

PILOT

NIGERIAN

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NEWSPAPER WITH CONSCIENCE

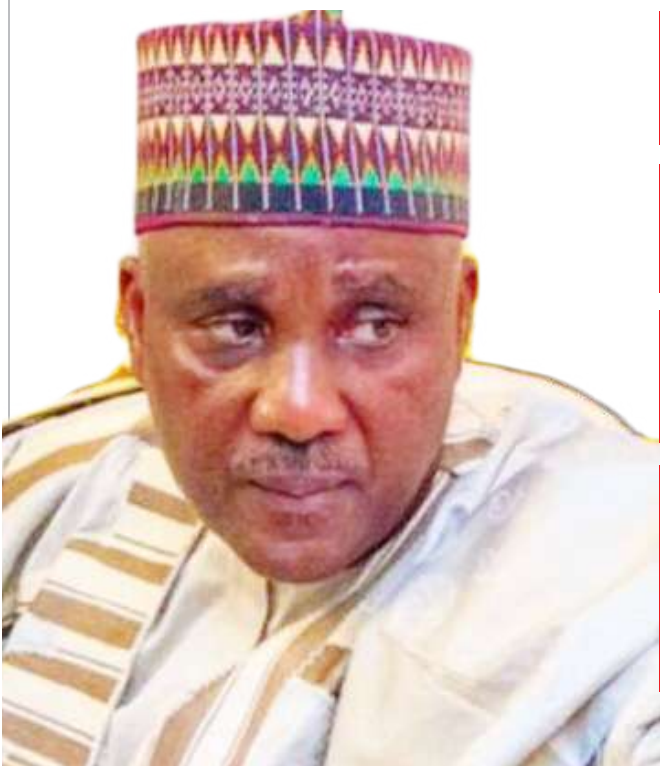


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Pilot Personality



PROFESSOR ISAAC NATHANIEL ITODO

World class agricultural engineer with outstanding work

In February this year, Professor Isaac Nathaniel Itodo was proudly announced by the Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of the Council of the University of Agriculture, Makurdi in Benue State, Hon. Edith Chidimma Uwajumogwu, as the new Vice Chancellor.

He took over from Professor Paul Annune who acted as Vice-Chancellor since November 2022 after the tenure of Professor Richard Kimbir ended as the Vice Chancellor on the 19th of November, 2022.

The Ivory Tower was later renamed as Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University by former President Muhammadu Buhari in 2019 but the name change was officially unveiled in 2021 in honour of a historical personage in Benue, Middle Belt and of course Nigeria, J. S. Tarka.

The Idoma-born Prof. Itodo, the 7th Vice Chancellor of the University, is an outstanding scholar who has distinguished himself in the field of engineering specializing in agriculture. The don made history as the first Vice

Chancellor who is an alumnus since the university since it was created in 1988.

Born on 18th August, 1964, Prof. Itodo obtained a B.Eng in Agricultural Engineering in 1986, an M.Sc in 1989 and a Ph.D in 1993 from the University of Ibadan.

In 1987 in the Department of Agricultural Engineering, University of Jos, his academic career began as Graduate Assistant until he rose to the position peak of academic honour as a professor in October 2003.

He has served in different positions such as Head of Department of Agricultural Engineering, Dean of College of Engineering, as well as Editor, Journal of Agriculture, Science and Technology.

One of his numerous contributions to academic research and knowledge is that he was the Lead Consultant to the UND where he served on the technical committees that developed the bio-fuels training manual and development of standards for bio-fuels

production in Nigeria. He was also the Technical Secretary of the Committee of Deans of Engineering and Technology of Nigerian Universities and was an ERM Inspector.

He was President of Solar Energy Society of Nigeria and was elected Life Member of the society in 2020; member of the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers and the International Solar Energy Society, and Fellow of the NSE, Solar Energy Society of Nigeria and the Nigerian Institution of Agricultural Engineers.

Prof. Itodo is a recipient of the award of Kassel University Germany scholarship for scientists from developing countries for the International Solar Energy Society solar world congress in 2011. He is a prolific author of books and over hundred academic publications.

The well respected don holds two patents, one, as a National Productivity Award Winner, and a Fellow of the Academy of Engineering. It would be recalled that, Prof. Itodo's publication

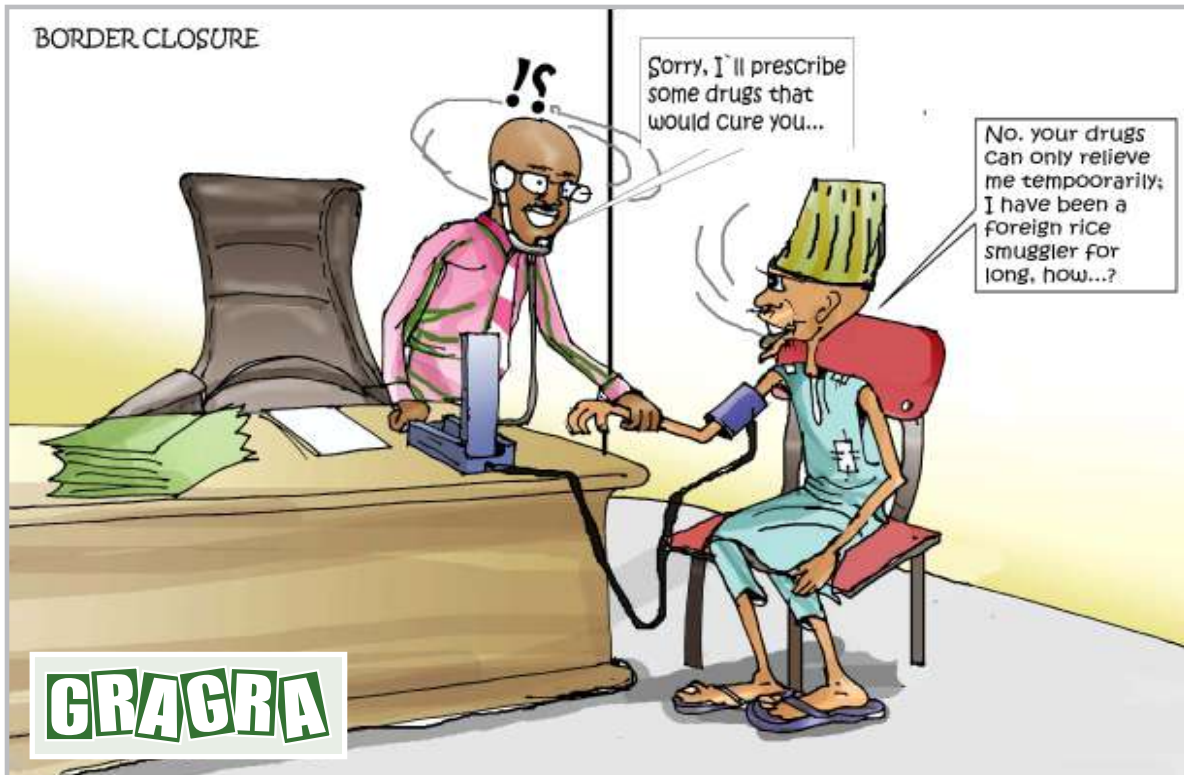
won the 3rd best engineering academic publication in Nigeria in 2019. He also holds a joint patent with the RMRDC of the acha dehulling machine.

Announcing the appointment of Prof Itodo as the Vice Chancellor, the chairman of the governing council, Uwajumogwu, explained that out of the 18 persons that applied, 16 were shortlisted in a credible process out of which Itodo emerged the best choice for the coveted position.

Uwajumogwu was quoted as saying that, "The choice of Prof. Itodo was unanimous after he emerged with the highest score from the three candidates that the selection committee recommended".

The chairman further said, "in the process, JoSTUM's interest was put first. Nobody was under any pressure that was not controllable. I hope other Universities will learn from the University. We went for merit and took the best for the University to take its pride of place in the Nigerian University system."

EDITORIAL



CAN PRESIDENT TINUBU STOP KILLINGS IN THE COUNTRY?

History will definitely judge Buhari of Daura. He handed over to Tinubu a nervous country with a security situation that left citizens and foreigners in our midst insecure. Till now, killings, raping and mass abduction by suspected Fulani-herders, bandits and kidnapers are still going on

True, former President Muhammadu Buhari disappointed Nigerians in many fronts, if not in all fronts. Concerning national security, his scorecard was a capital failure.

History will definitely judge Buhari of Daura. He handed over to Tinubu a nervous country with a security situation that left citizens and foreigners in our midst insecure. Till now, killings, raping and mass abduction by suspected Fulani-herders, bandits and kidnapers are still going on. The question is: Can Tinubu arrest this ugly situation?

For instance, few days ago, communities in Nasarawa, a state that shares boundary with the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, were thrown into inconsolable agony. Relatives and friends gathered and looked on with pains in their hearts, wailing for their killed loved ones numbering about 40 being buried in a mass grave.

According to media reports, the people were killed by suspected Fulani herdsmen in Takalafiya and Gwanja villages in the Gitata District of Panda Development Area in Karu Local Council. Other neighbouring communities, which include Angwan Bege, Angwan Madaki and Gidan Allah, occupied predominantly by Gwandara, Mada and Yeskwa tribes, were not spared as they were also brutally attacked..

The Deputy Governor of Nasarawa State, Dr. Emmanuel Akabe, who led a government delegation to the burial, in the usual official way, condemned the dastardly act, vowed that the state government would

investigate the matter and bring the culprits to book. He also assured the mourners of relief materials to cushion the effects of the incident.

It is very sad that barely two weeks to the end of the government of President Muhammadu Buhari, the Nigeria continues to sink deeper into darkness, especially with killings, banditry and kidnapping on the rise daily.

In Benue, Southern Kaduna, Plateau Nasarawa, etc, suspected herdsmen continue to kill, main and destroy lives and properties with minimal or zero resistance from security agents. Farms are ancestral homes of many people in the Middle Belt have become grazing routes and habitation for cows and AK47 - wielding herdsmen.

What manner of country are we? Where on earth is this kind of impunity accepted as if it is a norm? And how long can this bloody and destructive campaign or agenda be endured by the Victims?

It is rather unfortunate that Nigerians have continued to live with this unsavory experience all through the period of the Buhari administration. Surely, Nigerians will remember the Buhari era as Nigeria's darkest hour after the historical national pogrom, the Civil War.

We advise the president to hit the ground running, especially on security sector because, one of the best ways in which he can unite the heavily divided country under the Buhari administration is to restructure and reposition the security apparatuses and the time to do that is now.



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News

Include senior citizens in planned palliatives, Pensioners tell FG

By Michael Oche

The Nigeria Union of Pensioners (NUP), on Monday said the removal of subsidy of petrol has further impoverished and pauperized vulnerable Nigeria pensioners who are already struggling and battling for survival.

The Union therefore urged that the Federal Government must include pensioners in the planned palliatives package, being one of the low-income earners in the country.

Addressing journalists in Abuja, NUP president Comrade Godwin Abumisi, also said going by the current economic reality, the Federal Government should consider an upward review of pension as it commences an upward review of salaries of the Civil Servants.

He said there should be a departure from the prevailing practice where such circulars of

review of salary and pensions are issued separately at different times, leaving the pensioners struggling to obtain their own circular for the corresponding payment.

"This practice must be stopped as pensioners are workers in retirement, who are also entitled to decent living conditions in line with the popular saying that "what is good for the goose is also good for the gander", he said.

He said further that, "It is on record that the poorest of the poor in Nigeria today are resident in our rural communities where many families are not sure of a square meal in a day. It is also on record that there is no rural community in Nigeria, being it ward, village or hamlet that you cannot find pensioners/retirees who are struggling daily with poverty and hunger, alongside the rural populace, due to low pension earnings or non-payment

of their monthly pension or pending gratuity, and in most cases, backlog of arrears of their pensions.

"Given the above scenario and for equitable reasons, if the Federal Government wishes to achieve its objective of the cash transfer to the poor, using the much touted social registers, it must consider the involvement and participation of those organized Unions/Associations that have the records/statistics (data base) of their members resident in both urban and rural areas, most especially the Pensioners' Union (NUP), Market Women Organizations, the Physically Challenged Persons and other Professional Bodies. The leaders of the Unions/Bodies who are very visible could be easily held responsible and accountable in the event of any infractions or shortchanging of their members in accessing such funds."

He also said pensioners across board must also be considered for the proposed six months tax-free payment to public servants for 6 months as well as the payment of all outstanding liabilities to public/civil servants.

He said the Defined Benefit Scheme (DBS) pensioners under PTAD are being owed various pension liabilities, including the 2015 pension increment which the Union has been consistently pressing for its payment but to no avail.

"Also worth mentioning is the pending liabilities of our members

under the Contributory (Mandatory) Pension Scheme who have been short-changed of the 15% of the 2007 pension review, 33% of the 2010 pension review, omission of 2015 pension review and the consequential adjustment of 2019.

"We believe whole-heartedly that if the above pension reviews are paid to our members as part of the proposed palliatives, it will go a long way to ameliorate the living conditions of our members who will have cause to smile once again to the credit of the Tinubu-led Federal Government," he said.



A/Court endorses sack of oil coy's Directors, sets aside N3m fine

By Kenneth Atavti

The Court of Appeal in Abuja has upheld the removal of Dr. Bunu Alibe and Mr. Ayo Olojede as Directors of an indigenous oil company, Green Energy International Limited.

In a judgment on Monday, a three-member panel of the appellate court was unanimous in setting aside an earlier judgment delivered on September 23, 2022 by Justice Bolaji Olajuwon of the Federal High Court, Abuja, which had among others, reversed their removal.

The Court of Appeal faulted Justice Olajuwon's decision that sufficient notice was not accorded Alibe and Olojede before the holding of the November 12, 2020 Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Green Energy Oil firm where the decision to remove them was taken, among other resolutions.

The judgment on Monday was on the appeal marked: CA/A/CV/1248/2022 filed

by Green Energy and its Chairman, Professor Anthony Adegbulugbe against the September 23, 2022 decision by Justice Olajuwon.

In the lead judgment, authored by Justice Jamilu Tukur, but read on Monday by Justice Danlami Senchi, the Court held that the removal of Alibe and Olojede was in compliance with relevant laws, particularly the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA).

It further held that from the evidence before the trial court, Green Energy Company complied with the necessary requirements for the issuance of the notice for AGM, noting that the notice in the instant case, was issued and received on the 22nd of October 2020, which constitutes 21 clear days notice for the meeting held on November 12, 2020.

The court faulted the trial judge for voiding the AGM and nullifying all the decisions and resolutions of the meeting, including Alibe and Olojede's removal.

While holding that Prof. Adegbulugbe was not a necessary party in the case, the court set aside the N3 million damages awarded against Green Energy in the trial court's judgment.

The Court said the necessary party before the trial court was the 1st appellant (Green Energy), because the respondents' claims were against the 1st appellant.

"It is the 1st appellant company that allegedly failed to issue proper special notices of the removal of the respondents as directors. The presence of the 2nd appellant is a mere surplusage, that is, desirable, but not compulsory.

"The 2nd appellant or any member of the company could have been called as a witness and the court will still be able to effectively determine the controversy between the parties," the court said and proceeded to strike out Prof Adegbulugbe's name from the original suit filed at the Federal High Court.

Shettima to world leaders: Nigeria needs real partnerships, not handouts

Agency Report

Vice-President Kashim Shettima has said that Nigeria no longer needs handouts from developed economies, but seeks real partnerships and investments.

Shettima spoke at the ongoing UN Food Systems summit in Rome, according to a statement on Monday.

Referencing Napoleon Bonaparte, a French military commander, and political leader, the vice-president said recent economic policies such as the subsidy removal and the unification of the country's foreign change system, have put Nigeria on a pedestal for mutually beneficial partnerships rather than handouts.

"Napoleon Bonaparte once said, 'China is a sleeping giant. Let her sleep, for when she wakes, she will shake the world.' President Bola Tinubu is poised to redefine the meaning and concept of modern leadership in Nigeria, the Giant of Africa, which had woken up from its slumber and is now poised to move the world," he said.

"Nigeria needs no handouts but real partnerships. We have removed the albatrosses of fuel subsidies and multiple exchange rates from

our necks; hence, we are seeking investments for mutually beneficial partnerships, not handouts."

Since he ascended to power, Tinubu has introduced critical reforms in attempts to fulfill his campaign promises of economic prosperity.

The president, in a rousing speech on May 29, declared the termination of petrol subsidy payments.

On June 14, the Central Bank of Nigeria announced the unification of all segments of the forex exchange (FX) market, implying that the exchange rate will rise or fall based on market forces.

Tinubu, at a civic reception organised in his honour by the Lagos state government, said he decided to unify the official and parallel market rates to save the country from financial hemorrhage.

"We need to take the steps to stop the bleeding of our finances through speedy action on fuel subsidy. We have no choice," the president had said, defending his actions.

Although the policies have led to more hardship in the country as prices continue to climb, renowned economists have lauded Tinubu for the reforms.

Accord guber candidate promises to unlock Imo industrial potential

By Athan Agbakwuru, Owerri

The governorship candidate of Accord Party, in Imo State, Ikenga JohnJude Okere has promised to unlock the innovative and entrepreneurship potential of the state with the view to making Imo the industrial hub of Nigeria.

In a chat with our correspondent, Ikenga Okere described Imo State as a "land brimming with untapped potential and holds the key to a vibrant and prosperous future," for the country.

He said, "I am determined to unlock this potential and transform our state into an economic powerhouse. Together, let us embark on a journey of innovation and entrepreneurship, shaping a future that knows no bounds."

"In our quest to create an environment that nurtures ingenuity and fosters entrepreneurial spirit, we aim to cultivate a supportive business

ecosystem. We will strip away the barriers that hinder progress, simplifying bureaucratic processes and streamlining regulations.

"By doing so, we will provide a fertile ground for businesses to flourish, encouraging both local and foreign investors to join us on this transformative path. The winds of change blow strongest when fueled by technology and innovation.

"Imo State shall become a beacon of progress, embracing the opportunities presented by the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Innovation hubs, incubators, and technology parks will be established, serving as fertile grounds for collaboration between academia, industry, and visionaries. By stimulating research and development, we will unlock breakthrough technologies, revolutionizing industries and placing Imo State at the forefront of technological advancements," he added.

43% of Nigerian children aged 5 - 11 still engaged in child labour – FG

By Michael Oche

The Federal Government has estimated that over 43 per cent of Nigerian children aged between 5 and 11 years are actively involved in economic activities, including the worst forms of Child Labour.

Permanent Secretary in the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment, Daju Kachollom stated this in Abuja during a road walk to commemorating the 2023 World Day Against Child Labour and also draw attention to the danger of the menace.

Kachollom who led a walk to the headquarters of the National Human Rights Commission said the figures reflect the degree of urgency required

by the various actors working on child labour to proffer solutions to the reduction and possible elimination of child labour in Nigeria and globally.

Referencing the 2016 – 2017 MICS Survey, the permanent Secretary said 39% of children involved in child labour are working under hazardous conditions including quarrying granite, artisanal mining, commercial sexual exploitation, armed conflict, and sometimes are victims of human trafficking.

The 2023 World Day Against Child Labour (WDAKL) has as its theme: "Social Justice for All. End Child Labour".

According to Kachollom, the Federal Government recognises the

importance of addressing the issue of child labour hence its commitment to eradicating the menace.

She said this year's celebration was aimed at reinvigorating international action to achieve social justice and elimination of Child Labour.

She described Child Labour as a grave concern that affects millions of children worldwide, denying them their fundamental rights to education, health, mental and moral development and a childhood free from all forms of exploitation.

She said, "The WDAKL serves as a reminder that the fight against child labour requires sustained efforts and collective action.

"The commitment of the Federal

Government of Nigeria in contributing to the global fight against child labour and its worst forms is evidenced in the following interventions, programmes, activities and partnerships.

"The adoption and ratification of ILO Conventions No138 and No.182, Enactment of the Child Rights Act to domesticate the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, The 36 States of the Federation and the FCT have domesticated the Child Rights Act.

"Review of the National Policy on Child Labour and the National Action Plan on the Elimination of Child Labour, Development of the List of Hazardous Child Labour, Review of the Labour Act to mainstream Child Labour into the Labour Standards

Bill which replaces the Labour, including the adoption of 15 years as the minimum age for employment among others.

Kachollom however listed some of the challenges in the elimination of Child Labour in Nigeria including poverty, cultural/religious factors, poor educational system, inadequate social protection systems and wrong perception of the negative effects of Child Labour.

She said the Ministry of Labour and Employment intends to continue active collaboration with relevant stakeholders to develop and implement collective strategies that contribute to the eradication of child labour.

30 year-old lady murdered in Makurdi, body parts removed

By Sunday Ogli, Makurdi

A young lady in her 30s, Dorcas Shangev, has been brutally murdered at Agem Village, near Welfare Quarters in Makurdi, Benue State capital.

Dorcas was killed on her birthday and her body was dismembered; even as her eyes, ears, tongue, breasts among other body parts were removed and taken away.

A source who pleaded anonymity told journalists that Dorcas had on Friday, 14th July, 2023, escorted a friend of hers to the burial of her brother-in-law.

When they returned back to Makurdi the following day (Saturday) after the burial, Dorcas did not go back home but slept at her friend's house around the Modern Market area of the state capital.

According to the source "The next day, Sunday, 16th July, 2023, was her birthday, she left her friend's house with a promise to call her friend by 3:00pm, so they can sit-out.

"However, when she didn't call back as arranged, the friend called to find out why she hadn't called, but she didn't pick her calls. The friend kept calling the whole of Sunday and continued till Monday, but she still didn't pick the phone.

"On Monday, the friend got a message that was sent from the lady's (deceased) phone, but later on realised that she may not have been the one that actually sent the message, asking her to come to a certain address and when her friend got to the place, she discovered that she was dead and dismembered and some of her body parts strewn all over the place.

"While in a state of shock she called her husband to the scene and the husband in turn called the police and it was discovered that her eyes, ears, tongue, breasts among other body parts were removed and taken away by whoever may have perpetrated the act.

"When the Police saw that the corpse had started to decompose, they called in one of the State agencies, which came, gathered the body parts into a plastic bag, took and buried her.

"This lady has been through a lot in recent times. She has gone through one trauma or another. And recently, she lost her elder sister," the source said.

However, the Acting General

Manager of Benue State Environmental and Sanitation Agency, BENSESA, Martin Tseuma, when contacted, said his agency did not recover the body.

In his words: "We didn't recover the body. The police at B division wrote to us that they have discovered an unknown corpse at Adem village, near Welfare Quarters.

"It was based on the report that they said we should evacuate the body for burial and that was what we did.

"We didn't contact anyone because how do we know the family?

"But the family came to my office this morning and I directed them to go back to the police where they got the story of the unclaimed corpse.

"We were working based on the report from the police," Tseuma said.

When contacted, the spokesperson of the state Police Command, SP Catherine Anene, said she was yet to be briefed.



Abbas

Reps Speaker, Tinubu to meet over Resident Doctors planned strike

By Disun Amosun

The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Rep Abbas Tajudeen, is to meet with President Bola Tinubu as part of efforts to avert the planned industrial action by the Nigerian Association of Resident Doctors (NARD).

The Speaker's meeting with the President would be to intimate him on the pending issues raised by NARD and appeal to the President on how to resolve them.

At a meeting with the national

leadership of NARD on Monday in his office in Abuja, the Speaker also announced the setting up of an ad hoc committee to be chaired by the House Leader, Prof Julius Ihonvbere, which will meet with all the stakeholders with a view to addressing the issues.

The ad hoc panel has the immediate past Chairman of the 9th House Committee on Healthcare Services, Hon. Tanko Sununu (APC, Kebbi), as the Deputy Chairman while all medical practitioners in the House would be co-opted into the

Committee.

Speaker Abbas directed the ad hoc panel to swing into action immediately.

It would be recalled that NARD had on July 5, 2023, after its Extraordinary National Executive Council, issued a two-week ultimatum to the Federal Government to implement all pending agreements or face industrial action by the resident doctors.

The Resident Doctors had embarked on a five-day warning

strike between May 17 and 21, 2023, to press home their demands.

During the meeting with the NARD leadership on Monday, Speaker Abbas equally appealed to the resident doctors to give the House leadership two weeks period to find solutions to the issues raised.

The leadership of the Resident Doctors, led by the National President of NARD, Dr. Emeka Innocent Orji, acceded to the Speaker's appeal and said they would get back to their members on the Speaker's position.

