

MAN, FG, others Plan Manufacturers' Summit

From Anthony Nwachukwu, Lagos

In a bid for strategic solutions to the nation's manufacturing sector challenges, the Manufacturers

Association of Nigeria (MAN), partnering the Federal Government, Ministries, Departments and Agencies, has concluded plans for a closed-door manufacturers' summit. The summit, billed for the

Tuesday to Thursday (June 4th to 6th) this week and strictly by invitation, is being organised in partnership with the Presidency, Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment, National Institute

for Policy and Strategic Studies and EY at the State House, Abuja. According to MAN, the theme, "Rethinking Manufacturing," underscores the need for practical solutions

to the myriad of challenges limiting manufacturing performance through the adoption of innovative strategies that can guarantee

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● Tinubu

DAILY ASSET

Truth is Treasure

FIRST PUBLISHED: JUNE 12, 2017

MONDAY | 3: 06: 2024

www.dailyasset.ng

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book.com/dailyassetnewspaper ISSN: 2616-1036 Vol. 2 No. 1087 N200

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Cross section of ECOWAS Ambassadors during the 2024 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Retreat in Port Harcourt at the Weekend. Photo: NAN

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- People Still Sell Votes, Allow Politicians Use Them in Ballot Box Snatching

By Lubem Myaoranyi, Abuja

Former Head of State, General Abdulsalami Abubakar, has said that he

has no regret handing over power to a democratically elected president. It would be recalled that

Abdulsalami handed over power to former president Olusegun Obasanjo in 1999, after the country had

experienced different military coups.

Speaking during an exclusive interview with the media, he

said "...I am happy with what is

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2024 UTME: 24,535 Candidates 'll Write Exam - JAMB

A total of 24,535 candidates who participated in the 2024 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination, UTME, will retake the examination, the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board, JAMB, said on Sunday.

The candidates have already been rescheduled for the exercise, slated for Saturday, June 22, 2024.

This came as the board said additional 3,921 withheld results have been released, bringing the total number of results released so far to 1,883,350.

It has asked those who have not seen their results to check through the approved

channel.

JAMB, in a statement on Sunday, by its spokesman, Fabian Benjamin, explained that the decision was prompted by substantial non-compliance with the Board's standards in the affected candidates examination centres.

The statement reads in part: "The Board has painstakingly analysed the process and conduct of the 2024 UTME in some centres where there are strong proofs of substantial non-compliance with the Board's standards.

"Consequently, 24,535 candidates have been rescheduled to retake the examination in their chosen Examination Towns on

Saturday, June 22, 2024.

"Meanwhile, 3,921 outstanding 2024 UTME results that had been cleared have now been released.

"Therefore, concerned candidates are urged to check their results from Saturday, 1st June, 2024 by sending RESULT to 55019 or 66019 to ascertain their status as those cleared would have their results while those rescheduled would be told that they had been rescheduled.

"The rescheduled candidates are to print their supplementary Examination Notification Slip from Tuesday, 4th June, 2024 to ascertain their designated

examination centres.

"This release brings the total results released to 1,883,350.

"The rescheduled examination, which is taking place on Saturday, 22nd June, 2024, two weeks from now, is to give affected candidates adequate time to prepare for the exercise.

"This notice does not concern candidates whose results have been released." Candidates with prima facie case(s) of examination misconduct would be further interrogated to establish their culpability after which appropriate measures would be taken on them and announced."

Minimum Wage: Anxiety as NLC, TUC Strike Looms

<< FROM COVER

By David Torough, Abuja

The Federal Government has warned the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and the Trade Union Congress (TUC) to shelve their plan to commence a nationwide indefinite strike action from today.

FG, in a statement it issued through the Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Prince Lateef Fagbemi, SAN, on yesterday, described the proposed industrial action as "premature, ineffectual and illegal."

It stressed that the agitation for the increase of the minimum wage of workers in the country is currently being addressed, insisting that the labour unions failed to fulfill the condition precedents that would enable them to embark on a strike action.

The AGF, in a letter it addressed to the two labour unions, noted that FG and other stakeholders involved in the Tripartite Committee on determination of a new national minimum wage had not declared an end to negotiation.

He argued that in view of the fact that FG and State governments are not the only employers to be bound by a new national minimum wage, it was therefore "vital to balance the interest and capacity of all employers of labour in the country (inclusive of Organized Private Sector) in order to determine a minimum wage for the generality of the working population."

Besides, the AGF noted that an order of the National Industrial Court (NIC) which barred the two labour unions from embarking on any form of strike action is still extant as it has not

been set aside.

He, therefore, urged the unions to reconsider their proposed strike action and return to the negotiation table.

N494,000 Demand by Labour 'll Cripple Economy — Idris

Again, the Federal Government said the N494,000 new minimum wage proposed by the organized labour could cripple Nigeria's economy.

The Minister of Information and National Orientation, Mohammed Idris disclosed this during a press briefing in Abuja.

The minister lamented that the N494,000 minimum wage demand would amount to a N9.5 trillion expenditure burden to the government.

According to him, they had agreed to increase the country's minimum wage by 100 percent to N60,000 from N30,000 in line with the current economic realities.

He expressed dissatisfaction at the 1,547 percent new minimum wage proposal by the organized labour.

Idris noted labour's N494,000 minimum wage demand will make the federal government downside its 1.2 million workforce which does not portend any good for the country's economy.

He said, "The sum of N494,000 national minimum wage which Labour is seeking would cumulatively amount to the sum N9.5 trillion bill to the Federal Government of Nigeria.

"Nigerians need to understand that whereas the FG is desirous of ample remuneration for Nigerian workers, what is most critical is that President Bola Ahmed Tinubu will not encourage any action that could lead to massive job loss, especially in the private sector, who may not be able to pay the wage demanded by the Organised Labour," he added.

Recall that the organized labour is billed to embark on indefinite strike on Monday, June 3, over the government's failure to implement a new minimum wage and reversal of the April 3 electricity tariff hike.

President Bola Tinubu on January 1 signed the 2024 N28.7 trillion appropriation bill with projected revenue of N19.7 trillion and a budget deficit of N10 trillion.

CONUA Yet to Take Position, as ASUU Vows to Participate in Nationwide Strike

Meanwhile, members of the Academic Staff Union of Universities, ASUU, will participate in the nationwide strike called by the NLC.

However, another rival academic staff union in the university system, the Congress of University Academics, CONUA, is yet to take any position on the matter.

Speaking in a media chat on Sunday, the National Presidents of the unions, Prof. Emmanuel Osodeke of ASUU, and Dr Niyi Sunmonu of CONUA, made their positions known.

Osodeke said in response to our correspondent's enquiries, "ASUU is an affiliate

of NLC, hence ASUU will participate in any action of NLC."

Sunmonu, on his part stated, "We are following the development and I have called an emergency meeting of the congress for later this evening. There, we will appraise the situation and decide on what to do next."

Also in a chat, the Chairman of ASUU in the University of Lagos, UNILAG, Prof. Kayode Adebayo, explained that the NLC and the government have till midnight on Sunday to resolve the issue.

"One cannot say the matter is totally closed now. The NLC and the government have up till midnight to negotiate, one cannot say nothing positive can come out of such. If by that time, they agreed, there may be no need for any strike, but if the logjam remains, all affiliates of NLC would join," he said.

However, sources in ASUU said the national leadership of the union was holding a meeting on Sunday evening over the issue and the likelihood of going on strike if negotiation between labour and government fails, was high.

A former branch chairman of ASUU in a university in Kwara State said the national leadership of the union was yet to officially communicate the directive to go on strike to members as of Sunday afternoon.

"That is not unexpected; they are meeting on the matter and probably waiting if the labour and government could reach an agreement. If nothing of such happens, later tonight, they would send the signal to go on with the strike," he stated.

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MAN, FG, others Plan Manufacturers' Summit

higher productivity, competitiveness and sustainability of the sector.

President Bola Tinubu is expected to preside at the opening ceremony, while Vice President Kashim Shettima will preside at the afternoon session, a statement from the MAN Director-General, Segun Ajayi-Kadir, disclosed.

Ajayi-Kadir said the aim is to "reach a consensus with the Federal Government on the imperatives for intentional development of

manufacturing in Nigeria and the crafting of a time-framed strategic roadmap for the resolution of the identified challenges and attainment of steady growth for the sector."

MAN stated that manufacturers expect the engagement to provide valuable insights into the government's policy direction, its expectations and practical solutions to the biting constraints.

"The summit will feature focus group discussions between top

level government officials, industry operators and experts; insightful presentations on emerging trends and best practices in manufacturing; exhibition of made-in-Nigeria products, and showcasing of innovative products, technologies and solutions in the Nigerian manufacturing sector.

Specifically, the focus group technical session will bring together relevant MDSs, top-level chief executives of manufacturing

concerns, continental trade institutions, subject matter experts and the academia together to discuss the five pillars of the summit.

Ajayi-Kadiri listed the pillars to include how to promote growth, upscale productivity and improve competitiveness; enhance energy security and infrastructure development; improve macroeconomic environment and ease of doing business, improve patronage of made-in-

Nigeria products and local content development, as well as leverage regional and continental trade for export development.

It will further hold "critical discussions on how to achieve sustained manufacturing growth through the creation of a conducive business environment, guaranteeing security, boosting agricultural production and strengthening supply chain resilience by leveraging technology."

<< FROM COVER

Abdulsalami: I have No Regret Giving Democracy Chance

going on. Yes, everything is not perfect, but here we are today, celebrating 25 years of unbroken democracy.

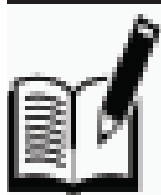
"Well, we thank God and I am very happy that it is now 25 years since I handed over. And we thank God that Nigeria and Nigerians are

enjoying the dividends of democracy.

"We are not yet there, but we have come a long way since 1999. The only drawback we have in the system is people still sell their votes and they do all types of things, they allow the politicians to use them in ballot box snatching here and

there – unnecessary things that we should have overcome at this age. But gradually and thankfully, yes, Nigerians are gradually coming out of this menace, they are realising that their vote counts and they are making sure that their vote counts.

"Unfortunately, I still maintain, there are some very few people who abuse the process and they allow their votes to be bought. And if they are buying these votes, certainly they cannot be called to be accountable, the people who are being so elected."



VIEWPOINT

Will Old National Anthem Solve Nigeria's Contingent Problems?

By Mukhtar Garba Kobi

Youth un-employability is a threat to the nation's peaceful coexistence and development, an idle mind as popularly says is a devil's workshop which should be put back on track through acceptable work or franchise. Different zones in the country are facing electricity shortages which directly crippled medium businesses, people that use electricity-driven machines in welding, vulcanising, grinding, carpentry and others are left with no choice than to embrace fuel-accelerated devices.

Recent approval by Mr President Bola Ahmed Tinubu of the old national anthem as the nation celebrates twenty five years of uninterrupted democracy is a misplacement of priority. Nigeria as a country under the current administration has faced and still encountering insurmountable challenges in almost all sectors. It is unfortunate that leaders that are supposed to strategize ways of solving what citizens are going through, but instead, focused more

on what will add salt to the irksome injury.

Nowadays, it is hard upon common citizens to feed three square meals due to the skyrocketing prices of food commodities. One might buy stuff today but on returning the next day might buy at higher prices or leave. In this case, we are the architects of these problems because one hardly sees an extremely rich man selling food stuffs in markets. Governments can install price control on commodities but neglect that while compelling people to adopt and sing the old national anthem with empty stomach aches.

Furthermore, thousands of students in higher institutions have abandoned pursuance of their studies, majority of them are from poor backgrounds while others were sponsoring themselves to schools. They endured pains, worked under scorching sun and earned what they have been paying as school fees, but all ended-up as waste because they could no longer afford the hiked tuition fees. Governments have tried by introducing students' loan,

but not all students will be assimilated as beneficial due to their increasing population.

In essence, there are major challenges bedeviling Nigerians that need to be addressed. Youth unemployment is a threat to the nation's peaceful coexistence and development, an idle mind as popularly says is a devil's workshop which should be put back on track through acceptable work or franchise. Different zones in the country are facing electricity shortages which directly crippled medium businesses, people that use electricity-driven machines in welding, vulcanizing, grinding, carpentry and others are left with no choice than to embrace fuel-accelerated devices.

Petrol is now costlier than other crude oil products which forced practitioners using it to increase prices. Insecurity in Northwestern part of Nigeria might cause residents to cohabit with hunger, bandits in villages of Katsina, Zamfara and Sokoto imposed levies upon all that want to plant seeds in their rightly owned

farms. Some villages are like death-zones as bandits stage attacks on them in broad daylight without being prevented by security forces, residents have dumped their businesses, houses, belongings and migrated to neighboring villages or urban cities for safety.

In summary, if the government desires to put an end to the problems in week's months, I am pretty sure that it is possible as enough resources, manpower and other necessary inputs are available. Leaders should be considerate on the welfare of all irrespective of region, tribe or religion.

Let them put the interest of the masses first, establish honest committees that will share the palliative in order to ameliorate the difficulties and after that, change of national anthem follow. An adage says one can control a lion if he or she has been feeding it well. Nigerians will forever shower encomiums upon leaders only if they can get access to affordable healthcare, standard education, linkable roads, uninterrupted water and power supply but absence of them will result in otherwise.



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We shall be responsible, decorous, factual, just and fair in the reportage of people, private and public institutions, processes and procedures believing that truthful and timely information is an asset to decision makers at all times. We shall always be guided by the patriotic duty to promote, support and defend the unity and indivisibility of Nigeria. We shall support the effort to build a society where citizens live peacefully and are availed the opportunity to tap their God-given talents and acquired skills to improve their living conditions and more importantly, attain the highest possible heights in their chosen vocations and endeavours.

Enugu Govt Pledges Support to Police Towards Improving Security

From Sylvia Udegbumam, Enugu

Enugu State Government through the Ministry of Justice, has pledged to support the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), Enugu State Command in its mission to safeguard life and property in the state by diligently prosecuting criminals, quick dispensation of justice, and defending the rights of citizens.

Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice, Dr. Kingsley Tochi Udeh said this during a meeting with the Enugu State Commissioner of Police, CP Kanayo Uzuegbu, at the Ministry of Justice Headquarters, 3 Arms Zone, Enugu.

Udeh assured the Police Commissioner that the Ministry will facilitate the NPF's execution of its constitutional duties without hindrance, in line with Governor Mbah's vision of making the State the number one destination for living, business and tourism.

He emphasized the state government's expectation of the Police to help in transforming Enugu into a crime-free and attractive investment hub in Nigeria, towards actualizing the goal of growing the state's economy from a GDP of 4.4 billion Dollars to 30 billion Dollars within this administration.

He also disclosed the Ministry's commitment to collaborating closely with the police in sharing information and providing legal services towards preventing and fighting crime.

In addition, he noted that the state has robustly continued its efforts in criminal justice reforms, including the amendment of the Administration of Criminal Justice Law, the Criminal Code Law, and the Magistrates Courts Law, among others.

He further disclosed that the Governor is set to inaugurate the Committee on Prerogative of Mercy to painstaking review and recommend cases for the Governor's discretionary exercise of prerogative of mercy, as the Governor is keen on prison decongestion and correctional services reform.

He further urged the police to respect the rights of citizens and avoid any form of abuse.

In response, CP Uzuegbu expressed the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) commitment to partnering with the Ministry to enhance the protection of life and property in Enugu State. He assured that the Police is working diligently to ensure that residents enjoy peace and security.

He commended Dr. Peter Ndubuisi Mbah for his vision, support, and encouragement to security agencies in the state. The CP assured of his team's total commitment towards a crime-free Enugu State.



Gov. Caleb Mutfwang of Plateau State (2nd left) with other Government officials, during the Road Walk to mark the Governor's one year in office in Jos on Saturday
PHOTO: NAN

Insecurity: Katsina Spends N13bn to Fight Bandits, Kidnappers in One Year - Radda

By Ubong Ukpong, Abuja

Governor Dikko Umaru Radda of Katsina State has explained how about N13 billion has been expended by his administration within his one year in office to tackle banditry and kidnapping in the state.

In an address to the people of the state to commemorate his first year in office, the governor said his administration spent the sum of N1.5 billion on completion of tactical combat equipment for the Katsina State Community Watch Corp.

Radda also explained that he sustained the payment of monthly security operations allowances to security personnel in the State to

the tune of 208 million.

This, he said was in addition to 10 units of Armoured Personnel Carriers, 65 Branded Hilux vehicles, 700 Motorcycles, surveillance drones, a communication network, trackers, and other related working materials at a total cost of approximately N11 billion Naira.

Radda further stated that in line with the strategy for community participation in the fight against insecurity, the State engaged 918 Local Government security committee members and 9,747 ward security committee members.

The Governor who expressed satisfaction with ongoing effort to tackle insecurity noted: "We have drastically reduced the areas colonized by bandits and returned

many communities to normalcy. 565 kidnapped victims have been rescued and reunited with their families.

"35 armed bandits have been neutralized by law enforcement, over 300 assorted arms, and over 1000 ammunitions have been recovered. We have also recovered motorcycles, vehicles, and a J5 bus from bandits during operations.

"This is in addition to many we have destroyed as we proactively dismantle this axis of evil. We have also arrested 363 bandits and subjective them to our fair judicial system.

"I want to reiterate that in our fight against insecurity we have maintained very high professionalism, abided the rule of

law, respect for human rights, and complied with global best practice.

He explained that the resolve by the state government to establish the Hisbah Board to teach good values and check societal vices being perpetrated across the nooks and crannies of the State was aimed at keeping the peace in the state.

The Governor added, "we also established a committee on encroached cattle routes and grazing reserves to checkmate farmers-herders conflict.

A joint Security Operations Communication Centre was established to improve intelligence gathering and assist security agencies in carrying out operations at all the security flashpoints in the State."

Kogi Expresses Readiness to Tackle Scarcity of Potable Water

From Joseph Amedu, Lokoja

Kogi State Commissioner of Water Resources, Engr. Yahaya Farouk, has expressed the political will of Governor Ahmed Usman Ododo's administration to tackle scarcity of potable water supply in Lokoja and other communities across the state.

The Commissioner gave the hint while briefing Journalists on the efforts of the present government to ensure that citizens have access to clean drinking water.

According to the Commissioner, the current administration under the leadership of Governor Ododo and the ministry of water resources are not sleeping over the scarcity of potable water in Lokoja and other parts of the state.

Farouk said that the governor,

had given his strong political will to actualise restoration of potable water in Lokoja and other communities across the state.

The Commissioner, who described the Greater Lokoja Water Treatment as one of the best in Nigeria, added that it had the capacity to pump 10 million gallons of water per day with provision to expand that to 15 million gallons of water for the same day.

He however, noted with regret that the October 2022 flooding in Lokoja submerged most of the vital equipment of the facility, including four electro mechanical equipment with huge cost, adding that the development brought the treatment and supply of potable water to a halt.

