

'We're committed to fixing poverty, unemployment



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# Sunday Standard



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## Unending terrorists' attacks: Undermining Plateau's corporate existence



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A voter being attended to by officials

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**We won't compromise professionalism, under any circumstances**

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### The 72 hour FUNAM ultimatum and matters arising

**IN** the aftermath of the recent attacks in Mangu, Bokkos and Barkin Ladi LGAs, the Fulani Nationalist Movement, (FUNAM) gave security agencies a 72-hour dateline for the release of their leader Bello Badejo in a press statement on national issues, dated January 24, 2024 and signed by Umar Amir Shehu, and Badu Salisu Ahmadu.

**BELLO** Badejo was arrested in Nasarawa State after creating a security outfit and training thousands of people. It was named Nomads Volunteer Vigilante group with the sole aim of protecting their interest but done without following due process and it was seen as a threat to Nigeria's security.

**THE** statement by FUNAM, the Miyetti Allah Kautal Hore demanded for the immediate release of their president, Bello Bodejo, notifying the Nigeria Government that failure to do so, they will hear from us. And threatened that the government will have itself to blame in the event of failure to meet their demand.

**IT** is imperative for the Tinubu led government to ensure it does not treat such threats with kids gloves. The threat is one too many against our security might and strength. It is undermining Nigeria as an entity and as the giant of Africa, any time a group is allowed to dare our security or blackmail them into giving in to their demands.

**IT** behooves on the government to get to the root of any threat and bring perpetrators to book. Our corporate existence is paramount and anything that threatens it should be dealt with iron fist.

**THE** statement also talked of an eminent crisis arising from post election matters, which include the choice of President which definitely didn't go down well with them. Consequently, an "Inevitable Jihad" is now in the pipeline. And without mincing words, they promised to "relaunch our campaign which we have started in earnest.

**WE** see this statement as a way of beating one's chest and promising a Jihad in a heterogeneous society like Nigeria.

**TO** say that this statement, and others like it, are capable of inciting public disorder and pose an obvious threat to the government is only stating it as it is. The reasonable thing to do, by any right thinking person, group, or people, is to condemn in unequivocal terms such pronouncements that only make good, to fan the embers of discord, and division in and amongst our people. At a time when we need to come together as one and face the monstrous economic pressures, we cannot be seen to be doing otherwise. Being that as it may, and knowing the efficacy and potency of such statements to generate reactions from many quarters, its expedient upon the authorities to treat this and similar matters with utmost decisiveness. Nigeria is a country that has witnessed so much bloodbaths to the extent that some areas are no-go areas, for fear of the unknown. The confidence with which people travel to unknown parts of the country has been eroded in many instances. So much so that our children fear for their lives when posted to do the mandatory one year National Youth Corp in unknown parts of the country. This, coupled with the increase in the number of ethnic militia is fast becoming an increasing worrisome situation for Nigerians and visitors alike.

**IT** is increasingly believed that ethnic militias are festering because the elite, especially members of the National Assembly, that are supposed to take the bull by the horn, but it is a common narrative in some quarters that they have refused to do what they should, in order allow for states to play a more active role in security by putting in place structure and regulation by amending the constitution. This, with its attendant consequences, have allowed for all sorts of colouration to be given. Some say the elite are playing the ostrich, and that has been going on for years, and we keep going round in cycles, and ending up back where we started. That point where we realise that our policing model is not working.

**THE** media must not be seen to be giving wider publicity to things that divide us especially with statements like that made in Lafia by the national president of Miyetti Allah, a group of herders turned political pressure group, comprising mostly Fulani on national matters.

**THE** Nnamdi Kanu-led separatist group, IPOB, made similar doubtful claims when the group set up the Eastern Security Network (ESN), for the south-east states. But federal security agencies crushed it. Yet, in a move that seemed to suggest that one vigilante group is greater than the other, the Nasarawa State Police Commissioner was a special guest at the Miyetti Allah vigilante service launch. These reflect the despair and desperation over the growing insecurity in the country, especially the latest franchise in the form of widespread kidnappings, even in places once thought to be safe.

**MULTIPLE** internal security challenges from banditry and insurgencies in the North-east, North-west and North-central, the unrest and violence by separatist groups in the South-east, pipeline vandalism in the South-south, our security network seems to be out-of-sorts with the situation. Mr President cannot afford to allow the drift to continue. He cannot manage the country's security the same way it has been managed in the past and expect a different result.

### 'We're committed to fixing poverty, unemployment'

**T**he Federal Government has said it was committed to taking immediate action to tackle poverty and unemployment.

Minister of State for Labour and Employment, Nkeiruka Onyejeocha said this during a meeting with top officials of the ministry in Abuja.

She urged the ministry's leadership to adopt a private sector-driven approach, emphasising efficiency and productivity in fulfilling the ministry's objectives.

In a statement on Saturday by the Special Adviser (Media) to the Minister, Enameh Gabriel, she said there was a need for a result-oriented approach within the ministry akin to that found in the private sector.

Onyejeocha said the shift was essential to fulfilling the proposed achievements outlined in President Bola Tinubu's eight points agenda.

She said: "We need concrete results that demonstrate the effectiveness of our



Tinubu

programmes. Business as usual won't cut it. We must work as people in the private sector; focused, accountable, and results-oriented. We are currently engaging development partners."

The minister emphasised the ministry's crucial role in achieving the President's agenda, aligning with six of its eight points.

She said: "At the end of every week, I will like to have the report of every department. I have never been in the last position and I don't want to find myself there. Everybody will fail

when the Ministry of Labour cannot account for the people we took out of the street and employed.

The ministry is committed to taking immediate action to tackle poverty and unemployment. We will hold the Head of every department accountable for the achievements outlined in the president's agenda.

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### CBN debunks plan to covert \$40bn to naira

**N**IGERIA'S central bank has said there was no plan to convert the funds in domiciliary accounts to naira.

Media reports had claimed that the bank planned to convert about \$30 billion in the accounts to naira to halt the Nigerian currency's free fall.

"This news is fake," CBN said on its X account said on Saturday.

The CBN in recent weeks has introduced policies to strengthen Nigeria's naira to a dollar and other foreign exchange.

Early this week, the parallel market rates shot up to between N1,400 and N1,450 to a dollar.

In a move to salvage the situation, the CBN ordered banks to sell their excess dollar stock latest February 1, 2024.

The CBN in another circular on Wednesday warned lenders against hoarding excess foreign currencies for profit.

Sources within the CBN disclosed that there were indications that some commercial banks hold long-term foreign exchange positions to enable them profit from the

volatile movements of exchange rates.

The CBN thereafter stopped daily Cash Reserve Ratio debits and will be adopting an updated Cash Reserve Requirement mechanism.

This led to speculations in media reports that the CBN would target funds in Nigerian domiciliary accounts.

A report, on Saturday, claimed that the CBN is considering a policy that will result in the conversion of foreign currencies

in domiciliary accounts of citizens to naira to stabilise and increase liquidity in the FX market

The report quoted a source that claimed that the government will order the conversion of foreign currencies in individuals' and corporate organisations' domiciliary accounts to a naira equivalent determined by the CBN.

"No plans to convert \$30bn domiciliary deposits to naira," the CBN said.



Cardoso

### We won't compromise professionalism, under any circumstances

- GOC

**T**HE General Officer Commanding 8 Division Nigerian Army, Maj Gen Godwin Mutkut has reminded the military personnel that professional discipline must not

be compromised in its operations under any circumstances.

Mutkut stated this at the 2023 annual West African Social Activities (WASA) event at the

Giginya Barracks, 26 Battalion parade ground, Sokoto.


"I wish to remind personnel on the need to always be professional when carrying out assigned tasks, discipline must not be compromised under any circumstance

According to him, his administration recently donated operational vehicles to the Division and established a local state security outfit to support the efforts of the security agencies.


While assuring that the state government is always ready and willing to support all the security agencies in a collective effort to achieve lasting peace in the state.



Mutkut



With  
**Katdapba  
Y. Gobum  
On Sunday**



**gobum\_katt@yahoo.co.uk 07037977744 (sms)**

**"Haven't we had enough in our hands, waiting for only the government to call us to order? Most times because we are familiar with those in government we take them for granted. So, what can we as a people do to stem this dangerous trend taking us to the edge of the precipice; and for which if we don't rise up, we shall be consumed. It has become a vicious circle of some sort. And as such, the state has become a laughing stoke. All of us are in it, making mincemeat of our leaders as if they were brought from another land and placed over us. Even the ones that are coming up are not spared; a lot of stumbling blocks are place by both the elderly and their pairs to ensure their lights are dimmed."**

ABOUT five and half years ago, exactly (June 2018), we had cause to address the issue of the lack of a voice for Plateau State, for which it was done through a repeat of a material we republished last Sunday. A greater need for this in the state hovers around us like some sword of Damocles, meaning that we have to urgently insist sooner than we had envisaged for such to happen.

Since the attacks at Gashish District of Barkin Ladi LGA, and some other parts of Bokkos, Riyom, Mangu and Bassa, where over 200 hundred lives were lost; the division which has been rekindled in the wake of the attack is about sending us to the dark days. The vitriolic comments in the social media and other platforms are about to consume us, with no one questioning the sanity of those who have inundated us with them.

You should be worried as others who love the state to demand that the time has come for us to rally round one person as the leader of the state. Such a leader must not be politically inclined as to defeat the essence of having one over us as a people.

Almost at the same time, many may recall that Benue State was also under attack. Different comments were made by Nigerians. It was that which former Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon made condemning the massacre of people in the state that attracted the condemnation of Miyeti Allah. Remember the piece you are reading is not originally on Benue State.

Time was when Gowon rose in condemnation on reprisal attacks on our highways, insisting there are more civilized ways of solving our problems. He has always insisted on embarking all descent ways of reaching solutions to the problems of attacks in our communities. There are very few leaders in Nigeria who, on being informed of deaths, disasters and others such issues; that would insist such states and communities to sympathize with them. The fact that he does not choose where to visit is indicative of the person in question.

On account of what the state recently went through or rather has gone through in the last two decades, there are enough reasons to want rally round one individual or more whose word is a command to all communities. Don't be quick to ask: Who can that person or persons be? You are aware of the tremendous human resource that is available in our communities.

Again, don't be in a haste to conclude that such persons have 'soiled' their hands and may not be heard by the people. You may be wrong and right. But to put a blanket assumption on their capacities is to imagine that they are not available. Not all humans are without stain of some sort; yet that is not to say that people don't look up to them. There are some who respect and have faith in them.

We always do, given their antecedence and capacity for mobilization over the years; and more importantly, the roles they have continued to play in the

## Why Plateau needs a leader



Gowon

actualization of the dreams of the people of the state. There are such persons in our communities; all they need is encouragement to take the mantle of leader of their communities.

We can build on such human resource up to the state level. Yet, given our present precarious situation, one will not be wrong to assume that there are no single individuals that we can place that mantle on his shoulders today to direct the state. Don't get it twisted, the governor at any material time has a responsibility to ensure good governance and accountability for the development of the state. He may be said to belong to a particular party, yet it does not remove the fact that he's the state's number one citizen.

This distinction is made so as to clear any doubts of the high regard the office of the governor should be taken into consideration. Again, it should not be forgotten that he belongs to a particular political party; yet that this does not remove the fact that he should be seen as a father figure. Not many will understand it from this context.

We must state here that most are of the efforts some persons have made for the state since June 23, 2018 and even in retrospect of the situations the state has gone through in the last two decades. In these years, communities have not spoken as an entity; we have been divided on many scores than one. As a result some of us from other communities did not help matters by making those going through hell assume, we are no longer together.

We have always been together until we were separated through politics. We have continued to play critical roles to stay together, but the attitudes of some of us are derailing this construction; and

desire to build on what our forefathers have had. We can go ahead to make that relationship come to life, if we understand what the motives of our attackers in the last couple of years are.

The desire to occupy through grabbing the land is at the center of the attacks. While they have continued unabated, they are the happier that we are divided in our cause to keep our land. One would be happy to note that of late, the state governor, Barr Simon Bako Lalong has inundated the world with the resolve not to allow the peoples' lands not to be taken away.

That is a strong resolve; yet it will make no meaning if there is no unity of purpose and a resolve to also drive it by the people themselves. We have to own the resolve. We must insist that we all understand the fact when leaders of ECOWAS in their Lome Declaration about a week ago say the adverse effects of climate change as one of the reasons for the herdsmen's attacks in communities across the length and breadth of Nigeria.

While this is condemnable it must be stated that the leaders have not done enough to stem the tide; even as we are aware that certain tendencies and characteristics of the attacks have been owned and applauded by certain known groups without any response by government. It is on this score that we hasten to say that such ownership of the killings in parts of the country should be dealt with without delay by authority.

The digression was intended to draw our attention to the fact that, the attacks have further divided us, making us attack one another and looking at communities as enemies of one another. The attackers have diminished our resolve and capacity to take on the enemies.

Many members of our communities have been dissuaded to think that the war is meant for a particular group. This has been amplified to the point that it has gained notoriety, making it difficult for us to trust one another.

This development has made some of our elders to be interested only in their belly, and would rather not for the general interest of their communities. This is the point that we all need, an intervention which necessitates that we rally round an individual or certain individuals whose voice is command.

Note that we wrote on June 24, 2018 in the following words: *With this development, we have come to the stage when a national voice must arise amongst us. We have arrived at a point that we have to look in our communities and get a voice that has a national appeal; and whose shade can cover us all.*

*It is high time; we found a leader whose appeal could serve as a shade to all. The time is now, we don't have to wait longer given the preponderance of the needless acrimony that stares us; but indeed is gradually destroying our leaders and even those who aspire to lead in the future.*

*Haven't we had enough in our hands, waiting for only the government to call us to order? Most times because we are familiar with those in government we take them for granted. So, what can we as a people do to stem this dangerous trend taking us to the edge of the precipice; and for which if we don't rise up, we shall be consumed?*

*It has become a vicious circle of some sort. And as such, the state has become a laughing stoke. All of us are in it, making mincemeat of our leaders as if they were brought from another land and placed over*

*us. Even the ones that are coming up are not spared; a lot of stumbling blocks are place by both the elderly and their pairs to ensure their lights are dimmed.*

*Coming at the hills of the incarceration of former Governor Joshua Dariye and the current predicament of Senator Jonah David Jang, and the capricious attacks being hurled on Governor Simon Lalong, one would assume that it is a crime to serve the people of Plateau State.*

*Since the creation of the state, progressive leaders have been made. Same leaders have put the state on the path of development to the envy of some states. Same leaders have tried over time to assemble some of the best hands you could find in the land to add value to governance and leadership.*

*It is not by mistake that we have had General Yakubu Gowon, late Joseph Dechi Gomwalk, late Rev Jacob Lot, Chief Solomon Daushep Lar, late DB Zang, late Nyako Azi, Senator Garba Mata, Alhaji Yahaya Kwande, late Alhaji Yakubu Hussaini, Senator Ibrahim Nasiru Mantu, Rev Selcan Miner, Senator Venmak K. Dangin, Rear Admiral Samuel Bitrus Atukum, Generals Domkat Bali, Joseph Garba, John Shagaya, Senator Jeremiah Useni, late Michael Audu Buba, late Senator George Baba Hoomkwap, late Mama Helen Gomwalk, Patrick and Sarah Dokotri, late Chief Michael Bot Mang, Senator Jonah David Jang and Dame Pauline Tallen. The list is inexhaustible.*

*This is not to forget other indigenous governors, who have served or serving the state. They are leaders by the fact that they have a large following; and indeed command respect amongst people of the state.*

*The list is inexhaustible because there are many in the academics, business, military, and clergy, banking sector, media, judiciary and other sectors which have produced many Plateau notables; and who are a target for destruction even before they become a name.*

*Right from the days of General Yakubu Gowon to the leadership of Commissioner of Police, Joseph Dechi Gomwalk in the defunct Benue Plateau State, it is no longer news as to the dangerous and vicious attacks of the administration of the man whose pioneering efforts are still a point of reference today.*

*Every governor who comes on board desires to be associated with his leadership style and qualities. Even younger persons who may have read and or told about Gomwalk, they are quick to want the state to return to those early days, where sacrifice rather than self-propelled success in the state to the envy of many others.*

*What we have today are men and women scattered in our communities waiting for the leader to slip and are everywhere with 'evidence' that we all wasted our time to have elected a 'thief' for a leader. Leaders fall and rise. They don't remain on ground knowing the effect it will have on their followers.*

## NEWS

## Create Ministry for Livestock, Fulani organisation tells Tinubu

By ABDULLAHI SHUGABA

**F**ULANI Socio- Cultural Organisation, "Fulani Community Nationwide" beg President Ahmed Bola Tinubu to create Ministry for Livestock, Forestry and Grazing Reserves for the nomads.

The chairman of the organisation, Alhaji Ya'u Haruna Malam-Madori, made the appeal in his country home in Malam-Madori Local Government of Jigawa State.

Malamadori disclosed that it was part of their demands to Tinubu that if he wins, he should create the Ministry for Livestock, Forestry and Grazing Reserves.

He said it is for this reason that they supported President Tinubu during his campaign.

The chairman said that the group now wants Mr. President to fulfill the request they made to him during the campaign.

According to him, the nomads are not benefitting from the budget to agriculture, hence the nomads need their separate budget.

"We believe the establishment of Ministry of Livestock, Forestry and Grazing Reserves will uplift the socio- economy of the pastoralists and the country in general.



Malam-Madori

"The gesture would also reduce the incessant banditry and kidnapping in the country.

"The initiative will also reduce the reoccurring herders/farmers clashes across the country.

Malamadori advised President Tinubu not to give chance to some past leaders

who served in previous governments in his administration, pointing out that such people failed the masses.

"It is suffice to say that such leaders betrayed the people as they could not satisfy the yearnings and aspirations of the electorate"

## Centre trains journalists on proliferation of small arms

By JOHN FWAH,  
Kaduna

**T**HE National Center for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (NCCSALW) in collaboration with the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Kaduna State Council trained no fewer than 40 journalists.

The participants were drawn from chapels of the union on the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the society for the event which was held at the council's secretariat.

According to the chairman of the council, Comrade Asma'u Yawo Halilu, the aim of the training is to help members to improve on their communication skills, including how to articulate their message clearly and concisely in the interest of

national development.

" This also offers our members the opportunity to learn how to handle difficult questions or scenarios. And also as a capacity building to enhance coverage of the activities of the center professionally and ethically.

" Today's training is the third of its kind in the last four months. Before now, 90 members had benefited from similar training, and more are still coming. Until we get all our members trained, we will not relent," the council chairman said.

Meanwhile, the National Coordinator of NCCSALW, AVM Haruna Mohammed (rtd), disclosed during the training that the centre has recovered 30,000 small arms, light

weapons and ammunition in Nigeria since its establishment in 2001.

Mohammed said, since the establishment of the Center, a lot of recoveries of illicit small arms and light weapons and ammunition have so far been recorded. "Over 10,000 small arms and light weapons and over 20,000 ammunition of different calibers have so far been recovered."

According to the coordinator, proliferation of small and light arms is a major catalyst for insecurity, not only in Nigeria, but globally.

"Proliferation of small arms and light weapons infatuate the upsurge of armed groups, communal clashes, cultism, kidnapping, ethnic and religious violence the world over and these result to loss of lives and property and displacement of our people.

"It is against this background that the federal government of Nigeria found it necessary as part of efforts to rejig the security architecture, to establish NCCSALW to serve as a security mechanism for the prevention and control of proliferation of small arms and light weapons towards peace and security in Nigeria". Mohammed said.

Mohammed however, explained that the training was organised in realisation of the critical role of the media in enlightening the public about the activities of NCCSALW.



Halilu



## School bullies: Boko Haram in uniform

**O**NE of the major obstacles to education is school bullies. These sets of students derive joy by inflicting pain on others, especially those weaker than them. Another category feel stronger, powerful or superior only when they use their authority as senior to inflict pain physically or psychologically on a younger person who is usually their junior.

In Nigeria, there are various types of bullies who operate in schools to make the school environment a hated place for many students. There are the ones who welcome one to boarding school with beatings claiming to remove the first timers' tail( fresher's tail). This usually happens the same night one arrives at school, very late in the night.

"The day I arrived at school as a Form one student in a government school, it was my happiest day. I wanted so much to experience being independent that I never thought there was something negative about secondary school. I had to learn the hard way.

"Late that very night, all freshers were ordered out of their bed by a huge looking senior. Sleepily, we lined up, thinking it was all part of being in secondary school. Without warning, the senior girl brought out a cane with which she gave each one of us, 3 swipes of the cane on our buttocks. She claimed to be removing our tail which was the only acceptable way to welcome us into the fold. It was a terrible experience that has become a very terrible memory associated with secondary school", Lydia Danladi shared her experience.

On her part, Irene P told her horrid story where those her parents entrusted her to, ended up making her life hell. Her bed bunk partner collected her new mattress and gave Irene one that was as flat as dead slippers. She also collected all her new uniforms and gave her her old ones sown in every direction with different types of thread to hold the loose edges together.

Irene started hating school her first night in school. She didn't sleep well because the mattress and pillow hers was exchanged for. The senior also collected all her provisions claiming to keep them save for Irene. But she said that was the last time she saw her provisions. She was left to starve. This girl who said she was just 11 years, began the long and tedious journey of self discovery. "I developed an aversion to school which almost ruined me," she pointed out.

Discussing the reasons why they hated school, some girls who attended a girls government secondary school in the state told of how they used to hide in the ceiling to dodge wicked seniors. The lady said she could not count the number of times she slept even on trees, preferring the danger posed by snakes than venomous seniors. Add all

this to total darkness due to lack of electricity.

What was she running from? One may wonder. The seniors used to beat them at the slightest provocation. One could be sent to fetch water from the stream which was very far but was the only source of water for the students. One could be asked to go and look for milk, garri and sugar or suffer punishment. In some cases, one would be asked to wash the school toilets which was one's nightmare, this lady disclosed. She said the condition, stench and maggots were the worst she had ever experienced.

A boy said in his own case, he was made to pay for his first cousin's sins. Since the day he arrived and the senior discovered he was related to a senior he claimed dealt with him, every day after lights - out, he would report at the seniors bedside where he would kneel down till around 2:00 am in the morning. Afterwards, he would sleep on a bare bed frame because the senior had seized his mattress and pillow. This continued for more than a week until the Form one student fell very ill and somehow, the cat was let out the basket. The senior was expelled but the young boy refused to go back to the school. It took the grace of God to enroll him in another school.

The cases are inexhaustible. There are subtle cases. One has heard a case where a junior was asked to always bring his piece of meat to a particular senior or else, face the consequences. He did just that until the senior graduated.

The problem is that even when the school authority knows about it, it turns the other way. They allow bullying to thrive for whatever reasons, forgetting that a number of students have opted out of school because of school bullying.

In my estimation, school bullies deserve capital punishment because they are enemies of education like Boko Haram.

What would you say about a senior student who humiliated a bedwetter who was sleeping on the upper bunk and he was on the lower bed. The younger student's head was pushed into the toilet seat, and he took in all the smell for up to 20 or more minutes to the joy of some wicked seniors. It took the grace of God for the junior student to regain his self esteem.

Or a senior who made junior students roll on the dirty toilet floor which was full of maggots and smelled like hell. And for what? Noise making in class. Some of these students are just too damn wicked.

Until secondary schools begin to deal decisively with bullies that abound in schools, we would always have school dropouts.

POLITICS

# PDP Governors sympathize with PLSG, donate N100m

From **ABBAS GUNGURA, Bauchi**

**P**EOPLE'S Democratic Party (PDP) Governor's forum Chairman, Governor Bala Mohammed of Bauchi State, has led PDP Governors across Nigeria to condole with the government and people of Plateau State over the recent crisis in Mangu, Bokkos and environs.

Governor Bala Mohammed said the PDP Governors would continue to support and advocate for the establishment of state police to enable leaders at various levels tackle the challenges facing them head on.

While sympathizing with Governor Mutfwang, the PDP Governors Forum Chairman urged him to remain strong and focused and pleaded with the people of Plateau to learn to tolerate each other at all times for the economic development of the state.



Mohammed

The forum Chairman, Bala Mohammed on behalf of the forum, donated the sum of one hundred million Naira to support the victims of several crises in the state.

Governor Caleb Mutfwang of Plateau State, appreciated his colleagues for the visit. He promised

that he would continue to support all efforts aimed at restoring peace and stability on the Plateau.

Mutfwang gave the assurance that the sympathy gesture made by his colleagues would be used for the purpose it was donated for.

By **PETER TITLE**

**T**HE People's Democratic Party (PDP), Governors' Forum were in Jos, the Plateau State capital recently, to commiserate with the government and people over the ugly incident that had bedeviled the state where they donated N100 million to aid the crisis ridden victims.

Led by the Chairman of the forum who is the Executive Governor of Bauchi State, Alhaji Bala Muhammed said the wanton killings as well as destruction of property witnessed in the state was unfortunate which only brought setbacks to the people and government.

Accompanied by the Governors of Osun, Oyo, Adamawa, Edo and Enugu States, the Governor of Bauchi said they were proud of Governor Mutfwang whom he noted that despite the challenges, he had remained focused, providing unequal dividends of democracy to the people of the state.

He posited that PDP was progressive in nature and the people were looking up to them. As such, they would not afford to disappoint them in any way whatsoever. Governor Mohammed further commended the Governor of Plateau State for his resilience in handling the crisis situation that rocked the state.

The PDP Governors' Forum Chairman, therefore

# PDP Governors' Forum support Plateau crisis victims



Mutfwang

advocated for the decentralization of the security architecture to pave way for the establishment of state police so as to curb the crisis that had bedeviled the states across the nation in the bud.

While describing Mutfwang as a shining star in a democratic setting, he assured him of their support at all times and called on the authorities concerned to punish perpetrators of the dastardly acts.

Governor Mutfwang who received the PDP Governors at the Government House, Little Rayfield, said he was overwhelmed by the visit. Has he said the government and people would remain grateful

for the show of love exhibited by the forum.

According to him, the security challenges were a nationalistic phenomenon and advocated for creation of state police to curb recurring crises.

He explained that the government was not deterred with the development but promised to remain focused by providing the needed dividends of democracy to the people.

Mutfwang, who said Nigerians have always trusted PDP, said the would not afford to fail them and assured of his unwavering support to building a new Nigeria.

# Discharge your duties without fear or favour -Ododo

**K**OGI State Governor, Usman Ahmed Ododo has charged the newly appointed commissioners in the state to discharge their duties with utmost sincerity as servant leaders without fear or favour.

Ododo gave the charge recently in Government House, Lokoja, during the swearing-in of seven commissioners as members of the State Executive Council.

The governor, who stated that the commissioners were carefully selected based on competence and ability to deliver, said

From **AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja**

they don't have any reason to fail in the task ahead of them.

"We are expected to hit the ground running for a new era in the development of the state. You should be ready to discharge your duties creditably without fear or favour because it is our collective responsibility to move the state forward.

"The immediate past administration led by Governor Yahaya Bello has laid down a formidable foundation for us to follow, and it is expected of us to consolidate on those

achievements to further move the state to enviable height.

"I sincerely urge all of you to give your best, work harmoniously as a team with one another and as the governor of the state I will be honest, transparent to render our selfless service to Kogi people to justify the mandate given to us during the November 11, 2023 governorship election" Governor Ododo said.

While appreciating the good people of Kogi State and other stakeholders for their unwavering support before, during and after the election, the governor urged them to unite in the interest of peaceful coexistence of the people.

"Kogi State is blessed with enormous potentials and we can only harness them if we are living as one indivisible entity. This administration is your government and you should all pray for the success of this administration.

"We cannot build a house and destroy it. That is why I am appealing to you and seeking your sincere support to enable us serve you to the best of our ability" he stated.

Speaking on behalf of other commissioners, Hon. Salami Ozigi Deedat, expressed appreciation to

the governor for appointing them to serve under the current administration.

"We will be loyal, obedient and transparent in all our activities as members of the state executive council", he promised.

# BSEMA to address IDPs camps' humanitarian crisis

**T**HE Acting Executive Secretary, Benue State Emergency Management Agency (BSEMA), James Iorpuu has assured Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) that the state governor, Rev. Fr. Dr. Hyacinth Alia was working tirelessly to collaborate with local and International partners to bring a permanent solution to their plight.

Iorpuu stated this recently when he led a team of Disaster Assessment Response Team (DART) from the United States Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (U.S BHA) to the IDP camps in continuation of their needs and impact assessment tour.

He said the camp to camp tour by the international body was in line with Governor Alia's comprehensive humanitarian response that was people-centred, context-specific, contributing to community resilience and provision of durable solutions to protracted internal displacement.

The BSEMA ES along with US BHA's delegation and key partners, visited Gbajimba Camp II, Daudu Camp II and Ortese IDP Camps all in Guma Local Government

Area of the state

Headed by Mr. Patrick Robin, the delegation while interacting with the camp management, IDPs and representatives of host communities, said the visit was to get first hand information about the IDPs' situation and present their report as well as explore how best the US government could collaborate and work together with Benue State government in alleviating their sufferings.

"The humanitarian challenges facing Benue State

are huge and require a strong and comprehensive response". Patrick Robin said.

During the visit, some of the IDPs were asked what triggered a humanitarian crisis and their most pressing needs and they provided the team with valuable information for their plight and concern, calling for adequate, strong and inclusive security from government to ensure their safe return to their ancestral homes to continue with their normal life.



