

PLSG partners organisations to tackle blindness
P 29



News: FG flags-off dry season farming today

Page 2

Sports: BSFA pays club N2m participation fee

Page 38

Politics: Gwarzo: A legacy of excellence in public service

Page 7

Sunday Standard



TRUTH EXALTS A NATION

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1972

VOL. 13 NO. 808

SUNDAY, November 26, 2023

N250

Is Nigeria losing the battle against cult violence?

ATE Ibrahim was a normal promising boy whose desire was to grow up and be successful in life. Though he grew up in the slums, he had never for once doubted the hidden potentials in him knowing too well that it was just but a matter of time for him to explode. BULUS GAMBO writes.



"INEC should stop dancing naked" P2



Tinubu charges APC Govs to deliver on promises P2



Elections and need for caution

IN any election, emotion is considered as an issue. This is to say that people do not consider good quality leadership but narrow their mind set along ethnic and religious lines. The last election in Nigeria and Plateau State in particular is a clear evidence of such.

ELECTIONS were conducted and winners emerged but it did not allegedly end up well and there was room for the losers to voice their grievances. The tribunal was set up to look at complains arising from the elections.

UNFORTUNATELY, Plateau case turned out to be controversial in the eyes of many due to conflicting judgments by the tribunal after the Appeal Court Judgment over-turned the judgment.

AS it is, the state is again tense, due to the Appeal Court ruling because some consider it bias especially the ruling party in the state. Since the Appeal Court ruling, demonstrations have taken place in different parts of the state, though no life was lost but there is need for calm in order to move the state forward.

SADLY, the state is drifting towards, another conflict which is fueled by some elders through their unguided utterances. It is disheartening that our leaders who are supposed to lead are attempting to destroy the state through selfish acts.

WE therefore call for calm and appeal to political, religious leaders youth leadership to educate their followers on the need to maintain the fragile peace that Plateau State is enjoying at the moment.

FOR the sake of our peaceful co-existence, all camps must de-escalate such negative impulses. Plateau citizens are advised to wait for the judiciary to finish its work as we all should have confidence on them.

WE therefore solicit that under no circumstances should anybody in the name of a supporter of any political party in the state resort to violence or even embark street protest which can easily be hijacked by hoodlums. As experienced in the past, people should learn from ugly experiences still hunting us. The state is yet to recover from the wounds of conflicts it had incurred in the recent past.

AS it is; the state cannot at this junction afford another political impasse fueled by ethnic or religious sentiments as that cannot take the state to any meaningful development.

THE youth who are used as foot soldiers by the political class should be advised not to join any protest or acts of hooliganism. We are all important and the future of the youth depends on a peaceful atmosphere.

APPARENTLY, the people who are planning to set the state on fire due to their selfish agenda should desist from doing so and security agencies searchlight should be widely broadened to make sure trouble makers do not achieve their goal.

IT is our believe that Plateau State is greater than any individual and to achieve remarkable success, we must agree that conflict derails development.

'INEC should stop dancing naked'

The Court of Appeal sitting in Abuja, on Friday descended heavily on the Independent National Electoral Commissioner, INEC, accusing it of being partisan.

The appellate court said it was embarrassing that the Commission could appear before it to act in favour of a party in an election dispute, by disowning documents that it not only issued, but also duly certified.

It decried that the electoral body has continued to "dance naked in the market," even though it was meant to assume a neutral stand in election litigations.

"The INEC as an institution should be reminded of its role in an election; to be an unbiased umpire between parties.

"It should stop behaving irresponsibly, having in mind that its duty to conduct election has a direct bearing on peace and well-being of the country.

"The role of INEC in election dispute should be limited to the

tendering of all the documents used in an election and explaining what they were used for and how they were obtained.

"INEC should stop dancing naked in the market, pretending that no one is seeing its nakedness and its dancing steps," the court stated while delivering judgement in a Bauchi State House of Assembly election appeal.

The lead judgement of a three-member panel of the court was delivered by Justice K. I. Amadi.

The panel, in its unanimous decision, nullified the election of the Speaker of the Bauchi State House of Assembly, Abubakar Suleiman, who was earlier declared the winner of Ningi Central Constituency in the state, by INEC.

The court held that evidence before it established that the election was inconclusive.

Aside from voiding the Certificate of Return that was issued to Suleiman who contested on the platform of the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, the appellate court directed INEC to conduct a



supplementary poll in 10 polling units in the state, within 90 days.

The court further awarded a cost of N500,000 against INEC.

The judgement followed an appeal that was brought before the court by the candidate of the All Progressives Congress, APC, Abdulmalik-Ningi.

INEC had declared that Suleiman of the PDP polled a total of 16,866 votes to defeat his closest rival, Abdulmalik-Ningi of the APC, who scored 15,065 votes in the election that held on March 18.

The court wondered why INEC

Tinubu charges APC Govs to deliver on promises

President Bola Tinubu has advised governors elected on the platform of the All Progressives Congress (APC) to always put the interest of the people first and work for the good of their states.

Speaking when he received the governor of Kogi State, Yahaya Bello, Governor of Imo State, Hope Uzodinma and the governor-elect of Kogi State, Ahmed Usman Ododo in Abuja yesterday, the president in a statement by his spokesman, Ajuri Ngelale, expressed satisfaction with the outcome of the elections which he described as free, fair and peaceful.

"You worked hard for this victory. I am very proud of you, but the real challenge has only

started, and it will stare you in the face. That is the challenge of good governance. Make sure that everyone is carried along. You are now the servants of the people. To God be all the glory for the victories, and may God guide you.

"Once the people of Nigeria and their concerns are the focal point of your plans and actions, not only will governance be easier for you, but you will enhance the value of your states and the masses of the people will have new opportunities to grow and enjoy a new standard of living. This must be your driving focus as governors, but especially as governors elected on the platform of our great party.

"Two out of three is not a bad way to start. We will focus not on

winning the elections alone but on delivering for the people. They are sovereign, and when we achieve what we promise, voters will respect us. We will work with you at the sub-national levels, and we will uphold the strength and superior excellence that is symbolised by the eagle on our coat of arms," the president said.

National chairman of the APC, Dr. Abdullahi Ganduje who led the governors-elect and APC stalwarts to the president, said the party's candidates conducted themselves with integrity as directed by the president during the elections, and that the party had conceded victory to the opposition in Bayelsa State

FG flags-off dry season farming today

The Federal Government will officially flag off the 2023/2024 dry season farming today.

Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Abubakar Kyari,

is expected to lead dignitaries to Hadejia, Jigawa State for the ceremony.

A statement by the Technical Adviser, Strategic Communication in the ministry,

Kingsley Osadolor, said a range of agricultural inputs including seeds, fertilizer, herbicides and pesticides would be delivered to farmers at the occasion.

It said, the Federal Government would subsidise the agricultural inputs by 50 per cent for farmers.

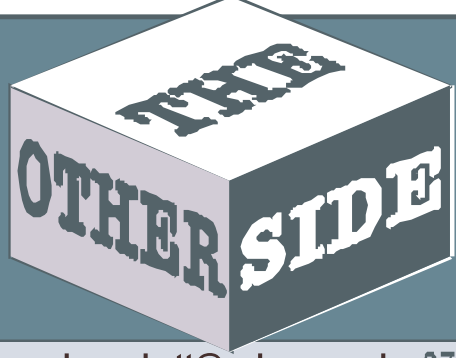
The 2023/2024 dry season farming is being boosted by an African Development Bank facility and implemented under the National Agricultural Growth Scheme and Agro-Pocket (NAGS-AP) project.

Osadolor noted that the move is part of measures to combat food inflation in the country and a direct response to President Bola Tinubu's declaration of emergency on food security earlier in July.


The dry season farming is expected to take place in all the 36 states of the federation and the FCT. Kyari has described the flag-off as a milestone in realizing the Renewed Hope Agenda.



Tinubu



With
**Katdapba
Y. Gobum
On Sunday**



gobum_katt@yahoo.co.uk 07037977744 (sms)

"Queuing has become common place. Nigerians had thought the currency swap would be less problematic, even as our country men and women never thought it would get to the level that we have reached. The Central Bank of Nigeria is reported to have been prepared for it, yet I thought we should have seen the preparations come to place, but not in the sufferings that were meted on all of us."

Is it bad to give Nigerians palliatives?

IT is already a fact that the National Assembly in the second week of July 2023 approved a whopping sum of 500 billion as palliative to assuage the Nigerian people on account of the removal of petroleum subsidy by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu as soon as he was inaugurated on May 29.

From all intent and purposes, this huge amount cannot solve the problem it is intended to counter. If the package is meant to be shared with Nigerians, most of them are of the view that it should have been invested in critical areas that may touch their lives as they will be impactful in more ways than share it.

Nigerians believe that some of the sad experiences of Sure-P, Public Works Programme, and N-Power are too nuanced to be forgotten easily. While the social interventions were deservedly enunciated, their execution was poor, and at best selective. They lost their steam as soon as they came on board; while the economy hemorrhaged on many fronts as a result of the sleaze that accompanied them.

The House of Representatives has gone ahead to approve the package, but not without the National Assembly and the Judiciary getting a large chunk of the palliative. While Nigerians think otherwise, the National Assembly has gone ahead to defend what they have been allocated.

Nigerians seem to know better where all is leading. They (Nigerians) have repeatedly alleged that it was another way of softening the ground for the Presidency for support. Whether that is the case or not, the frustrations of Nigerians are understandable and should be appreciated on its merit.

The removal of fuel subsidies has led to massive increases in the prices of goods and services, but more worrisome, the cost of living is cause to be disturbed. Unlike in the past where only the poor felt the pinch of various government policies, the new development cannot be said to be the same. The pain is being felt by all and sundry, and that makes it more worthy of study.

If Nigerians felt the pains of the fuel subsidy, it is the second increase of 617 naira per liter that raised their adrenalin level to incredible heights. Hardly were Nigerians 'about to adjust' to the increase on the day of inauguration than they were greeted with another huge lift in the price of the commodity again.

Since then, there have been intemperate comments about the administration of President Bola Tinubu. Little wonder, the N500 billion palliative promised by him and approved by the National Assembly is being reworked, on account of the harsh time being experienced.

Indeed, more Nigerians have joined the bandwagon of asking the government to rescind the decision and plow the humongous



Tinubu

amount into areas that will benefit more people in the future. There is nothing that should take away what the people want. Many people do not believe that such palliatives could get into the hands of those who genuinely deserve to be given. In the current situation in Nigeria, who is not poor?

No doubt, most Nigerians are the hard hit for it. The commentaries many have read about the new government of President Bola Ahmed on different platforms are not palatable. They tell of many things that are yet to come. By and large, it is a warning to guard our loins for good or bad. We are headed for more of the hard times. These are meant to tell us to accept that the mistake of yesteryears is back to haunt us.

There is no doubt we are in for austere times ahead. Had we taken this 'rejected' path since 2012, when President Goodluck Jonathan's government was on the verge of removing subsidies, perhaps we would have gotten things right. Those who opposed him then have since become team members on the saddle and who are taking a walk down the same path. They say, whatever goes around, always comes around.

As things stand, an emergency has been declared on food security instead of insecurity, given what has happened in several states. Most members of such communities that are traditionally known to produce food cannot access their farms this year. For this reason, it is a known fact that

there will be hunger in the land; therefore, the government should have known better what to do.

While the subsidy issue remains one of the most sensitive items Nigerians have had to grapple with lately, the 800 million dollars from the World Bank during the Buhari regime and how it will be used as directed must be handled with tact. The template should be renegotiated by the government so long it knows what it wants to spend the money on. Market forces may not solve all economic problems, and that is why we need to define boundaries; and redistribute income in such a manner that people's confidence in the economy will be boosted.

This is doable, so long as the government can get stakeholders to prepare the road map on how to get all working for Nigeria using an acceptable template. It is possible to build the capacity of Nigeria's economy to be productive; while we localize policies that can suit our environment. What may work in the United Kingdom, Rwanda, or Canada and elsewhere may not work in Nigeria.

Nothing is absolute in these policies. Nigerians have just been promised palliatives, which have not yet been implemented, but some DISCOS are already talking about reviewing their tariffs and taxes for their despondent consumers. As you read this, I want you to know that 11 of them have already applied for a review for the cost of services that are non-existent or at best given at their whims and caprices.

Government policies need to have a tinge of fiscal policies that can the effects of hardships: Taxes on health, education, etc, and also what could be done to reduce the effect on investors. Taxes are not about profit but should be directed to all segments in order to survive and make life meaningful for all.

All the steps taken by the government mean there will be an increase in revenue. It is possible to publish the amount gotten through so that citizens will appreciate what it is being used for. If the states don't work for their development through revenue generation, the federal may be suffocated.

Government can focus on critical areas that would improve the quality of lives of the people. Almost all states are involved in road projects, but there are no improved investments in health, education, and other critical sectors to make the lives of Nigerians better.

To cushion the effects of the subsidy removal, the government should release grains to Nigerians and other farm inputs such as fertilizers to farmers. Currently, the cost of procuring it is beyond the reach of most farmers. These are the critical inputs but they are procured under stringent conditions that are stringent.

Therefore, to get a lot of these sorted out by the government, the right policies must be taken. Often, the implementation of the policies has been the bane of their successes. Agriculture needs to have the right policies put in place that might give Nigeria the expected frame for the development of this sector.

There is no doubt that human capital development has not taken center stage in aggregating its benefits in our quest to compete with nations in other civilized climes. More is needed, and frankly speaking, there are Nigerians whose desire to be utilized is central to their training.

The Tinubu administration has already passed the half mark into its first hundred days. Some people have said that he comes as someone who may not have been prepared to lead. He may have been touted as being prepared to lead Nigeria. More is being expected of him, particularly in dealing with the malfeasance left by the last administration of Muhammadu Buhari.

If anyone has taken a walk to the market lately, Nigerians are in for a hard time. The markets are at best chaotic, unmindful of no one except their profits. Therefore, the question to ask is what is the road towards solving it? The government believes that the best that can come out of the quagmire is to dole out money to the poor of the poorest Nigerians.

The governments over the years have distributed money under

different guises, but it is also safe to ask: Who benefitted from it? What is the social register that Nigeria has generated? There has been controversy attached to those who generated the template. Perhaps due to our population and lack of planning, the desire by the government to give out different palliatives has been hampered.

Whether it is Sure-P, Trader Moni, or any of those initiatives executed in the past, can any government over the past 23 years say with certainty if the money got to those who meant to receive it? Even if it did, could it be said that those put in place of the initiative were fair enough?

Have Nigerians not been told by two ministers of the former administration, that of Finance and Humanitarian Development, Aisha Ahmed and Sadiya Faruk respectively that Nigerians benefited immensely from the school feeding program and other initiatives by the government to cushion the effects of the hardships on Nigerians.

One of the most vexatious issues coming out from the money meant to cushion the sufferings Nigerians are going through is the several billions meant to be given to the NASS and the Judiciary. The question has been asked: Why are the two arms of government getting such huge amounts of money, even while it has been established that they are better off?

Nigerians may not be satisfied with the reason that has been provided by the leadership of the NASS. For them, they deserve it for what it may be used for; but Nigerians know better why such humongous amounts are being doled out. Nigerians are of the view that these policies can be reviewed to allow for the space for which they can urgently address the mass of the people, and not the politicians, and the rich that benefit more than the poor.

Social investment by its name is not bad, what has often beclouded such initiatives is how the implementation is made. The truth is that the implementation has been bastardized over time by those put in place to manage them. No one is sure how much was spent by the last administration or where the receivers are from. The social register must be reviewed and those that deserve to get palliatives should be accordingly given.

Some states have started to increase the minimum wage to be paid to their workers. Imo State has promised to give 40000 naira only to its civil servants, and other investment palliatives to marketers. In Kwara and Bayelsa States, for instance, free transportation and a few days to come to work have been approved for its workers. Let us hope that other states may follow suit.

Gaggle

EYE with YVONNE



Drunk and down

One of the commonest questions often asked by Christians is: Is taking alcoholic drinks a sin? Yes and no. If it is taken in moderation or used for medicinal purposes, it is not a sin. Or if one takes it in moderation and goes to bed without misbehaving, it is okay.

It becomes a sin if the alcoholic drink takes over one's senses and one becomes as good as a puppet under its control. In this regard, he becomes violent and speaks in a senseless manner, wobbling around like a log of wood on a turbulent sea. In this condition, he can be violent and very stupid or foolish and can do the most humiliating things one can think of.

I have an aunt who in her younger days used to do the most humiliating things anytime she was drunk. Thank God, there was no social media. We were then kids. She would expose her nakedness and with her legs wide open, she would begin to plait her pubic hair. Very horrifying.

A gentleman once had an unforgettable night through the morning. He had gotten so drunk and instead of heading home, he took a wrong turn and was boldly strolling into ITF office, Bukuru. He said the bright light that lead into the premises deceived him into thinking he was at Steel Rolling Quarters, Bukuru.

At the gate, the guards gave him a hard chase. In his stupor, he must have found solace in a narrow path and he slept his drunkenness away. At the break of dawn, when darkness was giving way to light, in his subconscious mind, he could hear people whispering around about a dead body in a gutter. At first the voices were few but within minutes, the voices were increasing and they were disturbing his sleep.

This man began to wonder where the voices were coming from and why he was so cold. Slowly, he half opened his eyes and shut it almost immediately. He discovered that he had been the subject of discussion. Someone was informing the crowd that had gathered that the police were coming. Mr Drunkard almost leapt up. Thank God for the semi darkness. He half opened one of his eyes, quickly looked for the weakest point and took off. The crowd scattered but nobody chased after Mr Drunkard.

A respectable housewife almost lost her senses when she was lured into taking alcoholic drinks.

In her own case, the intoxication took effect slowly. Her neighbours and those living in the same compound with her saw her walk pass their house at a very fast pace around 7:00 pm. They asked her where she was going to but she looked through them and moved on.

Around 9:00 pm, her husband, who had been worried sick, received a call that his wife had been involved in an accident around Vom. She was walking on the main road and an approaching car hit her and fractured her leg. This lady's experiment cost her about 2 months in hospital not to talk of the resources expended.

A close relation lost her self respect and much more after getting herself drunk at a night party in Shendam. She woke up the next morning in the bed of a stranger in a face me and I face you compound. She felt like she would vomit when she saw the local illiterate that must have had carnal knowledge of her through the night.

My relation was a beauty, a sophisticated lady who turned heads around anywhere she entered. She had carved her niche as a woman of class who was doing very well and only men with confidence approached her in Kaduna where she was residing and Jos where her guardian lived. But of all places, Shendam—a local champion had her because she was drunk.

Before it was light, she sneaked out. She said she would not give the local champion the luxury of showing her off to his friends as one of his conquests. That very day, she left Shendam.

One of relations was forced to march through the night in a half naked state by her drunk husband. Holding a mighty stick, he forced his wife to lead the march past as his nieces followed all in various states of half nakedness. No one thought my aunt's husband could hurt a fly until the night through morning, he forced his household to march around their house several times. Whoever lagged behind, received the swipe of the cane. It was a serious matter but hilarious. It took the grace of God for my aunt to remain in the marriage after the humiliation she suffered even though at an ungodly time.

In all the cases recounted above, the drunks all lost their self respect, esteem, and lived to regret their actions. If you won't drink responsibly, please don't drink at all. And until you are 18, please don't dare. Remember that the word of God says: If your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better to make it to heaven with one eye than enter hell fire with 2 eyes.

NEWS

By FWENJI GOAR

HIV/AIDS: PLSG assures of quality/affordable drugs

THE Plateau State Government has expressed deep concern on the issue of ensuring the distribution of qualitative and affordable medicines for citizens of the state, especially for those living with HIV/AIDS.

This is quite possible, especially now that the Plateau State Drugs and Medical Commodities Management Agency (DMCMA) has commenced operations.

Speaking at the temporary office of the agency, the Executive Secretary, Pharm Fabian Y. Agwo during an advocacy visit to the agency by the APIN Public Health Initiative, an NGO which has been operating in Plateau State for about two decades now, he explained that the Plateau State Government has keyed into the mandate of the agency to ensure it goes into full operations, and is well accommodated in its permanent office in January 2024.

Agwo said, the situation where "people end up dying because they are not able to afford simple medicines," is over. This, he says, is a matter of great concern to the government, which is working hard to see that the agency goes into full operation, thereby ensuring that prices of drugs and medicines are brought down to much more affordable rates, which in turn would ensure that people live well and enjoy their lives.

Earlier on, Dr Kelechi Ngokwe, Head of the Benue office of APIN Public Health Initiative who led the delegation, comprising the



Fabian

NCD Integration Team from their headquarters in Abuja, and heads of the venue and Plateau offices, spoke about their mission to the agency.

He said, so far they have provided care for their clients to the extent that they are no longer afraid of AIDS related deaths anymore. Explaining further, he said that they have had a comprehensive way of managing them to the point where they are more focused on making sure their clients know their status, take their drugs and ensure they monitor their viral load count.

Ngokwe said that mostly,

they are managing their clients for things like hypertension, diabetes and the like. He said, prior to now, "most of the drugs they've gotten were free."

The team was in the DMCMA on the advocacy visit to seek ways of collaboration and partnership for the benefit of the clients who are citizens of the state.

APIN Public Health Initiative is a leading Nigerian Non Governmental Organization known for the provision, care and treatment services to people living with HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other

Dangote Group adjudged major contributor to agric development

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

THE National Agricultural Foundation of Nigeria (NAFN) has adjudged the Dangote Group as one of the major contributors to the development of the agricultural sector in the country.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the 2023 National Agricultural Show, the National Coordinator of the NAFN, Dr Samuel Negedu, described the Dangote Group as a colossus and the backbone of the country's agricultural sector.

He said the company is building rice mills that will

greatly support the Nigerian government in its drive towards achieving food security in the country.

He thanked the company and Alhaji Aliko Dangote for building what he described as the largest fertilizer plant in Africa.

"The Dangote Group is also the major sponsor of the ongoing 2023 National Agricultural Show," he said.

Speaking at the event, the Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Senator Abubakar Kyari, said the government has immediate and short-term plans for developing a standard

framework for the ease of doing agricultural business in the country.

"Over time, agricultural shows have become veritable tools for showcasing the latest developments within the agricultural sector. It brings people together to network, to do business, and to give the public a glimpse into farming life. It also provides a hub for the farming and rural communities to meet, exchange ideas, and, above all, have a few days away from the farms," the minister said.

The Deputy Governor of Nasarawa State, Dr Emmanuel Akabe, urged stakeholders to invest massively in agriculture to transform Nigeria into a country for food security and value chain addition.

Speaking also, Chairman, Board of Trustees of the National Agricultural Foundation of Nigeria (NAFN), Arch Kabiru Ibrahim, said this year's theme: Towards the Realization of Presidential Declaration of Emergency on Food Security, is apt.

He said the theme was "chosen in recognition of the need for all stakeholders in Nigeria to work towards the actualization of the resolve of the administration of President Tinubu to address the challenges of food security."

Arch Ibrahim, who is also the National President of the All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN), said that to scale up food security, there is a need to incentivize smallholder farmers (SHFs) through support for seedlings.



Kyari

SUNDAY POLITICS

Managing elections in Nigeria

Election period in many countries are usually tense not for the electorate but for the politicians and associates who may lose or retain their position after the exercise. The electorate play the jury as the politicians submit themselves for appraisal. On election day. No ambulances, no visit to intensive care unit, no fighting but a true atmosphere of carnival and expectations. MIKE UMOGUN writes.

SINCE the first republic (post independence) until now election weekends in Nigeria are tense, violence prone, people relocate to safely, some people would actually grab their green passport and go anywhere in Europe and watch proceedings from afar and the economy is awash with money that politicians have claimed is in short supply prior to the election. Elections are generally not well managed in Nigeria. Experts have concluded that there is a disconnect in our election system as a whole. Our biggest problem is that of election rigging and voter apathy. Our military are kitted for elections as if they are the Israeli Defense Forces on the hunt for Hamas. Citizens are discouraged from participating in a militarised civil exercise.

Election Rigging:

Election rigging refers to the manipulation of electoral processes to favour a particular candidate or party, geo political zone, religion and undermining the principles of democracy and fair competition. In Nigeria, election rigging has been a persistent issue that hinders the credibility and legitimacy of elections for over five decades and getting worse.

Some common forms of election rigging in Nigeria include ballot box stuffing, ballot box snatching, voter intimidation, voter suppression, tampering with election results, harassment and intimidation of electoral officials and bribery of electoral officials. These practices undermine the will of the people and can lead to political instability and conflict.

These problems have undermined the credibility of governments in Nigeria and have tarnished the legitimacy of such government overseas. It has also given room for the military to forcefully encroach in civil matters and governance. Diverting their focus from their defensive duties in the service of the country.

It has been suggested that INEC is usually overwhelmed by the general elections but the same can be said of the off cycle elections that have just been concluded in Bayelsa, Kogi and Imo state(s).

To address the problem of election mismanagement especially rigging, various solutions have been proposed and implemented in Nigeria but



the results have not been encouraging. These include:

1. **Electoral Reforms:** One of the key solutions is to implement comprehensive electoral reforms that aim to enhance the transparency, credibility, and fairness of the electoral process. These reforms may include updating electoral laws, strengthening institutions responsible for organizing elections, and introducing electronic voting systems. It has been suggested that a mix of both digital and analogue system be used as some part of the country are not digital election ready and should not be dragged into what they are not ready for. This is an option that must be considered moving forward.

2. **Voter Education and Awareness:** Educating voters about their rights, the importance of free and fair elections, and the consequences of election rigging can help empower them to resist manipulation attempts. Voter education programmes can also promote civic participation and encourage citizens to report any irregularities they witness during the electoral process. However the involvement of armed gangs and groups have discouraged robust discussion and participation. For instance, citizens would not like to

confront IPOB should they nudge the people to stay away from the election because the government have severally failed to provide security cover needed during such periods.

3. **Voter Registration and Identification:** Implementing robust voter registration mechanisms and using proper identification methods can help prevent voter impersonation and ensure that only eligible voters participate in the electoral process. Our system obviously need a blend of digital and analogue options to get our elections right.

4. **Security Presences:** Deploying adequate security personnel to polling stations can help deter acts of violence, intimidation, and coercion during elections. This can create

a conducive atmosphere for citizens to exercise their voting rights without fear.

5. **Independent Election Monitoring:** Allowing independent domestic and international election observers to monitor the entire electoral process can help detect and report any irregularities or instances of rigging. Their presence can also serve as a deterrent to those intending to manipulate the elections.

6. **Legal Accountability:** Ensuring that there are consequences for those found guilty of election rigging is crucial. Establishing and enforcing strict penalties for electoral offenses can help deter acts of violence, discourage potential perpetrators and contribute to the integrity of the electoral

process. Persons involved in election malpractices walk free once results are published this must change to deter future episodes.

Final Word: It is worth noting that addressing the problem of election rigging requires a multi-faceted approach, involving political will, strong institutions at the national and state level, and active citizen engagement. Implementing these solutions can help foster a democratic culture and ensure that the will of the people is respected in Nigeria's electoral processes. May we not be toddlers at this subject forever.

Michael Umogun is a Chartered Marketer with interest in public policy matters.

"Election rigging refers to the manipulation of electoral processes to favour a particular candidate or party, geo political zone, religion and undermining the principles of democracy and fair competition. In Nigeria, election rigging has been a persistent issue that hinders the credibility and legitimacy of elections for over five decades and getting worse. Some common forms of election rigging in Nigeria include ballot box stuffing, ballot box snatching, voter intimidation, voter suppression, tampering with election results, harassment and intimidation of electoral officials and bribery of electoral officials. These practices undermine the will of the people and can lead to political instability and conflict."

SUNDAY POLITICS

CYCJ urges Tinubu not to interfere in Kano

THE Concerned Yoruba Community in Kano, (CYCJ) has called on notable traditional rulers in the South West, as a matter of urgency to intervene by advising President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, not to intervene in the court of Appeal Judgement in the state.

The CYCJ, Secretary General, Comrade Taofeek Olalekan Olaosebikun stated this during a media briefing held in Kano.

"We have called to address some crucial issues as they affect us in relation to the prevailing political situation in Kano since the Appeal Court sacked the state Governor, Yusuf."

"We are using this platform to call on all Yoruba Obas and leaders of thought to wade into the Kano situation without further delay by engaging President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for a possible political settlement of the Kano logjam.

