

The NIGERIA & SUNDAY STANDARD newspapers hereby notify its esteemed customers that it will be off streets from 25th December to 8th January 2024 to carry out maintenance work on its machines so as to serve you better. However, the online version can be accessed at <https://nigerianstandard.ng>. We wish our esteemed customers a Merry Christmas and a fulfilling New Year. Signed: Management.

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Sunday Standard

TRUTH EXALTS A NATION

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Christmas: Families groan over high cost of living

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Christmas has from one generation to the other been one festive period that resonates in the hearts of millions of Christian faithful all over the world and even non-Christians alike. Its melodies of Christmas Carols all over the place rends the air waves while the mood vibrates in the different kinds of preparations which is geared towards making the day a special occasion. However, KENNETH DARENG examines how families are gearing up for a bleak yuletide over rising food prices, transportation fares and others.



I'll be fair to all Nigerians
- Tinubu



Don't hand over Port Harcourt refinery to cabal -NLC P2

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CAC and the need to delist companies

RECENTLY, the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) made clear its intention to delist over 91,000 companies from its registrar. This is sequel to the companies none compliance to their annual returns with the Commission.

IN a list published on its website, the Commission listed 9,43 companies for delisting (738 less than the 94,581 it initially published in August). This is still less than the initial 100,000 companies that the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) said it would remove in an earlier announcement.

EQUALLY too, in July, the Registrar-General and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Corporate Affairs Commission, (CAC), Garba Abubakar revealed that the Commission would delete 100,000 registered companies from its database for failing to file an annual return. AGAIN, in an update on December 5, the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) said, "further to its earlier notice of the commencement of striking off the names of Companies from the Register of Companies and published on August 2, 2023, the commission hereby notifies the General Public that the list of companies that have failed to comply with the provisions of the companies and Allied Matters Act CAMA 2020, to file up to date annual returns is now ready for publication in accordance with the provisions of Section 692 of the Act.

WE believe that the refusal to comply with the provisions of the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) by companies to submit the annual returns is the height of irresponsibility, insensitivity, gross misconduct and therefore deserve the needed, severe sanctions. Why should a company Refuse to submit its Annual Returns? What are these companies really hiding? Legalistically, these companies, have exhibited impunity to its climax.

IT is a known fact that at present Nigeria is in dire need of resources, hence, diversification has become the sing-song. Therefore, from agriculture to taxes, whether individual or corporate taxes, the government need every dime to execute its policies and for developmental purposes. Certainly, these erring companies are not oblivious of this fact.

INTERESTINGLY, there is a leeway for companies who dutifully Complied with the rule. According to the corporate Affairs Commission (CAC)", Companies who filed complete Annual Returns in response to the earlier publication are advised to confirm removal from its list of companies to be struck off. The updated list for publication is available on the Commission website".

WE believe that, the country cannot afford to be tolerant to the antics of certain interest, in the face of the present economic realities. Gone are the days when raediance on oil money ran the economy. Things have since changed, therefore, all revenue leakages must be blocked no matter the personality or personalities involved. The Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) must follow the enforcement of the law to its logical conclusion. Afterall, nobody is above the law. Simply!

Probe uncovers how \$6.3m was looted from CBN

Mr. Jim Obazee, the Special Investigator appointed by President Bola Tinubu to probe the management of the Central Bank of Nigeria, CBN, under the leadership of Godwin Emeziele has recommended the trial of former Secretary to the Government of the Federation, and 12 top executives of the bank for trial over fraudulent withdrawal of \$6.23million from the apex bank to allegedly pay foreign election observers.

According to the Special Investigator, the \$6.3 million was removed from the vaults of the Foreign Payments Office, Abuja Branch of the CBN as captured on CCTV between 7th February and 8th February 2023.

The Special Investigator said he viewed the CCTV footage of the removal of the cash done about two weeks before the 2023 presidential

election purportedly on the order of a letter dated 23rd January, 2023, with a signature mark, 'Muhammadu Buhari', which was sent to a government official with caption, 'Presidential Directive on Foreign Election Observer Missions'. This, the Investigator said was followed by another letter dated 26th January, 2023, with signature mark, directed to Mr. Godwin Emeziele, the Governor, Central Bank of Nigeria, for payment of the sum of \$6.23million as 'a contingent logistics advance... in line with Presidential directive and another follow-up letter dated 31st January, 2023, was sent to the Governor, Central Bank of Nigeria, requesting for approval to effect payment of the sum of \$6.23m.

The Special Investigator said the fraudulent withdrawal was uncovered on the 4th of December, when he issued a Request for Information to the management of

the CBN.

He accused the former SGF, and the top government officials of engaging in "forgery, concealment, conspiracy and fraud" over withdrawal of the funds.

According to the Special Investigator, an official of the CBN admitted in a written statement that he "acted in collaboration with, an Assistant Director in the Banking supervision Department of the Central Bank of Nigeria and some persons he is yet to identify, to conceive and carry out the act of stealing the sum of \$6.23million out of the vault of the Central Bank of Nigeria.

He said two top CBN officials are already in custody over the incident.

"There is therefore an appearance of concealment by officers who occupied some positions up to, and around the period 7 and 8th February, 2023."

Mr Obazee asked the government to prosecute directors, Deputy Directors, Assistant Director and Branch Controllers over the fraudulent cash withdrawal.

I'll be fair to all Nigerians - Tinubu

PRESIDENT Bola Tinubu says he will always be fair to all Nigerians and that his administration remains committed to advancing the unity of Nigeria, as well as ensuring the welfare and prosperity of all citizens.

Speaking at the Ansar-Ud-Deen Central Mosque in Surulere, Lagos, on Friday, the president said the economic reforms initiated by his government are aimed at establishing a robust and secure foundation for Nigerians today and for generations unborn.

President Tinubu, who joined the Muslim Ummah to observe Jumaat prayers marking the centennial anniversary of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria (ADS), commended the Society for its service to humanity, contributions to the propagation of the tenets of Islam, and efforts in uplifting the downtrodden.

He implored members of the Society to remain committed to their objectives of advancing the education of citizens, as well as promoting the moral and social development of the Muslim Ummah.

The president thanked the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society for their support during the elections, emphasising that their efforts serve as a motivation for his government to stay resolute in delivering good governance to the people.

"I thank the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society for its support during the elections. I do not take it for granted; rather, the support serves as a stimulus for us in government to remain focused," he said.

Reiterating his commitment to the welfare of all citizens, President Tinubu, who is on a brief Christmas holiday in Lagos, said the recent 50 per cent cut in inter-state land

transportation fares nationwide, and the payment of N-Power beneficiaries' backlog of allowances, among other reliefs, are all efforts aimed at alleviating the burden of Nigerians this festive season with much more to be expected in the new year.

We are committed to enthroning a better society for our citizens irrespective of ethnic, religious, or geographical differences. The various policies already in place are expected to bring great succour to our people. We know their pains, and we are addressing them holistically.

"It is instructive that Ansar-Ud-Deen has attained 100 years through a systemic strategy that maintains its mission and vision. This is a testimony to what focused planning can achieve in a society," the president said.

Don't hand over P'Harcourt refinery to cabal - NLC

THE Nigeria Labour Congress has warned against a possible takeover of the Port Harcourt Refinery by cabals of government.

The union also demanded an audit of the refinery and called on the Federal Government to purge the refinery of "elements" that led to its collapse in the first instance.

NLC Head of Information, Benson Upah, made this known in an interview with our correspondent in Abuja.

Our correspondent reports that the Federal Government on Thursday announced the "mechanical completion" and the "flare start-off" of the country's biggest crude refinery in

The Minister of state for Petroleum Resources (Oil), Heineken Lokpobiri, made the announcement during a media tour of the Port Harcourt refinery on Thursday.

"Just to announce to Nigerians the fulfilment of our pledge to bring on stream Phase One of the Port Harcourt refinery by the end of 2023 and the subsequent streaming of Phase Two in 2024. We happily announced the mechanical completion and the flare start-off on the 20th of December 2023," Lokpobiri said on Thursday.

The Port Harcourt Refinery comprises two units, with the old

plant having a refining capacity of 60,000 barrels per day and the new plant 150,000 bpd, both summing up to 210,000 bpd.

The facility shut down in March 2019 for the first phase of repair works after the government secured the service of Italy's Maire Tecnimont to handle the review of the refinery complex, with oil major, Eni, appointed as technical adviser.

Port Harcourt refinery begins operations NLC excited as Fubara approves N100,000 Christmas bonus for civil servants.

The minister explained that production of petroleum products at the refinery would commence after the Christmas break.

Commenting on the matter, NLC's Upah said, "Indeed, if it has commenced operation after countless rescheduling, it will be a plus for this government.

"As you graciously pointed out, we have over the years rooted for domestic refining for obvious advantages; cheaper products, multiplicity of products, jobs, product security/availability and more income.

"Some privileged Nigerians routinely sabotage our local refineries for their personal gains so they could be richer than our country makes Nigeria a paradise of crimes and sins with no redeeming qualities.




Ajaero

"While we at the Nigeria Labour Congress would like to commend the authorities for resumed operations, we would like to make the point that it is not enough to resume operations, the place must be purged of the people, habits and crimes that brought it to its knees in the first place.

"We must also warn against the implementation of devilish designs by the all-too-familiar cabal to start operations, collapse the refineries as inoperable to sell them off as scraps to themselves."


On his part, the National Deputy President of the Trade Union Congress, Tommy Etim, said, "I cannot confirm whether it is true until we visit the Port Harcourt refinery as agreed with the Federal Government."

On whether a date has been fixed for visitation, Etim said, "no date fixed yet.



With
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On Sunday

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"Christmas brings hope in the midst of hopelessness in a sinful world. The fact that Christ left his heavenly splendor to live with man on earth, even to the point of dying for the sins of mankind. What better sacrifice can this be? Truth is, over the years, the consequences of sin have multiplied. The world through man live with fear, oppression, tribalism, banditry and all manners of sins that leave us despondent".

CHRISTMAS will be celebrated the world over tomorrow, Monday, December 25, 2023. It is a yearly festival that Christians have been celebrating over 2000 years ago. How it is celebrated depends on the perception of those involved in the season of the festival.

If it is to be reviewed by individuals, it is possible to have as many ways they had celebrated Christmas before this year's. There are those who, for years have not had a better Christmas. It is the way their economy has been over the years.

There are others who depend largely on what they get from people to celebrate. In this category, there are many; and it must have taken only the grace of God enables them celebrate the birth of Jesus, we all have come to call Christmas.

That is why as stated by a servant of God recently, 'as we wrap ourselves in the warmth of friendship and family, let God's spirit of generosity illuminate our souls, much like the star that guided the wise men to a humble manger'.

As children, Christmas in the village was real fun without celebrating its significance. It meant a lot, what with the short khaki knickers with cross belt our parents struggled to get. Mind you, we didn't have shoes; yet, we found joy in what our parents gave us because that was what they could sincerely afford.

What gave us joy were the dances, food and all that life could give at that time. It was fun to celebrate it with your neighbours particularly if they were Muslims. In our case, because our parents spent a better part of their mission work in a community that was predominantly Muslim, sharing what we had was one of the best parts of the festival as it lasted.

Nothing gave us more joy than the impact Christmas played in our lives and those we live with. In those days, we thought eating and wearing new clothes were the essence of the yuletide, it took a long time before we got to know why the celebrant came to the world.

That experience may not be possible given the declining face of insecurity in our communities in the various states of the federation. The love that used to bind us together has evaporated long ago, living us estranged and not sure of what holds the people together. On a daily basis, we are the more suspicious of one another to the point that whatever we do together can only be cosmetic.

On this note, we must not forget that our humanity has since suffered irretrievable dislocation given the animosity that exist between sex, religious and indeed tribes across all divides. It is difficult to trust a neighbor these days as much as people we once shared living quarters together; they are considered enemies than those we shared our humanity together.

Is it possible to return to those

Christmas: Not as it used to be



good old days? While I agree that if we can and it is possible to return to those good old days, we must have a strong character to make it happen by encouraging ourselves to believe in our ability to change the course of our history.

That being the case, festivals which used to bring us together, by all intent and purposes have become less interesting and exciting as the young have lost confidence in what used to bring us together. The older people cannot bring the youth together as they (youths) are more committed to what can bring them fun than what was the common denominator that gave us peace.

One cannot blame them; they were born during some of the crisis ridden periods of our nation. They may have only read or heard of it told as history that there was once a country whose people used to be bound as a united people; even if it was cosmetic in character and undertaking, there are lessons to be taken from this development in more ways than one. That history for me is that, when we take a look backwards, it is possible that non among us who have experienced those good old days would not wish they return for the younger generation to face their future.

A lot has changed, but more will continue to sharpen the course of the festival in the years to come either by what we do or share. What it means is that we all need peace and trust to make things take place for our good in the years ahead.

We have repeatedly heard leaders reiterate the fact that without peace, development cannot take place. There is no doubt about this truism, except that in our quest to survive in our communities, there are lots of those who do not share the need for our togetherness. As such, they engage in all manners of atrocities including banditry to ensure that peace eludes us for their acts to succeed.

It is the reason that Plateau State

as well as others have lived in darkness by virtue of their attacks on communities for years that we cannot experience the joy of the peace of Christmas. The sovereignty of God has been enough for all of us. The fact that they keep attacking the state and others, God has not allowed them to consume the land.

Tried as they have to annihilate and take over some communities, they have not succeeded. For this reason and many more, the joy of Christmas cannot leave us. For this also, I am aware that Christians have continued to organize several activities that keep their zeal burning while receiving blessings from all those fronts of activities. Some take a whole dancing going from one village to another, while others organize spiritual activities in their churches.

Take for instance, the yearly Global Flame International Conference which started sometime in the 90s. The steam has not died; rather, it has continued to expand and made positive impact on the lives of those who attend. Speakers after another from Nigeria and outside the shores of the land have played their parts during the conference which often starts on December 25 until the cross over night.

Be that as it may, those who have attended one of its editions or even all, have one testimony or another to tell. God has continued to use the Set Man, Apostle Danjuma Musa Gaksu for his purpose. Year after another, God's purpose for the nations have been revealed in the themes of the conference. Indeed, the fact that God has wrought one miracle after another is enough to make participants' number to keep increasing each year. This year's Phanerosis-The manifestation of the spirit, cannot be but refreshing; and you cannot be left out of it.

Have you ever wondered why a particular set of Christians would choose to dedicate the yuletide to coming to the church to listen to the word of God from various speakers

drawn from the body of Christ across the globe? Does it ever occur that their action over the years have the capacity to change a number of things that relate to the society?

The Global Flame Ministry, without mincing words has changed the course of celebrating Christmas in the land in such a fashion that is different from what others take Christmas for. For what the Ministry has done over the years, some of us have course to thank God for taking us to the various levels many have attained in life.

Starting from tomorrow, the Global Flame auditorium at Diye, Zarmaganda, Rayfield Jos wil.l for one week, receive visitors from all walks of life including sons and daughters of the Ministry. This also includes the church on the internet, whose membership runs into hundreds of thousands.

To know that Christmas appears bleak due largely to inflation that has made the cost of goods and services hard to come to acceptance. The Bureau of Statistics' new indices about inflation released recently are hard to bear, as they tell of how bleak the story is.

Since the removal of fuel subsidy in May 2023, the prices of food stuff, rent, school fees, in fact, transportation have reached alarming rate. Most families in Nigeria cannot afford to buy foodstuff or even pay their children's school fees as well as eat decent meals to survive.

Nothing can be as demeaning as to survive only by a tiny thread of mercy. Agreed, it is the mercy of God that has kept us going, in spite of the harsh economic challenges we face daily. Some of the things families go through can only be imagined. A trip to any market reveals a lot of what ordinary Nigerians go through on a daily basis.

What Nigerians are able to obtain from different markets tell of the struggles they go through to make

meaning out of the current situation. The fact that life has been hellish to most Nigerians signifies that a lot is needed to be done by the political leadership at Abuja and in the various state capitals.

Over the years, Nigeria has grappled with the issue of corruption. Governments have not been able to stem the tide of corruption. It appears that with each passing regime, the rate of corrupt tendencies have remained at the highest level. Other nations don't play lip service with corruption; they deal with what they have at hand before it over takes them.

In Nigeria, those who have been accused and or are facing trials at various stages for corrupt practices could easily be set free or have their prosecution delayed for reasons that could be used to prolong the case and their trial for purposes other than ordinarily.

The corruption fighting organizations have not been at their best to fight sleaze. If we give our time and sincere resolve to its eradication, the better we can be in our quest for our development.

Some of our leaders are immune to what majority of ordinary Nigerians go through. While life may be smiling on the political class in governance, if they ever go through a quarter of what ordinary Nigerians face, perhaps, something can be worked out to make the lives of ordinary country men and women a lot better.

No wonder, the Nigerian workers in the last couple of months have been on the streets to demand for increased wages. Some states have, in the last couple of months made pronouncements for measures to cushion the effects of the hardships occasioned by the fuel subsidy removal by the government of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu in May 2023.

Christmas brings hope in the midst of hopelessness in a sinful world. The fact that Christ left his heavenly splendor to live with man on earth, even to the point of dying for the sins of mankind. What better sacrifice can this be? Truth is, over the years, the consequences of sin have multiplied. The world through man live with fear, oppression, tribalism, banditry and all manners of sins that leave us despondent.

While we may regret the consequences of what we are going through, is it not refreshing that Christmas brings hope to this wicked world? The reason for the celebration of Christmas is to return on the path of hope through the instrumentality of the goodness of the love of God.

As you celebrate the yuletide, and despite the challenges of life, remember the King of life is always ready to give you hope in a hopeless world that we find ourselves. This Christmas will translate your situation into what you have always desired. Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year!



Ministering angels are real

ONE of the most ignored topics in the church is the ministry of angels. Yet the Bible has explicitly stated their existence, how swift and efficient they are when carrying out God's bidding. We are well aware of guardian angels but forget that our part is to engage them.

Psalms 91 promises us that God will give His angels charge of us to make sure we do not hit our legs on the rocks on the trail. One heritage of our protection we do not lay claim to. Even in these evil times, we choose to forget God's protection and make our own protection. We easily forget that the Word of God says that if the Lord does not build a house, the builders build but in vain. If the Lord does not guard a house, the sentries guard but in vain (Psalm 121).

In spite of our ignorance, God is merciful. He doesn't allow us to perish at all times as His Word in Hosea 4:6 implies (My people perish for lack of knowledge). Here are a few encounters with angels that may serve to wake us up from slumber.

A lady was sitting on their soak-away. Suddenly, her friend appeared and called her with much urgency to follow her. As she stood up to follow her friend, there was a loud crashing sound and the soak-away caked in. Shaken, she watched with amazement at what would have been her grave.

The loud crashing sound attracted family and neighbours. The lady recounted to them how her friend had saved her because she had summoned her just at the nick of time. But the friend surprised everyone when she said she didn't come anywhere close to that place at any time that day. In fact, she just arrived at the scene of the accident. It was then that those with the understanding realised that she was saved by an angel.

In my own case, after hearing so much about ministering angels, I began praying for an encounter but it didn't happen immediately. I was about to give birth and a man of God told me to anoint the whole house before leaving for the hospital. I was going to have a cesarean section, so I knew when I was leaving for the surgery but I never brought myself to do it.

On the day I was leaving for the hospital, at about noon, my husband called me and told me to get prepared because he was on his way. As I brought my last things out to the sitting room, I heard a persistent voice reminding me to anoint the house. So I took the anointing oil and went round anointing every nook and cranny.

Outside the house, at our window, there was a part that was recently broken by children who came to pluck cashew. A very sharp and large chunk was securely in place. It was not a threat because it was not shaking. As I anointed the window area, out of nowhere, the sharp chunk of glass was coming for my legs. I inhaled and automatically lifted up one leg to

reduce the damage that would be done. Eyes closed, I waited for the piercing of the glass or its shattering on the cemented floor but it never happened. Slowly, I opened my eyes and what I saw shook me to my bone marrow. That sharp large chunk was collected by an invisible person and neatly tucked inside the room.

God knows that if the angel had kept it on the window sill, I would explain it somehow as luck, so the angel collected what I saw going for my leg and kept it within the room. Something very impossible. I burst out crying because I knew that it could only be God. If the glass had succeeded to pierce my leg, I would have bled to death and the baby could have died too. But God came through for us.

Until we were forced to leave that house due to insecurity, I left the glass there as a testimony of God's faithfulness and I used that proof as a testimony to the existence of angels. Many marveled at how a falling glass could readily be snatched from outside the house and kept neatly and safely inside the house. Two opposite directions. Indeed, nothing is impossible with God.

A boy who was kidnapped sometime ago and released to find his way home, in truth, left for death, said for the days he was too weak to take care of himself, a man came and took care of him. He tendered his wounds and fed him until the day he was found by a good samaritan, a Fulani who finished up what the angel started. When he was finally reunited with his family, the mother said one of her prayer points with her prayer partner was for his angels to minister to him wherever he was.

A lady told her story thus: She had been married for some time without children and her marriage was beginning to head for the rocks. One day, on her way home, she passed a group of kids playing. As she passed, the one playing mother addressed her and she decided to play along. Handing her some flowers, she told her to make sure she takes it in a glass of water when she reaches home. She repeated it 3 times as the woman walked away saying: "Yes ma!"

She said when she reached home, when she wanted to ignore the little girl's instruction, the voice started re-echoing and told herself, it won't hurt to do as the girl said. So, she got a glass of water and poured the crushed flowers and drank it. Shortly afterwards, she took in. When she discovered that, she went back to where she met those kids but she was told no kids like that existed in that area. That was when she came to the realization that she had encountered angels. And God used them to wipe away her tears.

In the Bible, we see how God used an angel to destroy the enemies of his chosen people. Check out King Jehoshaphat of Judah's time in 2 Chronicles, King Hezekiah's time in Judah, etc. On these occasions, God fought for his people. They did not need to lift a finger.

All that qualifies you for angelic protection is to believe, engage them for the right things according to God's will. Note that you have your angels as surely as those working with Satan have their demons at their beck and call.

NEWS

WAEC to introduce CBT for WASSCE – HNO

THE West African Examinations Council (WAEC) says plans to introduce the Computer Based Test (CBT) mode in the administration of its examinations are at advanced stage.

The Head of National Office (HNO), Mr Patrick Areghan, gave the hint in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on Saturday in Lagos.

Areghan was speaking against the backdrop of notable achievements and advancements of the council under his watch, as he prepared to bow out of office on Oct. 1.

He would be bowing out after completing his three-year tenure.

Areghan said that introducing the CBT mode of administering some of the council's examination had been part of his vision for the body in the near future.

"We have already started something in terms of CBT examination. We have gone far with our planning and all of that, even in the sub region, the registrar to council is also doing something.

"But this is not as easy as some people will think. This is because we ask ourselves, how do we conduct CBT for practicals and essay papers?"

"We can only readily do that in the case of objective questions. But so many people will not see it from that angle. They argue that some others are doing it, why can't WAEC do same.

"Now, no one even talks about energy; how many schools are exposed to computer literacy? How many have computer facilities and how many have electricity to run these things?"

"Even where you have all these things on ground, how do you handle the issue of theory and practical papers? So, these are the issues, but that is what I want the council to do in the very near future.

"We should be able to conduct CBT examinations, even if it means starting with the objective questions," he said.

The outgoing WAEC boss noted that already, the council had concluded on introducing the administration of its examination using the CBT platform under his watch, in no distant time, starting with the objective questions and later theory and practicals.

"But you can still be sure that not all schools will be ready. Maybe we can have a segregated market. Those who cannot afford the CBT will go for the pencil and paper mode.

"So, I will like to see WAEC in that light," he said.

Areghan said besides the



Areghan

introduction of the CBT, he would also like to see all the operations of the council fully digitalised in the near future.

He noted that almost every section of the council had been digitalised under his watch.

"I have almost digitalised everywhere now. Talk of certificate, checking of results and verification of results and more.

"I will live to see more massive deployment of technology so that the vision of council can change from just being a world class examination body to a technology-driven examination body.

"I also want WAEC to be more visible in the international stage. I want to see, through the cooperation of the sub region, how we can take WAEC overseas, that is, how Nigerian children in the diaspora can sit for WASSCE overseas.

"That, again, is what I want WAEC to do in the very near future. That is one thing I wanted to do under my watch, but, again like I said, it needs the cooperation of the sub region, not just Nigeria, to take WASSCE overseas.

"I also want to see its digital certificate that we have successfully launched in Nigeria replicated in the entire sub region, so that any candidate that has taken WASSCE, can be in any part of the world to access the digital certificate; that is a legacy.

"For instance, if your certificate gets missing, soaked, destroyed by fire and so on, with

one touch on the bottom, it appears.

"For me, this is a great legacy," the WAEC boss stated.

He also stated that the council's Digital Security Printing Press is another milestone achievement under his watch.

According to him, after 71 years of council's existence the introduction of the digital security printing press is a worthy legacy.

This is alongside other internal ones, such as the Staff Bus scheme, meant to cushion the effect of high transportation fare, occasioned by the fuel subsidy removal, he said.

"We are going to do more to motivate staff. I am counting on my successor to follow suit, being a very committed and intelligent person. It is my prayer that he achieves more than me," he stated.

Speaking on his greatest achievement, Areghan highlighted the successful conduct of examinations, release of results within stipulated time and printing and release of certificates to deserving candidates as key.

"That is my greatest achievement. That is because when you work in the council and you fail to conduct any examination, no matter the other levels of achievements, you have failed.

"So, I give God all the glory that I have been able to conduct all the examinations, even in the COVID-19 years, from 2020 to 2023," the outgoing council boss told NAN. (NAN)

Military neutralises 52 terrorists, apprehends 60 – DHQ

DEFENCE Headquarters says troops of the Nigerian armed forces have eliminated 52 terrorists, apprehended 60 and rescued 61 kidnapped hostages in different operations between Sept. 15 and Sept. 22.

The Director, Defence Media Operations, Maj.-Gen. Edward Buba, made this known in a statement on Friday in Abuja.

Buba said a total of seven terrorists comprising of five adult males and two adult females surrendered to troops within the period under review.

He said the troops recovered a total number of 77 weapons and 658 different types of ammunition.

"The breakdown is as follows: 53 AK47 rifles, two AK47 rifles loaded with 8 rounds of 7.62mm special ammo, 18 locally fabricated rifles, one beretta pistol, three pump action guns.

"650 rounds of 7.62mm special ammo, 50 AK47 magazines, two rounds of 9mm ammo, six rounds of 7.62 NATO and five fragmentation jackets.

"Furthermore, troops recovered 15 vehicles, 12 motorcycles, 12 Bicycles, five mobile phones, 12 cutlasses, two generator sets, two gas cylinders, 133

livestock and a sum of N602,000 and Airtel airtime worth N8,000," he said.

Buba said the troops of Operation Delta Safe denied oil thieves of an estimated N946.38 million being value of seizures in the South-South region.

He stated that the troops recovered 496,250 litres of stolen crude oil, 83,400 litres of illegally refined AGO, 1,200 litres of PMS, four pumping machines, five speed boats, 34 dugout pits, 57 storage tanks, 16 wooden boats, 85 ovens and three outboard engines.

According to him, the mission of the military against terrorist and other violent extremist groups in the country remains unchanged.

"The military will continue with aggressive operations to force these groups to submission," he added.

The defence spokesman said the troops of Operation Hadin Kai were engaged in ambushes, raids, rescue operations, fighting patrols, attacks as well as cordon and search activities in the North East theatre.

He added that troops of Operations Hadarun Daji, Safe Haven, Whirl Punch and Whirl

Stroke had also sustained aggressive postures against bandits and other criminals in North West and North Central.

According to him, troops of Operation Whirl Stroke conducted 22 operations, 13 fighting patrols, six confidence building patrols and one raid operation within the period under review.

He said that the areas covered included Mbaayande, Mbamazu and Mbaagudu villages of Konshiga Local Government Area of Benue.

"Troops of Joint Task Force Operations UDO KA and Operation Search and Flush in the South East region sustained momentum in the fight against insecurity in the region.

"Troops apprehended five suspected IPOB/ESN terrorists in Ikwo and Ihiala Local Government Areas of Ebonyi and Anambra, respectively.

"The military will through its operations continue to make improvements towards ensuring safety of citizens and restoring security across the country.

"Citizens are encouraged to know something, say something and let the military do something about it,"

SUNDAY POLITICS

Senate seeks confirmation of 11 Supreme Court Justices

PRESIDENT Bola Tinubu has asked the Senate to confirm 11 justices recommended for the Supreme Court bench.

President Tinubu's request was contained in a letter read by the Senate President, Godswill Akpabio, during the plenary recently.

The National Judicial Council (NJC) headed by the Chief Justice of Nigeria recommended the 11 nominees to President Tinubu.

The nominees have to be cleared by the Senate before they can be sworn in as Supreme Court justices.

The NJC made the recommendation after receiving a list of 22 nominees to fill the vacant positions at the Supreme Court.

The recommended Justices are Haruna Tsammani (North-east) who chaired the Presidential Election Petition Court, Moore Adumein (South-south), Jummai Sankey (North-central), Chidiebere Uwa (South-east) and Chioma Nwosu-Theme (South-east)

Others are Obande Ogbuinya (South-east), Stephen Adah (North-central), Habeeb Abiru (South-west), JJamilu Tukur (North-west), Abubakar Umar (North-west) and Mohammed Idris (North-central).

The Senate President referred the request to the Senate Committee on



Tinubu

Judiciary for the screening of the nominees and further legislative input.

Currently, the Supreme Court bench operates with 10 justices which falls below the statutory requirement of 21 judges.

The current Chief Justice of Nigeria, Olukayode Ariwoola, has pledged to ensure the court has its constitutional number of judges.

Only four of the six geopolitical zones of the country are currently represented on the Supreme Court bench. South-west and North-east have three justices each, while the South-south and North-west have two each.

The South-east and North-central do not currently have any representation on the Supreme Court bench.

The two zones lost their last representatives on the Supreme Court bench with the retirement of Dattijo Muhammad from Niger State, North-central, in October, and the death of Centus Nweze from Enugu State, South-east, in July.

If the recommended justices are confirmed, the South-east region will have three justices represented at the Supreme Court. The North-central will also have three justices represented at the Supreme Court bench.

THE Supreme Court has reserved judgment in the joint appeal filed by Governor Abba Yusuf and the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP), against the ruling of the Court of Appeal, Abuja, which nullified his victory in the March 18 gubernatorial election in Kano State.

A five-member panel of judges, led by Justice Inyang Okoro, disclosed this on Thursday after all the parties

Supreme Court reserves judgment in Governor Yusuf's Appeal

in the appeal adopted their final address.

Justice Okoro said a date for judgment would be communicated to all the parties.

The Court of Appeal had, on November 17, in a judgment of a three-member panel, upheld the decision of the Kano State Governorship

Election Petition Tribunal, which sacked Governor Yusuf and declared the candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Nasiru Gawuna, winner of the March 18 poll.

