government to avert the strike and after much discussion, the following

agreements were reached: The Federal Government grants a wage award of N35,000 (thirty-five thousand Naira) only to all Federal Government workers beginning from the month of September pending when a new national minimum wage is

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Plateau State Governor, Barr. Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang on motorcade reviewing the parade mounted by Nigeria Police Force with other paramilitary organisations at the Nigeria's 63rd Independence celebrations at the Rwang Pam Township Stadium, Jos on Monday.

Photo: DANLADI DUK

Mutfwang affirms commitment to social contract

By PETER TITLE

In commemoration of Nigeria's 63rd Independence Anniversary, the Executive Governor of Plateau State, Barrister Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang has reaffirmed his commitment towards fulfilling the social contract he signed with the people

when he took office. The governor stressed that his unwavering passion and dedication was to enhance good governance for the betterment of the citizens.

He also exercised the prerogative of mercy as enshrined in the constitution of the Federal

Republic of Nigeria on Danladi Musa who was sentenced to life imprisonment for culpable homicide and having served 17 years was granted absolute pardon.

Tali Zingtim who was sentenced to death by hanging for criminal conspiracy and armed

robbery would serve 21 years imprisonment. Ponzing Nanshep who was sentenced to life imprisonment for criminal conspiracy and culpable homicide was to serve 21 years..

Others include Dauda Joshua who was sentenced to death by hanging for

culpable homicide would serve life imprisonment in that order.

Governor Mutfwang made these known in a statewide broadcast to commemorate Nigeria's 63rd Independence Anniversary in Jos the Plateau State capital on

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Nigeria records over 1,000 Lassa fever cases in 9 months

Nigeria has seen 1,068 Lassa fever cases across the country over the last nine months, according to new data released by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC).

A total of 181 deaths were reported within the period, with a case fatality rate (CFR) of 16.9 per cent which is lower than the CFR for the same period in 2022 (19.1 percent).

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News

Federal Government signs 15-point memorandum with organised labour



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expected to have been signed into law.

A minimum wage committee shall be inaugurated within one month from the date of this agreement.

Federal Government suspends collection of Value Added Tax (VAT) on Diesel for six months beginning from October, 2023.

Federal Government accepts to vote N100 billion for the provision of high capacity CNG buses for mass transit in Nigeria. Provisions are also being made for initial 55,000 CNG conversion kits to kick start an auto gas conversion programme, whilst work is ongoing on

state-of-the-art CNG stations nationwide. The rollout aims to commence by November with pilots across 10 campuses nationwide.

The Federal Government plans to implement various tax incentive measures for private sector and the general public. 6. On the leadership crises rocking the NURTW and the purported proscription of RTEAN, the Federal Government commits to handling Labour matters in line with relevant ILO Conventions and Nigerian Labour Acts. A resolution of the ongoing impasse is expected by or before October 13.

The issue of outstanding Salaries and Wages of Tertiary Education workers in Federal-owned educational institutions is being referred to Ministry of Labour and Employment for further engagement.

The Federal Government commits to pay N25,000 per month for three months starting from October, 2023 to 15 million households, including vulnerable pensioners.

The Federal Government will increase its initiatives

on subsidized distribution of fertilizers to farmers across the country. 10. The Federal Government should urge State Government through the National Economic Council and Governors Forum to implement wage award for their workers. Similar consideration should also be given to local government and private sector workers.

The Federal Government commits to the provision of funds as announced by the President on the 1st of August broadcast to the Nation for Micro and Small Scale Enterprises. The MSMEs beneficiaries should commit to the principle of decent jobs.

A joint visitation will be made to the refineries to ascertain their rehabilitation status. 13. All parties commit to henceforth abide by the dictates of Social dialogue in all our future engagements.

The NLC and TUC accept to suspend for 30 days the planned Indefinite Nationwide strike scheduled to begin, Tuesday, the 3rd of October, 2023. 15. This Memorandum shall be filed with the relevant Court of competent jurisdiction within one (1) week as consent judgment by the Federal Government."

Mutwang affirms commitment to social contract

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Sunday, where he noted that the 2023 Independence Anniversary was special to him being the first since the people gave him the privilege to serve them as Governor. He thanked them for their collective decision.

According to him, "My team and I are constantly reminded of the need to work assiduously and deliver the dividends of democracy for the common good of all. The least we will present as a token of our appreciation for the trust and belief in our

vision for a new Plateau is to make Plateau the envy for all".

Governor Mutwang further noted, "Irrespective of the challenges we face, we must stick together, look beyond the horizon, towards building a prosperous state and nation. We are certainly not where we ought to be, just like our beautiful Nigeria. Nigeria is a blessed land, with vast resources, opportunities and talents, all yet to be fully explored.

However, we must have

faith in this nation and support our leaders. We must rally round and collaborate with one another towards improving the fortunes of our beloved country".

He urged citizens to strengthen their resolve to forge a common front and to set aside their differences and strive towards building a Nigeria that realizes dreams of their founding fathers.

According to him, it was a duty the people must uphold. Stressing that "Together, we can build an inclusive society where every Nigerian, regardless of background, gender, ethnicity or religion, gain access to equal opportunities for growth and development. Equity, justice and fairness will continue to be our watchwords".

Gov. Mutwang said on assumption of office, they hit ground running by tackling the systematic inadequacies and distortion of engagement processes within the civil service. Adding that the process was grossly abused, significantly altering the wage bill of the state. He said he was glad that the outcome of the preliminary verification exercise yielded positive results thereby saving taxpayers monies which he said would be channeled to

Nigeria records over 1,000 Lassa fever cases in 9 months

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In total for 2023, 28 states have recorded at least one confirmed case across 112

Local Government Areas while 75 percent of all approved Lassa fever cases were reported from Ondo, Edo, and Bauchi.

The rest, 25 percent, were reported from 25 states with confirmed Lassa fever cases.

The male-to-female ratio for confirmed cases is 1 to 0.9.

The number of suspected cases increased compared to that reported for the same period in 2022.

The report shows no new healthcare worker was affected in week 37.

The NCDC said it's national Lassa fever multi-partner, multi-sectoral Technical Working Group (TWG) continues coordinating the response activities at all levels.

Lassa fever is an acute viral haemorrhagic illness transmitted to humans through contact with food or household items contaminated by rodents infected with the Lassa fever virus. Person-to-person transmission can also occur, particularly in a hospital environment with inadequate infection control measures.

Like several other countries in West Africa, the disease is endemic in Nigeria and is often recorded during the dry season between November and May.

Lassa fever presents initially like any other febrile illness, such as malaria. Its symptoms include fever, headache, sore throat, general body weakness, cough, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, muscle pains, chest pain, and in severe cases, unexplainable bleeding from ears, eyes, nose, mouth, and other body openings.

The time between infection and the appearance of symptoms of the disease is between three to 21 days. However, early treatment and diagnosis increase the chances of survival.

To reduce the risk of the spread of Lassa fever, the NCDC has advised Nigerians to ensure proper environmental sanitation; dispose of refuse properly, store foodstuff like rice, garri, beans, and corn



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among other raw foods in containers with tight-fitting lids.

Nigerians are also urged to avoid bush burning, eliminate rats in homes and communities by setting rat traps and other means, and practice good personal hygiene by frequent handwashing with soap under running water or use of hand sanitisers when appropriate.

The centre urges Nigerians to visit the nearest health facility if they notice any of the signs and symptoms of Lassa fever, and avoid self-medication.

It is also advised that health care workers practice standard precautions and to maintain a high index of suspicion at all times.

Opioid addiction market fuels Nigeria's drug crisis

A growing market of addiction to synthetic opioids estimated at over \$1 billion has been identified as the fastest-growing challenge in Nigeria's drug crisis, apart from cocaine and heroin trafficking.

The emerging challenge is fuelled by the activities of organised crime syndicates that specialise in the production, use and trafficking of drugs, a report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and National Institute for Security Studies (NISS).

With a total of 16 methamphetamine labs seized by the Nigerian Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) as of 2019, opioid production is aided by the importation of certain chemicals for the local pharmaceutical industry.

The most important domestic drug market is that of synthetic opioids. The number of consumers is so large that the market is estimated to be worth more than \$1 billion annually, likely marking Nigeria's single highest-value drug market," the report states.

Most opioid usage is

reportedly connected to Tramadol, which comes in pill form. Although not illicit, the wide non-medical use in Nigeria is illegal.

Almost all the tramadol seized in Nigeria in containers between 2011 and 2019 was manufactured in South and Southeast Asia. Ports in Benin Republic and Togo, which often serve as conduits for goods destined for Nigeria, also seize large volumes of the drug.

Following the import and production ban of codeine cough syrup in Nigeria in 2018, it is likely that supplies are being diverted from neighbouring countries, the report said.

Prices of tramadol in Nigeria rose five-fold between 2017 and 2021. Moreover, Nigeria remains a hub in the transnational cocaine and heroin trade, with cocaine coming from Latin America using Nigeria and neighbouring countries as a transit hub also a matter of concern. Most cocaine couriered into Nigeria today comes from São Paulo (Brazil) through Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) to Cotonou (Benin Republic) or Lagos (Nigeria).



Mutwang



Business & Economy

Innovative payments and eCommerce in intra-African trade

Africa boasts immense economic potential, yet this potential has long been constrained by trade and payment barriers. According to the African Development Bank (AfDB), nearly half of intra-African trade settlements rely on foreign banks and the US dollar, highlighting the challenge at hand. In response, the African Union (AU) collaborated to pioneer innovative payment systems exemplified by the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS). While eCommerce platforms are also contributing to overcoming trade and payment barriers, their impact, while substantial, is not sufficient. To truly ignite intra-African trade, the adoption of innovative payment solutions has to parallel the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). OLAKUNLE MOHAMMED writes.

IN January 2022, the launch of PAPSS by the African Export-Import Bank (AfreximBank) and the AU marked a significant step towards facilitating cross-border payments across the continent. PAPSS allows businesses and individuals to make payments in local currencies, reducing the reliance on external currencies like the US dollar and minimising transaction costs.

However, only nine African countries and approximately 40 commercial banks have joined the payment infrastructure. This limited participation highlights a significant challenge that could hinder the full realisation of PAPSS's potential and the broader goal of boosting intra-African trade.

Recall that a few years after AfCFTA was established, its scope was expanded to include e-commerce and other forms of digital trade. This is in recognition of the increasing importance of digital trade in Africa. Nations such as Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, Morocco, and Egypt have experienced a boom in eCommerce platforms and innovative payment solutions. These countries serve as regional eCommerce hubs, boasting a combined estimated revenue surpassing \$10 billion in 2022. However, despite the rapid growth, Africa's online shopping rates still lag behind the global average, even in its leading markets.

It is noteworthy that intra-African trade increased from 13 percent to 20 percent in 2022 after AfCFTA operationalisation. But, it remains relatively low compared to other regions. Hence, there is a pressing



need for greater participation in PAPSS. While the initiative is promising, its impact can only be fully realised when more African countries and financial institutions join the network.

The AU, AfrximBank, and other stakeholders need to actively promote and incentivize participation to create a more robust and interconnected payment ecosystem. If African countries cannot operationalise a single currency for trading like the European Union's (EU) Euro, then it is pertinent to have an omniscient payment infrastructure that reduces reliance on external currencies and minimises transaction cost.

Expanding digital infrastructure, including internet access and reliable electricity, is crucial to ensure that remote and underserved areas can participate in eCommerce and

utilise innovative payment systems effectively

AfCFTA's Secretary-General, Wamkele Mene revealed that currency convertibility costs Africa as much as \$5 billion annually. This could have been avoided through regulatory harmonisation. This involves aligning laws, regulations, and standards across African countries to create a consistent and conducive business environment. Inconsistent regulations across African countries impedes the seamless operation of innovative payment systems and eCommerce platforms.

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) of the EU serves as an example of harmonised regulations. Though, the AU Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection has been ratified

but yet to be institutionalised in member states. With the booming fintech sector in Africa, nations also need to tackle interoperability between payment systems. This will ensure that mobile money platforms can seamlessly transact with each other to promote greater financial inclusion and ease of cross-border payments.

While the establishment of the AU Trade Observatory portal to monitor and harmonise customs procedures and reduce non-tariff barriers to trade is commendable. Still, the AfCFTA has to work with member states to harmonise regulations related to digital payments, cybersecurity, and data protection to create a conducive environment for cross-border trade and payments.

Let us not forget that infrastructure development is key. Expanding digital infrastructure, including internet access and reliable electricity, is crucial to ensure that remote and underserved areas can participate in eCommerce and utilise innovative payment systems effectively. Investment in infrastructure will extend the reach of these technologies and foster economic inclusion. Stakeholders must invest in physical infrastructures,

improving road and rail networks, increasing the number of ports and airports to reduce transit times for the delivery of goods within Africa.

More importantly, education and awareness are vital components of the solution. African governments and organisations must invest in programs that boost digital literacy and financial education among citizens. Fostering understanding of these systems and their advantages can drive broader adoption, particularly among African small businesses and individuals. This is of utmost importance, as small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) constitute about 90 percent of all private businesses in Africa, generate roughly 85 percent of employment, and contribute approximately 35 percent to the continent's GDP.

The integration of PAPSS and other innovative payment systems can improve intra-African trade and financing. As African nations reduce their dependence on external payments and financiers, they gain greater control over their financial destinies, ultimately paving the way for a more economically sustainable future.

"While the establishment of the AU Trade Observatory portal to monitor and harmonise customs procedures and reduce non-tariff barriers to trade is commendable. Still, the AfCFTA has to work with member states to harmonise regulations related to digital payments, cybersecurity, and data protection to create a conducive environment for cross-border trade and payments. Let us not forget that infrastructure development is key. Expanding digital infrastructure, including internet access and reliable electricity, is crucial to ensure that remote and underserved areas can participate in eCommerce and utilise innovative payment systems effectively."



Business & Economy

Rising inflation, FX pain bite consumer firms

NIGERIA'S annual inflation rate rose for the eighth straight month, its highest in 18 years, to 25.80 percent in August 2023.

The National Bureau of Statistics' latest consumer price index report shows that food and non-alcoholic beverages contributed the most (13.36 percent) to the increase in the headline index, followed by housing water, electricity, gas and other fuel (4.32 percent), among other things.

Ikoli-Oluwo noted that Inflation is skyrocketing and the buying powers of consumers are getting poorer, stocks are going to be piled up in the warehouses of these firms, and profit will fall.

"Despite underperforming bottom-line performance in the concluded quarter, the current assets of companies in the FMCG sector are expected to offset liabilities in the short term as most of the payables are currently recorded in their current liabilities. The impact of the FX devaluation has not eroded the value of the assets of the company; therefore, the overall total assets of the company can offset the company's payable with substantial shareholder equity," Ikoli-Oluwo said.

"Higher payable would increase cashflow performance (cash at hand and equivalent) in H2'2023 allowing room for more capital expenditure and expansionary plans for the company Ikoli-Oluwo," added.

The fluctuation in the naira's exchange rate has further exacerbated the issue, as the official exchange rate has surged from N463.38/\$ to N744.41/\$, with the parallel market rate reaching N1,000/\$.

However, Idahos said the cash flow of FMCG will likely record a decrease in the remaining half of the year.

"FMCG companies in Nigeria will have less cash flow because they will use whatever naira they have to pay off as much of their dollar debt as possible. This will cause their cash flow to bleed, and they will not be able to give credit to their distributors and major dealers because they need cash to survive," Idahos said.

The sugar manufacturer experienced year-on-year growth in trade and other payables of 74.4 percent reaching N400.3 billion in the first half of 2023 from N229.52 billion recorded in the same period of 2022.

The food and beverage



Adeyemi

manufacturer saw a decline in its trade payable which amounted to N167.7 billion in H1'23 from N170.89 billion recorded in the same period of 2022.

International Breweries International breweries saw their trade and other payables amount to N146.8 billion in the first half of 2023 from N122.9 billion recorded in the same period of 2022.

Unilever Nigeria Plc The manufacturer of food ingredients and home and personal care products saw its trade payable increase to N74.32 billion in H1'23 from N50.61 billion recorded in 2022.

Under its trade and other payables, amounts due to related parties amounted to

N19.5 billion, accrued expenses amounted to N5.3 billion, and trade and other payables amounted to N2.7 billion among other line items.

Cadbury Nigeria Plc The chocolate manufacturer's trade and other payables amounted to N24.5 billion in H1'23 from N20.5 billion recorded in the same period of 2022.

Due to related parties amounted to N10.01 billion, Trade payable amounted to N9.01 billion, and accrued expenses, among other things.

Champion Brew The indigenous beer maker accounted for N4.23 billion as it trade and other payables in from N2.2 billion recorded in the same period of 2022.

BUA reduces cement price to N3,500 per bag

BUA Group has announced a reduction of ex-factory cement price to N3,500 per bag. The current ex-factory price is N4,650, while it is being sold.

The current ex-factory price is N4,650, while it is being sold at N5,000 in the market.

In a statement the company announced that the new price will take effect from Monday, October 2, 2023.

The statement, titled 'Reduce in Prices of BUA Cement', reads: "We refer to our previous pronouncements regarding our intent to reduce cement prices upon the completion of our new lines at the end of the year, in order to spur development in the building materials and infrastructure sectors.

"As per the commitment made to reduce prices and following a periodic review of

our operations for efficiency, the management of BUA Cement Plc wishes to announce and inform our esteemed customers, stakeholders, and the public that effective October 2, 2023, we have decided to bring the price reduction forward. As a result, BUA Cement would now be sold at an ex-factory* price of N3,500 per bag so that Nigerians can begin to enjoy the benefits of the price reduction before the completion of our plants.

"Upon completion of the ongoing construction of our new plants, which would increase our production volumes to 17million metric tons per annum, BUA Cement PLC intends to review these prices further in line with our earlier pronouncements by the first quarter of 2024.

"NOTE: all pending,

THE Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation (NDIC) has announced the declaration of N16.18 billion liquidation dividends to depositors, creditors, and shareholders of 20 banks in liquidation.

In a statement issued recently by the Director, Communications and Public Relations at the NDIC, Bashir Nuhu, the Corporation subsequently announced the commencement of verification and payment of stakeholders covered by the declarations within 30 days, starting from 28th September 2023.

"It is instructive to note that the ongoing payment is sequel to earlier payment of various sums which cumulatively amounted to N45.45bn as liquidation dividends in respect of the 20 banks as at July 2023.

"Relevant stakeholders have been requested to visit any of the NDIC's offices closer to them or go to the claims page on the Corporation's website, to download, complete and submit the verification form with prescribed supporting documents to the dedicated email for the purpose: claimcomplaints@ndic.gov.ng.

"The closed banks

NDIC begins payment to 20 defunct bank depositors



Hassan

covered by the exercise are Liberty Bank, City Express Bank, Assurance Merchant Bank, Century Bank, Allied Bank, Financial Merchant Bank, Icon Merchant Bank, Progress Bank, Merchant Bank of Africa (MBA), Premier Commercial Bank, North South Bank and Prime Merchant Bank. Others are Commercial Trust Bank, Cooperative and Commerce Bank, Rims

Merchant Bank, Pan African Bank, Fortune Bank, All States Trust Bank, Nigeria Merchant Bank and Amicable Bank in liquidation,". The Corporation explained.

Liquidation dividend represents the amount in excess of the insured sums paid by the NDIC to depositors of a closed bank from recoveries made from realisation of assets of failed financial institutions.

State House Correspondents that his company was set to reduce the price of cement.

Rabiu added that to support the efforts of the government to crash the price of the product, the company would add two new plants at the end of the year or early next year.

According to him, the plants to be commissioned by Tinubu, would bring BUA Cement's total capacity to 17 million metric tons.

He said: "Let me thank His Excellency Mr. President for graciously receiving me today. I came to intimate His Excellency on the affairs of our cement business. We have two new lines of 3 million tons each that we will be commissioned by the end of the year.

"So I came to intimate His Excellency and also to explain to him the efforts we're making in trying to support again the efforts of the government in bringing

down the price of cement.

"With this 6 million tons that are commissioning by the end of the year. And by the way, His Excellency has agreed to come and commission the plants, sometimes in December or early January next year.

"So I explained to him and we want to support the efforts of the government in bringing down the price of cement. By the time these lines are commissioned, BUA Cement will be producing about 17 million tons per annum. And with that, we intend to bring down the price of cement from its current level of N5, 000 or N5, 500 per bag to maybe N3, 000 to N3, 500 per bag.

"And we can only do that because we're producing cement locally. 80% of the raw materials that we're using to produce cement are in Nigeria. We want to support the government efforts in ensuring that the price of these commodities are brought down."



Business & Economy

Dissecting Tinubu's industrialisation drive for a model Nigeria

The Renewed Hope government of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu is only four months old and is far too infinitesimal for results to start showing, especially, as it concerns industrialisation. However, the period is enough time to see the direction of the government on industrialisation and investment drive to Nigeria. Analysts have said the steps taken so far are encouraging, and that if the president is able to successfully implement his plans, they could have a major impact on the Nigerian economy and create millions of new jobs. GIDADO IBRAHIM writes

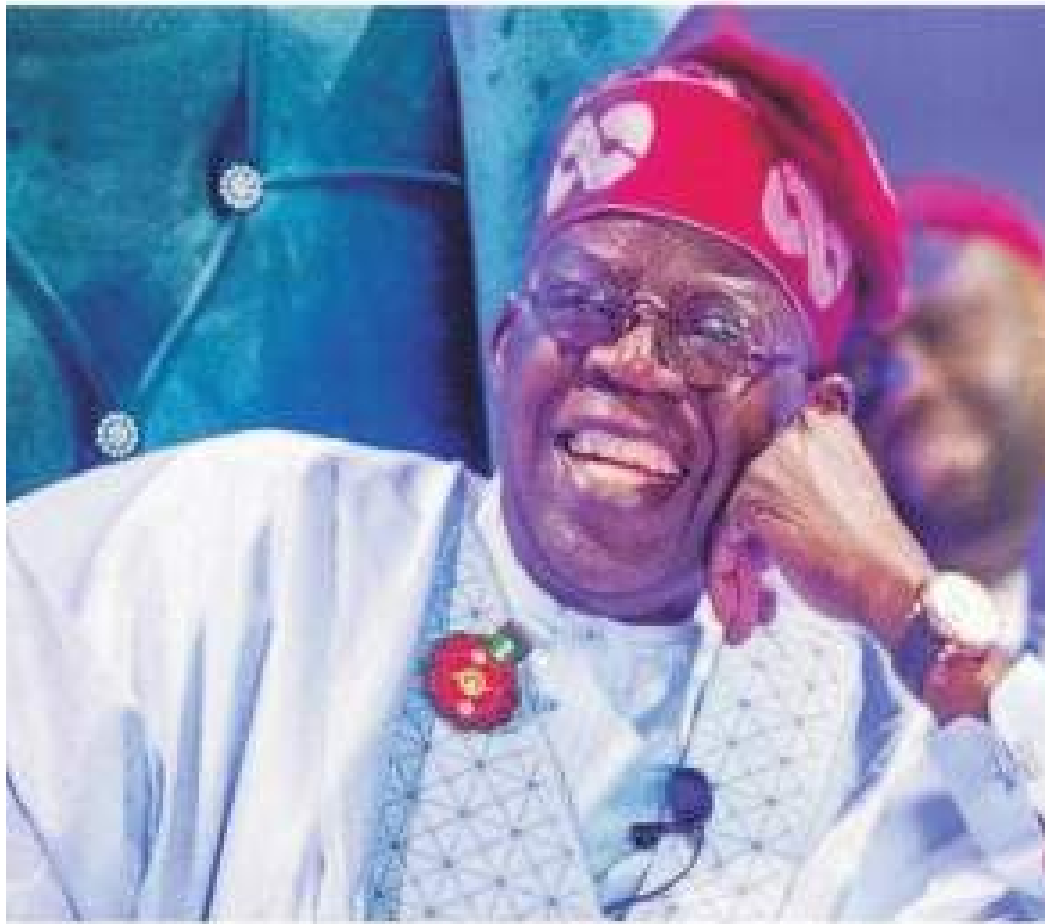
AS an industrial forensics security expert, my aim in this article is to examine the efforts so far, to see areas that needs recalibration or to sustain momentum. The essence of my engagements is not to apportion blames but to bridge the gap of understanding/communication between government's industrialisation policy and Nigerians.

