

Governor Alia
solicits Army's
collaboration
against insecurity



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TRUTH EXALTS A NATION

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Is Supreme Court of Nigeria dying?

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Cooking gas outrageous price

The prices of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) commonly known as cooking gas has hit record high amid high cost of living occasioned by removal of fuel subsidy. The price of a 12.5 kg cylinder of cooking gas has surged by 26 percent in two weeks, owing to high global crude oil and gas prices.

Unfortunately, this further limits the purchasing power of an average Nigerian who is already inundated by harsh economic realities which is not commensurate with the take home pay.

Worthy of note is the fact that most Nigerians were embracing the use of clean energy for cooking, even in rural areas before the surge in the price of gas. They had come to realise that use of gas for cooking was easier, safer and faster. This development was judged to have taken Nigeria forward from the prehistoric practice of cooking with firewood and charcoal.

From every indication, majority of Nigerians would be forced to go back to the old practice of cooking with firewood and charcoal. Habits that would endanger the climate, by destroying the ozone layer which has depleted due to the world's careless way of living, as well as lead to deforestation, desertification. The resultant effect is extreme heat or cold, natural disasters being witnessed in some parts of the world, leading to colossal loss of lives and natural habitat.

The sudden surge in gas price may not be unconnected to government's plan to shift attention to gas. It had rolled out plans to purchase cars, buses that would be powered by gas, in an attempt to cushion effects of oil subsidy removal. This, in effect, would have provided cheaper transportation for Nigerians at this difficult time.

We recall the earlier warnings sounded by the President of the Nigerian Association of Liquefied Petroleum Gas Marketers, Olatunbosun Oladapo, that the price of 12 kg cooking gas could go as high as N18, 000 by December, if the Federal Government did not checkmate activities of the terminal owners. He had pointed out that the terminal owners were hiding under the guise of high foreign exchange to increase prices to the detriment of the common man. Sadly, even with skyrocketing price of gas, the government is yet to step in.

It is a fact that in this country, price control mechanisms are absent. The Federal Government should do everything possible to allay the fears of Nigerians that commodities like gas would never revert to their former price.

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBC) reports that 63 percent of Nigerians are multi-dimensionally poor. In essence, it means that two in every 3 Nigerians are poor and are suffering just over one-quarter deprivation in areas like health, standard of living and work. The issue of obtaining energy for cooking getting out of reach of the common man could be the last straw on the camel's back which could provoke revolt.

Some experts have blamed the surge in price of gas to lack of sustainable policy for the development of the country's gas system, especially the LPG. That was the reason why the former National Chairman of Liquefied Petroleum Gas Association of Nigeria, Chika Umudu emphasized on that point which has brought untold hardship on the citizens of this nation.

Notwithstanding, at this point when petrol subsidy has been removed, gas would have been a worthy substitute if the right policies were put in place. It has already been reported that a pocket of people have begun running their generators with gas when it was cheaper. A very commendable move that the government should have encouraged by subsidising the price of gas and not allow market forces to use it for their selfish interest. It is now more expensive than fuel.

We therefore add our voice to that of Nigerians who say demand is more than supply and suggest the government does the needful for the price of gas to go down.

Undoubtedly, the Federal Government's decade old gas policy which seeks to make gas accessible and affordable for the common man is not feasible except government does something very fast to bring down the price. Nigerians are overwhelmed with hardships. They don't need another burden.

Nigeria receives \$150m Abacha loot from France

President Bola Tinubu, on Friday in Abuja, expressed his appreciation to France for the return of \$150 million stolen from Nigeria by former Head of State, General Sani Abacha.

In addition to the recovery of another tranche of Abacha loot, the president acknowledged the signing of a €100 million agreement between Nigeria and France to support the i-DICE programme — a federal government initiative to promote investment in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and Creative Arts Industries.

The agreement was signed by the Minister of Communications, Innovation and Digital Technology, Bosun Tijani, and the French Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs, at an earlier event at Tafawa Balewa House, the headquarters of the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

President Tinubu commended the strengthening of bilateral relations between Nigeria and France, noting that this progress followed his visit to Paris after his inauguration.

"Thank you for the good news on the return of Abacha loot. We appreciate your effective cooperation concerning the return of Nigeria's money. It will be judiciously applied in attaining our development objectives," the president told Catherine Colonna, the Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs of France, who delivered the news.

The president, while emphasising the need to reinforce collaboration on both political and economic

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President Tinubu assured that the money would be judiciously applied in attaining development objectives.

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On the situation in Niger Republic, President Tinubu, who is the Chairman of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, said Nigeria is monitoring the situation in the neighbouring country, and exploring diplomatic channels to avoid bloodshed.

"Leadership is about responding to the needs of the people; their cries, and their frustrations. Nigeria shares a border with Niger across the expanse of seven Nigerian states, and most of these states are very populated. Therefore, I need to guide ECOWAS carefully and steadily so that we manage our anger carefully.

We have a colleague and a democratically-elected leader, President Bazoum, being used as a human shield. If we are not careful, he and his family can be endangered.

"I am deploying all appropriate back-channel strategies to avoid bloodshed in Niger Republic. We recognise the wishes of our people; they do not want war, but that does not mean we can not take bold and decisive action," the president affirmed.

President Tinubu said Nigeria will continue to galvanise international partners in the determined pursuit of a peaceful resolution to the situation in Niger Republic.

The French Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs conveyed the goodwill of President Emmanuel Macron and expressed the readiness of France to expand mutually beneficial collaboration with Nigeria across multiple sectors.

She proceeded to extend a formal invitation to President Tinubu to attend the forthcoming Paris Peace Forum.

Speaking on the Abacha loot, the French Presidential Envoy said the repatriation followed the completion of legal processes.

"It was a long process, but we are glad that it was concluded. Sometimes, justice may be slow, but this is a very good achievement," she said.

Ms. Colonna also commended President Tinubu's leadership in ECOWAS, saying: "We support your efforts at ECOWAS. We are behind you because we believe that constitutional order is a treasure for all countries, and democracy must be a reality."

We are up-to-date in salaries payments -Dongkum

By EZEKIEL DONTINNA

THE Plateau State Finance Commissioner, Hon. Dongkum, Grace Shwarta, says the Governor Mutfwang led administration has not only cleared all backlog of salaries left behind, but has paid up-to-date salaries and pensions to the month of October 2023.

She cleared air while in an interview with THE NIGERIA STANDARD recently in Jos, the state capital, following speculations making the rounds in some quarters that October salaries were not yet paid to Plateau civil servants.

The commissioner said, "I want to state clearly here that Governor Caleb Mutfwang's administration is an administration that values human resource. When he came, he met a huge backlog of salaries, pensions and the workers were on strike for that reason.

"February salary was not fully paid because there were more than 80% of unpaid salaries in February. So, from March upward, there were no salaries. But I am glad to tell you that this government has cleared the entire backlog of salaries and pensions.

"As at last weekend, salary for the month of October was paid. You know, the salaries come in batches. For us the appointees, they say we are the parents and so, ours came in last, but I can tell you that I have received my October salary in October.

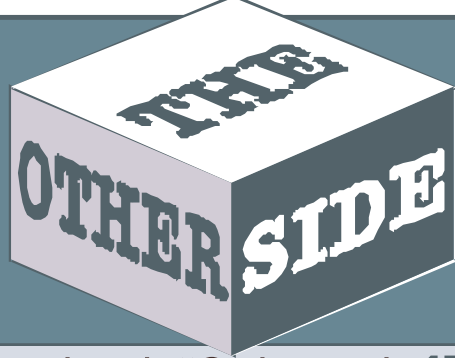
"So, we are up-to-date in payment of salaries and pensions. If there is someone who is yet to receive his October salary, well, we are yet to receive that complaint from any Ministry, Department and Agency (MDA)", Dongkum cleared air.

She, however, expressed concern that deductions were made from Cooperative Societies, Agencies and Taxes in the past, but there were no remittances. Pointing out that "those complaints came up, but we were able to sit down and sort out all of that and it is a plus to this administration.


"That tells you that if there was nothing else that we have, we are proud to have a leader who knows where he is going to and where he is coming from, for the betterment of Plateau State citizens.

"So, if you are unable to say your achievement, somebody out there will downplay it and say other things that cover whatever you have achieved. That is why we are collaborating with you, the media for you to project what we are doing", the Commissioner enthused.

Hon. Grace Shwarta Dongkum, however, expressed joy that two additional heads of trains have been procured by Governor Caleb Mutfwang's administration as part of measures to help cushion the transport problems of citizens in spite of negative stories surrounding it.



With
**Katdapba
Y. Gobum
On Sunday**



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"We know that the balance of power is tipped heavily greatly against the women. They don't just need appointment; they need to slug it out with the men during elections. The truth is that the women don't have the financial muscle to wrestle power from the men; hence they have to depend on the men for tickets to contest elective positions."

IT is rather difficult to say the teacher's earthly rewards are meager today. They deserve much more, or we think. They have been treated rather shabbily for years, particularly given the Nigerian context. It is difficult to forget the 2023 World Teachers' Day, particularly as Nigerian workers are in the struggle for better pay owing to the removal of fuel subsidy by the federal government on May 29, 2023.

This year's (2023) World Teachers' Day is difficult to be forgotten. There are reasons not to skip this day, given what workers in Nigeria have gone through lately. The Day which was observed last Thursday globally should become our responsibility to fight the war of the Nigerian teacher, who for long has been forgotten and neglected by government and indeed the society.

For the Nigerian teacher, we are aware that so much has happened regarding his predicament and the constant assurance that government is doing enough to change the station of the Teacher. Nothing seems to be happening to the teacher even with consistent rhetoric to the contrary for his development and the future of the sector.

Nothing has changed, rather, the Nigerian teacher's position as we have come to know of it has not improved and nothing appears to be done to change it. It is not as if government has not committed resources to the welfare of the teacher, yet the much that government has said it has done has not been able to address their predicament and settling those contentious issues that have aggravated the minds of the teachers to the point that we have witnessed so many strikes declared by their mother union, Nigeria Union of Teachers.

The World Teachers' Day offers the teacher the opportunity for soul searching and addressing those areas that have been neglected by government and drawing peoples' attention to those critical areas that have been refused attention; but more importantly allow people as well as teachers themselves the opportunity to justify their calling.

Has that been done? Have the teachers critically assessed themselves on the day with a view to changing their attitude to their calling since the activities for the day were started? If they have, could we say with all sincerity that some changes have been noticed in what they do? If nothing has been noticed by the society what have they done to address them, and to be able to change the perception of the society?

The man on the street does not appreciate the worth of the teacher, very few do. They do not see the teacher of today deserving respect and honour that the teacher of yester years would have been given. You and I know that the teacher used to be every thing that was found in society except the bad.

Therefore, if it has changed, and by every inch it has, we have every reason not to see the teacher as an example that he used to be some years back. It is only through the realization of this precarious

The teachers' meager earthly reward



deserves to get it in heaven when he would have suffered so much indignities, neglect and deprivation in his quest for equitable compensation of his services.

Today, however, several people who were employed as teachers are leaving in droves for other jobs that pay, and are not looked at with disdain. This is not the case in some saner climes, where the teacher is paid with dignity and respect; and not because of the two one is a teacher.

I think in the context that we find ourselves education and teachers salary are not treated specially. The attainment of the Millennium Development Goals in his part of the world depends on a virile educational system. What should be done, now that the target year is gone past; can we say with all honesty that government has put in place those things that are needed to attain the goals?

We cannot allow the teachers to continuously go on strikes if we mean to meet the challenges of those goals in the next seven years. Since 1992, the teachers have had a protracted battle with the government on the implementation of the Teachers' Salary Structure; even as we know that teaching became professionalized having set up the Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria in 2003.

It is logical therefore that a professional salary structure regime would have been put in place.

For some time now Nigerian teachers have been at home protesting the shabby treatment they have received in the hands of government at all levels. The uncompromising posture of the Federal Government on the strike is very unfortunate. The general expectation is that such a hard-line posture has gone with the military era. In a democratic setting, a very diplomatic and sensitive government would have prevented it from getting out of hand. The use of might and naked power in matters of conflict certainly does not produce good results. It cannot do the country any good.

In saner climes where government treats education with respect, and pays attention to a number of details, they have been developed because right from the beginning education received the right attention.

In Nigeria, even budgetary allocations are not followed. Lack of attention to schools' infrastructure has reduced some schools to abandoned government property. In the last couple of months, some states have had their teachers on strike as a result of lack of the implementation of allowances that were agreed to be paid to them.

With what is happening now is a reflection that once attention is not given to education, what are usually produced from the other levels naturally will affect the quality of what we churn out from our tertiary institution.

This reality is not lost on us in Nigeria, given what we daily see in our schools and even places of work. The foundation has been weak right from start, and until it is addressed by stimulating the teacher, so long will we be in the same station. They deserve their earthly rewards NOW; here on earth.

position that we can begin to address those issues that bother him daily.

Right from the beginning, let's agree that education has never gotten the right treatment from government. It therefore means that whatever is done, it can just serve as a palliative measure and cannot translate into concrete solutions. But that is what government has failed to address and put the sector into proper footing.

But then, we can not only address those issues without also assessing if government has played its role as expected of in tackling the problems of the Nigerian teacher over the years. We have said time without number that government has not done much to address the issues of the teachers.

There is so much deception and lack of faith in all the efforts that are continuously been put in place to salvage the education sector from the decay that it has gone through in the last couple of years. I doubt if we can rise from the current decay. It is surmountable, given the fact that on a daily basis the number of students you see wanting to gain admission to read in the country's universities, colleges of education and polytechnics is alarming and it gives credence to the fact that there are some serious ones out there yet. But several others are not prepared to go the right way to pursue their educational careers through the right channels.

It is for this category of students that we need to ask certain pertinent questions regarding the education of our children. We will do so because there is the need to ascertain where we have gone wrong and better still, find avenues through which we can retrace our steps and make the future of our children conducive. Yet, in doing so, we cannot forget easily what we all

have failed to do in regard to sanitizing the sector.

Talking about sanitation of the sector, in the last couple of years, governments have continued to pay lip service to making sure that education is given its rightly place through adequate budgetary allocations, provision of infrastructure and on the whole pay the teachers their rightful dues. And talking about the teachers' dues, we are not talking about paying them pittance and leaving them.

We are saying that government must be able to compensate them with a remuneration that they would die before they get their reward in heaven. Teachers don't want to receive their rewards only in heaven, they want to be paid right here on earth.

Some Nigerian teachers in some states have been shabbily treated and not given what they deserve to be given. The outcome of such a treatment is yearly noticed in the outcome of the products that are churned out of these schools. But the most annoying of all the impediments to quality education is the fact that some states are today battling to settle scores with the Teachers' union.

You will recall that only last year the Nigerian Union of Teachers declared a strike to press home the need to implement the much sought new Teachers Salary Scale.

It took several weeks before it was resolved in favour of the NUT. Since then, it has been one strike after the other from the different state chapters of the union. In some cases, some of the states teachers have spent months at home waiting for a negotiation of the demands by the NUT.

Nothing, for now appears to be happening in most of those states that the teachers are on strike, and our children are still at home waiting for the resolution of the crisis.

In some cases there has been outright condemnation of the union as not being progressive but only out to take away what should be used to develop the state given the current state of the nation's economy. This has further infuriated the teachers who think that the politicians are playing politics with their stomach and are not interested in solving the problem, which has continued to be the bane of our development.

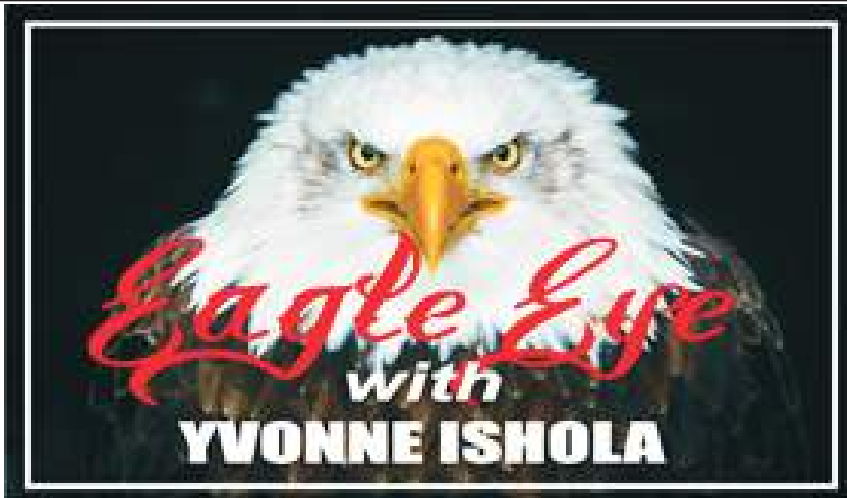
That we are thinking of catching the industrial world with this attitude is ridiculous and laughable as it is an indictment of the efforts that are made for us to be among the twenty most developed economies in the year 2020.

Teachers we need for the education we want: The global imperative to reverse the teacher shortage' is this year's theme of the event. It is apt and instructive given the continued neglect the teacher has been put through. It is instructive that his theme was chosen ahead of others. We have agreed that government has not given the right support for wanting to go into teaching as a profession.

Elsewhere, once you choose to go into teaching you are given special encouragement through grants above others who are under going other courses in the same institution. This, they believe should spur such students into accepting the fact that teaching has a special place in the development of their people.

They will also reciprocate by rightly doing what they are paid to do: impacting knowledge to the young ones. They do so because they are paid wages that are commensurate with the labour they put their work as teachers.

That is the last thing that we expect here in Nigeria, and they always say, why would the teacher expect his reward here on earth? He



'The heart of man is desperately wicked'

A story was told of a prisoner who escaped from prison in one of the northern states in Nigeria. As he wondered about in the bush, he came upon a man who was carrying a few days old baby crying at the top of its voice. The escaped prisoner hid behind some trees because even though it was dark, who ever looked intently would know he was a prisoner because of the prison garb he was wearing.

Firstly, he was shocked by the man's lack of compassion. He didn't care at all that the sweet baby was crying and made no effort to comfort the baby. At some point, the prisoner was tempted to think it was a dull. But what would a grown man be doing with a dull? This man was only focused on going deeper into the bush to a place densely surrounded by trees.

Curious, escaped prisoner followed closely but cautiously. Just as he was taking cover, he saw the man lifting the crying baby over his head, chanting some incantations. At this point, the baby's cry was high pitched, as if it sensed something dreadful. The prisoner almost dashed out to save the baby, but remembered his mission.

At this point, tears were rolling down his face. The baby was twisting its body and its cry was agonising. Without warning, there was a piercing cry, sharper than before and everything ended. Peace of the grave enveloped the place.

The man's incantations had become louder. Then with one swift movement, he tore the baby into two over his head. The blood splashed over his head and into his mouth. Wearing a satisfied look, he licked the blood and continued chanting some incantations.

Mr escaped prisoner was horrified. He had to cover his mouth because he felt like wailing. Unfortunately, there was nothing he could do. He had to remain hiding because it was a moonlit night. No one needed to tell him what his fate would be if the baby murderer caught him. He was overwhelmed with emotions but had to control himself.

The man continued his ritual for some time before cleaning up and packaging the dead baby. Only God knows for what. He made his way, walking like a king that is untouchable because he knows he is well guarded. Looking at him, the escaped prisoner saw wealth written all over him and wondered what all this meant.

Long after the baby murderer left, the escaped prisoner dragged himself up and retraced his steps. He took himself back to prison, reported himself while weeping. He told the authorities that he never wanted to be released again. After what he witnessed, the prison is a safe haven.

This may seem unbelievable to some of us but it was narrated by an eye witness. A similar story was told involving a day old baby this time. According to the narrator, everything started at a hospital. A lady was rushed to the hospital because she was in labour. When she arrived, it was discovered that she had dilated and was ready to start pushing. So, she was taken to the Labour Room.

All this while, there was a woman who stationed herself by her side and was very sympathetic to her situation. She gave her moral support and stood by her all through her delivery. The woman had a successful delivery and then had a sound sleep.

When she woke up, she asked for her baby but was told that the baby was in the care of her

mother. Wide eyed, she looked at them and asked: "which mother?"

The nurses informed her that her mother had been by her side all through her labour. But she informed them that her mother was dead. Pandemonium broke. The nurses had assumed that the doting elderly woman by her side was her mother.

Immediately, the nurses and security guards started running around looking for the woman and the baby. But they were nowhere to be found. At the gate, they were informed by a commercial motorcycle driver that he had just dropped a woman carrying a day old baby to a certain destination. He was just telling the other drivers that she paid him N1000 and said he should go with the change.

A few security men were called upon and the motorcycle driver led them to the destination. On reaching there, they approached the isolated house cautiously. They sighted the elderly woman pounding something in a mortar. When she noticed them, she was unperturbed. They approached her and asked her why she stole a baby. She casually told them to wait and see for themselves. They asked for the baby and she told them that they were late because it was already cooking.

At that point, those outside warned them that cars were approaching and everyone took cover. To their amazement, the people that were ushered in were heavy weights. Some of them were still serving and others once served but their names still rang bell. These powerful men were served baby garnished soup. And they sat and ate it as if it was fish peppered soup.

Seeing the powerful people that have been served and the kind of security they came with, the security agents who came in respect of the baby knew their lives were in danger except they sneaked out unnoticed. And that was what they did.

Unfortunately, they could not explain to the hospital but said it was a fruitless exercise. The mother of the baby was devastated. This case was an eye opener for most maternity wards not to make assumptions but ask before trusting the life of a baby or mother in anybody's hands.

These anecdotes are meant to show us the extent of human wickedness. The two examples above were committed against innocent souls- babies. One was a day old and the other, a few days old.

Times without number, we have heard of girls who gave birth out of wedlock and came back home without the baby.. One lady said she gave birth to a healthy baby, who cried his first cry loud and clear. However, she was later told her baby died and the private clinic took the liberty to bury the child since she was sleeping. She said, she smelt a rat but since it meant she was free again, she let it go.

We have heard cases of baby factories. Has the government tackled it well? Government has to revisit the issue of registration of different health facilities. Because from every indication, there are a few bad eggs aiding the destruction of lives and selling of babies.

In the same vein, quacks still abound in the health field. And they could be the bad eggs engaged in the destruction of lives to make ends meet at all cause. Government needs to fish them out by all means for the safety of lives.

NEWS

By JOHN FWAH,
Kaduna

First gas plant takes off in Kaduna

KADUNA State Government recently Commissioned the first ever Liquid/Compress Natural Gas plant Greenville L-CNG in Kakau, Kaduna State giving alternative to motorists following the perilous times that accompanied fuel subsidy removal.

Speaking at the commissioning, the representative of Kaduna State Governor, Architect Ibrahim Hamza, the Commissioner of Works and Infrastructure said "In a time marked by volatile fuel prices and currency fluctuations in the global market, Greenville LNG presents a robust solution in the form of LCNG.

" This change is not only embraced but enthusiastically welcomed in Kaduna. It promises to bring not only economic growth but also a revival to various Kaduna-based industries, including textiles, machinery, steel, aluminum, as well as the automotive and oil and gas sectors.

"The provision of a stable power source through the L-CNG gas hub is of paramount importance for these small and medium-sized businesses and industries. Moreover, the development of these hubs is poised to address Kaduna's pressing need for energy security.

"This welcoming change is not limited to businesses alone; it also extends to the transportation sector, where a significant number of keke riders ply the roads of Kaduna daily. For these riders, L-CNG represents a cost-effective alternative to high-priced PMS, offering financial relief and reduced stress.

"Additionally, it promotes ecological peace, as CNG is renowned for its eco-friendliness and emission of less harmful pollutants, ensuring the safety of both our citizens and the



Uba

environment," he stressed.

Declaring the event open, the Chief Executive Officer, Greenville Lauren Maubre said LNG and CNG present a cost-effective alternative to conventional fuels, leading to a 15-20% reduction in petroleum and gas oil consumption.

One of the most remarkable impacts of Greenville LNG's efforts is the economic empowerment of approximately two million KEKE NAPEP riders across Nigeria.

"By offering an affordable alternative to conventional fuels, we not only improve the economic well-being of these riders and their families but also

mitigate the impact of fuel subsidy changes on the general public," he posited.

Earlier, the Commissioner of Police, Kaduna State Command, Musa Yusuf Garba, Commissioned a state of the art Police Station at Kakau donated by Greenville LNG Company.

CP Garba who commended Greenville for the support to security, maintained that "I want to ensure that Kaduna communities, Kaduna citizens sleep with their two eyes closed unlike what I met them doing. You can see that we have made a lot of progress and we have achieved so much that people can now move freely without any fear or intimidation."

BSUTH to commence services at Mother and Child Hospital - CMD

From TERESE TUHWA,
Makurdi

THE Chief Medical Director, Benue State University Teaching Hospital, Makurdi, Dr. Stephen Hwande says the Benue State University Teaching Hospital (BSUTH) is now set to commence medical services at the Muhammadu Buhari Mother and Child Hospital, Makurdi.

He promises that Benue citizens will have access to the best and affordable medical services they deserve under Governor Alia's administration.

He made this known to SUNDAY STANDARD recently after taking a facility tour of Muhammadu Buhari Mother and Child Hospital, Makurdi preparatory to commencement of medical services.

Dr. Hwande expressed appreciation to Governor Hyacinth Alia for his interest in the healthy wellbeing of Benue people, pointing out that his proactiveness was the reason why the Federal Government did not take back the hospital from the State Government due to under utilisation.

The Chief Medical Director said with full commencement of medical services such as IVF, out patients, health insurance, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology as well as mild surgery would be offered to the people at a rate that could be afforded by the common man. He added that antenatal cards for children under five would be free.

The CMD said even though the

primary role of the Teaching Hospital was at the tertiary level, the hospital would still use its manpower to supervise and assist secondary and primary health facilities across the state with a view to improving the health condition of the state.

He disclosed further that expired medicines worth over one hundred million naira are to be publicly destroyed by management of Benue State University Teaching Hospital, BSUTH.

The Chief Medical Director, who said the public destruction of the expired medicines was necessary for him to start on a clean slate, expressed worry on why medicines of such amount would be allowed to expire in a state that has so many IDPs and others that needed them.

The Coordinator of the Hospital, Dr. Luper Uva, stated that although the hospital was built for only women and children, the new Chief Medical Director, Dr. Stephen Hwande thought it wise to add a General Outpatients Department to enable men also to get treatment at the facility.

Dr. Uva thanked the Chief Medical Director for ensuring that the hospital operates as an electronic medical record facility which would make services efficient and easier.

"We have solar systems where uninterrupted light, water and other amenities operate all day", he said.

The 120 bed Muhammadu Buhari Mother and Child Hospital was built by OSSAP-SDGs, Abuja 2021 Sustainable Project.



Hwande

SUNDAY POLITICS

Army assured of cooperation for peaceful election

From AMEDU JOSEPH,
Lokoja

GOVERNOR Yahaya Bello of Kogi State has given an assurance that the government will cooperate with the Armed Forces in ensuring a peaceful election and level playing field for all contenders.

Governor Bello gave the assurance in Lokoja, recently, when he received the Chief of Defence Staff, Gen. Christopher Mustapha, who was on a collaboration visit to the Kogi State Governor towards a peaceful election in the state.

The governor, who was represented by his deputy, Chief Edward Onoja, stressed that he would work within the directives of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu in achieving a violence-free election, noting that his administration had made security topmost priority since assumption of office.

"Having done well in all sectors of the economy of the state, particularly in security, we're very optimistic that it will encourage our people to turn out en masse and exercise their civic duty.

"Our outstanding achievements, which are visible, will speak and work for us, with the greatest of assurances that we will win overwhelmingly. We will cooperate with the Armed Forces in ensuring a peaceful election and also provide a level playing field for all contenders and for the people to turn out en masse to vote.

"Kogi people are peaceful. We have, since the coming of our administration, made security of lives and property a priority. We want to assure our president, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, of stability, peace before, during and after the governorship election.

"We also want to applaud the CDS for measures he has put in place for a peaceful election in the state," the governor stated.

He commended President Tinubu and the Chief of Defence Staff for the significant reduction in crimes in the North West and South East since the coming of the present administration.

In his remarks, the Chief of Defence Staff, Gen. Christopher Mustapha, assured that the Armed Forces would be fully on ground towards ensuring a peaceful, violence free and credible election in Kogi State.

He described the state as very strategic and



Bello

important to the country, saying this was the reason the president was very particular about a peaceful election in the state. He assured of maximum security to enable people to exercise their civic responsibilities.

"The Armed Forces are here for the people of the state. I urge the people to turn out en masse to vote. The Armed Forces are concerned about ensuring

a free and fair election for citizens to enjoy democracy. I therefore want to encourage eligible voters to come out and vote," he said.

The Chief of Defence Staff, however, warned that men of the Armed Forces who display unprofessional conduct will be punished and called on members of the public to report any case of misconduct to the military.

NGO plans advocacy on citizens engagement with lawmakers

From AMEDU JOSEPH,
Lokoja

A non-governmental organisation, Initiative for Grass-root Advancement (INGRA), is to embark on advocacy engagement of citizens with the elected members of the Kogi State House of Assembly on legislative business.

The Executive Director of INGRA, Hamza Aliyu Ibrahim, gave the hint during the Inaugural meeting towards the commencement of the project recently.

Ibrahim said that the proposed project is aimed at ensuring that citizens become part of the legislative functions as well as making them know happenings in the House of Assembly for them to make their inputs.

"Elected members of the state Assembly owe it as an obligation to be accountable to the people they represent by keeping them abreast of legislative business, carrying them along on activities of the House to enable them make their contributions.

"The idea of the project is also geared towards constituting semi formal advocacy group to improve upon citizens' engagement with their lawmakers, comprising of Civil Society Organisations, elected members of State House of Assembly and the Media" Ibrahim explained.

He therefore advocated for the public hearing of budgetary allocation where citizens should be

made to take part.

He also challenged lawmakers to make budget defense open to enable citizens participate in the

From JIDAUNA YANUNG,
Abuja

DOZENS of pro democracy activists recently stormed the National Assembly in protest, demanding the removal of the Minister of Defence over the growing insecurity across the country.

The protesters wielded banners with inscriptions demanding the sack of the Minister of Defence, Bello Matawalle over alleged complicity in the security crisis in Zamfara State. The protesters, under the aegis of Civil Society Advocacy and Accountability and Probity, also accused the minister of links to bandits responsible for the loss of lives and property in Northern Nigeria.

The group called on the Senate President, Godswil Akpabio to exert his influence on President Bola Tinubu to ensure Matawalle was relieved of his job.

The spokesman of the group, Danes Momoh, claimed that the Defence Minister had a lot of

budgetary process.

Ibrahim who expressed worry over non-existence of internet facility at the Kogi State House of

Dozens of protesters storm NASS



Matawalle

explanations to make, especially with his indictment by a panel set up by the Zamfara State Government.

Momoh, while reading a petition during the protests, expressed his deep disappointment over the Senate for allowing the minister to pass the screening in the first place without doing anything to remedy the situation even

when the facts were out."It is a mockery of their avowed legislative objectives".

He recalled that many well meaning Nigerians were vehemently opposed to Matawalle's appointment as a minister of the Federal Republic following his antecedents as Governor of Zamfara State.

Assembly up till now, called for immediate establishment of a

functional website for the storage of needed information on legislative matters.

Natasha Akpoti sworn-in as Senator for Kogi Central



Akpoti-Uduaghan

Senate standing rules to her. She, thereafter,

exchanged pleasantries with other senators before she was led to her seat by a sergeant at arms.

Akpoti-Uduaghan replaced Abubakar Sadiku-Ohere of the All Progressives Congress (APC). In September, the Kogi State Election Petition Tribunal sitting in Lokoja nullified the victory of Mr Ohere at the senatorial election. Dissatisfied with the judgement, Mr Ohere approached the Court of Appeal to seek redress but the court on Tuesday upheld the judgement of the tribunal declaring Mrs Akpoti-Uduaghan as the authentic winner of the 25 February senatorial election. Rivers Crisis: Nigeria's unity transcends party politics-

Covid-19 intervention fund: Reps give 72 hours ultimatum

From JIDAUNA YANUNG,
Abuja

THE House of Representatives has issued 72 hours ultimatum to the Accountant General of the Federation, Mrs Oluwatoyin to submit detailed report on the utilisation of the #100bn Covid 19 intervention funds released by President Muhammadu Buhari's administration to Ministries, Departments and Agencies between

2020 and 2022.

