

Dangers of presenting Northern candidates in 2023, by Akeredolu

By FRIDAY OMOSOLA

Chairman, South-west Governors' Forum and Ondo State helmsman, Arakunrin Oluwarotimi

Akeredolu, SAN, has warned political parties against fielding northerner candidates in the 2023 presidential election.

Governor Akeredolu who spoke while hosting members of a group,

Power Rotation Movement, led by the Chairman, Dr Pogu Bitrus, disclosed that he and his colleagues in the southern part of the country under the auspices of the Southern Governors Forum were determined to ensure
CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



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How Nigeria can survive, by Buhari

■ Confers merit awards on three scholars

→ 2



Buhari

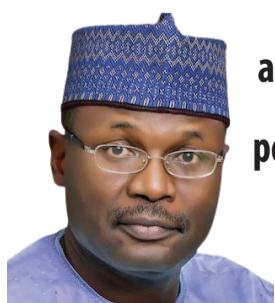


University of Calabar main gate



Eagles players missing in AFCON 2021 Best XI

→ 24



Issues in appointment of card-carrying political parties' members as INEC officials

→ 16



2023 presidential race gathers pace as more aspirants join

→ 8



Nigeria third on female genital mutilation list

→ 11

How Nigeria can survive, by Buhari

By REX ENABULELE, Abuja

President Muhammadu Buhari has said that Nigeria's collective future depends on active participation in science and technology.

The President spoke on Tuesday at the State House, Abuja while conferring the Nigerian National Order of Merit (NNOM) Award for years 2020 and 2021 on three citizens who distinguished themselves in the field of medicine and science.

Conferring the award on the recipients: Dr. Oluyinka Olurotimi Olutoye, Medicine (2020); the late Professor Charles Ejike Chidume, Science (2020) and Professor Godwin O. Samuel Ekhuagere, Science (2021), Buhari said he was very proud to welcome the new laureates to the prestigious league of highly honoured citizens.

The President also urged the youth to emulate the good works of the laureates by dedicating themselves to "excellence and strive to contribute their quota to the arduous task of getting Nigeria on the top bracket of outstanding nations."

According to him, the nation would continue to celebrate and echo the scholars' achievements as a shining example worthy of emulation by the upcoming young men and women in the country.

"Please endeavour, at all times, to serve as beacons of hope and aspiration for the younger generation of Nigerians, reminding them that our survival and collective future as a nation ultimately rests on our being active participants in global developmental efforts, especially in science and technology", the president stated.

Buhari noted that since the Nigerian National Merit Award (NNMA) was established 43 years ago, the addition of the three recipients would bring the total number of recipients to only 79, confirming the high standards of the Award and undeniable testimony of the strict adherence to quality and the merit-driven evaluation procedure for selecting laureates.

He added that the integrity of the Award also underscores the high expectations of the nation that the new recipients, like their predecessors, would continue to hold the banners of creativity and intellectual excellence very high.

While congratulating the three awardees, the President expressed the government's appreciation for the patience of the 2020 Award winners, who had to wait close to two years to receive their Award due to the emergence of Covid-19 in 2020.

President Buhari recounted that the total lockdown of the country, in 2020, made it



President Buhari

difficult for the assessment process to hold then but was later held concurrently last year alongside with the 2021 applications.

He congratulated members of the Governing Board of the NNMA under the Chairmanship of Prof. Shekarau Yakubu Aku, as well as members of the Four Specialized Committees of Assessors and External Assessors for their integrity and transparency, and for the excellent work they have done.

His words: "The noble

idea of constituting the Assessors Committees, whose membership is not disclosed to the public, ensures credibility that could be emulated by other Government Agencies performing similar functions.

"The fact that transparency and love for the Nation have been the hallmark of your stewardship is well borne out by the fact that the NNOM Award is one of the enduring national legacies that are held in high regard globally and nationally and your decisions have been well acclaimed and

controversy-free over the years.

"Let me assure you that the Government and People of Nigeria appreciate your efforts and I enjoin you all to keep up the good work."

On the request of the Chairman of the Governing Board over the dwindling budgetary allocation to the agency and how it is constraining the agency in carrying out its mandatory functions, President Buhari promised that the Federal Government would provide special intervention as was done in year 2020 to the NNMA, within limited resources available.

Acknowledging the focal place that NNMA occupy and the calibre of all laureates produced by the Agency, the President assured that the Federal Government would do everything possible to maintain and sustain the Agency.

"I wish to reassure you that this Administration is fully committed to giving the NNMA the recognition that it deserves, by immortalizing its recipients who have taken this country to greater heights both in Nigeria and in the Diaspora.

"We are a nation keen on fostering excellence across board and we will continue to celebrate those who have attained measurable levels of excellence in their professional life," he said.

Earlier in his speech, Minister of Special Duties and Intergovernmental Affairs, Senator George Akume said the three intellectuals emerged winners for the 2020 and 2021 Award after the selection process, from the over 1,200 applications received by the NNOM Governing Board during the period under consideration.

"It is important to state that Prof Charles Ejike Chidume died after he was selected and recommended for approval to Mr. President and he will be given the award posthumously," he said.

The Minister called on Nigerian universities to rise up to the challenge and continue to lead in innovative research targeted at providing solutions to the myriad of problems affecting the country, especially post COVID-19 era.

In his remarks, the Chairman of NNMA Governing Board, Prof Aku announced that recipients of the prestigious award bestowed by Nigeria on its citizens for creative, intellectual and academic contributions that are of national and global importance receive a cash reward of N10 million each.

Court strikes out suit against Osun hotelier over OAU student's murder

Justice Modupe Osho-Adebiyi of a High Court of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), in Gudu, Abuja on Tuesday struck out criminal charges filed against the Chairman of Hilton Hotels, Ile Ife, Osun State, High Chief Rahman Adedoyin, and some of his workers over the alleged murder of Timothy Adegoke.

The judge struck out the suit following the prosecution's withdrawal on grounds that it needed more time to conduct

further investigations into the murder of the student.

The deceased, a postgraduate student of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, was reported to have died under mysterious circumstances at Hilton hotels, Ile Ife last November and was buried in a shallow grave in the area.

The Force Central Investigations Department (FCID) had filed criminal charges against Adedoyin accusing him

of attempted felony, conspiracy, unlawful interference with Adegoke's corpse and tampering with the hotel's receipt and CCTV camera with intent to conceal evidence to prove that the deceased Adegoke lodged in the hotel.

The police allegedly excluded Adedoyin from the murder charge brought against his hotel workers and opted for lesser charges against him.

However, counsel to the

deceased family, Mr Femi Falana, SAN confirmed to newsmen that new charge will be filed at the Osun State High Court, being a place where the alleged cause of action originated from.

Those charged with murder are 23 years old Adedeji Adesola, Magdalene Chiefuna, 24; Adeniyi Aderogba and Oluwale Lawrence both 37 years old; Oyetunde Kazeem, 38; Adebayo Kunle, 35; while others are said to still be at large.

Dangers of presenting Northern candidates in 2023, by Akeredolu

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
that the next President comes from the south.

He said those pushing against power rotation in the country are tinkering with the existence of Nigeria, saying he believes in one fair and equitable country.

Commending the group for involving youths in

galvanizing support and votes ahead of the 2023 election, he said meetings have been held to ensure power moves to the south, adding that any political party that ignored his advice would lose the presidential election.

He stressed: "Some of us believe in One Nigeria that's fair and equitable. We have a reason

for it and it can be defended. Some people have argued that the Presidency should be based on competence. Are they saying there are no competent ones in the south?"

Akeredolu further disclosed that already, southern governors have pledged total support to whoever emerges as candidate from the south.