The task of industrialising an economy, especially that of Nigeria with over 200 million people, is not a tea party. More so that concatenation of events like insecurity, high cost of doing business, decay in infrastructure, epileptic electricity supply, unfriendly business policies of government have de-marketed and made the country unattractive to Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

Abreast of the humongous challenges that faces the economy, President Tinubu and Vice President Kashim Shettima did not leave anything to chance. They have even assumed the status of marketer-in-chief of Nigeria. The principal target of this economic diplomacy is to assure global investors that Nigeria is ready for business. You may say talk is cheap, but Tinubu backed words with actions by dismantling the cumbersome business policies that hitherto scared investors away from Nigeria.

These efforts are beginning to payoff with recent moves by Indian investors for significant investment amounting to nearly \$14 billion, a commitment Tinubu extracted during the Nigeria-India Presidential Roundtable and Conference held on the sidelines of the G-20 Summit in New Delhi, India.

Right from his electioneering campaign, President Tinubu did not leave us in doubt as to his commitment to industrialisation, given that sound economy is the ultimate measure of the strength of any nation. Tinubu's government has proven that industrialisation



Tinubu

is a top priority for his administration. He has outlined a number of initiatives that he is already implementing.

It is now clear that the Nigerian government is working to address the challenges of crawling economy. However, it will take time to start yielding fruits. The potential benefits of industrialisation for Nigeria are enormous. Industrialization can create jobs, boost economic growth, and reduce poverty. It can also help to diversify the Nigerian economy and make it less dependent on oil exports.

Overall, the industrial revolution in Nigeria is still in its early stages, but there is a growing momentum towards industrializing the country.

The Tinubu administration has launched a number of initiatives to accelerate industrial

development, and there are a number of factors that are contributing to the industrial revolution, such as a growing population, a young and educated workforce, a rich natural resource base, and government support.

However, there are still a number of challenges that need to be addressed, such as the infrastructure deficit, the high cost of doing business, and the lack of skilled labour. The Nigerian government is working to address these challenges, and the potential benefits of industrialisation for Nigeria are enormous.

But to successfully kick-start the government's industrialisation drive, some enabling environment must be created in the following areas: **Improving infrastructure:**

Tinubu has acknowledged that Nigeria's poor infrastructure is a major obstacle to industrialisation. He has pledged to invest heavily in improving the country's roads, railways, ports and energy grid.

Creating a more conducive business environment: Tinubu has also promised to create a more conducive business environment for investors. This includes reducing regulatory burdens, streamlining the tax system, and protecting intellectual property rights.

Promoting value-added exports: Tinubu has said that he wants to promote the export of value-added goods and services, rather than simply exporting raw materials. This would help to create more jobs and generate more revenue for the country.

Developing specific industrial clusters: Tinubu has also identified a number of specific industrial clusters that he wants to develop, such as manufacturing, agro-processing, and tourism. He has said that he will provide targeted support for these sectors to help them grow and thrive.

To match words with actions, some of the specific steps the Tinubu government has taken to promote industrialisation include the launch of a number

of infrastructure projects, including the construction of new roads, railways, and power plants. It has also started investing in improving the country's ports.

Providing tax incentives: The government has introduced a number of tax incentives for investors in certain sectors, such as manufacturing and agriculture.

For the benefit of hindsight, permit me to highlight the various stages of Industrial Revolution. The four industrial revolutions are coal, gas, electronics and nuclear, and the internet and renewable energy. Beginning from 1765 through the present day, we've seen an amazing evolution. As we discovered different energy sources and later, digital technologies, the entire landscape of the modern world has been transformed over and over. Here's a brief primer on the four industrial revolutions.

As Nigeria continues to move through the fourth industrial revolution under Tinubu, we see a shift to renewable energy such as solar, wind and geothermal. However, the momentum comes not from the shift in energy but from the acceleration of digital technology. The internet and the digital world mean a real-time connection within more and more components of a production line, both inside and outside facility walls.

As the development of the Industrial Internet of Things, cloud technology and artificial intelligence continue, a virtual world will merge with the physical world. Predictive maintenance and real-time data will lead to smarter business decisions and work order solutions for a myriad of companies around the world.

The good thing for Nigeria is that it is highly rated in the internet world. In the area of Renewable Energy, Nigeria stands shoulder high because of abundance of sunlight.

All that is required now is the political will to harness the potential, which Tinubu and Shettima have eminently demonstrated. But all efforts to work out the industrial revolution would amount to chasing the wind if corruption and other miscellaneous fraud offences are not fought and contained with due diligence.

A mind that is limited to reasons and analysis is incapable of perceiving what is truth. It is only a matter of time, Nigeria will attain its full potential in industrialisation.

"It is now clear that the Nigerian government is working to address the challenges of crawling economy. However, it will take time to start yielding fruits. The potential benefits of industrialisation for Nigeria are enormous. Industrialization can create jobs, boost economic growth, and reduce poverty. It can also help to diversify the Nigerian economy and make it less dependent on oil exports Overall, the industrial revolution in Nigeria is still in its early stages, but there is a growing momentum towards industrializing the country. The Tinubu administration has launched a number of initiatives to accelerate industrial development, and there are a number of factors that are contributing to the industrial revolution, such as a growing population, a young and educated workforce, a rich natural resource base, and government support."

Politics

Kogi guber: APC recommits to issue-based campaigns

From AMEDU JOSEPH,
Lokoja

The Kogi All Progressives Congress Governorship Campaign Council for the November 11, 2023 election has reiterated its uncompromising commitment to embark on an issue-based campaign that is devoid of violence, ethnocentric narratives or divisive tendencies.

Spokesman/Director, Media and Publicity of the Council, Kingsley Fanwo gave the assurance at a press conference held in Lokoja, the Kogi State capital recently.

Fanwo disclosed that under the leadership of the Campaign Chairman, His

Excellency Alh Yahaya Bello, and the Director General of the Campaign Council, Prince Shuaibu Abubakar Audu, our campaign has been peaceful, uniting and a true reflection of the enduring legacies that have kept our party at the apex of political performance in our dear state.

According to him, "Issue-based campaign entails tailoring our promises, assurances and social contract with the peace-loving people of our dear state through the media to the people.

"Ododo Ahmed Usman, the APC candidate wants the people of the state to be convinced by the legacies of the system he served in, his promises of consolidation and continuity, his antecedents and competence, as well as his message of unity. His clip to these ideals is iron cast.

"We have invited you today to brief you of certain developments as we race to November 11, 2023. Chief among them was the gruesome murder of an unarmed woman at Kotonkarfe by people suspected to be the



Bello

armed thugs of the candidate of the Social Democratic Party, Alh. Muritala Yakubu Ajaka.

"While we commiserate with the family and the entire people of Kotonkarfe; we call on security agencies to ensure that those who threatened to kill and went ahead to kill, have undoubtedly declared war on the Nigerian state, whose responsibility it is to protect the poor woman who was killed by bullets from the barrels of the SDP rifles.

"It is on record that the SDP candidate already said the Commissioner of Police was not aware of his rally. The rally was a satanic ambush on the peace-loving people of Kotonkarfe, leaving in its wake, the blood of an innocent woman whose only sin was belonging to the All Progressives Congress.

"We call on the supporters of our party to remain calm as security agencies are trusted to ensure that killers don't walk freely without consequences. The Kogi State APC Campaign Council will await the full reports of the security agencies.

"The initial statement of the Police authorities have been reassuring. There must be justice for the murdered soul. It is high time Kogites called

the blood-sucking campaign of the SDP to order. Elections are won on the ballot and not via the bullet. Even in the face of glaring provocation, our party and our campaign will remain peaceful and play according to the rules of the game.

"The unguarded, inflammatory and acidic statements of the SDP candidate, Alh. Muritala Yakubu Ajaka on national television, have not gone unnoticed. What is of surprise to us is how he gets away after calling a whole ethnic group "a common enemy". He also said they were ready for violence. His utterances and actions are not supported by the Electoral Law. And we are sure INEC and relevant authorities have taken note of this.

"His campaign has been divisive and inciting, yet he walks around spreading the propaganda of him being hunted. They commit visible crimes and turn around to play the victims. His desperation in the face of looming humiliation at the polls has undoubtedly put him in a very dangerous corner. Only Muritala Yakubu and the thugs he moves around with, think he has a chance at governorship election.

Kaduna Tribunal: I won the election - Ashiru

By JOHN FWAH Kaduna

The gubernatorial candidate of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) for the March 18th, 2023 election in Kaduna state, Hon. Isa Ashiru, has insisted that he won the election, so declaring Uba Sani as the winner was very wrong.

He said that he never prayed that the election be declared inconclusive. However he urged the people of Kaduna State to continue in their prayers towards ensuring that their mandate is returned to them in the state.

"The prayers of the good people of Kaduna State towards reclaiming our mandate has yielded fruitful results. The tribunal confirmed that the March

18th, 2023 election was not concluded, so, declaring Uba Sani as the winner was very wrong," the guber candidate said.

Ashiru, while reacting to the tribunal's judgment during a press conference in his residence at the weekend explained that there are gray areas to be challenged at the Court of Appeal.

According to him: "I want to make this clarification that after meeting with our legal team, we agreed that the tribunal has done its part but we still have to do a follow up. So, we are going to the Court of Appeal to address some gray areas, and we have documents to support our claims

" Going by the tribunal's

judgment, a re-run has been declared in 22 polling units where elections were canceled. In this case, for anybody to say that his victory was upheld by the tribunal in Kaduna State was wrong and misleading.

"It is very unfortunate that Governor Uba Sani said that the tribunal upheld his election victory. This is unexpected of him, being a leader, especially of his status in a state like Kaduna that is the headquarters of the North.

"With the verdict of the tribunal, I know, we have won the race. We earlier approached the tribunal with the view to reclaiming the mandate and fortunately enough, the tribunal nullified the gubernatorial election that took place this year.

"I thank the good people of Kaduna State for their patience and commitment towards reclaiming their mandate. I have taken it upon myself with the leadership of the party and other key stakeholders in the state to see that we recover this stolen mandate," the PDP guber candidate said.



Ashiru

From AMEDU JOSEPH,
Lokoja

Governor Yahaya Bello of Kogi State has felicitated with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and the entire Nigerian populace on the auspicious occasion of the nation's 63rd independence anniversary.

The governor in a statement issued by his Chief Press Secretary, Onogwu Mohammed and made available to journalists in Lokoja, extended his heartfelt felicitations to our esteemed leader and the President of our great nation, His Excellency, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, and to the resilient people of Nigeria who have unwaveringly believed in our nation's diversity."

Governor Bello also used the opportunity to celebrate the people of Kogi State, acknowledging their unwavering support and commending their significant contributions to the state's development over the years.

"Furthermore, I wish to commend all Kogites for a year marked by substantial translation of our blueprint into tangible projects across various sectors. Many of these projects are now available for your benefit, while others are in the final stages, awaiting commissioning before year-end.

"To me, this is the essence of governance, and it aligns with the solemn promise I made during my first Inaugural address in 2016: that all of Kogi's resources will be harnessed for the betterment

Alleged attack on SDP: Police orders thorough investigation

From AMEDU JOSEPH,
Lokoja

The Kogi State Police Command has condemned the alleged attack on members and supporters of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) during its campaign rally at Kotonkarfe, headquarters of Kogi Local Government Area, recently.

Following the development, Kogi Commissioner of Police, Bethrand Onuoha has ordered for a thorough investigation of all acts of political violence in the state.

In a statement by the Command's spokesman, William Aya conveyed the CP's assurance of unwavering commitment to safety/security of lives and property in the state.

The statement reads as follows: "The Kogi State Police Command received a report of alleged attack on the SDP Campaign at Koton-Karfe where some persons were said to have been injured in the process through political violence. The CP Kogi State Command CP Bethrand C. Onuoha psc(+) wishes to sympathize with all victims of political violence in the state while condemning in strong terms some politicians whose stock-in-trade is violence and who have taken it upon themselves to cause mayhem and heat up the state through their unguarded utterances and unregulated activities.

"The CP has directed the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Criminal Investigation Department, SCID to commence a thorough,

NIGERIA @63: Bello felicitates with Tinubu, Nigerians



Tinubu

of all its people. Our accomplishments thus far shall not deter us from pursuing even more ambitious projects.

"We remain committed to doing more, much more, even between now and the handover to a worthy successor in 2024, whom we trust to uphold and accelerate the momentum of development we have set," he noted.

Governor Bello urged the people to engage in introspection and prayers, emphasizing that despite challenges, Kogi State has much to be thankful for on this 1st of October, 2023.

"While we acknowledge that we may not have reached our ultimate destination, it is evident that our great nation is steadily progressing towards prosperity and advancement. I

commend the Federal Government for its unwavering commitment to economic policies that promote growth and its relentless efforts to enhance our infrastructure," he added.

Governor Bello reaffirmed his administration's unwavering commitment to ensuring the safety and security of all residents, especially during the election.

He urged citizens to uphold law and order, not only during the election but in the years ahead

According to him, the safety and security of lives and property remain paramount, and called on everyone to contribute towards maintaining a peaceful environment where democracy can thrive.

diligent and wholistic investigation of all acts of political violence, accusations and counter-accusations on all the political parties and actors with a view to bringing all offenders to book. The CP assures of the Command's unwavering commitment to the protection of all lives and property in the state.

"These instances of violence are attributed to the failure of most of the political actors to honour invitations and partake in a series of stakeholders parleys/Interactions where issues bordering on security and the need to conduct political activities as enshrined in The Electoral Act are discussed.

While Chairmen and candidates of the other political parties have continued to honour police invitations to discuss petitions and or allegations with the Police, and other salient issues germane to peaceable campaigns, and that of the INTER-AGENCY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE ON ELECTION SECURITY (ICCES), be it emphasised here that several invitations extended to the SDP and ADC candidates for interaction and consultation with the Police to shed light, provide explanations and give their own side of the story on petitions written against them but to no avail. While these other parties have been carrying the Police along in their activities, the SDP candidate has consistently and vehemently refused to honour any of Police invitations for investigation, or inform the Commissioner of Police nor the

Command while embarking on political rallies to enable the Police provide adequate security coverage. His refusal to deal with the Police is undermining peace in the State, has been impeding efforts to stream-line and regulate political activities which in turn has greatly contributed to the pockets of political violence being witnessed in the state presently.

"His riding rough-shod and engaging in political brinkmanship and brigandage is an ill-wind that blows no one any good. For instance on the complaint of Breach of Security Against The Executive Governor of Kogi State at Banda on 3Rd June, 2023, the SDP candidate, Murtala Yakubu Ajaka has consistently refused to honour Police several invitations to give his own side of the story!

"Again, since he applied for Police Security, he was invited to come but till date, he refused to show up. He moves around with a retinue of suspected political thugs armed to the teeth. Consequently, the above facts and scenario, coupled with his recalcitrance and obduracy have continued to jeopardize Police investigation and maintenance of law and order in the state.

"The CP uses this medium to sternly warn all the political parties in the state and their supporters to play by the rules and stop heating up the state," the police warned sternly.

Politics

The Nigerian political journey so far

Our journey as a nation, right from independence in 1960 to date is quite a historic one. Through the mercies of God, today, we are marking the nation's 63rd independence anniversary, an event that requires us to crucially reflect upon the nation's political journey and its impact on various sectors, particularly the pharmaceutical industry which is my immediate professional constituency.

There is no gain stating the fact that Nigeria's political journey since independence has been marked by both advancements and challenges affecting all spheres of human endeavour.

For us in the pharmaceutical industry, the Nigerian political leadership has over time not failed to recognise the significance of healthcare and pharmaceuticals in improving the well-being of its citizens.

This is evident in government's effort both at the national and state levels in the early years to establishing healthcare infrastructure and introduce policies that aimed at enhancing medical services in general and the pharmaceutical industry in particular.

Over time, the Nigerian political leadership, recognizing the importance of a robust pharmaceutical sector, has implemented several initiatives to promote growth and development in the industry.

Some of these initiatives include the establishment of regulatory bodies such as Pharmacy Council of Nigeria (PCN); National Institute for Pharmaceutical Research and Development (NIPRD); National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC); Institute of Public Analysts of Nigeria (IPAN) and the creation of Drugs and Medical Commodities Management Agency by the Plateau State Government, among others.

These organizations have played a crucial role in ensuring the safety, quality, and efficacy of Pharmaceutical products in Nigeria. Similarly, Nigeria's political leadership has also recognized the need for investment in research and development (R&D) to boost the pharmaceutical industry through the allocation of resources to research institutions as well as encouraging collaborations between academia and the industry.

By so doing, the government has fostered innovation and the

Pate

development of new drugs or medicines to an extent. It suffices to mention again that other Initiatives such as the Nigerian Natural Medicine Development Agency (NNMDA) have focused on harnessing the country's rich biodiversity for potential medicinal discoveries.

One can comfortably say that the Nigerian pharmaceutical industry has significant institutions and organisations contributing to the nation's Pharmaceutical policy and development.

Despite the progress recorded so far, Nigeria's Pharmaceutical industry still faces some challenges that require continuous attention from the government.

These challenges include but not limited to lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic which resulted in massive disruptions in global supply chains of medicines.

Nigeria is particularly vulnerable with respect to pharmaceuticals since there

is reduced local production vaccines instead of and about 70% of the increasing production of medicines supply is imported medicines locally.

creating a huge The problem of fake and supply-demand disparity substandard medicines, resulting in serious according to WHO report in medicines insecurity. Over 2018, was put at 50% in N800 billion is spent annually developing countries on the importation of including Nigeria.

Antimalarials, antibiotics and Several herbal medicines

circulating in the country are not standardized.

These situations if not addressed will continue to put the over 200 million Nigerians at risk of future trends of pandemics and epidemics.

Pharmaceutical industry in Nigeria also operates in the face of challenges of poor power, water supply and production of excipients among others.

Nigeria at 63, the political will is not encouraging for the Pharmaceutical industry as government is unable to control illegal importation and sale of fake/substandard medicines as shortage of genuine medicines is a big challenge.

The major reasons behind this, is the shortage of trained Pharmacists, appointment of Pharmacists in key sectors and lack of production of pharmaceuticals in the country as well as inadequate funding for research to tackle the plethora of gaps in knowledge and lack of modern infrastructure to support the growing need within the industry.

However, with continuous political will and strategic investments, the myriads of challenges facing our growth as a country, most especially the ones in the nation's pharmaceutical industry can be surmounted, thereby allow it to realize its full potential and contributing to the nation's overall development and the well-being of its people.

"These challenges include but not limited to lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic which resulted in massive disruptions in global supply chains of medicines. Nigeria is particularly vulnerable with respect to pharmaceuticals since there is reduced local production and about 70% of the medicines supply is imported creating a huge supply-demand disparity resulting in serious medicines insecurity. Over N800 billion is spent annually on the importation of Antimalarials, antibiotics and vaccines instead of increasing production of medicines locally. The problem of fake and substandard medicines, according to WHO report in 2018, was put at 50% in developing countries including Nigeria. Several herbal medicines circulating in the country are not standardized."

IMAGES

PRESIDENT TINUBU, SERVICE CHIEF CELEBRATE NIGERIA @ 63

Nigerian President, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Vice President, Sen. Kashim Shettima, Service Chiefs, CJN, Senate President and Speaker, House of Reps, with members of the Diplomatic Corp celebrated the Nigeria's 63rd Independence at the Presidential Villa, Abuja in a low keyed



President Tinubu, Vice President, Shettima, Senate President, Akpabio, Speaker of Reps, Rt. Hon. Tajudeen, Chief Justice of Nigeria, Justice Ariwoola and Service Chiefs cutting the anniversary cake



Members of the Security Council saluting at the celebration of Nigeria @ 63



Nigerian Service Chiefs on arrival at the Presidential Villa, Abuja



Brigade of Guard Commander inspecting the Guard of Honour



President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (right) in a handshake with the Vice President, Sen. Kashim Shettima



Cross section of invited guests at the celebration



Cross section of members of the Diplomatic Corp



Cross section of dignitaries

PHOTOS: STATE HOUSE PRESS, ABUJA

Politics

Nigeria's bittersweet journey since 1960

Nigeria gained independence from her colonial masters on the 1st of October 1960. From then on Nigerians have celebrated this all important day which marked a historic turning point in the life of the country. LUCY CHINDABA writes

Year in year out, governments at all levels from the federal, to the states and down to the local government level, the day is marked with pomp and pageantry with a number of activities to mark the day ranging from match pass, cultural dances amongst others.

This year Nigeria marks 63 years of her independence and the journey thus far according to many stakeholders is a mix of the good, the bad and the ugly.

Indeed the journey cannot be said to have been a smooth one.

THE NIGERIA STANDARD sought the views of a number of Nigerians cutting across politicians, journalists, business men and they had this to say: Senator Prof. Nora Daduut, the immediate past Senator representing Plateau South Senatorial District in the National Assembly, speaking on Nigeria's 63rd independence anniversary said, "Our nation since independence 63 years ago, joined other nations on the journey to self-liberation, self governing and indeed democracy.

"The independence was welcomed with great hope and expectations as inscribed in our national anthem, 'Nigeria, we hail thee, our own dear native land, though tribe and tongue may differ, in brotherhood we stand'.

"Unfortunately, this joy and desire to attain greatness among other nations was truncated by an unprecedented military coup in the civil war of 1966-1970 as well as the killings of our first political leaders.

"The military dictatorship lasted for over thirty years. When Nigeria survived in 1999 with the first republic another journey commenced towards a more solid and brighter height to achieve democratic rule.

"Between the first and the second, republic Nigeria had tasted democracy that lingered on with great challenges.

"These challenges include: the unstable political upheavals that are not just unhealthy but had



Daduut

taken Nigeria to a third but broken republic.

"The legislative, the judiciary and the executive functionings do not convey democratic dividends.

"Our journey has been rough, tough and difficult with showers of insecurity, economic and social decadence.

"As we celebrate the 63rd anniversary of our independence, we are also praying for the government of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu with a renewed hope, she concluded.

On his part, former Plateau NUJ Chairman, Mr Paul Jatau said, "So far, Nigeria has taken a few steps forward and many more backwards.

We have not been able to develop our infrastructure

and the ones we have are in very sorry states.

"There has been serious decay in our educational institutions. Our schools can no longer compete with the best around the world like they used to in the past.

"Health is comatose as our doctors and other health practitioners have all japaed to other countries in search of the golden fleece. Our leaders have not helped as they jet out to foreign countries to treat ailments as simple as headaches.

Security has been completely absent as non state actors compete with government institutions for control of swaths of territory.

"Leadership has not fared any better as those with questionable credentials find themselves in such position and do not seem to



Jatau

know what to do with it" Jatau barred his mind.

Another respondent, Mr Francis Douglas while commenting on Nigeria's independence anniversary opined that: "The Nigerian political journey cannot be mentioned without x-raying its history.

However, Nigeria gained independence in 1960 With a President of Nigeria) and a legislature (the National Assembly). The president is elected by the people. The National Assembly has two chambers.

"The House of Representatives has 360 members, elected for a four-year term in single-seat constituencies.

"However, Sir Tafawa Balewa was the first president under a federal system of government with military takeovers. But since 1999 when the Forth Republic came to being with President Olusegun Obasanjo as elected president, it seemed democracy had come to stay, giving room for political stability.

"Nigerian political journal has faced mixed reactions with presidential system of government which has both the upper and lower chamber as both have played key roles in passing bills that have

produced development in the nation and have given freedom to growth and expansion.

"As Nigeria marks 63 years of independence, the journey has been smooth with increase in population, Growth Domestic Product, infrastructural development, transformation of sectors among others. Above all the interwoven nature of the political structure where the People's Democratic Party (PDP) held sway for sixteen years and the opposition All Progressives Congress (APC) is in power, an indication that our democracy is growing with elections making choice of the best.