He said average man already believes that the judiciary has been interfered with, "We are hereby calling on our fathers, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo and the Ooni of Ife, Oba Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi, Ojaja 11, to intervene without further delay."

"We are also calling on the Oba of Lagos, Alake of Egba, Awujale of Ijebuland, Olubadan of Ibadan and other Yoruba leading lights to come to our aid as we won't find it easy if the situation degenerates further as we actually expect that it would."

Taofeek Olalekan Olaosebikun maintained that people in Kano will believe that they were cheated on by



Tinubu

a Yoruba President.

"That is the word going round now. A stitch in time, they say, saves nine."

He noted that Kano is a very volatile state politically and this is the reason why all men and women of goodwill should be concerned about the situation in Kano and rally round towards a collective initiative to save the state from any calamity which will affect us and our livelihood.

"Of course, you are all living witnesses to the whole developments which are clearly suggesting ill-winds because of the anticipated threat to peace and stability in the state."

Importantly, we the Yoruba in Kano have been here long enough to articulate and appreciate the political tendencies here and implications for our common

good.

For the record, many of us were born and raised in Kano, indeed, we have become "Kano indigenes" in some strategic sense.

This is our home as we have come to acknowledge and appreciate our stay in Kano and indeed our economic sustenance, wellbeing and development.

"Our children are doing fine in schools here as well as many of different ages engaged in one activity or the other. So Kano is our home and we are happy being here."

"we know the political tradition here in Kano and the issues surrounding such positions. In the case of the last election cycle in Kano, we know how the election went and the outright winners compared to the losers." he added

violated the order. Both the NNPP and APC are reportedly mobilising their supporters to organise protests on Saturday to express their views on the recent ruling of the Appeal Court in Abuja which declared a controversial judgment on the governorship election in the state.

The statement read, "Credible information at the command's disposal revealed that some groups of people claiming to be political party supporters of both the NNPP

and the APC are using various media platforms and mobilising people and planning to enter the streets on Saturday, November 25, 2023, to stage protest against the Kano State Governorship Appeal Court's verdict.

"The information further revealed that the intention of the protesters is to shut down the state and attack prominent political party opponents; an action which may result in violence.

"At this juncture, the police command is making it categorically clear that no formal notice was received from any of these political parties about the plan to conduct any protest or gathering.

"The police command is issuing this warning to all residents of the state to be extra careful as whoever intends to conduct any protest or procession should do so only in accordance with the provisions of the law.

"Furthermore, the position of the law is very clear, whoever attempts to disrupt the peace in the state will be arrested and made to face the wrath of the law," the statement added.



Egbetekun

From
AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

WORRIED over low appointment of Nigeria youths in governance, a Non-governmental Organisation, NGO, Conscience for Human Rights & Conflict Resolution (CHRCR), has challenged youths to embrace leadership roles through effective participation in politics.

The Executive Director, CHRCR, Idris Miliki Abdul made the call during a one day Round-Table for Youth Focus Organisations and Media on Inspiring Youth for Leadership Business held in Lokoja.

Abdul said that the round-table discussion was organised by CHRCR in partnership with Nigerian Women Trust Fund (NWF) as part of its efforts to provide youths with the needed inspirations to

NGO challenges youths on participation in governance

venture into political leadership.

"The rationale behind this motive is to raise the spirit of our Youths for more participation in the political landscape of the nation through effective engagement

"It will also propel the zeal of the youths to fight for their agenda as an insider in governance such as what they can offer for the welfare of their colleagues interns of employment, skills acquisition and other empowerment

"As future leaders, this forum will afford you the needed inspiration to make your impacts towards the development of your immediate society

"Our goal is to ensure that young persons become

leaders"

The Executive Director disclosed that the leadership approaches would be realised through community mobilization, media engagement, capacity building, institutional strengthening, publication and research.

Hamza Aliyu, Executive Director Initiative for Grass-root Advancement (INGRA), made a presentation on challenges of youths in attaining leadership position and the way forward while IbukunAjayi dwelled on the impact of youth scorecard.

Highpoint of the event is the unveiling of "Inspiring Youth for Leadership Network by Commissioner, Kogi Ministry of Youth and Sport.



CHANGE OF NAME

ADAMU

I, formerly known as **ADAMU MOHAMMED**, now wish to be known and addressed as **ADAMU MUHAMMAD AHMAD**. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.

KAMALA

I, formerly known as **KAMALA GOJE**, now wish to be known and addressed as **KAMALA GAJE**. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.



KANAM LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCIL PLATEAU STATE

INVITATION TO TENDER FOR PROJECT CONSTRUCTION AND PROCUREMENT

Kanam Local Government Council Transition Committee Chairman, desire to undertake some projects in the area and hereby wish to engaged the service of suitable Qualified contractors for the following:

1. Gungung 1 one Single Cell Culvert
2. Gungung 2 one single Cell Culvert
3. Multipurpose Dengi double box culvert
4. Maje single cell culvert
5. Katang Dogon Ruwa Road single ring cell culvert
6. Gungung double cell culvert.
7. Procurement of Solar light at grave yard, Dengi

PRE-QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENT

- a) Evidence of Registration with CAC
- b) Evidence of financial capability from a reputable bank
- c) Evidence of Tax Clearance Certificate
- d) Evidence of technical know-how
- e) Evidence of Value Added Tax Registration Certification
- f) Evidence of successful execution of similar project.
- g) Any other information that will enhanced the chance of your company.

COLLECTION OF TENDER

The submission of pre-qualification and completed tender document should be returned on or before 14days of the notices in spiral binding of three (3) copies address to the Transition Committee Chairman, Kanam Local Government Council.

NOTE: The Local Government reserves the right to reject any tender that does not meet its requirement.

Signed
ADO B. ISHA
DBPRS

SUNDAY POLITICS

Gwarzo: Legacy of excellence in public service

Of all the sterling leadership qualities of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, one that stands out is his unique capacity for talent hunting. Right from his days as Lagos State Governor, Tinubu has demonstrated a great ability to assemble the right team to get the job done and to groom political disciples that can stand by him, come rain come sunshine, ABDULLAHI SHUGABA writes.

THIS pragmatic approach to politics and governance is largely responsible for his remarkable political accomplishments which made him unequivocally the most successful politician in the Fourth Republic.

It was in 2006 that Asiwaju spotted Abdullahi Tijjani Mohammad Gwarzo when the latter was vying for Kano State Deputy Governor. Tinubu knew right away that Gwarzo was a political asset. They built and nurtured a rapport up till 2010 when he tasked Gwarzo to set up and lead the ACN structure in Kano State.

Gwarzo eventually contested the 2011 gubernatorial race on the party's platform and it was indeed a gallant fight. The duo kept close political ties up till 2014 when Gwarzo actively participated in actualizing the APC merger arrangement and became the pioneer Interim Chairman of the party in Kano State.

From that period to the 2023 electioneering season, Tinubu's intimate association with ATM Gwarzo made him fully convinced that the latter was indeed a loyal, reliable and dependable ally. It therefore came as no surprise that while the president compiled his ministerial list, Gwarzo's name from Kano came as a reflex action to Asiwaju. Whenever he met politicians from Kano, he often asked in his characteristic loud and jocular voice: "Where is Ruwa Baba!"

Gwarzo got the nickname 'Ruwa Baba' which means 'Water Baba' when he built the Fada Dam and water treatment plant in his hometown of Gwarzo while he served as the Kano State Deputy Governor and concurrently as Commissioner of Water Resources from 2007 to 2011. The facility has since then served more than fifteen towns and villages, ending the acute water scarcity in the Gwarzo axis of Kano North Senatorial District.

Gwarzo's choice as Minister in the current dispensation is certainly well deserved, considering the dozens of projects he executed while he served four times as Local Government Chairman, then as Special Adviser on Special Duties to the then Kano State Governor, Malam Ibrahim Shekarau before subsequently becoming his Deputy and Supervising Commissioner for the Ministry for Water Resources in Kano State.

The projects include Gwarzo township bye-pass, township and rural roads, shopping complex, Governor's Lodge, District Head's office and many



Gwarzo

other projects as well as impactful programmes and policies that have transformed the lives and livelihoods of hundreds across Gwarzo, Kano North Senatorial zone and the state in general.

During the period, he received numerous awards and recognitions which include best Local Government Chairman, ALGON Merit Award, an honorary Doctorate Degree, and his emergence as ALGON Chairman in recognition of his outstanding performance in Gwarzo Local Government Area.

An alumni of Ahmadu University Zaria, he also served as the Chairman, Governing Board of the Federal College of Education, Zaria, and supervised APC congresses, elections and reconciliations in many states and at zonal and national levels.

What is interesting is that his service to his people in the course of his three decades in politics, have endeared him to them which gave him a solid base to excel in his political career.

On a visit to Gwarzo to feel the pulse of the residents on the appointment of their son to represent the state at the Federal Cabinet, the town was agog and cheerful over the appointment.

The most prominent feature is the Fada Dam which was constructed by ATM Gwarzo. On the north side were fishermen on boats were strewn all over the coasts and upstream of the dam, dipping their hooks and spreading their nets to catch

fishes while on the south side is the vast expanse of irrigation and grazing fields that are evergreen in all seasons, with farmers and pastoral herds earning a livelihood from the facility.

To the east, is the Water Treatment Plant equipped with giant water reservoirs, a power generator, filter beds, water clarifiers, flow metres and valves and some staffers manning the equipment. Further eastward into the town, is a bye-pass and chains of feeder roads also constructed by AT Gwarzo when he was the chairman of the local government.

While at his family home in Kofar Kudu Gwarzo metropolis, Hajiya Asabe Malami Koya, his aunt and foster mother, described him as a worthy son.

"I took custody of Abdullahi when he was very young. I was married at the time but I did not have any child, so he was my first child. He was very courteous and obedient. He never waited for you to tell him what to do, he always did his house chores without being asked to do it. And once he was done, he left for school very early in the morning.

"He is indeed diligent and is not like any other child I have groomed in all my years of motherhood. He was exceptional from the onset", she said.

As for the Barde Kerarriyar Kano, District Head of Gwarzo, Alhaji Shehu Kabir Bayero, he was full of appreciation to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu

for appointing ATM Gwarzo because he had a likeable personality and character.

"Today we are happy that he has had an impactful career in politics and has left bold footprints in all the places and institutions where he had served.

For Alhaji Ibrahim Dan-Azumi Gwarzo, a childhood friend and longtime political associate of the Minister, AT Gwarzo's excellence in politics and in life generally is as a result of "his honesty, humility and doggedness in all his endeavours".

"We grew up and met our parents as best of friends, my father was a friend to his father and so were our mothers. Both families had five male children, so each of us picked a mate from his age group and made friends. Our journey into politics started while we were still at the university.

"Whenever we came home for weekends or long breaks, we took part in local politics, then it was the Second Republic. We were a group of six friends and we always brought every matter to be discussed within the committee of friends.

"Looking back, we are proud of AT Gwarzo's achievements and we are confident that he will make us proud both as indigenes of Gwarzo, Kano North Senatorial District and Kano State. What is interesting is that nobody lobbied for him to be made minister. President Tinubu picked him directly and appointed him as Minister", he said.

Meanwhile another member of the committee of friends, Alhaji Adamu Lawal, who is now a businessman and the Chairman of Community Reorientation Committee (CRC) of Gwarzo Local Government Area, recalled that their peer group was AT Gwarzo's political cradle where they first met and decided to encourage one of them to vie for the Chairmanship of Gwarzo Local Government Area under the defunct Social Democratic Party (SDP).

"Even from that time you could tell that Abdullahi was promising and he had the potential to excel in politics

because he had a likeable personality and character. "Today we are happy that he has led and transformed Gwarzo Local Government Area, and now he has a golden chance to replicate that feat at the national level", he affirmed.

To Dr. Kabir Ahmed, the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Administration at Sa'adatu Rimi University of Education, Kano, who is also the Vice Chairman Gwarzo Consultative Forum, ATM's elevation to the position of Minister makes him a torch bearer of Gwarzo, Kano State, the Northwest, and the northern part of the country in general.

"He is indeed a worthy son of Gwarzo and we are very proud of him. When he served as Local Government Chairman, Special Adviser to the Governor, and Deputy Governor respectively, he did us proud and has left indelible marks in terms of infrastructure and human development.

"We are sure that his impact will now be felt on a larger scale, and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development will be better for it".

ATM Gwarzo's reputation and legacy of excellence make his appointment into the federal cabinet, a case of a round peg in a round hole. Moreover, his pairing with Arch. Ahmed Musa Dangiwa at the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, makes a team of astute and hardworking administrators that will effect a revolution in the sector at a time when the country faces a housing deficit that is estimated at 20 million.

Architect Ahmed Dangiwa, having served as the Managing Director of the Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria (FMBN) for five years when he spearheaded dynamic and strategic institutional reforms in the bank, will bring his wealth of experience to bear in his new role.

He will find ATM Gwarzo as a loyal, versed, creative and progressive comrade that is ready to contribute to the task of actualizing the objectives of the 'Renewed Hope Agenda' in the Housing and Urban Development sector.

"Architect Ahmed Dangiwa, having served as the Managing Director of the Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria (FMBN) for five years when he spearheaded dynamic and strategic institutional reforms in the bank, will bring his wealth of experience to bear in his new role."

SUNDAY PEOPLE

MUTFWANG RECEIVES RMAFC FEDERAL COMMISSIONERS

Plateau State Governor, Barr. Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang recently received a delegation from Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission Abuja (RMAFC) led by the leader, Hajiya Hawwa Umar Aliyu, Jigawa State Federal Commissioner at Government House Little Rayfield, Jos



Governor Mutfwang responding while Hajiya Hawwa Umar Aliyu listens



Cross section of members of the Federal Commissioners' entourage



Head of Service, Barr. Rautha Dakok (right) with the Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Hon. Ephriam Usman



From left are, commissioners, Lands, Barr. Peter Nyam Gai, Agric, Hon. Bugama Samson Ishaku, Water Resources, Hon. Noel Nkup and Local Government Affairs, Hon. Ephriam Usman



TIC Chairman of Shendam LGC, Hon. (Dr.) Nicholas Kemi Nshe (right) with his colleague, Chairman Langtang North, Hon. Kumzhi Godwin



From left are, TIC Langtang North, Hon. Kumzhi Godwin, Shendam, Hon. Nicholas Kemi Nshe, GM JMDB, Arc Hart Bankat and Mikang, Hon. Daniel Kungmi



Permanent Secretaries Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Finance and the Accountant General of the State



Governor Mutfwang with the leader, RMAFC and members of her team

PHOTOS: DANLADI DUK

It is not wrong to say that the Plateau State House of Assembly has over the years been engulfed in a lot of leadership tussles. From the sixth assembly to the present tenth assembly, it has been a tale of impeachments. These developments clearly does not augur well for the state but again, they say politics is a game that is full of intrigues. Someone also said, where personal interest supercedes interest of the people, such are inevitable.

The resignation of the tenth assembly Speaker Rt. Hon. Moses Thomas Sule and the emergence of a new speaker may have come to many as a surprise. However, there are those who may not be surprised, especially given the fact that his party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) has been in the center of the storm for sometime now.

Also, the recent Court of Appeal judgement may have further fueled the turn of events at the state assembly. Even though no specific reasons were given for the resignation of Sule and his deputy Gwottson, an emergency plenary of Tuesday November 21st, saw the election and subsequent swearing in of a new Speaker in the person of Rt. Hon. Gabriel Dewan Kudengbena and a new Deputy Speaker, Rt. Hon. Timothy Dantong.

Before his emergence as Speaker, Rt. Hon. Gabriel Dewan Kudengbena who is a first timer has been the only member elected under the platform of the Youth Progressive Party (YPP), representing Pankshin/North constituency. He is also considered to be the youngest member of the tenth assembly. As for Dantong who is the member representing Riyom constituency, he is not a first timer and is said to have lobbied for the position of deputy speaker at the inception of the tenth assembly, but lost out to Gwottson representing Jos South constituency.

Interestingly, both the former Speaker, Rt. Hon. Sule, who represents Mikang constituency and his Deputy, Hon. Gwottson were elected unopposed by their colleagues and have presided over the legislative business of the present assembly, since June 13th, 2023, when the House was officially inaugurated. There seemed to exist a cordial working relationship amongst the lawmakers until lately.

Incidentally, during the 2024 budget presentation by the state Executive Governor Barr. Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang at the state assembly, it was noticed that the APC lawmakers were

visibly absent. Their reason for for boycotting such an important event was immediately not known. As things progressed, it became obvious that things are not all that cordial between the PDP and APC legislators.

For Kudengbena, it is the dawn of a new era for him as speaker of the Plateau State House of Assembly. In his remarks shortly after being sworn in, he thanked his colleagues for considering him and others capable of piloting the affairs of the House. In the same way, the immediate past



PLHA: Dawn of a new era



legislative leaders thanked their colleagues for the trust accorded them during the period of their leadership while pledging same to the new leadership. Earlier before he tendered his

resignation, the immediate past Speaker, Rt. Hon. Sule, announced that the House now has a new Acting Clerk and Deputy, in the persons of Mr Bary Nicholas and Mrs

Plangnaan Dimlong respectively, while DSP Nanshap N. Youmbap (rtd), and Awo John Sokowar Emmanuel (rtd), are now the new Sergeant-at-Arm and

Deputy Sergeant-at-Arm. Similarly, the former Deputy Majority Leader, Hon. Ibrahim Agbalak who is also the member representing Rukuba/Irigwe constituency, whose election was quashed last week has been replaced. With Hon. Danjuma Azi, member representing Jos North West constituency while Hon. Daniel Nanbol Listick former member representing Langtang North Central constituency, whose election was also overturned by the Election Appeal Tribunal is to replace Hon. Langyi Nannim of Langtang North North constituency as deputy whip of the state assembly. Meanwhile, the House has adjourned sitting and proceedings to resume on January 23th, 2024. The Speaker Rt. Hon. Gabriel Dewan, however, enjoined the lawmakers to use the period of the break and consult widely with the people in their various constituencies, in order to enlighten them on the current political happenings in the state.

SUNDAY MAGAZINE



Tinubu



Musa



Egbetekun

Is Nigeria losing the battle against cult violence?

Ate Ibrahim was a normal promising boy whose desire was to grow up and be successful in life. Though he grew up in the slums, he had never for once doubted the hidden potentials in him knowing too well that it was just but a matter of time for him to explode, BULUS GAMBO writes.

As promising as Ate was, he however failed to guard his loins and was unable to choose the kind of friends who would help propel him to greater heights in life. Throughout Ate's secondary school, he remained dedicated which eventually paid-off as he eventually met the prerequisite which facilitated him getting an admission into one of the prestigious universities in the country.

After scaling through the first year successfully, this young man eventually succumbed to peer pressure during his second year in the university. As the heat turned against this young man, he ended up joining one of the deadly cult groups on campus and was unable to survive it. Ate's decomposing body was recovered in an uncompleted building where he had joined his other members for a ritual that fateful night.

Investigations by security agents later uncovered that the cult members had felt uncomfortable with Ate's most recent public engagements thus decided to end his life for their own good. As tragic as this unfortunate story is; it in clearer terms reflects the horrible experiences of many unlucky young men and women in this country who at a point in their lives decided to sell their souls to the devil. Some of these young men and women had promising future and never anticipated to taste these brutal killings. However, their dreams and hopes for a better tomorrow was cut short following their involvement in cult related activities, a deadly routine engagement which usually ends up in a disgusting and

dehumanising manner.

The Oxford Concise Dictionary of Sociology defines cultism as a small group or religious activities whose beliefs are secret, esoteric and individualistic. The Lexican Webster Dictionary defines secret cult as a group of people who share a common cause and whose mode of meetings and agenda are unknown to the public.

Cultism according to Queen Anigbogu is a practice of people with a deviant religious, philosophical or cultural identity often existing on the margins of society. It is usually exploitive towards its members' beliefs and activities of cults are mostly known as secret cult. For, Ikenna Alumona, "in many parts of the world, cultism creates an atmosphere of negative peace as a result its footprints in the security market which facilitate arms proliferation. Youth cultism is one of the sources of violence in most Nigerian cities. Several studies on cultism have focused on the evolution of cult related activities in Nigeria from non-violence to the proliferation of splinter secret cults in tertiary institutions and communities.

Media reports for instance discloses that at least 202 persons have been killed as a result of cult and gang-related violence in Rivers State in three years. Most of these unjustified killings have proliferated across other parts of the country leaving behind excruciating pains on the side of parents and or victims' relations. In March 2020, the Akwa Ibom State government alone uncovered 51 cult groups and societies in secondary schools across the state.

Data from Nextier Violent Conflict reveals that Rivers State tops the list of cult activities in Nigeria followed by Ogun State but the menace of cultism is also plagued by many other related activities in Benue, Lagos, Anambra, Ekiti, Osun and Edo. Unfortunately, most Nigeria celebrities and politicians are allegedly belonging to one cult or the other in this country.

Recently, the European Union Agency for Asylum explained that student cults are characterised by violent initiation rites and conduct illegal activities such as killings, human trafficking, drug trafficking, smuggling, extortions, kidnappings and forced recruitments. It further stated that about 1,863 deaths were connected to student cults between 2006 and 2014. Cult-related violence in 2017 reportedly resulted in 442 fatalities and 290 victims of kidnappings.

As it is, reports also indicates that the sheer number of violent deaths alone, over 105 is a staggering and a major concern to many citizens and stakeholders in the country. In Lagos State, numerous deadly clashes have been recorded between Aiye and Eiye confraternities. In most cases, such deadly clashes usually end up with many unbearable casualties.

Records by the Lagos State Police shows that over 202 suspected members of cult groups were arrested with the recovery of various types of arms and ammunitions from them. Up north, the proliferation of cult related activities have also generated great concern in most

recent times. In some of these states, cultists openly celebrate their days with impunity throwing communities in total fear of the unknown.

In his submission on the proliferation of cultism in Nigeria's tertiary institutions which is regarded as a threat to national socio-economic development, Amos Adedeji elucidated that cultism has remained a veritable social menace and a serious obstacle to academic excellence, peace and security of the nation. It has become cancerous to the growth and development of our tertiary education in Nigeria. The harmful invention brought to the association has changed their modus operandi from peaceful and non-violent approach to bizarre and violent activities without respect for life.

According to Adedeji, "based on the concept of gods in African Traditional Religion, the history of cultism in Africa is connected to African culture and religion. It can be traced back to pre-colonial Nigeria, where people performed rituals for their ancestors primarily to ask for protection and success in their endeavours. By carrying out rituals, administering justice and purging society of any lingering cultural residue, cults serviced the spiritual and societal demands of their adherents as well as serving as institutions for societal control. As a result, the traditional cult organizations play a crucial rule in the growth of local communities and social changes."

He notes that cult activities at Nigerian's academic institutions can be traced back to 1952, when Prof. Wole Soyika the first African to win the Nobel Prize and his

contemporaries commonly known as G7 founded the Pyrites Confraternity. Pyrites aspired to stand out from the pretentious, hypocritical middle class, the detached colonial aristocracy, and mossy establishment with its pretentious wares."

Over the years however, cult groups have changed and become more dangerous than it used to be. Today, hundreds of deaths have been related to cult in the country. Most of these violent conduct by cultists have generated great concern in most recent times. Consequently, social commentators are of the opinion that the dangers cult activities pose to our society cannot be underestimated.

In one of such studies, it discovered that when a student engages in an act of cultism and indiscipline for instance; such a student tend live restlessly and endanger the lives of others. Cultists are known for unrepentantly committing social vices like robbery, disturbing public peace, killings and proliferation of illicit drugs. These drugs are syndicated in such a manner hardly dictated by security agencies in the nation. Unfortunately, many vulnerable people usually join cultism in search of protection from harassment and or intimidation. This sense of security offered members gives them boldness and confidence against any threats which is a total fallacy.

The Nigeria Red Cross says the proliferation of cult groups in primary and secondary schools in the country was a ticking time bomb. A member of the Governing

Continued on page 31

NEWS

CAS harps on mentorship, discipline

By DORCAS PANKYES

AS part of efforts to further enhance discipline, regimentation, professionalism and efficient service delivery in the Nigerian Air Force (NAF), the Chief of Air Staff (CAS), Air Marshal Hasan Abubakar recently, chaired a retreat held for Air Warrant Officers (AWOs) and Regimental Sergeant Majors (RSMs) serving in various units across the nation.

In his opening remarks, Air Marshal Abubakar emphasized the significance of mentorship in the NAF through sharing of knowledge, skills, and experience, in view of the vast experience and knowledge that the AWOs, RSMs and other Senior-Non-Commissioned Officers (SNCOs) possess.

Expressing concern over the observed decline in mentoring within the Non-Commissioned Officers' (NCO) cadre over the years, the CAS urged AWOs and RSMs to revive the culture of mentorship in their various units. He also reminded the AWOs and RSMs that as the link between the officers' cadre and the other ranks, they must be impartial in the discharge of their responsibilities.

Speaking further, the CAS underscored the importance of maintaining and upholding the

high standards of discipline and noted that AWOs and RSMs have the responsibility to ensure that airmen and airwomen under their Command, remain disciplined in the discharge of their duties.

While highlighting the upward trend of indiscipline being exacerbated through drug abuse, offenses related to sentry duties, and cases of Absence Without Leave (AWOL) across various units, Air Marshal Abubakar called for a cessation of this trend and identified the crucial role AWOs and RSMs could play in checkmating it.

He then urged them to establish mechanisms for constant interaction with their subordinates to address personal and service-related issues.

The CAS also emphasized the need for them to take ownership of service properties with the same passion and care as personal items. Emphasizing the importance of regular cleaning, sanitation, and maintenance of NAF buildings, hangars and operational facilities, he underscored the role AWOs and RSMs can play in fostering a robust maintenance culture within their units.

On safety, the CAS stated that the outcome of the recently



Abubakar

held 2023 Safety Review Board (SRB) can only be realizable if all personnel take ownership of the safety of the operational and personal environment.

He then emphasized the need for a relentless pursuit and internalization of safety culture among airmen and airwomen, noting that personnel must

consistently adhere to all safety standards and regulations to prevent mishaps in various operations as well as preventing fire hazards within barracks.

Highlights of the retreat include brief by the AWOs and RSMs on activities in their various Areas of

Security operatives arrest human trafficker, rescues children

From
TERESE TUHWA, Makurdi

OPERATIVES of Operation Whirl Stroke have arrested a human trafficker, Samuel Ottu from Akwa-Ibom State and rescued five children who were kidnapped from Shendam Local Government Area of Plateau State.

Briefing news men recently at the headquarters of Nigeria Tactical Air Command, Nigeria Air Force Base Makurdi, the Commander, Major General Sunday Igbinomwanhia said

Troops of Sector 3 who are deployed to Nasarawa State, acting on credible intelligence on the activities of human traffickers, arrested the

trafficker at a transit park in Lafia Local Government Area of Nasarawa State.

He explained that the ringleader of the criminal syndicate on sighting the troops, abandoned the children and left them with Mr. Ottu.

The Commander Operation Whirl Stroke further explained that during preliminary investigation, a Techno mobile phone was recovered from him and during screening, some of his cohorts were discovered including one Mrs. Tina Nkechi, a resident of Abuja whom he confessed to be working for.

Major General Igbinomwanhia told journalists that the suspect has confessed

to have stolen the children from their parents in Angwa Kabir village, Shendam Local Government Area of Plateau State and were to be moved to Abuja and kept under the care of Mrs. Tina Nkechi.

However, luck ran out on the suspect, according to Major General Igbinomwanhia. In an attempt to transport the five minors to the Federal Capital Territory, he was apprehended. The commander said that the suspects and victims will be handed over to the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP).

The traumatised children,

the Commander explained, will be handed over to their parents by NAPTIP after all the necessary procedures.

In a comment, the Zonal Commander of NAPTIP represented by the Head of Operations, Mr. Felix Akperaga, said the agency will investigate to ascertain the true parents of the victims before they will be reunited with their families.

The five trafficked children who comprised two boys and three girls within the ages of five to two years, were handed over to the officials of NAPTIP as at the time of filing the report.

Sweet Sisters Association celebrates 6 years anniversary

By DORCAS PANKYES

THE Sweet Sister's Association celebrated its 6th year anniversary with a colourful event recognizing and honoring women's empowerment.

The occasion was attended by distinguished guests, special invitees, and esteemed members of the association.

The matron and founder of the Sweet Sister's Association, Mrs Dorcas Pankyes Gamaje expressed her sincere gratitude to all attendees for their support and commitment to the cause. The chairman of the event, along with other special guests of honor, was praised for their invaluable contributions to the success of the association.