Ododo



Iorpuu

## SUNDAY POLITICS

# Issues to shape second half of legislative year

**Nigeria's House of Representatives will this week resume from its four-week recess. The House of Representatives had on Saturday, 30 December, 2023, proceeded on a break to allow representatives deepen constituency outreach and spend the end-of-year festivities with constituents, AKIN ROTIMI writes.**

**T**HIS followed the passage of the 2024 Appropriation Bill (now Act) at a special session held to consider and adopt the report of the Rep. Abubakar Kabir Abubakar-led House Committee on Appropriation. President Bola Ahmed Tinubu had presented the budget proposal before parliament on 29 November, 2023. The 2024 Budget totaling N28,777,404,072,861 was signed into law by Mr President on 1st January.

Themed, 'Budget of Renewed Hope;' it is the first substantive appropriation considered and passed by the Tenth House of Representatives since inauguration, and it focuses on job-rich economic growth, human security, and macro-economic stability.

Following its inauguration in June 2023, the House of Representatives has recorded significant legislative outputs over the first half of its first legislative year (June 2023- June 2024). The House made significant strides in fostering greater collaboration with citizens in key legislative activities. Shortly after inauguration, a Citizens' Town Hall was held on 25 July, 2023 to receive public input in the Legislative Agenda. Similar town halls were held on 28 November, 2023, and on 4 December, 2023, to harness public input in the proposed amendment of the Electoral Act 2022 and the 2024 Budget Proposal, respectively.

On 21 November, 2023, the Sectoral Debates Series was successfully introduced for the Green Chamber to engage the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) of government and better understand their unique challenges. The House also reviewed its Standing Orders to incorporate technological advancements such as E-Parliament to better adapt to changing needs, and also in line with international standards and best practices.

Highly responsive and committed to ameliorating the suffering of constituents, and contributing to Nigeria's overall peace and development, the House considered 500 Motions on pressing matters affecting the people. However, one key achievement of the House that must be highlighted is the unveiling of an eight-point Legislative Agenda on 14 November, 2023, which outlines clear and specific objectives to be achieved in the life of the Tenth Assembly.

Previous assemblies have had legislative agendas, but the Rt. Hon. Abbas Tajudeen-led 10th House has raised the bar with key priorities, including: (i) Strengthening Good Governance, (ii) Improving National Security, (iii) Law reforms, (iv) Economic Growth and Development, (v) Social Sector Reforms and Development, (vi) Inclusion and Open parliament, (vii) Influencing Foreign Policy, and (viii) Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability.

Key attributes of this Agenda of 'The People's House' indicate a huge improvement on this ethical framework set by previous Assemblies. These include:



1. Far-reaching consultations that informed its priorities and public input through representatives of ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs), civil society organisations (CSOs), development partners, and other relevant stakeholders.

2. Modes of monitoring and evaluating progress which includes the constitution of a Standing Committee for this purpose.

3. Codification into a public document (hard and digital forms) to enhance accessibility and accountability.

4. Careful alignment with the 8-Point Agenda of the Executive to ensure policy consistency and coherence.

5. Implementation strategy which is divided into short, medium and long term goals stands it out from previous efforts.

As part of efforts towards the achievement of its strengthening good governance priority, the House outlined the initiation of legal reforms to address systemic human right issues among the medium term goals for 2024-2025. In line with this, the House passed the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (Repeal and Enactment) Bill, 2023.

This is in addition to enhanced collaboration with national and international institutions as well as development partners in the areas of Town Halls held so far, and other strategic areas. All of these efforts are targeted at strengthening the various Committees of the House to enhance their oversight functions and improving the National Assembly's delivery.

Remarkably, in just six months, many other short and even medium term goals as outlined in "The People's House Legislative Agenda" have been achieved. Thus, looking forward, as the House resumes full legislative business this Tuesday, the following issues are expected to frame legislative proceedings and deliberations, and define the second half of the first legislative year (June 2023-June 2024). These are:

1. Security: The country is currently experiencing rising security challenges in the form of

kidnapping, banditry, and other criminal activities. Even Abuja, the federal capital territory, has not been left out, and has witnessed the abduction and murder of innocent citizens. The Plateau Crisis which elicited a statement from Mr. Speaker, amongst other security issues in the country, continues to put these issues on the front burner. Expectations are rife that the People's House will take bold steps in addressing insecurity from a legislative standpoint.

2. Constitution Amendment: There have been increased calls from stakeholders, on the need for the National Assembly to cure the 1999 Constitution of its perceived defects. The efforts of previous assemblies which have resulted in five alterations to the document between 2003 and 2023, is widely considered inadequate. Agitations for amendments to key areas have intensified, including calls for the establishment of state and community-led police structures; justice sector reforms; fiscal federalism; strengthening local government administration and increased devolution of power; e.t.c. As the House resumes, Nigerians would be looking to the Rt. Hon. Benjamin Kalu-led House Committee on Constitution Review to make progress in the efforts for further amendments to the 1999 constitution (as amended).

3. Electoral Reforms: As preparations intensify for the off-cycle elections in some states of the federation in the second half of 2024, the calls for electoral reforms will continue to dominate conversations in the country. Nigerians will be looking to the National Assembly for key reforms of the electoral process as we promised in our legislative agenda, to, amongst other things, improve the transparency and credibility of democratic ritual of elections, provide for stiff sanctions for electoral offences, and stem the judiciary's influence on the electoral process, and 'over-judicialisation' of electoral outcomes in a way that undermines public confidence, and could erode the legitimacy of political leadership.

4. Legislative Oversight: In line

with the commitment to Anti-Corruption and Improved Legislative Oversight under its Agenda One: Strengthening Good Governance, the House streamlined the mandates of committees to avoid overlap and conflicts. It also rationalised the membership of committees to enable more informed decision-making, better management of workload, and improved legislative quality.

On resumption, the House is expected to undertake more public hearings (including investigative panels) to probe a number of issues before the various Standing Committees. Between June and December 2023, the House constituted 30 ad-hoc Committees to conduct investigative hearings and make recommendations on pressing national issues for necessary legislative action. With the reports of 25 already submitted and four considered, the reports of the other Committees will occupy the front burner on resumption.

5. Public Petitions: The House since inauguration has received a hundred and fifty-three (153) petitions from various citizens across the country which are receiving necessary legislative actions. The Rep. Mike Etaba-led House Committee on Public Petitions has quietly achieved commendable success in helping Nigerians get succor from the People's House. The outcome of hearings on one of these petitions resulted in the payment of a compensation package amounting to Thirty Million Naira (N30,000,000) for Citizen Tairu Quadri Adewale; an Amputee Electricity Worker neglected for 15 years. Notably, the House of Representatives on Tuesday, 5 December, 2023, facilitated the presentation of the sum as a Final Settlement of Liability Claims Cheque to him by the Nigerian Electricity Liability Management Company (NELMCO) management.

Quadri; a 400-Level Electrical Engineering intern from the Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, had suffered electrocution in May 2008 while on duty for the defunct Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) in Lagos. The House through its Committee on Public Petitions will

be engaged in facilitating more of such settlements as well as the resolution of more issues arising from petitions already submitted for its consideration. Similarly, more petitions from distressed citizens will be laid before parliament.

6. Bills Progression: In its first six months, the House received 962 bills, out of which 120 have passed Second Reading and are currently undergoing in-depth analysis at the Committee stage. These bills are intended to provide immediate relief and long-term solutions to the challenges that have plagued our society. With the resumption of the House, reports on a majority of these bills will be laid before parliament for consideration and adoption ahead of third reading and passage.

More bills are expected to move through the various parliamentary stages and be presented for the President's assent. Through these bills, citizens will be better empowered, while peace, security and social justice will be enhanced.

7. State of the Economy: In spite of major efforts by the Federal Government to boost economic growth, a lot still needs to be done to ameliorate the pains felt by constituents across the country. The House will continue to support the Executive arm of government in the implementation of the 'Renewed Hope Agenda', and hold entities of the executive arm of government accountable. Efforts in these regards will include ensuring efficient and effective deployment of public resources especially through the use of hearings and oversight visits. The House will also enhance the Sectoral Debates started in November 2023, to promote transparency and accountability in government operations in line with our Legislative Agenda.

8. Constituency Outreach: With the 2024 budget now in place, supervision of the implementation of the budget will occupy a prominent place in the activities of Honourable Members. As part of the representative function of lawmakers, Honourable Members are primarily involved in influencing and facilitating projects and programmes in their respective constituencies. Honourable Members are thus expected to also be occupied with more robust constituency outreaches, and supervising effective delivery of these initiatives for the benefit of our constituents.

9. Influencing Foreign Policy: Last but not least, in line with the legislative agenda, the House is expected to take key legislative actions on key foreign policy imperatives, including the need to address the current impasse in the ECOWAS region. This is because peace and stability in the region has implications on our domestic affairs.

Year 2024 holds a lot of promise for the country's future and it is imperative for all hands to move our country forward. Nation building is a Joint Task, and the 10th Assembly is set with renewed vigour, to continue to play our own part in rebuilding our great country, Nigeria.

**Akin Rotimi is the House spokesman and chairman, House Committee on Media and Public Affairs.**

## SUNDAY POLITICS

## Personalities, institutions that'll shape politics in 2024

Going by predictions of political analysts 2024 might turn out to be a year of great politicking amidst preparations for the off-cycle elections, among others. In this report, KEHINDE OSASONA gives more insight into personalities and institutions that will shape the year. More than anyone else, the Nigerian President and Commander-In-Chief of the Armed Forces, Federal Republic of Nigeria, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, would play a big role both in his capacity as President and father of the nation, and as an astute political strategist.

TINUBU, a staunch member and co-founder of the All Progressives Congress (APC), was the party candidate in the last election. He was declared a winner by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), after he defeated three other candidates to occupy the Aso Rock Presidential Villa.

His journey to the peak of his political career was not a walk in the park, as it was fiercely fought for.

One of his many battles that readily comes to mind is "emi lo kan", a political slogan that later transmuted into a very powerful political statement.

A few months after taking the mantle of leadership in Nigeria, the former Lagos state governor has continued to demonstrate capacity that he has been known for.

Not only has he rolled out policies capable of shaping the nation's political and economic landscape, he has equally demonstrated to all that governance is serious business; just as he has promised to turn Nigeria's economy into a \$1 trillion economy. Tinubu hit the ground running when he appointed ministers capable of manning critical sectors of the economy. He followed it up by pursuing his eight-points agenda christened 'Renewed Hope' with focus on poverty alleviation, food security, job creation, economic growth, graft fight, access to capital to aid businesses, enthronement of rule of law, inclusion among others.

As a foremost political activist, the 'Jagaban of Borgu Kingdom' as he is fondly called is expected to churn out more policies and make some pronouncements like he did with the fuel subsidy regime.

More importantly, Tinubu, who recently played key roles in ensuring that the Kano and Rivers imbroglio does not result in a fracas of any kind appears to be working towards entrenching a democratic culture buoyed in enduring political ideologies as obtained in America and other European countries.

It would not be out of place to say that Tinubu is in charge of affairs in the country and will play major roles that will shape politics in the country this year.

Former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, who was the candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the 2023 presidential election, is another political figure poised to make a difference in 2024. An avowed political war horse and game master, the Turakin Adamawa as fondly called by admirers, is a typical cat with nine lives in the political fraternity.

After losing out to Tinubu, both in the field and at the Supreme Court, the Adamawa state-born politician has continued with criticism of government policies, while proffering alternatives.

Aside from faulting Tinubu's plan on the proposed palliatives to cushion the effect of the subsidy removal a few months back, he also cautioned PDP National Assembly members-elect to discharge their responsibilities according to the provisions of the Constitution and not become "rubber-stamp legislature".

Although some have argued that Atiku will, as usual, run to Dubai to look after his businesses after losing the election, he is still in the country. It remains to be seen how he strikes a balance between business and being a viable opposition figure.

Atiku, a rallying point in the PDP any day, has continued calling for a viable opposition to wrest power from the ruling APC come 2027. So, he is a man to watch out for.

Not many people gave him a chance to get to where he is today, however,



Tinubu



Abubakar



Obi

Peter Obi, a former governor of Anambra state and presidential candidate of the Labour Party (LP) in the 2023 general elections, has not only proved his mettle in politics, as his last outing rattled political heavyweights where he demystified 'structure' as a hype lexicon in politics.

Interestingly, rather than recoiling back into his shell, Obi has lately demonstrated that he would still be around to justify the good outing recorded during the presidential contest was not a fluke.

Just recently, as a pointer to his readiness to play the role of a viable opposition leader, Obi faulted the signing into law of the N2.17 trillion supplementary budget by President Tinubu, arguing the president failed to consider certain emergencies and pressing needs of the country.

While also underscoring the nation's challenges, he attributed the failure of successive administrations to priorities expenditure on critical areas like national development and security, expressing regrets that it was weighing down the nation. Obi by his current disposition is here to stay and will be playing a big part in what goes where politically.

Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso, is another former presidential candidate in the 2023 general election. Kwankwaso who flew the flag of the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) has grown over the years into political heavyweight and one of the most sought-after politicians.

Kwankwaso, who is also a former governor of Kano state and an ex-minister of defence, had it well last year when he successfully extended his political tentacles to other parts of the country, where he got sizable votes outside his stronghold in the North-west region.

The recent pronouncement by the apex court affirming that his protégé, Engr Yusuf Abba-Kabir, won the last governorship election in Kano state has further conferred on him an opportunity to consolidate his winning streak, especially in Kano where he has a strong base.

Aside from unleashing his political prowess to shape the polity in the coming months, Kwankwaso's next

political move in 2024 will surely make headline news.

Vice President Kashim Shettima is no doubt an asset to the Tinubu-led administration. He is one person that you underrate at your peril. This 'enigma' who mobilised the North heavily for the Tinubu/Shettima joint ticket will no doubt play more prominent roles politically, and in other spheres.

As a governor in Borno state, like Tinubu he left a lasting legacy both in terms of bridging infrastructural deficits in their states and choosing a capable successor.

Very tactical, blunt, and loyal, this former banker-turned-politician dwarfed his opponents with his brilliant submission during the vice presidential debate preceding the 2023 election and at the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) conference held in Lagos.

His disposition according to some political pundits may have helped swayed votes to the ruling APC in the 2023 election. Shettima has proven over the months that he was a good choice for the APC.

In 2024, Shettima, who has also been traveling within and outside the country to shop for investors, market and brand the country's image will surely play a big role in the nation's polity.

Despite coming from a state being ruled by the opposition, the current Senate President, Godswill Akpabio, is a game changer par excellence.

Close associates claim that politics without bitterness, a trait that has endeared him to the Akwa-Ibom people and Nigeria as a whole has remained his watchword.

Akpabio a few days showcased his readiness to play a key role in 2024 and beyond to ensure that APC, his party produces the next governor in the state come 2027.

Speaking at a meeting of the APC leaders in Uyo, the state capital, Akpabio said: "It will be an aberration for the number three citizen not to have a governor from the same party at the end of an election."

The Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Barr. Nyesom Wike, is a former governor of Rivers state and

a member of the PDP. However, he played a key role in the emergence of Tinubu, who was the APC presidential candidate in the 2023 elections.

Wike, last year, dismissed speculations that he could revive his presidential ambition in 2027, saying that as a man who abhors disloyalty he cannot contest against his boss, President Tinubu. Wike said he remained committed to the successes of the Tinubu administration. He said, "Tinubu made me the FCT minister and I won't allow anybody to crumble our political structure. No!"

As a pointer to Wike's vow, some assemblymen and foot soldiers loyal to him recently dumped PDP for APC, a scenario tilting to the possibility that he may be joining APC or working for the party.

Ahead of the 2023 election, the quest for justice over zoning of the presidential position led to six governors: Wike (Rivers state); Seyi Makinde (Oyo state); Samuel Ortom (Benue state); Okezie Ikpeazu (Abia state); and Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi (Enugu state); all of the PDP to form the G-5 group, who canvassed that power should shift to the South after former President Muhammadu Buhari who is from the North.

Although the group had a reunion a few days back, for now, fingers are crossed as to how things play out in months to come.

PDP  
The sustenance of democracy no doubt requires vibrant opposition and with the look of things, the main opposition party in the country has through its stance over the month demonstrated readiness for such a role.

CNPP  
The Conference of Nigerian Political Parties (CNPP) recently charged President Tinubu to reduce cases of corruption and abuse of office among ministers and civil servants for the masses to breathe.

In an open letter addressed to the President and dated January 8 and released in Lagos, the CNPP listened to Tinubu's New Year message and observed the various responses from Nigerians to all promises.

The letter, titled: "Reduce

Corruption in Your Administration", was signed by the Secretary General, CNPP South-west, Oloye Adegboye-Adeniji,

Adegboye-Adeniji urged the President not to forget years of struggle as a veteran activist and opposition leader from the days of Gen. Ibrahim Babangida's transition process that culminated in the annulment of the June 12, 1993, general elections.

With the look of things, therefore, it appears CNPP is poised to play a big role in 2024.

Judiciary  
The judiciary is one of the three arms of government and has been in the eye of the storm in recent times. While speaking at a 3-day retreat for Justices of the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal, organised by the Attorney General Alliance-Africa (AGA-AFRICA) in collaboration with the National Judicial Institute (NJI) in Uyo, Akwa Ibom state capital, last year, the Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN), Justice Olukayode Ariwoola, charged the judiciary to be neutral arbiters and sustain the ethos of democracy to gain public confidence.

The CJN, who was represented by Justice Helen Ogunwumiju said the theme of the retreat, "Achieving Efficiency and Effectiveness in Judicial System in Nigeria" was apt, saying it would serve as a constant reminder to judicial officers of the crucial role they play in the society towards the attainment of a stable polity.

Apart from helping to settle disputes occasioned by the just concluded elections across the board, it is obvious that the third arm of government has more crucial roles to play in 2024 and beyond.

Media  
Free Press had from time immemorial been an anchor through which democratic governance thrives.

Apart from setting agenda for successive governments, practitioners in the fourth estate of the realm have argued that democracy cannot thrive without effective media. Going forward, the media's role once more cannot be overemphasized.

# SUNDAY PEOPLE

## SENATE/REPRESENTATIVE RE-RUN ELECTIONS 2024

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) set aside the 3rd February 2024 to conduct rerun elections in the 26 States of the Federation. Flag off in Plateau state, the Northern Senatorial seat and Jos North/Bassa Federal Constituency election



Eligible voters waiting to perform their civic rights at the Arin Izang Polling Unit of Jos North North



Cross section of elderly captured in a photograph after voting at one of the Units



INEC officials attending to voters at 009 Sarki Street Unit of Jos North LGA



This woman is seen casting her ballot



Commercial buses being checked at one of the check points



NTA Jos Network Centre captured on duty



NYSC Corp members waiting patiently for eligible voters



Voters queuing up at a Polling Unit visited by our photographer

PHOTOS: DANLADI DUK



**I**T is no longer news that all is not well at the Plateau State House of Assembly, following the series of court judgements and subsequent power struggle between lawmakers and intending members of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and those of the All Progressive Congress (APC). Recall that recently, the issue took a different dimension when the sacked PDP members attempted to attend plenary as the House reconvened after about two months of recess. As expected, the issue has continued to generate reactions and is a topic of discourse amongst not only Plateau citizens but political analysts across the country. Do they have the right to sit? What does the constitution say about it? This week's edition takes a look at the various opinions of both stakeholders and the general public concerning the matter.

"The Plateau State House of Assembly is nobody's personal property; there are rules and regulations guiding the operation of the House. If he (speaker) doesn't know the rules, those of us from outside will educate him. He is one of the eight members, and he is a minority among the eight, so he cannot hold the seven others to ransom. Nature abhors vacuum, his election as speaker is illegal and he knows it, his election is part of the rascality of PDP; they cannot continue to hold the people of Plateau State to ransom..."

**Sylvanus Namang, State Publicity Secretary APC**

"In my personal opinion, I think the speaker of the Plateau State House of Assembly is playing a script that may affect his political ambition going forward. Why can't he just swear in the new members and allow the law to take its course while the other sacked members follow the law to pursue their case? Where is the Plateau interest in all these power tussle, if really it is all about representation?"

"Why hurriedly go on a recess even when you know there will be a court order to distract your resumption for another legislative period? We must not allow Plateau citizens to continue to suffer in the hands of selfish politicians please. All these things happening are never in the interest of Plateau people. Rather, what we see is a clear indication of political power tussle."

**Amb. Joachim, political public commentator**

"The APC members were not duly elected by the people. The rightful office holders should resume back to office, pending when the court gives a clearer directive. If we want peace, we must stop beating around the bush and allow the right thing to be done."

**Monday Emmanuel, political analyst**

"In the first place, the two months recess was unconstitutional and a deliberate plan to delay their swearing in. The recess is in prejudice to Section 104 of the 1999 Constitution as amended. Moreover, the timetable of legislative business of the Plateau State of Assembly was

developed in line with the provisions of Section 104 of the 1999 Constitution as amended. In line with the section, the House of Assembly must sit for a period of not less than one hundred and eighty one days in a year. Any motion, resolution or bill that is in prejudice to Section 104 will not fly".

**Hon. Daniel Nanbol Listick,** former member and now Labour Party member representing Langtang North Central constituency). Bld "My words of advice to the



## Still on Plateau Assembly impasse



**Dewan**

speaker, Plateau State House of Assembly. You are still young and have a promising future in politics. Respect court orders so that it will not be registered against you as someone who at one point in time disrespected court order. Let the former lawmakers seek for redress through the court. You will one day approach the same court, imagine what will happen to you if you disrespect its orders".

**Wudapba Pofitgak, Student**

"For me, our judicial system needs to be blamed for everything happening at the Plateau State House of Assembly. There is no doubt that the judiciary has been compromised and is complicit in the matter. If the Appeal Court based on evidences and facts made available to it decided to sack and nullify the election of sixteen PDP members while

certificates of return were issued to the APC members by INEC, who then should be occupying the seats? They are the authentic members of the state assembly in my opinion. The courts should stop confusing us please, what court order are we talking about again? Lastly, I appeal to Mr. Speaker please swear in the APC members and save us the trouble of court cases".

**Rahab Matamba,** Civil Servant, Plateau State Secretariat)Bld "The House of Assembly speaker by his refusal to swear in the APC members even after they have been issued with their certificate of return is unconstitutional. The PDP sacked members should be the ones obeying any court order. They have been acting in ways that will jeopardise the peace of the state. Their actions, especially threatening to resume sitting in the first place does not speak well of them as lawmakers because what example are they giving to the public. As lawmakers, they should be worthy of emulation.

"Furthermore, with the closure of the House of Assembly for some months now, nothing tangible has been done because members cannot sit and make laws or take decisions on policies affecting the state. For example, the insecurity in the state. Just look at the killings, maimings and wanton destruction of properties that has been going on in some local communities. These problems need inputs from the lawmakers and because of their absence, some resolutions which may have helped are lacking. At this crucial period, more important matters such as the protection of lives should be of utmost priority rather than jostling for power. All hands must be on deck to ensure that this ugly situation is salvaged so that the state and people will enjoy the dividends of democracy".

**Mirabel Lokdomwa A.D,** Research Consultant



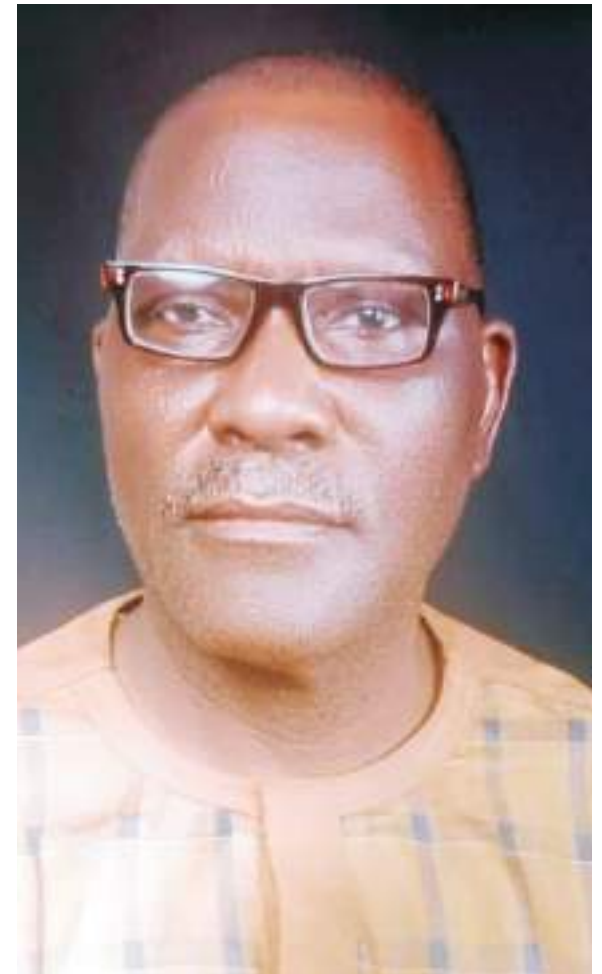
SUNDAY MAGAZINE



Mutfwang



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Gujor

## Unending terrorists' attacks: Undermining Plateau's corporate existence

*In the past few months, it has not been well with the citizens of Plateau State following the unending brutal Fulani herders' attacks on several communities across the Plateau Central zone. The most recent skirmishes started after the marauders targeted many villages in Mangu, Bokkos and Barkin Ladi Local Government Areas of the state last year's Christmas Eve. Bulus Gambo, writes.*

**T**HE attacks on these communities eventually resulted in the death of over 200 innocent lives and severe damages to crops and properties worth billions of naira. Though, last year's attack was not the first, evidences have clearly indicated that since pre-colonial Nigeria, attacks against the state have been based on intriguing gimmicks which left behind devastating consequences on its populace.

During this pre-colonial era, these planned attacks against some of these vulnerable communities within the Middle Belt region have been based on religious fallacies linked to jihad and or expansion of territorial occupation. In the aftermath of the colonial period, the perpetrators of these heinous crimes eventually changed tactics, spreading a concept to confuse many even as they continue to unleash terror on the lives of many more vulnerable communities in the country.

This time around, many scholars have attributed such attacks to overpopulation, climate change effects in the midst of terrorist submissions that they are waging a religious war against infidels.

USAID believes Nigeria's ongoing crises highlights how fragility-climate risks can heighten populations' insecurity by increasing their vulnerability to humanitarian

emergencies and conflicts. Nigeria's crisis in the north for example, reflects emergency conditions and famine risk that are not caused by climate factors alone but also by longstanding environment stress coupled with poor national management of the security, economic and social conditions in the region. Likewise, the escalating security situation in the middle belt involves a highly climate-exposed region where the state has provided only limited response to growing food insecurity and ongoing tensions between Fulani herders and non-Fulani farmers over the use of land and water resources.

Interestingly, while Nigeria according to its report faces extensive climate risks, the severity of fragility and conflict in the country has hindered its response to these climate challenges. This is a critical connection since environmental stress-coupled with government mismanagement of environmental and or other stressors contributes to instability the country now faces from food crises and land conflicts, risking a dangerous feedback loop between herders and farmers in the middle belt and simmering tensions over management of natural resources.

In the real sense of it however, many Nigerians perceive these unabated violent attacks to acts of land grabbing and

expansionist ideology in contemporary civilized times.

According to Institute for Integrated Transitions on the quest to ending violence in Nigeria's Middle Belt region, "conflicts in the Middle Belt, the most ethnically and religiously diverse region of the country, generate significant interest among Nigeria's Muslim north and predominantly Christian south. Politicians and important social organizations and leaders often court key groups in the region to advance their interests-including a quest for political power and control of economic resources. These interventions shape the dynamics of the region, and in turn affect broader dynamics in the country."

The institute further acknowledges that "the predominant source of conflict state wide is land, as it is the main source of wealth for the mostly agrarian population of the state... Beyond these cross-border conflicts over land amongst communities near the boundaries of Plateau State and especially Benue State have increased in recent years leading to growing tensions and violence."

Sad enough, the significant devastation of insecurity in the middle belt has continued to affect all states within the region. Most of these affected states are yet to recover due to the failure of government to end this menace.

Nasiru Zubairu in his work, *Rising Insecurity in Nigeria: Cause and solutions*, notes that "in contemporary world, the security of life and property remains significant to the socio-economic survival of any given society. To achieve that the government owns the responsibility of adequately provide security in a given social formation. Security is the most vital element in human life. Without it, social, economic and political achievements cannot be attained. Every nation struggles to protect and deepened its core values aimed at enabling people to lead their lives in free and secure environments according to their shared common beliefs by preserving their national interest, identity and sovereignty."

He further explains that "rising of insecurity is on the verge of being Nigeria's heritage as no single day goes by without acts of insecurity. More worrying is the fact that for undisclosed reasons, the Nigerian government seems unable to curb this threat or doesn't want to stop it, despite the pronouncement by former President Muhammadu Buhari after winning the 2015 elections. Nigeria currently appears to be grappling with security problems and these cuts through its six region, but particularly in the north east, north central and south south regions.

The most recent unprovoked attacks on the Plateau has in the past few months generated controversies around the nation. Indeed, the ferocious and sophisticated way and manner these attacks are coordinated and carried out has further solidify claims that the perpetrators have perhaps rejuvenated their grand plans to expand their quest to suffocate the Plateau natives to their advantage. Though the state has been under the radar for quite a long time, the Mangu, Bokkos and Barkin Ladi most recent attacks speak volume of how they care less about terminating as many human lives as possible to achieve their set objectives.

Though the issue of farmer-herders conflict in central Nigeria has lingered for a long time, this most recent attacks have surprised many people in the country. On Christmas Eve of 2023, over 200 lives were terminated by these marauders in the area. Other areas attached included Bokkos and Barkin Ladi Local Government Areas.

In Mangu, the marauders attacked villages including Kwalhaslalek, Kinat and Mairana located on the borders of Mangu and Barkin Ladi. In the aftermath of the most recent incident, the Plateau State Governor Caleb Mutfwang imposed a 24-hour curfew. The conflict in the heart of town nearly took a religious dimension but for the quick intervention of the Governor.