Governor Peter Mbah's certificate saga: CSOs affirm NYSC position

By Our Correspondent

In a bid to clear the air on the lingering issue bothering on the authenticity of the NYSC certificate that was tendered by the Governor of Enugu State, Mr. Peter Mbah, a rights group, Save Nigeria Movement and the Federation of Freelance Journalists, have thrown their weight behind the National Youth Service Scheme (NYSC) and has affirmed that the discharge certificate paraded by Mr. Peter Mbah is fake and does not originate from the Scheme.

Addressing a press conference in

Abuja, the duo of Rev. Solomon Semaka and Oduma Abel Kings, the National Coordinators of Save Nigeria Movement and Federation of Freelance Journalists respectively, the groups insisted that NYSC cannot err in following its rules and has not erred for 50 years and as such Mbah's case can't be different.

Part of the statement reads, "The certificate being presented by the Governor is a complete fabrication and has no connection to the NYSC. We have amassed undeniable evidence supporting the NYSC position. Records from various open sources, including NYSC correspondences, court

documents, and tribunal proceedings all confirm that the NYSC did not issue the specific certificate with registration number A808297 to Governor Peter Mbah at any time."

The CSOs equally gave a detailed rundown of the events that transpired more than 20 years to show that the NYSC keeps impeccable records and that records don't lie, adding that Mr. Peter Mbah is truly guilty as charged and should take responsibility for his actions rather resorting to a media war.

"The NYSC keeps excellent records and it's on record that after graduating from the University of East London,

Mbah was mobilised for the 2001/2002 Service Year and posted to Lagos State. However, he later applied to defer his service to attend Law School. Upon resuming his service in May 2003, he was meant to complete it in September of the same year.

"However, he was appointed Chief of Staff to the Governor of Enugu State on July 14, 2003, which led to his alleged abandonment of the NYSC program. Can those desperately trying to defend this illegality saying the NYSC deployed Mbah from Lagos and posted him to serve as Chief of Staff in Enugu State," the statement queried.

Anthrax: FCTA begins mass vaccination of cattle to curb spread

By Chioma Nnodim

The Agricultural and Rural Development Secretariat of the Federal Capital Territory Administration, FCTA on Monday, began a mass vaccination of cattle to curb the spread of Anthrax in the FCT.

The acting Secretary of the Secretariat, Alhaji Ishaq Sadeeq, inaugurated the exercise in Patkon Kore Grazing Reserve, Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja.

According to him, the mass vaccination exercise targets at least one million cattle across the six Area Councils of the FCT.

Sadeeq explained that the move became necessary following the confirmation of the disease in Suleja, Niger, one of the neighbouring states of the Federal Capital.

He thanked the Permanent Secretary, FCTA, Mr Olusade Adesola, for approving the

purchase of one million doses of the vaccine, which scientists have identified as the most effective ways of preventing the disease.

He said that the vaccination exercise, which would last for four weeks, would be carried out simultaneously across the 62 wards of the six Area Councils of the FCT.

He explained that the exercise was part of the FCT Administration's proactive and readiness to combat the disease.

"The FCT Administration had since the announcement of the outbreak in Ghana earlier this year, carried out a series of outreach campaigns to sensitise residents particularly livestock owners and butchers about the Anthrax disease.

"The sensitisation was to avail them with the knowledge of signs and symptoms, as well as effective measures they can adopt to protect themselves and their animals from

contracting and spreading the disease," he said.

He appealed for the co-operation of livestock owners with the veterinary health workers, to ensure the success of the exercise.

He equally advised livestock owners against selling or slaughtering any animal with visible symptoms, and reported suspected cases to any of the FCT Veterinary Clinics.

"While our veterinary personnel have been put on alert to attend to any emergency cases, we will be working closely with the Health and Human Services Secretariat to attend to human cases involving livestock owners," he added.

The Director Veterinary Services, Dr Regina Adulugba, described Anthrax as a "fatal disease" to both animals and humans, which can be contracted through open wounds, airborne and from consuming infected animals.

Adulugba said, "The best protection against the disease is vaccinating the animals and that is what we are here to do.

"It is deadly because it is Zoonotic, Zoonotic means it can affect humans and it can affect animals. So, it is dangerous, and it spreads by too many means.

"If you have a wounded skin, it can affect the wound and then infect the person, or it can spread even through the air, or it can spread from consumption of meat.

"That is why we advised them not to slaughter any sick animal for now. If an animal is sick, they should allow it to die and then we see if it is positive.

"It is safer for them as cattle owners, their children and their family, because it can affect human and it is very deadly in human as it is deadly in animals," he explained.

On his part, Malam Yahaya Isa, Chairman, Miyatti Allah

Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), FCT Chapter, commended the FCTA for the proactive step.

Isa, who is also the Deputy National Secretary of the association, said that the move would not only protect livestock against the disease, but also save investment and human lives.

He commended the FCTA for being the first to take such a proactive step in the country to prevent further spread of the disease.

"The entire Fulani herders' community is happy and is fully prepared to comply with the arrangement.

"Our people are ready to cooperate with the officials everywhere.

"We have even mobilised in each area council, some group of youths to back them up wherever they are going," he said.

Police confirm kidnap of medical doctor, one other in Benue

By Sunday Ogli, Makurdi

BENUE State Police Command has confirmed the kidnap of a medical doctor in-charge of General Hospital, Sakera in Ugbaam Council Ward of Ukum Local Government Area of the state.

The victim, Dr. Asema Msuega who hails from Kwande Local Government Area of the state was reported to have been kidnapped by unknown gunmen at about 13:00hrs on Sunday.

A local in the area who pleaded anonymity said that Dr Msuega was on his way for supervision of the ongoing State Malaria Control (SMC) programme at the Family Support

Programme (FSP), Uyoo before he was kidnapped along with a woman yet to be identified.

Worried by this development, the people then put a call through the victim's phone and when asked of his whereabouts, he said, "I am in a place I don't know because my face is tied up with clothes."

According to the source, subsequent calls put across to the victim's phone line were unreachable as the phone was said to be switched off.

When contacted, the Police Public Relations Officer, PPRO in the state, SP Catherine Anene who confirmed the incident said investigation was ongoing on the matter.

Senate assures Traditional Rulers of constitutional role in governance

By Okechukwu Jombo

The Leadership of the Senate on Monday assured Traditional Rulers of the constitutional role in governance which it said would be achieved through Constitution amendment.

Assurance for the traditional rulers on constitutional role in governance was given by the Senate President, Godswill Akpabio when he had in audience the royal fathers across the 36 States of the federation and the federal capital territory.

Akpabio who gave the assurance in response to requests made to that effect by the traditional rulers said roles of the royal fathers in governance, particularly on security matters, are very important.

"Your request for a constitutional role in governance is not strange to us and in particular, to me based on my background.

"My late grandfather was a traditional ruler and in fact, one of the warrant officers used by the colonial masters for effective implementation of indirect rule.

"During this period, traditional rulers effectively tackled issues of safety and security in their various domains.

"It is my belief and the entire Senate

leadership here, that if traditional rulers are constitutionally engaged in governance at the grassroots, the myriad of security challenges facing the country would be things of the past.

"You traditional fathers are reservoirs of information highly needed at the grassroots. Your journey to us today on the request, would surely not be in vain," he stressed.

Earlier in his speech on behalf of the traditional rulers, the Etsu of Nupe, Dr Yahaya Abubakar who represented the Chairman of National Traditional Council of Nigeria, the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Sa'ad Abubakar, said the constitutional role of traditional rulers was expunged by framers of the 1979 Constitution.

He lamented all efforts made by traditional rulers across the country under the aegis of National Council of Traditional Rulers, to get back the role, had not yielded any fruit.

"The most recent of such efforts, was the one made during the 9th National Assembly which didn't scale through as a result of failure to get the required votes in the Senate for the demand despite succeeding in the House of Representatives," he lamented.



L-R: Minority leader, House of Representatives, Rep. Kingsley Chinda; Majority Leader and Chairman, House of Representatives Ad-hoc Committee on Legislative Agenda, Rep. Julius Ihonvbere; and the Speaker, House of Representatives, Rep. Tajudeen Abbas, during the stakeholders meeting on the 10th House of Representatives Legislative Agenda, in Abuja yesterday.

Gov AbdulRazaq rolls out palliatives, as workers get monthly cash bonus

By Kayode Abdulazeez, Ilorin

Kwara State Governor AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq has approved a slew of multibillion naira palliatives to cushion the effects of recent removal of fuel subsidy, cutting across different sectors and demographics of the state.

On top of the palliatives is a cash support of N10,000 for every public sector worker in the state, which will begin this month (July) and last until a new minimum wage is introduced to enable workers cope with the economic shocks created by the subsidy removal, Chief Press Secretary to the Governor Rafiu Ajakaye told a news briefing on Monday morning.

"In deference to the new advisory of the National Economic Council for states to design their own independent responses to the development, the Governor has directed the leadership of the civil service to continue a staggered work schedule — not exceeding three days a week — to reduce transportation

expenses for workers," he said.

Kwara had earlier introduced a three-day work schedule for its civil servants, but suspended it in deference to an earlier advisory of the NEC for states to await a more holistic response to the development.

"The staggered work plan will not cover 'essential workers,' the governor's spokesman clarified.

"The Governor has similarly approved the payment, from this month, July, of new hazard and skipping allowances, and 100% CONMESS for consultants and medical doctors under the government's payroll.

"He also approved a new regime of allowances for nurses working for the state government. The whole essence is to check attrition rate in the health sector, and attract and retain medics and specialists to provide improved, qualitative healthcare services for the people of the state.

"The Governor has also endorsed immediate cash-backing of 2019 and 2020 promotion for Teaching Service Commission workers. The

administration had earlier cash-backed arrears of promotion for TESCOM for years 2015-2018.

"In the same vein, he has approved cash-backing for 2021 promotion exercise of teaching and non-teaching staff of SUBEB and restoration of steps to all of them. This is a policy response to the yearnings of SUBEB workers since 2016 when SUBEB workers no longer had steps.

"The Governor also approved the extension of free bus rides for students of tertiary institutions in the state, while modalities for occasional distribution of food to poor and most vulnerable households are to be activated in the next few days.

"This shall be nonpartisan, and would be coordinated by a government team to be supported by respected stakeholders who would get inputs from traditional rulers, religious bodies, market leaders, trade unionists, and community based organisations to generate the lists of beneficiaries and disburse accordingly," he added.

NEWS

Gas flaring: Reps vow to recover \$9bn fines

- Declare that 10th NASS will do everything within its powers to recover unpaid levies
- Regrets that oil, gas industries has outstanding fines amounting to \$9bn
- Worries over level of impunity local, foreign operators violate gas flaring laws
- Calls for drastic measures in tackling issues of fine evasion by oil companies

By Aaron Ossai and Disun Amosun

The House of Representatives has said that it will collect every dime of the over \$9 billion gas flaring fines imposed by the Federal Government on erring local and foreign companies operating in Nigeria's Oil and Gas industry.

Chairman, Ad-hoc Committee investigating gas flaring, Rep. Ahmed Munir gave the assurance Monday in Abuja, during the post-investigative hearing briefing, attended by various stakeholders drawn from Federal Ministry of Environment, Revenue Mobilisation Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC), National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA), among others.

Rep. Munir said given the level of impunity with which operators, local and foreign, violate the country's gas flaring laws; the 10th Assembly will do everything within its powers to ensure full recovery of all unpaid levies as well as compliance with extant legislations and regulations.

The Ad-hoc Committee

Chairman identified the problem of accumulated unpaid fines as penalties amounting to about \$9 billion needing rapid recovery and secondly reducing gas flaring and its resulting pollution to zero.

He stressed the need to check their activities through legislations and effective fines and other penalties the House through the committee will put in place.

Rep Kumo noted that Nigeria has proven gas reserves of 201 trillion standard cubic feet and unproven gas reserves of 600 trillion standard cubic feet, yet production of gas remains very low and unstable; he called for drastic measures toward in tackling the menace.

In his remarks, Director at Federal Ministry of Environment, Mr. Olubunmi Olusanya underscored the need to give legislative backing to the use of oil and gas trackers in sanitizing environmental challenges occasioned by gas flaring and oil spillage.

While delivering his keynote address, Speaker Tajudeen Abbas who was represented by the Chief Whip, Hon. Usman Kumo observed

that gas flaring and venting has been a significant environmental, economic, health and social concern in our country for many years.

"Firstly, gas flaring represents a tremendous waste of valuable resources. Natural gas is a precious energy source that could be utilized for various purposes, such as electricity generation, heating, or industrial processes. By simply burning off this gas, we are squandering a valuable resource that could contribute to energy security and sustainability", he said.

He noted that gas flaring has led to substantial economic losses and revenue decline for the nation as the flared gas represents lost revenue that could have been generated through its sale or utilization. Official records indicate that we lose about \$2.5 billion annually to gas flaring.

In his presentation, NOSDRA Director General, Mr. Idris Musa, who earlier explained that the extant penalties on gas flaring are to serve as deterrent, however recommended that the penalties on gas flaring should be increased.

While stressing the need for improvement on the penalty application process and procedure of the application and collection, he also harped on the need to abolish the dichotomy of penalty administration.

According to him, total of 3.8 billion Mscf was flared between 2013 to date while total sum of \$7.6 billion penalties are payable.

To this end, the lawmakers resolved to investigate the rationale behind \$277,258,304.72 disparity in the gas flare penalties computed by NOSDRA and NUPRC.

Police insist no going back on withdrawal of officers from VIPs

By Agency report

Acting inspector-general of police (IGP), Olukayode Egbetokun has reiterated that there is no going back on the decision to withdraw officers from very important persons (VIPs) in the country.

In June, IGP directed that personnel of the police mobile force (PMF) will no longer carry out VIPs escort and guard duties.

Egbetokun said the force will conduct an assessment of all the duties of the mobile police to ensure effective utilisation.

He said a special committee has been created to evaluate the strategies and how they will be enforced, adding that the team would be headed by the deputy inspector-general of police.

In a statement on Monday, Muiyiwa Adejobi, force spokesperson, said the policy remains valid, adding that there is "no going back".

Muiyiwa said the special committee established for the policy had submitted its report to the IGP while a process for the creation of the police quick intervention squad has been "activated".

"The force wishes to clarify that the decision to withdraw the PMF personnel from escort and guard duties stands firm, and there will be no going back on this critical policy change," the statement reads.

"The withdrawal process has already commenced with a comprehensive report, which has been submitted by the constituted committee assigned to oversee the seamless implementation of this directive; and the IGP has activated the mobilisation process for the establishment of the police quick intervention squad which precedes the withdrawal policy.

"The decision to withdraw police mobile force personnel from VIP duties is part of ongoing efforts to optimize the allocation of resources and enhance the efficiency of the Nigeria Police Force in its core mandate of safeguarding the lives and properties of all citizens.

"While poised to ensure a smooth transition, the Nigeria Police Force is committed to providing adequate security arrangements for VIPs who are entitled to such protection.

"Meanwhile, the force will carefully consider the provisions of sections 23 to 25 of the police act 2020, in recruiting more supernumerary officers, to handle VIP security responsibilities.

"No VIP or critical infrastructure will be left unprotected as a result of the new policy."

I-CSPJ task security agencies on release of female journalist

By Eunice Nnachi, Yenagoa

The International Press Centre for the Safety & Protection of Journalists (I-CSPJ) on Monday tasked security agencies and related stakeholders on the urgent need to ensure the safe return of the Director of News of Rivers State Broadcasting Corporation (RSBC).

Mrs. Priestba Anthony Nwokocha, was abducted by unknown gunmen between 7pm and 8pm along Slaughter/YKC road, Port Harcourt, on Friday, July 21, 2023 on her way from work.

I-CSPJ in a statement signed and issued to newsmen by the Coordinator, Melody Akinjiyan, on Monday, urged called for her unconditional release by her abductors.

A report by the Rivers State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) said: "Her car broke down along Slaughter/YKC road; she called her husband who later came with a mechanic to work on the car.

It was in the presence of her husband and the mechanic that the kidnappers came and picked her up. They didn't pick her husband or harm him; they just picked her and

left."

According to Comrade Stanley Job, the Rivers NUJ State Chairman, who confirmed the unfortunate incident, "the unknown kidnappers have reached out and are demanding for a ransom of 150 million naira for the release of Mrs. Nwokocha."

He further stated that, "all efforts are in place to ensure her release and the Union has contacted CP Nwonyi Polycarp Emeka, Commissioner of Police, on the incident."

I-CSPJ in a statement said "The spate of insecurity in the country is alarming and is of serious concern to all", adding that "it is very disturbing that journalists and media practitioners have also become easy targets."

I-CSPJ is also worried about the trend of gender-related attacks as evident from the IPC 5-year monitoring report, which indicates a gradual increase in the trend of attacks on female journalists.

I-CSPJ therefore enjoined the security agencies, especially the Rivers State Commissioner of Police to do all they can to ensure that Mrs. Nwokocha is set free without being harmed in any way, while urging all and sundry to remain security conscious in the light of the evident security challenges in the country.

Makinde appoints former UI DVC, Olanike Kudirat Adeyemo as SSG designate

By Ade Adeloye, Ibadan

Oyo State governor, Engr. 'Seyi Makinde has announced a University of Ibadan don, Professor (Mrs) Olanike Kudirat Adeyemo, as the Secretary to the State Government (SSG) designate.

Professor Adeyemo, is from the Department of Veterinary Public Health and Preventive Medicine, University of Ibadan,

The announcement was contained in a letter personally signed by the state governor and made available to the Journalists on Monday in Ibadan.

Professor Adeyemo, who served as the Head of the Oyo State COVID-19 Decontamination and Containment team of the Oyo State COVID-19 Taskforce, was born on July 17, 1970.

She bagged the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (D.V.M.), Master's degree in Veterinary Public Health (MVPH) and Ph.D. Veterinary Public Health, in 1994, 1998 and 2005 respectively from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

Professor Adeyemo, who is a COMSTech Distinguished scholar and the Pioneer Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research, Innovation and Strategic Partnerships) at the University of Ibadan, Ibadan between 2017 and 2021, joined the services of the university in March 1999 as Lecturer Grade II in the Department of Veterinary Public Health and Preventive Medicine. She became Lecturer I in 2002, Senior Lecturer/Assistant Professor in 2005 and Reader/Associate Professor in 2008. In October 2011, she became a full Professor.

Enugu residents protest Monday's sit-at-

Agency Report

Residents of Enugu State on Monday trooped out and marched around the streets of the state capital in protest against the continued Monday sit-at-home in the state.

This came as the State Government on Monday moved around parts of the state capital and sealed businesses that continued to obey IPOB sit-at-home

It would be recalled that Governor Peter Mbah on June 5 banned Monday's sit-at-home in the state and urged residents to go about their legitimate duties. He also improved security around the state.

On Monday, however, as early as 8 am, the residents gathered under the auspices of a Coalition of Civil Society groups and marched around the state capital to encourage the people to return to their Monday businesses.

The protesters, led by their coordinators, Oninye Mammah, Bismark Oji, Charles Ogbu, Eberechukwu Anigbo, carried

banners with inscriptions such as: "Enough is Enough"; "Say no to Sit at Home in Enugu" and "Enugu people must be freed from the shackles of those who want to hold it down" among others.

They also sang solidarity songs in support of Governor Mbah and against the sit-at-home as they marched through major roads and streets and converged on Michael Okpara Square.

Chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) Enugu chapter, Rev Emmanuel Ede, described the protest march as "heartwarming", saying it was an indication that residents were no longer comfortable with the forced sit-at-home every Monday in the state.

Mrs Onyinye Mammah, the Executive Director, Heroine Women Foundation, who spoke on behalf of the coordinators, explained that they decided to take the bold initiative, following the devastating effect the continued Monday sit-at-home has

had on the economy of the state and the Southeast region as a whole.

Officials of the Enugu State Capital Territory Development Authority (ECTDA) moved around parts of the State on Monday and sealed businesses that refused to open in compliance with an earlier order of the governor.

Our correspondent, who monitored the development, observed that some shops were "sealed with immediate effect" at the Spar and Polo Malls among other places that refused to obey the directive to open for business.

The development led to activities getting at their full gear in the major markets in the state as traders rushed to open their shops for businesses.

The Ogbete main market, New Market, Kenyetta and Artisan markets opened with several traders.

Also, there were improved vehicular movements in the city centre as security checkpoints increased with soldiers, DSS and Mobile Police Officers manning them.



Gov Mutfwang

Plateau Health sector would be given a facelift - Gov Mutfwang

By Golok Nanmwa, Jos

The health sector in Plateau State is to be repositioned as part of strategies for a productive economy and to curb medical tourism.

Governor Caleb Mutfwang gave this indication on Monday in Jos when a delegation of the state branch of the Nigerian Medical Association, (NMA), led by the Chairman Dr. William Audu paid him a courtesy call at the New Government House, Little Rayfield.

He said the state government is taking advantage of the natural endowments and favorable weather conditions of the state to develop the health sector to make it attractive so that people within and outside the state can get the best medical services that are comparable only to the outside world.

He expressed appreciation to medical personnel in the state for their commitment and selfless services they have been providing to victims of the unfortunate attacks in the Mangu Local Government Area of the State.

"We are sincerely committed to ensuring that we reposition the health

sector on the Plateau. We believe as a government that given our weather, which is very clement and conducive for human health, we believe that Plateau can become a destination for medical tourism.

"We will work towards that with your cooperation and collaboration. We will certainly be able to revamp the health sector and ensure that it is well repositioned for effective delivery of services and that is what we have begun already," he stated.

He explained that the health sector touches on every other aspect of human existence, adding that without health, the nation cannot have a productive economy.

Governor Mutfwang informed members of the Association that the state has gotten the approval of the Federal Ministry of Health for the commencement of operations at the Federal Medical Centre, Wase.

"I am glad to inform the association that we have approval from the Federal Ministry of Health For the commencement of the Federal Medical Center in Wase and the National Orthopedic Hospital here in

Jos.

A statement signed by Bere Gyang, his director of press and public affairs reads that Governor Mutfwang said "We would do everything to support the early and effective takeoff of those medical institutions and ensure that they serve the interest of our people effectively. Going forward, we would look at the several issues you have raised in your request and you may wish to formally send them to us again so that we can look at them more critically."

He advised the people of Plateau State to take more interest in the medical profession, especially as dentists and physiotherapists, and assured them that a medical school will open soon at the Plateau State University, Bokkos to pave the way for more indigenes of the state to be engaged in the medical profession.

Plateau State Chairman of the Nigerian Medical Association, NMA, Dr. William Audu said the visit was to congratulate Governor Mutfwang on his recent victory at the elections and subsequent inauguration.

Police confirm arresting two terrorists attempting to bomb Atiku's house

By Padio Phineas, Yola

The Nigeria police have confirmed arresting two suspected Boko Haram terrorists on a mission to attack the former vice president, Atiku Abubakar's residence in Yola, Adamawa State.

Spokesperson for the Adamawa State Police Command, Suleiman Nguroje, informed on Monday that operatives of the Command on Sunday arrested the two suspected terrorists and handed them over for further investigation.

"Yes, one Jibrilla Mohammed was arrested at the residence of the former vice president in Yola, and while interrogating him we got to arrest his accomplice.

"We have handed them over to the military, because their attempted crime is terrorism in nature," he said.

Abubakar, is currently challenging the election of President Bola Tinubu at the

Presidential Election Petition Tribunal; after losing to him during the February 25, election.

Reno Omokri had earlier today (Monday) raised an alarm on his Twitter handle about a threat to the life of the former vice president, Abubakar.

He said, "Yesterday, Sunday, July 23, 2023, at about 9PM, a man acting suspiciously was detected at Waziri Atiku's residence in Yola. Due to his erratic behaviour, he was accosted and restrained. The suspect, Jubrila Mohammed, was immediately taken to the police station and interrogated.

"During his interrogation, he confessed to being a member of the dreaded Boko Haram sect. He revealed a plot to bomb Waziri Atiku's residence, along with faculties at the American University of Nigeria, Yola, as well as the Modibbo Adama Central Mosque.

"The suspect is now with the State CID of the Adamawa Police Command", he said.

Ondo tanker explosion: FRSC confirms eight persons burnt to death

Agency Report

Eight persons have been confirmed dead while scooping fuel after a petrol-laden tanker fell and split its contents along the Ore-Benin Expressway, Ore in Odigbo Local Government Area of Ondo State.