He also told journalists that equipment needed to be replaced to put the facility back in optimal condition

are very expensive and would require months for them to be produced.

The state government, in its avowed determination to restore water to Lokoja is presently considering three options in achieving such ambition, he said.

According to him, the government is considering either to outrightly locate the site of the Greater Lokoja Water Treatment, the cost of which he disclosed, stands at between N120 billion and N150 billion, excluding reticulation.

The second option, he added was the possibility of relocating the two major flood prone sections of the facility at the cost of between N70 billion and N90 billion to execute.

The third option is the raising of the equipment of the facility above the flood level of 2022, pointing out

that this dream project also runs into billions of naira, the commissioner said.

Answering questions from journalists after the press conference, the commissioner disclosed that the state government intends to contact the Federal Ministry of Water, look into the possibility of Public Private Partnership, PPP, and state government financing to put the facility back on its foot to serve the purpose it was intended for.

Farouk said that while efforts are on for the restoration of potable water to residents, his ministry he explained, has embarked on the rehabilitation of the Old Lokoja Water Works, to supply healthy water to some areas among other interim measures pending when the Greater Lokoja Water Treatment would be back alive.

Mutfwang Attributes One Year Devt Stride to Tinubu's Support for Plateau

From Jude Dangwam, Jos

The Governor of Plateau State, Caleb Mutfwang has attributed the successes recorded in the last one year of his administration to the selfless support he received from President Bola Tinubu during the travail of the state upon assumption of office.

The governor assured the people of the State that better years are coming as he set machineries to pulled the state out of abject poverty which has continued to make its citizens vulnerable to all form of social vices, attackers and banditry activities in the state.

Mutfwang stated this during the Plateau State Inter-Denominational thanksgiving service to mark his one year in office held at the Rwang Pam Township Stadium on Sunday.

"We want to thank President Bola Tinubu for authorizing the security agencies to be up and doing in our state and to give us every necessary support to be able to tackle the menace of insecurity and banditry.

"We want to convey our congratulatory message to the President for clocking one year also in office, it has been a very difficult one year for the President but as Mr President will always say that there is light at the end of the tunnel, I believe him.

"I therefore want to encourage us as a people that we should have faith in God that it shall be well with Nigeria. It has been difficult and challenging but by the grace of God we will turn the corner and we will begin to see changes and properties again." He noted

Mutfwang appealed to citizens of the state to understand with him as some of the measures taken by government to sanitize the state capital is in good faith and not targeted at any group of people or individuals but to reclaimed the lost beauty of metropolitan city which is the State capital.

The Guest Preacher at the thanksgiving service in his exhortation and charged to the Governor urged him to remained focused and be vigilant as well as checkmate the activities of those he appointed in his government in

other not to rubbish his administration.

He prayed for unity of purpose adding the Plateau State will prosper abundantly in the coming years.

The National Acting Chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Umar Damagum who was also in attendance at the thanksgiving service stressed that the party is proud of the developmental stride so far recorded in the last one year of the Mutfwang's administration on the Plateau.

He noted that the PDP as a political party is a brand for the people of Plateau State as evident in the pace at which state is recovering from the 8 years of retarded development and urged the Governor to sustained the tempo.

In his words, "Indeed we have all cause to thank God, because everything we have today has been the will of God. You have overcome several challenges, from litigation which we all know what happened, to insecurity within the state. But yet, you have not relent, you're providing development to the people of Plateau State.

"We are proud of you as a member of the Peoples Democratic Party and also the people's governor. Plateau people this time have spoken but unfortunately we were robbed of so many positions, despite that we still thank God. Today what we used to know of Plateau has started yielding fruits.

"Since 1999, Plateau has been PDP, the Eight (8) years that our mandate was stolen, came with a lot of vices that has retarded development in this state. I want to urge you that there is also so much to be done for your people" he charged the Governor

The Gbong Gwom Jos and President of Plateau State Council of Chiefs and Emirs. Hi Majesty Da. Dr Jacob Gyang Buba represented by His Royal Highness the Miskagham Mwagavul Da John Hirse commended the governor for restoring hope to citizens of the state through good governance and urged him to remained focused while pledging the support of the Traditional Institution in the state to continued to support and gives him wise counsel at all time.

Kukah Centre Organises Post Election Peace Conference in Bayelsa

From Mike Tayese, Yenagoa

The Kukah Centre has appealed to political leaders, political parties and other stakeholders to embrace peace and peace building initiatives and social integration and move forward now that the governorship election has come and gone.

The call was made in Yenagoa last Thursday at a conference organized by the Centre in Yenagoa, tagged, "From Polls to Peace" with the theme "Strengthening Social Integration and Peace Initiative in Bayelsa State."

Speaking at the conference, the Project Manager, The Kukah Centre, Emmanuel Nkanta, described the event as a follow up to the November 2023 Peace Accord that was signed in the state ahead of the elections to commit candidates, political parties and key stakeholders to ensure peace before, during and after the elections.

He stressed that the issues of mistrust and dissatisfaction arising from the outcome of the electoral process informed the conference, to rebuild trust, create confidence to ensure that social cohesion and peace building is achieved and protected.

His words: "The elections may have come and gone yet there may be issues of trust deficit, issues that may have arisen at a point and may not augur well to every party involved, therefore, the purpose of this programme is to remind members that we need to rebuild trust, create confidence, to ensure that peace building is properly protected and that we have no state other than Bayelsa State.

"In essence what we have done today is propelling the ideals of peace building and social cohesion not just for political parties and their candidates but for youths, women, religious leaders and traditional rulers because of the moral powers that they have to ensure that we propelled the ideals of peace."

In her remarks, the Project Manager, National Peace Commute, NPC, Vicham Wazidi, said the idea of the conference is to come back to get the perception of the people after the election and see how to improved the electoral process and peace at large.

She said: "To address issues of mistrust it is important that we come back and sit on the table, yes things didn't go the way we wanted but elections will still happen and we still need to cast our votes because it is democratic system and there is no democracy without elections, so it's important that as much as we are discouraged and feel hurt by the electoral system and we still don't lose hope and know that at the end of the day the peace we want, we will be able to achieve at the long run."



Left: Executive Secretary, Enugu State Gaming and Lotto Commission (ESGLC), Mr Arinze Arum; Director, Administration and Supply ESGLC, Chief Chukwudi Nwobodo and a Stakeholder, Comrade Kingsley Ochinnawata during a news conference on the regulatory activities of the commission in Enugu.

Photo: NAN

National Anthem Lyrics Better Express the will of God for The Country - Olumba Obu

From Ene Asuquo, Calabar

The sole spiritual leader of the Brotherhood of the Cross and Star heartily congratulate Nigeria for reverting to the old national anthem which he said lyrics better expresses the will of God for Nigeria and the supplication of Nigerians to the Almighty God.

The Leader of Brotherhood of the Cross and Star in his address in September, 2019 had proclaimed that for Nigeria to find meaning

in her journey to nationhood and receive the blessings of God, she should revert to the old National anthem that calls for all Nigerians to stand in Brotherhood irrespective of differences in tribe and tongue.

According to the spokesperson of the Brotherhood, today, this timeless proclamation of leader Olumba has come to pass as Nigeria has officially reverted to the old anthem. By this action, the time has come for Nigeria to manifest her full potentials and

receive divine blessings from God, he stressed.

He said Nigerians should be more concerned about the lyrics of this anthem which is a solemn prayer to God and a commitment by all citizens to live together in Brotherhood.

"This anthem holds great spiritual significance; hence, it is our hope that as we chant these worthy aspirations in all our official gatherings, the letters and spirit of this anthem will fill our hearts and find expression in our national life".

"Once again, we congratulate His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu GCFR, the National Assembly and indeed all Nigerians for this historic move and assure the leadership of this Country of the divine blessings of our Father, His Holiness Olumba Olumba Obu".

"As we have gone back to the old anthem, let us all commit ourselves to its lyrics, for now is the time to build a nation where no man is oppressed that Nigeria may be blessed with peace and plenty". He maintained.

Amgbare Urges FG to Increase NDRBDA Funding to Achieve Mandate

From Mike Tayese, Yenagoa

The Managing Director of Niger Delta River Basin Development Authority (NDRBDA), Prince Ebitimi Amgbare, has urged Federal Government to put more funding in the Agency to enable it achieve its mandate.

Amgbare while having media parley with Journalists on Wednesday in Yenagoa on the achievements of President Bola Tinubu's one year in office, disclosed that an authority like that has only 2.5 billion naira yearly budget while other basins like that of Sokoto Basin Authority has 50 billion naira.

Niger Delta Basin Development Authority is disclosed as the grandfather of all basins but insisted that it is the most neglected because of bodies like Niger Delta Development Commission, the Presidential Amnesty Programme and the Ministry of Nigeria Delta Affairs.

He also urged Journalists to escalate the mandate of the authority, he said "This is something we must come together to re-address. I will need the support of the media to re-write this story. The Niger Delta Basin Development Authority predates even Independence, when the white men were here, they saw us as a Peculiar people and they thought it wise to give us this authority but it didn't see the light of the day".

"It was actually supposed to solve our peculiar problems but those problems are still here. We still drink from the water where we go to defecate and it is our core mandate to make sure that we solve this problem for our people".

"We are already taking census of all the moribund water projects all over the place including Bayelsa State. We know the problems already, they give the people generator and ask communities to buy Diesel. It was due to fail from the very beginning. We will try to see how we can transit from Diesel to renewable energy".

"We also have the Agric components. We want to make sure that the Peremabiri Rice farm functions. On sanitation, we want to launch campaign against open defecation".

"As we launch that campaign we must provide alternatives. So we are partnering with some partners so that when we eliminate open defecation, we will have alternative for our people".

Speaking on the achievements of President Bola Tinubu, Amgbare who was the leader of Tinubu Support Group during the last presidential election, affirmed that the president's policies and programmes have had positive impact on the economy.

According to him, the wage support, palliatives to communities, railways and the conversion of heavy duty vehicles from use of fossil fuels to compressed natural gas that the Federal Government was putting in place were all in the bid of price reduction.

He tasked state governors to check the activities of food vendors through the Consumer Protection Council in their states adding that they should make sure that their Consumer Protection Council is working.

He stated "From here to Itakpe is about N5,000 or N10,000. You can't compare that to what you will pay if you have to go by road".



Wife of the Governor of Rivers, Valerie Fubura (M) and others, at the opening ceremony of the 2024 Rivers International Marathon Race as part of the activities to mark one year anniversary of Gov. Siminalyi Fubura of Rivers in office, in port Harcourt on Saturday. Photo: NAN

NECO: Females Top List of Candidates for 2024 National Common Entrance Exam

By Tony Obiechina Abuja

A total of 27,268 females out of 70,603 students registered for the 2024 National Common Entrance Examination organised by the National Examinations Council (NECO) into the 110 Unity Colleges nationwide, last Saturday.

The female candidates outnumbered their male counterparts whose figures stood at 33,335, according to the data released by the NECO Registrar, Prof Dantami Wushisi who monitored the conduct of the exercise alongside

the Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Education, Mrs. Didi Walson-Jack.

Prof Wushisi lamented that the 2024 registration was lower than that of 2023 which had 34,064 males and 38,801 females, totalling 72,865.

The NECO boss attributed the low registration in 2024 to economic factors as the exam body had slightly raised the registration fee and parents, who are grappling with the economy, were responsible for sponsoring candidates at this level.

"For the males and females, last year's registration was higher than

this year's registration and this could be attributed to so many factors; economic factor is the most prevalent factor that could hinder this large registration," he said.

The Permanent Secretary, Mrs. Didi Walson-Jack, who gave a general assessment of the conduct of the exercise, expressed satisfaction with what NECO has put in place to ensure a smooth and seamless exercise.

She disclosed that 55 centres were wrote the NCEE in the FCT, stating that everything went smoothly and students were placed in conducive

examination halls to sit for the exercise.

Also speaking, the Chairman Senate Committee on Education, Basic and Secondary, Sen. Lawal Adamu, said he rolled out NECO and JAMB sponsorship in the state and contributed over N250 million for parents to be able to pay for NECO and JAMB examinations.

Adamu, who also called on National Assembly members to provide an educational foundation for every child in their constituencies, lauded NECO for the smooth conduct of the exercise.

Food Security: Ododo Flags Off Wet Season Farming in Kogi

From Joseph Amedu, Lokoja

Kogi State Governor, Ahmed Usman Ododo has officially flagged off this year's wet season farming in the state with the presentation of over 100 tractors to serve about 10,000 farmers in different farming communities across the 21 local government areas in the state.

Speaking at the flag off ceremony in Geregu, Ajaokuta local government area of the state, Governor Ododo noted that investment in agriculture is a critical step towards poverty eradication in the state, adding that 75 percent of the total farmland cleared for cultivation in this year's farming

season will be allocated to youth and women farmers.

The Governor who noted that over 90% of the land area in the state is arable, promised to make Kogi a leading state in agricultural production and contribute to the development of Nigeria's economy.

According to Governor Ododo: "Across the 21 local government areas of the state, we are opening farmlands and preparing more land for cultivation of crops like rice, maize, cassava, yam and other staple food crops and grains.

"We have also procured farm implements for full scale agricultural mechanization in line with our agenda to ensure food security in

the state.

"Our youths are beginning to embrace agriculture as a credible source of wealth creation and our women in agriculture are already on the field because of their believe in our commitment to transform the agricultural sector in the state.

"I call on wealthy Kogites at home and abroad to begin to explore the window of opportunities that abound in the agro industry."

The Governor noted that the state government has invested over 7 Billion Naira in farm implements with over 100 tractors to cultivate 7,324 hectares by about 10,000 farmers across the 21 local government areas in the state in the

current farming season.

Governor Ododo commended President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for supporting the agricultural transformation initiatives in the country, assuring that his administration has keyed into the cardinal objectives of the Renewed Hope Agenda to ensure food security in all parts of the country.

In his remarks, the state Commissioner for Agriculture and Food Security, Honourable Timothy Ojoma noted that the commencement of the wet season farming across 79 farm clusters in the state is a significant step in the agricultural transformation agenda of the state by Governor Ododo.

ASR Africa Begins Construction of N250M World-class Research Laboratory at FUL

From Joseph Amedu, Lokoja

The Abdul Samad Rabiu Africa Initiative (ASR Africa), has commenced the construction of a world-class research laboratory for the Federal University Lokoja (FUL) in Kogi.

Speaking at the project's groundbreaking at FUL campus Felele, Lokoja, the MD/CEO of ASR Africa, Dr Ubun Udoh, said the gesture was in continuation of ASR Africa's various strategic commitments to the nation's tertiary education interventions.

According to him, the N250 million world-class research laboratory is one of its many interventions under its Tertiary Education Grants Scheme (TEGS), drawn from ASR Africa's US\$100 million Fund for Social Development and Renewal.

Udoh thanked the management and students of the University for the warm reception accorded to him and his team.

He reiterated the commitment of the Chairman to supporting quality education within tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

The ASR Africa MD/CEO encouraged the management and students of the university to ensure proper use and maintenance of the facility as a show of appreciation for the grant.

According to Udoh, the duration for the project's execution would not be within six months.

"The ASR Africa grant and award process began in December 2022 and the confirmation of the university's nomination was met with great joy by the university community.

"At that time, the Vice-Chancellor described the gesture as a Christmas/New Year gift from God to him and the University.

"The Tertiary Education Grant Scheme of the ASR Africa is a personal commitment of the Chairman of ASR Africa and BUA Group, Abdul Samad Rabiu, to give back to the African continent.

"The objective is to make an enduring impact in education as a means of uplifting and restoring the dignity and lives of Africans, Udoh said.

Earlier, the university Vice Chancellor (VC), Prof. Olayemi Akinwumi, expressed his gratitude to the Chairman of ASR Africa, for his kind benevolence, saying it would enhance the institution's capacity for scientific inquiry and innovation.

Akinwumi stressed that the project would address the challenge of infrastructure deficit, especially in the area of research, facing the institution.

Akinwumi emphasised that it would provide a learning platform for explorations, discoveries, innovations, and scientific advancements in physical and life sciences.

"This is not just a donation a financial contribution; it is a powerful investment in the future of our students and our university.

"We are immensely grateful for your support and your belief in our mission," he said.

Akinwumi added that the facility would provide the students and researchers with the tools and environment necessary to conduct the cutting-edge research, foster interdisciplinary collaboration, and drive scientific breakthroughs.

Enugu Residents Reacts to Mbah's One Year Administration in Enugu

From Sylvia Udegbumam, Enugu

As Governor Peter Mbah's administration clocked one year in office. Many residents in Enugu metropolis reacted to his one year achievement in Enugu State.

A veteran journalist and also a political analyst, Mr Abuchi Anueyiagu in his opinion to Gov Mbah's one year achievement in office emphasized that Mbah has made a lot of promises that he has not actually fulfilled saying "Take for instance the issue of water, he made a wide publicity but till now after one year, he is still laying pipes and there is no water. I am quoting him, "he said within 180 days in office that he will make sure that every home in Enugu capital city will have pipe borne water, but as it is today you can hardly count how many homes in Enugu that enjoy pipe borne water."

As far as I am concerned, it is a failed promises. He just made that promises to get people's vote. Does it mean he did not conduct a feasibility studies

about water problem in Enugu before coming out with that promises before his electioneering. Also he kept on saying that he will raise the internally generated revenue of Enugu State from 4.4 million dollars to 30 billion dollars."

"We have now witnessed an occasion where he has been taxing people with so many types of levies, which people call taxation. He has increased the number of existing once. He has inflated what people were paying previously to a very high figure. For instance, somebody that pays 6,000 naira as ESWAMA bill is paying 18,000 naira now. He did not ask people how are they coping? and how their business is fairing?, he suppose to find out the monthly income of people before he will increase the levies. People are groaning, lamenting, crying. So many businesses has folded yet he doesn't want to know."

"Anyway, one will say that he has try to improve on the promise he made about infrastructures particularly roads. The condition of roads before he took over were in a mess but so

far through his rehabilitation work which people called asphaltting, he has been able to make those roads to be motorable."

"He was able to challenge and break the monster called sit at home. Previously the government workers were not going to work but now he made it compulsory that every government worker both in the rural and Urban area must go to work on Monday. He has achieved what his predecessor was not able to achieve. The smart schools he is talking about is a political rhetoric. It is still on paper, it is only in Governor Mbah's area in Owo that smart school exist physically. He cannot be praised on the issue of International conference center until it is completed".

Dr Maxwell Menkiti Ngene in his opinion said that Governor Peter Mbah's first year in office was marked with a sense of accomplishment, and hope for a brighter future.

He noted that Mbah's bold approach to security has been a game-changer.

By shattering the "sit-at-home" myth, "he has restored peace and stability, creating an environment conducive to economic growth and social progress. His strategic investments in security infrastructure, mobilising stakeholder support and community engagement have made Enugu State a model for effective crime prevention and response."