The Sweet Sister's Association, founded six years ago, aims to uplift and empower women from all walks of life. Through various projects and initiatives, the association has provided education, skills acquisition, emotional support, and counseling services to countless women, helping them become independent and self-sufficient.

"I would like to express my deepest gratitude to each and every one of you for being a part of the Sweet Sister's Association. Your unwavering support has fueled our success and inspired us to continue our work. Together, let us strive for a future where women are uplifted, empowered, and celebrated."

"To the chairlady and other

officials and members of the Sweet Sister's Association, I am humbled by your dedication and commitment to our cause. It is through your hard work and perseverance that we have been able to celebrate six years of impactful and meaningful contributions to our community."

During the anniversary celebration, the progress made by the association was highlighted. Numerous success stories were shared, illustrating the transformation of once timid and unfocused women into confident and empowered individuals who have overcome obstacles in the pursuit of their dreams.

While celebrating these achievements, the matron, Pankyes, stressed the need to continue supporting women in need and providing them with opportunities for growth and development. She envisioned a future where every woman could dream big without fear or limitation, emphasizing the importance of a society that offers equal opportunities to all.

The event concluded with expressions of gratitude to all attendees for their unwavering support and dedication to the Sweet Sister's Association. The matron and founder urged

everyone to continue striving for a future in which women are uplifted, empowered, and celebrated.

As the anniversary celebration of the Sweet Sister's Association came to a close, attendees left with renewed inspiration and a sense of purpose. The remarkable work done by the association over the past six years, serves as a testament to its commitment to improving the lives of women in the local community and beyond.

The Chairlady of the association, Mrs. Jummai Markus, took the opportunity to express her immense appreciation for the unwavering support and dedication of the Sweet Sisters Association members. She pointed out that their commitment towards the association's goals and objectives has been instrumental in fostering unity and empowerment among women in the community.

"The success of the Sweet Sisters Association would not have been possible without the remarkable efforts of our members. It is their unwavering support and passion that have brought us this far," stated Mrs. Jummai Markus, the Chairlady of the association.



NNPCL ends fuel import Dec 2024, projects N4.5tn revenue

The Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited, on Thursday, said it would end the importation of refined petroleum products by December 2024 as all the country's refineries would be operational by then.

Tinubu's appointee, Akawor resigns as Rivers PDP chairman

The chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party in Rivers State, Desmond Akawor, has resigned.

His resignation letter surfaced on Friday barely a few hours after President Bola Tinubu appointed him Federal Commissioner—representing Rivers State in the Revenue Mobilisation, Allocation, and Fiscal Commission.

Seven Kano protesters arrested, Yoruba community fears attack

The Kano State Police Command has arrested seven persons for participating in Wednesday's protest following the reported contradiction in the judgment of the Court of Appeal sacking Governor Abba Yusuf.

Our lives threatened, Kano APC stakeholders cry out

Opposition All Progressives Congress (APC) stakeholders in Kano state have cried out over an alleged threat to their lives by supporters of the ruling New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP).

Tinubu to increase funding for arts, creative industry

The federal government has assured practitioners in the creative and entertainment industry of President Bola Tinubu administration's support for the industry to assume its place as Africa's creative powerhouse.

Wike reviews land swap initiative

The Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Mr. Nyesom Wike, has taken steps to review the Abuja land swap initiative and investigate the sale of federal government houses in the FCT.

Kerosene records 25.18% price increase in one year – NBS

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) on Tuesday, November 21, said the price of the Household Kerosene (HHK) rose by 25.18% in one year.

Federal Gov't to create 1m jobs, provide 40,000 housing units

In its bid to provide affordable housing and improve the living condition of Nigerians, the federal government has revealed plans to provide over one million direct and indirect jobs through the provision of an estimated 40,000 housing units within the first phase of its Renewed Hope Agenda for Housing.

House probes N62bn HIV/AIDS intervention funds

House of Representatives has vowed to investigate the utilisation of the N62 billion federal government intervention funds invested into the HIV/AIDS control programmes and other donor funds deployed for allied ailments.

Why soldiers attacked police command headquarters in Adamawa – Army

The Commander, 23rd Armoured Brigade, Yola, Adamawa State, Brig. Gen. Gambo Mohammed, has accused policemen of shooting and injuring a soldier at a checkpoint.

Compiled by JIDAUNA DARING



SUNDAY FEATURE

NOW years later, a new generation hears the same words, "You are the leader of tomorrow." This raises the question, when is tomorrow? How long will we continue to anticipate a tomorrow that seems elusive? More importantly, will we be alive to see this tomorrow? The tomorrow that was and is being promised?

Let us encourage and embrace the promise of tomorrow by empowering the youth, engaging and supporting policies that foster inclusivity and advancement

These words, "We are the leaders of tomorrow," filled me with optimism and joy, believing that my generation would be the ones to transform the political landscape of Nigeria and define our destiny. I believe this because I am a member of the Nigerian youth generation. Nevertheless, in the present day, our country is confronted with a harsh reality. Older people who have just refused to let go of their power and, one might add, are power-drunk dominate the Nigerian administration. From holding the position of senator to holding the position of governor, and then returning to holding the position of senator, without having made any discernible progress. It is a never-ending loop that is being kept going by the same group of elderly people, a cycle that hinders progress.

We continue to see that the youths are not prioritized. The dreams and aspirations of young Nigerians are continually being crushed by the weight of the reality we are in, a period of being unheard and unrepresented causing frustration and disillusionment. This generation embodies potential, ambition and talent. Alas, the system holds us back because it fails to embrace us. The facts speak for themselves. Despite the fact that the Not Too Young to Run Act was passed in 2018, the number of young candidates vying for political positions in the elections held in 2023, was significantly lower at 28.6% than in 2019, when it reached 34%. There are only a few young people working in various government positions.

Keep in mind what the older generation constantly says, "You must start from the grassroots", yet what support have they provided to help develop the grassroots? These same grassroots were neglected by politicians who had the opportunity to assist their constituents but chose not to do so because they were more interested in amassing wealth for themselves and their offspring. The grassroots they

A call for generational shift

Growing up in Nigeria, I remember vividly in my primary and secondary education saying these words, "We are the leaders of tomorrow", alongside my classmates. AUGUSTINA ALEGBE writes.



speaking of have not undergone any discernible shifts since they first embarked on their own journey in politics. There is a need for change on every front. Change can start at any level. It can start from the bottom, at the top or in the middle. The most essential thing is that we make the decision to act and to change.

We need to ask ourselves if the Nigeria that exists now is an accurate representation of the Nigeria that we want. Because there has been no generational shift in the leadership of Nigeria, there is a clear mismatch between those in power and the goals and aspirations of the country's young people. We are aware that it does not matter how loudly a politician proclaims that they are here to represent the interests of young people. Their body of work stands before them. We continue to observe a lack of innovation and improvement; policies that are no longer relevant, and challenges that are not being adequately addressed. A total lack of accountability. Why are Nigerians thriving outside their country? Why are the number of graduates more than the available jobs? Why do we have children studying in dilapidated government-owned schools?

Read also: Leadership

Crisis

Never has it been more evident that it is definitely time for a generational shift in leadership. A Nigeria where young people are actively involved in politics and where mentorship programs abound to help bridge the gap between generations. A Nigeria where we have more youths vying for political positions. A Nigeria where the electoral reforms and processes ensure a level playing field for all. Where progress are obvious. A Nigeria where the older generation by aiding this transition leaves

behind a legacy of prosperity, unity and a harmonious existence of both old and young. Our nation deserves the very best. Our nation deserves leaders who embody these values, leaders who will inspire future generations.

I urge us as a people to continue to call for change. Let these words "You are the leader of tomorrow", not just remain mere words, but also let us see them become a reality. Together, let us champion a generational shift. Let us encourage and embrace the promise of

tomorrow by empowering the youth, and engaging and supporting policies that foster inclusivity and advancement. Let us remember that every decision we make today has a bearing on tomorrow. Let us unite to build a Nigeria that generations to come will be proud of. A Nigeria where strength and dignity prevail, where peace and justice reign. A Nigeria where the promise of tomorrow becomes the reality of today.

Alegbe is a student of Political Science and International Relations, Nazarbayev University.

"We need to ask ourselves if the Nigeria that exists now is an accurate representation of the Nigeria that we want. Because there has been no generational shift in the leadership of Nigeria, there is a clear mismatch between those in power and the goals and aspirations of the country's young people. We are aware that it does not matter how loudly a politician proclaims that they are here to represent the interests of young people. Their body of work stands before them. We continue to observe a lack of innovation and improvement; policies that are no longer relevant, and challenges that are not being adequately addressed. A total lack of accountability. Why are Nigerians thriving outside their country? Why are the number of graduates more than the available jobs? Why do we have children studying in dilapidated government-owned schools?"

SUNDAY FEATURE

Protecting the vulnerable during armed conflicts

49 years ago, the United Nations, UN, adopted the 'Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict'. The Declaration came into force in 1974, the same year it was adopted by the UN.

IT was proposed by the United Nations Economic and Social Council, UNESCO, on the grounds that women and children are often the victims of wars, civil unrests, and other emergency situations that cause them to suffer "inhuman acts and consequently suffer serious harm".

The Declaration further prohibits attacks against or imprisonment of civilian women and children, while also upholding the sanctity of the rights of women and children during armed conflicts.

According to Wikipedia, the Declaration states that women and children suffer victimization during armed conflict due to "suppression, aggression, colonialism, racism, alien domination and foreign subjugation". The major excerpts of the UN-backed Declaration include;

1. Attacks and bombings on the civilian population, inflicting incalculable suffering, especially on women and children, who are the most vulnerable members of the population, shall be prohibited, and such acts shall be condemned.

2. The use of chemical and bacteriological weapons in the course of military operations constitutes one of the most flagrant violations of the Geneva Protocol of 1925, the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the principles of international humanitarian law and inflicts heavy losses on civilian populations, including defenceless women and children, and shall be severely condemned.

3. All States shall abide fully by their obligations under the Geneva Protocol of 1925 and the Geneva Conventions of 1949, as well as other instruments of international law relative to respect for human rights in armed conflicts, which offer important guarantees for the protection of women and children.

4. All efforts shall be made by States involved in armed conflicts, military operations in foreign territories or military operations in territories still under colonial domination to spare women and children from the ravages of war. All the necessary steps shall be taken to ensure the prohibition of measures such as persecution, torture, punitive measures, degrading treatment and violence, particularly against that part of the civilian population that consists of women and children.

5. All forms of repression and cruel and inhuman treatment of women and children, including imprisonment, torture, shooting, mass arrests, collective punishment, destruction of dwellings and forcible eviction, committed by belligerents in the course of military operations or in occupied territories shall be considered criminal.

6. Women and children belonging to the civilian population and finding themselves in circumstances of emergency and armed conflict in the struggle for peace, self-determination, national liberation and independence, or who live in occupied territories, shall not be deprived of shelter,



food, medical aid or other inalienable rights, in accordance with the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Declaration of the Rights of the Child or other instruments of international law.

It however seems as if the Declaration is merely what it is. It is not one that has significantly guaranteed the safety of women and children, during armed conflicts and emergencies, in recent years. Civil wars and political conflicts across many African nations, and in other continents, after 1974 have claimed the lives of women and innocent children, in millions.

During the 1994 Rwandan genocide, an estimated 250,000 to 500,000 women were raped. The west African nation of Liberia, between 1989 and 2003, had its civil war, which brutally ravaged the nation, leading to the death of close to 250,000 people.

Women were raped and mutilated; while warlords recruited child soldiers to fuel the conflict; even as tens of thousands of people were displaced and fled the country. At the height of the Nigerian civil war, an estimated 10,000 people (including 6,000 children) died from starvation every day.

Also during the war, many Nigerian women and children

were exposed to all sorts of exploitation and abuses. The number of attacks by Boko Haram in the Northeast Nigeria and neighbouring countries has risen, and half a million children have had to flee to safety..., bringing the total number of displaced children in the region to 1.4 million, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) disclosed, not too long ago.

In the ongoing war between Israel and Palestine, the government media office in the Gaza Strip penultimate Saturday announced that the death toll from Israeli bombardments in the Gaza Strip has risen to 9,500, with well over half of them women and children. "The death toll as a result of the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip since October 7 is 9,500, including 3,900 children and 2,509 women," Salama Marouf, the head of the media office, revealed at a press conference.

But unlike the Israeli military forces, men of the Nigerian Armed Forces in asymmetrical warfare with Boko Haram and the Islamic State of West African Province, ISWAP, extremists for almost 14 years now, have been cautious of civilian population in the North East.

Though instances of collateral damage and miscalculated air raids killing innocent citizens have been recorded in recent years, they were not deliberately intended, from the onset. The Nigerian military, to a large extent, has done a lot to protect not only the women and vulnerable children hit by terrorism, but the entire people of the North East region.

Its troops have severally rescued women, children and other residents of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States, abducted by terrorists. Our military forces in the last three years successfully rescued some of the Chibok girls kidnapped at their Chibok Secondary School in 2014.

Is there any strategy that the Nigerian military adopted to ensure the protection of vulnerable persons at war-torn places in the country? The Defence Headquarters, DHQ, said the asymmetric nature of current security challenges in the country has made the military and other security agencies adopt a more realistic gender mainstreaming strategy to defend and protect women and children during conflicts.

It also said that the Armed Forces of Nigeria has attained 27.9 percent female participation in peace support operations, as against the 17 percent benchmark recommended by the UN. The Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), General Christopher Musa, said this at a one-day 'Gender Mainstreaming Conference' organized in Abuja, last week.

He said the Nigerian military had received encomium from the UN and the Africa Union (AU) for adopting commendable gender mainstreaming policies in all its military operations within and outside Nigeria. The CDS said: "The available record reveals that the Armed Forces of Nigeria have been able to attain 27.9 per cent female participation in peacekeeping

operations".

While our military personnel may not be honoured for upholding the sanctity of the female gender and children during conflict situations, they should not be perturbed. They should continue to thread the righteous path they have already taken. In fact, they should do more to ensure that our women and their children, particularly those in the North East, are adequately protected from the havoc of terrorists, who still launch attacks occasionally.

Heavy military presence is still needed at many towns and villages in Borno and Yobe villages, especially. On the international scene, the atrocities of the Israeli government and military, together with that of Russia, among other superpowers oppressing Palestine, Ukraine and other less powerful nations, must be halted.

Necessary mechanisms must be activated by the UN to sanction the Israeli and Russian authorities, who see themselves as tin gods. Enforcing political and economic sanctions on the two European states will not be too harsh. They must be reined in, and not necessarily because their troops have senselessly massacred hundreds of thousands of innocent women and children, but rather, for the barbaric war crime they have perpetrated against humanity, as a whole.

Mahmud, deputy editor of PR Nigeria, writes via babasalam1989@gmail.com.

LAST week, we spoke about the religious perspective concerning the stigmatization of divorce and how this stigmatization leads to spousal killings. Today, we will conclude our discuss. We continue with the cultural perspective on divorce as a factor that encourages the stigmatization of divorce and thereby causing spousal killings.

No research is required in determining the position of our culture on divorce. The African culture generally respects marriage and is averse to divorce. Many times, when a woman is being abused and she decides to go back to her father's house, her mother would tell her to go back and "manage" and not bring shame to the family. I have heard some people say that divorce is not allowed in their family. In essence, the abused is expected to remain in the abusive marriage with the abusive partner and endure the abuse. Eventually, if the abused is not lucky, he or she may die in the marriage or develop a stress induced medical condition such as hypertension, Cancer, or a mental and emotional challenge.

The "shame" in question is that society views divorce as a failure to keep a home and a partner. However, there are a handful of parents who will take their children back and will only allow the son or daughter back into the matrimonial home after the two families have met and the abusive spouse has been sternly warned to desist from the act. Even then, the abuse may not stop.

In the case of the men, it is clear that men who are abused are not expected to talk about it because culture views this as a thing of "shame". The man who is abused by the woman is seen as weak and as such, the man who speaks up when he is being abused, risks being made an object of ridicule by the society. The man who is abused would rather keep quiet and bear his psychological, emotional and/or physical pain in silence.

The stigmatization of divorce in society has led to the death of many men and women who have silently and stoically chosen to remain in their marriages and continued to receive abuse until they lose their lives, because of the society's religious and cultural opposition to divorce demonstrated through discrimination, condescension, outright disrespect, shaming and ridiculing of the divorced.

The stigmatization of the divorced is also tied to our value system in society. Culturally, a woman's value is tied to her being married at a certain age. If she is not married, she is seen as an old maid who lacks the character or beauty to attract a spouse. The unmarried is shamed because her value as a woman is tied to being married to a man. On the other hand, the married who knows the consequences of being single or divorced in our society, will take any kind of abuse to avoid ending her marriage so that she does not end up being a "thing of shame in society". This value system has led to the death of many women.

Similarly, there is an erroneous believe that a single woman or a divorcee is an irresponsible woman who goes from one man to the other. It is believed that marriage gives her honour. Unfortunately, this is not necessarily true because there are a lot of married women who are unashamedly committing adultery on a daily basis and there are many single women and divorcees who are morally upright and responsible members of the society, who contribute meaningfully to society. There are also a lot of married women who can pass for Jezebels. A woman has value whether she is married or not because man and woman are both created in the image of God. When a woman is seen as having no value without being in a marriage, it encourages abused women to remain

in their marriages because they do not want to be seen as valueless. This ideology affects the self esteem of many women and unless a woman is strong, she will remain in an abusive marriage. In the mind of the abused, it is better to be married and abused than to be divorced and safe because she has no self esteem of her own and cannot stand the stigmatization.

Secondly, the value of a woman is tied to children. If a woman is being abused in her marriage, she is expected to remain in the marriage and take it because of her children. In some instances, the children may ask their mother or father to leave the marriage due to the abuse. If the

wedding day. In fact, all married men and women pray against divorce. Consequently, when a man or woman decides to bow out of a marriage, what he or she does not need is the shaming and the stigmatization that society is more than willing to dole out. Society is very harsh and judgmental to the divorcee without considering the fact the divorce is sometimes necessary in order to save lives. Society, does not also consider that a divorce is a very painful process whether a spouse leaves or is left. According to Bridge to recovery.com

"Psychologically, when you lose a spouse to death, emotional pain is



Spousal abuse and stigmatization of divorce (3)



children continue to be exposed to this abusive environment, they may develop trauma in their adult life or repeat the cycle of abuse they grew up watching. The woman can leave and take custody of her children to save her life and safeguard the minds of her children. However, she remains in the abusive marriage "because of her children". This happens, especially when she is not economically empowered. This has led to the death of many abused women. In some cases abused women are told that only foolish women destroy their home. This makes her stay in the abusive marriage.

Furthermore, the value of a man is also tied to marriage. In the workplace, many times a man may not be given certain managerial responsibilities because he is not married. His single status is socially interpreted to mean that he is irresponsible and cannot handle big responsibility. The society believes that if he is married and managing a home, it means that he can handle bigger responsibilities, which may be an absolute fallacy and the complete reverse. If he is divorced, he is seen as a failure and may not be able to manage responsibility. This has led to many men getting married in order to position themselves for career growth or political office. This also has kept many men in abusive marriages because of the stigma of divorce and how the divorced are viewed in the society.

The society is at a crossroad today, on the issue of ending a marriage due to abuse. It is time for society to review its perception and perspective of divorce in order to save the lives of the abused who wish to leave their marriages to save their lives but are afraid of being shamed and stigmatized. First, there is no man or woman who sets a future target of divorce his or her spouse on his or her

expected, and there is a defined grieving process that can make your distress understandable to both yourself and to others. However, when a spouse is lost through divorce, many people find themselves without a clear roadmap for how to process both the loss itself and the development of a new life and identity separate from the marriage. While for some divorce is a relieving end to a dissatisfying relationship, for others, the disintegration of the relationship and the divorce itself cause deep psychological distress that keeps you from moving forward. For some, the common feelings of anger, resentment, confusion, fear, shame, and anxiety during and after divorce take up permanent residency in your emotional makeup and wreak havoc on both your mental and physical health. This can be the case even if you were the one who chose to leave the marriage"

Divorce has its downside but in the face of impending death, it is a necessary evil and a more manageable option. Its upside is that it removes the abuse from the danger of death which is the ultimate affliction. As such society, should change its draconian perception of divorce and its attitude to divorcees in order to stop the stigmatization of divorcee as this will help many people who are leaving in hellish conditions in their marriages, to find succour by leaving the marriage. This is not to say that divorce should be the first option or spouses should embrace divorce at the drop of a hat. No. What I am saying is that when all intervention, such as professional and medical counselling, religious intervention and family intervention fails, it is safer to advise the couple to get a divorce in order to avoid death. The insistence to keep couples in marriages that endanger lives because of socio-cultural, economic and religious reasons should be

reviewed downward if we are to stop abuse. I applaud the Minister of Women Affairs who is advocating for a psychological test before marriage. Many spouses are mentally ill but function normally until their condition is activated. For example, stress could activate this condition and stress is something we are all supposed to leave with and manage. However, in people with personality disorder, this could elicit violence. People who have no clue what abuse in marriage is all about are the harshest judges. They have the tendency to minimize the severity of a life-threatening situations. These people may also be people who see nothing wrong with abuse and have normalized it as a normal part of marriage. This is an abnormality that should also be corrected. Assault and battery are not normal. Emotional and physical abuse, psychological manipulation, and torture, none of this should be normalized. It is because some people in society have normalized these, that abuse is more acceptable to them than divorce. They have no idea what it feels like to be emotionally and physically brutalized by the person who is suppose to love, provide and protect the person being abused.

Let us look at a classic case. The social media is agog with the defamation case of Johny Depp and his ex-wife, Amber Heard. Investigations have revealed that his ex-wife suffers from borderline and histrionic personality disorders. When they were married, she subjected him to physical and emotional abuse. She went as far as defecating on their matrimonial bed, on his side of the bed. She hit him on many occasions and when Depp told her he was going to get a divorce, she pretended to be the victim and sued for divorce. His booming career was destroyed, and he decided to sue her for defamation. The ongoing trial has also revealed how Johny Depp was verbally and emotionally abused by his own mother while his dad did little to stop it. It exposed him to drug abuse and made him more susceptible to Amber Heard's abuse. Until Heard was psychologically evaluated, no one knew that she had two personality disorders. The world believed her and Johny Depp was the villain. Osinachi's case is still very fresh in our minds and as we speak, men and women are being destroyed daily in abusive marriages because of what the society will say and the stigmatization that comes with it.

When the society stigmatizes the divorced, no differentiation is made between the abused and the abuser. The blaming and shaming go to both. Society has little or no support for the abused divorcees who are already grappling with many issues. According to joinonelove.org:

Those in unhealthy or abusive relationships might stay with their partner or get back together after a break up because they feel pressure to not give up, forgive and forget or "ride it out." Pop culture glamorizes being a "ride-or-die" for your friends and partner, making people out to be in the wrong for leaving their partner. And while being loyal is a great thing, a good friend or partner would never

endanger or hurt you...There is incredible pressure to be in a perfect relationship, and some cultures and social media only accentuate this pressure.

Joinonelove.com also goes on to say that People in abusive relationships often feel embarrassed to admit that their partner is abusive for fear of being judged, blamed, marginalized, pitied, or looked down on.

While society stigmatizes the divorce, consequently leading to the death of the abused, society has done little or nothing to teach the emotional and social intelligence as part of skills required for a successful marriage. Society, until recently, has not considered the need for psychiatric evaluation before marriage, neither does society show support for victims of abuse who choose divorce.

It is time for us as a society, to revisit our value system, and our religious and cultural perception of divorce. We cannot be talking from both sides of our mouths. If society encourages spouses to leave abusive marriages, even the abuser will know that he has no support from society and may take steps to curtail and control his abusive urges. Parents should show more concern and give their children succour and remove their children from abusive marriages, not minding what their church or their neighbours and friends would say. Until we can prioritize human lives above our perception and stigmatization of divorce a very important medium for saving the abused, we will continue to loose our sons and daughters to lunatics and make their children orphans. The hypocrisy in our society should stop. There are worse things in this society than divorce. Society should channel its stigmatization to people who still taxpayer's money, kidnappers, pedophiles, arm robbers and the likes. How does living a marriage in order to save one's life constitute an act that should be stigmatized? ...Food for thought. And for those of us who are holier than thou, according to foryourmarriage.org, the following is what the Catholic Church has decided concerning domestic abuse: "A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence against Women, the Catholic Bishops emphasize that no person is expected to stay in an abusive marriage. They agree that that violence and abuse, not divorce, break up a marriage. They emphasize that the abuser has already broken the marriage covenant through his or her abusive behavior and abused persons who have divorced, may want to investigate the possibility of seeking an annulment. The forgoing is from <https://www.foryourmarriage.org/domestic-violence/>

In conclusion, each and everyone of us should reflect on our attitude towards divorcees and ask whether we are directly or indirectly stigmatizing divorce thereby stopping the abused in hellish marriages from getting a chance at saving their lives. May the souls of all the abused who died in the hands of their abusers, because they wanted to avoid societal stigmatization, rest in Peace.

Turn yourself into a sheep
Last week, I emphasized the need to have a personal relationship with God. In this series, it will be my pleasure to expatiate along that thought.

I believe there's an anointing upon your life, and it's working. I believe it. It is breaking barriers; it is opening doors. But this is the counterpart; this is how you cooperate with that anointing- you turn yourself into a sheep. It is sheep who can come close enough to the shepherd that anoints with oil.

David was talking as a shepherd, and out of the abundance of the living revelation he had. Remember what he said when he faced Goliath, when Saul came and put his armor on David, and it was too heavy on him. David wore Saul's armor, but before he went to face Goliath, it was dragging him down and, and he said, Look, Saul, I can't wear this armor because I have not proved it. It's your armor. There comes a day when your Pastor's walk with God will fail you. There comes a day when your wife's or husband's walk with God will fail you. You have to develop your own armor. Your armor is your walk with God.

What have you proven? You stay with the principle of tithing until the open heaven comes. You have a testimony that will mark you with the goodness of God that you can tell somebody else this thing works. Then you can understand the dynamics of it. It is not that you just do it one day and see the result the next day. You stay with giving; you stay faithful as you stay with service. It is on that path of faithfulness that you get working revelation of God that you can use. You have proven something and it will serve you all the days of your life. He said, **"I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them,"** (1 Samuel 17:39). In the preceding verses- verse 34 to 37, when he went out he was telling Saul, look, **"Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: 35 And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. 36 Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. 37 David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of**

the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine."

So David understood when he said the Lord is my shepherd. The Lord is the mighty warrior that fights for me. He is a mighty warrior. Deuteronomy 32:9 says, **"For the Lord's portion is his people..."**. Psalm 16:5 reads thus: **"Thou maintainest, my lot..."** He maintains my place for me. You see, I am not aggravated because I have a place in this life.

grow. But when people who have been long in Christianity start having these issues that you know, somebody offended me, somebody did this or that to me, so I won't come to church. I just discovered that that person is deficient of a personal knowledge of God.

The LORD is my Shepherd, my own Shepherd. Because of that, I don't want. Nobody can offend me to the point of not coming to fellowship with my Shepherd- the LORD.



I shall not want (8)



I have a place in this life. I have a ministry or a call.

I have come to understand that nobody can determine my destiny, except the LORD, because it is He, the LORD, that is my Shepherd. David understood this. That the same way he did for his physical sheep is the way his Lord does for him. That is why David could say in the height of his iniquity, that I would rather fall into the hands of the Lord. That's simply because he understood something about God. He is a Shepherd-Lord.

However, you must bear in mind that David had a personal relationship with God. You have to have a personal deal with this God. I know there are levels in Christianity. I know that people

So, the first thing that has got to be in place, why many people quote this verse and don't and cannot access the benefits is because, that lordship is not in place. Lordship, is ownership. It is an ownership deal. See, the moment you become born again, the Bible says in Colossians 1:13 **"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear son"**. So all of us, who have made the Lord our shepherd, we're living in another kingdom. Somebody else is our Lord, His name is Jesus, He is our shepherd. That means anything that is of Satan's kingdom has no right to enforce itself over us. But we take our authority from his lordship. That is why James will

say in James 4:7, **"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."**

See, if the devil is not resisted then he does not flee. Poverty? If you don't stand against poverty, it will stick on you. Anything you don't stand against, will stick on you. And this standing against is not bone face, please. David knew something, he knew that God will be that kind of warrior for him. You must put yourself under the lordship of Jesus Christ. Lordship means *owner*, lordship means *master*. You derive your ability from Him. You can only be as strong spiritually as your connection with God is. That is why the Bible demands that you submit yourself to God, then resist the devil then he will flee from you.