What kept many citizens

*Continued on page 31*

NEWS

**Don't present Staff of Office to Alamura - SPANCI**

From MUSLIUDEEN ADEBAYO, Ibadan

A human rights group, Save the Poor and Needy Charity Initiative (SPANCI) has advised Governor Seyi Makinde of Oyo State not to present Staff of Office to Deacon Samuel Oladejo Olakunle, as the Alamura of Amura land in Orire Local Government of the state. The group made this appeal via a petition signed by its President, Comrade Yemi Ezekiel Bello and addressed to the governor. The petition was made available to journalists recently in Ibadan, the state capital. Our correspondent gathered that the state government had concluded plans to present Staff of Office to Olakunle as Alamura of Amura on Friday 2nd of February 2024. But, Bello in the petition alleged that Olakunle is standing a criminal trial in suit No: MI/1047C/2023 at a Magistrate Court in Ibadan. He added that Oyo State government has prosecuted and arraigned Olakunle in the Magistrate Court in Ibadan after he refused to appear for interrogation and investigation on some criminal allegations bodering on land grabbing, sponsoring hooligans and thugs. Bello, speaking further, maintained that the Ministry of Local Government and

Chieftaincy Matters is aware that Olakunle has pending criminal cases against him in the court and pending petition before the ministry. He therefore urged the governor not to present the Staff of Office to him. "Urgent petition against an act of unlawful upcoming presentation of Staff of Office as traditional ruler to Deacon Olakunle Oladejo Samuel as the Alamura of Amura land, Orire Local Government, Ikoyi Ile Oyo State, an act that can lead to perversion, prevention, obstruction and defeat of cause of justice in suit number: MI/1047C/2023. "We have been reliably informed and have also confirmed from our clients, Pa Thomas Ademola Bamigbala and Chief Adeoye Akinpelu, the Onilodo of Iloilo and instructed by them to write this letter so that their rights might be protected. "Our client said the Ministry for Local Government already knows that Deacon Oladejo has pending criminal cases against him in the court and pending petition before the ministry and also referred to them from the state's Real Property Protection and Anti Land Grabbing Task Force bodering on the real Alamura of Amura title between him and Pa Moses Ajani. "We believe that the administration of his Excellency, Engineer Seyi Makinde is a very noble and



MAKINDE

justice serving administration and will never be involved in illegality. And also the office of the Honorable Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Matters should not be involved in any act that can lead to perversion, prevention, obstruction and defeat of cause of justice as the Honorable Commissioner is a law abiding and God fearing personality per excellence. "We also know that it is wrong for the state government to prosecute someone and also select him for coronation or presentation of Staff of Office to the same person standing criminal trial in court of law as

this will be a bad precedent. "We therefore humbly refer the state through the Ministry for Local Government and Chieftaincy Matters to the state's taskforce on Real Property Protection and Anti- land grabbing for verification of our claim since his case file is with them. "We also humbly request for immediate removal of Deacon Olakunle Oladejo Samuel, the self-acclaimed Alamura of Amura from those who will be presented with the Staff of Office on Friday 2nd of February 2024 just two days more in the interest of justice and not politics.

**Gov. Bala commends commissioner for proactiveness**

From ABBAS GUNGURA, Bauchi

THE Executive Governor of Bauchi State, Senator Bala Mohammed, has commended Bauchi State Commissioner of Cooperatives, Small and Medium Enterprises Development, Hon. Sadiq Hamisu Shira, for his tireless efforts and constant consultation with critical stakeholders for the advancement and overall development of SMEs in the state.

He heartily gave the commendation when he received in audience, the Director-General, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDA), Mr Charles Odii at the Bauchi State Government Lodge in Abuja. Governor Bala Mohammed gave the assurance that his government will continue to support the commissioner to consolidate on the existing partnership between Bauchi State Government

and SMEDAN on the targeted programmes that will foster job creation, reduce poverty and address youth's restiveness in the state. According to him, "Small and Medium Enterprises are important for economic growth and development, regional development, flexibility, social impact, and diversification of the economy". While appreciating the role being played by SMEDAN in the development of the country, Governor Mohammed highlighted that their contributions are vital for a thriving and resilient economy thus making SMEs a key component of sustainable and inclusive economic development. The governor therefore, used this opportunity to request and extend invitation to the SMEDAN and other enterprises, organizations to attend the zonal trade fair scheduled to hold in Bauchi in the month of February 2024. On his part, the Director-General, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), Mr Charles Odii appreciated the efforts of the Bauchi Governor in the areas of

strengthening SMEs activities by providing them with technical and financial services to enhance their operations. The DG acknowledged the empowerment programme launched by the governor across the 20 local government areas of Bauchi and assured of his agency's support for more interventions in the state for the benefit of the citizens aimed at tackling poverty, unemployment, and youth restiveness. Our correspondent reports that the Commissioner of Cooperatives, Small and Medium Enterprises Development, Hon. Sadiq Hamisu Shira, on his earlier visit to the SMEDAN DG, explained that it was part of his ministry's consultation with critical partners for the development of SMEs in the state. Hamisu Shira reiterated his unwavering commitment towards supporting the administration of Governor Bala Mohammed to implement all its policies and programmes on SMEs for the economic growth and development.



Bala



**2024 budget scales second reading in Senate**

The 2024 budget scaled the second reading in the Senate on Friday.

**Senate urges Nigerian govt to withhold statutory allocations of LGAs with unelected officials**

The Senate on Friday urged the Federal Government to withhold statutory allocations of local government councils whose officials were not democratically elected

**President Tinubu targets 3.76% economic growth in 2024 fiscal year**

President Bola Tinubu, on Wednesday, revealed that his administration is targeting a 3.76 per cent economic growth in the next fiscal year.

**Ethiopian Airlines bans Nigerians from using Ghana-must-go bags on its flights**

The Ethiopian Airlines has banned passengers from bringing 'Ghana-must-go' bags on any of its flights from Nigeria.

**Buhari was not in charge of his govt —Ndume**

The Senate Chief Whip, Ali Ndume, said on Friday former President Muhammadu Buhari was not in charge of his government

**Air Force helicopter crash lands in Port Harcourt**

A military helicopter belonging to the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) crash-landed in Port Harcourt, the Rivers State capital, on Friday morning.

**Nigeria signs agreement with Germany to improve electricity supply**

Nigeria and Germany on Friday signed an agreement to improve electricity supply in the West African country

**CBN orders banks to freeze accounts without BVN, NIN from March 2024**

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has directed deposit money banks in the country to place a "No Debit" restriction on all accounts without a Bank Verification Number (BVN) and National Identification Number (NIN) from March 2024.

**AfDB, FSDH sign \$20 million agreement to support MSMEs in Nigeria**

The African Development Bank (AfDB) and FSDH have signed a new \$20 million Trade Finance Facility to support Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria.

**Fire guts ABU Senate Building in Zaria**

Fire on Friday gutted a section of Ahmadu Bello University's Senate Building at the Samaru Main Campus in Zaria.

**Police, ICPC clear singer D'banj of rape, fraud allegations**

The Nigeria Police Force and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) have cleared singer Dapo Oyebanjo aka D'banj of rape and fraud in the N-Power scheme.

**Nigerians bothered about rising food prices, not budget, says Rewane**

The Chief Executive Officer, Financial Derivatives Company Limited, Bismarck Rewane, has disclosed that Nigerians are more concerned about the ballooning cost of food items and not in the details of the 2024 budget recently presented to the National Assembly by President Bola Tinubu yesterday.

**Reps summon NUC, others over termination of law programme in NOUN**

The House of Representatives on Thursday invited the Acting Executive Secretary of the National University Commission (NUC) and the Director General for the Council of Legal Education over the termination of law programme at the National Open University Commission (NOUN).

**Only PDP can decide Edo governorship candidate for 2024 – Obaseki**

The Edo State Governor, Godwin Obaseki, said on Thursday the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has the sole right to determine its candidate for the September 21, 2024 governorship election in the state.

**Impeachment Saga: Court dismisses Ondo Assembly appeal against Aiyedatiwa after withdrawal**

The Abuja Division of the Appeal Court has dismissed an appeal filed by the Ondo House of Assembly against an earlier High Court judgment stopping the impeachment of the State Deputy Governor, Lucky Aiyedatiwa.

**2024 BUDGET: The important numbers and who gets what**

President Bola Tinubu on Wednesday presented the 2024 appropriation bill of the federal government of N27.5 trillion to a joint session of the National Assembly.

**Investors make N44bn as Nigeria's capital market ends month on positive note**

The Nigerian capital market continued its bullish run on Thursday with a 0.11% growth in the All-Share Index (ASI).

**Tonto Dikeh tackles Mohbad's father in open letter**

Nollywood actress Tonto Dikeh on Thursday took a swipe at Mr. Joseph Aloba, the father of late singer Ilerioluwa Aloba aka Mohbad for placing wealth above other considerations.

**Arsenal win Champions League group with Lens thrashing**

Premier League side Arsenal reached Champions League knockout stages as group winners following a 6-0 thrashing of French club Lens.

**Mob attacks INEC office in Kogi**

An angry mob on Wednesday attacked the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) office in Kogi State

**UCL: Barca beat Porto to reach last-16, Newcastle denied win at PSG**

Barcelona sealed an incredible comeback victory over Porto in their matchday five clash of the UEFA Champions League on Tuesday night.

Compiled by Lois Daduot

## SUNDAY FEATURE

# Living Wage: FG unveils negotiation committee

**Nigerian workers, expressed optimism as the Federal Government finally inaugurated a 37-man tripartite committee to plan a new national minimum wage for the country. TERHEMBA DAKA & GLORIA NWAFOR write.**

**C**URRENTLY on a private trip to France, President Bola Tinubu set out modalities for a comprehensive review of the existing minimum wage. Tinubu, represented by the Vice President, Kashim Shettima inaugurated the committee, with members drawn from Federal Government, state governments, Labour circle and the Organised Private Sector, urging them to employ collective bargaining agreement in their consultations to come up with a workable wage for workers.

He directed that governors, ministers and the head of the Civil Service of the Federation who are members of the committee must personally attend the committee meetings, and in the event where they are unavoidably absent, their deputies, commissioners and Permanent Secretaries should represent them.

Specifically, the tripartite committee is tasked with the responsibility of proposing a new national minimum wage for Nigerian workers.

Nkiru Onyejeocha, the Minister of State for Labour and Employment, in her remarks, charged the committee to expedite action and ensure that issues around the minimum wage were completed before the April deadline. "Everything we're going to do must end before April 1. There's no need to delay because it is something that is backed by law and we must obey the law".

Festus Osifo, president of the Trade Union Congress (TUC), lamented that workers were facing an excruciating period, assuring that the negotiation would stand out. "As of the time we proposed N200,000 minimum wage, if you can recall, inflation had not gotten to where it is today.

"Also, at that time, the official exchange rate was somewhere around N450 to \$1. At the parallel market, the rate was somewhere around N700 to \$1. But today, all these have been shattered. What that means is that we'll go back to the drawing board because Nigerian workers are battered as we speak; I mean the pay today is nothing," said Osifo.

On his part, Joe Ajaero, president of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), said the outcome will depend on the commitment of the Federal Government. "What is going to happen will depend on the commitment from the government and the negotiators.

"If the workers today are expectant, they want a robust minimum wage, I believe there won't be any rigidity coming from the angle of the



Ajero

Tinubu

government. So, I'm in line with what my TUC president said."

Humphrey Ngonadi, national president of the National Association of Chamber of Commerce (NACCIMA), expressed concern that the new minimum wage may be eroded by inflation and urged the Federal Government to first address inflation concerns.

"If a worker is paid N1 million as a minimum wage and a bag of rice is N900,000, the N1 million still has no meaning. So, as we are thinking of hiking the salary of the workers, the government should think of how that money will add value."

Ahead of negotiation on the new minimum wage, organised labour has proposed a living wage of \$300 for workers. It argued that the current minimum wage of N30,000 has since been eroded by the high exchange rate coupled with the abrupt removal of fuel subsidy which has translated into high cost of living in the country.

Chairman, Trade Union Side, Joint Meeting of the National Public Service Negotiating Council (JNPSNC), Benjamin Anthony, presenting the position of labour yesterday at the 2023 meetings of the Separate and Joint National Public Service Negotiating Council held at Goshen City, Nasarawa State.

Anthony, who was represented by the secretary of the union, Boma Mohammed, also frowned at the recent delays in payment of salaries by the Federal Government to workers, saying the trend must be stopped as the suffering in the land is already unbearable.

He said: "As earlier stated, the time to review our minimum wage has come, in doing this; we must all agree that the current wage of N30,000 has since been eroded by the high exchange rate coupled with the abrupt removal of fuel subsidy which has translated into high cost of living in the country.

"We call on the government to immediately pay the arrears of the N35,000 wage award along with the current and expedited action on the process of getting a new living wage to bring succour to the working class people."

Head of Civil Service of the Federation, Dr Folasade Yemi-Esan, the convener of the meeting, urged leaders of the organised labour to tow the path of dialogue in their engagements with government, to achieve peace and stability towards enhanced productivity in implementing government policies.

Yemi-Esan, who was represented at the event by the Director overseeing

the office of the Permanent Secretary, Service Welfare (SWO), Dr Kemi Adeosun, said she believed that the positive impact of the meeting and subsequent ones would serve to maintain a stable and goal-driven public service in the country.

Many of the workers, who spoke with The Guardian yesterday, commended the Federal Government on the move of the tripartite committee and sought for a minimum wage that would be commensurate enough to take them home.

A Level-8 civil servant with the Ministry of Works, Ikechukwu Nnanna, said he was hopeful that his story on finances would change this year, as he had been battling with financial challenges over low income. Expressing his confidence in the committee, he urged that the government, in the end, approve a wage that would be a win for all.

A Level-7 civil servant and mother of four, based in Lagos, Titilope Tijani, who prayed that a humane wage be negotiated, lamented that she had to pull her children from the private school they attended as she could not cope with their fees due to high inflation and cost of living.

A member of the tripartite committee and president of the Nigeria Employers' Consultative Association (NECA), Adewale-Smatt Oyerinde, submitted that everybody in the committee would come together to arrive at a consensus.

"We are looking forward to a collaborative negotiation and we trust that all social partners will approach the negotiation with good faith to ameliorate the economic situation of the country. Everybody expresses commitment to arrive at a good and acceptable workable minimum wage for workers," he said.

A top official of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), who craved anonymity, said he expects the committee to hit the ground running so that the report would be ready even before the end of March, by which time it would be assented to and become an Executive Bill that would be passed to the National Assembly for passage into law.

"We hope we can get a new Minimum Wage Act that comes in place before the expiration of the current one on April 19, 2024.

Already, ahead of yesterday's inauguration, The Guardian gathered that labour has been working round the clock to ensure that its wage demand can hardly be faulted by both

government and private sector employers.

To ensure that labour demand is data-based, NLC directed its state councils nationwide to collate the cost-of-living data in towns and local government areas in the states.

President and Chairman of Council, Nigerian-British Chamber of Commerce (NBCC), Ray Ately, while reacting to the inauguration of the committee, warned that whatever conclusion the group of eminently qualified Nigerians reaches at the end, it might still not be enough to take care of the needs of workers, unless the government equally takes steps to shore up the value of the Naira.

He said this would be possible if the government drastically cuts down on the volume of Naira in circulation and then incentivises manufacturers and export-oriented non-oil industries, "that way, the pressure on the Naira will reduce drastically," he said.

Former Head of Civil Service of the Federation, Bukar Goni Aji is chairing the committee. Members of the committee include Nkeiruka Onyejeocha, Minister of State, Labour and Employment; Wale Edun, Minister of Finance & Coordinating Minister of the Economy; Atiku Bagudu, Minister of Budget Economic Planning; Dr. (Mrs) Yemi Esan, Head of the Civil Service of the Federation; Dr. Nnamdi Maurice Mbaeri, Permanent Secretary, OSGF and Ekpo Nta, Chairman/CEO, National Salaries, Incomes And Wages Commission (NSIWC), who will represent the Federal Government.

Those to represent the state government include, Mohammed Umar Bago, governor, Niger State – representative from North Central; Bala Mohammed, governor of Bauchi State – representative from North East; Umar Dikko Radda, governor of Katsina State – representative from Northwest; Prof. Charles Soludo, governor of Anambra State – representative from the Southeast; Ademola Adeleke, governor of Osun State – representative from Southwest; and Otu Bassey Edet, governor of Cross River State – representative from South-South.

From NECA – Adewale-Smatt Oyerinde, Director-General, NECA; Chuma Nwankwo; Thompson Akpabio with also members from the Nigeria Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA) to include Dr Michael Olawale-Cole, National President; Dr Ahmed Rabiu, National Vice President and Humphrey Ngonadi (NPOM), National Life President.

The membership from the National Association of Small and Medium Enterprise (NASME) are Dr. Abdulrashid Yerima, President & Chairman of Council; Theophilus Nnorom Okwuchukwu, Private Sector representative; Dr. Muhammed Nura Bello, Zonal Vice President, Northwest and also from the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) are Mrs. Grace Omo-Lamai, Human Resource Director, Nigerian Breweries; Segun Ajayi-Kadir, Director-General, MAN; and Ada Chukwudozie, Managing Director, Dozzy Oil and Gas Limited.

From the organised labour, Joe Ajaero, President of NLC; Emmanuel Ugboaja; Adayanju Adewale; Ambali Akeem Olatunji; Benjamin Anthony and Prof. Theophilus Ndukuba.

From the Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (TUC) sector include Festus Osifo, President, TUC; Tommy Etim Okon, Deputy President I, TUC; Kayode Surajudeen Alakija, Deputy President II; Jimoh Oyibo, Deputy President III; Nuhu A. Toro, Secretary-General and Hafusatu Shuaib.



## SUNDAY FEATURE

**A** Lance Corporal, who was one of the law breakers apprehended, boldly announced to the governor that he was a soldier. The riders had rebelliously occupied the lane of the convoy. God forbid (our usual parlance), if any of them had panicked, lost control of his bike and either died or sustained serious injuries, the story around town would have been "Pandemonium as Sanwo-Olu convoy killed Okada Rider".

Protesters, genuine and hired and those with personal objectives pretending to be social crusaders, would have surfaced on the highways and occupied government houses and offices with screaming banners and shouts of "Justice for Okada Rider", "Okada Riders are Human Beings", "Let Okada Riders Live and they deserve life not death" among others.

That not being the situation, narratives suggesting that Sanwo-Olu was out to rubbish and embarrass the army surfaced on various media outlets, especially social media. Awkwardly, such narratives tend to suggest that security operatives are above the law of the country.

It is a testament to how low we have sunk as a nation that the governor of over twenty-five million people was being vilified for apprehending a Lance Corporal, the lowest rank in the army.

In a viral video, a soldier, defending his colleague, called civilians bastards. I doubt if that is their orientation. I doubt if men of the Nigeria Army are trained with public funds to disrespect civilians. But then, a soldier said no governor can arrest a soldier in front of his barrack. How on earth do you situate this?

The said soldier in the viral video went on to say that soldiers are only responsible to their senior officers, saying that no governor has control over federal agents. Such absurdity! If that is the true mentality of the army in our country, then trouble looms!

One "Tiktok" content producer, putting on a UN

## Public sentiment, law enforcement and public order

*Less than forty-eight hours into the New Year, precisely on the 2nd of January 2024, the governor of Lagos State had to stop his convoy and order the arrest of commercial motorcycle (Okada) riders who were driving against the flow of traffic (one-way) on Lagos-Badagry Expressway. Segun Ogundeji writes.*



Peacekeepers' badge upside down on a camouflage, pretending to be an officer of the Nigerian Army, practically threw caution to the wind, calling the governor unprintable names.

Given the antecedent of the army in Nigeria, if the Lance Corporal had died in that incident, his colleagues would have trooped out to cause mayhem, thereby causing pointless public disorder. History backs this up, as the "unknown soldiers" episode is still fresh in our memories.

Recently, a viral video showed soldiers randomly attacking LASTMA personnel in support of one of them who was engaged in a brawl with a LASTMA official at Oshodi a day before. The uproar that resulted from the blatant action created needless tension, with many along the area running for dear life.

Overtime, the leadership of the

army seems to have inadvertently condoned unruly behaviours of some of his officers, as no evidence has shown that any of them has been apprehended. The Corporal who insulted Gov Sanwo-Olu is said to be in custody. Will that be the end of the matter? Well, your guess is as good as mine.

It is shameful and disgusting that security personnel in the country erroneously act as if they are above the law. More annoying is the fact that they seem to always get away with it.

This brazen act of lawlessness must stop. Security personnel don't have any privilege under the law that supports their lawless acts. It is a mentality that has been carried over from the dark days of military dictatorship. It must stop. Why should a security operative refuse to pay for transport fare just because he's putting on a

military or police uniform? Why should a security personnel think he can drive through BRT dedicated lanes without being reprimanded?

Come to think of it, why are laws enacted and enforced? It is for public order and sanity. After the governor's encounter along Badagry Expressway, three persons on two commercial motorcycles were crushed to death at Barracks Bus Stop along the same Lagos-Badagry Expressway, while riding on 'one-way'.

I am still waiting to hear from those who thought it was wrong of the governor to have prevented those on obvious suicide mission from suffering a wicked fate.

Subsequent governments in the state have tried severally to sanitise the transportation sector. The main goal is to protect lives and properties, which is partly responsible for the regulation of Okada as a means of transportation in the state.

This is the same reason why riders and passengers were urged to always wear helmets. In spite of this and coupled with several stakeholders fora held on the need to maintain laws and order on the road, many still remain adamant.

Rather than join hands with the government on the noble cause, many emergency activists chose to whip up undue sentiment about how Okada riders would be thrown out of job, thus escalating insecurity.

According to reports, public hospitals record more cases of Okada-related emergencies. In the first quarter of 2023, 1,712 accidents were reportedly recorded in Lagos, with about 45 percent (767 precisely)

traceable to Okada related crashes. Shockingly, about 54 percent of the victims are between the ages of 30 and 39. The implication of this is that the lives of our productive folks are being needlessly cut-short.

Insecurity fueled by using Okada as get away vehicles are still very much with us. At several fora, stakeholders have in unison advocated and endorsed a total ban on this mode of transportation. The government in its wisdom had thought it wise to phase it out gradually to prevent a sudden shock.

Where partial successes have been achieved, security has improved and shuttle buses, especially Korope has filled the vacuum left by the outlawing of Okada on designated routes. Accidents have also reduced drastically on such routes.

The state government, in my view, should consider implementing a blanket ban on this mode of transportation. It is too unregulated, fatal and dangerous to be accepted as a regular mode of transportation in budding smart-cities like Lagos.

If Kano and Rivers States among others could outrightly outlaw Okada, Lagos State will cope and cope better. The string of lawlessness daily witnessed from the confrontation between commercial motorcyclists and law enforcement agencies, no doubt, requires urgent action.

Every well-meaning Lagosian must support the government in its bid to take stringent measures on the use of Okada as a means of public transportation. We cannot achieve the 'Greater Lagos' of our collective aspiration in an unruly atmosphere.

***"Recently, a viral video showed soldiers randomly attacking LASTMA personnel in support of one of them who was engaged in a brawl with a LASTMA official at Oshodi a day before. The uproar that resulted from the blatant action created needless tension, with many along the area running for dear life. Overtime, the leadership of the army seems to have inadvertently condoned unruly behaviours of some of his officers, as no evidence has shown that any of them has been apprehended. The Corporal who insulted Gov Sanwo-Olu is said to be in custody. Will that be the end of the matter? Well, your guess is as good as mine."***

**P**OLITICIANS need to learn how to be strategic thinkers because without strategic thinking they cannot be problem solvers. The only reason why we keep voting is because we believe that whoever we vote for has the capacity to solve our many problem. No leader knows it all but all leaders can learn. Learning is critical in leadership. All good leaders are strategic thinkers and planners.

Let us look at one aspect of strategic thinking and planning that can help political leaders to solve problems. It is called SWOT. SWOT is a business tool that can also be applied politically.

SWOT stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This is a diagnostic tool that businesses use to read their internal and external environment and for drawing up their business strategies. As politicians, you are going to be handling our community monies. Have you read your environment and yourself well? How can you deliver results if you do not know your left from your right? What are your political strategies?

Let us start with strength. As a leader, what are your strengths? In fact, are you a leader? Have you learnt leadership skills? Your strengths will include your educational background, your experiences, and your positive personal traits. It will include your network and your net worth, your circle of influence. How can you bring all this to bear in your new job?

Let us say that you worked in for 20 years and you are an investment banker or an accountant by profession. Do you have to go for extra courses on budgeting for the public sector, yes. But you will find it easier than someone who read French or English language, who has to do extra. If you learn well, when the civil servants in your state start to play monkey games, you will see and understand what they are up to but if you are completely ignorant, you will sign documents that you cannot understand and when they steal, they will steal in your name and with your signature. If you choose to steal, you are not a leader but a thief because leaders do not steal, they are learned enough to create wealth and value.

The community that you will be leading, do you know the strength in that community? Let us say that the community has a lot of fertile land for growing yams and they produce big, delicious and healthy yams. How do you intend to generate revenue for the community with this strength? How do you intend to create value in the day of unemployment and poverty when the jobs are few and far apart? Do you know already, have you learnt or will you call in the entrepreneurs to advise you on how to maximize this strength? The local and international market for yam could be explored. Adding value to that yam by making it into yam flour and lafun for the international market could bring in massive revenue for the community. Teaching your people about natural pesticides, processing and packaging, preservation and marketing are some of the trainings you will need to provide to empower your community.

With this knowledge, you can draw up a strategy on how to boost the farming

and processing of yam and you can also partner with the export council, bank of industry and NEXIM to empower your farmers with training and loans. You can provide your farmers with fertilizer and other farming tools. You can grade the roads to their farms and provide storage facilities. You can start up factories with international certification so that the yam flour produced in your community could be exported easily.

If your strategy is well thought-out, you could provide jobs for the youth in your community while generating the



# When politicians become clueless

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much-needed foreign exchange for your community. If you do this and you are able to respond to the problem of unemployment, you would have solved one of the most pressing problems in your community without waiting for the Nigerian civil service to do so. Job creation can also help in maintaining security as the level of crime may drop.

The second aspect of SWOT is weaknesses. What areas of weakness do you and your community have. Let us say that you are not a farmer and would not understand the needs of the farmers technically or let us say that you know nothing about exports. The strategic question becomes, "how can I address these weaknesses?". You can consider many options. Hiring experienced experts and consultants in these fields who will work with your farmers and you, is a first step. However, because you are working with people, you need to carry everybody along.

A great leader is not one who has all the answers but one who knows how to work with the people who have the answers that he or she does not have. A great leader is one who consults and is willing to learn. As such, you could consider many strategies such as town hall meetings with your farmers and

exporters, steering committees and consultancies. Who are the experts in your community? You could call them together and form a think tank. In all your doings, make sure you learn as learning is a continuum in leadership. Have the humility to learn from big and small, stooping to conquer because the aim and objective is to create results for the people you represent.

O in SWOT is opportunities. What are the opportunities in your local and global environment? You have a community product to sell. You can focus on farming yams in your community. Comparative farming. You can leverage technology to put your product on the global map for marketing your community product. The internet is a global marketplace. You can empower your people abroad to become distributors of your community product because Nigerian food, just like Nigerian music, movie and fashion is becoming a hit abroad. Nigerians abroad are opening Nigerian restaurants every day, and our culinary deliciousness is competing with that of the Chinese. Locally, yam is eaten by all tribes and religion in Nigeria and the neighboring countries.

T is for threat in SWOT. Our biggest agricultural threat in Nigeria is our lack

of local knowledge in the areas of preserving, processing, packaging and marketing. Lack of electricity and the herder and farmer conflict is also a threat to agriculture. How can these threats be mitigated? You can set up a training centre to teach the community about natural pesticides, preservation, packaging etc. You can also make use of solar energy to provide energy for powering your small-scale yam industries. You can employ hygiene experts and certification experts. You can dig boreholes for water supply across the community as this is crucial to all forms of production. You can have dialogues and mediation sessions with your farmers and herders so that they agree on how-to live in peace together.

Someone told me that in their community, the farmers and herders agree that the cornstalk and agricultural bye products and materials go to the herders while the cow dung go to the farmers. This agreement helps them maintain peace and a symbiotic relationship. Again, the farmers fence their farms with cactus and create a roads in between farms for herders to move. A few meters of grass here and there is also created. Everybody is happy. Personally, I like it because cow dung means organic farming.

**D**RUNK with power, having quality authority, and staying in the corridors of power; the old-fashioned and handkerchief-headed leaders in Nigeria display notoriety, court worship and embrace praising from loyalists, masses and political-jobbers. It has been the same from 1960 till today with little adjustments and foreboding overalls. Nigeria has witnessed the same crop of leaders from the military era to the return of democracy in 1999. The primary goal of most political leaders in Nigeria as soon as they are sworn in is to amass wealth prior to the next election by buying votes, bribing electoral officers, paying lawyers and getting the judges over to their demands. That system has championed and encouraged only waste and consumption. The little progress made by any previous leader is always sabotaged and trampled upon due to the fact that they do not offer sincere governance rather they loot and amass wealth.

Besides, the dwindling Nigerian economic fortunes were caused purely by wasteful governance. The GDP and income per capita in Nigeria keep decreasing continuously showing that there is a wasteful pattern of governance. Waste and consumption significantly impact the stability, competitiveness and growth of any economy. Do we need statistics or call names to show that governance in Nigeria is wasteful and consumption-driven either as budget padding, supplementary budget, undue contract approval, policies and decisions? Nigeria at the moment is on a spending spree and wisdom does not condemn us if we would compare Nigeria with progressive sister nations.

