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Kidnapping industry: Are banks complicit

Kidnapping is now a big industry in Nigeria where those behind it are becoming above the law. These bandits have become ruthless' brave and bold, so much that they have overwhelmed all manner of security measures. They snatch their victim with precision like an eagle would take its prey. And when they demand for ransom payment, they confidently deplore the use of financial institutions. They have so far send fears into the adrenaline of the mighty and low in the society. KENNETH DARENG, examines the role of banks in enabling this epidemic.

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Editorial

Nigeria's food crisis: FG, do the needful

IN November 2023, the Food and Agricultural Organisation FAO, analysis of food security in Nigeria painted gloomy pictures of the food crisis that would affect 26.5 million Nigerians in Borno, Sokoto and Zamfara states, as well as the Federal Capital Territory, FCT, between June to August 2024.

ACCORDING to FAO, food crises are imminent due to an unusual lean season, which witnessed several shocks, ranging from persistent insecurity situations like insurgency, banditry that abound in most parts of the country. In some parts of the country, herder/farmer clashes, ethnic or religious crises, like in the case of Plateau, Benue, Kaduna states. This is taking colouration of ethnic cleansing, that has driven locals out of their ancestral homes, depriving them of their primary source of livelihood, which is farming. The end result is food crises, skyrocketing prices of food, beyond the reach of the common man.

WHEN push comes to shove, one should expect the worst. In the capital city of Niger State, Minna, residents took to the streets to vent out their frustration over the lingering food crisis. It escalated to Suleja, which is a few kilometres away from Abuja, the nerve centre of the country. What makes it frustrating is that there is no commensurate salary increase. Worst still is the fact that prices of goods and services triple what obtained before the FG's removal of fuel subsidy.

REACTING to Nigerians' discontent to the food crises, the Federal Government has taken steps to curb the escalating and scorching food crisis.

PRESIDENT Bola Tinubu on Thursday, February 8, 2024 directed the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security to immediately release more than 102,000 metric tons of various grain types from the National Food Reserve and the Rice Millers Association of Nigeria.

THIS decision which was taken after the last leg of a series of three meetings of the Special Presidential Committee on Emergency Food Intervention, at the Aso Rock Villa, is apt and commendable.

PARTS of the laudable interventions is to release about 42,000 metric tons of maize, millet, garri, and other commodities in its strategic reserves so that these items will be made available to Nigerians immediately. The second is to ask the Rice Millers Association of Nigeria to open up their stores, even as they have guaranteed the production of about 60,000 metric tons of rice, to take Nigerians the next one month to six weeks, perhaps up to two months.

FG promised to also look at the possibility of importing some of the food commodities if necessary, and take punitive measures against food hoarders.

WE hope that the FG will swing into action immediately and mince words with action to crash the high food costs. With this ray of hope, Nigerians are looking forward to heaving a sigh of relief from the suffering they are facing.

IT is not yet uhuru. Therefore any waste of time in implementation of these listed interventions will add salt to injury. As such, pro-activeness should be seen in the actions of the FG in the following weeks to come.

BUT while we applaud these proposed interventions, we caution against harmful procedures in the distribution of the food products or politicising the process.

WE are concerned because various experiences from the past indicate that the distribution of such life-touching, free incentives are usually marred by acts of nepotism, favouritism, politics, among other selfish tags by the handlers. This ends up enriching the powerful elite class rather than making an impact in the lives of the poorest of the poor.

WE therefore advise the FG to use distribution methods and strategies that are very practical, direct, and transparent. They should dissuade a situation where the food incentives will be shared based on ethnic, religious, or political affiliation of citizens. Empathy and humanity should rather come first as a criteria for distributing the items to salvage poor Nigerians from this unbearable predicament.

NEWS

Declare state of emergency on security - PFN

The Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, PFN, has urged the President Bola Tinubu-led government to declare a state of emergency on security.

The Christian organisation lamented the lingering banditry and kidnappings ravaging the nation.

Fielding questions from newsmen recently, President of the Fellowship, Bishop Wale Oke, while urging Tinubu not to treat the issues of insecurity with kid gloves, further appealed to Nigerians to bury their hatchets and join hands with the president as he cannot solve the problem alone.

He said, "Be president indeed. You are a seasoned politician, and you know Nigeria like a man knows the back of his hand. Nigerians are in pain. The blood of innocent people is everywhere. In Plateau state, in Benue state, in Kaduna state, in Ekiti state, and everywhere.

"Mr. President, please declare a state of emergency on insecurity in Nigeria and use your executive power as the Commander-in-Chief to compel Nigerian forces to crush insecurity and create a safe Nigeria that is peaceful.

"We learned from a group of



Oke

people on social media threatening that because the election didn't go their way, they were going to make Nigeria ungovernable. This is illegal; the people issuing the threat are criminals and should not be treated with kid gloves. The president should put his feet down and crush these rebellions against the authority of Mr. President and against the people of Nigeria. Because we are now carrying it beyond banditry and insurgency, it

has become a matter of treasonable felony."

He added, "I want to assure you of the firm cooperation of over 65 million Pentecostals in Nigeria who will cooperate with you, pray for you, and give you the necessary information that will make you a success.

necessary information that will make you a success.

The body urged the federal government to open the borders but to be "conscious of security," saying, "Nigerians are hungry, and prices of food are escalating every day."

"What Nigerians earn is not sufficient to fuel their cars, tankless of food. We need Mr. President to work on the economy and provide a solution urgently. We believe Nigeria has no problem with hunger if things are done well. If you do, this future generation of Nigeria will call you blessed.

We should open the border so that food items can come in, but with proper security checks because it has been reported that most people involved in banditry are foreigners, particularly from the Sahel region. So the border should be open in a regulated manner."

CBN barred from advancing loans to FG - Cardoso

THE Central Bank of Nigeria has said it can no longer advance loans to the federal government through the Ways and Means as Section 38 of the CBN Act (2007) bars it from doing so until previous advances have been paid.

CBN governor, Olayemi Cardoso, made the clarification on Friday while addressing members of the Senate committees on Finance, Appropriation, Banking, Insurance and Other Financial Institutions.



Cardoso

The minister of finance, Wale Edun, his counterparts in budget and national planning, and agriculture, Atiku Bagudu and Abubakar Kyari, were present at the meeting with the senators.

Speaking on what led to the present crisis, Cardoso said; "Increase in Net Foreign Asset following the harmonisation of exchange rates and the N3.22tn Ways and Means advances were the major factors driving the increase in money supply."

He said; "I am pleased to note the fiscal authorities' efforts in discontinuing Ways and Means advances. This is also in compliance with Section (38) of the CBN Act (2007), the bank is no longer at liberty to grant further Ways and Means advances to the federal government until the outstanding balance as of December 31, 2023 is fully settled.

"The bank must strictly adhere to the law limiting advances under Ways and Means to five percent of the previous year's revenue. We have also halted quasi-fiscal measures of over N10tn by the Central Bank of Nigeria under the guise of development finance interventions which hitherto contributed to flooding excess naira and raising prices to the level of

inflation we are grappling with today."

The CBN's adoption of the inflation-targeting framework, he said, involves clear communication and collaboration with fiscal authorities to achieve price stability, potentially leading to lowered policy rates, stimulating investment and creating job opportunities.

He said; "Our MPC meeting on the 26th and 27th of February is also expected to review the situation and take further decisions on these important issues. Empirical analysis has established that money supply is one of the factors fueling the current inflationary pressure.

"For instance, an analysis of the trend of money supply spanning over nine months shows that M3 increased from N52.01tn in January 2023 to N68.25tn in November 2023, representing N16.24tn or 31.22 percent increase over the period."

The CBN governor added; "Inflationary pressures are expected to decline in 2024 due to the CBN's inflation-targeting policy, aiming to rein in inflation to 21.4 percent in the medium term, aided by improved agricultural productivity and easing global supply chain pressures."

PLSG donates dental chairs to Unijos

By PETER TITLE

THE Executive Governor of Plateau State, Barrister Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang, has donated 13 dental chairs procured by the State Government, worth millions of Naira, to the College of Health Sciences at the University of Jos.

Governor Mutfwang, during the presentation at the Jos University Teaching Hospital (JUTH), recently, emphasized the importance of enhancing dental services and manpower training in Plateau State through such gestures.

He reiterated the government's commitment to equipping hospitals across the three Senatorial zones with dental equipment to facilitate efficient dental care services.

Expressing his dedication to improving dental healthcare

access for the people of Plateau State, Governor Mutfwang affirmed, "We are committed to ensuring statewide coverage of dental equipment, with at least one hospital equipped in each Senatorial District."

He extended gratitude for the collaboration with the University of Jos, stating his administration's determination to facilitate effective service delivery despite the federal status of the institution.

Accepting the health equipment on behalf of the Vice Chancellor of the University of Jos, the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic), Professor Rahila Gowon, expressed profound appreciation for the governor's generosity, saying that it is going to have a significant impact on the College of Health Sciences.


Prof. Gowon emphasized the

transformative effect of the donation, saying that it would address accreditation challenges and instill hope among dental students.

She commended Governor Mutfwang's integrity and proactive leadership in institution-building efforts.


Subsequently, the Vice Chancellor presented the 13 dental chairs to the Provost of the College of Health Sciences, University of Jos, Prof. Caleb Mpyet, to enhance service delivery.

The Chief Medical Director of Jos University Teaching Hospital (JUTH), Dr. Pokop Bupwatda, appreciated Governor Mutfwang for the intervention and assured that the medical equipment would be used for the benefit of the citizens.



With
Katdapba
Y. Gobum
On Sunday

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"To be fair, the military is overstretched beyond its limits. They are ill-equipped as their fighting power has been described as less than what the insurgents have. While many had thought the helplessness of the Nigerians should bring us back to the drawing board as well as deploying so much resource to execute the war. There are more questions than there are answers".

Let us make Nigeria safe for all

TO be fair, Nigerians have since been dissatisfied with the way the issue of insecurity has been handled here. We are in a state of war and Nigerians are not speaking except a few of those that believe we have got to the stage that something urgent must be done.

Wherever we turn to, one form of criminality has not only reared its head, it has spread in more areas than one and causing colossal that its protagonists had envisaged. We are indeed heading to the stage that it may likely be consumed if the right actions are not taken by government.

There is no need to wait until the worse of the situation hits us. There are sufficient and credible voices which have risen to condemn the continuing scenario; while advising for options that should be taken which could resolve the predicament. Such voices have been reprimanded and reported to have been invited for questioning by the security (?). They should not be silent; they are credible enough to be listened to.

Whatever that is, we have a difficult situation at hand. However we view it all of us are not safe in the country that has defended itself from terrorism several years running. The military has suffered the heaviest casualties; this is not to forget the humongous amount of money that has been sunk to buy equipment to be deployed for use in combating terrorism.

We cannot forget in a hurry how government officials turned that into personal use. Some of them are still facing charges; while many others could well be on their way to be incarcerated on account of sleaze. It is reason enough that some of our countrymen think are of the opinion that the number of Nigerians waiting to steal from government tills are more than those who may have been caught or even escaped the searchlight.

It should no longer be seen as politics to be asked to declare an emergency on security; even as others see it as not the solution to the current debacle. It is beyond

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Those who do not see the situation as disturbing, what other name can we refer to them? It is not a joke in a difficult situation able to consume all of us including those who created the Frankenstein monster for which we are all slaves waiting to be saved. There is a palpable fear which has gripped communities across the land. Whoever is safe has not thought of the hellish situation we have been put into. We can only expect a reprieve if the security agencies are adequately funded to prosecute the war. That is what they have continuously asked for years running.

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partisanship as it is a matter of concern for all who value the existence of the country. The responsibility of securing Nigeria is for all of us to be engaged in.

To be fair, the military is overstretched beyond its limits. They are ill-equipped as their fighting power has been described as less than what the insurgents have. While many had thought the helplessness of the Nigerians should bring us back to the drawing board as well as deploying so much resource to execute the war. There are more questions than there are answers.

'Evidently, the national security architecture has collapsed like a pack of cards in the face of rampaging terrorist who are emboldened by their belief and the apparent helplessness of the Nigerian Army to curtail them.

'The pertinent questions begging for answers now are: How could the insurgents have superior fire power than an established army like Nigeria's reputed for international peace-keeping operation in the past? How could they have superior intelligence than the Nigerian Army? How come the government has not been able to track their source of funding and block it? What exactly has gone wrong with the polity? Is there any hope for the embattled nation called Nigeria?'

As it has been observed severally, 'indeed, we cannot rule out official complicity and negligence, insidious collusion, lack of will power, incompetence, lack of patriotic zeal in this matter, all boils down to failure of governance, mediocrity, misconception of role, corruption and abuse of office. There is the ethical dilemma of sectional interest and general interest. Our present government seems to pander of sectional interest as against public interest and that accounts for the escalation of insurgency and terrorism', so says one Hajia Hadiza Mohammed.

The nation has been told that the

sum of N198.84 billion has been released to the military to prosecute insurgency war from 2019 till date by the federal government, while on the funding of Operation Lafiya Dole in Maiduguri is claiming that they have a shortfall of N50 billion as requested. It is doubtful if any progress will be made if the army is not supported with funds.

As at the time of writing this piece on Friday, April 30, 2021, the president was holding a crucial meeting with security chiefs and other top government officials which included Vice President, Prof Yemi Osinbajo, National Security Adviser, and General Babagana Monguno among others. It was not concluded; hence it was shifted to Tuesday, May 4, 2021.

Nigeria is not fighting a conventional war with any country today but the security situation calls for urgent and revolutionary/innovative measures because, as President Muhammadu Buhari himself has said, "we cannot continue like this." Like drones, spy planes are expensive. But there are already existing facilities that can perform the same function as spy planes without fear of discovery or being shot down and then sparking off a diplomatic row.

What stops the government from insisting that the issues that have been raised and which are thought to be sufficient grievances by those involved in some of the criminalities be examined. For instance, the issue of marginalization has been raging for decades; and it does appear it has been treated as a non-issue as well as several issues. What can be gleaned from all of these is that, time has come for the state to be restructured. For long, sufficient reasons have been adduced for that, yet the state keeps running from pillar to post while the states are being burnt; while lives and properties are destroyed with reckless abandon. The people can't ask for less; they feel what they are going through.

A few month ago the Benue State Governor, Samuel Ortom was on national television and as well as a Senator was also seen on the floor of the Senate shedding tears on account of what has been going on in the nation. In the case of Ortom, he spoke as he stood before

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The pertinent questions begging for answers now are: How could the insurgents have superior fire power than an established army like Nigeria's reputed for international peace-keeping operation in the past? How could they have superior intelligence than the Nigerian Army? How come the government has not been able to track their source of funding and block it? What exactly has gone wrong with the polity? Is there any hope for the embattled nation called Nigeria?

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corpses which were cut down by terrorists.

As many have asked: Is there anyone in charge here? We have a government that may have been feeling inebriated for certain projects which have been executed over the years; but those cannot make Nigerians lose their voices not to speak. It is speaking that we can make progress as a nation.

Those who do not see the situation as disturbing, what other name can we refer to them? It is not a joke in a difficult situation able to consume all of us including those who created the Frankenstein monster for which we are all slaves waiting to be saved. There is a palpable fear which has gripped communities across the land. Whoever is safe has not

thought of the hellish situation we have been put into. We can only expect a reprieve if the security agencies are adequately funded to prosecute the war. That is what they have continuously asked for years running.

Even though some members of the National Assembly have spoken, many others are still sitting on the fence. They feel the war is being fought in far away Afghanistan; it is at our door steps, and the doors may not be opened when they descend on us. But God forbid that we get to that. The grim situation will need their intervention, and quickly too as the signs for a failed state are indeed staring us in the face.

There have been suggestions to invite the international community to help us. While that may be a welcomed development, the question to ask is: Internally, what have we done to engage ourselves to stem the tide? Haven't the elite been accused a lot of keeping quiet in the face of evidences that we are on the precipice? Have they not been the ones engaged in orchestrating others into doing things which tend to divide us? Don't they know that we have since taken the road to Armageddon? If they know that we are on the brink of falling into the pit, pray, tell us. What they have done to stop the slide?

'The sad reality', as one Obinna Nwosu recently noted, is that 'God is speaking to us in actions now; God may have lost his patience and is putting samples of illustration for clarity and yet folks live in clubbed indifference and aloofness chasing and dreaming conquest. The precipice is looming'.

Even President Muhammadu Buhari himself declared that "we cannot continue like this," while making reference to the recent abduction and release of 333/ 334 students of Government Science Secondary School, Kankara in Katsina State. As soon as they were released, 'the students were surprised with a presidential visit. Encouraging them to concentrate on their studies and put the abduction behind them, Buhari used the opportunity to express his grave concern about security in a country under his watch'.

The situation is grim. If you are not worried about it, several Nigerians are. It is shameful that 'we have people who have used this to run a proxy government for their own benefit and our elites are aware and have sworn an oath to be silent'. The time to save Nigeria is now; let's not wait until it is late.

Note: This material was published some time back. On account of the fact that certain indices have continued to abate, it is important we republish it without editing.

It is hope that government will take conscious effort to arrest our drift as many Nigerians have continued to lose their lives without let. As much as it is expected, Nigerians would want a situation where the drift will be addressed.



Supernatural happenings and wickedness of the times

IN the aftermath of one of the cruellest religious crises ever witnessed in Plateau in the year 2004 or thereabouts, I and my family witnessed a very memorable supernatural event. Due to the ugly nature of the crisis, the blood bath, maiming of youth in their prime, the curfew which was declared from dusk to dawn had just been relaxed to 6:am in the morning to 5:00pm in the evening.

We were living in an environment unfriendly at that time to our religious beliefs. After escaping by the whiskers, through the help of a security operative and a friend, the best we could do was to leave the area around 9: 00 am and come back just before the curfew. It was like we were still squatting with friends.

It is one thing for someone to offer one his home, and another for one to overstay one's welcome. We spent the worst days of the crisis in our friends' house. But had to head back home the moment security was beefed up to give the wonderful family that offered us their home, some space. Even so, there was no way we could stay around in the daytime.

It so happened that on this fateful day, we were rushing as always to beat the curfew time. As we took the road that leads to Abattoir from the Airforce Roundabout, my 2 boys started shrieking excitedly. They were claiming to be seeing some riders on horses racing in the clouds above. Finding that hard to believe, I looked up, but all I could see was the sky.

Their excitement got the better of my husband who was driving. He parked the car and looked up and in no time, he joined in the excitement. He said he was shocked I could not see riders on horses galloping away with the wind blowing their clothes and making them appear bigger.

It was frustrating. No matter how hard I looked, I saw only the blue sky. Desperate to be part of the story, I began to plead with God to open my spiritual eyes. And like magic, I saw them. They looked like warriors on very wonderful looking horses, wearing long caftans and turban on their heads. I saw 3 riders on 3 horses riding hard and fast. And we were seeing them standing in one place. We watched them until they disappeared into thick clouds. By then, the traffic was non-existent because it was a few minutes to the start of the curfew.

It was like watching a movie on a gigantic screen. People who saw us looking up in excitement must have dismissed us as a crazy family especially if they had looked up. Thankfully, nothing spoiled our joy. It was a smooth ride to our abode with no harassment from security operatives who abound on the road.

When I discussed with a pastor what we

witnessed, he directed me to the book of Revelations 6:1-8. This Scripture talks about the 4 horse riders that represent God's judgment against man's rebellion. The first horse is very different from the remaining 3 because it's white in colour and represents victory. Some analysts say it is the symbol of Christ. Red stands for warfare and bloodshed, black for famine, pale green for death. These horses each had its mission- to kill and destroy.

What we saw may have foretold the future, describing the time we are in today. It may have been pointing to the crises that had engulfed Plateau after that year. The Dogo na Hauwa massacre where hundreds of women and children were killed while sleeping, was yet to come. Those were days of doom in Plateau State.

Then came the era of bombing of public places. Those were days of doom. Many innocent souls were wasted in that irrational and wicked manner. The number of those cut in their prime is uncountable. Some met their death in the hands of abductors, kidnappers or farmer/ herder clashes.

We were yet to witness the unfortunate Chibok girls debacle, and others that followed after it. In the past, there was a little respect for the sanctity of life. It was also uncalled for to use children as bait. But after the news generated by the Chibok girls' abduction, it is now the order of the day.

So many jobless people have resorted to kidnapping, abductions, to sustain their families. It does not require facing the opponent squarely. All it takes is to get soft targets, and when ransom is paid for their release, it does not involve exchange of bullets but give and take with the giver feeling intimidated and the receiver feeling superior.

We were yet to see a time when security of life is not assured even in the confines of one's home. If it is not petty thieves, then it could be armed robbers or kidnappers lurking around the corner. We are at our wit's end.

Things are so hard. Evil is at its height. The basic necessities of life are beyond the reach of the poor masses which make up the bulk of Nigeria's population. In desperation, some family men and women have resorted to criminal acts.

To make matters worse, the future of our youth has been toyed with anytime the Federal Government and ASUU flex their muscles. An idle mind being the devil's workshop, a number of students have fallen short of the glory of God. Some are now drug addicts or cultists or even both.

Where do we go from here? The solution is in God's word: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all the rest shall be added unto you."



NEWS

PLSG seeks collaboration with German Government

By PETER TITLE

THE Executive Governor of Plateau State, Barrister Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang, has called for more collaboration with the German Government, facilitated through the GIZ, towards addressing the longstanding security challenges plaguing the state.

Governor Mutfwang made the appeal during a meeting with the German Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Ms. Svenja Schulze, at the New Government House in Little Rayfield, Jos, Plateau State recently.

According to him, his administration was determined towards resolving the ongoing security challenges, emphasizing the importance of leveraging the enduring relationship between Germany and Nigeria to expand cooperation with Plateau State.

He stated, "We are currently focused on finding sustainable solutions to our security challenges, and we rely on partnerships with key European countries to assist us in this endeavour."

Governor Mutfwang highlighted efforts towards addressing poverty and enhanced education in the state, in view of their



Mutfwang

significant role in exacerbating security concerns.

Acknowledging the Plateau State's vast agricultural potential, particularly in the production of Irish potatoes, Governor Mutfwang underscored the need to introduce technology to bolster agricultural activities, with a view to tapping into German expertise in this area.

He also expressed interest in collaborating with the German Government to improve electricity infrastructure

and promote renewable energy, thereby stimulating economic growth in the state.

Responding, the German Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Ms. Svenja Schulze, commended Governor Mutfwang's leadership and expressed readiness to deepen collaboration with Plateau State to foster its development.

Ms. Schulze affirmed her team's visit to Plateau State to address the challenges facing the region and explore avenues for partnership.

Taraba to commission dam, airport

From Victor Gai, Jalingo

ALL is now set for the official commissioning of the 40 megawatts Kashimbilla Dam and an airport in Takum, Taraba State.

According to a statement by the Spokesman to the Taraba State Governor, Emmanuel Bello, the occasion will be performed by former President Goodluck Jonathan on the 23rd of February, 2024.

Bello said: "The dam which has an installed capacity for 40 mega watts, is seen as a massive boost to electricity in the state, especially the southern parts which include Takum, Donga, Ussa and Ibi. Neighboring states are also gearing up to benefit from the project".

He also said the two landmark projects, when launched, are expected to have a "tremendous impact" on the lives of the citizens.

Bello further added that apart from generating electricity, the dam will be used for irrigation purposes while an airport and a three star hotel will be used for the purpose of cargo transportation and tourism.

He stated: "Chairman of the visiting panel that toured the projects, Dr Emmanuel Lawson, said the dam is not just about electricity but also

for irrigation purposes and the supply of water in the area".

He added that the Kashimbilla airport will make it the second one in the state with huge potentials for cargo transportation. He stressed that the economic benefits to Taraba state and environs is beyond quantifying.

"Consequently, a three star hotel would also be built around the dam to enhance

the tourism aspect of the dam".

A high powered committee for the event has already been set up by the Taraba State Governor, Dr Agbu Kefas, which is to be chaired by the Chief of Staff to the Governor, Dr Jeji Williams.

The committee terms of reference is to organize a befitting launching event in the coming weeks, the statement further stated.



Kefas

POLITICS

Kwande congratulates Senator-elect, Reps-elect, on victory

By EZEKIEL DONTINNA

ELDER Statesman and former Ambassador to Switzerland, Ambassador (Dr) Miskoom Yahaya Kwande OON, has congratulated the newly elected Senator representing Plateau North, Prince Pam Mwadkon Dachuwangyang, on his victory at last Saturday's re-run elections.

He has also congratulated the newly elected member representing Jos-North/Bassa Constituency, Hon. Daniel Asama, who emerged victorious at the re-run election, describing it as: "A Triumph of Democracy: Congratulations to the Winners of Plateau State re-run elections of February 3, 2024".

This came in a press statement signed by the elder statesman and made available to **SUNDAY STANDARD** in Jos, the Plateau State capital shortly after the declaration of the election results recently.

The elder statesman said, "With great joy and profound gratitude, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the newly elected Senator, (Plateau North Senatorial District), Prince Pam Mwadkon Dachungyang, and the Member of the House of Representatives, (Jos North/Bassa Constituency), Hon. Daniel Asama, on their resounding victory in the recently concluded re-run election held in Plateau State. Your triumph is a testament to the true spirit of democracy and the unwavering support of the people.

"I have no doubt that both Prince Pam Mwadkon and Hon. Daniel Asama will live up to the aspirations and expectations of the voters, as they embark on this noble responsibility of representing their constituents. May your tenure be marked by dedication, integrity, and a relentless pursuit of progress for our beloved state and nation.

The statement adds that, "As we celebrate this momentous milestone, let us not forget the challenges we faced during the post-2023 elections period. It is my sincere hope that Plateau State will swiftly recover from the divisions and tussles that marred our unity. Let us unite as one, for the strength of our state lies in our togetherness", he advised.

According to him, "It is essential for the government and the people to undertake immediate measures to reconcile and bridge the gaps that have emerged. We must never forget that every citizen, irrespective of their religion or ethnicity, is entitled to their fundamental rights.

He maintained that, "The use of religion as a tool of disfranchisement must cease; we must affirm that citizenship rights are not conditional on faith.

"Let us also strive to recapture the lost glory of our state, when Jos was hailed as the political Mecca of Nigeria, attracting momentous political events and embracing politicians from all shades and



Kwande

ideologies. We can revive this legacy by nurturing an environment that exudes peace, openness, and security for all. Together, we can restore Plateau State as a beacon of democratic excellence", he enthused.

Baba Kwande, as he is always addressed, however, expressed optimism for the future of Plateau State, saying,

"I extend my deepest appreciation to all who peacefully participated in the re-run election, be it as candidates or enthusiastic supporters. Our journey towards progress and development continues, and I am confident that we will stand united, empowered by the unwavering spirit of our people.

Edo 2024: Avoid pre-election litigations -INEC

HEAD of the Edo governorship election holding September 21 this year, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has cautioned political parties against unnecessary postponement, arbitrary change of venues of their primaries, wholesale change of delegates' list or the submission of names that did not emerge from valid primaries as candidates for the election.

The commission also warned the parties to shun rancorous primaries that would lead to the breakdown of law and order often as a result of non-adherence to the provision of their constitutions and guidelines.

In a statement Thursday by the National Commissioner and Chairman Information and Voter Education Committee, Sam Olumekun, the electoral body said these were some of the issues that often lead to a

large number of pre-election litigations.

The statement said 16 out of 18 parties already notified the Commission of their intention to participate in the Edo state governorship election as well as their preferred modes and dates of primaries, adding that the last date for such notification lapsed on 4th February 2024.

The statement read: "It will be recalled that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) released the Timetable and Schedule of Activities for the Edo State off-cycle Governorship election. Among the activities listed for the election is the conduct of primaries by political parties scheduled for 1st - 24th February 2024.

"By virtue of Section 82(1) of the Electoral Act 2022, political parties are required to give the Commission at least 21 days notice before the date fixed for the conduct of their primaries.

'APC's failure, opportunity for NNPP 2027 win'

From MUSLIUDEEN ADEBAYO, Ibadan

chieftain of New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP), Ambassador *Olufemi Ajadi Oguntoyinbo* has declared that the failure of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) is an opportunity for the NNPP to win the 2027 general elections.