Chairman House Committee on Public Account, Hon Bamidele Salam, (PDP) Osun who handed the ultimatum, frowned at the AGF refusal to comply with the committee's 'resolutions to submit the report on October 27, 2023.

According to Hon Salam, the House had mandated his committee to investigate the

"expenditure incurred under the Covid 19 interventions especially in the year 2020 and up to 2022".

He disclosed that "A letter was written to the Accountant General to furnish the committee with details of all the releases pursuant to the provision of the Appropriation Act as well as other interventions captured by the release from Central Bank of Nigeria to different

Ministries, Departments and Agencies of Government."

Hon, Salam warned that his committee will not tolerate any action that will be a set back to the investigation. To this end, he directed the AGF to transmit the report before the close of work 3rd November 2023. These resolutions were passed sequel to the adoption of a motion on the mismanagement of the funds.

SUNDAY POLITICS

Kogi Govt denies SDP's alleged stakeholders' arrest

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

THE Kogi State Government has denied alleged claims by the Social Democratic Party (SDP) that some of their stakeholders had been penciled down for arrest in the wake of the state's Nov. 11 Governorship Election.

Mr Kingsley Fanwo, Spokesman/Director of Media and Publicity, Kogi APC Campaign Council, made the denial in a statement in Lokoja recently.

The SDP had through its Director of New Media, Muri/Sam Campaign Council, Isaiah Ijele, insinuated that Gov. Yahaya Bello had recently obtained a court order to arrest some key stakeholders of the party.

Ijele gave the names of those penciled down as the Director General, Muri/Sam Campaign Council, Sheikh Jibril Ibrahim, the Director General of Youths Mobilisation, Hon. Ahmed Attah, and other esteemed members of the Muri/Sam Campaign Council.

"The arrest plot is part of Bello's desperation to salvage his failing administration through framing and arresting key leaders of our party

"Therefore, we are making an urgent appeal to President Bola Tinubu, the National Security Adviser, Inspector General of Police, and all relevant security agencies to take swift action and prevent Bello and his associates from proceeding with these unjust actions.

"We assert that elections should not be treated as acts of war or matters of life and death," Ijele said.

But Fanwo described the allegations as another tempo



Fanwo

the November 11 the November 11 of falsehood from the SDP to attract undue attention.

"But it's unfortunate that the SDP will stop at nothing to push their noses in front as serious contenders when they know they stand no chance whatsoever, in the forthcoming governorship election.

"While we will urge security agencies to invite the fiction authors for questioning and to tender empirical facts to support their claims, we wish to dismiss the allegation as another attention-seeking, unimaginatively concocted lie aimed at creating panic and preemptively covering their satanic plans against the Kogi voters.

"As a responsible government, we wish to remind the Kogi voters of their resolve to continue and consolidate on the achievements of the past seven years, by voting for the APC governorship candidate, Alhaji Usman Ododo during

the November 11 the November 11 of falsehood from the SDP to attract undue attention.

He added: "If there are plans to terrorise the Kogi people, security agencies will ensure it is scuttled and we are confident that November 11 will make history as the best election day in the history of our dear confluence state."

Fanwo, however, called on security agencies to as a matter of necessity, urgency and professionalism, invite those behind the reckless and defenseless allegation to provide proof.

According to him, issues like these are capable of spreading fear if not curtailed immediately.

Fanwo assured that as a campaign council, "we will continue to preach peace and togetherness as well as abide by the provisions of our laws."

Representatives of the three governorship candidates, namely; People's Democratic Party (PDP), Action Alliance (AC), and Young Progressive Party (YPP) attended the Town Hall Meeting.

CDS tasks stakeholders on peaceful governorship election

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

THE Chief of Defense Staff (CDS), Gen Christopher Musa, has called for synergy among the security agencies in Kogi towards achieving peaceful and violence free November 11 governorship election in the state.

General Musa made the call at the stakeholders meeting with heads of security agencies held at the headquarters of the 12 Brigade Nigeria Army, Lokoja recently.

The General noted that there were lots of negative issues during election in Kogi, which include; violence, ballot box snatching, among other vices.

He stressed that President Bola Tinubu, has directed that he did not want any form of violence or other vices to happen during any election again.

According to him, it is the duty of the Nigerian Army to work in synergy with other sister security agencies to provide a peaceful and enabling environment before, during and after the election in the state.

The CDS assured the

residents of Kogi of adequate security, saying the Armed Forces would be fully on ground towards ensuring a peaceful, violence free and credible governorship election in Kogi.

He described Kogi as very strategic and important to the country, saying that was why President Tinubu was very particular about a peaceful election in the state.

He assured of maximum security to enable people to exercise their civic responsibilities.

The stakeholders in their separate comments, promised to ensure effective collaboration among the security agencies in order to achieve peaceful violence free poll.

Earlier, the CDS addressed the troops where he charged the Command to work in collaboration with other security agencies and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to achieve a credible election.

The CDS cautioned the officers and soldiers of the Nigerian Army against involvement in illegal activities during the election, saying they should not

compromise their duties for money or anything from the politicians.

While stressing that whoever was caught in such an act would be dismissed and sent to jail, he emphasised that President Tinubu had done everything possible to take care of the Armed Forces and it was their time to do their work.

He urged them not to take part in favouring any politicians.

General Musa also advised the officers and soldiers to

By PETER TITLE

PDP governors' forum concern over judgment disqualifying lawmakers

THE PDP Governors' Forum has expressed deep concern over the recent judgments of the Court of Appeal nullifying the elections of PDP lawmakers in Plateau State based on pre-election matters that have already been addressed by the Supreme Court.

This was contained in a statement by the Director of Press and Public Affairs to the Executive Governor of Plateau State, Gyang Bere.

The statement further explained that Chairman of the Forum and Governor of Bauchi State, Sen. Bala Muhammad disclosed this at a press briefing with journalists after the meeting of the Forum at Oyo State Governor's Lodge in Abuja.



Bala

He emphasized that while the Supreme Court has set precedents on pre-election issues, PDP candidates in Plateau State are being disqualified on the same grounds.

The Forum called on the judiciary at the apex level to preserve the integrity of the legal system and prevent distortion of the country's jurisprudence. Governor Muhammad reaffirmed the Forum's confidence in the judiciary's ability to administer justice in political and other cases before the courts.

He stated that the Supreme Court's judgment on the 2023 Presidential Election marks the conclusion of the Presidential election cycle and emphasized the need for an end to litigations.

He pledged the Forum's commitment to reposition and

strengthen the PDP as a formidable opposition political party that is ready to fulfill its role as the advocate for the Nigerian people in the pursuit of democracy, good governance, and accountability.

Expressing concern over recent developments in Rivers State, Governor Muhammad welcomed President Bola Tinubu's intervention to resolve the crises. He urged all the parties involved to opt for peaceful means of resolution and offered the willingness of the Governors' Forum to stand as a platform for just and swift containment of the issues.

Addressing the national economy, the PDP Governors appealed to the Federal Government to intervene in stabilizing the Naira, control

inflation, tackle the unemployment crisis, and

provide relief to Nigerians. Governor Muhammad expressed gratitude to Governor Seyi Makinde of Oyo State for hosting the meeting.

Prominent personalities at the meeting included Governor Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang of Plateau State, Governor Siminalayi Fubara of Rivers State (also Vice Chairman of the Forum), Governor Ahmadu Umaru Fintiri of Adamawa State, Governor Sheriff Oborevwori of Delta State, Deputy Governor Ifeanyi Ossa of Enugu State, Governor Ademola Adeleke of Osun State, Governor Seyi Makinde of Oyo State, Governor Godwin Obaseki of Edo State, Governor Kefas Agbe of Taraba State, and Governor Dauda Lawal of Zamfara State.

Former PDP aspirant, others decamp to APC

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

A former governorship aspirant of the

Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Dr Joseph Ameh Erico along with his supporters have defected from the People's Democratic Party (PDP) to the All Progressives Congress (APC).

Erico, alongside decampes harvested from the SDP, LP, APGA, and other political parties, were received by the Deputy Governor of Kogi State, Edward Onoja, on behalf of Governor Yahaya Bello at the Okpo Ceremonial Square in Olamaboro.

Onoja said the gale of defections to the APC in Olamaboro indicated the decimation of the opposition adding further that Governor Bello was poised to integrate them into the party structure.

He assured them of equal opportunities in the ruling party, describing the former PDP guber candidate as a valuable asset, given his years of experience and urged them to work assiduously with other stakeholders for the victory of the APC in the governorship and future elections.

While stressing that politics is local, he emphasized the

longstanding relevance of Olamaboro in Kogi politics, reiterating the consistent delivery of bloc votes from the region whenever a decision is made by "Olamaborarians" whom he described as "people who do not play double faced politics", from the inception of ANPP before it metamorphosed into the APC.

Onoja warned sternly, reminding Olamaboro youths of the potency of her culture and values which prioritizes human life above all forms of political interests, counseling that elections have always been won in Olamaboro without the use of guns against brothers.

He advised party stalwarts to shun politics of division, backbiting, and slandering, but rather prioritize engagement of the people instead of any schemes that promote violence.

In company of the Deputy Governor to receive the defectors were the Olamaboro LG Chairman, Hon Friday Adejoh, Commissioner for Commerce and Industry, Hon Gabriel Olofu; LG Chairman of Ankpa, Hon Ibrahim Abagwu; State APC Secretary, Hon Joshua



Musa

SUNDAY POLITICS

How poor privatisation of NITEL truncated \$82m NRTP

In 2002, the Nigerian government conceived the National Rural Telephony Project (NRTP), designed to ensure that rural communities were not left out of the telecommunication development that was about to take off in Nigeria. BAKARE MAJEED writes.

ON a rainy August morning, Abubakar AbdulKhadiri completed his computer science lesson for primary four pupils at LEA Primary School in Gurfata, a rural community in Nigeria's federal capital territory. The teacher is dissatisfied with his job. While computer science teachers in many parts of the world use computers to teach their students, Mr AbdulKhadiri relies on images in books to explain the basics of the subject to the 420 pupils in the school.

"We use images in books as instructional material to teach our pupils computer science," Mr AbdulKhadiri said. Even worse than not having a computer, Mr AbdulKhadiri's community is not connected to electricity or mobile network service, which are essential infrastructures for teaching his pupils the basics of computing. He has lived in the community for 30 years since his birth.

Just a few metres from the school is Hajara Seriki, a farmer who is also struggling with the consequences of the village not having mobile network coverage. For her, this means being financially excluded. To overcome this issue, she has to travel to either the area council headquarters in Gwagwalada or Lambata in Niger State in order to access banking services.

The LEA Primary School where Mr Khadiri is using images from books to teach students computer studies. The LEA Primary School where Mr Khadiri is using images from books to teach students computer studies to contact her customer from the village, she has to climb a hill to access the mobile network.

"I currently don't have a phone, I used to have one, but we have to climb that hill to get a mobile signal," Ms Seriki said while pointing to a hill outside the village.

The lack of mobile networks in this community excludes residents from the financial system. Over the past couple of years, the financial system in Nigeria has been leveraging technology to bridge the gap and provide accessibility to underserved communities. For instance, Point-of-Sale (POS) machines have taken some form of banking services to the unbanked. However, this also requires telecommunication infrastructure, which is lacking in many rural communities in Nigeria.

"From this place to Gwagwalada is like one hour for you to use POS. Those without bikes will need to use okada (motorcycle taxi) which costs as much as N2,500 and the same thing when coming back. If you plan to withdraw N10,000, you would already have spent N5,000," Adamu Shehu, a local government worker in the community, told this reporter.

The lack of mobile networks is not peculiar to the Gurfata community. About 20 years after the liberalisation of the telecommunication sector, telecom operators are yet to cover the entire country and the telecommunication black hole remains in many areas, particularly rural communities.

In 2002, the Nigerian government under former President Olusegun Obasanjo conceived the National Rural Telephony Project (NRTP), designed to ensure that rural areas were not left out of the telecommunication development that was about to take off in Nigeria.

Like several other well-intended but poorly planned and executed projects in Nigeria, the NRTP was conceived without the infrastructure for



implementation, hence, the project failed to provide the intended relief for underserved communities across the country.

The project was designed to deploy Code Division Multiple Access (CDMA) and other technology to cover rural areas in the 768 local government areas in the country and the six area councils in the FCT. The thinking then was that people in rural areas may not be able to afford the GSM technology, hence the argument for CDMA technology.

In the first phase of the project, the Nigerian government took a \$200 million concessionary loan from China to expand telecommunication infrastructure in rural areas in Nigeria like Gurfata.

ZTE Nigeria, a Chinese technological firm, was awarded the contract to procure and install 150,226 Code Division Multiple Access (CDMA) technology in 110 local government areas across the country.

Another Chinese firm, Sangai Bell got a contract to procure and install fixed wireless systems in 108 local governments.

For the ZTE project, the federal government got a loan of \$82 million (part of the \$200 million) at an interest rate of 3.5 per cent per annum, with a tenor of 12 years and a moratorium of six years. Facts obtained through a Freedom of Information request from the Debt Management Office (DMO) by PREMIUM TIMES confirmed that 100 percent of the loan was released to the ZTE.

The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy, WILLIAM ALO, on inspection of the 4G equipment delivered by ZTE.

In addition, ZTE was to provide Base Transceiver Stations (BTS) in 110 LGAs nationwide, and Main Switching Centres in Bauchi, Kano, Kaduna, Ibadan and Enugu states. According to Nigeria's Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy, in response to another FOI request by PREMIUM TIMES, ZTE delivered the project in 2010 and Technical Provisional Acceptance Test (PAT) and Final Acceptance Certificates (FACS) were issued in November 2010.

The NRTP was designed to be

integrated into the network of the federal government-owned telecommunication company, NITEL.

Before the liberalisation of the telecommunication sector, NITEL had monopolistic control of the industry. Following the liberalisation of the telecommunication sector, the Nigerian government commenced the process of privatisation of NITEL but with mixed success.

The poor privatisation process, according to the Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy, has not allowed the government to integrate the \$82 million project into the transmission line 13 years after the completion of the project. While the privatisation has been ongoing for years, the infrastructure of the state's own telecom has become moribund. "The integration of the network to the NITEL transmission network and the Public Switch Telephone Network (PSTN) to ensure seamless connectivity to other networks could not be achieved as the NITEL transmission network had become moribund as a result of pending privatisation and poor funding of NITEL to maintain and operate its network," the telecoms ministry stated in the reply to the FOI.

Amid this failure, the government had to get private security companies to protect the infrastructure from vandals which means that Nigeria continues to incur costs in protecting a project that is yet to benefit the people who need it.

The ministry failed to provide the cost of engaging private security to protect the infrastructure. Failed attempt to privatise the NRTP To get the project working, the government also embarked on the privatisation of some parts of the NRTP project, specifically the six telephony exchanges built in the six geopolitical zones.

The government initiated the concession assets under the lease, operate and own model. Omobola Johnson, a former minister of communication under former President Jonathan, announced in 2012 that the project would be better implemented by the private sector because the government does not want to have anything to do with running telecommunication firms.

"The telecom industry is fully liberalised, there is very little

government involvement and, therefore, we believe that the National Rural Telephony Project is better implemented and managed outside of government.

"So these six rural telephony exchanges are being concessioned to companies that have paid for them and our role is to monitor the implementation and delivery of services to rural areas. In a sense, we are getting out of the rural telephony," she stated. Following years of a bidding process, the Abuja and Kaduna NRTP were awarded to Suburban Broadband at \$47.7 million and \$47.5 million respectively. Bauchi zone was awarded to Gicell Wireless Limited at \$30 million.

Also, Voicewave Limited won the bid for Enugu zone at \$57 million, Key Communication Limited won the bid for Ibadan zone at \$38 million and Port Harcourt zone was awarded to Hezonic Limited.

Just like the failed integration of the NRTP into the NITEL network, the privatisation process has also been poorly done. For years, the federal government failed to hand over the assets to the concessioners. In 2011, some of the firms complained of bureaucratic impediments in the process of handing over the projects.

While the project assets wither away in different parts of the country, the Nigerian government has repaid the \$82 million loan with interest. By December 2014, the government had repaid the \$82,251,000 to the Chinese EXIM Bank and also paid \$17,592,160 as interest on the loan.

It is unclear if the government handed over the project to the relevant companies that won the bid. However, data on the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) website shows that the CDMA technology has a zero percent share of the market. Therefore, it is safe to say the ZTE project has not been integrated into the network.

It is unclear if the government handed over the project to the relevant companies that won the bid. However, data on the Nigerian Communications Commission website shows that the CDMA technology has a zero per cent share of the market. Therefore, it is safe to say the ZTE project has not been integrated into the network.

When this reporter contacted the NCC about the integration of the NRTP CDMA technology into Nigeria's telecommunication network, Ruben Muoka, NCC's director of public affairs, said he was not sure there is any CDMA technology in the sector following the exit of Multilinks, Starcomms and other CDMA based companies. While responding to a text message, Muoka said CDMA technology could not compete against GSM across Africa. "I don't think of any (CDMA) because Multilinks, Intercellular, Starcomms, MTS first wireless etc. are all out of operation.

CDMA technology could not compete with GSM across Africa." Experts say network operators may not have the necessary incentive to invest in the provision of telecommunication infrastructure in non-economically viable communities. "NCC makes a requirement that there should be consideration given to non-economically viable areas either through co-location or single location." Martins Nwoga, a telecoms expert, told PREMIUM TIMES.

He added that nowadays, most telecom operators opt to rent telecom masts from companies rather than installing their own. "It is no longer the GSM companies that are making decisions on installation of mast, the mast companies are," Martin added.

Despite the problem that characterised the implementation of the first phase of the project, the federal government still embarked on phase two of the project, and once again planned the project based on a \$99,375,700 loan agreement with China. Nigeria was to provide 15 percent of the counterpart funding which amounted to \$14,116,990. In phase two, ZTE was once again contracted to supply fixed wireless lines to the remaining local governments. Still, the project hit a snag with the funding arrangement.

According to the Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy, the loan from the Chinese was not forthcoming but Nigeria had paid the contractor its counterpart commitment.

In the face of the financial constraint, the Nigerian government was forced to review the scope of the project by triggering the "changed scope" clause in the contract with ZTE. Instead of supplying the fixed wireless system for rural communities, the government instead directed ZTE to use the \$14.11 million down payment to deploy 4G-LITE technology.

"With the FGN down payment of 15 percent counterpart funding and the loan not forthcoming, the Vendor was directed to utilise the 15 per cent down payment amounting to \$14,116,990.80 equivalent to N350,000,000.00 to implement the "CHANGED SCOPE" and deploy 4th Generation - Long Time Evolution (4G-LTE) standalone Telecommunications network infrastructure on the 700MHz frequency band," the ministry stated. Furthermore, the ministry said the technology has arrived from China and it is currently being warehoused in the premises of ZTE in Lagos State.

Although 4G technology is crucial for economic growth, the federal government's failure to implement the NRTP has resulted in people like Ms Seriki and many others in Gurfata and other rural areas of Nigeria being denied access to essential technology and its associated benefits.

Culled from Premium Times.

SUNDAY PEOPLE

NUJ CHAIRMAN RECEIVES COCIN LCC LEADERSHIP NASSARAWA GWONG

The first female Chairman of the Nigeria Union of Journalists, Plateau State Council, Ayuku Pwaspo on Friday received the Leading Pastor and Elders of the Church of Christ in Nation (COCIN) Local Church Council, Nassarawa Gwong, Jos North LGA in her office at the NUJ Press Centre, Jos



Leading Pastor of the Church, Rev. Emmanuel Joel Nimcheffa, encouraging Ayuku Pwaspo and EXCO



NUJ Chairman, Ayuku Pwaspo taking notes during the visit



Cross section of Elders of COCIN LCC, Nassarawa Gwong that accompanied the Reverend



Reverend Emmanuel Joel Nimcheffa praying for Ayuku Pwaspo and EXCO in her office



NUJ Secretary, Mary Replong Domtur making some remarks



NUJ Chairman, Ayuku Pwaspo (standing) responding



From left are, Correspondents' Chapel Chairman, Polycarp Auta, NUJ Ex officio member, Peter Amine and the Vice Chairman, Pam Musa listening attentively



Leading Pastor, Pastors, Elders of COCIN LCC Nassarawa Gwong in a photograph with NUJ Chairman, EXCO and well wishers

Photos: DANLADI DUK

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

On law reform and mediation center bills



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

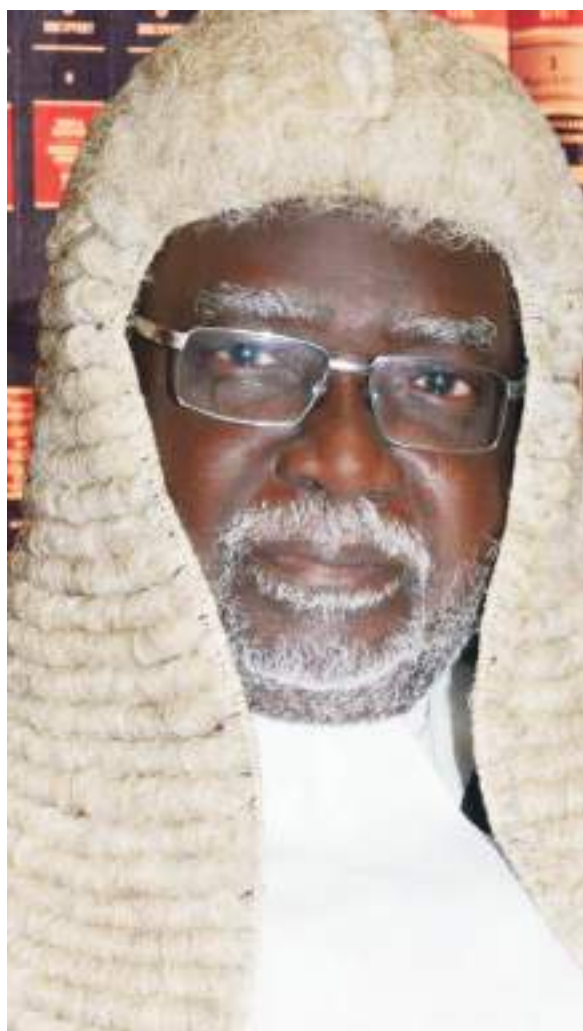
For Prof. Jummai Audi, Chairman of the Nigerian Law Reform Commission who could not hold back her excitement, The Plateau State House of Assembly has done quite well in coming up with this bill even though in her opinion, it ought to have been enacted long before now. She highlighted some of the benefits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

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

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



SUNDAY MAGAZINE



Ariwoola



Tinubu



Dongban-Mensem

Is Supreme Court of Nigeria dying?

There are mounting concerns within and outside the Judiciary circles on the urgent need to fill vacant seats at the nation's apex court. The Supreme Court whose number of Justices are being depleted at very fast pace has left piles of unattended cases, some for more than 10 years. This development is adversely affecting the dispensation of justice in the nation's apex court. KENNETH DARENG writes.

These might not be the best of times for the Supreme Court of Nigeria which had recently delivered its final verdict on the Presidential election appeal on the case of certificate and other matters surrounding the eligibility of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu to contest the 2023 Presidential polls, a case filed by the People's Democratic Party [PDP], joined by the Labour Party [LP] which polarized a good number of Nigerians along different shades of opinion over the judgment.

Then came the bombshell from retired Justice Mohammad Dattijo's indictment of the Judiciary whom he rattled the bench with the opening of a can of worms bothering on corruption and miscarriages of justice including other sundry issues that indicated all was not well with the nation's Judiciary.

On the other hand, the dwindling number of Justices on the Bench of the apex court shows a dire situation where the number of Justices who have reached their mandatory retirement age are leaving while those vacant positions are yet to be filled. For instance, the full complement of the Supreme Court is 21 justices as prescribed by the law. Therefore, the resultant effect will be a negative effect on the entire system.

Even the Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN), Justice

Olukayode Ariwoola, had recently lamented the depletion of justices on the Supreme Court Bench, and its spiral effects on the number of cases awaiting quick dispensation. It would be recalled, Justice Ariwoola, had raised the same concern on September 15, 2022, at the valedictory ceremony of a retired Supreme Court Justice, Abdu Aboki, where he opined that the exit of one Justice meant an additional workload on the remaining jurists.

In a recent interview on Arise Television, Former President of Nigerian Bar Association, Olisa Agbakoba, SAN, blamed successive CJN's for not taking the necessary steps to fill in those vacant positions even though it was within their purview to exercise such responsibility as stipulated by the country's Constitution. Yet such has been allowed to linger and now has affected the smooth running of the apex court and knowing fully well that without a good number of Justices on the Bench means a lot of damage is being done to the administration of justice in the country.

"When the Supreme Court devotes most of its time settling political cases, what time will then be available for civil cases and with how many Justices are those cases going to be dispensed giving the present situation where there are only a

few Justices available to handle such?" he said.

Another good instance was the indication of the recent retirement of Justice Amina Augie, having reached the mandatory age of 70, has further depleted the number of Justices at the Supreme Court to 11 as against the background of the prescribed 21 Justices required on the Bench.

Apart from the issue of depletion in number, there are several concerns about the administration of justice in Nigeria that needs to be addressed. According to some lawyers, the National Judicial Council [NJC], must ensure that the apex court is fully constituted with 21 Justices in line with the provisions of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Speaking on the vacant seats at the Supreme Court, a Law Professor and Senior Advocate of Nigeria [SAN], Sam Erugo, said the filling of the full complement of 21 Justices of the Supreme Court would appear to have been difficult over the years because great care and caution are required to make selection and appointments to that esteemed position.

According to Erugo, the nature of the position of a Supreme Court Justice is not like any other position where politics is played at the altar of meritocracy. He further said,

"Everyone involved appreciates the need for care required to ensure the competence and capability of the appointee to live up to the demands of the office, regarding legal knowledge, skill, and ethics or value of a Justice of the apex court."

Contributing on that, Senior Advocate of Nigeria [SAN], Olisa Agbakoba, noted that, the challenge of filling those vacant positions lies with the fact that there is a lot of political, sectional and selfish interests surrounding the issue. It is not a difficult thing for the CJN to set the template for the appointment and recommend same to the National Judicial Council [NJC].

Agbakoba, also wondered why lawyers with vast experience in criminal law and exposure cannot be appointed to the Supreme Court Bench to fill in the depletion which could be an avenue of sharing various perspectives of the law instead of the present situation where Justices are appointed from the Appeal Courts.

Although some of the factors attributed to the depletion are as a result of death or retirement. Many Lawyers have blamed the system for making the apex court preserved for the elderly statesmen in an Institution that is quite demanding in terms of the workload as well as physical and

mental ability to cope with the daily challenges of the administration of Justice at that highest level of the Judiciary.

According to most opinions, the only way out would be for the stakeholders to proceed constitutionally and ethically to appoint Justices to fill the constitutional number. "We had suggested elsewhere that there is even a need for a constitutional amendment to increase the number of the full complement to at least 37 Justices in view of the increasing docket. With 37 justices, every state and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), could be represented." One Lawyer said.

Another Professor of law, Ernest Ojukwu [SAN], stated that the National Judicial Council should play their role and nominate the required number of justices and send it to the President for appointment. Also voicing his support for filling the vacant seats, Victor Opara [SAN], believes that filling the vacant seats on the Bench is achievable as Nigeria has many competent justices with impeccable integrity who can discharge judicial duties.

Meanwhile, some Lawyers have attributed the depletion of the apex court to the way and manner the judicial arm has surrendered its powers to the Executive arm and have been served with a poisoned chalice

Continued on page 31

NEWS

Dankwambo wants his monthly pension suspended

From
WILLIE ATTAH, Gombe

IMMEDIATE past Governor of Gombe State, Senator Ibrahim Hassan Dankwambo, has requested Governor Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya to suspend forthwith, the payment of monthly pension he enjoys as a former Governor of Gombe State.

Senator Dankwambo who now represents Gombe North in the red chamber, was also a former Accountant General of the Federation and was Gombe State Governor from 2011 to 2019.

He made the request in a letter dated 4th October, 2023 but made the letter public on Tuesday 30th October, 2023.

In the letter, Senator Dankwambo wrote the incumbent governor, Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya, requesting that his monthly pension of N694,552.82 being paid to him as a former governor, be suspended.

The letter reads: "Further to my letter to His Excellency dated 28th September, 2023 on issues resulting to security allowances to Governors as per approval dated 20/09/2002, yours of 14/06/2019 and Executive Pension Act of 2007 (as amended) and other matters relating therein.

"I have interacted with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), integrity institutions, friends and associations on the above and decided to hold and make a refund as appropriate", he stated.

Senator Dankwambo also in the letter, denied enjoying any benefit in terms of furniture, medical and transport allowances from the State Government as a former governor.

He said, "Also note, that since I left office in 2019, I have never benefited from any welfare packages, be it medical, furniture, transportation etc".



Dankwambo

Adopt reconciliation for brotherhood, national cohesion

By **DORCAS PANKYES**

THE Igwe Obata-Obie 1 of Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, HRH Amb. Engr. David Kingston Okey-Dede, has called on the Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Benjamin Kalu, and the Minister of State for Labour and Productivity, Hon. Nkeiruka Chidubem Onyejeocha to thread the path of peace by adopting reconciliation as regards the differences between them.

The Igwe Obata-Obie 1 of Abuja, Amb. Okey-Dede called for their reconciliation in a statement personally signed by him and issued to newsmen recently.

This followed the Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Benjamin Kalu's denial of any link with the alleged campaign of calumny against Minister of State for Labour and Productivity, Hon. Nkeiruka Chidubem Onyejeocha.

According to BluePrint, One Usman Shuaibu who claimed to be the National Coordinator of Progressive League of APC Youth Voters, had spewed allegations of campaign of calumny against Onyejeocha at a media briefing.

But reacting to the allegation, Kalu said were it not for purposes of protecting the unsuspecting members of the public who may inadvertently be hoodwinked by a tirade of spurious narratives, the office of the Deputy Speaker would never be bothered about

making a rebuttal.

Levinus Nwabughio, Chief Press Secretary (CPS) to the Deputy Speaker in a statement recently, said what rather comes to mind is that the press conference was misdirected or at best, done without the consent of the minister who obviously would be embarrassed by it because it has the imprints of a people on a mission to infamy and perfidy.

"While one is seriously affronted by the launch of insolence and impudence against the person and the Office of the Deputy Speaker by this group, it is also very pertinent to state that it may be lost on them that Kalu shares a healthy and robust relationship with Onyejeocha, both as a sister and worthy partner in the government of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC).

"But the fact that Onyejeocha has not yet disassociated herself from the press conference, leaves a huge worry and casts aspersions on her person as to what manner of a minister would be creating an impression of someone deliberately courting trouble where none exists.

Explaining that there was no reason for the Deputy Speaker to have any issue with the Minister, the statement said, "Both officials hail from different political constituencies and so, there is no basis for a political war at all. Kalu's passion is to engender a new paradigm shift in political leadership especially as it

affects the youth of this country".

Reacting to the face-off between the duo of the Igbo extraction, the Igwe Obata-Obie 1 of Abuja, HRH Amb. David Okey-Dede entreated Kalu and Onyejeocha to replicate the image of the Igbo in the good light by resolving their disagreement with

- Obata-Obie

brotherly spirit and allow peace to reign.

Igwe David Okey-Dede, who said he has constituted a committee to look into the matter to bring about peaceful resolutions, further enjoined them to end the media war and embrace unity.

NGO advocates women empowerment to fulfil purpose

A non-governmental organisation (NGO), Women Like Esther Support Initiative (WLESI), has called for more assistance and empowerment for women and the girl-child in order for them to fulfill their purpose-driven lives.

Mrs Blessing Makanjuola, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Women Like Esther Support Initiative (WLESI), Nigerian Chapter, made the call during the official launch of the organisation in Ajaokuta, Kogi, Nigeria.

Makanjuola regretted the situation whereby a lot of women in Nigeria are without hope due to their low economic power and lack of good footing in their various communities.

The CEO said that there was a need for government, corporate organisations and wealthy individuals to look at various means of helping women to stand tall in order to fulfill their God given purposes in life.

"This becomes imperative in view of the fact that many women out there, don't have their footing. They don't know their left from their right and have lost hope. Life no longer has meaning to them.

"That's why an NGO like Women Like Esther Support Initiative, has decided to take the bull by the horns to connect women to their God given destiny directions.