So, before you can resist successful, you must submit. In other words, the strength you manifest is not your strength, it is your submission to God. You cannot see God physically- Jesus said **"No man has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known,"** (John 1:18 NIV). So, Jesus, the Son of God, the word of God, who is God, is the only way we can



“

What have you proven? You stay with the principle of tithing until the open heaven comes. You have a testimony that will mark you with the goodness of God that you can tell somebody else this thing works. Then you can understand the dynamics of it. It is not that you just do it one day and see the result the next day. You stay with giving; you stay faithful as you stay with service. It is on that path of faithfulness that you get working revelation of God that you can use. You have proven something and it will serve you all the days of your life. He said, "I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them."

”

practically submit. And the extent to which we are submitted to God is the extent to which we are submitted to this book, the Bible. So when the Bible says forsaking not yourselves together, you submit yourself to that verse, you are submitted to God. I am going to ask you a question- Is He your Lord?

Many believers are weak and feeble because the Lord has not yet become their Lord. Several people have met me and said, "our hearts is in Covenant Word; as soon as our family gets a car, we will be coming here". I would always say to them: "your heart is not here, nowhere". Many of us here trekked to church. And don't give me that excuse that it is your generation, or that things have changed. There is no generation in God, and nothing changes with Him. Pass your own test, sit down there and give God your ultimatum, tell God I won't come to church unless my car is fixed.

The truth of the matter remains: if the LORD is truly your LORD, you will take off all the restrictions you have put on your becoming a sheep of His fold. you'll come to accept that you have been limiting yourself from benefitting from His Shepherd Ministry and by so doing you have been unfair to yourself.

In our next series hopefully, I will expatiate on this thought. Until then, may the Spirit of the Lord God give you a deeper revelation of His Word, in Jesus' Name. Amen.

To be continued...

"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear son". So all of us, who have made the Lord our shepherd, we're living in another kingdom. Somebody else is our Lord, His name is Jesus, He is our shepherd. That means anything that is of Satan's kingdom has no right to enforce itself over us. But we take our authority from his lordship. That is why James will say in James 4:7, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

INTERNATIONAL

Ethiopia talks with Oromo rebel group

A second round of peace talks between Ethiopia's government and a rebel group aimed at ending a decades-old conflict in the country's largest region Oromiya has ended without a deal, both sides said on Tuesday.

The negotiations in Tanzania between the government and the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) followed talks in April and May that also failed to produce an agreement.

The OLA is an outlawed splinter group of a formerly banned opposition party that returned from exile in 2018. Its grievances are rooted in the alleged marginalisation and neglect of people in Oromiya, which surrounds the capital, Addis Ababa.

The violence in Oromiya has killed hundreds of people in the past few years and been one of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's main security headaches since the end of a two-year civil war in the northern Tigray region last year.

"Due to the intransigence of the other party, the talks have come to an end without an agreement," Redwan Hussien, Abiy's national security adviser, said in a post on social media site X. "The obstructive approach and unrealistic demands of the other party are the principal reasons why these talks could not succeed."

In a statement, OLA accused the government of failing to address the "fundamental problems that underlie the country's seemingly insurmountable security and political challenges".

The East African trade bloc IGAD (Intergovernmental Authority on Development) said on Wednesday it was "optimistic" about further talks. Its executive secretary Workneh Gebeyehu appealed to the parties "to uphold their commitment to the peace process in the best interest of the people of Ethiopia".

"IGAD will continue to remain seized of the situation and stands ready to provide unwavering support to both sides in their pursuit of a peaceful resolution to the situation," the statement said.

The government struck a peace deal in November 2022 to end the conflict in Tigray after tens of thousands of people were killed and millions displaced. But conflict has raged elsewhere.

Besides Oromiya, [fighting](#)



Ahmed

in the neighbouring Amhara region between government forces and local militiamen has killed hundreds of people since late July. Tensions have been rising since April, when the federal government announced it was dismantling regional forces nationwide, triggering protests by Amhara nationalists who

said the move would weaken their region.

The fierce fighting has seen the federal forces – known as the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) – battle local Fano fighters. Fano, an informal armed group with no publicly known command structure that draws volunteers from the local population, was an ally in the ENDF's war against

North Korea suspends Seoul military agreement, restores troops

NORTH Korea has said it will move more troops and military equipment to the border with South Korea, and will no longer be bound by a 2018 joint military accord after Seoul suspended parts of the agreement in response to Pyongyang's launch of a military spy satellite.

North Korea will "never be bound" by the agreement, state media reported on Thursday, citing the Defence Ministry.

The Comprehensive Military Agreement (CMA) was signed at a 2018 summit between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and former South Korean President Moon Jae-in as part of an attempt to reduce tensions on the peninsula and build trust between the two countries.

Seoul withdrew from parts of the deal on Wednesday after Pyongyang said it had successfully launched the Malligyong-1 into orbit, following failures in May and August.

"We will immediately restore all military measures that have been halted according to the North-South military agreement," the ministry said in a statement carried by the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA).

"We will withdraw the military steps taken to prevent military tension and conflict in all spheres including ground, sea and air, and deploy more powerful armed forces and



Kim

new-type military hardware in the region along the Military Demarcation Line," it continued.

South Korea must "pay dearly for their irresponsible and grave political and military provocations that have pushed the present situation to an uncontrollable phase," North Korea said.

Leif-Eric Easley, a professor of international studies at Ewha Womans University in Seoul, said risks were likely to rise as a result of the agreement being abandoned.

"South Korea has the technological edge, so will be able to conduct more sophisticated surveillance and exercises closer to the border," Easley said in an email.

"But Seoul's military intelligence and operational readiness were not seriously hampered by the CMA. And

A US warship cruising the Red Sea has shot down drones fired from Houthi-held territory in Yemen, according to the US Central Command.

The USS Thomas Hudner, a guided-missile destroyer, shot down "multiple one-way attack drones" launched on Thursday morning from Yemen's Houthi-controlled areas, CENTCOM said in a post on X, formerly Twitter.

CENTCOM said there was no damage to the US vessel or injuries to its crew.

Yemen's Houthi rebels have declared themselves part of the "axis of resistance" of Iran's allies and launched a series of drones and missiles towards Israel since the start of the war in Gaza.

On Wednesday, Israel said it had intercepted a "cruise missile" heading for the south of the country, a shot claimed by the Houthi rebels.

Switzerland moves to ban Hamas, backs Israel

THE Swiss government has announced it will introduce legislation by the end of February to explicitly ban "Hamas activities or support" for the Palestinian group.

The Federal Council, the executive branch, said on Wednesday that it has decided to draft a law to ban the Palestinian group "considering this to be the most appropriate response to the situation that has prevailed in the Middle East since October 7".

"The act will provide the federal authorities with the necessary tools to counter any Hamas activities or support for the organisation in Switzerland."

without the agreement, North Korea may be less restrained about its weapons deployments and maneuvers near the DMZ, which could increase the risks of miscalculation and conflict escalation on the Korean Peninsula.

State media reported on Wednesday that Kim had already been able to review imagery sent back by the satellite of the United States's military bases in the Pacific island of Guam.

Kim has made the successful development of reconnaissance satellites a priority of his military modernisation programme, arguing the equipment would improve North Korea's ability to monitor its neighbour and deal with alleged threats from South Korea and the US.

The Malligyong-1 was launched late on Tuesday night, hours after Pyongyang had notified Japan of its intention to launch a satellite between November 22 and December 1.

Such launches are banned under UN Security Council sanctions designed to curb nuclear-armed North Korea's ballistic missile programme, and it was swiftly condemned by South Korea, Japan, the US and the United Nations.

On Wednesday afternoon, in response to the launch, South Korea resumed surveillance operations on its northern border in a partial suspension of the 2018 deal

US warship shoots down attack drones from Yemen

The spokesperson for the Houthis' armed wing, Yahya Saree, said such operations would continue "until the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank stops".

The Houthis have also threatened to target Israeli shipping over the country's war with the Palestinian group Hamas that rules Gaza.

On Sunday, the Houthis [seized](#) an Israel-linked cargo vessel with an international crew of 25 at the entrance to the Red Sea.

Israel's military on Sunday said the seizure was a "very grave incident of global consequence", and a US military official said it was "a flagrant violation of international law".

US assets in the Middle

East have also come under fire since the Gaza war erupted on October 7.

US forces deployed in Iraq and Syria have been attacked at least 66 times during this time, causing injuries to more than 60 personnel, the Pentagon has said.

On Wednesday, the US [announced](#) its first significant retaliatory strikes on Iran-backed armed groups targeting it in Iraq, striking several positions of the Kataib Hezbollah militia, also known as Hezbollah Brigades, south of Baghdad, killing at least eight fighters.

Iraq's government condemned the assault as an "unacceptable violation of Iraqi sovereignty", saying the US had not coordinated with it in advance.

Iraq's government condemned the assault as an "unacceptable violation of Iraqi sovereignty", saying the US had not coordinated with it in advance.

On October 7, Palestinian fighters from the Gaza Strip, which has been run by Hamas since 2007, launched an attack on southern Israel that killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, according to the Israeli government.

Hamas and other Palestinian factions also took an estimated 240 Israelis and foreigners into the Gaza Strip as captives.

Since then, Israel has launched a massive air and ground offensive on the beleaguered Strip, killing at least 14,319 people, including more than 5,000 children, local health authorities say.

Early on Wednesday, Israel and Hamas agreed on a Qatar-mediated deal for a four-day truce in Gaza and the release of 50 captives held in the enclave for Palestinian prisoners in Israeli custody, with negotiations ongoing on the timing.

Israel and Hamas agree temporary truce

The seven-member council is formed by ministers from the four largest parties, and lawmakers in parliament are likely to swing strongly behind the draft legislation, given the positions of the major parties.

The hard-right Swiss People's Party, the biggest in the country, has been strongly pushing for a ban.

On Wednesday, the government called for respect for international humanitarian law and particularly the protection of civilians. It voiced "deep sorrow for the thousands of

civilians who have lost their lives in Israel and across the occupied Palestinian territories" and condemned the Hamas attack on October 7 "in the strongest possible terms".

The statement made no mention of Israel's actions in Gaza but recognised "Israel's right to ensure its own defence and security".

"In view of the dramatic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, the Federal Council stresses the need to ensure unimpeded humanitarian access. Humanitarian pauses are necessary for this purpose," the statement added.

Bern reiterated the need to restore the prospect of a political framework in the region based on a two-state solution.

"This approach is the only viable path towards ensuring that both the Palestinian and Israeli populations can coexist peacefully, securely and with dignity," it said.

On October 11, the Federal Department for Foreign Affairs (FDFA) suspended millions of dollars in funding to six Palestinian and five Israeli civil society organisations with ongoing international cooperation partnerships with the Swiss government.

The 11 partner NGOs were subject to "in-depth verification of their compliance with the FDFA's code of conduct and the anti-discrimination clause in their contracts". As a result, three of the NGOs saw their contract with the government terminated.



Cassis

INTERNATIONAL

Climate crisis compounds woes for Somalis

At a camp for internally displaced people on the outskirts of Baidoa city in southwest Somalia, Halima Abdi, 57, walks through the flooded compound to access her makeshift house. It is partly submerged in the water, which had forced her to leave the previous day. Most of her neighbours have left to seek shelter in Baidoa and, as she stands in the almost-empty camp of scattered shanty houses, she checks to see what is left after the flood swept away her belongings. BASHIR MOHAMED CAATO writes.

WE were forced to flee after three days of heavy rain that almost took our lives," Abdi, a single mother of seven children told Al Jazeera. "We are left with nothing but just the pillars of the house, and the floods swept away all our goods including the utensils, mattress and clothes. I have rescued my children and taken them to a different house in the town.

Early last year, Abdi sought refuge at the camp to get aid after a severe drought destroyed their maize farm in Manaas village, about 45km (28 miles) south of Baidoa and could barely get anything to feed her children. It was the worst drought the Horn of Africa had experienced in four decades. Since then, she has been dependent on aid in the form of food and medicine to survive.

Today, her fortunes have been dampened again.

"We couldn't plant anything due to the failed rainfall in four consecutive seasons and that is why we come to the camp looking for a better life. Now it has rained heavily and my makeshift house isn't there any more and I literally have to swim back when accessing the main road," she added.

Climate change has upended lives and livelihoods across the region in the last two years. The United Nations has said 4.3 million people, a quarter of Somalia's population, are at risk of "crisis-level hunger or worse" this year due to drought and floods.

Kevin Mackey, Somalia country director of the NGO World Vision, has said children are among the most affected groups and are now "at increased risk of illness".

With these floods following right after the dry spell, the most vulnerable people in Somalia have been hit once again by the latest shocks in a continuing climate crisis. In Dolow town, approximately 250km (155 miles) from where Abdi lives, Heyba Shirar and her four children live in her relative's house with nowhere else to go.

"I have nothing to feed my children with, I used to run a small restaurant but it's no longer operational due to the floods and the cost of living is very high since the roads are impassable." Shirar, 28, told Al Jazeera.

"No clean water to drink and all the water storage is destroyed. Also, all the sewage system is ruined and the number of people falling sick is increasing. I also got sick and I was diagnosed

with malaria, we are suffering, we kindly ask for help."

According to the country's disaster management agency SoDMA, the torrential rains have affected nearly 1.5 million people in South-Central and caused the death of at least [50 people](#). Its data shows that 687,235 people in the Gedo,



A woman collects flood water following heavy rains that have led the Juba river to overflow and flood large swathes of land in Dolow, Somalia

Hiraan, Bay and Bakool regions were forced to flee their houses, as floodwaters swept away key bridges and destroyed up to 6,000 houses.

More rain is forecast between November 21-24 and is expected to cause more destruction. The government says it has made efforts to address the current crisis and delivered humanitarian aid to some affected areas.

Somali government spokesperson Farhan Mohamed Jimale told Al Jazeera that food aid, mosquito nets and other relief materials have been delivered to 4,500 families displaced by the rains.

"We have also initiated lifesaving programmes which includes deployment of dozens of boats where bridges are destroyed," he said, adding that there are ongoing partnerships with aid organisations who are also responding as the situation unfolds.

However, the effects of the climate crisis remain widespread across Somalia.

In Beledweyne, an agricultural town about 350km (217 miles) northwest of the capital Mogadishu, the downpour ruined countless hectares of farmlands, some of which are still flooded. The flash floods from the river also displaced thousands of families who are now surviving on anything they can find.

"The water level is reaching my chest and all over the residential [area] is flooded and inaccessible. I was forced to flee

with my children and took them to higher ground. Literally, my children are sleeping on the ground [during] this cold and raining period." Abdikadir Abdullahi Mohamed, 60, a father of three in Beledweyne told Al Jazeera.

"I had a grocery store and a farm and all was swept away by the floods," he added. "I have lost about \$2,000 and still continue to count the loss; we are suffering. It's just now that we were hoping to plant and harvest given the drought over the years but it's over."

Somali boys play on a flooded kiosk stands near makeshift shelters destroyed following heavy rains at the Al Hidaya camp for the internally displaced people on the outskirts of Mogadishu, Somalia November 6, 2023 [Feisal Omar/Reuters]

According to the United Nations, countries like Somalia – which contributes 0.03 percent of total global emissions – are being disproportionately affected by climate change.

It is a topic that was debated at the Africa Climate Summit in Kenya in September and is expected to again be discussed as world leaders gather in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for COP28, the UN Climate Change Conference, from November 30 – December 12.

Meanwhile, the Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC) – a body tasked with climate forecasts – of the regional bloc IGAD has warned that the effects of climate

change are becoming more severe, frequent and widespread with far-reaching consequences for the region.

The centre says the region lacks an active multi-stakeholder coordination mechanism for the preparation of resources based on climate data and tools for early warning, alerts and disaster triggers.

"At an average global warming level of above 1.1 degree Celsius – and the region warms faster than this average – more climate change impacts are likely," Guleid Artan, the director at ICPAC told Al Jazeera.

Artan added that for resilience during recurrent and severe climate-related hazards, people need early warning information from real-time monitoring by

government agencies. That is missing and could take time to put into place.

"There is [the] need to build back better and not resettle people in lowlands and flood-prone areas," he said. "An integrated approach on land and environmental restoration and rehabilitating degraded landscapes including tree planting will help to reduce disasters in the medium and long run."

For now, Abdi, despite the situation around her, is still hopeful.

"There is nothing we can do, I hope and pray that we overcome this, return to our farming activities and recover from the disaster," she said.

SOURCE: AL JAZEERA.





With **BULUS GAMBO**

Gospel music has been part of me - Daret



Can you please introduce yourself?

My name is Dr Timothy Paul Daret, a public health physician.

come a long way singing. So for the first time I made a public appearance singing as a soloist. It was a song written by myself. I sang it at the COCIN Church Panyam Mangu LGA Plateau State during a concert organized by Dr Amos Peterson; my very good friend.

Though I didn't take up music as my professional career but since that day, I have not stopped singing. I have always gone everywhere to sing, within the country and some other parts of the world. Most times if we travel for evangelism with men of God like Rev. Danyam Dung, etc I led the praise worship before the preacher comes on stage. You know what it means to share stage with this caliber of ministers of God.

When I was still in Jos, I also shared stage with great musicians like, The Winners band, James O James, The proclaimers, Rev. Bulus Datiri, and lots more and I felt inspired and motivated. You see, I could have delved fully into gospel music but I have a strong career going on.

So my voyage into gospel music is not recent but, its been there for a very long time. Just that some of my friends call me part time musician. This is because; most times my job takes much of my time and only use my leisure time to write songs and attend to music concert invitation.

How did you develop this talent?

I developed my talent by myself, self-develop/self study. I didn't study music so I got some materials to read and study. In my beginning days, there were a number of music seminars and workshops organized for all kinds of musicians. I usually create time to attend some of them. Those that I can remember were by Panan Percy Paul and Lani Stevens. These were combine with strong practice which I do daily and have turned it into a habit. Because I believe that, to be a force in music, your musicianship, voice, performance skills have to be in tip top shape. The best way to ensure you're at your best, or to evolve your skills is to practice your craft every day, and to perform regularly.

Another thing I also did and kept doing is playing with family and friends, because it not only inspiring playing music with them, but it can also help keep me

Plateau State.

For a long time you have been serving humanity under the auspices of NGOs, what motivated you into venturing into Gospel music?

I have been working in development for over 20 years now. By the grace of God, I have worked in almost all the regions of the country. Service to humanity to me is also service to God. For the past 5 years up to now, I worked in the humanitarian sector providing support to people devastated by insurgency in Northeast Nigeria.

Gospel music has been part of me while growing up. I used to sing in the choir but was booted because I wasn't consistent with the part that I was given at that time. So, I left and decided to develop my music talent on my own.

One day, it dawned on me that since I had the opportunity because of my closeness to some men of God, why can't I sing alone. So, that particular day, I just called the bluff and started as the lead vocalist in our local church, I said I would love to lead the chorus for that day. So I took it upon myself and led praise and worship for that Sunday. That was around 1990/91.

But my debut was in 1996, I said to my self that I have



accountable. While jamming with other musicians, I improve, my timing, get inspiration, and enjoy the experience. Its important to also note that, by playing with musicians who may be more skilled than me, have a perfect opportunity to ask questions and learn helpful tips. My family and friends also help keep track of my progress and growth.

You are presently serving in the northeastern region of Nigeria presently classified as the most vulnerable. What does that mean to you?

At first, I was really afraid of working in the Borno State though I have a good understanding of the Northeast. But when I was invited to Maiduguri by my present employer in 2016/2017 and visited some camps and saw the sorry state of the people, I had compassion on them. Two things made me change my mind. The first one was, I discovered that the majority of the staff working to support our people were experts



Continued on page 26

Hollywood rising young stars

Rachel Zegler and Madelyn Cline



Rachel Zegler and Madelyn Cline

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

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

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

Simone Ashley



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

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

Ronny Chieng



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

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

Harris Dickinson



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

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

Continued on page 26

EVERYBODY'S WORLD

With Plang Kasmi

Relationships

6 signs you're in abusive friendship

HUDSON C says it and writes from experience. "If my childhood best friend had been my romantic partner, people would have told me to get the hell out of there, fast. All the textbook examples of toxic, controlling and manipulative behaviour were there from the beginning. Over time, they became louder and more obvious until it felt like the dynamic was ruling—and ruining—my life".

"Unfortunately, at the time, I didn't have the understanding or language to realise that a friendship could be abusive. If I'm honest, the idea felt dramatic and egotistical. It also felt difficult to distinguish an abusive friendship from what most people would refer to as just 'drama'. However, the moment my therapist labelled one of my longest, closest friendships as 'toxic and abusive', something inside of me clicked. I felt lighter. I felt less stupid and less sensitive for allowing a friend to have had this deep of an impact upon my life. I felt like I had permission to say that the friendship went well beyond the scope of what's normal".

There's a simple reason why it's difficult to identify that a friendship has become abusive. Abusive relationships may share a list of common symptoms—control, aggression, belittling, shame and blame—but how these symptoms play out can look very different depending on whether your relationship is platonic or romantic.

This is exactly why we need to talk about the signs of toxicity and abuse in friendships; so that people feel equipped to notice them, and, so we can normalise the idea of a friendship breakup. For whatever reason, people tend to believe that breaking up with a friend is overdramatic, or that it says something negative about you. However, it's important to allow ourselves to question friendships



just like we question romantic relationships. When we do this, we feel able to validate our experiences and acknowledge that all relationships have the ability to become toxic.

Don't like ads? Become a supporter and enjoy The Good Men Project ad free

I hope that by sharing what I learnt from my abusive, toxic friendship, I can help others to feel vindicated, understood and ultimately empowered to leave.

1. Your friend is possessive and attempts to control how you spend your time.

Emotionally abusive friendships usually start hard and fast. Don't get me wrong, a hard and fast friendship isn't necessarily a bad thing. However, if they're couples with one person punishing the other for

setting boundaries, there's a problem. The same goes for intense friendships where only one person is allowed to set the terms. In my experience, my best friend would get upset when I needed to hang up the phone or to go home. She would not take 'no' for an answer. My friend said she wouldn't allow my anxiety to be an "excuse" for why I couldn't see her. She would even berate me for spending time alone. The problem wasn't having a close friendship. It was having a closeness that depended on distance between me and everything else. Jealousy, guilt-tripping and attempts to control your time can be signs of abusive behaviour. Your friends should not demand your time on their times.

2. Your friend doesn't respect your interests, goals and dreams.

This one sounds pretty basic, but it's never obvious at the start. The problems begin when you drift away from your shared interests. Obviously, every friendship should involve differences; the problem is a failure to respect those differences. My friend would often describe my passions, career, degree, and social values as "stupid", "lame", "a waste of time", "too much" or say that "no one cared." Name-calling, put-downs and belittling accomplishments are all indicators of abusive behaviour. If you avoid telling your friend about the things that are important to you out of fear of ridicule, it can quickly develop into shame and silence. A friend should never be trying to force you to live a life they respect, they should just respect you.

3. Your friend labels their anger, temper or violence as 'passion' or 'love'.

Like many abusive relationships, anger and violence can creep in slowly. At first, you might notice that your friend is a bit volatile. Maybe they'll raise their voice or call you a name when they're drunk. Then one day, they're screaming at you or breaking your possessions. My friend insisted that constant conflict was a sign that we were closer than friends; we were "family." This is why people get trapped in these toxic dynamics; because anger, volatility and violence are often followed up with generosity, love and affection. These are all symptoms of an abuser. It's a confusing cycle that manipulates you into thinking that hate is a part of love. It's not. Love doesn't require 'low lows' in order to experience 'high highs'. Anger is never a substitute for passion. No matter how wonderful your friend can be, if they've yelled at you, called you names or broken something you own, there is no

excuse. Leave.

4. Your friend is unpredictable and you find yourself moderating your behaviour to avoid potential conflicts.

There are conflict avoidant people and there are people from whom we specifically avoid conflict. Learn the difference. Being a people pleaser is not the same as being fearful of one unpredictable and volatile friend. In my experience, I was finding myself nervous to check a text from my best friend because I was always scared that another fight was just around the corner. If a friend's reactions are never consistent, you're being asked to predict the unpredictable. You'll search for ways to calm your friend down and try to appease them before they can even get mad. Unpredictability, inconsistency, volatility and mood swings are all textbook ways for abusive friends to control people and get their way. If all your other relationships are stable and you're only afraid of that one friend's reactions, that's all you need to know.

5. They don't like change in your life because they consider it a threat.

If your friend is afraid of you moving forward with your life, it's a red flag. Healthy friendships are built on excitement for one another's accomplishments, support of their dreams and the welcoming of new, different relationships. At first, I thought my friend was just a little jealous of me making other friends. However, this aversion to me changing soon seeped into other aspects of my life. When I decided on a new career, to travel more and to spend some time being single, my friend became critical and openly insulting. If someone you love is constantly criticising your friends, your career choice and your relationship status it can be tough not to listen to them because at one point you respected this person's opinion. Only a toxic friend will find security in forcing you to stay the same. Failing to embrace your friend's evolution is failing to embrace that friend.

6. When you think about it, your friend may really love you, but you're not even sure if they like you.

The five points above lead us to this moment. If someone has a problem with how you behave, who you're friends with, what your goals are and who you want to be, it means they're uncomfortable with who you are. That's an incompatible friendship. When that incompatibility turns into guilt-tripping, control, manipulation, name-calling, yelling or violence, it's an abusive friendship. It's really hard to be in a friendship that's contingent upon you being someone you're not. It's painful to be yelled at or name called. It hurts to feel like you're not enough. The bottom line is that while this person might love you very much, their attempts to control your free will suggest they only like the idea of you. But you know what? You will find lots of friends who love you and like you, which is kind of the whole point.

Source: Familylives.org



THE WORLD

With Plang Kasmi

Delightful weekend recipes

How to make Samosa

Nigerian Samosa by Ajoke

SAMOSA Recipe is filled with delicious and flavourful prawns, peas and potato filling. Don't let the making of samosa wrapper from scratch scare you away from enjoying this crispy treat at home. It is actually very easy than you think, learn how to fold samosa easy with the step by step guide below.

Samosa is a popular snack which originated from India (Punjabi) but over time, it has evolved and has now been adopted and adapted all over the world. Nigeria is one of the countries that love samosa, we never joke with it, especially at parties. Every Nigerian party must feature Nigerian samosa on their menu and other small chops recipes like puff puff, spring rolls, plantain mossa, fried chicken wings just to mention a few. It is not a must but it means that the party isn't tight (as we say in Nigeria) enough hahaha. I have put Nigerian stamp on this samosa recipe but trust me, there is no difference from the Indian version. I have only used fewer spices than some Punjabi samosas would call for.

Can it be baked instead of fried?

Samosa is part of the many delicious snacks available in the Nigerian small chops family. It is traditionally deep-fried but in this day and era of 'healthy living', it is ok to bake samosa. It tastes very good if not better than the fried version. With baked samosa, you don't have to carry on the guilt from deep-frying it. Though I have used prawns as part of my fillings for this recipe, you can use and filling of choice or simply stick with the traditional potato and peas filling.

Ingredients for the dough

250g all-purpose flour
2 tbsp vegetable oil
½ tbs salt
Water (about ½ cup)
More Vegetable oil for deep frying

Samosa filling ingredients

2-3 medium-size potatoes
12pcs of fresh prawns, deveined
Salt
Seasoning
Cayenne pepper
A handful of frozen peas, defrosted
2gloves Garlic, thinly chopped
Ginger (about a sugar cube size) thinly chopped
1 small onion, chopped
Turmeric powder
Cumin powder, optional (substitute with suya spice)

Tips

Make the samosa pastry in advance and set aside for about 30 to 40 minutes then move on to make the filling.

I pureed the peas so my little one could enjoy it too.

You don't have to do this but I think it gives it the right texture when bitten into

This samosa can be made vegan or vegetarian. In fact, the Punjabi samosa recipe is made with spiced potato filling.

How to make Samosa wrapper

Add the flour, salt, cumin (if using) and vegetable oil into a bowl and mix together to form crumbs texture. Add water a little at a time to the dough and continue to mix till you form a stiff dough. Cover with a cling film and set aside while you prepare the filling

How to make the potato filling for this easy samosa recipe.