Oguntoyinbo said that the failure of APC to meet the yearnings and aspirations of Nigerians will open the door for the NNPP in 2027.

The NNPP chieftain who made the declarations recently spoke on the heels of the NNPP victory in the two state Assembly re-run elections conducted on Saturday in Kano State.

The NNPP chieftain while speaking, said that the NNPP is working very hard and will win the 2027 presidential election. Oguntoyinbo said that Nigerians are disappointed with

the manner the APC is ruling the country.

He maintained that an average Nigerian is waiting patiently for 2027 to remove APC from power.

He said the APC's failure to develop Nigeria and the high level of corruption being unveiled at the federal level, will buoy the chances of NNPP in 2027.

He urged APC members to prepare for a paradigm shift towards NNPP.

The NNPP chieftain while speaking further, stressed that the APC has failed the nation.

He said, "It is not just about political power but addressing fundamental challenges confronting the country, which the APC has not been able to confront frontally.

"In a visionary move set for 2027. NNPP is gearing up to confront a myriad of challenges, ushering in a new era of progress and transformation.

From JIDAUNA YANUNG, Abuja

THE House of Representatives has passed for second reading a bill to amend the 2022 Electronic Transmission of results and make it mandatory.

The amendment is also a bid to minimise fraud in the nation's electoral process.

The bill was sponsored by the member representing Upheld North/South/UDI Federal Constituency of Delta State, Hon Franci Waive. The bill is titled, "A bill for an Act to amend the Electoral Act 2022 and for Related Matters".

The bill seeks to amend selected sections of the current Electoral Act to provide for the re-registration of voters, as well as punishment for frivolous election petitions.

In his lead debate on the general principle of the bill, Hon Waive lamented the gaps in the Electoral Act 2022, noting that an amendment of the law to pave the way for the electronic transmission of election results would help the nation's democracy.

He also argued that a review of the voter register

Electronic transmission of result: Bill scales second reading

every 10 years would be a good starting point.

The proposed legislation seeks to amend Section 10 of the Principal Act by providing for a new Subsection (3) that states that "Without prejudice to

the provisions of this section and subject subsection (2), every 10 years, INEC shall carry out a re-registration of all eligible voters in preparation for the next general elections.



Tajudeen

rancorous primaries that lead to the breakdown of law and order often as a result of non-adherence to the provision of their constitutions and guidelines. These are some of the issues that lead to a large number of pre-election litigations.

"The schedule (dates and modes) of primaries proposed by the political parties has been uploaded to the Commission's website and social media platforms for public information."

In a related development, the All Progressives Congress (APC) Thursday assured the 12 Edo State governorship aspirants in the February 17 party primary of a level playing ground for the most eligible and accepted candidate to fly the party's flag in the September state governorship election.

The party's National Organising Secretary, Alhaji Suleiman Arungunu, made the

commitment in Abuja while inaugurating the Edo State National gubernatorial Aspirants Screening Committee and Screening Appeal Committee at the party headquarters in Abuja

The party chieftain urged members of the two committees to be meticulous in the discharge of their assignment and ensure the outcome of their assignment will be devoid of any litigation.

"We are going to provide a level playing ground for all our 12 aspirants. I implore you to be thorough in carrying out your assignment and follow the checklists to be sure that all the aspirants comply with the guidelines.

"As you proceed to engage with the task for which you have been nominated, please, be rest assured that we have made sure that the exercise will be hitch-free and seamless," he said.



Yahaya

SUNDAY POLITICS

Election judgements: Is attack on judiciary justified?

The 2023 general elections brought the Nigerian judiciary under heavy criticism, even as the integrity of the judges were impugned. Is criticism of the judiciary justified? TOPE SUNDAY asks in this report.

IN the aftermath of the 2023 Presidential elections, Nigerians have been very vocal in their criticism of the judiciary. Many decried what they saw as judicial interference, lack of independence, and partisanship in the handling of election petitions.

There were widespread allegations of vote rigging and malpractice during the 2023 general elections, with various parties contesting the results.

The role of the judiciary in resolving these disputes has been put under the microscope, with many Nigerians expressing dissatisfaction with the performance of the country's legal system.

Much of the criticism has focused on the perceived lack of independence of the judiciary from political influence. Many have accused the courts of being subject to pressure from the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) or other powerful interests, leading to biased rulings and miscarriages of justice.

Despite these criticisms, however, there have also been voices of support for the judiciary. Many have praised individual judges for their integrity and commitment to upholding the rule of law, even in the face of pressure from powerful interests.

Notable critics

A lot of Nigerians via social and traditional media have criticised the judiciary. While some of the critics are relatively unknown, criticism by legal gurus whose opinions are considered to be authority like the former President of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Olisa Agbakoba (SAN), carries a lot of weight.

For Agbakoba, the judiciary is the most undemocratic arm of government. The learned Silk, while reacting to the speech by retired Justice Musa Dattijo Muhammad at his valedictory session, held recently in Abuja, also said the National Judicial Council (NJC) needed to take note of the points that were raised by Justice Dattijo to address the decay in Nigeria's judicial system.

Agbakoba also emphasized that Dattijo's speech was not in any way impugning the character of the Chief Justice of Nigeria, Olukayode Ariwoola, but was addressing the inconsistencies of the office in itself.

Also, a Nigerian Professor based in the United States (US), Farooq Kperogi, in an article titled: "Lawan and Supreme Court of Shameless Judicial Bandits" which he shared on social media platforms, criticised the Supreme Court over its recent judgment that confirmed former Governor of Akwa Ibom State, Godswill Akpabio and Senate President Ahmad Lawan as senatorial candidates of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in the February 25 elections.

He also described the apex court "as the most hopeless Supreme Court in the history of the world's supreme courts."

Judiciary can be criticized, not scandalised – Falana

Speaking at the public presentation of "Dis Life No Balance; An Anthropology of Nigerian Diaspora Voices, a book, co-authored by Professors Farooq Kperogi, Moses Ochon, and Dr. Osmund Agbo, in Abuja recently, Mr. Femi Falana, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), argued that judiciary



Ariwoola

can be criticised, noting that judges had in the past criticised their judgments.

Falana, who cited various instances where judges disagreed over judgments, however, warned against scandalising the judiciary.

He said: "From time to time, the Justices of the Supreme Court subject the judgments of their brethren to harsh criticism which are expressed in dissenting opinions.

"For instance, in *Abacha v The State, Olufemi Ejiwunmi J.S.C.* was peeved that his colleagues decided to discharge the appellant despite what his Lordship regarded as the overwhelming evidence of his involvement in the brutal murder of the Late Mrs Kudirat Abiola.

"In a critical dissenting opinion, his Lordship referred to the judgments of his colleagues as "the tyranny of the majority." The Hon. Justice Cletus Nweze, who passed on a few months ago, never hesitated to write dissenting judgments whenever he felt that the decision of the Supreme Court could not be justified on legal grounds.

"Occasionally, his Lordship does so with some caustic words for his learned brethren in the Court. For instance, in the controversial case of *Uzodinma v Ihediora, Nweze* predicted that the majority judgment would haunt the Supreme Court for several years to come.

"Truly, the judgment has been haunting the Court since then and may continue until the judgment is revisited in the future.

"In the same vein, in *Oghenovo & Anor v Governor of Delta State & Anor (2022) LPELR-48062(SC)* the Supreme Court dismissed the appeal for want of locus standi. Convinced that the majority judgment was wrong the Hon. Justice Nweze delivered a dissenting judgment where he held that: "It would, in my view, be a grave lacuna in our system of public law, if a pressure group, like the federation, or even a single public-spirited taxpayer, were prevented by outdated technical rules of locus standi, from bringing the matter to the attention of the Court to

vindicate the rule of law and get the unlawful conduct stopped.

"Incidentally, the leading judgment in the case of *APC v Machina* was read by the Honourable Justice Nweze. No doubt, the judgment was anchored on technicalities as the appeal succeeded on the ground that the respondent ought to have commenced the pre-election case by filing a writ of summons instead of originating summons. "Out of the 5-member panel of the Court, Agim and Jauro JJSC vehemently disagreed with the majority judgment on solid legal grounds that are devoid of sentiment.

"In particular, the Hon. Justice Jauro stated that he had painstakingly read the affidavit in support of the originating summons and cannot identify any crime reference to warrant the filing of a writ of summons in the case.

"It is submitted that the right to criticize the decisions of courts in a democratic society is part of the fundamental right to freedom of expression guaranteed by section 39 of the Nigerian Constitution and article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (Ratification and Enforcement) Act Cap A9, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004.

"It has been observed that in a democracy, the three arms of government and all institutions including the courts are necessarily the subject of criticism. No public institution maintained with public funds is exempted from criticism scrutiny.

"It is submitted while the general right to criticize decisions of courts is not disputed, lawyers and members of the public are not permitted to scandalise judges or accuse them of corruption or misconduct without proof. In reacting to the controversial judgment of the court in *Machina's* case, Kperogi referred to the justices of the Supreme Court as "shameless judicial bandits."

"With respect, Professor Kperogi ought not to have engaged in such vulgar abuse in criticizing the

judgment of the apex court.

"... It is pertinent to note that the Justices of the Supreme Court have continued to welcome criticism of their judgments.

"Two years ago, while speaking in Abuja on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of his call-to-bar along with some Justices of the Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, Judges in other courts, and senior lawyers in the country, the immediate past Chief Justice of Nigeria, Justice Ibrahim Tanko Muhammad said, "As critical stakeholders in the task of justice delivery, you have the responsibility of drawing our attention to where things are going wrong or on the verge of going wrong."

"Justice Muhammad was emphatic when he said that it would not be out of place for lawyers to subject Justices in the country to criticism where necessary as a step to ensuring improvement in the justice delivery system.

"Justice Muhammad, however, said that such criticism must be offered in good faith and objectivity that will propel judicial officers on the bench to enhanced performance. I concur with the retired Chief Justice"

"2023 polls exposed judiciary"

Also speaking on the criticism of the judiciary, an Abuja-based Legal Practitioner, Chris Nevo Esq., said the 2023 general elections exposed the judiciary to forensic scrutiny, adding that the attack against the institution was not meant to scare the judges.

He said: "First, the attack is not, and can never be justified by any rational person. In my sincere estimation, it is also, in most cases, not an attempt to cow them.

"There may be a few instances, where the intent is clearly to browbeat the Judiciary. Notwithstanding, vicious and acerbic criticism of some aspects of their actions or conduct, should not be misconstrued.

"The 2023 general elections was unique and unparalleled in terms of the degree of awareness, mobilisation, interest, and participation. It offered hope and

created alluring excitements, as people were made to, and, did genuinely believe that their vote would count.

"They had fervently relied on and trusted the fact the election would be substantially IT/electronically driven to leapfrog the usual manipulations, and they conscientiously invested in it.

"When it came and eventually ended the way it did, especially at the national level, people, especially, the young and digital savvy could not be persuaded by the reasons or justifications provided by INEC for the abysmal disappointment, they were also enraged by the misplaced confidence with which INEC decreed 'Go To Court' for those dissatisfied.

"Since the Judiciary has been churning out some mysterious Judgments/decisions founded more on technicalities than substantial justice.

"The endpoint is that people became frustrated with the Judiciary and began to vigorously and fiercely interrogate their actions and decisions at every forum and any means – conventional/digital media.

"In all, the criticism is an admixture of frustration and the desire for the right to be done that will put an end to the theater of absurd in the conflicting and contradictory judgments of the courts occasioned by the 2023 elections.

"The elections opened up the Judiciary to forensic scrutiny as never before, and, there will be no end in sight until real justice starts surfacing."

"Bad losers criticising judiciary"

For Social Critic, Akinboye Adeoye, only bad losers were criticising the judiciary.

While reacting to Agbakoba's allegation against the judiciary he said: "The accusations against the judiciary and Supreme Court have become predominant as a result of bad losers during the recent elections.

"Those who did not produce sufficient evidence in courts, expected the Courts to manufacture evidence for them as if the Supreme Court were Father Christmas.

"The same Agbakoba cautioned those he called armchair lawyers to stop condemning the supreme court justices. He is one of the pioneers of those objectionable and ridiculous 25 per cent votes of Abuja superiority. That Abuja Federal Capital votes is superior to 36 State votes. Agbakoba is bitter over the losses of his candidates.

"Are the Supreme Court justices not first and foremost lawyers that some people alleged to be liars? Those that Late Chief Gani Fawehinmi referred to as "legal mechanics".

"That a lawyer can argue 'A' and 'B' here, and 'C' there depending on the highest bidders. Political and opposition lawyers are doing worse to our judges.

"How many of the senior lawyers are professionals in their conduct? The other day, one took a dead case in the Imo state of Ihedioha to court after four years.

"Let Agbakoba come out, especially in the recent cases where the Supreme Court delivered a judgment that was not in order. Let him articulate it point by point and not be going to the past."

SUNDAY POLITICS

Mutfwang: God's chosen governor for Plateau

For members of the Peoples Democratic Party, (PDP) and citizens of Plateau State, the journey on the tortuous road from March 18, 2023 can only be imagined. However, following the development, it can be safely concluded that the hand of God was certainly available in turning the tide around for good; not minding how long it took to come into effect. GYANG BERE writes.

AFTER some eight months of inordinately intractable litigation battle, the toll of it was certainly felt everywhere in the state; particularly in the division that was palpable in its wake. Plateau State, like never before must have been more divided during this period, no thanks to the outcome of the verdict from the Tribunal, Court of Appeal to indeed the Supreme Court. It remains, in many respects, and if it had subsisted; one of the greatest assaults on the nation's democracy.

The fact that the parties aggressively followed their cases to their logical conclusion at the Supreme Court gave the indication that Governor Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang and his lawyers were in every sense determined to coast to victory despite the technicalities that had inhibited its dancing songs put together for celebration at the Court of Appeal.

That setback, by all intent and purposes did not deter the lawyers of the camp of Governor Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang nor his party; the line was open for the fight to a finish at the Supreme Court.

So many allegations were peddled by the opposition and group of individuals with vested interest, but the only thing the governor held unto was: The Almighty God who secured the victory for him during the March 18, 2023, was able to deliver him from the hands of those who sought to take away the crown from him through the back door. He insisted, victory was soon coming his way; and when it did, the dance was sweet without regret.

But more than the parties, the discussions and analyses that its people and many other interested parties had engaged themselves in since November when the Court of Appeal quashed Governor Caleb Mutfwang's election on the ground of lack of structure; an issue long canvassed by the All Progressives Congress (APC) were incendiary. The parties were both fired on, nonetheless; knowing that they had a case' but it was the 'political bad blood', that came to an end.

The combustible accounts of those involved had all manners of followers, who didn't know that law does not survive on the emotions of the canvassers. The ruling of the Supreme Court definitely put paid to the wrangling that had emanated from the verdict he got from the Court of Appeal, that pre-election matters do not have a place at the election tribunal.

It was an official stamp that reversed the vexatious verdict of the Court of Appeal in the governor's case. But even at that, what became worrisome were the contradictory outcomes of the judgments that the Tribunals and Court of Appeal dished out ostensibly on the same matter 'outside their respective jurisdiction'. While it was seen as 'brazen judicial heist', their judgment was aimed at setting the state on fire, as well as unacceptable and at best malicious.

But above that has happened, the hope of the people of Plateau



Mutfwang

State came back to life, particularly of those who were almost giving up on an arm that is said to be the last hope of the common man. Seen from this angle, for many Nigerians, it was the democratic process that was undergoing a dangerous metamorphosis it portends to Nigeria if left to go at the Apex Court.

It was the general celebration of the verdict that brought hope of redemption; but more importantly that the people of Plateau State were solidly behind their governor. The end of a long travail had finally come for a fractured state; whose development efforts had been literally distracted on account of the time it took in the course of the intractable litigation. It is indeed a time to settle and implement the seven wonderful but massive policy ideas of the government.

The return of the governor to the state after his victory at the Supreme Court was anything but massive and symptomatic of a people celebrating. It was obvious that once the lead judgment delivered by Justice Emmanuel Akomaye Agim, JSC, signaled the beginning of celebrations from Abuja to the streets of the state capital to the local government areas of the state. It was spontaneous, just as it was when the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) announced him as winner of the gubernatorial election in March 2023.

No wonder, the apparent conviviality of the celebration was even more elaborate on Saturday, January 13, 2024; where starting from the Yakubu Gowon Airport, Heipang, and 'protocol and order' were broken as supporters had to

almost enter the runway to welcome the governor back home after his conquest at the Supreme Court, Abuja.

In the history of the state and the airport, no state governor had received such large number of friends and supporters, who have come from all the 17 local government areas to be part of the Governor's 'triumphant entry' into Jos from Abuja. He managed to say just a few words before his security men whisked him away into his vehicle.

But if it took time before he left the airport, what awaited the governor and his entourage from Heipang to the venue of the reception and later to his official residence was another spectacle to behold as the motorcade span several kilometers beholden by enthusiastic people who waited at various interceptions to Jos, the state capital. The frenetic party in various parts of the state continued uninhibited, thanks to the fact that freedom has come.

The government soon settled down to organizing a thanksgiving for the victory. The Muslim brethren first had theirs at the Jos Central Mosque, where thanks was offered to Allah for the resounding verdict. While the Christian counterparts held theirs on January 21, 2024 at the Rwang Pam Township Stadium, where again, the power of organization was brought to bear on the service. The sea of heads in and around the stadium resplendent in white and green must have sent jitters to anyone who had questioned the popularity of Governor Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang in the state. It was indeed apparent that the fight his team of lawyers gave a good fight

to sway judgment to their side; even though it was going to be hard given what had happened at the Court of Appeal.

Those who were called to speak and or prayed at the occasion were not emotional; they spoke from the bottom of their hearts of God's mercy to have delivered the victory to the governor in the most dramatic form. It was indeed what the state needed: Return to God while seeking his face for guidance for the task ahead of the government and indeed the people.

Importantly however, knowing the task ahead of him, not only Governor Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang was aware that the battle was God's to prosecute. To have rent his heart in supplication for the task of governance; and the multi-faceted dimensions of how his success could turn things for the better for Plateau State was all that mattered as he stood before the solemn assembly of the children of God.

As powerful as it was delivered before the state and the world, the truthfulness of seeking the face of God stood as a testament of his resolve to change more things than one from the failure of the immediate past government. That means a lot to his support base, particularly as evidence by the number of men and women from all walks of life in the stadium for the thanksgiving.

Those who didn't believe in the case the governor was pursuing thought his political star would wane soon, but from all intent and purposes, he is the comeback kid we have always known and admired. Since he would not give up on his case but pursue it to the Apex Court of the land, the Peoples

Democratic Party (PDP) believe in him far more as the leader they have always wanted. He did many things that ordinarily would have sent any leader in his shoes wondering whether to go ahead or hang around, until the case was dispensed of.

He chose to be the people's hero: Be the workaholic governor by setting up construction sites all over the state. Having met most roads in some parts of the metropolis in a total state of disrepair, he initiated action to take those head on by fixing them almost at the same time. By that singular action, his name would for long remain on the lips of the people of the state; who have always identified with the government that works for them.

It is obvious he wants to build a durable Plateau; no wonder a few days after the victory, the governor mobilized several construction companies to some of the most important projects which were started by former Governor Jonah David Jang but abandoned by Governor Simon Bako Lalong government in 2015.

The lead was instructive: Forge ahead and concentrate of developing the state at all cost, without minding if he had any case in court at all. For starters, he became governor during one of the toughest times in the history of the state. Muscled from all sides by a determined opposition to wrest power from and the genocidal attacks which became more pronounced in his local government of birth, Mangu would have slowed his resolve to be the leader the state needed.

More than any governor in the history of the state, he showed determination by sharing in the misfortunes of his people and became their constant companion in the villages and shelter camps in Mangu, Barkin Ladi and Bokkos. But determined more than ever before, he became a constant visitor to all who mattered and could help bring peace to the beleaguered state; even as the clergy and congregations were always on their knees for God's intervention in the Plateau attacks.

No one could fault him in this regard, so long as it was established that help indeed came. Yet, it was also established that the form of the attacks if not approached decisively given its nature and colour would obliterate Plateau communities from the map of the state, and by extension, Nigeria. He had read the signs from what took place in the past, and had rightly defined it as genocide against the people of Plateau State.

No doubt, the battle has been won; there is a lot of catching up to do by the Governor Caleb Mutfwang government. The opportunities for development are not lost to him, he has to, as he has been doing; 'putting behind the obvious animosity of the past eight months, embrace all citizens across the divides of faith and ethnicity; and carry on with the incredible developmental projects he was able to initiate (some of which have been completed) even under the great stress and tension he had to operate'.

SUNDAY PEOPLE

GOVERNOR MUTFWANG FLAGS OFF PIRBS

The Executive Governor of Plateau State, Barr. Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang last week flagged off the Plateau Intelligent Revenue Billing System (PIRBS) at the Plateau State Internal Revenue Service House, Jos



Governor Mutfwang (with mic) delivering his remarks



Governor Mufwang (left) in heart to heart discussion with the Chairman, PSIRS, Mr. Jim Pam Wayas



Cross section of Staff of the PISRS listening to the Governor's remarks



Cross section of Commissioners at the ceremony



From L-R, Hon. Dachung Musa Bagos, Hon. Peter Gyengdyeng and Hon. Isaac Kyale Kwalu



Plateau State Governor, Barr. Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang flagging off the Billing System of PSIRS



Consultant PIRBS, Mr. Hassan making some comments at the brief ceremony



Governor Mutfwang (left) signing the visitors register, while the Chairman, PSIRS, Mr. Jim Pam Wayas looks

PHOTOS: DANLADI DUK

IT is said that when two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers the most. The constant crises at the Plateau State House of Assembly is a testament to this. From the many leadership tussles to now jostling for seats between lawmakers. With all of the happenings, the state assembly which seems to be nonexistent for some time now has been unable to perform its legislative functions. Of course, it is the people that are made to bear the brunt.

eventually, the PDP lawmakers were allowed access into the premises. The spokesman for the group, Hon. Ishaku Maren who is the former Majority Leader and member representing Bokkos constituency while speaking to journalists said the Supreme Court judgement which affirmed Barr. Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang as the duly elected governor of the state should also be applicable to the lawmakers that were sacked by the appellate court.

Earlier, the Speaker Rt. Hon. Gabriel K. Dewan had in an



Plateau assembly in the eye of the storm

The issue took a different turn with the recent Supreme Court verdict declaring Barr. Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang as the duly elected governor of Plateau State, thus overturning the Court of Appeal judgement and bringing to question the issue of structure, nomination and sponsorship by the PDP.

You would recall that following the resignation of the former Speaker, Rt. Hon. Moses Thomas Sule and his Deputy Rt. Hon. Gwotson Fom Dalyop in November 2023, a new Speaker emerged in the person of Rt. Hon. Gabriel Kudengbena Dewan under the platform of Young Progressive Party (YPP).

It was expected that the new speaker would call for plenary and swear in the new members from the APC following the PDPs loss of sixteen seats in the House. But instead, Rt. Hon. Dewan in his acceptance speech declared that the House had been adjourned to the 23rd of January, 2024.

However, as the date for readjournalment drew close, the sixteen sacked PDP lawmakers in a press briefing held, threatened to resume plenary on the same date despite the nullification of their election by the Court of Appeal. To make good their threat, the sixteen members stormed the Old Government House Rayfield, temporary venue for plenary sessions since the assembly complex was under renovation.

Meanwhile, ahead of the resumption last Tuesday, armed security personnel had been deployed to the venue at Old Government House to forestall any potential disruption of sitting. Before then, the eight elected lawmakers including the speaker had already arrived and were having an executive session preparatory for the day's legislative activity. A little chaos ensued as the PDP members attempted to gain entrance into the premises, prompting the Police stationed at the gate to act by stopping them.

After a while, the situation was brought under control and



Dewan

address to the sixteen PDP members cautioned on the need for them to be patient as they await the interpretation of the court process already instituted. He was quick to appeal to both the APC and PDP supposed members of the Plateau State House of Assembly to maintain status quo pending the outcome of

the court process. In his words, "Honourable members, I am in receipt of a court process that restrains me from doing anything contrary to the court process already initiated. As you know, we as an institution are responsible for making laws and not interpreting the law. For now, I am pleading that



The eight duly elected members, including the speaker.



Former Majority Leader, Maren

we maintain the status quo until the interpretation of the law by those responsible, that According to him, the Appeal is the judiciary, after which the next line of action would be taken".

While reacting to the sixteen PDP members press briefing, stamp of finality which cannot be overturned by any Plateau State, Mr. Sylvanus Namang described their planned resumption as an assault to democracy and contempt of court order. According to him, the Appeal which the Court judgement which would be sacked the sixteen PDP members and all its National Assembly members has a stamp of finality which cannot be overturned by any court in the land, in line with Section 246 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended).



Members of the PDP, briefing journalists.

SUNDAY MAGAZINE



Cardoso



Egbetukun

Kidnapping industry: Are banks complicit?

Kidnapping is now a big industry in Nigeria where those behind it are becoming above the law. These bandits have become ruthless' brave and bold, so much that they have overwhelmed all manner of security measures. They snatch their victim with precision like an eagle would take its prey. And when they demand for ransom payment, they confidently deplore the use of financial institutions. They have so far send fears into the adrenaline of the mighty and low in the society. KENNETH DARENG, examines the role of banks in enabling this epidemic.

It sounds unimaginable that a gang of kidnapers would call friends or relatives of their victims to pay ransom into some accounts and yet cannot be detected. Such has been the trend in most cases across the country where hundreds of millions have been paid to save the lives of kidnapped victims.

Security experts have blamed commercial banks of encouraging the kidnapping epidemic in the country, as some ransoms are paid into bank accounts. Previously, such an ugly trend was restricted to the North West, abductions have in recent times spread to other parts of the country including Lagos, Ogun, Nasarawa, and Delta states, as well as the Federal Capital Territory [FCT], Abuja.

Speaking on the complicity of banks in the growth of abduction business, the Managing Director of Beacon Consulting, Adamu Kabiru affirmed that banks were involved in collecting the ransoms. Speaking in an interview on TVC Channel, he said, "I will shock you today to tell you that in almost all the cases where my company was involved, the money was collected through our banking system, and I say this with all sense of responsibility. In almost all, it was only in few circumstances that cash was collected and taken to the

kidnappers."

"They are brave and bold that they provide account numbers. Two banks are guilty, and because this is a public forum, I will not mention the banks' names."

According to Moses Fom, a Financial Expert based in Jos who spoke with **SUNDAY STANDARD** said, "We are all guilty of the lapses being experienced in our nations' insecurity at the moment where the whistle blower strategy has been abandoned while the absence of a centralized data capturing method appears not to be used by the authorities concerned.

"What happened to the National Identity Number [NIN], the Bank Verification Number [BVN] and other data capturing methods. All these were intended to

checkmate any fraud within the system' Unfortunately, these criminals are taking advantage of the loop holes in our strategic Institutions to perpetrate crime with ease."

The former Intelligence officer and now security Consultant Adamu Kabiru also alluded to the fact that the Money Laundering Prohibition Act 2022 prohibits individuals and corporate bodies from paying or receiving cash payments exceeding N5m and N10m respectively.

The law provides for 24 hour time frame for all transactions or designated non-financial institutions to file suspicious transaction reports with the Financial Intelligence Unit [FIU]. He admonished financial managers to "wake up from their slumbers" insisting that they have the technical capacity to

track kidnapers.

He noted, the country lacked the tactical ability to rescue the hostages, but with good intelligence and well trained personnel who could carry out multi-faceted rescue operations, a lot can be achieved in curbing the menace.

Furthermore, Adamu said, the industry has been "fed" by line of other businesses, including informants, weapons and ammunition suppliers and the vulnerabilities that exists in our banking system. He added, "One can conclusively say that a kidnap-for-ransom industry exists in Nigeria and that it is a thriving one. The industry is fed by a chain that includes informants, weapons and ammunition supplies, drugs and other essential supplies."

"It also includes those who

assist them in collecting and laundering the proceeds. Some of the drivers of abduction are the socio-economic issues and the vulnerabilities that exists within the banking sector." Adamu said.