However, the wish of Nigerians has the intimation of something unique that would address various challenges facing the social life and national economy. The UN in her Sustainable Development Goals addressed responsible consumption and production patterns to achieve sustainable development. Political leaders do not only operate a consuming economy but equally waste the scarce resources that will make the land liveable and prosperous. The oil boom that would have led to massive infrastructural development inspired and instigated looting, nepotism and favouritism. In the past, there were strides in Agriculture like the Green Revolution, Go Back To Land etc. which the pattern of governance could not sustain.

Recently, what could have happened to the 84 million hectares of arable land in Nigeria? Why have terrorists and bandits taken over the expanse of land for farming in the North? What has become the fate of the basket food of the nation? Why is there hunger and food insecurity in Nigeria? Why do many manufacturing industries, and factories fold up and close operations? The facetious remarks and comments on poverty, economy and politics reveal the nature of leaders and their mission while in office. Nigerians do not have leaders but

they have a set of people that gather, agree and share the commonwealth of all. This is not just consumption; it is waste. Having a bloated cabinet, floating the naira, practising fiscal activism, and running a deficit budget while there is an increase in the price of fuel, gas, electricity, education, internet services etc. is not just a waste but a high level of leadership abuse and indiscipline.

Seriously, visionary leadership

or expending something of value carelessly or for no purpose. Political leaders in Nigeria do not just waste money but the time and energy of the populace. They are not going anywhere and they do not intend to take the citizens to any desired horizon. Wasteful spending on unnecessary projects or excessive bureaucracy can strain government budgets, leading to higher taxes or government debts. Presently, the executive



## Wasteful consumption-driven pattern of governance in Nigeria



or governance will take the citizenry out of poverty and hardship. The vision of governance in Nigeria is to selfishly grow rich from the public fund and continuously live a life of luxury through the public fund by making sure that the transitory nature of power does not affect or influence their lifestyle. Our political leaders feel ensconced and increase entropy in the system which rarely affects them. This wasteful lifestyle and body language produces decay and disorder making the government less functional in addressing the needs of the masses.

There can never be success without suffering and there cannot be hard work without discipline. The wealth of the nation is being lavished and spent like evil money, or blood money and not according to the tenets of public finance and management. The central bank, which is the banker's bank, has put pressure and stress on the commercial banks due to high inflation, depleting the foreign reserve, and making the masses lose hard-earned money from multiple charges. Economic fluctuations, inflation, interest rate changes, and the global economic environment affected the performance of commercial banks.

Furthermore, wasteful is using

flaunts dollars on targeted dignitaries, and officers in a bid to achieve a purpose or score cheap points thereby devaluing the naira. Wasteful governance creates opportunities for corruption. When people perceive their government as wasteful, it erodes trust in public institutions and can lead to disillusionment among citizens. Wasteful policies can harm the environment, as they may not prioritize sustainability or conservation efforts. The effects of wasteful governance can be felt for years, as it may hinder economic growth and social development.

In addition, a focus on consumption without sustainable practices can deplete finite resources, leading to shortages and increased competition for essential commodities. Consumption-

driven governance can benefit the wealthier segments of society more than the less privileged, exacerbating income inequality. Policies geared toward consumption can prioritize immediate gains over long-term stability, inhibiting sustainable development and planning. Ministries, Departments and Agencies have budgetary allocations that are never supervised nor monitored making governance ineffective. If borrowing should be a crime, then, borrowing for luxury, consumption and pleasure should be first-degree murder in criminal justice.

Finally, Nigeria can never get better unless there is a New Nigeria. What is old, outdated, counterproductive and inefficient must be done away with to make room for

development and growth. The economy of any nation or wealth of nations does not translate to an ocean of wealth which remains unchanged despite variables and miscalculations. Nigerians want to take back their country but the forces of waste and debauchery have held the country bound. The efforts to reduce wasteful governance include transparency, accountability measures, and responsible budgeting to mitigate these negative outcomes. Efficient resource management involves adopting sustainable development goals, regulations that encourage responsible consumption and production, and policies that prioritize social and environmental well-being alongside economic growth.

***"There can never be success without suffering and there cannot be hard work without discipline. The wealth of the nation is being lavished and spent like evil money, or blood money and not according to the tenets of public finance and management. The central bank, which is the banker's bank, has put pressure and stress on the commercial banks due to high inflation, depleting the foreign reserve, and making the masses lose hard-earned money from multiple charges. Economic fluctuations, inflation, interest rate changes, and the global economic environment affected the performance of commercial banks."***

## INTERNATIONAL

## Biden's Michigan visit highlights rift with Arab American

A visit by United States President Joe Biden to Michigan has exposed a growing divide with the considerable Arab-American community in the key swing state ahead of November's general election.

Biden sat down with members of the United Auto Workers union on Thursday after they endorsed his re-election bid, but the president's motorcade had to take side streets in Warren to avoid some two hundred protesters before arriving at its destination.

Crowds of Arab Americans had gathered to display their anger at Biden's unwavering support for Israel even as its war on Gaza has killed more than 27,000 people, mostly women and children, amid international calls for a ceasefire.

The protesters in the election battleground state chanted "Genocide Joe has got to go" and waved Palestinian flags, a week after the World Court ordered Israel to prevent acts of genocide in Gaza.

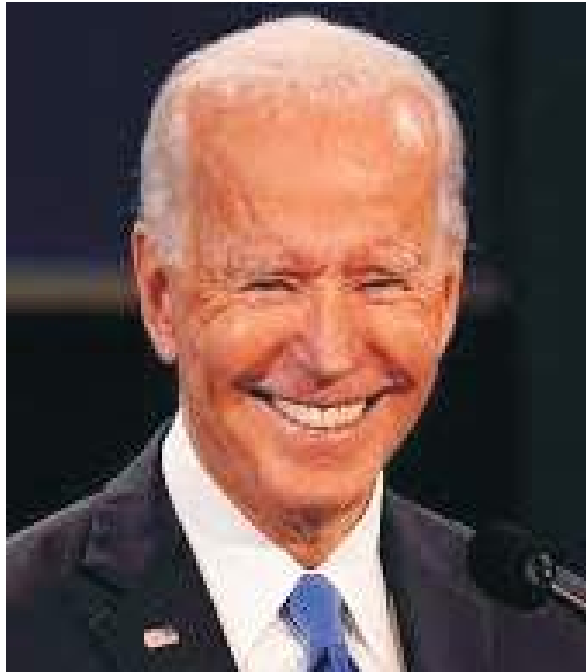
"Michigan has a large Arab American and Muslim population who voted overwhelmingly for Biden in the last election," Al Jazeera's Patty Culhane, reporting from Warren, said. "If he loses even half of their vote, it's unlikely he can win Michigan — and without Michigan, he has a very narrow path to winning a second term," she added.

At the protest, anger and disappointment were palpable with several demonstrators saying the US president was "lost to us forever".

"There is nothing that will ever make me vote for a genocidal president, ever," a protester who identified as Hawraa told Al Jazeera. "Not only me, but everybody else. My whole Arab community will never vote for this man."

Salma Hamamy, an activist with Students for Justice in Palestine, said Biden had "entirely abandoned" the Palestinian and Arab communities, as well as "the concept of humanity".

"Just as he abandoned us, we will be abandoning him on election day," the protester said,



**Biden**

citing Biden's continued support for Israel.

Arab Americans will no longer choose between the "lesser of two evils", between the Democrat and Republican candidates, in the next election, she continued. "We will be voting for people who are deserving of our vote".

Along with Wisconsin and Pennsylvania, Michigan was among the so-called blue wall of states that Biden managed to return to the Democrats when he was elected in 2020.

Michigan has turned increasingly Democratic in recent years, with the party now controlling all levels of state government for the first time in four decades. Biden is looking to secure the critical 15 electoral votes that the battleground state can bring.

But Israel's war on Gaza has impacted his chances.

"There is real anger in the [Arab American] community," James Zogby, president of the Washington, DC-based Arab

American Institute, told Al Jazeera.

"Imagine a situation where a sitting president comes to town and people are trying to set up a meeting with him before he comes, and the community says, 'We don't want to meet with him,' and they reject it, and finally the White House has to abandon plans to do it," Zogby said, predicting that a loss in Michigan would mean a Biden defeat in November.

Democratic strategists are hoping the potential of another Donald Trump presidency will be enough to change the community's minds — but Khalid Turaani, who helped launch the Abandon Biden movement, said that would not work.

"Because Joe Biden is president, we don't believe that the Israelis are bombing a little bit less. So when we have Trump, I don't believe they're just going to bomb a little bit more just because Trump is president," he told Al

Jazeera. FOR decades, India has focused its defense policy on its land borders with rivals Pakistan and China. Now, as its global ambitions expand, it is beginning to flex its naval power in international waters, including anti-piracy patrols and a widely publicized deployment close to the Red Sea to help protect ships from attacks during Israel's war with Hamas.

India sent three guided missile destroyers and reconnaissance aircraft in November when Yemen-based Houthi rebels began targeting ships in solidarity with Hamas, causing disruptions in a key trading route that handles about 12% of global trade.

The deployment highlights the country as a "proactive contributor" to international maritime stability, said Vice Adm. Anil Kumar Chawla, who retired in 2021 as head of India's southern naval command.

"We are not doing it only out of altruism. Unless you are a maritime power you can never aspire to be a global power," Chawla said. India, already a regional power, is positioning itself "as a global player today, an upcoming global power," he said.

India is widely publicizing the deployments, signaling its desire to assume a wider responsibility in maritime security to the world and its growing maritime ambitions to regional rival China.

"It is a message to China that, look, we can deploy such a large force here. This is our backyard. Though we don't own it, but we are probably the most capable and responsible resident naval power," Chawla said.

The Indian navy has helped at least four ships, three of which were attacked by Houthi rebels and another that Washington blamed on Iran, a charge denied by Tehran. It has also conducted several anti-piracy missions.

Iran-backed Houthi rebels have targeted dozens of ships in

## India flexes naval power, competition with China grows

the Red Sea, saying they are seeking a cease-fire in the Gaza Strip. The U.S. and its allies have responded with multiple rounds of bombings of rebel positions. India has not joined the U.S.-led force battling the Houthis.

On Jan. 26, the Indian guided missile destroyer INS Visakhapatnam assisted the crew of a Marshall Islands-flagged tanker in fighting a fire after it was hit by a missile in the Gulf of Aden. About 10 days earlier, the Visakhapatnam responded to a distress call by the U.S.-owned Genco Picardy merchant vessel following a drone attack in the same waters.

"Maritime security has not been a strong pillar of India's foreign policy engagements in a way we are beginning to see now," said Darshana M. Baruah, a fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "China is a factor in this."

The rivals are already locked in a military standoff along their disputed border high in the mountains.

China has built up its presence over the years in the Indian Ocean, a key route for its energy supplies. It has the world's largest navy by number of ships, more than three times the size of the Indian navy. China also operates a powerful fleet of large coast guard ships and what is referred to as its maritime militia consisting of fishing vessels that cooperate with the coast guard in asserting territorial claims in the South China Sea.

Beijing has deepened its engagement in the Indian Ocean mainly through infrastructure deals with India's neighbors, including Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and most recently the Maldives.

"The Chinese are looking for more and more naval bases in the extended Indian Ocean,"

said Lt. Gen. D. S. Hooda, a former Indian military officer and now a strategic expert. "Seeing that, India doesn't have any other option but to keep building up its own."

The Maldives government last week gave clearance to a Chinese research ship to dock in its port. Similar Chinese ships have made port calls in Sri Lanka in 2022 and 2023 amid fears in India that they could be used to surveil the region. India's concerns led Sri Lanka earlier this year to declare a one-year moratorium on foreign research ships entering its waters.

Experts say the growing competition with China is energizing India to acquire more advanced ships, submarines and aircraft and invest more in technology and infrastructure. The navy's share of India's burgeoning defense budget, which reached \$72.6 billion last year, has increased to 19% from about 14%. The Indian army has traditionally received the lion's share of the military budget.

The navy has also built strategic partnerships through participation in joint exercises with other nations in the region and beyond.

Baruah, who directs the Indian Ocean Initiative at the Carnegie Endowment, said there is a "need for Delhi's strategic thinking to be maritime-oriented, not just as an option for crisis response but as a theater to advance India's most pressing geopolitical and strategic priorities in the Indo-Pacific."

India, the U.S., Australia and Japan are members of the Indo-Pacific strategic alliance known as the Quad, which has repeatedly accused China of flexing its military muscles in the South China Sea and aggressively pushing its maritime territorial claims. The navies of the four countries regularly hold drills seen as part of an initiative to counter China's growing assertiveness in the Pacific.

Beijing maintains that its military is purely defensive to protect what it says are its sovereign rights, and calls the Quad an attempt to contain its economic growth and influence.

For Indian naval planners, the South China Sea remains a top concern, with about 60% of India's cargo passing through shipping lanes in the Beijing-dominated region.

Chawla said India doesn't have "strength to project power into the South China Sea right now" because of the vast Chinese maritime assets there.

"Frankly, if it comes to a shooting war, India does not really have the capability and Quad does not have the mandate," he said. "You know, it's not a NATO-like alliance yet."

## North Korea leader calls for war readiness

NORTH Korea on Friday extended a provocative series of weapons tests by firing cruise missiles into the sea, as leader Kim Jong Un called for his military to step up war preparations and toured a shipyard.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the U.S. and South Korean militaries were analyzing the North Korean launches into its western sea. It said South Korea's military detected multiple missiles but it did not immediately provide a specific number or an assessment of their flights.

The launches, which were North Korea's fourth round of cruise missile tests in 2024, came hours after state media reported that Kim reiterated his focus on strengthening his naval forces as he inspected unspecified naval projects at a shipyard in Nampho on the west coast.

Kim in recent months has emphasized efforts to build a nuclear-armed navy to counter what he portrays as growing external threats posed by the United States, South Korea and Japan, which have stepped up their military cooperation in response to Kim's nuclear weapons and missile program.

North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency did not specify when Kim visited Nampho. It paraphrased Kim as saying that the strengthening of the navy "presents itself as the most important issue in reliably defending the maritime sovereignty of the country and stepping up the war

preparations."

KCNA did not specify the types of warships are being built in Nampho, but said they were related to a five-year military development plan set during a ruling party congress in early 2021. During those meetings, Kim revealed an extensive wish list of advanced military assets, which included nuclear-powered submarines and nuclear missiles that can be launched from underwater.

During the inspection, Kim was briefed on the progress of his naval projects and remaining technological challenges and ordered workers to "unconditionally" complete the efforts within the timeframe of the plan that runs through 2025, KCNA said.

Kim Inae, a spokesperson for South Korea's army said its special operation troops wrapped up a 10-day training with U.S. Green Berets on Friday in a region near the country's capital, Seoul, in the allies' latest combined military exercises. The countries in past months had staged larger drills, including trilateral exercises involving Japan.

Kim Jong Un also called for naval might on Sunday while inspecting a test of a new nuclear-capable cruise missile, the Pulhwasal-3-31, designed to be fired from submarines. The North also last month conducted tests of a long-range cruise missile, which it has described as nuclear-capable and can cover ranges of up to 2,000 kilometers (1,240 miles), which would potentially put U.S. military bases in Japan within reach.

While North Korea has demonstrated quick progress in expanding its lineup of land-based nuclear-capable missiles, experts say Kim's naval ambitions may require significant more time, resources and technology breakthroughs. Most of its aging, diesel-powered submarines can launch only torpedoes and mines, and experts say Kim's stated pursuit of nuclear-propelled submarines is largely unfeasible without significant external assistance.

North Korean military scientists and engineers in recent months have been making progress on Kim's 2021 list of goals, testing for the first time last year a solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missile, named Hwasong-18, which added to the North's arsenal of weapons targeting the U.S. mainland.

The North on Jan. 14 also tested a new solid-fuel intermediate-range missile, which underscored its efforts to advance its weapons that could target U.S. assets in the Pacific, including the military hub of Guam.

The North also plans to launch three more military spy satellites in 2024 after sending its first one into orbit in November, as Kim has described space-based reconnaissance as crucial for monitoring U.S. and South Korean military activities and enhancing the threat of his nuclear-capable missiles.

Tensions on the Korean Peninsula are at their highest point in years, after Kim accelerated his weapons development to an unprecedented pace while issuing

provocative nuclear threats against the United States, South Korea and Japan. The United States and its Asian allies in response have strengthened their combined military exercises and updated their deterrence strategies.

There are concerns that Kim, emboldened by the steady advancement of his nuclear arsenal and strengthened ties with Russia, would further ramp up pressure against his rivals in an election year in the United States

and South Korea. Experts say Kim's long-term goal is to force the United States to accept the idea of the North as a nuclear power and negotiate security concessions and sanctions relief from a position of strength.

While most analysts downplay Kim's threats of war, some say there's a possibility that he can attempt a direct military provocation he can likely contain without letting it escalate into a full-blown conflict. One of the potential crisis points is the disputed western sea boundary



**Un**



## INTERNATIONAL

**South Africa's foreign policy contradictory or balancing act?**

**South Africa's seemingly contradicting stance on global issues in the last year has confounded many. But analysts say it might be part of a balancing act, CRYSTAL ORDERSON writes.**

**C**APE Town, South Africa – The South African foreign service has had a hectic year of navigating several tricky diplomatic endeavours.

It began with South Africa doing joint naval drills with Russia and China in February 2023.

By March, authorities in Pretoria were saddled with a dilemma: execute the International Criminal Court's warrant for the arrest of Russian President Vladimir Putin over alleged war crimes related to the war in Ukraine when he attended the BRICS Summit that August, or risk being seen as noncommittal to the rule of law. Ultimately Putin's withdrawal from the summit – after an awkward trip by a few African leaders led by South African President Cyril Ramaphosa to Ukraine and Russia – saved Pretoria from having to decide.

Within months, the US ambassador to South Africa accused it of sending weapons to Russia via the ship Lady R. Not long after, South Africa's Foreign Minister Naledi Pandor had a call with the chairperson of Hamas's political bureau, Ismail Haniyeh, followed by a visit to Iran to strengthen relations with it. By December, South Africa had hauled Israel before the International Court of Justice (ICJ), accusing it of genocide in its war in Gaza.

Then this January, Ramaphosa drew criticism when he hosted the leader of the Sudanese paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), General Mohamed Dagalo, also known as Hemedti, who has been accused of human rights abuses in Sudan, where a war is raging between the RSF and the army.

Critics of Ramaphosa's government say all of this is proof of Pretoria's inconsistent foreign policy, arguing that it is quick to scrutinise the human rights records of some countries but appears to turn a blind eye to that of others.

They argue that hosting RSF commander Hemedti and being reluctant to criticise Russia's invasion of Ukraine have punctured Pretoria's stated commitment to values of justice and equality in the post-apartheid era.

"South Africa has no principled approach towards these global conflicts," wrote Greg Mills and Ray Hartley, analysts at Johannesburg-based think-tank the Brenthurst Foundation, in a recent op-ed in local paper the Daily Maverick. "It professes to want to mediate, but it picks and chooses when and which of its principles apply. It is a



**Ramaphosa:**

matter of time before another indiscretion undermines the spin doctoring."

However, some analysts say such criticisms are steeped in naivety about the country's foreign policy, which they say is focused first on Africa, and then to ensure a world where no country exerts too much global influence. They argue that any apparent inconsistencies are due to a complex balancing act between these objectives.

Oscar van Heerden, an international relations scholar and author of 'Consistent or Confused: An Analysis of Post-Apartheid South Africa's Foreign Policy, is one of them. He says a "complex range of factors", including historical alliances and economic interests, influence the country's foreign policy.

"The country is in fact very consistent in its foreign policy in Africa and the world. Our founding father, Nelson Mandela, also reminded the world that your enemies are not my enemies, and I think the country has stayed true to that," van Heerden told Al Jazeera.

Zwelethu Jolobe, an associate professor of politics at the University of Cape Town, agrees with the seemingly zigzag approach, saying the country is "trying to promote an alternative world order", due to its enduring belief in a "multipolar society".

"South Africa knows the world is a complex place ... and in order for us to have world peace, multilateral diplomacy is the best way to have international relations and that is at the core of its foreign policy doctrine," he told Al Jazeera.

Hemedti's visit in particular has proved to be a thorny issue

as fighting between the army and the RSF continues to wreck Sudan. Rights groups including Human Rights Watch have said the "RSF has committed a wide range of horrific abuses including the forced displacement of entire communities and amongst the most egregious abuses against civilians were torture, extrajudicial killings, and mass rapes."

Against this backdrop, the South African presidency said in a statement that it "welcomed the briefing by Dagalo and the mediation efforts between the RSF and the Sudan Armed Forces in finding lasting peace". Dagalo, who has also visited to Kenya and Ethiopia, told the media that he had briefed Ramaphosa on the "efforts taken to end this war".

In response, General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the chief of the Sudanese army, criticised Ramaphosa and other leaders for hosting Hemedti.

Still, some say the controversial visit is only the latest case of South Africa getting involved in peace talks on the continent as a nonaligned actor.

For years, South Africa has

been active in various peacekeeping missions across the continent including the ongoing United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO), to which it has the sixth largest contingent of 62 countries involved. It is also often involved in various mediation efforts including the successful ones in South Sudan and most recently between Ethiopia and rebels in its Tigray region.

Former presidents Mandela and Thabo Mbeki were also respected as continental statesmen who helped bring opposing sides to dialogue over the years. The former helped resolve a dispute between Libya, the United States, and United Kingdom, while his successor was a negotiator during the first civil war in Ivory Coast.

And now, van Heerden says South Africa is once again determined to "play both sides" as the precedents show that it "does not see things in black and white".

"You can only bring people together in one room when you have built trust over a period," he said.

Van Heerden also dismissed

the view that the country is siding with autocrats. "The world is changing and the world needs to adapt and change," he said. "We cannot put our eggs in the Western basket; there are new important players like India, China, and Brazil."

Since the beginning of the Ukraine war, South Africa has been careful not to condemn Russia's invasion including declining to support a UN resolution on the matter. Multiple analysts have said the long-standing relationship between the ruling African National Congress (ANC) and the former Soviet Union plays a role in this.

And then came Ramaphosa's peace mission last June – a trip derided domestically by the opposition as "an ego trip" – to meet Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy separately. During their visit, they put forward a 10-point proposal, including de-escalation, the recognition of both countries' sovereignty, and unimpeded grain exports through the Black Sea. Ukraine rejected the proposal.

South Africa's approach to the Russia-Ukraine war has confounded many.

"South Africa has consistently failed to explain, in any substantive way, what exactly its doctrine of nonalignment is ...," wrote the analyst Eusebius McKaiser last May. "This sloppy usage of the word 'nonaligned' does the idea of neutrality or nonalignment a massive disservice."

Seven months later, the war is still on. And now South Africa is enmeshed in trying to resolve another war, through its ICJ case against Israel.

Still, some say the efforts to end both wars are commendable, despite the methods being very unlike each other.

"It is part of the complex nature of foreign policy, sometimes it sounds like contradictions ... but there is silent diplomacy that is not always in the public domain," Dirk Kotze, professor of political science at the University of South Africa, told Al Jazeera. "It balances itself out."

**SOURCE: AL JAZEERA**

**"Against this backdrop, the South African presidency said in a statement that it "welcomed the briefing by Dagalo and the mediation efforts between the RSF and the Sudan Armed Forces in finding lasting peace". Dagalo, who has also visited to Kenya and Ethiopia, told the media that he had briefed Ramaphosa on the "efforts taken to end this war".**



## The fans inspire us to continue telling African stories – Mary Njoku

Mary Njoku, CEO of ROK Studios, alongside Nollywood stars Desmond Elliot, Bolanle Ninalowo, Chinedu Ikedieze and Efe Irele recently embarked on a tour of South Africa, Zambia, the UK, Lagos and Accra connecting with fans and Nollywood lovers across Africa and the diaspora. In an exclusive interview with Nollywood Observer, Mary Njoku discusses Nollywood, content, fans and ROK studios.



### Why did ROK decide to embark on this tour?

We embarked on this tour to connect with our fans across Africa and beyond. It has been such a wonderful and insightful experience so far, spending time with so many of our super fans in the UK and South Africa. It's great to hear what they think about Nollywood, what they love about ROK and what they want more of. We are always speaking to our fans - face-to-face and via our social media platforms to see how we can improve.

**The tour would be incomplete without a**

**'homecoming'** with people in my home - Lagos and of course in Accra. **The fans inspire us to continue telling African stories. There are a number of consistent faces on the ROK tour, how is ROK able to get such loyalty and commitment from its actors?**

We all want the same thing - to keep the fans entertained and to do what we are passionate about. It is very important to work with people who are on the same page as you. What we do is for the people, to make

Continued on page 26

### 'I'll never be desperate again' – Jim Iyke vows



**P**opular Nollywood actor, Jim Iyke, has vowed never to be desperate again in his life.

Jim Iyke stated this in a viral video on the internet,

while narrating his encounter with the late founder of the Synagogue Church of All Nations (SCOAN), Prophet TB Joshua.

It was reported that the actor was captured in a widely spread video in 2013 undergoing deliverance at SCOAN.

Speaking in his latest interview with Teju Babyface, the actor insisted that he was forced to take his sick mother to the prophet for healing out of desperation.

Regretting taking such a step out of desperation, he said, "I will never be desperate again in my life. Desperation was what took me there—to take my mother there, hoping that a man of God would heal her. If she were to live, twenty TB Joshuas would not stop her.

"It was her time, nobody would have made me enter that space; he was not the only one I went to; I have been to five or six men of God; is it because I do not want to mention names? How they drove me the money they took from me."

### 'DNA test must be done in my presence' –Mohbad's father.

Mr Joseph Aloba, father of late Nigerian rapper, Ilerioluwa Olademeji Aloba, aka Mohbad, has said a DNA test on his grandson must be conducted in his presence.

It was recalled that Nigerians have been torn apart over calls for a DNA test on the late singer's son, Liam, to ascertain his true paternity.

Speaking in a recent interview with Stams TV, elder Aloba said a DNA test on his grandson is a must, stressing that it has become a national concern

On the rumours that a DNA test has been done, he said a DNA test can't be conducted without his consent.

He insisted that he has to be present or send a representative before the DNA test can be done.

Aloba said even at that, it would be conducted at two different hospitals to be sure of the result.

He said, "Concerning the DNA test, it's a must they do it. Nigerians are demanding for it. I heard rumours that they did it but no matter what, I'm Mohbad's father so I'll give consent on the DNA test or send anyone who can represent me during the test if I'm not there to know how they'll do it. And even when they want to do it, it should be done in two different places so we can be very sure and know the truth.

Also, where I am from in Ikere Ekiti, even Olu Ikere just left my side now after paying me a visit. We don't accept bastards where I'm from, but it will be a thing of joy for me if this child is Mohbad's because this is the only child he said he left for me. Three days before his death, I was with him, he even served me food and he put Liam on my hands and he was taking pictures.

So I'll be very happy if Liam is Mohbad's son because I love the child. But if it turns out that Liam is not his son, it won't be good if we don't find out now because of the future so that even late Mohbad shouldn't be blaming me that I accepted something like this in. So the DNA is very necessary."

Continued on page 26



# EVER'S WORLD

with Palang Kasmi

## Relationships

### 8 health benefits of kissing

**K**ISSING can be a heart-healthy micro workout, a hormone releaser and a mood booster. Ah, the kiss. It can be so many things: sweet, loving, awkward, intense, transporting, disappointing, boring, sublime, life altering. On the delicious and passionate side of the spectrum, a smooch can be a heart-healthy micro workout, a hormone releaser and a mood booster. It's also fun – and a great way to connect with the person you care about.

"Sex, as wonderful as it is, can be perfunctory," says Andréa Demirjian, author of "Kissing: Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about One of Life's Sweetest Pleasures." "Kissing is intimate: You're right there in the space of your soul. It gets to the core of your heart and spirit because it's such a lovely way to express and receive love and affection. A kiss a day really can keep the doctor away."

**1. Kissing helps reduce blood pressure**

Making out isn't just good for your emotional heart, it gives your anatomical one a workout, too. "Kissing passionately gets your heartbeat revved in a healthy way that helps lower your blood pressure," says Demirjian. "It dilates your blood vessels – blood is flowing in a good, solid fashion and getting to all your vital organs."

**2. Kissing zaps cramps**



**and headaches**

"Kissing is great if you have a headache or menstrual cramps," says Demirjian. You may be inclined to wave away advances when you're curled into an achy ball, but the blood-vessel dilation brought on by a good long smooching session can really help ease your pain. In fact, Demirjian recommends replacing the ol' "Not tonight, dear – I have a headache" line with, "Honey, I have a headache. Come kiss me!"

**3. Kissing fights cavities**

A smooch-a-thon gets all er, fluids flowing – including your saliva. "When you're kissing, you're secreting more saliva in your mouth," says Demirjian. "That's the mechanism that washes away the plaque on your teeth that leads to cavities." (So much more fun than gargling!)

**4. Kissing amps up your**

happy hormones

"If you're feeling stressed or rundown, a little kissing or lovemaking [is] actually the elixir you need to... feel better," says Demirjian. "It will relax, restore and revitalize you.... The feel-good chemicals in the brain get percolating: serotonin, dopamine, oxytocin – things you can get from the rush of exercising."

**5. Kissing burns (a few) calories**

It can't compare to 30 minutes on the elliptical, but a vigorous makeout session can burn 8 to 16 calories per smooch, says Demirjian. "Kissing and lovemaking can be a vigorous exercise if you're fully engaged," she says. "You need to have a passionate kiss [in order to burn those calories], but it doesn't have to be a 10-hour makeout session."

**6. Kissing boosts self-esteem**

One German study found that men who got a nice juicy kiss from their wives before leaving for work made more money. "If he leaves his home happy, he's more productive at work because he's not feeling emotionally distressed, so he's going to make more money," explains Demirjian. "Kissing has so much to do with your self-esteem and feeling loved and connected."