Peel and cut the potatoes into manageable chunks

Add salt to taste and bring to boil till soft

On a separate burner, place a frying pan on low heat, add 1 tablespoon of oil, leave to sizzle and add chopped onions, garlic and ginger and sauté for about a minute or two. Add the prawn, seasoning and continue to stir for another 3 minutes or till prawns are well cooked but not rubbery. Take it off the heat and set aside. Chop the prawns into tiny pieces or simply add to the food processor and pulse for a few seconds

Check on the potatoes, once it is done take it off the heat and drain.

Add the drained potatoes to a bowl and slightly mash with a fork, add the peas, turmeric and the prawn mixture and mix all together till well combined. Check for salt and seasoning and adjust accordingly.

Make balls from the dough as seen in the picture below. (Make them bigger or smaller according to personal choice)

Take a ball of dough on at a time and roll into a thin oval or circular shape. (This can be achieved by using a round cutter)

Cut the flat out dough down in the middle to form a semi-circle, fold the dough to form a cone with one edge overlapping another and seal the edge with water.

Add the potato filling to the cone and seal the water to form a triangle. Cut off any excess dough and press the edge with a fork as seen in the picture below. Continue this process till you have exhausted the batter and filling and then set aside.

How to make and roll pastry for small chops, how to fill and fold nigerian samosa

Place a shallow frying pan on medium heat and add vegetable oil and allow to heat up. To test the oil if it is hot enough, add small dough and if it floats on top of the oil then it is ready.

Add the samosa to the oil making sure it is not overcrowded, reduce the heat and fry on both sides till golden brown, continue this process for the rest of the batch. Take it off the heat and drain on a kitchen towel.

Serve with lime, homemade sauce or the good old, never disappointing ketchup.





Reality Bites

with Palang Kasmi
peekembo@yahoo.com
08036417305, 08095322786

World Toilet Day: Plateau among states to accelerate action

WORLD Toilet Day (WTD) is celebrated worldwide on November 19. This year's theme is 'Accelerating Change', using the hummingbird to inspire people to take personal action to help improve toilets and sanitation systems.

Plateau State has been listed among states needing urgent sanitation and toilet needs for its population. In 2021, four Nigerian States topped the list of Open Defecation Populations. Kwara, a state in the North Central was followed by Plateau, Ebonyi and Kogi states. The Federal Government identified the states as highest population of people who openly defecate as was disclosed by the Director, Water Quality Control and Sanitation, Ministry of Water Resources, Emmanuel Awe, in 2021 at the First Quarter Lunch Time Seminar for Media Executives in Abuja.

Quoting the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene National Outcome Routine Mapping Survey (WASH-NORM) 2019, he said 44 million people practised open defecation in Nigeria, a little improvement on the 47 million people captured in the 2018 report. One in four Nigerians practise open defecation, according to the World Health Organisation and UNICEF's joint monitoring report. And it is more common in places where there is less access to good toilets.

In addition, About 5.1 million people in Plateau State do not have access to water and decent toilet facilities, the 2018 Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (NBS) Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) National Outcome Routine Mapping (NORM) survey shows, according to WaterAid Nigeria.

The report, 2018 WASH NORM, shows that in Plateau State, only 44.9 per cent people have access to improved water sources and 34.5 per cent have improved sanitation, indicating that a gap of 2.3 million people that do not have access to water and 2.8 million that lack decent toilets exist.

The UN in a message to mark the 2023 WTD said "Right now, we are seriously off track to meet Sustainable Development Goal 6: safe toilets and water for all by 2030. Governments and institutions must be accountable for delivering on their promises. And every one of us must do what we can to help speed up progress".

"A toilet is small but mighty – just like a hummingbird!

Toilets are a foundation stone of public health and play a critical role in protecting the environment", the UN says.

"To leave so many people behind without safe toilets puts in jeopardy the entire 2030 Agenda, with the poorest people, particularly women and girls,



paying the highest price in terms of poor health, missed education, loss of productivity and general insecurity".

The World Toilet Day 2023 campaign asks people to 'be like a hummingbird' – to take simple actions to help accelerate change. What can you do? Be like a hummingbird this World Toilet Day!

Visit the World Toilet Day website to choose what action to take. Use our activation kit to spread the word, make an origami hummingbird nest as part of a global art movement, or take simple sanitation actions,

such as flushing your toilet less, fixing leaky pipes, contacting politicians, and busting taboos, the UN says.

Here are key messages you should know on World Toilet Day 2023. With just seven years left, the world has to work, on average, five times faster to meet the sanitation target of SDG 6 – safe toilets and water for all by 2030 – on time.

Sanitation and drinking water are human rights, and access to these services is critical to people's health and the integrity of the environment.

Over 7,000 people have already committed to take water and sanitation-related actions to help accelerate change towards SDG 6.

Did you know?

There are 3.5 billion people living without safe toilets and 2.2 billion persons living without safe drinking water. 419 million people still go to the toilet in the open ('open defecation').

2 billion people - a quarter of the world's population - lack basic handwashing facilities at home to wash their hands with soap and water. Unsafe water, sanitation, and hygiene are responsible for the deaths of around 1,000 children under five every day. (UNICEF 2023). At the current rate, 3 billion people will still be living without safe toilets, 2 billion will be without safe drinking water and 1.4 billion will lack basic hygiene facilities by 2030.

Drawing of a hummingbird next to the message Be the change. Use your voice. UN-Water, coordinating the UN's work on water and sanitation. There is no single UN entity dedicated exclusively to water issues. Over 30 UN organizations carry out water and sanitation programs, reflecting the fact that water issues run through all of the UN's main focus areas. UN-Water's role is to coordinate them all so that the UN family 'delivers as one' in response to water-related challenges.

The world is seriously off track to meet internationally agreed water-related goals and targets, including Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 "to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all by 2030".



THEY'RE SOW WORLD

With Plang Kasmi

Living

Is your child bullied?

Learn these key signs your child is being bullied and how parents can help kids who are victims of bullying at school or online, KRISTINA CAPPETTA writes

IF your child is the victim of bullying, they're sadly not alone. According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, at least half of all school-aged children will experience some form of bullying in their lives, with 10 percent of children being bullied regularly.

Your child may not tell you if he is being bullied, which makes it even more important to know the warning signs and take action. This is especially true because bullying comes in different forms these days. We're going to take a look at the different types of bullying, as well as signs to look for and how to talk to your child if they are being bullied.

Different types of bullying

If your child is being bullied, it may be happening in several different ways. Physical bullying can be the most obvious to see. If you notice bruises on your child or other marks, it may be an indication that your child is the victim of physical bullying.

Verbal Bullying, people who are verbal bullies, use words, statements, and name-calling to control their targets. They may choose their targets based on the way they look or act. It may be difficult to determine if your child is the victim of verbal bullying because there are no physical signs.

Cyberbullying uses the internet, smartphones, social media, and other technology to harass or threaten another person. It is becoming a more common form of bullying because bullies can hide behind a screen. The victims of cyberbullying can feel especially targeted because this type of bullying is invasive. Sexual bullying comes in the form of harmful or humiliating actions that target a person sexually. This can include crude comments or gestures, as well as sexual propositioning.

Sexting can also lead to sexual bullying. If a teen sends inappropriate photos to a boyfriend or girlfriend, they may get threatened that they'll send out the photo widely if they break up. Prejudicial Bullying and Racism.

Prejudicial bullying deals with the prejudices that tweens and teens have toward people of different races or religions. Victims of prejudicial bullying such as racism are singled out because they may be different from the group. It is possible that your child may be the victim of more than one type of bullying at the same time, which is why it is important to know the signs so that you can help.

Signs your child is being bullied. There are various signs of bullying to be on the lookout for that can raise red flags:

Physical Signs

Bruises, scrapes, physical marks, and other unexplained injuries can be signs that your child is being physically bullied. Be aware if your child starts frequently wearing long sleeves, even in warm weather, as this could be a sign that he is trying to cover something up. Physical ailments such as headaches and stomachaches are other possible indicators. Take note if your child frequently visits the nurse with these symptoms. Stress and anxiety from bullying might be the cause.

Lost or damaged physical items:

Kids can be clumsy and sometimes careless — we all know that. But, if your child frequently comes home with



torn clothing, missing personal items (such as shoes, glasses, or jewelry), or damaged school items (such as his backpack or textbooks), something else might be going on. Loss of friends and social isolation:

Chances are you know your child's friends. Take note if your child suddenly stops talking to her closest friends and begins to avoid social situations. It can be a red flag that her friends have formed a clique and excluded her, or that she's become a target.

Self-Destructive Behaviors: The low self-esteem and depression that stems from bullying can cause a child to start engaging in self-destructive behaviors. Any talk of self-harm or suicide is a major red flag and should be addressed immediately. Decline in school performance:

Decline in School Performance. If your child continuously doesn't want to go to school or fakes illnesses, something more may be going on that she isn't telling you. Signs of slipping grades, trouble concentrating on schoolwork, and lack of focus should also sound your alarm. This is especially true if your child was a good student and is suddenly having

trouble in school.

Changes in routine or interests: Keep an eye out for sudden changes in interests or commitments, such as skipping sports practices or suddenly dropping out of an after-school activity. While your child might have truly lost interest, she could be trying to avoid confrontations and certain people.

Difficulty sleeping:

Trouble sleeping, frequent nightmares, and bedwetting could all be indications that something is troubling your child. If sleep problems are coupled with some of the other signs mentioned above, there may be issues going on. Strange bathroom habits: Does your child wait until she gets home from school to use the bathroom? Although it may seem strange, it's a possible indicator of bullying. School bathrooms are often unsupervised, making them a hot spot for bullying to occur.

Crying spells: While teens can have a range of emotions, if you notice that your teen has unusually intense emotional reactions about school or social activities, it could be a sign they're having anxiety over being bullied. Changes in eating habits: Emotional distress from bullying can

impact your child's appetite. They may show signs of binge eating, skipping meals, or different changes in their eating habits. Unexpected eating changes can be a result of stress or a bully stealing food or lunch money.

Emotional outbursts: There can be several emotional signs of bullying as well. A child may behave more aggressively and have other changes in their moods. You may also notice that your child has become more anxious or depressed. This could be a major red flag that they are being bullied.

Cyberbullying is another intense type of bullying that can impact children of all ages. If you're unsure if your child is a victim of cyberbullying, here are some things to look for: Obsession or withdrawal from devices: If a child is being bullied online, you may notice they are either completely withdrawing from using their devices or have become overly attached to them. They may become overly protective of their devices for fear you're going to find something on them.

Keeping screens and other devices in commonly used areas is the best way to keep a watchful eye. On the flip side, they may not want to be near their devices because that's the source of the bullying.



Upset or frustrated after going online: When you notice your child becoming extremely angry over what is on their screen, it may be a red flag that there is something else going on. Any outbursts of anger are something you want to be aware of. More depressed after using devices: If your child looks suddenly depressed after using devices, you'll want to know what's going on behind the screen. You should be concerned if your child wants to be alone all of the time as well. Many victims of bullying pull away from their families because they don't want to talk about what is going on.

How to address bullying with your child: When you know your child is being bullied, you want to help them in any way you can. Here are some things you can do to address bullying with your child:

Be supportive: If your child tells you he is being bullied, you want to be supportive. Calmly listen so they know you care. Kids are often reluctant to tell adults they are being bullied because they feel embarrassed. They may also feel as though the bullying is their fault. You want to reassure them that it isn't and listen to them so that they will feel more comfortable telling you things.

Find a teacher or administrator at your child's school who will help: Look for a teacher or administrator at your child's school who will help you and your child. You want to make sure that the school takes bullying seriously and will do whatever it can to stop it. Also, if your child doesn't feel comfortable talking to you about their problems, they may feel more comfortable talking to a favorite teacher or counselor.

Help your child react appropriately to bullies: Bullies tend to prey on people who they know won't react to them or won't stand up for themselves. Teach your child how to react so that they can try to prevent themselves from being bullied. Examples of this can involve role-playing so they know what to do or say. While this may not stop all bullying behavior, it may help your child from becoming a victim. Build your child's confidence: Bullying can reduce a child's self-esteem. As a parent, you want to help to build their self-confidence. Encourage hobbies that you know they are good at to help build their self-esteem. Praise them when they do well and reinforce the positive behaviors you want to see more of.

BUSINESS WORLD

Providing MSMEs affordable, accessible digital financial solutions

Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) are the lifeblood of Nigeria's economy, contributing significantly to employment, innovation, and economic growth. Nigeria is home to over 36.9 million MSMEs, comprising 96.7% of all businesses in Nigeria. However, these businesses need relevant, affordable, and accessible digital financial solutions for them to reach their full potential and drive the country's development. The time has come for Nigeria to recognize the transformative power of these solutions and the enormous impact they can have on the growth of MSMEs and the overall economy, writes Kari Tukur.



A recent Mastercard study, 'The Digital SME: How Are Small and Medium Enterprises in the Middle East and Africa Embracing a Digital Future?' provides valuable insights into the evolving landscape of MSMEs in the Middle East and Africa (MEA), including Nigeria. The fact that MSMEs are aware of the many advantages of digitization is one of the study's most compelling findings. For Nigerian MSMEs, digitalization is a useful tool that can improve daily operations, spur development, and promote financial inclusion.

We need to provide MSMEs with affordable and easily accessible digital solutions

MSMEs must have access to and be able to afford digital financial solutions to benefit from them. Previously, MSMEs had restricted access to financial services however the introduction of digital financial solutions has removed these restrictions, with even the most remote MSMEs now having access to financial services. We take great pride in our

active support for initiatives in Nigeria aimed at fostering financial inclusion. Through strategic partnerships with local banks, we have made digital payments more affordable and accessible for MSMEs, even in remote areas. Our recent collaboration with First City Monument Bank (FCMB) and Netplus introduces a game-changing contactless payment solution. Now, merchants can accept payments with their Android smartphones or tablets, eliminating the need for separate hardware Point-of-Sale (POS) devices. This innovation simplifies business transactions, reduces costs, and empowers businesses across Nigeria. Tap on Phone works by enabling the device's Near Field Communication (NFC) capabilities, allowing it to communicate with a customer's contactless payment card. The customer simply taps their card on the merchant's smartphone or tablet, and the payment is processed through the Mastercard network.

We need to work together to help more MSMEs survive past

their fourth year by ensuring they have access to finance for capital and operational demands

We need to work together to create a bigger impact

To make these digital financial solutions a reality for MSMEs, collaboration and innovation are key. Financial institutions, fintech companies, and regulators must work together to create an enabling environment that fosters innovation and competition in the digital financial space.

Collaboration and innovation are at the heart of Mastercard's approach to empowering MSMEs in Nigeria. We have partnered with local fintech startups and telcos to harness innovative technologies and provide cutting-edge digital financial solutions. These collaborations have led to the development of innovative payment systems and financial management tools that cater specifically to the needs of Nigerian MSMEs.

We have opened access to digital financial services on a large scale partnering with telcos. We are leading the way in a rapidly evolving mobile money

market, working closely with telcos and Mobile Network Operators (MNOs), retailers and e-tailers, and traditional and non-traditional financial institutions to enable financial access for millions of consumers and merchants. We have partnered with Airtel to enable over 100M Airtel consumers across 14 markets in Africa and the Middle East with Virtual card and QR Payment capability and onboarding over 100k SMEs as merchants on QR. We teamed up with MTN, a mobile network operator in Africa, to bring more digital services to MTN's platform.

Mastercard is dedicated to Empowering Every Business Everywhere by leveraging its innovation and solutions beyond payments to help small and medium enterprises get paid, get capital, and get digital – safely and securely – wherever they are.

Financial and digital inclusion is critical to the socio-economic success of the African continent, and we know that achieving this, at the scale Africa needs, is not a solo project. This is why

we are partnering with a number of private companies, government institutions and development agencies to develop and scale locally relevant solutions, build stronger payment platforms, improve financial literacy, and empower even the smallest businesses.

Growth is achievable

MSMEs in Nigeria contribute over 45% to the country's GDP and they account for over 80% of employment in Nigeria. MSMEs are therefore critical for economic development so it is important for us to encourage their growth. We need to work together to help more MSMEs survive past their fourth year by ensuring they have access to finance for capital and operational demands, have the technological support they need to overcome market challenges, and make it easier for them to do business. If we get that right, I do believe that 7.5% growth is achievable for Nigeria's economy.

Tukur, vice-president of Customer Solutions, East and West Africa, Mastercard.

BUSINESS WORLD

Nigeria to export gas to Germany

OUTCOME of discussions between President Bola Tinubu and his German counterpart has revealed that a deal has been signed by Nigeria and Germany that will see the delivery of 1.2 million tons of natural gas to Germany yearly from 2026.

Under the agreement, Nigeria will supply initial 850,000 tons of natural gas to Germany annually which is expected to rise to 1.2 million.

This is as Nigerian and German companies recently signed two accords in Berlin that include a \$500 million renewable energy pact and a gas export deal, further strengthening economic ties between the two nations, a presidential spokesperson said.

Union Bank of Nigeria and Germany's DWS Group signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on renewable energy.

The agreement seeks to harness \$500 million in investment in renewable energy projects across Nigeria, mostly in rural communities, spokesperson Ajuri Ngelale said in a statement.

A second MoU on gas export partnership was agreed between Riverside LNG of Nigeria and Germany's Johannes Schuetze Energy Import AG. Under the accord, Nigeria will supply 850,000 tons of natural gas to Germany annually which is expected to rise to 1.2 million. The first deliveries will be in 2026, Ngelale said.



Tinubu

The deal will help process about 50 million cubic feet per day of natural gas that otherwise would have flared.

Nigeria holds Africa's largest gas reserves of more than 200 trillion cubic feet, but flares, or burns off, about 300 million cubic feet daily due to inadequate processing facilities.

President Bola Tinubu, who is attending the G20 Compact with Africa conference in Berlin, welcomed the deals, Ngelale said.

On Monday German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said Germany will invest 4 billion euros in green energy projects in Africa

until 2030, noting these could in turn help Europe's largest economy achieve its own transition to carbon neutrality.

FG, UN partner to raise \$5bn yearly

THE Federal Government and the United Nations, as well as other development partners, are to raise \$5bn annually for Nigeria's Humanitarian and Poverty Alleviation Trust Fund.

The Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation announced this recently that the government, UN agencies, development partners, and

SMALL & Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) in collaboration with Sterling Bank limited is set to disburse N50 billion to 10,000 small businesses across all sectors in the country.

The Director General of SMEDAN, Charlse Odii during a signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Sterling Bank limited in Abuja recently said the fund will be available as soon as two weeks from now.

Charlse explained that out of one hundred small businesses, 90 percent laments that access to finance is their biggest challenge and access to finance comes in different compartments.

He said they want to make the access to finance easier at single business interest rates for small businesses across different sectors in the country.

"We want to ensure how many people have access to these funds and we

SMEDAN to disburse N5bn to 10,000 small businesses



Odii

want to see progression in the access of the funds," he said.

Also, the Managing Director of Sterling Bank, Abu Suleiman explained

that over the last decades, they have seen that government has gone out of its way to source for cost of finance through the various intervention schemes.

FG, UN partner to raise \$5bn

ambassadors, among others, also committed to a coordinated approach and durable solutions for humanitarian response in Nigeria.

They resolved this during a humanitarian coordination meeting at the United Nations House, Abuja, where the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, Betta Edu, engaged ambassadors, UN agencies, NGOs, etc, on their commitment to

humanitarian crises in Nigeria.

"The meeting, which was at the instance of the minister, brought all the humanitarian responders in Nigeria under one roof, where they all committed to a durable, smart, and coordinated approach to humanitarian response.

"Part of the resolutions of the meeting was the commitment to raise \$5bn annually for the Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation Trust Fund in Nigeria by the Federal Government, other countries, private sector, donor agencies, and the development partners," the ministry stated in the statement.

Edu conveyed President Bola Tinubu's appreciation to the UN agencies and development partners for their contributions to easing humanitarian challenges in Nigeria.

She, however, stressed that the era of uncoordinated, unaccountable, and silotic approaches to humanitarian response in Nigeria was over.

"President Bola Tinubu does appreciate the effort of the UN agencies as well as other organisations that are working in the humanitarian space, but we just need to bring this effort in a more coordinated manner so that we can achieve more, especially in the face of dwindling resources.

"There is a need for the

government to take the lead and properly coordinate. The days of uncoordinated responses to the humanitarian crisis in Nigeria should be over.

"The days of operating in silos and duplicating efforts that lead to wastage, among other things, should be over. The government must take the lead to coordinate, to ensure that we are first in line with government priorities, and then secondly, we are meeting our targets," the minister stated.

She emphasised the Federal Government's commitment to reduce, prevent, mitigate, and respond adequately to the humanitarian crisis in Nigeria in a more coordinated manner, thereby reducing poverty by 50 per cent.

On his part, the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Nigeria, Matthias Schmale, who spoke on behalf of UN agencies, expressed support for the government in its effort to tackle humanitarian challenges.

"We've heard very clearly from you that humanitarian needs span the rest of the country. We are here as United Nations agencies to support in ensuring proper coordination, develop review and implementation response plan, mobilise resources for country response, as well as align to the Federal Government

NRC remittance drops, generates N345m in 9 months

THE Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC) has remitted N345 million in revenue for 2023,

covering January to September. The Managing Director

of NRC, Mr. Fidit Okhira, stated that their revenue was reduced because of insecurity.

He stated this while speaking before the House of Representatives Committee on Finance during an interactive session on the 2024-2026 Medium Term Expenditure Framework and Fiscal Strategy Paper (MTEF/FSP) in Abuja on recently.

The remark followed the revelation by the office of the Accountant General for the Federation that NRC had only remitted N345 million in revenue for 2023, covering January to September, which the committee members frowned at.

Chairman of the Committee, James Faleke (APC, Lagos) expressed

concern about the shortfall in the expected NRC revenue.

He suggested that the NRC Act should be amended and be made a self-funding agency while taking care of their operating costs and remitting any surplus to the government.

However, the MD while explaining the situation said that insecurity has affected their operations as their schedules had already been reduced, especially on the Abuja-Kaduna route.

He further noted that passengers' volume has reduced and the cost of diesel has gone up as such, they have to adjust since they have not increased their fares.



Okhira

ENTREPRENEUR WATCH

WITH CELESTINE D. ATTSAR

CBN policies and Nigeria's economy

Many Nigerians find it difficult to understand the process that led to the naira dropping as much as 89 percent in less than a decade. In this article, I will aim to explain the process that led us here and why a simple provision that was added to the 2007 CBN Act by the former Governor of the Central Bank who is now the sitting Governor of Anambra, as part of his series of reforms post recapitalization of the Nigerian Banking system, renegotiation of Nigeria's External Debt with the Paris & London group of Creditors, has turned out to be a curse more than a blessing that it was meant to be. KELVIN EMMANUEL writes.

PRIOR to 2015, Nigeria had operated a fixed peg in its exchange rate mechanism that restricted movement in its currency to +/- 3 naira intra-day (within a particular trading day). Nigeria had an abundance of Excess Crude Earnings (that the leadership of the Nigerian Governors Forum refused to collapse into the just established sovereign wealth fund, and preferred to share across the federating units like small children eager to devour the chocolate their daddy got for them on his way back from work), the state national oil corporation was remitting about \$3bn per month from oil receipts with the daily production volumes at between 2.2-2.5m barrels. NNPC as a holder of Nigeria's 49 percent in the Joint Venture it formed to liquefy and export methane gas, and propane to Europe, returned about \$3bn per annum in dividends and taxes to the government.

Post-2015, the new President decided that he was going to diversify the economy from Oil and gas and make non-oil and Gas exports the fulcrum of FX earnings. He also decided that he was going to change the mechanism for paying subsidy on petroleum products that was consuming around \$3bn per annum on an estimated 33m litres of PMS consumed per day. Rather than continue the system of paying subsidies to independent marketers, he asked the state national oil corporation to adopt an oil swap program, where about 20 licensed companies were given the authority to lift crude oil and bring back PMS, as a system that achieved 3 things:

1. Ensured the estimated amount of PMS consumed was increased without empirical evidence to back the demand, from 33m litres to 66m litres per day

2. Ensured that only 43 percent of the derivatives gotten from refining crude oil were returned back to the country with little emphasis on the grade of octane and Sulphur and that the petrol was in contravention of international best practices for quality control and environmental care (carbon control)

3. Ensured that the monthly Oil receipts NNPC got as payments for exports to its account managed by the Central Bank with six (6) approved external asset managers, went from \$3bn per month to nearly zero.

What happened in the coming



years was that in a bid to meet up with its balance of payments for imports and exports, the CBN started drawing down the foreign reserves with the Central Bank taking loans structured as security lending from two of its external asset managers without a formal request to the National Assembly, the Central Bank doing FX swaps with deposit money banks on the foreign currency deposits held across banks as a temporary measure for liquidity. As revenues shrank for the government on dwindling Oil receipts from organized crude oil theft, the government raised debt financing for deficits that constituted 16.8 percent pre-2015, and that rose to 43.8 percent in 2022, the implication was that the debt servicing and finance costs rose significantly to 32.5 percent of the budget, external rating agencies downgraded Nigeria's Local & Foreign Currency Issuer rating from Ba3 to Caa1 on rising Country Risk Premium and high Credit Default Swap Rates. The bill on the Central Bank honouring FX forwards for everything from Form A to Dividend and Capital Remittances to Commercial Letters of Credit (that negatively impacted the ability of commercial banks to maintain their clean line of credit with their correspondent banks) rose to \$6.8bn.

The Government switched from using revenues generated through taxes and government-owned enterprises that was around 6.9 percent of GDP, to raising quick money from the

Central Bank classified as "Ways and Means". A provision contained in section 38 of the CBN Act of 2007. The challenge though is that this provision only allows the government to borrow 5 percent equivalent of the real revenues of its previous accounting year (even though this was hastily amended without proper consultations in 2022). The Government went from a limit of \$500m to up to \$53bn. In order to achieve this, the former Central Bank Governor raised the non-discretionary cash reserve ratio from 15 percent (which is the globally recommended average for Central Banks) to 32.5 percent, he raised the discretionary cash reserve ratio to 41 percent, mopped up public sector CRR that was collapsed from DMBs in 2015 when the government adopted the Treasury Single Account (TSA). The balances he could not complete from Public and Private Sector CRR, he relied on Quantitative Easing that enabled him to print cash the CBN didn't have reserves to back, and this led to a sharp drop in the value of the naira, especially considering the sources for FX was dwindling on the expansionary monetary policy strategy that the government adopted. These monies were spent on budgetary support and direct intervention program that had impairments above 50 percent; for example, the Anchor Borrowers' Program which was supposed to raise the output for food production in Nigeria recorded impairments of 74.6

percent on 1.4 trillion naira, in contrast to the 4.8-5.6 percent non-performing loan ratio book that the CBN recommends for the banks it regulates.

The issue here is this: Central Bank overdrafts bear a recurrent theme across economies that have failed in recent times; the Banque de Liban extended \$43bn of the \$143bn in public debt that the Government of Lebanon owes that represents 160 percent of its GDP in comparison to the \$180bn that represents 36 percent of the GDP of Nigeria, and that is 4 percent below the 40 percent fiscal responsibility crises level.

Even though the Nigerian Government cannot account for how the Ways and Means were spent, the securitization was not market-based but involved the Government securitizing through a 40-Year Govt bond at 9 percent, which is at least 11 percent below risk-free rate (RFR), with a three-year moratorium, the government continues the indiscriminate violation of the new 15 percent limit without recourse to the law. It is also worth mentioning that the Central Bank of Nigeria being the entity that is owed money cannot act as a guarantor on a facility for which it's the creditor and an interested party.

In Ghana for example, a violation of section 20 of 612 of the Act that establishes the Bank of Ghana, and saw the BoG lend \$3.5bn that represents 523 percent of the previous year's government revenues, saw the cedis drop by

about 70 percent, leading to increases in the government debt obligations, that led to a technical default on interest payment to Eurobond Holders and consequent debt restructuring.

The interesting thing is that Nigeria's current Chairman of the Senate Committee on Banking, Insurance & Financial Services was once the MD of a regulated Tier II Bank before his foray into politics. It is difficult to imagine that the 10th Senate with him as this Chief Oversight Head and the New leadership of the Central Bank has done little to amend the 2007 CBN Act with particular emphasis on section 38.