"As we mark Nigeria @63, the choice for a better Nigeria lays with Nigerians themselves to grow and improve on the strength of unity and togetherness. Although it has faced a lot of challenges of insecurity, marginalization, poor leadership amongst others, there is hope for a better tomorrow," he pointed out.

From the forgoing, Nigeria has done well in some cases, made progress in some areas and not so well in some cases, particularly in the area of insecurity. The economy which is biting hard on the common man on the street and the issue of the rule of law which many believe that the ruling class is flaunting.

It is believed that President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's renewed hope mantra will truly bring renewed hope to Nigerians.

"Leadership has not fared any better as those with questionable credentials find themselves in such position and do not seem to know what to do with it. Another respondent, Mr Francis Douglas while commenting on Nigeria's independence anniversary opined that: The Nigerian political journey cannot be mentioned without x-raying it's history, however Nigeria gained independence in 196"

NEWS

ARDA warns youths against fake news, hate speech

From
AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

AFRICAN Radio Drama Association (ARDA) in partnership with Community Initiative to Promote Peace (CIPP) has warned Kogi Youths against the spread of fake news and hate speech on social media.

Our correspondent reports that the association gave the warning during a 1-day media literacy seminar it organised in conjunction with CIPP at Riverton Hotel, Lokoja.

Ms Priscilla Fiberesima, ARDA-CIPP Programme Manager, who disclosed that 40 youth from within and around Lokoja Local Government Area were being trained on the requisite skills and knowledge necessary to resist manipulations through fake news and hate speech on social media.

"Today's training is aimed at empowering participants to critically assess and verify information received on social media platforms, thereby contributing to promoting peace in the social media space.

"It also sought to contribute to grooming youth to become socially responsible with the content they share and engage with on social media and in their communities.

"This is because some of our communities have fallen victims of these fake news and hate speeches and suffered crises, violence and destruction of lives and property.

"It's in this light, the media literacy seminar focused on building the capacity of youth to harness the potential of social media for personal and business development, enabling youths to build their personal brands and utilize social media effectively to promote peace," she said. ARDA-CIPP Programme Manager added: "We strongly believe they can contribute to the positive development of their communities and not be idle and vulnerable to being used as tools of violence against their communities by desperate politicians."

The project manager said that the training would help teach them how to package themselves or brand themselves before the public on social media.

"It's about how to put the right content on social media. This is because if the youths are rightly engaged economically and otherwise, they will not be available to be used as tools for conflicts or violence by the politicians," she said.

Fiberesima, who said that the CIPP project is funded by USAID, disclosed that the training programme was being undertaken in six



Ms Priscilla Fiberesima,

states of Plateau, Benue, Kano, Kaduna, Katsina and Kogi with a total number of 240 youths.

She said that the literacy seminar was not their first training programme as "we have trained 600 youths, a hundred in each of the six states in 2021."

According to her, aside from this training, they have a radio programme called "My Neighbour, My Friend" which is being aired on Prime FM in Kogi.

She explained: "We started this programme in 2019 on Grace FM, sensitising the public on how everyone can contribute to the peaceful coexistence in our communities for the growth and development of Nigeria."

"Of course, we all know that without peace, there can never be any meaningful development in the country."

Our correspondent reports that the project is implemented by a consortium of partners made up of Mercy Corps as the Lead partner/implementer, ARDA Development Communication Inc -the media partners who facilitated the training as well as Pastoral Resolve (PARE), the Interfaith Mediation Center (IMC), Justice, Development and Peace Commission, and Savannah Center for Diplomacy, Democracy and Development (SCDDD).

The goal of the project is to empower communities to prevent and respond to violence and violent extremism by strengthening key skills and relationships in communities and harnessing the role of women in peace building in conflict communities of the six chosen states.

By
HOSEA NYAMLONG

THE Catholic Laity Council of Nigeria (CLCN), held its 152nd National Executive Council (NEC) meeting at the Bishop Kelly Pastor Centre in Edo State recently with the theme, "The Role of the Laity in Parish Welfare".

At the end of the meeting, it came up with the following resolutions, which it made known in a press release jointly signed by Hon (Sir) Henry Yunkwap, the National President (CLCN) and Barr. Dame Chisara Egwim-Chima, the National Secretary General and made available to THE NIGERIA STANDARD: The Council has agreed with the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) on the call for all governments and citizens of Nigeria to collaborate in creating a better future and a better Nigeria of our dreams.

The statement added that the Council decries and condemns the pathetic insecurity situations in the country which is evident in the recent adoption of corps members in Zamfara State who were en route to Sokoto State for NYSC orientation and the attack at St. Raphael's Parish, Fadan Kamantan in Kafanchan Diocese, where a seminarian, Brother Na'aman Danladi lost his life, and other attacks on innocent Nigerians across the country.

They called on the President of Nigeria to declare a state of emergency on the insecurity situation in the country and also work out permanent solutions.

Collaborate in creating a better Nigeria - CLCN



Yunkwap

The Council reaffirms her stand to continue in the fight for transparent, free and fair democratic process in Nigeria.

She also calls on the judiciary to be fair and transparent in resolving election disputes in order to restore the public's confidence in the electoral process.

In addition, the council is directing the Family and Human Life Committee to take full responsibility of the Catholic Lay Missionaries of Africa (CALAMA) as one of the terms of reference to create programmes and policies to support the well-being of families and individuals.

In accordance with Christ's mandate that we should make disciples of all nations

with the intention that the Good News would be received, they enjoined Christian faithful to convey to others who are not aware of its content.

They also charged Christians to embrace Christian charity, both to the church and the society which would serve as a tool of evangelizing the world.

Parishes are encouraged to embark on projects of welfare for the development of the youths which should be structured for continuity from one parish to another.

In conclusion, the Council urged the leadership of the Laity at all levels to make use of these resolutions towards the development of the Laity and the proclamation of the gospel of Christ.

63rd Independence: scholars x-ray nation's challenges

From
TERESE TUHWA, Makurdi

SCHOLARS at a symposium organised by Benue State Government as part of activities to mark the nation's 63rd independence anniversary, have examined causes of the nation's underdevelopment and charted the way out of the country's present underdevelopment.

The Director, Centre for Leadership Studies at the Federal University Lafia, Nasarawa State, Professor Okpeh O. Okpeh Jr., in a paper titled "Pre-Independence Struggles, Contemporary Nigerian Realities and the Benue

Experience" said the country has not fared well since independence 63 years ago due to leadership deficit.

Some of the contemporary issues retarding development in the country, according to the Don, was a weak state that is in the iron grip of self serving elites. Others include the preponderance of very weak and ineffective institutions that are incapable of driving the governance process as well as the abject and multidimensional poverty that have remained an albatross around the neck of the country and her citizens. The scholar of Diplomatic History lamented that the crisis of multiculturalism and social conflicts of multiple dimensions have ensnared the development aspirations of the people.

He said the mono-cultural economy the country has survived on over the decades was under severe threat and emphasised the need to invest in rebuilding and re-capitalising the rural communities and their inhabitants.

Professor Okpeh said for the country to move forward, the citizens must plunge themselves into the digital ecosystem and appropriate its limitless spinoffs, adding that elites must prioritise development by investing in people rather than ephemeral material things. He called for an urgent political culture that will refocus the primary concerns and development aspirations on creating wealth and requisite knowledge to drive or manage the same.

In another paper titled "The Socio-Economic Development of Benue State: The Journey Ahead, Dr. Gisaor Vincent Iorja of Economics Department, Federal University, Wukari Taraba fingered corruption, maladministration, negligence, poor maintenance culture, laziness, politics and insecurity as factors responsible for the nation's backwardness.

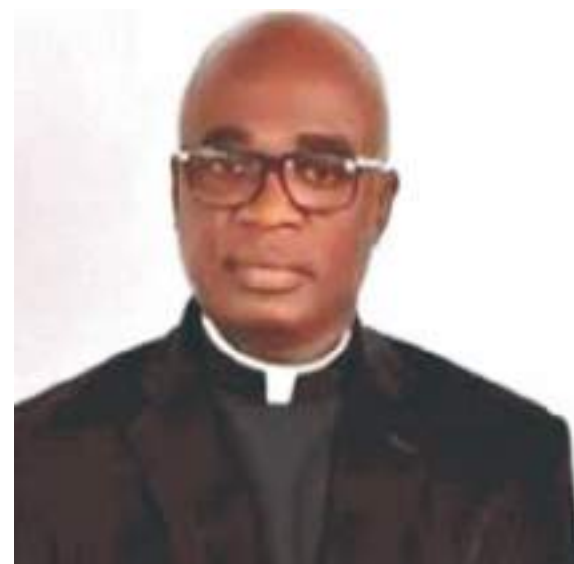
The economist however called for job creation, improvement in infrastructure, law reforms,

reformation of revenue agencies and creation of economic partnerships for the country and state to move forward.

A professor of Public Sector Management and Governance, Ukertor Gabriel Moti of the Federal University of Abuja in his presentation titled "Avoiding Pitfalls of the Past: Good Governance Anchored on Vision and Core Values" said poor representation, inadequate skills, insufficient resources and lack of adaptation were the major drawbacks of the nation.

He therefore sued for transparency, accountability, integrity, honesty, adherence to code of ethics, professionalism and leadership among citizens to move the nation forward.

Declaring the event open, the state Governor, Rev Fr Dr. Hyacinth Iormem Alia implored people of the state to always think of what to do to add value to the state.



News

Group empowers youths with entrepreneurial skills

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

The Muri Governorship support group, Muri Elite Network (M.E.N), over the weekend, empowered one hundred and thirteen youths in Kogi State with training on employability and entrepreneur skills.

Participants who were drawn across the state were trained in different vocational skills such as yoghurt making, bead-making, make-up, baking, and tailoring among others

Interactive session of the training featured a presentation on behavioral change communication, introduction to business ethics, neuro linguistic programming, and importance of regular family sessions to child's upbringing and development.

Director, Programmes and Strategy of Muri Elite Network, Baba Abdul Bala, stressed on the importance of strategic engagement of youths to change their mindsets about their wellbeing with a view to changing the misconceptions and beliefs about making fortunes.

While exposing the participants to the principles of business success in a competitive business environment, Bala said the group was in the vanguard of harnessing the potential of youths for greater economic well-being.

Bala urged the participants to learn the 21st century skills especially the emerging digital skills and channel their creative minds to money making ventures by reviving their spirit of enterprise in order to become entrepreneurs, millionaires and problem solvers with innovative business solutions in Kogi State in line with the economic vision of SDP Governorship Candidate, Muritala Ajaka.

National Coordinator of the group, Anthony Idoko, said M.E.N entrepreneurship programme is aimed at reducing youth unemployment and indolence, as the organization plans entrepreneurship skills for ten thousand (10,000) youths with focus on vocational skills under its entrepreneurship development programme.

Idoko, who spoke on the importance of creative thinking and self-reliance,



Bello

said youths that were engaged in gainful economic activities with innovative business ideas have the potential to become millionaires and employers of labour in their lifetime.

"We are working with professionals and inspirational business leaders and experts in different walks of life to bring out the hidden business talents in youths to make them self-employed. We train the youths to embrace entrepreneurship for sustainable livelihoods, overcome low self-esteem, indolence, and poverty through out-of-the-box thinking that will lead youthful members of the group to economic prosperity.

"Our entrepreneurship mentorship programme is an innovative way of adding value to society and creating wealth among youths through entrepreneurship training.

"The Muri Elite Network,

Imparts skills to the youth in Kogi State without limitations as the organization is actively involved in economic emancipation of the youth and the downtrodden in Kogi State," Idoko said.

The national coordinator of (M.E.N) also used the occasion to offer voter education to the participants to reduce void votes that may occur due to wrong thumb printing on the ballot paper during voting in the upcoming governorship election in the state.

Idoko gave a demonstration of 'the right thumbprinting' to the participants, adding that "your votes determine your future."

Participants interviewed said they were psyched up with the inspirational insights of the speakers as they expressed gratitude to the organization for promoting the ideals of youth entrepreneurship in Kogi State.

UI Social Work gets approval for PhD, others

From MUSLIUDEEN ADEBAYO, Ibadan

The Senate of the University of Ibadan, Ibadan in Oyo State has approved the PhD in Social Work Programme.

The Senate of the institution has also approved all postgraduate programmes in Social Work in the institution.

National Secretary of Association of Social Work Educators of Nigeria (ASWEN) and a Professor of Social Work, Professor James Ayangunna made this revelation at the weekend in Ibadan.

Ayangunna added that the PhD and MPhil programmes may be advertised any moment based on the discretion of the university through the Postgraduate College.

He used the medium to thank the university Senate, led by its Vice Chancellor, Professor Kayode Adebowale for the approval of the courses.

He said, "The University of Ibadan Senate has approved all postgraduate programmes as presented. These are: PhD (Social Work), MPhil, MSW (Academic), MSW (Professional, already existing but reviewed). Post Graduate Diploma in Social Work (PGDSW) is also an existing programme.

programme.

"The good news for our colleagues and others is that the PhD and MPhil programmes may be advertised any moment.

"Those who may (desire higher degrees and) meet requirements for admission may (apply). We wish all of us well as members of the Association of Social Work Educators of Nigeria (ASWEN).

"We also have our BSW running(at the distance learning mode and soon to come on main line soon). We thank the University of Ibadan Senate through the Vice Chancellor for this great achievement. Always first and the best.

"I feel that social work is making some positive progress. Everyone has been so positive about it. Therefore, we need to promote our profession collectively. Some of us are retiring very soon and we need committed ones as you to come on board. I can't wait to train PhD candidates!!! It's long overdue.

"UI started the MSW in the whole of sub-Saharan in 1990 with the support from University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. So far, we are maintaining MSW even at academic masters level", he said.



Restructuring health care delivery

The state of the healthcare delivery system of any society defines the level of the development of that society. When a society has a robust and functional healthcare delivery system, it saves and free for itself the fund to embark on developmental projects.

By PAUL JATAU

Nigeria just turned sixty- three, yes sixty - three years as an independent country. Going through the social media as a prelude to the celebration is some form of a nightmare. All that adorns most of the pages that has anything to do with the country are abuses by those who are supposed to be leaders of tomorrow. At the risk of being misunderstood, a lot of things are wrong with the contraption called Nigeria.

No sane person living in the country would claim to be happy with what is going on. Neither would one claim that everything will be alright in the next few years. Sixty-three years in the life of a human being is a significant milestone. Indeed, at that point, a normal civil servant would have retired and become a senior citizen.

It is expected that at that point too, one as a senior citizen would take time off and enjoy a deserved rest from the drudgery of life.

But can that be said of the lifespan of a country? Maybe yes. Maybe no. That we are a conglomeration of different nationalities is a pointer to the fact that it will take a longer time to weave us into a nation out of these disparate groups. No one region presents a common and formidable front to ease relationships. That weakness was taken advantage of by the elite who positioned themselves to take over at independence.

Whenever it suits them, they play the regional card. And at other times, religion which is supposed to be a personal relationship with our creator, is bandied as the unifying factor even when the elites know that that does not matter to them

when it comes to sharing the spoils of office. At some other points, the ethnic cards are played just so as to keep us all divided.

Yes, our leaders have not shown the resolve to lead the way but so too has the followership. They disobey laid down processes but so do the followers. They refuse to grow our institutions by starving them of funds, so too does the followership who flagrantly disobey these institutions by refusing to cooperate with them.

Reading through the social media has been nightmarish. Insults are heaped at leaders for not doing what is right but no solutions are proffered by these critiques as a way out of the quagmire. So where are we heading

“ Yes, our leaders have not shown the resolve to lead the way but so too has the followership. They disobey laid down processes but so do the followers. They refuse to grow our institutions by starving them of funds, so too does the followership who flagrantly disobey these institutions by refusing to cooperate with them. ”

We blame leaders for doing wrong when we cut corners at every given opportunity ourselves. We can't queue, we can't wait for our turn, we drive around political office holders. We ask for all manner of favours from those appointed to offices. We do not follow basic rules yet we expect those up there to do right. Are they not a product of our society?

Let us resolve to change in all the little things we do yet think nobody is watching. I saw on social media someone calling Nigeria "stupid and useless country" yet he makes a living out of the stupid and useless country. Some said they wish they were not born in Nigeria. To these set, I say you are wiser than God. At the risks of sounding religious, God put you in this goddam country to help change its fortunes. Let me ask you what you have contributed since you were born?

Government has not provided the enabling space? Do we all have to wait on government? Can we not change the narratives in our small ways?

Sad enough, those who indulge in thuggery are the youth who are the masters at hulling insults at our leaders. They are the ones struggling to become SA's to these leaders and go around fighting for their principals destroying themselves in the process.

We cannot, like Dominion said above, curse the grounds on which we plant and expect that same ground to yield bountiful harvest for us.

We can change the course of our country if we want to by contributing our widow's mite in our little corners.

News

Mutfwang celebrates 63rd Independence Day with school pupils

By PETER TITLE

IN a display of patriotism and resilience, primary and secondary school pupils in Plateau State braved the rain to join His Excellency, Barr Caleb Mutfwang, in a grand parade, celebrating Nigeria's 63rd Independence Day.

Arriving at the Rwang Pam Township Stadium at about 10:30 am, Governor Mutfwang saluted, inspected, and reviewed the parade led by the Nigeria Police.

He commended the unwavering determination of the school pupils, and said their participation is a testament to their faith and hope in Nigeria's future.

Expressing his gratitude, Governor Caleb Mutfwang acknowledged the dedication of all participants, especially the young students who marched despite the rain.

He emphasized the spirit of resilience, urging everyone to draw inspiration from the children and work together to elevate Nigeria.

"I want to thank each one of you and appeal to all of us to emulate these children. Despite the challenges we face, we can overcome them and restore Nigeria to its former glory. We must have faith in our country;



Mutfwang

together, we can inject life into our nation."

Governor Mutfwang also praised the contributions and sacrifices of the military and paramilitary agencies in maintaining peace in Plateau State.

He expressed optimism that with unity and faith, Plateau would experience lasting peace and progress.

Hon. Ibrahim Musa Ashoms, the Commissioner of Information and Communication, expressed appreciation to the citizens of Plateau State for attending the event, assuring them that

the current administration is committed to delivering the dividends of democracy.

For the march pass, Gaskiya High School, Zarmaganda took 1st position, Government Secondary School Gangare, came 2nd and Al-Iman Secondary School, Dogon Dutse came 3rd for secondary school category.

While for the primary school category, Obasanjo Model School came 1st, Chwelnyep Primary came 2nd and FEDMAS came 3rd.

By DORCAS PANKYES

TERRORISTS hibernating in the Tumbuns on the fringes of Lake Chad in Borno State were at the receiving end of NAF's firepower as air strikes obliterated their hideouts, destroying their structures and strategic logistics base.

Specifically, Tumbun Fulani and Tumbun Shitu were struck between 27-30 September 2023, when activities of terrorists in the locations were confirmed to have constituted a threat to military formations and law-abiding Nigerians residing within the locations.

This was disclosed in a statement signed by Air Commodore Edward Gabkwet, Director of Public Relations and Information, Nigerian Air Force which was issued to newsmen in Abuja.

The statement stated that at Tumbun Fulani, terrorists were observed loading jerricans in 2 guntrucks concealed under shrubs. Subsequently, NAF aircraft were scrambled to interdict the location, believed to be a major logistics base. After the strike, Battle Damage Assessment revealed several terrorists were neutralised and the guntrucks destroyed.

Similar strikes were also undertaken at Tumbun Shitu after structures believed to be terrorists' hideout were observed tucked under thick

NAF airstrikes destroy terrorists hideouts



Abubakar

foliage. Additionally, 3 gun trucks with terrorists were sighted moving into the location. The need to strike the location thus became imperative. The aftermath of the air strike revealed several terrorists were neutralised and the trucks destroyed.

The determination of the

Armed Forces of Nigeria (AFN) to significantly limit the activities of terrorists in the Northeast and indeed other parts of Nigeria remains on course. Operational gains by the AFN are indicative of improved synergy and cooperation by all security agencies as well as the unwavering support of all Nigerians.

Governor appoints 3 journalists media aides, others

From TERESE TUHWA, Makurdi

BENUE State Governor, Rev Fr Hyacinth Alia on

Monday appointed three Benue journalists; Mr. Donald Kumum, Isaac Uzaan and Mrs. Bridget Ikyado as media aides.

Mr. Donald Kumum, a former Benue State correspondent of National Accord newspapers has been appointed Principal Special Assistant (PSA) on Print Media, Mrs. Bridget Ikyado of News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) as his Principal Special Assistant (PSA) on Media and Publicity/Strategic Communications.

The governor in a press statement by his Chief Press Secretary, Sir Tersoo Kula said others appointed in the media department are Mr. Isaac Uzaan, Principal Special Assistant (PSA) on Media and Content Creation.

Governor Alia also appointed Comrade Angula Reuben - Principal Special Assistant (PSA) on ICT and New Media, Ferdinand Shinyi - Senior Special Assistant (SSA) on Media and Strategic Communications, James Asortar - Special Assistant on Social Media and Igbatar Jerry - Special Assistant on Digital Media. Ahohe Terungwa was

appointed Special Assistant on Broadcast Media, Ephraim Lanshima - Special Assistant on Visual Communication (Photographer), Raphael Ajav - Personal Assistant on Videography and Wizzy Wisdom - Personal Assistant on Photography.

The governor also assigned portfolios to some Special Advisers including Mr. Alex Addingi - International Investment, Mr. Fidelis Unongo - Special Duties and Intergovernmental Affairs.

Others are Mr. Akombo Benedict - Business, SMEs and Microfinance, Mr. Bemgba Anjembe - Agriculture and Climate Change, Dr. Dennis Akura - Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs and Jonathan Lahave - Legislative Matters.

Dr. Aondona Mkor Aondona - Research, Documentation and Strategy, Akaager Imoter Isaac - LGA Market and Strategic Coordination and Monitoring and Mr. Jonathan Gyuse - Poverty Alleviation and Youth Empowerment among others.

Nigeria @ 63, Gombe @ 27: CAN holds prayer

From WILLIE ATTAH, Gombe

GOMBE State Deputy Governor, Manasseh Daniel Jatau, has called for more unity among Christian faithful amidst the socioeconomic challenges faced by Nigerians.

He made the call during a special prayer service organized by the Gombe State chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) to mark

Nigeria's 63rd Independence anniversary and Gombe State at 27 since creation.

The special service which was held at the Gombe State CAN Centre, Monday afternoon, was also organized to pray for the prosperity of the country and for its leaders.

In his goodwill message, the Deputy Governor charged the Christian

community in the state to eschew all their differences and pursue a common front as they pray for the country and its leaders, citing the Holy Bible book of John chapter 17 verse 21.

He said prayers were also offered by the Muslim community in the state for the country and its leaders last Friday during the Jumaat prayers.

He however stressed that praying for the country's leaders is the same thing as praying for oneself and all citizens because, "We are all leaders, one way or the other", he stated.

He paid glowing tribute to the founding fathers of Nigeria and Gombe State as well as called for more patriotism from all Nigerians in the country's quest to overcome its challenges and come out greater.

Earlier in his remarks, the Gombe State CAN Chairman, Rev Father Joseph Alphonsus Shinga, stressed the need for fervent prayers by Christians amidst the biting challenges facing Nigerians. He charged Nigerians to



Jatau

Foreign Commentary

Has democracy failed in the African continent?

The US government has shutdown ten times over the past 40-plus years. Meanwhile, in other countries, governments keep functioning, even in the midst of wars and constitutional crises. So why does this uniquely American phenomenon keep happening? For most of the world, a government shutdown is very bad news - the result of revolution, invasion or disaster. That leaders of one of the most powerful nations on Earth willingly provoked a crisis that suspends public services and decreases economic growth is surprising to many. ROBIN LEVINSON KING & ANTHONY ZURCHER writes.

In a last-minute deal on Saturday, Congress's managed to avoid a shutdown by passing a stop-gap spending bill that will keep the government running for another 45 days. But that means the politicians will have to go back to the bargaining table, and the country could be facing another shutdown yet again, once the funding runs out.