The appellate Court dismissed the appeal filed by Governor Yusuf, based on his membership status in the NNPP.

'Nigeria will bounce back in a couple of months'

VICE President Kashim Shettima has challenged graduates to embrace their potential and contribute to building a brighter future for Nigeria instead of jolting out of the country in search of greener pastures.

He gave the charge recently when the Chief of Staff to the President and former Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon. Femi Gbajabiamila, led the graduating class of the second cohort of the Legislative Mentorship Initiative on a visit to him at the Presidential Villa, Abuja.

"I believe passionately that in this room, there are future Presidents, Vice Presidents, Senators, Members of the House of Representatives, and governors. We also have future drivers and captains of industry," Senator Shettima noted.

The VP struck a chord of empowerment when he urged the graduates to reject disillusionment and embrace their potential within Nigeria.



Shettima

"Let no one make you feel inferior as a Nigerian. One out of every four black men is a Nigerian. Let no one deceive you that the grass is greener at the other end. Certainly, we can make it green on our home turf," he noted.

He further challenged their perception of leadership, shifting the focus from physical strength to intellectual agility, even as he stated that "the hallmark of true leadership is not the ability to lift a bag of cement, but the ability to come up with robust solutions to a nation's problems." "Give us a couple of months, this country will bounce back. Say no to the naysayers and

to the prophets of doom. It doesn't serve any purpose.

Our ability to accept each other; and our tolerance threshold will determine how far we can go as a nation. And the quality of governance is crucial to the goal and trajectory of our nation," he added.

The Vice President, in a statement by his spokesman, Stanley Nkwocha, called on the LMI graduates to become active participants in shaping Nigeria's destiny.

Responding, the founder of the LMI programme, Hon. Gbajabiamila said the generation of young men and women in the cohort is a generation like no other.

Senator empowers constituents on e-commerce, vocational training

From MUSLIUDEEN ADEBAYO, Ibadan

THE senator representing Oyo South Senatorial district in the National Assembly, Barrister Sharafadeen Alli, in his bid to alleviate poverty and promote self reliance among his constituents has empowered no fewer than 1000 constituents in the area of e-commerce and vocational training.

The two-day training programme held in Igboora and Ibadan has participants drawn from across the 99 wards in the nine local governments that make up the senatorial district.

Alli said that the programme was aimed at

alleviating poverty and creating job opportunities. He described it as a great economic tool to make constituents self-reliant.

He said that he had, after the election, made the decision to give back to the society who voted him into office.

The lawmaker said that about 1000 participants drawn from across the 99 wards were trained on e-commerce and vocational training.

"We sincerely believe those who participated in the two trainings will be able to use it in their different trades. It will afford some to start a different trade on their own.

Dr Chubby Egu, a Petroleum Chemist from

Trato Nigeria Limited, said the training was facilitated to empower constituents and make them self-reliant.

"It will benefit so many of them because they would be able to start-up their business and generate income to take care of themselves.

Alhaji Mojeed Olaoya, the APC Senatorial Chairman for Oyo South, described the senator as a man of his words, a doer and wonderful representative of the people.

He said it was exactly six months that the senator assumed office and he had already done a lot, including this training programme.

"I want to say that for the first time in the history of Oyo South, our senator in less than a year, has wonderfully empowered his constituents as well as palliatives distributed for the people of the constituency. I must confess to you that he is doing wonderfully well. We are proud of him in this constituency," he said.

Shuaibu Sani, one of the beneficiaries, appreciated Senator Alli, describing it as a stepping stone towards poverty eradication in the district.

"I think this is a stepping stone towards eradicating poverty out of my life and the entire people participating.

Another beneficiary, Mrs Bunmi Agbaje, thanked the

senator for his usual support to constituents, appreciating his commitment to implementing beneficial programmes and initiatives.

"It is very exciting. We give it to our amiable Senator Sharafadeen Alli for this programme and initiative given to us. We say a big thank you to him."

Rivers assembly withdraws impeachment notice against Fubara

THE Rivers State House of Assembly at its 89th legislative sitting, recentl, in the auditorium of the House of Assembly quarters on Aba Road, has withdrawn the impeachment notice served on the governor of the state, Sir Siminiyalayi Fubara.

Reading a letter on the floor of the House, signed by 24 members, the Speaker, Rt. Hon. Martin Amaewhule, recalled that on the 30th of October, 2023 he read a notice of impeachment signed by 24 members of the House under Section 188 of the 1999 Constitution as altered; which contained particulars of gross misconduct, and was served on the governor.

He said following the agreement reached on the 18th of December, 2023 at the instance of the President and Commander-in-Chief of

the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the House has withdrawn the notice of impeachment and would abide by the letters of the agreement and the advice of Mr. President, whom he said



Fubara



Alli

SUNDAY POLITICS

Power tussle: Fubara, Wike should grow up

"Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is perhaps the end of the beginning" – Winston Churchill. This is the lesson: Never give in, never give in, never, never, never – in anything, great or small, large or petty – never give in except to convictions of honour and good sense. Never yield to force; never yield to the overwhelming might of the enemy." – Winston Churchill, SAMPSON UHUEGBU write's.

WNo one's political ambition is worth the blood of any citizen". This statement was made by the former Nigerian president, Goodluck Jonathan, reacting to the crisis.

The above speeches form the basis of this writing regarding the rising political crisis in Rivers State between former Governor, Nyesom Wike and his successor, Siminalayi Fubara.

These problems started when the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, FCT, Wike, ceded power to a man with whom he was well pleased. So, what went wrong midway? Why is the immediate past Governor battling the incumbent? This can be described as politics taken too far in Rivers State.

Chief Wike refused to let the world know when he officially joined the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC). As it stands now, no one can attest if he is a member of the PDP or APC.

The problem rocking Rivers has assumed a different dimension that on recently, this week, 27 Rivers Assembly members defected from the ruling Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, to the APC, and about nine Commissioners resigned their appointments.

On what appears to be absurd, Governor Fubara has also demolished a multi-billion Naira Rivers State House of Assembly building over this same issue that appears to be irreconcilable between them. I wonder why a mature man, in the person of Chief Wike, should be dancing naked in the market square instead of thinking out ways of attracting more development to his State. This has indeed created tension and division in Rivers State.

The purpose of this writing is not to separate a fight between Wike and Fubara. Should Rivers people continue to be subjected to the whims and caprices of Fubara and Wike who should have been worried over the hard times people of that State are facing, especially now the fuel pump price is high and cost of living has risen. We are wondering why they should place their political ambitions above the people's welfare.

Look at how a once peaceful State is being destroyed. What brought about this 'democratic deficit' that would warrant an irate arsonist mob to desecrate the multi-billion naira chambers of the legislative arm of the government of Rivers state? Who will bear the cost for the reconstruction of the Rivers State House of Assembly? Is it Rivers people?

God has blessed this man



Fubara and Wike

called Wike. What else does he want? He was the Rivers State Chairman, Association of Local Government of Nigeria (ALGON), former Governor for eight years and presently the landlord of the capital City of Nigeria.

I feel for the people of Rivers who are going to be greatly affected by the unconsidered actions of these bigwigs who

are decidedly not concerned about the the residents of Portharcourt.

Politically speaking, Chief Wike is an inconsistent leader. This man says one thing today and does a different thing tomorrow. He is not on good terms with those in the PDP, like Ali Modu-Sheriff, Uche Secondus, Senator Iyorcha Ayu, Emeka Ihedioha and other

chieftains.

The former governor only wants everyone to be his puppet and when one disagrees he starts fighting. Let us not forget that Chief Wike once said he could never settle for Vice Presidential candidate during the last election in Nigeria but we all saw how he went back and heavily lobbied for it after he lost to Atiku Abubakar, the PDP presidential candidate in

the polls.

Imo PDP was destroyed by Wike. I could vividly remember during the Presidential campaign, Wike gave Samdaddy and Chief Jones Onyereri the impetus to divert the One Thousand Dollars Atiku gave the State PDP during his visit.

Chief Wike also said he could never be a Minister. But surprisingly, he begged and lobbied and he got it. He announced at the PDP presidential primary ground, that he will support anyone that emerges. What happened at the end of the day? He said if God helps him and finishes his tenure, he has no business in the administration of the state. Today he is fighting to retain power for a third term. Nawaaoo!

The federal government, under the administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, should stop associating with this man who lacks political integrity. Wike should grow up.

"These problems started when the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, FCT, Wike, ceded power to a man with whom he was well pleased. So, what went wrong midway? Why is the immediate past Governor battling the incumbent? This can be described as politics taken too far in Rivers State. Chief Wike refused to let the world know when he officially joined the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC). As it stands now, no one can attest if he is a member of the PDP or APC."

SUNDAY POLITICS

Makinde and budget of economic recovery: How realistic?

in this report examines the strength of the budget proposal by Gov Makinde towards economic recovery for Oyo state. It is no longer news that Governor Seyi Makinde of Oyo state on December 5 presented a budget proposal for the 2024 fiscal year christened 'Budget of Economic Recovery' before the state House of Assembly for consideration and approval, BAYO AGBOOLA writes.

ALL eyes are now on what the year 2024 budget owes the state and its entire people. The governor at the presentation leaves no one in doubt about his administration's commitment to move the state forward in his second term with what was highlighted in the budget.

Presenting the N434.2 billion 2024 Appropriation Bill to the assembly, the governor said the budget includes N222.3 billion for capital expenditure and N211.8 billion for recurrent expenditure and that the budget anticipates an increase of N72 billion in Internally Generated Revenue, with a monthly average of N6 billion.

He stressed that education would receive the largest allocation with N90.6 billion or 20.8 per cent, followed by infrastructure with N74.3 billion or 17.1 per cent and the health with N40.9 billion, or 9.4 per cent, while agriculture ranks fourth with N15.8 billion, or 3.6 per cent.

Governor Makinde minced no words in stressing that the budget includes projects, programmes and measures that, when implemented, would cushion the impact of the hardship as a result of the removal of fuel subsidies and that his administration would continue to employ technology to close loopholes, adding there are no plans to raise taxes.

"I am happy to come before you today to present the 2024 Appropriation Bill. This year's presentation is special in two significant ways. First, this is the first full budget presentation since our re-election into office in March 2023. This budget presents an opportunity for us to show how we are matching our promises as stated in our roadmap for sustainable development 2023-2027 with definite action plans.

"Second, this budget is a chance for our administration to show our responsiveness to the current economic headwinds. You will agree that the effects of the removal of fuel subsidy and dollar-Naira currency by the federal government have brought hardship to our people. Therefore, this budget proposal would cover specific projects, policies, and actions that, when implemented, will cushion the impact of the economic issues that we are currently faced with. It is against this backdrop that we have tagged this budget 'Oyo State Budget of Economic Recovery'.

"It is my honor to present a total budget of N434,221,765,938.79. The total capital expenditure is N222,337,320,199.85 while the total recurrent expenditure is 211,884,445,738.94. What you will immediately notice is that we have been able to, once again, achieve a budget where capital expenditure is about 2.4 per cent higher than the recurrent expenditure. We believe that the growth of our economy is dependent on the fiscal decisions we take regarding our capital expenditure. Therefore, we are focusing on projects that will yield positive results for our economy in our areas of comparative advantage.

"Mr Speaker and the Honourable



Makinde

members of the 10th assembly, you will note the same marginal increase of about N4bn in the allocation to agriculture. You will recall that we have initiated an input distribution package for our smallholder farmers under the SAFER initiative. We also work with the World Bank to provide input for our smallholder farmers under the Oyo State Cares programme. We plan to build on various interventions we have introduced to help them. At the same time, we will, in the next few months, be completing work on the Fashola Agribusiness Industrial Hub. I am happy to report that the work done has further revealed the economic benefits of locating projects around our areas of comparative advantage. Because of this project, the Oyo Zone has been opened up for more business as this axis now hosts large and medium-scale agribusinesses. The Oyo-Iseyin road construction, which was commissioned in September 2023, is also driving businesses to this zone," the governor added.

"Mr Speaker and the Honourable members of the 10th assembly, you will note the same marginal increase of about N4bn in the allocation to agriculture. You will recall that we have initiated an input distribution package for our smallholder farmers under the SAFER initiative. We also work with the World Bank to provide input for our smallholder farmers under the Oyo State Cares programme. We plan to build on various interventions we have introduced to help them. At the same time, we will, in the next few months, be completing work on the Fashola Agribusiness Industrial Hub. I am happy to report that the work done has further revealed the economic benefits of locating projects around our areas of comparative advantage. Because of this project, the Oyo Zone has been opened up for more business as this axis now hosts large and medium-scale agribusinesses. The Oyo-Iseyin road construction, which was commissioned in September 2023, is also driving businesses to this zone," the governor added Breaking down the 2024 Budget proposal, The state commissioner for budget and economic planning, Professor Musibau Adetunji Babatunde said the budget was prepared against the backdrop of continuing global and national economic challenges and that the government would execute the budget to bring about sustainable economic recovery in the state. "The proposed budget reflects the economic recovery plan of the present administration towards addressing the current economic challenges and fast track economic recovery."

Breaking down the 2024 Budget proposal, The state commissioner for budget and economic planning, Professor Musibau Adetunji Babatunde said the budget was prepared against the backdrop of continuing global and national economic challenges and that the government would execute the budget to bring about sustainable economic recovery in the state.

"The proposed budget reflects the economic recovery plan of the present administration towards addressing the current economic challenges and fast track economic recovery.

"The budget indicates the commitment of the administration to economic reforms necessary for creating opportunities towards achieving economic recovery and also reflects government's desires on sectoral allocations to reflate the economy, unlock private investment, stimulate effective demand, accelerate economic growth and achieve sustainable development."

He said highlight of the budget is

part of the physical transparency and accountability of Makinde-led administration and would determine the destiny of Oyo state in the next fiscal year, as it is adequately captured to reflect the governor's Roadmap for Sustainable Development 2023-2027 and the Sustainable Action for Economic Recovery (SAFER) programme that followed the subsidy removal and exchange rate unification.

The commissioner emphasized that the estimate for recurrent expenditure in the budget proposal is N211,884,445,738.94, representing 48.80 per cent of the budget, while the capital expenditure of N222,337,320,199.85 represents 51.20 per cent of the budget and that the percentage of the recurrent expenditure estimate was high because it had been designed to capture the monthly wage award of N25,000 to civil servants and N15,000 to pensioners, which increased the state's wage by an additional N2.8 billion in its first

month of payment and is expected to run for six months.

Prof Babatunde stressed further that the 2024 budget would focus more on ongoing capital projects and programmes that would boost human capital, unlock the state's economic potential through agriculture and agribusiness value chain, tourism and solid minerals development, as well as promotion of Public Private Partnership, among others. He added that the sectoral analysis of the proposed budget showed the government's commitment to the economic recovery of the state, as the social and economic sectors, which comprises education, health, youth and sports, culture and tourism, agriculture, works and infrastructure and finance received the largest allocations.

The commissioner also disclosed that the state government looks forward to earning N86 billion in statutory allocations, N71.5 billion in Value Added Tax, N10 billion in Excess Crude, N36.3 billion in capital receipts, among others and that the government has projected N72 billion as the Internally Generated Revenue for the year 2024 at the rate of N6 billion monthly, noting, however that residents of the states should not exercise fears over tax increment and that the state is reviewing the current tax administration to ensure that more taxable entities are brought into the tax net, while it will also block leakages by improving revenue collection through ICT".

He gave an assurance that there would be control and enforcement on spending limits to ensure that a sound budgetary system is put in place to include aggregate fiscal discipline, efficiency and effective spending of the budget.

Opposition picks hole

To the main opposition political party in the state, the All Progressives Congress, (APC), the 2024 budget proposal by Gov Seyi Makinde is "unrealistic", describing it as defective, unrealistic. The party urged legislators to avoid rushing into its passage into law without a thorough job as it has been the case since 2020.

In a statement by its publicity secretary, Olawale Sadare, it faulted most content of the appropriation saying it was aimed at hoodwinking the good people of the state.

"Pundits and economic management experts have expressed worries over the future of the Pacesetter State in view of the fact that the administration of Gov. Makinde has done little or nothing to improve the economy and create wealth as being done in some other states across the country. To make it worse, an expert recently said that Gov. Makinde has reduced Oyo state to Okada/Keke economy. Credence was again given to the observation of pundits last week when the governor tabled before the House of Assembly an proposed budget for the 2024.. In the document, N434.2 billion is quoted as the total budget for the year but N260 billion is the total amount of funds expected in revenue leaving over N170 billion in deficit.

SUNDAY PEOPLE

GOVERNOR MUTFWANG RECEIVES TY DANJUMA FOUNDATION

The Executive Governor of Plateau State, Barr. Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang on Wednesday received on a visit the TY Danjuma Foundation led Victims Support Fund at his official residence Government House Rayfield, Jos



Governor Mutfwang (middle) responding to the message by leader of delegation, Barr. Toyosi Akinrele Ogunsiyi (right) and left is the Executive Secretary, PLASEMA, Hon. Sunday Abdu



Cross section of Commissioners listening to speeches



Cross section of members of the Plateau State Executive Council



Leader of the TY Danjuma Foundation, Barr. Toyosi Akinrele-Ogunsiyi signing the visitors book



From left are, General Manager, PRTVC, Kachollom Rita Pam, Commissioner of Transport, Hon. Jatau Davou Gyang and Commissioner in Charge of Higher Education, Dr. Mrs. Kachollom Gang



Commissioner of Health, Dr. Cletus Bako Shurkuk (left) with the Personal Physician to the Governor, Dr. Daniel Meshack



Cross section of members of the TY Danjuma Foundation that accompanied the leader



Governor Mutfwang, Commissioner in a group photograph with the leader, Barr. Akinrele-Ogunsiyi and her entourage

Photos: DANLADI DUK

WITH the recent Court of Appeal sitting judgements of the in Abuja, it has become clear that the All Progressives Congress (APC) has again, gained control of the Plateau State House of Assembly. What is even more clearer is the dynamics playing out between the two major political parties; that is the APC and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). It will interest you to know that during the ninth assembly, the House was dominated by the APC with the PDP as minority.

However, the tables turned at the inception of the tenth assembly as the PDP became the dominant party, making the APC the minority. The present tenth assembly was inaugurated on 13th June 2023 and set the ball rolling with the election of the speaker, deputy speaker and other principal officers while climaxing with the constitution of twenty four House Standing Committees. No sooner had it taken off with legislative activities picking up, then came its sudden end.

While some political analysts described the development as rather unfortunate with the lawmakers being victims of circumstance, others blame them for their carelessness and ignorance which they now have to pay dearly for. One of the legislators affected describes it is merely 'politics at play'. Also speaking on grounds of anonymity, an aid to one of the legislators concerned the fact that his boss was unable to recoup his money after spending so much during the election.

The turn of events started with the resignation of the former Speaker, Rt. Hon. Moses Thomas Sule and his Deputy Rt. Hon. Gwottson Fom Dalyop. The duo had during an emergency plenary tendered their resignation without giving reasons. A new speaker in the person of Rt. Hon. Gabriel Dewan Kudengbena under the platform of Youth Progressive Party (YPP) was subsequently elected and sworn in immediately.

Many expected the new speaker to call for plenary and swear in the new members. But the turn of events saw the speaker adjourning sitting to the 23rd of January, 2024. Observers are of the opinion that it was a deliberate and calculated act, knowing fully well that the judgement before the Court of Appeal would have been concluded by then. As it is now, the new APC members need to be sworn in before they can participate in any sitting or House activities.

As the rulings progressed at the Court of Appeal, reports started filtering in that the PDP had lost all sixteen seats in the state House of Assembly, with the APC now occupying twenty two. Meanwhile before then, the Plateau State Election Petition Tribunal sitting in Jos had sacked the election of Rt. Hon. Moses Thomas Sule as speaker and member representing Mikang constituency. Sule contested under the platform of the PDP. According to reports, the tribunal's decision was based on the fact that his party the PDP failed to comply with a court order mandating it to conduct a fresh election for the state executive. The tribunal in its ruling also directed the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to withdraw the former speaker's certificate of return and award it to

Hon. Naanlong Gapyil Daniel of the APC who came second in the same election. The court judgements followed in quick successions, one after the other, as all the PDP members were sacked while those in the APC were returned and asked to be issued their certificates of return. The Plateau State House of Assembly now has the following returned members:

Hon. Dachung Moses Dadon, representing Riyom constituency
 Hon. Daniel Nanbol Listick who contested under the platform of the Labour Party (LP) and is returning for a second term as member representing Langtang North Central constituency.



PLHA assembly: When the majority become minority



Dewan



Daniel



Gwottson



Akawu

Hon. Bendel is now representing Langtang South constituency. Hon. Abel Nimchak Nansak, Langtang North North constituency. Hon. Naanlong Gapyil Daniel, Mikang constituency. Hon. Laven Denty Jacob, Pankshin South constituency. Hon. Kwarpo Matthew Sylvanus, Mangu South constituency.

Others are Hon. Sylvester Wallangko, Bokkos constituency. Hon. Dagogot Karyit Owen, Qua'an Pan North constituency. Hon. Dalyop Isaac, Jos South constituency.

Hon. Abdul Yanga, who was the former member representing Mangu North East is also returning.

Rt. Hon. Yakubu Yackson Sanda, former speaker of the ninth assembly and member representing Pengana constituency now a returnee.

Hon. Theodore Maiyaki Bala, representing Qua'an Pan South constituency.

Hon. Dickson Chollom, Barkin Ladi constituency. Hon. Eli Bako Ankala, Rukuba/Irigwe constituency.

Unfortunately, there will be no returned female lawmaker as the two women in the tenth assembly Hon. Happiness Matthew Akawu, representing Pengana constituency and Hon. Salome Wanglek representing Pankshin South constituency, both of the PDP, were also sacked.



Maiyaki

SUNDAY MAGAZINE



Christmas: Families groan over high cost of living

Christmas has from one generation to the other been one festive period that resonates in the hearts of millions of Christian faithful all over the world and even non-Christians alike. Its melodies of Christmas Carols all over the place rends the air waves while the mood vibrates in the different kinds of preparations which is geared towards making the day a special occasion. However, KENNETH DARENG examines how families are gearing up for a bleak yuletide over rising food prices, transportation fares and others. . KENNETH DARENG writes.

The general economic downturn in the country today has made this year's Christmas preparations more difficult than in the previous years due to the fact that food prices and other commodities in the market tripled while traders complain of low patronage.

Unfortunately, as prices of goods and services keep hitting the roof top, so is the general fear that going by the present trend and the Nigerian factor of, "what goes up does not come down in the Nigerian market," which many social commentators predict that this may be an indication that citizens should expect further hike as long as the nation's inflation keeps going up.

The reality on ground is that, many people have either cancelled their plans of travelling, others are now contemplating to reschedule their travel plans for Christmas as transport fares keep rising by the day. Chuks Onoh, a businessman in Jos, in a chat with **SUNDAY STANDARD** said, "For the past five years, together with my family we used to spend Christmas in my village in the South East but this year, I am considering cancelling the journey when I looked at the

expenses involved.

"Imagine the cost of fuelling my car to and from the village, the food we are going to take along, and other extra expenses associated with the festive celebration, then coming back to settle school fees for my children in January. It is better and cheaper for me to have a low key Christmas here than going home and then come back with regrets." Onoh said.

Meanwhile, latest report by the National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], indicated in this year's October Customer Price Index that the headline inflation rate increased to 27.33 percent relative to the September rate of 26.72 percent. This indicates that the country is facing its worst cost of living in about 20 years.

SUNDAY STANDARD market survey in Jos metropolis revealed that the prices of staple food like a bag of rice now sells for between N55,000.00 and N60,000.00 as opposed to N48,000.00 in October this year. While a life chicken goes for between N6,000.00 and N10,000 depending on the size as opposed to N3,500.00 and N5,000.00 in October.

Prices for a Kilo of meat, fish and items such as onions,

tomatoes, Pepper, and cooking oil have all tripled and yet, there is the fear of increase in the coming days leading to the Christmas and New year. Other commodities like baking flour and sugar have increased in prices by 40 percent within the month of December.

Maureen Bako, a single mother of three children and a Civil Servant working in one of the state government agencies told **SUNDAY STANDARD** that, "Despite collecting my December salary, I still cannot afford to buy Christmas clothes for my children. Rather, I am going for second hand clothes and shoes for them. I am trying to manage the little savings to celebrate with them without stressing myself considering the fact that the market forces are ready to take all once you are at their mercy." Bako noted.

Another family who pleaded anonymity told **SUNDAY STANDARD** that, "this year, they have no option than to dump buying of meat for pomo [hides and skin] to prepare the Christmas stew while the local rice will feature largely on the menu." Infact, my children have been complaining about new clothes and so on, but there is

nothing we can do about it." he said.

Recalling the good old days of Christmas, Raphael Badung, said, "Its like Christmas has lost its shine. I recall in the time past, when it comes to Christmas period, it was a time our parents took us to then Bata shops, Lennard's or Chanrai's for our shoes and other accessories around Ahmadu Bello Way, Jos.

"We felt happy even in our cheap clothes and shoes. Rice was a yearly menu that we looked up to it with panache and with high expectations as the food was rich, tasteful and well shared with dear ones and with neighbors coupled with the aroma of frying here and there.

"Life was peaceful and calm and the spirit of Christmas filled everywhere and with fond memories to behold. Sadly, all that is gone as the cost of living kept rising and with our economy heading to the worst, everything has been torn apart with little or nothing now to celebrate." Badung said.

However, families are now lamenting the high cost of living which many attribute to bad government policies and insensitivity of past and present leaders for their failure to make life meaningful

to the average citizen of this country. According to Madam Ukah Osondu, "This Christmas is not looking like Christmas at all. My Children have been complaining but there is nothing we can do about the situation." She said.

Another woman said, "Imagine the cost of cooking gas, it has compounded my woes. 12kg of gas six months ago was barely N4,500 but now without N12,500 one cannot afford to fill it. To use electric cooker is like adding salt to injury and couple with unsteady supply of power one cannot even rely on it. I cant believe we are going through all these. The government needs to do something urgent about the plight of millions of Nigerians who are going through such hardships." She noted.

Families are counting the costs and have attributed some of the challenges to the Federal Government's removal of oil subsidy which have adverse effect on other sectors of the economy particularly due to high costs of petroleum products. And despite the release of billions of naira as palliatives to cushion the pains on Nigerians, the measures appeared to have little or no

Continued on page 31



Public Relations practitioners urged on professionalism

By FWENJI GOAR

PUBLIC Relations practitioners in Nigeria have been urged to set high standards of practice so as to distinguish themselves from quacks parading themselves as professionals.

This was stated by Chairman of the Plateau State Chapter of Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR), Mr Thomas Bajeh at the 2023 Award/Dinner Ceremony of the Chapter held at Korrets Hamlet in Jos, Plateau State.

He emphasized on the commitment of the NIPR to ridding the profession of quacks, and urged certified members to place a premium on excellence through diligence and adherence to professional

ethics.

Bajeh said the chapter would continue to pursue programmes designed to upscale the competence of members by providing opportunities for training and retraining.

He said the current Chapter's Executive Council which he leads, has organised various activities designed to showcase the relevance of the institute to society. Some of which include organising an awareness creation programme in collaboration with the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) during the last voters' registration exercise.

The Chairman added that the chapter also organised a town hall engagement with the governorship candidates of various political parties in Plateau State before the February, 2023 general elections.

He called on members to demonstrate more commitment to the chapter through regular payment of dues and participation in the chapter's activities.

Council member of the NIPR, Prof. Sarah Lwahas, on her part, emphasised on the determination of the institute to enforce the NIPR Act, disclosing that a task force to identify and flush out unregistered practitioners would soon swing into action.

She urged members to be committed to upholding high ethical values to earn the profession respect.

Nine people were honoured with awards at the ceremony. They include the Deputy Chief of Staff in the Office of the Vice President, Senator Ibrahim Hassan Hadeija, the Executive Secretary of Nigeria Agriculture Development Fund, Mr Muhammed Abu Ibrahim and a veteran media practitioner, Nde Gideon Barde.

Other recipients were the Plateau State Government, a former Council Member, Mr Haroun Audu, Mr. Fred Chagu, Mrs. Ruth Abwo, Mr Yakubu Gomos and Mrs. Rosemary Ettaba.

Northern Governors must develop common strategy against insecurity

From JOHN FWAH

KADUNA State Governor, Senator Uba Sani has said that the Northern States Governors must develop a common strategy and operational plan to tackle insecurity in the region.

"Our region has been grappling with challenges of insecurity. Our human development indices have been declining. For the Northern Governors Forum to remain relevant

We must forge unity among our people and collaborate on issues of development. We must fashion a master plan for the development of the North. Our situation is dire and requires concerted and sustained action.

Governor Sani said this in his opening address at the inaugural meeting of the 19 Northern Governors Forum in Kaduna recently.

He said, "We must develop a common strategy and operational plan to tackle insecurity. We must establish a Command and Control Centre to coordinate our joint efforts against terrorists, bandits, kidnapers and other criminal elements in our region. "Diversity and ethno-religious unity remain the foundation for the advancement of the ideals of regional peace, security and development in the North. Northern Governors must work together towards empowering the people as key production forces for the growth of the North. This requires deliberate policy designs and implementation, in ways that recognize the critical role of leadership in leading such initiatives.

"Dear colleagues, the vision for the design of a strategic agenda for the development of the North should be anchored on a core ideal that puts the people at the center of our aspiration and drive. This is simply because the mandate we got

to lead, emanated from the people.

The Northern Governors Forum was established based on the fact that beyond the pursuit of a pan-Nigeria ideal, regional unity is a strategic agenda that should be pursued. The Forum was put together in the strong belief that a forum that promotes the values of peaceful coexistence and shared prosperity is critical to the search for sustainable solutions to the region's development challenges.

"This effort at charting a new course for our region will come to nothing if we fail to provide strong leadership. We must therefore effectively mobilize our people around this common agenda, create the enabling environment, leverage the human and material resources of the region, deliver on our promises to the people, and at all times put the welfare of the people at the center of our development agenda for



Sani

the Northern Region.

"Regionalism, in the context of what the North represents, is an expression that is embedded in shared identity and purpose, anchored on the principle of mutual respect and cooperation between and among states.

The people of the North, regardless of political, ethnic and religious inclinations, are

one people, with a shared destiny, that are not driven by any short term consideration.

He thanked them thus, "I thank you all for your individual and collective condolence messages on the loss of our citizens in the unfortunate Tudun Biri military drone attack.

Rising malnutrition: SEC to upgrade food, nutrition policy

By WILLIE ATTAH, Gombe

GOMBE State Commissioner for Economic Planning, Salihu Baba Alkali, has revealed that the state food and nutrition policy is under scrutiny by the State Executive Council with a view to make it address the rising rate of child malnutrition.

The commissioner stated this when he received the Gombe State Coordinator, Civil Society Scaling Up Nutrition in Nigeria (CS-SUNN), Mrs Comfort Mukollo and her team who paid an advocacy visit on the need to step up the fight against malnutrition in the state.