"With the launch of WLESI today, we are out to gather women in order to chart the way forward in times like this. You can agree with me that the days and the times are hard and evil.

"Our aim is to gather women in Kogi, Nigeria and all over the world, to help chart a way forward for them to discover their purpose in life and to realize it.

"This is because if you're a woman without a purpose, you don't have a life to live. So we have come as an NGO to help women realize their purpose in life.

"Esther, in the Bible, was a child from nowhere, but she realized her purpose and she became a queen and transformed destinies. That's what Women Like Esther Support Initiative has come to do for women in Kogi and Nigeria and across the world," she said.

According to her, we are out to enable women to stand tall in whichever situation they find themselves in, so that the problems of this world will not overwhelm or swallow them but they will contribute their quota in homes and nation building.

She explained that WLESI would also encourage women to learn how to look up to God for help in prayers because "when women cry to God in prayers there's hope for revival and salvation."

"So we have come together as women to pray to our God for total change in our terrible situations in our families, states and nation.

"We intend to do this through workshops, seminars and town hall meetings. We plan to sensitise and train them as the Lord will empower us. We believe that when you build a woman you have built a nation," she said.

Our correspondent reports that the inaugural launch of the NGO saw the distribution of cash support to various indigent women including a mother of triplets, Hajiya Hadiza Muhammed, a jobless graduate.

**Nigeria to get \$150m Abacha loot from France**

The French government has resolved to return \$150 million recovered from the family of the late dictator, Gen. Sani Abacha, to Nigeria.

Put aside personal ambitions for Nigeria's prosperity
President Bola Tinubu on Friday charged members of the Federal Executive Council to work together and bring economic prosperity to the country.

Organised labour declares strike over assault on Ajaero by police in Imo

The organized labour on Friday resolved to embark on a nationwide strike on November 8 to protest the recent treatment of its President, Joe Ajaero.

Trouble brews again, as Northern group threatens to eject Yorubas from region in response to Igboho's threat

The Northern Consensus Movement has issued a warning to Yoruba agitator, Sunday Igboho, on Friday.

Ndume makes startling revelation on controversial presidential yacht

Dangote, BUA Group reignite 32-year-old war for market control, trade accusations of back-stabbing

Two of Nigeria's leading conglomerates, Dangote Industries Limited (DIL) and BUA Group have resumed their hostilities over market control.

26.5m Nigerians face food crisis in 2024 - FAO

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) said on Friday that at least 26.5 million Nigerians would face a food crisis in 2024.

Man docked for alleged theft of 40 ATM cards in Kano

Police on Friday arraigned one Madaki Isah at the Kano Magistrates' Court for allegedly stealing 40 different Automated Teller Machine (ATM) cards.

Osimhen'll make Napoli return next week, says Garcia
Super Eagles forward, Victor Osimhen will return to Napoli next week, this was according to the team's manager Rudi Garcia.

Labour Party accuses INEC of planning to hold governorship poll in Imo units with zero voters

The Labour Party in Imo State has accused the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) of planning to hold the November 11 election in polling units with no registered voters.

Justice Olukayode Adeniyi of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) High Court on Thursday ordered the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) to release the former Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Godwin Emezie, immediately or produce him in court on November 6.

Presidential yacht ordered by Navy under Buhari - Presidency
The Presidency said on Thursday the presidential yacht listed in the 2023 supplementary budget was not for President Bola Tinubu's personal use.

Uzodinma accuses Ajaero of blackmailing his government in Imo

The Imo State Governor, Hope Uzodinma, on Thursday accused the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) President, Joe Ajaero, of blackmailing his government.

National Assembly approves N2.176trn 2023 supplementary budget

The N2.176 trillion 2023 supplementary budget that President Bola Ahmed Tinubu submitted to the legislature on Tuesday has been approved by the National Assembly.

Tinubu demands credible governorship elections in Bayelsa, 2 others

President Bola Tinubu on Thursday charged all candidates in Bayelsa, Imo, and Kogi States to ensure a free and fair governorship election on November 11.

Experts upbeat CBN's clearing of FX backlog will strengthen naira, boost liquidity

The recent move by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to clear the FX backlog owed to Foreign Portfolios Investors is viewed as a move that would strengthen the naira, boost liquidity in the FX market, restore investors' confidence and arrest inflation.

CBN mentions high volume, panic withdrawals as causes of naira scarcity in parts of Nigeria

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has assured Nigerians of an adequate supply of Naira notes in the country.

Sanwo-Olu commissions Yaba Overpass Bridge

The former President of the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF), Amaju Pinnick, has accused music star, David Adeleke aka Davido, and his aide Israel Afaere of stealing and defamation.

Complied by LOIS DADUUT



Okey-Dede

SUNDAY FEATURE

Godfatherism: Docile populace

The word 'godfather' appears in parenthesis in many western political studies. The situation is different in Nigeria. The patron-client relationships that popularised the term in Nigerian politics have cultural roots among many Nigerians peoples. It is not a totally new experience in the sociology of the Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo for people to have one or other type of 'godfather'. For example, the word 'godfather' has a local equivalence in Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo languages and these words have been in usage since the pre-colonial era. AJIJI AJANG JOHN writes.

A godfather is known among the Hausa as a 'maigida' (landlord or the head of a household). The word 'maigida' goes beyond its literal meaning. Abner Cohen, Paul Lovejoy, and Polly Hill used the term in their works to refer to those who provided brokerage services to Hausa traders in transit in different parts of West Africa. These Hausa traders brought cattle from their homeland to different parts of southern West Africa and took back kola nuts to the North. At the various transit centres where they have to stop to do businesses, they rely on a maigida to facilitate their economic activities. The maigida provides them with accommodation, storage and brokerage services. The maigida receive compensations for their services and many of them became rich from the number of clients they had. Even in Hausaland, from where these itinerant traders came, this kind of patron-client relationship is popularly known.

The Hausa sell kola nuts by the hundred (k'warya). One kola nut is added to every hundred that is counted or sold. This is what the maigida gets for commission. In other words what a broker gets is just one percent of everything that is sold. This is what is known as 'd'an k'ida' (plural - 'yan k'ida). What is paid as commission to a landlord in cattle trade or other kinds of business is generally referred to as 'la'ada'. A 'godfather' is referred to in Yoruba as 'baba kekere' (the small father), 'baba isale' (the father of the underground world), or 'baba nigbejo' (a great help in times of trouble). The most historical of these terms is 'baba kekere'. It was used to depict community leaders with whom people of less social status identified as a way of providing physical, social, political and economic security for themselves.

For example, most of the Yoruba refugees who came to settle in Ibadan in the early nineteenth century settled with the 'baba kekere' in the city. These were military chiefs and patrons appointed to be in charge of certain Ibadan colonies by the town's traditional council. The migrants who settled under these Ibadan chiefs paid the 'baba kekere' tribute. part of which the 'baba kekere' transmitted to the Ibadan authorities. In return, the chiefs were obligated to protect those under them against any act of violence that characterised Ibadan at this time. the sociology of traditional in Igbo society Has made reference to the popular relationship between 'Nnam-Ukwu' (my master) and 'Odibo' (the servant) in the Igbo world view. A younger person is entrusted to a more mature and experienced person for training in social, economic and moral adulthood. The role played by the man in this kind of relationship is akin to that of a godfather. The latter is expected to set the boy up in his business after undergoing whatever training the master must have given him. In the three cases mentioned above, a person of lesser social status attaches himself to another person, usually of higher status, for support, which could be social or economic. The godfather gets something in return from the adopted son for the transactional relationship. It is probably on this understanding that the modern notion of godfatherism in Nigeria is based. In other words, the phenomenon of godfatherism is not strange to the cultural world of the Nigerian people. The giving of kola by a client to his patron is also not strange. What is probably strange is that the transposition of this social or economic system into the political arena and also the ridiculous nature of what patrons now ask for from their clients as compensation for providing them with 'brokerage services'. The present-day godfatherism is a primordial tradition taken to a criminal extent. The



phenomenon has far-reaching negative effects on the democratisation process in Nigeria. The founding fathers of party politics in Nigeria were godfathers of a sort. They were preceded by the first generation Nigerian elites to establish contact with the European in the late 1800s.

A picture surfaced on the internet some days ago and it has been driving everyone crazy. A commissioner of land and water resources of Akwa Ibom state, Umo Eno a man in his 50s or even 60s was kneeling down before Udom Emmanuel, the state governor, who according to reports just anointed the former as his successor to the governorship throne. That picture of a 60-year-old man (in the voice of Asari Dokubo) kneeling down before his mate or even his younger person who just happened to have occupied a higher position is a replica of how Nigerian politics plays out.

Politicians kneeling down, prostrating, and bowing down in worship of other politicians who they deem as gods is not new in the Nigerian political atmosphere. Remember sometime last year when a picture surfaced online showing a political figure in Delta state, a 61-year-old Nigerian top tier senator, James Manager, the senator representing the Delta south senatorial district was also pictured on his knees, begging the former governor of Delta state, James Ibori, to push his 2023 governorship ambition.

It is now a tradition. Some call it humility but we all know better, it can be anything but humility. It actually looks stupid, and clearly an act of desperation, its concept is pointing to how much decadence the Nigerian politics have suffered, it shows in clear terms that you can't occupy a juicy political position in Nigeria based on your credibility and merit but based on favoritism as you must be ready to kneel before, worship, bow down and adore some political majesties who will place you in their pockets and control you within their whims and caprices.

Western Nigeria is the pacesetter when it comes to godfatherism politics. Just like the godfather is the overall boss in the mafia family that other lords pay homage to him,

Tinubu is the overall governor, overall senator, and overall political figure in that region that governors, senators, house of representative members, and other political occupiers worship him and take instructions from him. If you dare to do otherwise and fail to follow his instructions you will be treated like an insubordinate and such act of insubordination is punished by making sure you don't ever return to the political position you were occupying before you frolicked or ever win an election again unless you have grown some huge wings to help you flourish independent of your political godfather.

This was the case of the former governor of Lagos state, Akinwunmi Ambode; based on his track records and achievements in the state, he was to return for the second term, he deserved it, but due to his insubordination to Tinubu, 'the Lagos mafia Godfather', he was denied the second term ticket. It has been the tradition and you can't help it. If you try to do otherwise the mafia gang will come after you and make sure you don't ever get close to any political seat, ever again and make you lose your political popularity for daring to be insubordinate to "the Godfather".

Adams Oshiomole was to try out this system in Edo state but it failed woefully as the opposition was able to introduce and sell propaganda to fight his grips in Edo state. They introduced and sold the "Edo nor be Lagos" slogan which was political propaganda sponsored by the opposition to fight the Adams Oshiomole system and structure and extol Godwin Obaseki.

Obaseki was clearly a political stooge of Oshiomole but due to unresolved differences the two fell off, Oshiomole tried to play the Tinubu/Ambode card on Obaseki, but Obaseki unlike Ambode decamped and fled the party and joined the opposition party and he was able to stand his ground and fight for his return ticket. He won and he made Oshiomole lose his popularity in Edo state, a state that was under his whims and caprices but he didn't fully grasp the state like Tinubu of Lagos state.

This godfatherism political system has never had a known or recorded success in the history of eastern Nigeria's political arena. Maybe the

Igbos right from the time of colonial rules hate to be controlled or answer "yes sir yes sir" to anybody. Little wonder the colonial indirect rule system failed woefully in that region. An Igbo man will always tell you "anyi cha bu cha Oga", meaning, everybody is his own boss. There is no state in eastern Nigeria where a governor, past or present, will boldly boast to be the Tinubu of that state.

Martin Elechi of Ebonyi state tried it when he was about to leave the governor's seat with his Labour Party but his deputy, the current governor of the state whom Elechi never endorsed to be the next governor made sure Martin Elechi retired out of politics back to his farmland in Ikwo. Rochas Okorocho also tried to play the Tinubu game in Imo state when he wanted to place his son-in-law in the governorship seat but it failed woefully, Rochas is still getting some heavy blows because this is his failed game till today. The list goes on, even in Rivers state, Riverians told Amaechi categorically that he can't play the Tinubu godfatherism game in Rivers state, and Wike was really a worthy match.

If you want to shove 'The Godfather' factor in Nigerian politics under the carpet, especially in the western Nigerian, and feign surprises when we see pictures of a figure kneeling and bowing before a higher figure then we are not ready for the discussion of emancipation and freedom from the menace.

It is abysmally bad that if you want to go into the political arena and throw in your interest, the question folks will ask you after asking you how much you are ready to throw around and buy support is: "Who's your godfather?" "Who's backing you?" just like the street guys will size you up by asking you "who's your daddy", meaning who's your support system; if you don't have a political figure as your godfather then you are likely to fail than to succeed in the Nigerian political sphere.

Godfatherism in Nigeria is a topic that has not been given enough attention until recently that it was exposed that Chief Chris Uba, was the estranged political Godfather of Chief Dr. Chris Ngige and among the

political criminals that are behind elections or selection of most of our state governors and other lawmakers.

Apparently, it appears that majority of our state governors, senators, ministers are financed by such caliber of person and for those financed by their godfathers get into offices now have huge power in respective states. Godfatherism is responsible for distorting the effective functioning of political parties, however, the issue is neglected by the political institutions charged with maintaining the sanctity of the system. The word godfatherism has been affecting the political system and party arena since the country returned to a democratic state and has a negative reflection on the society, if a proper and right candidate is not elected to represent the citizens, such a society will lack the dividends of democracy and neglect why they vote, because most of the candidates who represent them are imposed by some elite in society.

Godfatherism can also be seen as a particular group of individual in society that are wealthy, influential and strong in the environment that contribute to the development of any interest group or political party in society, which view them as a superiors individual, with such advantage they regard them as a strong elite and respect their authoritative decision both the masses and the rich because of their power.

They are different type of godfathers in Nigeria, they are some groups of individuals that do not have any intention for politics but want to contribute to political affairs and have a say in the community or society in using their resources to decide a particular candidate for a particular post, and make use of the opportunity to gain ground in the community that could help them to have a say in government and also recognize as one of the nobles in society of such particular environment and they are some that practice politics and also have mouth in the community or the society they residence but does not have the resources to aspire for political post, instead they make use of the mouth they have in the society to influence the society and candidate aspires for post.

Also some types of godfathers have high level of political participation in every aspect relating to politics, their political efficacy is high but they lack the practice strategic ideologies of politics, as result of this create room for some of the political gladiator to motivate them with money and utilize their manpower to wins election in different ward and eventual drop them after the election, most people in this group are the illiterates in the society.

A law should be made to forbid godfatherism in the state, The electorate should be properly sensitized that nobody has a monopoly of power and power does not belong to just one family. Godfathers are not all bad but they are some that are just evil and those need to be removed.

SUNDAY FEATURE

Effects of hardship, on mental health

It does no one any good to dissimulate or dissemble our feelings in a bid to hide or escape the present-day realities in the lives of citizens all over the world. Yes, there is high inflation, food insecurity all over the world but the case in Africa and Nigeria in particular calls for serious concern and attention. The level of hardship and hunger witnessed in Nigeria in recent times has never been imagined nor occurred to anybody as something that would come to be. Hardship, hunger and poverty are major social determinants of health, and they a significant impact on mental health. We may not take the main cognizance of people who are already mentally challenged, but healthy individuals who suffer lack and want are likely to be depressed due to discrimination and isolation. OBIOTIKA WILFRED TOCHUKWU writes.

DUE to the hardship in the country, a lot of people see food and medicare in their dreams and not having food, means of transportation are great stressors which can cause depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Hardship which comes in the form of financial insecurity, unemployment, homelessness, discrimination, violence can lead to depression, anxiety or sleep problems. People who are struggling to make ends meet may worry about how to pay for rent, food and other necessities, lose hope and turn to beggars.

Moreover, beggars lack access to basic hygiene, sanitation facilities, and medical care which could lead to illnesses, infections and the spread of diseases. Beggars often face social stigma and discrimination, which can contribute to their isolation and make it difficult for them to access support or opportunities for improvement. Begging makes it difficult to break free from the cycle of poverty. The ability to seek sustainable solutions such as education, employment or social support systems is completely hindered from them.

Hitherto, begging does not only attract sympathy or elicit empathy from kind-hearted individuals, it also has economic implications for a decent society. It would not only affect tourism; it would also limit visitation to places where beggars often flock.

Besides, depression is a socio-economic disease. It is on record that patients with clinical depression experience mood disorder when they suffer lack and want. A test with Baboons in Kenya in the 1920s showed that displaced baboons who lack food and space are usually depressed and stressed. Financial stress is a major cause of depression and anxiety disorder. Inequality is one of the drivers of the mental health crisis and there is a link between mental health and money. Going into a recluse, withdrawal, avoiding social functions, church attendance are various reactions of our mental state which could be detrimental.

On the same note, 'Japa' is already a syndrome in Nigeria and 'Sapa' is a mental condition. The grass is not green in Nigeria making citizens unduly stressed with ₦35,000 minimum wage which is less than \$50 and the government does not show any sign or readiness to remedy the ugly situation. Not being able to meet financial goals whether monthly or annually creates shame, guilt and discouragement. The mind and body are connected when it comes to stress and anxiety. Nowadays, we pay a very high rate for fuel, gas, electricity, education, transportation etc. and this definitely impacts our mental health. On 29 June 2018, 'Psychiatric Times' had classified inequality and poverty as social determinants of mental health.

Furthermore, hunger is a lack of access to enough food to meet basic



needs. A recent CDC study on food insecurity in America found that food insecurity is associated with 257% higher risk of anxiety and 253% higher risk of depression. Several nutritional deficiencies such as vitamin B12, B9 (folate), and zinc, can cause symptoms of depression and dementia such as low mood, fatigue, cognitive decline, and irritability. Letters on poverty, hardship, food insecurity and even write-ups about helpless Nigerians' condition flooded the media starting from 2015 to the present era signifying that a dark cloud has covered the prosperity of the nation plunging the citizens to untold hardship and suffering. Suffering has a place in religion whereby the hope of recovery gives whoever is going through 'hell' the possibility of a life in paradise or a glorious life in the golden city - Heaven. Yet, suffering impacts our worldview, mental health depending on the nature and cause of suffering.

Convincingly, someone may think or believe that there is nothing wrong with the government in Nigeria owing to high inflation all over the world but such views could be likened to "Plato's Allegory of the Cave". The allegory imagines a group of people chained together inside an underground cave as prisoners. Nigeria has never had it so divided, deprived, deprived and disgruntled as in the present time. This is so because by tackling the root causes of poverty and inequality, societies can work towards healthy living and high productivity from the citizenry. Going to university is good, starting a small business is wonderful but there is no guarantee of a successful outcome in recent times. 40% of Nigerians go into debt after marriage (wedding), childbirth, burial etc. which affects mental health. Experts have stated that



25% of Nigerians suffer mental health issues. Mental health is a social issue and the community and government must liaise to provide enabling support to the mentally challenged. Mental health problems cost the UK government £117.9 billion in a year.

In addition, people living below the poverty line are 3-4x likely to have mental problems. Testimonies from suicide survivors attest to the fact that they felt forsaken, unaided and abandoned. Poverty is a social and economic issue according to the World Bank and one sixth of the world population live in poverty. Poverty causes clinical depression, psychological problems and behavioural disorders. Poverty in children while growing up as well as stress and trauma affect children's ability for positive thinking. Lack of support and access to resources in general affect mental health. The most vulnerable segment of the

population, children and women are severely affected by poverty. Even though African women are emotionally and mentally stronger, they still pass through a whole lot because they could not afford their best life due to poverty especially while performing their role as mothers.

Again, poverty is a multidimensional problem affecting the social, economic and cultural aspects of life. Clinical depression and cognitive decline are the outcome of poverty in the elderly. Poverty exacerbates circumstances of stress, anxiety, family stress, and depression. Women from poor families have high rate of depression and low self-esteem as well as elevated rate of suicide and substance abuse. According to 'Psychology Today', poverty decreases social support and having the emotional support of friends and family helps people cope with difficult

situations in their lives. Poverty does not just affect human beings but animals as well.

In conclusion, mental health issues are common but they don't have to be inevitable. Several interventions in the health system and the economy can help to salvage, prevent and control emerging trends. Some causes of mental health problems include; child abuse, trauma, neglect, social isolation, loneliness, discrimination, stigma, racism, poverty, debt, bereavement, severe stress etc. Citizens can help themselves by being financially responsible which gives happiness. It's not about how much we have but how much we can keep. Do not always focus on the display and activities on social media. One can start journaling to record events and situational assessment. This may help to limit mindless spending. Your physical health and

mental health will always benefit from how you manage your money. The rate of influence of your financial situation (security, freedom) on your mental health cannot be over-emphasized. They are known as triggers to issues such as anxiety and depression. Having a budget to determine how much you have and how to spend it is very important. One can still venture into digital businesses in the face of rising high prices. Money management is a psychology.

The effects of hardship, hunger and poverty on mental health can be far-reaching. They can impact a person's ability to function at work, school and in their relationships. By addressing the social determinants of health, making mental health services more accessible and affordable, we can create a society where everyone has the opportunity to thrive and live a mentally healthy life.

THE word is agog with hysteria because of climate change. Far-reaching decisions that affect our lives are being made because of climate change. I often wonder if we are not doing too much globally because of climate change.

Recently, I found out that the weather can actually be controlled using weather modification technology. In other words, the weather could be engineered. This engineering of our weather could also be a double-edged word. One of such technology is called cloud seeding. This is one of the technologies used to cause rain and floods. Cloud seeding can do wonders in the desert. With rain caused by this technology, the desert could be converted into arable land. This seedling has been done in Dubai deserts.

Cloud seeding is an answer to droughts and dissertation. However, in the forest zones where rain is perennial, cloud seeding can lead to massive flooding. Today, occurrences of flooding across the globe has doubled. This leaves me with some questions. Are some of these floods results of cloud seeding gone wrong? Is climate engineering under government regulation? How can climate engineering be regulated in Nigeria even before it arrives here if it is not already here?

I share with you an excerpt on what cloud seeding is from the Desert Research Institute:

What is cloud seeding?

Clouds are made up of tiny water droplets or ice crystals that form when water vapor in the atmosphere cools and condenses around a tiny particle of dust or salt floating in the atmosphere. Without these particles, known as condensation or ice nuclei, raindrops or snowflakes cannot form and precipitation will not occur.

Cloud seeding is a weather modification technique that improves a cloud's ability to produce rain or snow by introducing tiny ice nuclei into certain types of subfreezing clouds. These nuclei provide a base for snowflakes to form. After cloud seeding takes place, the newly formed snowflakes quickly grow and fall from the clouds back to the surface of the Earth, increasing snowpack and streamflow.

How we cloud seed

Cloud seeding can be done from ground-based generators or aircrafts. The DRI Cloud Seeding Research Programme primarily uses ground-based generators, which are designed and built by DRI and can be operated remotely. In the Carson and Walker River basins, DRI also conduct cloud seeding from a subcontracted seeding aircraft.

Most cloud seeding operations, including those run by DRI, use a compound called silver iodide (AgI) to aid in the formation of ice crystals. Silver iodide exists naturally in the environment at low concentrations and is not known to be harmful to humans or wildlife.

When storm systems move through one of our cloud seeding project areas, a solution containing a small amount of silver iodide is burned from ground-based generators or released from aircraft. Upon reaching the cloud, the silver iodide acts as an ice forming nuclei to aid in the production of snowflakes.

DRI's cloud seeding operation generally runs during the winter season of November to May, when storm systems are actively moving through our project areas. During dry winters when storm systems are absent for long periods, cloud seeding cannot occur, because cloud seeding requires the presence of moisture-filled clouds.

DRI's team of experts include meteorologists who monitor the weather throughout the season for appropriate cloud seeding conditions. Cloud seeding does not occur during times when additional precipitation would be problematic, such as times of high flood risk or during busy holiday travel periods.

Benefits of cloud seeding

Cloud seeding is used all over the world as a method for enhancing winter snowfall and increasing mountain snowpack, supplementing the natural water supply available to communities of the surrounding area.

The effectiveness of cloud seeding differs from project to project, but long-term cloud seeding projects over the mountains of Nevada and other parts of the world have been shown to increase the overall snowpack in the targeted areas by 10% or more per year (Manton and Warren 2011, Huggins 2009,

Super and Heimbach 1983).

At a study site in the Snowy Mountains of New South Wales, Australia, a five-year cloud seeding project designed by DRI resulted in a 14 percent increase in snowfall across the project area. This enhanced snowfall was shown to be a result of cloud seeding, at the 97 percent confidence interval (Manton and Warren 2011).

In Wyoming, a 10-year cloud seeding experiment in the Snowy Range and Sierra Madre Range resulted in five to 15 percent increases in snow pack from winter storms (Wyoming Water Development Office 2015). And older research from a cloud seeding programme in the Bridger Range of western Montana showed snowfall increases of up to

Between cloud seeding and climate change



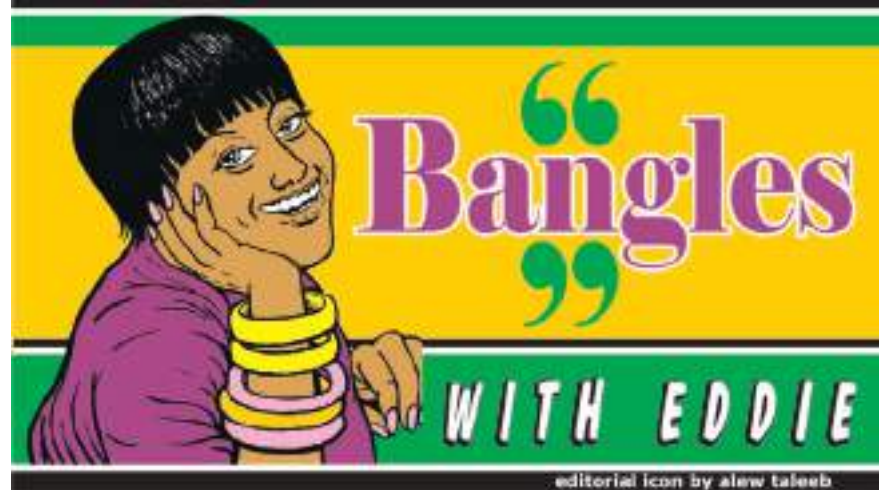
15 percent from cloud seeding using high altitude remote-controlled generators (Super and Heimbach 1983). These generators are similar to the cloud seeding methods used by DRI's modern cloud seeding projects.

The foregoing is from the Desert Research Institute. following excerpt from the bulletin of Atomic Scientists explains the pros and cons of cloud seeding with instances of flooding in places like Dubai, which is also taking its first harvest from cloud seeding this year:

With water shortages in the American West continuing to worsen, policymakers are starting to recognize that incremental changes such as "avoiding long showers [and] fixing leaky faucets" will not be sufficient. During crises, "silver bullets"—promising but overly-simplistic technological solutions to complex problems—become increasingly appealing, despite the acknowledgement that no single technology or policy can address complex challenges like water shortages or climate change.

Cloud seeding is perhaps the ultimate silver bullet, in which literal silver in the form of silver iodide is infused into clouds, causing ice crystals to form and water to condense into rain or snow. Cloud seeding is a form of planned weather modification. Most commonly used to increase precipitation as a drought management technique, cloud seeding is also regularly used to clear fog in airports, fight forest fires, suppress hail, and even divert rainfall, as it was used, for example, during the 2008 Olympics in Beijing.

The promise of creating rain is highly appealing in the face of increasing water shortages and disruptions to water cycles exacerbated by climate change. While cloud seeding is not a new technology—the first experiments took place in the 1940s—it fell out of favor in the 1980s for being an "unacceptable ethical and environmental hazard." It is now back on the policy agenda as a climate adaptation strategy. Idaho, Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, and California have all expanded their cloud seeding operations in the past two years in response to the worsening drought. Despite its potential, the risks associated with cloud seeding are high, and



warfare. The likes of cloud seeding which can cause flooding.

The fact that cloud seeding exists should not surprise us. Already, we have biological weapons. Weather modification resulting in catastrophes exist. The point here is that while we look for ways and means of mitigating the damaging effects of flooding in our country, we have to consider the possibility of cloud seeding as remote as it may sound. Do we have the technology in private hands? How can the government put in place regulations that will govern this sector. Drones are already in private hands. In fact, there is a drone club in Abuja. We all know the security threats that drones can constitute. Is this regulated

The world is moving in ways that we cannot completely decipher or reverse. While these events might surprise us, it is important for our government to be aware of this and regulate its usage in our environment by enacting the relevant laws. Before we continue the conversation, please read the forgoing on the environmental modification convention from Wikipedia:

Prior to the Environmental Modification Convention signed in Geneva in 1977, the United States used weather warfare in the Vietnam War. Operation Popeye saw the use of cloud seeding over the Ho Chi Minh trail. It was hoped that the increased rainfall would reduce the rate of infiltration down the trail.[1]

A research paper produced for the United States Air Force written in 1996 speculates about the future use of nanotechnology to produce "artificial weather", clouds of microscopic computer particles all communicating with each other to form an "intelligent fog" that could be used for various purposes. "Artificial weather technologies do not currently exist. But as they are developed, the importance of their potential applications rises rapidly."

The Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques (Geneva: May 18, 1977, Entered into force: October 5, 1978) prohibits "widespread, long-lasting or severe effects as the means of destruction, damage or injury". In 1972 an ENMOD convention on weather warfare presented that this permits "local, non-permanent changes".[2] The "Consultative Committee of Experts" established in Article VIII of the Convention stated in their "Understanding relating to Article II" that any use of environmental modification where this is done "as a means of destruction, damage or injury to another State Party, would be prohibited".[3] It also suggests all signatories are expected to abstain from using weather modification to cause harm at any scale, stating "military or any other hostile use of environmental modification techniques, would result, or could reasonably be expected to result, in widespread, long-lasting or severe destruction, damage or injury." However, the treaty does not directly condemn military use of weather modification when it does not directly cause harm,[3] such as the United States' use of weather modification in the siege of Khe Sanh, discussed above. The limitations of the treaty, and its application only to signatory states, allow weather warfare to continue to play a role in warfare throughout the twenty-first century. The United States prohibits weather modification without permission of the United States.

there is significant danger that cloud seeding may do more harm than good."Human consequences."

As early as 1965, the National Science Foundation called for urgent social science research into the impacts of weather modification, stating, "If the developing techniques of weather and climate modification are to be used intelligently, the human consequences of deliberate or inadvertent intervention need to be anticipated before they are upon us." But these issues continue to be under-explored. Compared to other forms of geoengineering that have received greater attention and generated more controversy—such as expanding research on solar geoengineering—policy discussions about the use (and misuse) of cloud seeding are lacking, even though it has been widely deployed.

Having read the forgoing, we must interrogate cloud modification weather engineering technology in a world where flooding, earthquakes and all forms of weather hazards threaten human life. If this technology gets into the wrong hands, it will become a deadly weapon of destruction where the weather can simply be modified to cause flooding in any area of choice. This should not surprise us because today's military power lies in the possession of the most destructive technology and water is just as destructive as fire.

Bhupendra Jasani, in a publication titled "environmental modification" talks about weather and climate modification, modification of oceans and earthquakes, modification of certain types of electromagnetic radiation reaching the earth and modification of the electrical behaviour of the atmosphere. This paper calls all of this geophysical modification. The paper reads and I quote as follows: "the term environmental modification embodies many types of deliberate or inadvertent changes in the environment where man leaves. One aspect of this, the deliberate geophysical modification, and its uses as a means of waging war, is considered here". From the foregoing, climate engineering can be used as a weapon of

WE are continuing our series on why Jesus came and what His presence to this earth means to the human race. Our purpose here is to focus on Jesus and His core anointing. We take our theme text from Luke 2:9-11 which reads, And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. 10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

The angel Gabriel was sent to describe Jesus as the saviour because that was his job description. The core anointing of the Lord Jesus Christ is to save and we should never out-grow this revelation. To save means to deliver, preserve and to break the dominion of the devil. The saving work of Jesus has to do with reconciling sinful man back to God; making as many that will receive Him, members of God's family that you should make heaven your eternal home and to also anoint you to live out the fullness of God's plan and purpose for your life in this world as though the devil didn't exist.

The power of God that destroys yokes and lifts burdens is on Jesus; when you become a believer in Jesus, that same anointing rests upon you and this anointing is the answer to any question in life. God has freely made available this anointing to all of mankind by inviting you into a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ starting by receiving Him as your Lord and saviour and master.