America's federal system of government allows different branches of government to be controlled by different parties. It was a structure devised by the nation's founders to encourage compromise and deliberation, but lately has had the opposite effect.

That's because in 1980, the Attorney General under President Jimmy Carter's administration issued a narrow interpretation of the 1884 Anti-Deficiency Act. The 19th Century spending law banned the government from entering into contracts without congressional approval; for almost a century, if there was a gap in budgets, the government had allowed necessary spending to continue. But after 1980, the government took a much stricter view: no budget, no spending.

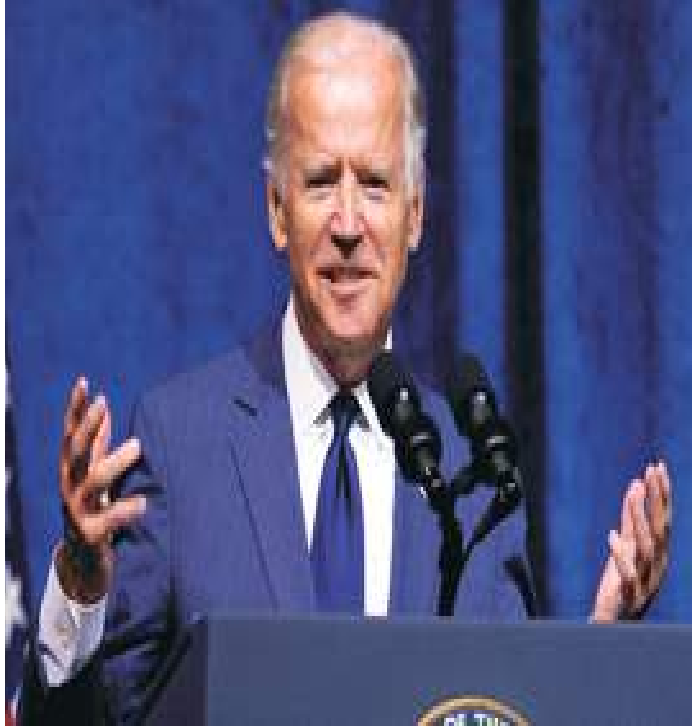
That interpretation has set the US apart from other non-parliamentary democracies, such as Brazil, where a strong executive branch has the ability to keep the lights on during a budget impasse.

The first US shutdown occurred shortly after in 1981, when President Ronald Reagan vetoed a funding bill, and lasted for a few days. Since then, there's been at least ten others that led to a stop in services, lasting anywhere from half-a-day to over a month. The last one, from 21 December 2018 to 25 January 2019, was the longest on record.

While some essential services did continue to run, like social security and the military, hundreds of thousands of federal workers were not paid. At the time, the White House estimated that the shutdown reduced GDP growth by 0.1 percentage points for every week the salary stoppage went on.

Elsewhere in the world, such shutdowns are practically impossible. The parliamentary system used by most European democracies ensures that the executive and legislature are controlled by the same party or coalition. Conceivably, a parliament could refuse to pass a budget proposed by the prime minister, but such an action would likely trigger a new election - not a stoppage in services like national parks, tax refunds and food assistance programmes.

That's exactly what happened in Canada in 2011, when opposition parties rejected the budget proposed by then-Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Conservative Party, which had a minority of seats in parliament. The House of Commons then passed a motion



Biden

of no-confidence, triggering an election. Meanwhile, the government's services ticked away.

Even in Belgium, which did not have an elected government in power for 589 days between 2010-2011, the trains kept running.

More recently, Ireland managed to keep everything running from 2016-2020 under a minority government with a confidence-and-supply system, which is when parties not in power agree to support spending bills and confidence votes.

But this type of cooperation has become increasingly rare in the US, where warring political parties seem all-too willing to use the day-to-day functioning of the government as a bargaining chip to extract demands from the other side. The latest shutdown, for example, is the result of a minority of hardline conservative Republican members of Congress demanding deep spending cuts that centrists in their own party and Democrats would not support.

A deal was finally reached on Saturday, but with a huge caveat: no additional funding for the Ukraine war.

With the clock ticking on the 45-day stop-gap funding, it remains to be seen what kind of new deal will be reached - if one can be reached at all.

The US has narrowly avoided its 22nd government shutdown in 50 years, after Republicans in Congress sided with Democrats to pass a last-minute temporary spending plan.

The move resets the clock on the Congress deadline to pass a new budget to keep funding the federal government, granting lawmakers another 45 days to strike a long-term deal.

If they do not manage to come up with one, several key

government departments will cease operating in little over a month.

Many federal government agencies rely on annual funding approved by Congress.

Every year, these agencies submit their requests, which Congress must pass, and the president must sign budget legislation for the next fiscal year.

If agreement is not reached by the start of the fiscal year on 1 October, then there is a shutdown, where all non-essential discretionary functions stop.

Usually when the deadline looms, lawmakers from both parties agree on temporary funding based on the previous year's requests.

This is called a continuing resolution (CR) and is a stop-gap way to keep agencies open until Congress can agree.

This is what House Speaker Kevin McCarthy finally proposed on Saturday, guaranteeing funding for federal agencies until 17 November.

Any House budget must pass in the Democrat-controlled Senate - the upper chamber - and then be signed off by President Joe Biden.

But there is deep disagreement about spending among the Republicans in the lower chamber of Congress, which they control.

A right-wing faction in the House is demanding deep cuts and wants to stop further funding of the war in Ukraine.

They had voted down attempts by the party leadership, headed by Speaker Kevin McCarthy, to bring a deal to the floor of the House.

The right-wing factions had vowed to topple Mr McCarthy as leader if moderates passed any solution with Democratic support.



McConnell

At his Saturday news conference, Mr McCarthy challenged those who oppose him to "bring it", adding: "There has to be an adult in the room."

Saturday's CR passed on a bipartisan basis - but 90 members of Mr McCarthy's party voted against it.

The bill notably excluded any funding for Ukraine, spending cuts or border policy changes - raising the likelihood of a fresh fight over the issues in the coming weeks.

If no deal is struck by 17 November, then the US will have its first shutdown since early 2019.

More than 1.3 million active-duty members of the military and thousands of air traffic controllers will be among those working without pay.

In recent shutdowns, the military were still getting paid because the defence department had a separate funding deal but that has not happened this time.

Government employees deemed non-essential are put temporarily on unpaid leave - called a furlough.

This will impact the food assistance programme, federally funded preschool, the issuing of student loans and food inspections, and National Parks will close.

It will also affect tax refunds and related administrative activities, such as income and social security numbers - delays here could prevent people from getting other services, such as a mortgage.

In 2013 there were some surprising consequences, such as American cemeteries closing in Europe and the US-Canada border only being patrolled by one person.

Quite common. President Ronald Reagan oversaw eight shutdowns during his tenure -

though all were relatively brief.

And there were three when Donald Trump was president, including the longest in history at 36 days which ended in January 2019.

That one happened because of disagreements over funding a wall on the Mexico border.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimated that it reduced economic output by about \$11bn, including \$3bn that it never regained.

Shutdowns over budgets are almost unique to US politics.

Under the US system, the different branches of government have to reach an agreement on spending plans before they can become law.

In most countries, budget votes become votes of confidence in the government itself. But because the US has equal and often divided branches of government, that isn't the case.

Services classed as essential - mostly related to public safety - continue to operate, and those workers are required to show up without pay.

That usually includes border protection, hospital care, air traffic control, law enforcement, and power grid maintenance.

Other critical functions that do not get their funds from the treasury on an annual basis - social security, Medicare, and Medicaid - are not interrupted.

The president of the United States has a guaranteed income.

Congress is also not affected - its members are exempt and, in any case, its funding bill has already been approved.

The US Department of Justice is among those affected - with many lawyers and judges not working during a shutdown. Others are working without pay.

Criminal investigations tend to continue, but almost all federal civil cases, and immigration court cases are affected.

Source: BBC

Foreign News

Haiti : Kenyan multinational force to restore order

The UN has backed Kenya's offer to lead a multinational security force in Haiti in response to a plea from the Caribbean nation's prime minister for help restoring order.

Haiti has suffered from gang violence for decades but the current wave of brutality escalated after the July 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse.

Gangs have taken control of large parts of the country, waging terror on residents and killing hundreds.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres has said that a "robust use of force" is needed to disarm the gangs and restore order.

Greenlighting the deployment, the UN Security Council resolution approves the mission for a year with a review after nine months.

The new force will carry out joint security operations and will have the authority to make arrests in coordination with Haitian police, according to the resolution.

It will also aim to create conditions to hold elections. Haiti has not had an election since 2016.

Haiti's Foreign Minister Jean Victor Geneus called the decision "a glimmer of hope for the people that have for too long been suffering."

What has Kenya offered to do?

Kenya has said it would send 1,000 police officers to Haiti.

When this was first proposed in July, Kenyan officials said the officers



Moïse

would guard government buildings and infrastructure, but that plan changed after Kenya sent a fact-finding mission the following month.

The country now wants to deploy an intervention force that will neutralise the armed gangs, protect civilians and bring about peace, security and order.

Foreign Minister Alfred Mutua says that his country would also like to help Haiti rebuild vital infrastructure and establish a stable democratic government.

The Bahamas, Jamaica and Antigua and Barbuda have said they will take part in the mission and the minister added that Spain, Senegal and Chile were also likely to deploy security personnel.

Mr. Mutua said he expected the force to be in place by the beginning of next year.

What will the Kenyan police find in Haiti?

Haiti is experiencing a multi-faceted security and

humanitarian crisis that Mr Guterres called "a living nightmare".

Swathes of the mountain-cradled coastal capital Port-au-Prince - some estimates say 80% - are either controlled or regularly terrorised by heavily armed gangs.

Inside the capital taken hostage by brutal gangs

These gangs, with names in Haitian creole such as "Kraze Barye" (Barrier-Crusher) and "Gran Grif" (Big Claw), have over the last two years been robbing, looting, extorting, kidnapping, raping and killing.

Armed with automatic weapons smuggled in mostly from the US, the gang members often out-gun the local police, sometimes burning their vehicles and stations.

They control, or regularly raid, the main routes in and out of the capital.

At least 10 Cuban migrants died and 17 others were injured when the truck they were traveling in overturned in southern Mexico on Sunday, Mexican authorities say.

The truck was "irregularly" transporting 27 Cuban nationals on the Pijijiapan-Tonalá highway in the southern state of Chiapas when the accident occurred, Mexico's National Migration Institute (INM) said in a statement.

Mexico makes agreement with US to deport migrants from its border cities

Officials said initial reports suggested the driver had been speeding and lost control of the unit, fleeing the scene after it overturned.

The 10 victims were female and included a minor, authorities said. All the injured are being

10 Cuban migrants, 17 others injured in accident



Cubans protesting

treated in hospital.

"The INM will establish communication with the consular authorities to initiate the administrative process for the repatriation of the bodies to their country of origin and is aware of the evolution of the health status of those seriously injured," the statement said.

Migrants from Central America and the Caribbean sometimes travel through Mexico in trucks and trailers in the hope of reaching the United States.

In 2021, 55 people were killed and more than 100 injured when a truck also believed to be carrying migrants overturned in Chiapas state, which borders Guatemala.

Turkey carried military airstrikes on Kurdish militants

Turkey's military carried out airstrikes targeting Kurdish militants in northern Iraq on Sunday, just hours after the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) claimed responsibility for a deadly bombing in the capital in the latest attack of its nearly four-decade long insurgency.

In a statement, the Turkish Defense Ministry said its warplanes destroyed 20 PKK targets including caves, bunkers, shelters and warehouses in the regions of Metina, Hakurk, Kandil, and Gara.

"Many terrorists were neutralized by using the maximum amount of domestic and national ammunition," said the statement, which cited self-defense rights from Article 51 of the United Nations Charter to justify the strikes.

The PKK, which is classified as a terrorist organization by Turkey, the United States, and the European Union, earlier said it was behind the blast Sunday outside Turkey's

Interior Ministry building that left one dead and two injured, the pro-PKK Firat News Agency reported.

The ministry said in a statement that two attackers murdered a civilian and stole his vehicle ahead of the opening of parliament in Ankara. Two police officers reportedly received non-life-threatening injuries.

One assailant blew himself up and the other was "neutralized," the ministry said.

Investigators found four different types of guns, three hand grenades, one rocket launcher, and C-4 explosives at the scene.

The ministry confirmed at least one of the two attackers is a PKK member. The second attacker has yet to be identified, it said.

Turkish security forces cordon off an area after an explosion in Ankara on Sunday.

Kurds, who do not have an official homeland or country, are the biggest minority in Turkey, making up between 15% and 20% of the population,

according to Minority Rights Group International.

Portions of Kurdistan - a non-governmental region and one of the largest stateless nations in the world - are recognized by Iran, where the province of Kordestan lies; and Iraq, site of the northern autonomous region known as Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) or Iraqi Kurdistan.

According to Ankara, the PKK trains separatist fighters and launches attacks against Turkey from its bases in northern Iraq and Syria, where a PKK-affiliated Kurdish group controls large swaths of territory.

At least one killed in bomb attack near government building in Ankara, Turkey says

Terror attacks in Turkey were tragically common in the mid to late 2010s, when the insecurity from war-torn Syria crept north above the two countries' shared border.

And in November last year, Ankara blamed the PKK for a bomb attack on a central pedestrian boulevard in Istanbul that killed six and injured dozens.

In recent years, Turkey has carried out a steady stream of operations against the PKK domestically as well as cross-border operations into Syria.

In an address to lawmakers Sunday, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan vowed that Turkey would continue its fight against terrorism "until the last terrorist is eliminated domestically and abroad."

Sunday's attack marked the "final flutters of terrorism" in the country, he added.

WHO approves low-cost malaria vaccine



Erdogan

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has approved a low-cost, readily available vaccine for malaria that promises to help ease one of the greatest disease burdens on the developing world.

The R21 vaccine, developed by the University of Oxford, the Serum Institute of India and drug maker Novavax, could help reduce the

500,000 malaria-associated deaths that occur each year.

It is only the second vaccine to have been approved for the prevention of malaria, after the RTS,S vaccine developed by drug giant GSK was authorised in 2022.

Although the WHO concluded R21 has similar levels of efficacy as RTS,S the new vaccine is

expected to be cheaper and should be more widely available.

The Serum Institute of India has production capacity for 100 million doses of R21 each year, which it says will be doubled over the next two years.

Cost and availability are both crucial factors for a vaccine being deployed chiefly in sub-Saharan Africa, where there are nearly 250 million cases of malaria each year.

"The vaccine is easily deployable, cost-effective and affordable, ready for distribution in areas where it is needed most, with the potential to save hundreds of thousands of lives a year," said Sir Adrian Hill, who led the team developing the vaccine at Oxford University's Jenner Institute.

The approval of the vaccine follows 30 years of work on malaria at the Jenner Institute. The same lab developed an effective Covid-19 vaccine in less than a year.

But malaria is an altogether tougher challenge.



A Baby receiving vaccine

Feature

The Internet and cyber bullying in the 21st century

The use of electronic communication to bully a person, typically by sending messages of an intimidating or threatening nature."children may be reluctant to admit to being the victims of cyberbullying. AJIJI AJANG JOHN writes.

CYBERBULLYING — when a person is harassed online or through social media — has amplified the scale and scope of the problem. Today, young people spend ever-increasing amounts of time online. "Tweens" (ages 8-12) average 5.5 hours of screen time a day, while teenagers (13-18) are even more plugged in, with more than 8.5 hours. In addition to its 24-hour access, the anonymity of the internet also encourages cyberbullying. Online bullies torment other users with posts designed to provoke or harm. The barriers to bullying, in many cases, have been lowered or eliminated by the internet.

Bullying can range from general taunting or teasing to physical confrontations and attempts to intentionally degrade a person's well-being. According to the Cyberbullying Research Center (CRC), cyberbullying is defined as "willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices."

Cyberbullying can take many different forms; Repeatedly making fun of a person online or picking on them via email or text message, saying something bad about a person in a post or leaving critical or sarcastic comments in response to a person's posts, making online threats, spreading rumors, and posting unflattering pictures or videos.

A major source of cyberbullying is social media. These platforms can have the opposite desired effect of uniting peers, and instead can be weaponized to harass and bully others. Research by Security.org found that the link between social media and cyberbullying is most prevalent on these sites: YouTube: 79% report being cyberbullied, Snapchat: 69%, TikTok, 64%, Facebook, 49%. Pacer's National Bullying Prevention Center identifies five characteristics of cyberbullying; using an electronic form of communication, performing an aggressive act, Intending to harm the victim, repeating the act or similar acts, causing harm to the intended victim.

The effects of cyberbullying can



often be intense for victims. SingleCare identifies the negative impact cyberbullying can have on young victims; emotional effects, mental effects, behavioral effects, and physical effects.

Furthermore, One of the top ways to minimize the risk of online harassment is to adjust your privacy settings. Most social media platforms provide some degree of control over how your profile appears, such as whether or not your photos are public and the visibility of your posts. While a more private profile means restricted access to other users, it makes it much easier to know your network.

Major platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook provide a number of ways to shut down cyberbullies without provoking them or engaging further. You can make your profile private and even filter out certain followers to prevent them from seeing particular posts. This is a great way to avoid confrontations without dramatically altering the appearance of your profile.

While most situations don't escalate to this point, cyberbullies and harassers can use your personal information and passwords against you. This is just another reason why it's important to take basic precautions to protect your passwords, especially if you spend

a lot of time online. Password managers are an easy and manageable way to store your passwords securely, but they're exposed to many of the same risks as individual logins. One of the best ways to manage a large number of passwords is on paper. Add an extra layer of security by using your notes for hints instead of whole passwords, and remember to use unrelated passwords for different logins.

Escalating a situation on your own is never the safest solution to cyberbullying. Even a simple response risks drawing you and your harasser deeper into a negative situation. That's why we encourage you to use some of the other tactics on this list, instead of responding. Casual negativity can be easy to diffuse, but it's not always as simple as making a joke or laughing things off. Keep reading for more non-confrontational ways to reduce your risk and exposure to cyberbullying.

When a situation does escalate and you want to address the problem quickly, blocking is an easy option on social media. In most cases, you can easily block a bully with a few clicks after visiting their profile. This is helpful whether you're concerned about how to prevent cyberbullying from strangers or even bullying by contacts in your closer circle. The process is

simple on most platforms, which is great because it's basically the same on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. Simply click the three-dot icon on the user's profile page and select Block. If the cyberbullying includes sending harassing texts to your mobile phone, you'll follow relatively similar steps to block their number(s).

Protecting yourself and being careful online is one of the best ways to protect yourself from a variety of threats. If something or someone feels unusual or unsafe, you should consider stepping back. Even if there is no specific aggressor, your first instinct about an unfamiliar situation is often right. Staying safe online will mean different things to different users, but if you spend a lot of time socializing online or you explore a variety of topics and communities, try to cultivate good judgment and avoid anything that appears even remotely negative or volatile. Be especially careful with your personal information and what you display online. When a situation gets out of control or you feel like you're in danger, it may be time to involve law enforcement. Some situations can be resolved closer to home or the point of contact, such as by school officials, moderators, or site admins. Others are different, however, and threats of violence or sustained harassment should never be ignored.

“Furthermore, One of the top ways to minimize the risk of online harassment is to adjust your privacy settings. Most social media platforms provide some degree of control over how your profile appears, such as whether or not your photos are public and the visibility of your posts. While a more private profile means restricted access to other users, it makes it much easier to know your network. Major platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook provide a number of ways to shut down cyberbullies without provoking them or engaging further. You can make your profile private and even filter out certain followers to prevent them from seeing particular posts. This is a great way to avoid confrontations without dramatically altering the appearance of your profile.”

THE NIGERIA STANDARD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

Living

NAWOJ donates relief items to Mangu IDP's

By **PALANG KASMI**

THE Plateau State Chapter of the National Association of women Journalists recently donated items and extended a show of love to Internally Displaced Persons (IDP's), affected by the recent killings in Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau State.

Just recently too, as a result of the severe humanitarian crisis caused by the killings, Nigeria's First Lady, Sen. Oluremi Tinubu had visited the state to donate a N500 Million Naira Cheque to cushion the effect of the sufferings of the IDP's.

NAWOJ members, led by the State Chairperson, Mrs. Nene Dung, conveyed the Association's support to the Paramount Ruler of Mangu, the Mishkaham Mwaghavul, Da Putmang Hirse at the Millinium International Centre on Saturday 30th September 2023. Among items donated for the IDP's was clothing and cooking utensils.

The female journalists were received by the paramount ruler, in company of Executive Officials of the Muaghavul Development Association (MDA), the Special Adviser to the Plateau State Governor on Gender/ Chairperson Implementation Committee of Gender and Equal Opportunities Commission, Barr. Mrs. Olivia Dazyam, and the Chairman Mwaghavul Support Committee, Musa Pwul.

Speaking at the forum, NAWOJ Chairperson said the humanitarian crisis caused by the conflict and plight of the IDP's has become of great concern to right thinking Nigerians, which has spurred the visit.

She lamented the continuous killings of innocent people, including vulnerable women and children who have been displaced from their ancestral homes, and are finding shelter in the temporary camps.

Dung equally condemned the attacks saying God has placed every tribe and nationality in a place to dwell in, which is called their ancestral home or place of origin which must be cherished and respected by all.

She added that NAWOJ is a voice for the voiceless in the society, and will not stop attracting the needed intervention for the vulnerable, calling on security agencies to arrest perpetrators of the reoccurring attacks and save the lives and properties of citizens as soon as possible.

"What has happened has really touched us, in every crisis, you notice that women and children are worst hit, and they become widows, to the point that you begin to ask what is really happening".

"As women, we feel the pain of our fellow women who have lost



their comfort, peace of mind, family communal life and the reunion they have with their husband's and children, including the opportunity to sleep in peace. They have also lost how to make ends meet. A lot of women affected by the attacks did not come out with anything as their houses was burnt and that means living their lives anew but that can be very difficult, to start all over again".

"That is why as women, we thought of bringing clothing and cooking utensils like pots and flasks so that if a family affected gets where to resettle, they can start life again with the items. We believe we are not only to report what is happening in our news stories, but by this gesture, presenting the items to the women will help them get succor from their pain.

The NAWOJ Chair called on parents and stakeholders to give extra attention to young girls and children in the IDP camps, who can easy fall prey to different atrocities like rape, teen pregnancies, or trafficking. "Support them to survive from these atrocities" she tasked the IDP stakeholders.

After receiving the items, The Miskhagam Mwaghavul, appreciated the kind gesture, and practical display of love by the Association to his subjects.

He used the forum to call for intensified efforts to resettle IDP's who have been displaced as a result of the attacks on communities in his Local Government, Mangu.

He recounted with displeasure the negative impact the attack has left to his people, among which is lost of lives and properties, as well as non cultivation of the vast farmland in many communities, which will cause food shortages and scarcity.

The traditional ruler said "My people are stranded, they have no clothes or food to eat, they are living or squatting in temporary shelters, and I pray this comes to pass, so that people will go back to their ancestral homes".

"I pray for peace to return to the state, it is not only Muaghavul land that is being attacked. One side is always attacked and anytime we try to defend ourselves, they say two people are fighting, but it is not so. We have to defend ourselves when we sleep and somebody comes to kill

us. We want the world to know the truth, that this is not people fighting. We are always being attacked", he disclosed.

He tasked Plateau journalists to step up in their reportage and project the true Plateau story, and the ills happening in his domain, adding that various peace talks and meetings turns futile as the perpetrators of the killings come to attack his people while they are sleeping at night.

While commending the combined efforts of government, security agencies and community leaders in restoring calm, the Miskhagam Mwaghavul urged Plateau State citizens to be united in projecting the interest of the state for meaningful development.

The Special Adviser to plateau governor on Gender and Chairperson Implementation Committee of Gender and Equal Opportunities Commission, Barr. Olivia Dazyam

Dazyam appreciated the show of love displayed by NAWOJ to the people of Mangu Local Government.