Baba Alkali particularly noted the rising rate of child malnutrition of the state from his personal findings which he described as alarming. But assured that it is cognizant of the situation, the Governor directed all line ministries, especially Agriculture, Health among others to study the food and nutrition policy with the aim of upgrading it to address the current challenges.

He assured that the State Executive Council will approve it following the kind of interest exhibited by the Governor, Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya.

According to the commissioner, the administration is committed to the improvement of the nutrition status of children in the state which is 67 to 70 percent, based on his findings.

"69 to 70 percent is a serious case for concern. Whatever it is, we will assist, especially in this ministry. Government will implement all

proposals. Our future (that is children) is involved, reason why the government is taking the issue seriously and the governor has directed all line ministries to sit with us", the commissioner stated.

The Chairman, Food and Nutrition Committee of the state who is also the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Economic Planning, Alhaji Jalo Ibrahim Ali, admitted that the issue of malnutrition in the state is getting out of hand but said deliberate efforts must be put to stem the tide.

He expressed happiness over the advocacy visit which he described as timely, coming at the end of the year when the Food and Nutrition Committee will be having its fourth quarter meeting.

Earlier, the State Coordinator of CS-SUNN, Mrs Comfort Mukollo, said the purpose of the visit was to appeal to the government to expedite release of funds to tackle malnutrition among under five (5) children in Gombe State.

Mukollo said, "We are writing to urgently advocate for the swift release of funds allocated to address the critical issue of malnutrition among under five (5) children in Gombe State.

"The prevalence of malnutrition among our youngest and most vulnerable population demands immediate attention and decisive action.

"The timely release of funds is essential to implement targeted interventions and programmes aimed at preventing and managing malnutrition cases effectively", she said.

Commenting on the alarming malnutrition rate in Gombe State, Mrs

Mukollo said, "Recent reports have highlighted the distressing rates of malnutrition among under five (5) children in Gombe State, posing a severe threat to their health and overall well-being".

She called for timely intervention by the government through expedited release of funds to facilitate the implementation of vital initiatives including nutrition programmes, healthcare interventions, procurement of essential supplies, and capacity-building for healthcare professionals.

"This urgent action is critical in ensuring the timely implementation of essential programmes that will safeguard the health and future of our young citizens.

"Your prompt attention and commitment to this pressing issue will significantly impact the lives of our children and contribute to building a healthier and more resilient community in Gombe State.

"We are available and willing to provide any further information or support required to facilitate the prompt release of these crucial funds", Mrs Mukollo stressed. As a firm believer in the rule of law, Barr. Mutfwang is determined to strengthen the bonds of unity and friendship across Plateau communities for a progressive state. He urged citizens to channel their energy towards productive ventures to rebuild and restore the lost glory of Plateau State

Nigeria's unemployment rate rises to 4.2% in Q2, says NBS

Nigeria's unemployment rate in the second quarter experienced a slight rise from 4.1% to 4.2%, the Labour Force report for the Q2, 2023 released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) has shown.

Tinubu approves re-introduction of school feeding programme

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has approved the re-introduction of school feeding programme as part of measures by his administration to address the menace of out-of-school children.

After several failed deadlines, Nigerian govt says Port Harcourt refinery to begin refining after Christmas

The Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Oil), Senator Heineken Lokpobiri, on Wednesday, announced the completion of phase 1 of the rehabilitation of the Port Harcourt Refinery in Rivers State, signalling the commencement of petroleum refining.

Senate passes bill extending 2023 budget implementation to March

The Senate on Thursday passed an amendment bill seeking the extension of the 2023 appropriation and supplementary budget to March 31, 2024.

Invasion of Cross River community by bandits from Cameroon is an act of war, Reps cry out to Tinubu

The House of Representatives, on Wednesday, asked President Bola Tinubu to urgently deploy military forces to the Okwa community in Cross River State in order to protect the nation's territorial integrity and ensure the safety of citizens following an alleged invasion by bandits from neighbouring Cameroon.

PDP rejects Tinubu's settlement in Rivers, insists on fresh elections for 25 vacant Assembly seats

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has rejected the eight-point terms of agreement by President Bola Tinubu to end the feud between Rivers State Governor, Fubara Siminalayi, and the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike

Rivers crisis may fester, as elders reject Tinubu's terms of agreement for Fubara, Wike feud

Seems the political crisis dogging Rivers State is far from over, as elders, and political leaders on Tuesday rejected the said signed eight-point agreement by President Bola Tinubu to broker peace between Governor Fubara Siminalayi, and the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike

Despite N200bn spent, Senate uncovers zero provision for 2024 Population Census

There was mild drama in the Senate during plenary on Tuesday as the Committee on Appropriations discovered that there was no provision for the population and housing census scheduled for next year in the National Population Commission (NPC), 2024 budget proposal, which was submitted to the National Assembly for consideration.

'I'm not broken', Nnamdi Kanu reacts to Supreme Court verdict

The leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Nnamdi Kanu, on Tuesday, said he was not broken by last Friday's Supreme Court verdict that he (Kanu) must face trial on terrorism allegations against him by the Federal Government.

'Barefaced lies' - Amosun berates Oshiomhole over claims on Buhari, exit as APC chairman

The former Ogun State governor, Ibikunle Amosun, on Wednesday accused the ex-National Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Adams Oshiomhole, of spreading falsehood about his removal from office in 2020.

Rivers Assembly withdraws impeachment notice against Fubara

The intervention of President Bola Tinubu in the political crisis in Rivers State has started yielding results, as members of the state House of Assembly have withdrawn the impeachment notice that was previously sent to Governor Siminalayi Fubara.

Xmas: Tinubu approves 50% reduction in transport fares

President Bola Tinubu has approved a 50 percent reduction in the price of interstate transport fares for Nigerians traveling during the Christmas period.

Poor management of seaports costs Nigeria \$7 billion annually, says House of Reps

The poor management of the various seaports in Nigeria is estimated to be costing a significant economic loss in the region of \$7 billion annually, the House of Representatives has disclosed.

NLC warns Nigerian govt of mass protest over naira scarcity

The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) has decried the latest naira scarcity in many parts of the country.

Teenager stabs girlfriend to death over N5000 in Bauchi

Police operatives in Bauchi have arrested a 19-year-old man, Muhammad Ibrahim, over the murder of his girlfriend in the state.

'PDP will sanction Wike, other rebels at the right time,' party's chairman, Damagum declares

The acting National Chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party, (PDP), Umar Damagum, said on Tuesday the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike, other rebels in the party would be sanctioned by the party's leadership at the appropriate time

Reps to pass 2024 budget December 30th, Speaker Abbas reveals

The House of Representatives has fixed December 30th for the passage of the 2023 Appropriation bill, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Tajudeen Abbas said on Tuesday

Former minister, Tallen, in trouble over comment on court judgment, barred from holding public office

A Federal High Court sitting in Abuja on Monday, gave an order restraining former Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development, Dame Pauline Tallen, from holding any public office unless she apologises publicly for disrespecting the court within 30 days.

Supreme Court reserves judgment in Kano guber election dispute

The Supreme Court, on Thursday, reserved judgment in the appeal filed over the Kano State governorship election. British court rejects P&ID's application on \$11bn judgement given in Nigeria's favour

A British court on Thursday rejected an application by Process & Industrial Developments Limited (P&ID) to appeal the judgement which stopped the enforcement of the \$11 billion award against Nigeria.

CBN alleges banks colluding with PoS operators to disrupt cash flow

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has accused the Deposit Money Banks (DMBs) of colluding with Point of Sale (PoS) operators to disrupt the cash flow in the country.

COMPLIED BY LOIS DADUUT

SUNDAY FEATURE

Nigeria's path to peace and development

I'm 70 years old; I started civil rights when I was 29, but I still have hope. I am happy the NSA is here, because I also studied counter intelligence in 1980. We need peace and security to develop; we can't win the war with armed forces. I would suggest to the National Assembly to invite ethnic nationalities, the owners of Nigeria. You know the last constitutional conference that was attended by my Oga here. We have no stake in Nigeria, because I am not an ethnic nationality leader.

I suspect inviting these leaders together with our traditional leaders who I suspect are ignored in the process; we may be able to resolve this Boko Haram, IPOB issue.

For the President to make progress with the President of the Senate, peace must reign. The first task is how do we find peace? Would it be through the armed forces?

My answer is no. It would be by executive and legislative process to find how we can draw in Ohanaze, Afenifere, Arewa, the traditional rulers that have been ignored. I personally believe they have a role in the constitutional process. I believe if this is done, we can achieve peace. That is number one.

I urge us to move away from a nine-to-five legislative process and embrace a transformative, unconventional approach, akin to one the President is familiar with. I propose ten objectives that can facilitate this shift. While I applaud the President's three bold decisions, I offer nuanced perspectives. For instance, while I fully support the removal of fuel subsidies, I believe legislation is crucial in mitigating its impact.

Furthermore, this unsettled constitution, lingering for twenty-three years, must be addressed, ideally by the 10th National Assembly. Such a prolonged state of flux is untenable. Therefore, I suggest prioritising the question of how to attain a new constitution. Two options exist. The first, which the National Assembly is currently pursuing, I strongly disagree with. My preference lies with the late Ben Nwabueze's solution, which leverages the National Assembly's extraordinary powers. Currently, only one of its four legislative powers is utilised, yet its full potential remains untapped.

The tribunal focuses on crucial questions like the functionality of Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) and the Biometric Voter Accreditation System (BVAS). These are not matters that directly concern the President; they pertain to the integrity of the electoral process and fall under the responsibility of the election management board.

Adopting this approach would shift the pressure towards INEC to ensure they diligently fulfil their duties. Currently, petitions often devolve into a contest between the petitioner and the respondent, while INEC, the entity ultimately accountable for electoral integrity, remains on the sidelines. This shift in accountability would incentivize INEC to improve its performance.

If I had been a member of the Justice Uwais panel, I would have advocated for two additional reforms. Firstly, the unbundling of INEC. Their current responsibilities are overly extensive. For instance, they are the largest paper printing agency in Nigeria, which simply isn't their core function.

Secondly, reducing the scope of INEC's responsibilities by creating separate entities to handle specific tasks. The Uwais Committee report recommended establishing a Political Party Regulatory Authority to take over party regulation from INEC, as well as an Election Offences Commission to handle related investigations and prosecutions.

I urge the 10th Assembly, under the leadership of President Godswill Akpabio, to enact the



recommendations made by the Uwais panel in 2008. These recommendations, languishing for over a decade, hold the key to reforming the Electoral Act and addressing the mockery it makes of our democracy.

As President of the Nigerian Bar Association from 2006 to 2008, I witnessed firsthand the critical state of our legal system. Like an individual suffering from heart failure, it's effectively on life support. In my legal practice, clients often inquire about investment timelines, and when I mention five to ten years for litigation, they lose interest. If we want to attract investment, we must address this bottleneck head-on by completely reimagining our legal system. Its current state is simply too antiquated to serve our modern needs.

The irony, and I say this with the utmost respect as a Senior Advocate and former member of the Nigerian Judicial Commission, extends to the judicial system itself. It requires a thorough and decisive overhaul to regain its efficiency and public trust.

When my daddy was CJN of the old eastern states, we all wanted to protect the judiciary like a military incursion, so we fence the judiciary and everybody is afraid.

People were saying; don't touch their money, and we did not allow anyone to touch anything about them.

The judiciary should not be aloft as it ones to make out. I was the first person, accompanied by my brother, Wole Olanipekun. We applied, because we felt we were qualified to sit in the Supreme Court, but the mafia there threw us out. You know why? Because we still mix administration of justice which the National Assembly cannot interfere with how they do their work with judiciary administration. The National Assembly can review how they do their work.

As leaders of your people, you must recognise their suffering. Now is the time to stand with the President by enacting substantial legislation that will ultimately bring them peace and security.

It may surprise you, Mr President, but I've implemented a breakfast and lunch program in my office for my staff. Necessity prompted this

unexpected initiative, as many of them simply couldn't afford proper meals. With food prices soaring, even N1,000 for a driver barely covers the cost of a good plate of rice (around N600). This led me to establish a small kitchen to provide proper meals for my team.

My point, Mr President, is that the weight of your work, and that of all our political leaders, rests heavily on the shoulders of those who support us. Their well-being, both physical and mental, is crucial to our success. If we want to remain relevant in the eyes of the people beyond four or five years, we must take decisive action now. Good deeds resonate. They pave the way for us to walk among the people with pride, knowing they see us as true representatives of their needs.

Mr. President, let service be your guiding light. Embrace sleepless vigilance, stay tuned to the needs of your people, and dedicate yourself to delivering on their aspirations. Only then, when your term ends, will you find true peace, protected by the legacy of good deeds done. Your name will not need accolades or praise; the people's gratitude will be its own reward.

Remember, a leader's legacy hinges on addressing the most pressing concerns. While you've made bold decisions – like the naira devaluation – there's one critical area, I believe, that requires your attention: economic governance. Personally, I find the term "restructuring" too broad. Instead, I advocate for "devolution" – a strategic transfer of power and resources that empowers local communities and fosters economic prosperity.

The CBN they work on monetary; the CBN is carrying far too much responsibility and quite sensibly in the UK their own CBN, the bank of England devolved power to two great institutions and I think, we need to see it here the credential and regulation authority.

Their work is to make sure that the public trust we have in our banks is indeed followed, our banks are not traders. It is a shame that I am standing before you. I have never had a loan in this country, because they want my grandmother who is dead to come.

In the UK, I've had loans because the system works, the prudential regulation authority in the UK ensures that the banks work, in fact some of us keep saying how in spite of all this poverty the banks are making tremendous profit.

How is it, so where is the money going? We got to ask where it is going? The banks in the UK, if they misbehave you have the financial conduct authority to keep them in check. The CBN needs to devolve two important powers; supervision and conduct.

In the UK it is retained within the structure of the bank of England, but there is a huge institution that ensures that oxygen money is in the system. How can Nigeria be described as a country that wants to be in the first 10 when it is not a credit economy, no country survives without a credit system.

I don't want to say you have failed. I say we have failed, but I know you know what I mean. N100 trillion go and look for the money. There are 56,000 uncompleted projects around Nigeria, the federal lands alone, the money there is unbelievable.

Look at the Federal Secretariat, it's been wasting there for the last 40 years, yet we cannot build the road from Lagos to Ibadan when that is N140 billion, what is it doing there? Sell it and don't be involved in things that the private sector can do. I talked to Zach and I told him, I'm happy that the President committee mentioned that no parastatal or department or agency should collect revenue. It is not their job.

NIMASA or Customs, it is not your job. The job of Customs is enforcement of Customs regulations, not collecting revenue. All that collection should go to a new national revenue agency; they are the ones to collect money not the individual parastatal that doesn't even remit you will then find that the money is not as difficult as you think it is. You can get the money.

The President has given a task Nigeria would be a trillion dollar economy in six years, let me say 10 years, it is more than doable. It is doable, but it will require absolute hard work and that's why I'm pointing out what to do.

Look at solid minerals, Nigeria has about 44 or 45 absolutely required minerals, but not the laws, we have legal failure. Let me just return to a point I missed under economic governance; the difference between revenue and capital they're different things. Public revenue is consecrated by section 162 of the constitution.

Regarding solid mineral trade policy, we cannot simply be a dumping ground. We need our own local mechanism equivalent to the WTO, which I call the National Trade Office (NTO). The late ambassador who previously represented us at the WTO did a tremendous job, but he lacked sufficient authority. Therefore, we require two key things: a clear and comprehensive trade policy, and the establishment of the NTO by an act of parliament. Additionally, trade remedies legislation is crucial to ensure effective protection for our domestic industries.

Trade remedies legislation acts as a countervailing power, allowing us to raise tariffs when necessary. If even someone like Trump could do that, why can we not? We are constantly told to keep our doors open, while cheap goods flood our markets. How can we possibly grow amidst such an influx? We need to prioritise an appropriate trade policy. Right now, Nigeria is essentially a dumping ground, hindering our development. Countries like China exploit this with unbalanced agreements like the China-Nigeria trade deal, which should be renegotiated or even scrapped. We have around 29 outdated multilateral and bilateral treaties, some written before our independence in 1959. These agreements need thorough review and potential revision to better serve our national interests.

It is important to recognise that the residents of Paris continue to receive financial support from Mali and Niger. This situation challenges the notion of true sovereignty for a country.

Maritime governance, that's my specialty, Mr President. Thank you very much for creating that Ministry. It will be a cash cow if the necessary laws are in place. For instance, I once told Mr President that I was your surveyor. You had asked me to survey your land, which you believed was only a thousand square metres. I informed you that it was actually five thousand, and you said, "Really? Please fence it!"

I was also part of the team that studied Nigeria's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Additionally, Nigeria was one of eight countries that the United Nations Ocean Strategy Giving Programme (UNOS-GPO) granted an additional 150 nautical miles of EEZ. Yet, we are not capitalising on these opportunities. The Chinese, for example, including the top restaurants in Hong Kong, refer to our prawns as "Nigerian tiger prawns." We are also one of the world leaders in tuna. We have tremendous wealth in our aquatic systems, but it's a shame we don't fully understand how to utilise it. Strong and effective laws are crucial to unlocking this potential.

Mr President, I can only offer you my best wishes. Nigerians do not crave the spectacle of court cases between the APC and PDP. Those are internal matters for those parties. We simply desire happiness under your leadership.

SUNDAY FEATURE

IT has been months of bold decisions, strategic re-engineering, and studied statecraftship. The expectations effusive, the yearnings harkened, the promises certain, and the hope ever so sure. Nigeria is in a planned drive under an ambidextrous and masterful pilot, President Bola Tinubu, and destined for majesty.

The road has not been without a few bumps, but the journey is as exhilarating as the promise of a propitious destination. We are soldiering through and through, and soon we will glide into a cruise. Nigeria is in very safe hands.

In just six months, Nigeria's economy is on a rebound; insurgency and terrorism is retreating, and our contracted global reputation resurging. The job is not yet done. A lot more will be done. But the process that will lead to a concatenation of auspicious outcomes has begun.

2023 has been the year of Renewed Hope. 2024 will even be a greater year of Renewed Hope, with some of the plans and programmes of the administration coming to fruition. Already, initiatives and policies such as the Renewed Hope Grants for Poor and Vulnerable Persons; the Presidential Conditional Grant Programme; the Presidential Palliative Loan Programme; The 3MTT programme and other digital economy programmes; the food security scheme, tax reforms, CBN reforms, and many others have come on stream – and are still maturing. But 2024 will be a greater year of renewed and manifest hope.

In this year of Renewed Hope, Nigeria decoupled from the ponderous yoke of petrol subsidy.

In this year of Renewed Hope, Nigeria's credit rating improved, with global financial services firms forecasting a reinvigorated economy in the coming months.

The year of renewed hope

2024 comes with great expectations and promises, especially as the Budget of Renewed Hope will begin running its course in the New Year. An understated element of the proposed budget is the allocation to health and social welfare – N1.33 trillion. A clear prioritisation of the nation's engine. FREDRICK NWABUFO writes.



In this year of Renewed Hope, insurgency and terrorism in the South-East and in the North-East receded.

In this year of Renewed Hope, Nigeria received pledges of investments worth over \$14 billion from a single event – the G20 Summit in India.

In this year of Renewed Hope, Nigeria saved over N1 trillion in just two months of removing petrol subsidy.

In this year of Renewed Hope, the federal government approved 50 per cent input subsidy for wheat farmers for dry-season farming to boost productivity.

In this year of Renewed Hope,

the Tinubu administration launched the food security plan to cultivate 500,000 hectares of farmland across the country to produce essential grains such as rice, maize, wheat, as well as other crops.

In this year of Renewed Hope, the Tinubu administration embarked on a diligent reform of Nigeria's tax system, setting up the Tax and Fiscal Reforms Committee to drive reforms, streamline tax administration, improve and expand collection, and revitalise the economy.

In this year of Renewed Hope, the CBN introduced effective monetary policies, clearing a significant amount of foreign

exchange forwards backlog, and initiating the ongoing unification of foreign exchange rates.

In this year of Renewed Hope, the Federal Government addressed some of the critical concerns of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU).

In this year of Renewed Hope, Nigeria launched a well-defined and articulate foreign policy, anchored on Democracy, Development, Demography, and Diaspora (4Ds).

In this year of Renewed Hope, the Tinubu administration charted a clear direction and a palpable path to the promised land for Nigeria.

In this year of Renewed Hope, the foundation upon which the triumph of subsequent years rests stands firmly ensconced.

2024 comes with great expectations and promises, especially as the Budget of Renewed Hope will begin running its course in the New Year. An understated element of the proposed budget is the allocation to health and social welfare – N1.33 trillion. A clear prioritisation of the nation's engine.

The administration is strengthening Nigeria's health sector through targeted and robust investments. To mitigate the cost of healthcare, the ministry of health and social welfare is redesigning the Basic Health Care Provision Fund (BHCPF) to boost access

to essential healthcare services as outlined in the National Health Act (2014). Also, a constituent of a more muscular health agenda is to increase the number of functional primary healthcare centres (PHCs) from 8,809 to 17,618 by 2027 across all 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

The prices of some pharmaceuticals are spiralling, and the government is raptly attentive to the concerns of Nigerians. Professor Ali Pate, coordinating minister of health and social welfare, recently announced that the government would establish a mechanism for the pooled procurement of critical pharmaceuticals in 2024. This initiative, he said, aims to mitigate costs and guarantee quality, making essential medications more affordable for Nigerians.

"In the medium term, Mr President's initiative to unlock the healthcare value chain will see Nigeria manufacturing increasing share of its generic drugs, medical devices, and associated content, such as vaccines over time. This will reduce our dependency on those only keen to exploit our markets," he said.

2023 is the year of Renewed Hope. 2024 will be a greater year of manifest hope.

Fredrick Nwabufo is Senior Special Assistant to the President on Public Engagement

"In this year of Renewed Hope, the Tinubu administration embarked on a diligent reform of Nigeria's tax system, setting up the Tax and Fiscal Reforms Committee to drive reforms, streamline tax administration, improve and expand collection, and revitalise the economy. In this year of Renewed Hope, the CBN introduced effective monetary policies, clearing a significant amount of foreign exchange forwards backlog, and initiating the ongoing unification of foreign exchange rates. In this year of Renewed Hope, the Federal Government addressed some of the critical concerns of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). In this year of Renewed Hope, Nigeria launched a well-defined and articulate foreign policy, anchored on Democracy, Development, Demography, and Diaspora (4Ds)."

WE are on the verge of saying goodbye to 2023. I know that the most frustrated amongst us would be the youth who have written a long list of targets that have not been met or the youth who has written so many job applications to no avail. Talking to the youths: Before you turn to crime such as yahoo yahoo, please note that all hope is not lost.

There are many small businesses that you can start in order to empower yourself economically. You do not have to wait for a government job or turn to crime. The current government is doing its best in developing small business by giving loans and grants. However, before accessing these, you must first of all do some research to see what you have the capacity and capability to do and then count the cost. It is after you have done your due diligence that you should apply for governments loans and grants to start your business. Furthermore, you can approach your community leaders, churches and mosques for sponsorships or capital to help you register and launch your business.

I have done some research and I found a professional business consultant called Baruch Gordon who wrote a piece titled "127 small business to start in 2024: An in-dept guide to start your own business", written on December 14th 2023. Please take your time to read through and search the link as follows: <https://management.org/best-business-ideas>. I believe that you can find something to do to turn your life around and escape the economic hardship and frustration that come with being unemployed. The following is Baruch:

The world is changing at an unprecedented pace. The advent of new technologies, the rise of the digital economy, and the changing needs of consumers have all contributed to a shift in the business landscape. Entrepreneurs continuously look for innovative, profitable, and profitable business ideas. This comprehensive guide will explore the 127 best businesses to start for 2024 that could help you create the ultimate business plan to turn your business idea into a reality.

The Most Profitable Business Ideas for 2024:

The world is evolving towards a digital economy. Technology is transforming existing businesses, including online business ideas, and creating entirely new business models. The AI revolution, for instance, is changing different industries and creating many opportunities for tech-savvy entrepreneurs. Moreover, the growing demand for personalized, convenient, and eco-friendly products and services opens new avenues for new business. Whatever your business idea, having a business plan is an essential first step for a successful business. Therefore, exploring the best small businesses to start in 2024 allows you to stay ahead of the curve, capitalize on emerging trends, and build your own business without needing a bachelor's degree.

How do you figure out if your business idea is a good one?: Validating your business idea is a critical first step in your entrepreneurial journey. Here are some steps to help you determine if yours is a profitable business idea:

Market Research: Understand your business idea's target market size, competition, and consumer behavior. **Customer Validation:** Get feedback from potential customers to understand if your product or service solves a real problem like the most profitable businesses. **Financial Feasibility:** Evaluate your business idea's profitability, initial investment, and ongoing costs. **SWOT Analysis:** Identify your business idea's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

What are the Most Profitable

Business Trends?: business ideas and business model trends are dynamic currents shaping the entrepreneurial landscape. In the ever-evolving world of commerce, trends such as sustainability-driven ventures, digital platforms for remote services, and innovations in health tech are gaining prominence. Ecommerce businesses continue to surge, and it will be among the best to start focusing on personalized experiences and streamlined logistics.

Additionally, the rise of AI and automation is revolutionizing industries, optimizing processes, and unlocking new realms of efficiency in the most profitable businesses. Keeping a keen eye on these

Hope is not lost



trends allows small business owners to navigate the currents of innovation, tapping into emerging opportunities that define the future and determine the best businesses to start.

5 Non-Negotiable Qualities in Building a Profitable Business for Small Business Owners to Medium-Sized Business Owners: While all small businesses are unique, successful businesses often share some common qualities:

Customer-centric: Small businesses prioritizing customer needs and delivering high-quality customer experiences thrive. **Agility:** The ability of a small business to adapt to changes quickly is crucial in today's fast-paced business environment. **Innovation:** A small business that continuously innovates has a competitive advantage. **Financial Management:** Good financial management is essential for the sustainability and growth of a small business. **Ethical Practices:** A small business that operates ethically builds trust with customers, employees, and other stakeholders.

A good business plan for a small business idea: A business plan is essential because it provides a roadmap, aids in strategic planning, facilitates resource allocation, attracts funding, manages risks, communicates the business idea, measures performance, allows for adaptation, enhances operational efficiency, and guides marketing and sales strategies.

Sound knowledge of your business finances: Being your own boss has its perks, like creating your own hours from your own home but having a grasp of your business finances and an idea of your overhead costs is crucial, as is keeping updated on the latest business news.

#1 Content Creation Agency: Startup costs range from \$20K to \$150K, and you could start freelancing, which would incur



updated with the latest content trends.

AI Marketing Agency: Starting an AI marketing agency can be as low as \$12 or as high as \$33,558, with an average cost of \$17,491. With AI revolutionizing various industries, marketing is no exception. You can start an AI marketing agency that uses AI tools to provide data-driven marketing solutions. What do I need to do? To start an AI marketing agency, you need to understand AI and its application in marketing deeply. You also need to build a team of AI experts and data analysts.

What's The Profitability Opportunity? As AI is still a relatively new field in marketing, you can charge premium rates for your services. However, your profitability will depend on the number of clients you serve and the efficiency of your operations.

Timeline: Starting an AI marketing agency can take several months to a year, depending on your existing knowledge and resources. **What's the Investment Commitment?** Starting an AI marketing agency can be moderately expensive, as you'll need to invest in AI tools and hire AI experts.

Pros and Cons: The pros of starting an AI marketing agency include high demand for AI services, high-profit margins, and being at the forefront of an emerging field. However, the cons include high startup costs and the complexity of AI technology, which may be too much for a small business owner.

Social Media Management with AI Analytics: The startup cost for launching a social media management company with AI integration typically ranges from \$5,000 to \$25,000, depending on technology requirements, scale, and marketing strategies. Social media is an integral part of modern marketing. You can start a small business that provides social media management services and uses AI analytics to deliver data-driven results.

What do I need to do? To start a social media management business with AI analytics, you must deeply understand social media platforms and AI analytics tools. You must also build a team of social media experts and data analysts. **What's The Profitability Opportunity?** The profitability of a social media management business with AI analytics depends on the number of clients you serve, the rates you charge, and your operational efficiency. You can attract more clients and charge premium rates by offering high-quality, data-driven services.

Timeline: Setting up a small social media management business with AI analytics can be relatively quick. However, building a client base and a reputation in the market can take several months to a year.

What's the Investment Commitment? The initial investment for a small social media management business with AI analytics is relatively low. You must invest in social media management and AI analytics tools and hire social media experts and data analysts.

To be continued

minimal expenses. In the digital age, quality content is king. You can launch a content creation agency that offers services like blog writing, social media content creation, graphic design, and video production, which may be a great business idea for the creative professional.

What do I need to do? Starting a small business like a content creation agency, you must assemble a team of skilled content creators to craft marketing materials, develop a portfolio, and reach potential clients.

What's The Profitability Opportunity? The profitability of a small business idea like a content creation agency depends on the number of clients you serve, the rates you charge, and your operational efficiency. You can build a successful business by attracting more clients and charging premium rates by offering high-quality content.

Timeline: Setting up a content creation agency can be relatively quick, which makes it a great business idea. However, building a base with potential clients and regulars while building a reputation in the market can take several months to a year. A business plan with a proven business model can help establish landmarks to reach as you grow and show a graphic design arm in the future.

What's the Investment Commitment? The initial investment for a content creation agency is relatively low. You'll need to invest in computers, software, and office space. When starting a small business, you can operate from home, create your hours, and hire freelancers to keep costs low.

Pros and Cons: The pros of starting a content creation agency include high demand for content, low startup costs, and the ability to work from anywhere. However, the cons have increased competition and a constant need to stay

I SHALL NOT WANT (2)
I am happy to continue our discussion this week on the topic, **I Shall Not Want**. In our last series, we established that they that shall not want are believers who make themselves the sheep of His sheepfold.

Now, if the Lord is your shepherd you shall not want. In the Hebrew, 'to want' means 'to lack', 'to fail'. That means when the Lord is your shepherd you will not lack, you will not fail. It may appear that you are failing but you are actually on the path of success. To want also means 'to lessen', 'to decrease' or 'to go lower' or 'to go without'. It means 'to have or suffer needs'. It means 'to be in want of something', 'to be deficient or to suffer deficiency'- just different adjectives to describe it. It means 'to be void', 'empty', 'to be destitute', or 'to suffer poverty'.

That's what the Hebrew says. It says, **"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want."** It is not a thing of negotiation; it is settled that when the Lord is your shepherd, you shall not want, you shall not lack, you shall not suffer needs or be desolate, rather He will make you **to lie down in green pastures** and will lead you **beside the still waters** (Psalm 23:2). Praise the name of the Lord!