"The restoration of pipe-borne water supply to most parts of Enugu Metropolis is a remarkable achievement. This basic human right, and necessity of life, once a luxury, is now a reality thanks to Governor Mbah's determination and investment in water infrastructure.

Governor Mbah's palm initiative and agricultural investments have empowered farmers, improved productivity, and enhanced food security, by partnering with SMEDAN, his administration has supported small and medium-sized enterprises, stimulating entrepreneurship and job creation.



NYSC Director Community Development Service and Special Projects, Hajia Zainab Isa (M), cleaning gutter to inaugurate the 2024 1st Quarter Nationwide Environmental Sanitation Exercise at Karu in Abuja on Saturday. PHOTO: Adams Samuel

Bayelsa Govt Wades Into Ogboinbiri Leadership Crisis

From Mike Tayese, Yenagoa

The Bayelsa State Government has waded into the festering leadership crisis in Ogboinbiri community in the Southern Ijaw Local Government Area of the state, directing the feuding parties to close ranks.

It specifically directed the Amananaowei, the community development committee (CDC) Chairman, the Youth President, and the Woman Leader of Ogboinbiri, including the council of chiefs, to maintain the status quo ante, and work closely together as a team for the peace, development and progress of the community.

The Deputy Governor, Lawrence Ewhrudjakpo gave the directive at a reconciliatory meeting with the Ogboinbiri council of chiefs and other stakeholders in Government House, Yenagoa, at the weekend.

It will be recalled that the Ogboinbiri communal crisis assumed a worrisome dimension following the purported suspension of the Amananaowei of the community, His Royal Highness Chief Okosighe Esemokumo, on the 19th of last month.

Ewhrudjakpo, urged the Ogboinbiri people to overcome their weaknesses by exploiting their strengths as a community for development and progress.

The Deputy Governor stressed that it was totally unacceptable for any one person to stop or prevent others from performing their duties as leaders of the community.

He, therefore, appealed to all the aggrieved parties to sheathe their swords and embrace the olive branch in the best collective interest of their community, adding that it was their responsibility to collectively lead Ogboinbiri to a greater level of

prosperity.

While appealing to the community to maintain all existing leadership structures, the Deputy Governor pointedly told the Amananaowei, Chief Okosighe Esemokumo, to make consultation his watchword and learn to carry everyone along as a leader.

Senator Ewhrudjakpo warned him and other power brokers to desist from taking any further actions capable of causing the breach of peace and breakdown of law and order in the oil-bearing community.

His words: "Learn from me and the Governor. We must learn how to forgive one another. That is what God wants us to do. The strength of a leader is accommodation and to delegate responsibilities.

"And so, I urge you people of Ogboinbiri to exploit your strength to best advantage, sheathe your swords and embrace peace.

"All suspensions should be lifted forthwith and let the Amananaowei, CDC Chairman, Youth President and Woman Leader maintain the status quo ante. That means there is no winner, no loser in this matter.

"The Ogboinbiri people should exploit their strength to best advantage, work together as a team to promote peace, unity and development of your community.

"As Amananaowei of Ogboinbiri, you have to run an all-inclusive system and carry everybody along. You are elected by your community to lead them to prosperity and not to fight one another."

The CDC Chairman of Ogboinbiri, Mr Tari Daniel and the Youth President, Mr Experience Pere, explained that they rose against the Amananaowei due to alleged high-handedness, autocratic and exclusive policies.



Director, UNHCR Regional Bureau for West and Central Africa, Mr Abdouraout Konde; Nigerian Permanent Representative to ECOWAS, Mr Musa Nuhu and ECOWAS Commissioner for Human Development and Social Affairs, Prof Fatou Sow Sarr during the 2024 UNHCR Retreat in Port Harcourt on Friday

NGOs Train 60 Widows on Self-sustaining Skills in Abuja

By Laide Akinboade, Abuja

Rasaq Okulaja Empowerment Initiative in collaboration with Helpline Social Support Initiative, have empowered sixty widows with self-sustaining skills in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja.

The widows were trained on tie and dye, soap, turban and Snacks making among other skills, during a second memorial empowerment and exhibition programme, in Abuja.

President of Helpline Social Support Initiative, Dr Jumai Ahmadu, said during the training and exhibition, that the empowerment was part of a two-year memorial of late Rev. Rasaq Okulaja.

Ahmadu said that the training was designed to eradicate poverty among widows, as well as keep the memory of late Okulaja alive.

She explained that the empowerment was also to give the widows and young girls an opportunity to be a better version of themselves.

She advised the beneficiaries not to be ashamed of what they were doing to support themselves financially.

To get the full benefits of the acquired skills, Ahmadu advised the widows to group themselves into clusters to share facilities, access financial support and organise step down training to other vulnerable groups.

She also encouraged the widows on good packaging and marketing for their products to gain acceptability among the targeted consumers.

"You also need to register your businesses with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC). Helpline will assist intending participants who have adequately packaged themselves with the registration.

"Try to be a better version of yourself and improve yourself at all times and form clusters among yourself so that you can work as a team and easily connect with customers.

"I promised that next year, we will expand this exhibition and take it to the Old Parade Ground, Garki to accommodate more participants," she added.

Extolling her late husband, Mrs Toyin Okulaja, described the late reverend as a man that loves impacting on the lives of people.

"After he died, we decided to establish an empowerment initiative after his name to keep his legacy alive, and continue to impact and transform the lives of the poor and vulnerable in our communities.

"We empowered 50 women and young girls in 2023 with different skills and today they are exhibiting their products.

"This year, we decided to support only widows with self-sustaining skills, food items and a little cash to support their lives because they are going through a lot," she said.

She expressed joy over what the beneficiaries of the first edition of the empowerment were able to do with the skills they acquired.

She said: "Seeing what they exhibited I am glad. I am so happy that at least, we were able to empower people, who are also empowering others.

"Some of them could now feed their families and pay their children school fees, so, we are encouraged."

AKSG to Re-Write Own Tourism Narratives Commissioner

From Mike Tayese, Yenagoa

The Commissioner for Culture and Tourism in Akwa Ibom State, Sir Charles Udoh, has said, the 1914 Amalgamation relics are in Ikot Abasi LGA of the State and not in Zungeru.

Charles Udoh, said the need to re-write all contentious tourism stories of the State is geared at placing Akwa Ibom state in its rightful position as the Tourism capital of Nigeria.

Already, the State government is drumming home the Tourism story that, the 1914 amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates of Nigeria by Federick Lord Lugard was in Ikot Abasi LGA of the State and not in Zungeru, Niger State, as erroneously documented by non-state actors.

The commissioner said, this is based on the fact that, the relics of the epochal history such as the

old Amalgamation House, old typewriter, archaic telephone and other surviving materials are all seen in Ikot Abasi close to the sea which Lord Lugard ferried through to Akwa Ibom.

The Commissioner made this position known, last week Thursday, in Uyo, while welcoming the newly posted Permanent Secretary, Mrs. Grace Akpan, to his Ministry.

Sir Charles Udoh who introduced the new Permanent Secretary to all headquarters staff of the Ministry, disclosed that, another narrative that must be changed is the 1929 Women War, which took place in Ikot Abasi, but has been erroneously captured in history books over the years, as the "Aba Women Riot".

Regretting that, these false tourism stories have been widely accepted for decades now across the globe, the State Tourism Commissioner intimated that, momentum is high

towards changing all contentious Tourism narratives about the State and called on all hands to be on deck, in this regard.

Udoh emphasized that, it is only Akwa Ibom people that can best tell their own story and called on all indigenes to brace up to join the government to change the tourism narratives of the State positively for posterity and generations yet unborn.

He expressed with optimism that, the new Permanent Secretary will bring her wealth of experience and expertise to bear in the attainment of the envisaged goal of changing the tourism

narratives of the state adding that, her posting to the Ministry is apt and timely.

Emphasizing that, he can attest to the passion, dedication and hardwork of Mrs. Grace Akpan, having worked with her previously

as the then Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Sir Charles Udoh, called on all staff to give the new Permanent Secretary the needed cooperation, support and assistance to enable her discharge the functions of her new office creditably.

In her response, the new Permanent Secretary, Mrs Grace Akpan, expressed appreciation to the Honourable Commissioner, Sir Charles Udoh, for taking out time to welcome her to the Ministry and pledged to work assiduously with him and the entire staff to push ahead the factual and true tourism narratives of the State.

Present at the occasion were Heads of Directorates and Units of the Ministry, including; the Director of Administration, Mr. Mfon Udokang and the Director of Marketing/Logistics, Mr. Mfon Essang, among others.

NBM of Africa Donates Food Items, N2 m to Ewu-Okuama IDP Camp

From Mike Tayese, Yenagoa

The Neo Black Movement (NBM) of Africa NBA worldwide has donated food items worth millions of Naira to members of Ewu-Okuama Internally Displaced Persons.

The food items was donated to the displaced persons on Friday as palliatives to ameliorate their suffering.

The National President NBM of Africa NBA worldwide, Olorogun Ese Kakor led delegation of the group to present the items to the people.

The Pan-African group also donated the sum of N2 million to the people of Okuama Community to assist them in rebuilding their community.

Recall that Okuama Community in Ughelli South Local Government Area of Delta was destroyed by the Nigerian Army in retaliation to the killing of 17

soldiers on March 14, 2024.

In his remark, Kakor commended the Governor Sheriff Oborevworiled administration on the level of infrastructure provided at Ewu-Okuama IDP camp.

Kakor, therefore, called on well meaning individuals, originations to emulate the humanitarian gesture of the NBM of Africa and assist the displaced Okuama people.

He noted that with what was at the Ewu-Okuama IDP Camp, Delta State government alone can not manage the humanitarian crisis.

"We want to appreciate the Delta State Governor, Sheriff Oborevwori for setting up this IDP Camp at Ewu-Urhobo to shelter our people from Okuama, the facilities we saw here are commendable for a camp.

"We also thank the Ewu-Okuama

Internally Displaced Persons Management Committee for the great job they are doing.

"We want to urged them to continue with the good work. In no distant time, many Deltans and Nigerians will come to offer their support.

"As you may know, the primary aim of NBM of Africa is to carry out humanitarian services wherever there is a need,

"So, we have come today to offer these items and money to alleviate the suffering of our Okuama people.

"Recall that in the 2021 flood that ravaged many states across the country, NBM of Africa donated palliatives to 13 states,

"We do this any where in the world you find our members and that is what we have come here to do, to put

smile on the faces of our people.

"From what we saw in the camp today, we have over 200 displaced women and children that urgently needs assistance,

"So, we brought 500 tubers of yam, 400 (3kg) bags of rice, 200 (3kg) bags beans and 3 big bags of onions, I think this will go along way in providing succour the Okuama people.

"I am also using this opportunity to appeal to Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations to also provide palliatives to this IDP Camp at Ewu-Urhobo and to Okuama people to help them rebuild and start live again," he said.

Kakor called on the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) and other international agencies to also focus on Okuama and provide succour to the people.

BUSINESS

NEWS

Navy Targets 60% Seaward Vessel Building Capacity by 2030

From Anthony Nwachukwu, Lagos

In a strategic move to further strengthen security and exploit the potentials of the blue economy for wealth creation and economic growth, the Nigerian Navy (NN) said it plans to be building at least 60 per cent of its seaward vessels by 2030.

Disclosing this in Lagos over the weekend at the closing ceremony of the NN's International Maritime Conference with the theme, "Promoting the Blue Economy in Africa through International Cooperation on Maritime Security," as part of its 68th anniversary, the Chief of Naval Staff (CNS), Vice Admiral Emmanuel Ogalla, described shipbuilding and repair as key aspects of the blue economy.

According to him, the NN's 2021-2030 strategic plan includes building at least 60 per cent of its ships, and the institution has already constructed seaward defence boats 1, 2 and 3, now working on boats four and five, billed to be completed by next

year.

"One key aspect of the blue economy is our ability for ship repairs and building," Ogalla said. "In the Nigerian Navy Strategic Plan 2021-2030, we have made that aspect of shipbuilding part of our goal.

"So, we intend to achieve at least 60 per cent of local shipbuilding capability before 2030. We have the seaward defence boat 1, 2 and 3 but we have it in our agenda now to ensure we redouble efforts in this regard.

"We are constructing the seaward defence boats 4 and 5 at the same time and hope to conclude this project by next year; as we are concluding the project, we are going to build another two. If we do this continuously, we will start breaking the jinx of capital flight."

He urged collaboration among the navies in the region, including Ghana and Senegal, to enable them share expertise and reduce reliance on imported ships.

On the concern for governmental support for the region's maritime security needs, the CNS stated

that the Nigerian Government is fully backing its navy, and recognises the importance of the blue economy in building wealth and eradicating poverty.

Nevertheless, he explained that funding remained a challenge, adding that with limited resources and a weaker economy compared to European countries, countries in the region can only do according to their capabilities.

"We still have the problem of funding and our resources are limited," he stated. "In West Africa, our economy is not as strong as that of Europe, so we need funding and the challenge that we have is beyond the challenges of those countries that are richer than us."

For viable funding options, he added: "We want to be ingenious in devising ways of funding our operations. To that extent, the first task for the International Maritime Institute of Nigeria is to come up with what viable options we can use to improve funding for the protection of the blue economy in Nigeria and in the sub-region."

Matawalle seeks integration of Falcon Eye, C4I Security Platforms

From Anthony Nwachukwu, Lagos

To optimise the potentials of Nigeria's various maritime security platforms through strategic collaboration and advanced technological integration, the Minister of State for Defence, Dr. Bello Matawalle, has called for a policy in that regard.

Matawalle spoke to newsmen over the weekend during his inspection visit to the C4i Center at Kirikiri, Lagos, owned by the Nigeria Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), and which controls the agency's Deep Blue Project.

According to him, the visit was to explore integrating the C4i system with the Nigerian Navy's Falcon Eye surveillance system for enhanced security measures in the nation's maritime domain.

He stated that a cohesive strategy between the navy and NIMASA will safeguard the country's waters, adding: "All we need is to secure our maritime domain. The Navy and NIMASA must work together to ensure we achieve the desired results.

"By integrating Falcon Eye and C4i, we can improve communication and coordination to effectively address clashes and apprehend criminals operating on our waters and the high seas."

Commending the minister's visit, the NIMASA Executive Director of Operations, Mr. Fatai Adeyemi, said it showed government's seriousness towards the security of the nation's waterways. According to him, "the minister's visit allowed him to see firsthand how he can support us further. Combining C4i with Falcon Eye will undoubtedly enhance our capabilities and improve security."

On efforts generally in maritime security, Adeyemi noted that Nigeria has come far, explaining: "Previously, we had pirate activities, but in the past two years those activities have dropped to zero. We have done very well and aim to maintain this success."

Similarly, the NIMASA Executive Director of Maritime Labour and Cabotage Service, Mr. Jubrin Abba, commended the expected integration of Falcon Eye and C4i, stating that "the brief given to the minister helped him understand the C4i system's capabilities.

"Integrating Falcon Eye with C4i, as suggested by the minister, is a step in the right direction and will significantly enhance our marine environment's security.

Also, "this partnership with the Nigerian Navy will improve capital trade in Nigeria. Currently, we have many vessels operating, and with enhanced security, trade activities will thrive even more."



Nigerian Navy

Over 1,986 SMEs Receive Grants to Grow Businesses In Cross River

From Ene Asuquo, Calabar

The Cross river state Governor, Prince Bassey Otu has announced that over 1,986 SMEs have received between 100,000 to 400,000 as grant to grow their businesses in the state

Governor Otu dropped the hint weekend in Calabar in his address during his meeting with journalists in the state to mark his one year anniversary.

Otu also announced that his administration has honoured its debt and all contractual

obligations to the tune of 55 billion naira and has also reactivated the state reserve fund account which at present has a balance of 3.7Billion Naira saved for the rainy days

He said all these were made possible as a result of the state financial prudent management, stating that from June 2023 --May 2024, the state internally generated revenue (IGR) has grown by 60.6% (36.3 Billion Naira) .

Otu also disclosed that these achievements have invariably augmented the state lean federal allocation and made funding of

government projects and programmes relatively easy

On accountability index, he said the state has moved from the 28th position it occupied in the last two decades to amongst the first ten states in Nigeria. According to him,

"Arising from this unprecedented feat, the state for the first time of its existence won \$4,000,000 because of sound Disbursement Linked Indicators (DLI) which has also helped the state to obtain good grade scores from some big accounting firms in the world" he said.



We Want Solid Minerals Contribution to GDP to Surpass Oil - Minister

The ministry is determined to ensure that the solid minerals sector's contribution to Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) surpasses that of oil.

The Minister of Solid Minerals Development, Dr Dele Alake said this in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on Sunday in Abuja.

He said that the administration of President Bola Tinubu was putting in place policies and initiatives aimed at diversifying the economy and ensuring that it generates more revenue than oil in the near future.

He said that the move was necessary, especially with the global upsurge of energy transition, which would reduce the demand of oil.

"We have been totally dependent on oil for decades, everyone has been dependent on the free flow of petrol dollars on the economy.

"And the critical sector of the economy such as agriculture and solid minerals was neglected. "Our objective is to make the solid minerals

contribution to the GDP to surpass oil.

"By the time all our policy initiatives goes through the gestation period and begins to manifest results, the revenue that will be accruing to Nigeria from this sector would be enormous.

"We are going to recover trillions to the coffers of the Nigerian government and for the benefit of Nigerians at large" he said.

He said that Nigeria possesses the critical minerals in commercial quantities across its states needed for energy transition, which the ministry was aggressively marketing to attract big players to invest in the sector.

"We embarked on an aggressive marketing to unlocking the richness of the potential, making sure we push out information on the number of minerals that we have, the type and their demand nationally and internationally," he said.

According to him, negotiations are on going with an auditing firm to audit the sector aimed at sanitising it to ensure the appropriate accruals to boost the country's GDP.

"As we speak, we are far in our negotiations with an auditing firm to come and audit the entire sector, because we have lost a lot of money in the past.

"We know that operators will under declare what they are carting away, even the payment of royalties, they under pay, taxes they evade.

"So we are in the process of engaging internationally recognised auditing firm that has done the same thing in other parts of the world, in more than 20 countries.

"So that they come and help us recover lost revenue and put some measures in place going forward so that we will no longer loose revenue.

"We are going to recover trillions to the coffers of the Nigerian government and for the benefit of Nigerians at large," he said.

The minister had said that a German company, Geo Scan, conducted a preliminary survey that indicates that Nigeria has 750 billion Dollars' worth of solid minerals underground, which had not been harnessed.

FG to Deploy Technology for Surveillance of Mining Sites

The Minister of Solid Minerals Development, Dr Dele Alake said the Federal Government will deploy technology for the surveillance of mining sites across the country.

Alake said this in an interview with newsmen on Sunday in Abuja.

He said that the technology would be in addition to the 2,220 personnel of the Mining Marshal Corps drawn from the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) to combat illegal mining.