Again when you become born again that anointing on Christ rests upon you. The Bible says in 1 John 5:4-5 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. 5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

1 John 4:4 says, Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. Friends, being a Christian; a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is not just a normal thing. Col. 1:12 tell us that you are removed from the authority of Satan and brought under the authority of Jesus Christ in His kingdom. You carry His life and nature and DNA spiritually and then you carry the anointing of the Christ upon your life.

This is why we call people who are born again Christians as it means you are now united and share in that anointing and you can live your life fearlessly in the face of disease, insecurity, etc.

again, His core anointing is to save.

Ladies and gentlemen, that was the announcement that angel Gabriel, the arch angel, made to the lowly shepherds in that Judean night. He informed them that the anointed one has arrived – the only one that can deliver man totally from satanic affliction; the only one that can guarantee your destiny – the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the blessed invitation we

what this anointing upon the Christ Jesus does in the life of anyone that will believe it.

Psalm 103:1-5 says ¹Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. ²Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: ³Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; ⁴Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; ⁵Who satisfieth



He has made us his righteousness



make to all as we charge you to give your life to the Lord Jesus Christ. It doesn't matter what your background is or whether you were born into a Christian home; what matters is that you need a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. It doesn't matter what your religious background is, you need to meet Jesus one on one. Jesus is not a religious figure – He is the Saviour and He is the Christ. There is no one like Him under heaven. The Bible says in Acts 4:12...for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

Now, we have previously talked about how this anointing functions and the functioning areas: first, this anointing delivers from sin; secondly, this anointing delivers from sickness and disease and infirmity of the flesh and the body. Thirdly this anointing delivers from poverty, want and lack. Fourthly, this anointing delivers from destruction.

You can go to Psalm 103:1-5 and you will find in a nutshell

thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Verse two says ²Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: So there are benefits to receiving Jesus and waking in this anointing. You can only be blessed for receiving Jesus. This is not a question of argument but a question of results.

Verse three then says ³Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; talking about the forgiveness of sin as well as deliverance from sickness and disease. Verse four goes on to say, ⁴Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; the word redeemed here means to buy you back and remove you from a place where destruction can come to pass in your life. And the word destruction here means to be delivered from a pit, danger and trap of the enemy.

Satan's intention of setting pitfall is not only to cause you to miss eternity with Christ in Heaven, but also to cut off the

power of God from your life in this earth so he can be free to feast on you and your family; God forbid! Glory to God that Christ and the anointing He carries is our refuge and this is open to every human being that will receive it.

2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us that God made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. So when Christ took our sin on the cross, He paid in hell and that means anyone that receives Him does not have to go to hell. But not only that, He has given us what we call righteousness. Righteousness can be understood as our right to stand before God without a sense of guilt or condemnation of inferiority complex.

Righteousness means we have been made right with God and our rightness with God brings rights and privileges with it. So everyone that has accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour, enters into the blessedness of righteousness. God looks at you the same way He looks at Jesus. God looks at you and ticks your name and says, this one will not be condemned because Jesus has paid for them and they have received what He has done for them by accepting Him as Lord and Saviour.

The Bible says in Proverbs 12:28, In the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death. Glory to God forevermore! This means that, spiritually speaking, the nature of sin has been removed from you (the nature of sin is called spiritual

“
It doesn't matter what your religious background is, you need to meet Jesus one on one. Jesus is not a religious figure – He is the Saviour and He is the Christ. There is no one like Him under heaven. The Bible says in Acts 4:12...for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.
”

death). It is that nature that condemns men to hell, but when you become born again, the nature of death is removed and the life of God is put in you and that life is called righteousness.

The second benefit is that you are removed from under the authority of darkness and Satan no longer has the right to afflict you. It is as you believe these things that they are activated in your life. Philemon 1:6 says that the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.

Therefore, there is no spiritual death in righteousness, and also, in this life, Satan has no right to cut short your life. Praise the Lord.

To be continued...

“Righteousness means we have been made right with God and our rightness with God brings rights and privileges with it. So everyone that has accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour, enters into the blessedness of righteousness. God looks at you the same way He looks at Jesus. God looks at you and ticks your name and says, this one will not be condemned because Jesus has paid for them and they have received what He has done for them by accepting Him as Lord and Saviour”.

INTERNATIONAL

Uganda captures chief of ISIL-linked militia

UGANDA says it has captured the leader of an ISIL (ISIS)-linked militia unit it blames for killing two foreign tourists and their local guide in a national park last month.

The militia chief known as "Njovu" was detained on Tuesday during a raid in which six members of his squad were killed, the government said on Thursday.

The militiamen belonged to the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), an ISIL-affiliated group based in the neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The group has allegedly killed scores of civilians this year.

Uganda's government says the ADF is also responsible for the October 17 murder of a honeymooning couple – David Barlow from Britain and Celia Barlow from South Africa – along with their Ugandan guide Eric Ayai. The trio were killed while on a safari in Queen Elizabeth National Park near the DRC border.

ISIL claimed responsibility for the attack the day after the killings, saying it had killed "three Christian tourists" with machine guns.

Uganda had promised to track down the killers.

"This was a successful joint military-intelligence-led operation, and the whole squad that had been sent by the ADF to cause mayhem, kill tourists, burn schools, hospitals, was eliminated,"



Museveni

Ugandan military spokesman Deo Akiiki told the Agence France-Presse news agency on Thursday.

"The only survivor is the commander whom we captured," he said, adding that he would be put on trial.

Akiiki said the militia chief was found with possessions of the slain tourists and their Ugandan guide's ID card.

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni has long pressed security forces to "wipe out" the ADF, which is vehemently against his administration.

The ADF began as a rebel coalition opposing the Ugandan government in the early 1990s. After being defeated by the army, it retreated into the DRC and began engaging in the illicit trade of timber, gold and farm products.

It pledged loyalty to ISIL four years ago and is considered a "terrorist organisation" by the Ugandan government.

In June, ADF fighters killed 42 people, including 37 students, at a high school in western Uganda near the DRC border, Ugandan authorities said, in what was the country's deadliest attack in more than a decade.

The group was also blamed for a machete attack in the eastern town of Oicha on Monday, which killed 26 people.

Uganda said it has foiled several other planned ADF attacks this year, including a plot to blow up churches in the central town of Kibibi last month.

Mexico's president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, said that 10,000 people arrived at the border every day last week alone.

THE United States House of Representatives has passed a Republican plan providing \$14.5bn in military aid for Israel, setting up a partisan clash over the usually bipartisan issue of backing the staunch US ally.

The plan, which is funded by cuts to the Internal Revenue Service, passed on Thursday by 226 votes to 196, largely along party lines.

The plan is the first major legislative action under new Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson, who took on his role last week after Kevin McCarthy was removed by the hard-right faction of his party.

The package includes \$4bn to replenish Israel's Iron Dome and David's Sling missile defence systems and military equipment transferred from US stocks.

Johnson on Thursday urged the Senate and White House to quickly approve the bill.

"The Senate and White House cannot let this moment pass, and I urge them to act swiftly and pass this bill as the House did today," Johnson said on the social media platform X.

The bill, however, has a slim prospect of becoming law after US President Joe Biden and his fellow Democrats in the Senate signalled their opposition due to its inclusion of spending cuts and a lack of aid for Ukraine.

To become law, the bill would have to pass the Senate, where the Democrats have a majority, and receive Biden's signature.

Ahead of the vote, the White House said the bill "would have devastating implications

Australia, China eye ways to heal old wounds

It ends a hiatus triggered by a string of prickly disputes, including various Chinese sanctions on Australian goods, and back and forth accusations of foreign interference.

Now both sides have renewed ambitions and have cleared the way for the visit with a series of gestures,

US House passes \$14.5bn military package for Israel



Biden

for our safety and alliances in the years ahead".

Biden has instead asked Congress to pass a \$106bn emergency spending package that includes funding for Israel, Taiwan and Ukraine.

While most Republicans still strongly back Ukraine, a vocal minority of the party has questioned the need to continue providing financial assistance to Kyiv at a time of steep budget deficits.

House Democrat Rosa DeLauro on Thursday accused

Republicans of delaying aid to US allies with their bill.

"This bill abandons Ukraine. We will not abandon Israel and we will not abandon Ukraine. But their fortunes are linked," she said.

The US has given Israel more military assistance than any other country since World War II, providing aid worth more than \$124bn.

The US ally is already receiving \$3.8bn per year in military assistance under a 10-year plan that began in 2016.

suspended action it had taken against China at the World Trade Organization (WTO) and greenlit the Chinese lease of a critical port in Darwin.

But the "structural issues plaguing the relationship" haven't changed, analysts say, as both countries vie for influence in the Pacific Islands region, and Australia updates its defence posture to counter China's military build-up.

And there is "some gap" between what each side sees as the next steps, they argue.

Chinese officials have expressed a will to advance the relationship by adding "more meat to the bone", says Elena Collinson from the Australia-China Institute.

"For Australia, though, this represents the pinnacle of stabilisation, and it's near as good as Canberra wants the relationship to get at this point," she adds.

Mr Albanese's visit marks 50 years since former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam travelled to Beijing, following the establishment of diplomatic ties.

From its inception the relationship has been based, as Mr Whitlam put it, on "mutual benefit".

China's transformation into an economic superpower created huge demand for Australian exports like iron ore, coal and gas.

And that helped Australia weather global recessions, while underpinning decades of uninterrupted growth.

It also led to strong cross-cultural exchanges - with 5.5% of Australia's population today having Chinese ancestry.

Cracks appeared in 2018, when Australia's former government banned Chinese firm Huawei from rolling out the country's 5G network, citing "security concerns".

"That could be described as the first shot," China's ambassador to Australia Xiao Qian said last year.

Australia criticised Beijing's crackdown on Hong Kong protesters, and led calls for an independent investigation into the origins of Covid-19, triggering a period of what then leader Scott Morrison termed "economic coercion" by Beijing.

is in Australia's interest, as well as China - but, I believe, in the global interest - for us to have a relationship where there is dialogue," he said at the White House last week.

"Through dialogue comes understanding and a defusion of tension."

Ukraine : Russia attack khakis village

COLOMBIAN President Gustavo Petro has condemned Israel's bombardments of Gaza, calling its war in the besieged Palestinian enclave that has so far killed more than 9,000 people "genocide".

Petro's remarks came in a post on X on Wednesday, accompanied by a picture of victims of the Israeli air attack on the Jabalia refugee camp in Gaza that killed at least 195 people. At least 120 people are also missing, according to Gaza's officials.

"It's called Genocide, they do it to remove the Palestinian people from Gaza and take it over," he wrote.

"The head of the state who carries out this genocide is a criminal against humanity," wrote Petro. "Their allies

cannot talk about democracy."

Petro's comments were posted a day after Colombia, along with Chile, which has the largest Palestinian population in Latin America, recalled their ambassadors to Israel in condemnation of Israel's bombardment of Palestinian civilians in Gaza.

Chile's President Gabriel Boric cited Israel's "unacceptable violations of international humanitarian law" for the move.

Bolivia cut ties with Israel completely over its bombardment and siege of Gaza and mounting civilian casualties. Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva called on Israel to end its bombing of Gaza.

"We are seeing, for the first

time, a war in which the majority of those killed are children," Lula wrote on X. "Stop! For the love of God, stop!"

Argentina, which has the largest Jewish community in Latin America, has issued a condemnation of Israel's attack on the Jabalia refugee camp, saying: "Nothing justifies the violation of international humanitarian law", while also calling for the release of captives held by Hamas, the group that rules Gaza.

Peru and Mexico lambasted the Israeli attacks on Wednesday. Peru's foreign ministry released a statement, saying: "Peru condemns, and will continue to condemn, violence from wherever it comes from."

Mexican diplomat Alicia Buenrostro, speaking at a UN emergency special session on Gaza, called for the "occupying power" of Israel to cease its claim to the Palestinian territories, arguing for a two-state solution.

"This needs to stop," she said, adding that Mexico would increase its aid to Palestinian refugees.

The three countries called for Hamas to release its captives. Both Argentina and Peru have said nationals of their countries have been killed in the conflict, while Mexico says it has nationals among the kidnapped.

Israel responded to these diplomatic moves by demanding that Chile and Colombia condemn Hamas instead.

"Israel expects Colombia

and Chile to support the right of a democratic country to protect its citizens, and to call for the immediate release of all the abductees, and not align themselves with Venezuela and Iran in support of Hamas terrorism," Israel's foreign ministry said.

Meanwhile, the Simon Wiesenthal Center, a Jewish human rights organisation, criticised Bolivia, Chile and Colombia on Wednesday, accusing them of siding with "terrorists" and of being "hostile toward Israel".

Arab countries, including those at peace with Israel, are also expressing mounting unease with the war.

Jordan recalled its ambassador from Israel and told Israel's envoy to remain out of the country until there is a halt to the war and the "humanitarian catastrophe" it is causing.

A man gestures as Palestinians search for casualties a day after Israeli air strikes on houses in the Jabalia refugee camp [File: Mohammed Al-Masri/Reuters]

Some United Nations officials have said that Israel's bombing of the Jabalia refugee camp could be considered a war crime.

Craig Mokhiber, a top UN human rights official who stepped down at the weekend over the organisation's response to the war in Gaza, has called on the UN to attach the same standards to Israel as it does when assessing human rights violations in other countries around the world.

Mokhiber, who was the



INTERNATIONAL

Will Egypt accept Palestinians out of Gaza?

Analysts say Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi fears instability at home if Palestinian refugees cross the border. Palestinians with dual citizenship wait for permission to leave Gaza at the Rafah border crossing with Egypt, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, IBRAHEEM ABU MUSTAFA writes.

EGYPT'S President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi appears unlikely to absorb the 2.2 million Palestinians who could be displaced from the Gaza Strip during the Israel-Hamas war, experts have told Al Jazeera.

"My assessment is that it is a 95 percent non-starter," said Nancy Okail, president and CEO of the Center for International Policy, a progressive nonprofit in Washington, DC.

"The political cost outweighs any of the benefits," she added, pointing to the potential for domestic unrest in Egypt if an influx of Palestinian refugees were to arrive.

But the prospect of a mass displacement from Gaza – a narrow, densely populated territory on Egypt's northeast border – has heightened concerns in el-Sisi's government.

On October 24, +972 Magazine and its sister publication Local Call reported on a leaked document allegedly from Israel's Ministry of Intelligence, outlining a proposal to "evacuate" all Palestinians from Gaza to Egypt.

Rumours are also swirling that Israeli leaders are attempting to entice Cairo into accepting displaced Palestinians by offering to write off some of its bloated external debt, which hovers at about \$160bn.

In addition, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has reportedly lobbied European leaders to help him convince el-Sisi to take in refugees from Gaza – an idea he has so far rejected.

"It is entirely understandable why the Egyptians and Palestinians fear that there are Israeli leaders that seek to forcefully and permanently displace Palestinians from Gaza," said Timothy Kaldas, an expert on Egypt's political economy for the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy.

He added that Palestinians should still be granted the right to seek asylum in neighbouring countries, a protection that Egypt and Israel are denying them.

"Palestinians should still have the choice – and I emphasise the choice – to move into Sinai and seek safe haven. They should not be



Fattah

forced to be subjected to indiscriminate bombardment in Gaza," Kaldas told Al Jazeera.

A majority of Palestinians were expelled from their homeland in 1948 during the creation of the state of Israel – an event they refer to as the Nakba, or "catastrophe".

Most people in Gaza today are the children or grandchildren of those displaced during the Nakba. They now risk being permanently uprooted again, which is a war crime under international law.

The question of Palestinian rights has always been a popular cause in Egypt,

according to Okail. If el-Sisi acquiesces to pressure to absorb Gaza's population, he could trigger widespread outrage and protests.

"The political cost [for aiding the displacement of Palestinians] could be el-Sisi's presidency," Okail told Al Jazeera.

Such a move, Okail said, would likely be interpreted as helping Israel to expand and entrench its occupation of Palestinian territories. Any resulting unrest could prompt the military to topple el-Sisi in order to restore order, she added.

"Any expression of dissent in the public domain in Egypt is

going to be highly sensitive for the army," Okail said. Its members "are known to be completely against the idea of allowing the Palestinians to be removed from their land and into [Egypt]".

El-Sisi has also articulated concerns that accepting refugees from Gaza might invite Palestinian fighters to take root in Egypt.

During a meeting with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on October 18, el-Sisi made the case that Palestinians dislodged to Egypt's Sinai region may establish a "new base" to carry out "terrorist operations".

"Israel would have the right to defend itself and its national security and therefore directly strike Egyptian lands," el-Sisi said.

This scenario threatens to upend the peace deal between Egypt and Israel, brokered by the United States at the Camp David Summit in 1978.

Kaldas believes that el-Sisi's security fears are legitimate. He added that Egypt is probably more worried about the arrival of smaller armed groups than Hamas, the Palestinian organisation whose surprise attack on Israel helped spark the current war.

"That's not to say they're not worried about Hamas, but they have a more clear and direct relationship with the group," Kaldas told Al Jazeera.

Since 2016, relations between Egypt and Hamas

have thawed. The two sides first cooperated to crack down on cells from the ISIL (ISIS) group. Then Egypt resumed mediating ceasefires between Hamas and Israel – a role that has restored some of el-Sisi's regional influence.

But el-Sisi's government is still wary of Hamas due to its heavy military arsenal and its affiliation with the Muslim Brotherhood, a group it vilified and repressed to consolidate power in Egypt.

What's more, el-Sisi may believe the arrival of armed Palestinian groups could inspire youth, disenfranchised by Egypt's economic crisis, to join their ranks, according to Okail.

"Many of these people frankly have nothing to lose and may be tempted to join," she told Al Jazeera.

Though el-Sisi has so far resisted calls to accept displaced populations from Gaza, some experts believe the Egyptian president is nevertheless using the situation to his advantage.

Hossam Bahgat, the founder of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), told Al Jazeera that el-Sisi's government is using Western support for Israel to argue it would be hypocritical to criticise human rights abuses in Egypt.

"Pro-regime figures on social media are highlighting how all the Western talk about human rights for the last 10 years – all the US congressional oversight and conditioning of military aid – was just part of a Western conspiracy to weaken the state," Bahgat told Al Jazeera.

Countries like the United States have documented "credible reports" of human rights abuses in Egypt, including torture, extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances. El-Sisi's government, however, has denied those charges.

But Bahgat said the pressure some countries are placing on Egypt to potentially allow the forced displacement of Palestinians – a grave crime – will give el-Sisi greater cover to commit human rights violations domestically.

"The regime won't even have to be mindful of its image," Bahgat said.

Source: AL JAZEERA





Nollywood can change Nigeria's narrative

— Funke Akindele

Nollywood star, Funke Akindele, shot into limelight after starring in popular United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)-sponsored sitcom 'I Need to know', which ran from 1998 to 2002. Her breakthrough came in 2008 after she appeared in the movie 'Jenifa'. She has enjoyed an impressive career and recently made her directorial debut in the socio-political comedy film, 'Your Excellency' which hits the cinemas this December. PREMIUM TIMES spoke with the talented actress at the media screening of her latest film which held in Lagos recently. Here, the 41-year-old actress speaks about the new direction of her career and her industry.



Congrats on your directorial debut. How was it like shooting behind the camera?

It was a mixed feeling, fun, challenging and tiring. Then also it was more fun. It gave me opportunity to work with Ebonyi Life as a director. Shooting Your Excellency was worth it all. The shoot lasted about a month. Directing isn't really a new field to me because I'm an actor, writer. I also direct, produce, so directing is something I have always been involved in.

Why were you drawn to the script?

The storyline is fresh and unique. It basically gives a new spin to the story which was created by Mo Abudu and developed by her too. It's not a regular storyline. It is something you expect. It's a political comedy or a comedy movie. It is filled with so many lessons and also to make people laugh. I worked with Ms. Abudu some years ago on the project titled 'Screen Divas' a reality show EbonyLife started then I moved on to Chief Daddy where I acted in. The truth is whenever I see the positive drive of Aunty Mo I just want to double on my own; so when she reached out to me to work as director and lead cast on the project 'Your Excellency' I was so happy and jumped on it despite my busy schedule.

What is the story line all about?

Your Excellency tells the story of Chief Olalekan Ajadi, a bubbling, billionaire businessman and a failed presidential candidate who is obsessed with Donald Trump. Just when his campaign looks set to be another disaster, Ajadi is anointed by a major party and becomes a credible contender-all through the power of social media. As the political drama unfolds, it seems possible that even the most inept candidate with little to offer voters except for viral soundbites and amusing antics can mount a serious

challenge for the presidency.

How easy or tough was it juggling the role of a director whilst playing the lead role in the same movie?

I must say tedious because I do that a lot like the head writer for Jenifa's Diary and some other contents you see on Scene One Production. This (Your Excellency) is more tedious for me because this is a film compared to TV Series and we kept on working every day. I am super proud



Continued on page 26

Nigerian celebrities who quietly ended their marriages

Some Nigerian celebrities have kept gist of their separation and divorce away from the public Here are some of your favourite celebrity marriages that ended quietly.



DR SID, SIMI

Nigerian music star Dr Sid and Simi got married in 2014 in one of the most talked-about celebrity weddings. They welcomed their first daughter and a second one a few years later.

Trouble in their marriage was first reported in 2017 but the couple stayed away from any public drama. In January 2020, Simi took to her Instagram page where she announced that their marriage was over.

Sid has remained silent about his divorce to date.



Osas Ighodaro, Gbenro Ajibade

Ighodaro and Ajibade met onset of a TV show and got married afterwards to fans and industry delight.

The couple's wedding ceremony was so huge, that it was televised on live TV.

In February 2019, fans and followers of Osas and Gbenro woke up to a rather strange post from the latter. He had in his post called out Osas over her parenting style. It was clear that they were separated at that time.

A few months later, Osas took down Gbenro's name from her Instagram handle. After several months in the United States of America, Gbenro marked his return to Nigeria with an interview on Rubbin Minds in December where he confirmed that they are divorced.



Etinosa Idemudia, Ighrosa

Etinosa Idemudia's marriage to Benin-based lawyer, Ighrosa is the most shortest-lived on this list. The former couple tied the knot in September 2020 and welcomed their first daughter on Christmas Day, the same year.

The movie star had planned to keep the news of her marriage crash away from the prying eyes of the public but the press had other plans. In May 2021, she called out a blogger for breaking the news about her marriage collapse.



Continued on page 25

EVERYBODY'S WORLD

With Palang K. Hilary

Nutrition

By JESSICA LEVINSON

Health benefits of hibiscus tea

ACCORDING to a Dietitian, Hibiscus tea is tasty, pretty and full of antioxidants that could be responsible for several health benefits. No wonder it was named one of the 2022 top food trends!

If you've noticed hibiscus popping up on cocktail menus or as an ingredient in nonalcoholic beverages lining supermarket shelves, there's a good reason. Hibiscus has been noted as one of the top food trends to watch for in 2022 and beyond. The bright red flower certainly is pretty, but its benefits go way beyond good looks. Read on to find out what hibiscus is, its benefits and side effects, and how you can put hibiscus to use at home.

Hibiscus (*Hibiscus sabdariffa*) is an edible flowering plant native to parts of Africa and Asia, though it's also cultivated in Mexico and Central America. Contrary to popular belief, the part of the plant you can eat and drink isn't the petals but rather the calyxes of the flower. Calyxes (or calyces) are the sepals of a flower, which, in addition to other things, are responsible for protecting the buds and petals.

Also known as roselle, sorrel and zobo, among other names, hibiscus is most commonly consumed as tea. Hibiscus tea is made by steeping the red dried calyxes of the plant in cold or hot water. However, the dried calyxes are also widely used in cooking—from making hibiscus syrup and jam to vegan tacos. Dried hibiscus can also be used to add flavor and color to drinks. These red calyxes, found underneath the bloom, contain a high concentration of anthocyanins, a red-blue pigment with antioxidant properties that gives hibiscus its pretty deep red color.

Hibiscus has a refreshing floral taste that combines fruity, tart and sweet. Some people compare the flavor of hibiscus to that of cranberries, but with a



floral twist.

While hibiscus tea is not chock-full of vitamins and minerals, it is quite high in antioxidants called polyphenols, specifically anthocyanins. Anne Danahy, RDN, a Scottsdale, Arizona-based registered dietitian and owner of Craving Something Healthy, says the antioxidants in hibiscus tea "account in large part for the tea's gorgeous red-fuschia color and numerous health benefits." While hibiscus tea is not a replacement for medication, the research surrounding this soothing sipper is interesting.

Let's take a closer look at some of the health benefits of these edible calyxes.

It contains Anti-Inflammatory

properties: Registered dietitian Kelsey Lorencz, RD, a nutrition advisor at Fin vs. Fin, notes that "anthocyanins are associated with the prevention of cancer and diabetes and have potent anti-inflammatory effects." According to a 2017 review published in the *Food & Nutrition Research* journal, anthocyanins reduce inflammation, which, when chronic, is linked to the progression of diseases such as cancer. Additionally, anthocyanins are known as potential anti-angiogenic agents. Anti-angiogenic agents prevent the body from forming new blood vessels that "feed" tumor cells with oxygen.

May reduce blood lipid levels:

Your blood lipids consist mainly of three components: LDL cholesterol, known as bad cholesterol, HDL cholesterol, known as the good one, and triglycerides, which can increase the risk of heart disease. According to StatPearls, dyslipidemia is a condition that can lead to heart disease and is characterized by the imbalance of HDL cholesterol, LDL cholesterol a n d

pressure, medically known as hypertension, is a disease that affects around 47% of the U.S. population, per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. As the name implies, hypertension causes the blood pressure in your arteries to rise, putting excess strain on your heart and increasing the risk of heart disease and stroke. Traditionally, the hibiscus flower has been used to reduce blood pressure. Research has shown that hibiscus extract could be used for mild to moderate hypertension. Lorencz explains that "a specific compound in the hibiscus calyx causes nitric oxide to be released from cells within the blood vessels, effectively lowering blood pressure." A 2021 randomized controlled study published in *Molecules* concluded that supplementing with hibiscus and lemon verbena (*Lippia citriodora*) could lower blood pressure indicators in people with prehypertension or type 1 hypertension.

May Help with Blood Sugar: Diabetes mellitus is a chronic disease in which the body cannot regulate blood sugar, per MedlinePlus. There are two main types of diabetes—type 1 and type 2—as well as gestational diabetes, which develops during pregnancy. Type 2 diabetes is more common and affects more than 1 in 10 Americans. Chronic high blood sugar can lead to kidney, liver and vision damage, among other health problems. Research published in 2022 in *Pharmaceuticals* showed a

beneficial effect of hibiscus tea on blood sugar; however, more research is needed to be sure of the relationship.

Potential Side Effects
Hibiscus is considered safe when consumed in moderate amounts in tea (2 to 4 cups per day) and foods. However, Kristin Biomedicine & Draayer, M.S., RDN, advises that high doses can cause toxicity. Draayer also notes that hibiscus may interact with certain medications, especially those used to treat high blood pressure or diabetes. Lorencz also recommends that hibiscus be avoided during pregnancy and breastfeeding and prior to surgery due to its blood pressure-affecting effect. Additionally, keep in mind that hibiscus can have diuretic effects on the body, which in excess can lead to dehydration. As always, it's important to consult with your health care provider before adding anything new to your diet.

How to make Hibiscus Tea at home
You can find hibiscus tea bags at some grocery stores, specialty tea shops or online. Making hibiscus tea at home is pretty straightforward—when using disposable tea bags, follow the instructions provided by the manufacturer! And if you come across dried calyxes, the easiest way to make a cup of hibiscus tea is by using a stainless-steel tea infuser.

You can also make hibiscus tea by covering 1 tablespoon of dried hibiscus with 8 ounces of boiled water and letting it steep for around 10 minutes. Once steeped, pour the tea through a fine-mesh sieve to remove the solids. The exact steeping time will depend on how strong you like your tea. We recommend tasting at five-minute intervals to determine your preference. Noting the depth of color could also help indicate when your hibiscus tea is ready. As mentioned above, a great thing about hibiscus tea is that you can serve it hot or cold. For a cold, refreshing hibiscus tea, Draayer recommends mixing the brewed tea with sparkling water or, she says, "Muddle some raspberries or strawberries in the bottom of a glass, add ice and sparkling hibiscus tea."

Studies have shown that antioxidants in the hibiscus plant have anti-inflammatory and anti-cancer properties. Additionally, hibiscus tea certainly has some promising potential health benefits, like lowering your blood pressure, stabilizing your blood sugar and reducing your blood lipid levels. However, more research is needed before concluding that hibiscus tea is a cure-all. One thing is for sure: it's a delicious way to warm up on a cold day or stay refreshed on a



THE WORLD

With Palang K. Hilary

Health

HIV prevention facts and questions

HIV is spread through semen, vaginal fluids, blood, and breast milk. Protect yourself by using condoms every time you have sex, and don't share needles with anyone. You can also ask your doctor about PrEP — a daily pill that helps prevent HIV.

How do I avoid getting HIV during sex?

HIV is spread through contact with blood or sexual fluids (like semen and vaginal fluids), usually during vaginal and anal sex. So the only 100% certain way to avoid HIV is to not have vaginal or anal sex.

But most people do have sex at some point in their lives, so learning about HIV prevention and knowing how to have safer sex is important. Using condoms really lowers your risk of getting HIV. If you're going to have sex, using condoms every single time is the best way to protect yourself from HIV. There's also a daily pill you can take — called PrEP — that can help prevent HIV. Your doctor or nurse can tell you if PrEP is right for you.

Some sexual activities are safer than others when it comes to getting HIV. These activities are "no risk" — they've never caused a reported case of HIV: Masturbating, touching your partner's genitals, rubbing your bodies together (dry humping), kissing, having oral sex with a



condom or dental dam, using clean sex toys. These activities are "lower risk" — they've only caused a few reported cases of HIV (out of millions):

"French" or deep kissing (if the person with HIV has sores or bleeding in their mouth), vaginal sex with a condom and/or PrEP, anal sex with a condom and/or PrEP, oral sex without a condom or dental dam, these activities are "high risk" — millions of people get HIV this way: Vaginal sex without a condom or PrEP, anal sex without a condom or PrEP.

It's easier for HIV to get into your body if you have sores, cuts, or openings in your skin that semen (cum), vaginal fluids, or blood may get into. So don't have sex if you have a herpes outbreak or other infections. Having other STDs makes you more likely to get HIV, so it's a good idea to get tested for STDs regularly.

There's no vaccine that protects against HIV, but lots of people are working on making one. And there are medicines (called PEP and PrEP) that can help prevent HIV. If you don't have HIV and your partner does, they can get on an HIV treatment called antiretroviral therapy (ART). ART can lower their chance of spreading HIV during sex. And some people who are on ART can't transmit HIV to their partner at all.

What is PrEP and how does it prevent HIV?

PrEP stands for pre-exposure prophylaxis. It's a pill you take once a day that can help you prevent HIV. Your doctor or

nurse can help you decide if PrEP makes sense for you.

What is PEP and how does it prevent HIV?

PEP stands for post-exposure prophylaxis. It's a series of pills you start taking after you've been exposed to HIV that lowers your chances of getting HIV. You have to start PEP within 72 hours (3 days), after you were exposed to HIV for it to work. The sooner you start it, the better. Every hour counts, so if you think you were exposed to HIV, call your nurse or doctor or go to the emergency room right away. PEP is only for emergencies — it doesn't take the place of using condoms or PrEP. Read more about PEP.

What is ART and how does it help prevent HIV?

Antiretroviral therapy (ART) is a combination of medicines that slows down the effects of HIV in your body and can help you stay healthy for many years. It can also lower or even stop your chances of giving HIV to anyone else.

ART lowers the amount of HIV in your body (called your viral load) — sometimes to the point where HIV won't show up on standard blood tests. If your HIV viral load is so low that certain tests can't see it, it's called "undetectable." When someone has an undetectable viral load, they can't spread HIV to others during sex.

It's important to remember that even with an undetectable viral load, HIV is still present in your

body. If you stop treatment your viral load can go up, making it possible to pass HIV to others you have sex with. Your doctor or nurse can help you find the treatment that's best for you to help keep your viral load low, so you can stay healthy.

How can I make sure I don't give HIV to anyone during sex?

If you find out that you have HIV, try to stay calm. People living with HIV can have normal, healthy relationships and sex lives. But it's important to take precautions to help your partner(s) stay HIV-free.