Beloved, if you want to come to a place where you don't want, where you don't decrease or lessen, then you have to be a sheep in His hands, because He now said that this is how He is going to begin to make it- He will "make" you to begin to lie down- not force you to lie down- "in green pastures." A pasture means a dwelling, a home, a pleasant place, a habitation. So green pastures are the benefits of being a sheep. And you know what? The Lord is bringing you into green pastures. God has green pastures for you. It does not matter how rough life has been. God has green pastures for you, and the function of that is His Shepherd Ministry. He said, **"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters."** The phrase still waters here means waters of quietness. **"He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake,"** (Psalm 23:3).

Friends, just calm yourself down! If you want to be in contact with this shepherd, you must calm yourself down. There may be trouble and turmoil around your life but calm yourself down! In the midst of that God has green pastures for you. God has a place for you- a place of flourishing for you. Praise the name of the Lord Jesus Christ! Verse 4 says: **"Yea, though I walk through the valley of**

the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Now this is all the picture of the believer's walk on this earth.

Let's look at verse 5 of Psalm 23. It says: **"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies..."** Remember, the table is not just for anybody but for the sheep. That

generally, but believe that such a place exists for you! Do you believe that such a place exists for you? This place I am talking about is a place of 'no want', not a place of 'no desire' or a place of 'no need', it is a place of 'no want'!

Psalm 34:9 says: **"O, fear the LORD ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him."** I have said several times that the fear of the Lord is determined by



The Benefits of Being a sheep of His Sheepfold



means no matter what is going on in your life, nothing that is going on around you can affect your destiny. What God has said about you, you will come into it. But you must follow the ministry of the shepherd.

Another benefit for the sheep is in verse 5 and 6, thus: **"Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over."** That anointing is reserved for the sheep. Praise the name of the Lord! There are green pastures for you my dear friends, and there is oil on your head. Then it says in verse 6: **"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."** That is the ministry of the shepherd.

Now, it is God's desire- the Shepherd's ultimate desire to bring you to a place in your life where you shall not want. But the first thing about it is that you must believe that there is such a place. You must believe that such a place exists, and then not generally, don't just believe

submission and subjection to Him. My dear friend, I want you to get out of the crowd of 'they that don't fear him' and get into the crowd of 'they that fear him, they that are submitted to him; they that put their lives under his reign and control'.

Let's go to Luke 6:46. It says: **"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"** So that means when you do the things which He says, you may not be physically calling Him Lord but you are calling Him Lord by your life. How do you submit yourself to the Lord? How do you willingly submit yourself to the fear of the Lord? The fear of the Lord is walking in His way. His way is described by His Word. So when you do the things which He says, and you subject yourself to His yoke, you are operating in the fear of the Lord, you activate Him as your Lord and then He can start making some things happen for you.

Verse 47 and 48 of Luke 4 says tells us that: **"Whosoever cometh to**

me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock." The Bible uses the word "when," not "if". That is because the flood and the stream of life will definitely come whether the foundation is on a rock or on sand. However, if your foundation is on a rock, which is Christ, when the flood and the stream come, they cannot shake you.

I am telling you the truth, there is something that will come upon your life and the economy will not affect your rising. There's something that will come upon your life that people cannot sit down and say they don't like you but there saying 'they don't like you' will work for your good. Go and ask Daniel. Go and ask Shadrach, Meshach

and Abednego. Go and ask Joseph. When you have the Lord as your shepherd, you shall not want! In that place, people, places and things are simply working for your good, as long as you stay under His Lordship. The flood will arise, all other things will come but as long as you are under His Lordship, all you are destined for is to rise.

The last verse of Luke 4, which is verse 49 says: **"But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great."** I pray that is not your portion in Jesus' name.

Some few weeks ago, the Lord said to me that, "Your praise will bring you to a place of personal overflow". What this means is that the place that God has prepared for me- a place where I shall not want- is the place same place He has prepared for you, and you shall not want in the name of Jesus. It is an appointed place.

INTERNATIONAL

Colorado Supreme Court kicks Trump off ballot

COLORADO'S Supreme Court has ruled that Donald Trump cannot run for president next year in the state, citing a constitutional insurrection clause.

The court ruled 4-3 that Mr Trump was not an eligible candidate because he had engaged in an insurrection over the US Capitol riot nearly three years ago.

It does not stop Mr Trump running in the other states and his campaign says it will appeal to the US Supreme Court.

The decision, they said, was "completely flawed".

The ruling only mentions the state's primary election on 5 March, when Republican voters will choose their preferred candidate for president. But it could affect the general election in Colorado next November.

It is the first-ever use of Section 3 of the US Constitution's 14th Amendment to disqualify a presidential candidate. The measure was ratified after the American Civil War to block secessionists from returning to previous government roles once southern states re-joined the Union.

Tuesday's decision - which has been placed on hold pending appeal until next month - only applies in Colorado. Similar attempts to kick Mr Trump off the ballot in New Hampshire, Minnesota and Michigan have failed.

- Can Trump still run for president after Colorado ruling?

- Voters react to Trump being kicked off Colorado's ballot.

The justices wrote in their ruling: "We do not reach these conclusions lightly. We are mindful of the magnitude and weight of the questions now before us.

"We are likewise mindful of our solemn duty to apply the law, without fear or favor, and without being swayed by public reaction to the decisions that the law mandates we reach."

One of the three justices who dissented, Carlos Samour, though, said the government could not "deprive someone of the right to hold public office without due process of law".

The decision reverses an earlier one from a Colorado judge, who ruled the ban did not apply to presidents but found Mr Trump had participated in an insurrection. The former president's supporters stormed Congress on 6 January 2021 while lawmakers were certifying President Joe Biden's election victory.

Media caption, "Thrilled": Colorado plaintiffs' lawyer on ballot outcome

The decision does not go into effect until 4 January 2024, coming right up to the deadline for printing the state's presidential primary ballots.

That delay could be extended if the Supreme Court takes up the case, which legal experts speaking to the BBC expect it to do.

They also expect the Colorado ruling to have a tough time in the highest court in the land, where conservatives hold a 6 to 3 majority.

The Supreme Court will likely not uphold the disqualification of Mr Trump out of "institutional caution", said Professor Samuel Issacharoff, a constitutional law professor at New York University.

"It cannot be that the national candidacy for presidency is determined on a state by state basis," he said. "That would be a breakdown of democratic order."

The Supreme Court is also wary of state courts when it comes to the election, said Robert Tsai, a constitutional law professor from Boston University.

The last time it heard a case



TRUMP

involving a presidential election was Bush v Gore in 2000, when it stopped the state of Florida from carrying out a vote recount.

"Since then, the court has become even more hostile or sceptical of state court judges doing things to interfere with the election of a president," he said.

The Trump campaign and fellow Republicans, including other candidates in the primary, accused the Colorado court of playing politics.

Calling the ruling "completely flawed", campaign spokesman Steven Cheung lambasted the justices, who were all appointed by Democratic governors.

"Democrat Party leaders are in a state of paranoia over the growing, dominant lead President Trump has amassed in the polls," Mr Cheung said in a statement.

- The legal bid to take Trump off ballot, explained

The Colorado Republican party said it would withdraw from the state's primary process if the ruling was allowed to stand and one of Mr Trump's rivals, Vivek Ramaswamy, pledged to withdraw his name from the ballot if Mr Trump was blocked.

THE United Nations food agency has temporarily suspended food assistance in some parts of Sudan's al-Jazirah state where it was supporting more than 800,000 people, as fighting spreads south and east of the country's capital, Khartoum.

About 300,000 people have fled the previously peaceful state in a matter of days, since clashes erupted last week, the World Food Programme (WFP) said on Wednesday.

This includes thousands of displaced people who have left Wad Madani, Sudan's second-largest city and the capital of al-Jazirah state, in recent days as paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) advanced.

"A place of refuge has now become a battleground in a war that has already taken a horrific toll on civilians," said Eddie Rowe, WFP representative and country director in Sudan, where the national army and RSF have been locked in conflict since April.

Earlier this week, humanitarian workers reported that all fieldwork within al-Jazirah state had been put on hold until further notice due to the security situation.

WFP staff had been regularly providing aid to more than 800,000 people in the state, including many who had escaped the fighting in Khartoum.

"We are committed to supporting the people of Sudan in their hour of greatest need, but the safety of our staff and partners must be guaranteed," said Rowe.

He added that teams are

WFP temporarily halts food aid in parts of Sudan



A World Food Programme (WFP) worker carries a bag of relief grains to be distributed to Sudanese refugees, near the border between Sudan and Chad, in April 2023.

working to provide food aid in locations where it is still possible and resume planned assistance in other areas when conditions allow.

WFP said the decision was taken on safety grounds. But it described it as a "major setback" to humanitarian efforts in the country's breadbasket.

"We already lost our homes in Khartoum and watched as our lives were destroyed before our eyes. Now we are forced to flee yet again, leaving behind what little we had left," said Karim Abdelmoneim, WFP's emergency coordinator for al-Jazirah state.

"Hundreds of thousands are fleeing on foot, with nowhere to go. We are so worried about those who already lived through the horrors in Khartoum, and now find themselves trapped in Wad Madani with no way out."

On Wednesday, UN rights chief Volker Turk said: "I am very alarmed by recurring reports of widespread abuses and violations of

human rights in recent days amid fighting between the Sudan Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces in Wad Madani."

The UN high commissioner for human rights also voiced concern over the "dire" humanitarian situation in the wider al-Jazirah state.

WFP said if the conflict spills over into Sudan's grain-producing region, it would have dramatic consequences on agricultural production and food availability in the coming months.

"Sudan's breadbasket must remain for what it was intended - farming, not fighting. Otherwise, we may see an even more catastrophic hunger crisis as the lean season gets underway in May 2024," Rowe warned.

Nearly 18 million people in Sudan are acutely food insecure during the ongoing harvest season, a time when food is typically more available, WFP said.

Roman Abramovich loses legal attempt to overturn sanctions

RUSSIAN billionaire Roman Abramovich has lost a legal challenge aimed at overturning European Union sanctions imposed on him in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Abramovich had filed a lawsuit at the EU's general court against the European Union Council, which imposed punitive sanctions on the 57-year-old in 2022 as part of measures targeting Russia and President Vladimir Putin's close allies after Russia invaded Ukraine.

The court in Brussels rejected the challenge and also dismissed his claims for compensation, noting his role in the Russian steel company Evraz and the fact that steel provided a major source of revenue to the Russian government.

"The General Court dismisses the action brought by Mr Abramovich, thereby upholding the restrictive measures taken

against him," it said in its ruling on Wednesday.

"The [European] Council did not in fact err in its assessment by deciding to include, then maintain, Mr Abramovich's name on the lists at issue, in the light of his role in the Evraz group and, in particular, its parent company," it added, referring to the sanctions lists.

Abramovich, who also holds

Israeli citizenship and is a former owner of Premier League football club Chelsea, became one of the world's most powerful businessmen after the 1991 break-up of the Soviet Union. Forbes estimates his net worth at \$9.2bn.

In a statement issued on his behalf, Abramovich said he was disappointed by the ruling, which he can appeal. He said the court had not

considered some of the arguments used by the EU Council, including the proposition that Abramovich had benefitted from the Russian government - which he said was a false suggestion.

"Mr Abramovich does not have the ability to influence the decision-making of any government, including Russia, and has in no way benefited from the [Ukraine] war," the statement said.

"The court's decision to maintain the sanctions against Mr Abramovich was based purely on the court defining Mr Abramovich as a 'Russian businessman' which under today's very broad EU regulations is sufficient to remain sanctioned, even if you are just a passive shareholder in a business sector with no connection to the war."

The businessman has also been punished in the United Kingdom and had his assets frozen in response to

Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Abramovich was forced to sell Chelsea after being sanctioned by the British government for what it called his enabling of Putin's "brutal and barbaric invasion" of Ukraine.

The sale of the Premier League club for 2.5 billion pounds (\$3.2bn) - then the highest price ever paid for a sports team - was completed by a consortium fronted by Los Angeles Dodgers part-owner Todd Boehly.

It marked the end of the trophy-filled, 19-year tenure of Abramovich.

The EU has imposed 12 rounds of sanctions on Russia since Putin ordered his troops into Ukraine almost two years ago. The measures have targeted the energy sector, banks, companies and markets, and made more than 1,000 Russian officials subject to asset freezes and travel



INTERNATIONAL

Putin's confidence upstages Zelenskyy as Ukraine faces uncertainty

Russia's Vladimir Putin has committed to spending a post-Cold War record \$157bn fighting Ukraine and securing Russia next year – a 70 percent increase on this year's defence budget.

BUT Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskyy has failed to secure \$61.4bn from the US and \$76.6bn from the European Union, among his staunchest allies, riven by internal disagreements over spending.

During lengthy press conferences over the past several days about the wartime issues facing them both, the confidence exuded by Russia's president clearly outshone the mere faith expressed by Ukraine's.

A Ukrainian summer counteroffensive that petered out without significant territorial gains has divided allied generals, as Russian forces have in recent weeks crept forward on the eastern front, putting Ukraine back on the defensive.

"Practically, along the entire line of contact, our armed forces are, shall we say, modestly improving their position. Virtually all are in an active stage of action," said Putin in his annual, end-of-year press conference at the International Trade Centre in Moscow on December 14, departing from his traditionally reserved assessment of the front.

Three days later, he told a meeting of his United Russia Party: "Russia will either be a sovereign, self-sufficient power, or it will not be at all," returning to his pre-war rhetoric of "denazifying" and "demilitarising" Ukraine – code for installing a puppet regime in Kyiv and rendering Ukraine a defenceless buffer zone between Russia and NATO.

On December 19, by contrast, Zelenskyy fielded embarrassing questions on

why congressional Republicans in Washington and a Russophilic Hungary in the EU have stymied the political process of military aid approval.

"I am confident that the United States will not let us down and that what we have agreed upon with the United States will be fully implemented," he said.

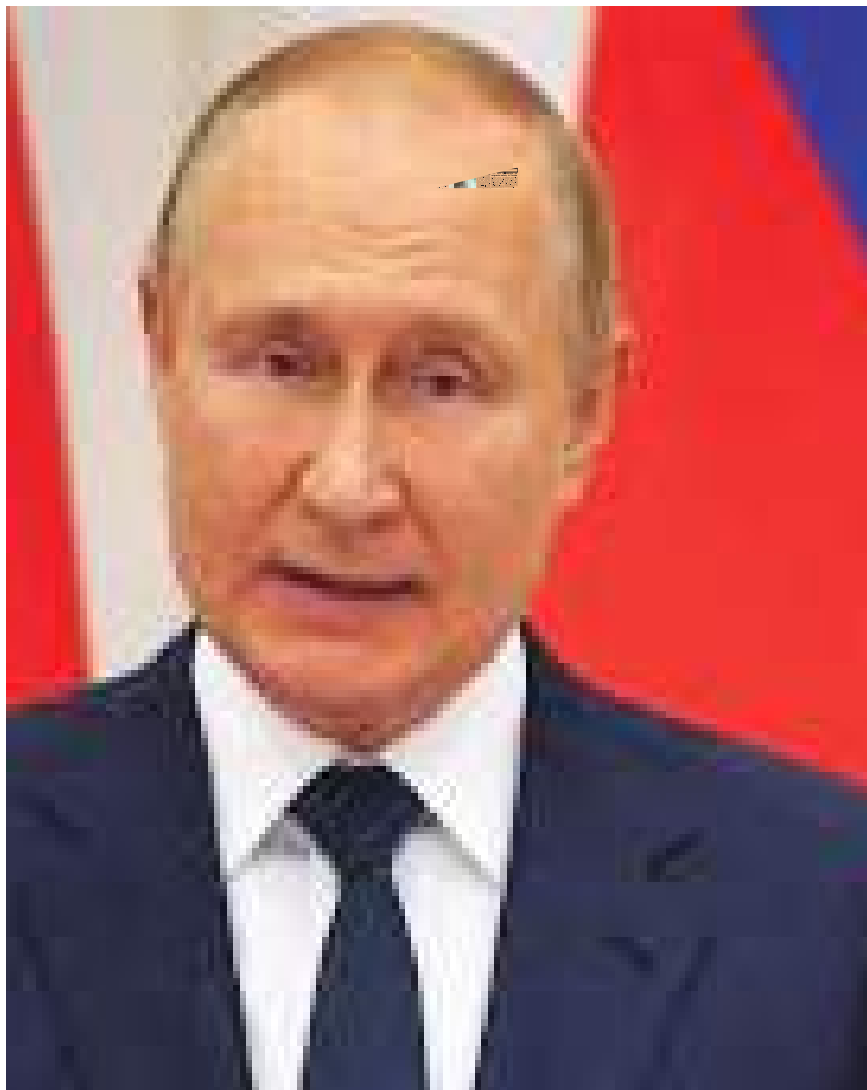
"As for the [EU's] 50 billion euros, I'm confident that a decision will be made in the very near future when they convene. It has been arranged in a way that ... there are other mechanisms in place to ensure that Ukraine receives these 50 billion."

The EU is proposing to commit 50 billion euros in financial aid to Ukraine over the next four years, as well as a separate 20 billion in military aid next year – a total of \$76.6bn.

Putin's determination was put into perspective in a report by the newspaper Bild on December 14, in which an unnamed Russian source described plans to overrun the remaining areas of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions and to capture much of Kharkiv by the end of 2024. If successful in the latter, it would roll back enormous Ukrainian counteroffensive gains in September last year.

The source described second-stage plans to take large parts of the Zaporizhia and Dnipropetrovsk regions and to advance as far as Kharkiv city by the end of 2025 and 2026.

Far from the presidents' decorous press conferences, a war now largely eclipsed in the media is being savagely fought with staggering loss of life.



PUTIN

Ukrainian marines who have taken part in operations across the Dnipro river in Kherson told the New York Times they amounted to a "suicide mission". They described high casualty rates and shelling so intense from Russian positions that they had been unable to recover the bodies of their comrades from the shallows of the Left Bank for two months. Nor have they been able to ferry the wounded back to base camps across the river.

"There are no positions.

There is no such thing as an observation post or position," said one soldier. "It is impossible to gain a foothold there. It's impossible to move equipment there ... It's not even a fight for survival," he said. "It's a suicide mission." Ukraine's general staff said they would withhold comment until a later date.

Ukraine is believed to have succeeded in placing a small force of 200 to 300 soldiers on the Left Bank over the past two months.

"These difficulties are to be expected for what is an economy-of-force operation with limited positions," said the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank.

The Ukrainian vanguard could be setting conditions for a more secure bridgehead and a launch of operations across the Dnipro, the ISW said. Suppressing Russian artillery on the left bank would enable civilians who fled the Ukraine-controlled right bank of the Dnipro to return.

Russia, too, is suffering huge losses on this front.

On December 15, British defence intelligence reported "exceptionally heavy losses" among the

newly formed Russian 104th Air Assault Division, during its inaugural operation in Kherson. The unit was sent to dislodge the Ukrainian bridgehead after marines failed to do so for two months.

Two days later, Ukraine's armed forces said 1,250 Russian soldiers had been "liquidated" in 24 hours, a staggering number compared with normal casualty rates. With them, 25 armoured personnel carriers and 19 tanks had reportedly been destroyed.

Ukrainian authorities did not specify where these highly attritional battles had taken place, but the general staff said Russian assaults continued against Kupiansk, Lyman, Bakhmut, Avdiivka and Marinka – all on the eastern front – and Novopokrovka and Robotyne on the southern front.

Ukraine's head of ground forces, Oleksandr Syrskyi, said Russia had lost 8,000 troops on the eastern front alone in the first half of December.

For Ukraine, there are shafts of light amid the gloom of a counteroffensive that did not deliver the expected results.

Ukraine has defended

itself from a Russian drone onslaught devastatingly well.

On December 13, it was reported that Ukrainian air defences had downed all 10 Iranian Shahed drones and 10 guided missiles of unspecified types that targeted Kyiv. The following day, they shot down 41 of 42 drones launched into Ukraine as well as all 14 drones and both missiles launched the day after that.

On December 16, Ukraine shot down 30 out of 31 drones, all 20 Shahed drones launched on December 17, and 18 out of 19 drones launched on December 20. That represents a 98 percent kill rate for the week.

Russia targeted Ukrainian energy and water infrastructure last winter, in a bid to break popular will to support the war. Last week, Ukrainian Air Force spokesman Yuri Ignat said Russia now had enough drones to attack Ukraine every day from various directions – something Russia has practically been doing for much of the autumn.

Even if it receives all the \$138bn it hopes for in military aid next year, Ukraine faces serious munitions and manpower concerns.

Zelenskyy said his military chiefs have proposed lowering the mobilisation age from 27 to 25 to put up to half a million more people in uniform next year, suggesting high attrition to the roughly million-strong force Ukraine had at the beginning of the invasion.

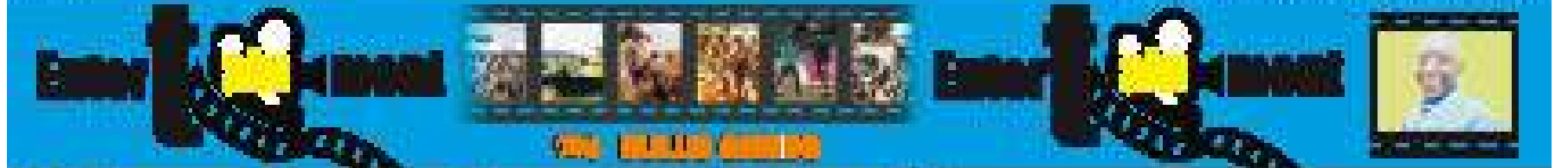
Putin, by contrast, said he had 617,000 troops across the front, some 200,000 more than Ukrainian military intelligence had estimated in September.

There are also problems with ammunition.

Ukrainian Brigadier General Oleksandr Tarnavskiy, who leads the forces spearheading the front's most important counteroffensive, at Robotyne in Zaporizhia, told Reuters that Ukraine was scaling back some operations because of shortages of ammunition "across the entire front line".

"The volumes that we have today are not sufficient for us today ... We're replanning tasks that we had set for ourselves and making them smaller because we need to provide for them," he said, without providing details.

"Zelenskyy said his military chiefs have proposed lowering the mobilisation age from 27 to 25 to put up to half a million more people in uniform next year, suggesting high attrition to the roughly million-strong force Ukraine had at the beginning of the invasion."



'I have always love modelling'

Modeling Sister Taggart, who hails from America's South's Lowcountry Area, takes time to be a commercial model and an actress. After Hollywood Nigeria 2024/25, she sits down with Farwell Magazine, she speaks about her journey and her experience modelling in the modeling industry and her brand.

How did you start modeling?
I have always loved modeling since I was 16 years old. This made me to always fancy and be in beautiful clothes, either on a screen or in magazines. I ventured into modeling in 2004 when I competed for Miss Beauty Queen. And I finished as a finalist (top 5). I then took a long break and came back in 2013 for the Face of Nigeria 2013 pageant where I won.

What was your first big break in the modeling industry?

My first big break was winning the Face of Nigeria 2013/14 title.

What was the challenge getting into it?

The Face of Nigeria 2013 and to my first show, working for someone to find my portfolio at that time, was a real challenge. But with God on my side and my personal drive, I was able to scale through successfully.

You won Face of Nigeria 2013, how

did that prepare you for Miss Hollywood Nigeria contest?

There was no-to-medium preparation though, because with my experience from the Face of Nigeria 2013 pageant, it is a heady task and all that was needed for the Miss Hollywood Nigeria pageant was to be properly groomed. The only difference between both pageants is that there is a regional segment and the crown is national pageant.

Tell us through your experience during Miss Hollywood Nigeria pageant?

It was an amazing experience, a time I won't forget to soon. During the Miss Hollywood Nigeria, the organizers gave us their best, ranging from camps, go-around, online voting and so on, and even after winning the Miss Hollywood Nigeria 2014/15 title, there was lots of opportunities from sponsors. I was featured on top national websites, blogs, and radio stations. I even got movie roles, an exciting hip-hop performance, and

Continued on page 13

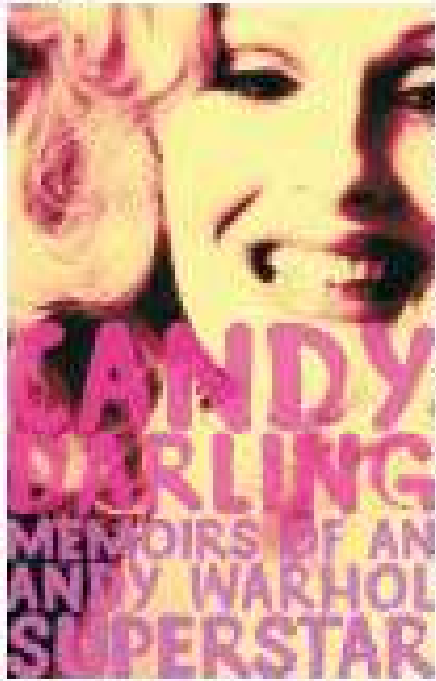


Biographies of remarkable women you need to read

These fascinating biographies deserve a spot on your must-read list.



History is short-staffed of women who made incredible contributions to society, yet are overlooked by the public. From pioneers and political activists to inventors and entrepreneurs, the biographies of these historical female figures deserve a spot on your must-read list, which is continued from last week.



Candy Darling

Rediscover the first true superstar in Candy Darling's personal journals, chronicling her time in Andy Warhol's Factory and her years in The Velvet Underground. Darling, who sadly passed away at only 28, was one of the most visible of Warhol's stars and starred in the first off-Broadway run of a Tennessee Williams play after the playwright specifically requested her casting. Her witty thoughts capture an era in the memoir.



Free Women

Often ignored by historians, Victoria Woodhull is a historical figure that drastically affected the political conversation in the United States. Woodhull's commitment to abolitionism and activism marked a major shift in the movement toward women's suffrage. She even ran for President of the United States in 1872.

Those who opposed her views (and who were often equally appalled by her unconventional background) heavily attacked Woodhull. She had been twice divorced and held a series of unrelated careers before running for President.



Even the feminists of her time were infuriated by Woodhull's campaign—she was an advocate for free love, birth control, and the first use of female pseudonyms, long before any of those ideas became commonplace.

Continued on page 13

EYE'S WORLD

Beauty

By Samridhi Srivastava

10 Christmas eye makeup tips

WONDERING how will you adorn your eyes for Christmas eve? Try some of these beautiful makeup looks!

We are almost ready to bid adieu to 2021, but before that, there is one of the merriest festivals we have to celebrate Christmas. While decorating homes and baking cake is all fun, Christmas can't be considered complete without glamour and fashion! That's why we bring some unique and amazing Christmas-themed eye makeup looks that will help you turn heads on the day!

1 Sweet santa eye makeup

This Santa-inspired eye-makeup might look tricky at first. But all you need to do is play with red glitter eye shadow, and finish it off with a thick coat of mascara. Lastly, also sketch a cute Santa cap above your eyebrow.

If you are donning a shiny and shimmery attire, you can club it with this fabulous rich-red eye makeup look. It is glamorous and the snowflake art is completing the Christmas theme.

2 Snowman-Inspired eye makeup



No matter how old we grow, we will always have a soft corner for the snowman! If you want to exude that love from your eyes, try this stunning snowman-themed eye makeup look.

3 Gold and glitter eye makeup

If you don't feel sure about painting too much on your eyelids and wish to keep it simple, go with this striking look. It has been created using just two, yellow, orange eye shadows and has been finished off with star and glitter stickers.

4 Jingle bells eye makeup

There is no Christmas without Xmas tree and jingle bells! Show some love from them by finessing this eye makeup look for the party eve.

5 Multi-Hue christmas eye makeup

The main colour of Christmas remains green, red, and white. This look has it all! If you are not scared to go overboard with eyeshadows, we suggest you must try this look.

6 Green glitter eye makeup

We know not everyone is not

a huge fan of using too many colours. For minimalistic makeup lovers, we got something for you too. The eyelid has been adorned with black liner and the Christmas punch has been added by painting green tree leaves on the corner of the eyes.

7 Gold snowflake eye makeup

Gold stands one of the favourite shades when it comes to the party makeup look. Club gold with white snowflakes to complete your Christmas look.

8 Christmas Tree-Inspired eye makeup

If you are wearing something green, going by the traditional Christmas theme, we recommend you try a similar eye makeup. Something like this that has been inspired by the Xmas tree.

9 Frozen eye makeup

Playing around with the hues of a similar shade can give you something as gorgeous as this icy eye makeup look. We love how it has been adorned with white and ice-blue beads.



@Robina_MJartistry

EVER'S WORLD

Weekend recipes

3 Broccoli Christmas recipes

1. Christmas Broccoli Salad

Total Time
Prep: 10 min. + chilling
Makes 10 servings
What could be more Christmasy than a red and green dish? Plus, once people taste this crisp lightly dressed salad, I never have to worry about leftovers.

Ingredients
4-1/2 cups fresh broccoli florets
3 cups chopped sweet red pepper
10 bacon strips, cooked and crumbled
1/3 cup sliced green onions
1/4 cup chopped pecans
3/4 cup mayonnaise
1 tablespoon cider vinegar
Dash pepper

Text Ingredients
Directions
Combine the first 5 ingredients. In a small bowl, stir together remaining ingredients until smooth. Pour over broccoli mixture; toss to coat. Refrigerate, covered, until serving.

Nutrition Facts
3/4 cup: 192 calories, 17g fat (3g saturated fat), 9mg cholesterol, 240mg sodium, 5g carbohydrate (2g sugars, 2g fiber), 5g protein.

2. Easy Steamed Broccoli with Garlic and Lemon By Katie Webster

Total time: 10 minutes Yield: 4
Easy Broccoli with Garlic and Lemon- it's a simple way to make steamed broccoli taste incredible and the kids will love it too! It's the perfect healthy vegetable side dish to pair with dinner.

Ingredients
5 cups raw broccoli, cut into florets
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon chopped garlic



1 1/2 teaspoon lemon juice
1/2 teaspoon lemon zest
rounded 1/4 teaspoon salt
Freshly ground pepper to taste
Cook Mode Prevent your screen from going dark

Instructions
Bring 1 to 2 inches of water to a boil in a large saucepan fitted with a steamer attachment. Add broccoli, cover and steam until crisp tender, 3 1/2 to 4 1/2 minutes.

Meanwhile, heat oil and garlic in a medium skillet over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Cook until the garlic is fragrant and just starting to brown, 30 to 90 seconds. Scrape garlic mixture into a large bowl. Immediately add lemon juice. Add lemon zest, salt and pepper.

Stir broccoli into the lemon mixture and stir to coat. Serve

hot.
Notes
Watch the garlic closely, and as soon as it starts to brown, scrape it into the bowl to prevent it from continuing to cook and brown more. If it gets too dark it will taste bitter.