Corroborating such opinion, a retired Commissioner of Police, Emmanuel Ojukwu, hinted that the banks might be complicit in the kidnapping business. "Crowd-funding for ransom payment has been hyped. It is not a pleasant solution, it sort of reinforces the crime. The banks are probably involved in all of these. Bank customers have been finding it tough to get cash for their transactions. How come millions are being sourced for kidnapers?"

"I suppose the banks and NFIU should begin to ask questions on how these funds are trafficked and where they end up. There is technology to track such funds, Ojukwu noted. Another analyst said, the problem with the banks is that they have abandoned the "Know Your Customer" KYC, strategy which had in the past, had some basic requirements before opening any account.

A banker who spoke under anonymity said, "During the era of Sanusi Lamido as CBN Governor, banks were allowed to open accounts with limited KYC requirements. These tier -1 accounts could be used to perpetrate such evil acts."

"The former Intelligence officer and now security Consultant Adamu Kabiru also alluded to the fact that the Money Laundering Prohibition Act 2022 prohibits individuals and corporate bodies from paying or receiving cash payments exceeding N5m and N10m respectively. The law provides for 24 hour time frame for all transactions or designated non-financial institutions to file suspicious transaction reports with the Financial Intelligence Unit [FIU]. He admonished financial managers to "wake up from their slumbers" insisting that they have the technical capacity to track kidnapers."

Continued on page 31

NEWS

Mutfwang urges citizens to pay taxes

By PETER TITLE

CITIZENS of Plateau State have been enjoined to trust the present government and ensure the timely payment of their taxes in order to fuel the state's development initiatives.

Governor Mutfwang made the call during the launch of the Plateau Intelligent Revenue Billing System (PIRBS), held at the Plateau State Internal Revenue House, Jos recently.

The governor underscored the significance of revenue as the backbone of economic progress, stressing its pivotal role in providing essential services and infrastructure for the people.

Acknowledging the shortfall in revenue

collection over the years, the Governor pledged to streamline taxation processes and prevent duplication of levies. He urged the revenue service staff to intensify efforts to meet the designated revenue targets for 2024.

The governor cautioned against undermining the newly introduced revenue system, which he explained was aimed at blocking financial leakages, and called for the cooperation of the staff, promising improved welfare packages as incentives.

"We cannot expect better compensation without enhancing our revenue capacity and efficiency collectively," Mutfwang stressed.

He advocated a collaborative approach to bolster revenue collection within legal boundaries.

The Chairman of the Plateau State Internal



Mutfwang

Revenue Service (PSIRB), Mr. Jim Pam Wayas, expressed gratitude to Governor Mutfwang for his commitment to enhancing revenue generation and assured citizens that the Intelligent Revenue Billing System would enhance the

state's revenue base without unduly burdening them.

Mr. Pam reiterated the revenue service's dedication to transparent revenue coordination and creating a taxpayer-friendly environment.

Governor Mohammed embarks on roads projects

From

ABBAS GUNGURA, Bauchi

GOVERNOR Bala Mohammed has begun road projects flagging up in Bauchi South Senatorial Zone of Bauchi State recently in Lere District of Tafawa Balewa Local Government Area.

He emphasized that his administration's desire is to construct rural road network linking communities along the corridors of Boi, Gambar, Sara, Marti and Lere in Bogoro and Tafawa Balewa Local Government Areas.

This is aimed to improve security, food production and other economic activities in the areas. The Governor unfolded his plans at the ground breaking ceremony of a thirty kilometers project held at Lere District of Tafawa Balewa Local Government.

Governor Bala Mohammed, promised to execute similar projects across the state under Rural Agricultural and Mobility Project RAMP, a World Bank Assisted Programme.

Our correspondent reports that shortly after the colorful and exciting flagging off of the project in Lere, the governor proceeded to inaugurate another 40.2 kilometers road project from Geljaule to Lame District of Toro Local Government Area of the state.

The workaholic governor informed that the project

would cost fourteen point two billion naira aimed at fulfilling the promises made to the benefiting communities during his electioneering campaign to create various

Prioritize security of lives, property - Kogi CP

From

AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

KOGI State Commissioner of Police, CP, Bethrand Onuoha has urged government at all levels to accord priority to security of lives and property of the citizenry.

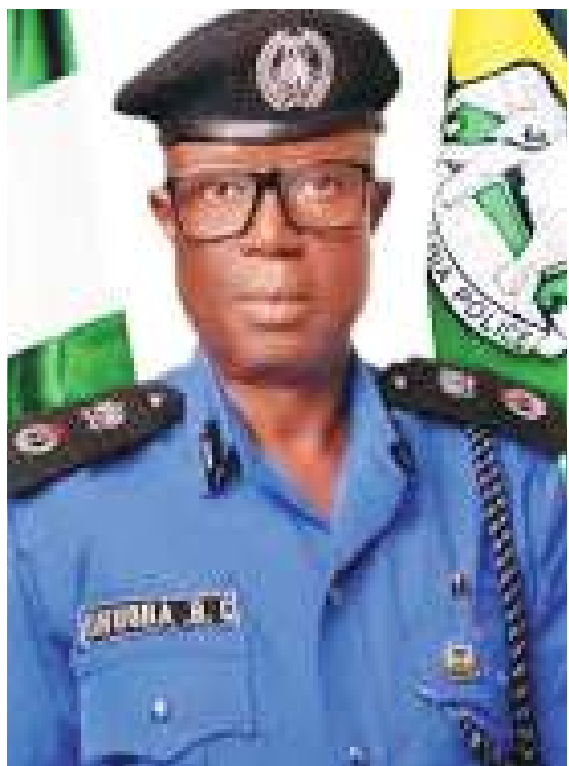
Onuoha made the call recently in his office while receiving officials of the Kogi State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists, (NUJ). He said the current security challenge facing the nation demands more attention, stressing that more funding was required towards creating better working conditions for the police.

According to him, the major challenges confronting Police was that of logistics, communication and information gathering. The CP described the role of

social and economic development of the areas.

In other to ensure timely completion of the projects, quality job and adherence to project specifications, Governor Bala directed the

Hon. Commissioner, Ministry of Works and Transport to ensure close and constant close mark with the contractors.



Onuoha

the media as crucial, especially in correcting societal ills, noting that the police in the state will sustain its efforts at bringing crimes to a minimal level.

The Police Commissioner pledged improved partnership with the NUJ and urged the new leadership to see their position as an opportunity to contribute to the growth of the society.

Earlier, the Chairman of NUJ, Alhaji Seidu Ademu, said the visit was to familiarize with the Police

Commissioner. He said that the need for synergy among the two cannot be overemphasized.

Alhaji Seidu commended the police for its fight against crimes, but called for strategic efforts at curbing kidnapping and other crimes in the state.

The NUJ Chairman assured that the partnership with the police would be improved upon, adding that there was no alternative to peace and security of lives and property.



Bala



2024 budget scales second reading in Senate

NATIONWIDE strike looms as NLC, TUC issue 14-day notice to Nigerian govt

The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), and the Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (TUC), have issued a 14-day nationwide strike notice to the Federal Government. [Read more](#)

12 new House of Reps members take oaths of office

Twelve new members of the House of Representatives have taken their oath of office today. [Read more](#)

Tinubu approves release of 102,000MT of grains to address hardship in Nigeria

President Bola Tinubu has ordered the immediate release of 102,000 metric tons of various grain types from the national reserve to address the current hardship in the country. [Read more](#)

Troops arrest female kidnapper while picking N1.5m ransom in Taraba

Troops of the 93 Battalion attached to the 6 Brigade of the Nigerian Army in Taraba have arrested a suspected kidnapper in the state. [Read more](#)

INEC confirms 16 parties for Edo governorship election

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) said on Thursday 16 political parties would field candidates in the September 21 governorship election in Edo State. [Read more](#)

Court orders Nigerian govt to fix prices of food, petroleum products in 7 days

Justice Ambrose Lewis-Allagoo of the Federal High Court, Lagos, on Wednesday, ordered President Bola Tinubu's administration to fix the prices of goods and petroleum products in the country within seven days. [Read more](#)

Union members protest, says NAFDAC ban of alcohol in sachets to affect 500,000 jobs

The Food Beverage and Tobacco Senior Staff Association and National Union of Food Beverages and Tobacco Employee (NUFBTE), have disclosed that no fewer than 500,000 workers stand to lose their jobs due to Federal Government's ban on sale and consumption of alcohol in sachets and polyethylene terephthalate (PET) bottles. [Read more](#)

Ribadu, CDS, absent at Senate's interface with security chiefs

The planned interface between the Senate and service chiefs was stalled on Wednesday following the absence of the National Security Adviser (NSA), Nuhu Ribadu, the Chief of Defence Staff, Gen. Christopher Musa and others at the National Assembly. [Read more](#)

EFCC raises taskforce to check 'dollarisation' of economy

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has raised a Special Task Force in all its zonal commands to enforce extant laws against currency mutilation and dollarization of the economy. [Read more](#)

Obi compares security under Obasanjo, Yar'Adua against Jonathan, Tinubu

Former Anambra State governor and Labour Party presidential candidate, Peter Obi, on Wednesday, ignited debate at the Centre for Values in Leadership's annual symposium by drawing a stark comparison between the security situations under different administrations. [Read more](#)

7. Senate moves to curb tax evasion, boost listing in Nigeria's capital market

Following the delisting of several companies from the equities market, the Senate Committee on Capital Market on Wednesday resolved to increase listing of quoted companies on the bourse and reduce tax evasion. [Read more](#)

9. Driver slumps on wheel, dies in Osun accident

An unidentified driver of a mini commercial bus on Wednesday died in an accident on the Olaiya overhead bridge in Osogbo. [Read more](#)

10. Nwabali the hero as Nigeria pips South Africa to AFCON final ticket

Super Eagles of Nigeria on Wednesday night qualified for the final of the ongoing African Cup of Nations in Ivory Coast. [Read more](#)

CBN blames naira's woes on \$39.6bn spent on foreign education, medical tourism in 10 years

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has blamed the freefall of the naira on the huge sum of \$39.6bn spent by Nigerians on foreign education and medical tourism in 10 years spanning 2010 to 2020. [Read more](#)

Tinubu returns from 13-day private trip to France

President Bola Tinubu on Tuesday returned to the country after his private trip to France. [Read more](#)

PDP blasts APC for politicising protests against economic hardship in Nigeria

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) on Tuesday berated the All Progressives Congress (APC) for politicising protests by Nigerians against the economic hardship in the country. [Read more](#)

Cardoso reveals measures deployed by CBN to address FX crisis

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Dr. Olayemi Cardoso, on Tuesday revealed measures deployed by the apex bank to address the foreign exchange crisis in the country. [Read more](#)

Edun bemoans Nigeria's tax to GDP ratio of 10%, says it's lowest in the world

The Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Olawale Edun on Tuesday, February 6, 2024 lamented that Nigeria's tax to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) level currently at 10%, is one of the lowest in the world. [Read more](#)

10. A look at Nigerian NBA success stories

Nigeria's influence in the NBA has steadily grown, bringing about a new era in the league's history. [Read more](#)

SERAP urges Tinubu to probe missing \$3.4bn IMF loan

SERAP has urged President Bola Tinubu to direct the Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, and appropriate anti-corruption agencies to probe allegations that \$3.4 billion loan obtained from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is unaccounted for. [Read more](#)

From one failure to another, ex-Senator knocks campaign for Yahaya Bello to become APC chairman

A former Senator representing Kogi East, (1999-2003), Alex Kadiri, has described the campaign by persons believed to be supporters of immediate past Kogi State Governor, Yahaya Bello, for the position of National Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC), as a crude joke taken too far. [Read more](#)

Nigerians thrown into darkness as national grid collapses again, TCN, NERC keep mum

Nigerians have been thrown into darkness yet again as the national grid has suffered another collapse. [Read more](#)

COMPILED BY LOIS DADUOT

SUNDAY FEATURE

2024 Budget: Govt fails to prioritise

Although the allocation to family planning in 2024 is better than the last four years, the low budgetary allocation raises concerns about Nigeria's ability to meet the 2030 targets. NIKE ADEBOWALE-TAMBE writes.

ONCE again, the Nigerian government appears to have fallen short in prioritising Family Planning (FP) programmes in its proposed 2024 budget, potentially causing a setback to the country's aspirations to achieve a 27 per cent Modern Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (MCPR) by 2030.

Despite the commitment to allocate at least one per cent of the national annual health budget to family planning, an analysis of the 2024 health budget shows that only N2.2 billion has been earmarked for FP programmes, representing 0.16 per cent of the overall health budget.

Although the allocation to FP in 2024 is better than the last four years, the low budgetary allocation raises concerns about Nigeria's ability to meet the FP2030 targets.

The FP 2030 is a global partnership supporting women's and girls' reproductive rights. It aims to empower women and girls to lead healthy lives and make informed choices about contraceptive use.

It also aims to hasten the process of addressing obstacles that delay the advancement of commitments made by governments towards family planning, by strengthening result-oriented partnerships with stakeholders and experts

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation had missed the initial FP target set for 2020, partly due to the government's failure to fund the programme, thereby hindering progress. FP 2020 goal was to enable 120 million additional women and girls of reproductive age, globally, to have access to contraceptives by the year 2020.

At the dawn of the deadline, the FP 2020 target indicators show that Nigeria has only 12 per cent MCPR for women.

As of 2020, Nigeria's population reached an estimated 206 million, a figure projected to elevate the nation to the third most populous globally by 2050, trailing only behind China and India. The 2014 World Urbanisation Prospects also predicts that by 2050, 77 per cent of the country's population will be urban.

However, this population surge is not met with corresponding economic growth, particularly in essential areas like infrastructure and job creation. The repercussions of this mismatch are evident in the escalating challenges of security, poverty, and various crises plaguing Nigeria.

Despite the looming threat posed by unchecked population growth, the Nigerian government appears to downplay the urgency of implementing family planning measures.

The total proposed budget



estimate for Nigeria in 2024 is N27.5 trillion.

Out of the three key development sectors, including security and education, health has the lowest allocation in the 2024 proposal. Of the total budget, the health sector which is already grappling with various challenges got N1.38 trillion (5.03 per cent).

This includes healthcare funding under the service vote amounting to N155.65 billion, health capital budget at N434.79 billion, health recurrent at N667.38 billion, and statutory transfer to the basic healthcare fund at N125.74 billion.

While the total health budget increased by 18.49 per cent compared to N1.17 trillion in 2023, it constitutes only 5.03 per cent of the budget size.

A review of the budget for FP in the past four years reveals a low allocation to this important aspect of health.

In 2020, under President Muhammadu Buhari's administration, the FP programme received only 0.2 per cent of the health budget and in 2021, the allocation dwindled further to 0.01 per cent of the health budget. In subsequent years, 2022 and 2023, the budget line for FP was non-existent.

The government's failure to include FP funding in the 2022 and 2023 budgets occurred, despite the country launching a

new Family Planning Blueprint (2020-2024) on 12 October 2020. The blueprint is Nigeria's roadmap for safe motherhood through the healthy timing offered by modern FP commodities.

The blueprint is said to be a clear and operational document with targets, performance indicators, and an accountability mechanism for CSOs to track and assess implementation performance.

But to effectively implement the blueprint, health experts said substantial cash backing is needed.

Analysing the 2024 proposed budget, the Development Research and Projects Centre (dRPC) said the lack of investment poses a significant challenge to achieving population-related goals and preventing maternal mortality, which are both identified as critical national development agenda in the National Development Plan 2021-2025 and National Population Policy 2021.

The dRPC said this pattern of underfunding FP programmes has consistently failed to meet the mark and address the increasing demands for FP services.

It said without adequate funding, access to essential contraceptive services, educational programmes, and reproductive healthcare may be impeded.

In an interview with PREMIUM TIMES, the Director of Programmes, dRPC, Stanley Ukpai, said if the 2024 budget allocates less than one per cent of the health budget to FP, it could have several implications for meeting the FP 2030 target.

Mr Ukpai said a smaller budget could mean less funding for the provision and distribution of contraceptives, which could limit access, particularly in rural and under-resourced areas. This, he said could further lead to an increase in unwanted pregnancies and sustain the population explosion.

He also said without adequate

funding, the quality of FP services could suffer, leading to a lower uptake of these services, even where they are available.

"FP is linked to a range of other health and development goals, including reducing maternal and child mortality, improving women's empowerment, and reducing poverty. So, limited funding for FP could negatively impact these other areas as well.

To meet the FP 2030 target, it would be important for this budget allocation to be increased to at least one per cent, to ensure that more women and girls have access to the contraceptives they need to be able to make choices about their reproductive health.

Similarly, the Director, Family Health, Yobe State Ministry of Health, Babagana Abba said the low budgetary allocation can directly or indirectly affect the 2030 target.

Mr Abba said, "It can distort our planning at the state and national level, of course even at the lower level, collectively."

"FP is linked to a range of other health and development goals, including reducing maternal and child mortality, improving women's empowerment, and reducing poverty. So, limited funding for FP could negatively impact these other areas as well. To meet the FP 2030 target, it would be important for this budget allocation to be increased to at least one per cent, to ensure that more women and girls have access to the contraceptives they need to be able to make choices about their reproductive health."

CHANGE OF NAME

RABI

I, formerly known as, **RABI SANI MUNIR**, now wish to be known and addressed as **RABI HALIRU DANTORO**. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.

SUNDAY FEATURE

Let's play football

IN more ways than one, this is Nigeria's Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON). Its beautiful outcomes should serve as a fulcrum for addressing some of the current, critical, challenges confronting the country.

As things have literally played out so far in the on-going continental fiesta, there is no gainsaying the fact that this has proved to be one of Nigeria's most spectacular outings in recent times.

This has confounded most Nigerian football enthusiasts, cynics and even aficionados who never gave the team a chance of making any significant impact.

They reasoned that, just as the economy, security and other indices of national development have continued plummet irrevocably, our football could not be an exception.

Indeed, there is very little to cheer about in Nigeria these days.

Only the other day, house wives brought out youth onto the streets of Mina to protest the extreme economic hardships under which they are living.

A day later, another demonstration erupted in Suleja, the commercial nerve-centre of the state. This time around, the youth took centre-stage.

It was something of a surprise that those public displays of disenchantment with the country's leaders resonated with people across the country - if reactions on social media are anything to go by.

But the police arrested the woman who led the first protest, Aisha Jibrin, and 24 other men for what they described as "organizing a violent protest."

And although the 25 were later released, that sordid episode once again underscored the sinister dimension the issues of citizens' rights are taking in the country.

To think that football could not follow the pervasive trend or offer any consolation in these bleak times would only amount to painfully wishing for the impossible.

Most Nigerians had ceased to invest any more hope in their leaders due to the strings of dashed promises they had had to endure since the inception of the current democratic dispensation in 1999.

Therefore, Nigeria's national football squad had to battle opponents on the pitch and an overwhelming sense of



By CHRIS GYANG

despondency back home.

AFCON could not have come at a more auspicious time for Nigeria.

Moreover, the tensions, bitterness and divisions caused by highly fractious 2023 general elections had not completely dissipated.

Not to mention the added lacerations inflicted by some of the controversial decisions of the elections tribunals and appellate courts that followed.

AFCON has provided the much-needed balm that has soothed Nigerians' frayed nerves and restored some measure of national unity - even if fleetingly or for the duration of the tournament.

Being a traditionally football crazy country, this temporary respite will certainly do a lot of good to majority of citizens and the country as a whole.

And that relief came in a very forceful way, through that dramatic, nail-biting and tension-soaked February 7 derby between Nigeria and South Africa.

To say that these two African

giants are rivals is an understatement. Their rivalry simply goes far beyond the football pitch.

Last Sunday, a budding South African musician, Tyla, triumphed over a galaxy of Nigerian superstars to clinch the much-coveted Grammy Award for Best African Music Performance for her hit song, Water.

Typically, this riled Nigerians considerably.

It brought back bitter memories of the series of xenophobic murders of innocent Nigerians in South Africa, which the authorities have consistently done little to curb or prosecute the perpetrators.

In the lead-up to the February 7 cracker, the Nigerian High Commission in South Africa issued a stern warning to Nigerians in that country to be mindful of the way they celebrate Nigeria's victory or lick their wounds - in case of a defeat.

So, it was no surprise that Nigerians put aside their religious and political differences, cast asunder their sorrows and the fury caused by the country's

biting inflation to support the Super Eagles.

They were united against a common foe.

And Nigerians supported and celebrated their team in one accord and with a singular passion that was as undiluted as it was prodigiously huge.

That evening, the spirit and feeling of oneness was so deliciously infectious that it flowed freely and powerfully across the country.

And when the last penalty kick secured Nigeria's place in the final, Nigerians did not spare the South Africans in their celebrations. They also repaid Tyla in good measure for causing their musical icons to bite the dust only a few days prior.

The BBC (February 8, 2024) captured scenes in which hundreds of jubilant students gathered in the courtyard of their hall at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, which went viral on social media.

"In the clip," the BBC reported, "the Super Eagles fans taunt their rivals by pouring liquid over their bodies while singing the hit Water by South African singer Tyla."

Even the clergy could not resist the exciting temptation to take a harmless swipe at the vanquished South Africans who had, nevertheless, put up a good fight.

According to the BBC, renowned Nigerian pastor, Jimmy Odukoya "joined in the jesting by commending Bafana Bafana for their performance despite their defeat, but telling the South African players: 'You need water.'"

As if to add more bite to his sardonic humour, the Pastor

quipped: "If it's any consolation, it's Grammy water."

As the Super Eagles get ready to square up against the hosts on Sunday, Nigerians' optimism in their national team, borne out of their stellar performance from the group up to the knock out stages, has not waned.

If anything, it has only continued to soar.

And with that has come a renewed and fresh hope in their motherland. That strong sense of unity and pride in the motherland that had laid dormant has been rekindled.

Political and football analysts agree that even if Nigeria fails to beat the Elephants (which is highly unlikely considering the Super Eagles' almost unbeaten run in the competition so far), Nigerians would still have had the rare opportunity of sharing momentous moments of joy and camaraderie with one another.

Many here hope that governments would leverage on these outcomes to bring unity, peace and economic prosperity to the country.

Somewhere in this tournament, we can find the formula to decipher the way to tapping citizens' huge reservoirs of patriotic zeal and passion for the progress of their country.

For that reason, we fervently call on Nigerians to come, let's play football.

GYANG is the Chair of the Jos, Plateau State-based, not-for-profit organization, Journalists Coalition for Citizens' Rights Initiative - JCCRI. Emails: info@jccri-online.org; chrisgyang01@gmail.com

“
Political and football analysts agree that even if Nigeria fails to beat the Elephants (which is highly unlikely considering the Super Eagles' almost unbeaten run in the competition so far), Nigerians would still have had the rare opportunity of sharing momentous moments of joy and camaraderie with one another. Many here hope that governments would leverage on these outcomes to bring unity, peace and economic prosperity to the country.
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THE Fact that the Nigerian economy is in need of help is a reality that we leave with every day. The Foreign exchange that use to flow into the economy is drying up and we are left with options such as paying customers who receive money from abroad, in naira instead of the currency of the originating country.

The Government has done a lot in the area of developing SME, with projects such as the Central Bank MSMEDF AND SMEDAN. However, we are yet to see the impact of these efforts in real terms as far as the economy is concerned. We are waiting for the day that foreign exchange will start flowing abundantly back into the economy as a result of the growth of our SMEs.

Why are we focusing on trying to manage the forex that we have in the country instead of creating avenues for more? The only way we can get out of this quagmire is by shifting aggressively from any form of import to exports. While we build our manufacturing capacity, let us also remember that we can export knowledge. After all, Nigerians are amongst the most intelligent people in the world. Yes, we can.

There are so many reasons why we should build a solid knowledge economy in every state of the Federation. Nigerians are the best doctors, surgeon, lawyers, scientists, artists, actors in the world. How can attain such organic success with our minds but we are yet to make knowledge a commodity on a large scale. The artists and the actor are already delivering solid foreign exchange. There are many other sectors and industries that produce knowledge services and intellectual properties that could be developed to boost our export capacity.

Before I proceed, let me explain why the service and knowledge industry strives better than the manufacturing industry. In Nigeria today, we have crises in the energy sector. Petrol, gas and electricity are very expensive factors of production and so many other infrastructure required for the production of goods. When the prices of these goods are fixed, the cost of production is literally transferred to the consumer. This makes the product expensive. When this product enters the global market and is in competition with similar products from other countries who have cheap energy, they are unattractive for importers from other countries who would rather buy their competition, because of price. It gets even worse if the product is expensive and of lower quality than its equivalent. If we have no buyers, we do not sell, if we do not sell, we earn no foreign exchange.

Another factor that lowers our export potential is insecurity. Whenever there is insecurity, production falls drastically. We are still mainly exporters of raw material. Yet again, energy and the lack of adequate manufacturing infrastructure has not allowed for robust industrialization. Imagine a situation where large-scale farmers of ginger or turmeric are afraid to go to the farm due to bandits and kidnappers. Imagine that if they do, they do so at great risk and have to increase the cost of these raw materials that are in high demand in the global market.

Furthermore, foreign direct investments are relocating to other countries due to insecurity in the business environment.

The business culture of padding and bribery is a culture that is alien to many investors who would like to make Nigeria a base for their production and exports. Government business policies with many layers of bureaucracy make matters even worse.

Insecurity, high energy cost, and a poor business environment make our end products below par in the global export market. What then can we do to cushion these effects? First and foremost, the

government needs to aggressively intervene in the business and export sector. We are happy to see that shoes have been banned and import tariffs have been increased on some goods. However, have we made the necessary arrangements for our businesses to benefit from these bans and tariffs increases? For example, how many tanneries do we have, how much training and incentives have we given shoemakers, how are we training then for quality control and certifications. How are we even training them to produce enough for the domestic market? Are we training them for the global market? Can their shoes compete with shoes from Italy and Brazil? Can their shoes survive in the

Exporting knowledge for forex



global shoe market? Do they have an association for communicating their needs to the Government? It is not enough to ban the consumption of hides and skins. If we do not ban the export of same and restrict it to our domestic use alone, our shoe industry will not go far. The bans must be enforced.

Having said the forgoing, let us go back to the service and knowledge industry. Unlike the manufacturing industry, the knowledge and service industry does not require so much input. The barest minimum is energy and internet connectivity. If one can write a script in Nigeria and sell to Netflix or if one can provide services to clients on the World Wide Web from Nigeria. Programmers who write and sell apps are paid in dollars. These "household" earnings are invested into the Nigerian. Simple examples. Data analyst, virtual assistants, consultants, and virtual teachers all earn money in foreign exchange. This is nothing close to exports from crude oil but if we invest in this sector and encourage it, it may eventually compete with oil.

Data science and AI is said to be the new oil. The University of Queensland has this to say about data science: "The world has seen a stunning increase in the amount of data generated each day. Such data, created by individuals, organizational systems, and sensors, among other sources, has the power to provide competitive advantage for business. This is primarily because data can provide clarity in business decision-making and therefore reduce related risk. It is not surprising then that data has recently been referred to as 'the new oil'. However, like oil, data can also be messy – its advantage can only be realised when data is strategically collected and managed, and meaningfully combined and analysed to create information of value to the business. Therefore, to help unlock the



value of data, businesses are increasingly making investments in data science – a discipline that combines statistics, mathematics and technology knowledge into a suite of methods and tools for the analysis of data of various types. So high is the demand for professionals with data science skills that it is arguably one of today's hottest IT professions".

The Knowledge economy is driven by the digital economy. Visibility on the internet is key to driving the process of selling one's knowledge through digital marketing the internet is cheap and can be accessed from anywhere. It is not bound by space or time. This implies that one can work round the clock on the internet.

It is time for forex to flow into the economy through the citizens as opposed to the government channels only. When forex flows into the economy through private businesses and households, the government will be left with the simple job of providing security, providing an enabling business environment and ensuring ease of business, providing infrastructure, reducing the cost of energy and other factors of production, giving out loans and incentives to digital businesses, training and investing in the knowledge economy and digital economy.