She praised the female journalists for their passion and zeal in reporting gender issues especially vulnerability of women and children.

On his part, MDA President, Mr. Joseph Gwamkat, while speaking expressed concern on how the crisis has greatly affected people of Muaghavul land and stressed

that when there is crisis, women suffer the most.

He said "Where there is crisis, more women suffer, men are killed, widows are made, women are vulnerable and suffer all sorts of things. In these attacks, many women have been rendered widows, children rendered orphans".

"We are very careful with the welfare of our people, many organisations are coming with the request to pick the orphans but we want proper documentation so that we know and track where the children are going. Therefore we have gone to the state Ministry of Women Affairs to make sure a proper documentation of the orphans is done if not before you realise it, incidences of human trafficking will begin to occur at the camps" Gwamkat added.

He disclosed further that many houses and farmlands have been massively destroyed beyond imagination with so many people killed or missing, praying that his people will come out of the humanitarian crisis confronting them.

"So many people have been killed, those we have buried are getting to 300, not to talk of over 100 persons that are missing, with many other people displaced. The humanitarian crisis is very huge and we pray that with God our side, we will get out it".

EYE'S WORLD

With **Henrietta Gonzuk**

Living

Nigerians celebrating 63rd independence in green and white attires

THE mood for Nigerians 63rd independence anniversary celebrated on 1st October was positive and enthusiastic despite the numerous economic and other challenges the country is facing. Many citizens took to their Facebook and other social media pages to share their loyalty to their country by displaying pictures of themselves and their families clad in the green and white national colours. Indeed Nigerians are always active, there is hardly a boring moment when it comes to expressing themselves through celebrations and creativity in their outfits especially ceremonial attires. I took my time to check out some of the creative outfits some people displayed on Facebook to celebrate the country's independence and you will be amazed at how the country's national colours, green and white was captured in their make-ups and attires. The images are long-lasting, writes. PALANG KASMI.



Editorial

Fwinbe's death: Unwarranted, condemnable

THE joy of every parent is to have children, nurture them to adulthood until when they can take up the responsibility of also starting their own families and the cycle continues. However, for the family of Mr and Mrs Thomas Gofwan, though they wished for this cycle to come to pass, the expectation was cut short by some unscrupulous elements who through a mob action ended the life of their thirty five year old son Fwinbe Thomas Gofwan.

IT was painful and regrettable that life was snuffed out of him in an inhumane and gruesome manner because life is sacred and no one has the right to take another's life. There are constituted authorities saddled with the responsibility of bringing even criminals to justice in the event that the person is a criminal and not for people to take the law into their hands and perpetrate evil in the name of dealing with a so called thief.

It is worrisome to note that shortly after the killing of the innocent Fwinbe, there was another report of a similar act by some Okada and tricycle riders who had chased another innocent victim using the same style of shouting thief thief and only got saved as he ran into a church and people came out to assist him.

HAVING gone through harrowing experiences in the past, Plateau State though peaceful at the moment, the peace can best be described as volatile so anything in the light of this happenings can spark up something that can escalate and rob off the peace being enjoyed at the moment and take us back to those dark days.

WE condemn the actions of those who partook in the dastardly act. It is necessary for the government to revisit the earlier ban on the use of motorcycles in the state as the riders have been penciled in these and other criminal activities in and around the state.

VERY worrisome is the fact that in the two cases, report shows that the victims were tagged thieves while in the real sense it is just a tactic. While commending the Police for rising to the occasion and making an arrest shortly after the killing of Fwinbe, they should leave no stone unturned to ensure they bring the perpetrators to book.

It is worthy to note that while preserving life and condemning violence is crucial, in regions prone to tension, it's essential for authorities to address conflicts and ensure justice to prevent further escalation and maintain social harmony. We therefore call on the government, security agencies and all stakeholders to rise to the occasion of this new trend of criminality and properly investigate the matter and those found culpable be dealt with in accordance with the laws of the land.

ADDRESSING emerging trends in criminality requires thorough investigation and a firm response from law enforcement. Striking a balance between ensuring justice and maintaining public safety is crucial in tackling such challenges effectively

IT is a known fact that most of the commercial motor cycle operators in the state are those that were chased out of neighboring states and the Federal Capital Territory, FCT, that banned their operations. Law enforcement agents should swing into action to enforce the ban on their illegal operations.

IT is important to note that the motorcycle and Keke riders have an association with leadership that knows most of its members, so security agencies should work with them to ensure there's a way they can identify their members in case of a crime such as this.

ALSO, security personnel in collaboration with the riders association should take practical steps to sanitise and sensitise members against participating, aiding and abetting jungle justice. They should be made to understand that they cannot take the laws into their hands but report any crime that has been committed and hand over the perpetrator to the appropriate authorities for necessary action.

ONE of the most needed amenities that differentiates in urban or rural area is the availability of electricity power supply. Urban dwellers depend so much on power to ease activities of life and lack of it spells doom.

Life becomes unbearable when simple things like charging phones would entail one going to another neighbourhood. During the night hours, the environment becomes so dark and the hours drag because one cannot watch TV. That has been the fate of residents of Down Base, Farin Gada, a community which accommodates a large number of University of Jos students. One can only imagine how the student population has been managing since the rainstorm damaged our transformer some weeks back.

This lack of power supply has adversely affected a lot of businesses. A lot of businesses that need power to operate, have been halted, causing undue hardships. Hairdressers, barbers shops are without life because of lack of power and using their generator is too expensive for most of them who are small-time businessmen or women.

I want to appeal to the government of Plateau State to kindly help in fixing the transformer for the betterment of the people living in the community for their businesses to progress, most especially people that have salons shops and provisions shops for people who sell chilled drinks in the shops. Households also



PHCN fix Down Base community transformer

need power for their comfort.

Residents living in that community are really concerned about the safety of their lives and property; most especially as criminal activities are very rampant. Issues like armed robbery, kidnapping and criminal activities operate in the absence of power.

Although the community people are working towards it, but their resources and contributions have not been able to help in fixing the

transformer. The community has tried its possible best to see that the transformer is fixed but they have not been able to fix it.

That is why I'm calling on the government with a loud voice to come to the aid of the people living in the community by assisting them to fix the transformer.

Emmanuel Blessing is an I.T student from Federal Polytechnic Bauchi.

Burden of first term resumption on parents

IT is true that education as the name implies, is no doubt the bedrock of any given society. It is also an act of impacting knowledge to people both young and old as far as the system is concern. Therefore, it is important for every person to be educated in order to have a progressive society.

In view of this, parents find it difficult when it comes to resumption of new academic session due to financial expenses when it comes to payment of high levies and buying of all necessary items for their wards.

As the new academic session begins, students are re-admitted back to school to their various level of education. Parents are baffled because high Levies are paid every first term. It involves the buying of exercise books and other writing materials especially parents who are sending their wards to new schools, have to go through financial stress because they are paying more than what others are paying considering the bad economic situation.

It is also unfortunate that some parents find it difficult to send their

wards to school of their choice due to high and exorbitance charges of school fees looking at the challenges faced economically.

However because of the first term resumption which has become a serious burden on some parents, it is also glaring that some of the parents find it difficult to provide the needed 3 square meals for their families, who ordinarily deserve or need the 3 square meals as far as life is concern.

It may interest you to know that some parents deny themselves so many things that they could have enjoyed to see that they provide the best education to their children by working day and night to earn something that can be channeled to their wards education.

With this, children on their parts should know that parents are striving hard to safeguard their future by providing them with the best education since it remains the bedrock of the society. Therefore, children are advised to concentrate on their studies so as to have a bright future and also make their

parents proud when seeing them at any time.

Also, children should shun any form of misconduct such as indulging in examination malpractice, cultism, stealing among others, because such behaviours can lead the lives of their parents at risk despite all the struggling, parents expect excellent performance from their wards.

In this regard, private school owners should as a matter of fact reduce high rate of their school fees so that parents who don't have enough can send their wards to school this is to avoid parents denying their wards education in such schools.

Since children are regarded as the leaders of tomorrow in our society, I therefore appeal to government and all proprietors to look into the issue of high school fee charges particularly during the first term so as to make resumption for the parents when sending their wards back to school easy.

Ibrahim Nandi Datit Department of Mass Communication, Federal Polytechnic Bauchi.

STANDARD CARTOON



Opinion

Understanding success

By HENRY UKAZU

DEAR destiny friends,
It is no longer news that every living being desires success. This is because nothing gladdens the heart like success. This success is seen in the form of a solid financial background, sound health, harmonious family, impeccable academic achievement, constant personal development, and vocational triumphs

However, success has become a word often used, but poorly defined. This is because it can mean one thing to someone, and mean a different thing to another. It is therefore sad to note that many people don't understand the true meaning of success.

Uniformed minds think that success entails just money. They fail to understand that if the only thing one has is money, that person is poor.

Some schools of thought opine that there's no magic for success; you can apply hard work, confidence, persistence, consistency, great organisational skill, emotional intelligence and resistance, growth mindset, courage, gratitude, risk, responsibility, smart work, and many more, and still not succeed. You can even apply the SMART goals (Specific, Measurable,

Achievable, Measurable and Timely) and still not succeed. In fact, you might even have everything in place, yet someone with luck will outshine you.

Sometimes, you need luck to succeed. This is without prejudice to your right connections, right information, right resources, opportunities and facilitating factors. However, for this luck to work, you must be prepared. The trick is you must organize and surround your life around goals for the things you need, want or enjoy.

There are many ways to achieve success. One of the simplest strategies is to align your success with your natural talents, abilities, and mental faculties. Everyone is wired differently and as such we are unique in our ways. It's your responsibility to discover what makes you unique and special.

Here's the strategy of smart work: First, you must know your strengths and weaknesses, and what you are good at. Focus on using it and transforming it into success and prosperity. It can be an ability, talent, or skill, with which you

can help others or prove your excellence and value.

It is instructive to note that once you attain a certain level of success, other people will begin to associate with you, brands will begin to identify with you. There are principles and strategies that are necessary for success. The truth is that success comes to you to the extent you want it, and to the extent you are willing to work for it. You get what you invest in it.

To fully understand what success is, one must define what he/she wants. According to Dr. Yomi Garnett, "Success has a master plan" and this plan includes questions like: "What do I want? When do I want it? Why do I want it? Where am I starting from? What obstacles must I overcome? What information will I require? Who are the people whose help I will need".

Let's elaborate on this master plan. There's no success without clarity. No successful man or woman who has attained genuine success achieved it without being clear and focused. They were all clear on what they wanted. They didn't allow distraction to confuse them.

When you are sure of what you want, challenges will come, with betrayals and disappointments. You might even doubt yourself if it's not adding up, especially as it relates to finance, but if you are determined, you will overcome. All the setbacks and challenges are there to serve as a test and inspiration to the vision one has.

The next step is to map out a strategy. Apart from the God-factor and hard work, strategy is the most important ingredient to success. Even if you do the hard work, if you are not strategic, or have a plan, you will fail. Strategy involves knowing the right people who will buy your products or services; networking with the right people, sacrificing for the project and most importantly, knowing how to execute the project.

Another dynamic way of understanding success is understanding the concept of relationship. This 'relationship' might be your business partner, spouse, friend or manager. Once you are properly aligned, all the minds, energy and spirit must be at peace, otherwise it will be difficult. It's widely stated

that the best thing that can happen to anyone is to have the right partner whether in business or marriage.

Understanding success also works with finding the right job that aligns with your natural skills, talents and gifts. When you focus on the money as opposed to fulfillment, success might erode you because you might earn money, but lose joy.

In conclusion, to succeed, the first step is knowing yourself and this entails practising self-discovery and meditation. Take time to know what's unique about yourself and ask yourself, what's the one thing I can do with relatively easy steps which is devoid of stress which ultimately gives me the most result. Once you find it, swing into action to groom it by developing yourself in theory and practice.

Henry Ukazu writes from New York. He works with the New York City Department of Correction as the Legal Coordinator. He's a Transformative Human Capacity and Mindset coach. He is also a public speaker, youth advocate and creative writer Design Your Destiny and Unleash Your Destiny. He can be reached via info@gloemi.com

Nigeria and the celebration of happiness

By OLAYINKA OPALEYE

FOR the first time, Nigeria joined the host of other countries across the globe to celebrate the International Week of Happiness at Work. Putting Nigeria on this global map of corporate wellness is truly a dream come true for us at Calme Pur Wellness, with a depth of gratitude to Happy Office for such a remarkable initiative and feature. With the self-awareness that Nigeria is not yet there regarding what organizations and government bodies have achieved in other parts of the world, we appreciate our baby steps and have chosen to celebrate the milestones. You would agree that it is a step in the right direction to identify organizations within the country that have done tremendous work in making their employees happy in their own thoughtful ways.

As organizations strive to achieve and be more target-oriented in deploying workplace wellness programs, the following seven companies deserve and reserve a special place in our hearts for their laudable initiatives to ensure their work environments are psychologically safe and healthy for their employees and relevant stakeholders.

NLNG Limited – this Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas company is a notable player in the global LNG business. The company was incorporated to harness the countries' immense natural gas resources and produce Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) and Natural Gas Liquids. We applaud the organization this International

Week of Happiness at Work for the innumerable corporate wellness programs they run to ensure staff engagement and promote participation while stimulating and creating a happy, safe, healthy work environment for them. They recently took corporate wellness a step further with their EFAP (Employee Family Assistance Program) being aware of the causality between happiness at home and work.

Reliance HMO – this technologically driven health insurance providing company is the only HMO currently covering preventive care and therapies through health plans with gym, spa, and wellness checkups. Their unique value proposition has encouraged many organizations to sign up their workers for health and wellness insurance covers that promote happy and healthy active lifestyles.

Business Law Academy – an astute corporate finance law expert founded this law firm subsidiary. Commissioned to handle corporate commercial law transactions in public-private partnerships and infrastructure financing, the academy also took it upon itself to conduct an annual roundtable talk on safeguarding mental health in the workplace. These webinars have hosted top dignitaries in the country's legal bodies, health and wellness experts, and leading law firms' human resource managers. It seeks to sensitize reforms due to the need to put systems and structures in place to

improve workplaces rather than the status quo.

ipNX& Premium Trust Bank – ipNX Nigeria Limited is an information technology company, while Premium Trust Bank is a financial institution, just as the name implies. Both organizations have taken the wellbeing of their staff members a bit further by encouraging a fit and active lifestyle through exercise and fitness programs at their offices.

TVC Communications – this leading media network operates two television stations and three radio stations nationwide. Knowing the importance of need-based corporate wellness initiatives, they made subsidized onsite daycare services available for return-to-work moms. As a working mom, I can only imagine the impact of this corporate gesture on any new mom, from the joy of returning to work, the relief of having the baby close by, to the peace of mind and ability to focus on the day's work.

CWG PLC – Computer Warehouse Group is an IT solution provider specializing in various services like communications, integration, infrastructure, management, and other support services like cloud and software. This company is big on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Knowing well that equality is not necessarily the same as equity. The company gives everyone a fair opportunity as leaders to take up responsibilities with an adequate learning and mentorship culture.

The concepts of workplace wellness and happiness at work are new here in my country, coming with a viewpoint of an economy that is more cash/money-based than goodwill or other intangible assets. The recognized initiatives of the seven spotlighted organizations will not only spur them to do more but encourage more organizations to commit to making happiness at the workplace a norm and not an exception.

It may interest you that Nigeria has the highest number of tech unicorns and the fastest-growing tech ecosystem in Africa. It is the most robust economy in Africa, with the largest population of hardworking diaspora communities that have remitted over 65.3 billion US dollars in the past three years. Arguably, it is also home to the richest black man on the planet and some Afro-music icons like Burna Boy, Wizkid, and Davido.

Nigeria is significant in the grand scheme of things, especially on the global corporate wellness stage. We are hardworking and resilient people who need a re-orientation of work and work culture. We always thrive wherever we go, and this could be because we appreciate the happy work culture in the Western world. We hope to have a national work culture that engenders a psychologically safe and healthy work environment that enhances business growth and sustainability and makes companies outlive their founders into multiple generations after them.

Feature

Nigeria@63: The human face of a sickly economy

By **OLADEHINDE OLADIPO**

AFRICA'S biggest economy has been sluggish for several years now, and the human cost of this slowdown is becoming increasingly apparent, BusinessDay's analysis and expert opinions have shown.

As Nigeria's independence clocked 63rd, many are checking to see if there is indeed any reason for celebration as the country looks unrecognisable from the country that was forecast in 2015 to be the first African country to hit a GDP of \$1 trillion.

For instance, time was when the naira, the country's currency, was stronger than the United States' dollar or at least was at par in the 1970s and 1980s, according to a statement from the CBN.

Those were the days when Nigerians didn't need a visa to travel to countries like the UK. Then Nigerian universities were highly regarded globally and the University College Hospital in Ibadan was among the best hospitals in all the Commonwealth nations.

The Nigerian immunisation coverage was also above 80 percent – an indication of an effective healthcare system.

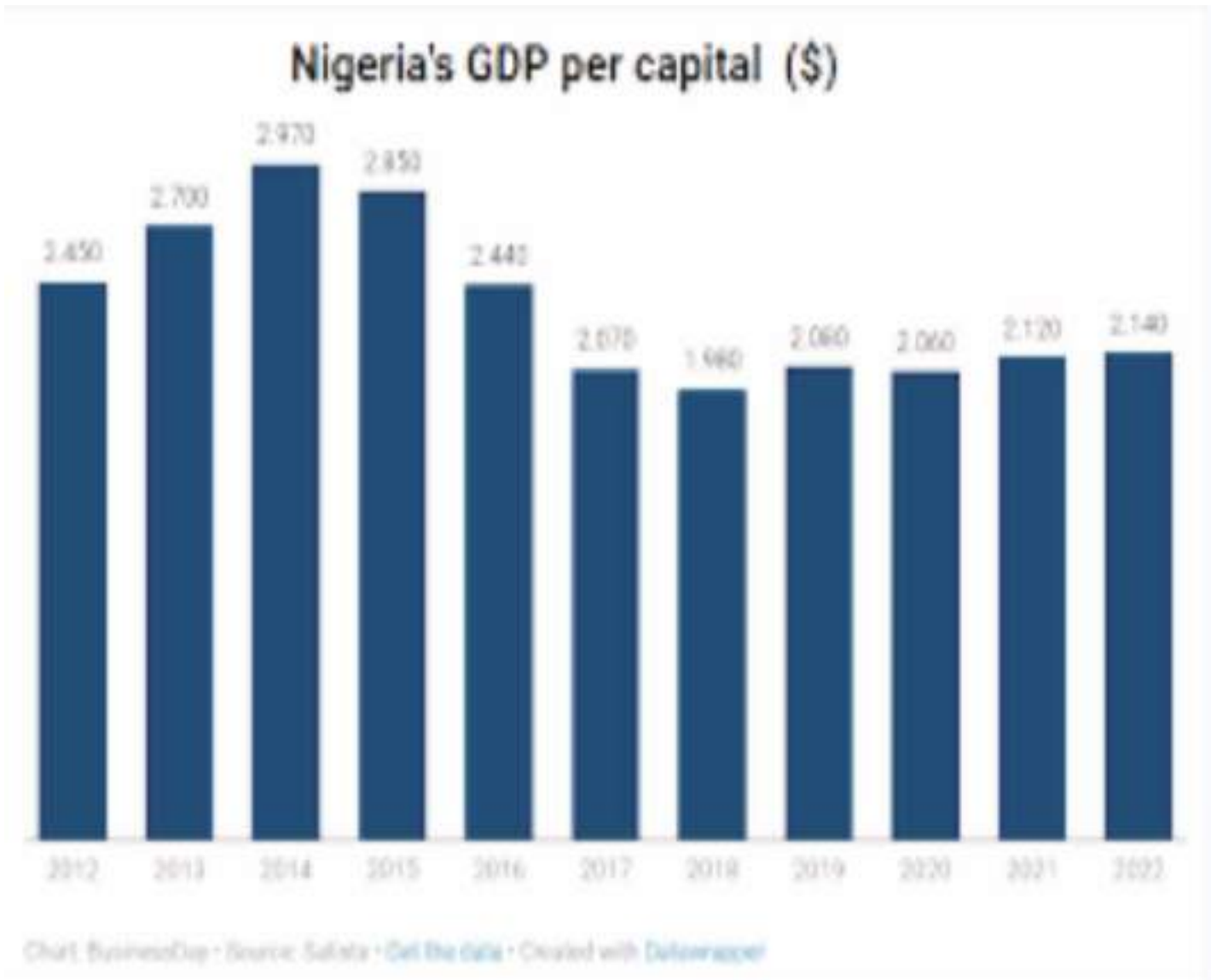
Today, the story is not that inspiring.

Although the economy has grown from \$4.1 billion in 1960 to \$477 billion in 2022, the country's output per person, otherwise known as GDP per capita, has slumped by 28 percent to \$2,140 between 2014 and 2022, according to BusinessDay's calculations.

Take the case of Clement Ighodaro (not real name) for example. His highest qualification is a Bachelor's degree in Microbiology from Lagos State University.

Ighodaro lost his job at Shoprite in 2021, after the South African retail firm discontinued its 16-year-old operations in Nigeria after struggling with supply chain disruptions and repatriation of funds caused by an acute dollar shortage.

It has been three years and Ighodaro is yet to land another job. His lack of a job has forced some changes. He has had to move away from his two-bedroom apartment somewhere



in Ikorodu to living with a friend in a one-bed apartment almost the size of a telephone booth within the same area.

"It is difficult to earn a living; I'm lucky to start my little business with borrowed funds; I have friends who have been forced to resort to begging or petty trade in order to survive," Ighodaro said.

Another person who has been directly affected by the economic downturn is Aisha Aliyu, a single mother of three who lives in Lagos.

Aisha used to work as a cleaner, but lost her job a few months ago. She has been unable to find a new job since then, and she is struggling to support her family.

"I don't know what to do," she said. "I'm running out of money, and I don't know how I'm going to feed my children."

Ighodaro and Aisha's stories are just two examples of the human cost of Nigeria's ailing economy.

Yet the pain of an economy growing slower than the population growth also shows it is no respecter of persons. The rich are also feeling the pinch.

Aliko Dangote, the country's richest man, who doubles as the continent's wealthiest person, is no longer worth half as much as he was in 2014.

Despite remaining the richest African for almost a decade, his fortune is down by 57 percent to \$10.7 billion from \$25 billion in 2014, according to Forbes data.

Despite the objectives of the policies introduced, the Nigerian economy is still faced with suboptimal growth of 3.3 percent and GDP per capita of \$2,187, which is 84 percent below the world average of \$13,479 as of

2022," Deloitte, a professional services firm, said in a note.

According to Deloitte, challenges such as poor policy implementation, heavy reliance on the oil sector as a major source of revenue, infrastructure deficit, internal security issues and significant debt burden have impeded economic growth and subsequently limited the effectiveness of policies over the years.

With GDP per capita currently at \$2,187, the firm said Nigeria is significantly below the prescribed threshold.

"For Nigeria to reach the current world average, its GDP per capita will need to grow at an exponential rate of 25.6 percent per annum within the span of eight years," Deloitte said.

Experts said a high per capita GDP indicates a high standard of living, while a low one indicates that a country is struggling to supply its inhabitants with everything they need.

"Although the target to double Nigeria's GDP per capita is ambitious, there are examples of countries that have achieved similar targets within a comparable timeframe," Deloitte said.

Luxembourg, a small European country surrounded by Belgium, France, and Germany, has the highest GDP per capita globally with \$142,214 as of 2023, according to the Worldometer.

Singapore (\$127,565) and Ireland (\$126,905) round out the top three countries with the

highest countries GDP per capita.

"To bring Nigeria closer to the world average while preventing an overheated economy, the current administration can aim to double the current GDP per capita over the next 8 years," Deloitte said.

Deloitte advised President Bola Tinubu's administration to remove the bottlenecks that constrain production and export activities by trade openness through incentives for local production, and reduction of tariffs in certain industries with the potential to generate foreign exchange should be encouraged.

It further advised continued management of the foreign exchange market towards a liberalised regime solely dependent on market forces.