The corps deployed across the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) were also trained on modern warfare by the military to secure Nigeria's natural resources.

"We are introducing some technology, we are not just relying on men and materials alone.

"The satellite surveillance gadgets we are putting in there is to enable us see in real time in all mining sites in Nigeria.

"So that when we notice any infraction, very quickly we can deploy the mining

marshals to go there so we don't even have to wait for any interpersonal communication.

"That reduces the time of knowledge and action. Right now we depend on people passing intelligence to us but when the satellite surveillance gadget is working, we will be able to see it ourselves.

"Which is a step forward on the right direction", he said.

The minister said that to attract investors to the sector, especially the big players, it was necessary to put in place policies and initiatives aimed at securing their investments.

"We needed to put in place policy measures to ensure that when these investors come, they are not just coming into the darkness that we had here before.

"They will ask some questions, what is the security of their operating environment, their investment, personnel and the ease of doing business in Nigeria and the sector", he said.

He said that the administration of President Bola Tinubu inherited a lot

of security challenges such as banditry, kidnapping and terrorism, which were associated with the solid mineral sector.

He explained that most mining activities were in the forests, where such crimes were being perpetrated.

He said that the administration of Tinubu was determined to sanitise the sector, and reposition it to contribute significantly to Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

According to the minister, concerted efforts are being deployed to curb the menace with other government agencies, such as the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), the Nigerian Army and the Police for rapid result.

"I had a meeting with Inspector General of Police on this issue and he is willing to give us more men to support those that we have on ground.

"Even the EFCC is cooperating with us, they are also arresting, the army also enumerated the number of illegal miners that they have arrested, it is a holistic effort cutting across all security agencies.

LPG Utilisation: Gas Retailers Urge FG to Encourage Investors

The Liquefied Petroleum Gas Retailers (LPGAR), says to boost Liquefied Petroleum Gas utilisation, government needs to encourage investors by giving all necessary incentives that can lower the price of gas.

The Branch National Chairman of LPGAR, Mr Ayobami Olarinoye, made the remark in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Lagos on Sunday against the backdrop of increase in price of cooking gas.

Olarinoye said that the Nigeria LNG Ltd. (NLNG) should further be encouraged to give substantial percentage of its production to local market.

He said that the price of gas should not necessarily be based on international template.

He said that this remained the only way the price of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) could be affordable which would consequently encourage a switch to gas by the rural dwellers.

According to him, I understand that government has commenced distribution of free cylinders to citizens in Abuja as part of the programme to boost LPG utilisation and to mark one year anniversary of President Bola Tinubu.

"While, I like to commend the initiative, it may not go a long way if the price of LPG (cost of buying gas) on the streets remains high.

"As LPG retailers of many years of practice, we are the last link to the end users.

"Price is a major determinant for boosting LPG utilisation and if it is not addressed, the citizens will collect the cylinders, use it for sometime and abandon it if they cannot afford the cost of refilling the cylinders with liquid," Olarinoye said.

The LPGAR chairman also said that as government was promoting cooking gas utilisation, there was need to also advocate for continuous safety campaigns in LPG handling.

"All government agencies, parastatals, federal and states that have business and interest in safety should collaborate with LPGAR for safety campaigns to reduce incidence of gas explosion.

"It is a major concern as usage of cooking gas is increasing on daily basis," he said.

CLASSIFIED

PUBLIC NOTICE

ILIAS OLUSHOLA OJOYE FOUNDATION

THIS IS TO INFORM THE GENERAL PUBLIC THAT THE ABOVE NAMED HAS APPLIED TO THE CORPORATE AFFAIRS COMMISSION (CAC), ABUJA FOR REGISTRATION UNDER PART 'F' OF COMPANIES AND ALLIED MATTERS ACT, (CAMA 2020).

TRUSTEES NAME

1. OJOYE IBRAHIM - Chairman
2. OJOYE IBIRONKE AKINTUNDE - Secretary

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- TO GIVE SCHOLARSHIP TO LESS-PRIVILEGED AND SMART STUDENTS IN HIGHER INSTITUTIONS.
- TO ADVOCATE FOR YOUTHS EMPOWERMENT AND EDUCATION.
- TO TRAIN YOUTHS IN THE AREA OF SELF-EMPOWERMENT.
- TO BUILD A SOLID PLATFORM AND FOUNDATION THAT ENCOURAGES TOGETHERNESS IN COMMUNITIES.
- TO CATER FOR THE WELFARE OF ITS MEMBERS NATIONWIDE.

ANY OBJECTION TO THE REGISTRATION SHOULD BE FORWARDED TO THE REGISTRAR-GENERAL CORPORATE AFFAIRS COMMISSION PLOT 420, TIGRIS CRESCENT OFF AGUIYI IRONS STREET MAITAMA ABUJA WITHIN 28 DAYS OF THIS PUBLICATION.

Signed: Secretary

Kano Residents Seek Improved Security amidst Emirship Tussle

Residents of the metropolitan Gwale, Dala, and Municipal Local Government Areas in Kano State have called on the State Police Command to deploy more operatives across the city and its environs to bolster security.

A cross section of the residents expressed their dismay and fear over the growing presence of thugs amidst the ongoing emirship tussle in the state.

They appealed to Gov. Abba Yusuf to establish a plausible comprehensive security network to address the situation, 'once and for all'.

Alhaji Abubakar Mohammad, a resident of Gwale Local Government Area, shared his personal experience of his wife being robbed by thugs on Sunday.

He appealed to the Commissioner of Police to deploy more security personnel to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Malam Abdulmuni Shehu of Dala Local Government Area and Hajiya Aishatu Abu of Dan Agundi area also called for increased security measures to address the tense security situation in the metropolis.

Dr Sani Zulyadain, a resident of Sagagi area, in Kano Municipal LGA, appealed to the state government to take drastic measures to end the activities of thugs terrorizing the innocent residents.

Malam Ishaku Ibrahim, another resident of Sagagi area, also appealed to Yusuf to intervene in the ongoing attacks by hoodlums.

The residents are calling for increased security measures, including foot patrols and the deployment of plain-clothes operatives, to apprehend the thugs, with a view to restoring peace to the community.

They emphasized that the activities of these criminal-minded youths posed a significant threat to the peace Kano had been enjoying before the onset of the emirship tussle.

Reacting, the Commissioner of Police, Usaini Gumel, assured the residents that the command was on top of the situation, adding, "we mapped out security measures to apprehend those involved."

"I am passionately appealing to all the law-abiding and peace-loving residents to volunteer timely and

credible information on the movement of hoodlums."

Also, the Commissioner for Information, Malam Baba Danteye, stated that the state government and the state security agencies were effectively synergising to bring all those behind the nefarious acts to book.

He said, "The Kano State Government is fully committed to supporting the Police and other state security agencies in their efforts to maintain peace and security in the state."

"We urge all the residents to join forces with us by reporting any suspicious activities or characters to the nearest security office, enabling prompt action to be taken."

FG Approves 500% Budget Increase for Disability Commission

The Federal Government has increased the 2024 budgetary allocation of the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD) by 500 per cent of what it received in 2023.

The Executive Secretary (ES) of the commission, James Lalu, disclosed this in an interview on Sunday in Abuja.

Lalu was speaking on how the disability community had fared in the one year administration of President Bola Tinubu.

"The administration of President Tinubu is truly committed to providing opportunities for People Living with Disabilities (PwDs).

"The commission has continued to receive all the necessary support from the administration to ensure that PwDs are carried along."

"Since the coming of the Renewed Hope administration, there are some deliberate initiatives the president put in place to improve access to governance and quality of service to persons with disabilities," he said.

Lalu recalled that, as soon as the President assumed office on May 29, 2023, he made a request on the instrument of reactivation of the African Union Protocol on Disability.

"The president did not waste time, he went ahead to sign the instrument, demonstrating Nigeria's commitment towards improving the quality of lives of PwDs which is part of the international treaty."

"As I am talking to you, Nigeria is a full-time member-state on issues of Disabilities regarding African Protocol on Disability," he said.

Lalu said Tinubu equally created the Office of the Special Assistant to the President on Disability Affairs to ensure that PwDs are carried along in governance.

"Just recently, there was approval from the President for the full enforcement of the Accessibility Law."

"This is a policy document, created primarily to provide standardisation for accessibility facilities for PwDs in public buildings and all the build environments as well as transportation."

"The National Commission for Persons with Disabilities at the moment is setting all the structures that are required for the full enforcement of these accessibility regulations."

"This is going to empower the Commission to monitor compliance, seal buildings and where necessary, invite erring parties or organisations."

"The commission is also empowered by the law to do investigation, prosecute and sanction, where appropriate," he said.

Lalu said it was based on the approved law by the President that sanction was meted to a KFC outlet at Murtala Muhammed International Airport, Lagos over alleged discriminatory treatment against a Passenger with Reduced Mobility at the airport.



From left: Registrar, National Examination Council, Prof. Ibrahim Wushishi; Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Education, Mrs Didi Walton-Jack; and Chairman, Senate Committee on Education Basic and Secondary, Sen. Lawal Adamu, during the monitoring of 2024 National Common Entrance Examination (NCEE) at the Government Day Secondary School, Wuse II, Abuja on Saturday. Photo: NAN

As Prices Soar, Nigerians Change Fashion Style

Nigerians are known for being fashionable, with fabrics tailor-made in classy designs, this is gradually changing due to increase in the prices of fashion accessories nationwide.

There has been a significant increase in the prices of tailoring materials.

A stop at the popular Oshodi Market, where both wholesalers and retailers usually get materials from, reveals that prices of items like thread, zipper, dull face, taffeta and Aba linings, increased by over 50 percent.

Dull face and Taffeta, which were sold for N500 and N800 respectively, now sell for N700 and N1100, while a pack of thread, which sold for 500, now sells for N800 to N1000 depending on the brand.

At the popular Idumota Market, which is home to both tailoring materials and varieties of trimmings, the price increase was not different from the other markets.

Some fashion designers expressed views on the impact of the increase in

tailoring materials.

Yvonne Ideho, the Creative Director, of Yvonne's Place, Ketu, Lagos, said the increase in prices had reduced the profit margin in clothes making.

Ideho said, "With this current situation in the country, the profit in clothes making is not what it used to be, compared with 2022 and early 2023."

"I don't over charge my customers, in order to remain in business which is better than not having any income," she said.

In the same vein, Omotola Gabriel, a fashion designer in Ikotun, said patronage in the last two months had reduced.

Gabriel, who owns Shiloh Stitches Fashion, specialising in female and male clothing, complained that the number of jobs she got in April and May was not encouraging, owing to the amount of bills she paid monthly.

"Business has not really been encouraging for some months, due to the increase in the prices of tailoring

accessories.

"Many customers, who sew up to five, seven clothes in a month, made only one or two outfits."

"Some of the customers I called to know why they had not made any outfit in the last few months, said they had more pressing needs to attend to."

"I am hopeful that things will get better in the country," she added.

Also, Joseph Azubuike, who also makes clothes for both sexes, noted that patronage from his female clients had reduced.

Azubuike, who runs a fashion business in his apartment in Igando, said the few female clients who patronise him now opt for styles with fewer charges.

Azubuike said, "My male clients still patronise me as a regular but I make more money sewing female outfits because of the styles involved."

"Now, my female customers prefer to sew simple styles like boubou that won't cost more than N5000, unlike

when I charged them N20,000 and even more based on the accessories on the dresses."

Meanwhile, Taiwo Oduwole, an accountant, said that she had reduced the number of clothes she made monthly.

According to Oduwole, her main priority is to ensure that her children are well fed and ensure their school fees are paid promptly.

"The last time I took any clothes to my tailor was four months ago because I used to like clothes with accessories, which cost between N15000 to N30000 to make."

"The cost of buying rice, garri and pepper to feed the home is my main objective right now, not sewing," she said.

Also, Yewande Adegunle, a Banker, said she no longer made sophisticated clothes because of the charges.

Adegunle said, "I still patronise my tailor but I do more of simple outfits these days."

POLITICS

Ijaw National Congress President Backs FG on L.G Autonomy

From Mike Tayese, Yenagoa

The President, Ijaw National Congress (INC), Prof. Benjamin Okaba has backed the federal government on the local government administrative autonomy.

Okaba made the declaration last Thursday at the "Presidential Retreat Warri 2024" convened by the Association of Professional Bodies of Nigeria (APBN), Delta State chapter.

The theme of the two day event which started on Thursday is: "Contemporary challenges in Nigeria: The Response of Professionals".

Okaba, who was a keynote speaker, noted that the local governments were more closer to the grassroots and knew the needs of the people.

"We should support the present Government to bring sanity into the Nigeria polity especially at the grassroots.

"Our local government areas must regain their fiscal and administrative autonomy as it was the case before 1999.

"We must embrace a well-coordinated community policing systems and other principles of restructuring for there lies the magic wand that will reposition this country for greater unity and prosperity," he said.

Okaba identified some of the fundamental challenges bedevilling the country to include: bad governance, weak institutions, lack of sense of Nationhood and ethical decadence.

The professor of Sociology at Federal University, Otueke, Bayelsa, however, noted that the challenges were surmountable.

He urged Nigerians irrespective of their status to be an agent of change, noting that the solution to the Nigeria challenges lied in our attitude and aptitude.

"Our love for this country should be demonstrated in our daily lives. It is patriotism that will impel us to put Nigeria first in all our dealings.

"So we should strive to undertake our professional duties diligently to the best of our abilities, without cutting corners.

"As a professional, you should see your work as a contribution to national development, knowing that any form of ineptitude from you will affect the client and the nation at large.

"We should love Nigeria to the extent that we will lead our organisations and subordinates well to achieve set objectives

"In doing so, we are adding value to the various social institutions that hold the country together.

"Let us see ourselves as social influencers and agents of positive change, by making transparency, accountability and stewardship our watchword in all our endeavors," he said.

Okaba urged the professional organisations to go beyond protecting the rights and interests of its members and monitored their conducts to meet the needs of the society.

My Five Years of Governance Challenging, Beautiful Experience - Ogun Gov

Kunle Idowu, Abeokuta

Ogun State Governor, Dapo Abiodun has described the past five years of his administration as challenging, saying his faith in God brought him the victory he desired.

Speaking during his 64th Birthday and 5th Year Thanksgiving Service held in his honour at the Ogun State Government House Chapel, Oke-Igbein, Abeokuta, yesterday, the governor recalled his journey to power despite all odds, attributing his victory to God Almighty.

He said: "The process through which I emerged as Governor was a very unusual one; one in which my predecessor who was in the same party with me was fighting me and campaigning for another person in another party, and I will sit down and ask myself, 'Baba God, this is very unusual, why do I have to go through so much to assume this office?' And then I will answer myself that it is because God wants to take that glory.

"The last five years of governance over the state of Ogun for me has been one of the most beautiful experiences of my life. It's been extremely turbulent, it's been very challenging, particularly, it has been rancorous. But the most important thing is that in all of this, God has given us victory."

Gov Abiodun said his government was taking giant steps to reshape the economy of the state and that the steps were yielding results.

One of such steps, according to him, is the plan to make Ogun an oil producing State, as the Ministry of Petroleum Resources would soon begin oil exploration in the state.

"Only on Friday, the leadership of the Ministry of Petroleum led by the Minister of State, Petroleum Resources (oil), Senator Heineken Lokpobiri, was here with three

others and the chairman of Shell to make an announcement that they would soon begin to drill oil in Ogun State," he said.

Abiodun also seized the opportunity to respond to comments by the governorship candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the last general election, Ladi Adebutu, on the Sagamu-Iperu road project.

Adebutu had criticised the 8-kilometer Sagamu-Iperu road project of the state government.

The governor said his focus was to continue the positive trajectory of the Gateway State and not to dwell on the

submission of a man who could not see the over 600km of roads across the length and breadth of Ogun State done by his administration.

Abiodun said he had learnt not to respond to people who had developed the habit of barking whenever they are no longer in the spotlight.

"I read on one of the papers that someone was saying that he was embarrassed that I was commissioning an 8-kilometre road, and a counterpart of mine was commissioning a 77-kilometer road," he said, adding that he had learnt not to respond to such ignorant remarks.



Abiodun

Atiku Calls for Political Solution to Kanu Issue, Condemns Soldiers' Killing in Abia

By Johnson Eyangho, Abuja

Following the violence that led to the killing of some soldiers in Abia State on Thursday, former Vice-president Atiku Abubakar, has called for political solution to the Nnamdi Kanu and other associated issues as part of efforts to ensure peace in the south east.

Atiku condemned the killing of the soldiers and some civilians during a sit-at-home organised by the Indigenous People

of Biafra (IPOB) to remember millions of Igbos killed during the 1967-1970 civil war.

The former Vice-president said on his X handle on Friday, "To this end, without prejudice to the ongoing legal processes, I think the time has come to explore a political resolution to the Nnamdi Kanu and other associated issues. I believe that this will diffuse the compressor cooker situation in the region. It will be a win-win for all parties."

He sympathised with the families of soldiers and civilians killed during the the violence, adding "even more profound is the impact of yesterday's sit-at-home in the Southeast region of our country on students writing WAEC examinations".

"The veil of the so-called unknown gunmen hiding under cover to unleash death and mayhem must be lifted to ensure that criminal elements are separated from legitimate agitators.

Impeached C'River Speaker Reinstated

The Cross River House of Assembly has reinstated its Speaker, Elvert Anyambem, who was recently impeached on grounds of high-handedness and financial impropriety.

During the assembly's sitting on Tuesday, Cyril Omini, representing Yakurr I constituency, moved a motion passing a vote of confidence on the speaker, which was supported by Kingsley Ntui, representing Etung constituency.

It would be recalled that 17 out of the 25 members of the assembly signed the notice to impeach the speaker.

The members alleged that the speaker

indulged in arbitrary expenditures in contravention of Section 9(1) of the state's Legislative Funds Management Law, 2021.

Governor Bassey Otu, on Monday, announced that he has brokered peace in the state assembly.

Otu, who made the announcement in a statement by his Chief Press Secretary, Nsa Gil, said that normalcy had returned in the house.

"I had a closed-door meeting with all the twenty-five members of the assembly on Sunday night.

"They all unambiguously agreed to restore normalcy and maintain the status

quo with Elvert Ayambem remaining as their speaker, the statement read in parts.

Also, in a statement in Calabar on Monday, Ayambem had commended Otu for wading into the recent crisis in the assembly.

In the statement signed by his Media Aide, Mathew Okache, the speaker commended Otu for showing extraordinary leadership prowess in the face of the challenge

"I pledge my cooperation and commitment towards the growth and progress of both the assembly and the state as a whole," the statement read.

By Ubong Ukpong, Abuja

There is no gainsaying the fact that the first year in office of Governor Umaru Dikko Radda of Katsina state has recorded huge successes in the fight against banditry, kidnapping as well as witnessed adorable development in the state.

Evidently, it could be seen that the state is becoming more calm, safer and even road travel is becoming friendly and interesting, just as there are visible development all over the places.