Akeredolu

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EFCC presents more witnesses against Jang in alleged N6.32 billion fraud case

The corruption trial of a former governor, Senator David Jonah Jang, before Justice Christy Dabup of Plateau State High Court, Jos resumed on Tuesday, with the prosecution presenting two more witnesses: Boyi Kakai Sanka (PW6) and Mary Anthony Bawa (PW7).

A statement by the Head, Media and Publicity, Wilson Uwujaren, said that the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC, is prosecuting Jang alongside Yusuf Pam, a former cashier in the Office of the Secretary to the Plateau State Government (OSSG), for alleged criminal breach of trust and misappropriation of N6.32 billion official/public funds.

Led in evidence by prosecution counsel, Rotimi Jacobs, SAN, Sanka, a former Accountant General of Plateau State from 25th August, 2011 to 1st June, 2015, told the court that his schedule of duties included maintaining custody of all funds accruing to the state, payment, disbursements and remittances as the case may, on the approval of the governor.

The former Accountant General explained how disbursement of funds were made in Plateau State.

"My lord, the procedure of disbursements is as follows.



Obi

The ministry or MDA that has a need of funds initiate a memo to the Governor seeking approval. If it is approved, it is forwarded to the Commissioner for Finance who then directs the processing and release of funds to the Accountant General. The Accountant General will check the memo and direct the Director of

Treasury, after processing, to send the memo through the expenditures control process".

The witness told the court that he N2 billion Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Funds (MSME), fund which the state received from the Central Bank of Nigeria was paid into the Project 1 account on the instruction of the governor.

On the issue of the loan provided by the State Universal Basic Education Board, SUBEB, Boyi told the court that, "there was a request from the governor to borrow money from SUBEB in the sum of N900 million but SUBEB was able to raise N750 Million and it was the governor that approved the borrowing".

The witness further stated that he met e-payment when he assumed office and until he left in 2015, the e-payment system was still in force.

PW7, Bawa, in her testimony, informed the court that she was at SUBEB, as Director, Finance and Supply from March 2015 - August 2015, and that her duties included raising mandates and returns of all payments.

On the loans provided by SUBEB, the witness said they were given after approval.

"Apart from the N2 billion, there was another N750 million which was during my time. There was a request and approval for it, and there are documents for the request and approval, my lord".

Prosecution counsel, Jacobs, SAN tendered certified copies of the request and approval for the loans in evidence.

Counsel to 1st and 2nd defendants cross-examined the witnesses. The case was adjourned to February 9, 2022, for continuation of trial.

MD of Elomaz Communications to speak on effects of drug abuse

By EDWARD ADAMIDENYO, Abuja Bureau Chief

The Managing Director of Elomaz Communications Limited, publishers of The Trumpet newspaper, Mr. Endurance Edafewotu, has been invited as a special guest to speak to students on the effects of drugs and narcotics.

The event organised by a non-governmental organization, Global Peace, in collaboration with the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) and Premier Academy, is to create awareness among Secondary schools on the effect of drugs.

Mr Martin Igwe, Chairman, Organising Committee of the event disclosed that "in line with the mandate of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency to eliminate drugs and narcotics, a one day roundtable with selected secondary schools students has been scheduled to hold in Abuja".

Igwe said the aim is to inculcate the need to strengthen the voices of teenagers to be Ambassadors of War Against Drug Abuse which is critical to the realization of basic education policies of the government.

The event is scheduled to hold on 10th February 2022 at the Premier Academy in Lugbe, Abuja.

DIA in manhunt for fake recruiters

By BY PAUL MICHAEL, Defence Editor

Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) has said it is on a manhunt for persons using its name to carry out fake recruitment in a bid to defraud unsuspecting citizens.

DIA said this while refuting claims of vacancies and ongoing recruitment in the agency. In a statement by its communications unit, the agency warned the public to be wary of "undesirable elements," who are hiding under the name of DIA to siphon money.

The statement further advised unsuspecting job seekers not to fall prey to scammers trying to fleece them. The DIA stressed that a manhunt was underway to fish out and prosecute the perpetrators.

"Efforts are being made to apprehend those behind false recruitment alerts for prosecution", the statement said.

Established in 1986, the DIA, formerly National Security Organization (NSO), provides intelligence to the Armed Forces and Ministry of Defence.

Faced with N900m fraud suit, JAMB ex-registrar, Ojerinde opts for plea bargain

A former Registrar of the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB), Professor Dibu Ojerinde, has opted for a plea bargain with the Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC) in respect of his ongoing alleged N900 million fraud trial at the Abuja Division of the Federal High Court.

Ojerinde, at his resumed trial on Tuesday, pleaded with the trial Judge, Justice Obiora Egwuatu for a very short

adjournment to enable him reach an understanding with the ICPC through plea bargain instead of formal trial.

According to his new lead counsel, Ibrahim Ishyaku, SAN, the defendant prefers an out of court settlement known as plea bargain to resolve the matter, adding that the trial could commence if after 24 hours, the matter could not be resolved.

"My Lord, our plea is that we be given 24 hours to explore the possibility of plea

bargain to resolve this matter and we ask that the trial be adjourned for the period to enable us come up with our terms of settlement", he said.

ICPC lawyer, Mr Ebenezer Sogunle did not object to the request but insisted that the trial would proceed in case the plea bargain fails.

The Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC) had on July 8, 2021 arraigned the former JAMB Registrar on an 18 count charge bordering

on diversion of public funds to the tune of over N900 million.

He was said to have committed the offense during his tenure as Registrar of the National Examination Council (NECO) and JAMB.

Ojerinde however pleaded not guilty to all the charges and was later admitted to bail in the sum of N200 million.

Meanwhile, Justice Egwuatu has fixed February 9, for report of the plea bargain to be presented.

JAMB shifts date for UTME registration

Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) said yesterday that the 2022/23 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) and Direct Entry (DE) registration earlier scheduled to start on Saturday, February 12, has been postponed to Saturday, February 19.

The one-week postponement,

according to the board, is to allow for more fine-tuning of the upgraded and more user-friendly procedures for candidates' registration.

The process, which will be concluded within the one-week extension period, is also aimed at accommodating feedbacks from candidates and other stakeholders alike, he

explained.

The statement indicated that the registration exercise will end on Saturday, March 26.

"The Board wishes the general public to note that the Board is ever-ready to provide world-class services to Nigerians."

"Further to the above, the new and improved

procedures for the 2022/23 UTME Registration would be made available on the Board's website, its weekly bulletin as well as other media outlets on Monday, 14th February, 2022."

"The candidates, are by this notice, urged to follow keenly the procedures for registration as would be announced by the Board."



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METRO WATCH



Man dumps fiancée as in-laws demand jeep in bride price list

A Nigerian man has disclosed how he ended things with his girlfriend, who is Igbo, after he saw her sister's bride price list.

He said that he got a chance to catch a glance at his girlfriend's elder sister's bride price list and that was when he knew that he would have to end the relationship.

According to the man, identified as @funkiestsholz on Twitter, he saw Lexus RX 350 on the list and did not even

bother reading everything before breaking up with her.

He revealed that unfortunately for the elder sister, the man who wanted to marry her disappeared on seeing the list too.

"My first commitment ended when I saw my ex-girlfriend's elder sister's bride price list, it started with Lexus RX 350... I didn't bother about reading the other items. Even her sister is still single, fiancé japa. Igbo girls too dey cost no be say dem sabi things," he wrote.

Fear grips Ojo community as hoodlums allegedly sell hard drugs, rob at bus stops

BY BENJAMIN OMOIKE

Some residents of Agric community in Ojo Local Government, Lagos State, are bemoaning the increase in armed robbery attacks at their major bus stops.

The residents also alleged that the hoodlums sell and smoke hard drugs with reckless abandon and at night, rob people of their valuables.

The residents allege that the hoodlums live in the shanties built at the bus stops.

Agric Bus stop, which consists of six Community Development Associations (CDAs), is located along Okokomaiko Road, before Volkswagen bus stop in Ojo Local Government.