There are a few ways that you can avoid giving HIV to other people: Always use condoms when you have vaginal and anal sex. Start treatment for HIV as soon as possible, and keep taking your HIV medicine. When you take it correctly, HIV treatment can lower or even stop your chances of spreading the virus to your sexual partners (and help you stay healthy).

There's a daily pill your partner can take to lower the risk of getting HIV, called PrEP. Don't share needles for shooting drugs, piercings, or tattoos. Get tested and treated for other STDs besides HIV regularly. Having other STDs makes it easier for you to spread HIV to others.

If you test positive for HIV, it's important to tell your sexual partners about it so they can be tested, too. Even if you're really careful to not spread HIV, be honest with your future partners about your status so you can both be informed and help each other stay healthy. Read more about talking with your partners about HIV.

This piece is courtesy Planned Parenthood Federation, a body that delivers vital reproductive health care, sex education, and information to millions of people worldwide. If there's a chance you may be pregnant, you've missed a period, and your cycle's usually normal, it may be time to take a pregnancy test. Once your body starts producing the pregnancy hormone human chorionic gonadotropin (hCG), your periods will stop. It's recommended that you take a pregnancy test a week after your period was supposed to start. If your periods are typically irregular, it can be harder to determine the best time to take a pregnancy test. You may want to take a few tests over the course of several weeks to make sure. This is also a good time to talk with





Reality Bites

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7 Essential life skills to help your child succeed

TEACHERS sometimes describe these skills as “learning to learn” skills, which can be developed through intentional daily activities. Below, we explore the seven essential life skills and offer some simple ways to nurture them. According to Bright Horizons Family Solutions online, here are some life skill activities to incorporate into your child’s daily routine:

1. Focus and Self-Control

Children thrive on schedules, habits, and routines, which not only create a feeling of security, but also help children learn self-control and focus. Talk with your child about what to expect each day. Organize your home so your child knows where to put shoes, coats, and personal belongings. We live in a noisy, distraction-filled world, so quiet activities like reading a book, enjoying sensory activities, or completing a puzzle together can help your child slow down and increase focus.

2. Perspective-Taking

Thinking about another’s point of view doesn’t come naturally to most children, but it can be developed. Discuss characters’ feelings and motivations in the books you read, e.g., “I wonder why the cat and the pig wouldn’t help the little red hen.” Make observations about how others are feeling, e.g., “Alex was really sad that he didn’t get a turn. I wonder what we can do to make him feel better.”

3. Communication

Children need high-touch personal interactions every day to build healthy social-emotional skills, including the ability to understand and communicate with others.



While the pace at which they develop these skills may vary, children need to learn how to “read” social cues and listen carefully. They must consider what they want to communicate and the most effective way to share it. Just talking with an interested adult can help build these skills. Spend time every day listening and responding to your child without distractions.

4. Making Connections

True learning, says Galinsky, occurs when we can see connections and patterns between seemingly disparate things. The more connections we make, the more sense and meaning we make of the world. Young children begin to see connections and patterns as they sort basic household items like toys and socks. Simple acts, such as choosing clothing

appropriate for the weather, helps them build connections. Point out more abstract connections in life, or in stories you read, e.g., “This book reminds me of when we picked sea shells at the beach.”

5. Critical Thinking

We live in a complex world in which adults are required to analyze information and make decisions about myriad things every day. One of the best ways to build critical thinking is through rich, open-ended play. Make sure your child has time each day to play alone or with friends. This play might include taking on roles (pretending to be fire fighters or super heroes), building structures, playing board games, or playing outside physical games, such as tag or hide-and-go-seek. Through play, children formulate hypotheses, take risks, try out their ideas, make mistakes, and find solutions—all essential elements in building critical thinking.

6. Taking on Challenges

One of the most important traits we can develop in life is that of resilience—being able to take on challenges, bounce back from failure, and keep trying. Children learn to take on challenges when we create an environment with the right amount of structure—not so much as to be limiting, but enough to make them feel safe. Encourage your child to try new things and allow reasonable risk, such as

climbing a tree or riding a bike. Offer a new challenge when she seems ready, e.g., “I think you’re ready to learn to tie your shoes. Let’s give it a try.” Focus more on effort than achievement, e.g., “Learning to tie your shoes was really hard, but you kept trying. Well done.”

7. Self-Directed, engaged learning

A child who loves learning becomes an adult who is rarely bored in life. To encourage a love of learning, try to limit television and encourage plenty of reading, play, and open-ended exploration. Model curiosity and enthusiasm for learning in your own life by visiting the library together, keeping craft supplies, making games available, and allowing for some messes at home.



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EVER'S WORLD

With Palang K. Hilary

Living

Screening tests for common diseases

A screening test is done to detect potential health disorders or diseases in people who do not have any symptoms of disease. The goal is early detection and lifestyle changes or surveillance, to reduce the risk of disease, or to detect it early enough to treat it most effectively. Screening tests are not considered diagnostic, but are used to identify a subset of the population who should have additional testing to determine the presence or absence of disease.

When is a screening test helpful?

What makes a screening test valuable is its ability to detect potential problems, while minimizing unclear, ambiguous, or confusing results. While screening tests are not 100% accurate in all cases, it is generally more valuable to have the screening tests at the appropriate times, as recommended by your healthcare provider, than to not have them at all. However, some screening tests, when used in people not at high risk for disease, or when testing for very rare diseases, can cause more problems than they help.

Some common screening tests

Be sure to consult your healthcare provider regarding the appropriate timing and frequency of all screening tests based on your age, overall health, and medical history. The following are some examples of common screening tests:

Cholesterol measurements

Cholesterol is a waxy substance that can be found in all parts of the body. It aids in the production of cell membranes, some hormones, and vitamin D. The cholesterol in the blood comes from 2 sources: the food you eat and production in your liver. However, the liver produces all of the cholesterol the body needs.

Cholesterol and other fats are transported in the bloodstream in the form of spherical particles, called lipoproteins. The 2 most commonly known lipoproteins are low-density lipoproteins (LDL), or "bad" cholesterol, and high-density lipoproteins (HDL), or "good" cholesterol.

Cholesterol screening is performed by a blood test. People with high cholesterol measurements from a blood

sample have a higher risk for cardiovascular disease (CVD), than those with cholesterol in the normal range. Studies have shown that people with high cholesterol can reduce their risk for heart disease by lowering their cholesterol. It is important to understand, however, that people can still have heart disease even with cholesterol levels in the normal range.

Fecal occult blood test

Fecal occult blood is detected by microscopic analysis or by chemical tests for hemoglobin (blood) in the stool. People with blood in their stool may have a cancerous growth indicative of colorectal cancer. The test requires collection of 3 stool samples that are examined under the microscope for blood. It is important to understand that when blood is present in a stool sample, it can be due to other noncancerous factors, such as certain medications or foods, gastrointestinal bleeding, or hemorrhoids. Testing is recommended starting at age 50 by many organizations including the American Cancer Society.

Pap test (also called Pap smears)

Pap smears are samples of cells taken from the cervix in women to look for cellular changes indicative of cervical cancer. The Pap smear is an important screening test in sexually active women under the age of 65, to detect cancer at a stage when there are

often no symptoms. It is important to understand that a Pap smear may be referred to as "abnormal," but may not mean that a person has cervical cancer. Some organizations also recommend HPV (human papilloma virus) screening in certain populations during the Pap smear.

Prostate specific antigen (PSA)

This blood test measures the prostate specific antigen (PSA) levels in the blood. Antigens are any substances that evoke responses from a

person's immune system. The prostate specific antigen levels can be elevated in the presence of prostate cancer. However, it is important to understand that other benign prostate conditions may also elevate PSA, such as benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), which is noncancerous swelling of the prostate. The PSA test is not recommended for all men, and there is considerable controversy over the role of PSA testing. Some organizations, such as the United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF),

now recommend against PSA screening. The pros and cons of PSA screening should always be discussed with your healthcare provider before testing. Some of the cons include unnecessary testing and procedures, unnecessary costs, and significantly increased anxiety.

Mammography

Many organizations, including the USPSTF, recommend mammography screening for breast cancer every 1 year to 2 years after age 50. This test is done in conjunction with a clinical breast exam

Colonoscopy

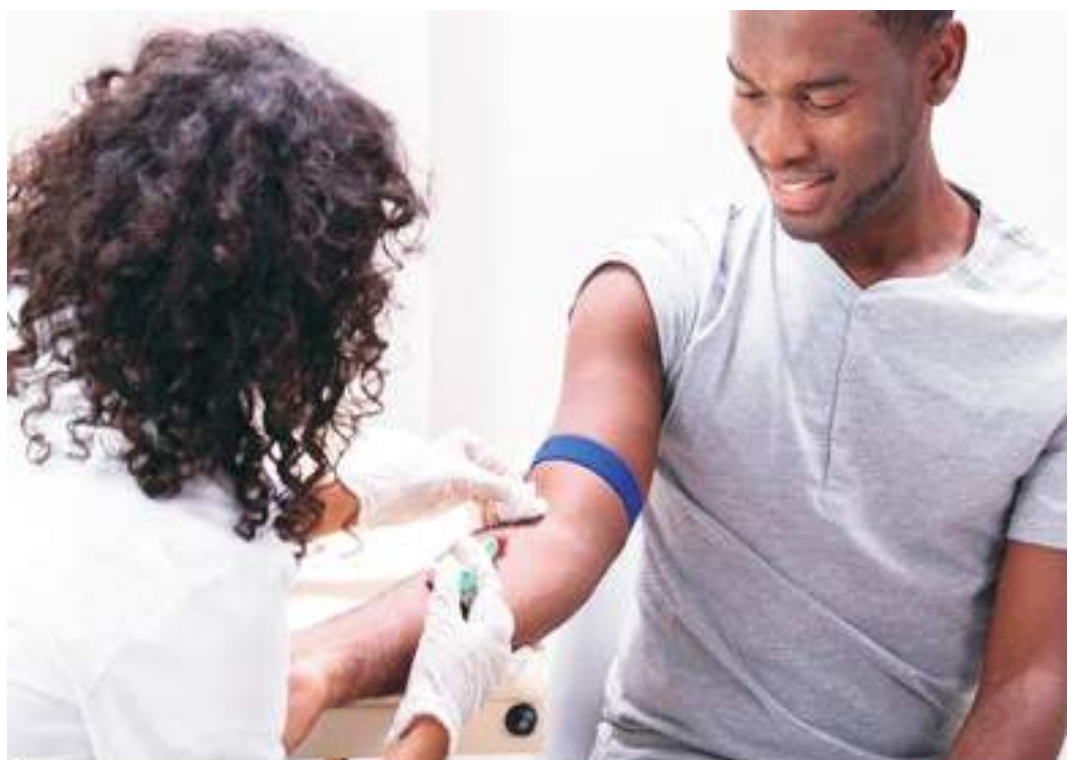
Many organizations, including the USPSTF, recommend screening for colon cancer or colon polyps at age 50, earlier if you have a family history or other risk factors

Diabetes or prediabetes

The American Diabetes Association (ADA) recommends that all adults be screened for diabetes or prediabetes starting at age 45, regardless of weight. Additionally, individuals without symptoms of diabetes should be screened if they are overweight or obese and have one or more additional diabetes risk factors.

Consult your healthcare provider regarding all of these as well as other types of screening tests, based on your medical condition, as not all healthcare providers are in agreement in regard to which screening tests should be done and for which age groups.

Source: [John Hopkins University.com](https://www.johnhopkins.edu)



BUSINESS WORLD



Nigeria's missed gas demand windfall: Implications and remedies

THE Nigerian economy depends largely on hydrocarbons. Yet, in the wake of the Russian-Ukrainian war and the subsequent energy crisis that gripped European countries due to a reduction in gas supply from Russia, Nigeria found itself ill-prepared to seize the opportunity presented by the surge in demand for natural gas. Despite possessing more than 200 trillion cubic feet of natural gas reserves, Nigeria failed to capitalize on the unprecedented rise in global gas demand. This lack of foresight and inadequate investments have significant implications for the nation's energy sector and its economic development. ELVIS EROMOSELE writes.

EXPERTS are quick to attribute Nigeria's failure to capitalize on the surge in gas demand to several factors, including poor investments, lack of foresight, and neglect of the domestic market.

The obvious first point is that inadequate investments in gas infrastructure, exploration, and production left Nigeria unable to meet the increased global demand promptly. The sad truth is that the lack of proper facilities and technologies hindered the country's capacity to extract and export its abundant gas resources efficiently.

In addition, the country failed to anticipate the potential increase in global gas demand due to geopolitical events like the Russian-Ukraine conflict. As a result, it missed out on the windfall that could have bolstered its economy and energy sector, particularly in these dire times.

Furthermore, while focusing on export potential, Nigeria neglected its domestic gas

market. The nation could have benefited from a more extensive network of gas distribution for local consumption, which would have boosted its industries and power generation capacity.

Excuses and reasons for missing out are irrelevant at this stage. There are implications, real life and far-reaching economic implications for missing out.

Number one, the failure to capitalize on the high gas demand windfall has resulted in a significant economic loss for Nigeria. The nation could have earned substantial revenues from gas exports, which would have bolstered its struggling economy in this critical time.

Also, Nigeria's inability to meet its domestic gas demand contributes to energy insecurity within the country. Inadequate infrastructure, pipeline vandalism, and unfair regulatory practices have hindered the supply of gas for power generation and industrial use.

Moreover, overreliance on oil revenues has long been a concern

for Nigeria. The missed opportunity to harness its gas reserves diversifies its income sources and reduces dependence on oil means the concerns persist.

If this episode teaches any lesson at all, it must be this one: promoting domestic use of gas is crucial for national growth and economic development. Promoting the domestic use of gas is a multifaceted strategy that benefits a country's energy security, economic growth, environmental sustainability, and the well-being of its citizens. It offers a cleaner, more affordable, and versatile energy source that can contribute to a more sustainable and prosperous future.

Now, to effectively address the implications of missing out on the high gas demand windfall, Nigeria must take decisive actions.

Firstly, it must become intentional in investing in gas infrastructure. All hands should be on deck here. The Nigerian government and private sector players should invest significantly

in gas infrastructure, including pipelines, processing plants, and export facilities. These investments will improve the nation's capacity to extract and export gas efficiently.

Secondly, there has to be a conscious effort to promote the domestic use of gas. Yes, a laser-like focus on boosting the domestic gas market is crucial. This includes investing in infrastructure to deliver gas for power generation, industries, and households. Regulatory reforms and anti-sabotage measures are essential here to ensure a steady domestic supply.

Then, Nigeria must diversify the energy sector. It is time to say, enough lip service. Nigeria should diversify its energy sector by giving equal importance to gas alongside oil. This diversification can provide a more stable income source and energy security.

And most importantly, we require enhanced foresight. The Nigerian policymakers must enhance their foresight and geopolitical awareness to seize

opportunities when they arise. The ability to adapt to global energy trends is critical for economic growth. Understanding the interconnectedness of the global economy is crucial to thriving today and the future.

This is the conclusion of the matter, Nigeria's failure to leverage its vast gas reserves during the peak of global demand due to the Russian-Ukraine conflict carries significant implications for the nation's economy and energy sector. By implementing the recommended remedies and learning from past oversights, Nigeria can position itself to take full advantage of future opportunities in the global energy market. The key lies in proactive investments, regulatory improvements, and a strategic focus on both domestic and international gas markets.

We can and should do better. **Eromosele, a corporate communication professional and public affairs analyst, wrote via: elviseroms@gmail.com**

BUSINESS WORLD

Old naira notes remain legal tender- CBN

In a recent announcement, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) clarified that the old N200, N500, and N1000 naira notes will continue to be accepted as legal tender even after December 31, 2023.

This decision comes after the CBN's earlier announcement in March, stating that, following a Supreme Court verdict, these specific banknotes would no longer be in circulation after the end of this year.

Last year October, Godwin Emefiele, former CBN governor had unveiled plans to redesign the N200, N500, and N1,000 notes, urging citizens to deposit their old notes before January 31, 2023, as they would lose their status as legal tender beyond that date. However, this directive led to a cash shortage in February, causing hardships for citizens and prompting protests and bank attacks in some parts of the country.

In response to concerns about the scarcity of these banknotes and the approaching year-end



Codorso

deadline, a senior official from the CBN reassured the public that both old and new banknotes would still be considered legal tender.

"They are all legal tender. Nigerians should continue to spend them. There is no need to worry about the December 31 deadline," the official stated.

Furthermore, the CBN official emphasised that the phasing out of the old notes would be a gradual process to avoid causing additional hardships for the people.

"We won't want Nigerians to undergo similar pain as they experienced earlier this year. The phasing out of the old notes will be gradual. It won't be rushed," the official assured,

Dstv, GOtv subscription prices increases by 19%

PAY -Tv operator, Multichoice Nigeria has announced another price increment across its DStv and GOtv packages by at least 19%.

Coming as the second increment this year after the first one was implemented on May 1, 2023, Multichoice said the latest increment takes effect from Monday, November 6.

While the increment announced in May was between 16.3% to 18, depending on the bouquet, the company is announcing a 19 to 20% increase across its packages this time.

According to the notice sent to its subscribers, customers on the DStv Premium package will be paying N29,500 for their monthly subscription starting from November 6, a 20% increase from the N24,500 they are currently paying.

The price of the Compact+ bouquet has also increased to

N19,800 from N16,600 monthly, which is a 19% increment.

DStv said subscribers on its Compact bouquet will now pay N12,500 as against N10,500 they are currently paying, representing a 19% increase; while those on the Confam package are to pay N7,400, also a 19% increase compared to N6,200 currently being paid.

Under the new price regime, viewers on DStv Yanga bouquet will now be paying N4,200 for the monthly subscription, a 20% increase over N3,500 currently being paid.

For GOtv, Multichoice said customers on its Supa Plus package will now be paying N12,500, a 19% increase from the current price of N10,500. Its Supa bouquet will now go for N7,600 as opposed to the N6,400 currently being charged.

GOtv Max subscription has also increased to N5,700 from

N4,850, while its Jolli package now goes for N3,950 from N3,300. Multichoice said its customers on the lowest GOtv package, Jinja, will now be paying N2,700 monthly, as opposed to N2,250 they are currently paying.

While Multichoice are yet to make any official statement on the new price increment, the company cited economic



Tijani

NNPCL to supply crude to Dangote refinery

NIGERIAN National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL) will supply crude oil to Dangote Refinery in December 2023.

In the report, it was stated that NNPCL plans to provide the 650,000 barrels per day Dangote oil refinery, with up to six shipments of crude oil in December for testing, based on information from industry sources both at NNPCL and Dangote refinery.

As reported by Reuters, an NNPC official, preferring anonymity, specified that six shipments, totalling 200,000 barrels per day, are set for December as part of a one-year agreement.

The volumes for the following months will be determined by mutual consent and availability.

The other sources mentioned a plan for 4-5 cargoes, equivalent to at least 130,000 barrels per day. A Dangote Group official, speaking on condition of anonymity, mentioned that certain

THE House of Representatives Public Accounts Committee has summoned the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and 11 Electricity Distribution Companies (DISCOs) in relation to accusations of mismanaging loans amounting to US\$321 million and N18.2 billion.

The loans were allocated for projects aimed at expediting the development of transmission and distribution interfaces, lines, and substations.

Chairman of the Committee, Rep. Bamidele Salam, issued the summons while Engr. Sule Abdulaziz, Managing Director of the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN), appeared before the committee in Abuja on Thursday.

These entities were asked to appear before the committee on November 8.

An inquiry was initiated following a petition addressing the purported misallocation of funds that the CBN had allocated to the DISCOs at the behest of TCN.

Speaking on the details of the inquiry, Salam insisted on receiving detailed information pertaining to loan disbursements, procurement

Lawmakers Summon CBN, DISCOs, over alleged misappropriation



Bamidele

processes, the involvement of DISCOs in the projects, the current project statuses, and the loan repayment terms for the beneficiaries.

Salam stressed the crucial need for public institutions to adhere to legal and international best practice standards, coupled with the responsible management of

financial resources.

During his Committee appearance, Abdulaziz made it clear that the funds were sent directly to the DISCOs by the CBN to support the execution of various projects.

The aim was to repay the loans using TCN's generated revenue.

He explained that there was a gap in the electricity sector, leading to complaints from distribution companies regarding the inadequate supply from TCN.

He claimed that financial institutions and regulatory bodies, including the CBN and NERC, played a role in funding and supervising these projects.

He added that loan repayments were intended to come from TCN's revenue, amortized on a monthly basis.

- Multichoice Nigeria

challenges in May when it announced the first increment.

According to data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) inflation rate in Nigeria increased to 26.72% in September from 25.80% in August of 2023.

"Due to the various economic challenges impacting our business operations, we have

had to review the price of our packages to continue delighting our customers with great entertainment, anytime and anywhere.

"MultiChoice acknowledges the difficult economic climate and thus kept the increase at the lowest possible point whilst ensuring sustainability and provision of quality



Kyari

agreements contain confidentiality clauses, without further details when inquired about the NNPC supply arrangement.

Recall that on October 31, Economic Confidential reported that the Dangote refinery had missed the diesel and aviation fuel

refining deadline previously set by the Dangote Group CEO, Devakumar Edwin during a September 2023 interview with S&P Global

The failed deadline was due to a delay in crude oil deliveries. In that report, it also quoted one of its

-Report

sources who said:

"It is not true that Mr. Edwin Devakumar lied about the dates provided in September. However, there are some delays when it comes to crude deliveries. But the company is working to resolve these challenges and soon the refinery will begin refining activities."

As the NNPCL will be supplying crude oil to the refinery based on its supply agreement, the refinery will begin activities because it is technically ready to start refining. It is important to note that the NNPCL has a 20% stake in the refinery.

The NNPCL Group Chief Executive Officer, Mele Kyari had previously highlighted that the company's involvement in equity participation aims to enhance both "national energy security and fiscal security."

He referred to a government directive requiring the Corporation's involvement in any privately owned refinery surpassing a capacity of 50,000 barrels per day.

ENTREPRENEUR WATCH

WITH CELESTINE D. ATTSAR

Breaking barriers in access to finance for #MSMEs

Nigeria is estimated to have about 40m MSMEs, most of which are in the informal trade. With formal financial inclusion at just about 50% according to the last EFINA study, skewed largely to mid and upper income, urban demographics, it can be assumed that most MSMEs in Nigeria are not included in the formal financial system. Olu Akanmu writes.

MOST of the #MSMEs would be nano enterprises employing two or three people, informal, unstructured and would largely trade or do business in their personal names. MSMEs in Nigeria are estimated to contribute 50% of Nigeria's GDP and generate 88% of employment. Providing inclusive access to #finance for the 40m MSMEs in Nigeria is critical to ensuring we have a Nigeria that works for many more people, a Nigeria where prosperity is more widely shared. A more #inclusive financial system for MSMEs will also generate strong positive externalities for the larger economy in accelerated GDP growth, employment and expanded market demand for business that will create a further reinforcing loop of more employment, demand and investment and prosperity for Nigeria households and businesses.

There are five challenges that we need to tackle to break barrier in access to finance for MSMEs in Nigeria. These barriers are as follows:

1. **Inclusive and pervasive digital identity that works:** Digital identity is the foundation stack in the financial system on which the payment, credit and other stacks in the financial system is built. It implies that efforts to create an inclusive #payment or financial system for MSMEs will be constrained by the reach, pervasiveness and inclusion of Nigeria's formal #digital #identity system. MSMEs businesses are typically unregistered and informal. Most MSMEs do business in their personal names. Hence the basic digital identity for individuals is also what the MSMEs also need as their their personal and business lives are significantly intertwined. An effective payment rail in the digital financial system must know who is sending money and who is receiving the money being sent. This simple but effective digital identity system is also the first layer of building a secured payment system that prevents frauds and a payment system that users trust and will recommend to others. Building trust in the digital financial system is particularly important to MSMEs who would be using formal digital financial payments for the first time, for which concerns about fraud could be a significant barrier to adoption and usage. Formal digital identity is also the first data point in credit scoring in digital finance which along with payment and cashflow data of a formally identified customer, provides the information for the credit stack of the digital finance system. Essentially, who is borrowing and what does their payment and cashflow information say about them in determining the credit they could access.

The government of Nigeria and the National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) must be commended for the very significant progress made over the last four years in pushing the reach of the Nigeria National Identity Number (NIN). The Central Bank of Nigeria as the financial system regulator must also be commended for the progressive regulation in KYCs that have now included NIN which now has a bigger reach than the Bank Verification Number (BVN). There are about 50 million Nigerians on the BVN. NIN has however grown very fast in the last four years or so with more than 90 million Nigerians formally registered on the NIN data base with biometric information tied to their phone numbers according to the information given by the NIMC at the recent National Identity Day celebration. This is a real cheery news. **The pace of growth of the NIN database in the last four years suggests that there would be 100million Nigerians registered on the NIN database by 2023. This will be a real, big historical milestone for the Nigeria digital identity system with wide ramifications for inclusive digital finance. 100 million Nigerians with formal digital identity by 2023 implies that we can theoretically have 100 million formal financial accounts (bank or wallet) by 2023 if we can provide all NIN holders with formal financial accounts.** A rallying cry to the ecosystem is therefore - what must we all do as players in the financial and digital



ecosystem to bring this to reality? The social implications in inclusive digital finance would be massive.

One of the key tasks we must tackle is the quality of the NIN database for identity verification. Experience suggests that there are still significant challenges with the quality of the NIN database. At a recent Premium Times Twitter space on the NIN with representative of the NIMC, there were significant public complaints on the pains and success of identity verification even for individuals who registered and uploaded their NIN records. These challenge needs to be fixed for the benefits of the NIN database to be fully harvested for financial inclusion. The tech ecosystem should also work with the NIMC to build address verification system that complements the biometric and phone number information of NIN. Using geospatial and geolocation technologies, how can we verify the claimed addresses on the NIN database where necessary to improve identity records and do so with speed and agility of the low transaction cost that digital technology enables.

2) **Accessible and affordable merchant collection solutions that can scale and reach millions of MSMEs:** Current card and offline traditional Point of Sales (POS) terminals that are deployed in Nigeria for merchant collections, where the POS terminals cost about 60 dollars per terminals are expensive and cannot scale to serve millions of small merchants. Sixty dollar terminal cost implies that current merchant collections solutions are exclusive and only available to large merchants where the unit economics of terminal cost could be justified. Yet providing digital solutions that enable millions of MSMEs to get paid conveniently offline could be a powerful method to get millions of informal MSMEs digitise their offline payment collections and establish a digital payment footprint for their business. Such offline digital payments would be the precursor of their online payment collections as they get comfortable with digital technologies and extend their business online. The offline digital payment collection also improves the formalisation and business efficiency of the small merchant enabling them to access *software as a service* tools like inventory and working capital management as they scale while providing the digital payment and cashflow data to access credit.

We need to push more on the industry and ecosystem cooperation to build alternative and affordable merchant collection solutions and rails like the QR (Quick response) code. This will need some initial heavy lifting and coordinated push on the issuance and acquiring side with ecosystem investment in payer and merchant awareness and user-friendly

product design. The business and social returns of the push and investment would be well worth it if we could bring at least 20 million of the 40millions MSMEs in Nigeria on the affordable and scalable digital payment collection rail. Other alternatives such as tap and pay where the android phone of the merchant could serve as a payment collection terminals should also be pushed.

An additional benefit of the QR and other non-card account to account merchant collection and payment solutions is that the payer pays rather than the merchant who would be typically charged 0.5% of the collection, popularly known as the Merchant Service Charge (MSC) for card payments. For the MSMEs, the MSC may be significant relative to their trade margins and may be a disincentive to the use of digital payment collections.

3) **Smartphone, affordable internet and USSD:** Smartphone penetration in Nigeria is increasing, helped significantly by more affordable pre-owned phones, estimated currently at 37%. Data however needs to be more affordable to get more of our MSMEs to consistently use their phones for digital and micropayments. Because of expensive data, quite a significant number of lower middle and lower income demographics in Nigeria would switch off their WhatsApp connection and only turn it on periodically. This suggests that data cost are expensive relative to income of lower income demographics in Nigeria and would constrain the consistent use of digital payments even as smart phones get more affordable.

Also USSD pricing per session charge at N6.98 plus a minimum of N10 per payment implies that a minimum USSD payment cost of about N17 at the minimum. This would be very expensive for millions of nano-enterprises and MSMEs and those who might want to pay them for very small or micro-payments. It would constitute a disincentive for usage of the USSD platform that should be ordinarily offering inclusive payments given that the USSD phone is the most accessible and affordable for millions of MSMEs and their customers. We may be having a potential market failure problem in USSD pricing where the social returns of more affordable USSD pricing in financial inclusion is far bigger than the private commercial returns that could be appropriated by #USSD service providers. This calls for some of regulatory intervention to rethink USSD pricing in the larger public interest of financial inclusion of millions of MSMEs and small holders farmers in spaces like agriculture. If we could bring additional 40million MSMEs and their customers to use USSD payment consistently and affordably, the social returns in financial inclusion and lifting

millions out of poverty would be huge. The current commercial market for USSD usage might even multiply 3X in volume which could more than compensate for lower and more affordable prices. The financial services industry should also consider more affordable transfer fees below N10 for micro-payments to provide incentives for trillions of Peer to Peer (P2P) micro and nano-payments that could be done digitally which would also accelerate #financialinclusion with big positive externalities.

4. **Smarter AI and ML for alternative credit scoring and smarter risk pricing:** The evolution of fintech platforms providing lending through alternative credit scoring for people, typically MSMEs without traditional financial records who have been historically excluded from credit in the financial system is very commendable. Interest rates on these lending platforms which could be as high as 10% monthly and 200% or more on annualized basis suggest that the digital lending platforms might be significantly overpricing for risk in their alternative credit scoring model. While such pricing makes digital lending very profitable, they are expensive and potentially limits the reach and uptake of digital lending products for millions of the excluded who ordinarily, the new alternative digital lending platforms should serve. It comes with significant social cost in lost opportunities to provide wider access to credit and lift millions out of poverty. Prevailing alternative credit scoring models in the market seem to assume the worst of the borrower and tend to use the most risky borrower to price for risk and interest rate. It tends to penalise the good borrower who has to pay the risk price or high interest rate of the worst borrower. It dis-incentivise the patronage of credit for the good borrower and potentially limits the growth of the alternative digital credit market in long run. Smarter #AI and machine learning models are needed that segments risk pricing more smartly based on borrower risk profiles essentially ensuring that the good borrower pays far-much lower interest rates. While some lending platforms are moving in this direction, the fact that median interest rates on the digital lending platforms are still generally high, suggests that the #AI and #ML models would still need to get much smarter to deliver affordable borrowing rates to many good borrowers. It will ensure that credit works for the good borrower, do not further impoverish them and that such pricing do not become a barrier to credit access and uptake for the MSME.

5) **Credit bureau system should also cover the fintechs. All Fintech digital lenders should also subscribe to**

credit bureau: Credit bureau coverage today covers the banks mandatorily. Fintechs in digital lending do not seem to have a regulatory mandate to subscribe to and share credit history of their borrowers with the centralised #credit bureau. While alternative credit profiling as done by each digital lender is a competitive asset based on the smartness of their #AI, current system implies that there is no central ecosystem view of the credit profile of the new types of borrowers being served today by the fintechs. This becomes even more important as the share of lending done by the #fintechs in the credit market grows, as they serve more customers who have been historically excluded from traditional lending. Credit bureau data with a wider coverage would provide useful complementary data to the alternative scoring model of fintechs and digital lenders, thereby helping to improve the accuracy and predictability of their risk pricing. Improved predictability and accuracy of risk pricing would lead to lower interest rates as borrowers with good credit history could be more easily identified and offered lower interests in tandem with their good risk profile. This would have a reinforcing effect on the credit system as more borrowers have incentives to build a good centralised credit history and access lower interest rates. It will also reduce the tendency to shop around by non-credit worthy customers who create bad credits across the fintechs platforms as each fintech has only their own silo view of the credit worthiness of the borrower.

Credit bureaus will also need to reform their pricing and their systems to serve the small borrower like the MSME. Current pricing of about N700 per credit check will not be suited for the small ticket and micro loans of the MSME.

Conclusion

The opportunity has never been greater for real substantial progress in the #financial inclusion of MSMEs in Nigeria. The convergence of more pervasive digital identity, innovative technologies in merchant collections and credit implies that we have an historic opportunity to include at least the next 20 million MSMEs in Nigeria in the formal financial system with the associated positive externalities in social impact and inclusive economic growth. We will achieve together with this, a Nigeria that works for many more people. We must not fail this historic duty.