Interaction with some locals and travellers confirmed the testimonies of the Governor in a world press conference that there were nothing to worry about visiting or residing in Katsina, as government has taken charge of the situation and was making the place comfortable for all.

Almost every motor park you go to in Abuja and environs, you find Katsina-bound vehicles fully loaded to travel through Zaria- Funtua road or Kano to Katsina.

The travellers and drivers alike corroborate the postulations of government that it was however advised not to set out on your journey too early or too late, just by way of caution, as the criminals often attempt to take advantage of lonely moments especially in certain ungoverned areas.

As for the war, the Commissioner of Information in the state said it has been won by over 70 percent, giving the new strategies employed by the Governor's team.

The Governor himself, disclosed that having been a victim of the banditry, where his elder brother was killed leaving three wives and 27 children in pains, he would stop at nothing to wipeout these bandits address criminality in the state.

"We came in last year confronted with multiple issues, especially the burning issue of insecurity. We concluded that we must do something, as a state, not just fold our arms because security is under the control and sole responsibility of the federal government.

"As a governor, I cannot just fold my hands and allow criminals to kill my people daily. I must do something to support what the federal government is doing to reduce the incidence of insecurity in the state.

"When we took over, about 23 LGAs were categorised into two frontline areas. Eight of the number were the vulnerable ones and they were border front-line local governments.

"Insecurity has gotten to places like Charanchi, Ingawa, Bindawa, and Kankia LGAs and moving into others but, as Almighty Allah will have it, when we came on board, we set up a local security outfit that has reduced it drastically. The battle has now shifted down to the frontline LGAs with only, maybe one or two, vulnerable ones that are affected in one way or the other from time to time.

"Their tactics have changed from coming as they want, and molesting people as they want to carrying out almost 90 per cent of those attacks at night and in very hard-to-reach areas that take security agents about two to three hours. They are now in very bad terrains.

"We have taken the battle with them to the next level. We have organised an operation in all the eight LGAs where the security agencies are attacking the bandits instead of waiting for them to attack. What we have done in months and still appraising our performances and assessing the operation to see the success before we strategise on the next stage which I don't have to mention the details of our plans.

"We have actually lost several people and several properties. This keeps occurring, the system, terrain, and strategy look almost the same. The security agents will need to study and do something different from what we used to do before. We had a series of security meetings which I don't want to disclose, but we are also working toward eliminating the issues to the barest minimum.

"We have been calling and seeking the synergy and collaboration of security agencies that have the most superior fighting power that can match what the bandits have. A few days ago, we had a bandit attack. They used a rocket propeller which hit one of our APC vehicles and made it to somersault. But, with the intervention of the security agencies we were able to restore calm, recover the vehicle, and rescue the personnel.

"The war is not as easy as people think. It is a very difficult battle in which you don't know



Radda's First Year Records Successes in War Against Bandits, Devt

which is your friend and enemy. You don't even know if you are sleeping with an enemy in your house. Whatever strategy we put in place the people in the bush may get the information in 30 minutes or one hour before us.

"That is what makes the war difficult. I remember our guest speaker recently, Patrick Lumumba said that everybody needs to be a policeman. It is only when all of us are police that we can provide valuable information that can make the war against banditry and criminality easier to control. However, the situation has not stopped us from pursuing some developmental projects or the benefits of the people of Katsina state", the Governor stated.

He spoke on What have been the challenges and unfulfilled targets of his one year in office.

"In our last council meeting, I told the members that we had not done enough because I thought by now the security would have improved much more than this. But, I can understand the challenges. I don't want to be carried away by what we have been able to achieve in the first year because I am looking ahead. This is not what I wanted Katsina to be. I had set for myself a very high expectation.

"I am working to match those expectations, but my major target as governor is always to make sure that the right person gets the right thing. That is why I moved away from the era of lobbying, political consideration, and favouritism to making sure that my approach to governance is to reach out to the people at the bottom of the pyramid.

"I was so happy when we had the farewell event for the 41 students that we took to Egypt to do their MBA. They came from public schools, the children of the poor without the influence of one individual in this state. They got the opportunity based only on merit. They sat for the examinations and got the scholarship.

"Why we did that was to give opportunity to everyone or anybody who wants to take his child to a public school. Their children will have the capacity to study anywhere in the world. We are targeting those who cannot take their children to private school because they can only afford public school. They are children of the poor and the opportunity was for everybody because we allow every LGA to produce the best they have.

"When we recruited teachers in the state, I did not allow any member of my cabinet or Assembly to manipulate or influence decisions over who should be shortlisted. We allowed

them to sit for the examination and everybody was given equal opportunity to get permanent and pensionable appointments.

"Immediately after my swearing-in, I dissolved all the Permanent Secretaries and made them write examinations. If I can start from the top, everyone from the lower level should sit up because we are not here for a joke. That was one of my happiest moments at that time of my administration.

"The saddest one was receiving calls that 20 people were killed at a place and their houses burnt. Some of their women were raped and some were kidnapped. The only way you can appreciate their pain is to place yourself in their position. The news will make one fall ill, especially myself who has already developed feelings because my elder brother was killed by the bandits.

"He was the same father and same mother as me. He left behind 27 children and three wives. I don't think there is any citizen of the state in one way or the other whose relative or somebody close to them has not been affected by the activities of the bandits. That does not only give us good sleep but also reduces our appetite. Sometimes, I feel why I should be here when people are killed and I can't do anything.

"That formed the debate for the state police. Before I became the Governor, I was one of the harshest critics of state police, but I have seen the need for it and I have seen the efforts the Katsina State Community Watch Corps is making toward tackling the insecurity.

"It was utmost courage, determination, and sincerity that informed my decision to call on the President to make sure that any police officers from the rank of the ASP should be posted to his state of origin. Any military officer at the junior level should also be posted to their state of origin.

"They will protect the lives of their people because they are their relatives, brothers, or sisters. If they like, let them allow people to kill them. The deployment will motivate people because they have everything at stake. I think the debate of the state police is apt now.

"I keep wondering when people say that the state governors are going to manipulate state security apparatus to oppress their opponents. I wonder whether they were not in Nigeria when former President Jonathan, with all the security agencies, lost the election.

"If they say that an elected governor is going to manipulate and use state apparatus against his

opponent, what makes Mr. President a saint not to do it when he has control of all at the federal level? It is about leadership, responsibility, doing the right thing and at the right time. A leader should be guided by the laws and the constitution of Nigeria. No fear or favour.

"We swore by that, it is the responsibility of the leader to use the apparatus appropriately for the benefit of the nation. If you use the state police against the opponent as a governor today, when you are out of office tomorrow your opponent will use it against you too. So, why can't you do the right thing? It is about responsibility and having responsible leaders.

"We must address the issue of insecurity squarely. As a country, the government must deploy technology in the fight against insecurity. What stops us from having a coordinated joint operation, from being proactive instead of reactive, why should we wait until they attack us before we retaliate, why can't we launch attacks on a selective target? Why can't we use drones, area surveillance, and trackers to defeat these people?

"Fighting insecurity requires some level of strength. We have to show capacity in fighting insecurity before the people can relax. When there are issues of lack of coordination, it makes it difficult to control them. As a government, there should be a clear and supportive approach between the national and sub-national governments.

"If they want to address the governors, they call them the chief security officers of the state, but in reality, we are not because we don't control. We must address this holistically to have peace and development. The developments at these frontline LGAs have been destroyed by these bandits and it is retrogressing the state. We are channeling so many resources to help those affected. Inflation is not also helping matters."

The governor is not just fighting the bandits, but also those sponsoring and collaborating with them, even within his government, and exposing those suspected government officials involved in banditry activities.

"I hold the security agencies in high esteem because they too are being killed daily in their pursuit to curb the insecurity in the state. But the point is, there is no set category of people who are not involved in this. What are we hiding here? Who was not arrested? Different categories of people were arrested on allegations of being involved in banditry, criminality, and many other vices even here in Katsina.

Kano Emirate: Lagos NNPP Hails Yusuf over Sanusi's Re- enthronement

The Lagos State chapter of the New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP) on Friday applauded Gov. Abba Yusuf of Kano State for his efforts at preserving the cultural heritage of the ancient state.

The State's Publicity Secretary of the Party, Mr Richard Benson, who gave the commendation in a statement in Lagos, said that re-enthronement of the former CBN Governor Sanusi Lamido Sanusi as the 15th Emir of Kano was noteworthy in keeping the tradition sacred.

Benson also applauded Sen. Rabiu Kwankwaso, the former governor of the state and 2023 Presidential Candidate of the NNPP, for his efforts at ensuring preservation of tradition.

"We, the New Nigeria People's Party, Lagos State chapter, hereby commend the effort of the amiable Governor of Kano Abba Yusuf, and our indefatigable National Leader Sen. Rabiu Kwankwaso and the entire House of Assembly of Kano in ensuring that the cultural heritage of the people is preserved based on truth.

"This is what was just exhibited in Kano to prove that the cultural heritage of the ancient city of Kano is preserved and the generality of the people are happy to see their tradition and core values are intact," he said.

The spokesman added that Kano State had begun to experience a drastic change in governance due to the unwavering commitment of the state governor.

According to him, the development being witnessed clearly shows the pro-activeness of the governor and the National Leader, Kwankwaso.

"We are delighted with the efforts to restore and preserve the values, traditions and heritage of the people as well as the commitment to put everything back in place and restore the lost glory of the ancient city of Kano," he added.

Benson said that some politicians were playing politics with the core traditions and cultural heritage of the people to score cheap political points.

He said that the chapter was still looking forward to seeing more progress entering Kano, the only state being controlled by NNPP.

He urged all the NNPP gladiators in the state including, Yusuf, Kwankwaso and the Kano State House of Assembly to collectively work to make the state an example to other states.

Yusuf on May 23 signed the amended Kano State Emirates Council bill into law.

The bill, which was passed by the Kano State House of Assembly few hours earlier, dissolved the Emirate Council and sacked the five Emirs appointed by his predecessor, Gov. Abdullahi Ganduje.

Yusuf also approved the return of Sanusi, former Kano Emir, who was deposed in 2020, to the seat.

The abrogated Kano State Emirates Council Law 2019 signed by the then-Gov. Abdullahi Umar Ganduje, had created five Emirates – Kano, Bichi, Rano, Gaya and Karaye.

The state government, on March 9, 2020, dethroned Sanusi, citing insubordination and was replaced by Aminu Ado Bayero.

The re-enthronement of Sanusi has marked a new chapter in the history of the Kano Emirate, but not without some court orders and counter orders against the development.



New Ambassador of the Republic of Philippines to Nigeria, Mersole Mellejor inspecting Guard of Honour by the Guards Brigade, Nigerian Army during his presentation of Letter of Credence to President Bola Tinubu at the Presidential Villa in Abuja on Friday. Photo: NAN

NASS to Mediate Between FG, Labour to Avert Industrial Action

By Eze Okechukwu, Abuja

The National Assembly has concluded plans to wade into the imbroglio between the Federal Government and Organised Labour, with a view to averting the industrial action due to commence today.

Nass said its decision to intervene followed the deadlock between the federal government and the Labour Unions in agreeing on a new national minimum wage and the reversal of the recent hike in electricity tariffs.

The National Assembly stressed that both parties have tenable reasons for their respective positions.

A statement issued yesterday and

jointly signed by the spokesperson of the Senate, Senator Yemi Adaramodu and the spokesperson of the House, Akin Rotimi revealed that the President of the Senate, Senator Godswill Akpabio, and Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon. Abbas Tajudeen, would be taking proactive steps to mediate and avert the impending industrial action.

The legislative arm was of the opinion that the strike action would have severe repercussions on the populace and economy, thus it decided to wade into the imbroglio.

It said: "The National Assembly acknowledges the announcement by Organised Labour, including the

Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and Trade Union Congress (TUC), to commence an indefinite strike action from Monday, June 3, 2024, nationwide.

"In view of this, the National Assembly Leadership and the Chairmen of the Senate and House Committees on Labour, Employment and Productivity respectively, Senator Diket Plang, and Rep. Adegboyega Adefarati, are looking to engage both parties in constructive dialogue and explore a variety of solutions in addressing the issues at hand."

It added that the 10th National Assembly was committed to ensuring that the interests of all parties are fairly represented.

We Stand on Rivers Interest First — Fubara

Governor Siminalayi Fubara of Rivers has said that his administration will continue to prioritise the interest of people of the state under the mantra: 'Rivers First'.

Fubara made the remark during the praise night organised on Friday by the state government to mark his first year in office, in Port Harcourt.

The governor, represented by his deputy, Prof. Ngozi Odu, solicited the support of the people, in moving the state forward.

He urged the people to contribute their quota to assist the administration to achieve its vision of advancing the fortunes of the state.

The governor prayed that God would

continue to move mountains on the path of the state, and make it better.

Fubara noted with happiness the spiritual ministrations and prophetic declarations by artistes during the event.

He said that they were manifestations of the victory which God had sealed in the state.

"We shall continue to have this shared vision of putting Rivers state first, but we can't do it alone.

"We need all of you, big and small, to be there for us, to chip in the little or the much you can, and at the end of this our first tenure, you will see where God will take Rivers state to."

Fubara thanked everyone who graced

the occasion, especially the artistes, for the performances which included singing and dancing.

"I think there were spiritual ministrations that they have made, and they have also made prophetic declarations that we all said amen to," he said.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the event featured praise and worship songs in appreciation to God for the first year of Fubara.

Among the dignitaries who graced the occasion were the governor's wife, Lady Valarie Fubara; former Gov. Peter Odili and his wife, retired Justice Mary Odili; and Rivers State Chief Judge, Justice Simeon Amadi.

Ascent Speedily to Bill on HIV, AID's Discrimination in Kogi – INGRA Begs Ododo

The Initiative for Grassroot Advancement in Nigeria, INGRA, has appealed to Governor Ahmed Usman Ododo to urgently ascent to the bill for a law to provide for the prevention, of HIV and AIDs based discrimination and protection of the rights and dignity of people living with and affected by the disease in Kogi State.

The Executive Director of INGRA, Hamza Aliyu made the appeal in a statement during.

Aliyu noted that the law will give persons living with HIV and AIDS in Kogi State respite from the deluge of discrimination that they have faced over the years in the state.

“The Bill objectives are to prevent the acquisition of the virus, HIV and its disease, AIDS, as well as its spread in cases where the virus had already been acquired, as well as to eliminate discrimination and protect the rights and dignity of those living with or affected by the virus or its disease” he added.

On the recent public hearing of the bill organized by the Kogi State House of Assembly Joint Committee on Health and Justice/Judicial Matters, Aliyu averred that the hearing, which is a constitutional requirement for all proposed legislation, is another confirmation that the present Kogi State House of Assembly led by Rt. Hon. Umar Aliyu is capacitated and in tune with the yearnings of the citizens, especially the most vulnerable in society.

Aliyu said, “This is what good governance should be about. We also wish to appreciate the Chairmen of the Committees on Health and Justice for their efforts in bringing about this engagement. Again, this would have been impossible without the inputs from stakeholders including the Civil Society, Religious and Traditional institutions in the State”

He appreciated the Speaker's democratic predisposition to ensure that the voices of the people are heard in laws that affect them.

The bill passed through first readings on the floor of the Kogi State House of Assembly on Wednesday, April 24th, 2024.

It was further learnt that the Second Reading of the Bill was done on the 7th of May 2024.

The Bill which is sponsored by Bin Ebaiya Shehu Tijjani, the member representing Lokoja I State Constituency, was supported by the Initiative for Grassroot Advancement in Nigeria, INGRA, and the AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF) Nigeria/International.



NAFDAC Warns against Use of Deadly 'Sniper' for Food Preservation

The National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) on Sunday warned Nigerians against the hazardous practice of using dangerous chemicals to preserve food items.

The Agency specifically emphasised on the dangers associated with dichlorvos, a chemical commonly utilised by traders to safeguard food from spoilage.

The Director General of the agency, Prof Mojisola Adeyeye who issued the stern warning in a press statement explained that the sale of small volume dichlorvos (100 ml or less), sold as Sniper® has been banned since 2019 while the sale of the large volume (one litre) is limited to certified agrochemicals outlets.

The NAFDAC Director General underscores the toxicity of dichlorvos to human health, cautioning that its use can have fatal consequences.

Responding to a viral video showing individuals using dangerous chemicals to preserve food items like beans, stockfish, and crayfish, the Adeyeye, urged traders and merchants to desist from using unauthorised chemicals on food meant for human consumption.

“The misuse of dichlorvos poses significant risks to human health, manifesting in both short-term and long-term consequences. Long-term exposure can result in severe health implications, including developmental abnormalities in offspring,

memory loss, reduced fertility, and potential carcinogenic effects.

“These adverse effects highlight the importance of adhering to safety guidelines to mitigate the risks associated with dichlorvos exposure,” she said.

Adeyeye emphasized alternative methods for preserving food, mentioning the use of bio-pesticides as a safer option compared to dichlorvos.

She noted that food remaining unspoiled for an extended period might indicate pesticide contamination rather than freshness, unless stored in the refrigerator.

In addition to the banning of the 100 ml size bottle as stated above, the Director

General disclosed that NAFDAC has implemented several initiatives such as stakeholders' sensitization meetings on restricting the direct application of dichlorvos on grains and foodstuffs and thorough laboratory testing to ensure pesticide residues do not exceed maximum limits for both in-country consumption and for exports.

She also added that routine monitoring of stakeholders is also conducted to ensure compliance.

Adeyeye highlighted continued NAFDAC's commitment to global best practices, including the phase-out of certain pesticides that have been banned in other countries due to proven toxicity.

Expert Calls for Implementation of Policies on Tobacco Consumption

A Clinical Psychologist, Adedotun Ajiboye, said the Federal Government needs to implement policies and programmes that reduce tobacco consumption and protect citizens from exposure to tobacco smoke.

Ajiboye who works with the Ekiti State University Teaching Hospital, Ado Ekiti, said this in an interview on Sunday in Abuja.

He was speaking against the backdrop of the World No Tobacco Day 2024 marked annually on May 31 with the theme “Protecting Children from the Tobacco Industry Interference.”

Ajiboye said tobacco was one of the top single greatest causes of preventable deaths globally.

He said smoking could lead to Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), cancer of the lungs, larynx, and mouth

pancreatic cancer; and hypertension.

Ajiboye said the Nicotine in cigarettes could lead to addiction or substance use disorder adding that tobacco was a significant cause of miscarriages among pregnant smokers.

He said smoking was a key factor in causing erectile dysfunction, adding that tobacco smoking led most commonly to disease affecting the heart, liver, lungs, etc.

“Based on the health effects revealed above, the government has a huge role to play in reducing preventable deaths caused by tobacco by implementing policies and programmes that reduce tobacco consumption.

Ajiboye suggested some key roles of government to include tobacco taxation, by raising taxes on tobacco products to make

them less affordable and reduce consumption.