If the Central Bank was to follow the recommendation of the IMF to move its accounting framework from IPSAS to IFRS as a tool to ensure that expected credit losses for 12 months are covered in its capital losses that appear in the valuation column of its balance sheet until its realized P&L and switches to the current column, the CBN will be forced to provision for its exposure and have its net reserves in negative.

One of the reasons the Central Bank is struggling to attract fresh capital in USD which is desperately needed to clear outstanding forwards and stabilize the FX markets, is that Investors are not pleased with the blatant disregard for extant laws, and fear that it might prove difficult to get their monies out than it will be to bring it in. It is time to amend the CBN Act!



Gospel music has been part of me - Daret

Continued from page 18



my second home. It was easy for me to acclimatize after suffering from a very devastating attack close to my house that I had to sleep in a hibernation room for that night. I presently serve people in six LGAs (MMC, Jere, Kaga, Konduga, Magumeri and Gubio). These LGAs have people of divers tribes and culture and they are wonderful, I wouldn't want to mention any one tribe because all of

(foreigners). Then, it dawned on me that I can't let other people come and work for us while I have the capacity to do so. The second thing was that, with the humanity in me, I wanted to be part of the people that help bring succor to the region because of the sorry state the people find themselves in due to unexplainable reasons. It is sad to see people knocking at the door of starvation, or knocking at the door of diseases and deprivation, or knocking at the door of sexual harassment, molestation and protection challenge.

What this means to me is showing the love of Christ in the most difficult moment. It means that no matter how difficult a situation is; people can still rebuild and hope for the best. We are resilient people and we can thrive in difficult moments and all we need is to get someone who can re-echo those gentle voices of hope to us. Working in that region gives me the opportunity to do that.

How have you been able to balance the equation in terms of your obligations and proliferation of the gospel?

God has been helping me. You see, when Jesus was entering Jerusalem during the triumphant entry and the people were praising him but the pharisee wanted to stop them in the book of Luke 19:40 He replied, "If they kept quiet, the stones along the road would burst into cheers!". So, for me worship is like food, because it is always in my mouth and each day I do not worship God, I feel like that day is not complete. In balancing that with my work, I normally deliberately create time to do that in such a way that it does not interfere with my obligation as for me, that is my primary responsibility.

I honor invitations for ministration since, most of these come during weekends. Over the years, I use to organize annual music concert once every year in my village in Chip, Pankshin LGA, where I invite gospel artistes across the state and beyond. That has been going on for over 15 years now. The annual program happens every December 26th and 27th. Through that, I was able to organize the Mhiship gospel artistes and we form an association called "Association of Mhiship Gospel Artistes". I led the group as its president for years and now handed over to Peace Dalis. They graciously made me their patron and I am humble to lead them in that capacity. The group has other notable gospel Artistes like, Eljoe, Emma Jesse, Angela Peace, NanshinDamu'ut, Ephram Job, Yaron J Town, Grace Datighit, and a host of other household names on the Plateau and upcoming voices which time and space cannot allow me to mention. I have been able to host this group of artistes to a music seminar and retreat for three days in Jos. This was in a bit to give them better foundation musically. I also try my best to support one musician every year to record an album, irrespective of where the person is from.

What kind of people are your present host community and how have you so far acclimatised?

I have been in Borno State for the past five years and it has become

them are great people and it is unfortunate that they fine themselves in the present situation.

Can you explain the message you intend to pass across in your recent album?

The title of my album is "It had to Happened". The songs in the album are evangelical in nature, we also have thanksgiving songs and praise and worship. I believe that we were not created to live in uncertainty, and we were not created to experience defeat. God's heart is for us to live from a place of victory and confidence in who He is and the assurance of His power in our lives. The album's message is all about focusing on who is within you. And it's the revelation of this truth that will make the difference in your life as you respond to every situation and circumstances life throws your way.

The message is to make people to discover powerful way through which they can make Sense of Life's Setbacks, and how they can handle It. When a crisis occurs, often our first reaction is to question God and ask why it had to happen. But what if there's a better way to respond? Discover how learning the right response to a situation is often more important than learning the reasons behind it.

Are there some challenges?

Some of the challenges I face include my nature of job which is time consuming. I actually face a lot of challenges in putting the peace together because of my commitment to serving people in the northeast. I am traditionally a rock artiste but had to do a mix of different genre to meet various fan's need. I had to venture into country music, reggae music and others.

Advice to other musicians?

Discipline is what makes a good musician. On average, it takes at least 18 days to create a new habit. If you're trying to become a better musician, set a goal for yourself to practice every day. This way, working on your music skills can become a regular part of your life. When practicing, be sure to create a routine for yourself. Start with a thorough warmup before moving on to learn notes and songs. Also, be sure to challenge yourself to a new skill every practice. Once you've finished practice, consider keeping a log of what you've done that day. This can help show your progress and what you may still



Hollywood rising young stars

Continued from page 18

Ariana DeBose



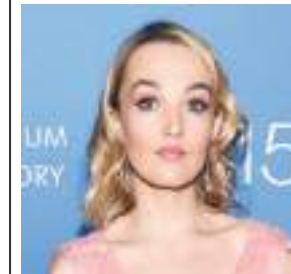
Moving to New York City from North Carolina at 19, DeBose's Broadway debut came in 2011's *Bring It On: The Musical*, which featured lyrics from Lin-Manuel Miranda, who would later tap DeBose for early workshops of *Hamilton*. "To see the fruits of your hard work, become an international phenomenon, I don't think you can ever fully process it," says the actress, who remembers helping Daveed Diggs escape a mob of fans during a lunch break as the show was gaining popularity. It was in the middle of her Tony-nominated run as Donna Summer in the musical *Summer* that DeBose was called in to audition for Spielberg's *West Side Story*, eventually landing the part of Anita, originally made famous by Rita Moreno. Ahead of filming, Moreno offered the actress some advice: "Lean into everything that makes you special." DeBose surmises, "She basically was like, 'Don't get in my shadow.'"

Phoebe Dynevor



A week after Dynevor wrapped filming on the six-month shoot for Netflix's *Bridgerton*, the quarantine began. "I went from one intense thing into another," says the actress, who only recently grasped the reach of the pandemic's biggest breakout: "It wasn't until the world has gone back to normal that I have realized the enormity of the show." The English Dynevor, who has been performing for over a decade and was previously best known stateside for TV Land-turned-Paramount+ darling Younger, is set for Amazon's U.K. remake of French series *Call My Agent* and Sony feature *I Heart Murder*. And, of course, there is *Bridgerton*'s much anticipated second season. Dynevor is happy to be back at work, noting, "The noise that comes after what we do for a living is a whole separate thing."

Chloe Fineman



On SNL, Fineman has impersonated everyone from Drew Barrymore to Timothée Chalamet. She was upped to repertory status this season and is also making the jump to the big screen this year with Warner Bros.' *Father of the Bride* remake, where she will take on Martin Short's wacky wedding planner role, minus the signature accent. "I felt like it was too much if I was German," she teases. "Now I'm the out-of-touch but likable white girl." And, in a more dramatic turn, Fineman will appear opposite Brad Pitt and Margot Robbie in Damien Chazelle's Hollywood epic *Babylon*. The goal for the NYU grad is to straddle the worlds of both comedy and drama, while also eyeing a future in producing. She explains, "The more hands-on I get to be, the more I enjoy it."

Dominique Fishback



When Fishback was working a retail job at New York's famed Drama Book Shop, she found out that the pilot she filmed titled *The Deuce* had been picked up to series by HBO. She kept signing up for shifts. "I still wanted to be grounded and wanted to be with everyone," says the East New York, Brooklyn, native of the decision. "Then my schedule got too busy and I had to give all of my shifts away." Her schedule has stayed busy with a variety of high-concept features (*Project Power*), Oscar-nominated titles (*Judas and the Black Messiah*), and prestige television (Apple's *The Last Days of Ptolemy Grey*). Now, she has just wrapped filming on Paramount's next *Transformers* movie, which she co-leads with fellow Brooklynite Anthony Ramos.

Leslie Grace



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

Source Hollywood Reporter

SUNDAY FEATURE

Countering arguments against commodity boards

The last information we received was that the COCOBOD, Ghana and Cote D'Ivoire's commodity board for cocoa crop, will be bailing the country out with \$400 million. Imagine that a cooperative – which is essentially what a commodity board is – is able to manage its affairs and prosper so well as to lend a country such a huge amount. The Ghana-CIV COCOBOD earlier this year reached out to Nigerian cocoa farmers, offering to admit them, so that they also enjoy the benefits of cooperation. TOPE FASUA writes.

ONE of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's genius ideas, going into the 2023 elections, was his strong belief that Nigeria has to bring back commodity boards, and also encourage commodity exchanges as key tools in rejuvenating the agriculture sector, banishing hunger, improving the lot of Nigeria's farmers, and ensuring value-addition through a structured approach to cash crops in Nigeria. This idea made it into the manifesto called "Renewed Hope" – perhaps the best of such documents ever to show up in Nigeria since our democracy commenced. It is noteworthy that President Tinubu's opponents, who had even more time on their hands, could not come up with anything close to the document.

The moment that this idea started getting discussed in the media during the campaigns, some 'market-savvy' Nigerians tried to shoot it down. The idea of a commodity board has been poohpooed as being backward. Some of these guys, who I have discussed with, said that farmers will get – or are getting – more cash when they are not organised into groups. They also claimed that the commodity boards of yesteryears were cheating the farmers. These claims are what I seek to interrogate today, and for good reasons.

Commodity boards particularly are of concern to me, because of their closeness to our farmers at the grassroots. Commodity exchanges, on their part, are very sophisticated institutions which help guarantee prices and oftentimes the delivery of commodities into the future, through very strict contracts. Nigeria has a few of these already, although we cannot be said to have developed a culture of having our farmers transact on such exchanges. In Africa, Ethiopia, Egypt and South Africa have commodity exchanges and these countries have reaped the joys of such structure for their farmers.

With regard to commodity boards, Nigeria used to have them up until 1986, when we embarked on a market-oriented economic ideology. The Structural Adjustment Programme of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) sought to help Nigeria with its economic structural defects. As part of the conditionalities for the loan that we sought then, Nigeria was asked to restructure public enterprises. This meant laying off quite a few civil servants and privatising many government-owned enterprises. We were also asked to increase interest



rates, and, of course, to get rid of these commodity boards, so that our farmers could sell their products directly in the international markets. We did. But we did not reckon on whether our farmers could negotiate as equals with their foreign buyers, or whether they could keep to standards on their own. We did not also reckon with the consequences of their clumsiness, or the reputational damage that the infractions of a few of them could have on others – and the country at large.

Whether we are talking about the North of Nigeria and its sesame, sorghum, maize, hibiscus, soyabean, and what not, or the South and its cocoa, wood, rubber, palm oil, and so on, it is doubtful that our farmers have done better than their forebears. We are not now talking about a few mechanised farmers but looking at the power of agriculture to change whole societies by lifting people out of poverty.

And so, we can look back today to consider whether indeed our farmers have fared better – especially those who sell to foreign entities. Whether we are talking about the North of Nigeria and its sesame, sorghum, maize, hibiscus, soyabean, and what

not, or the South and its cocoa, wood, rubber, palm oil, and so on, it is doubtful that our farmers have done better than their forebears. We are not now talking about a few mechanised farmers but looking at the power of agriculture to change whole societies by lifting people out of poverty.

From my own personal experience in Ondo State, I think our farmers were better off under the commodity boards. I recall when my brother and I were sent ahead of the family back to Akure, Ondo State, in 1982 and we had much interactions with our cousins and uncle, who was a cocoa farmer. In our farm settlement called 'Ita Oniyan', just outside Akure main city, there was a cocoa board office. In front of that board office and perhaps every other house nearby, cocoa seeds were almost always being dried aplenty. In front of most people's houses and also the cocoa board office, there were jute bags, and stacks upon stacks of cocoa, getting ready for the market. Even in Akure city, it was the same. Cocoa was so popular that it made it into some of our ancestral cognomen, such as 'Omo Oligii so'o ogbon ijomu'. This translates into, 'the son of the man who had trees that fruited money at Ijomu Quarters. The marvel of the improved-seedling

cocoa trees from Ministry of Agriculture, which bore fruits even on the stems, and whose seeds were shaped like cowries, made my people compose this cognomen from my grandma's side of the family.

It was, therefore, a prosperous time for farmers. Well, I couldn't tell how it fared for groundnut and beans farmers, or those in the Niger Delta area who planted palm trees and rubber. But in that era up till 1986, South-West farmers came to their own. They built storey buildings called 'petesi' in their immediate abodes. I was recently on a street called 'Oshinle' in Akure, and I admired the rows upon rows of those 'petesi' structures; those storey buildings constructed with mud and plank decks and stairs – proud symbols of that era that came to a screeching halt in the mid-1980s, with the ill-fated experimental advice of the multilateral organisations.

I think that era was a great success, which needs to be replicated under President Tinubu, for all farmers in Nigeria – from those in the vast farmlands of the North, to those in the South of Nigeria, including our livestock traders and even fishermen. We need to give back to these humble people who have been slaving to make our lives better.

I think that era was a great success, which needs to be replicated under President Tinubu, for all farmers in Nigeria – from those in the vast farmlands of the North, to those in the South of Nigeria, including our livestock traders and even fishermen. We need to give back to these humble people who have been slaving to make our lives better. I further think that period was a resounding success because it was when we managed to build the tallest edifice till date in the entire South-West of Nigeria – aptly named 'Cocoa House.'

Funnily, when the developed nations had issues from 2009 to 2011, they took the exact opposite of the medicine they prescribed for us. Rather than lay people off in their

public sectors, they employed more hands. Even during COVID-19, they created millions of jobs around the pandemic (not only medical). They reduced interest rates to spur economic growth during that Great Recession (2009-2011). They also put taxpayers' monies into private companies, nationalising a few car producers, banks, and insurance companies. They pulled out all stops. I believe it is high time we thought for ourselves, as nobody could know our country and economy better than we do. I fully believe and subscribe to President Tinubu's idea about commodity boards/exchanges towards turning the fortunes of our farmers around.

Perhaps what spurred me to finally write this article is a story from cash-strapped Ghana. Our anglophone neighbour had been hailed by the usual suspects, as it implemented a number of market-driven policies and topped these with borrowing of foreign currency from multilateral agencies. But now, things have turned southwards and the country is flailing. The last information we received was that the COCOBOD, Ghana and Cote D'Ivoire's commodity board for cocoa crop, will be bailing the country out with \$400 million. Imagine that a cooperative – which is essentially what a commodity board is – is able to manage its affairs and prosper so well as to lend a country such a huge amount. The Ghana-CIV COCOBOD earlier this year reached out to Nigerian cocoa farmers, offering to admit them, so that they also enjoy the benefits of cooperation. Those two nations apparently never dismantled their own boards when Nigeria did. Not only have they been able to cooperate till today, providing support, succour, and guarantee for their members when prices fall, the production of cocoa diverged from Nigeria's remarkably. Today, Ghana produces close to 700,000 tonnes, while Cote D'Ivoire nudges towards 3,000,000 tonnes. Nigeria struggles to produce 300,000 tonnes of cocoa.

Commodity boards and standardised commodity exchanges are promises that must be kept.

"From my own personal experience in Ondo State, I think our farmers were better off under the commodity boards. I recall when my brother and I were sent ahead of the family back to Akure, Ondo State, in 1982 and we had much interactions with our cousins and uncle, who was a cocoa farmer. In our farm settlement called 'Ita Oniyan', just outside Akure main city, there was a cocoa board office. In front of that board office and perhaps every other house nearby, cocoa seeds were almost always being dried aplenty. In front of most people's houses and also the cocoa board office, there were jute bags, and stacks upon stacks of cocoa, getting ready for the market. Even in Akure city, it was the same. Cocoa was so popular that it made it into some of our ancestral cognomen, such as 'Omo Oligii so'o ogbon ijomu'. This translates into, 'the son of the man who had trees that fruited money at Ijomu Quarters. The marvel of the improved-seedling cocoa trees from Ministry of Agriculture, which bore fruits even on the stems, and whose seeds were shaped like cowries, made my people compose this cognomen from my grandma's side of the family."

NEWS

Mutfwang calls for continuous prayer

By **DUMAH RANDONG**

GOVERNOR Caleb Mutfwang wants christians to continue to pray and have faith in the ability of God to intervene in every situation.

Mutfwang gave the admonition during the Harvest and Thanksgiving service of the Church of Christ in Nations, COCIN, Headquarters, Church, Jos, recently.

Our correspondent reports that the church was full to capacity as it was a great day for celebration and giving gratitude to God Almighty for members of the COCIN Headquarters Church.. Members were seen dancing to the altar in thanksgiving with proceeds of God's blessings in their life all through the year.

Governor Caleb Mutfwang, who was represented at the thanksgiving service by the state Deputy Governor, Josephine Piyo, said God deserves their thanksgiving and there is every reason to thank God at all times.

The Governor encouraged the congregation not to be deterred from prayer and thanksgiving despite the challenges of the present time.

In a sermon by COCIN General Secretary, Associate Professor, Benjamin Pokol, "Title Let



Mutfwang

Us Not Become Weary of Doing Good," he said doing good is the path that glorifies God,. Advising further, he said believers must give thanksgiving that benefits others rather than self.

The thanksgiving service also had in attendance, the Secretary

to the Government of the State, Samuel Jatau ,Head of Civil Service, Rauta Dakok , some members of the State Executive Council, Former Governor and Military Governor of the state, Jonah Jang and Admiral Bitrus Atukum among many dignitaries.

Kogi to freeze state accounts

From **AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja**

THE Kogi State Government has issued a directive to freeze all state and local government accounts,



Asiru

with immediate effect. A government statement signed by the Commissioner for Finance, Asiwaju Asiru Idris and made available to journalists in Lokoja recently, said no form of payment should be made to anyone from the government account henceforth.

According to the statement, all "standing orders and investment instructions are hereby canceled forthwith".

However, our correspondent gathered that the decision may be connected with the governor's concern regarding the performances of some members of his cabinet.

association. She made the appeal recently , while in an interview with SUNDAY STANDARD in Jos, the Plateau State capital, indicating her desire to bring back unity of the association when given the chance to serve her alma-mater as president.

The Contestant who appeared to be so passionate about NOSA, said, "I have seen what the

Our correspondent reports that Governor Yahaya Bello last Saturday fumed over betrayal of some of his cabinet members at the just concluded off-cycle governorship election in the state.

According to him, despite being mobilised to provide transportation and other logistics for the electorate during the election, "you have all failed to deliver while the mobilisation funds ended in private pockets."

The governor went ahead to issue a questionnaire to all 21 local government chairmen, which they were asked to submit last Tuesday.

From **AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja**

THE Kogi Off-Cycle Governorship Election Petition Tribunal, constituted by President of the Court of Appeal (COA), Justice Monica Bolna'an-Dongban, is set to begin sitting on Saturday, November 25, 2023.

Mr David Umar-Mike, Secretary of the tribunal, disclosed this to our correspondent in Lokoja recently.

The Nov. 11 election saw Alhaji Usman Ododo of the All Progressives Congress (APC) emerge as winner with 446,237 votes while his closest rival, Murtala Ajaka of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) garnered 259,052 votes.

The tribunal secretary said: "By God's grace, the tribunal will be sitting this Saturday, Nov. 25. We will take exparte motions.

"This is because all we have at hand right now are the exparte motions that will be taken on that Saturday.

"But the work proper may take few more days because counsels will have to go and start looking for

Kogi Election Tribunal commences sitting



Monica

documents at the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the rest of them before they file their various petitions, " he stated.

He said that the constitution of the election tribunal was in line with the

Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended) and the Electoral Act (as amended).

According to him, the registry of the tribunal has since opened for business at the state High Court of Justice complex, Lokoja.

will all be proud of the association and of course, they will know that there is a leader!", she enthused.

Dakas, however, expressed concern that many of the NOSA members were demoralized and not happy and had withdrawn from active participation in activities in the past, with some refusing to identify with the association because they have not seen what would push them to be part of the association.

This, according to her, was because other past leaders of the association have not given them the inclusiveness they needed. Encouraging such people, she said, "You know, it is not a one-man-gang association, but it is supposed to be for all of us so that all of us will have a sense of belonging in the association. But as members, we have not experienced that inclusiveness.

"I urge you all to come out and liaise with my team and let us put our hands on deck and ensure that we revive or revitalize it and bring this association back to where it is supposed to be. For me, I like good and accountable leadership and that is what I will deliver if given the position by the grace of God", the legal luminary prayed.



Dakas

men have done and have tried in their own ways to bring the association to where it is today. But I felt as a woman, I am not limited and believe, if elected as President of NOSA, I will add on what they have achieved and make it better.

"As a woman, I know that because of the care and tenderness that mothers give generally to their children, it gives them a sense of belonging and I will ensure I extend same to members of the association, my alma-mater so that it will grow from where it is today, to a place where all of us will be

proud of and be eager to associate with the association.

"I believe that when given the mandate, my leadership and the team that I am going to work with, we will be able to bring NOSA back to limelight because it has been quiet. Not many people heard about it. It is because of leadership issues that it seems we are not in existence.

"But, by the grace of God, when I come on board, I will ensure that our members are called back and the unity, progress and development of the association will be back. We

Vote for credible candidate- Dakas

News

PLSG partners organizations to tackle blindness

By DUMAHRANDONG

PLATEAU State Government has expressed readiness to partner with organisations working to address blindness and other eye problems in the state.

Governor Caleb Mutfwang gave this indication when he received on courtesy call members of Christian Blind Mission, CBM and Sight-Saver at Government House, Rayfield, Jos, recently.

Christian Blind Mission is an organisation working to reduce the prevalence of diseases which cause impairment and minimise the conditions which lead to disabilities. Sight-saver, on the other hand, is a leading charity organisation tackling blindness in Nigeria.

Governor Caleb Mutfwang who received the two organisations in his office, appreciated their efforts in providing eye care to the citizens of Plateau State.

The governor, represented by the state Deputy Governor, Josephine Piyo, emphasized that a society could not be productive without adequate health facilities to care for their eyes.

The Governor assured the partners of government's support to ensure the success of the programme in the state.



Mutfwang

Country Director Sights-saver, Sunday Ishaku, said the organisation has committed over 1.2 million Pounds for the project in Plateau State to ensure access to eye healthcare challenges.

Ishaku stated that the organization wants the state Ministry of Health to own the project by providing human resources, training and sensitization to the public on the importance of accessing quality eye care centres.

On his part, the Chief Executive Officer, CEO, Christian Blind Mission, based in Germany, Dr Reiner Brockhaus, pointed out the effects of blindness of an individual on the family and the community.

The two organisations have so far carried out over 400 eye surgeries and provided 627 people with glasses across the state as well as set-up facilities in Mangu, Pankshin for the Central and Shendam for Southern zone while people from the Northern zone will take advantage of tertiary health institutions in Jos for

From VICTOR GAI, Jalingo

CSO, NIS collaborate on migrants safety in Taraba

Civil society organization, the Foundation for Peace, Hope and Conflict Management has sought for a partnership with the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), Taraba State Command on the situation of migrants and IDPs in the State.

The coordinator of the Foundation, Rev. Fr. Anthony Bature, while leading his team to the Command in Jalingo, said the FPHCM was leading the civil society network on migration in the State ahead of the International Migrants Day coming up in December.

According to Bature, the role of the NGO was to ensure the safety of migrants and how Civil Society Organizations can impact the lives of migrants. He called for partnership with the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) and government.

He also spoke on the internally displaced persons (IDPs) situation in the State. According to him, the IDPs

"have melted into families" within their host communities and that "the meeting would enable us the opportunity of knowing where the IDPs are".

The Comptroller, Taraba State Command of Nigeria

Immigration Service, CIS neighbouring Cameroon. He mentioned Saradauna, Takum and Kurmi as areas where refugees exist. According to him, the presence of those refugees have created a lot of social vices in their host communities. He therefore promised to synergize and partner with the CSO.

He disclosed that Taraba had a case of refugees due to the Ambazonian crisis in



Kefas

Activist laments challenges to youth participation in politics

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

A human rights organisation, Conscience for Human Rights and Conflict Resolution, CHRCR has canvassed for the elimination of constitutional impediment to pave way for full participation of

young persons in the political development of Nigeria.

This is just as he challenged the youths to leverage on the "not too young to run" act to press further for total removal of barriers of age limit prescribed for certain political positions.

The Executive Director, Conscience for Human Rights and Conflict Resolution, CHRCR, Comrade Abdul Idris Miliki, gave the charge at a one day Round Table for Youth Focus Organisations and Media on Inspiring Youth for Leadership, held in Lokoja at the weekend.

The Executive Director noted that the future of the country rests squarely on the quality of youth who are expected to be worthy in character and learning, hence, they should

be supported by the older generation to enable them to make informed political decisions.

He noted that Nigeria, based on the available Statistics, revealed that over 60% of the population belong to the youth, hence, actions and inactions of the present leadership will have negative effect on the political and economic lives of the young persons.

He disclosed that most nations that have emerged from their challenges were nations that gave priority to their youths in all ramifications.

Miliki called on the Kogi State government to pay functional attention to the growth of the Youth Development Commission.

He called on relevant agencies and Institutions to synergize, collaborate and partner with the Youth Development Commission to ensure the youths are effectively mentored to confront challenges of leadership, while warning them to de-emphasize mundanity in life, rather, to be focused and committed to national development.

The Executive Director, who is the main resource person at the round table, promised to assist the Youth Development Commission through necessary commitment to deepen and spread consciousness of youth participation in governance and leadership.

He said that the main objective of the Inspiring Youth for Leadership among other things is to build capacity to promote good governance and to disseminate youth focused and media engagement.

He added that it is the main concern of the Programme to promote consciousness of the young persons to good governance and leadership in Kogi State.

While commending Governor Yahaya Bello for the establishment of Youth Development Commission and engaging them in political appointments, he decried his inability to put machinery in place for the democratic conduct of Local Government Council elections, in December, 2023.

In a remark, the Chairman of Youth Development Commission, Lawal Ozomata James, who was represented by Nazif Yusuf, commended the organiser for his continued support. He welcomed all

'Prof. Para-mallam, an epitome of handwork'

Governor Caleb Mutfwang has described Professor Olufunmilayo Para-Mallam as distinguished woman who built an enviable profile of hard work and commitment during her service at National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, Kuru in Jos.

Mutfwang stated this at the 60th Birthday Impact Celebration and Book unveiling in her honor which took place at the Unity Hall, NIPSS, Kuru, Plateau state.

Our correspondent reports that dignitaries cutting across the academia, political class, religious, traditional rulers as well as members of security agencies gathered to shower accolades on professor Olufunmilayo Para-Mallam who marked her 60 birthday celebration.

Plateau state Governor Caleb Mutfwang who

congratulated professor olufunmilayo on her birthday celebration, described her as a beacon of hope and a role model for future women to emulate.

The Governor represented by the state Deputy Governor, Josephine Piyo, assured that his administration is committed to creating an enabling environment which will give room for women to contribute to meaningful development in the state.

Director General National Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies Kuru, Professor Ayo Omotayo, stress that professor Olufunmilayo Para-mallam is a hardworking administrator who ensured diligence and excellence in carrying out her duty.

Book Reviewer, Professor Shedrack Best, said, the Book Gender and Development

Reader with thirty chapters capture the importance of gender compliance in development, and noted that the celebrant demonstrated selflessness by giving back to the society.

Good will messages came from former Governor of Plateau state Jonah Jang, former

Minister of Education Oby Ezekwesili who spoke through zoom, the Sultan of Sokoto Mohamed Sa'ad Abubakar 111, represented by the Emir of Wase, Muhammadu Sambo Haruna who all emphasized the importance of investing in female education.

Sani welcomes Appeal Court verdict

From JOHN FWAH Kaduna

KADUNA State Governor, Senator Uba Sani has applauded the Court of Appeal's verdict affirming the Kaduna State Election Tribunal Judgement which upheld his victory as the winner of the 2023 Gubernatorial Elections in Kaduna State, as well as dismissing the petition against him.

The Governor described the verdict as a "testament to the strength of our legal institutions, a win for democracy and a validation of the people's will."

A Press Release signed by Muhammad Lawal Shehu, Chief Press Secretary to the Governor of Kaduna State and made available to our Correspondent said.

While expressing joy and gratitude at the confirmation of his victory by the Appeal Court, Governor Uba Sani also extended a hand of fellowship to all opposing sides in a bid to move Kaduna State forward in tandem with the #SUSTAINKaduna agenda.