3. Broccoli Forest Loaf By Hetty Mckinnon

Ingredients
Serves 6 to 8
1 small head of broccoli (about 250 g), cut into large florets
1 1/2 cups (185 g) all-purpose flour
1 tsp. baking powder
1/2 tsp. baking soda
1/2 tsp. ground turmeric
1/2 tsp. chile powder
1 Tbsp. sugar
1 1/2 cups (170 g) grated cheddar

1 bunch of chives (about 25 g), finely chopped
1/3 cup (65 g) black or green olives, pitted and roughly chopped

1/2 cup (120 ml) extra-virgin olive oil
3/4 cup (150 g) sour cream
1 large egg

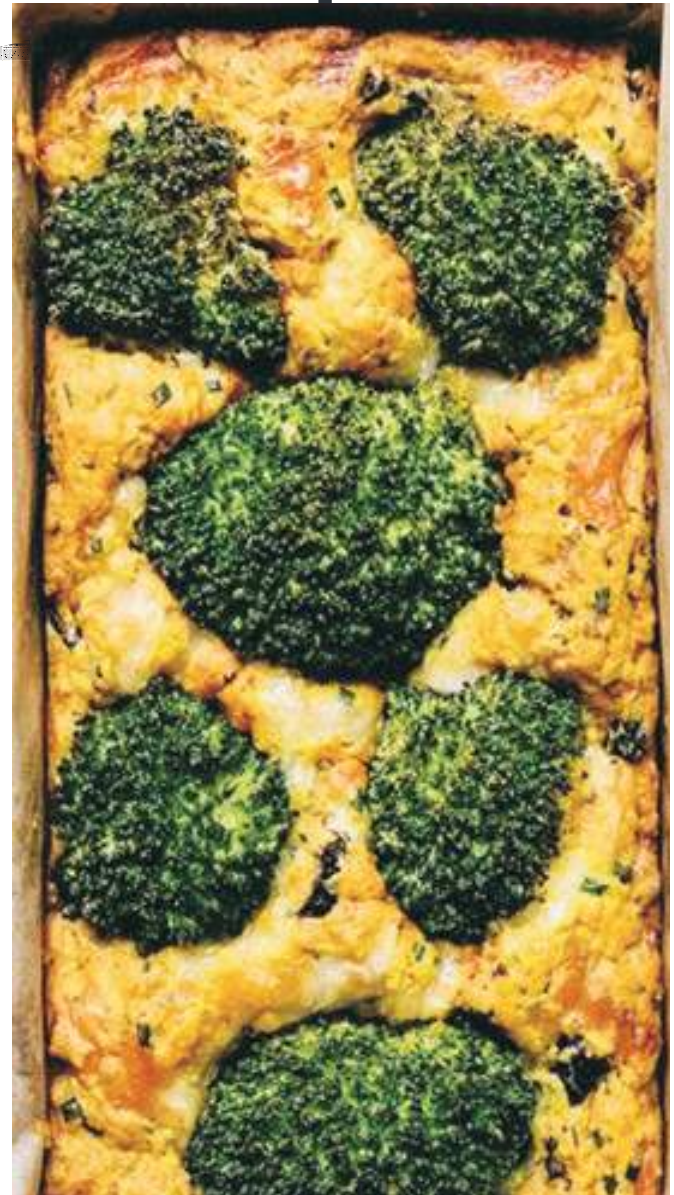
Step 1
Preheat the oven to 350°F.
Step 2

Bring a saucepan of salted water to a boil. Add the broccoli and cook for 2 minutes, then drain immediately and run under cold water until completely cool to stop it from cooking further.

Step 3
Grease and line an 8 x 4-inch loaf pan with parchment paper.

Step 4
Place the flour, baking powder, baking soda, turmeric, chile powder and sugar in a large bowl and whisk well to combine. Fold in the cheddar, chives, and olives.

Step 5
In another large bowl, whisk together the olive oil, sour cream, and egg until smooth.



Fold the dry ingredients into the pan for 10 minutes, then turn out wet ingredients and mix until just onto a wire rack to cool completely before slicing.

the prepared pan.
Step 6
Press the broccoli into the batter so the florets are standing up like trees (you may have a few pieces left over—snack on those!). Bake for 1-1 1/4 hours until the top is golden and an inserted skewer comes out clean. Let cool in the

Cooks' Note
Place any leftovers in an airtight container or wrap tightly in plastic wrap and store in the fridge for up to 2 days. To reheat, slice and warm in the oven or toaster.





Reality Bites

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How to diffuse family feuds this Christmas

By Becky Banham

We spend a lot of time with our families at Christmas and whether you normally get on well or not, there's usually a spat or two.

We put a lot of pressure on ourselves to make Christmas perfect, so if there's a bust-up it can seem like the end of the world. But, thinking about it, an argument or two is probably inevitable. The festive period can mean that people who don't normally spend much – if any – time with one another, are flung together under the same roof for a couple of days, if not up to a week.

Christmas is a time that's meant to be full of laughter and fun and generally, it is. But, there are bound to be occasions when things don't run smoothly.

Keep your eyes peeled for the following situations so that you can prepare for, or try to prevent any big bust-ups this year.

Beware of the big kids

A competitive nature rears its head at the mention of a board game, and tensions can run high – especially if the loser doesn't do so gracefully. Christmas has the potential to bring out childlike emotions and reactions in adults – for the good and bad – so prepare to play referee if needed. Steer clear of games that have caused angst in the past and put your foot down if the situation starts to get too heated.

Speaking of big kids, remember to keep any children in mind if things start getting tense. Ask for arguments to be taken outside if



sake of a slanging match.

Understand that some people aren't as willing to compromise as you

Everyone has their own way of doing things – and some people are all too happy to voice their opinion if your way is different to theirs. But, don't take criticism too much to heart and try to see light of these situations. Certain traditions are important to some people, so try to accommodate others as much as you can, but remember that you (and your Christmas traditions) are important too.

Recognise that trivial spats are

often related to emotions that run deeper

Underlying family issues have the potential to bubble up when everyone comes together. Resentment, jealousy and other powerful emotions, which can keep themselves under wraps for the rest of the year, suddenly explode at Christmas time.

If you can't ignore snippy comments, try to take the person aside and establish what is going on. Christmas is as good a time for forgiveness as any, so try to work out your differences and leave these problems behind you. Remember, no families are

perfect. What is the 'perfect Christmas'? No two people will ever think the same. We all have different ways of celebrating and creating our own traditions with our loved ones. Equally, no one is perfect, but we love our families in spite of this.



THEY'RE SOW WORLD

Living

Christmas outdoor decorations

YOU don't want to be the only house on the block that doesn't look great this holiday season. Use these 8 tips to help you with your outdoor holiday decorating.

Christmas lights wrapped around tree brand

The holiday season is almost upon us. The weather's getting colder, and soon the snow will be falling. Lawn and garden tools have given way to Christmas ornaments, gift wrap and artificial evergreens in most department stores. It'll soon be time to decorate your home for the holidays, indoors and out – and if you're the kind of person who loves getting in the holiday spirit, why wait? Use these eight tips to show off your festive spirit.

1. Choose a Focal Point

Decorating your home's exterior, yard, flowerbeds and other outdoor space around a central focal point can help you tie everything together and build a theme for your holiday décor. Many homeowners choose their front porch or even their front door as a focal point, drawing attention to it with a nice wreath, some lights strung around the railing and perhaps an artificial outdoor tree or two.

However, that's not your only choice. Your focal point could be a large evergreen tree in your front yard, a large statue of Santa in his sled or a nativity scene. Think about choosing a theme for your holiday decorations so everything flows together and you don't end up buying more decorations than you need.

2. Keep It Simple

You don't want to go all Clark Griswold with your Christmas lights. Start small, especially if you've never decorated the exterior of a home for the holidays before. Spend some time browsing the web for Christmas decorating ideas, and start with a manageable display. For example, just string some lights around the porch instead of lighting up the whole house. You can add to your display later or expand it next year.

3. Buy the Right Lights for Your Needs

If you've never purchased Christmas lights for your home before, or if it's been a while, you may be surprised at the options available to you. There are net lights for bushes, rope lights for illuminating windows, blinking lights, multicolored lights, icicle lights and various kinds of LED lights. Figure out what kind of lights are best for the display you have in mind,



as well as which lights will be cheapest to run.

4. Shop Secondhand

Looking to decorate for less this Christmas season? Who can blame you – Christmas is already expensive enough,

and surely there's a more environmentally sustainable way to get in the holiday spirit. Fortunately, you can score piles of gently used, secondhand Christmas decorations at most thrift

stores. Buy used and vintage wreaths, statues, nativity scenes and other items of holiday décor for a fraction of the retail price.

5. Play It Safe

When it comes to outdoor holiday decorating, safety is paramount. Use lights labeled with the UL (Underwriters Laboratories) seal of approval and make sure they're rated for outdoor use. Not sure about getting up on the ladder to string lights along the gutters and around windows? Hire someone to do it, or skip it

altogether.

6. Ditch the Staple Gun

When it's time to hang Christmas lights, leave the staple gun in your toolbox – that's how your grandpa hung his lights. Electrical tape is a safe, quick and easy alternative that won't damage your siding, shingles or fingers. It's also great for protecting electrical connections from the elements. Use Christmas light clips to safely and easily attach lights to shingles and gutters.

7. Start at the Bottom

When decorating something tall for Christmas, such as a large tree, start at the bottom and work your way up. Use a dowel rod staked into the soil to hold an extension cord for powering your lights, and work with the lights illuminated so you can get a better sense of how the finished product will look. Get help stringing the lights around the trunk of a deciduous tree, or zigzagging them through the branches of an evergreen, adding new strings as needed.

8. Decorate Smart

Save yourself some effort and expense and only decorate parts of the yard that people will see. Have a big tree that passersby will only see one side of? Just decorate that side of the tree. You may want to skip decorating parts of the yard that aren't visible to the public; however, if you have a back patio or deck that you plan to use throughout the Christmas season, feel free to decorate it with weather-resistant garlands, artificial trees, wreaths, lights or table arrangements.

Decorating for the holidays doesn't have to be a chore. With a little creativity and these helpful tips, you'll soon have an outdoor display that will inspire neighborhood passersby to stop and admire your work.



BUSINESS WORLD

Strengthening cybersecurity infrastructure for African trade

Over the past decade, digital connectivity in Africa has witnessed a remarkable spike, with an estimated 500 million internet users attributed to the ongoing expansion of mobile network infrastructure. **ADEBAYO ADELEKE** writes.

THIS growth has prompted the adoption of digital technologies in various sectors of the African economy, like agriculture, security, finance, education, government, and manufacturing. However, recent cyberattacks targeting prominent companies like Flutterwave, TransUnion, Eskom, and the Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG) underscore the critical need to prioritise cybersecurity in business strategies and policy formulation.

The current state of cybersecurity in Africa

As businesses embrace digital data storage and rely on cloud services to store sensitive information, they get exposed to the vulnerability of digital fraud. The prevalence of cybercrime, including hacking, ATM scams, malware attacks, phishing, electronic card fraud, identity theft, denial of service attacks, and Business Email Compromise fraud, is increasing and has become a thorn in the flesh. In Nigeria alone, the annual cost of cybercrime to the economy exceeds \$13 billion.

As digital connectivity growth in Africa brings opportunities, it also comes with challenges for cybersecurity professionals and employees at all levels of organisations. As the continent embraces the digital revolution, assessing cybersecurity awareness across sectors for prevention and safety measures against cyber attacks has become pertinent.

Strengthening security infrastructure will catalyse



digital economic growth in Africa and instil investor confidence. Nevertheless, an inadequate legislative framework and lack of advocacy and awareness about cybersecurity among the people contribute to a rise in online transaction threats.

Africa has suffered various forms of cyberattacks. With the surge in online transactions and data-driven operations, businesses have become targets for sophisticated cybercriminals. Cases of payment card fraud

on e-commerce platforms are widespread. For instance, Nigeria was ranked 32nd in the first personal online security quarter of 2023, with 82,000 leaked accounts, a 64% increase from the previous quarter. Also, Ghana experienced a loss of \$4.32m to cyber fraud between January and June 2023. In October 2020, Uganda suffered a significant hack, where hackers used around 2,000 mobile SIM cards to access the system and stole an estimated \$3.2m.

As consumers shift towards e-commerce and digital solutions, their focus on data breaches in the first quarter of 2023, with 82,000 particularly when making cross-border purchases. As internet penetration and connectivity rise, critical infrastructure in Africa becomes more vulnerable to cyberattacks.

Yet, about 90% of African businesses lack cybersecurity protocols, leaving them vulnerable to indirect attacks that can disrupt supply chains. The importance of cybersecurity awareness for African businesses

Africa's cybersecurity development is in its infancy stage, both in terms of infrastructure and regulations. Strengthening security infrastructure will catalyse digital economic growth in Africa and instil investor confidence. Nevertheless, an inadequate legislative framework and lack of advocacy and awareness about cybersecurity among the people contribute to a rise in online transaction threats.

Businesses and financial

vigilant, maintain a strong security posture, and safeguard against cyber threats, attacks, and vulnerabilities.

The role of governments and organisations in cybersecurity Many countries globally have implemented national cybersecurity frameworks and established institutions to combat cybercrime and leverage international cooperation. But in Africa, only 39 out of 54 African countries have legislation promoting cybersecurity.

Institutions such as the Central Bank of Nigeria and national cyber-response organisations in Tunisia, Ivory Coast, Morocco, and Kenya have warned businesses and citizens about rising cyber threats and cautioned them to strengthen security measures. Despite these efforts, many African states still need dedicated public cybersecurity strategies. To combat the surge of cybercrime in Africa, governments must prioritise cybersecurity.

Africa can mitigate the risks of unauthorised access, data breaches, and cybercrimes by ensuring the security of sensitive information. This commitment will inspire investor confidence and foster the growth of Africa's digital economy.

"Yet, about 90% of African businesses lack cybersecurity protocols, leaving them vulnerable to cyber threats. The rapid growth of the digital ecosystem in Africa has outpaced the development of laws and policies related to cybersecurity. This could compromise data integrity, business operations, and indirect attacks that can disrupt supply chains. The importance of cybersecurity awareness for African businesses. Africa's cybersecurity development is in its infancy stage, both in terms of infrastructure and regulations. Strengthening security infrastructure will catalyse digital economic growth in Africa and instil investor confidence. Nevertheless, an inadequate legislative framework and lack of advocacy and awareness about cybersecurity among the people contribute to a rise in online transaction threats."

BUSINESS WORLD

FG moves to improve consumer credit in Nigeria

THE Federal Government has established a Technical Working Committee to consider measures to enhance consumer credit in Nigeria.

The establishment of the Committee by the Presidential Council on Industrial Revitalization is a timely and strategic initiative aimed at investigating the present state of consumer credit in Nigeria, identifying the challenges faced by both consumers and financial institutions, and proposing a coherent regulatory framework that can significantly improve the consumer credit landscape.

According to a press statement signed by the Media Unit, Minister's Office, Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment, the committee will be chaired by Olawale Edun, Minister of Finance and Coordinating Economy, and he will be assisted by Doris Uzoka-Anite, Minister for Industry, Trade and Investment, as well as Bosun Tijani, Minister for Communications, Innovations, and Digital Economy.

"An efficient consumer credit system is a highly essential component of successful economies, as it works to improve market efficiencies and fill in gaps in consumption and productivity by providing consumers immediate access to credit, allowing them to purchase ahead of ability.

"The absence of a well-structured consumer credit system has been a significant impediment to financial inclusion and economic prosperity," the Trade Minister said at the inaugural meeting held earlier in the week.

Nigeria has numerous financial institutions and credit schemes, but many Nigerians still face substantial hurdles in accessing credit due to stringent eligibility criteria, high interest rates, a lack of awareness or understanding of credit processes, and inadequate credit available for lending.

Members of the committee at the inaugural session identified some major issues to be tackled to achieve a sustainable consumer credit framework.

The committee draws its members from the Central Bank of Nigeria's (CBN) National Identity Management Commission (NIMC), the National Insurance Commission (NAICOM), the National Institute of Credit Administration, the Federal Competition & Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC), and the Bank of Industry (BOI), among others, and agrees on a five-month timeline to achieve various objectives, including promoting inclusivity and improving access to finance.

The specific objectives of the Committee include increasing consumer credit uptake in Nigeria, enabling a sustainable credit system for the country in line with global best practises, and enhancing the supporting infrastructure



Tinubu

(technology, data, financial institutions, and global partners) to boost credit operations and equip players in the industry

In delivering on this objective, the Committee has adopted a holistic consultative approach that draws on the experience, knowledge, and expertise of the credit system ecosystem in understanding

the issues within the industry and defining workable solutions to addressing them.

Additionally, the committee seeks to address issues of corruption to foster economic growth. To achieve these goals, the committee will focus on developing a policy framework, harmonising data, and enhancing both institutional and legal frameworks to achieve

Reps advise CBN to adopt Chinese exchange rate

THE House of Representatives has called for the adoption of the Chinese Yuan as an official foreign exchange reserve currency with other internationally recognised currencies to protect the naira from further depreciation.

The resolution was sequel to the adoption of a motion moved by member representing Bogoro/Dass/Tafawa Balewa Federal Constituency, Bauchi State, Jafaru Leko, at a plenary session recently.

Leading the debate, Leko noted that the Nigerian economy was experiencing substantial shifts in the value of the naira, triggering economic instability and uncertainty.

He also noted that the International Monetary Fund proposed diversification of foreign exchange reserves for central banks of developing countries, including Nigeria.

According to him, the global economic landscape was evolving, and international trade dynamics were shifting, with China assuming a leading

role in international trade.

The lawmaker observed that the People's Republic of China had a stable and globally recognised currency, the Chinese Yuan, which was gaining recognition across the globe.

He said, "Adopting the Chinese Yuan as an additional foreign exchange reserve currency might mitigate the adverse effects of naira depreciation, reduce the risks associated with exchange rate fluctuations, and enhance Nigeria's economic stability."

"Furthermore, it would enhance Nigeria's trade and economic ties with China, a crucial trading partner."

Adopting the motion, the House mandated its committees on Banking Regulations, Banking and Other Ancillary Institutions, to liaise with the Central Bank of Nigeria to explore the appropriate mechanisms, policies, and partnerships required for the adoption, and report back in four weeks for further legislative action.

Meanwhile, the lawmakers also adopted a motion



NIGERIA'S total public debt rose slightly from N87.38 trillion in June to N87.91 trillion at the end of September 2023, the Debt Management Office (DMO) report has revealed.

The report which was published by the agency on recently, comprised the domestic and external debts of the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN), 36 State Governments and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

According to the DMO, the total external debt dropped from \$43.16 billion in June to \$41.59 billion as at September 30, 2023 and a relatively moderate increase of N1.80 trillion in the domestic debt.

"External Debt decreased due to a redemption of a \$500 million Eurobond and the payment of \$413.855 million as first principal repayment of the \$3.4 billion loan obtained from the International Monetary Fund in 2020 during Covid-19.

"The servicing of these Debts in addition to other Debts, are clear demonstrations of the FGN's commitment to honouring its debt obligations.

Nigeria's total debt rises slightly, hits N88trn



Patience Oniha

Notwithstanding, Mr President's initiatives and actions towards revenue generation remain important for Nigeria's overall fiscal balance," it stated.

Businessday' analysis of the report showed that out of the total external debt stock, Nigeria owe International Monetary Fund \$2.82 billion. Also Nigeria is indebted to the World Bank through the

International Development Association (\$14.09 billion) and Int'l Bank for Reconstruction and Development (\$488.19 million).

Others include: African Development Bank (\$1.64 billion), Africa Growing Together Fund (\$22.98 million), African Development Fund (\$973.02 million), Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (\$5.15 million), European Development Fund (\$34.30 million), Islamic Development Bank (\$236.11 million) and Int'l Fund For Agricultural Development (\$266.64 million).

Also, on Bilateral arrangements, Nigeria is indebted to China (Exim Bank of China) to tune of \$4.810 billion, France (\$563.17 million), Japan (\$55.34 million) India (\$23.66 million) and Germany (\$134.92 million).

FG to introduce fresh incentives to woo investors

THE Federal Government is introducing incentives to attract oil and gas investment as Nigeria, Africa's biggest economy, works to ramp up crude oil output.

Some of the measures being adopted include substituting signature bonuses – the payments made by companies to governments upon signing contracts – with lump sums for production, the Chief Executive Officer, Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission, Gbenga Komolafe, told Bloomberg. He also stated that

The country was tackling delays in licensing, as this would further increase the interest of oil firms to invest in Nigeria's oil and gas industry.

Nigeria's beleaguered oil industry has been a drag on the economy, with the country unable to meet the quotas approved by the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries, amid supply disruptions, crude theft and vandalism.

Since taking office in May, President Bola Tinubu has initiated sweeping reforms to revive economic growth, and a recovery of the energy sector is vital to achieve the double-digit expansion he's targeting.

Reducing costs for



komolafe

contractors and addressing the issues that hold up production agreements represent a "paradigm shift," Komolafe said.

In the next bidding round, happening "very soon," potential investors will "see that Nigeria is ready to do business differently," according to the NUPRC boss.

Tinubu has pledged to increase oil output, which is currently around 1.4 million barrels a day, to four million a day by 2030, an aspiration many analysts believe to be

implausible.

Boosting production is not only a question of cutting red tape. Nigeria has seen an exodus of oil majors in recent years, with firms selling onshore and shallow-water assets after projects were plagued by pipeline sabotage.

The government is working to upgrade infrastructure, end theft and vandalism and improve community relations, according to Komolafe, who said capital inflows into the industry had dropped by about 74 per cent in almost a decade.

ENTREPRENEUR WATCH

WITH CELESTINE D. ATTSAR



Fossil fuels: A dilemma for developing economies

Developing economies, like Nigeria, face a significant challenge: balancing the need for economic development with the urgent need to address climate change. OLUBUNMI BASHIRU writes.

THIS challenge lies at the heart of the fossil fuel dilemma, where countries heavily reliant on fossil fuels for energy and revenue must consider the consequences of transitioning to cleaner alternatives.

Nigeria's reliance on fossil fuels

Nigeria, Africa's largest oil producer and the continent's most populous nation, is heavily reliant on fossil fuels. Oil and gas account for roughly 90% of the country's export earnings and 80% of government revenue. This dependence fuels the economy, but it also comes at a significant environmental cost.

Impact of Fossil Fuels
Nigeria is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change, experiencing increased droughts, floods, and rising sea levels. Burning fossil fuels is a major contributor to these changes, further jeopardizing the country's food security, water resources, and overall development.

The Transition Dilemma
Nigeria's Energy Transition Roadmap

Recognizing the challenges and opportunities of transitioning away from fossil fuels, Nigeria has developed an Energy Transition Plan (ETP). The plan aims to achieve net-zero emissions by 2060 while ensuring energy

security and economic prosperity. Phasing out fossil fuels is crucial for mitigating climate change, but it presents a significant challenge for developing economies like Nigeria. A rapid transition could lead to:

Economic slowdown: Job losses in the oil and gas sector, reduced government revenue, and potential energy shortages could hurt economic growth.

Social unrest: Communities dependent on fossil fuels for income could face hardship and instability during the transition.

Limited access to energy: Without adequate resources and infrastructure, transitioning to renewable energy could leave many without reliable and affordable energy access.

Nigeria's Energy Transition Roadmap

Recognizing the challenges and opportunities of transitioning away from fossil fuels, Nigeria has developed an Energy Transition Plan (ETP). The plan aims to achieve net-zero emissions by 2060 while ensuring energy

security and economic prosperity.

Key elements of the ETP include:

Diversifying energy sources: Investing in renewable energy sources like solar, wind, and hydropower.

Addressing climate change: Nigeria can play a leading role in combating climate change and ensuring a sustainable future for the continent.

The Way Forward

Nigeria's path to a cleaner energy future will require careful planning, international cooperation, and unwavering commitment. The success of the ETP will depend on:

Strong political leadership: Government policies and regulations

must incentivize renewable energy investments and climate change.

provide support for communities and workers affected by the transition.

International support: Developed countries should provide financial and technological support to developing countries like Nigeria to facilitate a just and equitable transition.

Public awareness and engagement: Building public understanding and support for the transition is crucial for its success.

Nigeria's energy transition journey serves as a microcosm of the global challenge of transitioning away from fossil fuels. By navigating this complex dilemma, Nigeria can pave the way for a more sustainable and equitable future for its people and contribute significantly to

Conclusion
The transition away from fossil fuels presents a challenging yet essential endeavour for developing economies like Nigeria. While the challenges are significant, the potential benefits for the environment, economy, and overall sustainability are immense. By embracing innovation, fostering international collaboration, and ensuring a just transition, Nigeria can transform its energy sector and secure a prosperous and sustainable future for its citizens.

Bashiru sent this from Houston, Texas. She can be reached at bunmi.dayoayeni@gmail.com

"Economic slowdown: Job losses in the oil and gas sector, reduced government revenue, and potential energy shortages could hurt economic growth. Social unrest: Communities dependent on fossil fuels for income could face hardship and instability during the transition. Limited access to energy: Without adequate resources and infrastructure, transitioning to renewable energy could leave many without reliable and affordable energy access."



With **BULUS GAMBO**

'I have always love modelling'

Continued from page 18



career women, a n d entrepreneurs. It is sad that the society see models as prostitute because of how the industry has been bastardized and debased by s o m e unscrupulous p a g e a n t organizers and beauty queens. However there are still some of us who are very decent and upright in character.

Who or what do you consider as the greatest influence in your career?

My husband is my biggest influence, he makes me work hard to be better each day than I was yesterday.

What motivated you in establishing your

my pet project cut across the length and breath of Nigeria. I also got so many awards and recognitions, the list is endless.

How was your reign and the experience?

My reign was awesome, and I feel proud to say since, no beauty queen has surpassed my records. You can ask Google for clarifications.

How did winning the Pageant changed your life?

I didn't change too much though, I am still me, it only opened doors for me to explore.

Have you been sexually harrassed in the modeling industry?

Never, throughout my journey in the modeling industry, I don't give room for such.

What are the changes you would like to see in the modeling industry?

A lot, I want to see winners of pageants, go home with their prizes. I want to see pageants where all contestants can keenly contest to win a pageant on an equal ground without favoritism of any kind. I want to see pageant where contestants are not given tickets to sell, this will enable them crown a queen based on merit and not remitting the highest amount of money sold from tickets. The list goes on and on and on.

With the ongoing tag on models that they are prostitutes, what would you have to say about this?

Models are not prostitutes, models are ambassadors. They are worthy role models,

pageant?

The ills in the pageant industry is quite alarming, everyone cannot continue to be on the same page. As an ex queen and from experience, there are so many ills in our industry that needs to be corrected. I came back into the industry to enforce my difference by correcting the wrongs, and eventually begin the process of sanitizing the industry and to make the industry a safe haven for our young aspiring models and beauty queens.

Where do you see your brand 5 years from now?

Right now, we are the biggest, brightest, honest and fairest teenage pageant in Nigeria. And in 5 years, we would have become the biggest teen pageant in Africa, if not the world at large.

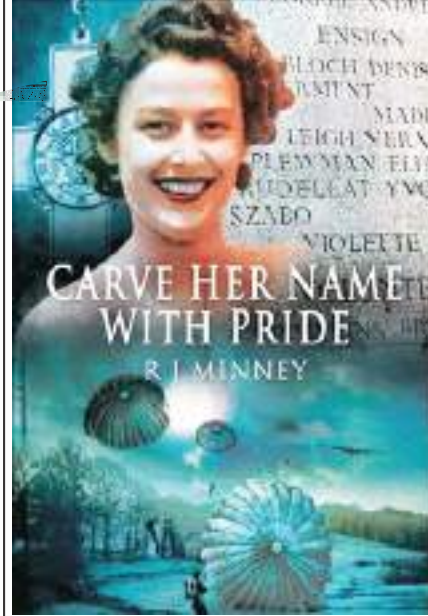
If you had to advise upcoming models, what would you tell them?

Do not ever compromise your integrity for any pageant organizer, the day you do so, you automatically lose your voice forever. Always stay true to yourself, do what is right at all times and be very free to decline any form of abuse from any pageant organizer. Also, before you apply for any pageant, please do a research for background checks. Ask questions, find out who their past winners are, because a large number of pageants in Nigeria today, are well packaged but fraudulent. Open your eyes.

Biographies of remarkable women you need to read

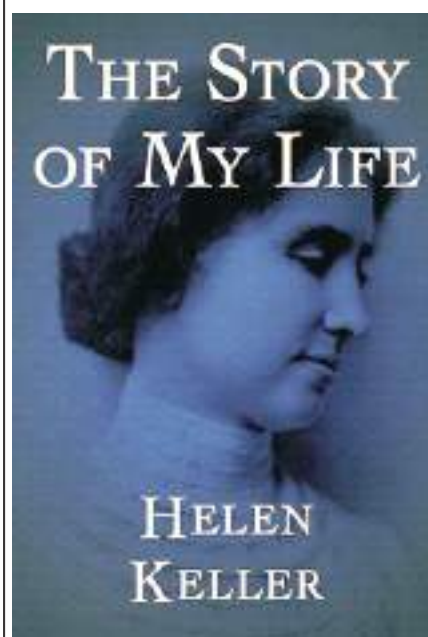
Continued from page 18

Carve her name with pride



One of World War II's most notable female spies, Violette Szabo was a French and British Special Operations agent in occupied France. Szabo's bilingualism was a major asset to Allied forces; she was sent into France to scout out the locations of German munitions factories undercover as a French secretary on her way to a new job. Szabo, sadly, was eventually captured by German forces and deported to Ravensbrück, a concentration camp outside of Berlin.

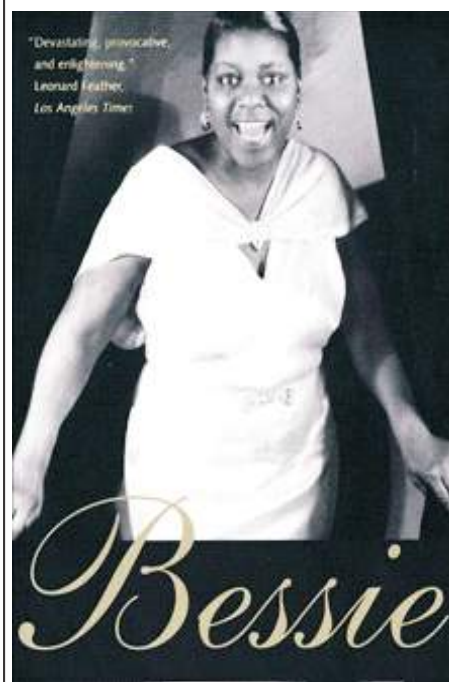
The Story of my life



A story that has been transformed into both stage and film adaptations, Helen Keller has remained an American icon for triumphing in spite of having lost her sight and hearing at a young age. With the help of her teacher—and later devoted friend—Anne Sullivan, she was able to embark on a journey that would change her life forever. Her perseverance led Keller to become the first deaf-blind person to receive a Bachelor of Arts degree.