**7. Kissing can give you a facelift (kind of)**

Per Demirjian, deep kissing can shape up the neck and jawline, which are often trouble spots for those concerned about looking older. "Your mouth has a number of facial muscles," she says. "When those are engaged in kissing, you can tighten and tone them."

**8. Kissing is a barometer for sexual compatibility**

It can be an excellent way to check out a potential partner for sexual compatibility before getting naked and emotionally involved, says Demirjian. But if your very first liplock with a new partner is meh, she recommends giving him or her one more shot.

"Sometimes during the first kiss, people are feeling awkward, nervous or embarrassed," she says. "That might not breed the most seductive, sexy experience." Second kiss is crappy, too? That's your cue to take your lips – and the rest of you – elsewhere.

**Source Cable News Network (CNN).**

# THE SUNDAY STANDARD

with Palang Kasmi

## Weekend recipes

# Cocoyam vegetable soup

## Bitter leaf soup

### Ingredients

Cocoyam  
Protein  
Crayfish  
Salt  
Pepper  
Onions  
Palm oil  
Ogiri  
leaf Bitter  
Seasoning  
Stock fish/dried fish

### Cooking Instructions

#### Step 1

Wash your bitter leaf to remove the bitter teast. Keep aside

#### Step 2

Cook cocoyam, peel off the back. Put in a mortar and pound, add palm oil and pound together. Keep aside

#### Step 3

Season your protein and put on fire to cook. When cooked, add more water, season to teast. Add stock fish, dried fish, blended crayfish and pepper cover to boil for 5mins

#### Step 4

Add cocoyam and ogiri, allow to boil for 5mins so the cocoyam desolves and the stock thickens.

#### Step 5

Add the bitter leaf and allow to boil for 5mins. Put off heat.

#### Step 6

Serve with any swallow of your choice

### Source: Chisdelight

### Nigerian Bitter leaf Soup

Bitterleaf soup – Ofe onugbu (as the Igbos like to call it) is very delicious and also comes third on my list of popular Nigerian soups.

This soup is popular because it could be made in more than five different ways by different ethnic groups in Nigeria. It can also be refrigerated for a very long time (even though I recommend two weeks at most for most Naija soups)

Here is a guide to making the much talked about "ofe onugbu". I stated in the download-able Nigerian foods Eguide that most Nigerian soups are named after the leaves or the thickener used in making them.

This soup can be made with either egusi (melon seeds), ede (cocoa yam), ofor, achi or even ogbono.

### How to prepare Bitterleaf Soup (Ofe Onugbu)

Bitter leaf soup, like most other Nigerian soups is named after the particular leaf which is used in preparing it. But of course, you need to wash this leaf to remove at least ninety percent of the bitter taste, just so you don't end up with a very bitter soup.

The ingredients listed below would make enough soup for 12 people. You are free to increase the size of the ingredients if you want to serve a larger number of people. You can also refrigerate the remainder in case you have a smaller family.

### Ingredients for making Bitterleaf Soup

2kg cow head (meat)  
Bitter leaf (wash to desire)  
Half cup of ground Crayfish  
Maggi or knorr seasoning (3 cubes)  
Ogiri (a product of castor seeds)(optional)  
Dry fish (2 medium sizes)  
Stock fish head (1 big size)  
Palm oil (about 25cl)  
Salt and pepper to taste.  
Cocoa-yam (pounded)  
Half cup ofor (alternative tickener)

### Cocoyam

The bitter leave soup takes almost the same process as the making of Oha soup. As a matter of fact, one pot of soup could be cooked up to the point of adding the leaves then you divide it to add Oha to one and bitter leaf to the other.

It is better and more hygienic to



Cocoyam

wash the leaves yourself, it is a bit of time-consuming but the result is worth the effort. This is possible if you live in Nigeria and can find them in your garden. But you can also get the "already made" from any market in Nigeria.

### Bitter Leaves

#### Bitter Leaf Soup Preparation

#### Step 1

To soften the leaves and further remove the bitter taste, it is advisable to boil alone in ordinary water for 10 to 15 minutes, most people like to add a little quantity of edible potash to hasten this

process but I highly advise against it.

My reason being that this catalyst (potash) tend to affect the entire soup in a slightly negative way.

If you still want to add potash, it will completely wash off the bitter taste and soften the leaves in less than 3 minutes of boiling (the reason most people like using it).

But then you would want to boil again alone and wash thoroughly with just water to remove every trace of the potash.

#### Step 2

Parboil meat with every necessary ingredient, use 2 seasoning cubes, a teaspoon of salt and half a cup of onions. Allow to boil for 10 minutes then add water and cook till the meat is tender.

#### Step 3

Add the (hot-water) washed dry fish, stockfish and cook until it is tender, add more water then add palm oil, ground crayfish, pepper, maggi seasoning, salt and pepper to taste. Stir and allow to boil.

### Soup

At this point, it should give a good soupy taste (even though it would be watery).

#### Step 4

Then add the pounded cocoa yam as you can find in the video below (at this point you can add the ground egusi if you choose to make bitter leaf soup with egusi), also add the ogiri now.

#### Boiling soup

Cook till the cocoa yam dissolves, (this would likely take about ten minutes). You could add a teaspoon of ofor, if the soup is not thick enough.

#### Step 5

Then add the bitter leaves, stir, taste, add more salt if necessary then cook for three to two minutes and you are done with the making of Nigerian Bitter Leaf Soup (Ofe Onugbu).

### Bitter Leaf Soup

Either of these five can go along with it – Eba, Fufu, Semo, Wheat or pounded yam-+





# Reality Bites

with Palang Kasmi  
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## How to build self-confidence

**A** lack of self-confidence comes in many shapes and forms, and learning how to build confidence is an ongoing project for most of us – we are all a work in progress! Here's some tips that you can use to learn how to build self-confidence.

How can you be more confident

Make lists of your achievements, and things in your life that you are proud of.

Acknowledge your personal strengths and talents, and remind yourself of them often.

Set realistic goals for yourself. Practice positive self-talk.

Make time for your hobbies, and try out some new things to find out what you are passionate about.

Talk to a counsellor or mental health professional to learn self-management strategies that can help build confidence and self-esteem. This can help if: You want to know more about self-confidence, you wish you were a more confident person, you want some practical steps to build your self-confidence.

What is a confident person?

Not everyone is born with an inbuilt sense of self-confidence. Sometimes it can be hard to develop confidence, either because personal experiences have caused you to lose confidence or because you suffer from low self-esteem.

A confident person:

does what they believe is right, even if it's unpopular is willing to take risks

admits their mistakes and learns from them, is able to accept a compliments, is optimistic.

Tips for building self-confidence

There are a number of things you can do to build your confidence. Some of them are just small changes to your frame of mind; others you'll have to work on for a bit longer to make them familiar habits.

### 1. Look at what you've already achieved

It's easy to lose confidence if you believe you haven't achieved anything. Make a list of all the things you're proud of in your life, whether it's



getting a good mark on an exam or learning to surf. Keep the list close by and add to it whenever you do something you're proud of. When you're low in confidence, pull out the list and use it to remind yourself of all the awesome stuff you've done.

### 2. Think of things you're good at

Everyone has strengths and talents. What are yours? Recognising what you're good at, and trying to build on those things, will help you to build confidence in your own abilities.

### 3. Set some goals

Set some goals and set out the steps you need to take to achieve them. They don't have to be big goals; they can even be things like baking a cake or planning a night out with friends. Just aim for some small achievements that you can tick off a list to help you gain confidence in your ability to get stuff done.

### 4. Talk yourself up

You're never going to feel confident if you have negative commentary running through your mind telling you that you're no good. Think about your self-talk and how that might be affecting your self-confidence. Treat yourself like you would your best friend and cheer yourself on.

### 5. Get a hobby

Try to find something that you're really passionate about. It could be photography, sport, knitting or anything else! When you've worked out your passion, commit yourself to giving it a go. Chances are, if you're interested or passionate about a certain activity, you're more likely to be motivated and you'll build skills more quickly.

If you're not feeling better, sometimes the quick fixes don't help in the long term. If you're feeling bad and things just don't seem to be improving, it's worth talking to someone who knows how to help. Professionals such as counsellors and psychologists can help you develop strategies to help you build up your confidence. They may also be able to help you understand any underlying problems that might be causing you to feel bad about yourself.

# THE WORLD

with Palang Kasmi

## Health

# Incredible uses of Shea Butter

**W**HAT is Shea butter? Shea butter is a creamy fat found in nuts growing on Shea trees in African countries. It's solid at room temperature but melts on contact with skin, similar to coconut oil.

And while it's edible and used in many African recipes, it's primarily found in skin and hair care products in the United States. You can safely apply Shea butter to your face, lips and body. Some body scrubs and hair conditioners also contain Shea butter for its moisturizing effects.

However, notes Dr. Vij, it's not the best option for acne-prone skin. Shea butter may clog pores and lead to more breakouts. And those with seborrheic dermatitis or dandruff should note that yeast related to dandruff can grow in shea butter.

Is raw or refined shea butter better for your skin? Raw shea butter is packed with vitamins and nutrients that are good for your skin. Refined (or processed) shea butter loses some of its essential nutrients during processing.

For example, there's less or no cinnamic acid, an anti-inflammatory substance, in processed shea butter. Raw shea butter is usually yellow or beige, while refined shea butter is white.

Shea butter versus cocoa butter

Both shea and cocoa butter are moisturizers — emollients that keep water from evaporating from your skin. But shea butter has more fatty acids, vitamin E and, unlike cocoa butter, contains vitamin A. Another difference is in the scent. Cocoa butter comes from the same source as chocolate — the cacao tree — so it smells chocolatey. Shea butter has a mild nutty fragrance.

The benefits of shea butter

Shea butter benefits the skin in several ways. Here's how it boosts skin health:

### 1. Relieves dry skin

Typically, you can find shea butter in lotions for people with dry skin. Shea butter contains fatty acids. They lubricate the skin and create a barrier that keeps moisture in. In people with oilier skin, sebum (natural skin oil) does this job. But for those with drier skin, a moisturizer helps maintain dewiness.

### 2. Eases irritation

Shea butter contains anti-inflammatory substances, which ease swelling and



Vitamin A. "Vitamin A is crucial for skin health," says Dr. Vij. "Since the 1970s, we've used retinoids — synthetic forms of vitamin A — to firm skin and reduce wrinkles." It works by increasing the skin-cell turnover rate, smoothing the skin's surface. It also plumps skin by stimulating the production of collagen, the framework that keeps your skin from sagging.

### Vitamin E

Shea butter naturally has a lot of vitamin E. Even better? The majority of it is alpha-tocopherol (one of eight forms of vitamin E), which has the highest antioxidant activity. Vitamin E is in our sebum, so oilier skins have more of it. But sebum production tends to decline with age. Sunlight exposure depletes it, too. Vitamin E helps skin by preventing cellular damage and boosting moisture.

### 4. Improves eczema

Eczema is a common skin condition that causes itchy, red rashes. It also makes you prone to skin infections. When you have eczema, part of the problem is that you don't have enough fatty acids in your skin. Your skin barrier isn't as effective at warding off irritants and germs. Eczema treatment includes applying thick ointments, balms or creams to seal in moisture and defend against germs.

One study found that shea butter was better at reducing eczema symptoms than petroleum products, which

doctors often recommend. This may be because shea butter contains linoleic acid, a fatty acid that's in skin. Research indicates that linoleic acid plays a crucial role in protecting skin and can significantly reduce eczema symptoms. "It's essential for people with eczema to keep their skin moist and protected," says Dr. Vij. "Shea butter can be a good option for many folks."

### 5. Provides sun protection

Shea butter has a sun protection factor (SPF) of about three or four. It's too small to prevent sun damage or sunburn on its own. But manufacturers combine it with other ingredients to reach levels of SPF 15 or higher. Plus, you get all the soothing, moisturizing and anti-aging benefits of shea butter.

### 6. Doesn't cause allergic reactions

Shea butter is safe for people with nut allergies. Allergens are proteins. While shea butter does come from nuts, it's made entirely of fat, so it's allergen-free. Additionally, no one has reported a reaction to it. However, raw shea butter does contain latex. So people with latex allergies should avoid it or make sure they only use refined shea butter.

What happens if you use shea butter every day? Using shea butter regularly helps skin retain moisture, which makes it soft and smooth. Since it's loaded with antioxidants and anti-inflammatory agents, it may also keep your skin supple. Smoothing on shea butter every day has lots of health benefits — plus it's a daily ritual



redness in skin. People use it for any irritation, from sunburns to chapped lips to skin that's reacting to too many acid peels or scrubs.

Cosmetics companies often add antioxidants (substances that protect cells) to anti-aging skin care. Shea butter contains two antioxidants:

3. Prevents cell damage

## BUSINESS WORLD

# Navigating Nigeria's tax challenges dynamically

*In the dynamic landscape of Nigerian business, navigating taxation complexities remains a formidable challenge for enterprises. With frequent regulatory changes, diverse tax authorities, and intricate procedures, ensuring compliance proves daunting, MICHAEL ARIYIBI writes.*



**T**HE ambiguity of tax policies coupled with inconsistent enforcement inhibits investment, leaving companies grappling with their obligations and facing penalties. To surmount these hurdles, businesses must prioritise professional tax guidance, meticulous record-keeping, and active engagement with governmental bodies to champion transparent and stable tax frameworks.

**Regulatory compliance challenges across Sectors**  
Regulatory compliance in Nigeria is not only a concern but a significant operational challenge for businesses across various sectors. Take, for instance, the telecommunications industry, where companies must adhere to regulations set by the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) regarding spectrum licensing, data protection, and consumer rights.

Simultaneously, the banking sector faces stringent regulations from the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) concerning capital adequacy ratios, anti-money laundering protocols, and significant financial investments customer due diligence. This diverse regulatory landscape often results in compliance burdens for conglomerates operating across telecommunications, banking, and other sectors, leading to

increased costs and administrative complexities.

#### Case studies

MTN Nigeria, one of the leading telecommunications companies, encountered regulatory compliance challenges when the Nigerian government imposed a hefty fine of \$5.2 billion in 2015 for failure to disconnect unregistered SIM cards, citing security concerns. This incident not only highlighted the complexities of compliance but also underscored the potential financial implications of regulatory non-compliance.

To surmount these hurdles, businesses must prioritise professional tax guidance, meticulous record-keeping, and active engagement with governmental bodies to champion transparent and stable tax frameworks.

Similarly, in the banking sector, Access Bank, one of Nigeria's largest banks, faced challenges in complying with the CBN's directive on increasing the minimum capital requirements for banks. Meeting these requirements necessitated significant financial investments and restructuring efforts, impacting the bank's profitability and operational efficiency in the short term.

#### Regulatory bureaucracy and compliance challenges

Moreover, bureaucratic

processes exacerbate compliance specific sectors. For instance, challenges, as illustrated by the multinational corporations like Dangote Group have established dedicated compliance departments tasked with monitoring regulatory changes, ensuring adherence to standards, and implementing internal controls to mitigate compliance risks. Engaging legal experts specialising in regulatory compliance is another crucial strategy adopted by companies to navigate the intricate regulatory landscape.

#### Strategies for mitigating compliance challenges

To mitigate these challenges, companies must proactively participate in industry associations provides businesses with a platform to collectively

advocate for regulatory reforms aimed at streamlining processes and reducing compliance burdens. For instance, the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) engages with policymakers to propose reforms that enhance the ease of doing business and promote industry-specific interests.

#### Addressing conflict of interests

Mr Michael Ariyibi is a chartered accountant and a seasoned Tax Practitioner specialising in Tax Audit. He is also a senior lecturer with Password Professional Limited, where he lectures Economics, Public Sector Accounting and Finance (PSAF), and Taxation.

**"MTN Nigeria, one of the leading telecommunications companies, encountered regulatory compliance challenges when the Nigerian government imposed a hefty fine of \$5.2 billion in 2015 for failure to disconnect unregistered SIM cards, citing security concerns. This incident not only highlighted the complexities of compliance but also underscored the potential financial implications of regulatory non-compliance. To surmount these hurdles, businesses must prioritise professional tax guidance, meticulous record-keeping, and active engagement with governmental bodies to champion transparent and stable tax frameworks. Similarly, in the banking sector, Access Bank, one of Nigeria's largest banks, faced challenges in complying with the CBN's directive on increasing the minimum capital requirements for banks. Meeting these requirements necessitated significant financial investments and restructuring efforts, impacting the bank's profitability and operational efficiency in the short term."**

# BUSINESS WORLD

## Miners, operators owe Nigeria over N2tn – Minister

THE Minister of Solid Minerals Development, Dele Alake has said miners and operators in the country owe Federal Government over N2tn.

He said this while issuing warning to states and local governments to steer clear of the collection of royalties and taxes from licensed miners operating in their domains.

The Minister who gave the warning in Kaduna, also said "miners and operators owe the Federal Government more than N2tn," calling on them to pay the debt.

Alake, represented by the acting Zonal Mines Officer, North-West Zonal Office, Kutman Ali, met on Thursday with members of the Licensed Minerals Holders, Laterite/Sand Operators Dealers in Kaduna.

While explaining that the purpose of the meeting was to unveil the ministry's plan for miners and operators for 2024, the minister said in Kaduna alone, miners and operators owed the Federal Government "over N300bn."

"We have made it very clear that in Kaduna State, every operator should make a bold step and clear their debt," Alake said.

He stressed that operators must monthly pay royalties and taxes to the Federal Government, adding that royalties and taxes were the exclusive preserve of the Federal Government.

He said, "Let me clarify it, state government and local government are entitled to collect other taxes, such as ground rent and other taxes, but they are not to collect royalty and tax on mining."

"Any state government or any local government that collects money in the name of royalty or mineral tax will have it deducted from their federal allocation."

He added that the administration of President Bola



Alake

Tinubu was determined to halt the activities of illegal miners across the country.

Alake described the activities of illegal miners as unacceptable and a huge crime against the nation.

He, therefore, directed the Special Mines Task Force activated in Kaduna State to clamp down on illegal miners.

The Special Mines Surveillance Task Force has men of the Nigerian Army, the police, civil defence, Department of State Services, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, Nigeria Immigration Service while the team is headed by Mines Officers in the State.

He said, "The Special Mines Task Force has been activated in Kaduna State and they have commenced operation on the war against illegal mining and non-payment of royalties, which must be paid on a monthly basis as well as other taxes to the Government of Nigeria."

He warned miners and operators against going to the field without licence, adding that those who had obtained their

licences "should report to the Mines Office, Kaduna to collect Permit to Mobilise to Site."

Alake explained that the mining sector under the Tinubu administration was given a top priority, noting that the importance of the meeting could not be overemphasised.

In his brief remarks, the Chairman of the Miners Association of Nigeria, Kaduna branch, Ado Dogo, represented by the secretary of the association, Kashim Hussaini, said the interface between miners and the regulators was imperative to address the challenges bedevilling the mining 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

## High inflation, reforms create hardships in Nigeria – IMF

THE International Monetary Fund has disclosed that high inflation is creating hardships in Nigeria.

The Division Chief, Research Department, Daniel Leigh, revealed this at the fund's press briefing for its January

needs to come together in their peoples' interest. Nigeria is Germany's second largest trading partner in sub-Saharan Africa.

"The Siemens' energy project is often mentioned by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, and I hope this may be our small contribution to improving electricity in the country. Germany is very active in so many areas like climate change and energy, she stressed."

The security situation in Nigeria, she noted, "is worrisome to Germany as well as Nigeria. We have taken that up already because it is the most important prerequisite for socio-economic development, peace and human development."

"The security sector support reform is also where Germany is deeply involved. Over the years, we have spent quite a lot of money and we are very happy to see that going well under the leadership of the National Security Adviser."

## Naira springs back after CBN directives

to foreign exchange and other risks."

The apex bank further directed banks with current NOPs exceeding its limits to adjust their positions and comply with the new regulations by February 1, 2024.

The latest circular came barely 48 hours after the CBN released a circular, warning banks and FX dealers against reporting false exchange rates, among others.

The new development came on the heels of the adjustment of the methodology used for the calculation of the nation's official exchange rate by the FMDQ Exchange, a situation that has moved the official exchange to about N1,500 from around N900/dollar.

Following the latest CBN directive which is aimed at unifying the official and parallel market rates of the local unit, several banks sold forex to their customers on Thursday.

The development led to a sharp rebound of the national currency in the official market. Bureau De Change operators in Lagos, Kano, and Abuja also pushed to sell their dollar

holding amid fear the local unit might sustain the gain in coming days.

Alhaji Lawan Ismael, a BDC operator in Ikeja, Lagos, said he bought and sold the greenback for N1400/dollar and N1420/dollar, respectively.

Another BDC at the Lagos airport, Sabiu Abdullahi, said the greenback went for between N1400/\$ and N1400/\$. This, he said, was a huge rebound from over N1500/\$ it sold on Wednesday.

In Abuja, the naira traded at the parallel market between N1,300/\$ and N1,350/\$.

Meanwhile, some bank officials said beyond the FX in banks, the CBN and the security agencies would need to beam their searchlights on politicians and government officials who are hoarding dollars in their homes.

As part of its effort to boost liquidity in the FX market, the CBN on Wednesday issued a new circular that removes the previous cap on exchange rates quoted by International Money Transfer Operators.



Cardoso

2024 World Economic Outlook Update. Leigh noted that current reforms in the country have led to currency depreciation. He stated the weakening of the naira has contributed to the increase in inflation.

Leigh said, "There were reforms, and the currency depreciated, and some of this weakness in the naira has contributed to the increase in inflation."

"Now there are also structural factors behind that high inflation, including, you know, on the fiscal side, financing of the deficit. But this is clearly creating hardship."

He stated that bringing down inflation must become a top priority for the country. "The Central Bank of Nigeria has already raised interest rates significantly over the past year to 18.8 per cent. So that is the monetary tightening that is helping in our forecast to bring inflation down from 24.6 per cent in 2023 per cent, to 23 per cent this year, and then closer to single digits into 2025 at 15.5 per cent."

Leigh declared that while conquering inflation through monetary tightening, the country must also provide social support through its budget. "Creating the space for that is the challenge. Our perspective is that more revenue mobilisation, strengthening revenue

administration, widening the tax base, this is what is going to bring in space for development spending while safeguarding fiscal sustainability," he added.

On Tuesday, the IMF released its World Economic Outlook update for January. In it, the Washington-based lender downgraded Nigeria's economic growth projections for 2024 to 3.0 per cent.

It further estimated that the Nigerian economy will grow by 2.8 per cent in 2023. Commenting on this projection in the briefing, the IMF's chief economist, Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas, said, "On Nigeria's growth rate, we have — this has been pointed out, a slight downward revision for this year (2024), 3 per cent, it's a negative 0.1 percentage point. Next year is unchanged at 3.1 per cent."

In its October World Economic Outlook update, the IMF blamed Nigeria's slow growth on weaker oil and gas production.

It said, "Growth in Nigeria is projected to decline from 3.3 per cent in 2022 to 2.9 per cent in 2023 and 3.1 per cent in 2024, with negative effects of high inflation on consumption taking hold."

"The forecast for 2023 is revised downward by 0.3 percentage point, reflecting weaker oil and gas production than expected, partially as a result of maintenance work."

## Senate seeks to partner with Germany govt

GODSWILL Akpabio, the Senate President, has called on the German Government to collaborate with Nigerian counterparts in the fields of security and electricity to enhance the country's socio-political development.

Akpabio made the call when he led some of his colleagues to receive in courtesy, the German Ambassador to Nigeria, Annette Gunther, in his office recently.

This was contained in a statement by the Special Assistant to the Senate President on Media, Mr Jackson Udom.

Akpabio said, "We are looking for partnership and guidance from Germany in the area of security and power generation."

"There is no doubt that we enjoy a very robust relationship with Germany and I see a much better

relationship between Nigeria and Germany under your tenure as the Ambassador.

"Nigeria wants to improve on the existing relationship between us, and the Nigerian Parliament would be very glad to join the President Bola Tinubu-led administration to improve on that relationship."

"Anything we need to do in terms of legalising or in terms of legislation to make most of the policies and programmes that you are embarking on with the government possible, would be done. We want more German companies to join those that are already here."

The German Envoy said she was honoured to be received by the Senate President and his colleagues, assuring his hosts of the commitment of Germany to assisting Nigeria to overcome its security and power challenges.

"We are honoured to be here today. Nigeria and Germany being the largest economies and population in their respective continents,



Akpabio



# ENTREPRENEUR WATCH

WITH CELESTINE D. ATTSAR

## Making entrepreneurship work for Africa's youth

**By 2030, over 40% of the global youth population will be African and by 2050, the number of African youths is expected to reach 830 million. This growth trend is exciting, given the potential for young people in the workforce to unleash a demographic dividend that positively transforms millions of lives, writes ADA OSAKWE.**

**U**NFORTUNATELY, Africa's youth bulge may not drive the economic growth and wealth creation that is expected because more than 1 in 4 young people in Africa's economies are not in employment, education, or training (NEET).<sup>1</sup> The African Development Bank estimates that each year, up to 12 million youths in Africa enter a workforce that has only 3.1 million jobs available and consequently, 1.7 million new jobs need to be created each month to meet employment needs.

Entrepreneurship for job creation

The lack of productive, formal employment is increasingly pushing Africa's youth to start their own businesses as entrepreneurs. Africa boasts the world's highest rates of entrepreneurship, with more than 1 in 5 working-age Africans starting a new business and more than three-quarters of the youth planning to start one within five years.<sup>2</sup>

Africa boasts the world's highest rates of entrepreneurship, with more than 1 in 5 working-age Africans starting a new business and more than three-quarters of the youth planning to start one within five years.

The challenge is that this entrepreneurship is mainly self-employment in the informal sector, what the International Labour Organization classifies as "vulnerable employment." Ninety-five percent of Africa's working youth fall into this category,<sup>3</sup> compared to less than 50% in the Americas, Europe, and Asia. Vulnerable employment is reflected in low productivity, low earnings, and difficult working conditions.

Whether in the informal or formal sector, entrepreneurship in Africa is often plagued with problems including but not limited to:

1. Lack of access to appropriate funding instruments required to start, maintain, and grow a business.

2. High cost of operations due to inadequate infrastructure.

3. Poor macroeconomic conditions.

4. Government policies unsupportive to business.

Coupling these issues with low levels of economic growth and poor social protection schemes, African economies are expected to experience even more youth employment challenges in the future.

As an entrepreneur, I have directly experienced most of these hurdles. In 2016, I launched Nuli Foods, a medium-sized agribusiness that manufactures nutritious



beverages with locally grown fruits and vegetables. Nuli has contributed to Nigeria's economic landscape by creating jobs for youth, reducing post-harvest losses, creating steady incomes for smallholder farmers, and giving Nigerians access to better nutrition. However, building this business has come with significant challenges, including difficulties securing financing from banks and public institutions, high operating costs, crippling inflation rates, and instability in government policies.

Despite the myriad challenges facing anyone trying to build a business in Africa, African youth continue to have a strong entrepreneurial spirit, leading to entrepreneurship being considered as the solution to Africa's job malaise. This is partly fueled by the increasing influence of digital technologies that provide new opportunities for innovation across sectors. Consequently, over the last decade, billions of dollars have been committed to developing Africa's entrepreneurs. However, most public and donor-funded youth projects are failing to adequately provide the systemic support Africa's young entrepreneurs need. For example, a recent Voxdev report states that approximately USD \$1 billion is spent yearly on entrepreneurship training in developing countries.<sup>4</sup> The report also notes that the returns from

these investments are not yielding economic and social impacts.

Rethinking entrepreneur-led job creation in Africa

We must begin to reconsider the models of entrepreneurship support that exist in Africa to ensure that young people are not being blinded by a false narrative of future wealth and stability. Academic institutions, governments, donors, and capital providers should be more intentional about promoting a more enabling environment for entrepreneurship to thrive with the intention of creating jobs on a massive scale in Africa.

To achieve this, an approach to consider is providing focused support to "SME Eagles."

Micro, small, and medium enterprises (SMEs) account for 80% to 90% of jobs on the continent, making them significant contributors to socio-economic development. Among these are enterprises that have demonstrated remarkable resilience because they have perfected their business models, created strong operational structures, grown revenues, and expanded their businesses, despite being faced with the Africa-specific challenges outlined above. These businesses can be referred to as SME Eagles.

Micro, small, and medium enterprises (SMEs) account for 80% to 90% of jobs on the continent, making them

significant contributors to socio-economic development.

SME Eagles have the capacity to provide stable, wage employment for millions of young people, serving as anchors that create and sustain jobs. An example is a 150-tons-per-day milk processing factory in northern Nigeria, owned by a 30-year-old entrepreneur. To meet the needs of the factory, this entrepreneur developed an effective "outgrower" model with milk collection centers where rural pastoralists, the majority of whom are youths and women, deposit their milk daily in return for an income. Today, 18,000 farmers are part of this SME Eagle's network, after only one year of operation. That's 18,000 new, stable jobs, with the potential for thousands more as the factory expands production.

Wage employment also emerges when new firms are created. Because SME Eagles are tried, tested, and led by experienced entrepreneurs in a proven market, replicating their businesses de-risks failure for new entrepreneurs. Socially innovative franchising programs that match youth with these businesses, particularly in sectors that have the highest potential for impact, can be explored. They get the benefit of leap-frogging the trial and error stages of entrepreneurship, because SME Eagles will share their processes and business

models with them, as well as the comfort of establishing an already proven business that has existing market demand. Furthermore, these youths will also get essential leadership training, mentorship, and business structure support.

Catalyzing entrepreneur-led job creation with SME Eagles will require providing affordable capital through blended finance mechanisms. For example, grants and other concessional funds, credit guarantees, interest rebates, and other tailor-made financing solutions could be made available for the acquisition of the franchise operations of an SME Eagle entrepreneurial linkage programs.