The community leaders are pleading with the Lagos State Government to clear the shanties built by the hoodlums and station security personnel at the bus stops.

The CDA leaders said that their bus stops are not secure anymore.

They claim that the armed robbers come out from the shanties to perpetrate evil acts by dispossessing people of their belongings and killing anyone who refuses to oblige.

They disclosed that about 11 people have been killed and over 50 people injured and shot, while returning to their various homes both at daytime and in the night.

Mr. Abiodun Gbamgboye, the CDA leader of Habib community, said the incessant robbery attacks

at Agric bus stop have stricken fear in people.

"Returning home or going out in this area is now a herculean task.

"The whole community is scared as our bus stops now turn to armed robbers' den and hard drugs zone, the shanties built by the hoodlums are their major hideouts," he said.

He noted that in the daytime, "we see them display hard drugs they sell on their tables and smoke, they even display mixture of drinks with hard drugs.

"There are many people who have been killed while being robbed. For instance, one Stanley Mbosah was killed last week while returning home.

"Most of us no longer take our cars out of the community for fear of being robbed by the hoodlums.

"We want the State Government, the police and Nigeria Drug Law Enforcement Agencies (NDLEA), to come to our aid," he said.

Another CDA leader, from Olowotabutu community, Mr. Emmanuel Chukwudi, said that there is the need for government to arrest the hoodlums, who live in the shanties built at the bus stops.

"I want the government to help us station police patrol at the bus stops, remove shanties and arrest the hoodlums, their presence is causing agitation to inhabitants of this community," he said.

Artisan's whereabouts unknown after fall from 3-storey building

BY ALEX OLISE

Police probe lawyer over incident

Police authorities in Lagos have been urged to do a deep investigation to unravel the circumstances surrounding the whereabouts of an Artisan, who was contracted by a Lawyer, Mr Lanre Okunade, to effect repairs in parts of a building situated at No 40, Diya Street, Gbagada Lagos.

In an exclusive interview with our correspondent, one of the Landlords of the building, Mrs. Mojisola Adebayo, nee Osinuga, accused the Lawyer, Mr. Lanre Okunade, as responsible for the whereabouts of the Artisan, as the Lawyer was the only one in the building, and had refused to quit despite notice to quit served him many years back.

According to her, the Lawyer contracted the Artisan to work on top of the building. Unfortunately, his legs slipped and he fell down, thereby sustaining

serious degrees of injuries. The Lawyer took him to two different hospitals, where he was rejected.

She noted that neighbours are worried over the present state of the Artisan. The Landlord, who is also the first child of her father and owner of the building, told our correspondent that the property was built in 1984 and is now old, hence, needed urgent repairs, based on advice from the Material Testing Agency and Environmental Agency Lagos State.

She noted that based on this, all tenants were served notice to quit many years back, but only the Lawyer refused to quit the building, using all legal means to frustrate the Landlords since 2008, when he entered the house.

The landlord who suspected foul play over the life of the Artisan, has lodged a complaint at the Ifako Police Station in Gbagada, to probe the only tenant in the building, Mr. Lanre Okunade, over the sudden disappearance of the Artisan.

Police raid Delta community over escalating cult war, go away with two lifeless bodies

Reports say members of the Nigeria Police at about 3pm Sunday, raided Agbarho, in Ughelli North Local Government Area in Delta State, apprehending several people at the popular Five Junction, Agbarho, before moving to other parts of the

town and left with two lifeless bodies, suspected to be victims of a rival cult war.

A source, who spoke on condition of anonymity via mobile phone, said most people in the town, were scared to come out, to avoid being arrested by the police team or innocently fall

victim from the crossfire of the rival cult clash, alleged to have consumed about 10 persons within the last one week.

The source, who was yet to identify the cult gangs involved in the clashes as at the time of this report, claimed the situation escalated on Sunday

afternoon, when some of the cultists came out in the open, brandishing dangerous weapons, including battle axes and guns, with a view to attacking members of rival gangs.

According to him, arrival of the police team, doused the escalating tension.

Suspected killer of police chief arrested in Imo state

The Imo State Police Command said it has arrested one of the killers of a retired Chief Superintendent of Police, Christian Kpatuma. The retired Police Officer was murdered by suspected cultists last Wednesday at Agwa, in

Oguta Local Government Area. Spokesman of the Imo State Police Command, CSP Michael Abattam, confirmed the arrest of the suspect.

Abattam said: "Following a report of a case of murder received by the Agwa Divi-

sional Police Headquarters, on 01/02/2022 at about 2152 hours, a group of young men suspected to be cultists resident in Mgbala Community Agwa, in Oguta LGA of Imo State, conspired amongst themselves, went to the house of one Christian Kpatuma, a retired Chief Superintendent of Police (CSP), and a native of Mgbala, abducted and took him to a nearby bush, where they killed him and later carried the corpse back and dumped it in front of his compound."

He said on receipt of the information, the Imo State Commissioner of Police, Rabiu Hussaini, immediately dispatched the Command's tactical teams to the Agwa community with a mandate to fish out the perpetrators of the dastardly act.

He added: "On arrival, the teams commenced discreet investigation, and after a diligent gathering of both forensic and

technical intelligence, one of the suspects, Deberechi Chukwu, the leader of the cult group that killed the retired police officer, CSP Christian Kpatuma, was arrested while escaping to a border state.

In the course of the investigation, he said, it was revealed that the suspect "is a notorious kidnapper and an escapee from the Imo Correctional Centre Owerri, Imo State."

According to him, the suspect, after escaping from the Imo Correctional Centre, recruited young men into his cult group and were terrorising the Agwa community.

Abattam said: "It is also on record that he was involved in the killing of a lot of security personnel in the state.

"However, he has made useful statement and has volunteered assisting the police in the arrest of other members of his gang presently on the run.



Retired Chief Superintendent of Police, Christian Kpatuma

Nigerian who defrauded UK customs from Lagos sent to jail

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC, has secured the conviction and sentencing of one Amunikoro Oludare Olawale to six months imprisonment for identity theft and impersonation.

The convict was sentenced by Justice Oluwatoyin Taiwo of the Special Offences Court sitting in Ikeja, Lagos State.

Investigation by the EFCC into Olawale's criminal activities had begun following a complaint received by the Commission from one S. Hawkins, who is resident in the United Kingdom.

Hawkins, using the EFCC online reporting mobile application, The Eagle Eye App, had

reported that Olawale used her name to commit fraud with Her Majesty Revenue and Customs in the UK.

Olawale was subsequently arrested by operatives of the Commission on November 22, 2021 and arraigned on January 31, 2022.

During his arraignment, he pleaded "guilty" to the charge preferred against him.

In view of his plea, Justice Taiwo convicted him accordingly and sentenced him to six months in prison, with an option of N250,000 fine.

Items recovered from him were also ordered forfeited to the Federal Government.

Three arrested over killing of 26 year-old Lagos trader

Three persons have been arrested in connection with the suspected murder of Chijioke Njube, 26, a trader at Oke-Arin Market in Ebute-Ero (Idita Line), Lagos State.

The Divisional Police Officer of Festac Police Station in Lagos State, Gboyega Balogun, confirmed this development.

Balogun said the three persons were arrested after Njube's body was discovered on Fifth Avenue.

According to the DPO, the deceased's colleagues were at the station to report him missing.

He said when he showed them a picture taken earlier, they confirmed it to be Njube.

They said they had been trying to reach him since Sunday. Balogun said: "There had

been no report of any missing person, but we were called at 7am the following day about a body on Fifth Avenue.

"We got there and took pictures and noticed there were bruises on the body. This most likely points to suspected murder.

"But we called an ambulance and the body was taken to the Yaba General Hospital mortuary.

"Some traders later came to report one of them missing.

"And when I showed them the picture we took earlier, they confirmed it to be the person they were looking for.