While many were reported to have died from the Sunday evening incident, the Sector Commander of the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) in Ondo State, Ezekiel Son-Allah, on Monday said eight persons were burnt to death following the explosion.

He said the white fuel tanker with no registration number lost control due to over speeding.

Son-Allah noted that following the development, some residents of a close by village stormed the scene and started scooping fuel spilt from the fallen tanker.

According to him, unfortunately, the tanker exploded, burning eight persons who were scooping fuel to death.

The FRSC boss said the tanker and motor boy managed to escape from the scene unhurt.

He said the FRSC rescue team had deposited the remains of the victims at the morgue of the General Hospital in Ore.

The incident is the latest in petrol tanker explosions in Nigeria. Fuel accidents are frequent in Nigeria, and commonly happen when tanker drivers crash on poorly maintained roads or as residents try to siphon oil or petrol from pipelines.

In June 2021, five people died and 13 others were injured in Lagos when a tanker exploded because of a gas leakage.

In April 2022, 12 people were killed and dozens of houses burnt when a fuel tanker overturned, spilt its contents, and caught fire in central Nigeria's Benue state.

In January of that same year, a tanker explosion in the southern city of Agbor claimed four lives and injured 11.

Contravention: Dev't Control removes illegal structures at Apo

By Chioma Nnodim

Department of Development Control of the Federal Capital Territory Administration, FCTA, on Monday removed illegal structures erected on plot 661 B01 Gudu District, in Apo area of Abuja for allegedly deviating from approval granted for the space thereby contravening Abuja Land Use Act.

It was gathered that the developer had approval from the department, but did not follow strictly on the approved plan for car park structure in the area.

The enforcement team led by Tpl Chinedu Okoro, the officer in charge of the District, said prior to the removal, the team had

visited and served the relevant notices, but the developer failed to comply.

He therefore warned other developers to always adhere to the approval granted them by the department.

Also, he reiterated that "Department of Development Control is resolute in ensuring the Master Plan of the Federal Capital Territory is preserved by all developers in the FCT."

Furthermore, he added that the department has resolved that any developer that did not build according to approval, the department will remove the structure and the developer will bear the cost of the removal.

Politics



Ministerial nominees: Hope of Ibori's candidate hangs in the balance

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NEWS INTERVIEWS COMMENTARIES ANALYSES FEATURES

Benue'll strengthen anti-open grazing law - Sen Udende

Senator Emmanuel Menga Udende representing Benue North East, who is a lawyer by profession, spoke to OKECHUKWU JOMBO our Senate correspondent in Abuja on various topics including the controversial Anti Open Grazing Law in the state saying it will be strengthened by the current government by filling the observed gaps.

He also spoke on insecurity in various parts of the country, unemployment, the recent allocation of N70 billion to the National Assembly, fuel subsidy removal and other national issues.

Q: What are some of the pressing issues in Benue North East where you represent that have come to NASS with?

A: I have just two. First, is security. About three or four local governments are bedeviled with the issue of security. That is a very big problem for us, just like the North West or North East. This has been disturbing us for a very long time. It's an agenda for me in the Senate to try to see if we can tackle it. You can notice that about two weeks ago, there was an attack in my own local government where about 24 people were killed by bandits. It's something that has been disturbing us. Since 2015 the military has been after these people, but very little have been achieved. Our major aim is that at this time let's adopt a stick and carrot approach. Those ones that are moderate, let's talk to them. If they can lay down their arms, we integrate them back to the society and ask the military to go after those who are hardened. We are working on it. Recently Service Chiefs have been confirmed. It's the concern of my governor too. We are jointly working on it. We have set up a very small committee to give us modality on how to go about it. As soon as the committee gives the report, we will take the next step. It's a very challenging situation; the economy of the place has gone down. People can no longer go to the farm. Before, it used to be Fulani herdsmen and in a bid to chase away the Fulani herdsmen, there is a problem internally because the boys who were armed to chase these people have now turned their guns on the people. So, it's a very big challenge. We are looking at it and God willing, we will be able to sort out the issue.

The second one is unemployment.



Udende

Generally there is unemployment in the country with graduates from the university, polytechnic roaming the streets. Now that I'm in the Senate to make laws, my proposals in the budget will be to areas that will alleviate this menace. It's a very big problem, which if not curbed can take us into security challenge too. An idle hand can do anything. It's my aim to have intervention that can really take some hands off from unemployment.

Q: Before this time, the Benue State Government promulgated Anti Open Grazing Law. How do you assess its implementation?

A: Well, I'm a lawyer by profession. I was called to bar in 1986, that is a long time. I looked at the law. There are gaps, the implementation by the past administration is very poor. There is no desk officer. The first thing is to create a department in the Ministry of Agriculture that anybody who wants to breed animals could go there and ask for land. That will be better, but for now there is none. We believe that this government will do something by creating a department in the Ministry of Agriculture that will enforce the implementation of this law. It was left for this livestock guards who most of the time will create problems, attack and carry

cattle. The Fulanis in trying to get the cattle back, once they come and the cattle are not complete, come back for revenge. The innocent people suffer. I believe there should be a desk officer who you can approach if you want a ranch and there is an infringement, these can go after.

Q: Do you foresee the present government coming up with an amendment to close these gap?

A: I think so, because during the campaigns he promised the people that he is going to strengthen the law. You can only strengthen the law if you fill gaps and then you are good to go.

Q: Distinguished, to solve any problem you must first get to the root of it. Don't you think legislators should go to the root of the problem first?

A: The root of the problem is that the farmer wants his land and the grazer wants to graze on the land. There must be some negotiation, not the law itself alone. Even as they fight in Ukraine now, they must come to negotiation table. The guns and whatever will never win the war. In this case too, the two sides must come to negotiation table and find a lasting solution to it. The law alone may not find the solution.

Q: You defeated a former governor and senator to be here today. How was the journey?

A: I'm a Christian and I you are a Christian go and read 1 Corinthians 1:27. It says God chooses the less privileged to confound the wise, to make the wise look foolish. That is what God did in this case. I have nothing to say. It's just the grace of God that brought me here.

Q: What has your experience been like since your inauguration?

A: Well, I have been in the National Assembly before. I was in the House of Representatives between 2011 to 2019. I'm in a familiar terrain, it's just a few changes; whereas in the House you don't debate infrastructure bill,

here they debate it. In the House, once it is infrastructure motion, once you move it, then it is passed without argument. It makes the process very fast. In the House the Deputy Speaker presides in a committee of the whole, but here it is the Senate President who does it. These are the few differences I have noticed; otherwise, it is the same thing. Committee on Rules and Business acts like the Attorney General in the House, here it is silence. The Leader drives it.

Q: What are your expectations of the 10th National Assembly?

A: Like every individual, you will want to surpass your predecessors. Our expectation is that we will surpass the performance of the 9th National Assembly.

Q: But from the beginning now people believe you are here to serve yourselves. Many Nigerians see the N70 billion allocated to the National Assembly in the amendment to the 2022 Appropriation Act as for your welfare.

A: No, you see, the problem with Nigerians, and I don't blame them because the world over, it is the legislator that takes the bashing. If you go to America, it's the same; they take the bashing for whatever privileges they have. Do you expect a minister, if they bring the list, the day they come here and they are sworn in, the ministry will provide working tools for them. The N70 billion is to provide working vehicles for the National Assembly generally; it's not for the welfare of legislators. Very soon, once the committees are set up, we go into committees. It's not for welfare, like The Sun said. The Sun did the arithmetic and said N128 million each. You see, we expect that where you don't understand, you ask. It is not palliative to National Assembly; it is for provision of vehicles for the working of the National Assembly, and not only the Senate, but for the House of Representatives too. Right now there are no computers. Part of the money will go into buying office

equipment for National Assembly generally and the other one will into buying vehicles. Don't we deserve to have working vehicles and working tools?

Q: What do you have to say about the removal of fuel subsidy?

A: For me, I'm a believer in the removal of fuel subsidy; it's a scam. The people that benefit from fuel subsidy are not you and I. See people in the oil sector that are benefiting. You can imagine that the expenditure is about N400 billion monthly. Multiply that by 12 months. Now without the subsidy, I think consumption has been cut by 28 per cent. We were subsidizing, not only Nigeria, but neighbouring countries, and that has stopped. I think it's good for us. What I will advise the government to do in the interim is to provide palliatives that will bring succour to the man on the street. I won't agree let's go back to subsidy regime, rather I will prefer they subsidise agriculture where every man on the street will get food to eat. But subsidy for petroleum products, no. The few people that are benefiting, some of them present their bills, nobody to check. It is only NNPC that buys, you don't know how much they are buying. They tell us they recoup whatever expenditure they have made. I think the President has done well by removing the subsidy. Everybody should support him. No matter the hardship, it will be temporal. We believe the prices will come down once we allow market forces to play.

Q: Some people are of the view that instead of palliatives, why not use the money build a refinery and solve this problem once and for all.

A: My biggest problem is that we have four refineries, but they are not working. The problem is not even building refinery. If we don't want the ones we have, sell them to private individuals who can manage them. Since we cannot fix existing ones there is no need building new ones. I don't subscribe to building new refineries.

Ikire Flooding: Sen Oyewumi commends Gov Adeleke, Egbedun, Commissioner for quick response

By Richard Akintade, Osogbo

The Senator representing Osun West Senatorial District, Sen. Olalere Oyewumi, has commended the State Governor, Sen. Ademola Adeleke, for initiating quick intervention over the flooding disaster that occurred in Ikire on Saturday.

Oyewumi, who doubles as the Deputy Minority Leader of the Nigerian Senate, also hailed the Speaker of Osun State House of Assembly Rt. Hon. Adewale Egbedun, and Commissioner

for Environment, Hon. Mayowa Adejoorin for their show of solidarity with the people of Ikire, especially victims in the aftermath of the flooding incident in the ancient town, noting that their words and actions meant a lot during the challenging period.

In a statement he personally signed and made available to Nigerian Pilot in Osogbo the Osun State capital, Akogun Lere particularly appreciated the Commissioner for Environment,

Hon. Mayowa Adejoorin, for swiftly visiting the site of the flooding for an on-the-spot assessment, adding that the leadership shown by the Adeleke-led administration was precise and assuring of a permanent solution to the disaster.

He said it is only when those in authority and other stakeholders work together, that difficult situations can be overcome, expressing strong hope that help is in sight.

The statement reads: "On behalf of my people, I want to express my profound gratitude to the Osun state government, Speaker of Osun State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon Adewale Egbedun, and Commissioner for Environment and Sanitation, Hon. Mayowa Adejoorin for their efforts to ensure that the damage caused by the flooding is limited. What they have done in the past 24 hours is a clear demonstration of the importance the Adeleke

administration attached to the life and properties of residents, and as a representative of the people, I am deeply moved by their efforts."

"It is gratifying and highly commendable to see what the Osun State government is doing to bring succor to the affected area. So, I like to assure our people that the government is doing everything to make sure they get over this disturbing incident and forestall future occurrences," he stressed.

Ministerial nominees: Hope of Ibori's candidate hangs in the balance

By Olugbenga Salami

As the National Assembly awaits the list of President Bola Tinubu's ministerial nominees, facts have emerged that the hope of former Delta State governor, James Ibori's candidate, Mode Boyo as a member of the next cabinet, is uncertain.

It was reliably gathered that Ibori has nominated Boyo, who is a player in the oil industry for the Delta State ministerial slot, because of his business partnership with Wale Tinubu and others in Oando Oil Company.

Ibori, who it was learnt, is not on the ministerial list of President Tinubu, because of his past issues, is seeking presidential pardon to enable him contest for Senate in 2027.

As an oil player, the calculation in some quarters is to either make Boyo a Minister of State for Petroleum or appoint him the General Managing Director,

GMD of Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, NNPC.

Appointing Boyo as minister, it was noted, will automatically make him a regulator in the oil industry. However, issue of clash of interests when a regulated entity becomes the regulator is worrisome to Nigerians and the international community.

The Emeziele's conundrum is an example. It is said that a repeat of such in the oil industry will not augur well for Tinubu's administration.

It was learnt that because of this prevailing arguments, the International Oil Companies, IOCs rejected his nomination in 2019 during President Muhammadu Buhari-led government.

As it stands today, the ministerial nomination in Delta state is still fluid, a nominee has not emerged, whatever is happening is still in the realm of rumor. Delta nominee, it was learnt will be a very big surprise to everybody, as some people with sense of entitlement will be disappointed.



Ibori

With all the moves and counter-moves in the state and the Presidency, Ibori's plot is to take over the All Progressives Congress, APC structure in Delta state, just like what he did in the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP in the state, until Ifeanyi Okowa

came on board and change the narrative.

Ibori's projection at the moment is to groom David Edewe for governorship to wrestle power from Ifeanyi Okowa's man in 2027.

Ibori, according to a source, understands that if Ovie Omo-Agege becomes a Minister or governor, he will be a strong force in the Delta politics, this will destabilize his plan, hence his plot to have a total grip in Delta through the presidency. Tentatively, Ibori has dropped Omo-Agege from his list of loyalists.

Meanwhile, it was learnt that 65 years and above is not welcomed in President Tinubu's cabinet because his focus is to have vibrant cabinet and also to have people, who will assist him in the next election all things be equal.

He is majorly looking for technocrats, who will help him to achieve his agenda of fixing the nation and put it on the part of development. Technocrat, whose focus is to develop the

nation to an enviable height and help him to gain favour in the eyes of Nigerians through their input.

As an astute politicians, whose major interest is to rebuild the nation through appointing technocrats, who will assist him in creating wealth for the nation, Tinubu knows the important of seasoned politicians in his cabinet. This will assist him to a great extent in re-energizing his winning capacity and capability in 2027.

Balancing the cabinet between technocrats and seasoned politicians is very important for Tinubu to achieve his goals and objectives of putting the nation on the right track.

It will not be far fetched to say that technocrats are important in an emerging society, this may have been the reason Dangote and Bill Gate brought Pate to Tinubu to make him the Minister of Health in his cabinet.

Be Security Conscious, Osun Governor Counsels Residents

By Richard Akintade, Osogbo

Governor Ademola Adeleke of Osun State has advised Osun residents to be security conscious even as he assured that his

administration has taken security precautions to secure the state.

In a message to people of Osun state, Governor Adeleke said he has directed heads of security agencies to deploy proactive crime

and terrorism prevention strategies in response to alleged security threats reported by the intelligence community.

"I assure the people of Osun State that service chiefs have

acted and the security of lives and properties is guaranteed. Our people should not panic as both formal and informal apparatuses have been activated.

Our people should go about

their normal businesses without fear. They should be conscious of their environment and report any suspicious movement to security operatives", the statement concluded.

Ebonyi Guber: Odoh tenders final written address against Nwifuru's emergence

By Victor Nwegede, Abakaliki

The Ebonyi State All Progressives Grand Alliance gubernatorial candidate in the March 18 gubernatorial election, Prof Bernard Odoh, has tendered his final written address before the Governorship Election Petitions Tribunal, stressing that Hon Francis Nwifuru was declared in error as governor by the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC.

Odoh had earlier in a petition filed at the Governorship Election Petitions Tribunal challenged the Independent

National Electoral Commission's declaration of Nwifuru as governor.

He equally prayed the Court to hold that at the time of the gubernatorial election, Nwifuru was not qualified to contest because he was still holding sway as Speaker of the Ebonyi State House of Assembly on the platform of the Peoples Democratic Party, instead of the All Progressives Congress, under which he was declared as governor by INEC.

In his final written address, which was signed and submitted by his Lead Counsel, J.S. Okutepa

SAN, the APGA candidate said it was unknown to any law in Nigeria for INEC to declare Nwifuru governor on the stable of the APC, while he was still retaining his membership in the PDP.

The final written address read in parts: "This is the final written address of the Petitioners in this petition.

"Following the election conducted by the 1st Respondent on the 18th day of March 2023, for the office of the Governor of Ebonyi State, the 2nd Respondent (Nwifuru Francis Ogbonna) who was at the time of the election, a

member of the Ebonyi State House of Assembly under the platform of the Peoples' Democratic Party and the Speaker of the Ebonyi State House of Assembly, and who was not qualified to contest the election, was declared by the 1st Respondent as the winner of the election.

"Summarily, the case of the Petitioner is that the 2nd Respondent cannot be qualified to contest the election as a candidate of the 3rd Respondent while being a member of another Political party in gross violation of both the Electoral Act 2022 and the 1999 Constitution as amended. Flowing

from the principal ground of complaint, the petitioners sought five (5) reliefs as per paragraph 40 (a-e) of their petition filed before this Hon. Tribunal.

"Upon service of the petition on the Respondents, the 1st Respondent who should ordinarily be an unbiased umpire and a referee, stepped into the arena and decided to play the role of the 2nd and 3rd Respondents, filed a Notice of Preliminary Objection and Reply to the Petition on the 2nd day of May 2023 in response to which the Petitioners filed a Reply on the 15th of May 2023."

DSP appoints Prof Abdullahi CoS, Daily Trust's Editor, others as aides

By Olugbenga Salami

Deputy Senate President, Senator Jibrin I. Barau, has announced the appointment of Professor Muhammad Ibn Abdullahi as his Chief of Staff; Professor Bashir Muhammad Fagge, Special Adviser (Policy & Monitoring); and the Deputy General Editor of Daily Trust Newspapers, Ismail Mudashir, Special Adviser (Media & Publicity).

In a statement by his media office, Senator Barau also named Idris Abiola Ajimobi, the son of the late Oyo State Governor, Abiola Ajimobi, as Special Adviser (Special Duties); Yusuf Aliyu Tumfafi, Special Adviser (Political); Mrs. Ngozi Ndawi Nkemdirim, a pioneer staff of the National Assembly, Special

Adviser (Administration); and Shitu Madaki Kunchi, Special Assistant (Media & Publicity).

Prof Muhammad Ibn Abdullahi, born in Faruruwa, Shanono LGA, Kano State, was until this appointment, the Head of Department, Education, School of Continuing Education of Bayero University Kano (BUK).

The professor of Guidance and Counselling obtained B.A. (Ed)/Islamic Studies, BUK, M.Ed/Guidance and Counselling (UNIJOS) and Ph.D. in Guidance and Counselling, BUK.

Bashir Muhammad Fagge, a Professor of Animal Science, hails from Fagge LGA of Kano State. He attended Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto for his

B.Sc in Agriculture; and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University for his M.Sc and Ph.D.

He served as the Provost of the Federal College of Education Technical, Bichi, Kano State between 2015 and 2023. He was a member of the Senior Executive Course 40 of the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), Kuru, Jos, Plateau State.

Ismail Mudashir, who hails from Kwara State, was born in Zamfara State. Until this appointment, he was the Deputy General Editor of the Daily Trust Newspapers.

While in Daily Trust, he held various positions including, Regional Editor (Kano), Group Politics Editor, State House correspondent and head of the

National Assembly. He started his journalism career in 2003 at the New Nigerian Newspapers (NNN), Kaduna.

He studied Mass Communication at the Federal Polytechnic, Offa, Kwara State; Kaduna Polytechnic; Bayero University Kano; and Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi, India, for his undergraduate and postgraduate studies.

Idris Abiola Ajimobi, the son of the late Oyo State Governor, Abiola Ajimobi, had his primary and secondary education in Nigeria before moving to England, where he furthered his studies and graduated with a degree in Business Management in 2004. He also obtained a Master's degree in International Relations in London.

Mrs. Ngozi Ndawi Nkemdirim, who was born in Jos, Plateau State, hails from Imo State. The graduate of the University of Calabar, Cross River State, has three decades of experience at the National Assembly.

Until her appointment, she was the Director, Journals and Procedure of the Senate. In 2008, she obtained a Master's in International Administration from the London Metropolitan University, UK. She has attended various training on legislative drafting and parliamentary procedure.

Barau, who represents Kano North Senatorial District, said the appointees were selected based on their track records in their respective professions. He said the appointments take immediate effect.

Politics

Subsidy removal: APC did not promise 'miracle' – Oshiomhole

By Lanre Oloyede

Senator representing Edo North senatorial district, Adams Oshiomhole, said the ruling All Progressives Congress, APC, did not promise Nigerians miracle.

Oshiomhole stated this in an interview with Channels TV's Sunday Politics.

He said, "You don't need to give me an example. I know what we (APC) promised more than you who was reporting it."

"Whatever you reported, we were the source. We did not promise a 24-hour solution. We did not



Oshiomhole

promise miracles. We did not promise an overnight solution.

"You show me any

document that says in 48 hours, this will be done. In 14 days, this should be done. In 21 days, this should be done," the Senator representing Edo North argued.

"I think you are the one who has the illusion that once a promise is made, automatically once you get into office, either spiritually or by miracles, solutions will emerge," he said.

Meanwhile, the former governor of Edo State said President Bola Tinubu is not a "magician" that will solve the country's problems in one fell swoop.

Oshiomhole said, "They

know they were not electing a magician. And nobody promised a magical solution."

The Edo lawmaker noted that what Nigeria needs is a courageous leader such as Tinubu, saying since the removal of subsidy on petrol, the President had taken steps to address the impacts of the decision.

"What Nigeria needs is what President Tinubu has demonstrated – the courage to make decisions and to be humble to admit some of the unintended consequences of those decisions, and the will to deal with those consequences. And he has

put in place instruments to deal with them," he said.

Oshiomhole also condemned the N30,000 minimum wage in the country, describing it as a "criminal wage".

"What we call minimum wage is a criminal wage. If you exchange N30,000 at N800 or N700 to the dollar, what does that translate to?"

"So, the value of that minimum wage when it was N125 – when it was first introduced under, I think, (Shehu) Shagari's government – is about two times or three times the value many years later, even in the public service."

Shehu Sani Reacts as Asari Dokubo Plans to Protect President Tinubu with Private Army

By Lanre Oloyede

Former Kaduna Central Senator Shehu Sani has warned President Bola Tinubu against allowing the rise of a private army to protect him.

Nigerian Pilot reports that Sani's warning comes after Niger Delta

militant leader, Asari Dokubo, announced that he had raised a private army to protect Tinubu.

In a viral video, Dokubo said that he and his comrades are working for the president, and anyone seeking his downfall will be crushed.

Sani said that Tinubu does

not need a private army, saying that the country's armed forces, Police and other security agencies have the experience, capacity and competence to provide all the necessary protection for him.

"They are viruses for the destruction of any country," Sani said. "A fragile country like ours

doesn't need a private army."

He wrote on Twitter: "I don't know if the trending video is real or fake, but in any case, President Tinubu must not directly or indirectly allow or encourage the rise of state-backed private armed militia."

"They are viruses for the

destruction of any country. A fragile country like ours doesn't need a private army. The country's armed forces, Police and other security agencies have the experience, capacity and competence to provide all the necessary protection the President and the Government need."

Tinubu came prepared to unleash economic terror on Nigerians – Sowore

By Richard Akintade, Osogbo

Presidential candidate of the African Action Congress, AAC, Omoyele Sowore, has accused President Bola Tinubu's administration of unleashing social and economic terror on Nigerians.

In a post on his verified Twitter handle on Monday, Sowore

expressed his concern about the rising costs of living in the country.

According to Sowore, tuition fees in some schools have increased by 500%, electricity charges are skyrocketing, fuel costs have quadrupled, and food prices have become unaffordable for many Nigerians.

He lamented the impact of these rising costs on the citizens.

Sowore asserted that the current administration had come prepared to impose harsh economic measures on Nigerians, and he expressed his belief that the regime will face consequences for its actions.

He encouraged Nigerians to

organise and take a stand against the government's policies.

In his tweet, Sowore said, "It is Monday morning and the roads are famished and empty. School fees are going up by 500% in some schools, electricity charges are skyrocketing, fuel costs have quadrupled, food prices have gone beyond

the reach of many... the @officialABAT regime came prepared to unleash social and economic terror on Nigerians and the rogue regime will get its comeuppance soon! Organise don't agonise! They did not promise magic, they promised Shege! #RenewedShege #Revolutionnow."

Cabinet: Sanwo-Olu sets to submit commissioner-nominees final list to Lagos Assembly

By Agency Report

Apprehension and anxiety have gripped All Progressives Congress, APC, fold and lobbyists as Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, is set to unveil and transmit the final list of his commissioner-nominees to the state House of Assembly for consideration and approval any moment.

This is coming after a series of permutations, horse-trading and alterations over the list before the final list was made up.

Therefore, the move is in line with the Fifth Alteration (No.23) which amended the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 requiring the President and Governors to submit the names of persons nominated as Ministers or Commissioners within 60 days of taking the oath of office for confirmation by the Senate or State House of Assembly; and for related matters.