He said the government should enact laws that prohibit smoking in public places, workplaces, and public transportation, and implement standards for tobacco products, such as warning labels and ingredient disclosure.

Ajiboye said that there should also be awareness campaigns to educate the public about the dangers of tobacco use and providing resources and support for individuals trying to quit tobacco.

“There should be youth access restrictions by enacting laws to prevent the sale of tobacco products to minors.

“There should be monitoring and surveillance by the government through collection of data on tobacco use and related health effects to inform policy decisions.

Stakeholders Call for Comprehensive Approach to Address Substance Abuse

The Lagos State Stakeholders Dialogue, held at the Youth Centre, Ikeja, Lagos at the weekend, emphasized the need for a comprehensive approach to address substance abuse, recognizing it as a medical problem requiring a compassionate response rather than a moral or economic issue.

The dialogue, organized by YOUTHRISE Nigeria, with the theme “Beyond the Surface: Responding to Substance Use among Young People,” brought together experts and stakeholders to address the growing concern of substance abuse among primary and secondary school pupils.

Dr. Banjo Adesoji, a Consultant Psychiatrist at the General Hospital, Ikorodu, likened the situation of substance abuse by youths to a burning building, stating that the focus had been on the wrong aspect.

“We have been focusing on the substance and economic aspects, rather than addressing it as a medical problem. This is why we only see a fraction of the cases, usually when they become severe. Substance abuse is a medical problem, not an economic one,” he said.

Adesoji therefore advised parents and school administrators to be more aware of their children’s behavior and surroundings. “Parents should know their children’s triggers, and school administrators should do a better job of monitoring their environment. Many children are introduced to substances through vendors around schools,” he stated.

Director of Research and Training and Head, Drug Addiction Treatment Unit, Federal Neuropsychiatric Hospital, Aro, Abeokuta, Ogun State, Dr. Sunday Amosu, highlighted signs and symptoms of drug use that parents should look out for, including behavioral changes, unusual possessions, and physical signs like red eyes and darkened lips. “For instance, if a child who is gentle and easy-going suddenly becomes aggressive, you need to suspect drugs. A child who once sat with you to watch television suddenly gets home and stays indoors alone may be having a drug issue,” he said.

Amosu also advised parents to be vigilant and look for signs such as matches, lighters, needles, and syringes in their child’s room, as well as changes in behavior and physical appearance. “If you notice your child bathing several times and using anything that contains menthol to mask any smell, that child is likely to be using drugs. When you notice expensive things are missing in the house, it is a pointer that somebody is using drugs,” he stated.

The Zonal Commander, Zone ‘H’ National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), emphasized the agency’s efforts in advocating against substance abuse through public enlightenment campaigns, community outreach programs, and school-based initiatives. “NDLEA’s advocacy targets specific groups, including youths, women, and communities affected by substance abuse, aiming to raise awareness and promote a compassionate response. We try to talk to their conscience to identify that they are first in the problem. They have to accept the fact that if they abuse drugs, it is first an individual thing, before it becomes a societal issue,” he said.

Younger Generations, Seeing Their Periods Earlier – Study

Researchers at the Harvard Teaching Hospital Chan School of Public Health have led a new study that showed a decline in the average age at menarche, or the first menstrual period, among younger generations, particularly those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and racial minorities.

It also discovered that the menstrual cycle was becoming more regular on average.

Open is the most recent report from the Apple Women’s Health Study, a long-term investigation by Harvard Chan School, the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, and Apple into menstrual cycles, gynaecological diseases, and general women’s health.

Co-principal investigator Shruthi Mahalingaiah said: “Our findings can lead to a better understanding of menstrual health across the lifespan and how our lived environment impacts this critical vital sign, Mahalingaiah is an assistant professor of environmental, reproductive, and women’s health at Harvard Chan School.

While previous studies have shown trends towards earlier menarche over the past five decades, data has been limited on how these trends present within different racial groups and socioeconomic statuses.

Additionally, few studies have had sufficient data to identify any trends regarding time to menstrual cycle regularity. The researchers

used the Apple Women’s Health Study’s large, diverse dataset to fill this research gap. Participants who enrolled in the study between November 2018 and March 2023 — 71,341 in total — self-reported the age at which they first began menstruating and their race and socioeconomic status.

The researchers divided the participants into five age brackets: born between 1950-1969, 1970-1979, 1980-1989, 1990-1999, and 2000-2005. Ages of menarche were defined as early (younger than 11 years old), very early (younger than 9), and late (ages 16 and above).

The study found that as birth year increased (meaning younger participants), average age at menarche decreased and time from menarche to menstrual cycle regularity increased. Among participants born from 1950-1969, the average age at menarche was 12.5 years, and the rates of early and very early menarche were 8.6 percent and 0.6 percent, respectively.

Among participants born from 2000-2005, the average age of menarche was 11.9 years, and the rates of early and very early menarche were 15.5 percent and 1.4 percent, respectively.

Across the two groups, the percentage of participants who reached menstrual cycle regularity within two years of menarche decreased from 76 percent to 56 percent.

The researchers observed that these trends were present among all sociodemographic groups but were most pronounced among the participants who identified as Black, Hispanic, Asian, or mixed race, and who rated themselves as belonging to a low socioeconomic status.

The findings showed that BMI at age of menarche could explain part of the trend toward periods starting earlier — in other words, that childhood obesity, a risk factor for early puberty, could be a contributing factor to earlier menarche.

Other possible factors that might explain the trend include dietary patterns, psychological stress and adverse childhood experiences, and environmental factors such as endocrine-disrupting chemicals and air pollution.

“Continuing to investigate early menarche and its drivers is critical,” said corresponding author Zifan Wang, postdoctoral research fellow in Harvard Chan School’s Department of Environmental Health.

“Early menarche is associated with higher risk of adverse health outcomes, such as cardiovascular disease and cancer. To address these health concerns — which our findings suggest may begin to impact more people, with disproportionate impact on already disadvantaged populations — we need much more investment in menstrual health research.”



Lagos Offers Free Medical Care to 50,000 Residents

Lagos State Government during the weekend disclosed that its on-going outreach will reach not less than 50,000 residents, to cushion the effect of the economic hardship in Lagosians.

The outreach, tagged ‘Alafia Eko’, which commenced Saturday, will cover six health districts, with specific locations for each.

The state government also announced that the second outreach will begin by June 6 and that each health district will host four outreach events in the first phase.

The Special Advisor to the Governor on Health, Dr Kemi Ogunyemi, who gave insight into the significance of the initiative, also said that each event would target 1,000 citizens, totalling approximately 25,000 individuals for the first phase.

Ogunyemi said: “The whole essence of this is to ensure that all the citizens in Lagos get access to affordable and quality healthcare. With all the economic hardship that we felt was going on months ago, Mr Governor spoke

to his cabinet, which included me, to find out ways in which we can help our citizens and make things a little bit easier for them.

“So we came up with Eko Cares, which consists of Onje Eko, which started a few months ago.

“Then the Ministry of Health came up with Alafia Eko because we realised that drugs were getting more expensive, people were staying at home, and they couldn’t afford to even come to the doctors.



Couple Appeals for Support to Raise Quadruplets

A civil servant, Ugochukwu Nwogute and his wife, Vivian have appealed to the First Lady, Sen. Oluremi Tinubu and well-meaning Nigerians for support in raising their quadruplets.

The couple, who gave birth to the four babies in a private hospital in Kubwa, Abuja on May 21, made the appeal in an interview on Sunday in Abuja.

Speaking in the hospital, Nwogute said she got married in 2015 and had her first daughter on Nov. 5, 2016.

“After years of waiting, I became pregnant in Sept. 2023 and was delivered of three boys and one girl through caesarean section at Vinca hospital, Arab Road, Kubwa, Abuja, on May 21.

“When I was told I was going to have multiple babies, it was a mixed feeling for me.

“Mixed feelings, because I was not expecting it, but was happy because we have waited for years after our first daughter. So, we were hoping for God and praying and God did more than we expected,” she said.

She added that the hospital billed them about N1.7 million in the first instance, which they were still running around to pay.

“The babies eat two hourly, they consume almost half of their Pre NAN formula which we were asked to feed them with, and a tin costs N10, 000.

“We also have follow ups because the paediatrician said after we have been discharged, we are expected to be bringing the babies to the hospital weekly for checkup,” she said

On the babies’ health, Nwogute said that they were responding to treatment, adding that her recovery was gradual.

“I am getting stronger because I have relapses. For example, last night I was cold all through and I have treated malaria and because of that, I cannot breastfeed my babies the way I am expected to,” she said.

The husband appealed to the government to come to their aid, financially and in the area of accommodation for a bigger apartment that can be convenient for the family.

“The journey has not been easy, taking care of a heavily pregnant woman and the only daughter we had eight years back.

Women Recount Economic Challenges at Homes

Some Nigerian women have narrated the huge economic challenges confronting them in sustaining homes.

The women expressed their views in separate interviews in Lagos on Sunday.

A Mother of four, Abiola Dipeolu, said that presently, the family spent a lot of money to keep the home going.

Dipeolu said that when she newly got married, she usually saved some money from the monthly allowance she received from her husband.

She said that the reverse was the case now, saying that what she received as feeding allowance hardly sustained the family for two weeks.

“I have to wake up as early as 4.00 a.m. to begin the hustle for the day and close by 6.00 p.m.

“Marriage is boring and uninteresting because the time for husband and wife to be together has been put into hustling” she said.

A Mother of three, Ronke Adu, said that she could not remember the last time she got financial support from her husband.

Adu said that the financial responsibilities had been shared and each of them took up his or her responsibilities.

She said that the present economic challenges had rendered some husbands mere figure heads in spite of the energy they put up on a daily basis to make ends meet.

She noted that she had to do menial jobs like sweeping of compounds, cooking soup for the elderly and home cleaning on a daily basis to make ends meet.

Expressing her views, a Mother of two, Busayo Adamolekun, said that she was a fashion designer by profession but when the reality dawned on her, she dropped her working tools and ventured into food selling.

Adamolekun said that food was one of the businesses now thriving.

She said her husband had to join the food

business and closed his business centre because he no longer received patronage.

She said that some women took up the main financial expenses at homes, while their husbands only rendered support.

A Civil Servant and a Mother of three, China Okeke, said that it was a pity that the economy turned this way.

Okeke suggested that managing the home financially needed prudence.

She explained that the take-home pay was not enough.

A Grandmother and Pastor, Adefunke Clement, said that many women came to the church for financial help.

Clement said that there was no day a woman would not come to the church soliciting for a meal.

She said that before now, the church used to have philanthropists who donated voluntarily, saying that now the church authorities had to announce before getting few donations.



Police Foiled Attempt to Invade Kano APC Chairman's Residence – Statement

The Police Command in Kano says it foiled an attempt by suspected thugs to invade the residence of Prince Abdullahi Abbas, Chairman of state's chapter of the All Progressives Congress (APC).

A statement by its spokesman, Abdullahi Kiyawa, said on Sunday in Kano that on May 31, at around 6 p.m, a distress call was received from Chiranchi junction in Gwale Local Government Area of the state.

“It was reported that the thugs, armed with dangerous weapons, were pelting people with stones and attempting to enter the APC chairman's house.

A team led by the Divisional Police

Officer, Gwale Division, responded swiftly and foiled the attempted invasion, restoring normalcy to the area.

He said that no arrest was made but investigation had revealed that the incident was a fight between two rival gangs, with the masterminds identified as Abdul'Yassar, Alias Jonny, Birbiri and Jinjiri Aljan.

Kiyawa said that efforts to apprehend the suspects were in progress.

“A round-the-clock patrol has been launched in the area to prevent further disturbances.

“The police are working tirelessly to ensure the safety and security of all citizens

in Kano State and this swift and decisive action is a testament to their commitment to protecting the community,” he said.

He assured the residents that the command was on top of the security situation

“We have mapped out security measures to enable residents to move on with their legitimate activities without threats to lives and property.

“We are appealing to all law-abiding and peace-loving residents to volunteer timely and credible information on the movement of suspected characters in their midst for prompt security action,” he added.



OPINION

Nemesis as Short Distance Runner



Emir-Sanusi

By Tunde Olusunle

When he flung Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, (SLS) out of the window of the Emir's palace in Kano four years ago, Abdullahi Ganduje would have least imagined what is playing out today. Ganduje was the "Lord of the Manor" in Kano State, the all-powerful chief executive. Recall video clips of Ganduje allegedly stuffing wads and packs of crisp, mint-fresh dollar bills into the bottomless pocket of his "babanriga" ahead of the 2019 general elections.

They were reportedly gifted to him by some contractor ally of the erstwhile Kano governor who was repaying a good turn. Graphic and unassailable as that short motion picture was, former President Muhammadu Buhari who rode into office on the camelback of now suspect integrity in 2015, volunteered a baffling defence for Ganduje.

He swore Ganduje was most probably participating in a "Kannywood" movie, the way the film industry up North is described. Buhari, who has never been known to operate a tablet, nor a notepad, suggested that advanced technology could actually simulate what we all saw in that short clip!

Ganduje was the prototype "alagbara ma mero" as we say in Yoruba. This interpretes as the "maximally muscular, minimally reasonable." He fought a few other prominent Kano leaders during his heydays in Government House. Recall he carried his unabated squabbles with one of his predecessors, Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso to the State House, Aso Villa, during the early weeks of the Bola Tinubu government. Told on one occasion that Kwankwaso was in a particular section of Aso Rock at the same time as he was in the complex, a vexed Ganduje said Kwankwaso should consider himself fortunate. He said Ganduje would have slapped Kwankwaso if he sighted him in the Villa! That

would have caused a scene in Nigeria's seat of power. I'm now just imagining how Tinubu would be trying to restrain Ganduje, in the forecourt of the office of the President, while Vice President Kashim Shettima will be pulling at Kwankwaso's *agbada* in a bid to manage the situation.

Ganduje reportedly considered Sanusi too independent-minded and outspoken for a natural ruler. Sanusi was governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, (CBN), before being appointed Emir in 2014. He had always had a radical streak about him which culminated in his suspension as CBN head in 2014 for blowing the whistle on the theft of \$20 Billion in accruals from crude oil sales. As Emir he considered aspects of the religious and cultural practices of his emirate repugnant. He opposed the "ultra-conservative interpretation of Islam" in some parts of northern Nigeria, which discouraged girl-child education, family planning, even inoculation against potential healthcare afflictions. He had reservations about the style of Ganduje as governor and didn't put a veil over his dislike for the return of Ganduje to Government House in 2019.

He believed Ganduje shouldn't have made it back if the poll was fairly and transparently conducted. March 9, 2020, Ganduje upended Sanusi. He was accused of negatively impacting the sanctity, culture, tradition, religion and prestige of the Kano emirate, and disrespecting the governor's office.

He was also alleged to have disposed of property belonging to the state and misappropriated the proceeds. It was a case of digging several manholes for a prey in a bid to ensure he falls into one of the several traps. He was summarily banished to Nasarawa State for effect.

Sanusi sought reprieve in the courts which ruled it was an overkill to fling him to a remote community far away from his family and more accustomed home in Lagos. Within a few days, Nasir El

“

He had reservations about the style of Ganduje as governor and didn't put a veil over his dislike for the return of Ganduje to Government House in 2019

”

Rufai, Sanusi's long standing friend who was governor of Kaduna State, personally enforced the evacuation of Sanusi from Awe local government area in Nasarawa State.

For whatever his contributions were to the emergence of Tinubu as president after the 2023 polls, Ganduje believed he would be compensated with a ministerial slot in the former's regime. Like Nyesom Wike, David Umahi, Mohammed Badaru Abubakar, Atiku Bagudu, Simon Lalong, former governors of Rivers, Ebonyi, Jigawa, Kebbi and Plateau states, Ganduje dusted his curriculum vitae to pitch for a slot on Tinubu's federal executive council.

His five colleagues in the "2015 - 2019-2023 class of governors" made the cut, not Ganduje. Tinubu spontaneously made him chairman of the All Progressives Congress, (APC), the vehicle which delivered him as president. Abdullahi Adamu, his predecessor and former governor of Nasarawa State was, as has become standard practice in Nigeria's notorious political rule book, schemed out and compelled to resign from office.

If Ganduje ever thought his chairmanship of the APC was going to be a walk in the park, he was thoroughly mistaken. Indeed, he's gained sufficient experience in his present office to know that there are sharp differences between wholesale insulation in Government House, and the inevitable overexposure of party leadership.

Last April, a faction of the APC in Ganduje's primary "Ganduje ward" in

"Dawakin Tofa" local government area of his home state, Kano, suspended him from the party. Haladu Gwanjo, legal adviser of Ganduje's ward, led some party leaders to pronounce the suspension.

They advocated the return of the national chairmanship of the APC to the north central zone, where Ganduje's predecessor, Adamu, hails from. The young Turks canvassed due process in party administration, consistent with the "renewed hope" mantra of the APC. Ganduje made a hurried recourse to the law courts for momentary reprieve.

Thursday May 23, 2024, Sanusi Lamido Sanusi was reinstated as Emir of Kano by Ganduje's successor in Kano State, Abba Yusuf. His cousin and successor, Aminu Ado-Bayero, was unceremoniously removed from office.

The splinter emirates created by Ganduje in his bid to whittle down Sanusi's authority as prime monarch in Kano, were similarly dissolved. The edifice which Ganduje built four years ago was apparently built of straw and spittle.

Governor Abba Yusuf is a product of the "Kwankwasiya" political tendency in Kano politics, a creation of Rabiu Kwankwaso. Those who know a little about Nigerian politics will recall that Kwankwaso's emergence in our politics predates the fourth republic. He was an ardent student of the "talakawa" political orientation, pioneered by the venerable Kano-born leader, Aminu Kano. Kwankwaso was Deputy Speaker in the House of Representatives of the Ibrahim Babangida political experimentation of 1992 to 1993.

Whereas the "Kwankwasiya" movement had long been entrenched, it was not until the run-up to the 2023 elections that Kwankwaso adopted a new platform, the Nigeria National People's Party, (NNPP), on which he is espousing the populist philosophy of the "Kwankwasiya"

Nigerian Teesside Students and the Order to Leave UK

By Babafemi A. Badejo

The screaming headline of a BBC story on 22 May was to the effect that students from Nigeria at Teesside University have been ordered to leave the UK. Placard carrying students accompanied the story. If one does not look carefully, only nine students are visible.

But a closer look shows a hand clenched around what could be a placard. In addition, two students – a male and a female – are hiding behind another student, whose placard reads: “INTERNATIONAL Students also have Right[s] Respect it.” It means some of the students are being intimidated and are afraid.

These students were demonstrating against just one of the many universities in the UK that are forcing Nigerian students to return home. However, this developing and worsening situation of throwing students out of their respective courses, and reporting them to the British Home Office for deportation, is not unique to Teesside University. Many UK universities that had benefitted enormously at the height of the “japa” syndrome are now causing the Home Office to deport Nigerian students who have defaulted in the payment of their fees.