Keller published this book when she was 22 years old; in it, she testifies to the darkness and silence she experienced before meeting Anne Sullivan. Her narration is rich with descriptions of her view of the world—she refuses to let her situation debilitate her understanding of the world. Keller's positive outlook on life and the testament of her willpower will leave you feeling hopeful.

Bessie



The "Empress of the Blues", Bessie Smith was the highest paid African American performer during the 1920s. Smith was performing by the age of 10, busking on the streets with her brother, Andrew. By the time she was 30, she was the biggest act in the black community, leading shows with as many as 40 supporting entertainers—singers, dancers, musicians—and touring in a custom-built railroad car. Now overshadowed by the singers that followed her, like Billie Holiday, Albertson brings the

iconic singer back to life through interviews with her family and friends.

SUNDAY FEATURE

Maximalist' demand fighters to vacate civilian homes

Foreign mediation in Sudan is failing because it continues to be misguided and based on flawed assumptions. On December 9, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) held a summit in Djibouti to address the war in Sudan. The gathering which was meant to boost regional mediation dealt a coup de grâce to the faltering efforts of ending the war. **LABDE FATTAH AL-BURHAN, DIRDEIRY MAHMED writes.**

THE official communiqué released after the summit spoke of a future meeting between General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, Commander of Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and Chairperson of the Sovereignty Council, and General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (Hemedti), Commander of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The Sudanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs was quick to issue a statement stressing that al-Burhan is not going to meet Hemedti unless the latter's forces evacuate Khartoum and a ceasefire is agreed.

For its part, the RSF responded with a statement clarifying that the meeting would take place only if al-Burhan agrees to attend as SAF commander and not as head of state.

Thus, it became clear that the meeting of the duo, the only substantive proposition the summit made, was not going to happen any time soon. This disastrous outcome came much to the dismay of many who awaited the IGAD summit with great anticipation.

On December 4, Alex de Waal and Abdul Mohammed, distinguished experts on peacemaking in East Africa, wrote a joint op-ed for the New York Times hailing Kenyan President William Ruto for "pushing for an emergency summit of East African leaders next week, where he will have the chance to submit bold proposals".

This "bold proposal" of a tête-à-tête meeting is not new, as Mr Ruto first put it forward in June. It constitutes the culmination of the misconceived hypothesis that the war in Sudan is merely a squabble between two generals, and if those two generals were to reconcile their personal differences, the war would end.

IGAD's flawed approach to the conflict was also made apparent in its decision to invite a senior UAE delegation to attend the summit. The communiqué recorded the presence of a high-profile Emirati dignitary in an entire paragraph and thanked "the delegation of the United Arab Emirates led by Honourable Sheikh Shakhboot Bin Nahyan Al Nahyan, State Minister for Foreign Affairs, for their support and input to the discussions held by the IGAD Heads of State and Government regarding the peace process for the Republic of Sudan on the margins of the 41st Extraordinary Assembly".

The IGAD summit was convened within a week of "earthshattering" revelations made at the US Congress by US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Molly Phee that there is "UAE support to the RSF and that is a topic of conversation including most recently during the Vice President [Kamala Harris]'s visit to the UAE for COP".

The American senior diplomat further stated that the publicity of the hearing at the US Congress and the Congressional request to the UAE to consider "the detrimental impact of their support to the RSF" could be "very helpful" in holding to account those fomenting the conflict.

A week earlier, Sudan's government had reluctantly pushed this matter to the open. On November 28, General Yasser al-Atta, an assistant to al-Burhan, publicly accused the UAE, for the first time, of supporting the paramilitary.

The Emirati response came soon after. As the IGAD summit was under way in Djibouti, the UAE declared three Sudanese diplomats persona non grata. The following day, Sudan's government responded in kind and expelled 15 Emirati diplomats.

The UAE has long been accused of



fuelling war in Sudan. In September, the New York Times revealed that under the guise of saving refugees, the UAE is running an elaborate covert operation through Chad to back the RSF.

Thanks to the Emirati generous financial support and sophisticated weaponry, tens of thousands of impoverished and landless nomads from the Arabian diaspora of the Sahel countries, particularly Chad, Niger and Mali, have descended on Darfur and Khartoum for land and loot.

Because of the Emirati lifeline, the RSF was able to use Kornet anti-tank missiles, armoured vehicles, drones and surface-to-air missiles in Darfur despite the arms embargo imposed by the UN on that region since 2004. The UN investigated the matter and parts of its report were leaked and reported by the NYT.

It is an open secret that the UAE is on a mission to fight Islamism all over the region and that is why it has been involved in the war in Sudan. However, it has another reason for supporting the RSF against the SAF.

In December 2022, two Emirati companies Abu Dhabi Ports Group and Invictus Investment signed a \$6bn preliminary agreement with the government of Sudan to construct the new port of Abu Amama on the Red Sea and to create an economic zone.

The announcement of the deal came shortly after the RSF and SAF leaders initialed the "Framework Agreement" with small political parties propped up to take over from the military and form a civilian government. The framework was brokered by the US, which along with the UAE, the UK and Saudi Arabia formed the so-called "quartet". Of the four, the UAE clearly stood to benefit from this arrangement.

It is perceived that this war erupted on April 15, because SAF refused to commit to the Framework Agreement as binding. Hence, it is acknowledged that this document was the first casualty of the war. The second casualty, if largely unacknowledged, was the Abu Amama project agreement.

This is because, after the failure of the RSF to take over in days – as was initially announced by Hemedti on April 15 – the civilian parties that

signed the framework are no longer on a trajectory to seize power. Bearing in mind the escalating geopolitical contest in the strategic sea route of the Red Sea, it is unlikely that the Abu Amama project agreement will be respected unless the same group of politicians linked to the RSF takes over after the war.

The UAE's support for the RSF has had a significant impact on the ground. As a result of this determined backing, SAF's aerial and tank advantage has largely been eroded. In October and November, the RSF took control of several cities in Darfur, including Nyala, the third most populous metropolis of the country.

Notwithstanding, in the last session of the Jeddah Talks, which were suspended on December 4, SAF reiterated its position that before a ceasefire is to be agreed, the RSF shall vacate civilian homes in Khartoum.

Referring to the recent withdrawals of SAF from Darfuri cities, European diplomats rushed to draw attention to the "glaring mismatch between the weakness of SAF's military position and their hilarious maximalist negotiating position". This is so reductive and simplistic. Pause for a moment and imagine a national army agreeing to a ceasefire that does not guarantee forcibly evicted citizens a peaceful return to their homes.

As a matter of fact, this is a commitment that was made by the two parties on May 11 in the "Jeddah Declaration". This document provides that the parties are "to vacate and refrain from occupying, as well as to respect and protect all public and private facilities".

The UAE has managed to tilt the scales on the ground in

favour of the RSF. Yet, it could be debarred from reaping the fruits of its labour at the negotiating table. Otherwise, what it did will invite other unwelcome meddling and help protract the war.

As de Waal wrote in an op-ed published by Foreign Policy after the ill-fated IGAD summit: "Biden's benign neglect brought the RSF to the brink of victory. Now, Washington has a chance to save Sudan."

Most of those who sat around the IGAD negotiating table had not the faintest inkling of what the forewarned RSF victory would spell for civilians. Nor did they have at heart the return of Khartoumers to their homes as an objective.

If you believe, as Ruto does, that this is a war between two generals, then for you, the SAF insisting on

evacuating homes is extremely annoying. From such a viewpoint, the panacea for the conflict is that the two generals meet face-to-face and sort out their differences as they please. The two would then decide whether civilians should return to their homes and when they could do so.

If you are Sheikh Shakhboot Al Nahyan or a member of his delegation, the priority is that the peace talks should empower your comrades in arms so the \$6bn deal sticks. If this requires that the RSF continue occupying civilian homes for a few years to come, then so be it.

To paraphrase what the late American politician Henry Kissinger said about communism in 1970: Why should we stand by and watch a country go Islamist because of the irresponsibility of its own people?

The population of Khartoum, in contradistinction to being maximalist, is now very minimalist. They simply want a ceasefire to allow them to return to their homes while the RSF militiamen are nowhere in sight, and law and order are reestablished. In the language of Hobbes, all that they currently want is a Leviathan to save the country from descending into a war of all against all.

These are people buckling under the joint pressures of hunger and homelessness. These are not people ready for a typically relaxed IGAD peace process that starts with differences on whether they have a right to return to their homes or not.

The views expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect Al Jazeera's editorial stance.

PUBLIC NOTICE

FEDERAL MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT



PUBLIC DISPLAY EXERCISE ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (ESIA) FOR THE PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION OF 5MW SOLAR POWER PROJECT IN HIEPANG-CHIT BARKIN LADI L.G.A, PLATEAU STATE BY NESCO NIGERIA LIMITED.

In accordance with the provisions of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Act CAP EI 2 LFN 2004, which makes it mandatory for proponents of all new major development activities to carry out Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of their proposed projects, the Federal Ministry of Environment hereby announces twenty-one (21) working days Public Display for the draft ESIA report submitted by NESCO Limited. This Display is to enable the public to make inputs that shall facilitate informed decisions on the project's EIA by the Ministry.

Brief Project Description:

The proposed project involves the generation of 5MW electricity using solar photovoltaic panels consisting of lithium-ion batteries with a life span of 13 years, = on a 50x50 sqm of land in Chit community, Barkin Ladi Local Government Area, Plateau State. The project expected lifes-pan is 25 years.

The Display Centers Are:

- Headquarters, Barkin Ladi Local Government Area, Barkin Ladi, Plateau State.
- Plateau State Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Mineral Development, Jos, Plateau State.
- Federal Ministry of Environment, Federal Secretariat Complex, Jos, Plateau State Federal Ministry Environment, Environment House (Brown Building),

Independence Way, Central Business District of, Abuja-FCT. www.ead.gov.ng

Duration of Display:

Date: 22nd December, 2023 - 24 th January, 2024 Time: 8:00am - 4:00pm Daily.

ALL COMMENTS RECEIVED SHOULD BE FORWARDED TO THE HON. MINISTER, FEDERAL MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT HEADQUARTERS, MABUSHI, ABUJA-FCT OR info@ead.gov.ng ON OR BEFORE 31st JANUARY, 2024.

**SIGNED:
PERMANENT SECRETARY
FOR: HONOURABLE MINISTER**

CHANGE OF NAME

SAMBO

I, formerly known as **SAMBO BISKILA BOT, BOT SAMBO BRISKILA**, now wish to be known and addressed as **SAMBO BRISKILLA BOT**. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take.

ADAM

I, formerly known as **GARBA ISHAKU ADMAU**, now wish to be known and addressed as **ADAM ISHAKU AUDU**. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take.

NEWS

COCIN Kingdom Things fellowship holds Christmas Carol

By EZEKIEL DONTINNA

KINGDOM Things Fellowship (KTF), a group of teenagers specially constituted and groomed as a gospel team to bring young people closer to God in COCIN Jenta-Adamu, Jos, last Sunday joined the world in celebrating the anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ by organising 2023 Christmas Carol tagged: "Grand Blessing".

The group which has been in existence since 2021, is a collection of teenagers within age 13 and 18 and were poised to mold themselves and encourage young people in the church to hold firm to the teaching and message of the word towards propagating the gospel.

With the motto: "Christ

and Creativity", KTF has, over the years been into sex education during Valentine programmes, Bible studies, prayer meetings and engaged other teenagers in talk-to-talks to understand the supremacy of God's message to the world.

According to the Group Leader, Mr. Walponen Linus Gobum, the celebration was to bring teenagers close to God and also to join the world in celebrating the anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ in style as teenagers of COCIN LCC Jenta-Adamu in Jos-North LGA of Plateau State.

He said they were looking forward to expanding the annual programme where it would engage many teenagers around the community to

help send the gospel of Christ Jesus to the younger ones and to also fish out the lost sheep among them to help reduce youth involvement in unholy activities.

SUNDAY STANDARD understands that the officials of these teenagers always tasked themselves and were supported by their teachers to organise these programmes for the past three (3yrs). They are hopeful to organise a bigger event when they have resources.

However, the Theme for this year: "Grand Blessing" was drawn from the 3 John 2. It was quite thrilling as they were seen singing praises led by Boniface Nanyep Zimtu, moderated by Yilzumma Daniel Golu. They were grateful to the Lord for witnessing yet another Christmas

state."

She said the governor has the commitment to ensure that every child has access to quality education in line with goals 4 and 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through increase in access and quality.

"The important persons that can translate these goals are the teachers and the government has provided institutions to facilitate the realization of this," she said.

"Today teaching is regarded as a stepping stone and beggar's job and we need to find a solution to this problem to improve the quality of education.

"As we engage in the discussion, let's be focused on strategy and innovations that will take us to a future where our education sector will be a beacon of excellence.

"I commend stakeholders

for their efforts in developing education and I am optimistic in the future of development of education in Bauchi State under the good and progressive leadership of Governor Bala Mohammed", she said.

PSN lauds FUL Vice Chancellor for outstanding leadership

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

THE Pharmaceutical Society of Nigeria, (PSN), Kogi State Chapter, has commended the Vice Chancellor, Federal University Lokoja, Prof. Olayemi Akinwunmi for his outstanding leadership and achievements in the institution.

The Kogi State Chairman of PSN, Dr. Lawal Muhammed Omuya, gave the commendation when the association paid a thank you visit to the management of FUL in Lokoja.

Dr Omuya, who acknowledged the transformation of FUL under Prof. Akinwunmi, noted that the establishment of College of Health Sciences and the Faculty of Engineering by the university management was a step in the right direction

Continuing, Omuya said, "You did say in your inaugural speech as VC FUL that you will make sure the institution takes a lead amongst the nine (9) universities established by the Federal Government in 2011 and to make FUL among the ten (10) foremost universities in Africa.

"I was not mincing words in our last visit dated June 7th 2021 to acknowledge and express our profuse joy for the bold and courageous steps you took to establish College of Medicine and Faculty of Engineering when we suggested that you use your good office to rephrase the name College of Medicine to College of Health Sciences

By PETER TITLE

GOVERNOR Caleb Mutfwang of Plateau State has admonished the 6th Regular Course of the Police Academy, Wudil, Kano who are Plateau indigenes to live above and adhere strictly to the rules governing the institution.

According to him, the state government would be proud of them, if they live above board by exhibiting transparency while discharging various duties as Police Officers to the nation.

Governor Mutfwang handed these admonitions when the students Cadets paid him a courtesy visit at the New Government House, Little Rayfield, Jos recently. He stressed that the state would continue to treasure them.

He urged them to go out with the mindset of serving humanity and not looking for money. "I enjoin you to be transparent in all duties. Your minds should be how to serve your nation diligently but not on how to make money at all costs. By cutting corners, you will cut your career short", the governor advised them

Governor Mutfwang assured them that the state government would ensure that their stay at the Academy in Wudil, Kano State was less stressful and urged them to be ambassadors of Plateau and Nigeria as a whole.

He congratulated them for coming to the end of their attachment in Jos and by virtue, the end of their studies

Mutfwang charges Police Cadets to live above board



Mutfwang

at the Police Academy, Wudil, stressing that that has gone to show that they were hard working. Mutfwang wished them the best as they were going out into the society to serve.

Earlier, the leader of the students Cadets of the 6th Regular Course, Plateau indigenes, Koplama Emmanuel, intimated Governor Mutfwang that they were in the state for a mandatory attachment which they have completed. Emmanuel informed the governor that it was the tradition to pay a visit to the governor of the state, that

follow the protocol.

He commended the governor for changing the face of the state within a short period of coming into office and urged him not to be detracted but to focus on providing the needed dividends of democracy to the people of the state irrespective of their affiliation.

He assured the governor that they would be good ambassadors and would make the state proud before and after their stay at the Academy and thanked him for the warm reception accorded them despite the short notice.

Governor Mohammed committed to ensuring access to education

From Abbas Gungura, Bauchi

IN an effort to achieve goals 4 and 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals in Bauchi State, the State Commissioner of Higher Education, Dr Lydia Tsammani, at the ongoing two day education summit said the administration of Governor Bala Mohammed, is committed to ensuring that every child has access to quality education.

Dr. Lydia stated this at the ongoing two today Education Summit taking place at the Sultan Sa'ad Abubakar Hajj Camp, Bauchi. She pointed out that the summit would surely bring the state out of its present education inadequacy.

According to her, "Your collective contributions to the issues involved will advance education in the



•Mohammed



Akinwunmi

to accommodate other health related courses, so that our children could be relieved of the stress they go through when seeking admission into universities for these courses - Pharmacy, Nursing, Medical Laboratory Sciences. This, you immediately and graciously granted."

"With the take off standard you and your management team have set, sir, we are convinced that the institution will get there sooner than we envisaged.

"We are happy as a professional body that FUL has joined the few universities in Nigeria offering Doctor of Pharmacy programme. Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm.D) is the minimum qualification to practice as a pharmacist in advanced countries like United State of America (USA). This is a

major achievement, sir."

"For this reason and more, we are here again to say a big THANK YOU as you have made good your promise at our Pharmacy Week 2023, through your representative, in your acceptance speech during the award conferment as FRIEND OF PHARMACY - A noble and prestigious profession."

"In that event, you promised us that the Pharmacy programme in FUL will commence before the next edition of Pharmacy Week. This is fast coming to past".

He described the university's Vice Chancellor as a man of honour and symbol of contemporary development, adding that, under his leadership, the Professor of History has demonstrated competence

and capacity in all his dealings.

The PSN Chairman reassured the university management that manpower will not be

a problem when the institution kickstarts pharmacy programme in their next academic session.

"Manpower will not be a problem as we have more than enough pure bred pharmacy professionals, eminently qualified to complement your good efforts as lecturers, even in our midst as we speak," he added.

Responding, the Vice Chancellor, Federal University Lokoja, Prof Olayemi Durotimi Akinwunmi sought the collaboration of PSN in providing the resource materials in terms of textbooks to equip the library, reach out to well meaning Nigerians to help the institution in terms of funding as Federal Government funding may not be sufficient.

Other demands of the university are provision of support to the institution in terms of manpower, especially academics.

Akinwunmi said, "On behalf of the management, staff and students of this promising institution, I am reassuring the Pharmaceutical Society of Nigeria that admission into the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences will kickstart next year, 2024. The faculty will be standing on its own and will be

News

CAS promises to live up to expectations

By DORCAS PANKYES

THE Chief of Air Staff (CAS), Air Marshal Hasan Abubakar has stated that his command's philosophy which is, "To transform the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) into an agile and resilient Force that effectively meets the air power demands of national security in all operational environments" is critical towards building the capabilities of the NAF for future air warfare.

The Chief of Air Staff made this known in a statement issued to newsmen in Abuja by The Nigerian Air Force Director of Public Relations and Information, Air Commodore Edward Gabkwet.

He also noted that any Armed Forces that fails to prepare for the probable future will always be reactive rather than proactive in its approach to national security issues.

The CAS made these statements recently, during his paper presentation as a guest lecturer at the Armed Forces Command and Staff College, Jaji, Kaduna State.

Speaking on the topic, "The Future of Air Warfare in the Nigerian Air Force - My Command Philosophy," Air Marshal Abubakar went on to note that the nature of future air warfare would be determined by a number of factors, including internal and external threats to national security, the national economic fortune, and the air power capabilities of the service.

The CAS reeled out the key enablers of his philosophy and how they would impact on the service. In his first key enabler which focuses on "Optimising force structure and establishment for enhanced operational effectiveness," Air Marshal Abubakar stated that the NAF under his administration is acquiring more platforms including Unmanned Aerial Vehicles for real time Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance and precision strikes, as well as replacing its medium and heavy airlift capabilities for more effective and rapid mobility.

Additionally, he continued, efforts were in the final stages to conduct the first-ever capabilities-based assessment of the NAF, which would enhance the operational effectiveness of the Service in current and future air warfare.

In analyzing the significance of the second key enabler which is on "Deliberate training and mission-oriented force development", the CAS stated that human capacity development in the NAF under his watch, is consciously tailored towards achieving assigned tasks and bridging current and future gaps in NAF capabilities.

He also noted that in order to address NAF's present and future air combat needs, about 1,476 personnel are currently enrolled in several training programmes, both domestically and internationally. He was also emphatic when he noted that, "All selections for the courses will be merit-based to ensure that only the most qualified are selected to give the NAF value for money."

While discussing the relevance of the third key enabler on



Abubakar

"Proactive logistics support and strong maintenance culture", the CAS stated that the NAF is implementing a holistic aircraft maintenance planning system which entails that all the spares and consumables requirements for future aircraft inspections for the next 4 quarters are compiled in advance and processed with immediate effect. This, according to him, would invariably ensure that aircraft were available for quick combat against enemies in order to meet national security objectives.

Speaking on the fourth key enabler which focuses on "prioritizing research and development, leveraging cutting-edge technology, strategic partnerships and lessons learnt," the CAS stated that the NAF was making significant gains toward domestic manufacturing of required capabilities through research and development activities in addition to utilizing cutting-edge technologies.

According to him, "The NAF has been manufacturing various military equipment to support counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations through the Air Force Research and Development Center."

Regarding the last key enabler that entails "Maintaining a highly motivated Force by enhancing welfare and infrastructural renewal," the CAS maintained that to ensure that NAF personnel accomplish personal and organizational goals, the Service, he said, has a role to play in providing the enabling environment. This, according to him, led to his decision to convene a committee of officers to ascertain the accommodation deficit of the NAF with a view to addressing the lingering problem of accommodation shortage. New uniforms and accoutrements, he continued, would also be issued to all personnel on a yearly basis just as payments of all entitlements are now being paid as at when due and without delay. These efforts, according to the CAS, would put NAF personnel in the right state of psychological readiness for air warfare now and in the future.

Air Marshal Abubakar noted that if the challenges militating

against operational effectiveness in the NAF persist, they could hamper its combat readiness for future air warfare. Prominent amongst these challenges, according to him, are; dwindling economic fortunes, low technological base and inadequate strategic alliance.

He, however, stated that it remained incumbent on the Service to surmount these challenges and build the NAF combat readiness for both current and future battles.

PLAMWASSA new general manager promises team work

By JIDAUNA DARING

NEWLY appointed General Manager (GM) Plateau Municipal Water Supply and Sanitation Agency (PLAMWASSA), Engr. Julius Ndah Akawu has promised to carry both old and new management along so as to move the agency to greater height in the state.

Engr. Akawu stated this shortly after receiving handover note from the outgoing General Manager, Mr. Jelkyes Dakat, held at the conference room of the Ministry for Water Resources and Energy Jos, last Wednesday.

The General Manager on behalf of the new management, thanked Governor Caleb M. Mutwang of Plateau State for finding them worthy to serve in different capacities as management of the agency. He also promised that they would not disappoint the governor and the entire people of the state, particularly with the task given them.

He described the occasion as a landmark in the history of the agency since its inception as far as the law that established the agency was concerned in the state.

Engr. Akawu told the former management of the agency that their coming on board was not to remove anybody from the agency, but to work together as a team in order to further strengthen the good work that the former management had done in the agency.

He urged the new management to bring their various wealth of experience to bear from the water sector to the agency, adding that all hands must be on deck among

PLATEAU State Central Medical Store is set to receive a total facelift among the selected twenty-two (22) State Warehouses in Nigeria from UNICEF ongoing modern upgrade of facilities across the country for the storage of health commodities towards a better health service delivery.

The UNICEF Aid Officer Nigeria, Bauchi Field Office, Oluseyi Olasode, disclosed this when the Plateau State Government handed over the facility to them for onward delivery to the contractor to immediately carry out remodeling exercise of this facility within four (4) months.

Speaking to journalists shortly after handing over the facility to the contractor, the Aid Officer, UNICEF Nigeria, said, "Plateau State is one of the five (5) states under Bauchi Field Office, UNICEF Nigeria.

UNICEF in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Health with Financial support from Global Funds, is upgrading twenty-two (22) warehouses across the country.

"Out of these states, one is Plateau State and this is why we are here today. We have had the design for the place and have engaged the contractor to upgrade this property to a modern warehouse. We are going to have Code Room, adequate facility that befits a modern warehouse for storage of

UNICEF to remodel Plateau Central Medical Store

By EZEKIEL DONTINNA

health commodities.

"Health commodity is the major when it comes to service delivery and that is why we are here today working with Plateau State Government to make sure that there is adequate health commodities across the country.

"For our Bauchi Field Office, we have done three; Plateau, Adamawa and Gombe States and this is the third one we are doing", he highlighted.

Olasode, however, disclosed that there were Supervisory Films that would ensure that materials used would be of standard and in compliance to project design and the work was expected to be completed within four (4) months and be delivered where the Executive Governor of Plateau State would commission the project.

On his part, Representative of the Contracting Firm, Beacon Creative Ideas Limited, Dubem Okereke said, "We will deliver before the end of January 2024 and by that period, the facility should be in full operation. For quality, we went through the eye of a

needle before we came out successfully for this project. So, the issue of quality is not a problem, but timing".

Meanwhile, the Plateau State Commissioner of Health, Dr. Cletus Bako Shurkuk, represented by the Director of Pharmaceutical Services, Pharm. Haruna Yaret, thanked God for this great privileges that it was a dream come true.

"So, we are grateful to UNICEF for finding Plateau State worthy among the 22 states to benefit from this exercise. It may interest you to know that this place was built in 1976 and ever since, it has not received any facelift. I want to appeal to the contractor to work according to the timeline and handover by December 2023", he appealed.

However, the Executive Secretary, Plateau State Drugs & Medical Commodities Management Agency, Pharm. Fabian Agoh, assured of a secured space at the JIB to keep or house the commodities they were transferring to enable the contractor to carry out his job within the timeframe to ensure the integrity of the commodities.

the citizens so as to achieve the aim of the agency.

Earlier in his farewell remarks, the outgoing Ag General Manager, PLAMWASSA, Mr. Dakat Jelkyes appreciated the God for giving him the grace to control the programmes and activities of the agency. He also thanked the old management for the support and cooperation accorded him, and described such spirit as a spirit that was geared towards moving the agency forward.

Mr. Jelkyes said that hard work, dedication and unwavering commitment to excellence, empathy, and professionalism has further changed his perspective about

service and has equally inspired him on daily basis to contribute immensely to the collective success they have all together achieved in the agency.

He disclosed that the memories created and the impact made together with old management would forever hold a special place in his heart. He added that he had work with a high sense of fulfilment and pride having been associated with such an extraordinary team.

"My best wishes are with all you for continued success, growth and the fulfillment of every aspiration you hold: The outgoing Ag General Manager also called on both new and old management to

give the new General Manager the necessary support at all times. He pointed out that some of the remarkable achievements made so far in the agency within the two years of his staying in office as Ag General Manager, was not unconnected to team work.

Our correspondent reports that the newly appointed management includes; Engr. Julius Ndah Akawu as General Manager, Mrs Ladi Nimishit Tanko: asst. GM Admin & Finance, Mr. Jonathan Kefas Dayas; Asst. GM operation, Engr. Fyaklet Markus Asst. GM Technical and Mr. Ajer Amangha Adang: Asst. GM Quality Assurance.



outgone GM of PLAMWASSA, Mr. Jelkyes handing over to the new GM, Engr. Akawu

NEWS

230,000 households to get FG's N25,000 palliative monthly

From

AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

ABOUT 230,411 households are expected to receive the Federal Government's N25,000 monthly as palliative for fuel subsidy removal in Kogi.

The National Enrolment Manager, National Cash Transfer Office (NCTO), Hajiya Sadiya Abdullahi, said this when she spoke with our correspondent during the enrollment for targeted beneficiaries in Lokoja.

She said the programme, tagged: "Renewed Hope Initiative Intervention", was leveraging the National Social Safety Net project structure.

This, she said, would enable Tinubu to fulfill his promise of cushioning the economic shock of fuel subsidy removal.

"Over 15 million households across the country will benefit from the N25,000 monthly disbursement for three months in the first phase," she said.

Abdullahi said that the beneficiaries were sourced from the verified National Social Safety Net C

"In Nigeria, a total number of 15 million will be supported through one primary recipient per household.

"In Kogi, we have a total of 230,411 beneficiaries for the first phase of the intervention which is one third of the total number of beneficiaries to be captured.

"This activity is a transparency and accountability process; you can see we have displayed the list of beneficiaries both banked and unbanked so as to enrol them for payment.

"The system is fully digital, and the unbanked beneficiaries are supported to have bank accounts for financial inclusion," she said.

Also speaking, Mrs Bridget James, the Head of Operation, Kogi Cash Transfer Unit, said



Tinubu

the exercise was meant to display the list of beneficiaries and proceed with their data capturing.

"Most of the beneficiaries are unbanked, that is why we are capturing them to get their details so long their names are on the National Social Register (NSR).

"The capturing of their details would in turn qualify them to partake of the N25,000 monthly for three months to cushion the adverse effects of fuel subsidy removal," she said.

Okpanachi said the exercise would capture over 171,000 new beneficiaries in addition to about 74,000 existing households who had already benefited from the monthly N5,000 Cash Transfer of N5,000 since 2016 in the state.

"So in all, over 230,000 households will benefit in the first phase of the Renewed Hope intervention programme by the federal government in Kogi," she said.

She said that over 14,000 households would benefit in Lokoja Local Government Area (LGA) of the state, adding that the enrollment was going on

simultaneously across the 21 LGAs of the state.

She advised the beneficiaries to be patient and calm as there were enough staff on ground to capture them without wasting time.

Some of the beneficiaries who spoke with our correspondent, appreciated the federal government for alleviating the hardships they experienced due to fuel subsidy removal.

A 75-year old woman, Hajiya Hawal Bala, expressed gratitude to the government for the gesture.

"We appreciate President Tinubu, God will bless him."

Mr James Friday of Maigari Palace, Lokoja, said he had been living in terrible hardships due to subsidy removal. He said the intervention would serve as a relief to him.

"We are so much happy because we don't expect that such a thing will come even though we have been hearing it, but we have seen its reality.

"We thanked President Tinubu for keeping to his promises. By the special grace of God, we will use the money judiciously," James said.

No provision for population, housing census in budget

From

JIDAUNA YANUNG, Abuja

THE Chairman, Senate Committee on National Population Commission, Senator Abdul Ningi says there is no provision for the proposed national population and housing census in the 2024 budget.

Senator Ningi stated this when he submitted his committee's report to the National Assembly's Joint Committee on Appropriation

recently. He disclosed that if there is no provision for the census in the budget, the country would lose about #200bn already spent by the commission.

The legislator stressed that there would be no proper documentation tomorrow if the National Population Commission did not get the money. He added that the money spent for the census will go down the drain and it is a humongous amount of money.

Responding, Chairman of the Joint National Assembly Committee on Appropriation, Senator Solomon Adeola, assured that the money would be provided for the census. To this end, he invited the head of the population and the committee chairman to tell the joint committee what was needed for the conduct of the census which was scheduled to be held in the first quarter of next year.

Meanwhile, the Joint

Committee on Appropriations supported the inclusion of the controversial #1bn in the 2024

budget of the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment.