Recall that on March 16, the Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives and

Chairman House Committee on Constitution Review, Idris Wase, announced that President Muhammadu Buhari has signed 16 constitutional amendment bills into law which include: Fifth Alteration (No.23).

With the new law, Governor Sanwo-olu is expected within the next five days to name his cabinet within 60 days after taking the oath of office on May 29, and transmit it to the State House of Assembly for confirmation.

Sanwo-Olu, in the first term had appointed 38 aides

comprising of 21 commissioners and 17 special advisers that made up his cabinet.

He ordered the dissolution of the state executive cabinet and all other aides with effect from Friday, May 26, 2023, in compliance with constitutional provision.

Recently, the Governor made the first appointments of principal aides since his inauguration for a second term in office on May 29, 2023.

Former Chief of Staff, Tayo Ayinde and Deputy Chief of Staff, Gboyega Soyannwo, were

re-appointed retaining their former roles, while Barrister Bimbola Salu-Hundeyin, was appointed as the new Secretary to the State Government, SSG, and succeeding Folashade Jaji. Until her appointment, Salu-Hundeyin was the Commissioner representing Lagos at the National Population Commission, NPC.

He subsequently, announced re-appointment of Gboyega Akosile as Chief Press Secretary, Jubril Gawat and Wale Ajetunmobi as his senior special assistants on media.

EndSARS: Lagos Govt Speaks on Planned N61m Mass Burial for 103 Protesters

By Agency Report

The Lagos State Government has reacted to media reports that it is planning a mass burial for 103 EndSARS protesters who were killed by the Nigerian Army at the Lekki tollgate on the night of October 20, 2022.

This is sequel to a letter from the Lagos State Government Public Procurement Agency titled: 'Letter of No Objection – Mass Burial for the 103 victims

of the year 2020 ENDSARS protest' which hit the internet on Sunday, July 23.

According to the letter, the Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu led government contracted the services of Messrs Tos Funeral Ltd, a private firm, at the cost of N61,285,000 to bury 103 bodies of EndSARS victims.

Most Nigerians on social media claimed that the bodies scheduled for mass burial were that of protesters killed by the Nigerian Army at the

Lekki Tollgate on 20 October 2020 during the infamous EndSARS protest against police brutality.

But in a swift response, the Lagos State Ministry of Health dismissed the claim describing it as a ploy by mischief makers to stir public disaffection against the Sanwo-Olu administration.

The letter pointed out that the state government had approved 103 bodies recovered across the state for the mass burial.

The ministry's permanent

secretary, Olusegun Ogboye, maintained that none of the bodies were recovered from the Lekki tollgate area.

He insisted that it approved the 103 unclaimed bodies for mass burial three years after the incident due to the need to decongest the morgue.

"The 103 bodies were picked by the Lagos State Environmental Health Unit (SEHMU) in the aftermath of #EndSARS violence and community clashes at Fagba,

Ketu, Ikorodu, Orile, Ajegunle, Abule-Egba, Ikeja, Ojota, Ekoru, Ogba, Isolo and Ajah areas of Lagos state," the statement announced.

"There was also a jailbreak at Ikoyi Prison. The 103 casualties mentioned in the document were from these incidents and not from Lekki Toll-gate as being alleged. For the avoidance of doubt, nobody was retrieved from the Lekki toll gate incident."

2023 polls: CSOs, political parties pass vote of confidence on INEC chair

By Our Correspondent

The Civil Society National Roundtable, five political parties and some socio-cultural groups have frowned at the call for the removal of the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, Prof. Mahmood Yakubu over the conduct of the 2023 general elections.

Instead, they commended the commission for deploying technology including the Bimodal Voters Accreditation System, BVAS and the INEC Result Viewing Portal, IREV, noting that both innovations helped to strengthen the integrity of Nigeria's electoral system.

To this end, they passed a unanimous vote of confidence in the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission, Prof. Mahmood Yakubu, saying the INEC boss conducted free and credible elections.

The Roundtable put together by the Civil Society Organizations Central Coordinating Council which is the

highest organ of the civil society community in Nigeria, explained in a communique read at a joint press conference, Monday, in Abuja, that they arrived at their verdict after their "comprehensive review of the 2023 general elections.

The event had in attendance the Chairmen of political parties, some presidential, governorship, senatorial, House of Representatives and House of Assembly candidates from various political parties.

The National Chairman of Action Alliance, AA, Barr. Kenneth Udeze, who read the Communique on behalf of the political parties and the candidates, said the National Roundtable also commended the introduction of technology in the accreditation and transmission of results and called on the National Assembly to amend the Electoral Act 2022 to enable the deployment of technology in the result collation and announcement processes.

They frowned at what they called stereotyped attack on the INEC



Yakub

National Chairman and rejected the calls for his sack, describing it as an "expression of ill-will and done in bad faith."

They, however advised that "for INEC to be truly independent, the appointment and removal of the leadership of the Commission should not be at the whims and caprices of the executive."

According to the groups, "until the approval of the National Assembly is sought and obtained, the Chairman of INEC cannot be removed."

The communique read in part: "The National Roundtable reviewed the pre-election processes by the political parties and agreed that political parties and political actors were responsible for a vast majority of the tension and concerns about the election and INEC conducted itself creditably in this area.

"The National Roundtable reviewed the preparations and pre-election logistics deployment by INEC and agreed that the Commission was punctual in meeting up and completing all its activity checklist on schedule including logistics deployment of non-sensitive and sensitive materials.

"The National Roundtable reviewed the role of the BVAS and the IREV in the electoral process

and commended the roles the deployment of both innovations is playing in the various tribunals to prove the actual outcomes of the elections.

"The National Roundtable reviewed the modus of collation and announcement of results and decried the wrongful use of armed security personnel to compromise the electoral process at the collation centres and called for introduction of the use of technology in this aspect of the process.

"The National Roundtable reviewed the post-election application for Certified True Copies of relevant election documents by both Petitioners and Respondents at the various Election Tribunals and commended INEC for making available the copies of the huge volumes required including digital reports of the BVAS and IREV. These, the Roundtable admits reinforces the credibility of the election and the neutrality of the Commission.

INEC Admits Glitches in 2023 Presidential Elections

By Our Correspondent

The chairman of the Independent National Electoral Officers (INEC), Professor Mahmood Yakubu, has acknowledged that the Commission experienced glitches in transmitting results through the IReV during the presidential elections.

POLITICS NIGERIA reports that the INEC boss made the disclosure in a session with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) on the review of the 2023 General Elections.

Yakubu also revealed that the activities of thugs deployed by politicians made the election day administration very difficult. He said that while voter accreditation using the Bimodal Voter Accreditation

System (BVAS) was very successful, the uploading of results to the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV), especially for the presidential election, encountered a glitch.

The INEC Chairman said that the Commission is aware that this matter is currently the subject of litigation and would reserve its comments for now. However, he said that the performance of the technology deployed for the election is part of the ongoing review of the 2023 General Election and that it will form an integral part of the comprehensive report that will serve as a basis for further engagement with stakeholders focusing on specific actions necessary for the improvement of

future elections and electoral activities in Nigeria.

He said: "Nevertheless, as you are aware, there were many challenges encountered before and during the elections. The severe cash and fuel situations were compounded by the perennial insecurity nationwide. Their impact on our deployment plans, compounded by the behaviour of some of our own officials in the field, made logistics management particularly challenging.

"The deployment of thugs by some political actors made election day administration difficult in a number of places. While voter accreditation using the Bimodal Voter Accreditation

System (BVAS) was very successful, the uploading of results to the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV), especially for the presidential election, encountered a glitch as explained in our statement released by the Commission on 26th February 2023. The Commission is aware that this matter is currently the subject of litigation and would reserve its comments for now.

"Nevertheless, the performance of the technology deployed for the election is part of the ongoing review of the 2023 General Election. It will form an integral part of the comprehensive report that will serve as a basis for further engagement with stakeholders focusing on

specific actions necessary for the improvement of future elections and electoral activities in Nigeria."

Yakubu also clarified that the Commission did not receive any direct funding or cash support from international development partners, and that their support was totally indirect through civil society organizations and implementing partners working on elections.

He thanked the CSOs and development partners for their enormous support to the Commission during the 2023 General Elections, and urged the accredited observer groups that have not yet submitted their reports to do so in earnest.

Adamawa: Binani wants tribunal to decide petition before ex-REC's prosecution

By Lanre Oloyede

The All Progressives Congress governorship candidate in the last election in Adamawa State, Sen. Aishatu Dahiru, on Monday, urged the Federal High Court in Abuja to allow the election petition tribunal sitting in the state to deliver its judgement before the suspended Resident Electoral Commissioner, Hudu Ari, is prosecuted.

Dahiru, also known as Binani, made the plea before Justice Donatus Okorowo, through her counsel, Chiesonu Okpoko, SAN, while adopting the processes filed in respect of her suit.

The News Agency of Nigeria reports that Binani had, in a suit marked: FHC/ABJ/CS/935/2023, sued the Independent National Electoral Commission, Inspector-General of Police and the Attorney-General of the Federation as 1st to 3rd respondents, respectively.

In the suit, the applicant sought the interpretation of

Section 144 of the Electoral Act, 2022 and a preservative order seeking the maintenance of status quo by parties pending the hearing and determination of the suit.

Binani's counsel, Michael Aondoaka, SAN, in the ex-parte motion earlier filed and granted by the court on July 10, drew the attention of the judge to the fact that a petition was before an Adamawa Election Petition Tribunal and would be dispensed with within 180 days in accordance with the law.

But on the last adjourned date, the court, which did not extend the interim order, fixed today for hearing the originating summons served on the defendants.

Upon resumed hearing, Okpoko, who held the brief of Aondoaka, argued that the star witness to their client, Ari, was being harassed and prevented from giving evidence before the tribunal, which if continued, would jeopardise the case of their client at the tribunal.

The lawyer prayed the court to restrain the respondents from prosecuting Hari pending the determination of Binani's petition at the tribunal.

He based his argument on the grounds that prosecuting the suspended REC now, while Binani was still challenging INEC's declaration of Ahmadu Fintiri of the Peoples Democratic Party as Adamawa governor after she had earlier been declared the winner of the governorship poll, might create a likelihood of bias in the decision of the tribunal.

Okpoko further submitted that the applicant was not saying that Ari should not be prosecuted but that INEC and others should wait until the tribunal gave its judgement within the 180 days prescribed by law.

He said the decision of INEC to file the action against any person involved in Binani's April 15 declaration as winner of the supplementary poll in the state when the tribunal was

yet to determine the petition of their client, would deprive her of Section 285(6) of the law which gives 180 days within which the petition filed on May 6 should be dispensed with.

He said waiting for the tribunal's decision would not prejudice the parties in the suit.

He then urged the court to halt Ari's prosecution and uphold their argument.

But counsel to INEC, Adebisi Adeniyi, who held brief for Rotimi Jacobs, SAN, disagreed with Okpoko's submission.

Adeniyi argued that the charge being preferred against the suspended REC was a bailable one that would allow him to give his testimony before the tribunal.

The lawyer said that Binani had not placed anything before the court to show that Ari was listed as a witness in her petition.

Besides, he argued that the applicant had not also shown to the court whether the suspended REC had either been invited, arrested or charged.

The lawyer, who said that the judges that would determine the election petition case were not robots, said they were judges that were properly trained, experienced, and would be guided by law.

According to him, there is no way the prosecution of the suspended REC will affect the plaintiff's petition.

He submitted that if Ari felt strongly about this argument, he was the rightful person to canvass such an argument before a high court in the state and not Binani.

Adeniyi, who challenged the jurisdiction of the court to hear the matter, said the suit ought to have been filed in the state.

But disagreeing with Adeniyi, Okpoko argued that all the respondents in Binani's suit were Federal Government agencies, hence, the issue of court jurisdiction had no place.

—Justice Okorowo adjourned the matter until Oct. 13 for judgement.

Sudan's Darfur terror: Meet radio presenter who gave birth and kept walking



After her three sons were killed, a heavily pregnant radio presenter fled the war in Sudan's Darfur region on foot - and gave birth to a baby boy at the border crossing with Chad.

"I delivered it on the road. There were no midwives and no-one to support me. Everyone was thinking of themselves. Everyone was running to save their lives

"The baby got out, I wrapped it up. I didn't think of anything else. I continued walking to Adré," Arafa Adoum said when I met her at a refugee camp of tens of thousands of people on the outskirts of the Chadian town.

The 38-year-old said she had walked in the scorching sun for 25km (15 miles) from her hometown of El Geneina with her four daughters, while her husband had - for his own safety - taken a longer and more arduous route to reach the camp.

"When I arrived at the border I found myself wiped out and exhausted until I delivered the baby," Mrs Adoum said, pointing out that she had named her son Mohamed, after the Prophet of Islam.

She left behind the unburied corpses of her other boys - aged

three, seven and nine years - after she says they were killed by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and allied Arab militiamen at the centre of the war raging in Sudan since April.

Darfur is the worst-affected area, with the RSF and the militias accused of trying to establish Arab supremacy in the region by "cleansing" it of black Africans - including those from Mrs Adoum's Massalit community.

Not surprisingly, the battle for El Geneina - historically a symbol of black African power in Darfur, and the traditional capital of the Massalit kingdom - has been vicious.

"We tried to defend ourselves, but they were using very big weapons," said Sheikh Mohammed Yagoub, an influential Muslim cleric and Massalit leader, who has also become a refugee in Adré.

"In our area in one day, we lost 82 [people] within three hours," he added.

The RSF denied involvement in the fighting, but said that Darfur was witnessing the resurgence an old conflict between Arab groups and the Massalit.

Giving her version, Mrs Adoum

said her three sons were killed at El Geneina's university - where they were taking refuge - after it was shelled and torched by the RSF and Janjaweed, as the Arab militias are known.

"The three kids were hit by the shells and lost their lives at that same spot," Mrs Adoum said.

Several members of her extended family were also killed, she said, including her father-in-law, who had both his legs "smashed", one of his ears cut, and then "they fired some bullets, finishing him".

Mrs Adoum and her husband then fled with their four daughters, but he took back routes to avoid passing through RSF-manned roadblocks as the paramilitaries were - according to numerous refugees - killing Massalit men and boys, sometimes by dousing them with petrol and setting them alight.

The couple reunited at the refugee camp, where her husband cradled Mohamed for the first time - a child whom they see as a blessing after the loss of three sons.

The sheikh's wife, Rakhiya Adum Abdelkarim, told me that she had also been pregnant, but she lost her

baby the day after reaching Adré - a walk that left her hungry, exhausted and weak.

"I started to bleed. Then I started to get headaches, and all the while blood was coming. Then, at dawn, the foetus came," she said.

A field hospital has been established in Adré by a charity, but Mrs Abdelkarim did not manage to get there for treatment.

The hospital is packed with patients - mostly women, babies, and children, some of whom have gun-shot wounds.

One of the patients, Naima Ali, said she and her nine-month-old son were shot by a RSF sniper as they fled their village.

The boy was strapped on her back, when a bullet hit him on the leg, and "me on my side, narrowly missing my kidney.

"We were both bleeding and no-one was helping us," she said, pointing out that she too kept fleeing on foot until she reached the camp.

To end the atrocities, four East African states have called for a regional peacekeeping force to be deployed to Sudan, with Kenya's

President William Ruto raising concern that the country was being "destroyed", and there were "already signs of a genocide" in Darfur.

A joint United Nations (UN) and African Union (AU) peacekeeping force withdrew from Darfur in 2021, about 18 years after conflict first broke out in the region, causing the deaths of an estimated 300,000 people.

The conflict caused global outrage, with the International Criminal Court (ICC) indicting Sudan's then-ruler Omar al-Bashir on charges of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, which he denied.

When the peacekeepers withdrew, the UN said the decision was aimed at "empowering Sudan's government to take charge of maintaining peace in the region".

But since their withdrawal, Sudan has been hit by a coup, and plunged into a civil war in mid-April after its two most powerful generals - army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, better known as Hemedti - fell out.

Their feud has reignited the conflict in Darfur, forcing more than 160,000 people from the Massalit community to flee to Chad. It is unclear how many people have been killed in the region, with the lowest estimate of the death toll in El Geneina put at 5,000.

According to Sudan's Professional Pharmacists Association, the number is higher. It says 11,000 bodies have been buried in mass graves in the city, while some refugees told the BBC they had seen corpses being thrown into a river.

The RSF also ransacked the city of Zalingei, home to the Fur community, and encircled the two biggest cities in the region, Fasher and Nyala.

Many Darfuris fear this is the culmination of a long-standing plan to transform the ethnically mixed region into an Arab-ruled domain.

They say that El Geneina - along with numerous other towns and villages - have been emptied of most of their residents, with buildings and infrastructure - including hospitals and water stations - destroyed.

"What is happening is worse than what happened in 2003," the sheikh said, pointing out that the Massalit people's most-famous personalities - including doctors and lawyers - have been killed.

Mrs Adoum - a presenter at the now-silent Radio El Geneina - was fortunate to survive when the RSF raided the broadcaster's office in the early days of the war.

"They went in and smashed all the equipment and looted what they could," she said.

Now Mrs Adoum lives in a hut, built with sticks and pieces of clothing, not knowing whether she will ever be able to return home.

"We came as refugees. Many died along the way. But we had to keep moving," she said, as she held her three-week-old baby in her arms.

Another refugee ruled out ever returning, saying: "Who do I go back to? I have been here for weeks and the smell of the rotting corpses on the streets of El Geneina have refused to leave my nose."

Zaha sets to join Galatasaray

SPORTS



Women's World Cup: Super Falcons in great spirit to face Australia – Waldrum

2026 World Cup qualifier: Crisis rock Super Eagles group opponent, Rwanda

Sports



2023 FIBA Women's AFrobasket: D'Tigress strong enough for finals- Queen

By Afolabi Johnson

Despite the series of controversies surrounding the preparations of the D'Tigress ahead of the 2023 edition of the FIBA women's afro basket tournament set to be hosted in Rwanda.

Rivers Hoopers Media Manager, Queen John-Moseph in an interview with journalists, has predicted that even though the odds are stacked against the current defending champions, the D'Tigress could reach the finals of the tournament.

She believes the Nigerian factor could spur the team on despite the myriad of challenges as the ladies go into the tournament hoping to secure a fourth consecutive trophy in what has been a total domination of women basketball in the continent.

The hopes of however achieving this

feat appear quite unrealistic at the moment due to the composition of the roster and the situation surrounding the resignation of the previous head coach and the appointment of a new head coach just a few weeks into the start of the tournament.

Serious preparations didn't start until about a month ago when the NBBF called for an open camp and also commissioning tryouts in three centres: one each in the FCT, Lagos and the United States.

Also, with the resignation of the former head coach, Otis Hughley Jnr, former player Rena Wakama was appointed as head coach, within the same period in view.

According to Queen, "If I want to be realistic, deep down I have this belief that they will get to the final. There is the Nigerian factor that spurs us to victory, even in 2017, we still had a new coach then, still, we grew into the tournament and even won that tournament."

Fenerbahce leads race to sign Ndidi



By Afolabi Johnson

Turkish Super Lig giants, Fenerbahce are favourites to sign Wilfred Ndidi from Leicester City.

According to the Turkish news outlet, Fotospor, Fenerbahce jumped ahead of the queue after the Scottish Premier League club, Celtic withdraw from the race.

Ndidi is expected to leave Leicester City this summer following Fox's relegation from the Premier League last

season.

The Nigeria international has the one-year remaining on his contract and Leicester City will be expected to cash in now instead of losing him for free next summer.

The midfielder struggled with injury last season but still made 30 appearances across all competitions for the former Premier League champions.

Ndidi has also been linked with a move to Saudi Arabia.

Fenerbahce finished second in the Turkish Lig last season.

Women's World Cup: Super Falcons in great spirit to face Australia



By Afolabi Johnson

Super Falcons gaffer, Randy Waldrum has said his girls are in great spirit to face host matildas of Australia in a decisive second group stage clash on Thursday.

In a video posted on the Super Falcons Twitter handle, Randy Waldrum highlighted the good mood in the camp and mentioned the use of yoga to calm the players' nerves.

Well, I think it's good," Waldrum remarked. "Yesterday, on game day plus one we just did recovery training for those players that played a lot of minutes.

"Got some yoga, got some recovery training, got them in the pool, the hot and cold tub and gave them a little bit of a break in the afternoon to go shopping and sightseeing around the hotel.

"It was good for them to be out they've been so isolated in camp and then today we'll be

2026 World Cup qualifier: Crisis rock Super Eagles group opponent, Rwanda

By Afolabi Johnson

Camp of one of Super Eagles opponents in the 2026 World Cup qualifier, Rwanda, is in crisis following the move by their handler, Carlos Alos Ferrer to tender resignation letter.

The Spanish gaffer in March penned a two-year contract extension after committing his future at the national team until March 2025 but fresh reports indicated that he wants to terminate his deal.

Ferrer confirmed that talks over his future are ongoing with the FA and a decision could be taken in the next few hours on Monday, July 24.

"We are discussing the situation [resignation]. On Monday, we can have something concrete," he said.

The former AS FAR Rabat coach was appointed Rwanda coach in March 2022 after Vincent Mashami's contract was not renewed.

His prime task was to qualify Amavubi for the 2023 AFCON in Côte D'Ivoire which the country failed to achieve under his tutelage as the team currently sits at the bottom of Group L, trailing five points behind second-placed Mozambique with just one qualifying game to go.

A resignation could benefit both parties since Ferrer is yet to win any competitive game since he took charge of Amavubi, managing just three draws in seven games.

The Amavubi of Rwanda are placed in the same group with Nigeria, South Africa, Benin, Zimbabwe and Lesotho for 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifier.



Super Falcons in Australia – Waldrum



Sports

Australia/New Zealand 2023: Super Falcons will surprise the Matildas-Ebi

By Asuelimen Osasuyi

Nigeria captain Onome Ebi said the nine-time African champions are not afraid of Australia ahead of Thursday clash in the ongoing FIFA women world cup co-hosted by Australia and New Zealand.

Ebi also hinted that the Falcons have no reason to reveal their strategy for the game, but they would certainly surprise the Matildas.

Following the Matildas' defender Charlie Grant declaration that the Aussies have a good idea of how to cage the Super Falcons, Ebi reacted swiftly that there is no cause for alarm.

"It is interesting that they have an idea of how to play us. We also have our own idea of how to play them. It is a very crucial game for us and we will throw everything we have into it."

Australia, with three points, top Group B after the first round of matches, with Nigeria and Canada joint second with one point each.

"It is very important to us to collect the three points on Thursday. That will put us in a great position before we play the Irish."

For the Matildas, victory will take them to six points and all but guarantee a place in the Round of 16, ahead of their much-anticipated clash with Olympic champions Canada.

With the championship hosting 32 teams, it means only two top-placed teams in each will make progress to the knock-out rounds, where more cash is available for the players. Ebi said the Falcons also want to earn more money in the tournament, with the sum of \$60,000 to go to each player whose team attains the Round of 16, and \$90,000 for any team that gets to the quarter finals. Players of teams that exit the group stage will only earn \$30,000 each.

"Much more than money, it is a matter of pride. Of course, we will like the money. However, Nigeria comes first. We were in the quarter-finals in 1999 and that is a long time ago; we want to work to go far in this tournament. Last time, in France, we got to the Round of 16. We are looking beyond the group stage here," said the veteran who is attending her sixth World Cup finals and could play her 15th match of the finals on Thursday.

Ever-present Nigeria is the only African team to have earned a point here after their first round of matches, with other flagbearers Zambia, South Africa and Morocco having



been denied of any point by their respective opponents.

The Falcons returned to training on Sunday evening after having Saturday off, following Friday's draw with Canada in Melbourne, and also trained on Monday evening at the match time (8pm).

With midfield powerhouses Rasheedat Ajibade and Halimatu Ayinde back from suspension, Coach Randy Waldrum is most likely to juggle the starting lineup, with Ayinde possibly the clear replacement for the impressive Deborah Abiodun who got a red card against the Canadians.

The lithe and lethal Ajibade, being ambipedal, could be deployed on either wing, meaning either Francisca Ordega or Ifeoma Onumonu could start from the bench.

"Personally, I'm fine. Really pumped up for the game. It's going to be a difficult game because we're playing the host team in front of their own fans and at their own stadium with so much crowd. A lot of factors.