There are many countries who have made tremendous strides in digital and knowledge economy to the point where it has become a massive foreign exchange earner. India is one of them. Let us explore some internet sites where we can work to earn forex for our local economy: Upwork, Toptal, Fiverr, Designhill, LinkedIn, SimplyHired, Dribbble, Guru, Freelancer.com, Flexjobs, 99designs, PeoplePerHour, TaskRabbit, ServiceScape, Behance, WeWork Remotely, AngelList Talent, DesignCrowd, Codeable, SolidGigs. You can go to the following sites. These will give you an idea

about what skills set and knowledge that

you can sell: <https://www.upwork.com/resources/best-freelance-websites#upwork>

<https://www.ryrob.com/remote-jobs-websites/>

<https://www.entrepreneurs.ng/website-s-to-find-work-from-home/>

Understanding the knowledge economy: The knowledge economy is a key economic system that relies on efficient information management to drive productivity and growth. It places a strong emphasis on intellectual capital, innovation, research, and the effective use of knowledge for economic development. This economy harnesses the power of ideas, creativity, and information exchange, moving beyond traditional industries.

Technology and the internet play a vital role in fostering the knowledge economy's growth. These tools facilitate innovation in learning through educational platforms, creating a dynamic and accessible environment for knowledge acquisition.

From online courses and digital resources to collaborative research and data-driven insights, technology serves as the cornerstone of the knowledge economy, democratizing information access and leveling the playing field for individuals and businesses alike.

What is knowledge commerce?: Knowledge commerce is a pivotal component of the knowledge economy, representing the monetization of expertise, information, and know-how. It encompasses a diverse range of offerings, including online courses and eLearning: Comprehensive educational modules that empower individuals to acquire new skills and knowledge at their own pace. ebooks and digital information products:

Continue on next production

SHALL NOT WANT (12)

I bring you greetings in the most precious name of our Lord, Jesus Christ! It is indeed a rare privilege to share God's Word with you on this special day. Thank you for following this wonderful series. I believe that the LORD is using this message to move you to your inheritance. Praise the name of the Lord forevermore.

To connect with our last series, lets continue from 2Corinthians 2:14, which says, **"Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place."** (KJV). Let that be the reality of your life. Also 1 Cor. 15:57- **"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"**. (KJV). So why can't we be bold? Because it is a Word from God. This thing may be so complex, this thing may be so difficult, but I have an 'always' on my life! Ah! Satan, you have come too late! I am in the family of God now, and there is an 'always' based on what I do or do not do. The Bible says 'always', that is God's disposition towards us.

Now, look at Psalms 34. Why I am saying this, is because we have, have to come to a place that we believe that this place exists, and that it is possible for us to live in this place. You are not the sponsor of it, do not mind about it, God knows how to bring it. The issue is that, He is looking for your faith and you're believing.

Look at Psalms 34:8. It says, **"Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him."** (KJV). Empower to prosper and succeed is the one that relies upon Him totally. Then verse 9 says, **"Oh, fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him,"** (KJV).

We have established that the fear of the Lord is the function of your submission to the authority of God's Word. Now look at this- **"for there is no want to them that fear him."** The Bible did not say 'there is no need'. No, He said **"no want..."** Praise the name of the Lord, **"to them that fear Him."** Verse 10 says, **"The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing,"** (KJV). You know why he talks about the young lions? It is because we understand this from nature, that it is the young lions that do the hunting. Well, first and foremost, it is the female lions that hunt. I do not know why it is like that in the lion kingdom. But we are made to understand that male lions do not hunt. All that the male lions do is, they just scare people off and reproduce. They just eat and terrorize. I do not know why that is so.

So it is the female lions- the lioness- that hunts; but it is not

even every lioness that hunts, it is the young lioness that hunts because she is in her prime, praise the name of the Lord. She is in her prime, and because lions are not really fast creatures, they are just powerful creatures, so they have to strategize, a lot. They have to employ a lot of skills to hunt. So it says here, "young lions." But with all their skills, their strength, and their strategy; with all that is going

any good, in the precious name of Jesus. What is good to you? I do not know; but a BMW 7series sounds good to me, a Land Rover sport sounds good to me, mention the SUVs, flying business class and first class is good to me, glory to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ; having a vacation for at least twice a year, for at least two weeks, sounds good to me, flying anywhere in the world and have my own money, all sound good



Why Can't We Be Bold?



for them, they still lack! Oh hallelujah. PhDs, MScs, first class? It is possible to lack. Now, get first class oh, but it is not first class that will feed you. Thetis what God is trying to say? I emphasize, get all the degrees that you can, get anything good that you want, get all the skills and strategy you want, I am not making light of that, but what the Bible is talking about, of the young lion, with everything going for them, their position, their pride, they have a resume, they have all the references and the referrals, yet they- young lions- may still lack! With all of that, you may still not get it, blessed be the name of the Lord Jesus Christ! But (whenever you hear the word 'but', it means de-emphasize what you have just heard and emphasize on what you are about to hear) but, for they that seek God, the Bible clearly says they shall not want. Glory to God!

Though young lions may lack and suffer hunger; but, they that seek the Lord shall not want! It says 'shall not want'

to me. Will I ever have my wants? The answer is a capital YES! For **"...they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing,"** (Psalms 34:10, KJV). Praise the Lord!

You know, I do not want to be prejudiced this morning, but I realize that what is good to one person, may not be good to another. I realize that to some, Volkswagen may be good, but to me, it is NOT. I realize that face-me-I-face-you apartment may be good to some, but to the ones that seek God, it should not be. While I praise God for what I have and where I am, I am equally trusting Him to get me out, quickly, praise the name of the Lord!

The young lions do lack and suffer hunger but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing. I want you to know that the Bible is our blue print for life! If God says there is a place in life where you would be wanting nothing, then there is such a place. Do you know that there are people upon the face of the earth who spend money without thinking? Not because they are not

prudent, but because there is surplus. Amen! If there are such people, why not you? I say, why not you? I say why not you? Do you know there are some people that come to church and give with their cheque books? Why not you? Blessed be the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Are you here?

I hope this message wakes you up, because what the Bible says and what God says, should be our reality. I tell you the truth, if you cannot pierce it into your thinking, your hand can not get into it in life. Your hands must pierce through in your thinking. Some people, imagination is free but if you ask them to just imagine something, they almost start getting a heart attack. You have to start blowing on them. You have to get the fan and startblowing on them. When you tell some people to imagine an income of one million naira a month, they suddenly begin to sweat; just imagine, and forget about whether it is God's way or not.

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Just imagine, exercise your free imagination, just once in a while, you need a mind stretch, praise the name of the Lord. You need a mind stretch, I said you need a mind stretch. That is why I said, at least once in a while; at least once in a while, do yourself a favour, and do not eat at that 'buka', even if you are going to save up for two weeks or whatever, at least once in a while, go off to that best restaurant and just enter there and sit down and just eat. Just once in a while! And get the feel of it. Begin to understand the environment of it. Get a taste for it. Put on some kind of confidence and just go around.

I tell you the truth, from the time you get out of that place, something would have been imprinted in your mind. Glory to God forevermore. Just go for no reason at all to Hilton, (that is the best we have, even though it is falling apart, God help us)- many of you are going to build better ones- but just go, just see those doors open for you, just enter the elevator and go up to the third floor, come down again, just go round the place and walk out again. Nobody is going to attack you! It is from the look at your eyes, that is why they stop you. But I remind you today that you shall not want any good thing in the name of Jesus!

To be continued...
We apologise for past's week's mix up

INTERNATIONAL

Macky Sall 'like a 90-year-old autocrat'

-former PM

A former Senegalese prime minister has accused President Macky Sall of "behaving like a 90-year-old African autocrat, which we won't accept".

"Twelve years ago we were together in the street fighting against the third term of President [Abdoulaye] Wade - and so here he is doing exactly the same action that he used to fight against," ex-Prime Minister Aminata Touré told BBC Newsday.

President Macky Sall shocked the country on Saturday when he announced that the presidential election due later this month would be postponed.

On Monday, riot police fired tear gas to break up protestors trying to gather outside Senegal's National Assembly. Opposition candidates say the change violates the constitution and are enlisting unions, religious leaders and civil society to campaign against the delay.

Senegal's reputation as a bastion of democracy in an unstable region is on the line after protestors clashed with riot police outside parliament on Monday.

Inside, lawmakers passed a contentious bill to extend President Macky Sall's tenure and delay elections after he called off a planned election with just three weeks to go.

The opposition say some of their members were forcibly removed from the parliament building by police in riot gear to stop them from voting.

Khalifa Sall, a leading opponent and a former mayor of Dakar, who is not related to the president, called the delay a "constitutional coup" and urged people to protest against it. His political coalition has vowed to go to court.

The proposal needed the support of three-fifths (ie 99) of the 165 deputies to pass. The ruling Benno Bokk Yakaar coalition, of which President Sall's Alliance for the Republic party is part, has a slight majority in parliament.

In the end 105 MPs voted for the proposal. A six-month postponement was originally proposed, but a last-minute amendment extended it to 10 months, or 15 December.

Mr Sall reiterated that he was not planning to run for office again. But his critics accuse him of either trying to cling on to power



Sall

or unfairly influencing whoever succeeds him.

No sooner had he announced the unprecedented postponement than protestors marched across the capital, Dakar, to call for a reversal. At least 150 people have been arrested in the past two days.

West Africa's regional bloc Ecowas on Tuesday pleaded for Senegal's political class to "take steps urgently to restore the electoral calendar" in line with the constitution.

Former Prime Minister Aminata Touré condemned the passage of the bill in a post online.

The opposition has condemned the shutdown of the signal of private television channel Walf TV for "incitement to violence" over its coverage of the demonstrations.

Two opposition politicians, including former Prime Minister Aminata Touré, once a close ally of President Sall but now one of his harshest critics, were both briefly detained following the protests.

Critics fear that this clampdown could plunge the country into further political turmoil which, by extension, could be dangerous for the whole West African region.

Satisfaction with democracy in Senegal has declined sharply under Mr Sall. In 2013 Afrobarometer, a pollster, found that after Mr Sall had taken office, more than two-thirds of Senegalese people were fairly or

very satisfied with democracy. By 2022 less than half were.

However, Durmaz says he does not foresee the possibility of a military coup because Senegal has a "diverse range of political parties, a robust civil society and influential religious leaders who step in to mediate political disputes between the politicians".

Twenty candidates had made the final list to contest the elections, but several more were excluded by the Constitutional Council, the judicial body that determines whether candidates have met the conditions required to run.

Prominent among them were firebrand opposition leader Ousmane Sonko barred because of a libel conviction, and Karim Wade, the son of a former president, who was accused of having French nationality. They both say the cases against them are politically motivated.

Despite the delay, it is unlikely Mr Sonko will be able to participate in the election, as his party has already replaced him with Bassirou Faye who is also in jail but remains eligible to run, Mr Durmaz says.

But Wole Ojewale, Dakar-based regional co-ordinator for Central Africa at the Institute for Security Studies, says the delay is not justified.

All eyes will now be on the regional blocs to see how they treat yet another democratic headache in West Africa.

ISRAELI Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says he has ordered the military to develop a dual plan to evacuate civilians from Rafah and to defeat the remaining Hamas battalions.

Netanyahu said that a "massive operation" is needed in Rafah. The announcement came after international criticism of Israel's plan to invade the crowded town on Egypt's border.

An estimated 1.5 million Palestinians - more than half of the Gaza Strip's population - have crammed into the town after fleeing fighting elsewhere in the strip.

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan has expressed concern over the world's silence on Israel's actions in Gaza, describing it as "complicity in genocide".

"If the massacre in Gaza does not stop, if the two-state solution does not come into effect in Palestine, it is not difficult to foresee that such conflicts will recur and spread," Fidan warned in an address at an Organisation of Islamic Cooperation youth forum in Istanbul.

He called for a two-state solution in Palestine to prevent further conflict.

"There is no moral value, no international legal ground left in the world for reference in subsequent conflicts," Fidan said.

Sara Kira, founder and director at the European North African Centre for Research,

'Catastrophic consequences' if Rafah invaded

told Al Jazeera that Egypt is flexible in their demands from an unwavering Israel.

"Netanyahu has again become the hardliner for this peace plan," she said, adding that the Israeli prime minister has called Hamas's request for the destroyed hospitals and shelters in Gaza to be rebuilt "delusional".

She added that if Israel starts bombarding Rafah, the people will have nowhere to go except for the Egyptian borders.

"And that's crossing the

Philadelphia axis which Egypt has declared as a red line because that might cause, again, military tension with Israel," she said.

Close to 1,700,000 displaced Palestinians have been in Gaza's city of Rafah since the beginning of the war - a condensed 55sq-km (21sq-mile) area on the border with Egypt.

The Palestinian Red Crescent says it is worried about the safety of its medical teams, wounded people and patients, as Israeli forces continue to raid al-Amal Hospital.



Netanyahu

Who is Syrsky, Ukraine's new army chief?

UKRAINE'S military, has played a key role in some of the country's biggest victories in its war with Russia, including overseeing the successful defence of the capital, Kyiv, in the early days of the invasion.

Like most senior officers of his generation, Syrsky was born in Soviet Russia, in July 1965, and studied at a Red Army academy in Moscow.

In the 1980s he was deployed to Ukraine, then part of the Soviet Union.

But when the Soviet Union collapsed, he remained in Ukraine, studying at the National Defence University in Kyiv and joining the ranks of the newly independent Ukrainian army.

The choice of Syrsky as commander-in-chief is hardly a surprise because few in the Ukrainian military have the experience and know-how to be able to fill the shoes of his popular predecessor, General Valerii Zaluzhnyi.

In 2014, he commanded Ukrainian troops fighting a Moscow-backed insurgency in the eastern Donetsk region and was given the call sign "Snow Leopard".

In 2019, he became head of Ukraine's land forces and led the country into war when Russia invaded in February 2022.

In the early months of the war, he was named a "Hero of Ukraine", the country's highest honour, because of his successful defence of Kyiv.

In July 2022, Syrsky planned and executed a lightning counteroffensive that pushed Russian troops away from the northern city of Kharkiv and retook swathes of land in the east and southeast.

Two months later, Syrsky was credited with orchestrating the counteroffensive in the Kharkiv region, which was the most significant Ukrainian victory in the war

and enabled Kyiv to retake the cities of Kupiansk and Izyum from the Russians.

He has also led the Bakhmut operation, which was the war's longest and bloodiest and has been criticised because of the high losses suffered by Ukrainian forces. The tactic to pin Russian forces in the strategically insignificant salt-mining town in eastern Ukraine also exhausted Russian troops and resources, sapping their ability to forge major breakthroughs elsewhere.

Some military analysts believe his battlefield tactics reflect his hierarchical Soviet training.

His successes on the front lines have earned him the backing of his soldiers, who have been locked in grinding battles for two years. He says his priority is the morale of his soldiers, whom he is regularly pictured visiting at the front.

But as triumphs turned to attrition in the war, Syrsky has had to oversee the most difficult phase of the conflict, which will enter its third year this month. Shortages of ammunition and fresh personnel threaten to weaken the Ukrainian lines as Russians eye an advance.

Meanwhile, the Ukrainian forces' main goal this winter has been holding the territory it controls, as much-needed United States military aid is held up in Congress.

Could US Supreme Court stop Trump?

THE US Supreme Court on Thursday began hearings about Donald Trump's eligibility for the presidency in a historic case that could either boost the former president's reelection campaign or see him kicked off the list of candidates for the upcoming November elections.

Filed by voters opposing Trump, the case will see justices decide whether a Colorado court

was right to rule that Trump violated an article of the 14th Amendment to the US Constitution during the 2020 elections saga, and whether that violation means he can be barred from running for office. It is part of a swath of legal challenges Trump is facing ahead of the elections, including four criminal indictments.

Section 3 of the 14th

Amendment bars people who have "engaged in insurrection or rebellion" against the state from holding federal office. Trump's challengers argue that his role in the January 6, 2021 attack on Congress means he should be barred from seeking office.

So far, two US states - Colorado and Maine - have invoked the clause and declared Trump ineligible to run in their territories, even as primaries heat up, with Trump leading the Republican race to the White House.

A group of Colorado voters filed the lawsuit in August 2023. While a Colorado district court denied their attempt to bar Trump from the election, the Colorado Supreme Court, on appeal, [decided](#) in December that Trump had indeed violated Section 3 of the Amendment - the first ruling of its kind. Electoral officers in Maine also made a similar ruling.

Trump's team appealed to the US Supreme Court in Washington, DC following Colorado's decision. The Colorado Supreme Court, and the state of Maine, have stayed their rulings until the Supreme Court decides on the case.



INTERNATIONAL

Israel's legacy of media deception stumbles

Israel's deception campaign against UNRWA does not seem to be working as expected. Why?

IN the last two weeks, the Israeli government put on a masterclass on how to use the Western media to spread fake news and propaganda and to justify anti-Palestinian actions taken by the United States and its allies. It worked – but only in part.

On January 26, in a landmark preliminary ruling on South Africa's genocide charge against Israel, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) found it "plausible" that Israel is committing acts that violate the Genocide Convention; and demanded that it take "immediate and effective measures to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to address the adverse conditions of life faced by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip."

Israel ignored this, and within hours, launched a deception campaign to weaken UNRWA, the UN's main humanitarian agency for Palestinian refugees, to inflict further suffering and death on nearly two million displaced, injured, sick and starving Palestinians in the Strip.

Israel passed on to Western media a "dossier" alleging that about a dozen UNRWA staff in Gaza have been working for Hamas and even participated in the group's October 7 attack on Israel.

After the compliant media immediately relayed these unsubstantiated allegations to the world without bothering to do any independent verification, the US and other countries suspended vital funding to UNRWA. Meanwhile, prominent politicians started calling for it to be "shut down" as Israel has long sought in its efforts to reverse the recognition of Palestinians it displaced as "refugees", and invalidate their right of return to the lands in Israel stolen from them.

None of this was new or extraordinary.

Mainstream media organisations in the West, from the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal to CNN and NBC, have long helped Israel spread its propaganda and achieve its political aims.

For the past century, these organisations and their counterparts in Europe routinely disseminated Israeli narratives without questioning their veracity, while ignoring, downplaying or misrepresenting Palestinian perspectives. Their efforts helped Israel win the war on narratives and continue its settler-colonial assault on Palestinians with near total impunity.

Well, until recently – because



Rami G Khouri

the ugly tradition of Israel successfully laundering its lies and propaganda through Western legacy media is now being exposed and challenged, and appears to be starting to dissipate in the information era dominated by new media.

Indeed, since October 7, a flurry of independent investigations into events in Israel-Palestine and Western media reports about them exposed how Israel has been using legacy media organisations in the West to deceive the world, silence Palestinians and their allies, undermine international law, obscure its systemic human rights violations and further its settler-colonial agenda.

The initial Western media coverage of the terror allegations against UNRWA was perhaps the best example of this phenomenon.

Israel suddenly came up with an "explosive" dossier on alleged links between Hamas and UNRWA staff because it wanted to divert attention from the ICJ ruling on its own genocidal acts, and instead raise doubts about the crucial UN agency's credibility.

Thanks in large part to the Western media's uncritical reporting, Israel's plan succeeded, at least partially, as it triggered significant funding cuts and a congressional hearing in the US on "UNRWA Exposed: Examining the

Agency's Mission and Failures".

Members of Congress accused UNRWA of having "longstanding connections to terrorism and promotion of antisemitism" seemingly based on nothing other than Israeli claims circulated in the media. They also introduced a bill titled the "UNRWA Elimination Act" calling for the complete disbanding of the humanitarian agency and transfer of all its responsibilities to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

But independent reports and investigations quickly revealed major holes in the Israeli narrative that mainstream media had eagerly adopted and disseminated.

As Western journalists outside the mainstream, Global South media like Al Jazeera, activists and scholars started to ask questions about the claims against UNRWA, Israel's story started to unravel.

Unable to provide any hard evidence on UNRWA staff involvement in the October 7 attacks, the intelligence agency that distributed the "dossier" said its information came from "interrogations of Palestinian prisoners". The revelation further raised suspicions among journalists and scholars who follow the conflict, as Israel is known to use torture to extract false confessions from Palestinian prisoners. Realising the global community is questioning their story, Israel's intelligence agents simply

changed it and started to say they obtained the information through surveillance.

As numerous countries stood up for UNRWA, and Israel faced scrutiny about its allegations against the US agency, and shared its shaky "intelligence documents" with even more journalists.

An analysis of the dossier by Britain's Sky News revealed that these documents claim only six, not 12 as initially suggested, UNRWA staff entered Israel on October 7. It noted that "the Israeli intelligence documents have several claims that Sky News has not seen proof of and many of the claims, even if true, do not directly implicate UNRWA".

After also analysing the documents, Britain's Channel 4 reached a similar conclusion and said the six-page-long dossier "provides no evidence to support the explosive claim that UN staff were involved in terror attacks on Israel".

The terror accusations against UNRWA were perhaps the most striking example of exposing major Western media for uncritically circulating Israeli fabrications and propaganda since October 7. But it was hardly the only one.

The Israeli claims about "terror tunnels" and "Hamas command centres" under Gaza hospitals, which were repeated by most Western media without any scrutiny or attempt at verification were also proved to be baseless by several open source investigations, in-depth reporting by local journalists on the ground and extensive video evidence.

In February, Al Araby TV filmed what Israel claimed was a "Hamas tunnel" it discovered under Sheikh Hamad Hospital in northern Gaza, which proved to be nothing but a water well.

Earlier, in December, an explosive New York Times report on Hamas's weaponisation of sexual violence during the October 7 attack was criticised for its weak sources and sloppy reporting. The paper of record eventually had to pull a podcast episode it had prepared on the subject.

Speaking of the Times' sexual violence report and podcast, The Intercept investigative site said, "the critics have highlighted major discrepancies in the accounts presented in the Times, subsequent public comments from the family of a major subject of the article denouncing it, and comments from a key witness seeming to contradict a claim attributed to him in the article."

The Electronic Intifada published several articles and podcasts with more details of

the New York Times' investigation of its mass rape story, mostly confirming the lack of credible evidence or eye-witnesses in the stories that Israeli institutions, including the armed forces, shared with the global media.

The progressive investigative website Mondoweiss explained in a report, entitled "We deserve the truth about what happened on October 7", that "researchers cross-referencing claims against the list of terror victims maintained by Israel's own Social Security Administration have shown that several horrifying stories first responders and [Israeli military] members initially told reporters do not reflect actual people or deaths".

Britain's Guardian published an extensive report on how "CNN is facing a backlash from its own staff over editorial policies they say have led to a regurgitation of Israeli propaganda and the censoring of Palestinian perspectives in the network's coverage of the war in Gaza".

The Oct7factcheck project – an exhaustive collection of claims, where they originated, who propagated them, and whether the evidence confirms or refutes them put together by the Tech for Palestine initiative – has also published the results of independent investigations into a dozen or so of the most dramatic Israeli accusations and reports about the Hamas attack, which were uncritically repeated by most of Western media, debunking most of them as untrue and lacking evidence.

They show, for example, that some of the evidence Israel submitted to the ICJ hearing – evidence republished by mainstream Western media without question – was false.

"Over the last four months, claims about October 7 have influenced the public narrative," they noted. "Stories of atrocity, sometimes cobbled together from unreliable eyewitnesses, sometimes fabricated entirely, have made their way to heads of state and been used to justify Israel's military violence."

As new evidence reveals that stories that Israel offers the media about Palestinians and Hamas are fabricated, unsubstantiated, or exaggerated, international journalists tend to spend more time checking the veracity of Israel's propaganda offerings – and more time doing their job of reporting the facts and the truth.

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

Source: Al Jazeera



Famous black women leaving mark on history

"We have to make the choice—every single day—to exemplify the truth, the respect, and the grace that we wish for this world," Oprah said. It's with this spirit that we take the time to honor trailblazing Black women, many of whom embody Oprah's words every day by serving as role models to us all. We've got quite the inspiring list, with actors, artists, activists, athletes, doctors, and even a poet. These women are not only A-listers but also leaders we look to in all facets of society. In the past 20 years, they've been responsible for trendsetting firsts and impressive cultural shifts that changed our world for the better—yes, even though the struggle. As famous African American women (like former First Lady Michelle Obama, Serena Williams, Tracee Ellis Ross, Tamron Hall, and Gabrielle Union, to mention a few), they have made a name for themselves while simultaneously creating a platform for so many more to follow in their footsteps. And don't worry: We'll be updating this list regularly. Got suggestions? Let us know on Instagram.

Quinta Brunson

From winning the 2023 Golden Globe for Best Performance to winning an Emmy for Outstanding Writing for a Comedy Series, Quinta Brunson and her show, *Abbott Elementary*, have been on a roll. In its second season, *Abbott Elementary* tells the story of a group of teachers working at an underserved public school in Philadelphia, and is dedicated to Brunson's mother and public school teachers around the country. Brunson first gained popularity from her viral memes and videos while working at BuzzFeed. Her rise to fame along with her original humor has garnered well-deserved praise and admiration, with the awards to prove it!



Kizzmekia Corbett, PhD,

Kizzmekia Corbett, PhD, was notably one of the leading scientists developing the Covid-19 vaccine in 2020. Working at the National Institutes of Health, Corbett was a key player of the team that developed the Moderna vaccine that was later proven to be 94.1 percent effective against the virus. Anthony Fauci, MD, described her involvement "right at the forefront of the development of the vaccine" as "a sign of hope" for other young scientists. Corbett is now also an assistant professor of immunology and infectious diseases at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.



Janet Mock

Mock, who received the Stephen F. Kolzak Award at the 2020 GLAAD Media Awards, is one of the leading voices for transgender rights in the 21st century. With her work on *Pose*, she became the first transgender woman of color to write and direct a TV episode. She is also a New York Times bestselling author and signed a three-year, multimillion-dollar deal with Netflix in 2019.



Viola Davis

In 2015, Davis made history by becoming the first Black woman to win an Emmy for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Drama Series, for her work in ABC's *How to Get Away with Murder*. She is also an Academy Award winner and has been in a countless number of our favorite films. Most recently, Viola produced and starred in her own movie, *The Woman King*, which sold \$94,333,330 in worldwide box offices.



Lizzo

Lizzo has won three Grammy Awards, a Billboard Music Award, and a BET Award. But aside from her incredibly popular music, Lizzo is known for her advocacy and her dedication to practicing body positivity and self-love. Most recently, Lizzo accepted the People's Champion Award at the 2022 People's Choice Awards, showing us all what celebrity activism looks like by bringing over 15 activists onstage and using her speech to introduce them.



Tarana Burke

In the wake of Harvey Weinstein being revealed as a serial sexual abuser in 2017, Burke's activist group, *Me Too*, became #MeToo. The hashtag became a movement of its own, acting as a way for those in the social media age to stand in solidarity with their shared experiences of sexual assault. She was *Time* magazine's Person of the Year in 2017.



Jada Pinkett Smith

While Smith has been in the spotlight for decades, her star power gained renewed momentum in 2018 with the premiere of her hit Facebook Watch talk show, *Red Table Talk*, which she hosts alongside her mother, Adrienne Banfield-Norris, and daughter, Willow. The show has become a go-to apology stop for A-listers following scandal, from Jordyn Woods to Olivia Jade, and even Smith herself.



Sheryl Lee Ralph

Sheryl Lee Ralph has been making waves this awards season, winning the Golden Globe for Best Supporting Actress in a Comedy at the age of 66, along with being nominated for a Critics Choice Award. While she plays the wise Barbara Howard in *Abbott Elementary*, the actress mirrors her role, with awards speeches going viral for their uplifting and inspiring messages.



Nigerian actresses with highest net worth

These talented celebrities have many followers on social media. In addition, some of these Nigerian female actors have increased their net worth through business endeavours and endorsement deals. Here is a list of these actresses' with their net worth.

Genevieve Nnaji - \$10 million

Who is the richest female actress in Nigeria in 2021? Genevieve Nnaji tops the list of the richest actress with a net worth of \$10 million. Nnaji is a talented actress who has starred in many movies. Besides acting, she is also a producer. In 2019, she produced *Lionheart*, the first Netflix original film produced in Nigeria. The talented actress is also the owner of the St Genevieve clothing line. She has sponsorship deals with Etisalat, Amstel, Malta, and Jumia, among others.