"An eyewitness also told us of what had been happening in the house where the deceased lived.

"According to him, the deceased was about to be settled

after serving his boss for 10 years before his body was found.

"Three persons have been arrested and the case has been transferred to the state CID for further action."

Njube's colleagues at Oke-Arin Market in Ebute-Ero (Idita Line) have asked that justice be served because they believe Njube was murdered.

The traders spoke through their spokesperson, Chidi Nweze.

They said Njube went missing on January 30 and could not be reached on his mobile phones.

His bruised body was, however, identified in a picture shown them at the police station.

Nweze said the deceased was supposed to sleep at his

newly-rented apartment on Sunday but was called to return to his boss's house on Fourth Avenue, E-Close, Festac Town, before he went missing.

He said: "We had been trying to reach Chijioke since Sunday but no success.

"We could not also reach his boss, Mr. Chika Umofia.

"But we later got through to his son, who came to the market to tell us they had also been looking for Chijioke.

"He also said they had not reported to the police and we urged him to do so, even offering to nominate three market officials to go with the family, which he rejected, saying the family would go alone and report back to them.

Expert faults CBN's e-invoicing policy

BY JOHNMARK UKOKO

Few days after the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) announced its e-invoicing policy regime on Nigeria's internal trade process, a leading economist has said that the apex bank got it wrong.

Chief Executive Officer of the Centre for the Promotion of Private Enterprise

(CPPE) and immediate past Director-General of the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), Dr. Muda Yusuf, therefore, urged the CBN to rejig the policy or scrap it totally.

Yusuf said the policy would further worsen the challenges businesses in the country.

"The e-invoicing and e-evaluator policy will only worsen an already bad international trade transactions process. The CBN introduced the e-valuation and e-invoicing to curb foreign exchange malpractices."

He noted that the policy would increase transaction cost, entrench red tape, increase uncertainty, escalate

business disruptions, weaken investors' confidence and heighten corruption risk in the system.

"The truth is that there is a strong correlation between red tape and corruption. The increasing incursion of the CBN into the trade policy is an aberration in our economic management system and serious cause for concern

to the business community.

"Issues of import valuation and classification are statutory functions of the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), with the Finance Ministry as their supervising organ. The decision of the CBN to now undertake valuation and product price benchmarking of imports and exports is a duplication of

the statutory responsibility of the Nigeria Customs Service.

He also argued that it would create an additional regulatory compliance burden and costs for the business community, adding: "We, therefore, submit that the CBN reversed the e-evaluation and e-invoicing initiatives, because there is no justification for the new policy."

NDLEA Operatives Arrest Drug Trafficker, Recover Cocaine Worth N3.1bn in Lagos

BY ALEX OLISE

Operatives of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), have arrested a suspected drug trafficker along the Lagos-Badagry Expressway, recovering cocaine substance with street value of N3.1 billion.

The operation was carried out following a tip-off given to operatives of the Agency attached to its Lagos Command.

Sources at the Agency office in Lagos told The Trumpet, that the suspect is being quizzed to track other accomplices linked to the drug cartel.

However, the Chairman of the drug-fighting Agency, Brigadier-General BubaMarwa (ret'd), has warned personnel of the Agency never to compromise any drug trafficker in their effort to rid the country of illegal narcotic substances.

Investigation carried out by The Trumpet revealed that more teenagers are being recruited by drug barons to traffic hard drugs, both through land borders and all the major Airports in the country.

Investigation further revealed that in their bid to beat security at the Muritala Mohammed International Airport, drug traffickers now device new mode of operation to use the Lagos-Badagry Road, enroute Republic of Benin, before jetting out of the country to their major destination.

LASG to host 2nd edition of employment summit in March

...Sanwo-Olu, Obi Asika, Jumia, Ford Foundation, LBS, 70+ others to speak at Summit.

BY BENJAMIN OMOIKE

Lagos State Employment Trust Fund (LSETF), and the Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget (MEPB), have announced that they are collaborating to host the second edition of the Lagos Employment Summit, a two-day hybrid event scheduled for March 3 and 4, 2022, at the Eko Hotel and Suites.

Themed: "Sustainable Job Creation Strategies: Collective Action and Prosperity for All", this year's edition of the Summit will foster deliberations about progressive economic and social solutions to unemployment problems in the state.

At the press conference held to announce the upcoming event on Friday, February 4, 2022, Mrs. TejuAbisoye, Executive Secretary, L.S.E.T.F., stated that sustainable job creation strategies are a much-needed conversation among industry players in the entire socio-economic space. "This event will spotlight various speakers with diverse wealth of experience across the entrepreneurial, advocacy, governmental and private sectors," she said.

"We share in the philosophy that the issue of unemployment is a shared responsibility of both the government, corporates, and individuals; hence, we are always elated to partner and collaborate as much as

we can, and this Summit further positions us in the right direction," she added.

This year's summit, which will feature 90 speakers and 15 plenary, presentation, and breakout sessions, is designed to further discuss innovative and sustainable approaches to job creation, drawing experiences, expertise, and interventions of notable local and international institutions, including public, private, and non-profit organisations.

Lagos State Governor, Mr. BabajideSanwo-Olu, will be a keynote address, will be joined by Mrs. Bola Adesola,

Chairman LSETF; Mr. Sam Egube, Lagos State Commissioner for Economic Development and Planning; Mr. Aloysius UcheOrdu, Director, Africa Growth Initiative; Ian Hommers, Country Director Nigeria & Ecowas, (G.I.Z.); JumokeOduwole, Secretary, Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council (P.E.B.E.C.); Obi Asika, Founder, IbaAjie; NnamdiEzeigbo, CEO. Slot Systems Nigeria, as well as leaders from Jumia, Ford Foundation, Lagos Business School (L.B.S.), and more than 70 other notable speakers to interrogate the topics that include: The Workforce of the Future: 'Gig Economy' – opportunities, challenges, and strategies for success; Women's economic empowerment as a tool for economic growth; Orange Economy: A driver of youth employment in emerging markets; Partnering for Impact: Critical areas that drive youth employment; Job

Centres: Preparing Youth for a Resilient Career; amongst others.

In addition to the deliberations and conversations, there will be an innovation challenge, tagged the "Lagos State Employment Summit Innovation Challenge", where tech innovators will proffer resourceful solutions to increase jobs creation in Lagos State. This process will include the submission of pitches, judges' reviews, shortlisting of applications, and the announcement of the finalist and winners.

There will also be clinics to equip young professionals

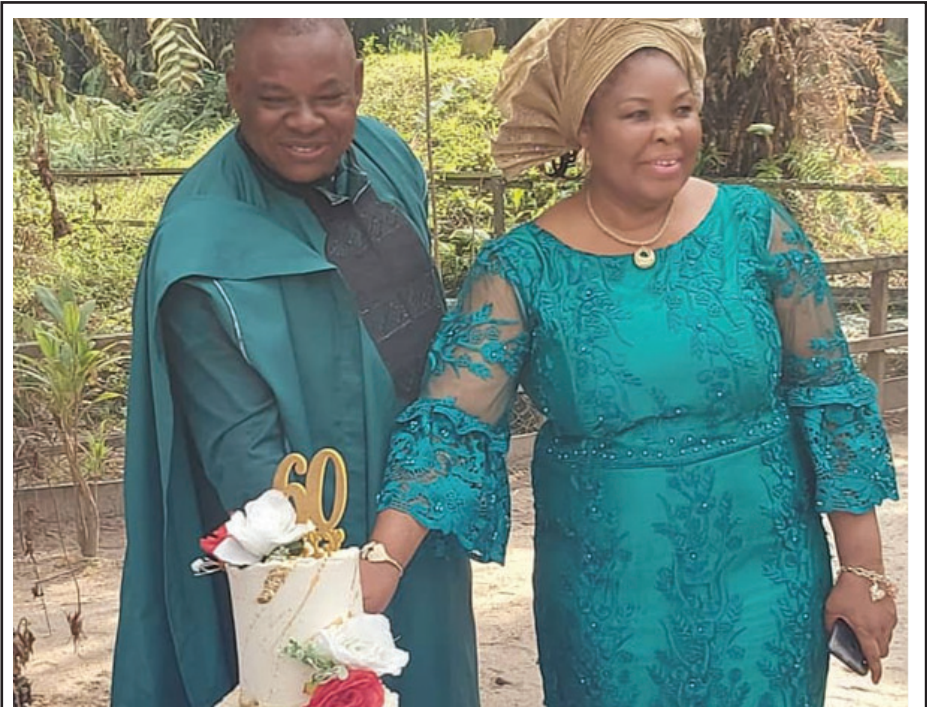
with contemporary skills for the 21st-century workplace.