Ultimately, for entrepreneurship to live up to its expectations for job-creation, SME Eagles must be enabled to thrive. Focusing government, donor, and private sector financial and policy support on SME Eagles mitigates the high risk of entrepreneurship failures. By providing the supporting business policies and institutional support, effective government regulations and incentives, workforce training subsidies, and affordable financing to these already de-risked, high impact, high productivity local SMEs, a more resilient form of entrepreneurship will emerge, driving stable job creation and inclusive economic growth for Africa's youth.



## The fans inspire us to continue telling African stories – Mary Njoku

Continued from page 18

them happy. ROK is a family – we are on tour as a family.

### What determines the type of stories produced by ROK TV?

What type of stories do the people who consume the content enjoy the most

Our environment, experiences and interactions with people on a day-to-day basis

Powerful storytelling that reflects the many different aspects of African life

### What has been the greatest discovery of the ROK team throughout the Rok Tour?

Seeing how much love we got from the people outside of Nigeria, especially in South Africa and Zambia. Nollywood is no longer a Nigerian phenomenon, it is for all of Africa and through this tour we have expanded our knowledge of people and places outside of Nigeria which can be developed into broader African stories.

### How does ROK intend to give back to the next generation of Nollywood Directors, Producers and Actors that are aiming for a start in the industry?

This is the whole premise of ROK as a company. We love new faces. You can see that a lot of people have grown in the past few years through ROK. A great example, Efe Irele who is also on the tour with us, has really seen her career accelerate very quickly, and she has grown into such a versatile and well-sought out actress.

I am passionate about the younger generation and providing opportunities for them through acting, scriptwriting, etc. I was once in a position where I was in search of opportunity so anything I can do to lift others and create job opportunities, I will. Bringing new blood into Nollywood, whilst also collaborating with professional stars that have paved the way for the rest of us, is an important balance.

### What steps must a Director take to get

### their project showcased on ROK? Must ROK be an executive producer on the project before it is showcased on the channel?

At least 85% of the content on ROK is produced by us, however we do also acquire content from other production companies to showcase on our platforms across Africa and the UK. Quality content, quality storytelling – this is critical to all of our acquisition decisions

### Where do most viewers of the ROK channel come from and what does it tell the team about the type of content being produced?

As a TV channel, ROK reaches 13.5 million subscribers across DSTV and GOTV platforms in Africa alone. In the UK it reaches 12.5M viewers. We create diverse content from epic dramas to modern city romance stories, to make the movies relatable to viewers both home and abroad.

### What message would you leave for someone that does not believe in Nollywood content but you would like to use ROK as a factor to convince them to begin this journey?

As long as we continue to produce meaningful and relatable stories, that are entertaining and speak for us Africans, we will continue to create new Nollywood converts on a regular basis.

### What is the goal of ROK in the next 2-5 years?

To produce more African content, for Africans by Africans. We would like to unite Africa by inviting talent from other countries – we want to learn about South African stories, about Zambian stories, about Africans who grew up in Europe, we want to share relatable content through our movies and series.



## If you want to stay relevant, emulate Wizkid – Shallipopi

Continued from page 18



CROWN Uzama, professionally known as Shallipopi, a popular Nigerian musician, has offered some helpful career advice with fellow entertainers.

The Elon Musk crooner stated that if his colleagues want to stay relevant in the industry, they must mimic Afrobeats superstar Wizkid's social media decorum.

Shallipopi expressed this in a recent interview with 78 Factory, explaining that overworked musicians frequently forget their ideals.

He said: "To stay relevant, you stay silent. When you talk too much, you lose value. Let your music and your success speak for you like Wizkid."

The Edo-born singer also disclosed during the interview that his genre of music isn't afrobeats but afro-pluto.

Meanwhile.....

Zlatan gave my career life – Shallipopi

Crown Uzama, also known as Shallipopi, a rising Nigerian artist, has underlined the importance of rapper Zlatan Ibile in his success.

According to the "Elon Musk" singer, Zlatan gave his music career "life" without receiving any monetary compensation.

The TikTok sensation, 23, revealed this via his Instagram story while giving a tribute to the Lagos Anthem hitmaker.

Shallipopi wrote; "Big shoutout to Zlatan Ibile. Bro literally gave my career life. He didn't ask for anything in return."

He became an internet sensation after his song 'Elon Musk' went viral. He later remixed the song with Zlatan Ibile and Fireboy DML which solidified his stardom.

## Lupita Nyong'o and Boyfriend Selema Masekela Break up

LUPITA Nyong'o and boyfriend Selema Masekela have ended their romance less than a year after going Instagram official. Read her powerful message on her "heartbreak" and "pain"

There is no more "us" for Lupita Nyong'o and Selema Masekela.

The Oscar winner and her boyfriend have broken up after about one year together, she shared on Instagram Oct. 19 without naming her ex.

"It is necessary for me to share a personal truth and publicly dissociate myself from someone I can no longer trust," Lupita wrote. "I find myself in a season of heartbreak because of a love suddenly and devastatingly extinguished by deception."

The Black Panther star shared why she decided to reveal the news publicly in spite of the heartache she's currently feeling.

"I am tempted to run into the shadows and hide, only to return to the light when I have regained my strength enough for me to say, 'Whatever, my life is better this way,'" she continued. "But I am reminded that the magnitude of the pain I am feeling is equal to the measure of my capacity for love. And so, I am choosing to face the pain, cultivating the courage to meet my life exactly as it is, and trusting that this too shall pass."



## SUNDAY FEATURE

# Effects of bullying on physical mental health

***Bullying is a common phenomenon among us now. Being bullied is both heartbreaking and miserable for those targeted. But many adults, unless they too have been bullied, have a hard time understanding just how much kids can suffer from being bullied. They fail to realise that the consequences of bullying are dire and can have a lasting impact on one's mental and physical health, writes MAIMUNA KATUKA ALIYU.***

ACCORDING to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), bullying has a lifelong impact on the social and emotional development of children that puts them at risk for everything: from severe mental health issues to stunted professional growth later in life. Bullying is the use of force, coercion, hurtful teasing or threat, to abuse, aggressively dominate or intimidate an individual. The behaviour is often repeated and habitual.

In Nigeria, this mostly occurs in boarding schools among seniors who take advantage of their timid and weak juniors, thereby forcing them to do their biddings such as washing of clothes, assignments, cleaning their rooms, collecting their foods, punishing and beating them as they wish.

According to NICHD, children who are involved in bullying experiences (on either side of the situation) are at an increased risk of developing issues on both mental and physical health. Bullying can have physical, social, and emotional effects, too.

Bullying can also affect other children who witness the acts even if they aren't directly involved. While it may seem obvious that those who are bullied have a higher risk of developing developmental issues, what's less obvious is that bullying also affects the on-lookers.

Bullying brings negative affects to everyone who witnesses the act by way of creating what feels like an unsafe environment. It can make children feel as though they are helpless, planting a deep seed of insecurity and disdain for their classroom (and classmates) as a whole.

Bullying also makes kids feel as though they can't be protected by those they trust (teachers, aides, parents, etc.), which can lead to withdrawal and a failure to thrive. Research shows that bullying and harassment can cause adult symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

In fact, one study examining mental health in college students found experiencing bullying to be the strongest predictor of developing PTSD symptoms. Often times, it is withdrawal that is the first and most obvious sign that bullying is taking place, apart from actually seeing the incident in person.

Over time, if bullying continues, those who witness it will likely begin to show other signs such as attention issues, fear of participating in normal activities, and acting out or other behavioral problems such as vandalism or destroying toys or objects. Because kids rarely tell an adult when they experience bullying, it's important that parents, teachers, and other caregivers



are aware of the warning signs.

For instance, kids may hint that they are being bullied by saying there is drama at school, that kids are messing with them, or that they have no friends. These are all signs that they are experiencing bullying. If your kids confess to being a target, tell them you are proud of them for having the courage to talk about it.

This reinforces that you value having an open dialogue about issues they're facing. It's also important that you believe what your kids tell you and that you make a commitment to work with them to find solutions. While it can be difficult, try to keep your emotions in check. Instead, remain calm and work with your child to make a plan.

When kids feel as if they have options, they are less likely to be overwhelmed with negative feelings. In addition, efforts to advocate on behalf of victims will not be effective unless people truly comprehend how painful and traumatic bullying can be.

Kids who are regularly targeted by bullies often suffer both emotionally and socially. Not only do they find it hard to make friends, but they also struggle to maintain healthy friendships. Part of this struggle is directly related to low self-esteem.

A lack of self-esteem is a direct result of the mean and hurtful things that other kids say about them. When kids are continuously called "fat" or

"losers," they begin to believe these things are true. Many times, kids feel like they need to accept occasional bullying in order to belong. As a result, they will succumb to peer pressure and accept bullying as a way to maintain their social standing.

In fact, research shows that 50% of students between the ages of 12 and 18 who have been bullied report that the bully had more social influence. In addition, 31% indicate that they had more money. Bullying victims also tend to experience a wide range of emotions. They may feel angry, bitter, vulnerable, helpless, frustrated, lonely, and isolated from their peers.

Consequently, they may skip classes and resort to drugs and alcohol to numb their pain. If bullying is on-going, they may develop depression and even contemplate suicide. Aside from the bumps and bruises that occur during physical bullying, there are additional physical costs. For instance, bullied kids often experience anxiety. This stress on their bodies also will result in a variety of health issues, including

being sick more often and suffering from ulcers and other conditions caused by persistent anxiety.

Kids who are bullied often suffer academically, too. Bullied kids struggle to focus on their schoolwork. In fact, slipping grades is one of the first signs that a child is being bullied. Kids also may be so pre-occupied by bullying that they forget about assignments or have difficulty paying attention in class.

Parents can do everything right and still find out that their child is being bullied. As a result, they should never feel responsible for the choices a bully makes. Instead, they should place the blame where it belongs and focus on helping their child heal from bullying.

Research shows that bullying has a lot of effects which last well into adulthood. In fact, one study found that the consequences of being bullied by peers may have a greater impact on mental health in adulthood than originally thought. Remember, the experiences that people have while they are children help

mould them into the adults that they later become. So it is not surprising that the effects of bullying linger well into adulthood.

Conclusively, bullying prevention has been put in the spotlight in recent years and has gained momentum in educational facilities across many countries. Many schools and childcare providers now implement some variation of an anti-bullying policy, which has had a major impact on developing minds everywhere.

Most anti-bullying policies include tips such as keeping a watchful eye, utilising activities that encourage kids to speak up about their experiences, and keeping an open line of communication with youngsters to ensure they are comfortable with sharing any unwanted behaviours by others. It is time bullying in whatever form is stopped in Nigeria. One hopes that the government, school managements and the society at large will do something to tackle the vicious malaise.

Maimuna Katuka Aliyu is an intern with PRNigeria in Abuja

***"According to NICHD, children who are involved in bullying experiences (on either side of the situation) are at an increased risk of developing issues on both mental and physical health. Bullying can have physical, social, and emotional effects, too. Bullying can also affect other children who witness the acts even if they aren't directly involved. While it may seem obvious that those who are bullied have a higher risk of developing developmental issues, what's less obvious is that bullying also affects the on-lookers"***

# NEWS

## Alia assures BSUTH of support for quality healthcare

From **TERESE TUHWA, Makurdi**

**B**ENUE State University Teaching Hospital, Makurdi has been assured of continued needed support even as it will also prioritize the health needs of the people, Governor Hyacinth Alia has said.

Speaking recently during the 100 days in office of the Chief Medical Director, Benue State University Teaching Hospital, Dr. Stephen Hwande, Governor Alia stated that the 100 days of Dr. Hwande in office was a celebration of hard work and commitment.

Represented by his deputy, Barr. Sam Ode, the governor expressed satisfaction with the achievements recorded by the Hwande led management team of the hospital.

Governor Alia noted with joy that he was proud of Dr Hwande and the state Commissioner for Health and Human Services, Dr. Yanmar Ortese, who have continued to work round the clock to achieve a lot within a hundred days.

The governor said if the Chief Medical Director of the hospital could achieve what he had achieved in just one hundred days, what he would achieve in four years would be marvelous and the people would benefit maximally from it.

In his comment, the state Commissioner for Health and Human Services, Dr. Yanmar Ortese appreciated the governor for appointing the right man for the job, insisting that he would continue to do



**Hwande**

his best to enable the Chief Medical Director to render quality services to people of the state and beyond.

Also speaking, the Chief Medical Director, Dr. Stephen Hwande, who conducted the governor round the projects executed, disclosed that the one hundred days was to showcase the achievements recorded and promised not to rest on his oars to achieve even more for the Benue people.

Dr. Hwande noted with confidence that with only fifty percent implementation of the budget of the hospital, he would be able to do better. And added that the shortage of manpower, which was the major challenge of the hospital, was being addressed

as they were in the process of employing qualified people.

Some of the projects inspected or commissioned include renovated mortuary, perimeter fence to avoid encroachment, doctors' quarters, lassa fever clinic, water project and its treatment plant and CT Scan among others.

## Sightsavers, Health Ministry collaborate towards eliminating NTDs

From **AMEDU JOSEPH, Lokoja**

**A**n international charity organisation, Sightsavers, in collaboration with Kogi State Ministry of Health, have solicited the support of critical stakeholders towards the elimination of Neglected Tropical Disease (NTDs) in the state.

Dr Francis Akpa, the Director Public Health, Kogi Ministry of Health, disclosed this during an advocacy visit to the new Ohinoyi of Epiraland, Alh. Muhammad Tijani Anaje on recently in Okene.

Akpa said that the advocacy was part of activities to mark the 2024 World NTDs Day with the theme: "Unite To Act Towards Elimination of NTDs", celebrated every January 30th.

"We are calling on the global community to unite and eliminate Neglected Tropical Diseases, and also celebrating the success we have made on NTDs over the past 30 years in Kogi," he said.

Akpa stressed that without the input of the traditional institution it would be difficult to reach communities through their distribution mechanism, and would not be able to achieve the desired success.

He congratulated the Ohinoyi of Epiraland on his coronation, and lauded his unflinching support over the past decades.

He therefore solicited for continued support and collaborations that would ensure the success of the NTDs in Kogi State.

Also speaking, Nurse Albert Alabi, the State Coordinator for NTD Control Programme, said the visit would enable them to intimate the new Ohinoyi of the scourge of NTDs, their programmes and activities.

"We also want to let the royal father know that the local government areas within his domain are more endemic of NTDs.

"So, we believe with his presence, voice and support, definitely there is going to be a change. We are also planning

BY **EZEKIEL DONTINNA**

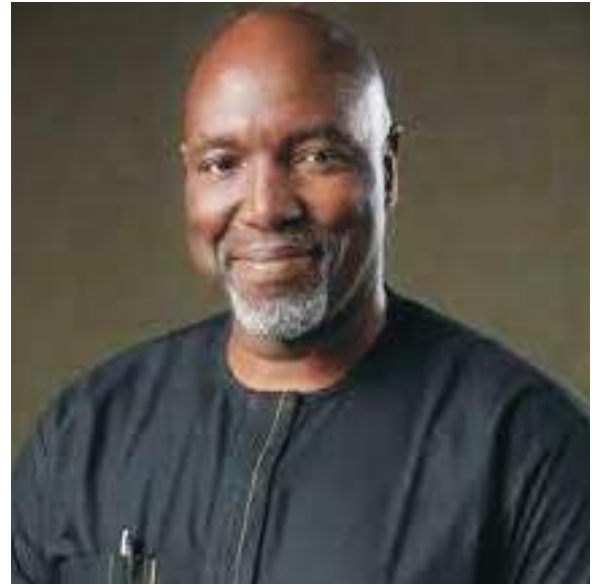
**F**OLLOWING the recent Supreme Court victory of Governor Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang, of Plateau State, the State Executive Council of Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), has congratulated the governor. They described his affirmation as a God ordained mandate.

This was contained in a press statement signed by the Plateau State Chairman of PFN, Rev. Dunka Gomwalk, and made available to THE NIGERIA STANDARD in Jos, the Plateau State capital recently.

The statement said, "the Executives of Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) and all her leaders across the state and beyond, wish to heartily extend her congratulations to the Executive Governor of Plateau State, His Excellency, Barr. Caleb M. Mutfwang on the affirmation of your God - ordained mandate as the duly elected Governor of Plateau State by the Supreme Court of Nigeria on the 12th day of January, 2024.

"Indeed, for us in PFN, the final consummation of this success despite the vicissitudes that prevailed through the journey, was a sure proof that your mandate is divine. With this victory, our hope as a Fellowship is further strengthened that God has

## PFN congratulates Mutfwang over Supreme Court victory



**Dunka**

something great for the people of Plateau.

"While rejoicing with His Excellency on this great success, it is our prayer in view of the great task ahead that our Lord will continue to grant you the grace, wisdom and all the enablement required to implement your desired vision for the people of Plateau State", he prayed.

Gomwalk, therefore,

pledged the state PFN's unalloyed continuous support and readiness to partner with the governor and his administration through prayers, periodic consultations as the need demands, to achieve his goal for this great land of peace and tourism. "Once again, congratulations and God bless you, Sir!" the letter concluded.

## Demolition of illegal structures to avoid another disaster

From **MUSLIUDEEN ADEBAYO, Ibadan**

**M**RS. Olabisi Oyediji, wife of the immediate past Seriki of Ibadanland, late Chief Adebayo Oyediji, has advised Governor Seyi Makinde of the state, the state Commissioner of Police, Adebola Hamza, to order demolition of some illegal structures in her petroleum station.

She noted that this is necessary so as to avoid another disaster in Ibadan, the Oyo State capital.

Oyediji made these declarations while addressing a press conference in Ibadan recently.

Some explosive devices



**Makinde**

exploded at Dejo Oyelese close, Bodija Housing Estate in Ibadan two weeks ago.

Chief Adebayo Oyediji who was the head of the Seriki in the Olubadan chieftaincy lines died in 2018.

The wife of the former Seriki has however enjoined the governor, the CP and other stakeholders in the state to order demolition of some illegal structures in her petroleum station, Debistol Petroleum Station located at Akobo area of Ibadan.

Oyediji, while addressing journalists at the press conference held at the Broadcasting Corporation of Oyo State (BCOS), explained that the man whom she leased the petroleum station to, Omoniyi Olusegun, has erected some structures over the underground tanks in the petroleum station.

She said that this may lead to an explosion if not urgently demolished.

Oyediji while speaking further, appealed to the governor, the Commissioner of Police, the Olubadan of Ibadanland and other stakeholders to prevail.

She added that the man has erected some structures which are not allowed in a petroleum station.

She said that all efforts to ensure that the structures are demolished have been

fruitless.

She urged the governor, the CP, Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) and other stakeholders to intervene to avoid another disaster in the ancient city.

"I have tried my best. I have informed the Town Planning, they came but did not do anything. I have informed the police, nothing good has come out. That is why I am addressing this press conference today.

"I want the governor to intervene in this matter. I want the Olubadan of Ibadanland to intervene. The man I leased my petroleum station to in 2018 has erected some structures over the underground tanks. This is dangerous. I can't sleep in my house again. I have been threatened over my property. I want the governor to intervene. It is dangerous to erect structures when there are underground tanks.

"The person I leased the petroleum station to, has erected some structures such as eatery and a Suya stand. It is very dangerous to erect structures when there are underground tanks. How can they be seeling Suya at a petroleum station? It can lead to an explosion. And I want to protect the name of my husband. My husband was the former Seriki of Ibadanland".



**Akpa**

to make him one of the NTDs Ambassadors", Alabi said.

He described NTDs as diseases that affect communities that lack access to potable water, poor housing and sanitation and poor nutrition.

According to him, NTDs include: Trachoma, sleeping sickness, River blindness (Onchocerciasis), Dengue fever, Hookworm, Leishmaniasis, Leprosy, Lymphatic filariasis (elephantiasis), trypanosomiasis, among others.

Alabi emphasised that the level of awareness was very low in Kogi, hence the need to step up awareness to let people know that the NTDs are ordinary and preventable, and not as a result of witchcraft or otherwise.

"The major challenge facing the elimination of NTDs is the issue of awareness and that is why we will continue to step up campaign on sensitisation and mobilisation towards eliminating NTDs in Kogi State," he said.

On her part, Ms Phoebe Hindan, the Monitoring &

Evaluation Officer of Sightsavers, commended Kogi Ministry of Health for its support and partnership which had made it possible to achieve huge success over the years.

She said that the partnership with the relevant stakeholders was to ensure that everyone was brought onboard to ensure the total elimination of NTDs in Kogi State.

"Sightsavers is an international charity working to prevent avoidable blindness, support equality for people with disabilities and advocate for change.

"Our goal is to prevent avoidable blindness and fight for the rights of people with disabilities.

"We campaign for disability rights so people with disabilities can participate equally in society.

"We also partner with the relevant stakeholders to eliminate NTDs because they lead to disabilities such as blindness, among others," Bindan said.

She stressed the need to strengthen the system to ensure that the advocacy campaign and works of Sightsavers were sustained after the organisation's exit in Kogi State.

Our correspondent reports that other activities carried out to mark the 2024 world NTD day include: visit to the State's office of WHO, Campus walk at Federal University Lokoja (FUL) and Kogi State Polytechnic.

Others were Radio Phone-in program, Panel discussion on NTDs at FUL and advocacy visit and sensitisation on NTDs in the 21 LGAs of Kogi.

# NEWS

## PLSG to partner federal establishments for development

By Peter Title

PLATEAU State Government has expressed its willingness to partner with any federal establishment that wants to bring development to the state

Governor Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang disclosed this when Heads of Federal Establishments in the state paid him a courtesy visit recently, at Government House, Little Rayfield, Jos, where he promised to provide land for the erection of office accommodation to any federal establishment.

The governor noted that the meeting was timely and important. He said that it affords them time to rejig the process of governance for the overall development of the state.

According to him, "I don't" consider your presence as staff of Federal Government but representatives of Plateau people in the federal system. Your presence in the state is therefore crucial."

He said, they were invited to brainstorm and to know the challenges they face while discharging their duties and urged them to be good advocates of people of the state.

Governor Mutfwang revealed that the present administration under his



Mutfwang

watch had come out with constructive engagements with the federal government and called for their cooperation so as to fast track development in the state.

He promised to improve on interface with the Heads of Federal Establishments in the state to regularly reappraise their activities for the good of all.

Earlier, the Chairman of the Heads of Federal Establishments in the state, Mr. Emmanuel Taukek, congratulated the governor for his victory at the Supreme Court, saying that the case never

distracted him from providing the needed development to the people of the state.

According to him, there are 53 federal agencies in the state and they hold meetings every month. And some of them are in a dire need of accommodation. He lamented that if nothing was done, it would elude the state.

Mr. Taukek thanked the governor for availing them the opportunity to have an interface, saying it would further fast track development in all spheres.

By JIDAUNA DARING & HOSEA NYAMLONG

PLATEAU Northern Senatorial and Jos North, Bassa House of Representatives by-election yesterday witnessed a very low-turnout of voters who came out to exercise their franchise.

Our correspondents who went round report that there was a serious voter apathy in most of the polling units visited even with the presence of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) officials that were at hand with both sensitive and non-sensitive materials to attend to the electorate.

Most of the Presiding INEC officers at the various polling stations that spoke with **SUNDAY STANDARD** said that both sensitive and non-sensitive materials arrived the polling units around 8 a.m.

The INEC officials also told our correspondents that all their BVAS machines were functioning well. And assured the electorate of a sincere and transparent exercise at their various polling units or stations.

However, some of the electorates who spoke with our man, shortly after casting their votes said that they were not happy with the low-turnout of the voters who came out to vote candidates of their choice. They pointed out that voting in any given election, whether fresh or by-election, is a constitutional right for people to come out and

come up with very workable solution towards mitigating this menace", Bajju enthused.

Earlier, in a welcome address, Provost of the College, Dr. Jude Okpara said the college has offered scholarship to over twenty indigent students of the host community, Vwang, owing to the cordial relationship that exists between the college and its immediate host.

Okpara added that all the National Diploma, Higher National Diploma and Degree courses being offered in the institution were fully accredited by both the National Board for Technical Education, NBTE and the Nigerian Universities Commission, NUC.

Highlight of the occasion was the administration of oath on the students by the Registrar, Veterinary Council of Nigeria, VCN, Dr. Oladotun Fadipe on the graduating students.

## By-election: Voter apathy blamed on PDP absence

The electorate also described the INEC removal of one of the political parties from participating in the by-election two days to the exercise, as undemocratic as far as the choice of some electorate were concerned. This in particular, refers to the party whose candidates were not allowed to contest.

According to the electorate, Nigerians have now become tired of

conducting re-run or by-elections which have become order of the day. They also called on INEC to do more in terms of improvement so as to avoid such elections.

The electorate also called on INEC to be honest or fair in announcing the real winner of any given election in the country as an independent body that does not need any interference from anybody. Adding that what electorate need from

## Change of name

<p><b>KANKIMES</b></p> <p>I, formerly known as <b>KANKIMES JOHNSON</b>, now wish to be known and addressed as <b>KANKIMES JOHNSON DONGO</b>. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public to please take note</p>	<p><b>MILDRED</b></p> <p>I, formerly known as <b>ALEX MILDRED KOSHI</b>, now wish to be known and addressed as <b>MRS. MILDRED RITDANG Alex</b>. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public to please take note</p>
<p><b>PATIENCE</b></p> <p>I, formerly known as <b>PATIENCE NANMWA</b>, now wish to be known and addressed as <b>PATIENCE BINF A</b>. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public to please</p>	<p><b>SINGDEP</b></p> <p>I, formerly known as <b>PONDUR SINGDEP</b>, now wish to be known and addressed as <b>NANKUR CHIRMAK SINGDEP</b>. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public to please take note</p>
<p><b>ZARADEEN</b></p> <p>I, formerly known as <b>DUL NANFA DUN</b>, now wish to be known and addressed as <b>ZARADEEN ABUBAKAR</b>. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public to please take note</p>	<p><b>LOHNIM</b></p> <p>I, formerly known as <b>LOHNIM PONZING TAN</b>, now wish to be known and addressed as <b>LOHNIM PONZING</b>. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public to please take note</p>
<p><b>TANKO</b></p> <p>I, formerly known as <b>SUNDAY JOY SHANKAT</b>, now wish to be known and addressed as <b>SUNDAY SHANKAT TANKO</b>. Correct date of birth is 27\5\1999. All former documents remain valid. Concerned</p>	<p><b>DANLADI</b></p> <p>I, formerly known as <b>NIMKUR ZWALNAP</b>, now wish to be known and addressed as <b>ALEXANDER PONFA LAKTAM</b>. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public to please take note</p>
<p><b>MUHAMMED</b></p> <p>I, formerly known as <b>MUHAMMED ADAMU</b>, now wish to be known and addressed as <b>MUHAMMED ADAMU</b>. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p><b>ADEBAYO</b></p> <p>I, formerly known as <b>ADEBAYO LAWAL OYERINDE</b>, now wish to be known and addressed as <b>ADEBAYO YEKINI OYERINDE</b>. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>
<p><b>LONGKAT</b></p> <p>I, formerly known as <b>MUTMANG VICTORIA LONGKAT</b>, now wish to be known and addressed as <b>LONGKAT VICTORIA</b>. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p><b>NAANZOEM</b></p> <p>I, formerly known as <b>NAAZAAM DEMDIP</b>, now wish to be known and addressed as <b>NAANZOEM HYGINUS DENDIP</b>. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take</p>
<p><b>JAMES</b></p> <p>I, formerly known as <b>JAMES MONDAY ENOWEL</b>, now wish to be known and addressed as <b>JAMES NOWEL</b>. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the general public to please take note.</p>	<p><b>DANLADI</b></p> <p>I, formerly known as <b>SOOMMUK JOSEPH ALPHONSUS</b>, now wish to be known and addressed as <b>DANLADI ALPHONSUS DAYOON</b>. All former documents remain valid. All concerned authorities and the</p>

## FCAHPT staff, students undergo train the trainer training

By KENNETH DAKOP

EXECUTIVE Secretary, Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria, ARC, Sunday Prof. Garba Sharubutu has disclosed that about seventy graduates and staff of the Federal College of Animal Health and Production Technology (FCAHPTS) Vom, Plateau State are currently undergoing Train-the Trainer (ToT) training on soil-less farming as part of efforts to address the perennial conflict between crop farmers and pastoralists across the country.

Sharubutu said the initiative was conceived out of the desire to mitigate the incessant conflict between farmers and herders that has negatively affected the agricultural sector in Nigeria.

The ARC scribe made this disclosure at the Fourth Registration and Induction of 187 graduates of the

college near Jos recently. AIG Aishatu Bajju, corroborated that the "the point of crisis now is incessant conflict between farmers and herders which is related to climate change, would be addressed by the council in collaboration with other stakeholders.

Bajju maintained that President Bola Tinubu has "inaugurated a committee headed by the former Governor of Kano State, Dr. Abdullahi Ganduje on Agriculture and the Green livestock reform which will soon start its implementation. It is within the purview of that committee to work and ensure that the perennial conflict between farmers and herders across Nigeria is mitigated".

"Of course, the Veterinary Council of Nigeria is part of that committee and we are going to work because it is a climate related issue, so there is so much pressure on land, population growth and so on. But I am sure the committee would be able to

SUNDAY FEATURE

# Plateau rerun elections marred by voter apathy

**Following the outcome of the election petition tribunals for the 2023 general elections across the country as well as death of some office holders, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) fixed February 3, 2024 as date for the re-run elections to fill in the various vacancies that arose as a result. SUNDAY STANDARD reporters, LUCY CHINDABA, YVONNE ISHOLA, FWENJI GO'AR AND EZEKIEL DONTINNA, spread across the Northern Senatorial Zone went round to monitor the process and sent in the following reports.**

AT the Gold and Base Polling Unit in Jos South Local Government Area as early as 7:20am INEC Presiding Officer Timothy Ajiboye and his team as well as security personnel were already at the polling unit when the reporter arrived. According to the Presiding Officer there were 918 registered voters and 918 ballot papers were available. Though there were some little hitches at the beginning which included lack of chairs and tables to use as well as the ink being dry voting however commenced by 8:58am. The reporter however observed that there was serious voter apathy as people were coming in trickles as against the usual large crowd witnessed in previous elections.