"This will aid cost structuring, promote long-term planning across key sectors, and reduce uncertainties among investors," Deloitte said.

Concerning Nigeria's infrastructure deficit, the firm said collaborating with private enterprises through public-private partnerships can bring significant benefits while mobilising private capital and expertise.

"These partnerships can address infrastructure gaps, promote economic growth, and create jobs. This is a strategic approach to bridge the infrastructure gap and drive sustainable development," Deloitte said.

"Despite remaining the richest African for almost a decade, his fortune is down by 57 percent to \$10.7 billion from \$25 billion in 2014, according to Forbes data. Despite the objectives of the policies introduced, the Nigerian economy is still faced with suboptimal growth of 3.3 percent and GDP per capita of \$2,187, which is 84 percent below the world average of \$13,479 as of 2022," Deloitte, a professional services firm, said in a note. According to Deloitte, challenges such as poor policy implementation, heavy reliance on the oil sector as a major source of revenue, infrastructure deficit, internal security issues and significant debt burden have impeded economic growth and subsequently limited the effectiveness of policies over the years."

NEWS

Mutfwang urges on professionalism

From JIDANUA YANUNG, Abuja

PLATEAU State Governor, Barrister Caleb Mutfwang, has advised nurses and midwives in Nigeria to be committed to professionalism in order to salvage the profession from extinction.

Similarly, the Governor has solicited the support of Senior Federal Civil servants from Plateau State working in Abuja in his determination to change the face of Plateau State in general.

Governor Mutfwang while speaking during the launch of Challenges and Triumph of Nursing Profession in Nigeria written by Professor Kola Oyedepo in Abuja said that the nursing profession has not been given its pride of place in Nigeria as a result of self-inflicted woes by the practitioners.

Also speaking at a meeting with senior federal civil servants from Plateau State Governor Mutfwang urged them to work hard and bring federal governments projects to the state as well as support his administration's determination to leave the state better than he met it.

According to him "the time is now" for all of you here to



Mutfwang

use your various positions to bring developments back at home.

Speaking at the launching, Barrister Mutfwang said "I am connected to nursing. My deputy is a nurse, my immediate younger sister is a nurse. So, in every way, I am connected with nursing. As a Governor, I have many nursing training institutions, I have to look after."

While emphasizing the importance of nursing profession, Mutfwang said

"Nurses are very important because after the doctor has finished his surgery or examination, the nurses take over".

He further stated that the registrars must mobilize members of the nursing profession to rise to the occasion. "They must do a lot of research to change the perception of the nursing profession. You should ensure that these books don't end in the hall. They should be transmitted to those who need them".

From TERESE TUHWA, Makurdi

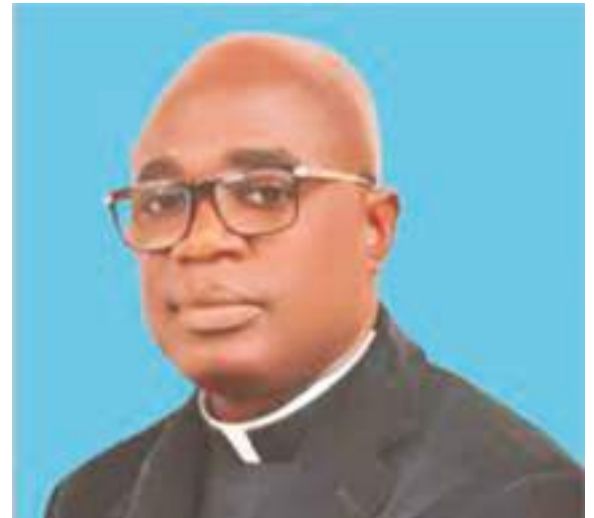
GOVERNOR Hyacinth Iormem Alia of Benue State has announced suspension of all forms of illegal logging and mining activities in the state, warning that anyone caught in any of the activities will face the full wrath of the law.

The governor who was speaking recently at Methodist Church of Nigeria, South Bank Wadata Makurdi during the interdenominational church service organised by Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in conjunction with Benue State Government to mark the nation's 63rd independence anniversary, said those interested in the business must be properly documented by relevant authority in order to block revenue leakages to ensure accelerated development of the state.

Alia who commended people of the state for electing him their leader, maintained that he has no reason whatsoever not to attract development to the state given the numerous mineral resources that abound in the state.

He assured people of the state that his administration will create

Gov Alia suspends logging, mining activities



Alia

an enabling environment for them to explore their full potentials. And, added that the present hardship being experienced as a result of fuel subsidy removal will soon become a thing of the past as necessary measures are being put in place.

He revealed that his administration has inherited a debt burden of three hundred and fifty nine billion naira (#359 bn) from the immediate past administration. But expressed the hope that the challenge will not deter him

from moving the state forward and called on all hands to be on deck to move the state out of its present woes.

Earlier, guest preacher at the church service, Rev Tor Ujah said no nation can develop without attitudinal change of her citizens.

According to the cleric, a nation develops through character and integrity of her citizens. He implored every Nigerian citizen to get busy, insisting that he who does not work should not eat as enjoined by the holy scriptures.

The former Executive Secretary, National Christian Pilgrims Commission, Abuja told the congregation that the country can move forward only when every citizen begins to see themselves as agents of change. He called on government to create more conducive environment for citizens to pursue any legitimate business of their choice.

The founder, Mission House International, Makurdi enjoined the people not to idle away but get something doing as that was the only weapon that can be used to fight heightened poverty in the land.

The state CAN Chairman and Bishop of Makurdi Catholic Diocese, Most Rev Dr. Wilfred ChikpaAnagbe represented by his Vice, Rev TerwaseUgbede, commended Governor Hyacinth Alia for the giant strides he has taken, especially the prompt payment of workers' salaries and efforts to resettle the internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their ancestral homes.

There was special prayers for the nation and state offered by representatives of CAN blocs while governor Alia, his deputy Barr Samuel Ode and state attorney general and commissioner for justice Barr Fidelis Mnyim took the first, second and third readings.

TIC Chairman commends NGO for free medical outreach

IN a bid to improve the healthcare and well-being of the people of Langtang North, the Chairman of the Transition Implementation Committee (TIC) in Langtang North Local Government Council, Hon. Godwin Nanmwa Kumzhi, has commended the efforts of the Eden Compassion and Health Mission int'l (ECHM). The organization has been providing free medical services to Langtang North citizens and residents. During the flag-off ceremony of a six-day free medical outreach, sponsored by the TIC Chairman and organized by the ECHM medical team,

By DORCAS PANKYES

Hon. Kumzhi expressed his appreciation for the gesture and praised the ECHM for promoting local unity, improving health, integration, and cohesion among the citizens of Langtang North.

Hon. Kumzhi urged the people of Langtang North to take advantage of the opportunity to receive quality healthcare services and support the members of the ECHM in achieving their health objectives.

He promised to collaborate with the ECHM to ensure that the health status of Langtang North citizens is

guaranteed. In response, Dr. DinfaLongbap, the CEO/MD of the Eden Compassion and Health Mission int'l, expressed his gratitude to Hon. Kumzhi for his support in providing free healthcare services to the people of Langtang North.

Dr. Longbap assured the chairman that his team would put in their best efforts to ensure the success of the

outreach programme. He emphasized that the programme was organized as part of the ECHM's community service outreach to positively impact the lives of many community dwellers.

The collaboration between the Langtang North TIC Chairman and the ECHM is expected to bring about significant improvements in the healthcare sector of the

region, benefiting the citizens and residents of Langtang North and its environs. Dizan Ponman Samuel, the Media Aide to Hon. Godwin Nanmwa Kumzhi, conveyed the chairman's message and highlighted the importance of the partnership between the TIC and the ECHM in providing accessible and quality healthcare services to the community.

MPWB pegs Hajj fee at N2m

By JIDAUNA DARING and LONGDIEM C. SHINNA'AN

MUSLIM Pilgrims Welfare Board (MPWB) Plateau State has pegged the sum of N2 million naira as its deposit for 2024 Hajj operations in the state.

This was contained in a press statement signed by the board's information officer, Namu Sanusi and made available to THE NIGERIA STANDARD in Jos.

The statement revealed that the acting Executive Secretary of the board, Hajiya Aishatu Ibrahim Saleh disclosed this to the board's information desk.

She explained that the intending pilgrims were now at a liberty to pay more than N2 million as the board awaits the announcement of final Hajj fares by the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON).

Saleh maintained that the

commission had recently allocated 1345 Hajj slots to Plateau State.

She also assured of giving priority to those who did not perform last year's Hajj.

She added that the new intending pilgrims will be on a first come first served basis as they would not give room for any form of injustice while preparing for the exercise.

Saleh further explained that those who have their deposit with the board and were unable to perform last year's Hajj are expected to

come to the board and collect their bank teller so as to enable them top-up their deposits.

She disclosed that those seeking for refunds will be invited in due course.

The acting executive secretary also used the medium to appreciate Governor Caleb M. Mulfwang of Plateau State for his support to the board, saying that the administration was equally trying to leave no stone unturned towards ensuring a better 2024 Hajj exercise in the state.

CHANGE OF NAME

YARO
I, formerly known as **KUNDUL FRIDAY**, now wish to be known and addressed as **YARO FRIDAY WUYEP**. Correct date of birth is **16/2/1984**. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.

GAMBO
I, formerly known as **GAMBO CHRIS**, now wish to be known and addressed as **GAMBO AMINU AUDU**. Correct date of birth is **18/11/1999**. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public please take note.



Kumzhi

View Point

Food inflation hits 18-year high

The prices of major food items such as maize, milk and plantain have almost doubled within 12 months, leading the pack in terms of the largest price increase in Nigeria. BUNMI BAILEY writes.

According to the latest selected food prices report by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the average price of 1kg of maize grain (white sold loose) rose by 93 percent to N580.1 in August 2023 from N300.5 in the same period of last year while the yellow type grew by 90.2 percent to N583.7 from N306.9.

The average price of a 170g evaporated canned milk carnation increased by 81.7 percent to N431.3. The price of 1kg of plantain (unripe) and plantain(ripe) rose by 78.6 percent and 77.1 percent respectively.

Others are a 170g evaporated canned milk (peak), which grew by 76.1 percent; 1kg of rice (local sold loose), 62.7percent; 1kg of rice (medium grained), 51.5 percent and 1kg of garri (white sold loose), 49.2 percent.

The report also revealed that the total average food price for the 43 food items rose by 31.5 percent to N51,414.1 from N39,108.5 with 1kg of frozen chicken (N 3,144.1), 1kg of Beef, boneless (N2,799.5), 1kg of dried catfish (N2,650.0), 1kg of dried mudfish (N2,535.1) and dried fish sardine (N2,226.9) recording the highest prices for August.

In the NBS's latest Consumer Price Index report, food inflation rose to 29.34 percent, the highest in 18 years from 26.98 percent in July. Food inflation, which constitutes 50 percent of the inflation rate, was the major factor that pushed the country's headline inflation to 25.80 percent from 24.08 percent.

"The rise in the food inflation on a year-on-year basis was caused by increases in prices of oil and fat, bread and cereals, fish, fruit, meat, vegetables and potatoes, yam and other tubers, milk, cheese and eggs," the NBS said.

Unsurprisingly, food prices increased on the underlying factors such as the pass-through effect of elevated Petrol Motor Spirit prices on food prices, higher input costs and conflicts in the Northern region of the country – remain intact, according to analysts at Cordros Securities.

Coupled with the above, the closure of the Niger Republic border in early August exerted fresh pressures on the food basket amid the lean season in food-producing states.



Consequently, pressures were significant in the farm produce and processed food sub-baskets," they said in a recent note.

Tola Balogun, a Lagos-based carpenter, said his family can't even afford to eat thrice daily anymore as prices keep soaring.

"It is getting difficult daily for Nigerians, especially with the recent petrol subsidy removal and other reforms the Tinubu's led-government has done. They are good reforms but they are seriously hurting Nigerians and businesses," he added.

The Federal Government reforms such as the removal of petrol subsidy and naira devaluation, implemented in the second quarter of the year, increased the cost of living of cash-strapped consumers in Africa's biggest economy.

The removal of the fuel subsidy tripled the petrol price to N617 from N184, causing public transportation providers such as buses, tricycles and motorcycles to raise transportation fares.

On June 14, 2023, the Central Bank of Nigeria merged all foreign exchange markets into the Investors and Exporters window and reintroduced the willing buyer, willing seller model.

The floating of the naira increased the official exchange rate from N463.38/\$ on June 9, to

N755.29/\$ as of September 29. At the parallel market, the naira depreciated to N1,005/\$ from 762/\$.

The high cost of dollars and the implementation of a 7.5 percent value added tax on diesel imports have pushed its pump price to as high as N1,200 per litre.

The World Bank said in June that inflation pushed an estimated four million more Nigerians into poverty in the first five months of this year.

"In the immediate term, the removal of the petrol subsidy has caused an increase in prices, adversely affecting poor and economically insecure Nigerian households," it said.

It added that among the poor and economically insecure, 38 percent own a motorcycle and 23 percent own a generator that depends on petrol and that many more use petrol dependent transportation.

The poor and economically insecure households will face an equivalent income loss of N5,700 per month, and without compensation, an additional 7.1 million people will be pushed into poverty."

According to the international organisation, many current, as well as newly, poor and economically insecure households will likely resort to coping mechanisms that will have long-term adverse consequences, such

as not sending children to school, or not going to the health facilities to seek preventative healthcare or cutting back on nutritious dietary choices.

Tinubu in July declared an immediate state of emergency on food insecurity to tackle the increase in food prices.

All matters pertaining to food & water availability and affordability, as essential livelihood items, be included within the purview of the National Security Council, according to a statement.

Analysts at CSL Stockbrokers said food insecurity has been a cause of concern as the challenges of insurgency, low investments in agriculture, low mechanized farming,

inadequate food storage methods and poor transport infrastructure have suppressed supply while demand for food products in a population-dense country remains high.

"The five-year tax break provided by the Federal Government to stimulate investments in the agricultural sector is yet to improve output in the sector. More so, the price levels of food products have risen significantly over the years as all of the factors mentioned above have either directly affected prices or have indirectly affected food prices through increased transport cost," they added.





By Victor Ali

Nigeria at 63, the struggle continues

in all fields of human endeavor to be plague with such leadership deficit is a monumental misnomer. Come to think of it, for sixty three years, all the leaders produced in this country are visionless, lack focus and the finesse to bring the country out of the wood, and make it a prosperous nation where milk and honey would flow is not possible?

There is no denying the fact that, amongst the bunch of Nigerian leaders all this while some of them, no doubt, did well or planned to do well but some other extraneous factors became their bane. And these factors were not caused from anti-development "gods," but are man-made. That is by Nigerians themselves simply put, it is a self-inflicted injury.

With the exception of a very few, if any, greed, avarice and grand corruption have been ingrained in the DNA of most Nigerian leaders. They do it so spectacularly that it has now become the norm rather than exception. The merciless pillaging of our common patrimony by a few certainly would have a concomitant negative effects on the citizenry and the nation.

For a very long time in the sixty-six years of Nigeria's independence, the military apparatchik who ventured into the political circuit show have largely been blamed for the present misfortune bedeviling the country. Though the military misadventures starting from January 1966 and other subsequent military coup d'tat

Endured with enormous human and natural resources it becomes very difficult to comprehend why the country has found itself in this pitiable and sorrowful condition. And what really is the problem with Nigeria that it has found itself in this quandary? For the late iconic literary giant, Chinua Achebe in his little but illuminating book, **The Trouble with Nigeria**, he alluded that it was "simply and squarely the problem of leadership." Really?

For a country that is fantastically blessed with some of the best brains in the world

that followed contributed satanically to the present sorry state of the country, but questions must be asked: What about the democratically elected leadership in the country? Did they, or rather, have they fared better?

The democratically elected administration of the late Alhaji Shehu Usman Shagari from 1979 to 1983 witnessed one of the worst licerny of the purse of the Nigerian state. Corruption simply became a fanciful bazaar. Little wonder, when the military hawks made a comeback on the twilight of the Shagari administration and subsequent set up military tribunals for trials on leadership malfeasance (corruption), some of the politicians were sentenced to jail for over hundred years! Sad. Some of the politicians died in the gulag before others got reprieve.

While this "revolving door" leadership drama of the elites continue, a broad spectrum of the citizenry wallow in abject poverty, penury and wants. Hunger, illiteracy, diseases and indeed abject poverty have been companion of the Nigerian



masses. To this category of Nigerians, having access to Medicare is a herculean task, eating three square meals a day is a pipe dream, affording education for the children is illusion etcetera etcetera. This is the stark reality of present day Nigeria!

Ironically, while the rich are getting richer and displaying their affluence for all to see, the poor are getting poorer and humbly managing their penury. Afterall, wetin man go do! The situation is akin to what the defunct magazine Analyst described Nigeria thus: One country, two nations. The present situation of Nigerians are totally unacceptable. The level of poverty has overwhelmed the common man. Indeed, there is hunger in the land!

One begins to wonder how Nigerian leaders go to sleep in the midst of these social

calamity. The Nigerian gulag condition at present seems to be a situation where there is arrogance on one end (leadership) and decility on the other end (citizenry). From all intent and purposely this certainly is a time bomb waiting to explode because a hungry man is an angry man.

The coming of the present administration of President Ahmed Bola Tinubu with its "renewed Hope" mantra" gave Nigerians some confidence that after all there may be light at the end of the tunnel. Alas, with the removal of that amorphous fuel subsidy, things seem to have nose-dived. The cost of living now for even an average Nigerian is in the hands of God. Can we get it right this time or we keep on struggling till our next national birthday when another round of promises would be mouthed?

"The democratically elected administration of the late Alhaji Shehu Usman Shagari from 1979 to 1983 witnessed one of the worst licerny of the purse of the Nigerian state. Corruption simply became a fanciful bazaar. Little wonder, when the military hawks made a comeback on the twilight of the Shagari administration and subsequent set up military tribunals for trials on leadership malfeasance (corruption), some of the politicians where sentenced to jail for over hundred years! Sad. Some of the politicians died in the gulag before others got reprieve."



By JIDAUNA DARING

The need to create rural ministry in Plateau

IT is widely believed that, our rural people have suffered so many untold hardships as a result of undesired neglect by

successive governments, thereby depriving the rural communities of their rights.

This is because, the rural dwellers are always at the receiving end as politicians during electioneering campaigns make promises to tackle the various challenges faced at the grassroots but at the end of the day, they become unfulfilled. Again, even the self-help activities embarked upon by the rural dwellers, most often, are unknown to government.

In view of this, the importance of this ministry, if created, cannot be overemphasized since it

would go a long way in assisting any given administration on board to know deeply the problems faced by the rural communities at all times.

This, if put into consideration, as far as the plight of the rural dwellers are concerned, would never in any way sound regrettable to Plateau State government and its people, since it would benefit all and sundry in the state.

Interestingly, the creation of this rural-based, focused ministry as suggested would give rural communities a sense of belonging because it

is going to be a ministry that rural areas issue would always be channeled to.

It is believed that the creation of the said ministry would also create job opportunities to some unemployed youths who are roaming the streets in search of jobs. This is more so because departments and various units are going to be created for people to work.

However, what is more disturbing is the fact, that most rural communities are cut-off from the city centres when it comes to the issues of bad roads network, poor health care facilities, as well as problems of good drinking water among others.

Infact, all the alluded challenges have continued to remain unsolved and have made lives difficult or very unbearable for the rural dwellers. Research has shown that 70 percent of Plateau State population are rural dwellers who engage in agriculture related activities to provide food for the population.

Worthy of note, is the fact that, "the time is now" administration led by Barrister Caleb M. Mutfwang of Plateau State is poised to deliberately and actively encourage more food production in the agricultural sector, especially in the rural areas.

This is because, it will be encouraged to provide financial services for the rural communities as a deliberate rural poverty alleviation strategy by government.

The existence of Urban Development Ministry in the state has brought many transformation to the urban areas, such as roads construction and several social amenities, if one looks at it carefully you could see and equally believe that the rural communities are only enjoying 30 percent of government's presence, particularly in the area of physical projects.

Bye and large, government on its part should see the move as a sign of bringing more dividends of democracy to the doorstep of the rural communities in different sectors.

"It is believed that the creation of the said ministry would also create job opportunities to some unemployed youths who are roaming the streets in search of jobs. This is more so because departments and various units are going to be created for people to work."

By **BULUS GAMBO**

VWANG community in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State is host to Karl Kumm University established by the Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN). Interestingly, not only Karl Kumm University, Vwang community is host to several other federal institutions in the state. Thus, the coming of Karl Kumm University to Vwang is an added blessing to the locality, citizens of the country and the church. But again, since 1903 in the aftermath of the coming of the missionaries through the Sudan United Mission, (SUM), the Church has not left any stone unturned towards proliferation of quality education in the state and the country at large. Thus, if the historical involvement of the church towards promoting quality education in Nigeria is anything to go by, COCIN surely has its respected place in the country.

For sure, COCIN has over the years been doing everything possible to ensure the sustainability of quality education of the citizenry. Though many secondary schools have been established by COCIN in the aftermath of the departure of some of these missionaries, the thought for the establishment of a tertiary institution has never left the minds of the leadership of the church.

With the passage of time, the leadership of the church decided that it was a long awaited dream which by God's grace would come to fruition. Indeed, and as God would have it, the Church after fruitful deliberations finally settled that the location of this long awaited institution of learning should be in Vom, in Jos South of Plateau State in Nigeria. After all that was needed for the smooth take-off of the university was put in place, academic activities for the 2003/2004 started some weeks ago, the Vwang Community thought it wise to donate a 22 KV Generator worth 22 million naira to assist the institution in the area of power supply improvement.

Vwang community has continued to demonstrate great interest and concern for the promotion of genuine collaboration with Karl Kumm University. In this regard, the community donated land free of charge for the establishment of the university. The community also donated funds, trailer load of cement and of recent assisted the institution with vigilantes to consolidate on the security framework of the institution.

Speaking during the occasion, the traditional ruler of the community, His Highness, Gwom Rwey Vwang, Da Gyang Gutt Balak congratulated COCIN, the Governing Council, the Board of Trustees and the management of the University for the relentless efforts in spreading the gospel through education, health and economic empowerment of the citizens. "With this interest in mind, you are no doubt assisting

government in its developmental efforts".

According to him, 'on our part as the host community of this university, we are fully aware that the responsibility of providing education is the responsibility of all, knowing the capital intensive nature of establishing and running a university of this magnitude.'

He said, 'it is on record that

The traditional ruler further explained that 'following this historic take off of academic activities, we are today as a community exhibiting our desire of further assisting the university with 22KV stand-by Electric Generator valued at Twenty-two Million Naira only. We are aware of the epileptic nature of power supply from the National Grid which has effected productivity



Vwang community donates generator to Karl Kumm varsity



Vice Chancellor, Karl Kumm University, Prof. Nanven Gambo in a handshake with Gwom Rwey Vwang, His Highness, Da Gult Balak



Pro.Chancellor Karl Kumm University, Prof. Ochapa Onazi with other dignitaries

Vwang community has continued to demonstrate great interest and concern for the promotion of genuine collaboration with Karl Kumm University. In this regard, we have in the past donated land free of charge for the establishment of the university, donated funds as individuals and groups, donated trailer load of cement and of recent assisted the university with vigilantes to help augment the security challenges on campus, apart from mobilising our people to provide accommodation for staff and students who may want to stay off campus'

in the country. By this donation therefore, it will no doubt close the gap in order to ensure smooth academic activities at this stage of the university.' 'I want to assure all the Federal, State and Private establishments located in my domain of our continued demonstration of great interest and concern for the promotion of genuine collaboration in the areas of security, employment, admissions, economic empowerment, scholarship and provision of social amenities as part of corporate social responsibility.'

Earlier, the Pro-Chancellor of

Nanven Audu Gambo explained that the university has since taken-off with students receiving lectures in an accommodating environment which would no doubt help them attain their career objectives.