Olu Akanmu is President and Co-CEO of OPay-Nigeria. He writes from his multi-industry experience in #telecoms, #banking and #fintech. The content of the essay was given in a speech at a recent EFINA (Enhancing Financial Innovation and Access in Nigeria) program on #MSMEs financing.

SOURCE LINKED IN



Nollywood can change Nigeria's narrative

— Funke Akindele

Continued from page 18

of the outcome so far and I can't wait for people to see what we have cooked.

What is that role that you are yet to play?

So many roles, watch out for 2020 one of those challenging roles I haven't played is coming out. I have done some serious roles too not just comedy.

So much has changed in your industry since you launched your career nearly 21 years ago. What type of stories do you think Nollywood needs to begin to shoot?

We need to shoot more movies that promote and celebrate our culture. Right now, it should be all about presenting our stories to the Western world. I think Nollywood needs to shoot more indigenous, historical movies to tell our stories like 'Sango' and all of that. We can change the Nigerian narrative through our films. I believe Nigerian filmmakers have a lot of power in their hands to change our society and even hold our politicians accountable.

This is why I love what Genevieve Nnaji did with 'LionHeart' I particularly love the role Genevieve's family played. We just need to tell our story, to make people happy. Let them know what we have in Nigeria.

It's not a setback. I love the movie. The Oscar rejection made the film more popular. People had to go watch it. It gained attention far and wide.

Nollywood is almost an all-comers affair. What skills do you think budding actors have to possess?

First, you have to be sure you have the talent. You must have it in you. There must be something



different about you. You can't force talent or do something simply because someone else is doing it. You can learn how to act for sure, but you must be willing to learn. Then stay focused. You must be ready to be patient and endure. You have to work hard. Do not be distracted. You have to be well-grounded and listen to correction. You have to grow organically. I did Screen Divas with Ebony Life some years ago and here I am now directing a movie with the same Ebony Life. It's called organic growth. Then, you have to be very respectful.

So, which are you most comfortable with acting or directing?

Honestly, I think acting because I get to express myself so well. Also based on the fact that acting is what I have been doing for so many years; I feel so much at peace doing it; directing takes a whole part of an individual.

Where there moments when you felt like throwing the towel during the shoot?

Don't forget that I am also a strong woman; even on those days when I had down moments onset; the executive producer is always there to give words of encouragement. She will be like 'Funke you can't give up now; let the world see the stuff you are made of on this project' and all those words from her and other crew members made the job seamless for me. And before I forget, my ever-supportive husband was also there to support and encourage me and one thing he keeps telling us that you have done your jobs well; this is another person's production; you have to kill it.

What is that one thing you love about this particular production?

Well, that will be the fact that everything you see from start to finish of the movie is 100% real in terms of props and more importantly all the cast came with their A game.

So when is your creativity normally at its peak?

I draw inspiration from happenings around me. I could get an idea and when I am in the bathroom taking a shower I develop it. Later on maybe during a massage, I could give the concept a deeper thought.



Nigerian celebrities who quietly ended their marriages

Continued from page 16

Mofe Duncan, Jessica Kakkad

Mofe Duncan and Jessica Kakkad had one of the most discreet breakups in the history of celebrity marriage crashes. It had to take a die-hard fan of Jessica to burst the bubble in September 2019.

A few hours after the news broke, Mofe Duncan took to his Instagram page to release a statement where he revealed that the marriage had crashed a year earlier and that he still maintains a cordial relationship with Jessica and her family.



Anita Iseghohi, Tom Iseghohi

Another celebrity marriage collapse that was very discreet was that of former Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria, Anita Iseghohi, and her business executive husband, Tom.

The former beauty queen took to her Instagram page in November 2018 where she revealed that her 11 years marriage to the former MD of Transcorp Corporation had ended. The union is blessed with three children.



Damilola Adegbite, Chris Attoh

Just like Osas and Gbenro, Damilola Adegbite and Chris Attoh had one of those onset beautiful love stories. The couple got hitched on February 14, 2015, in Accra, Ghana.

In April 2017, Chris Attoh slammed divorce rumours in a radio interview. The couple had earlier unfollowed each other on Instagram.

The actress remained silent about their separation after that. However, in September that same year, Attoh finally revealed that their marriage had crashed.



Blossom Chukwujekwu, Maureen Esisi

Blossom Chukwujekwu's split from Maureen Esisi was probably the most shocking separation gist in 2019. Social media will not forget in a hurry how Blossom and Maureen showcased their beautiful and 'happy marriage' to the admiration of many.

In September 2019, the news broke of their separation.

While blogs gave different accounts of the reason behind their marriage collapse, the couple remained mute. Although Maureen has made several cryptic comments about their failed marriage.

Blossom on the other hands has done a great job keeping conversations about his failed marriage out of his way.





**COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY,
P.M.B. 33,
LAFIA, NASARAWA STATE
(Office of the Registrar)**

COMMENCEMENT OF ADMISSIONS FOR 2023/2024 ACADEMIC SESSION

College of Agriculture, Science and Technology, Lafia is a Nasarawa State Government owned Institution established in 1977. The College has now been upgraded to a Polytechnic. Having maintained high standard of academic excellence, the College is set for the 2023/2024 Academic Session admission. The College is to also commence PGD programmes in collaboration with the Nasarawa State University, Keffi in the 2023/2024 Academic Session.

The following academic programmes are available in the Schools and Departments listed below:

1. **School of Agronomy and Environmental Management**
 - a. Department of Crop Production Technology
Programme:
HND Crop Production Technology.
 - b. Department of Pest Management Technology
Programme:
HND Pest Management Technology.
 - c. Department of Forestry Technology
Programme:
ND Forestry Technology
 - d. Department of Agricultural Technology
Programme:
ND Agricultural Technology.
 - e. Department of Horticulture and Landscape Technology
Programmes:
i. ND Horticulture and Landscape Technology;
ii. HND Horticulture and Landscape Technology.
2. **School of Animal Science and Fisheries Technology**
 - a. Department of Animal Science
Programmes:
i. ND Animal Health and Production;
ii. HND Animal Health Technology
iii. HND Animal Production Technology
 - b. Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture Technology
Programmes:
i. ND Fisheries Technology
ii. HND Fisheries Technology
3. **School of Applied Sciences and Technology**
 - a. Department of Computer Science and Information Technology
Programme:
ND Computer Science
 - b. Department of Statistics
Programme:
ND Statistics
 - c. Department of Basic Sciences
Programme:
Pre-ND Science and Technology
4. **School of Engineering and Environmental Technology**
 - a. Department of Agricultural and Bio-Environmental Engineering
Programmes:
i. ND Agricultural and Bio-Environmental Engineering Technology
ii. HND Post-Harvest Technology
 - b. Department of Civil Engineering
Programme:
ND Civil Engineering Technology
 - c. Department of Computer Engineering Technology
Programme:
ND Computer Engineering Technology
 - d. Department of Electrical and Electronics Engineering Technology
Programme:
ND Electrical and Electronic Engineering Technology
 - e. Department of Mechanical Engineering Technology
Programmes:
i. ND Mechanical Engineering Technology
ii. ND Welding and Fabrication Technology
5. **School of Home Economics and Hospitality Management**
 - a. Department of Home and Rural Economics
Programmes:
i. ND Home and Rural Economics

- ii. HND Home and Rural Economics
- b. Department of Nutrition and Dietetics
Programme:
ND Nutrition and Dietetics
6. **School of Management Technology**
 - a. Department of Agricultural Extension and Management
Programme:
HND Agricultural Extension and Management.
 - b. Department of Agribusiness and Cooperative Economics
Programmes:
i. ND Cooperative Economics and Management
ii. HND Agribusiness Management.

Interested applicants are to login to the College website at www.coastlafia.edu.ng to apply for the available programmes run by the College for both ND and HND programmes, and Post Graduate programmes.

A. NATIONAL DIPLOMA (ND)

All UTME candidates who chose College of Agriculture, Science and Technology, Lafia as their 1st choice and scored one hundred (100) and above in UTME (2022/2023) are to login and apply via College website www.coastlafia.edu.ng by creating their account and subsequent payment of the sum of N2,000.00 only.

Candidates who chose the College as 2nd or 3rd choices are advised to change to 1st choice before they can be considered for admission. For those that did not choose College of Agriculture, Science and Technology, Lafia they are advised to do change of Institution/Course, chosen from the above listed programmes to College of Agriculture, Science and Technology, Lafia, Nasarawa State.

B. HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA (HND)

Candidates for Pre-HND and HND programmes are to apply by login to the College website www.coastlafia.edu.ng and to pay the sum of N6,000.00 only.

C. POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA PROGRAMME (PGD)

The PGD programme is run in collaboration with the Nasarawa State University, Keffi (NSUK). The PGD Programmes are:

- a. **Department of Agricultural Extension and Management**
 - i. PGD in Agricultural Economics
 - ii. PGD in Agricultural Extension and Communication
- b. **Department of Crop Production Technology**
 - i. PGD in Agronomy with option in Crop Protection
 - ii. PGD in Agronomy with option in Crop Science
 - iii. PGD in Agronomy with option in Soil and Water Management
- c. **Department of Animal Science**
PGD in Animal Science
- d. **Department of Fisheries Technology**
PGD in Aquaculture and Fisheries Management
- e. **Department of Home and Rural Economics**
PGD in Home Science and Management.

Admission Requirements for PGD Programme

The following may qualify for admission into the Postgraduate Diploma programmes:

- a. Candidates must possess five (5) 'O' level credits including Mathematics, English Language, Biology/Agricultural Science, Chemistry and Physics in not more than two sittings;
- b. Graduates from Universities with at least 3rd class degree in relevant fields;
- c. Holders of Higher National Diploma (HND) with at least an upper credit from a recognized Institution in Agriculture or related disciplines may be considered;
- d. HND holders with lower credit in relevant disciplines with post-qualification working experience; and
- e. Holders of other qualifications which may be acceptable to the Academic Board.

Candidates for PGD programmes are to apply by login to the College website www.coastlafia.edu.ng and to pay the sum of N20,000.00 only to obtain admission form.

Sales of admission forms for Pre-HND, ND, HND and PGD commence on the 10th October, 2023 and close on the 9th December, 2023.

For Further inquiries on the admission requirements and the various programmes, please login to the College website www.coastlafia.edu.ng or call 08132444759, 07030919697 and 08036514096.

Signed
Dr. Musa Zhebu Oliver (JP)
Registrar

NEWS

Rights group makes case for citizens rights

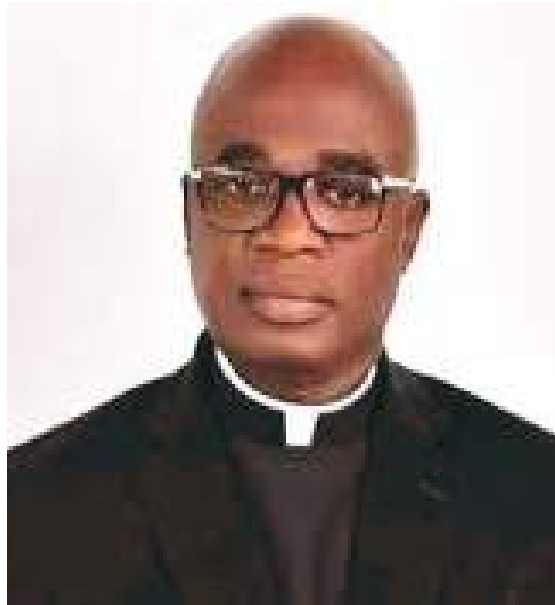
From **TERESE TUHWA, Makurdi**

A human right watch, Lawyers Alert has made a case for citizens' rights as enshrined in the nation's constitution.

The group engaged media practitioners in a one day symposium recently in Makurdi. It educated them on forms of human right abuses and tasked journalists to assist in exposing cases of human rights abuses across the country and the state in particular with a view to appealing to security agencies and government at all levels to protect the sanctity of human rights.

In a presentation christened "Increasing Civic and Freedom of Peaceful Assembly in Nigeria", one of the facilitators, Mr. Lazarus Mom decried continued violation of peaceful assembly and other forms of human right abuses in the country where citizens are intimidated, harassed and prevented from organising themselves to express their concerns on issues affecting them.

According to Mr. Mom, since citizens' rights have already been enshrined in the nation's



Alia

constitution, there was no basis for the citizens to be restricted from organising themselves with the intention of peacefully articulating their positions on issues that affect them provided it does not constitute security threat.

The human rights watch lamented that even in advanced democracies, the citizens' right for peaceful

assembly and other forms of human right abuses are always meted out to citizens. He appealed to media practitioners to be always in the vanguard of writing against such practices.

He asserted that when the local and international legal instruments are guaranteed, the rights of citizens will always be respected.

Group petitions IGP over planned takeover of land

From **Musliudeen Adebayo, Ibadan**

SAVE the Poor and Needy Charity Initiative (SPANCI) has petitioned Inspector General of Police, Kayode Egbetokun, Governor Biodun Oyebanji of Ekiti and National Boundary Commission over alleged plan by a monarch in Osun State to forcefully take over a church land in Ekiti State.

The group alleged that the Elerinmo of Erinmo in Osun state, Oba Michael Odunayo Ajayi has perfected plans to forcefully take over the land at Orioke Agbara Emimimo Efon Alaye in Ekiti State from the family of Baba Aladura Joseph Odeyemi Eyinfafe Bojesomo.

SPANCI President, Comrade Yemi Ezekiel Bello in the petition addressed to the IGP, Oyebanji, the National Boundary Commission and other stakeholders, urged the concerned authorities to wade into the matter to avoid breakdown of law and order.

Bello in the letter made available to journalists

recently, noted that the said land which falls within the boundary between Ekiti and Osun states, has been used as church for many years and belonged to the cleric family, Bojesomo family.

He noted that past census and polio vaccination exercises proved that the land is in Ekiti State and not Osun State as claimed by the monarch. Bello however alleged that the monarch has connived with some indigenes of Erinmo and some individuals to forcefully take over the land from the church.

He then charged the IG, Oyebanji and the National Boundary Commission to intervene in the matter. Explaining that this is necessary so as to avoid loss of lives and property in the area.

Bello while speaking further urged the IG to investigate the matter in the interest of justice and fair hearing.

He said, "Urgent request and appeal to Ekiti State Governor, Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice, Commissioner for Local

Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Chairman Efon Ala Aye Local Government, Alaaye of Efon Alaaye, Chairman Boundary Commission, IGP, DSS, CG NSCDC, Ekiti and Osun CP to intervene and rescue Bojesomo family members from the hand of Elerinmo of Erinmo, Oba Michael Odunayo Ajayi and Osun State law enforcement agencies.

"We have the consent of Prophet Samuel Adegoke Bojesomo and other family members of Baba Aladura Joseph Odeyemi Eyinfafe Bojesomo to write this letter so that their rights and obligations may be protected. The Prayer Mountain genuinely belongs to the Bojesomo family and has been their possession even before Elerinmo became the king. Orioke Agbara Emimimo Efon Alaye is in Ekiti State under Ward 5 of Efon Alaye Local Government, Ekiti State and not Oriade Local Government in Osun State as claimed by Elerinmo and his people.

"That the past census and polio vaccination and other immunization proved that it is in Ekiti State and not Osun State as claimed but got popular and generally called Orioke Erinmo because that is the easy access from outsiders and travellers to get there because of its closeness and relationship with Erinmo and Erinmo people.

"We want the Ekiti State Government, Alaye of Efon Alaye Oba Emmanuel Adesanya Aladejare and other authorities to wade into this matter so that the rights and obligations of the family may be protected and they would be able to bury their father on the said Prayer Mountain.

"That the IGP should caution the alleged Osun State CP and other law enforcement agencies and agents from abusing their power and

Pay your debts or we'll go after you- BIPC GMD

From **TERESE TUHWA, Makurdi**

THE new Group Managing Director, Benue Investment and Property Company (BIPC) Plc, Dr. Raymond Asemakaha has given marching orders to debtors of the company's Micro Finance Bank Plc to as matter of urgency pay up loans given to them by the bank or he will go after them to recover the loans.

Dr. Asemakaha who came hard on those indebted to the company and have refused to pay in an interview with news men in Makurdi, the Benue State capital shortly after taking over the affairs of the company, decried the character problem of Benue people where people take loans and refuse to pay.

He insisted that all those indebted to the company must pay up their loans with immediate effect so that others will also benefit.

The financial expert maintained that if the government establishes a business and monies have been lent to people, it was incumbent on them to pay back so that others "will also have the same handshake".

The new GMD who was earlier addressing staff of the



Asemakaha

company after being ushered in by the outgoing acting Managing Director, Mr. Terungwa Chia Surma said as an accomplished professional and international finance consultant in several sectors of the economy, he was poised to change the narrative of the company.

Dr. Asemakaha who reiterated his commitment to reposition the company for optimal performance, assured management and staff of the company of a cordial working relationship. He sympathised with them over the non-payment of their salaries in the last five months due to freezing of all

government accounts by the governor.

He promised that he would workout modalities to ensure immediate payment of salary arrears of staff and urged them to put in their best for the growth and development of the company.

He thanked Governor Hyacinth Iormem Alia for finding him worthy of the appointment and promised to justify the confidence reposed in him.

In a remark, the out-gone acting Managing Director, Mr. Terungwa Chia Surma, expressed readiness to accord the new GMD his unwavering support and pledged his unalloyed loyalty.

AFN to enforce electoral violence directive

By **DORCAS PANKYES**

THE Armed Forces of Nigeria (AFN) has assured of its readiness to enforce the presidential directive to deal decisively with perpetrators of electoral violence. The Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), General Christopher Gwabin Musa disclosed this recently during his operational visit to troops in Kogi State.

The CDS while speaking at the Kogi State Government House, assured Governor Yahaya Bello, who was represented by his deputy, Mr Edward David Onoja, that the Armed Forces is fully

prepared to carry out its duty of maintaining law and order during the upcoming elections.

He emphasized the importance of a peaceful electoral process and stated that any form of violence or disruption will not be tolerated.

General Musa also stated that the Armed Forces has been conducting various training exercises to enhance the capabilities of its personnel in handling electoral security challenges.

He assured the Governor and the people of Kogi State that the military is well-equipped and ready to

respond effectively to any security threat that may arise during the elections.

The CDS further urged all political parties, candidates, and their supporters to abide by the rules and regulations governing the electoral process. He emphasized that the military's role is to ensure a peaceful and transparent election, allowing the people to exercise their democratic rights without fear or intimidation.

Governor Yahaya Bello commended the Armed Forces for its commitment to ensuring peaceful elections. He expressed confidence in the readiness and professionalism of the military in securing the electoral process in Kogi State.

The governor also called on all stakeholders to work together to promote a peaceful atmosphere before, during, and after the elections. He urged political leaders and their supporters to engage in issue-based campaigns and avoid any form of violence that could disrupt the electoral process.

The Armed Forces of Nigeria has been instrumental in providing security during previous elections, and their commitment to maintaining law and order is crucial in ensuring a peaceful electoral process.

The assurance given by the Chief of Defence Staff reaffirms the military's dedication to upholding democracy and preserving the safety of all citizens during elections.



Oyebanji



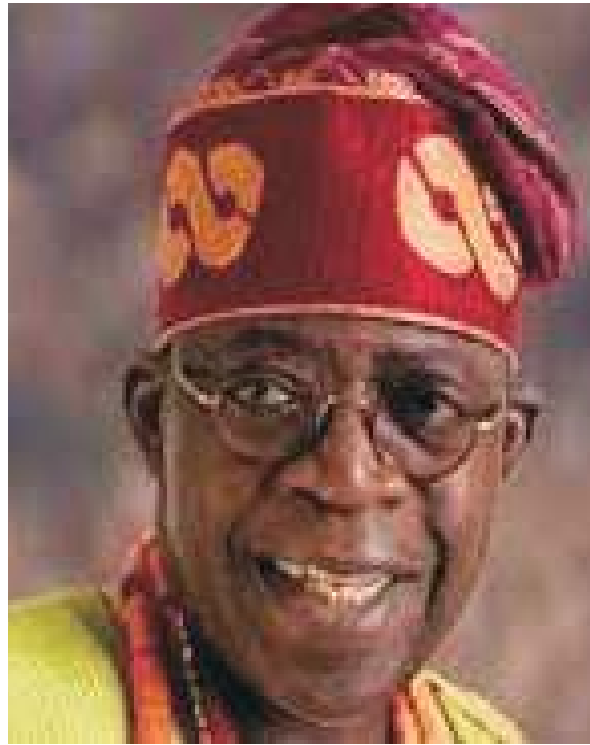
Musa

News

Perform or be sacked, Tinubu warns ministers

From JIDAUNA YANUNG, Abuja

PRESIDENT Bola Tinubu has threatened to sack his ministers and other aides for non performance. The president also vowed to succeed by all means to deliver on the expectations of Nigerians from its current state. He handed down the warning in Abuja while declaring open his administration's first cabinet retreat held at the Presidential Villa. He reminded all participants at the retreat that everything needed to lift the country was at the government's disposal. Tinubu also told the participants that there would be periodic assessment of government functionaries, adding that those who fail to measure up to the target of the Renewed Hope Agenda of the administration would be shown the door. "You will sign a bond of performance with me. If you are performing,



Tinubu

nothing to fear. If you miss the objective we reviewed, if you don't perform, you will leave us," he warned. Speaking further, the president said "it's our country, we have no other one. Let's be proud that we are Nigerians and we

can do it. We can fight to make democracy a lasting reference for the rest of Africa", the president emphatically pointed

THE paramount ruler of the Atyap Chieftom, Agwaytap in the Zango Kataf Local Government Area of Kaduna State, Dominic Yahaya,

From TERESE TUHWA, Makurdi

BENUE State Governor, Rev. Fr. Hyacinth Alia has called on the Nigerian Army to turn its focus on Benue State to help secure the 'Food Basket of the Nation'.

The governor made the call during a courtesy call on the Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General Taoreed Lagbaja in his office at the Army Headquarters, Abuja recently.

He said the once very peaceful state was at the moment besieged by criminals ranging from murderous armed herders, bandits and local gangsters.

He said, "A week hardly passes without reports of two, three or more persons being killed in the villages, mostly on their farms by armed herders.

"Most of these are not reported in the media".

He decried lack of manpower for other formations operating within the state, including Operation Whirl stroke and 401 Special Forces Brigade. Pointing further that if properly equipped, men of the formations may begin to enter the hinterlands to be able to tackle the menace and will not only be standing on the roads as it is the practice presently.

The governor in a statement by his Chief Press Secretary, Sir

Governor Alia solicits Army's collaboration against insecurity



Alia

Tersoo Kula, called for the establishment of Force Operation Bases in Anyiin, Naka, Ukum, Agatu, Udei and Gbajimba.

Responding, the Chief of Army Staff stated that as one who has served in the state for nine years, he has a good understanding of the security situation of the state.

"In my capacity as COAS, I

do receive on a daily basis security reports both formal and informal from Benue State.

He promised that the Nigerian Army will turn its attention to Benue especially now that the dry season was about setting in. And added that it was the time that the state usually witnesses a lot of crises.

Monarch donates N4m for 118 IDPS

From JOHN FWAH, Kaduna

recently, donated over N4 million to 118 orphans out of the 267 captured.

The occasion was at the launching of a foundation,

'Jumma Gambo Yahaya Foundation' to assist in catering for the education of the victims of terrorists attack in his chieftom.

"This is meant for their scholarship aimed at assisting orphans, who lost their parents during the attacks in their educational careers," he said.

According to the monarch, what informed his decision to launch the foundation, was the giant stride of Governor Zulum of Borno State toward promoting the education of orphans who were victims of the Boko Haram crisis.

He said his chieftom has experienced similar sad development, hence the need to assist the orphans.

"The several attacks that took place in my chieftom from 2020 to 2023, brought untold hardship and turned my people vulnerable, their houses were razed down while their loved ones were brutally killed," he said.

He disclosed that his chieftom has experienced several killings and a lot of NGOs came to their rescue by bringing assistance like building materials, food items, etc. Still, nobody thought about the orphans, and that occurred to him to kick-start the process of launching a foundation that will cater to their needs.

"The poverty level in the village is so much that it is difficult for someone to take responsibility for his family and another person.

We are calling on highly spirited individuals, both inside and outside the country, state and Federal Governments to assist by keying into this project in educating our children.

The monarch explained further that this was the first batch of the scholarship which cut across seven

communities, including Hausa Fulanis who were also victims of the carnage.

The Executive Chairman of the Local Government, Francis Zimbo, commended the effort of the monarch and supported the foundation with the sum of N1.5 million while urging privileged individuals to key into ensuring that the victims get the required education they need.

Zimbo said the council on its own has been doing so much in settling the medical bills and school fees of some of the victims.

The Chairman of the occasion, Barnabas Tagan, said the Jumma Gambo Yahaya Foundation Scholarship was a tribute to their rich heritage and an embodiment of their collective responsibility towards the most vulnerable members in their communities, stressing that this was a reflection of their values of compassion, unity, and progress.

According to Tagan, this effort symbolised their unwavering commitment to providing hope and a brighter future for those who have faced adversity.

"Orphans and widows often bear the brunt of life's harshest trials. They are left to navigate a challenging world with limited resources and support. He however noted that it was during these times of adversity that we must step forward and extend a helping hand.

"We launch this scholarship with the conviction that education is the most potent tool for transformation. He added that education empowers individuals to break the cycle of poverty, opens opportunities, and instills self-confidence. It was our firm belief that by supporting the education of orphans, we can uplift entire families and, in turn, our entire communities."

Key into FG's agricultural revolution, SSA urges Nigerians

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

SENIOR Special Assistant to President Tinubu on Community Engagement, Abiodun O. Eset has urged Nigerians to key into the present administration's agricultural revolution.

The Senior Special Assistant who described agriculture as the main stream of Nigeria's economy and food security, gave an assurance that the Tinubu's led-administration will accord priority to the development of the agricultural sector.

Eset made the call while speaking during the Maiden Interactive Events for Value

Chain Operators where the Kogi State Government displayed a show exhibition/networking in Lokoja recently.

He enjoined farmers across the country to support the government in its intervention to boost food sufficiency in Nigeria.

The Commodity Fair with its theme "Celebrating the resilience and roles of smallholder farmers in Nigeria" brought participants from pilot states of the federation.

The Senior Special Assistant challenged local farmers and processors of rice, and Cassava Value Chain in the federation to brace up to improve on their

livelihood.

She disclosed that the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN), International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) Value Chain Development Programme (VCDP) are three components of intervention for Agriculture Development Programme in the country.

Abiodun commended the state government and the Coordinator of the VCDP in the state, Dr. Stella Adejoh for her commitment towards FGN/ IFAD and VCDP Agriculture Programme in the state.

Earlier, the National Programme Coordinator of the FGN, International Fund for Agricultural Development and Value Chain Development Programme, Dr. Fatima Aliyu represented by Baba Yakubu said Governor Yahaya Bello has continued to live up to expectations by paying counterpart contributions to enable agriculture to strive for the benefits of farmers in Kogi State.

Dr. Fatima maintained that Value Chain Development Programme Coordinator in Kogi State, Dr. Stella Adejoh for the past two years has impacted positively on the lives of rural farmers. She urged her not to relent in her efforts to boost food production in the state.



Eset

CHANGE OF NAME

DANLAMI

I, Formerly known as **DATONG OLIVER DABOER**, now wish to be known and addressed as **DATONG DANLAMI DABOER**. All former documents remain valid. All Concerned authorities and the General public to take note please.

NEWS

Governor Alia extols statesman at 90

From **TERESE TUHWA, Makurdi**

GOVERNOR Hyacinth Alia of Benue State has extolled the good virtues of an elder statesman, elder Jonathan Niyiyongo Ninga on his 90th birthday celebration.

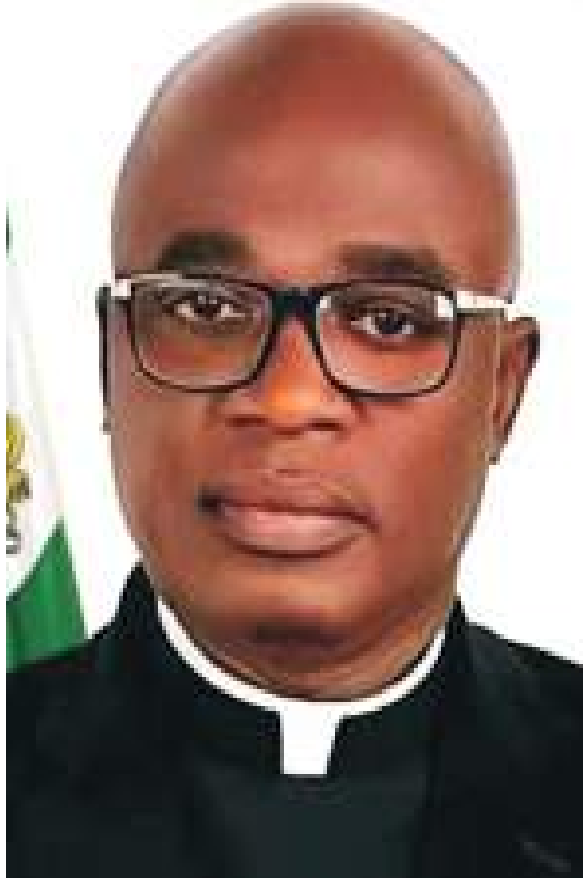
The governor who spoke at Kimbis Hotel, Makurdi said as one who has seen it all in life, he in particular and the state at large, stand to benefit immensely from his wealth of experience.

Represented by his Chief of Staff, Rt. Hon. Paul Biam, Governor Alia said it was a joyous moment to celebrate a man who has impacted tremendously on the state and called on people of the state to pray for more of God's blessings, good health and favour upon him.

Some of the guests who spoke at the occasion, including Special Adviser to the Governor on Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Dr. Dennis Akura, appreciated God for his mercies upon the life of the celebrant.

Dr. Akura while emphasising the need for the teaching and learning of history subject in schools across the country, appealed to the governor to make it mandatory for the book, "The Biam Genealogy" written by the celebrant to be included in post primary school curriculum with a view to teaching it in schools across the state.

He said for one to have basic understanding of his or her society, it was incumbent on them to have good knowledge of their history, adding that



Alia

the celebrant's literary exploits was a masterpiece and should be read by all.

The former chairman of Ukum Local Government Council, Hon. Kaaty Tyumbur in an interview with news men on the sideline, thanked God for sparing the life of the celebrant.

He said for one at elder Ninga's age to have the ability to write, it takes sufficient God's grace and congratulated

the elder statesman on his 90th birthday anniversary.

The celebrant elder Ninga Biam in an interview with news men said he was grateful to God for sparing his life all these years.

He stated that it takes self discipline devoid of certain habits coupled with God's grace to live long, insisting that people must desist from keeping things in mind against one another.

BY EZEKIEL DONTINNA

THE Management of Plateau State University (PLASU) Bokkos, has staged a valedictory walk organised by the Mass Communication Department of the University in honour of its deceased Head of Department, Dr. Nancy Katu Ogundimu who died recently.

This came in a press statement signed by the university's Public Relations Officer, John K. Agam, and made available to SUNDAY STANDARD in Jos, the Plateau State capital shortly after the valedictory walk held in Bokkos.

Vice Chancellor of the university, Professor Matur Malau Bernard, described the late Head of Department, Mass Communications, Dr. Nancy Katu Ogundimu, as an exceptional academician whose contributions to the Senate, university and department were exemplary and should be emulated.

He said the death of Dr Nancy came as a rude shock which sent shivers to the spine of not only her department, but the entire university community, particularly the Senate and management of the university when her positive and qualitative contributions to deliberations in the Senate were most needed.

Matur reiterated that the

PLASU walks for deceased lecturer, Ogundimu



Katu

university Senate had recently endorsed that a procession be organized in her honour as a third tier member before her demise and used the occasion to further sympathize with staff and students of the Mass Communication Department over her death.

The Vice Chancellor, therefore, called on the staff and students of the department to give the new Head Of Department the required encouragement and support to enable the department to grow.

Among those who paid

posthumous respect and glowing tributes to the former Head of Department were Professor Moses Galadima Pyefa who described late Nancy as an intelligent and one extraordinary personality he first met at the School of Preliminary Studies, Keffi.