In a chat with some of the voters, a woman who wished to remain anonymous said the people have refused to come out because the party they wanted to vote for was not in the ballot and so they felt there was no need to come out and vote. However another respondent Nvo Gyang while countering the first respondent said she has come out to vote because it is the right thing to do, it is her responsibility as a citizen of the country to come out and obey the laws of the land by exercising her franchise.

At another Polling unit in Rayfield, a correspondent spoke to some voters at the polling units of the Old Government House, Rayfield who expressed his views on the election.

Rev Dr. Sylvester Dachomo, the Leading Pastor of the Church Of Christ In Nations (COCIN), who voted at Polling Unit 006, Old Government House, Rayfield said, "This is rather unfortunate. We are here to vote, and the place is empty. Knowing our past experience in this Polling Unit, voting goes on through the night, but what we are seeing today is serious voter apathy."

"One is just wondering what would be the outcome of the exercise. This is rather very sad."

By 9:27am at Unit 011 of the Laranto, Jenta-Apata Ward, INEC officials, security personnel and others were on ground and ready to address the small crowd, but party agents were not available. The atmosphere was peaceful and people looked organised.

Speaking with Chief Joseph Zee Nyam, he expressed optimism that the exercise will be smooth sailing in spite of the low turn out of voters.

In the history of elections on the Plateau, the lack of interest displayed by most eligible voters in Rayfield and environs, leaves much to be desired. For most people, it was just a holiday, a day of rest.

Feeling the pulse of a middle aged woman, who gave her name as Mama Mum, she said "I am not going to vote because my party, PDP, has been disqualified from the race. That is one. Two, I have no confidence in the other candidates".



Every word from the people around, trying to get her to vote, fell on deaf ears. Ignoring everyone, she went back to doing her laundry.

The atmosphere around Rayfield was like a Sunday. While some people came out to exercise their civic responsibilities, others went about doing their house chores, or simply idling around. There were a few people who decided to

outrightly go against the law, and opened their shops or availed themselves for business in the market. Some of them were seen openly selling foodstuffs in the market.

Speaking with one of the market women, she said there is no reason for her to go and vote because all the politicians are the same. Expantiating, she said "I have never suffered like this in my

life. Feeding is beyond the reach of an average Nigerian. And things are getting worse by the day. Imagine the high cost of rent, electricity. We have no other country but Nigeria. And to think I voted them into power. I won't vote!" she emphasised again.

Our correspondent reports that Polling Units like the one opposite the New Government House, Little Rayfield and the one at St George's

Primary School, Topp, Rayfield were the only vibrant ones. Most of the INEC officials at Obasanjo Model School, Shinco Road, Gura Topp axis sat around, patiently waiting for voters to come and vote.

A voter who does not want his name in print said they literally had to go and encourage the voters to come out. He said they had to paint the picture of the likely consequences of not voting at all. Which is that their worst nightmare may emerge the winner.

Unlike previous elections, the turn out of electorate at Hill Station Polling Units of Jenta-Adamu Ward of Jos-North Local Government Area, has been poor as voters come in bits to cast votes for the candidates of their choice.

The Electoral Officials and Party Agents were seen sitting almost ideal as voters come one after the other in each hour time and swiftly cast their votes, because there was no queueing as in the previous elections.

Speaking to one of the voters Adamu Bull Dajan, said, he was at the Polling Unit to cast his vote saying, "we have successfully done our voting, but we have experienced voter apathy here. The turn out has been very low compared to other elections and do not know why this is so, but we have exercised our civic duty."

"You see what happened last time with the BVAS fracas, a lot of people do not have confidence in the process, because we believe that somebody out there is writing results. So why should they come out and waste their precious time and spend the whole day here?"

"I did mine but the people in my place have refused to come out and vote. We talked to people around to come and vote too, but they refused. This election is like a pregnant woman because we are voting in the day time, but some people will do theirs in the "night" as usual and we will wait and hear from you the press."

"But, so far, if the election will continue like this, the elections by God's grace will be peaceful, because we do not want any destruction of lives and property. We are now together during election, but the moment they go to Abuja, you will not see them again. So, pray that it ends peacefully", he prayed.

Dajan, however, cautioned the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to do their work diligently, without favoritism based on affiliation or religion, because it is for the interest of Plateau and Nigeria at large.

On the whole in all the areas visited election materials and security operatives arrived the polling units on time and voting is ongoing peacefully without much hitches.

As at the time of filing in the reports the general observation is the serious voter apathy in many of the polling units but it is hoped that before the close of voting more people will come out to vast their votes.

## SUNDAY MAGAZINE



## Unending terrorists' attacks: Undermining Plateau's corporate existence

*Continued from page 10*

wondering was how brothers eventually took arms against each other in the area. Reacting over the incident, Governor Mutfwang lamented that some people are still determined to create an atmosphere of insecurity in the state despite government's efforts to end activities of terrorist elements.

He noted that for decades, Plateau has been plagued with internecine crises, attributed to ethnicity and religion but these two factors have been dispelled over time while some persons believed the crisis have to do with disagreement between herders and farmers.

Condemning the attacks, the Mwaghavul Development Association said it was saddened by the current breakdown of law and order in Mangu town which begun on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> and continued on Wednesday 2024 without any resistance from the security.

The association in a statement signed by Lawrence Kyarshik remarked that "the Executive Governor of Plateau State, Caleb Mutfwang in a swift reaction to curtail the situation imposed a 24hr curfew in Mangu Local Government only for the Fulani jihadist to unleash mayhem on Kwahaslalek leaving 30 people dead, houses completely raised down and properties including food items destroyed with fire."

"One then wonders how these criminals operated without any resistance from the security personnel already deployed in the local government. Sadly enough, security alert received on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> had shown that there is pending attacks in Mangu and other places, yet these carnages went on unhindered. As

if that is not enough, even within Mangu, the Muslims took advantage of the curfew to burn down houses, killing unsuspected persons and destroying properties and churches.

The MDA frowns at the activities of some of the military personnel who appeared to be complacent in carrying the constitutional duties they swore to protect all citizens of the country irrespective of tribe and religion. Eye witness report has it that while the military send our people away, they watched the Muslims burn down houses seamlessly."

The Mwaghavul association noted that "we want to use this opportunity to respond to a write-up on the social media by one Safwan Umaru Yahaya accusing the Christians in Mangu of collaborating with the Plateau State government particularly Operation Rainbow to attack Muslim Ummah at Mangu. In his social media space, he claimed that the police and Operation Rainbow are killing them, yet there was no sound of gunshots at the background of the video. This statement by Safwan Umaru Yahaya is not only misleading but a complete fabrication of lies, distractive and meant to falsely attract sympathy to his people.

The Mwaghavul nation and Christians in Mangu have coexisted peacefully with Muslims for decades. Most of them are even our brothers and sisters who have also married our daughters, they have allowed bad elements to settle amongst them and used them against their own brothers and sisters. Remember, if you are a Mwaghavul Muslim, and love

Mangu LGA, you will not conspire with the evil people against us.

Also reacting over these attacks, the Plateau Initiative for the Development of the Natives, (PIDAN), noted that both the Christmas Eve killings and the prolonged political leadership impasse in the state have not only been sources of great concern but have also slowed down progress and demoralized most persons who wished to see that the state takes giant strides in growing the economy, building robust infrastructure and providing effective leadership and governance.

In a statement signed by its secretary, comrade Nanle Gujor, appealed to all citizens to take security concerns very seriously in all programmes and be effective information providers to the security agents in order to enable them provide us with the safety and protection that we need.

All these years, some villages on the Plateau have become targets by these marauders with impunity. Many lives have been lost and properties worth billions of naira destroyed.

As it is, the natives are constantly chased away from their ancestral homes and their lands grabbed also with impunity. This has continued to create more problems and difficulties for the people of the areas affected. Now that the attacks have taken another dimension with the natives instigated to take arms against each other, the complicated nature of these attacks is becoming more intriguing.

Plateau state is fighting for its soul not because of the obvious that it cannot withstand these pressure but for the fact that the

enemies of the state have started infiltrating and collaborating with some of these natives to create and wreak more excruciating havoc. Though since precolonial era, the state has not fallen into the hands of jihadists, now that some of the natives are becoming traitors based on acts of personal aggrandizements, the pillars that hold the state firm may eventually give way if care is not taken.

That is the more reason why immediate efforts must be made to save the citizens of the state from this obvious looming danger.

In its work on Curbing Violence in Nigeria: The Jos Crisis, the International Crisis Group which is working to prevent conflicts worldwide notes that Plateau crisis requires both national and local solutions. Constitutional provisions by virtue of their ambiguity over the terms indigenes and residency for accessing citizenship rights have done little to clarify the situation."

Accordingly, it suggests that the government should publish reports of previous commissions of inquiry and the Presidential Advisory Committee on the Jos crisis, including various white papers and implement recommendations promoting principles of political inclusivism, fairness, equity and justice. These include establishing a truth and reconciliation commission and implementing the recommendations of the Justice Fiberesima, Tobi and Ajibola commissions of inquiry and the white papers that promotes peace and security.

These includes prosecution of instigators and perpetrators of conspiracy, murder, arson and public disturbance, checking

illegal possession of firearms, and ending the indiscriminate construction of places of worship in residential areas in Jos and other towns.

The international group also submits that "efforts should be made to facilitate meaningful and sustained dialogue between the various communities to help defuse the crisis, revive the moribund Plateau State Inter-Religious Council for Peace and Harmony (IRCPH) and replicate it at the local government and community levels, so as to value the expertise and experience of its special advisers on religious affairs, (Christian and Muslims) security, community, relations, youth and women mobilization, rural transformation, projects monitoring, ethical re-orientation, and peacebuilding.

To say the least, all the reoccurring attacks on the Plateau have rendered many people homeless, it has ended the livelihood of several others bringing untold hardship and frustration to several communities in the state. Due to these unending attacks, the state is on the edge of losing its bearing but for the doggedness of a collective few.

This is the more reason why; many stakeholders are of the opinion that the time has come for both the state and federal government to do everything possible within the confines of the law to end these senseless attacks on the Plateau. Knowing too well that these attacks are undermining the state's corporate existence, the people of the state have no other option than to remain on the same page of progress for the progress of the state.

# METRO-FOCUS

By EZEKIEL DONTINNA,  
JUMMAI MUSA & DANKUJE JOY ASHESON

## JD Gomwalk Road: Street lights without life

**W**HEN Plateau State Government embarked on street lighting programme and flagged it off in Jos, the capital city, by the immediate past administration, people along JD Gomwalk road, were happy and thought it was going to reach them and help in curtailing the criminal activities around the area.

JD Gomwalk Road which is one of the busiest roads in Jos city, at one time, was illuminated by street lights when former Governor Jonah David Jang, expanded the road leading to Kabong towards Goodluck Jonathan road. Sadly, the reverse is the case now. Everything is still standing with so much promise, but the structures have no light and give no light as a result.

It used to be a beautiful sight, seeing everywhere shining with light. It ran down to Gada Biu and beyond. It assured one of safety because vices are best perpetrated in the dark. It was then very common to see business areas closing from 9:00 pm not any time before that as it now obtains.

A lot of market women used to take advantage of the street lights to trek home with their children. They served as watchful and protective eyes.

The solar street lights were very consistent. They had been here, giving life along JD Gomwalk Road long before other areas were adorned with street lights. But for some reasons, they all stopped working and have remained as empty structures ever since.

One of the commonest questions on people's lips is why successive governments refused to attain to those street lights and bring them back to life.

Unfortunately, JD Gomwalk road is the only highway and main street within Jos metropolis that has no functioning street lights.

It is often a nightmare when driving at night from Kasheem Ibrahim road down to Hill Station roundabout. The journey goes smoothly with street lights everywhere until one reaches the JD Gomwalk Road, down to Police



Photo: John Lar

Headquarters, to Polo Roundabout. Except for flashes of light from cars.

However, this development has always been a serious concern to communities around that axis because of the rising cases of crime in the neighborhood. Every blessed day, there are reports of bag and phone snatching, attacks and clashes by cult boys and it has seriously been a threat to the lives of those living in these communities.

It has therefore become a

pathetic situation because people hardly move freely, especially from 6pm-9pm. In the past, these areas used to be very lively especially during the night. It used to be a time to unwind, and some businesses used to boom at such hours. Local alcoholic drinks like palm wine, burkutu with accompaniments like peppered pork, stick meat, peppered ganda, moi moi made with palm oil, dog meat used to abound at Burkutu joints in Kabong, Jenta Adamu and Jenta Mangoro and

pockets of areas. At such times, it used to be market time for these people whose economic lives have been adversely affected by the security situation in the areas. The issue is such that people hardly sleep with their eyes closed. Sometimes, gunshots rent the airspace of these communities and one begins to wonder who and where is this coming from.

Meanwhile, people are beginning to doubt the sincerity of this blackout, most especially as the headquarters of two security outfits are located along the JD Gomwalk road. If any organisation would need light most, it should be the security outfits along JD Gomwalk Road because of the nature of their job.

However, speaking to one security personnel who pleaded anonymity, he said, "During our operations, it is easier for us to view a criminal from afar in the dark than when there is light. So, it is for security reasons that we have not impressed upon the government to restore back the street lights. We want the people of this axis to understand with us", he pleaded

"You know, criminals, especially those cult boys in this area had been giving us serious headaches, so we are trying to see if we could eliminate them or send them out of business before addressing this light

issue. You know, they usually operate using tricycles and motorcycles and they need light to operate", he hinted.

Ironically, the major concerns of residents along that axis is their safety. As civilians, they do not have any weapons to defend themselves when these criminals strike. Their only consolation is how they can view these criminals from a distance and raise alarm to the advantage of security men.

Therefore, they are appealing to the government to look at ways of revisiting the street light issue of these roads for them to be able to assist the security in doing their job. They have also suggested that the street lights should be from Standard Junction down, if it must be for security reason.

It is certainly important to note that arresting the unexpected situation is better than allowing the expected to happen before taking action. Yes, it is quite wise to be ahead of an enemy using security tactics. But the police cannot be everywhere at the same time. There should be a mechanism that would help save the people first before facing the enemy. Because in the course of operations, innocent people can be



Photo: John Lar



# SUNDAY PEOPLE

## SENATE/REPRESENTATIVE RE-RUN ELECTIONS 2024

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) set aside the 3rd February 2024 to conduct rerun elections in the 26 States of the Federation. Flag off in Plateau state, the Northern Senatorial seat and Jos North/Bassa Federal Constituency election



An eligible voter at the Polling Unit opposite The Nigeria Standard casting her ballot



Cross section of voters queuing for accreditation



Empty street captured during the election period



A voter checking her name on the wall at the Vander Puye Ward, Jos North LGA



A voter being attended to by officials



Under aged children using the street playing football along Filin Ball road, Jos North LGA



INEC official helping an elderly woman at one of the Polling Units in Jos North West Constituency



Empty busy road captured during the election exercise

PHOTOS: DANLADI DUK

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 Michael Agada  
 SAFER TOGETHER  
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## On hazard warning lights

- When do you use hazard lights on the highways?  
**When you slow down quickly because of danger ahead, and when your vehicle has broken down**
- What is the effect of hazard warning lights on your brake-lights?  
**No effect**
- When should you use your hazard warning lights?  
**When your vehicle brakes down, or when you are causing unavoidable obstruction**
- Your hazard warning lights enables you to...?  
**Warn other road users of your vehicle break down**
- You should use your vehicle's hazard warning lights when...?  
**Your vehicle has broken down and causing obstruction**
- What light should be on a car-trailer?  
**Indicators, brake-lights, rear number plate light, red reflectors and rear tail light**
- Warning lights on your speedometer dashboard indicates...?  
**Condition of the vehicle such as battery low, engine oil shortage, battery not charging, etc.**
- Warning lights on speedometer functions as...?  
**The vehicle's in-built devices for communicating with the driver/owner.**
- Generally, the hand brakes operate on...?  
**The rear wheels**
- Generally, trailers above what gross vehicle weight must have brakes fitted?  
**750kg**
- What is the recommended method of driving a vehicle with automatic transmission?  
**Operate the accelerator and brake with the right foot**
- What are the two pedals in automatic transmission vehicles?  
**The accelerator pedals, and The brake pedals.**
- What should you take into account when driving a diesel engine vehicle in freezing weather?  
**Ensure that the fuel is treated with an anti-waxing agent**
- Overfilling the vehicle engine with engine oil could...?  
**Damage the catalytic converter**
- What should you do when your fuel system becomes air-locked?  
**You should bleed the sir out of the fuel system**
- Is rebated (green) diesel fuel recommended for use in cars?  
**No**
- What is the basic function of head restraint in a vehicle?  
**To reduce the risk of neck injury in a rear end collision**
- When must a vehicle be fitted with a rear-view mirror?  
**Always**
- What is the basic function of a rear-view mirror?  
**Used to see traffic behind your vehicle**
- What is the minimum legal tread depth for tyres on cars?  
**1.6mm?**
- What is the minimum tread depth required for tractor tyres?  
**1.6mm**
- The load index of a tyre indicate...?  
**The maximum load which a tyre will carry**
- When should both cross-ply and radial tyres be fitted to a vehicle?  
**Never**
- What is the effect of resting your foot on the clutch pedal while driving?  
**It wears out the clutch**
- How would you check the effectiveness of the power-assisted steering?  
**Ensure the fluid reservoir is full to the max and turn the steering from lock to lock with the engine running**
- What should you do when the power-assisted Steering (PAS) becomes more difficult to turn as you drive along?  
**Check the level of fluid and if necessary stop and call for medical assistance**
- What are the likely effects of an incorrectly-adjusted driver's seat?  
**It hampers the operation of the controls by the driver, It affects the driver's ability to check the traffic behind**
- What should do with a worn wiper blade when driving in the rain?  
**Drive slowly to the nearest garage and have the blade fixed. However, if the rain is too heavy, find a safe place and park till it subsides**



## NEWS

From **ABBAS GUNGURA, Bauchi**

### Bauchi Governor vows to promote cultural education

**A**S Jalam Community in Dambam Local Government Area of Bauchi State celebrated its 2024 Annual Bala Baraa ma Jalam Cultural Festival recently, which was held at Jalam town, of Dambam LGC Governor Bala Mohammed of Bauchi State, said his administration is committed to investing in initiatives that would promote cultural education and awareness.



**Haruna**

Governor Bala Mohammed who was represented at the occasion by his Deputy, Rt. Hon. Auwal Jatau, expressed the belief that imparting the knowledge of cultural heritage to the younger generation can ensure its continuity and preservation for generations to come.

The state Chief Executive, while expressing his excitement to the people of Jalam for organizing such a fascinating gathering, assured that his administration would continue to support and promote the development of cultural festivities in the state including the Bala Baraa ma Jalam Cultural Festival. He pointed out that the government recognises the significance of such events in preserving cultural heritage and showcasing it to the world.

The governor commended the initiators of Bala Baraa ma Jalam Cultural Festival which has become a significant event that puts Bauchi State on the map, attracting visitors from Nigeria and beyond.

According to him, "This annual celebration of Bala Baraa ma Jalam Cultural Festival, reminds us of the rich

tapestry of tradition that bind us together as a people. The Festival is a highly celebrated cultural event that takes place annually in this area and has been in existence for many years with continued significant cultural activities that attract tourists and locals alike.

"Historically, the festival is named after two famous hunters from the area - Bala Baraa and Jalam - who were known for their bravery and hunting skills. The festival aims at preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of the Jalam community and at the same time, celebrating the unique talents, skills, and creativity of its people."

Governor Bala Mohammed, therefore congratulated the people of Dambam Local Government for celebrating the 2024 Bala Baraa ma Jalam Cultural Festival successfully.

He urged them to join hands in building a future that honors and values their cultural heritage, while embracing the advancements and opportunities that lie ahead.

In a vote of thanks, the Caretaker Committee Chairman of Dambam Local Government Area, Ahmed Mohamed Danbama, expressed gratitude to Governor Bala Mohammed, that despite his numerous national and state engagements, he created time to grace this historic occasion and also for the number of people oriented projects executed by his administration in the local government.

He assured the governor of his total support and loyalty to his purposeful administration focused on building the state in line with the dreams of the founding fathers of the state.

### Humanitarian crisis: Alia receives US delegation, key partners

From **TERESE TUHWA, Makurdi**

**A**S part of measures to find a lasting solution to the humanitarian crises bedeviling the state, Governor Hyacinth Alia recently played host to a delegation from United States Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) and Population, Refugees and Migration and key partners.

The governor, while addressing the team and key partners at the Government House, Makurdi, described the visit as a significant milestone to Benue State which since 2018 has been grappling with humanitarian challenges arising from relentless farmer/ herder clashes, banditry, kidnapping, maiming and killings.

According to the 2022 Benue Humanitarian Response Plan, over 1.5 million people have been forcefully ejected out of their ancestral homes with the majority residing in official and unofficial camps.

He added that the internally displaced persons were faced with severe challenges such as access to health care, education, water, sanitation/hygiene (WASH) while over 80% of the displaced population was traumatized and are in a poor state of mental health due to atrocities witnessed during the attacks.

He maintained that the visit will facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the humanitarian situation in the state in order to determine how best they can respond to the growing humanitarian concern which he said has surpassed the financial and technical capacity

of the state.

Governor Alia commended the efforts of International partners including International Organisation for Migration (IOM), United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), Save the Children International (SCI), Medicines San Frontiers (MSF), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) who he said are playing significant roles in supporting Benue State Emergency Management Agency (BSEMA).

The governor also appreciated the support of all partners who played one role or the other in developing the State Humanitarian Response Plan focusing on the 3R: Reconciliation, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction, aimed at building resilience and facilitating the recovery of affected populations and communities.

On his commitment to support and work closely with the humanitarian sector to ensure the return of IDPs, Governor Alia called on the US BHA team to do everything within its powers to ensure that the humanitarian situation in the state was recognised as a global problem.

He commended the Acting Executive Secretary, Benue State Emergency Management Agency (BSEMA), Sir. James Iorpuu for his strong commitment and hard work towards ensuring that the vision of the agency to serve humanity was achieved.

The governor approved an

office accommodation for UNHCR to create an enabling environment for genuine partners to complement the state government in restoring hope to Persons of Concern.

Earlier in his speech, the Acting Executive Secretary, BSEMA, Sir James Iorpuu, attributed the agency's partnership with humanitarian partners, Line MDAs and Civil Society Organisations in mitigating the negative impact of crises and ensuring the well being of affected population to Benue State Governor, Rev. Fr. Hyacinth Alia's support and passion for humanity.

Director General, Bureau for Benue State International Cooperation and Development (BICD), Leonard Viashima said the US BHA visit was to support the state's commitment to tackling the problems of Persons of Concern, the State's Resettlement Plan for IDPs. And expressed commitment to actualize the core mandates of the institution.

The US BHA team leader, Mr. Patrick Robin, informed Governor Alia that the team's visit was to get first hand information about the humanitarian situation in the state and team up with government to find pathways to resettle the IDPs and reintegrate them into their communities.

The US BHA team and representatives of UNHCR and IOM were later taken to some IDP camps, including Ichwa and Baka in Makurdi and Uikpam in Guma Local Government Areas where they addressed IDPs and had a face to face interaction with them.

SUNDAY FEATURE

# You may need to dig your well again

*Many people are feeling discouraged today. They've put in far more effort than their peers, but haven't seen similar results. Despite their best efforts, the outcomes leave little to impress. Shame, confusion, and perhaps discouragement cloud their thoughts. They hesitate to mingle with friends and classmates, feeling like they haven't achieved enough. The frustration is tangible, like digging wells and finding no water. They're on the verge of giving up, believing they're destined to miss out on certain things in life. OLUWOLE DADA writes.*



**B**UT that's not true. While this picture reflects a harsh reality, remember that we can only control what lies within our capacity: our tenacity. The number of times we must keep digging before finding water differs for each individual. That's the irony of life. Some individuals smoothly navigate life's milestones, securing a spouse, university admission, passing professional exams, and landing jobs with ease. Conversely, others endure repeated hurdles, retaking exams, submitting numerous job applications, or contesting political positions multiple times before tasting success. Life's journey, intricate and unpredictable, defies a linear trajectory. Perhaps you've tried to leave your current job without

success. Don't stop trying. Keep digging, and you will eventually find water. Years ago, as a middle manager, I desired a change in level and possibly a new job. I sent out over 250 applications in nine months, resulting in 15 interviews. None led to a position at the time, although some companies did reach out years later after I had found another job. You may have tried many businesses without success, but remember, perseverance is key. Don't let setbacks discourage you. Keep going, and you'll reach your goals. You may have taken an entrance examination into the university with no results. You may be experiencing frustration from your professional exams. You must not stop

trying. You may have contested several times but had no victory; don't stop. Keep digging. You may have made several entries for a scholarship or admission but to no avail. This is not the time to stop. Keep digging. Water is not far away. Failure is not final until you stop trying. The only person who can make you stop trying is you. No matter the number of times a striker misses his attempts at the goal post, he will not stop trying until he scores the goal and possibly wins the match. Never compare the number of times your friend digs their well to yours. You're digging in different soil with different tools, each endowed with unique strengths and destinies. Every individual carves their

own path. Life unfolds differently for everyone. One significant cause of frustration stems from comparing ourselves to friends and colleagues. Remember, each person is unique and possesses individual strengths and challenges. Even twins navigate their journeys differently, facing distinct scenarios and obstacles. Commit to unwavering resolve and tenacity in the face of daunting challenges. Keep digging your own well, even if it takes many attempts to find water. This message applies to various aspects of life, including career, finance, politics, business, marriage, and projects. Never give up. Ultimately, life isn't defined by what happens to you, but by what you make of it.

“  
***This is not the time to stop. Keep digging. Water is not far away. Failure is not final until you stop trying. The only person who can make you stop trying is you. No matter the number of times a striker misses his attempts at the goal post, he will not stop trying until he scores the goal and possibly wins the match. Never compare the number of times your friend digs their well to yours. You're digging in different soil with different tools, each endowed with unique strengths and destinies. Every individual carves their own path. Life unfolds differently for everyone.***  
 ”

## SUNDAY SPORTS



Adam Wharton, Morgan Rogers and Armando Broja were among the players to move on a low-key transfer deadline day

## Premier League spending down by £715m

By TOM MALLOWS

**S**PENDING by Premier League clubs in January dipped significantly after three successive record-breaking windows - with teams splashing out £715m less than in the 2023 winter window.

The combined outlay of the 20 top-flight clubs was £100m - the lowest January spend in a non-Covid season since £60m in 2011-12 - and vastly lower than last year's spend of £815m, according to financial services firm Deloitte.

Just £30m in disclosed fees was spent on deadline day, another considerable drop on the £275m spent on the same day 12 months ago.

There were only 17 permanent transfers made by Premier League clubs during the window, with a further 13 loan deals - including seven permanent and six loan deals on deadline day.

Despite the relatively modest

January total the 2023-24 season still has the second-highest transfer spend ever, with £2.5bn shelled out across both transfer windows - driven by clubs' record-breaking expenditure in the summer.

Tim Bridge, lead partner in Deloitte's Sports Business Group, said: "After record-breaking spending in the last three transfer windows, Premier League clubs' spending this January has been subdued.

"The more prudent approach is likely driven by the high level of spend invested during the summer window but may also have been influenced by a heightened awareness of the Premier League's financial regulations and the potential repercussions of non-compliance.

"Securing the highest quality player talent remains pivotal for Premier League clubs, but we've seen in this window that retention

has been of higher priority than attraction."

The charges hanging over Everton and Nottingham Forest for allegedly breaching the Premier League's Profit and Sustainability Rules (PSR) are likely to have had a chilling effect on spending.

Under the top-flight's PSR, clubs are only allowed to make losses of £105m over a rolling three-year period.

The Toffees were deducted 10 points in November for breaching the league's financial rules in their 2021-22 accounts, with the club having appealed against the decision.

Everton and Forest were then charged last month for alleged breaches in their 2022-23 accounts, with their cases due to be dealt with before the end of the season.

Tottenham's £25m signing of Romania defender Radu Dragusin was the biggest deal of the

January transfer window

"I think what we are storing up is a spending circus in the summer because there has been so much pressure on these clubs," Professor Rob Wilson, football finance expert at Sheffield Hallam University, told BBC Sport.

"We have seen the news about Everton and their 10-point deduction, the additional charges for Everton and Nottingham Forest and the pressure the huge amount of Premier League is under from the government with regards to an independent regulator, so everybody is a bit scared about what to do right now.

"Managers and sporting directors will be looking keenly at their PSR calculations to see if they can spend a bit more heavily in the summer.

"You'd imagine that the spending will be much heavier in the summer - I just don't necessarily think it will reach those multi-billion pound levels we have seen in years gone by."

Calum Ross, assistant director in Deloitte's Sports Business Group, said: "The domino effect created by high-value transfers and a desire to improve on-pitch performance ahead of the final part of the season are usually key drivers of transfer spending, but this hasn't been reflected in January's subdued transfer window.

"As we move towards this summer's window, and a new financial year, we expect to see spending return to similar levels we have seen in the last two record-breaking summer transfer windows."

The biggest permanent deal of deadline day was Crystal Palace's

capture of Blackburn midfielder Adam Wharton for an initial £18m, potentially rising to £22m.