NPFL: GTI tasks investors on elite club ownership

By Ifeanyi Marcus, Lagos

Strategic partners to the Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL), GTI Asset Management & Trust Limited has called on individuals, philanthropists and corporate Nigeria to take advantage of the ongoing revolution that elite club football is undergoing in the country to invest into these professional league clubs.

GTI/TNFF Head of Media and Publicity, Andrew Ekejiuba, told sport journalists in Lagos that the coming of GTI into the country's football ecosystem has paved way for elite club football to thrive.

He further revealed that after the successful hosting of 2022/2023 Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) Championship Play-offs and the just concluded Naija Super 8 pre-season tourney, at the Mobolaji Johnson Arena Onikan, Lagos, has clearly demonstrated that the upcoming NPFL season is going to be keenly contested with massive followership for each of the 20 clubs expected to do battle.

"This is a clarion call GTI is making to

individuals, philanthropists and corporate Nigeria to take advantage of the ongoing revolution that elite club football is witnessing in the country and invest in them.

"There is nowhere in the world that government is saddled with the responsibility of elite club ownership because it is capital intensive and pure business. From the English Premiership, German Bundesliga, South African Premier League and Italia Serie A the story remains the same.

"Government at all levels can only involve themselves in elite club football by creating conducive and secured environment for club football to thrive. Nothing more!" From the Local Government Area level to State and Federal levels, government do have a lot in their hands, like taking care of the welfare of its citizens and for those who venture into club football in Nigeria only use it for political aggrandizement which is not good for football development in the country,"

training in the evening since our matches are going to be late in the evening. The next two matches will be at 8. pm 11 am Nigerian time so we want to simulate that.

"We'll see how training goes tonight but so far the camp looks to be in a very good place right now. Keep supporting us, we appreciate the support, and all the messages I've gotten from back home in Nigeria, as well as the Nigerians here in Australia there was great support in the stadium, just keep sending positive vibes to the

team because we're in this all together."

The Super Falcons and Canada are currently joint second in Group B with one point after their first game.

Australia occupy the first position in the group with three points from one game, while the Republic of Ireland are last with zero point.

Super Falcons best showing at the FIFA Women's World Cup was a quarter-final finish at the USA 99 tournament.

Prosperity Cup: Crusaders Feeders ease out Agbere FC to set up showdown with De Grace FC

By Eunice Nnachi, Yenagoa

Crusaders Feeders FC of Peretorugbene on Sunday join De Grace FC to reach the final of Nigeria's biggest grassroots football tournament, the Bayelsa State Governor's Football Tournament christened the Prosperity Cup.

Crusaders Feeders FC beat Agbere FC 2-1 to qualify for the final of the tournament in a game decided at the Samson Siasia Stadium.

Isaiah Jacob gave the Peretorugbene side the lead three minutes into the game from Junior Christopher's rebound having taken full advantage of the encounter in the first 15 minutes.

Crusaders Feeders FC continued to mount pressure on Agbere FC in their quest for the second goal but were wasteful in front of goal, however the Sagbama side on 35 minute responded through Mabinton Jonathan's beautiful cross as Igbunu Ehwioma header leveled the scoreline.

Two minutes later Crusaders Feeders FC talisman Junior Christopher raised the hopes of the Ekeremor side to make it 2-1 to increase his goal tally in the tournament to eleven goals same with De Grace FC forward Don Pedro Samuel.

Agbere FC on resumption from the break piled

pressure on Crusaders Feeders but failed to convert chances with Crusaders Feeders FC goalkeeper Gbansese Gas making crucial saves to put his side through to the final of the showpiece.

Earlier on Saturday in the first semi final De Grace FC of Yenagoa humbled Dream Boys FC of Odi 2-0 to progress to the final of the nation's biggest grassroots football spectacle.

Goals from Don Pedro Samuel on 7 minute and a well placed free kick from Preye Victor on 78 minute moved De Grace FC into the final.

De Grace FC will be seeking to follow the heroics of sister team Eternal Grace Ministry EGM FC who lifted the trophy last year having crashed out of the tournament in the preliminary rounds.

An elated coach of Crusaders Feeders FC Genesis Suomokumo, said he was happy to reach the final of the competition, stating that he had already envisaged reaching the final before the game.

Agbere FC coach Ebi Amula, asserted that they will now focus their attention on the third place game on Sunday against Dream Boys FC of Odi at Samson Siasia before the grand finale.

Sports



Man United, Chelsea, Al-Hilal enter Mbappe race

Manchester United could be set to enter the bidding war for Kylian Mbappe after Al-Hilal submitted a record-breaking £259m offer earlier yesterday.

The Red Devils are said to be one of several clubs to have 'expressed their interest' in the striker, while a number of teams are 'formulating bids' in an attempt to test PSG's resolve.

The Saudi outfit have reportedly tabled a bid in the region of £259m, which would smash the existing record of £191m that was paid by PSG to sign Neymar from Barcelona six years ago.

Talks on the player's side are yet to begin, although CBS Sports are reporting that an unprecedented salary package of around £11m per week could be on the table if

Al-Hilal's bid is accepted.

Also in the race, is Chelsea said to be preparing to submit a 'concrete offer' for the services of PSG forward Kylian Mbappe, according to The Times.

The French giants are reportedly expecting to receive bids for Mbappe in the near future as they look to cash in before his contract expires next summer.

Zaha sets to join Galatasaray



Wilfried Zaha is expected to be unveiled as a new Galatasaray player today after leaving Crystal Palace on a free transfer at the end of last season.

That's according to Sky Sports, who are reporting

that Zaha will sign a three-year deal with the Turkish giants.

The 30-year-old was spotted arriving in the country last night in order to finalise personal terms and undergo a medical.



Chelsea chasing double deal

Chelsea are reportedly working hard to complete the signings of Crystal Palace forward Michael Olise and Montpellier striker Elye Wahi this summer.

The Blues have already submitted a £35m bid for Olise, according to RMC Sport, with the winger also said to be a target for Manchester City.

Meanwhile, it has been claimed by Fabrizio Romano that a deal is close to see Wahi move to Stamford Bridge over the coming weeks.

Arsenal eyeing Lavia

Arsenal are still in with a chance of signing Southampton ace Romeo Lavia this summer.

The 19-year-old, who is said to be valued at around £45m by his current employers, has been linked with a potential move to Liverpool in recent weeks.

However, it is claimed that Arsenal are keeping a close eye on the situation as they continue to mull over the idea of firming up their interest in the player.



Man United plot £34m swoop

Manchester United are on high alert over a potential move for Monaco defender Axel Disasi.

Erik ten Hag reportedly wants to sign the 25-year-old but his £34m valuation is thought to be too big, while takeover issues are said to be making it difficult.

Arsenal and Chelsea have also been credited with a desire to land Disasi, who played in all of Monaco's games in Ligue 1 last season.



Arsenal talks break down

A move to Rangers for Arsenal defender Austin Trusty is no longer on the cards after negotiations broke down last week.

It is said that Michael Beale was keen on bringing Trusty to Ibrox but is now expected to move on to alternative targets.

The United States international is thought to have no shortage of potential suitors, with The Guardian claiming that Ipswich Town are one of several other clubs with an interest in snapping him up.



Burnley's latest Clarke bid rejected

Sunderland have rejected Burnley's latest offer for Jack Clarke.

The Clarets have reportedly failed with several bids this summer including the latest one, which was said to have been worth over £10m.

Clarke is believed to be keen on a move away from the Stadium of Light as he seeks to play at the highest level possible and establish himself in the Premier League.



Elanga undergo Forest medical

Manchester United forward Anthony Elanga will undergo a medical today ahead of his proposed move to Nottingham Forest, according to Sky Sports.

The Swede is set to leave Old Trafford after being deemed surplus to requirements by Erik ten Hag and will move for a transfer fee in the region of £15m.

BUSINESS & ECONOMY

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Lamido Adamawa

Lamido of Adamawa tasks NCC to reduce cost of telecom services

By Onu Okorie

The Lamido of Adamawa, Dr. Muhammadu Mustapha, has advised the Nigerian Communications Commission NCC to consider exploring different areas that can lead to further reduction in the cost of telecom services and to ensure that services are available in most parts of the country.

A statement signed by the NCC Director, Public Affairs Reuben Muoka yesterday in Abuja explained that the Royal Father gave the charge during a Village Square Dialogue VSD, which held at the weekend in Yola, Adamawa State.

According to him, "The Commission should kindly look inwards and ensure that all communities in the country continue to enjoy cheaper, better, qualitative and more accessible telecommunications services." He however, commended the NCC on a range of its telecom consumer protection initiatives.

Kakakin Adamawa, Prof. Abubakar Tahir, who represented Lamido Adamawa at the Consumer Conversation programme of the Commission with the theme: "Know Your Rights as Telecom Consumers" in Yola, said the event marked a privilege for individual telecom consumers and businesses in the state to ask questions and get face-to-face response from the regulator on telecom-related issues.

"We must commend the NCC for the

great work it has been doing in the area of consumer education and enlightenment. Aside from being the regulator of the sector, the NCC leadership has taken the issue of consumer information very central; and we thank you for bringing this laudable initiative to the good people of Adamawa," he said.

NCC's Director of Consumer Affairs, Alkasim Umar, who represented the Executive Vice Chairman of NCC, Prof. Umar Garba Danbatta, said the regulator has always been at the forefront of ensuring maximum protection for telecom consumers while providing the enabling environment for the licensed service providers to be able to provide good quality of service to the consumers.

"The NCC remains committed to its mandate of protecting, informing and educating consumers of telecoms services across all the 36 states of the Federation including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). This essence of the Village Square Dialogue, as one of our outreach events, is to provide a face-to-face interaction among the NCC, the service providers and the consumers," Umar said.

Speaking on some of the consumer-centric initiatives of the Commission, Umar said the Commission recently introduced the harmonized shortcodes which provide uniform codes for telecom consumers to access any consumer service type across all networks, either

for airtime loading, checking airtime balance, call centres, data plan balance, and so on.

He also reminded the consumers of the availability of the NCC Toll-Free Number, 622, which consumers can use to make complaints to the Commission on any telecom service-related issues they may be having with their service providers; the 112 Emergency Number to seek succour during emergencies, as well as the Do-Not-Disturb (DND) 2442 Short Code to block unsolicited messages.

"Information and education are key to the empowerment of telecom consumers. The protection of the rights and interests of telecom consumers is one of the mandates of the Commission, as enshrined in the Nigerian Communications Act (NCA) 2003. When telecom consumers are duly informed and educated, they are protected against the unfair practices by the service providers," Umar said.

Speaking further, Umar said everything in the current digital world revolves around telecommunications services and that educating consumers plays an important role in informing them, clarifying issues, and empowering them through information and enlightenment.

"So, it is a great decision which will sensitize the people about their rights, their privileges and the expectations they have about the telecom businesses in the country," he added.



NOTAP receives silver plaque for independent assessment

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THE TEAM

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Kehinde Ibrahim - Money&Capital Market

Palma Ileye - Tourism

Business



L-R: Director General NOTAP, Dr. DanAzumi Mohammed Ibrahim receiving the BPSR assessment award from the DG BPSR . Engr. Dasuki Ibrahim Arabi

NOTAP receives silver plaque for independent assessment

By Eunice Orike

Bureau of Public Service Reforms BPSR, has awarded the National Office for Technology Acquisition and Promotion NOTAP, a silver plaque award.

The award on the heel of an independent assessment as well as validated assessment of NOTAP by the bureau in October, 2021.

Presenting the award to the Director General of NOTAP Dr. DanAzumi Mohammed Ibrahim at the Office Headquarters in Abuja recently, the Director General of BPSR Engr. Dasuki Ibrahim Arabi said NOTAP is rated a silver level organization by the bureau having

scored 74.25% and therefore met expectation in all essential areas of responsibility.

He added that the quality of work in the organization is generally good since the most critical organizational goals are achieved and as such deserves the silver award but urged the agency to work harder since it has great potentials for improvement

He noted that NOTAP is playing a leading role in line with governments agenda of using technology to provide services and employment for the nations teeming youths and commended the office for adopting Information Technology (IT) to digitalize its

processes locally and engage with its stakeholders. He added that the bureau is happy with what they have seen in the organization and its worth celebrating.

However, Arabi noted that NOTAP needs to put in place and strengthen certain policies in order to enhance good governance especially in organizational health safety, code of conduct, human resources management, staff training, robust financial accounting, e-procurement and internal control mechanisms.

Earlier in his welcome address, Director General of NOTAP, said the Office was primarily established to regulate the inflow of foreign

technologies into Nigeria and is also responsible for the promotion of locally motivated technologies.

He noted that while executing its mandate of regulating technology transfer agreements the office has between the years 2012 to 2022 saved the nation over N140 billion that would have left to foreign countries as capital flight.

Ibrahim, added that NOTAP instituted various partnerships with Industry in order to bridge the wide gap that is existing between academia and industry through projects like the NOTAP Industry Technology Transfer Fellowship (NITTF).

He said the programme which

kicked off in 2015 was envisaged to be a voluntary contribution fund by industries to support high level manpower training (PhDs) to fast-track the development, acquisition, assimilation and diffusion of technology in Nigerian industries and has so far enrolled 21 Nigerians.

The DG informed the bureau that NOTAP also instituted the Local Vendor Policy out of the concern that over 90 percent of the software being utilized by Nigerians especially in the banking and other financial sectors was imported leading to an urgent need for the enhancement of indigenous software development.

He added that through its mandate of registration of technology transfer agreements, NOTAP made it mandatory for Local Vendors to be involved in all Annual Technical Support (ATS) services for Software Agreements or updates and the Local Vendor's fee paid in naira by the licensor.

This policy he stressed has made tremendous impact in strengthening the capacity of indigenous software developers who are presently developing software for local consumption and export to African countries.

The DG said that the rating of NOTAP by the bureau is a wakeup call for the Office management to analyze the recommendations of the report and improve performances

He assured that the office will work hard to achieve 85 percent when the bureau commences the next phase of its assessment of the Office.

The DG emphasized that all agencies are subjected to this type of assessment and they religiously follow the recommendations, I am sure the target of becoming one of the top 20 reformed public service in the whole world will be achieved

He expressed gratitude to the Bureau for finding NOTAP worthy of the award and commended it for the work it is doing which he stated, is critical in enhancing good governance in the public service.

No vessel involved in fire incident at Lagos port –Sifax group

By Kehinde Ibrahim, Lagos

THE Ports & Cargo Handling Services Limited has explained that the fire incident at its terminal in Tin Can Island port did not affect any vessel.

The Group Head, Corporate Communications of Sifax, a mother company of Ports & Cargo Handling Services, Olumuyiwa Akande, confirmed that the incident only affected a shore crane.

Akande explained: "At about 12:30pm on Thursday, July 20, 2023, a shore crane developed a sudden technical fault and before anything could be done to fix it, it went up in flames.

"There was a quick response from all stakeholders which resulted in putting out the fire as soon as possible, even though substantial damage was done to the equipment," he said.

"The vessel at berth as at the time of the incident was not affected by

the fire while containers, both those on board the vessel as well as other consignments at the terminal, were not affected also. "There was no loss of life, as the operator working on the affected equipment was safely rescued without any injury. "The said equipment as well as all other equipment and facilities at the terminal are all insured," he said. He said that the company is committed to operational excellence in a safe and secure environment for the

collective good of all its stakeholders; customers, agents, staff, regulators and the general public," he added. He, therefore, urged the public to disregard sensational reports on the incident and stay with the facts. He appreciated individuals and organisations who reacted swiftly to the emergency situation including, Nigerian Ports Authority, Master and crew of MV Argeciras Express and the Lagos State Fire Service team.

Avanti holds position as sub-Saharan Africa's leading capacity partner for second year running

By Kehinde Ibrahim, Lagos

AVANTI Communications ("Avanti") has been named the market-leading high-throughput satellite capacity partner in sub-Saharan Africa for the second year running. The results from the 20th edition of NSR satellite capacity supply analysis shows that Avanti's market share is now more than two times that of its nearest competitor.

NSR's annual report is one of the satellite industry's most trusted and comprehensive sources for satellite

capacity analysis, offering insight into key market developments and dynamics. Avanti has made a significant commitment to Africa.

The company has ambitions to accelerate growth across the region through local partnerships and the rollout of connectivity solutions; connecting hard-to-reach rural communities and improving network resiliency for critical communications infrastructure is central to this strategy.

To date, Avanti has connected more than 1,000 villages and schools across Africa, providing services in Nigeria,

Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, Ghana, Angola, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon and South Sudan. The company has plans to connect a further 10,000 sites over the next 5 years across Africa, impacting millions of lives and enabling communities to enjoy a connected life.

Kyle Whitehill, CEO at Avanti Communications, said: "Africa is a major focus for us and so we are delighted to be recognised as the market leader, but we won't stop there. For us, Africa's potential is limitless and the role that we can play in unlocking

this is providing connectivity solutions.

Connectivity is an enabler that provides vital resources and opportunities for individuals, businesses, and communities to thrive, which is why we won't stop until we have connected the 871 million people currently living without a basic internet connection." Avanti has invested over \$800m in Africa and already has a growing footprint across the continent. More than a fifth of the company's employees are based in Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, Angola, and Benin.

Former Minister wants enhanced opportunities for private sector

By **Emeka Samuel, Uyo**

A former Minister of Budget and National Planning, Senator Udoma Udo Udoma, has called on governments to increase more investment opportunities for the private sector to enhance their job creation potentials.

Udoma said the private sector has provided most of the investment required to grow the economy and create jobs, as such, governments must provide the enabling environment that would encourage entrepreneurship, innovation, investment and wealth creation.

The former Minister who spoke as Chairman at Akwa Ibom Dialogue, a programme put together by the state government to enhance business and entrepreneurship potentials of the state in Uyo on Monday however identified non-implementation of government policies as the bane of governance.

He charged Governor Umoh Eno to ensure that the policies of the ARISE agenda must be directed at making Akwa Ibom one of the most desirable destination for investment in Africa.

"Government must provide an environment that encourages entrepreneurship, innovation, investment and wealth creation.

It is incongruent on those in government to get those of us in the private sector to know the opportunities they are creating for private sector investment.

"A healthy private sector drives

economic growth. It is the private sector that provides most of the investment that is required to grow the economy and create jobs, and job creation must be the essential part of His Excellency's agenda, as creating jobs is the fastest way to alleviate poverty and elevate the living standards of our people.

"To be sustainable, most of these jobs must be in the private sector. In my view, government policies must be directed at making Akwa Ibom State one of the most desirable destinations for investment in Nigeria and indeed Africa. Udoma stated.

In his address, Governor Eno, said his ARISE agenda would focus on agriculture, rural development, infrastructure, security, and education, urging the people of the state to take ownership of the dream and drive its realisation together.

Eno explained that the ARISE agenda is further broken down into 17 focal sectors targetted for short, medium and long term implementation, urged the people, irrespective of their political leanings to eschew hatred and join hands together to build the state.

The governor who explained that he was bringing back all the Commissioners in the last administration to help in the realisation of the ARISE Agenda, however warned them not to be lazy.

He stated that his administration would be operating a new template

and urged them to key into it, but warned that excuses would not be tolerated and non-performances would be removed from office.

"I would like to inform the incoming Commissioners that you are coming into a new season. You maybe old on the job but there is a new template. I have fulfilled my part of the bargain with you to ensure that as colleagues, we come back together and run the government because you laboured during the elections.

"We worked together, I didn't just have the heart to throw you away but truth is, there is work to be done. The

truth is, we will not take excuses, we will take results. We still need your wisdom, we still need your ideas, that is why there is a continuity in this government, so we can sit together and finish. But how far you will travel will depend on you. If you don't deliver, you will hear the announcement on the news." He stated.

Speaking as the special guest of honour at the event, immediate past governor, Mr Udom Emmanuel called on the people to cooperate with Governor Eno to actualize his ARISE agenda, saying Akwa Ibom has the human resources to realise the

goal. Emmanuel said execution, planning and acceptance of the agenda would drive its actualisation and warned the people against distracting the governor with negative comments.

Also speaking, former Governor, Obong Victor Attah said the ARISE agenda was the restoration of the dream he had for the state that was beginning to fade and urged that the policies realised from the dialogue and the blueprint of the agenda must be implemented for the state to make progress.



Dangote

Dangote, Niger government partner on investment opportunities

Agency Report

The Dangote Industries Limited (DIL) and the Niger State Government are strengthening ties towards exploring fresh investment opportunities in the State.

Mr Mansur Ahmed, Dangote Group's Executive Director, Government and Strategic Relations, stated this during the Dangote Special Day at the 20th Niger State National Trade Fair in Minna.

He said that Niger State was central to the company's overall investment plan in the agricultural sub-sector.

He said the Dangote rice mill earlier planned for Wushishi was being moved to Badeggi where there is enough water supply conducive for rice farming and business.

He also announced the company's preparedness to partner with the state government in the educational sector.

Ahmed said that given the

land size, fertile topography and friendly business atmosphere, DIL was passionate about adding value to activities of the Chamber and businesses in the state.

Gov. Mohammed Bago expressed delight for DIL investment in the agricultural and educational sectors, adding that the new government would created an enabling environment for businesses to thrive in the state.

Bago, who was represented by the Permanent Secretary, Public Service Department of the state's Head of Service, Mr Abubakar Sadiq, urged the Dangote Group to leverage on the renewed business opportunities in the state.

He said the new administration would build a viable economy driven by private sector participants.

"The state will leverage on Agro industrial value chains to provide critical infrastructure for the development of high-quality products for local consumption and export."

He commended Niger Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines

and Agriculture (NCCIMA) for the annual event to promote trade, investment, and entrepreneurship.

Speaking, the President NCCIMA, Dr Bisi Adeniyi, commended the company for sponsoring the on-going Trade Fair themed "Public-Private Partnership: A Panacea for Nigerian Economic Growth."

Bisi urged DIL and other investors to key into the International Trade Fair being planned by NCCIMA to move research in tertiary institutions in the state forward.

The participating companies under DIL include Dangote cement, Dangote sugar, Dangote salt and seasonings and Dangote Fertiliser, Bisi noted that the State recognizes the private sector as a partner and engine for economic growth.

Eulogizing the Dangote Group for its business acumen, former President of the Chamber Mr. Umar Ahmed Bakai described the Dangote Group as a worthy partner. He added that the relationship he pioneered was bearing fruits for the people of the State and Nigeria as a whole. NAN

Danbatta to unveil book on digital culture, Cyber Politics

By **Onu Okorie**

Executive Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Nigerian Communications Commission NCC Umar Danbatta will today formally unveil a book written on digital culture for democracy in Nigeria by the Head of Media Relations at the Commission Ibietan.

Danbatta who is also the writer of the foreword to the book explained that the book situates the historical context of Nigerian politics and democracy and for exploring the nexus between social media and voting behaviour, and the influence of the social media ecosystem and other variables in the electoral process.

He described Cyber Politics as a "compelling narrative, a scholar's guide and companion on the various political communication themes it interprets".

"It is difficult to put down this work once you are drawn by its alluring and free-flowing prose and incisive analysis," the NCC boss added. Also panel is set to discuss the implications of digital culture for democracy during the public presentation of the book.

The panel discussion will follow the review of Cyber Politics: Social Media, Social Demography and Voting Behaviour in Nigeria, by Azubuike Ishiekwene, the editor-in-chief of Abuja-based Leadership Newspapers.

Discussions during the session will dwell on 'The Cyber Context

of Political Communication and its Implications for Democracy in Africa'.

Listed as panellists are Mr Ibietan, Majeed Dahiru, writer, public affairs analyst and CEO of Orascom Properties; and Abiodun Adeniyi, a professor of Mass Communication and deputy dean, Postgraduate School, Baze University, Abuja.

Chido Onumah, social entrepreneur, journalist, writer, author and Coordinator, African Centre for Information and Media Literacy (AFRIMIL), will moderate the discussion.

The panel will focus on how cyber politics played out and shaped the last two general elections in Nigeria. The possible implications of cyber politics in future elections will also be x-rayed.

Published by Premium Times Books, the book publishing arm of the Premium Times Group, the 460-page book, spread over 12 chapters, interrogated a critical phase in Nigeria's democracy through its elections.

In this new title that has been widely praised, Nigeria's 2015 presidential election is used as the sounding board from which analyses that offer great insights into the future of voting behaviour in the country were made. The study that culminated in the book has been described as both skilful in its rendition and ground-cutting in its intellectual approach.