In his remark, the Lagos State Commissioner for Economic Development and Planning, Mr. Sam Egube, said, 'this Summit aligns with the Next Level goals of the Federal Government and the Lagos State Government's flagship policy thrust, the T.H.E.M.E.S. Agenda on job creation and "Making Lagos a 21st Century Economy". As you may recall, Mr. Governor, in his 2020 New Year's address, reiterated that "our focus on improving the business environment for small and large businesses across the State will create countless

opportunities for business expansion and job creation." This Summit, therefore, further pinpoints us towards achieving this charge', he said.

Sponsorships and partnerships are welcome by the Lagos State Employment Trust Fund and the Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget to further drive the objectives of the Summit.

Participants interested in the Lagos Employment Summit are required to register online at www.lagosemploymentsummit.com. Attendance is free but there will be limited seats for physical participation due to COVID-19 protocols.



Reverend Felix Oriazowan of Church of God Mission International, Lekki, Lagos and wife, Margaret, cutting his 60th birthday cake recently.

Sanwo-Olu swears in special advisers on PPP, Agric

•Signs bills regulating Real Estate, cooperative societies, prohibiting dangerous animals

BY BENJAMIN OMOIKE

Lagos State Governor, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu, has sworn in Mr. Ope George and Dr.OluwarotimiFashola as Special Advisers on Public-Private Partnerships and Agriculture (Rice Mill Initiative) respectively.

Governor Sanwo-Olu, who

swore in the two advisers during the weekly State Executive Council meeting at the Executive Chamber in Lagos House, Ikeja, on Monday also signed three bills into law.

The three bills were – law regulating the real estate transactions in Lagos State; law to provide for the registration of Cooperative Societies in Lagos State; and law to regulate

ownership, licensing and sales of pets and to prohibit and restrict people from having in custody dangerous animals in public places.

Speaking about his new advisers, Governor Sanwo-Olu said George and Fashola are coming into the State Executive Council with a lot of experience in Public and Private Partnership and Agriculture to add value to the

system and wish them the very best in their new assignments.

"We believe this addition to our cabinet will further strengthen our ability to deliver all that we promised our citizens because we need people in strategic positions. We need people that have sufficient authority to be able to dispense their responsibilities," he said.

Governor Sanwo-Olu said

the new bills he assented to will strengthen government and citizens' engagement and relationships and for residents of the State to continue to live in an atmosphere where the rule of law is enshrined for people and to know what is expected of them.

The Governor who commended the Speaker of the Lagos State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. MudashiruObasa and the state lawmakers for seeing the need to pass the bills into laws said the government will

"continue to ensure that our citizens are happy with us and trust is further deepened in government."

Governor Sanwo-Olu said the law to regulate the real estate transactions in Lagos State will help to protect the citizens; the unsuspecting Lagosians who fall prey to many real estate professionals, adding that the law will also help players in the real estate sector to know what is expected of them and for government to be able to track who is doing what in the sector.

POLITICS/DEMOCRACY



2023 presidential race gathers pace as more aspirants join

BY JOSHUA OMOLOYE, POLITICS EDITOR, ABUJA

As the 2023 general election inches closer and political parties continue to search for credible candidates among the many presidential hopefuls, the number of aspirants will increase as today in Abuja, a former governor of Imo State, Senator Rochas Okorocha, has officially declared his intention to run.

National Leader of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, opened the floodgates of declarations when told President Muhammadu Buhari at Aso Rock Villa of his intention to contest the APC presidential ticket.

Ebonyi State Governor David Umahi followed suit by visiting Buhari and since then more personalities have been voicing out their wish to run in 2023.

Also from the fold of the APC is former governor of Abia State and Senate Chief Whip, Orji Uzor Kalu.

Although Vice President Yemi Osinbajo is yet to declare, his name has featured prominently among APC hopefuls.

Declaring on the platform of the PDP are known faces like former Vice President, Atiku Abubakar, two former Senate

presidents; Anyim Pius Anyim and Bukola Saraki while supporters are rooting for governors Aminu Tambuwal of Sokoto, Bala Mohammed of Bauchi, Nyesom Wike of Rivers to vie for the party's ticket.

Party debutants like Sam Oluabunwa and Dele Momodu have also declared to contest on the PDP platform.

Senator Rochas Okorocha is not a first timer in the presidential race. The senator representing Imo West Senatorial district, a 3 times presidential aspirant led the Igbos through the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) to join forces with President Muhammadu Buhari of the then Congress for Progressives Change (CPC), Asiwaju Bola Tinubu of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) and the All Nigerian Progressive Party (ANPP) to form the APC.

He took his first shot at presidency 20 years ago as an aspirant under the platform of ANPP with Gen. Muhammadu Buhari then former Head of State, Chief Nnia Nwodo, and Chief Harry Akande.

Again in 2007 he ran under the platform of PDP coming second to President Umaru Muda Yar'Adua where the likes of Prof Jerry Gana, Gen. Gusau and Gen. Marwa were contestants.

Okorocha indicated his readiness for 2023 on the floor

of the Senate last Wednesday when he notified the Senate President, Ahmad Lawan

He made his intention known in a letter which Lawan read at the floor of the Senate, Wednesday 26th January, 2023.

Okorocha who is from South East Nigeria is one of the prominent aspirants hoping to clinch the presidential ticket of the All Progressives Congress (APC) should the ruling party zone its ticket to the South East.

Okorocha in the letter went ahead to itemize expected qualities of a 21st century Nigerian President topmost among which is that the next president must be a detribalized Nigerian.

He said "our citizens are concerned about the quality of persons to run the affairs of our nation, one who can address some of their major concern which includes; a detribalized Nigerian who can unite our country.

"A leader with a compassionate heart, who will care for the poor and downtrodden and the masses of our country.

"A visionary leader who can create wealth for our teeming populace thereby, addressing the issues of poverty, insecurity and youth restiveness".

He said "it is as a result of these concern that I wish to run for the office of the President of our dear nation".



Asiwaju Bola Tinubu



Senator Rochas Okorocha



David Umahi



Atiku Abubakar



Bukola Saraki



Anyim Pius Anyim



Orji Uzor Kalu



Aminu Tambuwal



Bala Mohammed



Nyesom Wike

Lau replaces Bwacha as Senate Deputy Minority Leader, Sekibo kicks

BY JOSHUA OMOLOYE, ABUJA

Senator Shuaibu Isa Lau (Taraba North) has emerged as the new Deputy Minority Leader of the Senate. He replaced Senator Emmanuel Bwacha also from Taraba State, who defected to the All Progressives Congress (APC) last week.

Shuaibu was nominated by the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) through a letter from the National Chairman of the People's Democratic Party, Iyorchia Ayu, which was read at plenary on Tuesday by Senate President, Ahmad Lawan.

The letter reads in part, "following the defection of Senator Emmanuel Bwacha to the ruling APC, the PDP Senate caucus has nominated as his replacement, Senator Shuaibu Isa Lau.