Ibinabo Fiberesima - \$8 million



Ibinabo Fiberesima, one of the wealthiest Nollywood actresses, was born in Port Harcourt on January 13, 1970. Fiberesima debuted as an actress in the film *Most Wanted* in 1998. Read also Most beautiful Hausa actresses in Kannywood She was the winner of the Miss Wonderland pageant in 1999 and the first runner-up in the Miss NUGA competition at the University of Calabar. In 2014, the actress

married her college sweetheart, Uche Benjamin Ugbuka. Her net worth is \$8 million as of 2021.

Funke Akindele - \$7.6 million

Funke Akindele is one of the most influential Nollywood stars, having a large fan base on Instagram. Akindele's performance has earned her both national and continental recognition. With a net worth of \$7.6 million, she is one of the top three richest Nigerian celebrities.



Omotola Jalade Ekeinde - \$7.2 million



Omotola Jalade is one of Nigeria's most influential actresses. The majority of her fans refer to her as Omosexy. Since joining Nollywood in 1995, she has starred in over 250 films. In addition to acting, the Nigerian actress is a well-known musician and activist. *Time* Magazine named her one of the top 100 influential persons in the world in 2013. Her net worth is estimated to be \$7.2 million.

Rita Dominic - \$6 million

The Nollywood actress was born in Mbaise, Imo State, on July 12, 1975. Rita Dominic has received numerous notable cinema awards, including the Africa Movie Academy Award. In addition, she is a co-founder of The Audrey Silva Company (TASC). Rita's net worth is estimated to be \$6 million.



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EVERYBODY'S WORLD

With PALANG KASMI

Living

Have you become emotionally mature?

BECOMING emotionally mature is an ongoing process. It does not happen overnight. Instead, growing into a more mature person requires consistent effort and commitment. A more mature individual understands the nuances of human relationships and leans on them for support when needed. They can also articulate their feelings clearly while demonstrating empathy towards others rather than focusing on just themselves.

Becoming emotionally mature takes practice and determination, but it is possible to grow as a person with dedication and persistence in your efforts. Keep reading to discover these signs that you are becoming emotionally mature:

You accept yourself completely
When you become emotionally mature, you come to accept yourself and your own imperfections. You understand that everyone has flaws and weaknesses, but that does not necessarily make them bad people. Instead of wishing you were different, you understand that being your authentic self is the best way for you to operate in the world. You accept responsibility for your actions



but know that you cannot control everything in your life. The ability to accept yourself completely is the first step toward emotional maturity but also the most difficult. You feel comfortable being alone. As you become more emotionally mature, you embrace your ability to be alone and do not feel lonely, or as though you are missing something. You know that at

times you will be by yourself, and this is okay. Recognizing that being alone provides you with the opportunity to recharge, reflect, and focus on yourself. You may not feel uncomfortable in silence or need to fill it with unnecessary chatter.

You can see the good in others
As you become more emotionally mature, you focus less on the negative aspects of those around you and more on their positive attributes. You are able to see the good in people and recognize that sometimes people act badly or make mistakes because they need guidance and assistance. You feel like you can offer assistance without being condescending or judgmental. Instead of condemning others for their flaws; instead, look for ways to help them see the good in themselves.

You can articulate your feelings to others

As you become more emotionally mature, you can articulate your feelings clearly and compassionately to others. You can let others know when they have hurt you without shaming them and yourself. You do not have to hold on to your feelings and instead can let them go after healthily communicating them. Having healthy communication skills is an integral part of emotional maturity and requires practice and patience from you.

You know what you want
As you become more emotionally mature, you know what you want out of life and

You are honest with yourself and others

As you become more emotionally mature, you are honest with others and honest with yourself. You do not lie to yourself or others, even if it is something seemingly insignificant. You recognize that being dishonest with yourself and others is harmful, both to yourself and to others. Instead, you are open and authentic in your interactions with others, allowing them to trust you more as a result.

Becoming emotionally mature can be a long and difficult journey. It does not happen overnight, but instead requires consistent effort and a willingness to be vulnerable with others. It also requires a willingness to look at your flaws and be honest about them, which is a difficult but necessary part of the process. When you become emotionally mature, you understand the intricacies of human relationships and know how to lean on others for support when needed. You can also articulate your feelings clearly while demonstrating empathy towards others.

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what you are willing to do to get there. You are clear about your values and what you stand for, which is important as it allows you to make decisions and choices that reflect who you are as a person. Letting go of things that are not important without guilt or remorse, as these things do not align with your values.



THEY'RE SOWING THE SEEDS OF THE WORLD

With PALANG KASMI

Health

Ways your child has a speech problem

ALL parents want to do everything in their power to ensure their sons and daughters have the best possible academic start in life. This involves researching the best schools, discovering the most reputable day cares, and providing toys that are educational as well as entertaining.

But how many parents watch for the early signs of a speech disorder? If your child has a speech disorder, he or she is at a greater risk of performing below grade level. This not only equates to problems reading and writing: speech disorders can devastate your child's self-esteem, causing him or her to avoid school. The good news is speech therapy is incredibly successful! In order to achieve the maximum benefit though, your child should be treated as soon as signs of a speech disorder first appear.

The following are signs that your child has a speech disorder and needs speech therapy: **Your child stutters.** Stuttering is an obvious indication that your child needs speech therapy. Children who stutter may repeat whole words (He-he-he- ran to the door) or the first syllable of a word (j-j-jump). Sometimes stuttering children



may avoid talking altogether. **Your child has an inconsistent voice quality:**

Not all signs of a speech disorder have to do with voice or inability to control vowels or consonants. Often, children who have a hoarse voice or inability to control volume may need early

intervention. They also may have trouble emphasizing the correct syllable of a word, even though they pronounce a word correctly (such as saying BANAN-A instead of ba-NAN-a).

Your child doesn't interact with other children: If your baby doesn't smile or show acknowledgement when someone is speaking or playing, you should consider scheduling an appointment with a speech therapist.

Your child doesn't babble: Between four and seven months of age, your child should be babbling or making "nonsense" noises. These sounds are important because they will help your son or daughter learn words. Your child shows speech inconsistency:

For example, your child may pronounce a word correctly the first time but incorrectly the second or third time. They may also place gaps between syllables (run...ning).

Your child has a cleft palate or other structural YOUR problems with the mouth: Problems with the lips, jaw or tongue can make it difficult for children to speak clearly and consistently. This can have a devastating effect on their academic progress. Your child doesn't gesture: Your child should be using gestures such as waving and pointing by the time he or she is seven to twelve months old.

Your child doesn't speak: When your child doesn't speak a lot - or at all - this is a red-flag warning. You should also be concerned if your child says fewer than 50 words by the time he or she is two years old. Your child has several ear infections:

You may not equate ear infections with speech disorders, but extensive and chronic ear infections can cause fluid in the middle ear to cause temporary hearing loss. If this happens repeatedly, your child's speech may be delayed.

Your child has some type of hearing loss disorder: In order to create sounds properly, your child needs to be able to hear them properly. Hearing loss, particularly in the early years, can cause more extensive speech problems further on down the line. If your child has even partial hearing loss, it's important to work closely with an audiologist speech therapist to be sure he or she has all the skills needed to help them succeed in school and in life.





Reality Bites

with Palang Kasmi
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FATIGUE is known to drain energy levels and motivation. Female fatigue is sometimes related to the hormonal changes of periods, pregnancy, and perimenopause.

Females are also more likely to develop certain health conditions linked to fatigue, such as chronic fatigue syndrome and multiple sclerosis (MS). Some of your daily medications can cause fatigue, or you may be burned out from juggling too many responsibilities and not having adequate sleep.

This article by Ann Pietrangelo lists some common causes of female fatigue with tips on how to boost energy.

Female fatigue and low energy are common. It can happen for many reasons, from lifestyle factors to medical conditions.

Iron Deficiency Anemia

Iron deficiency anemia means your body lacks the iron to make enough healthy red blood cells. It can happen due to different reasons including your type of diet, heavy menstruation, or certain medical conditions. Females who menstruate or are pregnant need more iron than others.

Thyroid problems.

Fatigue can be a symptom of hypothyroidism (underactive thyroid) or hyperthyroidism (overactive thyroid). It's also a symptom of thyroid diseases like Hashimoto's and Graves' diseases. Thyroid conditions tend to affect women more than men, with 1 in 8 women developing a thyroid problem, particularly following pregnancy and menopause. Heart disease. Heart disease is the top cause of death in women in the United States.

Heart disease symptoms in women aren't always the same as in men, and some are less obvious. Fatigue can be a symptom of heart disease or heart attack. COPD.

About half of people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) have severe fatigue. COPD is a lung disease that makes it difficult to breathe. In the United States, more women than men are living with COPD.

PCOS. Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) is a hormonal disorder affecting up to 13% of women of reproductive age. And women with PCOS are more likely to feel fatigued or have sleep disorders than women without PCOS. Endometriosis or Adenomyosis

Endometriosis and adenomyosis are gynecologic conditions that are associated with fatigue. In endometriosis, uterine lining-like tissue grows

Why am I always tired?



Insomnia. It involves trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or waking up too early. You might develop insomnia because you have too much on your mind or work a night shift. Or it can be related to a condition that interferes with sleep, such as restless legs syndrome.

Depression

Over 90% of people with major depressive disorder report also having fatigue.

Other symptoms of depression include persistent sadness or emptiness, unexplained aches and pains, and a lack of interest in things you used to enjoy.

Stress and anxiety are physically and mentally exhausting. Your fatigue could result from excess unhealthy stress and excessive worry or too many responsibilities.

Hormonal fluctuations.

Natural hormonal fluctuations occur throughout a woman's life. Hormones rise and fall with puberty, the menstrual cycle, pregnancy, and perimenopause. Evidence suggests that estrogen and progesterone directly impact a woman's sleep cycle. Painful Bladder Syndrome.

Anyone can get painful bladder syndrome, which is also called interstitial cystitis. But it's more common among women than men.

Because you might have to wake up often during the night to urinate, it can lead to fatigue.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Chronic fatigue syndrome is a long-term illness more common among women than men.

The main symptom is debilitating fatigue, making it difficult to perform daily tasks or normal functions.

Fatigue is a common symptom of multiple sclerosis (MS). It's the primary central nervous system disease of young adults, about 75% of whom are female. The rate of sleep disorders among people with MS is 3 to 5 times higher than in the general population.

Fibromyalgia. It is a chronic disorder that affects women more than men, and the risk grows with age. In addition to fatigue, you might have sleep problems and a heightened sensitivity to pain. Lupus. Lupus is an autoimmune condition that affects women nine times more often than men. Aside from fatigue and tiredness, symptoms may include a butterfly-shaped rash across the nose and cheeks.



outside the uterus. In adenomyosis, the uterus lining-like tissue grows into the uterine walls.

Nutritional deficiencies such as iron, vitamin D, and vitamin B12, can contribute to fatigue. For example, fatigue is a symptom of anemia, which can happen if you have an iron deficiency. Not enough exercise too.

A sedentary lifestyle will likely make you feel more tired than rested. Research suggests that regular physical activity is associated with higher energy levels and lower fatigue levels in women.

Alcohol. Drinking alcohol during the day can make you drowsy. And while it might help you go to sleep at night, it also

interferes with quality sleep, which can lead to fatigue. Sleep Apnea too. Sleep apnea is a condition in which you pause breathing while you sleep. You may think you sleep all night, but it's not quality sleep. Besides fatigue, you may also experience dry throat, trouble concentrating, or mood changes.

EVER'S WORLD

With PALANG KASMI

Nutrition

Best natural teas to help you fight cold

THESE herbal remedies will help ease your sore throat and calm your cough.

Sometimes the simplest treatment can be the most effective: So when your grandmother (or brother, or the neighbor at the dog run who sees you sniffing into your sleeve) suggests you keep a pot of tea close at hand when you're fighting off a cold, listen up!

This ancient home remedy has been helping cold-sufferers feel better for thousands of years. There are several reasons why: Firstly, the hot liquid can soothe your throat and break up congestion. The chemical makeup of those tasty leaves is also key: "Tea catechins are natural antioxidants," says Tara Tomaino, RD, nutrition director at The Park. "Antioxidants work in the body to protect cells from free radical damage. Drinking tea regularly may help ease cold symptoms if you happen to get sick."

But one of the most important healing functions of tea may simply be that it keeps you hydrated, says Jaclyn London, MS, RD, CDN, author of *Dressing on the Side* (and *Other Diet Myths Debunked*). "When you're sick, eat high-water fruits and veggies and drink a ton of fluids — at least 10 cups per day from unsweetened sources, including tea," London says. P.S. If you squeeze a lemon into your cup, you get a burst of vitamin C, which may reduce the duration of your cold.

Here are the best teas for cold or flu symptoms:

Peppermint

best tea for colds -

Just a few sips of peppermint tea can start to make you feel better. The menthol in the peppermint leaves can have a slight anesthetic effect on your throat, suppressing your cough (which is why peppermint appears in many cough drops). Plus, scientists from the USDA report that when tested in a lab, peppermint has been found to have significant antimicrobial and antiviral activities. While we don't know for sure if those lab results translate to humans, a cup of minty tea certainly couldn't hurt!

Chamomile
best tea for cold-

The dried flowers of chamomile have been used for centuries to help lull you to sleep — flavonoids from the plant have a tranquilizing effect.



Since getting a good night's sleep is an important part of your cold-recovery mission, chamomile is an excellent choice. There is also some evidence the tea acts as an anti-inflammatory, so sip away.

Echinacea

best tea for colds.

Echinacea comes from a purple flower found in North America and is used by Great Plains tribes as a traditional cure. Studies have shown that taking echinacea as a supplement can cut your chances of catching a cold by up to 58%, and can reduce the length of your cold by more than a day. Brewing it as a tea is potentially a tasty way to get all that protective goodness.

Ginger

Sore Throat Remedies.

Ginger tea is a favorite with singers to soothe their throats — the bioactive ingredients in it act as an anti-inflammatory and may also inhibit microorganisms that can lead to infection. And if your cold comes with an upset tummy, ginger is also known to relieve nausea. "At the first sign of a cold or flu, I always make a pot of strong ginger tea," says Bill Rawls, MD, co-founder and medical director of Vital Plan. "Ginger is a

potent antiviral and anti-inflammatory agent. Plus, it's available fresh in any grocery store."

Elderberry: Like other small, dark berries, elderberries are filled with health-boosting antioxidants, ranking even higher than cranberry and blueberry for polyphenol content. Studies with elderberry syrups and extracts have shown they can reduce the length and severity of cold and flu symptoms; we love the flavor sipped in a fruity tea.

Slippery Elm Tea.

This might sound a little gross, but slippery elm bark is known for having a lot of mucilage: a sticky, gel-like substance that can soothe an itchy, sore throat. In fact, according to the National Institutes, you may find slippery elm among the active ingredients in throat lozenges. So if you want to take a break from those cough drops, you may want to try sipping on this calming brew.

Licorice Root Tea:

If you like something on the sweeter side, you might enjoy licorice root tea. Licorice root, or *Glycyrrhiza glabra*, is a popular

herbal remedy in Chinese medicine. It's typically used to treat gastrointestinal issues like heartburn, but research has shown that licorice root has antimicrobial and antiviral qualities which could help in getting over a nasty cold.

Marshmallow Root.

Like slippery elm, marshmallow root contains mucilage that will calm an irritated throat. In 2020, researchers who were looking at the effects of marshmallow root discovered that the herb also has anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidant properties — even more reason to enjoy this mild tea when you're feeling a bit under the weather.

Green Tea.

Green tea has many health benefits that can support your body in fighting off infection. It's high in antioxidants and has antiviral qualities, and while more studies need to be done to really say, there's some evidence that green tea could help to prevent the flu and the common cold. "Green tea contains epigallocatechin-3-gallate (EGCG)," Tomaino explains. "This powerful antioxidant makes green tea an excellent choice to sip throughout cold and flu season." Pour us a mug, please!

Lemon Tea.

As mentioned above, lemon's cold-fighting power comes from its

abundance of vitamin C. You can squeeze it into your favorite herbal blend if you'd like, but you can also just squeeze half a lemon into hot water to make your own "tea" of sorts. Lemon water is super sour, so for taste's sake, you may want to stir in some of your favorite honey.

How does tea help a cold?

Hot tea can attack a cold on several fronts: First, the hot liquid can soothe your throat and break up congestion. But just as important, the tea leaves themselves contain a complex spectrum of chemical substances called phytochemicals. "The plant produces these substances to protect its cells from free radicals, toxic substances, radiation and a wide range of microbes," says Dr. Rawls. "It's a defense system similar to our immune system. When we consume the complex phytochemistry of an herb, we gain those benefits."

What's better for a cold: hot or cold tea?

While hot tea can help break up congestion and feel soothing on a sore throat, cold tea also has its benefits. Some research has found steeping the tea for a longer amount of time in cold water may increase the antioxidant benefits. In the end, the best way to drink tea is the way you prefer it. Hearstmagazine.com



BUSINESS WORLD

The potential of a cashless Nigeria remains untapped

When it comes to the role of physical currency in Nigeria's evolving financial landscape, there are mounting costs and challenges that can no longer be ignored. While cash remains king and the dominant form of payment, the expenses and burdens associated with its usage are becoming increasingly apparent. EBUNOLUWA LADIPO writes.

FROM the production and distribution of physical currency to the costs of handling and securing cash, the financial burden is substantial. Research has shown that cash-based economies like Nigeria face transaction costs that are 4-10 times higher than those reliant on digital payments. This results in the loss of millions of dollars each year, funds that could be redirected to more productive uses or invested in vital sectors such as healthcare and education.

These complexities not only hinder the efficiency of transactions, but they also contribute to the growth of an informal economy. Long queues and frustration at ATM terminals serve as reminders of the limitations of cash, while businesses struggle to manage large sums of money, leaving them vulnerable to theft and errors.

The necessity of transitioning to a cashless society has become increasingly apparent in recent times. Amidst a recent cash crunch accompanied by transaction failures, Verve cards emerged as a crucial lifeline for many Nigerians. In supermarkets, where physical cash dwindled, Verve transactions facilitated the uninterrupted flow of essential supplies, staving off potential panic. Street markets, typically bustling with cash exchanges, experienced a notable shift as contactless Verve payments, facilitated through its partnership with Moniepoint, Opay etc, supplanted the chaos brought on by cash scarcity.

The immediate impact on businesses was profound –

The immediate impact on businesses was profound – operations streamlined, financial security ensured, and confidence fostered during uncertain times. While the cash crunch underscored the limitations of a physical currency-based economy, Verve showcased the transformative potential of cashless transactions, providing a practical and resilient solution in the face of scarcity. It's no surprise that partners like Opay and Monnie Point have achieved significant milestones in a short period. While the Verve partnership isn't the sole factor, its pivotal role cannot be undermined. Verve card holders now enjoy a myriad of services, with their Verve cards serving as the gateway to expanded opportunities.



Cardoso

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In neighbouring Ghana has made significant progress in reducing its dependence on cash by embracing digital currency. Nigeria, too, is at a crossroads, deciding whether to cling to the familiarity of cash or embrace the transformative potential of a cashless future.

While cashless alternatives are emerging, uneven ecosystems have hindered widespread adoption. However, Verve, a Nigerian payment card network, is playing a key role in driving the adoption of card-based transactions in the country. The company's commitment to providing convenient, secure, and efficient payment solutions has positioned it as a leader in the industry. Verve offers a safe, affordable, and

widely accepted platform that bridges the gap between cash and digital transactions.

The widespread use of Verve cards reflects a growing acceptance of digital transactions, marking a shift away from reliance on cash. By empowering individuals and businesses to embrace cards, Verve is paving the way for a more inclusive and efficient financial landscape.

The benefits of a cashless society go beyond mere numbers. The enhanced security of digital transactions replaces the vulnerability of cash, which carries a higher risk of theft and fraud. With each swipe of a card, these risks diminish, and businesses gain greater transparency and control over their finances, allowing for better financial planning and growth.

Transitioning to card-based transactions also has the potential to foster a more secure and transparent payment ecosystem. Cash transactions are often untraceable, contributing to tax evasion and hindering the government's ability to regulate economic activities. By leaving a digital footprint, every Verve card transaction promotes transparency and accountability, pushing the informal economy into the fold and fostering greater financial inclusion.

While the transition to a cashless Nigeria may have its challenges, card-based transactions offer a

transformative solution. Verve's leadership in the industry, with over 50 million payment cards issued, demonstrates the increasing acceptance of digital payments in the country. By embracing the advantages of card-based transactions, Nigeria can navigate its economic landscape more efficiently, drawing inspiration from Ghana's successes.

This shift provides a practical way to mitigate security concerns, reduce reliance on cash, and foster a more transparent and secure payment ecosystem. Through collaborative efforts from the government, financial institutions, technology providers, and strategic partnerships with relevant stakeholders, Nigeria can unlock the vast potential of a cashless society.

Verve, with its deep understanding of the Nigerian market and commitment to financial inclusion, stands ready to be a catalyst for change. By embracing the transformative power of cards, not just as plastic rectangles and other forms of payment tokens, but as keys to a more secure, efficient, and prosperous payment ecosystem, Verve can lead Nigeria towards a brighter financial future.

Ebunoluwa Ladipo, marketing communication specialist writes from Lagos.

BUSINESS WORLD

CBN, NNPC agree to domicile revenue in Apex Bank

IN an effort to improve efficiency and bolster their commercial activities, the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC Ltd) and the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) have announced their intentions to strengthen their banking relationship.

Mallam Mele Kyari, the NNPC Group Chief Executive Officer, and Mr. Olayemi Cardoso, the CBN Governor, held a joint review of the NNPC's decision to domicile a sizable portion of its revenues and banking services with the CBN after a meeting held in Abuja recently.

As highlighted in their joint statement, the decision is poised to yield mutual benefits for both organizations. By centralizing a portion of its financial operations with the CBN, NNPC aims to streamline its cash management processes, particularly concerning obligor limits set by its Board of Directors. This move is expected to optimize NNPC's financial operations, ensuring more effective utilization of resources.

The CBN, on its part, has demonstrated its commitment to facilitating this arrangement by providing enhanced digital platforms for all transactions involving NNPC. Moreover, specific



Kyari

transaction limits have been established to regulate NNPC's financial activities, promoting transparency and accountability.

Both NNPC Ltd and the CBN have expressed their dedication to further fortifying their collaboration to guarantee seamless commercial operations. It is worth noting that while NNPC Ltd will leverage its enhanced relationship with the CBN, it will continue to engage in banking transactions with commercial banks as necessary, ensuring flexibility and diversification in its financial dealings.

This joint initiative

underscores the importance of strategic partnerships towards driving efficiency and innovation within Nigeria's economic landscape. As NNPC Ltd and the CBN work hand in hand to optimize their banking relationship, the stage is set for enhanced productivity and sustainable growth in the nation's vital petroleum sector. "As miners, we are operating within states, local governments and even down to villages but sometimes, state governors can stop you from working. Meanwhile, this mining operation is what we are doing by contributing to the federation account," he said.

Court orders FG to fix prices of food, others

A Federal High Court sitting in Lagos, recently, ordered the federal government to fix the prices of petrol, diesel, kerosene and other goods within seven days from February 7, 2024.

Trial judge, Justice Ambrose Lewis-Allagoa, specifically ordered the government to fix the prices of milk, flour, salt, sugar, bicycles and its spare parts, matches, motorcycles and its spare parts, motor vehicles and its spare parts as well as petroleum products, including diesel, premium motor spirit, PMS, and kerosene.

The court made the order in its judgment in a suit by rights activist and lawyer, Mr. Femi Falana, SAN, against the Price Control Board and the Attorney-General of the Federation, AGF.

Reacting to the judgement yesterday, the Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Prince Lateef Fagbemi, SAN, said Federal Government would get a copy of the court judgement, study it, to take necessary actions that would be in the interest of the masses and the nation.

The AGF, who reacted through his Special Adviser, Communication & Publicity, Mr.

Kamarudeen Ogundele, said: "As soon as we have a copy of the judgement, we will study it. On the long run, we will take a decision that is in the best interest of the country. Rest assured that this government will always have the interest of the masses at heart."

Falana had in suit, asked the court to determine "Whether by Section 4 of the Price Control Act., the first defendant is carrying out its duty to impose a price on any goods that are of the kind specified in the First Schedule to the Price Control Act."

He had asked the court to declare that by virtue of Section 4 of the Price Control Act Cap, the defendants are under a legal obligation to fix the prices of bicycles and spare parts, flour, matches, milk, motorcycles and spare parts, motor vehicles and spare parts, salt, sugar and petroleum products including diesel, petrol motor spirit and kerosene.

He also prayed the court to declare that the failure or refusal of the defendants to fix the prices of bicycles and spare parts, flour, matches, milk, motorcycles and spare parts, motor vehicles and spare parts, salt, sugar and petroleum products including diesel, petrol motor spirit and kerosene is illegal as it offends the

provision of Section 4 of the Price Control Act, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004.

He had also sought for an order directing the defendants to fix the prices of bicycles and spare parts, flour, matches, milk, motorcycles and spare parts, motor vehicles and spare parts, salt, sugar and petroleum products including diesel, petrol motor spirit and kerosene not later than 7 days after the delivery of the judgment of this court."

At the hearing of the suit, yesterday, the plaintiff, Falana informed the court that the motion on notice is premised on Section 4 (1) of the Price Control Act, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004.

He also told the court that the defendants in the suit have been served with the processes since it was filed in May, 2023, but refused and failed to file any response or counter to it.

He consequently, urged the court to grant all the reliefs sought for, since there was no counter from the respondents.

Justice Lewis-Allagoa after hearing from the lawyer and perusing through the court filed, observed that the defendants did not file any counter to the suit after citing some plethoras of authorities, held "All the

THE Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), has charged the Federal Government that, even though the policy to regulate the solid minerals sector in Nigeria has potential economic benefits, the need to address the associated challenges will be necessary in order to realise its full potential and ensure sustainable and inclusive development.

With the decline in the global oil market, diversifying into the solid minerals sector reduces Nigeria's dependency on oil revenues.

LCCI president, Gabriel Idahosa, said this would help mitigate the impact of oil price fluctuations on the country's economy and enhance economic stability.

"The development of the solid minerals sector is likely to create job opportunities across various stages of exploration, mining, processing and marketing.

This can contribute significantly to reducing unemployment and fostering economic

reliefs contained in the motion paper are hereby granted as prayed."

Edun, Cardoso seek increase in World Bank support

MR. Wale Edun, the Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister for the Economy, has called for more support from the World Bank for Nigeria, expressing hope that the multilateral institution will appreciate the reforms conducted by the country.

Mr Edun, who received the World Bank's Managing Director of Operations, Ms Anna Bjerde, said the country and the World Bank were working toward strengthening mutually

beneficial bilateral relations. Ms Bjerde is in Nigeria on a two-day visit in furtherance with the Bretton-Wood based bank's engagement with the on critical aspects of the development agenda.

He said the President Bola Tinubu-led administration has carried out two core policies including the removal of the fuel subsidy and the harmonisation of the Naira as recommended by the lender.

"The World Bank has been



Edun

LCCI: FG must address mineral challenges



Idahosa

growth.

"The effective regulation of this sector can also lead to increased revenue generation for the government through taxes, royalties and other levies, which can then be utilised for infrastructure development, social programs and other public services. By regulating the sector, Nigeria can position itself to participate more effectively in the global market for solid minerals. This can open new opportunities for international trade and partnerships," he said.

He added that the approval of this policy

review allows for better management and utilization of the abundant solid mineral resources in Nigeria; ensuring that the resources are exploited judiciously, efficiently and sustainably, preventing their depletion and ensuring long-term economic benefits.

He added that the successful implementation of the policy may face various challenges, including regulatory hurdles, lack of infrastructure and bureaucratic inefficiencies, which could hinder the policy's intended benefits.

part of the progress report and we commend all their efforts," he said.

Ms Bjerde said the World Bank had more than 30 projects in Nigeria, adding that her visit would allow her to also take stock of the ongoing projects.

Also speaking, the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Mr Olayemi Cardoso, commended the World Bank for its support to the country over the years.

He said that the World Bank's support was not only in terms of Dollars and cents, but also through the knowledge resources, which would be beneficial to the country, adding that the country was looking forward to more collaboration.