"Today, I received the news of the Appeal Court verdict. I acknowledge and appreciate the diligence and thoroughness of the Kaduna State Elections



Sani

Petition Tribunal and the Appeal Court for arriving at this verdict today.

I have always remained confident in our judicial process. It is now time to peacefully move forward and continue to work assiduously for the people of Kaduna without distractions as the task ahead of us is huge.

The Deputy Governor, Dr Hadiza Sabuwa Balarabe and my humble self, appreciate the All Progressives Congress family, and the good people of Kaduna

for their unflinching support during this entire process.

I urge my brothers in the opposition to accept this verdict in good faith and as the will of the people. It is time to come together as one to move our great state forward," Governor Sani stated.

Additionally, Governor Uba Sani has promised to continue to encourage dialogue with all stakeholders and to maintain an open-door policy for well-meaning citizens.



Para-Mallam

SUNDAY FEATURE

Godfatherism and political mentorship dearth

As a leader, your greatest leadership obligation is succession planning. However, recent happenings in the Nigerian political scenario point to the contrary with an unfolding disquieting narrative: a breed of leaders who prioritise manipulation over genuine leadership, resulting in a declining tradition of political mentorship. KALU OKORONKWO writes.

THE return of democracy in Nigeria in 1999, starting with President Olusegun Obasanjo's era till the present government, worsened the situation as nurturing of political leaders in Nigeria is no longer based on merit but on imposition with political godfathers in various states, especially outgoing Governors picking their cronies to succeed them.

Historically, political mentorship has been the basis of leadership development, a conduit through which the wisdom of seasoned statesmen is passed down to the next generation. Such could not be said in the Nigerian situation, a nation grappling with the complexities of governance, yet this once important tradition is fading into obscurity, leaving aspiring leaders to navigate treacherous waters without the compass of experience to guide them.

While this article dwells on political mentorship, it is satirical to mention here that this ugly trend is also found in all facets of leadership in Nigeria, be it religious, traditional, private and public organisations, non-governmental bodies, etc.

The dearth of role models who embody integrity, accountability, and a genuine commitment to democratic tenets is very evident in our political landscape. This has created a lacuna that opportunistic figures are quick to exploit to manipulate public opinion, consolidate power, and advance personal agenda as recently witnessed in the fiasco that engulfed the leadership transition in Rivers State and other states with similar leadership alignment.

The emergence of this disconcerting trend: the dearth of political mentorship and the simultaneous rise of manipulative leadership have paved the way for a breed of politicians who manipulate rather than inspire.

Following Nigeria's independence in 1960, the country's political landscape was marked by a sense of optimism and the challenge of establishing a united Nigeria. The leaders of that era, such as Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and Ahmadu Bello, played dual roles as both statesmen and mentors. Their wisdom and guidance were crucial in piloting the nascent nation through the complexities of nation-building, fostering unity, and instilling a sense of purpose in the political heirs they nurtured.

Though the advent of military rule in Nigeria cast a long shadow over the nation's political mentorship journey by stifling democratic institutions, political mentors like Chief Anthony Enahoro and Chief Ayo Adebajo persevered in nurturing political consciousness and advocating for a return to democratic governance. The struggle against military rule became a rallying point for mentorship, as the leaders imparted lessons of resilience and enduring value of democratic ideals.

However, the return to democracy in 1999 marked a watershed for political mentorship in Nigeria.

Beneath the surface of Obasanjo's presidency, shadows of manipulation began to emerge. While his administration made strides in



economic reforms, allegations of political interference and strong-arm candidates often found themselves indebted to their godfathers, leading to a compromise in governance that favoured personal agenda over the public good.

The era witnessed the emergence of powerful political figures, often with deep pockets and extensive networks, playing a decisive role in determining who ascended to political offices. These godfathers, having nurtured political alliances, expected unwavering loyalty and influence over policies and appointments in return.

The story of Dr. Chris Ngige and Chris Ubah of Anambra State is a story great box office movies are made. It echoes the broader quest for political autonomy, transparency, and a redefined narrative where the voice of the people reigns supreme over the whisperings of political godfathers with personal agendas.

Godfatherism manifested in a subtle but pervasive erosion of governance structures. Elected officials, owing their political success to godfathers, found themselves entangled in a constant tug-of-war between serving the public interest and appeasing their benefactors. The result was a compromise of policy decisions, the allocation of resources, and the appointment of key officials—all done with the implicit approval of the godfather.

The nexus between godfatherism and corruption became increasingly evident during this era till date, themselves as kingmakers, backing candidates who pledged allegiance to them. In return for support, these candidates often found themselves indebted to their godfathers, leading to a compromise in governance that favoured personal agenda over the public good.

Also, during Obasanjo's presidency, godfatherism became a prominent feature in Nigerian politics as these godfathers strategically positioned

themselves as kingmakers, backing candidates who pledged allegiance to them. In return for support, these candidates often found themselves indebted to their godfathers, leading to a compromise in governance that favoured personal agenda over the public good.

The era witnessed the emergence of powerful political figures, often with deep pockets and extensive networks, playing a decisive role in determining who ascended to political offices. These godfathers, having nurtured political alliances, expected unwavering loyalty and influence over policies and appointments in return.

The story of Dr. Chris Ngige and Chris Ubah of Anambra State is a story great box office movies are made. It echoes the broader quest for political autonomy, transparency, and a redefined narrative where the voice of the people reigns supreme over the whisperings of political godfathers with personal agendas.

Godfatherism manifested in a subtle but pervasive erosion of governance structures. Elected officials, owing their political success to godfathers, found themselves entangled in a constant tug-of-war between serving the public interest and appeasing their benefactors. The result was a compromise of policy decisions, the allocation of resources, and the appointment of key officials—all done with the implicit approval of the godfather.

The nexus between godfatherism and corruption became increasingly evident during this era till date,

eroding the leadership principles of mentorship. In the pursuit of political patronage, elected officials succumb to the pressure of their godfathers, leading to the diversion of public funds for personal gain. This intertwining of interests fueled a cycle of corruption that further eroded public trust in government institutions.

Years after Obasanjo's presidency, the spectre of godfatherism has persisted in Nigerian politics. The phenomenon transcended party lines, infiltrating both the ruling and opposition camps. Godfathers continued to play pivotal roles in determining the political fate of candidates, perpetuating a system where allegiance to powerful individuals held more weight than commitment to democratic ideals.

The erosion of political mentorship has broader implications for the health of democratic institutions. Without the steady hand of experienced mentors, leaders may become autocratic, side-stepping accountability and undermining the foundations of a thriving democracy. This erosion poses a severe threat to the democratic ideals that Nigeria aspires to uphold.

A cursory look into the nation's political landscape reveals that manipulative leadership are stark and the consequences are felt at every level of society, as public discourse becomes polarised, and the pursuit of the common good takes a back seat to personal ambition.

Curbing the rise of manipulative

leadership requires a multifaceted approach. First and foremost, there is a pressing need to institute political mentorship programs. This can be achieved through well-run political parties with very strong Youth Wings (not political thugs). The political parties of the First and Second Republics had a very strong tradition of youth Wing hence we hear of the Zikist Movement in NCNC and later NPP and Awoists in Action Group and later UPN. Establishing platforms where seasoned statesmen actively guide and mentor emerging leaders can be a powerful antidote to the prevailing trends.

The electorate must play an active role in demanding transparency, accountability, and ethical conduct from their leaders. Citizens hold the key to breaking the cycle of manipulative leadership, and by fostering an environment that values integrity and collective welfare, they can reshape the political landscape.

The imperative for change in navigating the abyss of manipulative leadership amidst the decline of political mentorship in Nigeria has never been more urgent. The revival of mentorship stands as the only hope and a catalyst for a new era of leadership that prioritises the common good over individual ambition.

It is through the collective efforts of mentors, aspiring leaders, and citizens alike that Nigeria can steer away from the dangerous currents of manipulation towards a future defined by integrity, accountability, and genuine democracy.

SUNDAY MAGAZINE



Is Nigeria losing the battle against cult violence?

Continued from page 10

Board of the NRC, Sir Eddy Ogidi Gbgbaje warned that if this trend is not checked, it will become a serious social problem adding that 'I am always pleased and happy when I see young ones making useful contributions to nation building and they should be encouraged.'

Mobolaji Ogunyanya in his research work titled Impact of Secret Cult Organisations on University Administration: A Study by University of Ibadan, reveals that Nigeria, was quick to add that 'the Nigeria University is being ravaged by the menace of secret cults among the student population. Secret cult associations have infiltrated virtually all Nigerian institutions of higher learning and function to varying degrees of intensity in the various universities including military university. The southern universities have however dominated the discussions on student cultism in Nigeria.'

According to him, "in spite of the negative image of secret cult organizations on the university campus, they are gradually permeating the social fabric of legitimate student organizations in search of power, influence and affluence. And they are doing so quietly without being conspicuous."

According to another study by the International Journal of Law Crime and Justice, violent crime campus cultism is widespread in Nigeria and hence has attracted increasing policy attention and

scholarly works. However, much of the literature has focused on cultists (perpetrators of cultism) in the free world-cultism among prison inmates have been largely underexplored.

For Celestine Poroma and Ekweoma Abel "The issue of arms proliferation and the crisis of cult supremacy and security in Nigeria especially in the Niger Delta region have posed serious concern and threat to national security and socio-economic and political development of the area. In recent times, Rivers State has experienced different types of conflict ranging from communal/political crises to crises of cultism/militancy worsened by the free movement of small arms and light weapons across the coastal borders. This development has equally degenerated to the suburbs of the state, to the extent that different parts of the state have been bedevilled by different types of arm conflict."

The use of arms has fuelled crises and insecurity in Omoku, Ahoada, Ogbakiri, Rumuekpe, and Ogoniland. This development has aggravated security challenges in River State which has affected socio-economic and political activities. The proliferation of arms has been one of the biggest security challenges confronting the state which is capable of throwing the state into anarchy and increase crime and violence.

But again, there are many other states in the country which have

almost been held captive by various dangerous cult groups. In some of these states, citizens hardly come out on the streets without thinking twice considering the nasty situations they have found themselves in.

On moves required to address occultism, Chukwurah Gladys and John Mathew in their research study are of the opinion that 'cultism is a serious issue of concern as it has seriously degraded academic system in Nigerian universities. In recent times, the activities of secret cult members in tertiary institutions have assumed different negative dimensions. Understanding the root causes of cultism is of importance as a means of finding a lasting solution to it.'

The study further highlights that 'several efforts have been made to curb cultism but to no avail. In 1984, Prof Wole Soyinka noticed that cultism has derailed from its intention, he extricated himself from emerging trend, initiated the abolition of the Pirates Confraternity in all tertiary institutions. The 1979 and 1999 Constitutions of the Federal Republic of Nigeria are abhorrent to any association, club, society

and groups whose activities run counter-productive to national development."

According to Udoh Chinwe and Ikezu Mag, 'government should establish tribunals to try cultists and if found guilty should be sentenced accordingly. This will be the detriment to those who have joined or those who have the intention of joining the secret cults. If the truth should be told, the Nigerian government is yet to provide stable employment opportunities for many of its jobless youths in the country which has no doubt added to increasing influx of teenagers to cultic organizations. Some of these jobless youths are easy recruits for these sinister and evil minded individuals who are always scavenging for them. For others, the government should also implement a form of rehabilitation for cult members to orientate themselves to live a better life. The government should also reduce the high cost of education in Nigeria so that everyone can afford it.'

Just recently, Rivers State Governor, Simnalayi Fubara was forced to read riot act to school principals in the state saying that

anyone caught involved in cult activities would be summarily dismissed. He further stressed that schools in his state are for quality teaching and learning and not for breeding grounds for cultists. In like manner, the Lagos State government has warned students in the state against joining gangs and cult groups. Speaking recently, the state Commissioner for Education, Folasde Adefisayo noted that the state government would not tolerate gang and or cultist related activities. Other states in the country have also clearly drawn battle-lines against cult related activities but all these afford have not yielded any meaningful results. This development has prompted many individuals to conclude that the Nigeria government is gradually losing the battle against this menace in the nation. This equally means that a lot needs to be done to save more vulnerable citizens of the country from joining these groups.

On the other hand, more sensitization programmes should be implemented in order to help vulnerable citizens of this country come to terms with the reality of the dangers associated with cultism in the nation.

"A Study of University by Ibadan, Nigeria, reveal that 'the Nigeria university is being ravaged by the menace of secret cults among the student population. Secret cult associations have infiltrated virtually all Nigerian institutions of higher learning and function to varying degrees of intensity in the various universities including military university. The southern universities have however dominated the discussions on student cultism in Nigeria'".

METRO-FOCUS

The mentally ill, back on our streets

By HOSEA NYAMLONG

JOS City, the beautiful with a lot of tourists attraction, like the Wildlife Park, waterfalls, game reserve, striking hills and rock formations etc.

The city is a nice place to live, visit and spend one's holiday. One of its main attraction is its clement weather and serene environment.

Over the years, Plateau State has witnessed a lot of influx of people that came to do one form of business, attend school or training, engage in farming or mining, etc. After such engagements, most of these people fall in love with Jos and decide to make it their second home.

Recently, Jos metropolis is witnessing a resurgence of persons with mental illness roaming the streets freely without any check on them. Some people say the situation is not unconnected to the approaching harmattan. It is the common believe that the harmattan winds is a trigger to mental illness. At this time, even those whose case has calmed down, become an issue.

One of the signs or features of a mental ill person is when someone is preoccupied with the collections of rags, dirt and junk. Such luggage is then carried along effortlessly as more junk is added along the way. As they move along, the baggage increases.

Sometimes, the person might be physically aggressive, uncontrollable, unkempt because they don't take their bath. And at most times, they talk unabatedly. Another noticeable sign is withdrawal from people especially, family members, friends and associates.

METRO FOCUS correspondent observed that mental illness are characterized by a combination of abnormal thoughts, perceptions, emotions, behaviour and relationships with others.

Again, mental illness has no race, gender, tribe, age or social status. Studies have shown that mental disorder includes, depression, bipolar affective order, schizophrenia and other psychosis, dementia, intellectual disabilities developed into autism.

Sadly to say that it is not



everybody you see that you should think is normal on the streets. However, it was observed that within the state capital, the younger people are the most hit by mental illness. This has become a thing of concern to the general public. Moreso, with these group of persons that ought to have been engaged productively, but are busy roaming the streets and becoming nuisance in the society. World Health Organization(WHO), has said

that Nigeria's population if not checked, would double by 2050. As at January 2022, WHO gave a statistic that over 20 million Nigerians are currently suffering from various degrees of mental illness or disorder without psychiatric health care. Nevertheless, there is an urgent need for more psychiatrists doctors, alongside a massive public awareness on preventive measures to mental illness in our country at large.

METRO FOCUS went round the city centre to sample opinions of citizens on the resurgence of mentally ill persons gaining prominence within the metropolis. An octogenarian, Mr. Felix Ndubuisi said that the cause of mental illness in our society today is as a result of consumption of illicit drugs by the younger generation and such harmful drugs are sold in every nook and cranny of the city.

He attributed that to the availability of these harmful substances in our society which gain entrance because of the kind of porous borders we have in the country. Most of the the drugs are being smuggled on a daily basis by the drug barons, not minding the damage it would cause to the health of the Nigeria's population.

A senior citizen, Mrs. Atong Martha Azi, expressed contrary opinion. She said that the economy of the country is so harsh and most citizens can barely eat. It has become very difficult for an average citizen to survive. Some people cannot bear the situation, so their escape route is to take substances or drugs.

Mr. Babajide Akinlade on the other hand barred his mind that the major cause of these mental illness in our society today, especially in the case of the younger persons, is as a result of 'get rich quick syndrome. Many have gone astray, to the extend that they engage the services of Baba lawo (native doctors) to help them make money by all means. This sometimes involves human sacrifice.

The implication of the sacrifices, after the rituals are performed and they can't keep to the bargain of the rules of the game is mental illness.

METRO FOCUS also gathered that there is this general believe that once you are mentally ill, you remain mentally ill forever. While some citizens attribute it to a myth.

Similarly, some attribute mental illness to environmental factors that are linked to stressor which can trigger an illness in a person who is susceptible to mental illness. Stressors include, death of loved ones, divorce, a dysfunctional family life, self low esteem, anxiety, anger, loneliness, substance abuse by the person or person's parents or care givers.

Unfortunately, the attention given to mental health disorder in Nigeria is inadequate, considering the sum total of psychiatrists doctors in the country which is low, compared to the total population of the country.

It was viewed that the Nigeria mental health policy is only a framework without structures. Our legislators should be up and doing to ensure that the bill on mental health that would protect individuals suffering from any form of disorder, and have access to medical care, sees the light of day.

In addition, Ndubuisi, Akinlade and Azi suggested that the government should take the necessary measures to arrest and jail any person caught peddling drugs, if not the youths would not be able to move our great nation forward.

Plateau state government and the relevant authorities should take decisive steps to clear up mentally ill persons roaming the streets of the city, to rehabilitation centers.

Plateau state is known as the "Home of Peace and Tourism" not home for insane people.



SUNDAY PEOPLE

GHS PRINCIPAL RETIRES FROM SERVICE

The management, staff and students of Girls' High School Gindiri on Sunday organised Retirement Service for the Principal of GHS, Mrs. Orpah Goteng at the Ulster Church Gindiri, Mangu LGA



Sum Pyem, His Royal Highness, Charles Mato Dakat delivering the royal father's goodwill message



Chaplain, Ulster Church, Rev. John Sagai (right) encouraging the retired principal and husband



The Principal, Girls' High School, Mrs. Orpah Goteng and family during the Service



Mr. & Mrs. Orpah Goteng in a group photograph with clergymen



Celebrant and husband flanked by well-wishers



National President of GOSA, Engr. Sunday Hyat, mni delivering his speech



Girls' High School PTA Chairman, Dr. Kamshak Kuden delivering his message



Cross section of students of the school during the retirement of their Principal

Road Runner
 Michael Agada
 SAFER TOGETHER
 magada122@gmail.com
 +234 803 333 5313

On the activities of tricycles

This is a person riding a three-wheeled vehicle. Such a vehicle may be motorized or non-motorized.

General Guide for Non-motorized Tricyclists

- i. Wear hand gloves
- ii. Sit comfortably, facing the front
- iii. Hold handle bars firmly
- iv. Do not meander in traffic
- v. Do not carry outsized objects
- vi. Do not carry more than the required number of passengers
- vii. It is illegal to overload a tricycle
- viii. Wear safety/crash helmet
- ix. No passenger should share the rider's seat
- x. Do not compete with motor powered vehicle in traffic
- xi. Do not hold onto any other vehicle in traffic

Riding through intersection

- i. Where traffic lights are installed, cyclists must obey traffic lights as applicable to other vehicles.
- ii. Cyclists should use hand signals to indicate direction
- iii. Cyclists should not obstruct the flow of traffic
- iv. Cyclists should avoid lane hopping
- v. Remember Look-Signal-Look-Move

Speed Limit

- i. Maximum speed limit is 5km/hr.
- ii. Tricycles are not permitted to ply the highway/expressway.

THE MOTORIZED TRI-CYCLE

This is a person who rides an engine powered three-wheeled vehicle.

General Rules/Guides

- i. Wear hand gloves
- ii. Sit comfortably facing front
- iii. Hold handle bars firmly
- iv. Do not meander in traffic
- v. Do not carry out sized objects
- vi. Do not carry more than the three passengers at the back seat
- vii. No passenger is allowed to share the rider's seat
- viii. Avoid competing with other vehicles in traffic
- ix. Do not replace your tri-cycle engine with another engine and capacity different for the manufacturer's specification



NEWS

Wife of slain pastor, freed

From John FWAH, Kaduna

THE wife of the slain pastor of Second Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), Damakasuwa in Kuru Local Government Area of Kaduna State, who was abducted by gunmen, Grace Maraya has regained her freedom two days after her husband was killed.

Her release was confirmed by an elder in the church on Monday, who said a ransom of

N350,000 was paid to secure her release on Sunday night.

He also said the kidnappers had earlier demanded N3 million, but after negotiation, they accepted N350,000 before she was released.

Recall that gunmen in the early hours of last week Friday stormed the clergy's house in Damakasuwa and killed Rev Amako Maraya, who was the church pastor, and abducted his wife, Grace.

Report has it that the same group of gunmen,

three months ago, had made an unsuccessful attempt to kidnap the clergyman's son.

However, with the assistance of the community, their nefarious plan was thwarted, although the pastor's son sustained injuries during the incident.

Chinge, giving an update on the cleric's wife's release, said, "Mrs Grace was released to us on Sunday night. She is presently taking medication in one of the hospitals."

FRCN cooperative society elects new executives

By DORCAS PANKYES

THE Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, FRCN, Headquarters Cooperative Society, has elected new executive members to run the organization for the next two year- terms.

After a keenly contested polls, Mr. Ndubueze Chidoka was elected President with 244 votes to beat Mr. Mustapha Ahmed with 209 votes as announced by the chairman of the Electoral Committee, Alhaji Abba Zayyan.

Also elected is the General Secretary of the society, Mr. Bontus Joseph who polled 243 votes to beat Conrad Labehe with 151 votes.

The President of the Abuja Federation of Cooperatives, Mr. Emmanuel Atama, described the election as fair, credible and transparent.

"Honestly, I am happy that the election was credible. The cooperators saw it all. They waited from the beginning to the end for the results - that's how to go.

" I'm wishing the new executive members the best as they pilot the affairs of this cooperative for the next two years.

The newly elected President of the Cooperative and Manager Sports and Outside Broadcast of FRCN, Mr. Ndubueze Chidoka,



Chidoka

expressed appreciation to the cooperators who reposed confidence in him. "I want to sincerely thank you cooperators for believing in me.

I'm not unaware of the role you played towards the success of the election.

This victory is not mine but for you and others who stood firmly with me.

I can't afford to let you down. It's a for all of us. I call on all of you, winners and losers to join me and this brand new exco to rebuild and rebrand FRCN COTHRIFT to be the cynosure of all eyes not only in FCT but in Nigeria at large.

Chidoka's rival, Mustapha Ahmed, described the election as a worthwhile experience and wished the winners

the best.

Mr. Michael Olofu was also elected as Financial Secretary with a total score of 172 votes to defeat his closest rival, Abdullahi Obenege who scored 124 votes.

The outgoing President, Mr. Victorson Agbenon, urged the incoming executive to consolidate on his achievements and brace up to the challenges ahead.

Other members of the executive are: the Vice President- Faith Dangana, Public Relations Officer - Lilian Adaeze, Treasurer - Ibrahim Adamu and the Assistant General Secretary - Shaibu John.

FRCN Cooperative Society has over 700 members and a well known cooperative society in the FCT.

SUNDAY FEATURE

International expatriate “tariffs” and Nigerian situation

Ongoing plan by the federal government, through the Ministry of Interior and Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS), to roll out a policy to drag expatriates into its revenue-generation net has dominated the media space in the last two weeks. According to sundry media reports, the plan would dovetail into a policy choice that is well-rooted in the economic imperative of widening the nation's revenue base and, consequentially, bolstering the economy in terms of production and consumption of goods and services as well as the supply of money. JOHNSON MOMODU writes.



THE plan, understandably, requires some validations against the important question around its novelty. While the plan to capture expatriates in the proposed revenue net (not taxes) may be novel in Nigeria, the decision by the President Bola Tinubu administration to consummate the policy of ensuring that the working expatriate community in Nigeria becomes a veritable source of new revenue has obligatorily underscored the administration's need to explore all reasonable avenues to generate income.

In fact, the essential international contexts for comparative analyses between how and why the policy is practised in other countries and why it is not in Nigeria, validates the urgency that is needed to effectuate the policy in its entire ramifications. A good understanding of how other countries have placed special demands on their international expatriates, leaves one with the impression that Nigeria has all along missed out in this critical area that has the potential to generate mega foreign exchange earnings for the country. If the trend must be reversed, the federal government must take the bull by the horns and confront the existential challenges that may want to conspire to frustrate the coming on stream of the revenue source.

Indeed, it is remarkable to note that as part of the nationalisation regulations to encourage hiring citizens over expatriates in G-20 countries, including Mauritania and many other countries, private sector

entities are being charged monthly for each expatriate employee that exceeds the number of employees at the entities. This is in apple-pie order and in alignment with international best practices, and Nigerian can very well adopt it.

This practice is a cosmopolitan reality in Germany, China, France, Czech Republic, Ireland, and in over seventeen other countries, which are placing charges on the offshore earnings of expatriates. The Tinubu administration will do well to replicate the same in Nigeria.

In those countries, which are by all standards developed, they have not put an end to generating revenue. A plethora of revenue sources is being constantly devised to meet the challenges of public finance, rising complexity in the ever-expanding infrastructure gap, especially in Nigeria, and funding of governments globally. Growth and development in all sectors of their respective national economies become the normative order in the consideration and effectuation of policies, programmes, and projects that conduce towards the public good.

The interplay between the wellbeing and security of the people underscores the primary purpose of government anywhere in the world. Significantly, these two essential ingredients of government and community cannot, suo motu, activate themselves, nor can sheer political will without any corresponding or concomitant actions do so.

The political will must crystallise in the nature and form of deliberate and aggressive funding, which is impossible if there is no cash backing. Governments cannot spend the money they do not have. It is the responsibility of governments to run and coordinate their national economies, manage the relationship and tension between production and consumption as well as other financial or budgetary matters.

It is therefore understandable when governments globally, including the federal government of Nigeria and the subnational governments embark on government-to-government, government-to-business and government-to-people interactions that result in generation of revenues, including Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) through taxes, royalties, fees, fines and sundry charges on both small and large scales. It is in this context that the plan by the Tinubu administration to extend its revenue source to expatriates working in Nigeria finds justification.

Indeed, the initiative to place extra demand on working expatriates in Nigeria is not dissimilar to what operates in China, for example, where the income of expatriates from employment is subject to Individual Income Tax (IIT). In that clime, taxable income from employment generally includes wages and salaries, bonuses, commissions, allowances and subsidies, taxes paid by the employer, stock options and any other income related to the individual's position or

employment.

In the Czech Republic (CR), all employment-related incomes of expatriates (wages, salaries, overtime pay, bonuses, gratuities, perquisites, benefits, benefits from employees' stock options, etc.) are taxed. Mandatory health insurance and social security contributions paid are also regarded as employment income subject to tax (they enter a tax base and create a super gross salary). If a Czech employer has an expatriate working for them without a Czech employment contract, such expatriates are typically employed by a foreign company.

In such cases, the deemed employer must act as a payroll agent and transfer the appropriate income tax advances to the tax office. This is basically about taxation. But what the Nigerian government is planning is not additional taxation on expatriates' income. It is a charge that derives from implementation of the terms and conditions of the expatriate quota given to companies that engage the services of expatriates. It possibly operates at a minimum of two levels from my understanding of what is in the works, although greater details, according to media reports, would be announced at the launch of the policy soonest.

The first level may entail a fixed charge on each expatriate working in Nigeria; then the second level may be charges imposed on companies for infractions or failure to absorb Nigerian professionals into jobs that are allotted to them. If any company that engages the services of expatriates gives

jobs meant for Nigerians to expatriates, it should be ready to pay the prescribed penalty.

There may be other ancillary charges derivable from the overarching implementation of the new revenue measures, which Nigeria has not taken advantage of since 1960. It is not too late to begin to derive the requisite benefits in this area, which is why the beat is on.

As the saying goes, it is better late than never. The time to cure the mischief of the past years is now. The initiative is expected to come on stream in a few weeks' time. Mega revenue will be generated from the expatriates, which current population is put at a little over 150,000. The plan by government is to deploy the revenue received from this source in massive investments in infrastructure development. This is apart from the fact that more jobs will be provided or secured for Nigerians in companies that engage the services of expatriates to strike the obligatory balance or quota as agreed to by both parties.

Overall, the Tinubu administration, which is struggling to raise money to drive the economy, has a historical opportunity to leverage this potential revenue source. There are countries to reference to validate its new plan to impose some tariffs of sorts on working expatriates in Nigeria to generate the much-needed revenue for infrastructure development. Let us keep our fingers crossed as the federal government rolls out this policy soonest.

Mr Momodu writes from Abuja.

SUNDAY SPORTS

Davis Cup: Tournament returns home, away ties?

By RUSSELL FULLER

STAGING Davis Cup ties in neutral venues is like an eighth deadly sin to some - but a return to traditional home and away ties would "not work", according to the man in charge.