Historically, Nigerian students have not been habitual tuition defaulters. However, Nigerian students fell on bad times after the unparalleled devaluation of the Nigerian currency by about 300 per cent as the President Bola Ahmed Tinubu administration began in Nigeria about a year ago. The naira values that respective students had stashed up from the sales of personal or family properties or parental earnings, could no longer meet the needs of external obligations for the payment of tuition fees.

The problem of failure to meet debt obligations is not unique to students. As a result of tripled replacement costs or huge naira debts on goods already sold at pre-devaluation prices, businesses are finding it difficult to continue being in existence. Some businesses are negotiating debt reductions or forgiveness from suppliers around the world. Nigeria being largely an importing country has been unable to take advantage of devaluation through huge export quantities resulting from a cheaper naira.

However, the Teesside University situation provides an opportunity to look broadly at the larger picture – the problem of external/foreign education as a material and human drain on Nigeria. The problem of foreign education especially in terms of both material and human resource drain on Nigeria is multifaceted.

From significant financial costs, exacerbated by the sustained crippling of the naira, a disastrous level of brain drain/talent flight, and broader socio-economic impacts. Included in the problems have been the false expectation that foreign education opens up job opportunities and pathways to residency in the countries of study.

Tuition Fees and Living Expenses Nigerian students studying abroad often pay significantly higher tuition fees in comparison to what they pay in local institutions. For instance, in countries like the UK, US, and Canada, international student fees can range from \$15,000 to over \$50,000 per year, depending on the programme and institution.

Living expenses, including accommodation, food, and transportation, add to the financial burden. These costs can range from \$10,000 to \$20,000 annually, and, according to the Central Bank of



Nigeria (CBN), they have resulted in a major financial drain on Nigeria over the years. The CBN Governor, Mr Olayemi Cardoso, in a speech to the House of Representatives on 6 February stated that:

“Looking at the demand side of the exchange rate, it’s important to note the growing number of Nigerian students studying abroad. In the 1980s and 1990s, the need for US dollars for their living expenses was minimal. However, recent data shows a significant change. According to UNESCO’s Institute of Statistics, the number of Nigerian students abroad increased from less than 15,000 in 1998 to over 71,000 in 2015. By 2018, this figure had reached 96,702 students, as per the World Bank.

Another report projects the number of Nigerian students studying abroad to exceed 100,000 by 2022. Additionally, the UK’s Higher Education Statistics Agency noted a 64 per cent increase in Nigerian students studying in the country, rising from 13,020 in the 2019/2020 academic session to 21,305 by the 2020/2021 session. Given this data, it’s crucial to highlight that between 2010 and 2020, foreign education expenses amounted to a substantial US\$28.65 billion, as per the CBN’s publicly available Balance of Payments Statistics.”

On the flip side, the African giant did not attract any form of inflow from foreign students. This is not surprising, given the current state of the Nigerian educational system, with university students counting over seven months at home as a result of strike actions.

The Nigerian young populace has tapped into study visas as a perfect formula to “japa” from the country – an expression that is used to represent escaping from Nigeria. Similarly, many Nigerian companies are currently faced with an exodus of resignations, as foreign schools resumed academic activities and both young and old citizens jumped on the leaving train.

“ Looking at the demand side of the exchange rate, it’s important to note the growing number of Nigerian students studying abroad. In the 1980s and 1990s, the need for US dollars for their living expenses was minimal ”

Brain Drain and Loss of Talent

Many Nigerian students who study abroad do not return home after their studies. They often seek mean jobs reserved for them and not jobs measuring up to the skills they had acquired. The salaries and improved living conditions are necessary allures, in spite of the fact that most of the earnings go into meeting survival bills, leaving no extras to do much thereafter. At times, Nigerian youths embark on homelessness, and eating donated foods at soup kitchens, as means of survival.

This sad situation has resulted in a significant loss of skilled professionals in various fields such as Medicine, engineering, IT, banking and finance, and even more recently, academia.

The absence of highly educated and skilled individuals hampers local development. Sectors like healthcare and education face shortages of qualified personnel, which affect service delivery and overall progress.

Socio-Economic Impacts

The allure of foreign education often undermines confidence in local institutions. There is a perceived gap in the quality of education provided locally, when compared to international standards. Efforts to improve the local education system has continued to be de-prioritised, as the wealthier segment of society opts for foreign education solutions.

Impact on the Nigerian Economy

The massive brain drain currently ravaging the Nigerian corporate world is leaving a huge skills gap in most organisations, as it seems that the best hands are the ones jumping on

the “japa” train, making it imperative for firms to train and retrain their staff to fill the space. This has also meant more competition in terms of hiring, as firms now develop strategies to outwit themselves in getting the remaining best hands in the industry.

Foreign education spending requires the availability of foreign exchange, something which the Nigerian economy is in shortage of at the moment. The increased demand for the dollar to pay for foreign services, speculative needs, including theft by Nigerian authorities, especially when federal allocations are shared, and importation, amongst others, have caused a significant depreciation of the local currency against the US dollar.

Potential

Expecting Nigerians who are already outside, as a result of the japa syndrome, to return home is the appropriate thing to do. A lot can be done in meeting the needs of Nigerians from within, through a focus on infrastructure development that will boost productivity on several fronts. However, this is wishful thinking. There is the assumed “shame factor”, in returning to Nigeria when all acquisitions, prior to the japa plan, had been liquidated and there is nothing to return to.

The Nigerian diplomatic and consular efforts need to be more activist in protecting the rights of Nigerians outside our shores. Some of the Teesside University students could use such assistance to secure their respective certificates that were almost earned before they defaulted.

The ease with which Nigerians are being subjected to deportation pressures and actual removal should be a basis for negotiations by our diplomats. To claim that nothing can be done once a report has been made to the Home Office impugns the involvement of Nigeria in protecting its citizens. We should not remember that we have a diaspora only when calculating annual remittances.



FOREIGN

NEWS | ANALYSIS

South Africa's ANC to Share Power after Election Blown Rafah



South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa is under growing pressure after leading the ruling African National Congress (ANC) to its worst election result in 30 years, forcing it to share power.

With almost all the votes in from Wednesday's poll, the ANC is on 40% - down from 58% at the previous election.

This is lower than the party's feared worst-case scenario of 45%, analysts say.

The ANC has always polled above 50% since the country's first democratic elections in 1994, which saw Nelson Mandela become president.

But support for the party has been dropping significantly because of anger over high levels of corruption, unemployment and crime.

Citing the cost-of-living crisis and frequent power cuts, one woman told the BBC she had voted for the ANC for the past 30 years, but had backed the centre-right Democratic Alliance (DA) this time.

Late on Saturday, the country's electoral commission said it would announce the full

results at 18:00 local time (17:00 BST) on Sunday.

The commission said all objections raised by a number of political parties would be reviewed, and recounts would be ordered if needed.

This is when we will know exactly how many seats each party has in the National Assembly, although South Africa has a strict system of proportional representation, so we already have a pretty good idea.

Its options are a coalition with the DA, which is in second place on 22%, or the uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) party led by former President Jacob Zuma, on 15%.

The radical Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) is on 9%, so a coalition of those two parties would fall just short of the required 50%.

The new parliament must be sworn in within two weeks of the final results and the new president would normally be chosen then.

Both the EFF and MK advocate seizing white-owned land and nationalising the country's mines - policies which would alarm foreign investors.

The MK has said it would be prepared to work with the ANC, but not while it was led by Mr Ramaphosa.

He replaced Zuma as both president and ANC leader following a bitter power struggle in 2018.

MK supporters have been celebrating overnight in Durban, the biggest city in the party's heartland of KwaZulu-Natal province. The party was only formed in September.

ANC chairperson Gwede Mantashe said his party was unlikely to form an alliance with the DA.

He said there would have to be "policy alignment" between parties to form a coalition agreement.

For the ANC, its black empowerment policies - aimed at giving black people a stake in the economy following their exclusion during the racist apartheid era - were "non-negotiable".

He added that any coalition partner would have to agree to the National Health Insurance (NHI) Bill, which promises universal healthcare for all, signed into law earlier this month.

India's Modi Could Win Third Term, Polls Predict

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to win a third consecutive term in office, exit polls suggest.

Analysts warn the polls, released by various news agencies, have often been wrong in the past and are not impartial.

However, they have placed Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as the frontrunner in the general election.

The BJP, the main opposition Congress party and regional rivals battled it out in a fierce campaign over seven phases of polling.

Results will be announced on June 4.

A party or coalition needs 272 seats in parliament to form a government.

The BJP led-coalition, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), will cross this target - according to exit polls, which forecast it being close to taking about two-thirds of the seats.

In his first comments after voting ended, Modi claimed victory without referring to the exit polls.

What are the exit polls saying?

Prime Minister Modi came into this election with resounding popularity, but his main rival - the leader of the Indian National Congress, Rahul Gandhi - and a coalition of opposition parties gathered significant momentum through the course of the lengthy election campaign.

Now an aggregate of six exit polls forecasts big wins for the BJP-led NDA, but such surveys are not always reliable.

Though the individual numbers vary, they predict that the NDA will get between 355 and 380 seats.

The INDIA bloc is expected to get between 125 and 165 seats, according to the Reuters news agency.

On its own, the BJP may win about 327 seats, not quite meeting its 370-seat target.

A really big election

India is the world's most populous country, with 1.4 billion people, and holding a nationwide election is nothing short of a Herculean task.

Some 969 million citizens were eligible to cast their ballot, which is equal to the populations of the US, Russia, Japan, Britain, Brazil, France and Belgium.

Mexicans Vote in Election Overshadowed by Violent Attacks

Mexicans are going to the polls on Sunday in an election which is almost certain to see the country's first female president elected.

Both the front runner, Claudia Sheinbaum, and her main rival, Xóchitl Gálvez, are far ahead in the polls of the only male candidate, Jorge Álvarez Máynez.

Voters will also elect all members of Mexico's Congress and governors in eight states, as well as the head of Mexico City's government.

The campaign has been overshadowed by violent attacks, which have resulted in more than 20 local candidates being killed across Mexico.

Sheinbaum, a 61-year-old scientist who served as mayor of Mexico City from 2018 to 2023, has the backing of the outgoing president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

Mr López Obrador, who has been in power since 2018, cannot run for the top office again as under Mexico's constitution presidents are limited to a single

six-year-term.

The popular leader - recent polls suggested he had an approval rate of close to 60% - has instead thrown his weight behind Ms Sheinbaum, who is part of his Morena party.

While many of the promises President López Obrador made upon taking office have remained unfulfilled, his efforts to reduce poverty and help elderly Mexicans have been popular with beneficiaries of these social programmes.

Having the backing of the president may have considerably widened Ms Sheinbaum's base of voters, but it has also raised questions about how independent she is of the sometimes overpowering leader.

Ms Sheinbaum has stressed that she is very much her own woman, while at the same time promising to continue building on what she said are López Obrador's many achievements.

Their party, Morena, boasts about how millions of Mexicans

have been lifted out of poverty during the past six years.

Morena says the number of people living in poverty is dwindling thanks to its policies, such as more than doubling the minimum wage.

But economists have pointed out that there are also other factors at play, such as a rise in remittances being sent by Mexicans living abroad to their friends and family at home.

Taking on Ms Sheinbaum at the polls is senator and businesswoman Xóchitl Gálvez.

Gálvez, 61, was chosen by a broad coalition of parties who share a desire to put an end to the rule of the Morena party.

She and the Strength and Heart for Mexico coalition she is running for have been critical of the rise in violence the country has experienced in the run-up to the election.

Speaking at her closing rally, she told Mexicans that if they voted for her they would have

"the bravest president, a president who does confront crime".

And while she has repeatedly derided the strategy Mr López Obrador laid out at the start of his presidency, when he promised "hugs not bullets" in the battle against crime, Ms Gálvez has provided little detail as to how she would combat the powerful criminal groups which are behind much of the violence which is blighting the country.

She has said that she would offer better pay to the police and invest more in security in general.

But what has arguably made her more popular with voters critical of the outgoing president is her promise to strengthen institutions she says Mr López Obrador tried to weaken, such as the constitutional court and the National Electoral Institute.

Gálvez has accused López Obrador of being authoritarian and of undermining Mexico's democratic institutions, calling his government "arrogant and overbearing".

Zelensky Accuses Russia, China of Undermining Summit



Zelensky

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has accused Russia and China of attempting to undermine his upcoming global peace summit in Switzerland.

He said Russia was trying to dissuade other states from attending the event, and that China was working to do this as well.

Speaking at an Asian security forum, he also said there were "elements of Russia's weaponry" that come from China.

China says it does not side with either side of the Ukraine war, a position that has been increasingly questioned

particularly by the US.

Beijing is accused of aiding Moscow by sending components for weapons. It is also seen as propping up the Russian economy by purchasing vast quantities of oil and gas, softening the impact of Western sanctions.

Zelensky made a surprise appearance at the Shangri-la Dialogue in Singapore attended by defence chiefs from around the world, including US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and Chinese defence minister Dong Jun.

The visit was aimed at drumming up support from

Asian countries. Besides meeting regional leaders, he also urged delegates to attend his summit due to be held later in June.

Zelensky said it would focus on achieving nuclear security, food security, and the release of prisoners of war and Ukrainian children held in Russia.

So far 106 countries said they would send high-level representatives or their leaders to the summit, he said.

Russia has not been invited and China is not attending.

A formal invitation was not issued to Russia as Moscow had told Switzerland early on that it

did not want to participate.

Zelensky claimed that Russia was attempting to disrupt the summit by pressuring countries not to attend, through threats of a blockade of agricultural goods, chemical goods, and energy.

Certain countries were assisting this "diplomatic disruption", he added.

He named China later on, and said it was "working for countries to not come to the peace summit", unlike the US which has promised to send a high-level representative and is encouraging others to attend.

Israeli Ministers Threaten to Quit over Ceasefire Plan

Two far-right Israeli ministers have threatened to quit and collapse the governing coalition if Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu agrees to a Gaza ceasefire proposal unveiled by US President Joe Biden on Friday.

Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir said they were opposed to striking any deal before Hamas was destroyed.

Opposition leader Yair Lapid has pledged to back the government if Netanyahu supported the plan.

The prime minister himself insisted there would be no permanent truce until Hamas's military and governing capabilities were destroyed and all hostages released.

Biden's three-part proposal would begin with a six-week ceasefire in which the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) would withdraw from populated areas of Gaza. The deal would eventually lead to the release

of all hostages, a permanent "cessation of hostilities" and a major reconstruction plan for Gaza.

Netanyahu's right-wing coalition holds a slim majority in parliament, relying on a host of factions, including Ben-Gvir's Otzma Yehudit (Jewish Power) party - who hold six seats - and Mr Smotrich's Religious Zionism party - who hold seven seats - to maintain power.

But Yair Lapid, one of Israel's most influential opposition politicians, was quick to offer his backing to the embattled prime minister. His Yesh Atid (There is a future) party holds 24 seats.

The row came as tens of thousands of people rallied in Tel Aviv, calling on the Israeli government to accept Biden's proposed plan.

Many demonstrators also demanded Netanyahu's resignation and some told reporters they feared the prime minister could torpedo the

proposal.

A group campaigning to bring home Israeli hostages captured by Hamas has warned that such a move would endanger the lives of those held in Gaza.

Scuffles broke out between protesters and police, who used mounted officers and water cannons to disperse the crowds. Some demonstrators were reportedly detained.

Protests have become a fixture in Tel Aviv in recent months, as families of hostages and other anti-government campaigners have held rallies calling for a hostage deal - as well as for Netanyahu to step down or call an election.

The statement added Israel would "continue to insist these conditions are met" before agreeing to a permanent ceasefire.

However, the comments seemed to be vague enough for Netanyahu to be able to claim that his objectives had been achieved.

Netanyahu's office did not mention "total victory" - which he has repeatedly highlighted as a key aim for the war in Gaza.

This omission may allow the prime minister to reject criticism that the deal offers major concessions to Hamas.

Elsewhere, fighting continued in Rafah on Saturday, with reports of Israeli air strikes on Gaza's southern city on Egypt's border.

Shelling and gunfire were also reported in Gaza City, in the north of the Palestinian territory.

More than 36,000 people have been killed in Gaza since the start of the conflict, according to the Hamas-run health ministry.

The war began on 7 October 2023 when Hamas gunmen launched an unprecedented attack on Israel, killing about 1,200 people and taking 252 back to Gaza as hostages.

China Says its Spacecraft Lands on Moon's Far Side

China said its uncrewed craft has successfully landed on the far side of the Moon - an unexplored place almost no-one tries to go.

The Chang'e 6 touched down in the South Pole-Aitken Basin at 06:23 Beijing time on Sunday morning (22:23 GMT Saturday), the China National Space Administration (CNSA) said.

Launched on 3 May, the mission aims to collect precious rock and soil from this region for the first time in history.

The probe could extract some of the Moon's oldest rocks from a huge crater on its South Pole.

The landing was fraught with risks, because it is very difficult to communicate with spacecraft once they reach the far side of the Moon. China is the only country to have achieved the feat before, landing its Chang'e-4 in 2019.

After launching from Wenchang Space Launch Center, the Chang'e 6 spacecraft had been orbiting the Moon waiting to land.

The lander component of the mission then separated from the orbiter to touch down on the side of the Moon that faces permanently away from Earth.

During the descent, an autonomous visual obstacle avoidance system was used to automatically detect obstacles, with a visible light camera selecting a comparatively safe landing area based on the brightness and darkness of the lunar surface, the CNSA was quoted as saying by state-run Xinhua news agency.

The lander hovered about 100m (328ft) above the safe landing area, and used a laser 3D scanner before a slow vertical descent.

The operation was supported by the Queqiao-2 relay satellite, the CNSA said.

Chinese state media described the successful landing as an "historic moment".

The state broadcaster said "applause erupted at the Beijing Aerospace Flight Control Center" when the Chang'e landing craft touched down on the Moon early on Sunday morning.

He has analysed other lunar rock brought back on the American Apollo mission and previous Chinese missions.

But he says the chance to analyse rock from a completely different area of the Moon could answer fundamental questions about how planets form.

Most of the rocks collected so far are volcanic, similar to what we might find in Iceland or Hawaii.

But the material on the far side would have a different chemistry.

The mission aims to collect about 2kg (4.4lb) of material using a drill and mechanical arm, according to the CNSA.

The South Pole-Aitken basin, an impact crater, is one of the largest known in the solar system.

From there, the probe could gather material that came from deep inside the lunar mantle - the inner core of the Moon - Prof Pernet-Fisher said.

Wilder No Longer a Threat to Joshua – Hearn



Anthony Joshua's promoter, Eddie Hearn has revealed that Deontay Wilder is no longer a big threat to Joshua after losing to Zhilei Zhang in Riyadh.

Recall that in the early hours of Sunday, Zhang knocked out Wilder in the fifth round.

The Bronze Bomber could only stumble to his feet and the referee

promptly stopped the bout in Saudi Arabia to hand Zhang victory.