Business

Renewed confidence seen in CBN's FX policy reform

In this piece, Lagos Bureau Chief, KEHINDE IBRAHIM writes on how the nation's financial markets and business community reacted to changes at the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and reforms in its monetary policies.

ON May 29, President Bola Tinubu from his inaugural speech had signaled his plan to institute fast reforms in the Nigeria's economy. He said the nation's monetary policy requires a "thorough house-cleaning" and that a unified exchange rate would redirect funds into meaningful investments that power the real economy.

According to him, "Monetary policy needs thorough house cleaning. The Central Bank must work towards a unified exchange rate. This will direct funds away from arbitrage into meaningful investment in the plant, equipment and jobs that power the real economy."

With close to N4 trillion gain recorded at the stock market and renewed confidence that followed recent change in the central bank of Nigeria (CBN), stakeholders have expressed confidence that the outlook of the domestic economy is bullish with the hope that things will continue to get better as government begins implementation of its major policy thrust.

A day after President Bola Tinubu's assumption of office, the stock market posted a gain of N1.5 trillion, a rare occurrence. On Monday, following a leadership change at the CBN that brought in Folashodun Shonubi in acting capacity, the capitalisation spiked again by approximately four per cent or N1.2 trillion.

Investors' confidence is uptick with foreign investors said to have started aggressive stock acquisition with their dividends and proceeds of the stock sale, which they have been unable to repatriate home.

Indeed, the stock market mirrors broader rising confidence in the Nigerian economy – reflecting rising business leads. The confidence level was further fueled by Wednesday's bold decision by the apex bank to activate the long-awaited rates harmonisation around the Investors' and Exporters' (I&E) window, a policy that promises to restore sanity to the market.

The rates harmonisation underscores the responsiveness of the CBN to the new administration's agenda on economic growth and job creation. The President had disclosed that he would create additional one million jobs through the digital economy and grow the economy by six per cent.

While x-raying the economic outlook and impact on the capital market, stakeholders said there is an urgent need to build on the level of confidence the rates harmonisation has raised and pursue appropriate pragmatic strategies that would aid faster execution of reforms. Less than a month into the new administration, foreigners who have been waiting on the wing seem to be watching the economy with renewed interest.

Findings by the Nigerian Pilot revealed that foreign investors are excited about the economy. They had remained on the sideline due to uncertainty and macroeconomic challenges that bedeviled the nation's political space over the years, but are now showing interest in the market

again.

They are currently reinvesting the backlog of dividends, which they could not repatriate over the years due to the scarcity of FX in the equities market.

It was learnt that more local players that were showing apathy in the market are scrambling for shares in repositioning ahead of foreign portfolio investors' participation.

Reacting to the recent development, Bismarck Rewane, managing director/ chief executive officer of Financial Derivatives Company Limited, said the reform is, "Changing that which is the established order to something else with a view to making the society a better place."

Since the suspension of Godwin Emefiele, CBN's governor and the appointment of Folashodun Adebisi Shonubi, as the acting CBN governor, by Tinubu, the apex bank has introduced some foreign exchange reforms, which analysts described as a welcome development that would result in boosting investors' confidence.

"It is restoring confidence already. See what is happening in the Stock market, with massive appreciation in the equity prices and fixed income securities market," said Ayodele Akinwunmi, relationship manager, corporate banking at FSDH Merchant Bank Limited.

He said, "What we need now is to increase the supply of foreign exchange to stabilise the value of the Naira."

Muda Yusuf, chief executive officer of the Centre for the Promotion of Private Enterprise, said already there are clear indications of elevated investors' confidence, improvement in the government fiscal space, higher prospects of exchange rate stability in the near term, and positive expectations of better economic governance.

On June 14, 2023 the CBN collapsed all segments of foreign exchange markets into the Investors and Exporters (I&E) forex window. This was made known by Angela Sere-Ejembi, director of financial markets in a circular she signed.

About five days after the FX liberalisation, the stock market soared by 5.5 percent. The benchmark All Share Index (ASI) appreciated to 59,000.96 points on Friday from 55,930.97 points at the beginning of the week, representing a 5.5 percent increase.

According to the CBN's circular, applications for medicals, school fees, business travel allowance and personal travel allowance (BTA/PTA), and SMEs would continue to be processed through deposit money banks.

The CBN also re-introduced the "Willing Buyer, Willing Seller" model at the I&E window, saying that operations in this window shall be guided by the extant circular on the establishment of the window, dated 21 April 2017 and referenced FMD/DIR/CIR/GEN/08/007. All eligible transactions are permitted to access foreign exchange at this window, the circular stated.

"The operational rate for all government-related transactions shall



be the weighted average rate of the preceding day's executed transactions at the I&E window, calculated to two decimal places," the circular said.

Furthermore, the circular said proscription of trading limits on oversold FX positions with permission to hedge short positions with OTC futures limits on overbought positions shall be zero.

The CBN re-introduced order-based two-way quotes, with bid-ask spread of 411. It said all transactions shall be cleared by a Central Counter Party (CCP).

As seen in the circular, the CBN also reintroduced the Order Book to ensure transparency of orders and seamless execution of trades. The operational hours of trades shall be from 9am to 4pm, Nigeria time, the CBN said.

"Further guidance on these matters shall be communicated in due course. All market participants and the general public are kindly enjoined to abide by these rules," Sere-Ejembi said in the circular.

Before the major FX reforms implemented on June 14, the CBN only allowed a slow depreciation of the official exchange rate, which was insufficient to bring the supply and demand of foreign currency into balance, placing increasing pressure on the exchange rate in the parallel market, according to the World Bank in a new report.

The official rate depreciated by 11 percent from January 2022 through May 2023, while the parallel market rate depreciated by 30 percent, with the parallel market rate premium widening from 37 percent in January 2022 to 63 percent in May 2023, the World Bank said.

During this period, the report said the CBN, the largest single supplier of FX to the Nigerian economy, continued to suppress FX demand. The use of FX remained banned for the importation of 43 product categories, and the CBN also limited the size of its interventions in the FX market, and thus, the FX supply for imports of those goods and services that are not banned.

Nigeria's previous exchange rate management stifled business activity, investment, and growth weakening the fiscal position, and boosting inflationary pressures. Despite higher oil exports and reduced CBN interventions, external reserves fell from their recent high of \$41.8 billion in October 2021 (helped by official sector

inflows) to \$34.9 billion in June 2023.

Another confidence boosting reform of the CBN was the removal of restriction on access to domiciliary accounts, which analysts said would increase liquidity in the financial market.

The CBN on the same June 2023, in a letter to all banks said cash deposits into domiciliary accounts will not be restricted, and that customers shall have unfettered and unrestricted access to funds in their accounts.

The letter signed by Haruna Mustafa, the CBN's director, banking supervision department, said the FX policy change aims to promote transparency, liquidity, and price discovery in the FX market in order to improve FX supply.

Deposit money banks (DMBs) shall provide returns to the CBN including the purpose for such transactions. Cash deposits into domiciliary accounts will not be restricted, subject to DMBs conducting proper know your customers (KYC) due diligence, and adhering to the spirit and letter of extant anti-money laundering/ combating the financing of terrorism laws and other relevant rules and regulations," the letter said.

This will increase the available dollars in the financial system in the medium term and help support the Naira," said Ayodeji Ebo, managing director/CBO, Optimus by Afrinvest.

According to Taiwo Oyedele, head of tax and corporate advisory services at PwC Nigeria, an orderly relaxation of capital control and other forex restriction rules is a positive development to restore confidence and attract FX liquidity.

For Uche Uwaleke, professor of Capital Market at the Nasarawa State University Keffi, "it will enhance liquidity in the forex market as it provides an incentive to operate domiciliary accounts. With the restrictions lifted, there is likely to be an increase in remittances through formal channels."

The CBN said it would prioritise orderly settlement of any committed FX forward transactions as they fall due in order to further boost market confidence.

"We believe that foreign exchange liberalisation brings benefits to Nigerian equity investors and will encourage foreign investors to bring money into the country again," analysts at Coronation Research said in a report.

"The long-term declines in both foreign direct investment (FDI) and

foreign portfolio investments (FPI) are set to be reversed, in our view. Within the equity market we favour the bank sector. Banks not only tend to hold net long positions in US dollars but are also beneficiaries of liberalised FX trading and the increased liquidity that implies," it further stated.

For at least a decade Nigeria's multilateral financing partners have consistently called for three key reforms: removal of fuel subsidies; unification of Naira/ US\$ exchange rates (to be achieved through a free float of the Naira); power sector reform, according to the report.

The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and many other development agencies and donor nations have made these demands, and until now they have been disappointed, the Coronation report stated.

"It can be argued that Nigeria's reluctance to enact these reforms resulted in a low level of investment by multilateral and public sector bodies (certainly in comparison with the packages made available to some other emerging markets). And it cannot be denied that foreign direct investment has fallen over many years. So, now that two key reforms have been enacted (and reforms to the power sector have already been announced), what is stopping these institutions from engaging with Nigeria again? There appears to be no better time to support the country," analysts at Coronation said.

Professor of Economics, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, Sheriffdeen Tella, said foreign investments would continue to return once they are sure that they would be able to repatriate their profits.

He said the harmonisation of FX rates and other positive reforms of the monetary tools have sent a strong positive signal that Nigeria is ready for business

Also speaking, Group Chief Executive Officer, Nigerian Exchange Group (NGX Group), Oscar Onyema, expressed optimism that the nation's economy would witness more investment inflows in the coming years.

Onyema lamented that foreign transactions on the exchange decreased by 38.5 per cent from N616 billion in 2007 to N379 billion in 2022 owing to forex crisis, which the rates convergence seeks to address.

Combating counterfeiting through product authentication

The health and safety hazards of product counterfeit are very high. Many unsuspecting consumers have lost their lives while others face different kinds of associated problems. Can the new method, product authentication, address the issues? LUCY OGALUE and IKENNA UWADILEKE provide the answer in this report.

Counterfeiting, the act of imitating, making illegal copies, or making something look like the original, usually goes with the intent to steal, destroy, deceive or even replace the original.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development reveals that African countries are target destinations for counterfeit goods such as pharmaceuticals, foods and beverages.

Unfortunately, the ultimate victims of counterfeiting are the consumers, who receive poor-quality goods and are exposed to health and safety dangers. In spite of the potential economic benefits of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCTA), there have been concerns by some stakeholders that it could lead to an increased rate of counterfeiting and dumping of substandard products.

No doubt, counterfeit products endanger health as consumers even death when they ingest fake food, drinks or drugs, or use counterfeit cosmetics. Apart from the health and safety risks, industries worldwide also lose a lot to counterfeiters.

Those losses, according to a report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, not only affect the producers of genuine items but also involve social costs.

The World Customers Organisation believes that counterfeiting drains an estimated amount of 600 billion euros annually from the global economy. To put it to proper perspective, this is equivalent to the loss of about five to seven per cent of trade in brand-name goods worldwide.

In addition, it is estimated that around 2.5 million jobs are lost due to counterfeiting across G20 economies alone. This leads to a loss of tax revenue to governments, income loss to local manufacturers and loss of jobs in the employment that would have otherwise been generated.

It is estimated that trade in counterfeit goods is now worth more than five per cent of world trade.

Experts say that governments also incur large costs in destroying and prosecuting defaulters. For instance, the Nigerian Copyrights Commission (NCC) says the country loses N918 trillion (\$3 billion) annually to the activities of pirates.

As of April 2022, the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) said that



Nigeria has a 15 per cent of drug prevalence.

The Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON) estimates that about 75 per cent of auto spare parts in the country are fake. Experts attribute the increasing wave of counterfeiting to advanced technology, increased international trade, emerging markets and an increased share of products that are attractive to imitate.

However, they say that concerted efforts are critical in combating the distribution of counterfeit goods in Nigeria.

Dr Abdulrasheed Yerima, National President, Nigerian Association of Small and Medium Enterprises (NASME), said such efforts are necessary to protect the society, economy and environment from the threats counterfeiting poses.

A consumer, Mr Fidelis Edeh, believes that due to the damages caused by substandard products, consumers must join in the fight against counterfeit products by consciously rejecting them. "If counterfeiters must face stiff

penalties, consumers must report illicit products/dealers to SON," Edeh said.

According to Ms Annabel Nkeruem, a public health analyst, consumers have a role to play in destroying counterfeit products and bringing their merchants to book. As a regulatory body in charge of ensuring the maintenance of standards in local and imported products, SON said it is demonstrating capacity in combating counterfeiting, fake and substandard products.

One of the ways through which the organisation is fighting the menace is by initiating the Products Authentication Mark (PAM). According to Mr Tersoo Orgudwem, Director Product Certification, SON, the organisation introduced the SON Conformity Assessment Programme (SONCAP) to ensure that all imported products are of acceptable quality.

Orgudwem said for the international community not to assume Nigeria is creating a trade barrier; SON also introduced MANCAP for the locally manufactured goods in Nigeria.

"The world has become a global village, and Nigeria is part of that village, and we cannot run away from it, so we have introduced measures, particularly for imported goods.

"This ensures that Nigeria does not become a dumping ground for any other country. So, if they want to trade with us, they should give us what they can use in their country.

According to Orgudwem, the consumer is fully involved in enforcing quality by scanning the PAM or sending a short message (SMS) to verify the product's status before purchasing a product.

According to him, PAM is designed such that the product has a stamp on it and consumers have the QR code either on their smartphones or there is a number on the stamp on the product.

"If you don't have an Android phone or an IOS phone, you can send the number of the product on the stamp to a toll-free code 281.

"And within five seconds, they will return a message telling you that the product is certified by SON and is good for use", he said.

According to Orgudwem, Nigeria makes up about 20 per cent of Africa's population, estimated at 220 million, making it a target market for both genuine and fake products.

Addressing the challenge posed by counterfeit products is a difficult task and an economist, Margaret Attah, says all relevant bodies should partner to ensure that the battle is won.

According to Attah, tackling counterfeit products successfully will massive benefit the economy because it will stimulate the growth of industries, attract investment and reduce unemployment.

While some stakeholders commend SON for initiating PAM to mitigate substandard products, others urge the government to ensure the prosecution of offenders.

The Director-General of SON, Farouk Salim, said the organisation was working with the National Assembly to amend its Act to make for more successful prosecution of counterfeiters.

"We are already working with NASS to amend the existing Act to increase the penalties such as jail terms for defaulters," he said.



Tackling counterfeit products successfully will massive benefit the economy because it will stimulate the growth of industries, attract investment and reduce unemployment. While some stakeholders commend SON for initiating PAM to mitigate substandard products, others urge the government to ensure the prosecution of offenders

Entertainer MC Walter enters Guinness Records

Yet another young Nigerian has hit the limelight at a global stage. In this piece, "Guinness Records: How perseverance lifts Ebonyi entertainer, MC Walter to global fame," our correspondent in Abakaliki, Victor Nwegede, chronicles the event for Nigerian Pilot's readers.

Episodes have continued to take us back to one of the realistic maxims of Nelson Mandela when he said, "It always seems impossible until it is done." Subscribing to Nelson Mandela's aphorism implies success and failure should not be perceived as the final, at any point in every pursuit but what counts is courage.

Too, one setting a goal to achieve should be more practically skilful, having grasped the fundamental qualities including passion, teamwork, stamina and responsibility. But above all, to truly succeed and make it to the top, perseverance must secure a prominent niche in the quest.

The above illustration can be related to MC Walter's recent performance in the entertainment industry. MC Walter as fondly called by his admirers, has become a global celebrity in the entertainment industry. His recent feat as the 130 hours marathon entertainer in the Guinness Book of World Records, GBWR has earned him multiple praises in all breaths of the world.

It will be recalled that Chukwuemeka Nwota is a popular Nigerian comedian generally known by his stage moniker, MC Walter. Walter on Tuesday July 18, 2023, by 8 am, began with incredible bravery and fascination to break the Guinness World Record of entertaining guests for over 130 hours non-stop. MC Walter, who hails from Amikeaba Local Government Area of Ebonyi State Nigeria, later emerged as the first Marathon Entertainer in the Guinness Book of World Records on Sunday.

He completed the Marathon Entertainment tournament at exactly 7 pm on Sunday, July 23, 2023, though in his remark, assured that he would extend the fixed time just to make his admirers happier before leaving the stage. Nigerian Pilot learnt that the World Marathon Entertainer has distinguished himself in the entertainment industry as a gifted Master of Ceremony (MC), which earned him the popular sobriquet MC Walter worldwide.

The entertainment tournament which took place at the Citi Hub Event Centre Abakaliki, the Ebonyi State capital, recorded many of MC Walter's admirers including academic, business, entertainment, political and religious actors among others. Friends and well wishers, including the Governor of Ebonyi State have congratulated Walter on his new accomplishment. Governor Nwifuru lauded the resilience and grit demonstrated by Walter Chukwemeka as he sets a Guinness World Record for 130 Hours Marathon Entertainment. The governor described Walter as a quintessential comedian who has made immense contributions to the entertainment industry.

The governor who pledged to honour Walter, made this known in a press release issued and made available to journalists by his Chief Press Secretary, Monday Uzor, in Abakaliki, the state capital. "I join fans and people of goodwill in celebrating our young talented Walter as he sets a global record in entertainment. It did not come to me as a surprise because he has always been a talented and resourceful entertainer whose passion and dedication knew no bounds. With his creative talent, passion and dedication, Walter has not only carved a niche for himself but has placed Ebonyi State and Nigeria in the global spotlight."

Governor Nwifuru who commended Walter for making Ebonyi entertainment industry a global brand, encouraged youths to emulate him by working assiduously to make maximum use of their talents and assured that his



administration would continue to use the Ministry of Skills Development and Job Creation to encourage youths to harness their potential and get to the zenith of their career. The governor commended Ebonyi people for their solidarity which he said was a huge encouragement to the young Walter to achieve the rare distinction of achieving a world record.

On his part, the 2023 Labour Party Candidate for Abakaliki/Izzi Federal Constituency, Dr Ezech Emmanuel Ezech popularly known as Immaculate, commended the bravery of Chukwuemeka Nwota which made him emerge the 130 hours Marathon Entertainer in GBWR. Ezech described MC Walter as an Izhi illustrious son in Ebonyi State Nigeria, who has distinguished himself in the entertainment industry. The Labour Party chieftain further described MC Walter as a model of hard work, preparedness and resilience. According to Ezech, the Guinness Book of World Records inspires thousands of people annually to attempt record-breaking feats is a good platform and declared that the platform would be utilised by people around the world not only to put themselves and their communities on the world map, but also to market their brands.

His words, "The Guinness Book of World Records, which inspires tens of thousands of people annually to attempt record-breaking feats is a good platform which people around the world utilize not only to put themselves and their communities on the world map but also to market their brands. It is very heartwarming to find an Ebonyi young man who has taken the courage to make the Abakaliki city a world flashpoint in the past few days. Walter represents the I-CAN-DO spirit of the average Ebonyian and, indeed the Nigerian youths. It is therefore in the spirit of our drive for a New Nigeria where many more of our young people are expected to unleash various innate potentials dominant in them, that I applaud the support from ordinary Ebonyians irrespective of political, social, and economic leanings. This is the

unity of purpose we need as Ndi Ebonyi and indeed Nigerians in our quest to Recover, Restore and Rebuild Naija. Congratulations and to God be the glory."

Also, the former Commissioner for Information and State Orientation, Dr Chike Onwe congratulated MC Walter and described his emergence as the World Marathon Entertainer as a lift landing for Ebonyi State and Nigeria at large on the global map especially in the entertainment industry. Dr Onwe who is a Senior Lecturer in the Mass Communication Department at Ebonyi State University recalled that Ebonyi people have suffered many deprivations in the past as they were seen as second-class citizens both in Igbo communities and other parts of Nigeria as a nation. He commended MC Walter whom he described as a brand new liberator of Ebonyi State and Nigeria in the global entertainment industry.

He said: "Before now, Ebonyi people have suffered many denials of their rights as a human nation. Until people like MC Walter began to display their talents, the kind of rejection and marginalization, Ebonyi men and women suffered in the past would have not stopped. We were taken to be a second-class people but today, Ebonyians are on their giant feet in many fields of human endeavours taking Ebonyi, the Igbo land and Nigeria as a nation to the world fame. MC Walter has given Ebonyi people today a brand new certificate in the global map of the entertainment industry. You have proved that there is nothing impossible to achieve.

"For a young man to stand over 130 hours moving his body on his feet, making people feel happy in a very innovative way means something is good there. It's a task before all of you seated here and you can make it. We must take it, this Ebonyi State can't go back again, rather Ebonyi people will continue to set the example in the global map. Dear MC Walter, I assure you as you keep standing till 7 pm this evening, the world will stand up for you without ending."

In addition, the Ebonyi State Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Matters, Hon Stephen Uchenna Igwe praised the courage, determination and perseverance of MC Walter for achieving the feat of 130-hour marathon-Entertainment in the World Guinness Book of Records. Igwe, while congratulating the record breaker said he has demonstrated the true spirit of Ebonyi man who out of resilience achieves the impossible in the eyes of many. He commended MC Walter for making Ebonyi State proud through focused hard work. Commissioner Igwe noted that the exploit and success achieved by the entertainer is a morale booster to other youths that they can achieve anything praiseworthy if they are truly determined to do it without looking at the challenges of getting to their zenith.

"My family and the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Matters are happy to identify with this success achieved by this young man who took the bold steps to register his name in gold. He has made Ebonyi State proud and has challenged other youths to always channel their energy and talents towards areas that will promote the State and bring Honour to them. Let me also thank our dear Governor for providing a peaceful environment for Ebonyi youths to harness their talents. Other youths should toe the same line because MC Walter has distinguished himself as a role model to other youths. Once again, I join all Ebonyians to say Congratulations to him," he said.

Further, the Prince of Ebonyi Urban Monarch, Hon Friday Oketa, commended MC Walter for breaking the Guinness Book of World Records as a Marathon Entertainer even when some people were making a mockery of him at the onset. The Prince of the Nkaleke Echera Autonomous Community housing Ebonyi urban population including Amikeaba, the native town of MC Walter applauded his determination and endurance which made him emerged as the World Marathon Entertainer.

While praising the Guinness Record breaker, Prince Oketa, said, Walter has exemplified the true personality of Ebonyi man who out of solidity performs the unthinkable in the sights of a myriad of the watchers. He lauded MC Walter for making the Ebonyi people delighted as a result of his determination and perseverance. The Prince of the Urban Monarch noted that the accomplishment by the record breaker has become a profound promoter of youth commitment towards pursuing their goals to surmount their challenges and attain the pinnacle of their targets. Oketa also commended Ebonyi State governor, Chief Francis Nwifuru for promising to honour the latest and first record breaker in the entertainment industry worldwide.

He noted that the pledge by the governor when fulfilled will turn a booster to encourage more talented Ebonyi citizens especially the youth to make greater exploits in the global society. He urged every youth to emulate MC Walter by exploring and activating ventures that will signpost Ebonyi state products in the world map of creativity, innovation and general development, with much emphasis on adding value to humanity.

Other speakers at the occasion especially the guest artists who described the world breaker as a determined fellow, recommended that Governor Francis Nwifuru-led administration should consider honouring MC Walter at least, to be among his appointees as the Commissioner for Entertainment Industry.

KOLO: Hero of Kwara boat tragedy humanitarian intervention

We remember the boat mishap that claimed more than 00 lives last month in Kwara State that threw the country into mourning. Veteran journalist, Ayantunde Ayangbayi, captures the chilling story of the tragedy and humanitarian intervention of a good man called Dr. James Babajiya Kolo.

On June 12, 2023, Kwara State, and indeed Nigeria sorely remembered the tragic news of the Patigi mishap that claimed the lives of more than one hundred of lives. About 300 members of communities along the River Niger went to Eboti Village for a marriage ceremony on Saturday, 10th June, 2023 but many of them did not return home.

The overloaded local canoe capsized when one side of the canoe was said to have collapsed which caused water to flood the boat. It is sad that to note that, there is no access road linking the villages; the only means of transportation is water.

A report quoted the Emir of Patigi, Ibrahim Umar Bologi II, the traditional ruler of the area, as saying that, more than 150 people most probably drowned.

The Kwara State police said 106 had died while 144 were rescued from the river after desperate search by local professional drivers. Two villages, Ebu and Dzakan had more number of casualties.

Virtually all news media captured the heartbreaking and mournful mood, events and atmosphere. Because of the magnitude of the accident, it attracted international and global attention.