The route to November's Finals begins with a qualifying round in February, which is played on the home and away basis that sustained the competition until 2018.

But the last 16 is now staged in just four cities in September and the final eight are disputing the trophy in Malaga this week - and hosts Spain have not qualified.

"The home and away format is not going to work and the players told us that in the past," International Tennis Federation (ITF) president David Haggerty said in an interview with BBC Sport.

"It would not be a good competition if we went back to only home and away. Sometimes the loudest voices aren't always the majority."

Fears of a repeat of the sparse crowds seen at some of the group ties in September - most notably Switzerland against France on the opening day in Manchester - did not materialise for Finland's quarter-final against champions Canada on Tuesday.

About three quarters of the 9,207 seats were taken, mostly thanks to a spectacular effort from Finnish fans excited about watching their country's first ever quarter-final.

At least 1,000 fans flew in from home and that number was perhaps more than doubled by the numerous buses laid on by expat fan clubs across southern Spain.

The LTA says Great Britain's quarter-final against Serbia on Thursday is sold out and it knows of at least 2,500 travelling fans. The Czech Republic are also expected to bring a vocal contingent.

But for many, it will never be



Canada are defending their Davis Cup title in Malaga, Spain this week

quite the same. World number 12

Alex de Minaur made his debut for Australia in a five-set thriller against Germany's Alexander Zverev at the Pat Rafter Arena in Brisbane in February 2018.

"In a heartbeat I would want the competition to go back to what it used to be," he said.

"I was lucky enough to get a taste of what home and away ties meant. I was able to make my debut at home in front of a packed Brisbane crowd - to this day it still gives me goosebumps.

"And then I was able to play in Austria [against 2020 US Open champion Dominic Thiem]. Everyone was against me but that was some of the coolest experiences and what made this

competition so special." Stan Wawrinka posted a video of a virtually empty stadium just before Switzerland's tie with France in Manchester in September. He also posed a question on X: "Did you know that ITF Tennis are paying people to support and make some noise for every country at every match?"

Haggerty confirmed that some students were paid to provide musical support to two of the teams.

"Some of the bands in Manchester... teams asked us if we could help get local university people which we put in contact with them - and it helped them with the atmosphere they were

looking for," he said.

The 2024 Finals will be played over four weeks instead of the current three. But now the Davis Cup is an official part of the ATP Tour calendar, and the ITF and ATP have formed a "strategic alliance" to consider the evolution of the competition, a review is currently taking place to see whether any changes should be introduced from 2025.

One proposal which has attracted some support over the past couple of years is the idea of staging the competition over two years, with a greater emphasis on home and away ties.

Space in the calendar is at a premium, as by 2025 seven of the nine ATP Masters events will be 12 days in duration. The old

Davis Cup format was played over four weeks instead of the current three.

"I think the nations are getting used to it. Fans are getting used to the World Cup concept of Davis Cup and Billie Jean King Cup," Haggerty continued.

"The Final Eight seems to be embraced and makes sense because it's a great finale."

Haggerty was at the 2014 final in the French city of Lille, where Roger Federer finally won the Davis Cup with Switzerland in front of a record crowd of more than 27,000. He accepts it was a truly special atmosphere but argues it - and other finals - did not have the impact it should have done outside the two countries involved.

"People in France and Switzerland knew that Davis Cup was taking place. Everywhere else around the world, they didn't know because it didn't have that same euphoric end to the season that we can have here in Malaga," he added.

"The majority like what we have done, and voted in favour of it. It was an accommodation to make sure that we would get top players being able to turn up and have a schedule that was reasonable."

Malaga is expected to be confirmed as next year's host city. The ITF does not rule out moving the competition away from Europe in the future, but the strength of the European nations - and the need for fans to travel to the Finals - makes a foray into a country like Australia unlikely.

And so if you are Alex de Minaur, and the format does not change, you are likely to play very few ties at home.



Great Britain reached the Davis Cup knockout stages with a thrilling victory over France on home soil

SUNDAY SPORTS

“Coach cannot satisfy all superstars”

FORMER Nigeria international Greg Etafia has called on head Coach Jose Peseiro to find the right team balance for the Super Eagles to return to winning ways, Soccernet.ng reports.

Nigeria drew their first two matches in the qualifying race for the 2026 FIFA World Cup despite being the favourites to claim victories.

Despite boasting a team filled with exciting strikers, including Taiwo Awoniyi, Kelechi Iheanacho, Terem Moffi, Umar Sadiq, and Victor Boniface, the Super Eagles scored only two goals in 1-1 draws against lowly Lesotho and Zimbabwe.

In a bid to make room for many of the Nigerian attackers performing well in the top five leagues in Europe, Peseiro's Eagles look short on quality central midfielders.

This imbalance caused by Peseiro's desire to invite all of Nigeria's best strikers in Europe, Etafia insists, will do more harm than good to the national team.

The former Lobi Stars goalkeeper has urged the Portuguese tactician to work with only the centre-forwards who fit into his game plan.

However, Etafia, currently a goalkeeper coach at South African club, TS Galaxy, remains optimistic that Nigeria will bounce back from the setbacks to qualify for the 2026 World Cup.

“Nigeria will come out strong when they are against the wall,” Etafia told Sunday World.

“We have good players, it's just that the coach is struggling to strike the balance. In football, you cannot invite all the camp.

“You have to know which kind of football will give you the results instead of calling up all the good players and failing to field them. The coach cannot satisfy all the superstars.

“But it is still early for the group to be decided. We [Nigeria] have only played two matches and there are many more matches to be played.

“The Super Eagles still have a massive chance to bounce back and to become serious contenders to qualify for the World Cup.

“There's no way we can miss two World Cup tournaments in succession, that will be a big problem for Nigerian people. The fans are not happy and if the federation had the money, they would have dismissed the coach already.

“The people are impatient because we have good players playing in Germany, France, Portugal and Italy – so there is no excuse [for the coach to lose games].”

Nigeria's chances of qualifying for the Mundial received a major boost on



Etafia

Tuesday after Rwanda claimed a shocking 2-0 home victory over South Africa.

The Super Eagles remain one point behind second-place

South Africa and two points behind surprise Group C leaders, Rwanda, despite dropping four points in the space of a week.

NPFL faults broadcast rights' claims by Total Promotions

THE Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) has asked the public and potential partners to disregard Total Promotions' claims to the broadcast rights of the league.

The Guardian said that, in a statement titled, “Re-clarifications regarding

claims made by Total Promotions,” the Nigeria Premier League Limited/Gte described the claims as totally unfounded with no legal validity.

The statement made available to The Guardian reads: “We wish to reiterate that these claims made by 'Total Promotions Limited'

are entirely unfounded, factually incorrect and devoid of any legal validity.”

It offered judicial backing of the expressed position of the NPFL with a reference to a 2010 judgement by a Federal High Court judge, who ordered liquidation of the Nigeria Football League Limited, the body that

\$1,000 prize for Opobo marathon winners



Marathons

WINNERS at the 2024 Opobo Marathon, set for January 4, 2024, will secure a guaranteed prize of \$1,000, courtesy of Managing Director of D'Consigliories Nigeria Limited and the Hope Initiative, Blessing Fubara.

The Guardian said that, Project Lead of Opobo Marathon, Henry Iyowuna Cookey, said in Port Harcourt, that there would be consolation prizes for the first 10 runners-up and an indigenous category for the top three Opobo indigenes.

He disclosed that the previous editions of the marathon had a cumulative total of more than 8,000 participants, including elite and fun runners, fitness enthusiasts, gym instructors and enthusiastic spectators from all works of life, adding over 1,500 were expected to register for next year's edition.

He said: “Opobo Marathon has always been more than a race, it's an embodiment of our aspirations, dreams, and the unity that binds us together. Miles of Hope

serves as a reminder that no matter how tough the journey, the destination is worth every ounce of effort. It signifies our commitment to pushing boundaries, overcoming obstacles, and striving for a brighter tomorrow.”

“With a meticulously designed course that winds

through the heart of Opobo, participants will experience the vibrant culture, rich history, and warm hospitality that Opobo Kingdom is well-known for. From seasoned runners to enthusiastic leisure runners, everyone is invited to take part in this inspiring event. After all, we are all winners at the end of the race.”



NPFL Players

SUPER Eagles captain, Ahmed Musa, has called out for the inclusion of experienced in the national team to foster leadership and aid younger players, Soccernet.ng reports

Musa, 31, also complained that the mismanaged passions of Nigerian football fans have caused some of the big stars who left the team no choice but to stick with their decisions.

Nigeria have one of the youngest squads on the continent, with the majority of the players yet to get into their peak, and are under the age of twenty-eight.

“As you can see, we still need someone like Mikel Obi in the team, we still need Victor Moses. It's not just about having young players in the team because you need

We need someone like Obi-Musa

players to mentor them, which we don't have right now,” Musa mentioned in quotes revealed by Punch.

Musa also advised the media to reduce the burden on the team's younger players, realising the hardship they face from fans.

“Please, I beg the media, take it easy on these young boys; they can't take too much pressure. That is why, once they step onto the pitch to play, they worry because they are concerned about what they will see on their Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook accounts,” the 31-year-old added.

Nigeria have drawn two of their 2026 FIFA World Cup

qualifying games and could be in deep trouble if they fail to grab three points and score

more goals soon, as they've scored just two goals in two games.



Musa

The NPFL also wondered how Total Promotions could still be laying claims to the NPFL broadcast rights when the contract it was relying on has expired and the entity that assigned the rights is dead based on a court order.

“Besides the fact that the contract for the said broadcast rights granted Total Promotions has expired, the entity that granted the rights is dead by virtue of the cited Court order,” it declared.

The statement noted that the Nigeria Premier League Limited/Gte (with RC No. 6862169) was incorporated at the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) on February 2, 2023 and licensed by the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) to organise the Nigeria Premier Football League.

“The NPL Limited is not a successor in title to any previous company. It is also on record that the defunct League Management Company (LMC) had a running legal confrontation with Total Promotions and prevailed in suits filed in different jurisdictions by the company.”

“Public commentators have been asking if Total Promotions own a lifetime right to the league broadcast and noted with concern that the company has no record of broadcast production, no equipment and no broadcast platforms.

“At the time they kept the rights between 2006 to 2011, they outsourced the match productions to Nigeria Television Authority (NTA) showing one game per week. The company has acquired a reputation for irritant confrontation to companies seeking to partner the league over the years by writing threat letters and publishing newspaper advertisement aiming to scare off corporate organisations from the league.”

SUNDAY SPORTS

BSFA boss pays clubs N2m participation fee

By DORCAS PANKYES

THE Chairman of Benue State Football Association (BSFA), Barr. Paul Edeh, has announced a participation fee of N200, 000 to each of the 10 clubs that made it to the ongoing maiden FA Chairman's Cup in Makurdi, the state capital.

The cash donation to the 10 clubs that eventually made it to the tournament after emerging tops from their various local government areas and constituencies of the adjoining Zone A, B and C of the state, means that a total of N2 million has been handed out by the BSFA Chairman who is also the sponsor of the competition.

That is aside another total sum of N2 million earmarked as prize money for the competition for the would-be overall winners (N1 million), runners-up (N700, 000) and N300, 000 for the third place side.

There is also a giant trophy and individual awards available for grabs.

At the official kick-off of the tournament, symbolically performed by the Commissioner of Youth, Sports and Creativity, Rt. Hon. Ikyange Terkimbi, inside the popular McCarthy Stadium, Makurdi, the Benue State FA Chairman affirmed that grassroots football development under his watch will surely experience the three tripods upon which the round-leather game is instituted by FIFA at the global level which cascades to the continental, national, states, local government and communities.

He then assured that from 2024, more grassroots football competitions, including the U17



tournament will be triggered in parts of the state.

He said, "Our vision remains to build a football association that is investment-driven, self-sustaining, and that can develop the game at the grassroots. I believe that with the ball we have set rolling today, it is going to lead to an enduring impact in footballing in Benue State."

The FA Chairman also took time out to shower encomiums on the state government, the BSFA board members, Local Football Council Executives and other stakeholders for their support in moving football forward, while revealing the

modality that led to qualification of the 10 teams for the ongoing FA Chairman's Cup.

"It was a tedious process with a lot of funds sunk into the tournament. My joy is that we accomplished our goal.

"I want to thank all football stakeholders in Benue State for making football come alive again in our dear state. Particularly, I want to thank the Hon. Commissioner of Youth, Sports and Creativity for his robust commitment. When we visited him after he assumed office, he was unequivocal in his determination to support football and we see it clearly in his participation in all our

activities including today's event.

"I am happy also to note that the local FA chairmen have distinguished themselves. It is my joy to note that when we took the initiative that the local FA chairmen should run their local FA Chairman's Cup, everybody thought the FA at the state level was going to give them money. Despite the challenges, they hosted the local FA Chairman's Cup in the 23 local government areas.

"I believe that if we must grow the game of football, that is the way to go. Everybody must work towards ensuring that he or she has the capacity to raise funds and use the funds in the most transparent manner to develop the game of football.

"I want to also commend members of my board, indeed we are enjoying ourselves in the board of Benue State Football Association. When the 23 local government areas were done with their finalists, the board members among the winners and the second place, hosted Board Member's Cup, from where we have got the 10 teams that qualified to come to Makurdi for State FA Chairman's Cup," Barr. Edeh, who is also the President of Ratel Sports Development Foundation said.

Also speaking, the Commissioner of Youth, Sports and Creativity, Rt. Hon. Terkimbi, commended BSFA for the numerous innovative moves within a short time of its emergence.

He reiterated the readiness of

the state government to restore the dignity of sports for the overall good of its citizens, with the return of the Governor's Cup Competition which was last held several years ago.

Declaring the FA Chairman's Cup Competition open, the Speaker of the State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Aondona Dajoh, who stood in for the Deputy Governor, Dr. Sam Ode, affirmed that the legislators are in full support of BSFA's grassroots football development drive.

Represented by the House Majority Leader, Comrade Saater Tiseer, the Speaker said already the lawmakers are in unison to endorse the proposed Speaker's Cup Tournament by the Benue FA board adding, "By the time we resume general sitting, we will look into it and ultimately pass a bill to that effect.

"We have the responsibility to join hands with the Benue State Football Association to develop football in the state. We won't also leave other sports but due to the large followership football enjoys, a lot more will need to be done in that direction in order to engage young people and take their attention off social vices.

"Paying requisite attention to sports development is certainly going to reduce insecurity and other societal problems. I can assure you that the leadership and entire honourable members of the House are committed to this course and we will follow it through."



SUNDAY SPORTS

Henderson's move to Saudi Arabia

ENGLAND midfielder Jordan Henderson's Saudi Arabia move felt like a "slap in the face" following his support of the LGBTQ+ community, says Jake Daniels.

BBC SPORT said that, Daniels, 18, is the UK's only openly gay active male professional footballer and received a message of support from Henderson after he came out last year.

But the Blackpool forward told BBC's Newsbeat he had not heard from Henderson since the former Liverpool captain's move to Saudi club Al-Ettifaq in July.

Henderson, 33, was criticised by some LGBTQ+ campaigners over his transfer to Saudi, where same-sex sexual activity is illegal, after he had previously publicly shown support for the LGBTQ+ community.

In May 2022, Daniels became the first active professional in the UK men's game to come out since Justin Fashanu in 1990.

He said that after coming out, he received a private message of support on his social media account from Henderson, which he has kept.

Daniels said: "He was backing me and said: 'We're proud of what you've done.'"

"Seeing him move to Saudi, it kind of like, slaps me in my face really."

"But I guess the money pays well, and money must mean more to people."

Henderson was one of dozens of elite players at top European clubs who moved to Saudi Pro League side Al-Ettifaq as part of a huge state investment into the domestic game.

He wrote a long piece for the Liverpool matchday programme in November 2021, expressing support for Stonewall's Rainbow Laces campaign.

Henderson said in September that he had been "really hurt" by the criticism he has received, insisting his intention had "always been to help causes and communities" and that he had not "changed as a person".

Daniels said it was also "frustrating" to see former Liverpool midfielder Steven Gerrard become Al-Ettifaq's manager in July.

He added: "I met him in



Henderson

person and he said: 'If you ever want to get in contact then message me' - but he moved over."

Daniels said he "really struggled" with his mental health over a six-month period before he was able to accept his sexuality and come out.

"Having a lot of male friends at school made it feel like it was bad to be gay - and that obviously made it difficult because it felt like if I came out there, I'd be losing all my friends," he said.

"I was around football 24/7 because that was the only thing that took my mind away from everything else."

But Daniels said when he

came out, first sending a message to his mum and sister in a group chat, the sense of relief had him "dancing around the room".

"It has been crazy since coming out," Daniels said. "I didn't think it would blow up as much as it did. The reception I've had, the people I've met, it's been a crazy experience."

"Coming out was the best thing I've ever done. I'm playing better now."

While the response Daniels received was overwhelmingly positive, he said the decision to come out was made more difficult by the lack of other high-profile gay men in football.

ARGENTINA'S World Cup-winning boss Lionel Scaloni says he is considering resigning after five years in the role.

BBC SPORT said that, Scaloni made the surprise announcement after Argentina's 1-0 World Cup qualifying win over Brazil in Rio de Janeiro on Tuesday.

The 45-year-old also led Argentina to the Copa America in 2021 before their World Cup triumph in Qatar last year.

"Argentina needs a coach who has all the energy possible and who is well," said Scaloni.

"I need to stop the ball and start thinking, I have a lot of things to think about during this time."

"It's not goodbye or anything, but I need to think because the bar is very high and it's complicated to keep going and it's complicated to keep winning."

"These guys are making it difficult, so I need to think about it for a while. I will talk to the FA president and the players afterwards."

Scaloni succeeded Jorge Sampaoli as Argentina boss in August 2018 after a brief spell in charge of the under-20 side.

Their 2021 Copa America win was Argentina's first major title for 28 years and meant they qualified for the Finalissima against

Scaloni may resign

European champions Italy in June 2022, which they won 3-0 at Wembley.

Their World Cup triumph in Qatar later that year was their third global title and first since 1986.

"We are sure and hope that Scaloni will continue," said Argentina and Tottenham defender Cristian Romero. "Let's see now he will have time to think, he didn't say anything in the dressing

room about it. We will try to convince him."

Tuesday's win over Brazil was Argentina's first-ever away win over their rivals in World Cup qualifying and moved them two points clear at the top of the table.

The game at Rio's Maracana stadium was delayed by 30 minutes after crowd trouble broke out during the national anthems.



Scaloni

Five-time Olympic champion appoints Fraser-Pryce's coach



Elaine Thompson-Herah (left) will aim to win third successive Olympic golds over 100m and 200m in Paris

FIVE-time Olympic champion Elaine Thompson-Herah will train under the same coach as Jamaica team-mate Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce as she prepares to defend her sprint titles at Paris 2024.

According to her management team, Thompson-Herah split from Shanikie Osbourne this month over the coach's "extremely excessive" terms.

The 31-year-old, winner of 100m, 200m and 4x100m gold at Tokyo 2020, will continue her Olympic preparations with Reynaldo Walcott - coach of

10-time world champion Fraser-Pryce since 2020.

Thompson-Herah is the second-fastest woman in history over 100m and her golden treble in Tokyo came after she won 100m and 200m gold at Rio 2016.

But while she has dominated women's sprinting at the past two Olympic Games, she failed to qualify for this year's World Championships in Budapest following an injury-hampered season.

Five-time world champion Fraser-Pryce won the Olympic 100m title at Beijing 2008 and London 2012.

She was part of her nation's successful 4x100m relay team in Tokyo - but had to settle for 100m silver behind Thompson-Herah.

"Out of difficulties grow miracles," Thompson-Herah posted on X.

The athletes' management team said: "Thompson-Herah remains as dedicated as ever to her craft, demonstrating an unequivocal focus on the path ahead."

"Her commitment to excellence is unwavering and she is resolute in her pursuit of defending the double Olympic titles she so triumphantly earned."

STUART Manley's has said he is ready to make a mark at this year's DP Tour.

BBC SPORT said that, at the age of 44, Manley had regained his place on the DP World Tour.

Manley was in an apartment in Majorca, having felt too nervous to stay to watch the latter stages of the Challenge Tour Grand Final.

The Welshman had finished his final round three hours earlier and, after a disappointing display, was left waiting to discover whether he had done enough to secure DP World Tour playing rights in 2024.

"My dad and brothers were watching [in Majorca]," Manley told BBC Sport Wales.

"It was so tense that in the end I called my other brother,

DP World Tour: Manley hungry to make mark

who was at home watching on Sky, and he was giving me live commentary while it was happening.

"It was unbearable really." Manley ended the season 21st in the overall Challenge Tour rankings after a disappointing 14-over-par finish in the last event of the season.

He had been well-placed in 14th before the Grand Final began.

DP World Tour places were on offer to the top 20 finishers in the rankings.

But thankfully for Manley, the player who ended in 11th, England's Alex Fitzpatrick, had already secured his card thanks to his performances on

the DP World Tour in 2023.

That meant 21st was enough, just, to get Manley over the line.

"The scenario where everybody jumped past me and that Sunday afternoon... it got really close," said Manley, the oldest player to gain a DP World Tour card through this year's Challenge Tour.

"It went down to the last putt of the 30th event of the year and if the guy had holed the putt, he knocks me out. It was that tight."

"That last hour was brutal, really tough, and I'm just relieved to get the card."

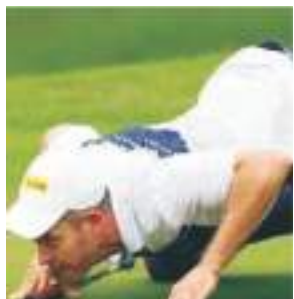
Manley has since spent time back home in Aberdare preparing for his ninth season

on the DP World Tour - formerly known as the European Tour - having last played at that level in 2019.

Between practice at Mountain Ash Golf Club and working with his coach Neil Matthews at Parc Golf Club in Newport, Manley has been busy organising a hectic pre-Christmas schedule.

He will play three tournaments in South Africa - starting with the Joburg Open, which begins on Thursday - and one in Mauritius in a bid to win some valuable early-season ranking points.

While the first goal in 2024 will be to perform well enough to secure a DP World Tour in the following year, Manley has



Manley



'Too early to sack our coach'



Super Eagles played an inglorious 1-1 draw with Zimbabwe

Retired Nigeria international Duke Udi has insisted that there is no point for the Nigeria Football Federation to bring in a new manager despite stakeholders calling for the head of Super Eagles coach Jose Peseiro.

Although Nigeria's results in their first two matches of the 2026 World Cup qualifiers were far from convincing, Udi stressed that the Portuguese football tactician was unbeaten in the games against Lesotho and Zimbabwe.

The Super Eagles needed a lifeline from the unlikely of sources, in Rwanda, who caused a sensation by beating South Africa 2-0 to throw Group C of the World Cup qualifiers wide open, with only two points separating the top five countries.

Nse Essien, a Board Member of the Nigeria Football Federation, dropped a bombshell in the wake of the draw with Zimbabwe, saying that Peseiro is not capable of leading the national team and only a lack of resources is preventing him from being fired.

Udi underlined that the Super Eagles still have a chance to qualify for the World Cup and refused to rule out the possibility of the Jose Peseiro-led side performing well at the 2023 Africa Cup of Nations.

Speaking to the BBC this week, Udi said: "If any

department is not functioning then it is the problem of the team because everyone has to work together. "It's too early to sack a coach because he drew two matches. He has not lost. "We are still on course for both competitions (the World Cup and Nations Cup). In Ivory Coast, anything can happen."

Nigeria are back in action in the 2026 World Cup qualifiers next June when they face South Africa and Benin.

Also, Moroka Swallows goalkeeper Daniel Akpeyi has confessed he is eager to return to the Super Eagles and regain the team's number-one gloves, Soccer.net.ng reports.

Akpeyi, who has 18 caps for the national team, has not been a part of the Super Eagles squad since Jose Peseiro took charge of the three-time African champions in May 2022.

In Akpeyi's absence, none of goalkeepers Francis Uzoho, Maduka Okoye, and Adeleye Adebayo, has impressed between the posts for Nigeria.

And with the Africa Cup of Nations tournament kicking off in Ivory Coasts in a few weeks, there have been calls for Peseiro to look for a new number-one goalkeeper.

While the former Sporting Lisbon manager insists he is satisfied with Uzoho, Akpeyi

has revealed he continues to wait for his chance to return to the national team.

Asked in an interview if he could be the answer to Nigeria's goalkeeping crisis, Akpeyi said: "I think I'm better than yesterday. Today is better than yesterday. It's just that (I'm) waiting for the opportunity."

The Super Eagles missed the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar and kicked off the 2026 World Cup qualifying campaign on a disappointing note after stumbling to two 1-1 draws against Lesotho and Zimbabwe.

Rwanda and South Africa are ahead of Nigeria in Group C, with only one nation guaranteed a qualification ticket in each group.

Still, Akpeyi remains convinced that the Super Eagles will return to their peak after their false start, citing the example of Argentina, who lost to Saudi Arabia in the opening rounds only to become world champions on the last day.

"In Qatar, Argentina never did well from the beginning," Akpeyi noted. "But they ended up winning (the World Cup)."

"Football has changed. No

team is an underdog. Everybody is stepping up, year after year. I must say that at this time, we need to understand that aspect of the game and not because you have all the players playing in Europe and you expect to knock everybody down.

"You don't have to get three points in your hotel room. You have to get three points on the field. And that is what we were not able to do. But I'm sure the coach already sorted it out where it needs to be fixed and all that."

Akpeyi, 37, started in four

of Nigeria's six matches at the 2019 Africa Cup of Nations, where the Super Eagles won a bronze medal.

The attacking options up-front for the London side include Nicolas Jackson and Armando Broja. Still, the Blues are interested in bringing Osimhen to build competition up-front and to have the quality of a world-class striker in their side.

However, a winter move for the 24-year-old is still far-fetched, and with Napoli unwavering in their hundred million asking price, Chelsea might have to look elsewhere for another striker.

According to **Goal**, the Blues are currently keeping an eye on Santiago Gimenez, who has scored fifteen goals in all competitions for Feyenoord this season.

Gimenez, 22, joined the Rotterdam side from Cruz Azul in 2022 and has gone on to score thirty-eight goals in sixty goals for the Eredivisie Champions, and could be a cheaper option for Todd Boehly.

Chelsea's recruiting team admires his potential impact, but he also has a contract with the Dutch club until 2027, which means the Blues may have to pay more than £35 million plus add-ons for the goalscorer.

Other European elites are interested in the Mexican, including Real Madrid and Barcelona, as well as a slew of Serie A clubs such as Juventus, AC Milan, and Inter.

Chelsea's interest in Osimhen remains firm as they're willing to go all in for last season's Serie Golden Boot winner, but should Napoli refuse to budge, the club will turn their attention to Gimenez.

Osimhen is set to return to footballing action this weekend after spending the past four weeks on the sidelines due to a hamstring problem.

Pistorius to be released on parole

Oscar Pistorius will be released on parole in January, prison authorities announced Friday, drawing criticism from Reeva Steenkamp's mother, who said she did not believe the South African athlete had been rehabilitated since he murdered her daughter almost 11 years ago.

Pistorius shot Steenkamp four times through the bathroom door of his house in 2013, denying that he killed her in a fit of anger and saying instead he had mistaken her for an intruder. He was originally

sentenced to 13 years and five months imprisonment.

June Steenkamp said she was concerned for the safety of other women once he was released on parole.

In a victim impact statement, she said her daughter's death had left a "massive hole" in her life that cannot be filled.

Her statement was also read outside a South African parole board meeting by a family representative.

In the statement, Steenkamp said while she had forgiven Pistorius, she doesn't believe his version

of events.

"At this time, I am not convinced that Oscar has been rehabilitated," her statement said.

"Rehabilitation requires someone to engage honestly with the full truth of his crime and the consequences thereof. Nobody can claim to have remorse if they are not able to engage fully with the truth.

"If someone does not show remorse, they cannot be considered to be rehabilitated. If they are not rehabilitated, their risk

of recidivism is high."

June Steenkamp said she did not attend Friday's parole board hearing because she couldn't "muster the energy to face him (Pistorius) again."

She also raised concerns about his pattern of violent and aggressive behaviour.

"I do not know to what extent this behaviour still exists or were evident during his time of incarceration, but I am concerned for the safety of any woman should this not have been addressed in his rehabilitation."