Reacting after the game, Hearn said that Wilder is going through a phase that Joshua has gone through.

"He's shown in the last two fights that he's not the threat that he used to be, and he's got to find the reason why. Does he not have it anymore? I don't know.

"I said to AJ tonight, 'For a long time,

people feared Deontay Wilder. No one fears him anymore."

"AJ went through a little bit of that at one stage, they used to be petrified of AJ, now they're petrified again. For me, it's a personal decision for Deontay. He tried, tried to convince himself, tried in the ring... but just couldn't do it. I just wonder whether he's the same fighter that he was."

Ex-Falcons Player Turned Man Seeks N69m to Become Father

Former Super Falcons player Iyabo Abade, now a man and renamed James Johnson, has begged the Nigeria Football Federation to assist him with the payment of N69.7m to facilitate a corrective surgery that will enable him bear children.

Johnson, a confirmed hermaphrodite, was a member of the Falcons from 1997 to 2000 and successfully underwent a sex change operation in the United States in 2004 courtesy of then Minister, Federal Capital Territory, Mallam Nasir El-Rufai.

This came after a series of failed attempts to correct the abnormality that led to his being dropped from the women's national team.

A hermaphrodite is a person or animal with both male and female organs. While it is common with animals, it is rare in human beings.

Johnson said he wrote to the NFF for financial assistance last year to undergo the surgery but hasn't heard from the football body.

The 40-year-old said he would be a fulfilled man if he could conclude the final stages of the surgery and bear children.

"Anytime I think that I can't father a child yet, I feel broken, that's why I wrote to the federation for financial assistance. The NFF

president Ibrahim Gusau is a man with a listening ear and hopefully, through him, the federation can help me achieve my dream," Johnson told our correspondent.

In the letter titled 'Appeal for financial assistance to enable me finalise my surgery of transforming from an inter sex person (male and female organs – hermaphrodite) to full-fledged man so that I can father a child', and addressed to the NFF president, Ibrahim Gusau, Johnson said he needed the money to undergo the final two phases of surgery that would make him a full man.

The letter dated April 4, 2023, read, "My President, I am using this medium to passionately appeal to you for God and humanity sake, to use your good office to assist me financially to enable me travel to the United State of America where I did the 1 & 2 phase of surgery (Midway Hospital Medical Centre, Los Angeles) for the surgery and treatment of the 3rd and 4th phase of my transformation to a full fledge man so that I can father children.

"The total cost of the surgery and treatment is one hundred and sixty thousand dollars (\$160,000) equivalent to sixty nine million seven hundred and fifty thousand naira (N69,750,000:00)."

Kwibuka Cricket: Nigeria Grab First Win against Cameroon

In an emphatic response to their match-day one defeat to Uganda, Nigeria's senior women's cricket team, the Female Yellow Greens, defeated Cameroon by nine wickets on Saturday in their second game of the ongoing 2024 Kwibuka Women's T20i tournament in Kigali, Rwanda.

Winning the toss and electing to bat first, Cameroon didn't walk the talk and were bowled out for just 26 runs in 18.2 overs, crumbling under the pressure from Nigeria's bowlers.

Lilian Ude was the standout performer, delivering an exceptional spell of four overs, including two maidens, and taking four wickets for just seven runs.

Peculiar Agboya also showcased her skills, conceding only six runs in her four overs while claiming two wickets.

The Nigerian captain, Favour Esegbe, along with Shola Adekunle, Anointed Akhigbe, and Piety Lucky, each contributed a wicket, ensuring that Cameroon couldn't build any significant partnerships.

In the second inning, Nigeria's chase was swift and decisive.

Opening batters Esegbe and Esther Sandy set the tone, with captain Esegbe scoring an unbeaten 11 runs off 12 balls. Esther Sandy contributed 14 runs off 10 balls before being caught by Madeleine Laure.

With the target in sight, Lucky joined Esegbe at the crease. The pair quickly wrapped up the match in just 3.5 overs, securing a comprehensive victory for the Female Yellow Greens.

Lilian Ude was deservedly named Player of the Match for her outstanding bowling performance, which dismantled the Cameroonian batting lineup and set the stage for Nigeria's dominant win.

The Female Yellow Greens will hope to build on their first win as they face Kenya on Sunday (today), June 2.

Barcelona Congratulate Rivals Madrid on Securing 15th UCL Title

Barcelona sent congratulatory message to LaLiga rivals Real Madrid after they overcame Borussia Dortmund in Saturday's UEFA Champions League.

Madrid landed a record-extending 15th title thanks to a 2-0 win against the Bundesliga giants.

Dani Carvajal and Vinicius Junior were the heroes for Carlo Ancelotti's men as their second half goals secured the hard-fought win.

Carvajal broke the deadlock on 74 minutes off a corner kick from Toni Kroos before Vinicius added the second goal with less than 10 minutes left.

After the game, Barcelona took to their X handle to congratulate Madrid.

"Congratulations to Real Madrid for winning the Champions League title," the Catalan club wrote.

The last time Barcelona were crowned European champions was in 2015 when they defeated Juventus 3-1.

Since then, it's been nine years that they emerged European champions.

Nigeria vs S' Africa: Nigerians Advise Eagles to Mime New Anthem



Players of the Super Eagles have been advised to simply mime the new National Anthem instead of fretting over singing it during the CAF World Cup qualifying tie against South Africa at Godswill Akpabio International Stadium in Uyo on June 7.

The advice came from some concerned Nigerians in their response to a Facebook post by former Nigeria goalkeeper Peterside Idah, who expressed his concern about the players' ability to sing the old anthem reintroduced by the federal government on May 29 following approval by the National Assembly.

I hope these Super Eagles players will not disgrace us while the National Anthem is being played," stated the former Enyimba shot stopper, pastor, and football analyst.

It elicited a myriad of comments, with former Nigerian forward and Shooting Stars Sports Club general manager Dimeji Lawal the first to share his thoughts, urging the players to simply mime the anthem.

He stated, "The microphone will not be in their hands; all they're expected to do is miming. Milli Vanilli sold lots of albums in the 80s without even knowing the lyrics;

the singer is always somewhere behind the scenes... Power of technology."

This was corroborated by John Atoyebi, who wrote, "They will fold their hands, mute, and look up like some of our foreign-based 1994 players did. There is no wahala in being quiet unless you know the lyrics. Even some England players do it, not because they don't know the anthem but just to keep their calm ahead of the big assignment ahead."

Miffed by the federal government's imposition of the task of singing the old anthem amid a plethora of survival challenges, Olajide Flora stated, "Nobody should blame them if they can't recite the anthem; I bet it if Tinubu himself knows how to sing it."

Jarias Leonard shared her sentiment and wrote, "Let Tinubu himself sing it after any broadcast."

Njoju Nnadozie wrote, "Eagles will remain mute while the trumpet will sing the anthem."

"Do they even need to sing along? I don't think so, for the fact that the people who signed it into law can't also say the anthem," wrote Kingsley Okoro.

All Nigerian internationals were not born

at the time the old anthem was sung in the 1960s and 1970s, before the introduction of the new, rested second one. Some of them have been making an effort to sing the reintroduced anthem, with Super Falcons captain and Atletico Madrid forward Rasheedat Ajide recently frantically trying to do so in a video on her Instagram page.

The Super Eagles will be aiming to rekindle 2026 World Cup qualification hopes against Bafana Bafana in Uyo and, four days later, travel to Ivory Coast to face Benin Republic in a week-five fixture at Stade Félix Houphouët-Boigny in Abidjan.

After two rounds of games, Nigeria are third in Group A with two points behind Rwanda and South Africa with four and three points, respectively.

Nigeria reached the AFCON final, defeating South Africa in the semi-finals before losing to the hosts. During the March friendlies, Rwanda drew with Botswana and defeated Madagascar; Lesotho registered one win, one draw, and two losses from their 2024 friendlies; Zimbabwe defeated Zambia and lost to Kenya; and Benin drew with Côte d'Ivoire and lost to Senegal.

2023 WWCQ: 15 Players Hit Super Eagles Camp

About 15 players are currently in the Super Eagles camp in Uyo ahead of the 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifiers against South Africa and Benin Republic.

Wilfred Ndidi, Kelechi Iheanacho, Samuel Chukwueze, Victor Boniface, Terem Moffi and Stanley Nwabali are among the players in camp.

Others are; Olorunleke Ojo, Ibrahim Olawoyin, Benjamin Tanimu, Chidozie Awaziem, Sodiq Ismail, Kenneth Igboke, Alhassan Yusuf, Raphael Onyedika and Fisayo Dele-Bashiru.

Eight players are still being expected in camp.

The Super Eagles trained at the Godswill Akpabio International Stadium, Uyo on Sunday morning as they intensified preparations ahead of the two qualifiers.

Finidi George's side will host the Bafana Bafana of South Africa at the Godswill Akpabio International Stadium, Uyo on Friday.

They will travel to Abidjan for a clash with the Squirrels three days later.

Olympics: I can't Practice New Techniques with New Anthem—Adekuoroye

Nigerian women's freestyle wrestler Odunayo Adekuoroye has decried the burden of learning the new national anthem and practicing new techniques while preparing for the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris.

The 30-year-old shared her thoughts on Instagram on Saturday, joining the elongating list of Nigerian athletes who have expressed reservations about the reintroduction of the old anthem that was discarded for the second time long before they were born.

"I no fit dey practice new techniques still dey learn new anthem," stated the newlywed, who became the country's first grappler to qualify for the Olympic Games after she defeated Turkey's Elvira Kamaloglu 9-5 to win the bronze medal in women's 57 kg at the World Championships in Belgrade.

Paris 2024 will be Adekuoroye's third Olympics, and she will be gunning for the elusive medal after disappointments in Rio 2016 and Tokyo 2020, being defeated by Sweden's Sofia Mattsson in the quarterfinal at the former.

Adarabioyo to Undergo Chelsea Medical Next Week

Tosin Adarabioyo will undergo medical next week ahead of his impending move to Chelsea.

Adarabioyo, according to reports, has agreed personal terms with Chelsea and will sign a long-term contract.

The 26-year-old is leaving Fulham after failing to sign a contract extension with the Whites.

The Nigerian-born defender spent three seasons at the Craven Cottage.

Newcastle United were also in talks with the tall defender but he has opted for a move to Stamford Bridge.

Chelsea will be without Thiago Silva next season and they need to replace him adequately.

The experienced centre-back has returned to his boyhood club Fluminense after four years with Chelsea.

Adarabioyo will be expected to fill the void left by the Brazilian defender.

Players, Coaches Score StarTimes NPFL Live Broadcast High

Players and coaches in the Nigeria Premier Football League said the impact of live television broadcast of matches in the league is immeasurable as the 2023/24 season nears its end.

The NPFL is broadcast live on Beta Sports channel 244 on match days.

Before the start of the current season, the NPFL board signed a five-year deal worth N6bn with StarTimes to bring the country's elite league back on television, with the match-day eight game between Akwa United and Remo Stars at the Eket Township Stadium on Sunday November 19 being the first game to be televised.

The number of live matches was then increased from two to four in February. This is in addition to streaming services offered by Propel Sports Africa at all matching venues.

Plateau United captain, Daniel Itodo, who has played in the league during the TV broadcast blackout from 2017, noted

that live broadcast has aided desirable results for teams.

"First of all, it helps in showcasing the players that we have in the league. More importantly, the quality of football we play is shown to the whole world and it helps to keep everything that can mar the game in check," Itodo said.

Bendel Insurance defender, Ebuka Akobundu, also described the era of TV blackout in the league as demoralising.

"There used to be a lot of controversies back then. Coming out to play and knowing anything in the stadium can't be seen by the world, you don't even feel like a professional.

"So, internationally, it has helped us to stay relevant and scouts now know where to turn to if they need to watch a player in the league."

In 2017, former MFM player Sikiru Olatunbosun won the CNN Goal of The Week for his screamer against Enugu

Rangers during a night league game at the Agege Township Stadium in Lagos.

He bagged 82 per cent of the votes to beat the likes of Radja Nainggolan, then of Roma and Yuri Tielemans, then of Anderlecht.

Former MFM coach, Fidelis Ilechukwu, who is now in charge of leaders Enugu Rangers, said more of such displays would be made possible with the established StarTimes TV broadcast rights deal.

"I think it's going to be a good thing if we have almost every game on TV. We started with one and we have three to four. It's a sign of progress. We score beautiful goals in the league that need to be seen and I believe it will help us, like it did for Olatunbosun in 2017," Ilechukwu said.

"There's a lot of advantage because it's bringing the league to limelight and it will solve 70 per cent of the challenges we face on match days from security to officiating," the coach added.



The Imperative of CBN'S Autonomy

Under globalization and multicultural settings such as ours, Nigerians are under no illusion to the enormity of the myriad of challenges confronting the President Bola Tinubu Administration. In my opinion, anxiety and trepidation seems to trail the move by the National Assembly, to amend the provisions of the CBN Act of 2007.

Industry watchers and members of the banking community fear that the attempt to amend the Act will erode confidence in the apex bank, have a negative impact on the banking industry and ultimately, affect the nation's economy.

In the dynamic landscape of global economics, the independence of central banks stands as a cornerstone for maintaining sound macroeconomic stability and fostering confidence in financial markets. Across all major world economies, from the United States of America, United Kingdom, the developed Asian economies to the European Union, this principle is upheld as a vital aspect of prudent economic management.

However, recent proposed amendments to the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Act by the Nigerian Senate threaten to erode this independence or autonomy, putting Nigeria at odds with global best practices and jeopardizing its economic stability going forward. In this piece, we shall examine the critical reasons why preserving the autonomy of the CBN is imperative for Nigeria's economic future.

It is crucial that we fully understand and appreciate the significance of maintaining the Central Bank's independence. An independent central bank is critical for ensuring that monetary policy is conducted without political interference.

This autonomy allows central banks to implement policies that focus on long-term economic health, such as controlling inflation, stabilizing the currency, and promoting sustainable economic growth. In major economies, central bank independence has been instrumental in achieving these goals. The Federal Reserve in the United States, the European Central Bank, and the Bank of England all operate independently of their respective governments, ensuring that monetary policy decisions are based on available economic data and analysis rather than political whims.

While commendably the idea of the proposed amendments to the CBN Act aim to enhance compliance and strengthen corporate governance, some of the key aspects pose significant threats to the bank's autonomy. One of such proposal is the creation of a Coordinating Committee for Monetary and Fiscal Policies.

This committee, dominated by fiscal authorities including the Ministry of Finance, would have a considerable influence on monetary policy decisions. Such an arrangement risks subordinating monetary policy to fiscal objectives, undermining the CBN's ability to achieve its primary mandate of price stability in the economy. Apparently, this is a step in the wrong direction in the management of the Nigerian economy.

Fiscal policy, which is the cardinal responsibility or primary function of

BY
IBRAHIM MODIBBOMPHIL



the Ministry of Finance, encompasses a range of activities related to government spending and taxation. This policy area involves the allocation of government resources, management of public funds, and implementation of tax regulations, all aimed at influencing the country's economic conditions positively.

While the effective coordination between fiscal and monetary policy is desirable, giving fiscal authorities dominance over the CBN compromises the bank's ability to act independently. This fiscal dominance could lead to short-term policy decisions that prioritize immediate fiscal needs over long-term economic stability. For instance, the government might pressure the CBN to keep interest rates artificially low to reduce borrowing costs, even if such a policy could lead to higher inflation and other economic vulnerabilities.

Another alarming aspect of the current amendment process at the hallowed precincts of the Nigerian Senate pertains to the insistence on subjecting the Central Bank of Nigeria's yearly budget to approval by the National Assembly. This proposed measure raises significant apprehensions regarding the potential politicization and interference in the operations of the Central Bank of Nigeria. The approval process could result in undue delays of monetary policy decisions, hindering the CBN's ability to respond swiftly and effectively to economic challenges. In an environment where rapid decision-making is often essential, this could prove detrimental to Nigeria's economic health.

Global best practices emphasize the need for central bank independence to ensure economic stability and investor confidence. Across the world today, major and emerging economies adopt this framework

to ensure a situation of a more stable and predictable economic environment. For Nigeria to diverge from this path would not only isolate it from the global business community but also undermine investor confidence, leading to potential capital flight, increased borrowing costs from multilateral institutions, and a general loss of economic credibility as well as downward grading by global rating organizations.

The proposed amendments, particularly the inclusion of the Coordinating Committee for Monetary and Fiscal Policies, represent a concerning shift towards fiscal dominance. This committee's role in determining interest rates on the CBN's temporary advances to the federal government is especially problematic. With the committee chaired by the Minister of Finance as proposed in the current amendment and ostensibly dominated by fiscal authorities, there is a clear conflict of interest. Such a structure inherently favors fiscal objectives over monetary prudence, jeopardizing the delicate balance and the thin line required for sound macroeconomic management. The CBN should rather be encouraged to foster effective prudential guidelines in management of its advances to the federal government as enshrined in the current Act.

While the Nigerian Senate's intentions to amend the CBN Act may stem from a desire to enhance governance and performance by the apex, the proposed measures threaten to undermine the very foundation of effective economic management. Eroding the CBN's autonomy not only contradicts global best practices but also risks plunging Nigeria into a cycle of political interference and economic quagmire.

It is therefore imperative that the Senate reconsider some key aspects of these amendments as enunciated here, preserving the CBN's independence as a cornerstone of Nigeria's economic policy framework. Only by doing so can Nigeria ensure a stable, predictable, and resilient economic future, in line with global standards and best practices. The nation's economic health and international standing depend on it.

While admitting that some of the proposed amendments to the CBN Act are commendable as they are designed to entrench the culture of compliance, strengthen corporate governance, and reposition the apex bank for improved performance in attaining its mandate, most analysts however, say some of the major proposed amendments to the CBN Act appear to erode the bank's autonomy and weaken the independence of monetary policy, at variance with international best practices.

For example, the proposed coordinating committee for monetary and fiscal policies concerning monetary policy in their opinion will undermine the apex bank's independence and capacity in achieving its price stability mandate, including fiscal and monetary policy coordination as well as undermining the CBN's operational independence and weaken the apex bank's flexibility in deploying appropriate policy frameworks in a dynamic economic environment to achieving its core mandate.

The now controversial amendment bill to the CBN Act is sponsored by Senator Mukhail Adetokunbo Abiru and co-sponsored by all 41 senators of the Senate Committee on Banking, Insurance and other Financial Institutions and proposes the establishment of a 7-member coordinating committee for monetary and fiscal policies to be chaired by the minister of finance, to among other things set internally consistent targets of monetary and fiscal policies that are conducive to controlling inflation and promoting financial conditions for sustainable economic growth.

QUOTE ME

This autonomy allows central banks to implement policies that focus on long-term economic health, such as controlling inflation, stabilizing the currency, and promoting sustainable economic growth. In major economies, central bank independence has been instrumental in achieving these goals