"Senator Lau is from Taraba State, the North East geo-political zone of the country, where the position has been zoned.

"The PDP Senate caucus has duly informed the National Headquarters of the party, in view of which we so communicate to you.

"We believe that Senator Lau will be an asset to the leadership of the Senate.

Meanwhile, Bwacha (Taraba South), has formally notified the

Senate of his defection from the People's Democratic Party to the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) on the floor of the Senate.

His decision to leave the opposition party was conveyed sequel to a point of order raised by the lawmaker during plenary.

Relying on Order 42 of the Senate Rules (Personal Explanation), Senator Bwacha gave reasons for his defection.

He said, "In view of my desire for equal competition, and about my desire to enjoy the full operations of my fundamental human rights, Mr. President, I want to announce this day, that it is appointed to me, henceforth, to enjoy free air.

"As King Solomon said, there's a time for everything; now is a time for me to leave the People's Democratic Party.

"Mr. President, I say I have opportunity to breathe freely because of a deliberate isolation and huge division and factionalisation in the party in my state.

"Mr. President, I had to leave because I seek to breathe better. This day, I announce henceforth my exit from the People's Democratic Party, and to join the governing party because of the visible presence of the party in my Senatorial District.

"I say this without fear of contradiction that my constituents are happy about this movement because of what they have seen on ground in Taraba South Senatorial District.

"So, we make bold to pay the PDP back by ensuring that better

days are ahead for the party in Taraba State."

Bwacha's defection brings the number of APC Senators to 70, PDP 38 Senators and Young Progressives Party (YPP) 1.

Immediately after his announcement to defect from the opposition party, Senator George Thompson Sekibo (Rivers East), came with a counter point of order to oppose Bwacha's defection citing the provisions of Section 68 (g)(h) and subsection 2 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended).

The lawmaker, against the backdrop of the provisions cited, requested the Senate President to declare Bwacha's seat vacant.

Sekibo was however ruled out of order by the Senate President, Ahmad Lawan.

Lawan observed that Sekibo's demand was null as Senator Bwacha had explained that the PDP in Taraba was factionalised.

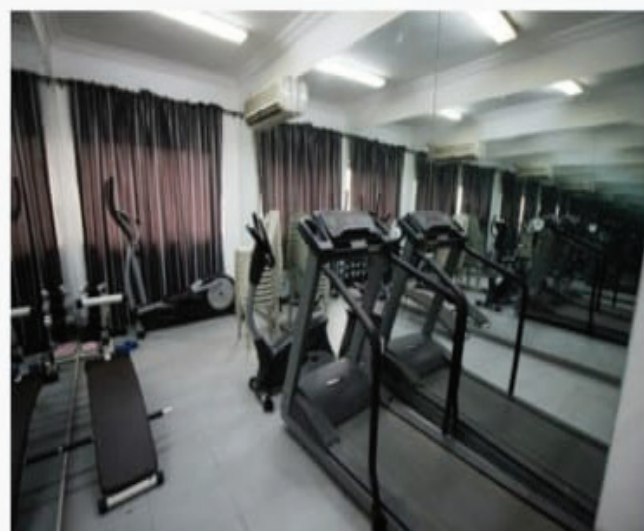
He also drew Sekibo's attention to a letter by the National Chairman of the PDP nominating a new deputy leader to replace Bwacha.

According to Lawan, the decision by the PDP caucus in the Senate to intimate the National Body of the opposition party of a new nomination translates to an acceptance of Bwacha's resignation from the PDP.

The Senate President, on the strength of the reasons advanced, ruled Sekibo out of order.



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'UNAIDS 95-95-95 vision key to ending HIV in Nigeria'

Mr Jekwu Ozoemena, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) HIV Trust Fund (HTF), says only strict adherence to United Nations Joint Action on AIDS (UNAIDS) 95-95-95 vision for 2030 will guarantee a HIV free Nigeria.

Ozoemena said that ending HIV required regular tests and treatment of 95 percent of persons tested, 95 per cent placed on treatment, and 95 per cent viral load suppression.

"The UNAIDS 95-95-95 fast track strategy; 95 percent of people living with HIV knowing their status, 95 percent of people who know their status placed on treatment and 95 percent of people on treatment with suppressed viral loads," he said.

The Chief Executive Officer, who expressed optimism in realizing HIV free Nigeria, said that testing and treatment were imperative.

Ozoemena said that stigma and discrimination were being orchestrated by lack of information, as well as religious bias.

According to him, this remains a challenge in Nigeria.

He, however, condemned moral judgments by people against persons living with HIV, saying that it was one of the biggest challenges impeding progress in the fight against HIV.

"This is because HIV is mainly transmitted through sex and can be linked to the injection of drugs.

"People make moral judgments about how someone contracted HIV and this can lead to stigma internalization."

Ozoemena restated the need for a collective responsibility by all to continue the advocacy against stigmatization.

He said that such collective advocacy would go a long way in changing the narrative, especially with the involvement of religious leaders.



Ozoemena

Nigeria third on female genital mutilation list

Stories by SHARON O. ISAALAH

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has lamented that female genital mutilation (FGM) is on the rise in Nigeria and that the country is ranked third globally.

This was contained in a press statement by UNICEF on International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation 2022. It warned that female genital mutilation was on the rise among Nigerian girls aged 0-14, while rates have risen from 16.9 per cent in 2013 to 19.2 per cent in 2018, which is a "worrying trend."

UNICEF lamented that FGM remains widespread in Nigeria with an estimated 19.9 million survivors. It stressed that Nigeria accounts for the third-highest number of women and girls who have undergone FGM worldwide.

The UN agency said: "While the national prevalence of FGM among women in Nigeria aged 15-49 dropped from 25 per cent in 2013 to 20 per cent in 2018, prevalence among

girls aged 0-14 increased from 16.9 per cent to 19.2 per cent in the same period, according to NDHS figures.

"An estimated 86 percent of females were cut before the age of 5, while 8 per cent were cut between ages 5 and 14."

UNICEF said: "As the world today commemorates the International Day of Zero Tolerance of FGM, 68 million girls worldwide were estimated to be at risk of female genital mutilation between 2015 and 2030. As COVID-19 continues to close schools and disrupt programmes that help protect girls from this harmful practice, an additional 2 million additional cases of FGM may occur over the next decade."

The UNICEF Representative in Nigeria, Peter Hawkins was quoted in the release to have said: "Millions of girls are being robbed of their childhoods, health, education, and aspirations every day by harmful practices such as FGM," insisting that: "The practice of FGM not only has no health benefits – it is deeply harmful to girls and women, both physically and psychologically. It is a practice that has no place in our

society today and must be ended, as many Nigerian communities have already pledged to do."

It was admitted that across Nigeria, disparities in the practice exist. State prevalence ranges from 62 per cent in Imo to less than 1 per cent in Adamawa and Gombe. The prevalence of FGM is highest in the South East (35 per cent) and South West (30 per cent) and lowest in the North East (6 per cent).

The statement revealed that UNICEF is initiating a community-led movement to eliminate FGM in five Nigerian states where it is highly prevalent: Ebonyi, Ekiti, Imo, Osun and Oyo, lamenting that nearly 3 million girls and women would have undergone FGM in these States in the last five years.

According to the statement, "The Movement for Good" will reach 5 million adolescent girls and boys, women – including especially pregnant and lactating mothers – men, grandparents, and traditional, community and religious leaders, legislators, justice sector actors, and state officials through an online pledge to 'say no' to FGM. The movement

will mobilise affected communities for concrete action at the household level to protect girls at risk of FGM. It will challenge misconceptions on FGM and the discriminatory reasons it is practiced and break the silence around the practice together with communities.