"We look forward to more collaboration," Mr Cardoso said.

The Minister of Budget and Economic Planning, Mr Atiku Bagudu, expressed appreciation to the World Bank for its continuing support for Nigeria.

He stated that President Tinubu's administration embarked on one of the biggest reforms, adding that the 2024 budget would reduce deficits for the first time in recent years.

ENTREPRENEUR WATCH

WITH CELESTINE D. ATTSAR

Cost of living affecting the supply of chain

Inflation in Nigeria has risen to its highest in 27 years as the headline inflation rate for December 2023 rose by 0.72 percent to 28.92 percent year-on-year from 28.20 percent in November, marking the twelfth consecutive increase in inflation rate. Inflation in Africa's biggest economy and the most populous nation has not climbed this high since mid-1996. Today, food prices have surged, exacerbating a cost-of-living crisis that gravely affects consumers and businesses while mounting pressure on the central bank to raise interest rates further. ADEBAYO ADELEKE.

This persistent increase in the prices of goods and services poses an enormous challenge to the supply chain web. As the cost of raw materials continues to soar, businesses grapple with escalating operational and production expenses, significantly affecting their bottom line.

Businesses find themselves in a delicate balance of managing inventory to prevent shortages and address surplus challenges. Additionally, inflation reverberates through contractual agreements, making it necessary to renegotiate terms with suppliers and partners, thereby impacting long-term business relationships. The dynamics of supply chains are further complicated, as inflation influences international trade, contributes to currency fluctuations, and challenges cross-border supply chain operations.

As the cost of raw materials continues to soar, businesses grapple with escalating operational and production expenses, significantly affecting their bottom line.

Economic crisis affects supply chains directly.

In Nigeria, transportation costs are a critical component of supply chain expenses. Inadequate capacity and fluctuating fuel prices heavily affect the country's reliance on road transport, which accounts for a significant portion of cargo movement. Transportation costs surge when fuel prices rise, primarily because of global oil market trends or local subsidy policies. This increase is often passed on to the end consumer, affecting demand patterns.

Also, Nigeria's heavy dependence on imports for raw materials and machinery exacerbates



price increases. For instance, Nigeria imports a substantial amount of its manufacturing inputs, making it vulnerable to global supply chain disruptions and currency fluctuations. When the global prices of these raw materials rise, it directly inflates operational costs for Nigerian businesses. The Naira's volatility, which also increases the cost of imported materials, further compounds this.

In response, companies may reduce production or seek cheaper alternatives, which can impact product quality. Eventually, the ripple effect will be seen in reduced business profit margins and increased cost of living for consumers.

The other side of this coin is the resultant disruption in the logistics sector that Nigeria faces because of challenges in its transportation infrastructure, including inadequate road networks,

port congestion, and underdeveloped rail and air freight capabilities. This inefficiency leads to delays, increased vehicle wear and tear, and higher operational costs.

Because of the inefficiency in the transportation infrastructure which directly affects the distribution networks, it becomes challenging to maintain just-in-time inventory systems, leading to either stockouts or high inventory holding costs. This situation is particularly problematic for perishable goods and can lead to significant losses.

"Because of the inefficiency in the transportation infrastructure which directly affects the distribution networks, it becomes challenging to maintain just-in-time inventory systems, leading to either stockouts or high inventory holding costs. This situation is particularly problematic for perishable goods and can lead to significant losses. In summary, the economic crisis in Nigeria, characterised by a persistent increase of prices of everything from food and energy to the free fall of the currency in the FX market, which is making importing more expensive, has resulted in rising operational costs for businesses."

more expensive, has resulted in rising operational costs for businesses.

This is due to increased transportation and raw material prices and disruptions in logistics because of infrastructural challenges, all of which create a complex environment for supply chains. These factors lead to increased costs, reduced efficiency, and potential delays, significantly



Famous black women leaving mark on history

Continued from page 18

Meghan Markle
 Though Markle—along with her husband, Prince Harry—made the unprecedented move to step back as a senior member of the royal family in 2019, since she joined the world of the British monarchy in 2018, the former actress has established herself as an advocate for a variety of causes, including gender equality and climate change. She and her husband have also founded Archewell, an organization that acts as a production and audio company, and a charitable foundation.



She now takes on a different live audience with her daytime talk show, *The Jennifer Hudson Show*, which debuted in 2022. Hudson earned EGOT status, and is currently the youngest female EGOT winner in history, as of January 2023.

Vice President K. Harris
 Following the November 2020 election and January 2021 inauguration ceremony, Sen. Kamala Harris of California made history, becoming the first woman and first Black and Asian American to hold the title of vice president. She's also the first woman and person of color to be district attorney of San Francisco and attorney general of California.



Gabrielle Union
 Though we've seen Union on the big and small screen since the '90s, in recent years the star has become open about everything from her fertility struggles to racial and gender equality in Hollywood, and raising her children with love no matter what. Her outspoken voice has set her apart in the acting world as an advocate and ally for a number of underrepresented communities.



Regina King
 King has been absolutely killing it in a career that spans decades. In 2019, she won a Golden Globe and a supporting actress Oscar for her role in *If Beale Street Could Talk*. And her critically acclaimed HBO dystopian drama *Watchmen* riveted audiences and earned her a fourth Emmy.



Gayle King
 Longtime Oprah fans know that Gayle has been at the top of her game for years now (she has three Emmys to prove it). In 2018, King was inducted into the Broadcasting & Cable Hall of Fame, and following her headline-making interview with the disgraced R. Kelly, Gayle was named one of Time's 100 most influential people in 2019.



Sherri Shepherd
 Emmy Award-winning talk show host Sherri Shepherd has been making waves with her daytime talk show, *Sherri*. Formerly a host on *The View*, Shepherd has taken on hosting her own show with ease, and she's hilarious. Shepherd has expressed that hosting her own show was lifelong dream, and she is using her show to spread joy and laughter, with her clips consistently going viral on TikTok.

Michelle Obama
 Mrs. Obama captivated many with her show of warmth, strength, and positivity as the country's First Lady from 2009 to 2017. In her role, she fought against childhood obesity and championed education for young girls. And in the face of dark political times, during her speech at the 2016 Democratic National Convention, she delivered a line that still resonates with many today: "When they go low, we go high." She's also the bestselling author of *Becoming* and a podcaster. Check out her new memoir, *The Light We Carry*, as she tackles "change, challenges, and power."



Ruth E. Carter
 Though you can trace Carter's costume design career back to 1988's *School Daze*, in 2019 she became the first African American woman to win the Oscar for Costume Design, for her work in *Marvel's Black Panther*.



Jennifer Hudson
 From her heartfelt 2006 portrayal of Effie in *Dreamgirls* to her dynamic performance as Aretha Franklin in the 2021 biopic *Respect*, the Academy Award and Grammy winning Jennifer Hudson has always wowed us.



Tracee Ellis Ross
 The daughter of singer Diana Ross, Tracee Ellis Ross is a shining light in Hollywood. From her role as the ambitious Joan in the early 2000s show *Girlfriends* to her groundbreaking gig as Dr. Rainbow Johnson on the hit sitcom *Black-ish*, the actress is guaranteed to put a smile on your face with her fashion, goofy Instagram antics, and passion for movements like #TimesUp and #BlackLivesMatter. And in 2019 she launched her very own haircare line, *Pattern Beauty*.



Nigerian actresses with highest net worth

Continued from page 16

Chioma Chukwuka - \$5.7 million



Chioma Chukwuka is another actress who enjoys portraying an "innocent" lady in romance films. She was born in Lagos, Nigeria, on March 12, 1980. On *My Wedding Day*, *Wives on Strike*, *Heart of Gold*, and *The Rain of Hope* are a few of the films she has played a role in. Chukwuka has a net worth of \$5.7 million.

Mercy Johnson - \$5 million

Mercy Johnson has worked in the Nigerian film industry for almost a decade. She has established herself as one of the most admired stars in the industry as a result of her talent and hard work. *Hollandia Evap Milk* and *Pennek Nigeria Limited* are among the brands she has endorsed. Her net worth is \$5 million, making her the one of richest female star in Nollywood.



Uche Jombo - \$4 million



Uche Jombo is an actress, screenwriter, film producer, and director who has had a lot of success. Her first film, *Visa to Hell*, was released in 1999, and it was her first foray into the film industry. Uche has written and co-authored several Nollywood films, including *Girls in the Hood*, *Games Men Play*, and *The Celebrity*. She has also been nominated and won several awards like *Female Viewers Choice* during the 2015 Golden Icons Academy Movie Awards. Jombo's net worth is around \$4 million.

Ini Edo - \$3.9 million

Ini Edo was born in the city of Uyo in the state of Akwa Ibom. She began her acting career in 2000 and has since appeared in over 200 films. Read also *How much is Chinedu Ikedieze's net worth in 2019?* Ini Edo is also a brand ambassador for *Beauty Secrets of April*, a skincare line. She has also won awards such as the *Nafca Award* and *Golden Icons Academy Movie*. With a net worth of almost \$3.9 million, Ini is one of Nigeria's most well-paid and sought-after actresses.



Oge Okoye - \$3 million



Ini Edo was born in the city of Uyo in the state of Akwa Ibom. She began her acting career in 2000 and has since appeared in over 200 films. Read also *How much is Chinedu Ikedieze's net worth in 2019?* Ini Edo is also a brand ambassador for *Beauty Secrets of April*, a skincare line. She has also won awards such as the *Nafca Award* and *Golden Icons Academy Movie*. With a net worth of almost \$3.9 million, Ini is one of Nigeria's most well-paid and sought-after actresses.

Source: Legit

SUNDAY FEATURE

Baba Jang: The face of Plateau PDP

When the great Leopold Senghor was championing the cause of the Negritude literary movement, which was aimed at showcasing to the world the fact that the black man was not of a backward race, the legendary Wole Soyinka simply told him to stop all the posturing and hype. CHRIS GYANG writes.

RATHER, Senghor should concentrate on practically demonstrating what he was theorizing by churning out critically acclaimed literary works that could match those of Europeans.

Thus, Soyinka famously declared: "A tiger does not have to proclaim his tigrity." Essentially, he was saying that the effectiveness of any human endeavour and cause is judged by the quality of its practical and tangible outcome and not by ephemeral words and empty theorizing.

Why are we going down this literary memory lane here? It's meant to show us that man, in fact every human being, should be able to point to the practical, positive, outcomes of his or her endeavours and thoughts when all is said and done.

It is from that standpoint, therefore, that we kindly direct the minds of both our political leaders and those of us who believe in them, in the process of assessing who is a true leader among them.

Viewed from that perspective and on a more general note, respect for a leader should be based on his or her practical antecedents. That kind of respect naturally emanates from what the people see as his felt contributions to their general well-being. This kind of respect can never be exacted or gotten through sophistry of any kind.

This is because, first, the human mind has the capacity to discern between truth and deceit. Second, and most importantly, true leaders are



Jang



Mutfwang

forged from the finest stuff that can never be counterfeited.

Of course, as a human being and leader, Jonah David Jang has his personal flaws which surely hurt individuals, groups and even our state when he was governor, senator and thereafter.

But, certainly, Jang is not the problem of the PDP in Plateau State.

On the contrary, he is the most unifying factor in the Plateau PDP. For instance, in the 2019 general elections, his

Northern Zone gave the PDP an unmatched clean slate.

To be sure, he occupies an exalted and iconic position that has been voluntarily conferred on him by the generality of Plateau people and Party members – and that was not through any force of coercion.

If the truth must be told, Baba Jang is the face of the PDP in Plateau State.

Consequently, we are bold to assert that he has earned a rare place on the pantheon of the great leaders of not only our Party but Plateau State as

a whole.

Undoubtedly, he is the nemesis of the rudderless Lalong administration. This is mainly because his achievements as governor are so intimidating to them that they know that even if they are given two plus more tenures, they can never match his developmental landmarks.

Landmarks that will remain a reference point in the annals of the governance of our state for a long time to come.

This is only one of his legacies that have so seamlessly

conferred on him the position of a true leader.

And, just like Soyinka so boldly affirmed, Baba Jang has earned the respect and position of a statesman and leader because he has not patently "declared" his "tigrity."

He has painstakingly concentrated on the selfless pursuit of offering good governance and direction to Plateau people of all political and religious beliefs at the most critical moments of their lives.

Others who seek to be true leaders may kindly wish to borrow a leaf from Baba Jang.

Obviously, rabble rousing is not the path towards such respect because it's earned and not exacted.

And, mark this, he has survived this long because he possesses this uncanny knack for rallying his beloved people to victory. He rebounds when all appears to be lost; when his opponents least expect.

Above all, he has a very deep, hands-on understanding of the internal dynamics of Plateau, and indeed Nigerian, politics.

No doubt, this old horse still has much more to offer in this highly unpredictable game of politics.

THIS PIECE, PARTS OF WHICH THE WRITER HAS SLIGHTLY EDITED, WAS FIRST PUBLISHED IN THE SEPTEMBER 4, 2020, EDITION OF THISDAY NEWSPAPER



Plateau State Secretariate flyover bridge

NEWS

Oando Plc commended for giving back to society

By Peter Title

OANDO Plc has been described as a corporate giant that has been giving back to the society. They were urged to sustain the feat.

Governor Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang stated this when the management of Oando Foundation paid him a courtesy visit recently at the New Government House, Little Rayfield, Jos.

According to him, the state government accords education a special place in this dispensation and called for training and retraining of staff for maximum output.

The Executive Governor also solicited for NEEDS Assessment of the sector so that the challenges bedeviling the sector would be adequately addressed.

While describing the partnership as valuable, he urged the Foundation to extend their gestures to secondary as well as tertiary institutions in the state.

Earlier, the head of the delegation, Adekunle Adedoke, congratulated



Caleb

Governor Mutfwang over his victory at the Supreme Court. He noted that his brief stay in office has brought tremendous achievements.

According to her, the Foundation was set up by their strategic partner Oando Plc with a mandate of transforming the lives of children across the country.

Mrs Adedoke told the

governor that the Foundation has identified communities that are vulnerable even as she said they were working in synergy with relevant authorities like the SUBEB. She noted that the Foundation was out to support 20 schools in Plateau State while they had equally supported six schools in the past.

From DORCAS PANKYES,
Abuja

IN a bid to fast-track the process of achieving the Final Investment Decision (FID) on the Nigeria-Morocco Gas Pipeline, the Federal Government has intensified discussions with the Kingdom of Morocco.

A statement by the Chief Corporate Olufemi O. Sonya Communications Officer, NNPC Ltd said they had a discussion recently, on the side-lines of a meeting between the Honourable Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Gas), Hon. Ekperikpe Ekpo, and the Moroccan Minister of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development, Ms. Leila Benali, anchored by the NNPC Ltd.'s Executive Vice President, Gas, Power & New Energy, Mr. Olalekan Ogunleye, and the Director General of the Morocco National Office of Hydrocarbons and Mines (ONHYM), Mme Amina Benkhadra.

The talks focused on how to drive the partnership between the two countries to accelerate the Nigeria-Morocco Gas Pipeline Project in line with the series of Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) signed between the two countries in Abuja in 2022.

Both parties emphasised the strategic importance of the project to the two countries and the entire African continent and the need to drive it to completion expeditiously in line with the objective of stemming energy poverty on the African continent.

It would be recalled that the Cooperation Agreement for the 48" x 5,300Km

Nigeria-Morocco Gas Pipeline: Project in FID stage

pipeline from Nigeria to Dhakia (Morocco) and 1,700km from Dhakia to Northern Morocco was signed in 2017 with a capacity of 30 billion cubic meter (bcm) per year (equivalent of 3.0 billion standard cubic feet of gas per day).

The pipeline would traverse Republic of Benin, Togo, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Gambia, Senegal, Mauritania, and terminate in Morocco with a spur to Spain.

Due to the international nature of the project, the

ECOWAS Commission is saddled with the responsibility to, among other things, facilitate inter-governmental treaty and host government agreements, establishment of Pipeline Higher Authority, and alignment with AU, UN and other relevant international bodies.

The project, among other things, will help drive the monetisation of Nigeria's gas resources, maintain NNPC Ltd.'s energy leadership in Africa, and promote economic and regional cooperation among African countries.



Ekpo

Troops rescue abducted LGC chair

From TERESE TUHWA,
Makurdi

TROOPS of 72 Special Force Battalion under 401 Special Brigade commanded by Brig. Gen. A. Rabi, have rescued the kidnapped Caretaker Chairman of Ukum Local Government Council, Rev. Gideon Haanongon.

The council chairman and his personal assistant who have been in the kidnappers' den for about two weeks in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area.

Brig. Gen. A. Rabi said they acted on a distress call, carried out a rescue mission and in the process, destroyed three (3) camps of the kidnappers.

"When we recovered him, we brought him down to our barracks in Makurdi. We administered first aid to him and also gave him food to eat. He is in good condition".

While narrating his ordeal to reporters, Rev. Gideon Haanongon said on that fateful day, he was on his way to attend the burial of late Ter Katsina-Ala and around Anyagba, he came in contact with some strange boys who were shooting sporadically and even killed someone.

"At that point, I told my driver to stop the car and they took us straight into the bush.

"They covered my face throughout the period of my captivity. I did not know when it was daytime or night. They kept us inside a thatched house without air.

"Each day, the soldiers will come shooting but they manoeuvred their way through a bush path and hid us inside a river. The soldiers destroyed their camps and they kept moving us to another place.

"At a point, they told me that

these soldiers are disturbing them because of me and that the Governor had appealed to them to release me and he would forgive them. They said I should tell the governor to keep to his words and get them out of the bush. So, at 8pm on Wednesday, we crossed a stream and trekked a very long distance almost like from Makurdi to Abinsi and they removed the blindfold and asked me to take a path that leads to Zaki-Biam.

"But I recognized the village which is Tse Wombo because my daughter is married there. I must appreciate the effort of the military because it was their persistent pressure that made the kidnappers release me.

Also, the Special Adviser to Governor Hyacinth Alia on Security, Lt. Col. Alexander Igbaya Ashungu (rtd) played a significant role in my release.

In a reaction, the security adviser, Alexander Igbaya Ashungu (rtd) commended the military for its determination in ensuring the release of the council chairman.

He assured that Governor Hyacinth Alia was working hard to see that criminals do not have their ways in the state.

He said the government was meeting with stakeholders to find solution to criminality and other vices.

The security adviser equally disclosed that the military authority has rescued over 13 kidnapped victims recently.

It will be recalled that the Caretaker Chairman of Ukum Local Government Council, Rev. Gideon Haanongon, was kidnapped by unknown gunmen about three weeks ago on his way to attend the burial of a traditional ruler, the Ter Katsina-Ala, late Chief Fezanga Wombo.

Ebiraland jubilates as monarch gets Staff of Office

From AMEDU JOSEPH,
Lokoja

SONS and daughters of Ebira land, both at home and in the diaspora gathered in Okene, Central Senatorial District of Kogi State to witness the official Installation and presentation of Staff of Office to the New Ohinoyi of Ebiraland, Alh. Ahmed Tinaji Anaje.

Tijani Anaje was appointed to replace late Dr. Ado Ibrahim who died

on the 29th of October 2023 at the age of 95.

The event which took place at the Central Palace of the Ohinoyi of Ebira land, was well attended by prominent sons and daughters of Ebiraland as well as top officials of Kogi State government.

Gov. Yahaya Bello of Kogi State reiterated his commitment to the

traditional institution in Kogi State and assured the traditional rulers of continuous support from the incoming administration of Alh. Usman Ahmed Ododo.

He said "I want to call on all the sons and daughters of Ebiraland that we should all come together and rally round our Ohinoyi of Ebiraland for the greatness, development and security of our land".

Gov. Bello appreciated all the contestants for the Stool of Ohinoyi of Ebira land, for the spirit of sportsmanship they displayed.

His words: "God Almighty has enthroned Alh. Dr. Ahmed Tijani Anaje out of the seventy eminently qualified contestants. I appreciate statesmanship and the display of maturity through the process of selecting the Ohinoyi of Ebiraland".

Born on 29th June, 1974 into the family of Late Alhaji Muhammed Anaje Aliyu of Asuwe clan, Dr. Tijani Anaje attended Seifudeen Primary

School, Okengwe where he obtained his First School Leaving Certificate in 1983.

He attended Ebira Muslim Community College, Okengwe (EMCCO) in Okene LGA of Kogi State where he obtained his West African School Certificate (WASC) in 1993. After his secondary school education, he started his Islamic studies at the Sharafudeen Madrasat, Okengwe under the leadership of Mukadam Alhaji Yakubu Ta'aba.

He later acquired a Diploma in Applied Psychology from University of Jos.

Alhaji (Dr.) Ahmed Tijani Muhammed Anaje was enlisted into the Nigerian Army in the year 1995 as 39 Regular intake, where he rose to, and was decorated as Warrant Officer on the 13th of October, 2021 shortly before his ascension to the stool Ohinoyi of Okengwe/Okene.



Bello

NEWS

Plateau leads in curtailing NTDs transmission

BY EZEKIEL DONTINNA

PLATEAU State Commissioner of Health, Dr. Cletus Bako Shurkuk, has, based on national rating, disclosed that, the state was second to none in curtailing effects of Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs)'s transmission in Nigeria.

He disclosed this recently, while addressing journalists on the occasion marking World Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) Day at the Ministry of Health conference hall, JD Gomwalk Secretariat Jos, the State capital.

The Commissioner said, "Nigeria is one of the most endemic countries in the world for NTDs with an estimated 100 million people at risk for at least, one NTD according to International Charity Sightsavers.

"But Plateau State, with the support of the Carter Centre, has made tremendous progress in curtailing the effects and transmission of some of these NTDs, especially with regards to Guinea worm (GWD), Onchocerciasis, Lymphatic Filariasis and Trachoma.

"The State NTDs Programme with support of the Carter Centre has successfully carried out free surgeries for 59 Hydrocele patients in 2023. Intensive Mortality Management and Disability Prevention (MMDP) is ongoing



Shurkuk

across the 17 LGAs, while Post Treatment Surveillance is currently going on across our border communities as regards Lymphatic Filariasis (LF) and Onchocerciasis", he highlighted.

Shurkuk, while appreciating Governor Caleb Mutwang, for supporting health programmes and giving an enabling environment to work, called on Plateau people to unite and act towards elimination of Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) by stopping it saying, "Together we can do more.

While entertaining

questions from journalists, the Plateau State NTDs Coordinator, Mr. Philemon Dagwa, said Carter Centre started with 2000 patients and has trained them on how to manage washing their legs and most of them have been doing it themselves and they are doing it well.

However, he expressed concern that the Programme Officer of Carter Center, Bulus Mamcha, people thought the illness was demonic and they were trying to sensitize the general public on this perception and help in trying to eliminate this diseases completely.

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

THE Kogi State Government has begun clampdown on criminal elements collecting revenue illegally across the state with a vow to block all leakages in the system.

The Chairman, Kogi State Internal Revenue Service, (KGIRS), Sule Salihu Enehe, disclosed this at a press conference held in his office in Lokoja, recently.

He expressed sadness over the continuous blockage of roads by some individuals claiming to be collecting revenue for Kogi State.

Enehe also vowed to ensure that those involved in the illegal act will be brought to book.

He added that those collecting revenue illegally are a security threat to the state. The Chairman said that the present administration remains committed to boosting its revenue drive and developing the state.

Narrating his experience in Kogi State concerning the collection of illegal revenue by some fraudulent individuals, Enehe said, "It is only in Kogi that an individual will create a toll gate and start collecting revenue. We are happy a new law has

Kogi clamps down on Illegal revenue collectors



Enehe

criminalized this dubious act.

"There was a time I went to one Local Government, the road was blocked. I came down with my entourage and discovered that the receipt they were issuing out was Local Government and Not State. I called the DLG and he said he was aware.

"I asked where the money was going and he said he didn't know. The new administration under Alhaji Ahmed Usman Ododo has

given a directive to put an end to the sharp practices of these individuals who are enemies of our state.

From today, we are swinging into action, because these people are not working for us but their own selfish interest. Anyone caught in this dubious act will be arrested and prosecuted".

He explained that the government is engaging with Inter-switch to supply over 1000 Point of Sale (POS) machines to boost the revenue drive in the Local Government and block loopholes in the system.

According to him, the projected revenue for 2024 in Kogi State is N30.4 billion.

FG makes oxygen more accessible in health facilities

By JIDAUNA DARING

THE Federal Ministry of Health has entered into partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Health Organisation (WHO) with the aim of making oxygen more accessible in all health facilities across Nigeria.

Reports have it that many casualties during the Covid-19 pandemic in the country, helplessly lost their lives due to the inadequacy of oxygen in most hospitals in Nigeria.

However, on noticing this huge gap, the Federal Ministry of Health in conjunction with UNICEF, WHO and other partners, commenced the National Oxygen Strategy for 2023 - 2027 which is aimed at closing the gap by ensuring increased accessibility in health facilities and saving more lives especially during emergencies.

At the three day dissemination and step down training of the

National Strategy for the scale up Medical Oxygen (2023 - 2027) in health facilities for the North East zone, all the Health Commissioners of the six states led state officials and other stakeholders to Gombe for the training on the management, use of oxygen as well as disseminate a manual and handbook to that effect.

Dr. Jibril Umar Mohammed, a consultant of UNICEF in the Bauchi Field Office, told our correspondent that UNICEF was a major partner with the Federal Ministry of Health in developing the document.

He reviewed the challenges faced in the country as a result of the inadequacy of oxygen during the Covid-19 pandemic and said all sectors need the oxygen plant, "especially in pediatric and maternities where its absence can result in the loss of lives of new born babies", he stressed.

He said, "UNICEF is part of the

training and has been part of the strategic document development. It supported the multimillion Naira oxygen plants in nine states made up of two in Azare, Bauchi State and Damaruru, Yobe State all in the northeast and hopes to scale up in more states.

"The documents disseminated today have guidance from generation of oxygen to the last point in the patient and it is a universal standard operational procedure", he stated.

Dr. Farouk Umar Isma'il, the Gombe State Coordinator of the World Health Organisation (WHO), said WHO played a key role by providing the technical support to see that the document is produced by the government.

Mr. Bishara Emmanuel of the Oxygen Desk Office under the Director of Hospitals Services, Federal Ministry of Health, said the training for the northeast is made up of 70 participants including observers.

He revealed that the Federal Government of Nigeria has invested a lot in ensuring the provision of oxygen plants in the country after realising the wide gap that surfaced during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The Federal Government funded the procurement of 30 oxygen plants (the machine that produces oxygen) across the country in almost all the states in collaboration with Global Funds.

"An additional 12 plants with approval for the procurement of 63 that are going to each geopolitical zone so that each Senatorial District will have one.

"More Biomedical Engineers were trained to handle the plants because there were few in the country. Nigeria is

aligning with global best practices by transporting oxygen through pipes. Piping is currently going on in Federal Teaching Hospital Gombe where there is an oxygen plant.

"Over 20,000 cylinders were procured by the Federal Government for distribution. It has interest in the oxygen ecosystem and this is the reason for this huge investment as well as this activity", Mr Bishara explained.

On the participants in dissemination meeting/training and Gombe State Commissioner for Health, Dr. Habu Dahiru, commended the Federal Government, UNICEF and other partners over the initiative and stressed the importance of oxygen ecosystem in today's health care delivery.

He however, called on the Federal Ministry of Health and its partners to always consult state authorities in deciding or determining the citing of the Oxygen Plants in any state, considering the peculiarities and needs of the states.

"We strongly recommend that when they want to site such projects, they should come and sit with the State Ministry of Health officials and then look at the locations where it can be easily accessed by all health facilities in the zone", Dr. Habu pointed out.

Plans are underway for the establishment of the Oxygen Plants in Kumo and Kaltungo for Gombe Central and South zones. However, accessibility of the facility for Nafada, Funakaye, Dukku and some parts of Kwami Local

CSOs protest ban on sachet alcoholic beverages

From JIDAUNA YANUNG, Abuja

OVER 150 civil society groups recently stormed the National Assembly complex to protest the stoppage of registration of alcohol in sachets and small volume PET and glass bottles below 200ml by the National Agency for Food, Drug Administration and Control, NAFDAC.