Governor AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq who visited the area expressed his "heartfelt condolences" to families of the victims. President Bola Ahmed Tinubu said he was "deeply saddened by the news of the tragic boat accident that claimed the lives of our people in Kwara State" adding that,

"That the victims were guests at a wedding ceremony made the unfortunate accident more painful," he added.

It is worth noting that during that tragedy, one man that should be singled out for applause for his rare humanitarian intervention was Dr. James Babajiya Kolo.

Kolo is an illustrious son of Patigi Local Government Area of Kwara North Senatorial District. He holds the revered traditional title of Haske Patigi. He retired as a director in the Nigeria Customs Service and veered into private businesses.

He demonstrated his exceptional passion as a philanthropist and people's ambassador when a boat accident occurred. In the midst of the painful occurrence, he did not wait for authorities. He moved very fast to the scene of the tragedy and was practically involved in helping people in the best way he could.



The ill-fated boat inside deep water and divers in desperate effort to rescue



Kolo

This man a man of exemplary leadership with rare humanitarian pedigree responded swiftly to the yearnings of the victims and donated N500,000 (five hundred thousand naira) for immediate disbursement. It was a succor likened to a stitch in time that saves nine. Before now, he has been renown as a notable philanthropist, a respected voice in the society for the less-privileged, vulnerable, needy, have-nots etc.

He is a politician, concerned stakeholder, rallying point for socioeconomic and stable political life of his community, state and the nation. He aspired to represent his people at the red chamber by contesting as a Senatorial candidate on the platform of All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) in the last election.

Dr. Kolo is a charismatic visionary, experienced and competent leader with proven credibility, capacity and



People like Kolo should be commended. The royal father, Alh. Ibrahim Bologi Umar II, the 7th Estu Patigi, should rise up to the occasion by calling on government at all levels to consider Patigi Emirate Council as "Emergency Zone" that needs effective water and road transportation system to aid socioeconomic growth

humility to partner with any group of people, government, agencies to build a new Nigeria.

Kolo received commendation from families of victims for the timely assistance, response and quick financial intervention. This is a feat for others to follow in being their brother's keeper.

For instance, Mr. Umar Mohammed, a local of Ebu in Patigi LGA said, "Dr. James Babajiya Kolo – Haske Patigi, has touched several lives through his philanthropic gestures with numerous humanitarian interventions and direct assistance/support to many, not only during this boat mishap, he is one of our shining scholarly lights in traditional and religious circle".

There are suggestions that, it is high time that Patigi Local Government Area designed a master plan; grading and regrading of internal roads in its communities has become expedient. Rural feeder roads should not be abandoned; they deserve facelift in order to enhance the socioeconomic and social life of the people.

People like Kolo should be commended. The royal father, Alh. Ibrahim Bologi Umar II, the 7th Estu Patigi, should rise up to the occasion by calling on government at all levels to consider Patigi Emirate Council as "Emergency Zone" that needs effective water and road transportation system to aid socioeconomic growth and development.

The natural ruler should network with the federal government environmental impact assessment team to determine provision of jetty or ramp to improve environmental control in his areas. Also, part of the traditional responsibilities is to ensure security and safety of the peoples.

The Kwara State government did well in the entire scenario/disaster. Governor Abdulrazaq has also received kudos for his quick response. However, a special intervention should be made available for riverine areas by the state government to improve water transportation and interconnectivity of communities by road. This will entail making alternative means of transporting goods, services and people.

Patigi LGA is close to River Niger, no doubt, nature will take its cause; however, there is a need to prepare for eventualities. Kwara State Government has been urged to take the lead by doing the needful at this point in time.

As Dr. Kolo has opened new frontiers for advancing human capital, social and community development in Patigi and beyond and should be emulated.

Mr. Ayangbayi (JP) is a veteran journalist based in Ilorin, Kwara State.

Akume: Hope of Benue and Middle Belt Renaissance (1)

Benue State and the Middle Belt are in shambles. Inspirational leadership is obviously lacking. Can Senator George Akume, the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, fill the gap? Will he? Asks SAMUEL ODAUDU, Editorial Board Coordinator/Features Editor.

Earlier in the week when Citizens Media and Development Network (CIMEDEN) held its Public Policy Review Meeting (PPRM) in Abuja, one of the issues that were on the table bordered on peace and development of Benue State and Middle Belt.

As the conversation went on, the biggest question was: What is the best way to foster peace and development of the area under the current dispensation of the Bola Ahmed Tinubu presidency? As expected, the lot fell on the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Senator George Akume.

According to CIMEDEN, while peace in the entire country was important, a regional analysis and solution based on the best advantage for the Middle Belt people of North Central was that, being the highest political office holder in the region in this government, Akume possesses the machinery of power, influence and resources to inspire a better political, economic and infrastructural development for Benue State and the Middle Belt.

For those who can discern the oracle, the appointment of Akume as the SGF is one of the shocking and strategic appointments President Tinubu has made thus far since he took over the baton of power from the immediate past President Muhammadu Buhari of Daura, a man Akume equally served in his administration as the Minister of Special Duties and Intergovernmental Affairs.

Prior to his appointment, there were speculations, especially in the social media regarding names that have been penned down by the president as SGF and other 'juicy' positions. Then there were strong indications that the President Tinubu would pick one out of the most vocal immediate past state governors who fought Buhari and the cabal in his government who tried to frustrate his (Tinubu) presidential ambition.

It is a fact that, for obvious reasons, many Nigerians do not have savoury memories of the Buhari administration; however, there is something that connected the Buhari government to Akume; it is something about the vision, strategy and benefit of the virtue of patience in opposition politics that Akume learned from the masters, President Tinubu



Akume

and former President Buhari.

There must be something that Akume saw that nobody else saw when he defected from the former ruling but now leading opposition party, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and pitched his tent with the All Progressive Congress (APC), a conversation we shall leave for another day.

By this gesture, Akume has become the highest political office holder in the APC-controlled federal government of Nigeria in the North Central Nigeria or Middle Belt where there has been a yawning leadership gap.

It is a region that has been in a dire need of a cohesive central agenda. On this note, therefore, Akume's appointment becomes curiously important. By this same tokenism and other fundamental factors, willy-nilly, Akume has assumed that potential symbol that can reinvent the political, economic and cultural agenda of the region under the Tinubu administration.

Why is this intervention imperative at this moment in the country's geopolitical space? Why has it become vital in Nigeria's monolithic political structure where the majority ethnic tribes exercise domineering advantage by virtually emasculating the

the last eight years of the Buhari administration were the darkest historical moment for the North Central Nigeria; an area politically and economically dismembered by unprovoked invasion and invaders that rode on death and destruction through farms, farmlands, agrarian areas, peasant communities and waters.

Till date, in many places, lands and farmlands invaded and which terrified unarmed owners fled away from for their lives are still being occupied by suspected herders.

The political invasion of the Middle Belt is another dimension that has divided and crippled the capacity of the leadership of the region to muster courage and galvanize their strength in order to fight and defend their territories and interest of same.

While politics remains a potent force for galvanising the will of the people towards a collective ideal of the majority, the political ideology that was thrown into the Middle Belt was such that it encouraged personal rather than collective interest. This is what has further created the disunity and weakened the regional power and leadership structure which has been unable to take political advantage presented by different dispensations.

Irrespective of differences in political inclinations, party loyalty and ethnic backgrounds, there is a beckoning for Akume to lead the way. There is no doubt that this necessarily requires coming together in the spirit of honesty, peaceful disposition and forgiveness. Surely, it requires some sacrifices, a little shifting of grounds and tough decisions.

For Akume, the capacity has been bolstered and buoyed by enormous political infrastructure, so it is neither a question of can nor clout. The question of competence is also irrelevant because the civil and public service trajectory of the SGF has revealed a most competent man with premium experience and goodwill.

But the question is: will SGF Akume accept this historical and momentous burden of pulling the strings together, mobilise all stakeholders, galvanise the huge human and natural resources of the area, process and analyse their collective concerns, needs and demands under the present dispensation and boldly address them? He can but will he? Is he ready?

(Watch out for part 2)

minority?

The underlying emphasis is the fact that the Middle Belt is in desperate need of a dynamic and charismatic leadership that will inspire the people and galvanize their enormous human and natural resources towards a common and united purpose.

Benue, Middle Belt and their people are in a bad shape needing security, political, economic, agricultural and infrastructural resuscitation. There is a seeming absence of inspirational leadership around which the region's aspiration could gravitate and this vacuum is beckoning on Akume.

It is worth underscoring that



Benue and the Middle Belt is in a bad shape needing security, political, economic, agricultural and infrastructural resuscitation. There is a seeming absence of inspirational leadership around which the region's aspiration could gravitate and this vacuum is beckoning on Akume

Government's efforts in addressing unhygienic practices of confectionery producers in Nigeria

*Some bread manufacturers are applying unwholesome practices for economic gains, thereby undermining the safety of consumers, **BLESSING BATURE** seeks to examine Government's efforts in ensuring Bread and other confectionery producers always imbibe the culture of Good Hygiene Practices (GHP) to ensure safety of bread and other allied products they produce for public consumption.*

One of the readily available food is bread, which is a staple food that do not require further processing before consumption. It is produced in various forms and eaten in homes, restaurants and hotels.

Globally, access to safe food is a basic human right. It is so important that this year, the World Health Organization made food safety theme "Food Standards Save Lives". Standards not only provide farmers and processors with guidance on the hygienic handling of food, but also define maximum levels of additives and contaminants, among other components, that can be safely consumed.

The demand for bread has escalated the number of bakeries across the country. Even though this development is coming with some advantages, such as consumers now able to choose from a wide variety and the possibility of healthy competition among bakers, there are concerns that some bread manufacturers are applying unwholesome practices for economic gains.

For Nigerians, bread is a staple food. In fact, it is more staple than rice, eba or any of the popular staples perceived as an exclusive preserve of Nigerians culinary culture.

All genders, ages, tribes, both the rich and the poor consume bread, and it comes in various sizes, shapes, compositions and price tags to meet the needs of different categories of consumers. It is a grab and go staple that goes with almost anything, that is why there is virtually no household in Nigeria where bread is not consumed.

The importance of this staple to a country like Nigeria can therefore not be overemphasized.

One of the biggest challenges facing the bread industry is government policies regulating importation of materials needed for the production of bread. For one, there is a dissonance tune between government policies for the industry and the realities that major stakeholders that comprise bakers, face.

Recently, the Director General of National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), Prof. Mojisola Adeyeye admonished confectionery producers during a stakeholders meeting with the Association of Master Bakers and Caterers of Nigeria, Lagos State Chapter where she insisted that the Agency would not compromise the quality of bread, a staple food amongst Nigerians, being produced for the consumers.

The NAFDAC boss who was represented by the Director, Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (FSAN), Mrs Eva Edwards, noted that the Agency was sensitive to the increasing costs of ingredients in the production of bread, but that this should not be an excuse to undermine the safety and quality of the products thereby endangering the lives of consumers in the process.

"You should have full confidence



Adeyeye

that you can give your family members to eat from what you have produced for the Nigerian consumers. In this case you would not want to produce what will make you or your family members sick if eaten, she said, adding that they should avoid using expired raw materials and contaminated packaging materials and embrace a food safety culture in their activities".

Prof Adeyeye, in a statement by the NAFDAC Resident Media Consultant, Sayo Akintola, on Sunday, noted that the overall objective of GHP in the food processing sector including bakeries, quick service restaurants is to ensure the safety of the food from the starting materials to the final products.

According to the DG, good hygiene practices must be strictly adhered to from the beginning to the end of the production process, stressing that the finished products should not be exposed to the ravaging onslaught of rats and other pests in the Lagos metropolis.

She informed that Food raw materials/ingredients that are not properly sealed, compromised packaging, infested by rodents or their droppings and not adequately labelled should not be used, she further warned, adding that storage and handling of food ingredients/raw materials should be such that mix-up and cross contamination are avoided.

She noted that detergents, disinfectants, engine oil/lubricants should be kept away from food raw materials, she said, adding that If the bakers operations will endanger the health of the public, then the Agency will not hesitate to take decisive action.

She added that as a responsive Agency, NAFDAC is prepared to support their businesses to survive and thrive.

She further stressed that production facilities should not be sited in locations that can compromise the safety and quality of the finished products, such as near a cemetery or directly opposite a toilet or soakaway, stating that there is no way the Agency would stand aloof while the health of the public is being put at a risk.

GHP in food facilities cover all stages of the process, starting from the planning stage for the location of the factory. Food facility should not be located in an area that is close to source(s) of contamination or prone to flooding, adding that the material of the equipment should be impervious and not erode or react with the food during processing. They should be properly installed and arranged to enable easy cleaning of the immediate surrounding and allow for free movement of personnel.

She also maintained that vehicles used for transportation of chemicals, or any hazardous materials should not be used to transport bread, adding that the finished products should be adequately covered and protected from contamination while in transit.

According to her, medical tests should be conducted periodically to ensure personnel do not harbor any diseases that could be transmitted through food, stressing that food handlers are also not expected to work with open wounds; and when they are ill, they should be excused from work.

She said the principles of food safety and Good Hygiene Practices should be adopted and maintained in any food production or processing facility.

She emphasized that it is imperative to ensure the wholesomeness of the raw materials/ingredients and the process of food production to consistently have wholesome end products.

The NAFDAC boss also advised the Master Bakers on the need for proper labelling of their products. She said this includes listing the ingredients contained in the finished products in order of predominance by weight. In other words, she said the ingredients that weigh the most are listed first. She emphasized the importance of indicating date markings on the labels so that the consumer is informed about when the product was produced and the best before date to guide them accordingly.

The Acting Chairman of the Association of Master Bakers and Caterers of Nigeria, Lagos State Chapter, Mr Matthew Ayoola, commended the initiative of NAFDAC by engaging his members on the way forward with their businesses.

He pledged that his members would use the knowledge imparted to them at the engagement to further enhance the quality of their products in the State. He however, disclosed that his Association had set up a task force with a view to bringing forward any recalcitrant members to NAFDAC for necessary guidance towards compliance with the regulations, and sanctions as deemed necessary by the Agency.

Comments

Ribadu: The once rejected stone

By Adikwu Samuel Ebo

In regular pursuit of viable engagements in our contemporary society, despite the challenges on the pathways to greatness and the relative scanty opportunities, there is always a minute space for merit for people who are steadfast in their vision, imagination on the specific steps to take towards set goals. They usually uniquely distinguished in modus operandi, and are equally determined to achieve proficient objectives at any slightest chances.

In our usual expression or common parlance, it is always recounted that we should give honor to whom honor is due and whom the cap fits, let him or her wear it. This is because honor and greatness, to a large extent, are not often cheaply bestowed, but earned with respect, admiration, allegiance and devotion.

It is this real that Mallam Nuhu Ribadu belongs. That is why many Nigerians believe that, his appointment as National Security Adviser (NSA) by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, is well deserved. This appointment has brought to sharp focus the principle of fixing the round peg in a round hole; it not come as a surprise to the keen observers of his antecedents in the areas of resourcefulness, track records of integrity, courage and determination to deliver any task at all times.

Over the years, we could recall with

gusto on his resounding performance, when he held sway as the pioneer Chairman of Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), and where he refused to surrender or be intimidated by corrupt persons and their combined forces which looked like undefeated foes.

Amidst the storms that displayed like insurmountable odds, he remained resolute, unwavering and took the battle against corruption to the corridors of power just to redeem the image of the country tarred by Transparency International as then the most corrupt nation in the world.

Posterity will be very kind to us as a nation if we objectively examine his leadership credentials with precision and honour him with the plague of exceptional achievements in the battle against corruption and other heinous crimes.

It is on records in his frank disposition on how he refused to succumb to 'juicy porridge' attached to looted funds just to ruin his birthright. In his wisdom of meticulous approach to issues and devoid of greed and selfless service, he severally escaped all the treacherous baits and traps set to discredit him and subsequent dislodgement as EFCC boss.

Mallam Ribadu was quite diligent, dedicated and focused on his core values and obligations as EFCC chairman. After his gallant performance with the commission, there was an outrage of vituperation, victimization, indignation and deluge of censorious commentary over his double promotion in the Nigeria Police Commission. All the huge successes

recorded by the Commission under his watch were misconstrued as mere witch hunting of government opposition. Some even labeled him as 'watch dog'. Thus, there were collisions and ploys to demote him. It was a clear manifestation of use and dump syndrome to scourge his fruitful efforts and hard-earned integrity.

It was at this point that I courageously inked down an article titled "Ribadu Deserves Honour Instead" which was published in the LEADERSHIP SUNDAY Newspaper of August 10, 2008, on page 18. In my documentary, I drew the attention of the then Inspector-General of Police Mike Okiro and our servant leader, the late President Musa Yar-Adua to sit up and appraise the injustice meted out on Ribadu after the rigorous exercise of rebranding the country's identity.

Also, I wrote succinctly that it is worthwhile to note that in a complex society like ours, it takes one with special courage, unperturbed principle and aggressive disposition to fight the war against corruption. I emphasized that the war against corruption is not massaging of ego, mere dialogue, undue procedure of rule of law and unnecessary time wasting to achieve any remarkable result.

The intelligent officer, Mallam Ribadu worked so fearlessly and selflessly that his name became a slogan "The fear of Ribadu is the beginning of wisdom".

He fought and risked his life and family to redeem Nigeria's dented image. He meant well for the country and his promotion which was due to impeccable records of

performance and share vision should be sustained instead of subjecting him to humiliation and dragging his hard work precedence to the mud and mire.

This article about my views and perceptions generated so much criticism and among my peers and notable personalities. But today I am highly vindicated by God and President Tinubu for this elevation as the National Security Adviser (NSA).

Albeit, it is not strange for people pejoratively and contrarily hold view about this new assignment from different segment of the public. The onus lies on Mallam Ribadu again to showcase his usual intelligence, preparedness, competency and outstanding experience to deliver the country from national insecurity. We should be mindful of the fact that security of life and property requires teamwork in order to harness necessary resources and collaboration from all and sundry.

Though, Ribadu is at the helm of the security affairs, but he deserves vital information and fervent cooperation to achieve this fight against insecurity and other vices in the country. We need a rancor free society where everyone can go about with their normal businesses without maiming, molestation and intimidation from any quarter. Our prayers is that as he settles down for this onerous task, may God grant him sound health, courage and guidance to wither the insecurity situations in the country.

—Ebo is a public affairs analyst based in Abuja. adikwusamuelebo@gmail.com

Climate change and effects of global warming

By Oghenevarho Abigail

The consequences of climate change are extremely serious affect many aspects of our lives. Both countering climate change and adapting to a warming world are top priorities for the world. We need climate actions now. Global warming is the phenomenon of a global increase in the temperature near the Earth's surface. This phenomenon has been observed over the past centuries. This change has disturbed the climate pattern of the earth. However, the concept of global warming is quite controversial but the scientist have provided relevant data in support of the facts that the temperature of the earth is rising constantly.

There are several causes of global warming which have a negative effect on both humans, plants and animals. These causes may be natural or might be outcome of human activities. In order to curb this issue, it is very necessary to understand the negative impacts of global warming. Man-made causes of global warming. Deforestation: Plants are the main source of oxygen. They take in the carbon dioxide and release oxygen, there by maintaining environmental balance. Forests are being depleted for mainly domestic and commercial purposes. This has led to an environmental imbalance, thereby giving rise to global warming.

Use of vehicles: The use of vehicles, even for a very short distance results in various gaseous emissions. Vehicles burn fossil fuels which emit a large amount of carbon dioxide and other toxins into the atmosphere resulting in temperature increase. Chlorofluorocarbon: With the excessive use of air conditioners and refrigerators, humans have been adding CFCs into the environment which affects the atmospheric ozone layer. The ozone

layer protects the earth surface from the harmful ultraviolet rays emitted by the sun. The CFCs have led to ozone layer depletion making way for the ultraviolet rays, thereby increasing the temperature of the earth.

Industrial development: With the advent of industrialization, the temperature of the earth has been increasing rapidly. The harmful emissions from the factories add to the increasing temperature of the earth.

In 2013, the intergovernmental panel for climate change reported that the increase in global temperature between 1880 to 2012 has been 0.9 degrees Celsius the increase is 1.1 degrees Celsius when compared to the preindustrial mean temperature. Agriculture: Various farming activities produce carbon dioxide and methane gas. These add to the greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and increase the temperature of the earth.

Over population: An increase in population means more people breathing. This leads to an increase in level of carbon dioxide, the primary gas causing global warming, in the atmosphere. Natural causes of global warming.

Volcanoes: Volcanoes are one of the largest contributors to global warming. The ash and smoke emitted during volcanic eruptions goes out to the atmosphere and affect the climate. Water vapor: Water vapor is a kind of greenhouse gas. Due to the increase in the Earth's temperature, more water gets evaporated from the water bodies and stays in the atmosphere adding to the global warming.

Melting permafrost: Permafrost is frozen soil that has environmental gases trapped in it for several years and is present Earth's surface. It is present in glaciers. As the permafrost melts, it releases the gases back into the atmosphere, increasing the Earth's temperature. Forest blazes: Forest blazes or forest emits a large amount of carbon containing smoke. These gases are released into the atmosphere and

increase the Earth's temperature resulting in global warming.

Effects of global warming. Rise in temperature: Global warming has led to an incredible increase in the Earth's temperature. Since 1880, the Earth's temperature has increased by -1 degrees. This has resulted in an increase in the melting glaciers, which have led to an increase in the sea level. This could have devastating effects on coastal regions. Threats to the ecosystem: Global warming has coral reefs that can lead to the loss of plants and animals lives. Increase in the global temperature has made the fragility of coral reefs even worse.

Climate change: Global warming has led to a change in climate conditions. There are droughts at some places and floods at some places. This climatic imbalance is the result of global warming. Spread of diseases: Global warming leads to a change in the patterns of heats and humidity. This has led to the movement of mosquitoes that carries and spread diseases.

High mortality rates: Due to increase in floods, tsunamis and other natural calamities, the average death toll usually increases. Also, such events can bring about the spread of diseases that can hamper human lives.

Loss of natural habitats: A global shift in the climate leads of the loss of habitats of several plants and animals. In this case, the animals needs to migrate from their natural habitat and many of them even become extinct. This is yet another impact of global warming on biodiversity. Possible solutions to global warming. You heard that our planet is in trouble: glaciers are melting, sea levels are rising and wildfires, hurricanes and heat waves are becoming more severe. Some of the possible solutions to global warming includes;

Afforestation: Afforestation is simply the planting of forest trees. It is the AC and practice of creating a new forests where

none existed before, ore reforestation of areas long deforested. Reforestation is the most cost-effective way to prevent global warming. According research, trees absorb carbon dioxide (reminder: makes up 82% of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere), so planting more trees can help reduce the amount of carbon in our atmosphere. In fact, we could remove roughly two-thirds of human made carbon by just letting all forest regrow.

Divest from coal and encourage others to do same: Coal burning power plants are by far the biggest emitters of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere, according to the natural resources defense council. Aka is a big deal 20% of industrial coal emissions ate funded by public investors. So when people or companies stop investing, it's more difficult for coal producers to finance coal production.

Walk, bike or take public transport: The world's roadways are clogged with vehicles, most of them burning diesel or gasoline. Walking or riding a bike instead of driving will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and help your health and fitness

For longer distances, consider taking a train or bus. And carpool whenever possible. Living car-free can reduce your carbon footprint by up to 2 tons of co2e per year compared to a lifestyle using a car. Reducing agricultural greenhouse gases: Greenhouse gases emissions from agricultural activities can be reduced through more efficient management of carbon and nitrogen flows within agricultural system. The consequences of climate change are extremely serious affect many aspects of our lives. Both countering climate change and adapting to a warming world are top priorities for the world. We need climate actions now.

—Abigail is a public affairs analyst.

Nasarawa: Smocking criminals out of their den

Recently, the police forces carried out a crackdown on criminal suspects, arrested many and paraded 30 for various crimes committed within Nasarawa State. The state governor, Abdullahi Sule, determined to smoke out terrorists, bandits and criminals that have been making life nightmarish for people, has been empowering and supporting security agencies to make the state crime-free, writes SAMUEL ODAUDU.

For years now, terrorists, bandits, kidnapers and other criminals have been trying to make Nasarawa State a haven where they can hibernate, fester and unleash terror on Nasarawa and border communities and travelers within, outside and through the state. Nasarawa State is a major passage between the North and Southern Nigeria.

There have been several reports showing cases of abductions, robberies and all kinds of criminal activities in the state. Terrorists who reportedly fled the counterterrorism offensives of the Nigerian troops in the North East and other parts of the North West went and occupied forests in the state with their families.