FGM is recognized internationally as a violation of the human rights of girls and women. It reflects deep-rooted inequality between the sexes and is an extreme form of discrimination against girls and women. It is nearly always carried out on children and is a violation of children's rights. The practice also violates a person's rights to health, security and physical integrity; the right to be free from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment; and the right to life, in instances when the procedure results in death.

"The International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM reminds us that we are not alone in this work and that we need to accelerate efforts – especially with families and communities – to achieve a Nigeria safe for girls and women and finally free of FGM," said Peter Hawkins.

Africa records 1.1m new cancer cases, 700,000 deaths annually

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has said Africa records about 1.1 million new cases of cancer every year resulting in 700,000 deaths.

In a message to commemorate this year's World Cancer Day, the body said more than 400,000 children were diagnosed annually with cancer globally, with about 90 per cent living in low- and middle-income countries.

In the message issued by the WHO Regional Director for Africa, Dr. Matshidiso Moeti, it urged member states in the continent to make the necessary investment required to ensure that all our citizens, no matter their incomes or geographic location, have access to quality cancer care.

"Every year, Africa records around 1.1 million new cases of cancer, resulting in up to 700 000 deaths. Breast cancer, along cervical, prostate, liver and colorectal cancers, account for almost half the new cases on the continent annually.

"Children are also inequitably impacted. Of the more than 400, 000 children diagnosed annually with cancer around the world, about 90 per cent live in low- and middle-income countries. "Survival rates are at a very low 20 per cent or less in African countries, compared to more than 80 per cent in developed countries," it said.

According to Moeti, this year's theme, "Close the care gap," marked the start of a three-year campaign to raise global awareness around cancer and its impacts, especially among most vulnerable citizens.

Moeti said renewed efforts to curb new cancer cases were urgent, adding that there are alarming projections that cancer death rates in Africa would rise exponentially over the next 20 years, outstripping the global average by 30 per cent.

He also said that common challenges across the African region included lack of awareness and

education, limited access to primary prevention and early detection services, coupled with delays in diagnosis and treatment.

"There is also limited access to palliative care and pain relief.

Shortages of specialists in medical and radiation oncology, pathology, medical physics and other essential areas compound the gaps.

"Africa has only three per cent of the world's cancer treatment facilities, with radiotherapy available in just 22 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, which contributes to poor survival rates," he added.

To "close the care gap," WHO Africa is driving a number of key initiatives. These have seen 45 percent of our countries introduce national HPV vaccination programmes to address the cervical cancer threat. National screening programmes are now operational in 72 percent countries, 11 of which offer high-performance screening," he said.

Moeti further said that through the Global Initiative for Childhood Cancer (GICC), Zambia, Senegal and Ghana have developed country-specific treatment guidelines, established pediatric hospital-based registries, and improved access to chemotherapy.

He disclosed that Senegal was in the process of including childhood cancers in its new National Cancer Control Plan.

Moeti said that last year, WHO Africa partnered with St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in the United States to launch the groundbreaking Global Platform for Access to Childhood Cancer Medicines.

"It is expected to contribute significantly to closing the cancer care gap for children on the continent.

As countries work towards universal health care, with the support of WHO, cancer risk factors need to be prioritized.

S'African regulator okays Sinopharm COVID vaccine

South Africa's health regulator has approved a COVID-19 vaccine from China's Sinopharm, although a senior health official said the government was not planning to procure doses for now.

The country worst-hit by the pandemic in Africa, in terms of reported COVID-19 infections and deaths, has used the Pfizer-BioNTech and Johnson & Johnson (J&J) shots in its vaccination campaign, after signing supply deals with the two United States companies.

The government delayed some vaccine deliveries late last year because of oversupply as hesitancy slowed the uptake.

Drugs regulator SAHPRA said in a statement the Sinopharm approval was based on "acceptable safety,

quality and efficacy data submitted by MC Pharma," referring to a local regulatory pharmaceutical company that has partnered with Sinopharm.

It said the vaccine was indicated for those aged 18 and over, subject to conditions including that it was administered in line with the national vaccination programme and periodic safety updates were submitted.

"We are not procuring (the) vaccine as we have plenty in stock," Nicholas Crisp, deputy director-general in the health department, told Reuters when asked whether the government was in negotiations to buy Sinopharm doses.

A Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccine was approved for emergency use by the World Health Organization (WHO) in May.

Clinical trial data showed it had

lower efficacy against symptomatic disease than the shot developed by Pfizer.

In December, the WHO recommended that people who had received an inactivated COVID-19 vaccine-like ones made by Sinopharm,

another Chinese manufacturer Sinovac Biotech and India's Bharat Biotech should receive a booster dose to protect against waning immunity.

Inactivated vaccines take the SARS-CoV-2 virus and inactivate or kill it using chemicals, heat or radiation.



Africa's first mRNA COVID vaccine uses Moderna data

A South African company has made its own COVID-19 vaccine, according to its executives.

The company, called Afrigen, says it used Moderna data to design, develop and produce the first mRNA type vaccine for Covid-19 on the African continent.

It would mean a cheaper, patent-free version of the shot.

The WHO hired the company last

year, one of several chosen in a pilot program to help low and middle-income countries crack the code of COVID vaccines.

UN health official Charles Gore says Afrigen should help change perceptions of African nations' capabilities.

"If this project shows that Africa can take cutting edge technology and produce cutting edge products with

it, that will banish this idea 'Africa can't do it'.

Afrigen used the publicly available sequence of Moderna's mRNA vaccine.

However, the company's managing director, Petro Terblanche, made it clear it's a uniquely designed vaccine.

She said, "We haven't copied Moderna, we've developed our own

processes because Moderna didn't give us any technology."

WHO launched the project after Pfizer, BioNTech and Moderna declined their request to share tech and expertise.

However, Moderna pledged not to enforce patents during the pandemic.

Moderna had no immediate comment on Afrigen's Thursday announcement.

The WHO hopes its hub in Cape Town will help overcome vaccine inequalities between rich and poor countries.

Some 99 percent of Africa's vaccines against all diseases are imported and the negligible remainder is manufactured locally.

Afrigen announced its vaccine could be tested on humans before the end of the year.

EDITORIAL

Officials and public health facilities in Nigeria

For a country working towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the state of public health facilities is a cause of deep concern. Both at state and federal levels, public health facilities face an existential challenge. Public officials, sometimes at the expense of national security, often jet out of the country to get medical help whenever they face a crisis. This is tantamount to passing a vote of no confidence in our healthcare system. Infectious diseases, control of vectors, maternal and infant mortality as well as poor hygiene, disease surveillance and road traffic injuries are still major challenges.

The 2019 WHO Global Status Report on non-communicable diseases listed Nigeria and other developing countries as the worst hit with deaths. Cardiovascular disease, tuberculosis, hepatitis, cancer, diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases, sickle cell disease, malaria, asthma, coronary heart disease, obesity, stroke, hypertension, road traffic injuries and mental disorders are on the increase. Life expectancy at birth, as of 2021, hovers around 59 years for male and 63 years for female.

In addition, inter-sectoral cooperation and collaboration between the different health-related ministries remain a major issue. This is a critical issue affecting public health care delivery in Nigeria despite the collaborative efforts of the government, donor agencies and NGOs.

The problems have been attributed to irrational appointments, inadequate payment of medical workers' salaries, poor quality of care, and inequitable healthcare services for even the sector's workers among others. There are also the issues of uncompleted agenda on the containment of infectious disease as well as the emergence of non-communicable diseases. There is shortage of health workers as a result of economic and social brain drain. It has been estimated that there are only about 27 physicians per 100,000 people in Nigeria as against the

WHO's recommendation one to 600. These multifaceted challenges are compounded by poor economic policies, socio-political factors in the country's history and limited institutional capacity to provide efficient responses at the population.