That is in sharp contrast to the biggest deal on deadline day in January 2023, which was Chelsea's then-British record £107m deal for Argentina midfielder Enzo Fernandez from Benfica.

Aston Villa signed forward Morgan Rogers from Middlesbrough in a deal worth £8m that could rise to £15m. Villa also signed Australia keeper Joe Gauci from Adelaide United and full-back Lino Sousa from Arsenal, with the England Under-19 international immediately joining Championship side Plymouth on loan.

The most eye-catching deals were high-profile loans, such as Calvin Phillips' move from Manchester City to West Ham, Borussia Dortmund re-signing England winger Jason Sancho from Manchester United and Eric Dier moving to Bayern Munich from Tottenham.

Tottenham made the biggest permanent signing of a low-key window, bringing in 21-year-old Romania defender Radu Dragusin from Italian side Genoa for £25m. They also signed Germany striker Timo Werner on loan from RB Leipzig until the end of the season.

A lot of the other permanent deals involved young players, including 19-year-old Argentine winger/full-back Valentin Barco joining Brighton from Boca Juniors for £7.9m and Manchester City signing Argentina Under-17 midfielder Claudio Echeverri from River Plate.

**"We have seen the news about Everton and their 10-point deduction, the additional charges for Everton and Nottingham Forest and the pressure the huge amount of Premier League is under from the government with regards to an independent regulator, so everybody is a bit scared about what to do right now. Managers and sporting directors will be looking keenly at their PSR calculations to see if they can spend a bit more heavily in the summer".**

# SUNDAY SPORTS



Marcus Rashford has now scored eight Premier League goals on Thursdays - only Harry Kane, with 10, has more

## Mainoo scores 97th-minute winner in thriller

**K**OBBI Mainoo scored a 97th-minute winner as Manchester United beat Wolverhampton Wanderers 4-3 at Molineux in a Premier League classic.

BBC SPORT said that, Mainoo curled his first Premier League goal past Jose Sa, just seconds after Pedro Neto appeared to have snatched a point for Wolves.

Wolves pulled themselves level having been 2-0 down at half-time and 3-1 behind on 85 minutes, but United took the three points thanks to 18-year-old Mainoo, who picked the ball up on the left, nutmegged Max Kilman and cut inside before bending the ball into the bottom corner.

Marcus Rashford had opened the scoring five minutes into his United return, having been absent from the FA Cup fourth round with illness amid reports he had missed training following a night out in Belfast, before Rasmus Hojlund doubled the lead.

Pablo Sarabia pulled one back from the penalty spot, before Scott McTominay seemingly made it safe for the visitors by heading in a corner with 15 minutes left shortly after coming on as a second-half substitute.

But that was only the start of the late chaos.

Wolves captain Kilman ensured a grandstand finish by scoring from close range following a corner.

Then, in the sixth of nine added minutes, Neto struck home past the wrong-footed Andre Onana as United were caught on the break.

Wolves celebrated wildly - but it proved premature as Mainoo had the final word in a remarkable game.

Erik ten Hag's side move back into the top seven after ending a run of four away league matches without winning and are now eight points off the Champions League places, while Wolves stay 11th.

At the beginning of the evening all eyes were on Rashford, who started for United despite being the subject of what the club called an "internal disciplinary matter".

The forward missed Sunday's win at Newport County after it was reported last week that he had been seen in nightspots in Northern Ireland on Wednesday and Thursday before arriving to training unwell on Friday.

Ten Hag says he considers the "case closed" as Rashford has

"taken responsibility" - and the England international certainly did inside the opening five minutes.

A low cross from the right was flicked back by Hojlund to the edge of the area, and Rashford produced a slick and controlled finish to curl the ball past Sa, before celebrating in front of away fans and being mobbed by team-mates.

Rashford's connection with Luke Shaw looked refreshed too, with the England duo combining in the Wolves area before the left-back set up Hojlund for the second. The striker slid in to finish from close range from Shaw's low cross as the Wolves defence failed to clear.

It has been a chastening week for Rashford and United, with Ten Hag forced to field plenty of questions about the forward's future at Old Trafford.

While Cristiano Ronaldo and Jadon Sancho were forced to leave United after fallouts with the Dutch manager, Rashford has been reintegrated - and showed why he has the trust of

Ten Hag.

After scoring early doors, Rashford tracked back nearly 50 yards to hassle Matheus Cunha into shooting straight at Onana - himself returning to the XI, following Cameroon's early exit from the Africa Cup of Nations.

Indeed, the entire United team was seemingly renewed as they swarmed Wolves in the first 45 minutes. Hojlund was unlucky not to make it three when he charged down a Sa clearance, and both he and Casemiro had goals ruled out by the offside flag.

But United's issues with inconsistency were laid bare after the break as Wolves were allowed to get back in the game - and ultimately they were left to rely on another academy product in Mainoo to bail them out. James told Access All presenter Emma Tracey, who herself has no sight, that his "central vision is blurry" and that "I struggle with seeing different colours and different lights" although he has "good peripheral vision".

## Bopanna sets sights on Wimbledon title

**R**ECORD-breaker Rohan Bopanna wants to make more history by adding the Wimbledon doubles title to his CV.

BBC SPORT said that, Bopanna, 43, became the oldest major men's doubles winner with Matthew Ebden at the Australian Open last month, and is the oldest tennis world number one.

India's Bopanna reached the semi-finals at Wimbledon in 2023 and has ambitions to go further this year.

"Growing up in India Wimbledon was the only Grand Slam shown on TV," Bopanna told BBC World Service Sport.

"I have a really close connection [with Wimbledon]. In 2023 we ended up losing to the eventual champions, [Neal] Skupski and [Wesley] Koolhof.

"I'd love to get back there, get myself in a great position and hopefully Matt and I can do Wimbledon together."

It took 61 attempts with 19 different partners for Bopanna to win his first doubles Grand Slam title when he and Ebden beat Italians Simone Bolelli

and Andrea Vavassori 7-6 (7-0) 7-5 in the final, and he said he took "a nice nap" to help "calm the nerves down" before the match.

Bopanna teamed up with Ebden at the start of 2023 and has since set several records, including becoming the oldest Masters champion, the oldest finalist at a Grand Slam and the oldest player to win a match at the ATP Finals.

"Today I feel when I'm at the top there's no real reason to stop, and I really feel I'm enjoying travelling still," Bopanna said.

"I'm still competing against the best in the world, winning tournaments, now winning the Grand Slam also. I really feel as long as I enjoy it and I'm not forcing myself to be there, I can still keep going as much as possible."



Rohan Bopanna (right, doubles with partner Matthew Ebden) is a two-time US Open men's doubles finalist

**F**ULHAM have signed Chelsea striker Armando Broja on loan for the rest of the season.

BBC SPORT said that, Broja, 22, has made 19 appearances across all competitions for Chelsea this campaign, scoring two goals.

The Albania international was also a target for Wolves and AC Milan during the winter transfer window.

"It feels amazing. I'm really happy to be here and I can't wait to get started, meet the players and manager and play for the fans," said Broja.

"The fans always play a big role and I can't wait to go to Craven Cottage and meet them all. I'm going to work hard for the team and create a real bond. I'm really honoured and excited to be here."

He missed half of the 2022-23 season after rupturing his anterior cruciate ligament in December 2022.

Broja is a graduate of Chelsea's academy and has scored three goals in 38 appearances since making his debut against Everton in March 2020.

Fulham are 12th in the

## Fulham sign Chelsea striker on loan



Armando Broja made his Chelsea debut in 2020

Premier League, two places and six points behind Chelsea, and just six teams have scored fewer than the Cottagers' tally of 28 goals in 2023-24.

Meanwhile, Chelsea midfielder Andrey Santos has joined French Ligue 1 club Strasbourg on loan.

The 19-year-old was on loan at Nottingham Forest at the

beginning of this campaign, but only made two appearances before being recalled by Chelsea this month.

The club always planned to loan Santos out again this season to continue his development.

Strasbourg are also owned by Todd Boehly and Behdad Egbahli, with the Chelsea co-

## Messi comes off bench late on in friendly



Lionel Messi started the game as a substitute

**L**IONEL Messi's Inter Miami suffered a heavy 6-0 defeat by Al-Nassr in a friendly in Saudi Arabia.

BBC SORT said that, the game had been billed as a clash between

Messi and old rival Cristiano Ronaldo but the latter was ruled out for Al-Nassr because of injury.

There was nothing Messi could do about the result as he only came on for seven minutes with Al-Nassr already 6-0 up.

Former Manchester City defender Aymeric Laporte scored the pick of the goals with a free-kick from his own half.

Brazilian Talisca hit a hat-trick for the Saudi Pro League side, who were 3-0 up inside 12 minutes.

Osorio opened the scoring before Talisca got his first and then Laporte got on the scoresheet when he caught Miami goalkeeper Drake Calender well off his line.

Talisca got his second from the penalty spot to make it 4-0, Mohammed Maran scored Al-Nassr's fifth with a header before Talisca completed the scoring.

Meanwhile, American club Bay FC have signed Nigeria striker Asisat Oshoala from Barcelona Women for an undisclosed fee.

The 29-year-old, who was named African Women's Footballer of the Year for a sixth time in December, has signed a deal until 2026 with the option of a third year with the National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) team.

Oshoala won four league titles, the Champions League twice and eight domestic cups during five years in Spain, where she had five months to run on her contract with the Catalan club.

"Asisat is a proven goalscorer at the most elite levels of world

football," Bay FC general manager Lucy Rushton said.

Oshoala, who previously had spells with Liverpool and Arsenal, scored 117 goals in 162 appearances for Barca, who she joined from the Chinese side Dalian Quanjian in 2019.

She was the first African woman to win a Champions League title in 2021 - having already become the first African woman to score in a final in 2019.

Oshoala, who has been nominated for the Ballon d'Or twice, joins Bay FC as the San Jose-based outfit prepare for their first NWSL campaign as the American top flight expands to 14 clubs.

"To have the opportunity to add a player of Asisat's quality, experience and winning pedigree to our roster is an exciting and important day for us and the NWSL," Rushton added.

"She brings a top-class mentality to the field combined with pace and technical ability that allows her to lead the line, while also giving those players around her the license to be creative and thrive in space."

Oshoala's tally of 117 goals for Barcelona Women made her the club's fourth-highest goalscorer in the professional era.

Earlier this week Bay FC signed Ghana international Princess Marfo from Danish club FC Nordsjaelland.

The 20-year-old forward has signed a deal until the end of the 2025 season, with the option of a third year.

## SUNDAY SPORTS



Burrage

## Linz Open: Burrage progresses but Boulter exits

**J**ODIE Burrage made it through to the quarter-finals of the Linz Open but fellow Briton Katie Boulter was knocked out in Austria. British number two Burrage beat Romania's Jaqueline Cristian 6-3 7-6 (7-5) to reach the last eight of a WTA 500 event for the first time. She will play Jelena

Ostapenko or Clara Tauson in the next round.

British number one Boulter, 27, suffered a 7-6 (7-2) 6-4 defeat by Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova.

In a closely fought contest, Boulter lost a first-set tie-break before Pavlyuchenkova broke her in the ninth game of the second set and then

served out the match.

Burrage, 24, came through two qualifying rounds and beat Varvara Gracheva before facing Cristian.

She was broken for the first time when serving for the match at 5-3 in the second set, but Burrage went on to win a tie-break to secure victory.

## Woods, McIlroy benefit as PGA tour signs deal

**T**HE PGA Tour has agreed a private equity deal worth around \$3bn (£2.36bn) with a group of investors led by the Fenway Sports Group, which owns Liverpool FC.

BC SPORT said that, as a result, golfers who have remained loyal to the tour and rejected advances from the rival LIV Golf circuit are set to receive \$1.5bn in immediate and future equity.

Members have been briefed on the deal, which has been in the pipeline since December last year. This coincides with the launch of PGA Tour Enterprises, a newly formed for profit company which has been initially valued at \$12bn and will run parallel with the non-profit, tax-exempt tour.

PGA Tour commissioner Jay Monahan, who will serve as chief executive of the new profit seeking enterprise, said: "Today marks an important moment for the PGA Tour and

fans of golf across the world.

"By making PGA Tour members owners of their league, we strengthen the collective investment of our players in the success of the PGA Tour."

In a joint statement, PGA Tour player directors Patrick Cantlay, Peter Malnati, Adam Scott, Webb Simpson, Jordan Spieth and Tiger Woods, added: "We were proud to vote in unanimous support of this historic partnership.

"It was incredibly important for us to create opportunities for the players of today and in the future to be more invested in their organisation, both financially and strategically."

Fenway front the Strategic Sports Group (SSG), a conglomerate of leading sports investors who are providing the cash injection.

Other members of SSG include Arthur Blank (owner of the Atlanta Falcons), Wyc Grousbeck (Boston Celtics), Marc Lasry (Milwaukee Bucks), Tom Ricketts (Chicago Cubs), Cohen Private Ventures (New York Mets) and HighPost Capital.

SSG will invest up to \$3bn into PGA Tour Enterprises with an initial input of half that amount. Players will receive equity in the new company based on playing achievements, tour status and future participation.

As yet there is no involvement from Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF), although the PGA Tour confirmed talks are ongoing over future investment.

The PGA Tour, along with Europe's DP World Tour, have been in talks with PIF - who fund LIV Golf - and a framework agreement

**T**HREE-time Grand Slam champion Andy Murray says he "won't quit" tennis despite being in a "terrible moment".

BBC SPORT said that, the Briton, 36, is winless in 2024 after Monday's first-round loss to Benoit Paire at the Open Sud de France.

Murray also suffered a first-round exit at the Australian Open, while his last ATP Tour victory was in October.

On Tuesday, he responded to a BBC reporter's post on X, which asked when Murray should "call time on an extraordinary career".

The post linked to an article which said while the Scot's status as a legend was secure "at what point does bravely soldiering on start to damage his legacy?"

"Tarnishing my legacy? Do me a favour," two-time Wimbledon champion Murray wrote in reply. "I'm in a terrible moment right now, I'll give you that.

"Most people would quit and give up in my situation right now. But I'm not most people and my mind works differently.

"I won't quit. I will keep

## Navratilova, Evert accused of 'turning backs on women

**T**ENNIS greets Martina Navratilova and Chris Evert have "turned their

## Murray says he is in a 'terrible moment'



Murray has won the US Open as well as Wimbledon twice and has reached eight other Grand Slam finals

fighting and working to produce the performances I know I'm capable of."

The article asked whether Murray's "refusal to back down from a challenge" was doing him "more harm than good".

World number 49 Murray has suffered nine defeats in 13 matches since the start of the US Open in August.

The former British and

world number one defied the odds to return from hip replacement surgery in 2019.

However, since losing to Daniil Medvedev in the Qatar Open final last year, he has not won more than two matches at any tour-level event and is about to drop out of the world's top 50.

Murray said in Melbourne earlier this month that there was a "definite possibility" he had played in his last

backs on women" by opposing plans to stage women's events in Saudi Arabia, the kingdom's ambassador to the United States has claimed.

Last week, the pair wrote an opinion piece outlining their opposition to hosting the WTA Finals in Saudi Arabia.

The WTA is considering moving the season-ending tournament to Riyadh.

Princess Reema bint Bandar al-Saud said their view was "beyond disappointing".

Is it 'right' for women's tennis to go to Saudi Arabia?

Navratilova, 67, and Evert, 69, each won 18 Grand Slam singles titles between 1974 and 1991.

Their opinion column in The Washington Post last week was headlined: 'We did not help build women's tennis for it to be exploited by Saudi Arabia'.

In it they said moving the "crown jewel" women's event to Saudi Arabia was "incompatible with the spirit and purpose of women's tennis and the WTA itself" and was a "significant regression".

"Not only is this a country where women are not seen as equal, it is a country where the current landscape includes a male guardianship law that essentially makes women the property of men. A country which criminalises the LGBTQ community to the point of possible death sentences. A country whose long-term record on human rights and basic freedoms has been a matter of international concern for decades," they wrote.

But in a statement issued on Tuesday, Princess Reema - who is also a member of Saudi Arabia's Olympic Committee and an

International Olympic Committee board member - said they had "turned their back on the very same women they have inspired and it is beyond disappointing".

She did not address the pair's criticism of laws which criminalise the LGBTQ community.

Al-Saud said the pair should "get your facts straight" on matters of Saudi law affecting women and said their arguments were "based on outdated stereotypes and western-centric views of our culture".

She added: "Failing to acknowledge the great progress women have made in Saudi Arabia denigrates our remarkable journey. This not only undermines the progress of women in sports, it sadly undermines women, progress as a whole.

"Sports should not be used as a weapon to advance personal bias or agendas or punish a society that is eager to embrace tennis and help celebrate and grow the sport."

Tunisia's Ons Jabeur - an icon in the Arab world, and the runner-up at Wimbledon for each of the past two years - said in August she would be "very excited" if the WTA Finals were to be held in Saudi Arabia.

But critics of Saudi Arabia have accused the oil-rich kingdom of using its wealth to invest in sports in a bid to improve its image - known as 'sportswashing'.

It follows recent heavy investment in golf, Formula 1, football and boxing in particular.

Campaigning organisations remain critical of Saudi Arabia's record on human rights and equality.



Woods

# SUNDAY SPORTS

## AFCON 2023

### African footballers putting their hearts on the line

ONE player was a notable absentee during Zambia's first two games at the 2023 Africa Cup of Nations, but Enock Mwepu's non-selection had nothing to do with his abilities.

Instead, it was because the midfielder, who captained his country in their first two qualifiers in June 2022, had been forced to retire from football after being diagnosed with a hereditary cardiac condition.

In September that year, he had fallen ill in Mali with tests upon his return to his then club, Premier League side Brighton, delivering the worst outcome for the then 24-year-old.

The Seagulls said Mwepu would be at an "extremely high risk of suffering a potentially fatal cardiac event" if he continued playing.

"It is a terrible blow for Enock, but he has to put his health and his family first," Brighton's head of medicine said at the time.

"This is the right choice, however difficult it is to quit the game he loves."

Yet it is not a decision that all African footballers in Mwepu's position have made.

Just two months ago, former Ghana international Raphael Dwamena died after collapsing on the pitch in Albania, having chosen to play on after removing an implantable cardioverter-defibrillator (ICD), fitted in 2020, that could have prevented his fatal heart attack.

Manchester United midfielder Christian Eriksen had a similar device fitted after collapsing while playing for Denmark at Euro 2020.

One of Dwamena's former clubs, FC Zurich, first discovered his heart issues in 2017 and were advised by various specialists and cardiologists that he could continue - which he did - with the Swiss Super League side always ensuring they had a mobile defibrillator pitch-side in case of emergency.

But there was no such provision at Albanian side Egnatia FC, who were contacted in vain by the BBC but who told the Athletic last year that they were happy for Dwamena to play "so long as all the tests were done by the club".

Knowing the risks

Sadly, the former Black Stars striker was not the only African to die on the pitch last year.

Moustapha Sylla passed away in March last year while playing for top-flight side Racing Club d'Abidjan in Ivory Coast, the country currently hosting the ongoing Africa Cup of Nations.

Like Dwamena, Sylla would also have been aware he was risking his life by taking to the field, as the defender had been effectively kicked out of the Malian league in 2022 after mandatory pre-season medical checks revealed his condition.

His death, aged just 21, prompted former Ivory Coast captain Didier Drogba to issue a plea on behalf of all players in his homeland's local league system after its third heart-related death since 2019.

"Condolences to Ivorian football... 3 deaths of players in the Ivorian pro league in less than 4 years..." Drogba posted on X, then known as Twitter, external

"When will there be compulsory medical examinations for 'professional' players?... Blood test, ECG [Echocardiogram], stress



Zambia midfielder Enock Mwepu (left) retired after being diagnosed with a cardiac issue, but Ghana striker Rafael Dwamena (right) decided to play on



Didier Drogba, who failed in a bid to become the president of Ivory Coast's football federation in 2022, has called for compulsory medical checks

tests? When will sports medicine arrive?"

Drogba calls for 'compulsory medical checks' for players

With at least two dozen African footballers known to have died of heart-related issues over the years, Drogba's attitude about needing more stringent medical provisions for cardiac issues is one with which another ex-Chelsea star agrees.

"I played in Europe several times and I know that when you sign the contract, you have to pass a medical control," said Geremi, a former Cameroon international who is now a players' union representative.

"We have to implement that here in Africa."

While this does happen in some African clubs, it does not happen all over - one reason for Drogba's plea.

Like Geremi, who lost team-mate Marc-Vivien Foe on the pitch in 2003, Drogba also lost an international team-mate to a heart issue in Cheick Tiote, an African champion in 2015 and a man with whom he shared the pitch on dozens of occasions.

Listening to the medics

One major issue is that the African heart is believed to be more susceptible to cardiac problems, with a medical research team

Pillay is someone who knows this only too well, having had to advise five different footballers to quit because of heart-related problems.

"It's never an easy conversation, because someone has been doing this job for 10-15 years and now you've given him news to say, 'Listen, you can't do this anymore, you need to make a plan B'," Dr Pillay told BBC Sport Africa.

"Most footballers have not established a Plan B by the time they're 25, and the conversation often boils down to that exact question: 'What am I going to do if I stop playing football?'"

For Dr Pillay, it is hard to watch when players who have been told not to play stick to Plan A despite knowing the dangers.

"When you see the guy's name on the starting line-up you cringe - and if it's going to be a televised match, I'll change the channel," he said.

One patient, who cannot be named without breaching confidentiality rules, died two years after he failed to heed Dr Pillay, leaving the latter "depressed for a while".

"If you find someone with a cardiac problem, then ensure your medical care around that - so (that) you have things like automatic external defibrillators around, access to hospitals and emergency vehicles, because if you don't have them, you are creating a problem."

While FC Zurich took precisely

that action in relation to Dwamena, many other clubs have not.

There have been notable incidents in the past where basic medical provisions are not available in African grounds, such as when local Nigerian footballer Chineme Martins died in 2020 following a catalogue of failures.

Access to the right support

In a bid to reduce the number of tragic incidents that have rocked the sport, the Confederation of African Football conducts mandatory tests before major international tournaments, as does Fifa.

Fifa recommends that every school, club and organisation involved in football has an emergency plan in place to deal with a collapsed player.

Following Sylla's death, his sister Bintou Sylla told BBC Sport Africa that the medical support given to her brother following his collapse was inadequate.

Both Racing Club and the Ivorian football federation did not respond to the BBC's requests to comment on Sylla's death and its surrounding factors.

He died at the Robert Champroux Stadium in Abidjan, Ivory Coast's largest city which is hosting matches in two different stadiums - the Felix Houphouet-Boigny and the Alassane Ouattara - during the Nations Cup.

But in contrast to local Ivorian league matches, there is plenty of medical support provided during Africa's biggest sporting event, with pitch-side care as well as ambulances, helicopters and nearby hospitals all on standby.

Some see a clear contrast between the way in which international and local players are looked after.

"They must have access to the same medical support," Bintou Sylla said. "Because it is the lives of children that are in play here."

"So they really must review the medical assistance in Ivorian clubs. We don't need another player to suffer."

Given the heartbreak suffered by so many, Mwepu - who may be finding it difficult following Zambia's progress at their first Nations Cup finals since 2015 - can at least take solace in knowing that, however hard his decision to quit, it is one that could well have saved his life.



The sister of Moustapha Sylla (right) says medical assistance available to players at Ivorian clubs must be improved

# Nigeria beat Angola to book AFCON semi

**ADEMOLA Lookman's first-half goal sent the Super Eagles into the semi-final at 2023.**

**By being the first team into the AFCON semi-finals, Nigeria have the luxury of extra rest.**

Coming into this tournament, many expected it to be the Nigeria forwards that would power them into the latter stages of AFCON.

But it has been the defenders.

After conceding in the first half of their first group-stage game against Equatorial Guinea, they have not conceded another goal at the tournament.

They will head into the semi-final with a four-game clean sheet streak.

That is how you come together as a team to win a major tournament quarter-final.

As the attackers got the business done at one end, the defender locked it down at the other.

And, somewhere in between, the midfielders suffocated their counterparts.

While Peseiro looked hot and bothered on the touchline, I'm sure he will have been very pleased with that performance.

It was impossible to take your eyes away from Osimhen in that match.

He was either throwing himself in front of defenders to meet crosses, being kicked in the air by those defenders or celebrating (and then not) goals.

He had four shots, scored a

goal that was disallowed by VAR, left the pitch on a stretcher, came back on and then got substituted.

The injury that ultimately forced him off didn't look serious and Nigeria will be desperate to have him fit for the semi-final.

After taking time to celebrate their win, a number of Nigeria players went straight over to the inconsolable Angola players.

For the second time in a row, Lookman was the hero for Nigeria.

He struck his third goal in two games in the first half and it was that goal that has sent the Super Eagles into the final four.

Super Eagles winger Moses Simon was named Man Of The Match after his brilliant performance helped Nigeria defeat Angola to reach the semi-final of the 2023 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) in Ivory Coast.

The Confederation of African Football (CAF) named the Nigerian winger after a brilliant assist for Ademola Lookman to fire the match-winner for Nigeria's Super Eagles against Angola.

Moses Simon collected a pass on the left, accelerated away from Kialonda Gaspar and drove into the area before cutting the ball back for Lookman to finish clinically.

Simon was a threat to the Angola defenders each time he drove the ball on the opposition team and he constantly kept the Sable Antelopes backline busy throughout the game.

Moses will hope to continue



**Lookman put Nigeria through the Semi-final by scoring a goal at the quarter final match with Angola**

his fine form as Nigeria continue to push for a fourth AFCON title and will play the winner of Saturday's quarter-final between Cape Verde and South Africa in the semi-final on Wednesday

Meanwhile, DR Congo came from behind to win 3-1 against Guinea, securing a place in the semi-finals of the Africa Cup of Nations. The Congolese will face either Mali or hosts Ivory Coast who play on Saturday evening.

The game got off to a frantic start with Guinea adamantly

appealing for a penalty in the first minute before a defensive mix up at the other end presented Yoane Wissa with a golden opportunity from eight yards out, but the Brentford man dragged his shot wide.

As the half went on the game settled slightly until Guinea were awarded a penalty as Congo captain Chancel Mbemba was adjudged to have pushed Guinea striker Mohamed Bayo in the box. After a lengthy delay Bayo kept his

cool and confidently despatched the penalty.

However, Guinea's lead would be short lived as minutes later a DR Congo corner found Mbemba at the back post who brought the ball down before smashing it into the roof of the net with a finish any player would be proud of. Following the mandatory water break the games pace dropped and both sides looked happy to go in level.

The second half was a much slower affair being broken up

by constant fouls and substitutions. Yet DR Congo consistently looked more threatening and took the lead through the games second penalty when substitute Silas Mvumpa was tripped after being on the pitch a matter of moments.

Wissa converted the penalty giving DR Congo the lead for the first time on the night. The game was won in the final 10 minutes when former West Ham man Arthur Masuaku spotted the Guinea goalkeeper off his line and struck a clever free-kick which snuck into the near post.

The result sees Congo through to the semi-finals for the first time since 2015.

Two times winners DR Congo have not been AFCON champions since 1974 and have reached the semis only twice since then. Les Leopards have looked steady if not electric so far this tournament and had drawn all the games prior to tonight, failing to score more than once in a game.

However, they have tangled with giants like Egypt and Morocco proving they can mix it with the favourites. Could they go all the way and cause an upset for the ages?

Marseille man and Congo captain got off to rough start in Friday's game by giving away what some may argue was a soft penalty to Guinea. However, the response the captain can only be applauded.

Just seven minutes later he had his side level with a rocket of a strike and was commanding throughout the rest of the game. Guinea may not have presented the toughest test

ever, but he met every cross and gave a captain's performance when he easily could have crumbled.

## Osimhen knocks critics over goal drought

**NIGERIA star Victor Osimhen has insisted he does not care about his lack of goals at the Africa Cup of Nations after the Super Eagles beat Angola 1-0 on Friday to progress to the semi-finals, BSNSports.com.ng**

reports.

Osimhen found the net a quarter of an hour from the end when he headed in a Lookman free-kick, but that effort was disallowed for offside.

"Those who know me, they know I don't put myself

before the team. If my goal comes, they come," the Napoli striker told broadcaster Canal Plus Afrique.

"I want to help the team with goals of course, but if I am not scoring I am defending. If I am not defending I am fighting for them.

"I just want my team to be in the right mentality to win this tournament.

"It is a big prize for us, as an individual and also as a country. So I think we have the right mentality to make sure we bring the trophy home.

"We had to make sure we went into the competition with the right mentality," added Osimhen, who was substituted in stoppage time after taking several knocks over the course of the match.

"We have the quality, we have the squad to win games and to reach the final for me."

The Super Eagles now advance to a semi-final against either Cape Verde or South Africa next Wednesday in Bouake as they remain on track to claim a fourth continental title and first since 2013.

Meanwhile, the chairman house committee on Sports Honourable Ekene Adams has congratulated the Super Eagles for booking a place in the semi final of the Africa Cup of Nations in Ivory Coast.

The Super Eagles defeated Angola one nil at the Felix

Houphouet-Boigny stadium in Abidjan on Friday to reach the last four of the tournament.

A first half goal by Ademola Lookman was all the Eagles needed to secure the win.

Honourable Adams said the boys deserved all the praises with the way they have approached the tournament.

He said "I am particularly so happy for the boys and I think they deserve all the support and encouragement at this point to eventually come back up home with the trophy".

"These boys have really done us well and their victory against Angola has further sent a message of strong unity despite the challenges the country is facing", he said.

"I want to also specially send the greetings of the Speaker of the House of Representatives Hon. Tajudeen Abbas to the boys because he is also very proud of them and their resilient performance".

"The Speaker wants to assure the boys that they will be handsomely rewarded if they bring home the trophy".



**Victor Osimhen knock down by Angola defender**