The Vice Chancellor noted that the host community has been standing by the institution and urged them to continue to help the institution attain its envisaged glory in no distant time by God's grace.

He thanked the leadership of the church, the entire COCIN family, host community including other well-wishers for believing in the dream which has today not only achieved but a legacy to behold, adding that the coming to be of the university would help in no measure towards redefining the educational standard of the nation. Prof Gambo who is prayerfully hopeful of the prospects of the institution has also gingered his staff to do their best in their expected obligations and other areas of responsibility.

Since 2006 when the university was established, many citizens of the country have prayed for the success of the institution. Many of the citizens also contributed in ensuring that the university is sustained to a point of stability.

To help sustain this gesture, the Vice Chancellor of the University, Prof Naven Gambo has continued to monitor and supervise most of the crucial amenities which would help the students be comfortable in school. So far, the Vice Chancellor and his management have installed solar water heating machine for students, the hostels have been made comfortable for them while the newly designed curriculum for the school is of global best practice. Beyond this, the Vice Chancellor is also concerned about the spiritual well-being of the students in the institution. In fact, since the resumption of students, both the chaplain and his group have ensured that students are indulged in spiritual programmes intended to deeply strengthen their faith as a body of Christ. However, it is also our prayers that Karl Kumm University will in no distant time impact its students the right leadership necessities and midwife them to become our great leaders of tomorrow.

the university, Prof Ochapa Onazi thanked the community for the kind gesture which would go a long way in assisting the institution be amongst the best in the country.

According to the Prof Chancellor, the aim of establishing this great institution was to help complement the efforts of the government in providing quality education to the youths of this country and since its establishment, this institution has been trying to achieve this noble objective.

Prof Onazi further noted that work on the establishment of the institution commenced in 2006 and so far, tremendous efforts have been made towards ensuring that the institution is also ranked amongst the best in the nation, hoping that with due diligence, the sly would be the starting point of the school and the best moments of the school will soon begin to come. He disclosed that a lot of work has been put into the establishment of this great institution but despite little hiccups experienced in the past, there are positive signs that it has come to stay.

Prof Onazi encouraged both the host community, the Vice Chancellor and his management team and staff to continue to put in their best for the sustainability of the school for the sake of our future generations to come.

Contributing, the Vice Chancellor of the institution, Prof

IMAGES

GOVERNOR MUTFWANG INSPECTS INDEPENDENCE PARADE

Plateau State Governor, Barr. Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang was special guest and reviewer of 63rd Independence celebration at the Rwang Pam Township Stadium, Jos



Governor Mutfwang (right) discussing with the PLHA Speaker, Rt. Hon. Moses Sule who was represented by the Deputy Speaker, Rt. Hon. Gwotson Fom



Front row, Rear Admiral Samuel Bitrus Atukum, CJ, Justice David Mann, SGS, Arc Samuel Nanchang Jatau, Commissioner, Youth and Sports, Hon. Bashir Lawandi Datti and that of Agriculture, Hon. Bugumma Samson Ishaku (standing)



Wife of the Governor, Barr. Helen Mutfwang (left) with members of Plateau State Security Council and the representative of the President, Traditional Council of Chiefs and Emirs, HRH Da John Putmang Hirse, CON, Miskhaham Mwaghavul



Cross section of Permanent Secretaries in the State Civil Service



Cross section of TIC Chairmen at the ceremony



Chief of Staff Government House, Engr. Jeremiah Satmak (left) with the Head of Civil service, Barr. Rauta Dakok



Chairman, Local Government Service Commission, Chief Simon Tangni (left) with other Chief Executives of MDAs at the celebration



Commissioner of Information, Hon. Musa Ibrahim Ashoms (middle) Hon. Theophilus Dakas Shan (right) PDP North Central Officer and the representative of PDP State Chairman, Hon. Goleng

PHOTOS: DANLADI DUK

PLATEAU STATE GOVERNMENT

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND MINERAL DEVELOPMENT



DRILLING OF 4NO SOLAR POWERED BOREHOLES FOR WATER SUPPLY, IRRIGATION & LIVESTOCK IN 8 LGAS TO INCLUDE WASE, KANAM, BOKKOS, BARKIN LADI, KANKE, PANKSHIN, MIKANG, AND QUA'ANPAN LGAs

NG-PLATEAU STATE ACRESA-309508-CW-RFB
Credit No: IDA-70150

Request for Bids Small Works (One-Envelope Bidding Process)

Country: NIGERIA

Name of Project: AGRO-CLIMATIC RESILIENCE IN SEMI-ARID LANDSCAPES PROJECT (ACReSAL)

Contract Title: DRILLING OF 4NO SOLAR POWERED BOREHOLES FOR WATER SUPPLY, IRRIGATION & LIVESTOCK IN 8 LGAs TO INCLUDE WASE, KANAM, BOKKOS, BARKIN LADI, KANKE, PANKSHIN, MIKANG AND QUA'ANPAN LGAs

Credit No: IDA 70150

RFB Reference No.: NG-PLATEAU STATE ACRESA-309508-CW-RFB

Issued on: 4th October, 2023

Closing Date: 18th October, 2023.

1. The Federal Republic of Nigeria *has received* financing from the World Bank toward the cost of the Agro-Climatic Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscapes Project (ACReSAL) and intends to apply part of the proceeds toward payments under the contracts for **Drilling of 4NO Solar Powered Boreholes For Water Supply, Irrigation & Livestock In 8 LGAs to Include Wase, Kanam, Bokkos, Barkin Ladi, Kanke, Pankshin, Mikang and Qua'anpan LGAs.**

2. The State project management Unit (SPMU), Plateau State – Agro-Climatic Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscapes Project on behalf of Plateau State Government now invites sealed Bids from eligible Bidders for:

Lot No	Site Description	Location/LGA	Bid Security US\$/NGN	Duration
1	DRILLING OF 4NO SOLAR POWERED BOREHOLES FOR WATER SUPPLY, IRRIGATION & LIVESTOCK IN WASE & KANAM LGA OF PLATEAU STATE	WASE & KANAM	NGN 2M	2 ^{1/2} Months
2	DRILLING OF 4NO SOLAR POWERED BOREHOLES FOR WATER SUPPLY, IRRIGATION & LIVESTOCK IN BOKKOS & BARKIN LADI LGA OF PLATEAU STATE	BOKKOS & BARKIN LADI	NGN 2M	2 ^{1/2} Months
3	DRILLING OF 4NO SOLAR POWERED BOREHOLES FOR WATER SUPPLY, IRRIGATION & LIVESTOCK IN KANKE & PANKSHIN LGA OF PLATEAU STATE	KANKE & PANKSHIN L.G.As	NGN 2M	2 ^{1/2} Months
4	DRILLING OF 4NO SOLAR POWERED BOREHOLES FOR WATER SUPPLY, IRRIGATION & LIVESTOCK IN MIKANG & QUA'ANPAN LGA OF PLATEAU STATE	MIKANG & QUA'ANPAN L.G.As	NGN 2M	2 ^{1/2} Months

Margin of domestic preference does not apply.

3. Bidding will be conducted through National Competitive Procurement using a Request for Bids (RFB) as specified in the World Bank's Procurement Regulations for Investment Project Financing (IPF) Borrowers: July 2016, revised November 2017 and August 2018 ("Procurement Regulations"), and is open to all

Bidders as defined in the Procurement Regulations.

- Interested eligible Bidders may obtain further information from the address given below in the document and inspect the bidding document during office hours 0900 to 1700 hours at the address given below.
- A complete set of bidding documents in English Language may be purchased by interested eligible bidders upon the submission of a written application to the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of **Fifty Thousand Naira (NGN50, 000.00) only**. The method of payment will be through **Bank account; Plateau State ACReSAL Government Counterpart Fund Acct, Account Number: 5030131651 and bring the payment evidence to the address below**. The document will be sent by courier on demand.
- Bids must be delivered to the address below on or before 12.00 Noon on **Wednesday, October 18th, 2023**. Electronic bidding *will not* be permitted. Late bids will be rejected. Bids will be publicly opened in the presence of the bidders' designated representatives and anyone who choose to attend at the same address stated below.
- All Bids must be accompanied by a *Bid Security* as stated in the table above.
- Attention is drawn to the Procurement Regulations requiring the Borrower to disclose information on the successful bidder's beneficial ownership, as part of the Contract Award Notice, using the Beneficial Ownership Disclosure Form as included in the bidding document.
- A *Pre-bid meeting* would be held at the address below on **Wednesday 11th October, 2023** which is **seven days** before the tender opening date by 12:00 noon to allow potential bidders seek clarifications on the bidding document.
- The address referred to above is:
Project Coordinator
Mr. Garba G. Gonkol
Plateau State Agro-Climatic Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscapes Project
Address: No 19, Apollo Crescent, GRA, Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria.
Telephone: +2348036154305
Email: plateauacresal@gmail.com

Mr. Garba G. Gonkol
State Project Coordinator

Feature

Rocks as free billboards: Legacy of Plateau politicians?

By PROF. JOSIAH MUTHIR

I was born and bred on the plateau where there is abundance of rocks and stones of different sizes, shapes, designs. As I became wiser, the quest to understand these bizarre structures was imminent. I was told they were stones or rocks (hitherto called jwak or nhik). We were told our parents met them there and that they were going to outlive us. Our parents had no answers as to where they came from, what they were made of and why they were where they were situated.

Curiosity drove us as very young persons to explore them further. They were found out to be solid, immovable and very heavy objects. They appeared not to change much in size or shape over years. They neither breathed nor moved around. Some had flat surfaces on the exposed part while some surfaces were rough throughout. Some were black while others were grey with a tinge of white. For some, the part visible was only a tip of the ice-berg, as the hidden part was bigger than the exposed part of it.

Over the years, we noticed that these structures interfered with road constructions and had to be broken using extreme force to get them into smaller sizes and to be pushed aside to make way for road construction. They were also found handy to fill up valleys and galleys. As children, we also noticed that the foundation of even our mud houses were constructed using manageable sizes of these commodities. As I grew up further, one noticed that the uses of these commodities were vast and on the increase. From major construction works, like building dams, to simple things like decorating the ornamental interior of a home.

Rocks shape the landscape particularly those around the plateau. While stones and rocks may be used interchangeably, stones are the smaller sizes compared to rocks. Thinkers have seen rocks as symbolizing wisdom, strength, stability, patience and time. Politicians have seen stones as billboards, free of charge.

Rocks shape the landscape particularly those around the plateau. While stones and rocks may be used interchangeably, stones are the smaller sizes compared to rocks,



A stone has been defined as a hard, solid, non-metallic mineral matter of which rock is made, especially as a building material. On the other hand, rock has been defined as a large mass of stone forming a hill, cliff, promontory or the like. Geologists see it as mineral matter of variable composition, consolidated or unconsolidated; assembled in masses or considerable quantities in nature as by action of heat or water

Because these objects were more predominant on the plateau, the then plateau state government, fascinated by it decided to name its beer brand as 'Rock Lager Beer.' Other businesses also adopted the name rock to precede their business company names.

Some rocks also contain minerals, hence referred to as precious stones. Rocks have contributed largely to the nation's economy in being crushed into smaller pieces to tar our highways. One has also witnessed chunks of stones shaped in the size of big billets transported by articulated vehicles (trailers) to the Nigerian sea ports for export, thus earning pound sterling,

dollars or other currencies.

Thinkers have seen rocks as symbolizing wisdom, strength, stability, patience and time. Politicians have seen rocks and stones as billboards, free of charge.

Politicians somewhere along the line discovered that these bizarre but beautiful objects of nature could be used as billboards for free. They were readily available, in strategic locations and positions, and not likely to be moved by opponents or miscreants. All that was needed was to buy buckets of white or milk colored oil paint; and transport, to drive along the roads, identify the rocks that presented some good surface, and then adorned it with adverts of the party of their choice. Because of the abundance of these rocks and their surfaces in the state, they were not in short supply for all political parties to use. In fact, there have been no crises for space due to their shortage, as no two or more political parties have had to fight over them, or scribbled messages on top of another for want of space or availability of the rocks.

In Jos Township, rocks along all major and minor roads have

been used for this purpose. The Jos to Bauchi road up to Toro has many of such rocks that have been used by the politicians. Similarly, the Jos to Rukuba road, Jos to Manchok road, Jos to Fobur road, Jos to Jengre, Jos to Hawan-Kibo (Jos to Abuja road, almost 70 kilometers for the Jos Township), all have had their own fair share of defacement over the years. The surfaces are so chosen that drivers and passengers leaving or returning to Jos on these roads see clearly the party logo, campaign slogans of political parties and candidates' names. Examples abound and one cannot for sure say that any political party is exempted from this malady.

To the politicians, this may be fun or a cheap campaign strategy. The question that arises is this. Is it because it is cheap? Is it that the political parties have no funds to produce standard and attractive billboards? Are they aware that such actions deface the beauty of these gifts of nature to the state?

To the naturalist and environmentalist, this is gross abuse of the beauty of God's creation called nature. Just because the rocks cannot complain, it does not mean freedom to be so abused. The monotony of these milky white patches can be so irritable to the sight.

For those of us that admire the beauty of these structures that shape the plateau, our votes for the party culprits is already lost. More so, the party that is unable to do the proper avenues for advertisement is considered irresponsible and has already lost many votes.

This bizarre attitude has also been observed to be extended to the street roads, sculptures,

ceramic models, statues and artworks that beautify the streets during the day and at night. In addition, beautiful and fantastic art works that adorn the state capital in particular are defaced by shameless and irresponsible agents of these political parties in the name of campaign strategies. Uncompleted buildings, walls of houses, rooftops, overhead water tanks, fences, etc have had their own share of the assault. What a shame. This is unacceptable and the various parties concerned should be held accountable to desist from such reckless action, and where this has been done, to remove such things forthwith.

This is a digital or electronic era and these politicians or political parties should utilize those avenues and leave the rocks, roads and street monuments alone.

The other concern and worry is the non-removal of the defacements by the individuals and parties that are responsible. These defacements have been seen months or even years after the elections have been fought and won and the need for them no more exists.

It is appropriate to hasten to say that legislation at all levels must be put in place to provide succour to these elegant objects of admiration that form one of the key elements of tourist attraction to the state.

Now that the campaign saga is over, one will say that relevant authorities compel the culprits to hasten to clean up the mess and let the stones regain their lustrous appearances again to adorn the environments and to reflect the might of their creator.

Some rocks also contain minerals, hence referred to as precious stones. Rocks have contributed largely to the nation's economy in being crushed into smaller pieces to tar our highways. One has also witnessed chunks of stones shaped in the size of big billets transported by articulated vehicles (trailers) to the Nigerian sea ports for export, thus earning pound sterling, dollars or other currencies.

NEWS

Plateau Man O'War Nigeria appeals for permanent office

By JIDAUNA DARING

PLATEAU State Command, Man O' War Nigeria has made a passionate appeal to the Plateau State government to assist the organization with a permanent office site, so as to reduce the stress of paying rent by the command.

Commander Royal Uche Akumou made the appeal at the three in one programme organized by Man O' War Nigeria, Plateau State Command held at Azi Nyako Youth Centre Dadin-Kowa Jos, last Saturday.

Commander, Akumou while appreciating God for making the event a reality, also thanked all the invited guests for gracing the occasion. He said that the theme for the event was on "Engaging the youth for skills development and changing the narratives".

He pointed out that the three in one programme includes; patrons investiture, rank decoration of officers, launching/presentation of medical team and the organization's skills development initiative to the government and people of the state.

"We shall use this opportunity to hold a free medical outreach for the Dadin-Kowa community and environs as part of our cooperate social responsibilities", he said.

Commander Akumou explained that the state command has held several free medical outreaches in various communities in Jos and its environs to alleviate the suffering of the people health wise. He added that the gesture was aimed at complementing government's efforts in the state.

He maintained that the organization has trained a lot of people through their skills training, especially the youth so as to curb the excesses of social vices among them.

He added that the training would also make the youth to become productive and as well as channel their energies on gainful ventures.

Commander Akumou disclosed that the Man O' War Nigeria is an organization of discipline, the largest and most organized youth organization owned by the federal government under the supervision of Citizenship and



Mulfwang

Leadership Training Centre, a parastatal of the Federal Ministry for Youth and Sport Development.

He also appreciated all Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that have partnered with them in most of their free medical outreaches within Jos and environs.

Some of the patrons who spoke shortly after the investiture appreciated the Man O' War Nigeria, Plateau State Command for finding them worthy to

serve the organization in the capacities of patrons. They also assured them of their readiness to always afford the organization with advises that would further move the command forward in the state.

Our correspondent reports that the event featured parade drills and talent display by gallant personnel, presentation of the organization's medical department and official presentation of production IT skills development

Maintain faith in the greatness of our nation - Arase

By DORCAS PANKYES

As Nigeria commemorates its 63rd Independence Anniversary, Dr. Solomon Arase, Chairman of the Police Service Commission and former Inspector General of Police, has urged Nigerians to maintain faith

in the greatness of our nation, emphasizing that all hopes are not lost.

This was contained in a statement issued by Ikechukwu Ani, Head, Press and Public Relations recently in Abuja.

In his address, Dr. Arase called on the citizenry to take

a moment to honor and celebrate the freedom that our heroes fought for and to cherish our rich diversity. He firmly believes that Nigeria will rise again, and the sacrifices made by our past heroes will never be in vain.

Acknowledging that no nation is perfect and that Nigeria has faced its share of challenges, Dr. Arase emphasized that now is the time to shape a brighter future based on love and understanding. He encouraged all Nigerians to unite with the current government and work together to propel our nation forward.

Dr. Arase expressed hope that this special day would be a time of celebration for Nigerians and their loved ones, providing a sacred opportunity to appreciate the precious gift of freedom.

"Be assured that the labor of our heroes' past shall never be in vain. Nigeria must rise again".

As the nation reflects on its 63 years of independence, Dr. Arase's message serves as a reminder of the resilience and unity that have defined Nigeria throughout its history. This call for unity and faith in the Nigerian spirit echoes the sentiments of many citizens as they strive for a brighter future.



From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

The Federal Government has been called upon to create a Ministry for workers in the informal sector to give room for progressive modernization, development and formalization of the sector.

Comrade Maryam Usman Ibrahim, Chairperson, Kogi State Federation of Informal Workers Organization of Nigeria FIWON made the call while speaking with journalists in Lokoja yesterday.

She said that the informal workers are made up of 80% of the adult working population in the country.

Comr. Maryam observed that the informal economy in Nigeria employs over 90% of Nigerian workers, but lamented that the workers who are self-employed in the country work in jobs that pay no retirement, maternity and holiday benefits or provide social protection.

The FIWON chairperson noted that the informal economy in Nigeria employs 90% of Nigeria's working population. It contributes over 60% of the GDP. FIWON expressed worries over government's bias in the application of social protection instruments for workers in the sector.

She expressed concern over the plight of most

Create Ministry For Informal Workers, FIWON tasks FG



Umahi

informal workers, describing the development as precarious.

She pointed out that government policies have led to the collapse of many industries in the formal sector over the years, leading to rapid expansion of the informal sector.

The Chairperson of FIWON also expressed disappointment that the existing social security frameworks in the country such as the NHIS, Workmen Compensation Act and the Micro Pension Plan practically exclude informal workers.

Comr. Maryam also called for the application of

CMMRC condemns killings in communities at Bassa

By JIDAUNA DARING

THE Conflict Mitigation Management Regional Council (CMMRC) Plateau State has condemned in totality the recent gruesome killings in some communities in Bassa Local Government Area (LGA) of Plateau State.

This was contained in a Press Statement signed by Chairman CMMRC, Mustapha Galadima and made available to THE NIGERIA STANDARD in Jos.

CMMRC described the killings of Women and Children during the recent attacks as senseless and barbaric act.

The statement call on Plateau State government to swiftly investigate these ugly incidents of unlanwful killings of innocent citizens with a view to bringing the culprits to justice.

Article 25 of the UN Declaration on Human Rights for social protection of informal workers.

She lamented the problems faced by artisans such as constant harassment by government officials, excessive taxation, extortion, poor access to affordable credit.

She decried the lack of occupational health and safety facilities, training especially on the use of new technologies as well as access to work spaces with basic infrastructure, social protection, paid leave, health accident and old age insurance.

It also urged citizens of Plateau State to remain calm, maintain law and order as well as conduct themselves peacefully as they ventilate their grievances on current state of affairs in their respective domains in the state.

The statement added that CMMRC also shared in the grief of those who lost their loved ones. It equally commiserate with the affected families and prayed God to comfort and strengthen them. CMMRC also demands that all the organs, individuals and authorities government in the state should promote and preserve peace while praying for wisdom, courage and willingness to do what is right in order to achieve peace and tranquility in the state.

Sports

Wildest trail race in the world 1

A place to savour the tranquillity of nature, inhale the fresh mountain air and marvel at a sky dotted with more stars than you could even begin to count.

Not tonight.

House music is pumping, the air is thick with red flare smoke and a man who may well have auditioned for Nightmare on Elm Street is revving a chainsaw to within an inch of its life.

Eyes bulging, face glistening with sweat and a maniacal grin across his face as petrol leaks to the ground and fumes fill the nostrils, he is among the thousands of people lining the track at Notre Dame de la Gorge just outside the small town of Les Contamines-Montjoie.

Hundreds rattle cow bells like toddlers with a new toy. Others rely simply on the power of applause. Everyone is roaring encouragement. Fortunately, Monsieur Chainsaw has had the good grace to leave the blade at home.

Through this tunnel of noise strides a grinning Courtney Dauwalter, the greatest female ultra-runner in the world and 20 miles into the biggest, most famous and wildest trail race on the planet.

Welcome to Ultra Trail du Mont Blanc, a race so epic it has been described as the World Cup, Tour de France and Super Bowl of running. None of those does it justice.

UTMB covers 106 miles, starting and finishing in Chamonix and passing through three countries - France, Italy and Switzerland - as it circumnavigates Mont Blanc, the highest mountain in Europe.

The distance is only half the story. Runners must tackle 10,000m of elevation gain - comfortably more than the height of Everest - cope with temperatures ranging from below zero to 30C, and handle any conditions thrown at them by mountains which are normally the preserve of skiers. Helicopter search-and-rescue insurance is compulsory.

The race follows a popular hiking route that usually takes 10 days. The elite runners at UTMB charge round in under 20 hours. Mere mortals have two days to 'complete the loop'.

Earlier this month, 2,689 athletes from 81 countries set off on one of the toughest challenges of their lives. More than a third didn't manage it, and many of those who did were a physical and mental wreck by the time they staggered over one of the most iconic finish lines in sport.

Jez Bragg, the only male British winner of UTMB, in 2010, describes it as "the perfect journey - I love it to bits". Four-time winner and trail-running legend Francois d'Haene says: "What is magical is the winner and the finisher can have the same feeling - 'wow, we made it'."

There are so many aspects of UTMB that are special in their own right.

Let's start with the scenery. Chamonix, nestled in a slim valley and flanked by towering peaks and awesome glaciers



Trail running, but not as you know it - UTMB is an assault on the senses in every way

that rise steeply from the end of people's back gardens, is breathtakingly dramatic. And it only gets better during the race, with stunning views of the snow-capped dome of Mont Blanc. "The beauty is insane," says Bragg. "There's nowhere else like it." Then there's the scale. The second most prestigious 100-mile trail race in the world, Western States in California, caps entry at fewer than 400 runners, a fraction of UTMB. Over the course of a week in Chamonix, 10,000 people take part in a series of races that culminate in UTMB, with the help of 2,500 volunteers from all over France and beyond.

The atmosphere is the stuff of legend. Crowds five deep line the streets of Chamonix; the riotous scenes from Notre Dame de la Gorge are repeated in countless other villages; and fans camp out at even the most remote parts of the UTMB course in the middle of the night to cheer on what amount to little more than moving headlamps. Britain's Tom Evans, who finished third in 2022 and is among the favourites this year, describes it as "completely bonkers".

The quality of the field is also beyond compare. "It's the most competitive race of the whole year and they're all in the shape of their life," according to American Dylan Bowman, who finished seventh in 2017 and now hosts the Freetrail podcast. "It definitely is the one to win," says Evans, despite his stunning triumph at Western States in June. Katie Schide, women's UTMB champion in 2022, says simply: "You don't use UTMB as a training race."