Police recruitment: 416,000 applicants to undergo screening

By

DORCAS PANKYES

THE Police Service Commission has announced that the screening process for successful applicants for recruitment into the Constable cadre of the Nigeria Police Force will commence on January 8th. The decision was made during a meeting held by the Police Recruitment Board at the Corporate Headquarters of the Police Service Commission in Jabi, Abuja.

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

Police Service Commission. He disclosed that a staggering 416,270 number of Nigerian youths have satisfied the initial requirements for the next stage of the recruitment exercise.

Among the successful applicants, 315,065 have been shortlisted for the General Duty cadre, while 101,205 applicants have been selected for specialist positions.

Letters of invitation for the screening exercise are expected to be sent out to the successful candidates on or before December 23rd, 2023. The screening process will include both physical and credentials screening, to be conducted in the applicants' respective states of origin. It is mandatory for candidates to bring original copies of their certificates and other credentials, along with letters of attestation from their Local Government Chairmen and/or traditional rulers.

By

DORCAS PANKYES

THE Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) Ltd. has fulfilled its pledge of achieving the mechanical completion of rehabilitation work on Area 5 Plant of the Port Harcourt Refining Company (PHRC).

According to a statement signed by Olufemi O. Soneye, Chief Corporate Communications Officer

In Abuja recently, rehabilitation work has been ongoing at the refinery for over two years and the NNPC Ltd. had pledged to complete Phase One of the project (mechanical completion and flare start-up) of Old Port Harcourt Refinery (Area 5) by 31st December 2023.

Speaking during an inspection tour of the rehabilitation project, which also coincided with the 15th Refineries' Rehabilitation Steering Committee Meeting, the Group Chief Executive Officer, NNPC Ltd., Mr. Mele Kyari, said as of December 15th, 2023, 84.4% of Area 5 Plant, a key component of the refinery, and 77.4% of the entire rehabilitation project have been completed.

The statement quoted the Chief Executive Officer saying "In our quest to ensure that this refinery is re-streamed to continue to deliver value to Nigerians, we made a promise that we will reach a mechanical completion of phase one of the rehabilitation project by the end of December and get the other plants running

NNPC fulfils promise, delivers Port - Harcourt Refinery

in 2024. Today, we have kept those commitments," Kyari stated.

The CEO commended the NNPC Ltd.'s staff and the EPCIC contractors for doing a great job in ensuring that the refinery achieved that significant milestone.

In his remarks, the Chairman of NNPC Ltd Board, Chief Pius Akinyelure described the milestone as "historic", stressing that the board was proud of the staff and management of the refinery.

"We are just starting. We want to be at the highest level of production so that we will keep the prices of petroleum prices stable in order to give comfort to our people and generate more revenue for our country," Akinyelure noted.

Also speaking, the Honourable Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Oil),



Kyari

Senator Heineken Lokpobiri, said the milestone is another landmark of the renewed hope agenda of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR.

He thanked Nigerians for their patience and the trust they have in NNPC Ltd.'s ability to deliver on this huge project.

In his address, the Minister of State for Petroleum (Gas), Rt. Hon. Ekperikpe Ekpo, said re-streaming the refinery will herald a good omen for the nation's Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) industry, as LPG, also known as cooking gas, is a major by-product of the refinery.

Also speaking, the Managing Director of Tecnimont Nig. Ltd, Fabio Del Cioppo, one of the EPC Contractors of the Rehabilitation Project, said his company remains committed to fulfilling the terms of the contract.

The PHRC rehabilitation project, which costs about \$1.5bn, is an EPCIC project that covers engineering, procurement, construction, installation, and commissioning phases. For Area 5, the engineering, procurement, construction, and installation have all been completed. The mechanical completion signifies the closure of the construction and installation phases.

More importantly, the milestone was achieved under an excellent Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) record, which stood at over 9.5 million manhours with zero Loss Time Injury (LTI).

NIS presents relief materials to IDPs

BY JIDAUNA DARING

THE Board and staff of Nerat Integrated Service (NIS) has presented clothing, relief materials to Internally Displace Persons (IDPs) in five Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Plateau State.

NIS Executive Director, Dr. Vings J Lomak made the

presentation during the organization 3rd annual conference of the IDPs, held at the Azi Nyako Youth Centre Dadin-Kowa, Jos, last Tuesday.

Dr. Lamak expressed gratitude to God for making the day a reality and thanked all the representatives from the five affected LGAs which include; Mangu, Bokkos, Riyom, Barkin-Ladi and Bassa LGAs.

He pointed out that the relief

materials were for both male, female and children. He appreciated the House Recap for the support given to them.

Dr. Lomak said that the conference would go a long way in looking for ways around some of the challenges faced by the IDPs. He added that their organization focused on preaching peace as well as promoting peaceful coexistence among communities irrespective of tribe and religion.

He maintained that they would not relent in their efforts in championing the issue of peace building as well as promoting dialogue when it comes to conflict issues in the society. He explained that funding of programmes or activities comes from the organization.

In his remarks, Chairman on the occasion, Alh. Hassan Sabo, commended the efforts of NIS emphasized the need for people to embrace one another irrespective of tribe or religion so as to allow peace to rein in every nook and cranny of the state.

Giving their separate testimonies, the IDPs said that life were presently not easy for them at their various IDPs camps.

They also pointed out that they are facing many challenges such as lack of transparency in distribution of relief materials to the target victims at their camps, feeding, sickness, education of their children and grazing on planted crops among others.



Ningi

SUNDAY MAGAZINE



Christmas: Families groan over high cost of living

Continued from page 10

effect on majority of Nigerians whom many have allegedly blamed the ruling political parties of hijacking the process and diverting the funds to other interests that has no direct bearing on the populace.

SUNDAY STANDARD visit to parks around the Jos metropolis observed that fares to other parts of the country have increased by almost 100 percent. A passenger at one of the parks in Jos said by this period last year, the transport fare from Jos to Lagos was N18,000 but now it is going for between N25,000 and N30,000.

In one of the luxurious bus terminals, passengers were shocked to hear of the tripled hike in fares and had to make other alternative arrangements. This development in the hike of transport fares has forced many residents particularly those in the urban centres to cancel their planned Christmas trips.

According to Joseph Ekererre, a Jos based trader, "I would have travelled to my hometown this Christmas and also attend my younger brother's traditional wedding but cannot do so due to the present economic hardship."

For another individual, Emeka Ifeakachi, said he would rather send money to his immediate family members in Rivers State than travel for the yuletide. He

said, "My father struggles with ill health and the last time I travelled home to see him was during the 2021 Christmas and New Year and I spent a total of N20,000 on transportation, so you can imagine what it is now in the year 2023."

Chibueze Ugochukwu said, his family would not travel to his hometown, Mbieri, in Imo State due to the hike in fuel price and the difficult economic situation. He further said, "Normally in our culture when you are going to your town or village at the end of the year, there must be something significant about your life that you will showcase to let people realize that you are making progress and that you have achieved something this year."

"But this year, things have gone from bad to worse. Since the middle of the year, it has been hard to keep up and I can't point to anything significant that has been added to my life, so what is the essence of going to the village for assorted meetings and church harvests? Is it to show them that I am still where I used to be?"

On his part, Emmanuel Adekunle said he had the intention of travelling with his family to his hometown in Ondo State for the festive period but had to change his plans due to the increase in

the pump price of petrol.

SUNDAY STANDARD also went down to the Jos Terminus axis of the city center and other parts of the metropolis, observed that there were influx of families making last minute purchases for the Christmas but mostly on children's wears with second hand clothe sellers making a boom in market sales.

However, some economic experts have noted that the inflation rate in the country will continue to rise if government continues with such policies that are inimical to growth, adding that most of the Federal Government's policies already rolled out were ill-timed.

They also noted that inflation would affect the Yuitide, as many families might not be able to celebrate as they should. According to Ade Dayo, a development

economist, "The ever increasing inflation was an effect of combined economic woes." He noted that, "Nigeria barely produces anything that can be exported. We rely wholly on imports, even for things we can produce."

"The environment for small businesses and other entrepreneurs is not conducive. Many businesses have closed down as a result, there is no respite. When these things are added to the confusion in the forex market where a dollar is equivalent to N1,000.00, it is obvious why the prices of goods and services will continue to rise." Dayo said.

According to economic experts, the only solution to these ugly situation is for the Federal Government to show purposful leadership in the way that it runs the affairs of the state, while the economy cannot be this bad with the present over bloated system

and where food inflation is nearing 30 percent.

A lot of public commentators have expressed reservation on the way government is slow on taking drastic measures that would address some of the negative policies that have continued to be a clog in the progress of the growth and development of the country.

For instance, the Federal Government has been criticized over the continued payment of N30,000.00 minimum wage to the country's workforce added with the over 133 multi-dimensionally poor and over 40million poor households.

This then goes to show that with the present bleak situation, it is obvious that the common people cannot cope with the present prices of food, transport and other basic necessities which could be a big blow to their celebration and recipe for a disaster especially when it gets to a festive season such as Christmas.

"The environment for small businesses and other entrepreneurs is not conducive. Many businesses have closed down as a result, there is no respite. When these things are added to the confusion in the forex market where a dollar is equivalent to N1,000.00, it is obvious why the prices of goods and services will continue to rise."

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 mercily 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

GOVERNOR MUTFWANG RECEIVES TY DANJUMA FOUNDATION

The Executive Governor of Plateau State, Barr. Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang on Wednesday received on a visit the TY Danjuma Foundation led Victims Support Fund at his official residence Government House Rayfield, Jos



Governor Mutfwang (middle) responding to the message by leader of delegation, Barr. Toyosi Akinrele Ogunsiyi (right) and left is the Executive Secretary, PLASEMA, Hon. Sunday Abdu



Cross section of Commissioners listening to speeches



Cross section of members of the Plateau State Executive Council



Leader of the TY Danjuma Foundation, Barr. Toyosi Akinrele-Ogunsiyi signing the visitors book



From left are, General Manager, PRTVC, Kachollom Rita Pam, Commissioner of Transport, Hon. Jatau Davou Gyang and Commissioner in Charge of Higher Education, Dr. Mrs. Kachollom Gang



Commissioner of Health, Dr. Cletus Bako Shurkuk (left) with the Personal Physician to the Governor, Dr. Daniel Meshack



Cross section of members of the TY Danjuma Foundation that accompanied the leader



Governor Mutfwang, Commissioner in a group photograph with the leader, Barr. Akinrele-Ogunsiyi and her entourage

PHOTOS: DANLADI DUK

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OVERTAKING questions and answers

- When overtaking, you should avoid causing...?
 Approaching traffic to alter course or speed
Traffic being overtaken to alter course or speed
 - When overtaking, you should...?
Avoid making a third line of vehicles abreast if possible
Always be able to move back to the rear side in plenty of time
 - Where would you position yourself for a view along the offside of a truck which is following a left-hand bend?
In the near-side position
 4. You intend to overtake a truck which has just started following a left-hand bend on the road with restricted view. What should you do?
Position yourself for the earliest possible view along the truck's offside
 - You are in the near side position behind a truck and decide to take up the offside position. What must you be cautious about?
Areas of the road which will be lost from view while you change position
 - What hazards are possible when overtaking a slow-moving truck?
The truck in front of you may turn left with very late or no indication
The driver of a vehicle turning right ahead to face you may only have observed his left
A slow-moving vehicle may be turning left onto your road ahead
 The driver of a vehicle on a road to your right ahead may be turning left and you are not in view
 - You have just overtaken another large vehicle and you wish to move back to the right-hand lane, you should...?
Check the right-hand mirror, signal and move back when it is safe to do so
 - You have moved close to the vehicle in front in readiness to overtake, what must you be aware of...?
The driver may brake suddenly
The drive may increase speed
The driver may reduce speed
An unexpected hazard may come into view
 TAKING EMERGENCY AND CORRECTIVE ACTION
 - If you get a sudden and severe puncture while riding along, what should you do?
Close the throttle and ease to a stop
 - What should do when stopping the engine?
Turn-off the ignition
Do not use the engine cut-off switch except in an emergency
 - To stop your motorcycle quickly in an emergency, you should.../
Use the front brake followed by the rear brake
 - Your vehicle engine cuts out suddenly while on motion, you should...?
Put the gears in neutral
Signal and steer the motorcycle to the side of the road
 - You are riding along and you get a front wheel sideways skid, what should you do?
Turn the steering in the same direction the bike is heading
Roll off the throttle
 - You are riding along and you get a rear wheel sideways skid. You should...?
Roll off the throttle
Turn the steering in the same direction the rear wheel is heading
- DEALING WITH HAZARDS**
- You are approaching a truck in a narrow road, you should...?
Slow down
Patience
 - What should do if another vehicle denies your right of way at a junction?
Be patient, allow him to go and proceed thereafter
 - You are about to embark on a journey and are upset and angry, you should...?
Not drive until you are calm
 - You are driving along and another vehicle is overtaking you. There is an oncoming traffic. what should you do?
Reduce speed and allow the other vehicle to move in front of you
 - When in hurry and another vehicle cuts into your path, you should...?
Be patient and do not retaliate. Two wrongs do not make a right
 - One of your tyres goes flat as you are driving along. What should you do?
Stop at a safe place and change the tyre
 - You wish to change to the traffic lane on your left in which there is another traffic driving along. What should you do?
Use your mirror, signal and move into the left-hand lane where a suitable gap appears in the traffic in that lane.



NEWS

BASG poised to change out-of-school-children narrative

From **ABBAS GUNGURA, Bauchi**

STAKEHOLDERS in the education sector from within and outside Bauchi State gathered in Bauchi for a two day education summit under the Chairmanship of Prof. Bogoro.

The summit is aimed at providing a roadmap to deal with the perennial challenges of the education sector in the state.

The summit, which was titled Improving Access to Quality Education, would provide an opportunity for

the participants to brainstorm and proffer solutions to the challenges identified to enable the state to align with locally acceptable ways of building the capacity of teachers especially at the basic education level.

The two day summit organized by the state Ministry of Education, was planned to serve as an avenue for formulating policies and to mobilize the required resources through engagement of all relevant stakeholders towards providing equitable access to

education that would guarantee the future of the younger generation.

Governor Bala Mohammed, while declaring the summit open, unfolded that challenges in the decay in infrastructure, inadequate training of teachers and as well as the growing number of out of school children in the state, was responsible for taking the decision to organize the summit.

He explained that the commitment made by his administration in addressing the ugly trend include construction of over five thousand classrooms, approving the employment of three thousand teachers and increase in budgetary provision to the sector.

The Minister of Education, Dr. Yusuf Sununu who described education as key to sustainable development, assured that the federal government remained resolute to supporting the state in line with the eight point agenda of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu led administration aimed at restoring the quality of education.

SUNDAY STANDARD reports that the occasion featured goodwill messages from representatives of Universal Basic Education Commission, UBEC, Tertiary Education Trust Fund, TETFund, National Centre for Colleges of Education, NCCE and United States Agency for International Development, USAID, including the former Minister of Education, Prof.



Bogoro

Traditional ruler, 21 others kidnapped

From **VICTOR GAI, Jalingo**

A second class chief, Alhaji Umaru Buba Nyala of Pupule Chiefdom in Yorro LGA of Taraba State, had, in the early hours of Tuesday, been kidnapped alongside 21 of his subjects.

A resident of Pupule, who craved anonymity, told **SUNDAY STANDARD** that the traditional ruler and others had been taken away very early in the morning by kidnapers who lived in the surrounding mountains of the town.

The source stated: "The kidnapers, situated in the hills surrounding us, invaded the town and kidnapped 22 people including the second class Chief of Pupule, Alhaji Umaru Buba Nyala".

Confirming the event, the Police Spokesman in Taraba, Abdullahi Usman (SP), said 15 persons were kidnapped including two police officers.

"15 persons were kidnapped among them are two policemen(a



Kefas

sergeant and an inspector".

He also confirmed that the kidnapers lived on the surrounding mountains and that a combined security team is presently on a manhunt to arrest the perpetrators and rescue the victims.

He stated: "So far the Command has deployed men of the Strike Force in collaboration with vigilantes and hunters

combining the areas with the view of arresting them and bringing the victims back to their families.

"Investigation has revealed that they live in these mountain areas. The Pupule area is surrounded by mountains, from Yorro down to Jalingo. Most of them live on these mountains. They descend from the mountains, perpetrate their acts and go back".

SUNDAY FEATURE

Challenges and opportunities in Nigeria's changing work landscape

In the dynamic landscape of work, Nigeria stands at a crossroads, grappling with the delicate balance between productivity and personal well-being amidst the rising popularity of the hybrid work model. Traditional office structures are making way for flexible arrangements, allowing employees to work remotely. This shift has granted employers advantages, creating a paradox where bosses gain ground, and workers strive to find equilibrium, writes OLUWAFEMI MAYOWA, OLUSOLA.

THE Nigerian workforce, like its global counterparts, witnesses a significant transformation in work dynamics. Technology erases geographical boundaries, turning the traditional office into a virtual space where online meetings replace in-person conversations. Employers appreciate the benefits of enhanced productivity and reduced costs linked to physical office spaces. However, employees struggle to balance professional duties and personal life, resulting in what can be termed as the "Flexible Work Dilemma."

Nigeria, having close-knit communities, faces unique challenges in embracing this shift. The social fabric of the country, deeply rooted in community ties, encounters disruption as remote work disrupts personal connections and face-to-face interactions. The sudden shift, fueled by the global pandemic, challenges workers seeking a sense of belonging and connection amid the digital divide.

As bosses gain ground through improved productivity metrics and cost savings, the workforce grapples with the dual-edged sword of flexibility and isolation. The elimination of the commute brings relief from daily, notorious traffic jams, but it also eradicates the camaraderie forged in the shared physical space of an office. Employees navigate blurred lines between work and personal life, often working extra hours due to the lack of defined boundaries.

The appeal of remote work in Nigeria is undeniable, offering employees relief from urban traffic and the daily commute grind. However, the lack of a structured work environment poses challenges for those seeking a clear separation between professional and personal life. The home, once a sanctuary, becomes a multifaceted space juggling office tasks, family responsibilities, and personal relaxation.

Moreover, the hybrid work model in Nigeria highlights the digital divide within the workforce. While some employees transition into remote work easily, equipped with the necessary technological infrastructure, others face barriers like limited access to high-speed internet and inadequate devices. This divide exacerbates existing inequalities, raising concerns



about inclusivity in the evolving work landscape.

The Flexible Work Dilemma (FWD) is particularly pronounced in sectors where collaboration and innovation thrive on spontaneous interactions. In industries like tech, where brainstorming sessions and impromptu discussions fuel creativity, the absence of face-to-face engagements can stifle innovation. Balancing remote work flexibility with intentional efforts to maintain social connections and foster a sense of community among employees is crucial.

The mental health implications of the FWD cannot be overstated. While the freedom to work from anywhere provides a sense of liberation, it also brings forth the spectre of isolation. Employees in Nigeria, accustomed to the vibrant social fabric of office life, now grapple with loneliness and a sense of disconnection. The lack of causal interactions can lead to feelings of professional and personal isolation, impacting mental well-being.

To address the challenges posed by the FWD in Nigeria, a holistic approach is imperative. Employers must prioritise creating a supportive work culture that acknowledges and addresses

the mental health concerns of employees. Initiatives such as virtual team-building activities, mental health support programs, and flexible work hours can contribute to fostering a positive work environment.

Additionally, investment in technology infrastructure is crucial to bridge the digital divide. Ensuring that all employees have access to reliable internet connections and necessary devices is not just a matter of business efficiency but a step towards fostering inclusivity and equal opportunities within the workforce.

The Nigerian government

can play a pivotal role in facilitating this transition. Policies that promote digital inclusion, such as improving internet infrastructure and providing incentives for companies to invest in remote work capabilities, can contribute to a more equitable adoption of the hybrid work model. Furthermore, collaboration between the private sector and government entities can help create a conducive environment for remote work to thrive.

To wrap up this opinion of mine, the FWD in Nigeria, specifically reflects the global challenges associated with

the evolving nature of work. While bosses gain ground through enhanced productivity and reduced costs, workers seek a delicate equilibrium between professional duties and personal well-being. On this note, I say that addressing the nuances of this dilemma requires a collaborative effort from employers, the government, and employees themselves. By fostering a supportive work culture, bridging the digital divide, and embracing a balanced hybrid work model, Nigeria can navigate the complexities of the new era of work with resilience and adaptability.

"To address the challenges posed by the FWD in Nigeria, a holistic approach is imperative. Employers must prioritise creating a supportive work culture that acknowledges and addresses the mental health concerns of employees. Initiatives such as virtual team-building activities, mental health support programs, and flexible work hours can contribute to fostering a positive work environment."

SUNDAY SPORTS

How FIFA primed World Cup underdogs to shock

When Argentina and France kicked off the Qatar World Cup final on 18 December 2022, they were more prepared than any teams in the history of the competition. Rob Haywood writes.

WITH the match shifted from the end of gruelling domestic seasons, their players were in peak physical form, but also their backroom staff, like every other in the tournament, had access to data and video analysis like never before - all provided by Fifa.

At the head of this data revolution was a man from the East Midlands, Chris Loxston, who now works for the San Diego Wave in the United States' National Women's Soccer League.

When Loxston realised he was not going to make it as a footballer he wanted to ensure he could help those with more playing ability be their best. He worked with the British Olympic team before specialising in football with Saudi Arabia at the 2015 Asian Cup, and the United Arab Emirates, finally landing at Fifa in late 2017.

He was immediately tasked with preparing for the 2018 World Cup in Russia, where he was Fifa's only performance analyst.

Four years later, Loxston was head of Fifa's performance analysis and insights department - leading a team of around 100 football analysts, data scientists and data engineers. So what changed?

"I think the lightbulb moment was Arsene Wenger," says Loxston.

Wenger joined Fifa as its chief of global football development in 2019 and was an early supporter of using data. He had been the Arsenal manager when the club acquired StatDNA, a pioneering US company, in 2012 and it instantly became Arsenal's data analytics department.

"We presented what we were doing to Arsene," says Loxston. "He said: 'What you are doing is great, but I want to build the best football analysis centre in the world.'"

The idea was to produce a system that gave equal access to information for all nations, irrespective of size or budget.

In 2014, Germany had used data to improve all aspects of their performance - and it paid off as they won their fourth World Cup. But few countries can match the size, organisation and budget of the German football federation.

Four years later, Croatia - a country of four million people and a much smaller budget - similarly crunched numbers to help find their final and come within 90 minutes of turning tournament orthodoxy on its head.

"Since Uruguay lifted the trophy [in 1950], no nation with fewer than 40 million inhabitants has won the World Cup," said Wenger. "Croatia came close, and they're a great role model that smaller nations can draw inspiration from."

Marc Rochon, a Scot, was the man behind the data of Croatia's amazing run to a silver medal.

He had worked for Croatian manager Zlatko Dalic at Al-Ain in the UAE and when Dalic was put in charge of his own national team, Rochon got a message asking for his help.

Rochon operated as a one-man



Morocco had only been beyond the group stages of the men's World Cup once before their run to the 2022 semi-final

data analysis department for Croatia in Russia.

As the team battled through the knock-out stages, Rochon would be situated high in the stadium with two laptops in front of him, accessing software he had borrowed or paid for out of his own pocket, two TV screens and a radio.

"I was surviving on about two or three hours' sleep a day," Rochon recalls. "I was hammering everything I could." He had access to Fifa video feeds but the data came from third-party suppliers.

He had to prepare video clips himself in real time as the match was being played.

Four years later, Rochon was again part of the Croatia backroom team at the Qatar World Cup. By then the use of data had become more widespread. Croatia's opponents in their opening game - Morocco - had their own Brit working behind the scenes, in the shape of Harrison Kingston.

Kingston had worked his way to the Moroccan national team via the Welsh FA, Spurs Under-18s, Burnley and Liverpool.

In Qatar, he was one of three analysts working for Morocco. "The data department has grown in my time here and continues to do so, not only in terms of numbers," Kingston explains.

"We have improved the impact of the work through education and by embracing new technologies. This has given the role of an analyst in Morocco more clarity, purpose and a clear professional status."

The enhanced Fifa data provided contextualised information to help Morocco upset more established powers.

"It showed us opponent tendencies," says Kingston. "For example, Belgium's attacking patterns were heavily weighted down one side of the pitch. We used this to supplement our work

during the tournament and our physical coaches benefited from the tracking reports."

The in-tournament data was used by the coaching staff to bolster team talks. "Whether it be something simple like reinforcing just how positive a 0-0 was in that first game," explains Kingston.

"We were one of the very few teams to stop Croatia scoring in recent history. In preparation for our last-16 game against Spain, we used their possession figures - especially those against top teams - not only to identify what we already knew, but to help reinforce the coaches' game plan and make it clear to the players that they would have to be prepared to suffer for long periods without the ball."

Fifa's data uses a standardised football 'language' that everyone could use to compare and contextualise across tournaments and games, and ensure high-quality analysis is possible for all.

"We spent two and a half years developing the Fifa football language," explains Loxston. "It is probably 10 times the depth of any other data provider on the market."

One area in which Fifa's language goes much further than before is the tracking of off-the-ball data.

"We have ball movement data to show that a player is typically on the ball for one minute 49 seconds," says Loxston. "The clock starts when the ball touches the player's foot and ends when the ball leaves. It doesn't include the time when the ball is travelling to the next player. So a typical player playing 96 minutes has possession for a maximum of around 2% of the match."

What Loxston and Fifa wanted to do was analyse what happens for the other 98% of the time.

"One of the new metrics we have is called 'offering to receive'," says Loxston. "That can be signalling

for the ball, changing body shape or making a movement in an attempt to receive. Whether they receive the ball or not, we still capture that piece of information."

And far beyond whether a pass is simply received or not, the 'offer' is broken down into groups based on where the player making the offer is situated: inside or outside of a team shape, between certain units, in behind the defence, and so on.

Television viewers could also see the enhanced new metrics on screen during matches. Line breaks and receptions, ball recovery time and varying degrees of pressure on the passer were among the insights shared. More are available for the curious via the **Fifa Training Centre website**.

All of these events were tagged by a team of analysts coding the match in real time. Each player was assigned an analyst and the data was combined with optical tracking information, which used eight cameras to remotely track player movement 25 times a second.

If an event was logged by a human that did not match up with positions tracked automatically, a flag was raised and a further analyst would check why there was a discrepancy.

"Fifa had a football analyst and data scientist in communication with broadcasters, so they could say, for example: 'In the last five minutes England have made five line breaks - now would be a good time to share this on screen,'" says Loxston.

"It wasn't just showing the possession stats every 15 minutes. It gives commentators more to talk about and the idea is to get people talking about football in a more intelligent way."

Like having a Lionel Messi or Kylian Mbappe on the pitch, the data battles can be won by the nations who know how to best use what's at their disposal. "Understanding the intelligence is just as important as having the

people in your staff who are able to transfer that to the players. That's where the gold dust is," says Loxston.

"Fifa's data was our primary source for analysis, particularly the tactical footage being available live in games," says Kingston.

"I often said during the tournament it was like having additional analysts working for us. The time, energy and workload we were saved by the services provided by Fifa were invaluable and allowed us to compete, off the pitch, with other nations who might have had more resources."

"What we're seeing is some of the smaller nations starting to buy in and understand why this is important," says Loxston. "Of course they are going to take time to come through, but we are starting to see them think outside the box and say: 'OK, how can we improve? How can we do things slightly differently?'"

In the future, Kingston plans to use the data even more. "In our case [we] will be using it more live in the game," he says. "Fifa had these streams and data sets available but we didn't have the processes in place to benefit from this during the tournament."

The data revolution extended to the **Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand** earlier this year, but Qatar 2022 was the first time smaller and lower-ranked nations could use such rich data on the biggest stage.

Saudi Arabia, Australia, Tunisia and Japan all gained famous upset wins against more celebrated football nations, while Morocco and Croatia, once again, seemed to benefit most and reached the semi-finals. Data has long ago convinced football of its worth, now it is spreading deeper and further into the international game.

SUNDAY SPORTS

Klopp critical of atmosphere before Arsenal visit

LIVERPOOL boss Jurgen Klopp has told any supporter "not in the right shape" for Saturday's top-of-the-table Premier League encounter with leaders Arsenal to give their ticket to someone else.

BBC SPORT said that, Klopp - whose side are a point behind the Gunners - criticised the Anfield atmosphere during Wednesday's 5-1 Carabao Cup quarter-final win over West Ham.

The Reds galloped to their joint-biggest win of the season to book a two-legged last-four encounter with Fulham.

Yet, despite goals for his side from Dominik Szoboszlai, Cody Gakpo, Mohamed Salah and Curtis Jones, who scored twice, Klopp felt the atmosphere inside the stadium was flat.

That was even though it was just the second time there were 57,000 present after the opening of the upper tier of the Anfield Road Stand.

After Sunday's goalless draw with Manchester United, television pundit Gary Neville said: "The atmosphere was the worst



Liverpool bounced back from failing to score against Manchester United with five goals in a ruthless display against West Ham

I've seen at Anfield ever.

"I've always been complimentary of Liverpool fans. It's the biggest crowd they've had here in 60 or 70 years but it's the quietest crowd I've seen in this game."

And Klopp was no more complimentary after the win over West Ham.

"In the first half, when the boys played exceptionally, I was not overly happy with the atmosphere behind me," he said.

"I asked people: 'What do they want?' We changed a lot of things and we dominated West Ham like crazy and missed chances. If I was in the stands, I would be on my toes, 1,000%."

"I don't know if the Man United game was that bad that we have to say sorry

we didn't smash them?"

On Saturday, Liverpool entertain an Arsenal side who will not have played for six days since their 2-0 win against Brighton.

The Gunners lead the Premier League, although Aston Villa can go top by beating Sheffield United on Friday.

"We need Anfield on Saturday," Klopp said.

"Arsenal didn't play this week. Anyone who knows anything about them knows they will be prepared, so we need Anfield on their toes from the first second, without me having an argument with the opposition coach.

"If it is too much football in December, if you are not in the right shape, give your ticket to somebody else."

THE Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) has unveiled the provisional squad for the Super Eagles ahead of the forthcoming African Cup of Nations (AFCON).

The list is contained in a document uploaded on the CAF website on Wednesday. The NFF submitted a 40-man list to the continental football governing body within the stipulated December 14 deadline.

Daily Trust said that, the list includes Ahmed Musa and William Troost-Ekong, who were previously absent from the recent Super Eagles outings.

Others are six goalkeepers, 13 defenders, eight midfielders and 13 forwards.

Victor Osimhen, newly crowned African footballer of the year, was included alongside red-hot Victor Boniface, Ademola Lookman and Samuel Chukwueze.

The squad includes three goalkeepers from the Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL): Amas Obasogie of Bendel Insurance, Ojo Olorunleke of Enyimba and Sporting Lagos' Christian Nwoke.

The trio are the only home-based players in the squad and will compete against Francis Uzoho, Stanley Nwabali and Adebayo Adedeleye for the final spot on the team.