Spokesman for the group, Adam Matazu, while briefing journalists at the National Assembly Complex, called for the immediate sack of NAFDAC DG, Prof. Mojisola Adeyeye, for alleged

anti_people policies. Tagged, "let the poor live", the protesters were led by the Coalition against Economic Saboteurs.

The group lamented that the new policy would further aggravate the suffering of the people and create more problems for the nation's economy.

He added that the NAFDAC boss was being used by multinationals to destroy small businesses and companies in the country. "We view this policy as a direct assault on the livelihood of millions of Nigerians, a move that will put countless citizens out of work.



Pate



Akpabio

NEWS

Step up your CSR for development - Mutfwang

BY PETER TITLE

Manufacturing Industries in Plateau State have been charged to step up their Corporate Social Responsibility(CSR), to enhance development of the state.

Governor Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang made the appeal when he received a delegation of the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria, (MAN), on a courtesy visit recently at the Old Government House, Rayfield, Jos.

He charged members of the association to play a critical role in bringing to fruition the present administration's ambition of making the state compete favourably with its counterparts that have achieved a certain fete in industrialization.

The governor also appealed to the team to partner the state government in improving the livelihood of residents by embarking on community projects.



Mutfwang

He also commended members of the association for sustaining their businesses despite the security challenges which have affected their chain of supply of various raw materials among others and pledged the state government's commitment towards providing the conducive environment for businesses to thrive.

Speaking earlier, the leader of the delegation

and Chairman of the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN), Plateau State chapter, Alhaji Shehu Sule, called on the state government to prioritize industrialization of the state and highlighted some areas that needed support by the manufacturers.

The delegation comprised heads and representatives of various industries situated in the state.

A Professor of Criminology, Victimology and Security Studies, at Lead City University, Ibadan, Oludayo Tade has declared that poor inter-agency collaboration among security agencies is undermining security management in the country.

Tade made this declaration while delivering the 4th lecture of Faculty of Management and Social Sciences of the university.

The don while speaking on the topic "Can Two Walk Together Except They Agree?Awusa Culture and Inter -Agency Relations in Nigeria's Security Ecosystem", said that absence of inter-agency collaboration among security agencies in the country, is a major factor militating against effective conflict resolution and security management in Nigeria.

Tade, while addressing the gathering, noted that the synergy and cooperation exhibited by criminals is incredible especially when such traits is not a principle in the operation between and among security agencies.

'Poor inter-agency collaboration undermining security efforts'

FROM MUSLIUDEEN ADEBAYO, IBADAN



Tade

The don while speaking at the lecture organised by the Department of Sociology, Psychology, Criminology and Social Work under the leadership of Dr. Jane Adebuseyi, maintained that research has identified this cooperative tendency as the success factor in the operation of criminal elements while it has been

the bane of security progress and crime fighting in Nigeria.

He added that strained relationships at security organizational levels manifest in overt display of violence against one another in public.

He maintained that political decisions should be used as a solution to inter-agency security cooperation in the country.

"Available evidence indicates that poor inter-agency collaboration among Nigeria's security institutions is one of the major factors militating against effective conflict resolution and security management in Nigeria.

"The consequence of not working effectively together culminates in an increasing fear of insecurity and diminished trust in the capabilities of the security system to protect the lives and properties of civilian populations across Nigeria in general and terror-intensive zones in particular.

"The 2023 Global Terrorism Index (GTI) places Nigeria in the right position of countries worst hit by the negative outcome of terrorists' activities. From Boko Haram in the Northeast, banditry and criminal kidnapping in the Northwest, secessionist agitations in the Southeast, South-south and Southwest, the security system in Nigeria is practically overstretched.

"In this case, only the working together of these units that make up Nigeria's security system will de-escalate conflict and neutralize security threats through complimentary operations and credible intelligence sharing, among others".

Suffering unbearable for Nigerians, CAN tells Tinubu

From John Fwah KADUNA

The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in 19 Northern States and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) has expressed its deep concern over the prevailing economic hardship and the increasing security challenges across the country.

This is contained in a statement issued by the body and signed by its Secretary General, Elder Sunday Oibe and made available to newsmen in Kaduna, recently.

The statement noted that "The suffering in the country is becoming unbearable for ordinary Nigerians. The high cost of foodstuffs,

transportation, goods and services has made life difficult for many Nigerians.

"The epileptic power supply has led to the collapse of many small businesses. The continued decline in the value of the Naira and the seeming inability of the government to address the situation has completely weakened the purchasing power of ordinary Nigerians."

CAN pointed out that "The situation is further compounded by escalating insecurity occasioned by rampant killings and kidnapping for ransom.

Government must take urgent steps to address the depressing economic and

escalating security situation in the country, CAN emphasised.

Northern CAN also noted the rampaging activities of bandits in Plateau State and other parts of the country in recent times.

"We are saddened by the attacks by bandits in Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau where many people were killed and several houses burnt barely a month after several communities in Barkin Ladi, Bokkos and the same Mangu, were raided by bandits, resulting in the killings of over 300 people.

It said the government must do everything possible to stop the killings not only in Plateau but across the country.

These killings have continued because the perpetrators have never been brought to justice.

"We have continued to wonder why the government has not been able to hold anyone accountable for the mass killings going on in the country.

"Unless justice is done, by ensuring that the perpetrators and whoever are the sponsors, are brought to book, all the peace talks may be mere rhetoric.

"Just when we thought banditry and kidnapping had been contained, it has resurfaced more daringly, especially, in Abuja, the nation's capital, which was hitherto considered a safe haven, being the seat of power with all the security apparatus located there.

"The brutal killings of traditional rulers in Ekiti, Kwara States and the

abduction of school children among others too numerous to mention is an indication that Nigeria is on the brink.

"These, notwithstanding, we commend our security agencies for their sacrifices and patriotism in ensuring that these criminal elements are flushed out. We urge them not to relent in their efforts to crush them.

"We advise that the security architecture be reviewed for effective and decisive action.

We call on governments at all levels to support our security agencies with all that is required to fight these criminals.

"We also call on Nigerians to cooperate with security personnel and pray for them as they confront these enemies of the nation.

Northern CAN also noted with concern, the inauguration of a security outfit by a tribal group, Miyetti Allah Kautal Hore in Nasarawa State.

"We find the establishment of the security outfit by a group which some of its members are being accused of banditry and kidnapping across the country, very disturbing.

"Northern CAN wishes to state in strong terms that allowing any ethnocultural group to set up a security outfit, is an invitation to anarchy.

In the interest of peace and security, the government should not handle this issue with kid gloves.

"No ethnic group should be allowed to form an exclusive security outfit.



Sunday oibe

SUNDAY MAGAZINE



Kidnapping industry: Are banks complicit?

Continued from page 10

Chidi Omeje, a security analyst lamented that kidnappings had become a big industry, turning over billions of naira in just a matter of months. He said, "If we check the figures, we will discover that those guys have a monthly turn-over of billions. It is so huge an industry."

"Ofcourse the banks are complicit because most of the ransom payments are not done with cash and this is where the offices of the NSA, EFCC and DSS come in. We have lots of agencies that ought to tackle this ugly situation but nothing is happening."

Some experts have also said that there should be marked sums of money domiciled with the police which can be used in paying ransom and can lead to the arrest of the kidnappers like done in the past. Others have

called for the search light to be beamed on the commercial banks considering the fact that there are so many rotten eggs within the system who might be collaborating with criminal minds to perpetrate crime. Simon Tergha, a businessman in Jos, told SUNDAY STANDARD that, "We cannot dal with the problem of banks involvement with kidnapper's money until the issue of KYC is adequately attended to. The banks know who their customers are and when monies are being transferred in millions, that should be an alarm for them to contact the relevant intelligence agencies."

"don't forget, the banks are competing to solidify financially. The threat of re-capitalisation by the CBN, is leaving some of the commercial banks to mob-up funds to escape being caught in a

panic situation of lack of liquidity. And if there is going to be any meaningful headway in tracking ransom money, the CBN, must activate its anti-fraud laws and apply a serious monitoring mechanism for compliance." Tergha said.

On his part, Dickson Osaije, a security expert said, "Nigerian banks need to wake up to teir responsibilities. During the ENDSARS protests, the CBN was able to track down the sponsors. Its 13 years now since Boko Haram has been ravaging the country, why have we not been able to track its sponsors?"

"The banking sector is not doing enough. What these kidnappers are capitalizing on is the online banking because you don't need to go to the bank physically, your KYC is not therefore not verified. You can even open an account anywhere."

"More attention should be given on these online banking services. If we don't do this, we will continue to suffer from this trend. Banks must ensure that customers follow all the rules and regulations so that criminals do not take advantage of their lapses."

"There should be an additional regulatory agency under the CBN's control that will help monitor the menace. They will be in charge of policing all activities of the banks about criminality and ensuring that banks are complying with the rules of engagements." Osaijie noted.

Continuing, he reasoned that, "We should have a banking police, just like an agency that will ensure that the banks keep track of everyone with an account with them. The NIN and BVN should also be important. The process of our NIN is very porous. Many people who are not Nigerians have NIN."

Abba Mohammad, also a Jos-businessman in a chat with SUNDAY STANDARD, expressed disappointment that despite the ravaging effect of the activities of kidnapping on the economy, government does not feel the urgency to look into the banking sector and applying the break on the ugly trend.

"We need more serious and workable measures on the banks. They need to be kept on their toes to realize the fact that the more peaceful the country is, the more prosperous for the customers and the more liquidity for the banks. Making money through short-cuts

may just be a temporary respite, but its boomerang effect can be devastating on the entire society." Mohammad said.

Again, Osaijie frowned at the spate of abductions which he said had become a big criminal enterprise. "They [kidnappers] see it as a business industry. The industry is the kidnapping market, and the business aspect is the money they are making from kidnapping. They have discovered that the risk implications are very slim."

Going forward, experts like Chive-GPS, Nnamdi Chife said, "The banks can freeze such accounts and notify the security agencies. It is usually under a "suspicious transaction report" that way the KYC of these criminals can be gotten tracked and arrested."

"Nigerians are participating in the crime due to the rewarding experience and the absence of a security architecture to curtail the menace." Chife said.

Imagine hundreds of millions entering the forests and also imagine what business will be done with such amounts in a thick jungle. Logically, the kidnappers are not spirits, they live under a camouflage in the communities, some are seen as "responsible" members who behave like normal innocent citizens who would always wear smiling faces while going about their daily responsibilities. Yet these are the public enemies with millions kept in various bank accounts as proof of their ill-gotten wealth that may remain undetected.

"The banking sector is not doing enough. What these kidnappers are capitalizing on is the online banking because you don't need to go to the bank physically, your KYC is not therefore not verified. You can even open an account anywhere. "More attention should be given on these online banking services. If we don't do this, we will continue to suffer from this trend. Banks must ensure that customers follow all the rules and regulations so that criminals do not take advantage of their lapses."

METRO-FOCUS

By YVONNE ISHOLA

When ashoebi becomes a drain

One of the trends that Nigeria has embraced that has more disadvantages than advantages is ashoebi. This is simply the act of wearing a specific wrapper or lace which may be accompanied by headgear during an event along with hundreds of other people. This is done to express loyalty, support or solidarity. It could be a funeral, wake keep, naming ceremony or birthday.

It is important to point out that it is only on rare occasions that men bother about ashoebi. A man can wear something as casual as jeans and t-shirt and he is good to go for any occasion. However, women are crazy about ashoebi for the fact that it makes them feel like they belong.

The ashoebi is usually decided by the celebrant of birthday, or marriage who may have preferred colours. In the case of funeral, it is most likely decided by the aggrieved party or parties.

A stranger to Nigerian weddings may be amazed by how colourful it is. This is because in one wedding, there could be more than ten ashoebis, each representing a class or relationship.

In one wedding one witnessed, there was ashoebi of #45, 000. This was worn by the high class friends of both mothers of the couple. Next to it was an ashoebi of #7000. This was worn by all and sundry.

At weddings like this, in church, all may be treated as equal. But the moment everyone steps on the reception ground, there would be class disparity.



Those wearing the expensive ashoebi are usually given an exalted position, while those wearing the cheap one, will have to make do with any position.

It also means that those wearing expensive ashoebi will be seated on round tables where there will be assorted drinks for their consumption. And when it is eating time, they will be served first and the best, while others will be served whatever remains.

If you have ever experienced the disparity, then you will understand why some people go to all lengths to wear the expensive ashoebi. According to a Lagos based Jos lady, Mrs Attah, "No one wants to be looked down on". She cited a situation where those that wear expensive ashoebi are not only treated like royalty but are given very expensive souvenirs. Those in the other class are ignored or if lucky, given

rubber bowls or dust pan. Attah corroborated the notion that so many women borrow money or do unwholesome acts to make sure they buy ashoebi. A lady who wants to remain anonymous said some of her friends in Abuja will go out of their way to use what they have to get what they want, especially if the wedding is here in Jos, better still in the village. She explained that to maintain the name Abuja babe, which is synonymous with 'big girl' is not easy.

From every indication, ashoebi has done more harm than good. Apart from class distinction, it has robbed couples of gifts. Mrs Laven said that if she coughs out so much money to buy your ashoebi, then you should understand and don't expect any gift. Gifts used to be part and parcel of marriage that used to help newly weds begin their home.

Mr Shitnaan said he hates ashoebi because it has cost him so much. He is a civil servant who has had to pay for ashoebi more than twice

to avoid a fight with his wife. Shitnaan said he alone knows what he went through to pull through those times as regards feeding his family.

Another man who does not want his name in print for obvious reasons, said every sane man hates ashoebi because it is no respecter of budgets. He said his wife would always plan with the ashoebi sellers to bring it directly to him. And he would be shameless to refuse to buy one for his wife depending on the relationship.

In different ways, the men are pleading with women to consider the harsh economic condition and give them some space to handle other important issues on the home front.

It will not be out of place for colours to be given instead of ashoebi. That will give everyone peace and bring back the old practice of giving gifts during weddings.

According to a Lagos based Jos lady, Mrs Attah, "No one wants to be looked down on". She cited a situation where those that wear expensive ashoebi are not only treated like royalty but are given very expensive souvenirs. Those in the other class are ignored or if lucky, given rubber bowls or dust pan Attah corroborated the notion that so many women borrow money or do unwholesome acts to make sure they buy ashoebi. A lady who wants to remain anonymous said some of her friends in Abuja will go out of their way to use what they have to get what they want, especially if the wedding is here in Jos, better still in the village. She explained that to maintain the name Abuja babe, which is synonymous with 'big girl' is not easy.

SUNDAY PEOPLE

RCCG WOMEN PRESENTS ITEMS AND EXERCISE BOOKS

The Good Women of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Region 8 Headquarters Parish Alheri, Zaria Road Jos and their counterpart from Plateau Province 1, Jos Plateau State on Friday embarked on CRS at House of Recap Orphanage Jos and Government Secondary School (GSS) Anglo-Jos, Jos South LGA as they celebrated Ministry Conference 2024, Theme "Women of the Right Hand"



Wife of General Overseer, RCCG, Pastor Mrs. Folu Adebayo, represented by Wife of the Assistant Continental Overseer and Pastor in charge of Region 8, Pastor Mrs. Esther Oni preaching to the inmates at House of Recap Orphanage



Pastor Mrs. Esther Oni (middle) with other women at the Orphanage



Pastor Mrs. Adamaigbo demonstrating to the children of the Orphanage



Wife of the ACO, Pastor Mrs. Oni making symbolic presentation at the Orphanage, House of Recap, Jos



Pastor Mrs. Olunmi Adesola with other Good Women of RCCG Plateau Province 1 on courtesy call at GSS Anglo Jos, received by the Principal Mr. Bature Danladi Danbwarang (right)



Wife of the Pastor of RCCG 8, Plateau Province 1, Pastor Mrs. Olunmi Adesola making some remarks before presenting the books to students of GSS Anglo-Jos



Leader of the team in a group photograph with her members



Students of the GSS Anglo-Jos displaying the books presented, flanked by Women of the Right Hand

PHOTOS: DANLADI DUK



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Alertness as a motorcycle rider

AS a bike rider, you are about to turn left, you should take a "lifesaver" glance over your shoulder. Plan your approach to the junction, signal left and select the appropriate gear in good time. Just before you finally turn, take the all-important "lifesaver" glance over your shoulder to check behind and sideways

What is a lifesaver for a motorcyclist?

A lifesaver is a final, rearward glance before changing direction. This action brings you into awareness of what is happening behind and beside you as you ride on. The "lifesaver" glance should be timed to give you adequate reaction time if it isn't safe to perform the maneuver.

You are riding and are dazzled by the headlights of an oncoming vehicle, you should slow down or stop until your eyes have adjusted properly. Taking a hand off the handlebars to adjust your visor while riding could lead to loss of control. A dirty or scratched visor could cause dazzle and further impair vision.

4. Always check the "blindspot" before moving off. These are the areas behind and to either side of you which are not covered by your mirrors.

You should always check such "blind areas" before moving on or changing direction.

Before changing direction, ensure you check the "blindspots" which are the areas behind you that not covered by your mirrors. Always check these areas before changing direction. This check is so important that is called the "lifesaver" glance.

You are about to emerge from a junction and your pillion passenger tells you it is clear, you should never rely on your passenger. Rather it is advisable you look for yourself. This is because your passenger may

A. Be inexperienced in judging traffic situations.

B. Have a poor view

C. Not have seen a potential hazard before.

As such, you are absolutely responsible for your own safety and that of any passenger you carry. You should always make your own checks to be sure it is safe to pull out.

You want to change lanes in busy, moving traffic, it will help to look over your shoulder as drivers may not cover blind spots and drivers behind you would be warned. Before changing lanes, you

need to know if there is a safe gap to move into. In this situation, looking over your shoulder

A. Allows you to see into the area not covered by your mirrors, where another vehicle could be hidden from your view.

B. Warns following motorists that you intend to change lanes.

You have been waiting for some time to turn into a side road, you need to make a "lifesaver" check before making the turn. Remember your "lifesaver" glance may give you a clear view of any vehicle further back that may try to overtake. It is especially important to look out for other motorcycles in this situation which may be approaching at speed.

9. Before making a U-turn in the road, look over your shoulder for a final check, before making a U-turn, slow down and ensure the road is clear in both directions. Ensure that the road is wide enough to carry out the maneuver safely.

10. To move off safely from a parked position, you should look over your shoulder for a final check before. Before moving off from the side of the road on a motorcycle you must take a final look around over your shoulder. There may be another road user who is not visible in your mirrors.



NEWS

Don calls for review of 6:3:3:4 education policy

From AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja

THE Director General of Nigeria Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies, Kuru, Jos, Professor Ayo Omotayo has called for the rejig of the policy of 6:3:3:4 of our education sector to meet the present realities in order to move the nation forward.

The DG noted that the initial concept of the policy was to grow or have a blend of technical, vocational and technology education students with those with flair for academics in the society.

He lamented that poor funding has altered the policy, thereby stunting the educational progress of the country.

He said, although the policy is still running, it has deviated from the original concept as poor funding has affected its continued relevance, saying, government should either scrap it, or put measures in place to rejig the programme.

Professor Omotayo made the call

at the 5th Distinguished Lecture Series with the theme "Policy Summersault: The bane of Development in the Public Sector" organised by the Federal University Lokoja.

He stated that for the policy to be effective, all the governments in power should endeavour to codify policies into law as a means for the citizenry to hold government accountable for its breach.

He added that enacting policies without backing it by law was the major cause for policy abandonment and summersault, leading to loss of resources and people's discontentment with government programmes.

The erudite professor explained that certain factors such as political consideration, geography, religion, funding and the issue of corruption should be taken into cognisance to avoid failure. He stressed that most policies are formulated without considering these variables, causing distortion and ineffectiveness of the

policy.

Omotayo noted that inasmuch as the people at the grassroots and target audience of the policy are necessary to be consulted, lack of awareness and low intellectual capacity, have always been the bane for consultation.

He identified lack of ideology by political parties and biases of leadership to issues and projects always fueled policy failures, but stressed that policy summersault has both positive and negative impact on the society.

"Policy can summersault to correct a poorly formulated policy. Constantly, policy needs to be reviewed to measure its impact on the people and if it is discovered that it was not meeting the objectives and yearnings of the people, it should be either discontinued or modified".

Professor Omotayo, however called on the people to elect those with capacity and capabilities to the position of authorities, disclosing that corruption in high places of the society is caused by mental laziness and greed.

He said the issue of corruption in Nigeria should not be a blame game as everyone is involved at every level and magnitude and called for social and spiritual rebirth.

He commended the management of the Federal University, Lokoja, for the distinguished lecture series which has brought together the gowns and towns and urged for a sustained effort in proffering solutions to societal challenges.

Meanwhile, the Vice Chancellor of the University, Professor Olayemi Akinwunmi, said the topic of the lecture was carefully selected as the nation is faced with multiple policy failures that have dotted the length and breadth of the country with abandoned projects and programmes.

He charged everyone to contribute his or her quota to the development of the nation, saying the challenges facing the nation are surmountable and urged the students to develop mindsets that will transform the nation.

He commended the guest lecturer for the thought provoking scholarly treatment of the subject matter, assuring that the university will continue to keep the lecture.



Omotayo

Governor charges NSCDC promoted officers to justify promotion

Willie Attah, Gombe

GOVERNOR Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya of Gombe State has charged 302 newly promoted officers of the state's Command of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) to justify their promotion by being more committed and diligent for the success of the service.

Represented by his Deputy, Manasseh Daniel Jatau, at the decoration ceremony, held at the Gombe International Hotel, the governor said their promotion was a reward for their diligence, hardwork and productivity.

While congratulating the officers over the feat, he commended the contributions of the NSCDC and applauded the management for taking the right dimension of rewarding excellence.

According to him, "Reports, statistics, media reports and comments of members of the general public have all pointed out that over the years, the organisation has been very effective in the performance of its duties.

"This is highly commendable and we in Gombe say, weldone and assure you of the support, cooperation and partnership to ensure that the goals for which you were established are realised".

He appreciated the Minister of Interior, Dr. Olubunmi Tunji Ojo and the Commandant General of the NSCDC, Ahmed Abubakar Audi, and his management for approving the promotion and decoration of the officers and men of Gombe State Command.

While charging them to live up to their new ranks, Jatau said "Accordingly, your promotion has



Inuwa

been a compelling need to be in line with your knowledge of the job. Do not allow a situation where there is a great gap between your shoulders and your heads".

In his remarks, the Assistant Commandant General in charge of Zone "C", NSCDC, Umar Musa Bala, informed the gathering that the decoration ceremony was remarkable as it symbolises the dedication and commitment of the newly promoted officers which is demonstrated by their service to the nation.

He said, "These officers have consistently demonstrated their commitment to upholding the values of the NSCDC and ensuring the

safety and security of our communities. Their willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty is a testament to their strong character and sense of productivity," Umar Musa Bala noted.

In his welcome address, the Gombe State Commandant, NSCDC, Muhammadu Bello Muazu, explained that the service is being reorganised by the government because of its impact in the country. He said the promotion is in recognition of the commitment of the officers and a great challenge for them to brace up for additional responsibilities. He added that to whom much is given, much is expected.

SUNDAY FEATURE

The impact of "Japa Syndrome" on work and family relationships

In recent years, Nigeria has witnessed a surge in a phenomenon colloquially known as "Japa Syndrome." The term "Japa" derives from Nigerian slang, meaning to escape or flee, often to seek a perceived better life abroad. While migration is a natural part of human history, the scale and implications of this modern exodus are worth examining. This article delves into the far-reaching effects of the Japa Syndrome on work and family situations in Nigeria.



Michael Fasina

WHEN a considerable lot of the residents need to leave the country, what might this mean coherently? Considering the endeavours of fellow Nigerian who daily exit their country's border in large numbers, it would take a great deal of patriotism not to succumb to the temptation of following suit, with the hope of a better life, once the opportunity presents itself. In the relatively recent past, the Nigerian Monetary Highest Point Gathering projected the joblessness rate in Nigeria to increase to 37 percent in 2023 while the United Kingdom is offering a decent yearly compensation to Nigerians able to relocate there and work as educators. The immediate consequence is the significant depletion of skilled and semi-skilled labour from various sectors in Nigeria. Industries in healthcare, engineering, information technology, and education are the hardest hit, with the mass exodus of some of the best skilled professionals. Such critical industries have been left to grapple with personnel shortages, hindering progress and development in the quantity and quality of productivity, due to the

brain drain impacts. The prevalence of the Japa Syndrome fosters an "exodus mentality" among Nigerian youths, whose newfound cherished value is finding greener pastures in the global north. Many grow up with dreams of escaping the perceived limitations of their homeland, seeking better opportunities elsewhere. This mentality often leads to a lack of commitment to local projects, as young talents view them as stepping stones rather than long-term investments. As individuals depart due to the Japa Syndrome this may have a profound impact on family dynamics. The emotional toll on parents, siblings, and extended family members can be immense. Additionally, families are faced with the challenge of adapting to changes in roles and responsibilities, especially when a primary breadwinner leaves. This can lead to increased stress and strained relationships within the family unit and could also impact mental health significantly due to adjustment and adaptation

challenges like loneliness, anxiety and depression. Additionally, there is a rise in empty-nest especially with older parents having to now leave alone with their children in faraway foreign lands. This has reduced the social support and daily interaction for parents and further isolates the already 'isolated nuclear family'. While those who have "Japa" may find improved economic opportunities abroad, the financial support they send back home can sometimes foster a culture of dependency. Families left behind may come to rely heavily on remittances, potentially discouraging local economic initiatives and entrepreneurship. This can create a cycle of economic stagnation in communities heavily affected by the "Japa" Syndrome. The social and cultural impacts of Japa Syndrome has also brought about shifts in societal norms and values, example is a spouse leaving for foreign opportunities which can strain their relationship due to distance, cultural adjustments, and diverging life paths, leading

to divorce or marital breakdown due to communication challenges, emotional distance and unmet expectations. Traditional family structures may be strained, with an increasing number of households headed by single parents or extended family members. Additionally, the loss of skilled professionals can hinder the transmission of cultural practices and indigenous knowledge, potentially eroding the rich tapestry of Nigeria's cultural heritage. Addressing the Japa Syndrome At this moment, I don't believe that the Nigerian government has acknowledged how the Japa issue can seriously affect the country. What befalls the nature of strength of the residents? Who and what are supplanting the administrations of medical attendants and specialists who left the country? Many great hands are neglecting the Nigerian dream consistently. To mitigate the impact of the Japa Syndrome, concerted efforts are required at various levels. Government policies should focus on creating an enabling environment that

encourages investment, innovation, and job creation. Additionally, there is a need for targeted programs to retain and attract skilled professionals. Providing opportunities for skill development and career advancement can help stem the tide of emigration. In conclusion, the Japa Syndrome is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has far-reaching consequences on work environments and family relationships in Nigeria. As the nation grapples with this modern exodus, it is imperative to implement comprehensive strategies that address the root causes and provide viable alternatives for the Nigerian youth. By fostering an environment of opportunity and growth, Nigeria can not only retain its valuable talent but also pave the way for a brighter, more prosperous future for all its citizens. Michael Fasina is a Research Associate at the Institute for Work and Family Integration, Lagos, Nigeria. He can be reached on chinyeredoziemdc@iwfionline.org or via phone +2347038097730

SUNDAY SPORTS

Football's hottest talent factory



Ibrahima Traore smiles as he parks his black Range

ROVER outside the apartment block where his footballing story began.

He is back in Pantin, just outside the north-east corner of the peripherique - the ring road that separates central Paris from its suburbs.

Amid the din of sirens and the aroma of fast food, Traore buzzes in and takes the lift to the fifth floor. The doors open and his brother is waiting to welcome him back to their childhood home.

Inside, there are photos of the pair's Guinean father and Lebanese mother, as well as shots of grandparents and younger generations of the family. Dominating the view through the floor-to-ceiling windows, across a dual carriageway and tramline, is a vast sports complex, with two 4G football pitches.

"That's our Camp Nou, our Anfield," Traore says. "We used to jump over the fence at seven in the morning to practise our free-kicks. Before school and after school, it was football. Only football."