Throw in the fact this year is the 20th anniversary of the event, mixed with huge dollops of drama courtesy of the organisers' slick promotional and marketing machine, and it is clear why Bowman says UTMB is "orders of magnitude bigger than anything else" in trail running.

Trail running is essentially running anywhere off-road, but typically involves hills (UTMB's hills tend to be bigger than most). It is one of the fastest growing sports in the world and Chamonix, which hosted the Winter Olympics in 1924, is widely acknowledged as its summer home - at least in Europe.

There is no better example of that than the UTMB start line. All the runners cram into the Place de l'Eglise in front of the town hall, not an inch of road visible amid a swarm of bright running kit and twitching muscles.

Shops shut before the Friday 6pm start,

timed so the leading runners finish during the busiest part of Saturday afternoon. Spectators and photographers reserve their spots hours in advance. Some clamber on statues for a better view. If you can see beyond a mass of outstretched arms and mobile phones, you're one of the lucky ones.

Vangelis' Conquest of Paradise, the operatic soundtrack to a Ridley Scott movie, bounces off the walls in the narrow street, ratcheting the tension to fever pitch before the starting gun fires.

"The atmosphere is like nothing I've ever experienced - in any sporting event," says Bragg. "It's a unique hype, excitement and anxiety - extremes of emotions - even before you've left Chamonix. The crowd are trying to transfer their energy to the runners, and the runners are living in fear of what lies ahead."

The elites, who share the same start line as the amateurs but are allowed a spot at the front, sprint off at a speed more suitable for a 10km race than 170km, to avoid being stuck in a bottleneck as the road narrows.

"You hear stories of people falling," says Schide. "So the first 800m you're not thinking of pacing - you're

thinking 'get out and find space'. You're just trying not to trip up on anything." Schide is not racing UTMB this year - she finished second in a 34-mile race in Chamonix earlier in the week - and fellow American Dauwalter is the clear favourite in the women's field.

UTMB champion in 2019 and 2021, Dauwalter is chasing the unprecedented Triple Crown of 100-milers in 2023, having won Western States and Hardrock, in Colorado, this summer. Only a handful of top runners have even attempted three of the most brutal ultra-marathons in the running calendar in the space of 10 weeks. Completing them is almost unbelievable, winning them borderline ludicrous.

"It would be one of the biggest achievements in the history of the sport, and something that will never be repeated," says Bowman. "Courtney is a once-in-a-generation athlete."

Dauwalter, 38, has transcended the niche world of ultra-running, her carefree attitude, perma-smile - especially when racing - and baggy shorts as much a part of her appeal as her phenomenal athletic accomplishments.

She holds the female record at Western States, Hardrock and

UTMB; she has not been beaten by a woman in any race since 2019; she routinely finishes in the top 10 regardless of gender; and she once won a 240-mile race outright. As a guest on Joe Rogan's podcast and a cover star in the New York Times sports section, she is on the verge of household-name status in the US.

Schide is candid enough to admit Dauwalter is in a league of her own. "We're not even close to competing," she says. "Courtney doesn't race anyone - she just runs and kills us all."

Evans says: "In order for me to win, I need to be at 100%. Courtney needs to be at 75%. The other girls are amazing, but she is an absolute specimen." The phenomenon that UTMB has become is a far cry from the low-key affair that was organised from a living room in 2003. Repeatedly pestered by a friend into creating a race around Mont Blanc, husband and wife Michel and Catherine Poletti eventually gave in.

Their daughter Isabelle built a website. Teenage son David was among the volunteers. Michel's sisters and Isabelle's father-in-law served as the medical team.

Continued on page 31



Sports

Trevor Francis obit: A 'wonderful person', record breaker

A look back at when Brian Clough signed Trevor Francis as Britain's first £1m player Trevor Francis, who has died at 69, will go down in history not only as Britain's first £1m footballer, but as a European Cup winner whose prodigious talent was appreciated across the world and took him to the likes of the United States, Italy and Australia.

BORN in Plymouth in 1954, Francis was the oldest of three siblings and, with a father who played semi-professionally, his potential was obvious from an early age. He scored more than 800 goals in the Devon schools system to attract interest from professional clubs.

Aged 15 he signed as an apprentice for Birmingham City and later spoke of how he would take his spikes to the club's St Andrew's ground to run sprints and improve his speed.

That dedication paid off, with the teenager making his senior debut in the second division the following year as a substitute against Cardiff City, becoming Birmingham's youngest player at 16 years and 139 days in September 1970 - a record only beaten by current England and Real Madrid midfielder Jude Bellingham in August 2019.

He went on to score 15 goals in his first 15 games that season, including four against Bolton Wanderers, and another 12 the following campaign as the Blues won promotion.

Manager Freddie Goodwin compared Francis to Jimmy Greaves and Denis Law, yet as an apprentice the forward continued to clean boots, sweep the stands and live in digs with a 10.30pm curfew until he was 17.

Francis' impact and Birmingham's promotion to the top flight saw more than 50,000 fans squeeze into St Andrew's for one game and he would remain at the club until that record-breaking transfer in 1979, scoring 133 goals in 329 games in all competitions.

Francis was Birmingham City's then-youngest debutant in 1970 aged 16 - a record only beaten by current England and Real Madrid midfielder Jude Bellingham in August 2019.

While at Birmingham, Francis also spent a summer on loan with Detroit Express in the North American Soccer League (NASL) scoring 22 goals in 20 games to earn himself a spot in the All-Stars XI alongside Carlos Alberto, Franz Beckenbauer and the league's enigmatic top scorer Giorgio Chinaglia, who all featured for champions New York Cosmos.

Having been handed his England debut two years earlier by Don Revie, Birmingham manager Jim Smith eventually accepted Francis' request to leave the club in pursuit of silverware.

In February 1979, Birmingham accepted a landmark deal for British football from champions Nottingham Forest and, despite Coventry City chairman Jimmy Hill offering to match the bid, Francis joined Brian Clough's side, believing they were the "only team in England who could



Trevor Francis

challenge Liverpool".

Clough, who arrived in the press conference to unveil Francis wearing a tracksuit and wielding a squash racquet, insisted the fee was £999,999 so as not to give Francis a million-pound tag, but the deal actually worked out as nearer £1.15m following taxes and commission.

Asked whether it would be a burden, Francis said: "I hope not. At the moment it certainly isn't, I'm quite excited about it. I realise when I get on that pitch I have to forget about it and just get on with playing."

It shattered the previous British record of £516,000 set just weeks earlier when David Mills left Middlesbrough for West Brom, but was short of world record moves by Giuseppe Savoldi and Paolo Rossi in Italy.

He made his First Division debut for Forest away at Ipswich, where he came up against England team-mate Terry Butcher, who could find only one way to stop him.

"I was playing up against him and thought it's his debut, he's going to want to excite and do things, I'm in for a hard afternoon," Butcher told BBC Radio 5 Live.

"So I went up to him and just asked how the family was. Then I said 'look Trevor, I'm going to lay my cards out on the table. If you do get past me I'm going to kick you so hard that you'll end up back in the stand'. He never came near me for the rest of the game so he had a pretty quiet

debut but that was the only way I could beat him because he had everything."

Eligible to play for Forest in the European Cup final in Munich against Swedish side Malmo, Francis soon delivered on his price tag.

Francis became Britain's first £1m footballer when he moved from Birmingham City to Brian Clough's Nottingham Forest.

In first-half stoppage time, Francis met John Robertson's cross at the back post and headed it into the roof of the net, scoring what proved to be the winner. As someone who used to write a column for the comic, Francis called it his very own "Roy of the Rovers moment".

After another summer loan at Detroit - where Francis netted 14 times - he was part of the Forest side who conquered Barcelona over two legs to win the European Super Cup, but after goals against Dynamo Berlin and Ajax in the knockout stages, missed the European Cup final against Hamburg through injury as Forest retained their continental crown.

The same Achilles problem kept Francis out of England's 1980 European Championships campaign and, after a season disrupted by injury and often being played as a winger by Clough, he left Forest for Manchester City for £1.2m in September 1981 having scored a total of 37 goals in 93 games.

Francis scored 12 times in 26 First Division appearances for

City and was also on target twice for England during the 1982 World Cup in Spain, but his spell at Maine Road lasted just one season.

With City facing financial problems they resorted to selling the forward to Sampdoria.

Francis spent four seasons with the Serie A club - winning the Coppa Italia in 1985 in a side that also included Graeme Souness, Gianluca Vialli and Roberto Mancini, finishing as the competition's top scorer - before another year in Italy with Atalanta.

Francis returned to the UK to join Souness' Rangers side and won the Scottish League Cup, with spells afterwards at QPR, a very brief stint in Australia with Wollongong City, and Sheffield Wednesday, where he won the League Cup in 1991.

He took over as player-manager at Hillsborough for the 1991-92 season, guiding Wednesday to a third-place finish and runners-up finishes in both the FA and League Cup finals, eventually hanging up his boots after a 23-year playing career aged 39 in 1994.

Francis was sacked in 1995 and the following year became Birmingham boss, missing out on promotion to the top flight via the play-offs three times in succession and reaching a League Cup final, where his side lost to Liverpool on penalties.

He took charge at Crystal Palace in November 2001 but

was unable to steer the Eagles into the Premier League and left the club in April 2003. It would prove the end of his managerial career.

Francis enjoyed a four-year spell at Sampdoria as a player, winning the Coppa Italia.

Francis instead embarked on a career as television pundit and co-commentator, with many of those who worked with him expressing their sadness at the passing of a "wonderful gentleman".

Gary Lineker described Francis as a "wonderful footballer and lovely man", former Forest defender Viv Anderson referred to him as a "wonderful person and fabulous team-mate", while Stan Collymore said Francis was one of his heroes and "the loveliest of men, humble, humorous, always giving of his time and advice".

A key part of Francis' legacy may be his landmark price tag, but the forward brought a whole lot more to the game and to those who knew him.

"I played professional football for 23 years until I was 39," he told the Guardian in 2019.

"I won European Cups with Nottingham Forest, I played 52 times over nine years for England, but whenever I go to a sporting occasion I'm always introduced as the first £1m footballer - as if that's the only thing I achieved in my career.

"But do I feel proud of being the first £1m player? Absolutely."

Source: BBC Sport

Sports

Wildest trail race in the world 2

Continued from page 29

The Polettis expected 300 runners. In the end, 722 signed up. "That was emotional, the first start," says Michel, who also ran the race. "At 4am in the morning, there was no crowd."

Armed with a mobile phone, two radios and a laptop under a gazebo, Catherine and a handful of volunteers were race HQ. A mere 67 runners completed the circuit, less than a 10% finish rate in miserable conditions.

Michel ran part of the race with American Krissy Moehl, who was on her honeymoon - a wedding present from the sports shoe company she worked for. At the same time her new husband, Brandon Sybrowsky, was being welcomed over the finish line by Catherine as the joint second-place finisher.

"This was their honeymoon - me with Brandon and Michel with Krissy," remembers Catherine. "It could be a movie," chuckles Michel. Moehl, who was the first female finisher, says: "The French loved it. They went to town on the romantic couple."

Thanks to Michel's organising prowess and Catherine's business savvy, UTMB grew exponentially. In 2006, when the race sold out in three weeks, the Polettis began adding events of varying distances to cope with demand. UTMB tickets were snapped up in nine minutes in 2008, a qualification process was introduced in 2009 and a lottery system the following year.

Catherine says as many as 9,000 people apply for a UTMB race bib each year. Michel reckons that, without the current system whereby hopefuls must collect 'running stones' by completing qualifying events, "it could be 100,000".

"It has changed so much," says Dawa Sherpa, winner of the men's race in 2003 despite never having run more than 70 miles. "But that first race is like yesterday in my mind."

Moehl, now 45 and a running coach, triumphed again in 2009. "UTMB has a special place in my running career. But it's only in hindsight. I didn't know it then," she says.

The winner's prize in 2003 was no more than a wooden trophy. Bragg, now 42, remembers scooping some sports vouchers in 2010 before returning to his job as a chartered surveyor.

Did life change in any way? "Not at all. You're back in the lift on Tuesday morning, making small talk on the way into the office. I could never be bothered trying to explain to people because 90% just wouldn't get it."

Although this year's winners will each



collect 10,000 euros (£8,600), victory is worth much more in terms of sponsorship and profile.

"It makes it easier to explain to a sponsor that's not totally inside the sport," says 31-year-old Schide. "You can just say, 'Hi, I'm Katie, I won UTMB', and not, 'Hi, I'm Katie, I was second at this race in Italy'."

"I live in a tiny village in France and it doesn't change my life at all. It's not like people are stopping us in the street." Jim Walmsley, a track and road runner in his youth, has a fastest marathon time of 2hrs 15mins

UTMB continues to elude him, though. He was fifth in 2017, did not finish in 2018 and 2021, and last year led for two-thirds of the race before fading to fifth.

This year, with Spaniard Kilian Jornet - widely acknowledged as the greatest trail runner of all time and a four-time UTMB champion - absent through injury, could be Walmsley's best chance.

Such is his obsession with winning UTMB that last summer he and his wife Jess moved from Arizona to Arches, a small village close to the race route. He lives down the road from close friend and training partner D'Haene, who won the most recent of his four titles in 2021.

"I really hope Jim can win it. For him it would be so nice," says D'Haene. "But maybe he will never win UTMB. It's not the most important thing. Maybe in 10 years it's more important what he has experienced here in the mountains."

No-one seems to know before the race what shape Walmsley is in. He tore ankle ligaments in May, missed the Mountain and Trail Running World Championships in June and has been suspiciously silent on Strava in the weeks leading up to UTMB. He spent five years as a caretaker in a hiking cabin in the Colorado mountains and now travels around the US in a converted Breaking Bad-style bus, turning up at races to give out free doughnuts and ice lollies.

There are reports that Miller was picking up litter during this year's UTMB, and only a few hours after the race he is walking round Chamonix buying cheese with his girlfriend.

His tactics are endearingly gung-ho, running hard from the off and hoping to cling on. "The fans really love the aggressive style, but all the coaches and sponsors are like, 'maybe you should start conservatively'. I'm

kind of stuck with it now," he grins.

When Miller reaches Champex-Lac, 79 miles into the race, he has a 12-minute buffer over Walmsley, who is even briefly passed by Frenchman Germain Grangier, the eventual third-place finisher.

Dauwalter, stopping briefly to embrace her husband and parents by the roadside, is on course to break her own UTMB record and is so far in front of the women's field that only a seismic collapse can stop her. Runners will often come into view at aid stations surrounded by a moving gaggle of videographers. Body language is scrutinised by eagle-eyed commentators. Dozens of zoom lens are trained on athletes as they do something as exciting as eat a banana or change a T-shirt. In 2019, viewers got a close-up view of Dauwalter vomiting live on TV.

There's definitely a market for it. UTMB had 52 million video views on its official website and social media channels during the week of racing this year. Some 436 journalists were accredited and almost 2,000 articles published, double the 2022 figure.

Lizzy Hawker's mother had no such luxury in 2005. She rang the tourist information office in Chamonix the day after UTMB to discover her daughter had won the race - the first of a record five victories for one of Britain's all-time great runners.

Yet the growth of UTMB is not to everyone's taste.

At its heart, trail running is a simple sport rooted in community. The top runners, largely untouched by layers of management, remain approachable and willing to share their love of the trails. In how many other sports can you high-five the best in the world as they go about the business?

The Polettis have dedicated their lives to UTMB and genuinely love what they do. Michel, who was born in Chamonix and convinced Catherine to move there after they met at university in Grenoble, has completed the race seven times, most recently last year at the age of 67. He will make it 25 miles into this

year's loop before being timed out.

Isabelle has taken over from Catherine as race director, while David runs an app which provides live updates from all corners of the course. Catherine is on the finish line to welcome the winner of every race.

However, UTMB is now part-owned by the behemoth that is Ironman Group and has been criticised for decisions such as introducing a qualifying process that incentivises people to sign up for - and spend money on - more races.

A UTMB entry alone costs 355 euros (£300), and that's before you consider travelling to and staying in one of the most expensive resorts in Europe. "It's too big now. It smells of money," says 53-year-old Dawa, who was born in Nepal but has worked as a bricklayer in Geneva for 25 years.

"A lot of people are protective about the grassroots," says 37-year-old Bowman, who started racing ultras in 2009. "UTMB in Chamonix is unapologetically about the spectacle, the brands and the commerce around it. There's a tension, for sure."

Schide, one of the minority of runners who is fully professional, says: "We're asking for more prize money, more support, more doping control. At the same time we don't want money in the sport. It's a huge point of contention."

UTMB's green credentials have also been criticised. Damian Hall, one of Britain's leading trail runners, fifth-place finisher in 2018 and vocal climate activist, is among those who have boycotted the race while it is sponsored by a car manufacturer.



A camera biker to the front, a camera runner to the rear and countless mobiles locked on her, a smiling Courtney Dauwalter is the centre of attention



Quest



writer

LEJI DAGUS

FRAGMENT

"Most times, they have structures and big platforms that could give an upper hand in succeeding at different endeavors with promises of unending possibilities, but they do not exist without rules and regulations, ways of life, standards and tenets. It is mostly binding on members by legal agreements and in obnoxious cases results in violent and fetish means of enforcing binding rules on members."

LEJI DAGUS

Mohbad's death: Lessons we must learn

Mohbad after death is estimated to be worth more than 1.2 billion made from songwriting royalties as well as streaming revenues and downloads.

He also became the 46th bestselling digital artist in the world side stepping internationally recognized artist like Nicki Minaj, Lady Gaga, Eminem, 21 savage, Chris Brown, Wizkid and Burna Boy.

Before his death, he was worth only 15million naira. Like the hashtag #Endsars protest there were protests in different Nigerian states and beyond. Outside Nigeria, there was a massive billboard in New York with Mohbad's images as calls for a probe into the circumstances surrounding his death continued to gain global mileage mostly led by young people.

Popular tracks of his like 'ko por ke', 'ponmo' 'feel good' 'peace' 'marlian anthem' have continued to top mainstream and streaming platforms because most people didn't hear his songs until after his demise.

He sang mostly in Yoruba but his lyrics carried crypted messages about his realities not until his death did it made sense to several people that he was fed up with life and his life was being threatened but nobody was paying attention.

He was a signee under Marlian Records owned by Naira Marley. He rose to stardom with hit songs like 'feel good' and his collaboration KPK (KO POR KE) with rexxie which earned three nominations at The Headies awards in 2022, stamping his rank as a rising star in the Nigerian music industry. However, in 2022 he parted ways with the Marlian records and started his own record label IMOLENIZATION.

He died on September 12 2023 under disturbing circumstances. In a report by punch Newspapers 6 October, Mohbad alleged that he was assaulted by his management team after he demanded a change of manager. He further explained that he with his producer and a friend went to Naira Marly's house to discuss the issue of him demanding a change of manager but it resulted in an outburst and they were attacked and beaten.

He said Naira Marley was fully present and coordinated some of the attacks as he instructed the boys to beat them up.

In a video clip that went viral mohbad decked in a white singlet



Mohbad

was seen with bruises on his back, neck and hand. Naira Marley debunked the claim describing the incident as a "family affair".

After MohBad's death, it was reported that he had filed a police report in June 2023 alleging that Samson Erinfolami Balogun, a music promoter nicknamed "Sam Larry" and a known associate of Marley's, had assaulted him and destroyed some of his property.

In the report, MohBad said that Larry had interrupted a video shoot, leading a group of 15 men armed with firearms and cutlasses who claimed to work for monarch Oba Elegushi. Police later said MohBad had not attended a subsequent meeting to address the allegations, and that Balogun and others accused of the assault had then filed a defamation complaint.

Elegushi released a statement distancing himself from Balogun and expressing condolences on MohBad's death.

Sam Larry also released a statement explaining why he attacked mohbad at a video shoot he said he had given Mohbad N2 million two years ago to perform at his mother's annual remembrance concert in Ikorodu but he failed to show up and when he challenged him about it,

the singer claimed to have not been feeling fine. According to the note, Sam Larry asked Mohbad for a refund but the singer claimed that he lost his phone and money after the NDLEA raided where he was staying so he was broke.

The statement revealed further that Sam Larry later heard Mohbad was shooting a music video somewhere close to his house and he went there to ask for his money before an argument ensued and one of the singer's friends promised that the money would be refunded. Sam Larry allegedly claimed in the statement that he later traveled to Kenya to find a new African musician to perform at his mother's annual remembrance and he has been away since August 20, even before Mohbad died.

These incident as reported by Mohbad before he died expressly made Naira Marley and Sam Larry prime suspects in the leading cause of his death which was why a lot of people were angry and in all the procession for Mohbad kept calling for the heads of Naira Marley and Sam Larry. More inquest into some of the leads Mohbad left behind was his time with the Marlians.

In Naira Malays response to Mohbad's assault he said it was a family affair. The next question

that comes to mind is, What kind of family could this be? Groups and individuals who offer a similitude of togetherness, care, concern, growth, cooperation, friendship, commitment easily pass for the title family.

Most times, they have structures and big platforms that could give an upper hand in succeeding at different endeavors with promises of unending possibilities, but they do not exist without rules and regulations, ways of life, standards and tenets. It is mostly binding on members by legal agreements and in obnoxious cases results in violent and fetish means of enforcing binding rules on members.

Mohbad obviously didn't have a healthy relationship with this so-called family of his as he said in a tweet as reported by punch newspaper "I have always just wanted to create good music and to provide for my family and myself through my music. As an Artiste from the street, I thought the Marlian Family would be a good place for me. "However, recent events and certain truths have come to light which threaten my peace, health and career.

The kind of relationships and affiliation one keeps can either stabilize or cause mental stress their activities will often rub-off on you whether you approve of it or not.

Many young talents have good intentions of creating good music thereby creating sustainable income for themselves and their families but have gullibly fallen into the trap of some of these vicious families without knowing in toto what the cost can be. Young people need to be weary of associations and their activities.

All that glitters is not gold. Excessive use of drugs is also tagged a possible cause of his death. From testimonies about his life, it was obvious that he was messed up already by drugs He could have died of drug related psychosis due to endorphins and neurotransmitters like serotonin that controls the mood. Drug consumption has from time in memorial been the bane of many music and musicians. It's an affliction that's always lurking in every sniff and sip.

It has dragged many musicians down the drain. Even outside the shores of Nigeria there exist this

subsisting and notorious notion that drug consumption contributes highly to artistic inspiration.

In an article from Cable newspaper titled 'The Mohbad in Nigeria at 63' written by Festus Adedayo highlighted a one-time renowned artist who lost her life to drug addiction after suffering brain damage - Brenda Fassie. She was a south African diva who was so talented in the art of singing so much so that times magazine dubbed her the Madonna of townships.

She was a wonder to behold the memory of her stage performance of her famous song 'vulindlela' still resonate so much energy and excitement.

Unfortunately, she died at the age of 40 before she could climax her career. Drugs is a temporary joy giver. For the pleasure it gives it reduces your life span.

The human body is designed to enable performance optimally. Instead of drugs enhancing performance as many have claim it does to them, drugs could conspire to cut your life short without notice.

The situation is one which we cannot ask the dead what happened. people will continue to pucker until they can come to a logical conclusion to the cause of Mohbad's death, the Autopsy carried out should expose vivid cause of his untimely death.

Without pointing fingers, the behavior and conduct of some of his immediate family and some well-wishers have raised suspicions therefore the Nigerian police should look in all direction in fact victims should be treated as suspects. It has now become a matter of public interest.

It is public outcry that has open up this can of worms and in a very positive way it is good for our society, relevant authorities are on their toes; the police, media, judiciary, and the legislature.

There is constant update and media has tagged it developing story in other to pacify the public.

If only Nigerians can find a common threshold where it hits everyone with the same gravity then we can unite stronger than #justiceformohbad and #endsars protest and call out the common evil and uphold what is true and just for our society, for the common good of everyone and the generation to come.