He, said, "the death of Dr. Nancy came so sudden with no prior signs and that the best way to appreciate her is to hold dear what she lived for and the impact she has made on the university community.

Both the new Head of Department of Mass Communications, Dr. Michael Adeyanjo, and the President of the Department of Mass Communication Students Association, Comrade Dalap Isaac Simon, all showered accolades on the late Dr. Nancy Katu Ogundimu and prayed to God to grant her soul eternal rest.

Zenith Bank donates eighteen seater bus to PLASU

BY EZEKIEL DONTINNA

THE Zenith Bank PLC has donated an eighteen (18) seater bus to the Plateau State University (PLASU) Bokkos, to help enhance transportation challenges for optimal academic and administrative duties.

This was contained in a press statement signed by the university's Public Relations Officer (PRO) John K. Agam, and made available to SUNDAY STANDARD in Jos, the Plateau State capital shortly after the Zenith Bank's Zonal Management donated the bus recently.

While acknowledging the university's continuous support and patronage, the Zenith Bank's Zonal Director, Mr. Duwong Dayil said, "the recent achievements of the bank, including the CEO award and Bank of the Year award, were made possible by the support of "responsible organisations" like Plateau State University, Bokkos.

He added that the donation was part of their corporate social responsibility to the state and assured the university of Zenith Bank's commitment to further intervene in areas that will enhance knowledge and learning in the institution.

Responding, Vice Chancellor of the Plateau State University (PLASU) Bokkos, Professor Bernard Matur, thanked Zenith Bank for this great gesture and reaffirmed the university's

unwavering commitment to sustaining its partnership and expanding collaboration with Zenith Bank PLC.

He stated, "We are very happy and grateful to God Almighty for our partners in business, Zenith Bank International, for coming all the way to visit us because of the little we have been doing in terms of providing an opportunity for the bank to manage our finances."

The VC, however, revealed the university's eagerness to engage in public-private partnership (PPP) agreement and sign a Memorandum of Understanding that would involve offering land and related logistics to support the construction of essential infrastructure within the university.

Professor Matur said, "We have opened the chapter for public private partner development. We have opened the chapter for build-operate and transfer to further consolidate on the fast developing and growth of the university.

"We have eleven faculties from four just added five months ago. We have the School of Post-graduate Studies and that is where Zenith Bank can come in. We have sufficient land to give you to build a real business.

"I want to assure you that I, as the Vice Chancellor of this university, will continue to pursue a mutually beneficial relationship

with Zenith Bank until we all reach the zenith of our aspirations", he assured.

The Vice Chancellor, thereafter, extended an invitation to Zenith Bank to participate in projects such as building hostels for post-graduate students, either through a Build-Operate-And-Transfer Partnership or a Public-Private Partnership (PPPA).

Meanwhile, the representative of the state government and the

University's Governing Board, Hon. Samuel Para, expressed delight in the growing partnership between Zenith Bank and Plateau State University and prayed for its continued success.

Speaking earlier, Bursar of the University, Longsen Kerrekum Lawrence, said the bus donation was a fallout of the marching orders given to the Bursary Department to think out of the box and explore avenues that

US medical team tours Gombe rural communities

From **WILLIE ATTAH, Gombe**

A team of medical expatriates from the United States of America, Ghana and Nigeria are touring some selected underserved rural communities in Gombe State with free medical care and palliatives.

The team which also comprises indigenous medical personnel and paramedics to support the foreign expatriates is led by Dr. Robert Lee Lawson from Texas, USA.

The one week long free medical outreach which began on Sunday and Monday 30th/31st October, 2023, in Nyuwar community in Balanga LGA, has rounded up in Komta, Billiri LGA on yesterday, 4th November, 2023.

According to Dr. Lawson, this

is his sixth visit to Nigeria. He summed up his observation from the current visit on the third day of the tour saying, "there are a lot of health challenges in the rural areas, especially in the aspects of sanitation, clean water, lack of healthy food among others".

He said, "We tried to bring some food in addition to the medical outreach to give some of them that need it the most, so that they can have nutritious food.

"We intend to treat as many as possible. We have itinerary for each day and we intend to leave food and medication for the nurses and doctors to help the people even when we have gone back", he stressed.

Honourable Rambai, a former two term member of the State

would add value to the university through collaborations with business partners as part of their contributions under their corporate social responsibility.

"This event marks a significant milestone in the collaboration between Plateau State University, Bokkos, and Zenith Bank, reflecting their shared commitment to academic development and growth", he stated.

US medical team tours Gombe rural communities

House of Assembly, also a facilitator of the free medical outreach, said apart from the timely free medical service, the medical outreach team had also settled the medical bills of six snakebite patients at the Kaltungo Snakebite Hospital.

He explained that just after three days of the free medical outreach, the team had already met the medical needs of well over 500 persons with various health challenges. And they hope to cover much more in the remaining days.

He said, "The team has been coming in contact with people with serious health challenges and their intervention has been very timely. Grains will also be shared to those mostly in need as palliatives due to

the current economic hardship.

"They also attended to eyesight challenges and others. They make referrals where necessary. It's a complete team, some run tests, some are giving medical attention and we keep buying drugs", he stated.

Speaking on the Primary Health Care Centre, Rambai said, "I conceptualized and gave a push while I was still in government. I had interest in the Fulani settlement that has been with us over the years.

Leader of the Fulani settlement in Kalindi, Alhaji Ade (Ardo Ade), expressed happiness with the provision of the health facility as well as the free medical outreach.

SUNDAY MAGAZINE



Is Supreme Court of Nigeria dying?

Continued from page 10

by the political class who in turn are in some instances alleged to have procured favourable judgments in return for bribes.

Retired Justice Mohammad Dattijo, who spent 47 years in active judicial service and bowed out of the Supreme Court just few weeks ago, maintained that the Judiciary, as presently structured, gave so much powers to the CJN who he said usually takes decisions without consulting other justices.

He also said that membership of the Bench that heard the Presidential election appeals by candidates of the People's Democratic Party, PDP, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar and the Labour Party, LP, Mr Peter Obi, for the sake of transparency, all geo-political zones are required to have been represented in the hearing. "It is dangerous for democracy and equity for two entire regions to be left out in the decisions that affect the generality of Nigerians," Dattijo said.

However, the unnecessary delay in filling the vacant positions is seen in some quarters as a deliberate attempt

to create a balance of jurists within the apex court which is now seen to be tilted in favour of a particular section of the country. But Victor Opara SAN, said it was unsafe for the country to continue to over work the Supreme Court justices which would ultimately lead to inimical consequences that would be detrimental to their health.

According to him, "the unconscionable delay in making these appointments is understandably feeding the rumour mill. This is not good news at all. It is easy to fill executive and legislative seats. However, when it comes to that of the Judiciary, dilly-dallying now sets in and this is a sad commentary in our managerial abilities as a nation.

"Let's hope the renewed hope agenda of Mr President will accommodate this challenge and donate to us immediately a renewed hope, that hopefully the vacancies at the Supreme Court will be filled without further delay."

Also speaking on the issue, Barrister Wahap Shittu, SAN, insisted that the country was not lacking in suitable

requirements. What is needed is action now and that seasoned academics should be considered and deserving Court of Appeal Justices should also be elevated to fill the slots.

On his part, Barrister David Fadile, while lamenting the state of the Judiciary, said the Supreme Court would never get the full complement of 21 Justices as long as the Judiciary continued to be subservient to the other two organs of Government.

According to him, "this is a country where the Judiciary has been captured by the executive arm of government while the Nigerian Bar Association [NBA], looks the other way. It is also a country where a sitting Chief Justice of Nigeria [CJN], was bundled out of office in a

disgraceful manner." Fadile said.

He further said the Judiciary hop nobs with the executive at the detriment of their constitutional mandates. "The common practice is seeing Governors, ministers, legislators and so on attending functions of weddings of sitting Judges in the glare of the public without caring whose ox is gored. The solution in my view is that the Judiciary should assert its all round independence i.e the compliance of the 1999 Constitution and the rule of law, financial autonomy and limit the fraternity with the other tiers of government as much as it lies within their powers." Fadile added.

Barrister Ige Asemudara, in his opinion, there was no other way out as an option open to the Nigerian Judicial Council and the

Supreme Court than to swear in additional Justices of the apex court. He said workloads will continue to increase because there is only one Supreme Court which all Nigerians look up to for final redress as the last hope of the common man.

However, as long as the drought on the Supreme Court Bench continues, so also would the delay in the administration of justice persist in terms of endless time for hearing of pending cases. The expectations across board now is that of serious concerns which require action on the part of the CJN, by initiating the process of appointing additional justices to make up the full complement of 21 jurists as prescribed by the Constitution. Just as the saying goes, Justice delayed is equally justice denied.

"Let's hope the renewed hope agenda of Mr President will accommodate this challenge and donate to us immediately a renewed hope, that hopefully the vacancies at the Supreme Court will be filled without further delay."

METRO-FOCUS

Much ado about stray animals

By YVONNE ISHOLA

THERE is no gainsaying that the harsh economic realities in the country has further made feeding in Nigeria very poor. Stable foods like rice, beans and ingredients for cooking like palm oil and groundnut oil are beyond the reach of the common man. The common saying these days is: We live each day as it comes.

Foods like sweet potatoes, cocoa yam, gotai (with roughly ground maize) which were unpopular in the past are now common foods in most average homes in Plateau State. Talk about na condition dey make crayfish bend. Even garri is beyond the reach of the common man.

This makes one wonder how dog owners are managing, knowing that dogs either eat leftovers or one buys their feed which is expensive. Alternatively, one could prepare the meal by getting the following according to specification: maize, soya beans, dry bones or fish meal, slightly roasted groundnut, mix them and take them to the millers to grind. This could be very tasking and it is now very expensive. Only the rich can afford it.

However, considering the peculiarities of the times, how many people can afford to keep a dog and feed it as desired? Of recent, one has noticed an increased number of stray dogs roaming the streets or rummaging through garbage dumps. The consequences of this cannot be over-emphasized.

Studies have shown that one of the ways dogs get rabies is by eating what bats have leftover which is mostly found in refuse dumps. As dangerous as this condition is, once a dog in an area gets it, all other dogs in that area would be in danger of getting infected.

A worst-case scenario is the danger to humans, especially children. A dog infected with rabies does not need to be provoked to attack. It silently goes after any moving object and bites it.

More than a decade ago, 2 sisters met their death as a result of being bitten by a rabies infected dog. They were from a humble background, and as such, the parents could not afford the treatment. The owner of the dog refused to be responsible for the treatment. Going back and forth like that, the little girls (age between 6 and 9) exhibited all the signs of rabies, including barking like a dog before finally giving up their ghost.

It was heart rendering. The



parents and the owner of the dog under-estimated the ravages of rabies and lived to regret it. The death of these girls was avoidable but negligence was the order of the day. If they were administered anti-rabies in 24 hours of the bite, they would have survived it. But the issue of money came in because the anti-rabies injection is expensive but not as expensive as the life which can't be bought.

Similar to the issue of stray dogs are stray domestic animals like sheep, goats, pigs, cows, monkeys, cats. My mother's first accident was caused by stray sheep. She had just bought her car and wanted to drop me in school. Among some trees just before my school- Holy Cross School, Pankshin, were some sheep grazing. Just as we came upon them, mother warned them by honking. That seemed to be her undoing. They started running to and fro before the incoming car. And to avoid them, mother ramped into a tree and dented her new car.

That was the day I learnt that it would have been better to run the sheep down than for one to damage one's car- that was what the small crowd that gathered told mother. For one thing, they pointed, they were stray animals.

A friend to my younger sister almost kicked the bucket when a stray pig ran into her car around Akwanga, on her way to Jos from Abuja. It was as if she ran into a brick wall. She somersaulted a few times but luckily, she survived.

Three months ago, my sister and other passengers in a commercial vehicle almost became history when a dog out of nowhere decided to cross the road as they took a bend around Akwanga. Instead of running into the dog, the driver swerved off the road and entered the bush until a tree stopped it. Thank God, nobody was hurt but the car will be off the road for some time.

The cases are endless. The government needs to be proactive in addressing the issue of stray animals for the safety of the citizenry. What obtains in other climes? I know for certain that strays are often taken off the streets. And if you are the owner, you pay direly to retrieve your animal. In most occasions, one has to weigh if the animal is worth the trouble. This could be another way to

generate revenue for the state and bring sanity to the system. People need to know that owning an animal means responsibility which involves spending money.

People need to be sensitive to know that one has no business keeping an animal, if one cannot feed the animal or be responsible enough to care for it the best way possible. This includes keeping it off the streets and in a safe place. It also includes keeping it healthy and cleaning after it if it defecates in the open, if it is a dog, pig or cow. Fortunately, cow and pig Dung are marketable as manure on farms.

Cases abound when a dog feels neglected and relocates to where its needs can be catered for. The worst case

scenario is watching your dog struggling with sickness and you turn the other way. One has seen dogs, with broken eyes, swollen private parts, conditions that required surgery, left in that sorry condition until death mercy takes them.

In our younger days, a dog forced itself on us. It used to come around to eat leftover food because we had no dog then. We had just packed into Pankshin. Not long after, it disowned its owners and made our home its house. The dog must have been maltreated by its former owners because dogs are loyal animals.

Unfortunately, we could only keep the stray dog as long as we were at Pankshin. When we packed, we left it.



SUNDAY PEOPLE

GOV MUTFWANG IS WORKING

Plateau State Government is working on the Jos township roads by filling up the potholes as captured by the The Nigeria Standard newspapers photo-editor



Renovated Fidelis Tappun road to CBN roundabout



Filin Ball in Nassarawa road to Dilimi needs the State Government attention



NUJ Press Centre, Hills Station roundabout



CBN roundabout renovated



First Bank, UBA, UNION Bank and Revenue House roads



This road from Bauchi Rd junction to Bayan Banki washed out completely



Works in progress at some roads visited



Massalacin Yan taya road to Dilimi

Photos: DANLADI DUK



Road Runner

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SAFER TOGETHER

NEWS

Kaduna NUJ declares FRCN Chapel's election unconstitutional

By JOHN FWAH, Kaduna

NIGERIA Union of Journalists (NUJ), Kaduna State Council, has declared the Umar S. Fada-led executive of the FRCN Chapel as unconstitutional, illegal, null and void and of no effect whatsoever.

The Council views with seriousness the attempt by some persons to stand the constitution of the NUJ on its head through illegal conduct of election into the FRCN Chapel of the council.

This is contained in a statement jointly signed by the Chairman of the Council, Asma'u Yawo Halilu and the Secretary, Gambo Santos Sanga.

In the statement issued recently, the council leadership advised members of the public to disregard the illegally constituted executive committee of the FRCN Kaduna Chapel.

According to the statement, the Credentials Committee that inaugurated the Fada-led executive committee breached the provisions of the NUJ constitution, particularly with regards to electoral procedures, processes and conduct of election.



Asmau

"Article 6 of the NUJ Constitution, specifically subsection 6 states that in all cases, only the State Working Committee (SWC) shall supervise Chapel's election after other provisions stipulated in Article 6 subsection 7 (a-g) must have been complied with.

"In that regard, only the State Council shall carry out the final screening of aspirants before the conduct of an election and subsequent inauguration.

"Significantly, the

Credentials Committee that conducted election into the FRCN Chapel, violated all the rules enunciated in the constitution and illegally went ahead to inaugurate an executive that was not properly elected in spite of communication to that effect.

"It is on this premise that the Council, based on the powers vested on it by the provisions of the NUJ Constitution, hereby declare the election and or inauguration illegal," the statement reads.

Effect of impact on passengers

1. What is the immediate effect of a head-on impact of two cars at speed?

All persons in the vehicle are thrown violently forward

2. What danger can arise with the power take-off of a tractor?

Clothing can get caught in it if it is not covered

3. What are the necessary steps to take when changing a wheel of your vehicle?

Turn on your hazard lights

Wear reflective clothing Place a red warning triangle to the right-side rear of the vehicle

Place a red warning triangle to the right-side rear of the vehicle, and

Secure the hand brake and place a chock or small wooden block at the front of the wheels

Slack the bolts of the tyre before jacking up the vehicle

Tie the bolts directly opposite to one another

Wedge the tyre that is perpendicular to the one being changed

Tie back the bolts and bring down the tyres before finally tightening the bolts

4. When is a red flag a sufficient marker for a rear-load overhang that exceeds one metre?

Only during the day. At night it is recommended that you put a red reflector at the rear end of the projected load.

5. You are driving a fully loaded vehicle. In order to avoid excessive stress on the steering and suspension, how

should you negotiate bends?

At a slower speed than when empty

LOAD CARRYING CAPACITY

6. When is it permissible to carry more passengers than available seats in your vehicle?

Never

7. You have been asked to drive an overloaded vehicle, what should you do?

Politely refuse to drive the vehicle

8. What is the effect of constant overloading on the vehicle?

It increases the wear and tear of the vehicle and results in defective suspension system of the vehicle.

LOAD DISTRIBUTION

9. How could towing an overloaded trailer affect your vehicle?

It could impair the vehicle's fuel consumption

10. You are carrying small packages in your vehicle. Where is the safest to put them?

On the rear seat or floor

11. Vehicle load is more likely to shift when...?

Cornering or applying brake harshly

TRAILERS

12. What should you ensure when attaching a trailer to a ca?

That any load in the trailer is evenly spread so that the hitch will not become detached

13. What should you ensure when attaching a trailer to a car?

That the trailer pin is tightly inserted

14. What should you do first before un-hitching a trailer from a towing vehicle?

Apply the handbrake with a low gear engaged and switch off the ignition

15. When is it permissible for you to carry a passenger on a trailer drawbar?

Never

VEHICLE HANDLING

16. In which two occasions is a tractor mostly to overturn?

When speeding downhill, and

When turning sharply

17. What should you do to avoid possible roll-over on entering a round about when driving a tractor with a trailer?

Reduce speed

18. Jack-knifing is...?

When a trailer is travelling faster than the drawing tractor

19. When is jack-knifing most likely to occur?

When trying to reduce speed sharply while travelling downhill

20. You wish to turn left when driving a tractor with a wide load which is blocking your view to the rear. What should you do?

Have a person advise you of traffic from behind while you check for oncoming traffic

TECHNICAL MATTERS BOTHERING ON ROAD SAFETY

SIDELIGHTS

21. When should you drive with side-lights on?

At sunset when daylight is fading

22. What do you do when a side lamp bulb has failed?

Check the side-lights when switched on and attempt to insert it firmly or get it replaced

NCC emphasizes Fintech's role in financial inclusion

By DORCAS PANKYES

In a recent keynote address at the Nigeria Information Technology Reporters Association (NITRA) FinTech Forum, Dr. Aminu Maida, the Executive Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer (EVC/CEO) of the Nigeria Communications Commission (NCC), highlighted the critical role of the Financial Technology (FinTech) industry in driving financial inclusion in underserved communities across Nigeria.

Dr. Maida, represented by Mr. Henry Ojiokpot, the Controller of NCC, Lagos Zonal Office, stated that the theme of the forum, "Harnessing Nigeria's Fintech Potential: Challenges and Opportunities," was timely, given the significant rise in digital financial services throughout the country.

He emphasized that FinTech is revolutionizing Nigeria's financial ecosystem by leveraging technology to enhance financial services such as mobile banking, borrowing, investment, and cryptocurrency.

The EVC acknowledged that FinTech applications, including robo-advisors, payment apps, peer-to-peer lending apps, investment apps, and crypto apps, create business opportunities for individuals.

He further emphasized that the adoption of these applications by the youth, who constitute 70% of Nigeria's population, would add value to the economy.

Dr. Maida also highlighted recent industry statistics, which revealed that active subscriptions across mobile networks in Nigeria reached



Maida

220.7 million in August 2023. This data demonstrated the potential of the Nigerian FinTech ecosystem to offer a wide range of financial services to telecom subscribers.

The EVC affirmed that the NCC will continue to expand and enhance telecommunications infrastructure to enable robust FinTech services. The Commission aims to address consumer concerns and regulatory challenges in the sector, leveraging the high mobile phone penetration rate in Nigeria to provide financial services to rural communities and underserved segments of the population.

Dr. Maida stated that the NCC has begun implementing new strategies to achieve the target of 70% broadband penetration by 2025, as outlined in the Nigerian National Broadband Plan 2020-2025. These policies

and strategies will have significant implications for enhancing the benefits derived from the FinTech industry, as well as positively impacting Nigeria's goals of financial inclusion and the digital economy.

The NCC boss assured of continued support for the FinTech industry in harnessing its enormous potential. He said the Commission remains committed to addressing challenges in the sector, including improving the provision of secure infrastructure that supports the delivery of digital financial services efficiently.

Dr. Maida also emphasized the NCC's focus on maintaining minimum standards in Quality of Service (QoS) to ensure uninterrupted connectivity and enhance the sector's contribution to the economy.

Furthermore, he mentioned that the NCC has implemented a Memorandum of Understanding with the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to boost payment systems and financial inclusion, aligning with the Nigeria Payments System Vision 2025.

The NCC will continue to play a vital role in harnessing the potential of FinTech through maximum support for FinTech policies, regulatory enforcement, and strengthened collaborations with relevant authorities.

The NCC's commitment to supporting the growth of the FinTech industry reflects its dedication to enhancing financial inclusion and driving Nigeria's digital economy. With the implementation of new strategies and collaborations, the NCC aims to create an enabling environment for FinTech to thrive, ultimately benefiting underserved



SUNDAY FEATURE

Trader moni, fuel subsidy palliatives: Another hope differed

There seems to exist a recurring narrative one of grand promises and another, profound disappointments over certain policies especially geared towards poverty alleviation and improvement of the life of Nigerian citizens. This is despite the opportunities and prosperity that naturally abound in the country. writes Okoronkwo

THE economic asphyxiation of the masses is exacerbated by a government that often fails to harness its abundant resources effectively for the benefit of the people.

Nigerians are always promised relief, but what they often receive are half-measures and misdirection

As at the last count, Nigeria has implemented various social intervention programmes intended to alleviate the suffering of the masses. However, the effectiveness of these programmes is often questionable. Trader Moni, N-Power, school feeding programme and now, fuel subsidy removal palliative among other initiatives have faced allegations of corruption, politicization, and mismanagement, leaving the intended beneficiaries in the lurch.

The Trader Moni of the past administration and palliatives associated with the recent fuel subsidy removal by this present administration which are promises of economic relief for the masses and positioned as lifelines for the most vulnerable citizens, have again, cast a mirage of hope.

These programmes are superficially positioned to uplift the masses from suffering. However, as the dust settles and the realities emerge, the story is one of economic despair. The common thread that binds them is a pattern of waste, mismanagement, and questionable outcomes, reflecting a broader challenge in Nigeria's approach to addressing the needs of its citizens.

Read also: FG set to resume TraderMoni scheme in November, beneficiaries to get N50,000

Just like the now rested Trader Moni microcredit scheme of President Mohammed Buhari's administration, the N3.27tn subsidy removal palliatives announced by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration to cushion the economic hardship on Nigerians following the removal of fuel subsidy may just be another phoney jamboree with no significance or impact on the common man, who is the primary target of the initiative.

These palliatives included N100bn to acquire 3,000 units of 20-seater CNG-fuelled buses, N200bn to boost agriculture production, N75bn for manufacturers, N125bn for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and the informal sector, N185bn as palliatives for states, N1tn on student loans and other programmes.

Others included N315bn to pay federal workers' N35,000 allowance for six months, N1.13tn to 15 million households at N25,000 per month for three months from October to December



2023, N70bn earmarked as palliative measures for lawmakers, and N75bn loan facility to 1.5m market women.

The fact is that Nigerians are always promised relief, but what they often receive are half-measures and misdirection. The yearning for substantial change always results in grand gestures without concrete actions.

The much-touted Trader Moni initiative as of today has no testimony of a Nigerian who was impacted by the programme, who could stand before the world and really chronicle a story of transformation from grass to grace, neither could anyone vouch for economic improvement since the fuel subsidy removal initiative was announced. What an irony! This is in spite of the fact that over 50% of the funds have left government coffers, yet poverty looms large on a daily basis.

With the current hardship in the country, Nigeria needs policies and initiatives that go beyond the illusion of hope. It requires genuine empowerment, sustainable development, and social and economic justice. Rather than short-term fixes, the nation must move towards long-term, transformative solutions

that improve the well-being of all citizens.

The economic strangulation of the masses cannot continue. Empowering ordinary Nigerians requires the government to prioritize policies that genuinely address the needs of the population. It involves a commitment to social and economic justice, investment in education, job creation, and the eradication of systemic corruption.

Accountability and transparency in governance are critical to mitigating waste and economic asphyxiation. These principles can help ensure that public resources are allocated efficiently and equitably. Strengthening the rule of law and anti-corruption efforts is pivotal to restoring the faith of the masses in their government.

For instance, the Nigeria Trader Moni (NTM) programme launched in 2018, was touted as

a microcredit initiative designed to provide small loans to traders and artisans across the country. With a promise of financial empowerment for the most vulnerable in society, it seemed like a ray of hope. However, what followed was a series of allegations and investigations, revealing that the program had been marred by corruption, mismanagement, and politicization. Funds meant for the masses allegedly found their way into the pockets of politicians and middlemen, leaving many genuine beneficiaries without the support they were promised.

The compulsory cash transfer of (N25,000.00), an initiative of the federal government which is part of the general scheme to cushion the impact of the fuel subsidy removal, seems to have already suffered a setback owing to the mechanism the government is

adopting in its implementation.

Just recently, the government said that disbursement of the cash transfer to the vulnerable will commence, adding that the government will first update the register, removing those without voter cards and NIN.

The question is how possession of a voter's card or NIN relates to poverty. Does the possession of a NIN or voter's card make one poorer or richer?

The case in Nigeria is, however, a sobering reality as these programs have, in many instances, failed to address the pressing needs of the people.

Though the programs are conceived with the noblest of intentions and there may be beneficiaries, the question remains: are the programs genuinely making a substantial difference in the lives of the masses? A comprehensive impact assessment is often lacking, leaving the true impact unclear.

To mitigate some of the controversies that trail poverty alleviation programmes, Nigeria's leaders should aim for lasting, sustainable solutions that genuinely address the needs of the population. The masses should be active participants in the design and execution of policies that affect their lives. True empowerment requires a shift from short-term, politically motivated palliatives to long-term, sustainable solutions that elevate the welfare of the nation.

To tip the balance of hope in favour of the masses, Nigeria must prioritize transparency, accountability, and inclusivity in its policy implementations. It is imperative to ensure that the intended beneficiaries receive the support they are promised. Oversight mechanisms must be strengthened to root out corruption and malpractice in the execution of these initiatives. The government must also embark on a sincere journey of effective communication, building trust with the masses through honest and open dialogue.

The government's tendency to waste resources and economically strangle the masses is a stark contradiction to the nation's potential. Nigeria should be a land of opportunity and prosperity for all its citizens. However, this vision can only be realized when the government shifts its priorities towards transparency, accountability, and policies that genuinely uplift the masses. The economic strangulation of the masses must end, and the government has a fundamental role to play in ensuring that Nigeria's wealth benefits all its people.

Accountability and transparency in governance are critical to mitigating waste and economic asphyxiation. These principles can help ensure that public resources are allocated efficiently and equitably. Strengthening the rule of law and anti-corruption efforts is pivotal to restoring the faith of the masses in their government.

SUNDAY SPORTS



FIFA President Gianni Infantino, second right, and Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince

Saudi 2034 WC: Why decision is not a surprise

The prospect of a World Cup in Saudi Arabia has long been anticipated, with the country's unprecedented investment in sport over recent years always seemingly intended to lead to this moment. DAN ROAN writes.

No-one who has been paying attention to the way the country has turned the world of golf upside down through the rebel LIV Series, or started to dominate the hosting of top boxing, or sent shockwaves through football's international transfer market, can be that surprised.

The regular meetings Fifa president Gianni Infantino has had with the Saudi Crown Prince in recent years were also a sign of the growing influence the country enjoys at the very top of the game.

And yet, despite the staggering level of Saudi ambition in sport, the idea of a World Cup in the kingdom will still shock many.

Now that the country is all but guaranteed to be staging the tournament in 11 years' time, it has the potential to be even more controversial than Qatar's hosting last year; with concerns ranging from human rights issues, and Fifa's handling of the bidding process, to the calendar disruption and impact on player welfare due to what is likely to be another winter World Cup because of extreme summer temperatures.

In fact, with an expanded 48-team format, the level of disruption could be even greater than for Qatar 2022, along with the requirement for significant infrastructure construction, intensifying sustainability concerns.

Many critics will see this as the ultimate expression of 'sportswashing' - a form of soft power - by the biggest exporter of oil in the world - a country where there are grave concerns over women's rights abuses, the criminalisation of homosexuality, the restriction of free speech, the continued use of the death penalty, the 2018 murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, and scrutiny over the country's involvement in the conflict in Yemen.

The Saudi authorities deny this, insisting their bid is designed to help modernise the country, to grow the game, inspire a youthful population, boost tourism, diversify the economy before the arrival of a post-oil world, and be a unifying force.

They point to the progress made in women's football for instance, and argue this is a natural next step after

successfully hosting many events across multiple sports, establishing the Saudi Pro League as a footballing force, purchasing Newcastle United, and preparing to stage the Club World Cup this winter, along with the AFC Asian Cup in 2027.

However, while there is more footballing heritage in Saudi Arabia than in Qatar, attendances at most of the Pro League clubs have actually fallen this season.

But whatever the true motive of Saudi Arabia's rulers, its emergence as the one bidder for 2034 will intensify scrutiny on Fifa's processes and judgement, with some observers voicing concerns that this outcome had almost been engineered as an effective fait accompli in a deal lacking transparency and accountability.

First there was Fifa's shock announcement earlier this month, bringing forward the bidding process for 2034 by three years when decreeing that the host country must come from either Asia or Oceania, and giving just 26 days for bids to be declared.

This followed its approval of the 2030 tournament being given jointly to the continents of Europe, Africa and South America, despite the dismay of environmental campaigners, thereby ruling them out of bidding for 2034 under Fifa's rotation policy.

Then - within minutes - came the Saudis' formal announcement of their bid, swiftly followed by the backing of the Asian Football Confederation.

Mohammed bin Salman, far right, during the Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022

In another move seen by some as being designed to help the Saudis, Fifa then relaxed its rules around the construction of new stadiums, with bidders now needing just four established venues (rather than the current seven).

The fact that Australia has now decided not to bid will also raise concerns that they knew taking on the Saudis would have been futile.

Fifa - if it had held a news conference and taken questions following its announcement earlier this month - would probably have suggested that this method of 'anointing' hosts via uncontested

bids - is preferable to the past, when years-long contests between many countries were vulnerable to the threat of vote-swapping, bribery and corruption.

But the way that this process has seemed to pave the way for the Saudis will leave many uneasy.

In March, the World Leagues Forum - which represents domestic leagues around the world - expressed its "concern" over what it claimed was Fifa's lack of consultation over the global football calendar including expanding the 2026 men's World Cup and the new versions of the Club World Cup.

Its mood - along with that of other stakeholders such as player and fan representatives - is unlikely to have been improved by the way decisions have been taken since.

Human Rights Watch has also accused Fifa of ignoring its own rules, saying: "The possibility that Fifa could award Saudi Arabia the 2034 World Cup despite its appalling human rights record and closed door to any monitoring exposes Fifa's commitments to human rights as a sham."

Fifa has declined to comment, but privately insists that human rights remain an integral part of the bidding process. Certainly Saudi Arabia will be far from the only controversial host of a sporting mega-event in recent years.

Same-sex relationships are illegal in 2030 World Cup co-hosts Morocco, as they are in Qatar of course, as well as in Saudi Arabia. Gay fans who said they did not feel safe going to the last World Cup may now feel they cannot attend two more either. Will there be player protests of the kind seen in Qatar, when the Germany team showed their support for the LGBTQ+ community? Could some countries even consider boycotting the event?

And what is clear is that this underlines the extraordinary shift in sporting power towards the Middle East. Up until relatively recently, the idea of tiny Qatar and neighbouring Saudi Arabia hosting two World Cups within the space of just 12 years would have been inconceivable to most. But given these countries' wealth and Fifa's approach under president Gianni Infantino, anything now seems possible.

The Saudis, meanwhile, will continue to defend themselves against what they see as hypocrisy, pointing to the trade that many Western countries seem happy to do with them, and hinting at ignorance, as suggested recently by boxer Tyson Fury after he fought in Riyadh, saying that people should not judge the kingdom before visiting it themselves.