Kelechi Nwakali is a surprise addition to midfield alongside Alhassan Yusuf and Fisayo Dele-Bashiru. Wilfred Ndidi also made the list alongside Frank Onyeka, Alex Iwobi and Joe Aribio.

Peseiro is expected to prune

NFF releases 40-player provisional squad for AFCON



Super Eagles

down the list to 27 players before the January 3, 2024, deadline.

The 34th edition of AFCON is billed to kick off on January 13, 2024, in Ivory Coast.

The Super Eagles of Nigeria are in Group A alongside the hosts, Equatorial Guinea and Guinea-Bissau.

Nigeria will take on Equatorial Guinea in their opening game before facing Ivory Coast and rounding off the group stage with the Guinea-Bissau tie.

THE FULL PROVISIONAL LIST

Goalkeepers

1. Francis Uzoho
2. Adebayo Adedeleye
3. Ojo Olorunleke
4. Stanley Nwabali
5. Amas Obasogie
6. Christian Nwoke

Defenders

1. Ola Aina
2. Bright Osayi-Samuel
3. Tyrone Ebuehi
4. Jamilu Collins
5. Zaidu Sanusi
6. Bruno Onyemaechi

7. William Troost-Ekong
8. Semi Ajayi
9. Calvin Bassey
10. Kenneth Omeruo
11. Kevin Akpoguma
12. Chidozie Awaziem
13. Jordan Torunarigha

Midfielders

1. Wilfred Ndidi
2. Frank Onyeka
3. Joe Aribio
4. Alex Iwobi
5. Alhassan Yusuf
6. Fisayo Dele-Bashiru
7. Raphael Onyedika

Nwadike

Attackers

1. Victor Osimhen
2. Victor Boniface
3. Terem Moffi
4. Umar Sadiq
5. Ahmed Musa
6. Paul Onuachu
7. Cyriel Dessers
8. Ademola Lookman
9. Nathan Tella
10. Moses Simon
11. Emmanuel Dennis
12. Samuel Chukwueze
13. Kelechi Iheanacho

Kane scores to continue record-breaking run

HARRY Kane stayed on course to break the record for Bundesliga goals in a season with his 21st strike as Bayern Munich beat Wolfsburg.

Jamal Musiala headed Bayern ahead from Thomas Muller's cross.

England captain Kane then smashed in a wonderful effort from 25 yards out, in only his 15th German top-flight game.

Maximilian Arnold's long-range strike just before the break gave Wolfsburg hope and he was denied an injury-time equaliser by goalkeeper Manuel Neuer.

Kane, 30, wrote on social media: "Perfect way to sign off for the winter break! Have loved my first few months at Bayern and in Munich. Looking forward to a rest, then back in the new year to go again."

Boss Thomas Tuchel said: "If you look at his goal and the way he played in the second half, he was our first defender.

How he holds on to the ball, tracks back, defends - his performances have been top. "He's a top personality, leader, top player - the complete package."

The summer signing from Tottenham is the first player to score as many as 21 Bundesliga goals in his first 15 games in the competition.

When Robert Lewandowski scored a record 41 Bundesliga goals in 2020-21 for Bayern, he was on 20 goals after 15 games.

Including the second half of last season with Tottenham, Kane has scored 38 league goals in 2023, four above second-placed Kylian Mbappe in Europe's top five leagues.

With five assists included, Kane has been involved in 26 Bundesliga goals this season, as many as the player with the most goal involvements in the whole of last season, Randal Kolo Muani.

Despite Kane's goalscoring exploits, Bayern go into the winter break four points behind surprise leaders Bayer Leverkusen.

Xabi Alonso's side beat Bochum 4-0 with Patrik Schick scoring a hat-trick, his first

three Bundesliga goals of the season.

Leverkusen are unbeaten after 25 games in all competitions, a record for a German professional team from the start of a season.

Moshood Abiola Stadium will host grade A matches soon - Minister

SPORTS development minister, Senator John Owan Enoh, has vowed to ensure that the Moshood Abiola National Stadium Abuja gets the world soccer ruling body, FIFA and CAF's certification to start hosting of Grade A matches soon.

Leadership said that, he made the commitment during the handing over ceremony of the rehabilitated pitch and scoreboards at the Stadium by Dangote Group and Aron Nigeria Ltd, saying the Sports Ministry under his leadership would work diligently to ensure the pitch meets international standards in line with the Renewed Hope Agenda of the President Bola Ahmed Tinubu-led Administration.

While stressing the importance of the



Enoh

national stadium in hosting Grade A matches, especially for the various National Teams of Nigeria, Enoh commended the completion of their two years post maintenance rehabilitation and called for increased

collaboration between the government and the private sector to further advance sports development in Nigeria. The rehabilitation of the National Stadium facilities by Dangote Group and Aron Nigeria Ltd, he added, represents a significant

milestone in the ongoing efforts to enhance sports infrastructure in the country.

He applauded the commitment and resources invested by Dangote Group, describing their involvement as a shining example of the positive outcomes achievable through collaborative efforts between the government and the private sector.

"As a country, we are indebted to Dangote Group for the huge resources it committed to the rehabilitation of the National Stadium. I look forward to more collaborative efforts between the government and the private sector to develop sports in our country," Senator Owan Enoh stated.



Kane

SUNDAY SPORTS

Murray named tournament director of Queen's Club

JAMIE Murray has been named tournament director of the Queen's Club Championships.

BBC SPORT said that, Multi-Grand Slam-winning doubles player Murray, 37, will continue to play in 2024 but not at Queen's itself (17-23 June).

Last year, ex-pro Laura Robson became Nottingham Open tournament director.

Murray has experience as a tournament director, having organised the Battle of the Brits event between Scotland and England in Aberdeen in late 2023.

"It's a real honour to be given this opportunity by the Lawn Tennis Association, to work on such a prestigious and well-regarded tournament



Jamie Murray has previous tournament director experience

with the event team during the year, supporting the development and growth of the cinch Championships," Murray said.

"As most people know, I

have a genuine interest in the events side of the business having started as a tournament director of the Murray Trophy and most recently organising Battle of the Brits in ensuring the best possible experience for the players

OCCASIONALLY, Alexandr Dolgoplov still thinks about tennis. But not very often.

Dolgoplov, once ranked 13th in the world and with a notable win over Rafael Nadal on his CV, now lives another life, as a soldier.

The 2011 Australian Open quarter-finalist is one of thousands of Ukrainians fighting on the frontline to defend his nation in the war with Russia.

Dolgoplov, 35, joined up when Russia invaded its eastern European neighbours in March 2022, and was provided with military training to teach him how to use weapons.

He has feared for his life under Russian attack, and has seen colleagues seriously injured or killed. His days on the ATP Tour seem a long way away.

"It has been tough on the battlefield in the last year," Dolgoplov, who last played professionally in 2018 before retiring three years later because of a recurring wrist injury, told BBC Radio 4.

"When they are firing and

Tennis player on life as a soldier



Dolgoplov has been deployed with Ukraine's Directorate of Intelligence (GUR)

getting really close, you know they know approximately where you are.

"When the round exits, you hear that and then you have the few seconds where it is flying - it is like loud whistles coming in - and then you feel the impact.

"You hope the impact is not exactly on the top of the trench.

"If it is one or more metres from you, you should be fine because you're half or one metre under the ground. If it doesn't hit the ceiling, you should be OK, but you don't know that."

Dolgoplov has been deployed with Ukraine's Directorate of Intelligence (GUR) in the Zaporizhzhia region of the country and is currently back in capital city Kyiv as he waits for his next assignment.

Asked about the attacks his unit faced, Dolgoplov said: "Mostly artillery fire and aircrafts, that's the main danger.

"The worst day was when mortars landed reasonably close to us.

"Usually it is random fire and if they see you, they shoot two, three, five times and then forget about it unless they see what they're aiming for. You try to hide and protect yourself.

"This time it got really intense and we got maybe 20 rounds fired at us. They were all close."

Dolgoplov describes how "comrades" have been lost, including a Georgian soldier in his unit a month ago. Another man lost his leg in an attack.

"We haven't had too many close people dead but many have been injured," he said.

"We hear a lot about other guys from other units, and friends of friends, dying.

"The longer it goes, the

more people are dead." "Is the world doing enough? I don't think so"

With the war nearing the two-year mark, Ukraine continues to face challenges - in terms of financial and military aid - as it tries to repel Russian forces.

On Tuesday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky rejected a suggestion that the nation could be starting to lose the war.

President Zelensky said Ukraine's military wants to mobilise up to 500,000 extra people to join those such as Dolgoplov who have already signed up.

But these are costly proposals and there are fears in Ukraine that operations will be scaled back because of a drop-off in foreign aid.

Olena Zelenska, Ukraine's first lady, warned in a BBC interview earlier this month that Ukrainians were in "mortal danger" of being left to die without further Western support.

Dolgoplov, who said Ukrainian troops are able to "analyse" how the war is panning out themselves through "critical thinking", agreed.

"We need armoury and instruments to win this war. At the moment, mathematically we're not in a good position," he said.

"On the battlefield, Russia have advantages in most things - more people, more armoury and more artillery rounds.

"Is the world doing enough? I don't think so. I think it is obvious by now.

"We are not getting enough, not fast enough, not enough quantity, it is a big war and we need much more.

"I think the West needs to wake up and understand it's not just Ukraine's problem.

Whitbread wins Helen Rollason Award

FORMER javelin world champion Fatima Whitbread has been honoured with the Helen Rollason Award at Sports Personality of the Year 2023.

Whitbread, now 62, spent the first 14 years of her life in children's homes after being abandoned as a baby.

After being fostered, she went on to break the javelin world record and win world and European Championship gold.

The Helen Rollason Award recognises outstanding achievement in the face of adversity.

Whitbread now campaigns to improve the care system and ensure children in care are "seen, heard and valued".

"I remember Helen ringing me and asking for me to be her first international athlete to be interviewed. I had just won the World Championships in 1987.

"Now she has given me the

opportunity to stand on this stage and speak out loud for our children. I stand here, and I'm privileged and proud to receive this award, and I represent the care system sector and celebrate our young children, the remarkable resilience they show."

The Helen Rollason Award was introduced to Sports Personality of the Year in 1999 in memory of the BBC Sport journalist and presenter, who died of cancer that year at the age of 43.

Whitbread, who was named Sports Personality of the Year in 1987, was presented with her award by 1972 Olympic pentathlon champion Lady Mary Peters and former world champion hurdler Colin Jackson.

During her time in care, Whitbread experienced physical and sexual abuse during forced visits to her biological mother.

Sport was her "saviour", and through it she met javelin coach Margaret Whitbread - eventually being fostered by the Whitbread family and changing her surname by deed poll.

Whitbread embarked on a career in athletics, and after struggling to land a major title amid her well-publicised rivalry with fellow Briton Tessa Sanderson, broke the women's javelin world record in qualifying at the 1986 European Championships in Stuttgart, Germany.

Throwing 77.44m - more than two metres further than the previous record - Whitbread became the first British athlete to set a world record in a throwing event and went on to win the gold medal.

The following year she won World Championship gold in Rome, and in 1988 in Seoul, she won Olympic silver - four years after winning bronze at the Los Angeles Games.



Whitbread

It is now or never for Joshua, Wilder - Groves

SO it seems we are now just one successful night away from Anthony Joshua and Deontay Wilder finally getting it on next year - but they could have saved us all some stress by picking easier fights.

It is not out of the question that Joshua loses against Otto Wallin or Wilder loses to Joseph Parker on Saturday night - I'm not picking against either of them, but neither would be the biggest upset this year, or even this month.

In particular, Wallin is no walkover for Joshua and it is a very risky fight given what is at stake.

I am assuming it just came down to what the Saudis requested. I don't know who is making the matches but someone knows they need meaningful fights if they are paying so much money.

Ultimately, everyone is doing what they're told because the money is really good.

The media conference was announced and everyone flew in for it instantly. These people

make stuff happen.

But don't get me wrong - although these are risky fights for both, they are certainly winnable fights too. If they can't get through these then Wilder and Joshua fighting each other isn't really of interest anyway.

You want real fights beforehand if these are like two semi-finals - you want something good, something meaty.

Wallin 'terrible' preparation for Wilder

A big southpaw like Wallin is terrible tactics if you are signed up to fight Wilder next, but maybe he didn't have any choice in the matter or maybe he just doesn't care now.

He believes in himself to do what he needs to do against anyone.

Wallin has said Joshua is mentally shot and past his peak and I can see why he would say that as an opponent.

Joshua has done some bizarre things of late, like his **outburst after being beaten by Oleksandr Usyk.**

After the last fight he jumped out of the ring, did a lap and drank some stout with Conor McGregor. He has also gone and sat in the dark for a few days.

He even gave Robert Helenius some stick in their final face-off and Helenius, poor fella, had come in on a few days' notice to save the show.

Joshua asked him what he's looking at? Maybe it's just Joshua's new thing, his way to get up for the fight.

He's had enough mega-fights in his life so maybe he needs a bit of hate for his opponent to get in the zone nowadays.

I don't think Wilder will need to do the same and I don't anticipate him dropping the ball against Parker.

Wilder has been working in the gym a lot with Malik Scott, who is really trying to break down the art of boxing.

I'm just wondering, are we one camp away from Wilder putting it all together, becoming this slick fighter with his extreme power with it?

Then if they do both win, we are told the fight is definitely

happening next. It's a great fight for the division and one that will excite everyone, even without any belts.

I don't see why they wouldn't want to fight each other at this stage - it really is now or never.

Hand on heart, I think Wilder wins - but we will know more after 23 December.

Joshua has not been great of late - his past two fights have been a bit flat but then, on the other hand, Wilder has only had one round in two years. That's what makes this fight fascinating.

These heavyweights have been waiting to fight each other for a generation.

It's a strange era at the moment with American TV networks pulling out of boxing and disintegrating.

In the UK we have three major broadcasters in Sky, TNT and DAZN which should lead to more opportunities for fighters, but in reality this sort of competition can lead to more roadblocks in negotiations and therefore fewer of the fights we actually want to see happening.

SUNDAY SPORTS

Afcon 2023 kicks off in January

THE 2023 Africa Cup of Nations (Afcon) kicks off in Ivory Coast in mid-January after being pushed back to avoid a clash with the rainy season in West Africa.

With Senegal looking to defend their title, the 24-team format means the top two from each group will progress to the knockout stages, with the four best third-placed sides joining them.

There were shocks at the last Nations Cup in Cameroon, with Comoros and The Gambia going through as four-time champions Ghana headed home early, but what can we expect from the 34th edition of the continental tournament?

BBC Sport Africa has spoken to players, African footballing legends and journalists to run the rule over Groups A, B and C.

Group A - Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea and Guinea-Bissau

The hosts were drawn with three-time winners Nigeria and Equatorial Guinea, who pulled off a couple of upsets to reach the quarter-finals last time out.

Guinea-Bissau, who are aiming to progress from the group stage for the first time, round off a line-up which former Ivory Coast striker Didier Drogba expects to be "very difficult".

"There's no such thing as a generous draw because all the teams deserve to be here and they're going to fight," Drogba, who scored 65 goals for the Elephants, said.

"Nigeria, with Victor Osimhen and all the players they have, is a big team. We mustn't forget the other two teams because there are always surprises.

"I think that our main asset will be to focus on our game, our team, our strengths and try to progress. It's up to us to make the most of it, get behind our team and make sure the trophy stays at home."

Nigeria faced criticism from supporters after drawing their opening two 2026 Fifa World Cup qualifiers against Lesotho and Zimbabwe in November, but Super Eagles midfielder Frank Onyeka says it is crucial fans get behind the side.

"I know they will be frustrated but we still need their support," the 25-year-old said.

"We know what it takes to win Afcon. The draws we had in the last two games is something we need to learn from."

The West Africans exited in the last 16 in Cameroon and Onyeka is expecting a tough assignment in their Abidjan-based group.

"African teams are not easy to play against," he added. "It's something that we need to prepare ourselves [for], mentally and physically."

Group A fixtures

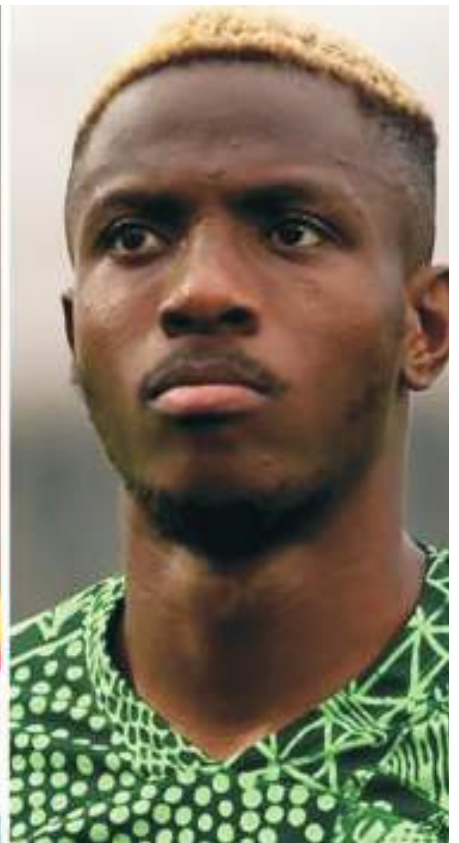
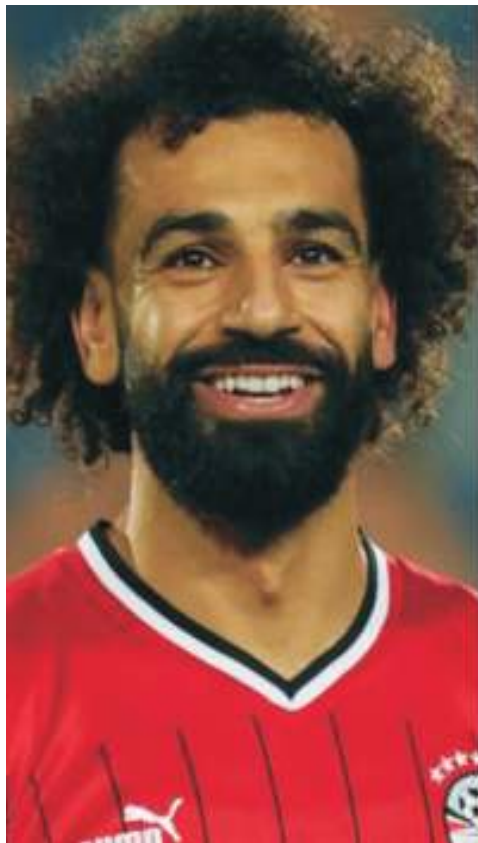
Saturday, 13 January: Ivory Coast v Guinea-Bissau

Sunday, 14 January: Nigeria v Equatorial Guinea

Thursday, 18 January: Ivory Coast v Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea v Guinea-Bissau

Monday, 22 January: Equatorial Guinea v Ivory Coast, Guinea-Bissau v Nigeria

Group B - Egypt, Ghana, Cape Verde and Mozambique Egypt expect to travel far in West Africa after losing two of the past three Afcon finals - against Cameroon (2017) and Senegal (2021) - after what were "distinguished technical



Mohamed Salah has tasted defeat in two Afcon finals - including against Sadio Mane and Senegal at the 2021 edition - while Nigeria will hope Victor Osimhen fires them to glory

performances" according to Egyptian journalist Inas Mazhar.

"Mozambique should provide a straightforward start given the difference in experience and history between the two teams, but the second game against Ghana will be the toughest and most crucial, where Egypt will fight to secure top spot," she added.

"With Cape Verde to follow, the Pharaohs' chances of topping the group are strong and progress is almost certain - yet if they make it to the quarter-finals, the North Africans would clash with stronger teams.

Guinea and The Gambia Continental heavyweights Cameroon have five Nations Cup titles to their name but had to settle for third place on home soil last time out.

Despite being drawn with holders Senegal, anything short of success might not go down well with Indomitable Lions supporters.

"We expect them to bring home the trophy, especially because we won our first Afcon in Abidjan in 1984," Cameroonian football analyst Lawrence Nkede said.

Yet performances during the 2021 finals elicited mixed reactions. While

"Matches against Cape Verde and

to the quarter-finals on their Afcon debut.

"The Scorpions will have to be at their very best to progress following poor performances and two defeats in World Cup qualifiers," journalist Momoudou Bah said.

"Coach Tom Saintfiet's team will be pumped up to face Senegal in a derby in the opening fixture, as it will be the first time in over 15 years the two countries have faced each other at senior level."

Gambian football is progressing, with the country featuring at the Under-20 World Cup this year for the first time in 16 years, but Saintfiet has faced criticism over his



Mohammed Kudus

"Head coach Rui Vitoria has not faced such a test since he assumed the post in July 2022, which could be the biggest challenge for Egypt.

"The Portuguese will face an examination by fans and Egyptian football pundits, who will not accept anything less than making an appearance in the final."

Big expectations are also an issue for Ghana, with BBC Sport presenter and reporter George Addo Jr saying fans are "concerned" at the form of the Black Stars, who have not reached the last eight of a Nations Cup since 2017.

"Ghana were eliminated in the last 16 in 2019 and were winless and failed to advance from the group stage in Cameroon," he

Mozambique have become a worry based on the performances against minnows lately," he said.

"Qualifying for the quarter-finals would be a major success. While that may seem achievable, Hughton and his team must find a consistent starting XI.

"Additionally, the Black Stars will need to keep key players fit to stand a chance.

Group B fixtures

Sunday, 14 January: Egypt v Mozambique, Ghana v Cape Verde

Thursday, 18 January: Egypt v Ghana

Friday, 19 January: Cape Verde v Mozambique

Monday, 22 January: Mozambique v Ghana, Cape Verde v Egypt

Group C - Senegal, Cameroon,



Senegal talisman Sadio Mane

there was praise for the team's resilience, the disappointment was pervasive after a semi-final defeat by Egypt on penalties.

Now observers worry over coach Rigobert Song's lack of a settled starting XI.

"In the past ten games we've had ten different line-ups. It's very difficult to read the team and its true capacity," Nkede added.

With goalkeeper Andre Onana enduring dips in form at Manchester United and doubts over the fitness of forward Bryan Mbeumo, the Lions may already be wounded ahead of their opener against Guinea.

The Syli Nationale have reached the knockout stages on their past three appearances while The Gambia return after a surprise run

playing philosophy.

"The pragmatic approach, which is based on sitting deep to soak up pressure before hitting opponents on the break, has been one of the team's strengths since the Belgian took over in 2018," Bah added.

"But he has had to deal with a backlash from expectant supporters who want a more expansive approach. Saintfiet has also faced challenges in the build-up as some key players struggle in front of goal."

Group C fixtures

Monday, 15 January: Senegal v The Gambia, Cameroon v Guinea

Friday, 19 January: Senegal v Cameroon, Guinea v The Gambia

Tuesday, 23 January: Guinea v Senegal, The Gambia v Cameroon



AFCON: Oliseh, Ighalo question exclusion of NPFL players

FORMER Super Eagles midfielder, Sunday Oliseh, has backed Odion Ighalo's call for the inclusion of more Nigerian Premier Football League (NPFL) players in the Nigerian national team.

The Confederation of African Football (CAF) on Wednesday officially unveiled the 41-man provisional list submitted to it by the Nigerian Football Federation (NFF) for the 2023 African Cup of Nations (AFCON).

Three NPFL goalkeepers were also included such as Ojo Olorunleke of Enyimba International, Bendel Insurance's Amas Obasogie and Christian Nwoke of Sporting Lagos.

With the Super Eagles head coach, Jose Peseiro expected to submit his final 27-man list on January 3, 2024, Ighalo spoke on the neglect of NPFL players in the Nigerian national team.

"I don't think it is right not to invite home base players, this is a 40 man list, at least five to seven players should be on the list to encourage them, not inviting them means you don't focus on the league," Ighalo told Oma Akatugba.

Nigerians appear to be divided over the invitation of NPFL players to the Super Eagles, especially for international football tournaments with Oliseh also joining the conversation.

"Haba, dem just want kill everything wey be home-based in favour of football business! Time we acted!!"

An X user by name, King David replied Oliseh, saying: "Coachee, I still maintain that we don't have consistent players in the league."

"The few ones who had been a part of the national team always ghost after some time. Few even use it to get deals outside the country and nothing more about them. I don't think the national team is to encourage the league."

The former Super Eagles captain and coach, however, insisted that more NPFL players need to be included in the team.

"Haba, when we dey play 1-1 draws versus lowly Lesotho and Rwanda in important world cup qualifiers, what right do we have to refuse opportunities to home-based or are they no longer Nigerians?," Oliseh asked.

Remo Stars prolific goal poacher, Sikiru Alimi has said that players in the Nigeria Premier Football League, NPFL, deserve an invitation to the Super Eagles.

BSNSports.com.ng scooped from Oluwatobi Ayinde @Theayindetobi on X, shortly after his side defeated Lobi Stars 2-0 in Match Day 15 of the 2023/2024 NPFL season.

Alimi, who netted his 10th goal of the season, stated that the NPFL players have been doing enough to



Super Eagles players pose for a team photo before their AFCON qualifier against Guinea-Bissau. Photo: The NFF

warrant a call-up to the Men's Senior National Team.

He however expressed joy after scoring against Lobi Stars to help his side return to the summit on the NPFL log.

"I feel really delighted because the goal came at the right time we needed it. It was a team effort and I'm glad we got the absolute three points."

"Generally, it's not any Super Eagles legend, Sunday Oliseh, responded to Odion Ighalo's call for home-based players in the Super Eagles squad, Soccer.net.ng reports.

The provisional list for the upcoming 2023 AFCON released by the Super Eagles featured only three home-based players—Ojo Oluwasegun (Enyimba FC), Christian Nwoke (Sporting Lagos FC), and Obasogie Amas (Bendel Insurance).

This selection heavily favoured foreign-based

players, drawing criticism from Ighalo, who highlighted the Nigeria Football Federation's (NFF) oversight towards the local football league.

This debate has sparked varied reactions within the Nigerian football community, igniting discussions among football enthusiasts regarding the squad's list.

In contrast, former Ajax star Oliseh acknowledged the shift in times, comparing the current squad to the 90s and 2000s teams that boasted international superstars and dominated global football.

He criticized the absence of home-based players, expressing concern that neglecting local talent could diminish the growth of grassroots football.

"If we had superstars like in the 90's and early 2000's playing at the very top world clubsides, champions league etc., one could understand the absence of home-based in a

40-man call-up. Haba, they just want to disregard everything that is home-based in favour of football business! Time we acted!" he shared on his X (formerly Twitter) page.

Meanwhile, Rivers United Technical Adviser, Stanley Eguma has expressed optimism that his side will qualify from the group stage despite the defeat to Club Africain in the CAF Confederation's Cup, BSNSports.com.ng reports.

Eguma stated this in his post-match reactions after Kingsley Eduwo scored two first half goals as Club Africain defeated Rivers United 3-0 in their CAF Confederation Cup matchday 3 encounter on Wednesday night at the Stade de Rades in Tunisia.

According to Eguma, the Pride of Rivers will go back and correct the mistakes from the game saying that his team gave a very good

account of themselves.

"We are also a good team despite our undoing today. On a good day we gave a very good account of ourselves and I believe that the future is still bright for us."

Meanwhile, Dreams FC of Ghana moved to second position in Group C with 9 points after defeating Academica do Lobito of Angola 4-0 at home, to complete a double over the Angolans.

Club Africain top Group C with nine points from four games while Rivers United dropped to third position with six points following the defeat.

The Pride of Rivers will travel away to Academica do Lobito for their next game in February, 2024, while Club Africain will visit Ghana for a clash with Dreams FC.

Meanwhile, Super Eagles and Bayer Leverkusen's forward, Victor Boniface has won the Rookie of the Month

award for a fifth consecutive time this season.

Information Nigeria reports that Boniface made three league appearances, scoring three goals and providing two assists.

The Nigeria international has also netted nine goals in 15 league games this season in addition to four more in the UEFA Europa League.

For the first time since the 2009-2010 season, Bayer Leverkusen ended the first half of the season as honorary "winter champions" thanks to the efforts of two Nigerian duos Nathan Tella and Boniface.

After their year-ending match against VFL Bochum on Wednesday, they lead the Bundesliga with 39 points clear of their nearest rivals, Bayern Munich, who have 35 points from 14 games.

With their 4-0 win over Bochum, Bayer Leverkusen remain the only team in Germany without a defeat.

However, Xabi Alonso and his boys qualified for the DFB Cup quarterfinals and earned a spot in the UEFA Europa League knockout stages by winning all of their group matches.

Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda are set to co-host the 2024 African Nations Championship (CHAN), subject to successful stadium inspections.

In September the East African neighbours were awarded the rights to stage the 2027 Africa Cup of Nations - which will be the first time in history that three countries will deliver the continental showpiece.

The joint hosts will all provide one stadium to host CHAN next year, with a fourth venue in Zanzibar, according to Wallace Karia, the president of the Council of East and Central African Football Associations (Cecafa).

Eto'o's daughter want Dad jailed

his legal obligation to his progeny.

Annie, the daughter of Anna Maria Barranca, was not in the player's life until 2015 when a court confirmed she was the footballer's child following a DNA test.

Annie, the daughter of Anna Maria Barranca and Samuel

Eto'o has reportedly taken legal action over unpaid child support.

Eto'o was reportedly instructed to pay €10,000 to Annie as child support, but the player has reportedly not provided the money for his daughter's upkeep.

Although Annie is 21 years old and legally an adult, she is a student and dependent on her struggling mother, which leaves the four-time African footballer of the year with the obligation of taking care of his daughter.

According to Football Espana, Eto'o's daughter submitted the complaint this week as authorities opened an investigation into the matter, per Marca.

Eto'o is currently the head of the Cameroonian Football Federation. The two-time AFCON winner is hoping to see his nation claim continental glory in Ivory

Coast.

The Indomitable Lions have been drawn in Group C of the tournament alongside Senegal, the Gambia and Guinea, per **Rueters**.

Meanwhile, former Super Eagles forward Nwakwo Kanu has revealed how his participation at the 2004 Africa Cup of Nations affected his game time during Arsenal's historic Premier League invincible season.

The invitation to represent Nigeria at AFCON came at the wrong time for Kanu who was already struggling to get into Arsene Wenger's side having started just 3 games in that campaign.

With Nigeria advancing to the latter stages of the competition, the former African Player of the Year couldn't return to contending for a place in the historic Gunners side early.

In a recent interview, he

granted to Arsenal's official website, the retired forward admitted that representing Nigeria at AFCON affected his game time.

"It was difficult, because in a squad of so many good players, when you lose your place, it's hard to get it back," Kanu said.

"Obviously Arsenal did very well while I was away, so it was hard for me to get into the team again after going away."

"Sometimes it worked the other way - when you go away sometimes, they need you back in the team or need to change things, but this season they didn't need to change anything."

Due to the stiff competition for places, Kanu would only make one appearance in the Premier League upon his return from representing his fatherland, finishing the season with 4 goal contributions in ten games in the English top flight.



Eto'o