For many of the kids growing up here, constant practice can lead to the ultimate reward - a career in the professional game.

Traore, now 35, played more than 250 games for four different clubs in Germany's Bundesliga and captained Guinea at the 2019 Africa Cup of Nations.

His inspiration growing up came from the success around him, rather than the television screen.

"I remember just across the street, we had the player who used to play for Manchester United: Gabriel Obertan," says Traore. "It's the dream from everyone and then even more when you have someone who comes from the same suburb

who makes it.

"When you hear that it's possible that, being from this area, you can play for a team like Manchester United, that is something that you want to follow, you want to pursue."

As the clock strikes 4pm, children and coaches flood on to the pitches below. Aston Villa's Moussa Diaby, former Arsenal winger Nicolas Pepe and France and Monaco defender Youssouf Fofana all started out at the same facility, which is shared by local clubs Esperance Paris 19eme and Solitaire Paris Est.

On the biggest stage of them all, Paris' finest are everywhere.

Thirty players at the 2022 men's World Cup in Qatar were born in the vicinity of France's capital. Compare that to two other hotbeds of youth football: Sao Paulo provided 12 World Cup players and Greater London eight.

There were 11 Parisians in the France squad that lost to Argentina in the final, with the other 19 spread across eight national teams: Morocco, Tunisia, Senegal, Ghana, Cameroon, Portugal, Germany and Qatar.

And then you have the icons of the recent past. World Cup winners Thierry Henry, N'Golo Kante and Paul Pogba all grew up in the banlieues (suburbs) of the French capital, as did Kante's former Leicester team-mate Riyad Mahrez.

Post-war immigration from football-loving former French colonies in north and west Africa is the obvious reason why Ile-de-France - as suburban Paris is known - is such a remarkable football factory.

Traore was born in Paris before moving to Guinea, settling back in the French capital from the age of four with his mother and siblings.

"You have a lot of people from

North Africa round here; we used to say they are the real street footballers," he adds.

"Then you have a lot of Senegalese, Guinean, Malian people round here. In the summer, we used to do an Africa Cup. All the Guinean players would be in one team. All the Malian players, they will be in one team. Ivory Coast... whatever you want. It's crazy, because everyone is defending his country, and then it's just insane."

It was during one of these informal tournaments that a local scout spotted Traore and set him on the path of a professional career.

But that influx of talent and culture also emerged into an environment perfect for super-charging player development.

A local government policy of building high-quality football facilities in every Paris banlieue, partly to keep kids off the streets and out of trouble, has been fundamental to making the sport cheap and accessible to all.

"You come down from your building and you have a football field, so the first thing you do is go play football," says Abdelaziz Kaddour, sports director of FC Montfermeil 93, a thriving club in Seine Saint-Denis, a suburban Paris region with one of the highest crime and unemployment rates in France.

Abdelaziz and Montfermeil oversaw the development of Arsenal defender William Saliba after he transferred from nearby AS Bondy, the club where France superstar Kylian Mbappe played as a child.

"Young people round here play football practically all day long," says Abdelaziz.

"And on top of that, most of the pitches are small. That means, they touch the ball a lot. They learn to dribble. And over time, it

gives them a lot of quality, dribbling, speed, seeing things before others, tackling, intensity.

"And what's more, they want to make a living from football. They have the spirit. When you ask them the question, they want to be professional footballers at all costs.

"This is not an easy place to live. Many families are in difficulty. The children know it and give their all to succeed. It builds a mentality and that perhaps makes the difference, in addition to talent."

Sebastien Bassong, the former Tottenham, Newcastle and Cameroon defender, began his passage to football stardom at Deuil Enghein, a club located in Val d'Oise, directly to the north of Paris. He says football is "in the DNA" of those who grow up in the banlieues.

"There's a certain mindset that's very contagious," says Bassong. "I've got bigger brothers, so to make myself a name was difficult. But as soon as I started playing football, people started seeing me differently. I started to exist as soon as football came into my life. I started to puff my chest out a bit."

Bassong's talents were such that at the age of 13, he followed the path taken by Henry and Nicolas Anelka to Clairefontaine, the world-famous residential academy that has long cherry-picked the best talent from the Ile-de-France area.

"We call it the Harvard of football," says Bassong. "Most of my football IQ came from Clairefontaine. You think football, you drink football, you smell football, you sleep with your ball and, above all, you learn discipline. They develop champions."

Those not fortunate enough to

be spotted by the scouts of Clairefontaine improve their skills in one of the biggest and most competitive amateur leagues in world football.

The Ligue de Paris Ile-de-France has more than 1,000 clubs and 270,000 players. It's such an important organisation that it has an office in the picture-perfect Place Valois, a well-struck free-kick away from the Louvre museum, right in the heart of Paris.

"Some of the great French players, or players who play in the major European leagues, say that what served them best was training in the Ile-de-France, that the level was very, very good," says the league's president Jamel Sandjak, a former defender of Algerian descent who played in the league before moving into football administration.

"Most of the France national youth teams are full of our players. So our regional teams are playing at national level. Scouts from all over the world come to Ile-de-France to look at players in our leagues."

The proliferation of foreign scouts explains the vast numbers of Parisian players who end up in the Premier League, with Liverpool's Ibrahima Konate and Chelsea's Axel Disasi among the latest batch. Konate even returned to his old Paris banlieue to unveil his Liverpool shirt, while a delirious crowd lit red flares and chanted his name.

English teams have benefited from the fact that Paris St-Germain, the one truly elite club in the Paris region, has long favoured spending on overseas galacticos over developing homegrown talent. This policy came back to bite them in their one and only Champions League final in 2020, when they lost 1-0 to Bayern Munich, the winner scored by Kingsley Coman, a player PSG had released on a free transfer to Juventus six years earlier.

Yves Gergaud, a former PSG youth coach who scouted Coman at the age of nine, says the then-18-year-old winger's departure from the Qatari-owned club was prompted by the £33.5m arrival of Brazilian Lucas Moura to play in his position.

"It's all about business," says Gergaud.

"For 15 or 20 years now, they have wanted to win the Champions League, and they are trying to achieve that by attracting very great players, like Messi, like Neymar, like Thiago Silva.

"But unfortunately, they are still perhaps missing a little bit of soul.

"You have the academy in one corner, and the pro team in another corner, directors and managers changing all the time, so it's very difficult to really develop players. But it's true that you could field three or four teams of players from the Paris region in the Champions League."



Dani Alves at the opening of his trial on Monday

Alves denies nightclub rape

FORMER Barcelona and Brazil footballer Dani Alves denied raping a woman in a nightclub as he took the stand on the final day of his trial in Spain.

BBC SPORT said that, the 40-year-old has been in prison without bail since he was arrested in January of last year.

He told a Barcelona court the woman could have left "if she wanted to", adding that he was "not a violent man".

Prosecutors are calling for a nine-year jail sentence and financial compensation.

Mr Alves' accuser previously told the court he had lured her into a toilet in the VIP section of a Barcelona nightclub before forcing her to have sex with him.

During his 20-minute testimony, Mr Alves said: "If she wanted to leave, she could have left, she was not obligated to be there."

He added that "at no time" had she asked to leave, according to AFP news agency.

The footballer also denied hitting the young woman.

Prosecutors said Mr Alves and his friend had bought champagne for three young women before asking one of them to accompany him to another area with a toilet of which she had not been aware.

Once inside, they said, he turned violent, forcing the woman to have sex despite her repeated requests to be let go.

Earlier on Wednesday, a psychologist who treated the woman after the alleged rape testified that they had found "no indication" that she was inventing the situation or exaggerating it and that she showed signs of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Experts called by the defence argued that she could have been upset by the intense press focus on the case.

On Tuesday, a friend of Mr Alves told the court he had consumed a considerable amount of alcohol before entering the nightclub.

His wife Joana Sanz, 31, said he had appeared very drunk when he got back to their Barcelona home that night and had bumped into furniture before collapsing on the bed.

A friend who was with the alleged victim on the night cried as she told the court how the woman had "cried uncontrollably" after leaving the toilet and said Mr Alves had "really hurt" her.

Mr Alves had initially denied knowing the alleged victim in a TV interview before later acknowledging he had had sex with her but saying it had been consensual.

In Spain, a claim of rape is investigated under the general accusation of sexual assault, and convictions can lead to prison sentences of four to 15 years.

The public prosecutor in this case is seeking a nine-year jail term for Mr Alves, and for him to pay damages of €150,000 (£128,000) to the woman.

A verdict is expected in several weeks.

Mr Alves was formally charged in August and a court later decided there was enough evidence to send him to trial.

Repeated requests for him to be released on bail have been denied because the courts considered the Brazilian national a flight risk.

Mr Alves is one of the

most decorated footballers in history and has played for a host of top clubs including Barcelona and Paris St Germain.

He made more than 400 appearances for Barcelona, winning six league titles and three Champions Leagues across two spells, and was also part of Brazil's 2022 World Cup squad.

2026 World Cup Qualifier

We can beat Nigeria, South Africa coach shifts attention

By **SAMPSON ADEDEJI**

AFTER losing to Nigeria in the semi-final of the 2023 African Cup of Nations in Ivory Coast, the head coach of South Africa Bafana Bafana Hugo Broos has shifted his attention to the 2026 World Cup qualifier, BSNSports.com.ng reports.

The 1996 African champions will be the guests of the Super Eagles in the match day 3 of the

qualifier in June and Broos is already thinking of victory in the game.

"When there is a draw for AFCON or the World Cup and you see Nigeria in your group, it is normal that this will be the team to beat.

"But after Wednesday's AFCON semifinal defeat to them on penalties, we know that we can beat them.

"They will make our

chances to qualify for the World Cup bigger, which is where we have to focus.

"We have to focus on being at the World Cup because after 24 years we had a semifinal at AFCON.

"The next focus must be qualifying for the World Cup in 2026.

It is not going to be easy, I have already spoken about Nigeria but there is also Benin, Zimbabwe, Rwanda and Lesotho in our group", he said.



Ali's late goal sends Qatar into Asian Cup final

ALMOEZ Ali's late strike helped Qatar reach the final of the Asian Cup and continue their title defence with victory over Iran.

BBC SPORT said that, hosts Qatar led after goals from Jassem Gaber and Akram Afif cancelled out Sardar Azmoun's superb overhead opener.

A controversial penalty decision helped level the scores, but Ali's 82nd-minute strike and Shoja Khalilzadeh's late red card were fatal to Iran's final hopes.

Qatar will play underdogs Jordan in Saturday's final at Lusail Stadium.

Jordan **stunned two-time winners South Korea** on Tuesday to reach

their first Asian Cup final.

Qatar are bidding to become the first team since Japan in 2000 and 2004 to win back-to-back Asian Cup titles.

Iran's semi-final got off to the perfect start when Azmoun leapt acrobatically to fire home a sensational overhead kick after Qatar failed to clear a long throw into their box.

Al Thumama Stadium erupted 13 minutes later, however, as Gaber's strike took a huge deflection off Saeid Ezatollahi and looped over goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand.

The equaliser caused outcry from the Iranian bench, who thought Mehdi Taremi had been fouled in the opposite

box seconds earlier, and Mehdi Torabi was booked for demanding a penalty from the touchline.

Having wasted a simple opportunity earlier in the opening half, Afif redeemed himself when he cut through Iran's defence before netting his fifth goal of the tournament to take him within one of Iraq's Aymen Hussein - the Golden Boot leader.

Iran were handed a lifeline early in the second half when the video assistant referee intervened to recommend a review of a penalty decision.

Despite initially waving away appeals of a handball and Ahmed Fathy keeping his arms close to his chest,

the referee changed his decision and Alireza Jahanbakhsh calmly slotted the spot-kick straight down the middle.

Goalline clearances at both ends of the pitch kept the tense encounter level until Ali picked out the bottom corner with less than 10 minutes of normal time remaining.

Iran's hopes of reaching their first final since 1976 went from bad to worse when Shoja Khalilzadeh's yellow card for wiping out Afif was upgraded to a red after a VAR intervention.

After holding off a series of promising last-gasp attacks, the Qatar players dropped to their knees in celebration when the referee blew the full-time whistle following more than 16 minutes of stoppage time.



Akram Afif's (left) first-half strike put him one goal behind Golden Boot leader Aymen Hussein, who scored six goals for Iraq

SUNDAY SPORTS

Abu Dhabi Open: Raducanu beaten by Jabeur



Emma Raducanu claimed a straight-set win over Marie Bouzkova in the first round

BRITAIN'S Emma Raducanu was denied a place in the Abu Dhabi Open quarter-finals by second seed Ons Jabeur. BBC SPORT said that, competing as a wildcard in Abu Dhabi, the 21-year-old Raducanu lost 6-4 6-1 to the Tunisian world number six. A surprise US Open champion in 2021, Raducanu made her Grand Slam return at last month's Australian Open after missing the final

eight months of 2023 following wrist and ankle surgeries. Jabeur, 29, will play Brazil's Beatriz Haddad Maia in the last eight. Jabeur, a three-time Grand Slam finalist, was in impressive form and hit 35 winners and eight aces on her way to a dominant win. She led by a double break at 5-1 in the first set before Raducanu threatened a fightback - the Briton breaking back and saving four set points before

Jabeur served out the opener to love. But Raducanu could not prevent Jabeur storming to a straight-set victory from there and she sealed her progress in style by taking six successive games. British number four Heather Watson will take on Spain's Cristina Bucsa on Thursday, when top seed Elena Rybakina also returns to action against American Danielle Collins.

Murray's disappointing season continues with loss

ANDY Murray's difficult start to the year continued with defeat in Marseille but Heather Watson earned one of the best wins of her recent career at the Abu Dhabi Open on Tuesday. BBC SPORT said that, Murray lost 7-5 6-4 in another error-strewn showing against world number 66 Tomas Machac at the Open 13 Provence. He has lost all four of his matches in 2024, including a first-round exit at last month's Australian Open. Meanwhile, Watson beat Russian ninth seed Veronika Kudermetova 6-3 7-5. The convincing first-round win was Watson's best in terms of ranking since 2017, with Kudermetova ranked 16th in the world - 140 places above the former British number one.

"I played really well and had a lot of fun out here today," said Watson, who beat 2020 Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin in qualifying to make the main draw. "I played a Grand Slam champion in the first round and that gave me a lot of confidence. That really helped. I knew the conditions and felt prepared for today." Last month Murray admitted he was in a "terrible moment" but said he "won't quit" in response to an article which questioned when the Scot should retire. Against Czech Machac, 23, he was broken in his second serve game and, having recovered to 5-5, gifted his opponent another break for 6-5 with

a double fault and backhand error. Murray lost his serve again early in the second and missed an opportunity to break back at 3-2 before Machac comfortably closed out one of the biggest wins of his career. Elsewhere in Abu Dhabi, Naomi Osaka's comeback was halted by another first-round defeat as she lost 7-5 6-0 to American Danielle Collins. The Japanese former world number one returned last month after giving birth in 2023, but struggled after losing a tight first set. Osaka won her first match back at the Brisbane International at the start of January but has lost her three matches since, including against

TIGER Woods will play his first PGA Tour event of 2024 at the Genesis Invitational in February.

BBC SPORT said that, the 15-time major champion has had a limited schedule since suffering a leg injury in a car crash in 2021.

Woods last played in December when he said he expected to play one event per month in 2024.

The 48-year-old says he is "excited" to be playing at the Genesis Invitational, which he hosts, and which starts in California on Thursday, 15 February.

Woods withdrew from the Masters in April 2023 before making his return to competitive action at the Hero World Challenge in

Woods to play first PGA Tour event of 2024



Tiger Woods played alongside his son Charlie (left) with his daughter Sam (centre) caddying at the PNC Championship in December

December.

The American also played alongside his 14-year-old son Charlie at the PNC Championship in Orlando in December.

Woods' last win on the PGA Tour was at the 2019 Zozo Championship in Japan, which saw him equal Sam Snead's record of 82 Tour victories.

Plateau hosts trado-sports after 20yrs

By BARNABAS DANLADI
THE Plateau State Sports Council has hosted the Traditional Martial Art competition popularly known as Dambe, after a long period of about 20 years that the

tournament last held in the state. The Head Coach of the Traditional Martial Art (Dambe), Mr Raymond Yilshut, while briefing journalists about the tournament which began from 26 January 2024 said.

"This tournament is organized to bring back peace in Plateau State and also to select players that will represent the state in the National Sport Festival coming up".

While commenting on the challenge of Dambe, Mr. Raymond the head coach said. "Our challenge is funding as there is need to take good care of the athletes and people who are playing the drums, if our national body will give good funding Dambe will go far".

Raymond further said that, the game is registered at the National Sports Festival.

"The sports is registered under the National Sports Commission and has competed severally in the National Sports Festivals, where most of the athletes of Plateau State team won gold medals," he emphasized.

He also added that after this tournament there will be more traditional sports tournament, such as kokuwa, Langa, Ayo-ayo and Agula.

One of the organizers of the tournament Safiyanu Dauda also known as Safiyanu Zaki, who was once an athlete of this said.

"The reason why

Dambe lost it stand in Plateau was due to lack of commitment by both the athletes and coaches, as people no longer value the traditional sport", he lamented.

Dauda opined that. "The government should help in supporting the game in order to move forward. Let's copy from Kano State where the state government are in full support of the game, that is why they have better equipments, coaches and athlete".

Also an athlete Dogo Sharif, while commenting on the tournament said. "Even though Plateau State had not hosted Dambe tournament for a long period of time, but this recent one is one of the best tournament I ever witness", he maintained.

He added that he had never been to Plateau State, but because of this tournament he was opportune to visit Jos Plateau for the first time.

"The weather, sociality and hospitality of the Plateau is what impressed me the more".

Speaking on his experience in Dambe, Dogo said.

"I began this sport when I was 17 years old and I never did any sport apart from it. Through this sport I was able to visit many state of federation and met a lot of people whom I had never imagine in life.

"I take this sport as my own personal occupation, because through this sport I was able to sponsor myself and my parent with the money I won during tournaments", he concluded.

THE WRITER IS AN I.T STUDENT FROM UNIMAID.



SUNDAY SPORTS

AFCON 2023: Toure hopes Ivory Coast beat Nigeria

Ivory Coast defender Kolo Toure celebrates with the Africa Cup of Nations trophy in 2015

Kolo Toure helped Ivory Coast to their second Africa Cup of Nations triumph in 2015 following a 9-8 penalty shootout win over Ghana.

Through the 2023 Africa Cup of Nations have made global headlines this past month, but Kolo Toure believes the hosts' fortunes changed when Elephants fans protested in anger earlier in the tournament.

Shortly after the country's heaviest ever home - and Nations Cup - defeat, when losing 4-0 to Equatorial Guinea in their final group game, Ivorian supporters booed inside the Abidjan arena before some vandalised buses and other property in scenes that were widely condemned.

Nonetheless, former Arsenal and Manchester City defender Toure says a result that left the Elephants on a precipice, one they eventually retreated from after squeezing through as a best third-placed side, lies behind their place in Sunday's final against Nigeria.

"That loss was a big wake-up call for the players because they saw that fans in the country were really, really angry," the 42-year-old told the World Football at Afcon podcast.

"A few things happened and since that game I think the players realised how that important the tournament was for the country. That was a turning point."

Part of the second - and last - Ivorian team to lift the trophy, when defeating Ghana on penalties in the 2015 final, Toure considers the replacement of French coach Jean-Louis Gasset with Emerse Fae to be the other key moment for a side that has been on a rollercoaster ride.

Midfielder Fae - who has overseen knock-out wins against Senegal, Mali and DR Congo - played in the same team as centre-back Toure for many years, even contesting the 2006 final which the Ivorians lost to host nation Egypt on spot-kicks.

"Emerse is a great guy - he knows the culture of the country, was inside the team and knew its mentality," Toure explained.

"He has brought discipline both on and off the pitch.

"He has brought tactical discipline because we have a midfield with really good players - Ibrahim Sangare, Franck Kessie and Seko Fofana



- but against Equatorial Guinea, I felt those three were running all over the pitch with no discipline.

"Since taking over, he has also brought back some competition - making big changes when bringing in Jean-Michael Seri and Odilon Kossounou in the last 16 and those two were really good against Senegal."

Fae rang the changes against the defending champions, selecting Seri, Bayer Leverkusen defender Kossounou and the evergreen Max-Alain Gradel, 36, for their first starts while dropping Kessie to the bench.

The bold changes restored structure to a side galvanised by their new manager, who made full use of his bench from where former AC Milan and Barcelona star Kessie rose to score two decisive penalties.

Ivory Coast fans have endured a rollercoaster of emotions at the 2023 Nations Cup, from losing 4-0 to Equatorial Guinea to beating Senegal, Mali and DR Congo en route to the final

Full of praise for his country's Nations Cup hosting, which has seen at least \$1bn invested by the government, Toure also lauded Ivory Coast's fans, who have recently backed their team with a feverish intensity.

"The fans are unbelievable and you can see that all the country is passionate about this Nations Cup," he rallied.

"Some of them don't have food or a clean place to sleep but when the football comes, they forget their daily struggles and they expect the players to give 150%. As long as you give everything, they have no problem with you.

"If Ivory Coast win the match, it's going to be double the celebration of 2015!"

If the Ivorians are to claim a third title, with their first success in 1992 also coming against Ghana, they must avenge a 1-0 defeat by Nigeria in the group stage, when Toure feels his nation failed tactically.

"Nigeria changed their shape, playing a 5-4-1 defensively and a 3-4-3 offensively, which really disturbed us. We never found the solution to stop them hitting us on the counter attack," he said.

"With Victor Osimhen up front, and Moses Simon and Ademola Lookman (out wide), they are really dangerous in transition.

"We need speed at the back because as soon as Nigeria get the ball, they will look for Osimhen who is super quick - he may have scored only once so far, but what he brings to that team is incredible."

William Troost-Ekong celebrates scoring a penalty for Nigeria against South Africa

Nigeria captain William

Troost-Ekong has scored two high-pressure penalties to help the Super Eagles reach a first final since 2013

Nigeria, meanwhile, have proved all their doubters wrong with their Nations Cup displays, according to former Super Eagles striker Brown Ideye.

Ranked 42nd in the world and sixth in Africa, not much was expected from Jose Peseiro's team after some underwhelming results in late 2023.

"I never believed in this team. Their form before the tournament and injuries to key players gave no one any hope," Ideye, a Nations Cup winner with Nigeria in 2013, told BBC Sport Africa.

"They've proved a lot of us wrong by reaching the final. I'm really proud of them."

The three-time champions beat South Africa on penalties to reach the final at the Alassane Ouattara Stadium, where they will renew their rivalry with the Ivorians after William Troost-Ekong's second-half penalty gave Nigeria victory on 18 January.

"The final will be different but the players must be calm," says Ideye, who played against a Didier Drogba-led Ivorian side at the 2013 Nations Cup.

"There will be orange everywhere at the stadium. The Super Eagles must not be scared. It will be difficult but these players have shown they understand what is at stake."

Sunday's meeting will be the eighth Nations Cup finals clash -

but a first title decider - between the west African rivals, with Nigeria boasting four wins and a draws from their previous outings.

Two-time champions Ivory Coast will become the first host nation to play in the final of their own tournament since Egypt in 2006.

Victor Osimhen in action for Nigeria at the 2023 Africa Cup of Nations

Nigeria striker Victor Osimhen has had 24 shots at the 2023 Nations Cup finals, but only scored once

Nigeria's campaign started with a 1-1 draw against Equatorial Guinea, with Napoli striker Osimhen heading home the Super Eagles' equaliser.

Since then, the current African Footballer of the Year has failed to add more goals, despite his impressive work rate which has resulted in an assist and two penalties won for his team.

"Osimhen cannot do it all alone. The change in formation has not really helped him get chances," former West Bromwich Albion and Dynamo Kyiv forward Brown said.

"The 5-4-1 formation can be very tiring for the lone striker."

Unlucky to have had two goals disallowed by VAR, Osimhen is expected to lead Nigeria's title quest on Sunday, while Atalanta winger Lookman is their top scorer with three goals.

"Lookman has been a great back-up plan. He has had an amazing tournament," Brown added.

"The whole country (Nigeria) needs this trophy. It will bring so much joy to us."

Severely criticised for the team's poor form before the Nations Cup, coach Peseiro has now been heralded for turning the team around at a crucial time.

The Super Eagles have scored in all their six matches while keeping four clean sheets, and conceding just twice.

"If Peseiro wins the Afcon, he should continue," suggests Ideye of the Portuguese, who is yet to commit his future beyond the Nations Cup.

"If you're not good, you can't win a tournament as big as the Afcon."

Brown Ideye was part of Nigeria's Nations Cup-winning squad in 2013 as the Super Eagles beat Burkina Faso 1-0 in the final

AFCON 2023: Cote d' Ivoire, Nigeria clash again



Osimhen

By **IBRAHIM T. LOT**

THE Super Eagle of Nigeria will, today, battle the Elephants of Cote d'Ivoire in a titanic clash for the ultimate prize of the African Cup of Nations at the Alassane Quattara Stadium.

The last time these foes met was in the group stage of this competition when the Super Eagle edged out the Elephants 1-0.

However, with redemption on the line, Cote d'Ivoire will be a different beast and Nigeria should know that preventing them from winning a third Africa Cup of Nations at home should represent their toughest test.

For Nigeria Manager, Jose Peseiro, outwitting Cote d'Ivoire boss Emere Fae, will be key. Peseiro's tactical ability guided the Super Eagles past South Africa in a shootout thriller on Wednesday. But Fae also showed grid to overcome DR Congo 1-0 in the semi-final, meaning much will depend on the touchline.

Cote d' Ivoire boast of stars like Nicolas Pepe and

Sebastien Haller while Nigeria has star striker Victor Osimhen, William Trouset-Ekong and Ademula Lookman in their ranks, with such pedigree on display, a goal fest could await.

Nigeria's joy of glory came when Kelechi Iheanacho scored his penalty to give Nigeria 4-2 penalty shootout scored over South Africa on Wednesday after a semi-final thriller in Bouaka.

The match finished 1-1 after extra-time, placing the 3 time champion a step away from continental victory against the hosts.

Both regular time goals came from penalties with captain Williams Trost-Ekong scoring after 67 minutes for Nigeria and Teboho Mokoena equalized from 90th minutes spot tick.

The Mokoena equalizer came after Nigeria thought they scored a second goal through a tap in from Victor Osimhen but play was called back to the other end of the field after VAR alerted the Egyptian referee that South African Percy Tan had been fouled in the area.

Kulisa Madan also had a

chance to finish off the Super Eagle in added time but blazed out the goal past.

Nigeria entered the game with a perfect record against South Africa in the Premier Football competition, having won 3 previous meetings.

The Super Eagles have bad fitness concerned over Willion Troost-Ekong, though most of the tournament and will hope he is fit for the final.

Star striker Victor Osimhen, who was under an injuring also ran himself to the ground in

the semi-final, is another who is being monitored closely.

Cote d' Ivoire will have Oumar Dinkite and Odibu Kossounou available after they served a one match suspension in the semi-final. Odilon could return to defense which foe will likely keep Simon Odinga

in the starting lineup.

Players to match out for are Victor Osimhen, Ademula Lookman, Captain Ekong and goalkeeper Stanley Nwabili.

The Elephants also have Sebastian, Haller, who has proved himself worthy in spear heading the attack,

AFCON 2023: 'It will be a big day in my life'- Musa

MUSA first tasted AFCON success with the Super Eagles at the 2013 edition hosted by South Africa.

The winger, alongside centre-back Kenneth Omeruo, are looking to become the first Nigerians to win the AFCON title twice.

"It will be a day in my life," Musa responded when asked during Saturday's press conference on what it would be like for him to win the AFCON title again.

The 30-year-old is yet to make an appearance for the Super at the ongoing AFCON 2023 AFCON finals.

The former Leicester City star stated that he is unperturbed by his lack of action.

"I'm a player who is



always willing to make sacrifices for the team. The team must always come first," he added.

"If we win, it is going to

be for the team and the country."

Meanwhile, Nigeria's Super Eagles coach Jose Peseiro is set to make a

late decision on Zaidu Sanusi's fitness for the Africa Cup of Nations final against Ivory Coast, BSNSports.com.ng reports.