The authorities will draw comparisons with the way that Qatar, despite so much criticism, managed to stage a World Cup deemed by many who attended to be a success.

And others will argue that the media exposure accompanying the build-up to the World Cup could help

accelerate reforms - as suggested by Jordan Henderson recently when responding to the intense criticism over his move to the Saudi Pro League.

Many others, however, will fear such a view is unrealistic, and will be dismayed at the prospect of Saudi Arabia 2034, concluding that this represents the the domination of money, and continued sidelining of human rights, and the wishes of many fans, as important considerations when the hosting of such events is determined.

The Saudi authorities and Fifa now have 11 years to try to convince the doubters, but the scrutiny is highly unlikely to fade.



Ronaldo

SUNDAY SPORTS



Plateau United

NPFL: P/Utdbeat Katsina United 1-0

By ANDRE BISYIT

AS the Nigeria Professional Football League (NPFL) enters its day six games, Plateau United Football Club of Jos overpowered visiting Katsina United Football Club with a lone goal, at the Zaria Road Stadium in Jos on Wednesday. Although Plateau United played well in the first stanza which yielded the only goal of the game.

Commenting after the encounter, MbwasMangut, Technical Adviser of Plateau United Football Club of Jos opined that the red card given to one of his players has negatively affected his boys during the showdown.

"The red card given to my player was a big setback to us, because before the card we're trying to make different

substitution and style of play and the red card came, but we had no option than to come out with a counter in order to absolve pressure.

"From the beginning of the game we started not too badly, we created chances but couldn't utilize most of it. You saw how the second stanza was, we had to come out with a counter in order to keep the shape of the game. But we are happy we maintained the score line and we are still going to work more to enable us perfect our scoring ability.

"We are working with the players we registered, the window is closed and if they can't improve then when the window is open we have to look for alternative," he said.

Coach Mbwas further disclosed that they are going

to Uyo for their next game with a different approach.

"We'll have a different approach in Uyo. Seven of our players were out because of injuries and today another one is out with a red card, but we'll ensure we utilize what we have on ground to enable us emerge victorious," he ended.

Also, Bolus, Technical Adviser, Katsina United Football Club said that football entail winning and losing.

"In football there must be three results, either to win, lose or draw. We have a very bad match today, our pattern didn't work for us, but we'll go back home and come to the drawing board in order correct the mistakes, because I believe my team is one of the best in this league," concluded.

SPORTING Lagos's wait for a first away win this season continues after they fell to a midweek defeat at the Kwara State stadium to Kwara United, Soccernet.ng reports.

With five minutes to half-time, Kwara United's goalkeeper, Adeyinka Adewale, denied Alukwu a chance to bag a brace with a great save, before the referee pointed to the penalty spot at the other end.

A corner kick fell kindly to the feet of a Kwara midfielder just outside the box, and he whipped the ball into the box, only to hit Emmanuel Odafi's shoulder, and the referee wasted no time in pointing to the penalty spot.

The Sporting players put up a protest as they thought the referee got the decision wrong, but the decision wasn't changed, leaving Ekeh Isaiah to score the equalizer from the spot-kick and allow the home side to go into the half-time break with a level scoreline. Junior Lokosa was taken off at

NPFL: Alukwu scores noisy Lagosians fall to defeat

half-time and about twenty minutes into the second half, Alukwu was withdrawn, and Kwara United continued to increase the pressure.

Five minutes to the end of the game, the home side got a free kick on the edge of the box, and was sent it before the delivery fell kindly to

Ifeanyi Odimegwa, who placed the ball into the bottom of Christian Nwoke's arm to secure the win for the home side.

The noisy Lagosians have now won two games, drawn two games, and lost two games in their debut NPFL season.



Sporting Lagos won the maiden edition of the Naija Super 8 tournament

Olympic qualifiers: Nigeria face tough third-round hurdles

THE second-round fixtures of the 2024 CAF Women's Olympic qualifying tournament have been concluded, with eight teams progressing to the third round.

Nigeria defeated Ethiopia 5-1 on aggregate to book a date with Cameroon for a spot in the fourth round.

The Super Falcons held the Ethiopians to a 1-1 draw in Addis Ababa, but the nine-time African champions soared to a crushing 4-0 triumph in Abuja to send Lucy back home empty-

handed.

Cameroon were close to being eliminated after they lost 1-0 to Uganda in the first leg of their second-round clash.

But the Lionesses pulled off a stunning 3-0 win (after extra time) in Douala to complete an impressive comeback and set up a tie with Nigeria.

Unlike Cameroon, Ghana had it easy against Benin after claiming a 5-0 aggregate victory.

The Black Queens secured a 0-3 away win in Cotonou before cruising to a 2-0 victory in the return leg at the Accra Sports Stadium.

Zambia had little to do to qualify, though, as they claimed a walkover win over Mali after the Malians withdrew from the tournament.

Tunisia also made it to the third round on the same basis following the withdrawal of Ivory Coast.

Zambia will have their hands full in the third round as they are scheduled to trade tackles with Ghana.

Namibia were, however, no match on the pitch for

Morocco as the Atlas Lionesses secured two 2-0 wins home and away to claim a 4-0 aggregate triumph.

Tunisia's true mettle will be tested by 2022 WAFCON finalists Morocco in what is expected to be a thrilling North African derby.

Botswana, with a FIFA ranking of 150, were dumped out of the tournament by 152-ranked Tanzania.

Tanzania took huge confidence from their 2-0 victory in Dar es Salaam and completed the job with a hard-fought 0-1 win at the Botswana National Stadium in Gaborone.

South Africa claimed a 3-1 aggregate win over DR Congo, with much of the credit going the way of star forward Thembi Kgatlang.

Kgatlang scored the crucial equaliser in their 1-1 first-leg draw in Kinshasa, and the former Atlético Madrid striker grabbed the brace that lifted the reigning African champions to a 2-0 win in Johannesburg.

South Africa will be favourites to advance to the fourth round when they face Tanzania, the lowest-ranked team left in the tournament.

Pinnick sues Davido, obtains interim order against him

THE former President of the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF), Amaju Pinnick, has taken legal action against afrobeats musician Davido Adeleke, popularly known as Davido, accusing the artist of cyberbullying and defamation of character.

Mr Pinnick said Davido made incendiary posts against him on social media in October, and that since then his life and that of his immediate family have been in grave danger and threat of physical bodily harm, injury and attacks.

The lawsuits followed altercations between the artist and Mr Pinnick in October after the musician failed to show up for an event he was paid to perform.

An investigation by PREMIUM TIMES revealed how Davido's company signed a performance agreement with BrownHill Event Inc, owned by Mr Pinnick, on 30

March 2023, committing the musician to performing in Warri on 6 October.

The contract was signed by the musician's agent, Soso Soberekon, indicating the singer would perform for at least "55 or 60 minutes at the event." Victor Wokocha endorsed the agreement for BrownHill, while a certain Cecil Bekederemo signed as a witness.

However, the 30-year-old musician was absent from the Warri event because he fixed another show in Australia (Melbourne) on the same day, 6 October.

After failing to attend the Warri show, Mr Pinnick addressed and apologised to the event attendees in Warri, explaining to them that all contractual obligations and payments to secure the attendance of the artist were met but he still failed to show up.

Not long after, Davido took to the social media handles of Instagram, Snapchat and X (formerly known as Twitter) to post several posts reacting to Mr Pinnick.

In one post on Instagram, Davido said: "If I am returning any money, I will return it to any football charity organisation. In Fact, I will double it. Mr Dream Crusher imagine how many Nigerian footballers have had their dreams crushed because a person wants to live for Ikoyi by force," he said, allegedly referring to Mr Pinnick, who served as the president of NFF for eight years.

In another post, the musician

responded to a video saying, "The man that dropped from the RR is Amaju Pinnick. He was NFF president for just eight years. He was charged for allegedly misappropriating \$8.4 million paid by FIFA to NFF. I won't mention allegations of unpaid allowances by players when he was the president. Let's play a game."

Mr Pinnick told a high court that these statements by Davido implied that the "former NFF president is a thief and is only able to live in Ikoyi because he crushed the dreams of several Nigerian footballers."

"These defamatory publications and posts made by the artist when accorded their ordinary meaning portray me as a person deficient in character and integrity but also imbued with deceit, dishonesty, immoral, and fraudulent in the eyes of the right thinking members of the society," he added.

The former NFF president went on to say due to the wide influence Davido has on social media, the singer has now subjected him to all forms of "cyberbullying, stalking, and harassment since the defamatory and incendiary posts."

Mr Pinnick added that the singer posted the statements with the "aim of lowering the esteem of his person in the eyes of ordinary persons and generally bringing him to ridicule, derision and opprobrium."

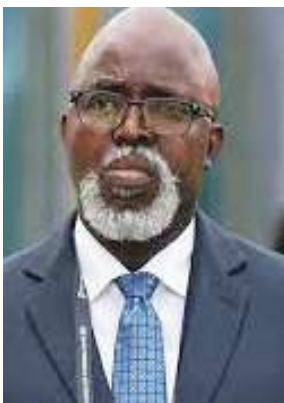
In court documents seen by

PREMIUM TIMES, Mr Pinnick told the court that sometime in early 2023, Davido approached him to engage his services for the 19th edition of the "Warri Again" event that was held on 6th October 2023.

Mr Pinnick said he was hesitant to "engage the service of Davido because the musician had disappointed him in 2014 and 2019 editions of the "Warri Again" where the singer didn't show up to perform after he had been paid for the events and he was compelled to make refunds thereafter."



Falcons



Pinnick

SUNDAY SPORTS

Djokovic wins, Medvedev reacts to boos after loss

NOVAK Djokovic began his bid for a record-extending seventh Paris Masters title with a fluent display in his first singles match in over six weeks.

BBC SPORT said that, Serbia's Djokovic, who had not played since a Davis Cup match on 15 September, won 6-3 6-2 against Argentina's Tomas Martin Etcheverry.

The 24-time major champion will face Tallon Griekspoor in the last 16.

Third seed Daniil Medvedev appeared to raise his middle finger to the crowd after he lost to Grigor Dimitrov.

Medvedev, 27, reacted to being booed by the French fans having eventually buckled against the Bulgarian, who took his seventh match point to clinch a 6-3 6-7 (4-7) 7-6 (7-2) win.

The jeers towards Medvedev started when he flung his racquet in the second set and he refused to continue until the boos stopped, leading to a time violation from umpire Renaud Lichtenstein and a subsequent argument.

Asked about the gesture as he walked off court, the former world number one said: "I just checked my nails, it's nothing more than that. Why would I do that to this beautiful crowd in Paris?"

The Russian's defeat means the two leading seeds behind Djokovic are already out, with Spanish second seed Carlos Alcaraz suffering a shock exit against 45th-ranked Roman Safiullin on Tuesday.

Djokovic, 36, further boosted his chances of finishing above Alcaraz as the year-end number one with his winning return to the tour.

Having not played a tour-level singles match since lifting the US Open title on 10 September, Djokovic looked sharp throughout against world number 31 Etcheverry.

Djokovic, showing his usual precise hitting and athleticism, won three of seven break points and saved the only one he faced.

Italian fourth seed Jannik Sinner battled back to beat American Mackenzie McDonald in a match which finished at 02:37 local time.

Sinner, who triumphed at last week's Vienna Open, lost a first-set tie-break but progressed 6-7 (6-8) 7-5 6-1 after edging the second and closing out victory by winning five successive games.

The 22-year-old is due back on court on Thursday against Australian Alex de Minaur in the fourth match of the day session.

"I lost the first set in a bad way and I'm still getting used to the conditions, but I'm happy about the win and to be in the next round," Sinner said.

"It was tough going on court after midnight, but it was nice to still have some crowd watching."

Danish sixth seed Holger Rune, who beat Djokovic in last year's final, started his title defence with a 6-4 6-2 win over Austria's Dominic Thiem.



Djokovic

Rune also moved a step closer to securing his place at the season-ending ATP Finals in Turin, as did Greek seventh seed Stefanos Tsitsipas with an impressive win over Canada's Felix Auger-Aliassime.

Serving well under pressure to save six of seven break points, 25-year-old Tsitsipas earned a 6-3 7-6 (7-4) success to reach the last 16.

Tsitsipas will next play German 10th seed Alexander Zverev, who it was reported on Tuesday has been charged with assaulting an ex-girlfriend.

Zverev, who is aiming to book his spot in Turin, saved 11 break points before France's Ugo Humbert took his next two chances to level the match and move a break up in the decider.

But 26-year-old Zverev fought back to seal a 6-4 6-7 (3-7) 7-6 (7-5) win after three hours and 28 minutes.

Poland's Hubert Hurkacz became the first man since 2019 to hit 1,000 aces in a single season as he beat Spain's Roberto Bautista Agut

6-3 6-2. Australia's De Minaur progressed by beating Serbia's Dusan Lajovic 4-6 6-4 6-4 in what was the 200th win of his career.

Murray misses out on Turin & Skupski splits with Koolhof

British doubles player Jamie Murray saw his hopes of reaching the ATP Finals ended by a second-round defeat in Paris.

Murray, 37, and New Zealand's Michael Venus, who are ninth in the race with the top eight qualifying for Turin, lost 6-4 6-3 to Mexico's Santiago Gonzalez and France's Edouard Roger-Vasselin.

Meanwhile, Britain's world number three Neal Skupski is looking for a new partner for the 2024 season after Dutchman Wesley Koolhof ended their successful partnership.

The pair won the Wimbledon title earlier this year and could still finish the season as the world's best pair, but Koolhof has decided to team up again with his former partner Nikola Pietrangeli of Croatia.

Woods, McIlroy golf league launches in January

GOLF's latest venture - an indoor "high-tech league" launched by Tiger Woods and Rory McIlroy and backed by fellow sporting superstars - will get under way on Tuesday, 9 January 2024.

BBC SPORT said that, fifteen of the current world's top 20 are among the 24 PGA Tour players to have signed for the inaugural season.

All events will be televised and played at a purpose-built venue in Florida.

Serena and Venus Williams, Stephen Curry and Liverpool owners the Fenway Sports Group are among the backers.

While many details are still to be finalised - such as the prize money on offer, the name and owner of one of the six teams,

or which team each golfer will play for - here's what we do know.

The league - called TGL - will be run by TMRW Sports, the technology-focused sports company launched by Woods and McIlroy in August 2022.

It will feature six teams of four players, playing each other once in a league format. Only three of the four players will compete in any one event.

Five teams have been announced so far, with names linked to US cities in Atlanta, Boston, Los Angeles, New York and San Francisco.

NBA star Curry is involved with the San Francisco set-up, while tennis greats Serena Williams and sister Venus are among those providing support for the LA team. The Fenway Sports Group is



Woods and McIlroy

THE women's 20 kilometre race walk course at the Pan American Games was found to be several kilometres short after a world record had been set.

BBC SPORT said that, the results were subsequently annulled after Peru's world champion Kimberly Garcia won in one hour 12 minutes 26 seconds in Santiago, Chile.

Officials realised the error after Garcia obliterated the world record of 1:23.49 set by China's Jiayu Yang.

In addition to medals, athletes also missed out on Olympic ranking points.

After the completion of the women's event, in which Ecuador's Glenda Morejon took silver and Peru's Evelyn Inga bronze, officials remeasured the course - believed to be about 3km short - and corrected the mistake before the men's 50km event.

"I have never seen anything like that before," said Canada's Olympic 50km bronze medalist Evan Dunfee, whose race was delayed by more than an hour.

Women's 20km race walk world record annulled



Glenda Morejon (left) and Peru athletes Kimberly Garcia (middle) and Evelyn Carla Inga (right) were awarded their medals before the results were declared void

American Athletics Association".

"We deeply regret the inconvenience for the athletes, their coaches, the public and the attending press, but this situation cannot be attributed to the organising committee," it added.

The Santiago Organising Committee said the mistake was "the exclusive responsibility of the Pan American Athletics Association".

"For some of those women that's just really disappointing because it is an opportunity lost so I feel gutted for them."

WTA Finals: Swiatek beats Gauff in group stage

POLISH second seed Iga Swiatek moved within touching distance of the WTA Finals last four after a confident win over US Open champion Coco Gauff.

BBC SPORT said that, the four-time major champion Swiatek, 22, won 6-0 7-5 in a windy Cancun and has now won both of her group matches.

Tunisia's Ons Jabeur beat seventh seed Marketa Vondrousova 6-4 6-3.

Jabeur, who lost to the Czech in this year's Wimbledon final, joins Gauff with one win and one loss and plays Swiatek in her final group match.

The pair last met in the US Open final, when Swiatek triumphed.

"Iga is a smart person and she knows how to adapt to these conditions," said Jabeur.

"I'm going to try to enjoy this game, try to play freely, try to let go some of the anger that I have. It's definitely not going to be an easy match, but I will try my best."

Both players had seven break points in a tight opening set but it was Jabeur who held out after breaking for a second time for a 3-2 lead.

And, after an exchange of breaks early in set two, Jabeur broke to love in the seventh game before clinching victory on Vondrousova's serve two game later.

Vondrousova, despite losing both of her matches, could still yet qualify with victory over Gauff in her final match.

Gauff, 19, served for the second set at 5-4 but hit four double faults in a row to gift the break back to Swiatek.

Third seed Gauff, who can still qualify after thrashing Jabeur, won one more point as Swiatek sealed victory.

"Coco is the kind of player who doesn't give up so I knew it wouldn't be easy," said Swiatek, who is aiming to regain her world number one ranking from Aryna Sabalenka at the season-ending event.

"The key is to stay focused on yourself. The conditions at the end were tricky so I was happy I could just survive and get through."

"You can't predict which way the wind will go, it was swirling. It is uneasy but there is no reason to overthink it, you just have to adjust."

On Tuesday, American Jessica Pegula beat top seed Sabalenka in the other group to become the first player to reach the semi-finals.

Belarus' Sabalenka plays Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina on Thursday to determine the second player to qualify from the group.

The Finals have been marred by the players criticising the court conditions at the venue, where the construction of the surface was only completed in the days before the tournament started on Sunday.



Gauff earned her first career win over Swiatek in Cincinnati in August, but has now lost nine of their 10 meetings

SUNDAY SPORTS

Taraba estimates N34b for stadium overhaul

From
VICTOR GAI, Jalingo

THE Taraba State Government has estimated the sum of N34 billion for a complete rehabilitation of the ultra modern Jolly Nyame Stadium.

The dilapidated state of the 16 year old complex which was as a result of neglect by successive administrations in the state, had been the subject of media scrutiny for some time now.

The Commissioner of Youth and Sports Development, Joseph Joshua, while speaking with journalists at the sidelines of the National Beach Volleyball Star Tour Phase Two in Jalingo, disclosed that the original contractors had given an estimate of N34 billion for a complete rehabilitation of the facility.

"A month ago, I came here with the people who built the stadium. We went round the stadium. We are supposed to have an executive meeting this morning where I would present the cost for the renovation of the stadium to the Executive Council for approval for us to commence renovation. I am assuring you, by the special grace of God, we would fix this stadium to be one of the best in the country.

"The swimming pool is not of the Olympic standard. We want to construct an Olympic size swimming pool. And we are going to upgrade the main bowl to a FIFA certified pitch. We would put a roof where spectators can sit and watch football comfortably. His Excellency asked us to upgrade the hotel to a three star standard

"They have given us a bill of N34 billion to renovate the



Kefas

entire sports complex, not just the football pitch," he disclosed.

The Commissioner further said when the current government came on board, sports was at its lowest ebb and that they were trying to "revive sports in the state".

He regretted the underperformance of team Taraba at the recent National Sports Festival, saying it was due to the lack of readiness of the state.

Speaking on the potentials of sports in Taraba, the North East Zonal Representative, Nigeria Volley Ball Federation (NVBF), DCP Stephen Hasso (rtd), said Taraba had all the facilities to hold major tournaments and urged the government to request for hosting rights of the next National Sports Festival.

"Taraba State has all the facilities for all the sports. I would suggest to the Taraba government, if they can request to host the National Sports Festival because they have all the facilities.

Everything they need, they have it here," he noted.

Meanwhile, Governor Agbu Kefas was presented with an award by the NVBF. The award was presented to the governor by the President, Nigeria Volleyball Federation, Engr. Musa Nimrod.

The President, who was represented by DCP Stephen Hasso (rtd), said the award was in recognition of the governor's support for the game of volleyball.

"We have gone to other places and it was not easy for us to be sponsored. Taraba has become a volleyball state for us because two years ago, we had a championship for division two and that was the first. This year again we asked for beach volleyball," he stated.

Equally speaking, the governor who was represented by the Sports Commissioner, Joseph Joshua, thanked the NVBF for choosing Taraba to host the tournament and also appreciated them for the award given to the

THE Nigerian Professional Football League (NPFL) matches are set to broadcast live again after seven years.

The leadership of the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) sealed the deal with Startimes – a cable television – on Thursday, November 2.

The new arrangement follows a failed broadcast deal between the then ShehuDikko-led League Management Company (LMC) and Super Sports, another cable television, in 2017.

The failed deal lasted for two years instead of five.

A new five-year deal was signed in Abuja on Thursday by NFF and Startimes.

It is worth N1.06 billion in its first year, the current 2023/24 season, while the following seasons attract increments.

The 2024/25 season will see the deal rise to N1.1 billion. It will be N1.150 billion in the 2025/26 season. The deal grows to N1.2bn in the 2026/27 season while it jumps further to N1.25 billion in the 2027/28 season.

The agreement takes effect this weekend as some NPFL matches will be broadcast on Saturday, November 18.

Expressing his administration's commitment to return the football league to TV, the NFF president, Ibrahim Musa Gusau, who led the NFF board members, pledged to make sure that the Nigerian league is beamed across the globe and expose Nigerian players to the world.

"It was a promise we made

Nigeria's top flight matches set to return on TV, 7yrs after



Action in the NPFL where Heartland and Kano Pillars were fined for fans encroachment

when we came on board to beam football games on our screen, and today, we are telling Nigerians that we have achieved that. We started with live streaming, which will still go on.

"It was our intention to start this before the league kicked off, but we wanted to do a thorough job as we wanted to do things the right way. Today, we are here, and tomorrow, we may not be here. With that, we want to leave a lasting legacy for those that will come after us," he said.

The NPFL board chairman, GbengaElegbeleye, lauded the effort to return the league to TV.

"Today is a major step to bring football to the homes of Nigerians. It has been months of painstaking efforts to

ensure we bring our football to the TV. We look forward to exciting times in our league. Good times are back in the NPFL," he said.

The Chief Executive Officer, CEO StarTimes, Joshua Wang, promised the company would provide high-quality games to Nigerians.

"We have been in Nigeria for several years, and we know Nigerians are passionate about football. We give equal opportunities to everyone, and this has led to partnerships with several football federations, such as Rwanda, Tanzania and Ghana. We are glad to have secured exclusive rights for five years, and we remain committed to developing football in Nigeria," he said.

Garcia: Recuperating Osimhen will return next week

NAPOLI head coach Rudi Garcia has informed that injured Victor Osimhen will return

next week, after he provided an update on the fitness of the star striker, BSNSports.com.ng

reports.

For those not aware, Osimhen has not featured in any of Napoli's last three fixtures across all competitions, owing to a hamstring injury he picked up whilst on international duty last month.

Osimhen injured himself during the Super Eagles 2-2 draw against the Green Falcons of Saudi Arabia in Portugal.

The expectation was that the striker would be out for about a month.

The Partenopei, to their credit, have notched two wins and a draw across this stretch, including, most recently, a potentially crucial comeback point at home to AC Milan.

Nevertheless, though, all associated with Rudi Garcia's troops were no doubt desperate for some positive news regarding the wellbeing of the club's talismanic goalscorer.

And, on Friday, precisely that has been forthcoming.

Speaking in a press conference ahead of his side's Serie A showdown with Salernitana on Saturday, Napoli boss Garcia was asked for the latest on Osimhen's recovery.

And though the 24-year-old will not be available for selection at the StadioArechi, Garcia confirmed that he expects to have Osimhen at his disposal in short order:

"The doctors manage and guarantee me that he is following the program. He will be with us next week."

Heartland captain apologises for poor results

HEARTLAND FC have endured a difficult start to the season on their return to the Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) with no win in five games.

The club famously touted as the Naze Millionaires have drawn all two home games played so far and lost two on the road while plucking a draw at Akure against Sunshine Stars.

And ahead their Matchday 6 fixture at home to former champions, Rivers United, the

captain, NnaemekaAnyanwu has the support of their solicited fans and apologised for their uninspiring performance so far.

"We are sorry about our not-too-good start to the season. We are ready to make amends and that will start with our game against Rivers United," pleaded Anyanwu who has had stints at former champions, Enyimba and Abia Warriors.

He said the players will benefit from the solid backing of the fans at this difficult time to turn their fortunes.

"It is this time that we need our fans and supporters behind us. We will continue to work hard to get over our difficulties and challenges.

"We can do it if we do away with some of the errors we have made during games and are also more forceful in attack", Anyanwu pledged.

He noted that their situation calls for understanding and patience from the fans, urging them to come out in numbers to

the stadium.

"Our fans need to be patient with us. We shall get it right. Let them come to Dan Anyiam Stadium, Owerri to cheer us to victory. It is what we need at this point," he told the club media.

Kano Pillars was on Monday fined ₦1 million for their supporters' encroachment onto the field of play during the Matchday 4 fixture against Rivers United.

In another development, Heartland of Owerri were issued a stern warning to curb restive acts of their supporters and advised to organise reorientation for the supporters to inculcate in them the spirit of fair play.

The Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) reached the respective decisions conveyed in separate Summary Jurisdiction notices announced on Monday.

Kano Pillars supporters were found to have jumped the barriers onto the field of play to celebrate their 92nd minute goal in the encounter at the SaniAbacha Stadium.

After reviewing reports from the match officials, the NPFL charged the club with a breach of Rule B13.18. The club was consequently ordered to pay





AFCON: Absence of Nigerian referees, wake-up call

FOOTBALL has always been a unifying force in Nigeria, captivating the hearts and minds of millions of fans across the nation.

Nigerian football has produced some of the continent's most talented players and has a rich history in African football.

However, recent developments in the Nigeria Professional Football League (NPFL) have cast a shadow over Nigeria's involvement in the sport, particularly with the omission of Nigerian referees from officiating in the upcoming AFCON 2024.

This decision raises important questions about the implications for Nigerian football and its future.

Nigerian referees have a long and illustrious history in African and international football. They have consistently showcased their competence, knowledge, and professionalism on the field of play.

Nigerian referees have officiated at various levels of the game, from local leagues to international competitions. Their contributions to the development and promotion of African football cannot be understated.

However, Nigeria's omission from the 69 referee's member list by AFCON should give Nigerians a reason for concern.

The omission of Nigerian referees from AFCON 2024 raises concerns about the lack of representation from one of Africa's football powerhouses.

Nigeria has a strong footballing tradition, and it is only natural that its referees should be part of the continental showcase.

Representation matters not only for national pride but also for the development of the sport within the country.

Nigerian referees serve as role models for aspiring officials, and their presence at a prestigious tournament like AFCON is crucial in inspiring the next generation of talent.

Officiating at international tournaments like AFCON provides Nigerian referees with invaluable experience and exposure to different styles of play and officiating standards.

This exposure is essential for their growth and development as referees. It helps them refine their skills and adapt to the ever-evolving nature of the game.

The omission from AFCON 2024 denies Nigerian referees this chance to further enhance their capabilities, which could ultimately hurt the quality of refereeing within the Nigerian leagues.

The exclusion of Nigerian referees from AFCON 2024 has far-reaching implications for Nigerian football.

Firstly, it may lead to a



It is essential for football governing bodies to recognise the potential of Nigerian referees and ensure they have equal opportunities to officiate at top-level competitions.

perception that Nigerian referees are not up to the standards required for

Poor organisation bane of NPFL says Mikel

FORMER Super Eagles captain Mikel Obi has lamented the poor state of the Nigerian Premier Football League in comparison with the South African Premier Soccer League, PUNCH Sports Extra reports.

Mikel made this assertion during an interview with South African Soccer Laduma.

The South African Premier Soccer League, featuring 16 clubs competing from August to May annually, has secured its place as one of the top five leagues in Africa.

The league boasts one of the largest television rights deals with SuperSports, enabling it to generate an impressive \$72m in revenue each year.

According to Statista, as of September 2023, the market value of all the teams in the South African DSTV Premiership amounted to €158.14m.

Mamelodi Sundowns had the highest market value with approximately €30m, which represented around 19 per cent of the value of all teams in the DSTV Premiership. Orlando Pirates followed with

international competitions.

This could diminish the country's standing in the

roughly €20m, while Kaizer Chiefs ranked third with around €18m.

Mikel spent two of his teen years with Plateau United before he moved to Europe to begin his illustrious professional career.

The retired midfielder started his career in Europe with Lyn Oslo in 2004 before joining Chelsea, where he enjoyed 11 trophy-laden years.

In a video posted by Ghanaian journalist Sannie Daara, Mikel, who won the Africa Cup of Nations with the Super Eagles in 2013, pointed out the key factors that elevated the South African league's status.

"I think it's not the mentality; it's your organisation. Your organisation is better than our organisation (NPFL)," he said.

"If you look at the South African League, it is that good where a player doesn't have to go abroad to make ends meet to help his family.

"It is something we (Nigerian) have been crying out; we want to see our league better, and we know we can get there because

African football community and affect the trust and confidence in Nigerian

we have so much talent. We want to grow and improve the standard of our league. The facilities for these players to go and the younger ones who aspire to play in the Premier League.

"We have to create an environment where they feel comfortable to improve, and that is something they (South Africans) have, and that is pretty much the difference."



referees at home and abroad.

Secondly, it could potentially hinder Nigeria's football development. The absence of Nigerian referees from a major tournament means fewer opportunities for them to learn and grow, which could, in turn, affect the quality of officiating in domestic leagues.

Good refereeing is essential for a fair and competitive football environment, and any decline in this aspect could harm the sport's progress in Nigeria.

The omission of Nigerian referees from officiating in AFCON 2024 is a matter of concern for Nigerian football.

It is not just about representation; it's about the impact on the development, quality, and perception of football within the country.

It's time for Nigerian referees to put their acts together by placing priority on professionalism and building trust.

More often than not, Nigerian referees have proven their worth on the international stage, and their exclusion from this prestigious tournament may hinder their growth and the overall progress of the sport in Nigeria.

The Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) must ensure that going forward, the greatest footballing nation in Africa must have a representation at the AFCON.

The NFF must prioritise the welfare of referees so they

don't become vulnerable to corruption and other sharp practices.

This decision should serve as a wake-up call for all stakeholders in Nigerian football to invest in the development of referees and strive for greater representation in the future.

Meanwhile, Rebecca Welch will become the first woman referee to be involved in a Premier League game when she acts as fourth official for Saturday's game between Fulham and Manchester United at Craven Cottage.

Wendy Toms was the first woman assistant in the Premier League, from its inception, and was followed by Natalie Aspinall and Sian Massey-Ellis. Welch will be the first to take on one of the roles of a referee, with Massey-Ellis the assistant VAR for the game.

The 39-year-old has enjoyed a meteoric rise this year, in January becoming the first female to take charge of a Championship game, between Birmingham City and Preston North End.

Welch was then selected to referee at the Women's World Cup, appointed to three games including the round-of-16 match between Australia and Denmark. Her hopes of refereeing further games in the tournament were effectively ended by England reaching the final.

North Riding referee Welch was offered promotion to the EFL as an assistant referee in 2017, but opted to switch to being a referee and work her way up the men's game that way. She was officiating in the National League, the fifth tier of English football, by the 2018-19 season while also continuing in the women's game.

She took charge of the Women's FA Cup final in 2017 and 2020, and was promoted to UEFA's elite category of female referees in 2020, when she left her job as an administrator in the National Health Service.

In 2021, she progressed to become the first female to referee a professional game in England, as Port Vale beat Harrogate Town in League Two.

It marks a further step by PGMOL, the refereeing body in England, to increase diversity in the professional game. In January, Bhupinder Singh Gill became the first Sikh-Punjabi to act an assistant referee in the Premier League.

PGMOL has also fast-tracked promising referees who have shone in lower leagues through to the Premier League this season. Sam Barrott had refereed just 10 matches in the Championship before being elevated to the top flight last month at the age of 30. A former Halifax Town youth player, he was only promoted to the EFL in 2020.