But the governor, Abdullahi Sule, reported to be one of the best governors in terms of security management, resisted all political and ethnic persuasions and put his feet on the ground. Several of the families of the terrorists and those who reportedly surrendered were transported to their states of origin under strict supervision by the military forces that combed the forests and dislodged them.

In recent times, there have been reports of increased criminal kidnapping activities in many parts of the state. During security meetings, the governor would bluntly admit that, there were local ammunition manufacturing factories in some forests in the state and would mandate the security agencies to ensure that suspects were tracked, arrested and prosecuted according to the law of the land.

Last week, the police efforts paid off. The Nasarawa State Command of the Nigeria Police Force, paraded some suspects. The police said that the suspects admitted to the crimes they were accused of committing.

According to the State's Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Ramhan Nansel, during the parade said that, the crimes committed by the suspects included kidnapping and armed robbery. Others, he said were arrested for possessing "dangerous weapons and ammunition".

The DSP Nansel said one of the suspects, a wanted kidnapper, Zakari Umar, was recently apprehended following intelligence obtained by the police.

He said, "We received a complaint at the Awe Area Command on 18/06/2023 at about 1 pm that a victim was called and threatened to pay the sum of one million and five hundred thousand naira (N1,500,000) or risk being kidnapped and killed.

"Police detectives attached to Awe Area Command launched a diligent investigation into the matter, where one Zakari Umar Alias Dan Wudil 'M' 28years of Mahanga village, Awe LGA was arrested.

"Investigation revealed that the



Police parades some suspects in Nasarawa

suspect called his victim on the phone and threatened him. Due to fear of being kidnapped, the victim was coerced into paying the sum of one million, one hundred and fifty thousand naira (N1,150,000) to the suspect as ransom.

"Upon arrest, the suspect led Police operatives to farmland where the sum of seven hundred and fifty thousand naira (N750,000) was exhumed and recovered as an exhibit. The suspect has confessed to the crime", he said.

Among those paraded were Timothy James, 21 years and Simon Oliver, 19 years from Kakashi village, Lafia LGA in an armed robbery-related case in Lafia, the Nasarawa State capital

"Investigation revealed that the suspects attacked a farmer in a bid to rob him but the victim raised alarm which attracted Police operatives that were on patrol in the area. One Lugard (English-made pistol), one locally fabricated pistol and two rounds of live ammunition were recovered from the suspects as an exhibit," he added.

Determined to ensure that Nasarawa State does not become a breeding ground for crimes and criminals, Governor Sule convene an expanded meeting in order to address emerging security threats in Nasarawa this week.

During the meeting, the governor raised alarm that there was a proliferation of illegal production of small arms and ammunition in the state, even as revealed

when the zonal coordinator of the National Centre for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons visited him in Lafia.

According to the governor, "It's one of the things that we will discuss today because it has brought out a lot of concerns about our state. The concern is mostly about the production of small arms and ammunition within the state.

"They have given us the list of all those producing these weapons here in Nasarawa State, and the number is alarming. We have to discuss it and find a way out of it. Some of them are actually at our backyard. Our traditional rulers are not even aware of what is happening. But I am happy with the intelligence report at our disposal, with the security operatives able to communicate with some of these people," the Governor said.

Continuing, Governor Sule pointed out "The latest discovery of commercial quantity of lithium in Nasarawa State has brought of blessings but also lots of challenges. In the past, there have been lithium issues but communities have been managing it, especially around Nasarawa Local Government Area and especially around Udege Development Area.

"It is the same with few other places but it's alarming in that area, especially with the recent report in that area that quantities have been discovered in large number. This has attracted some investors and some illegal miners and this has become a major problem.

"It is one of the issues again for us to discuss. I am happy that all the parties are here so that we will be able to hear more. It will give us an understanding of the havoc activities of miners will cause on the environment," he stated.

The governor pointed out that, "The security crisis recently around Mangu Local Government Area in Plateau State while it's still ongoing,

has led to a lot of migration of people with some of those bandits crossing into our state mostly from Mangu and Bokkos area," he said.

In his word, "Recently, there have been movement of herders, especially Fulani herders. This may not pose a big security challenge because they are moving to grazing areas but unfortunately those areas are also problematic because they are at the border between Keana and Guma Local Government Area in Benue State.

"It will be a recipe for problems down the line and around Tunga area which is our major concern", he said.

He commended security agencies in the state, including 177 Guards Brigade Keffi, for their unrelenting efforts at ensuring that criminals operating Akwanga and Kokona Local Government Areas were halted, a development that resulted in the arrest of a notorious kidnapper identified as Lagudi and some members of his gang, as well as checking the dreaded Yan Shara cult group in Keffi.

The state commissioner of Police, Mohammed Baba Maiyaki, the police would do everything possible to protect lives and property in the state.

"We just had an expanded security meeting convened by Governor Sule in respect of the security situation of the state. Among other things discussed mostly are issues of kidnapping, banditry, issues of mining sites, as well as movement of herders.

"The security meeting took a decision over these issues. We are able to reach fruitful resolutions aimed at bringing the situations under control. Security agencies have agreed to work together as a team," the CP said.

It is hoped that the people of the state will support the efforts of the governor and the security forces to curtail insecurity in the state.



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Foreign



Israel judicial reform: Key bill becomes law amid mass protests

Israeli MPs have passed into law a highly controversial bill despite mass protests which aimed to thwart it.

The law removes the power of the Supreme Court to overrule government actions it considers unreasonable.

It is the first to be approved in a series of bitterly contested reforms aimed at curbing the power of courts.

The planned reforms have triggered some of the biggest protests in Israel's history, with opponents warning they imperil Israel as a democracy.

The government argues that the measures are necessary to correct an imbalance in power which has seen the courts increasingly intervene in political decisions in recent decades.

The so-called "reasonableness" bill was approved by 64 votes to 0, after the opposition boycotted the final

vote.

In remarks to the Knesset (parliament), opposition leader Yair Lapid called the step "a takeover by an extreme minority over the Israeli majority".

But Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu insisted the court would remain independent. He said the bill was necessary for the government to "carry out policy in line with the decision of the majority of the citizens of the country".

The vote brings to a head months of turmoil, with Israel's president warning political leaders on Monday that the country was "in a state of national emergency".

On Monday morning protesters blocking a boulevard outside the Knesset were sprayed with water cannon and pulled off the road by

police amid a cacophony of noise from drums, whistles and air horns.

One protester was hurt, local media say, and six were arrested, police said. Other protesters surrounded a police van shouting "shame" at officers.

A demonstrator lying in the street told the BBC he was defying "dictatorship", adding that his grandfather had been a wartime codebreaker against the Nazis at the UK's famous Bletchley Park.

Asked how long he would stay put he said: "We will never surrender".

Another, Reut Yifat Uziel, the daughter of a paratrooper pictured in an iconic Israeli photograph of the capture of the Western Wall in the 1967 Middle East war, said she feared for her children's future.

"Netanyahu kidnapped the country and I am worried it will become a

theocracy," she said.

The protesters - tens of thousands of whom marched some 45 miles (70km) from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem at the end of last week - set up camp in a park between the Knesset and the Supreme Court, which are located almost next to each other.

Prime Minister Netanyahu was in parliament for the vote hours after being discharged from hospital following unscheduled surgery for a pacemaker on Saturday.

The controversial reforms have polarised Israel, triggering one of the most serious domestic crises in the country's history.

Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators have taken to the streets weekly since the start of the year in protest at what they say is an attack on democracy. The

government says the reforms serve to strengthen democracy, arguing the Supreme Court has accrued too much power over politics in recent decades.

Deepening the crisis, thousands of reservists, including pilots in the air force crucial to Israel's offensive and defensive capabilities, have vowed not to volunteer for service. Such unprecedented dissent has caused alarm over the potential impact on Israel's military readiness.

Former heads of Israel's security services, chief justices, and prominent legal and business figures have also been vocal against the government's reforms.

The measures have also been criticised by the US President Joe Biden, who in his most explicit comments yet called for the "divisive" reforms to be postponed.

Elon Musk: Twitter rebranded as X as blue bird logo killed off

Twitter has changed its brand and logo from its famous blue bird to "X".

The new white X on a black background has replaced the blue bird on the desktop version of the social network, although is yet to appear on the mobile app.

"Tweets" will also be replaced, according to Twitter's owner Elon Musk, and posts will be called "x's".

The billionaire changed his profile picture to the new logo and added "X.com" to his Twitter bio.

Mr Musk wants to create a "super app" called X - his vision for a new kind of social media platform that he has been talking about creating for months.

On Sunday, the billionaire said he

was looking to change Twitter's logo, tweeting: "And soon we shall bid adieu to the Twitter brand and, gradually, all the birds."

He then shared a picture of the new X branding projected onto the side of Twitter headquarters in San Francisco.

Mr Musk, who has changed the name of the business to X Corp, said the replacement "should have been done a long time ago".

He posted an image of a flickering X on Twitter, and later in a Twitter Spaces audio chat, replied "Yes" when asked if the Twitter logo would change.

Linda Yaccarino, Twitter's new chief executive, wrote on the platform that the rebrand was an exciting new opportunity.

"Twitter made one massive impression and changed the way we communicate," she said.

"Now, X will go further, transforming the global town square."

The bird is called Larry which Twitter's co-founder Biz Stone said, in 2011, is a tribute to basketball star and Boston Celtics legend Larry Bird.

People took to Twitter to mourn the loss of the logo, including Martin Grasser who designed it in 2012.

"Today we say goodbye to this great blue bird," he said. Later the tweet was shared by Jack Dorsey, Twitter's best-known co-founder with a goat emoji, which means 'greatest of all time'.

For some people in Asia, super-apps including India's PayTM and Indonesia's

Gojek have been a vital part of everyday lives for the past few years.

The apps let users pay for services through a finance system.

WeChat is a messaging and social media platform that has evolved into one of the region's biggest apps in terms of its range of services and number of users.

Last year, it was estimated to have 1.29 billion users in China alone.

Drew Benvie, social media commentator and founder of digital agency, Battenhall said, "Musk is going full throttle for the everything app space, leaving old Twitter in his wake, and eyeing the successes of Asia's trailblazers like WeChat and Moj."

"Succeeding in just a couple of

additional services, such as shopping or payments, could be all that's needed to make X better than Twitter was. But there are already so many alternatives, so Musk and co are playing an enormous game of catch-up."

Twitter's website says its logo, depicting a blue bird, is "our most recognisable asset".

"That's why we're so protective of it," it added.

The firm temporarily replaced the logo in April with Dogecoin's Shiba Inu dog, helping drive a surge in the meme coin's market value.

Mr Musk was later accused of insider trading by a group of Dogecoin investors, who claimed he had profited from driving up Dogecoin's value.

Turnout down so far as Spain snap election clashes with heatwave

Despite turnout easing slightly compared to 2019, a record almost 2.5 million Spaniards have already voted by mail in this unprecedented July election.

That isn't much of a surprise when you consider as many as 10 million people are already taking their summer holiday.

One image of a man in snorkel and flippers casting his ballot has already gone viral and others are just taking their beach gear as part of their voting experience.

Many voters got up early to hit the polling station before hitting

the beach near Huelva on the south-west coast.

Not everyone's happy with the searing heat in the polling stations. One official at a school in Barcelona complained that if the prime minister had tried voting there they might have had air conditioning.

But Carmela in Valencia on the east coast told El Mundo she couldn't see the problem: "If you're on holiday, vote by mail and if not, do what I'm doing: go and vote and then quietly enjoy the rest of your Sunday."

Turnout trends down compared with 2019 amid high temperatures

Some new turnout data has come in from Spain's interior ministry.

As of 18:12 local time on Sunday (17:12 BST), there was about a 53.07% voter turnout in the snap election.

This is lower than at the same time in the last election in November 2019, when that number sat at 56.85%.

The latest numbers suggest Spaniards brought their votes forward in the day as Spain is hit by a heatwave.

It reflects the highly unusual summer election that is clashing with people's holiday plans and the

higher-than-average temperatures.

But the numbers do not show the postal vote of about 2.5 million.

Having heard from two voters who are casting ballots for change at this election - others are crossing their fingers that this election brings no upheaval at all.

"To be completely honest, I hope everything stays the same," Madrid resident Silvia says when asked what she would like the outcome of the vote to be.

"I hope the left-wing parties can continue the work they started last year. They increased the minimum

salary and benefits for families, which was good for everyone," she says.

Two voters have told the BBC why they have decided to support the far-right Vox party, which could play kingmaker depending on the results of the election.

Maite Serrano says for many years the conservative People's Party "has been an accomplice to the left-wing policies".

"Hence I support Vox because I consider [it] is the only party that can radically change all the left-wing policies that have been approved little by little," she says.



Wagner Group, Yevgeny Prigozhin

Wagner mutiny: Junior commander reveals his role in the challenge to Putin

A mercenary who took part in the attempted mutiny against Russian President Vladimir Putin says he and his fellow fighters "didn't have a clue" what was going on.

In the space of just 24 hours, the leader of the Wagner Group, Yevgeny Prigozhin, staged an insurrection, sending troops into the southern city of Rostov, then further on towards Moscow.

Wagner fighters rarely talk to the media, but BBC Russian spoke to a junior commander who found himself in the middle of the action.

Gleb - not his real name - had previously been involved in the fighting for the symbolic town of Bakhmut in eastern Ukraine. As the mutiny began, he was resting with his unit in barracks in the Russian-occupied Luhansk region.

Early in the morning on 23 June they got the call to join a column of Wagner fighters leaving Ukraine. The order came from a Wagner commander who Gleb is reluctant to name for security reasons, but who was acting on orders from Prigozhin and the Wagner Command Council.

"It's a full deployment," he was told. "We're forming a column, let's move out."

Gleb says no-one was told where

the column was heading, but he was surprised when he realised they were moving away from the frontline.

The Wagner fighters encountered absolutely no resistance, he says, as they crossed the Russian border into the Rostov region.

"I didn't see any border guards," he recalls. "But the traffic police saluted us along the way."

Channels closely associated with Wagner on the messaging app Telegram later claimed that border guards at the Bugayevka checkpoint had laid down their weapons as the Wagner fighters arrived.

These channels shared a photo purportedly from the scene showing two dozen unarmed individuals in camouflage.

As they approached Rostov-on-Don, the fighters were given orders to surround all the law enforcement agency buildings in the city and to occupy the military airport. Gleb's unit was told to take control of the regional offices of the Federal Security Service (FSB).

As they approached the building it appeared to be completely locked and empty. They flew a drone overhead to check for any signs of life.

Eventually, after half an hour, a door opened and two people came out onto the street.

"They said, 'Guys, let's make a deal,'" Gleb recounts. "I said, 'What's there to make a deal about? This is our city'."

"So we just agreed that we would leave each other alone. They came out to smoke from time to time."

Rostov journalists have reported a similar situation with many government buildings in and around the city. The Wagner fighters would first fly drones over them and then surround them. No-one was allowed to leave, but delivery couriers were allowed in with food.

While all this was going on Wagner leader Prigozhin was at the Russian army's Southern Military District headquarters meeting Russia's Deputy Defence Minister, Lt Gen Yunus-bek Yevkurov, and the Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Lt Gen Vladimir Alexeyev.

Prigozhin demanded that they hand over the Chief of the General Staff, Valery Gerasimov, and Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu.

At the same time as Prigozhin was in his meeting, there was another column of Wagner fighters on the move.

Gleb confirms media reports that this column was led by Wagner

founder Dmitry Utkin, a former special forces officer who is rarely seen in public.

This column was on the main highway towards Voronezh, and apparently bound for Moscow, he says.

So did Gleb know the plan - what Prigozhin was intending or planning to do?

He swears as he bluntly says he didn't have a clue. "We learned what was happening from Telegram, just like you did."

As the day went on, pictures of what was happening in Rostov were beamed around the world. People were surprised to see local residents and even local journalists apparently smiling and chatting to some of the normally tight-lipped Wagner fighters occupying their city.

"It was the ex-cons," says Gleb, referring to the many serving prisoners or convicts conscripted into Wagner last year. "Nobody told them not to, nobody cares about them."

For established fighters like Gleb, who were hired long before the war in Ukraine, the rules are much more clearly understood.

He told the BBC that back in the spring, they had been told by the senior command that anyone who spoke to the media would be "nullified", ie killed.

Several former Wagner fighters have told us the same thing.

On the evening of 24 June, Gleb was contacted by one of his superiors and told, without any explanation, that he and his unit should now return to base in Luhansk.

As they made their way back to barracks, they were following the news on Telegram.

They read that criminal charges had been initiated against Prigozhin, then dropped, and that he was to move to Belarus.

They then read that Wagner fighters would not be held accountable for their role in the mutiny because of their "combat merits", according to President Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov.

For Gleb and his unit, their future is now unclear. They've been told to stay in their barracks in Luhansk and await further orders.

Their hosts, authorities of the so-called Luhansk People's Republic, pro-Russian separatist militants in eastern Ukraine, are keen to find out more about their future plans and what will happen to their equipment and ammunition, he says.

When asked why he doesn't leave Wagner, Gleb has a simple answer: "My contract hasn't expired yet."

Last Line

"Yes, one Jibrilla Mohammed was arrested at the residence of the former vice president in Yola, and while interrogating him, we got to arrest his accomplice."

-Spokesperson for the Adamawa State Police Command, Suleiman Nguroje, speaking yesterday on Sunday's attack in the Adamawa home of Atiku Abubakar.

The palliatives that Nigerians deserve

Grace Anderson

Guest Writer

It is sad, strange and even strangulating. Certainly, it isn't normal for people living by the river to wash their hands with spittle. It is either the river is crocodile-infested or the people have been restricted from accessing the water by the gods of the land. Something is fundamentally wrong each time crude oil obtained from Nigeria is taken outside to be refined and then brought back. There are countries that don't have a drop of oil, yet they have refineries that are fully working. Nigeria is blessed but the evidence of the blessings isn't seen in the citizens. It is only a few that are stupendously wealthy; the majority is pathetically poor. That is why Nigerian citizens keep queuing at various embassies and escaping in their numbers. The best brains are running away.

Apparently, they cannot stand the heat any longer. Can we truly beat our chest as at today to say that Nigeria is still the giant of Africa? How does a worker who earns ₦70,000 as basic salary when fuel was sold at ₦145 cope with the same salary while fuel price per litre has skyrocketed to ₦617? Just how! Workers are now buying their daily bread on credit just to survive. What about the jobless ones in our midst, those who can't particularly tell where their next meal will come from? Recently, Ebimotimi Freeborn, a 32-year old unemployed graduate was beaten to death in Bayelsa for stealing bread. These days, getting our daily bread is now a herculean task and even with all the care taken, one could die in the process.

Sadly, Nigerians has been told in very clear terms by President Tinubu that they must make sacrifices. Unfortunately, going by recent trends, political office holders are exempted from making sacrifices. They must enjoy the full rights and privileges of their various political offices. Their convoys aren't reducing neither are those that carry phones, books and umbrellas for them reducing. The implication is that the sacrifices of the poor alone do not have an impact because it is negligible. When a poor man gives out a thousand Naira, it is a huge sacrifice but when a rich man gives out ten thousand Naira, it is just a token and that is the difference between the sacrifice of the poor and that of the rich, something akin to the parable of the widow's mite.

So, the poor keeps sacrificing and along the line, the 'fragrance' of the sacrifice rises to the heavens and the feedback gets to President Tinubu. This prompts him to empathise as well as sympathise with the masses. Consequently, he proposes to distribute ₦8,000 to 12 million households for six months as part of efforts to assuage the hardship occasioned by fuel subsidy removal. Wow! What a compassionate move. By implication, it means that Tinubu's administration is really feeling

When a poor man gives out a thousand Naira, it is a huge sacrifice but when a rich man gives out ten thousand Naira, it is just a token and that is the difference between the sacrifice of the poor and that of the rich, something akin to the parable of the widow's mite

our pains too. As in, we should be expecting palliatives soon. Can ₦8,000 effectively cushion the effect of the fuel subsidy removal? Can the palliative seamlessly get across to the target without long stories?

Unfortunately, the history of palliatives in Nigeria is not particularly palatable. We know that most palliatives do not get to the people they are meant to get to. It is on record that COVID-19 palliatives were hijacked and distributed among politicians in the thick of the pandemic. In some places, the palliatives were collected and stored in warehouses instead of distributing them to the people. They kept the palliatives for months. Later on, the End SARS protests came on board and all hell was let loose. Somewhere in Maza Maza area in Ojo, Lagos, hoodlums attacked a government owned warehouse where the food meant to be distributed during the lockdown was stored. The same scenario also played out in places like Osun, Edo and Kwara States.

As it is now, it is one thing to release palliatives and it is another for them to get to the poorest of the poor. Even when they eventually get to them, inflation won't even allow the people to derive maximum value from the money. Therefore, Nigerians need a different kind of palliative. We want that money to be used to give us functional refineries. If we have functional refineries, it means that some of our unemployed youths will be gainfully employed. Apart from the employment aspect, it means that the price of fuel will drastically reduce because, we will have no business again with subsidy removal and the sad narrative associated with it. In the long run, the prices of food stuffs will reduce because traders will be able to transport

themselves to the rural areas to buy farm produce to come and sell in the towns and city centres.

President Tinubu can go further by ensuring that we have a steady and affordable power supply. Prepaid meters should be distributed to Nigerians as palliatives. Why should electricity distribution companies be estimating bills for majority of Nigerians? Why should Nigerians be paying for what they are not using? The burden of estimated billing is becoming too heavy for so many and their spinal cords are at the brink of collapse. If this burden can be lifted, the people will be happier. More so, a steady power supply will guarantee a robust economy as it will likely help businesses to thrive and also help to reduce the cost of doing business in Nigeria. Mechanised agriculture should be adopted. A country that has arable land like Nigeria should have no business suffering the pangs of hunger! Nigerians also deserve to have a Nigeria that is working. We deserve a better healthcare system to curb medical tourism. Currently, most government owned medical centres are nothing to write home about. Nigerians deserve something better.

We deserve a functional education system where employers of labour all over the world will be looking for Nigerian graduates to fill vacant positions in their establishments. We deserve better roads and better infrastructure as well. Functional security apparatus will also be of additional advantage to Nigerians. The truth is that the palliatives that Nigerians deserve are inexhaustible. We have been suffering and smiling (Apology to Fela Ransome-Kuti the Afro-beat musician) for too long a time. We need something that can comprehensively put a smile on our faces.

What about creating an enabling environment for industrialisation to thrive by abolishing unnecessary taxes and levies on businesses? How can a small enterprise that is not into manufacturing be asked to pay for effluent discharge? What kind of effluent is a service company discharging into the atmosphere? When they are looking for ways to enrich themselves unnecessarily, they begin to coin big grammar. They assume that their lies will be absorbed readily when they affix unrelated verbs and nouns to it. In the long run, actions like this pushes up the prices of goods and services and Nigerians continue to add extra money each time they go to buy things since the business man will factor in all the expenses before selling. After all, in business, we use money to make more money.

Can Nigeria be more intentional about manufacturing quality products and exporting same? The other day, I saw an imported set of wooden spoons and I was chuckling. What is wooden spoon that Nigerians cannot produce? Those who should be in factories using their hands and brains are now mostly found in sport-betting shops staking their money for winnings. Too bad! Nigerians also deserve affordable homes as palliatives. These and more are the palliatives that we desire because we deserve them. Unfortunately, these are mere wishes and if wishes were horses, beggars would ride.

Sports Watch

Women World Cup: Oparanozie close to full fitness ahead Australia clash



Nigeria's power forward Desire Oparanozie could play some part in Thursday's cracker with the co-hosts at the Lang Park, as she appears to have substantially recovered from the injury she copped on the last day of the final training camp in Gold Coast, days to the FIFA World Cup.

She trained on her own, kicking the ball on the side of the pitch as the other 21 players were drilled by Waldrum and his assistants. Goalkeeper Chiamaka Nnadozie, who saved a penalty taken by non-pareil Christine Sinclair and won the MVP award on the day, was allowed off perhaps to relax her nerves.

The China-based star could play some part in Thursday's game, with the need to get goals and the knock to Asisat Oshoala.

The technical crew also have the versatile Jennifer Echegini on the roster, as well as Uchenna Kanu.

Meanwhile, Australia captain Sam Kerr is still doubtful for the clash as she continues to nurse the injury that ruled her out of the first game against the Irish.