To address these problems the government should collaborate with other international health institutions to do the needful to achieve an efficient and effective system. Construction of additional medical facilities is urgently required across the nation, with remote areas given priority. Existing health centres should also be rehabilitated and upgraded. Recruitment of more medical practitioners and provision of a conducive

working condition for them will also go a long way in resolving the health crisis in the country. On mental health the government should continue to promote the ideals of International Health Regulations (IHR) while working with relevant agencies to curtail drug abuse incidences as well as curb the spread of fake or expired drugs and their subsequent abuses.

There is also the critical issue of how Nigerian public officials manage their health. By now the Freedom of Information Act of 2011 ought to have removed the aura of mystery and exclusion with which most public officers conduct public affairs. There remains a shroud of secrecy on the health status of most public officials. This is akin to the secrecy that obtained in the colonial era Official Secret Act (OSA) of 1911. Public officials hardly ever declare their health statuses before and when in office. This should stop. Nigerians deserve the right to know how healthy the persons who lead or who aspire to leadership positions are. The health challenges of incumbent President Muhammadu Buhari has caused the nation a great deal. All these must change if Nigeria is to overcome the crises she faces at the level of public health.

We therefore call for the enactment of a law that compels all public officer to declare their health statuses and how they are managed. Management must be by designated public health institutions. In the 1970s, the First Lady of the nation, Mrs. Victoria Gowon, gave birth at LUTH. The Teaching Hospital at Ibadan attracted persons from the Commonwealth. Candidates seeking public office in the 2023 general elections should give evidence of good health. This, as part of the social contract between the officials and the electors, will compel state officials to improve health services in the country. Nothing describes conflict of interest and sabotage more than public officials using private health facilities both at home and abroad.



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DISCIPLINE THEM WITH LOVE

Discipline is an essential tool used by parents daily to guide a child in the right path.

1

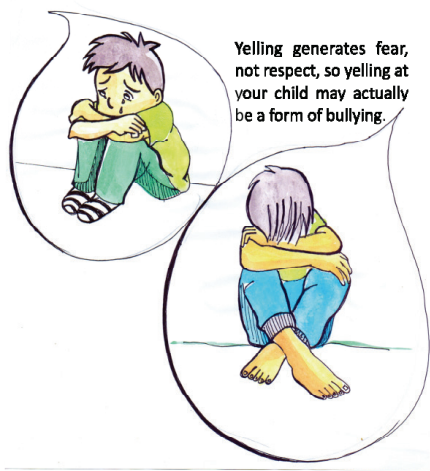
Esuoghene is a very young boy of about six (6) years old in Oleh, Isoko South Local Government Area, Delta State, who became very depressed. Why? Esuoghene's father yelled at him saying: are you not seeing your mates...?, they are reading their books and you are here playing....you lazy son! Esuoghene became weak and depressed.

If a child is disciplined without love, many unhealthy thought will accommodate his heart.



2

'My dad doesn't love me!' Esuoghene imagined... I don't know why my dad hates me so much....



3

Esuoghene's mother noticed her child's state of depression and talked to him calmly.



4

Esuoghene now has confidence in himself and became delighted with his parents at last.





By
**Professor Hope
O'Rukevbe Eghagha**

Zoning: To be or Not to Be!

Every nation, nascent or established, develops a framework for political stability, social engineering, and economic development. While some practices are constitutional, there are also conventional, unwritten codes of mutual coexistence which have evolved over time. Any nation with a sense of history must work out its survival codes, rules, and laws to guarantee its continued existence. Nigeria as currently constituted though skewed in favour of the elite, is somewhat a product of negotiations and discussions especially in the years leading to political independence from Britain. Even the United States did not emerge from heaven, its constituent parts having agreed to be part of the union. It is against this background that we must understand the agitation of most southern Nigerian patriots for power rotation in the country through zoning of positions in the political parties. It is called affirmative action!

In a federation like Nigeria made up of disparate, diverse, and different ethnic and religious groups, the need for equity in power sharing arrangements cannot be overemphasized. The first National Anthem recognized this diversity or plurality in these words: 'Though tribe and tongue may differ/In brotherhood we

stand' and 'Help us to build a nation/Where no man is oppressed'. It expressed the wish to create a nation that all peoples would have a sense of belonging within the corporate body. Politicians have always been in the forefront of negotiating the nature and manner of our mutual coexistence even though sometimes their extreme utterances and behaviour tend to emphasize divisive and destructive factors. Yet, they are the ones we must persuade into negotiating a better future for Nigeria.

Strictly speaking Nigeria is not made up of north and south. No region is monolithic. The two blocs are mere referential in describing the country. The north-south divide reflects four levels of consciousness – political, religious, cultural, and economic. Yet this is not completely true. What you have in the north you also have in the south. But there is a dominant narrative couched in a contradictory if false narrative – Islamic north and Christian south. It is true that the north is predominantly Islamic in population, but not every northerner is a Muslim. The same applies to the south. Sadly, politicians have appropriated, misappropriated this paradigm as governance tool for Nigeria. As a result, a President of northern extraction is seen as largely a 'northern President'. The same applies to a president who comes from the south. The reason is that Presidents tend to pay more attention to their geographical zone in terms of appointments, projects, and social affiliation. This is a tragedy. It is the main reason behind the clamour for power rotation.

The Nigerian presidency is too powerful. Unfortunately, most Presidents have not been national in outlook and character. The ones who attempted to be national were perceived from the other region as 'the other', thereby stressing

difference. If past and current presidents had all been national in orientation, the clamour for power rotation would not have arisen. The perception by some politicians and ethnic jingoists that the Presidency is indeed their heritage has not helped national cohesion. The 'they' and 'us' mentality has fostered a deep cleavage that widens by the day. This situation seems to have been aggravated by the skewed appointments into federal agencies by the current federal government.

In a properly run government, the nation ought to search for the best hand from wherever to manage its affairs as president. In such a situation, it would not matter whether the president is from the south or the north. His constituency would be the entire country. Ironically, the military governments in Nigeria appeared to be more conscious of this dynamic than some civilian administrations. It is true that some saw themselves as senior partners in government on account of the region that they come from. Yet the ethnic tension currently wracking the nation is nerve-racking and frightening. Will something give seems to be the question on the lips of everyone. The deadly violence that has gripped the Southeast championed by the prescribed IPOB is a dimension that calls for tactful management of the polity. The animosity between groups had never been so palpable. What has helped the nation thus far is the non-involvement of state actors in the frenzied call for restructuring.

I therefore call on the two major parties to be conscious of power rotation as a way of guaranteeing national harmony. Already, the APC seems to have considered zoning the presidency to the south. The PDP is yet to make its position known. Incumbent President Muhammadu Buhari will complete a two-term presidency in 2023.

Owing to the perception that his government has mainly favoured persons from the northern part of the country (including appointments to sensitive federal positions in the security service) and the oil sector, there is clamour that the next President must be a southerner who will redress the years of clannish governance that has permeated the country in the last seven odd years.

In the states there has been a power sharing arrangement to meet the interests of different groups. In Delta State, for example, a gentleman's agreement was nurtured by then Governor Chief James Ibori on power rotation among the three senatorial districts. After his tenure in 2007 which saw the governorship resting in Delta Central, Governor Emmanuel Uduaghan came from Delta South in 2007, followed by Governor Ifeanyi Okowa from Delta North in 2015. The governorship reverts now to Delta Central for the rotation to return to Point One. To be sure, discussions are ongoing on how to ensure harmony in the State because some forces are contesting the extant arrangement. It is my hope that the PDP leaders would resolve this issue to prevent a snowball into the unknown. Lagos and Anambra States also have working arrangements just as Ogun and Oyo do. This should not elude Nigeria.

If Nigeria must remain one indivisible country, the state actors must promote acts of national unity and cohesion. Zoning power to strategic groups in a polity is a way of strengthening the federation. If President Buhari wants to be remembered for good, the Presidency should be zoned to the South.

Professor Hope O. Eghagha teaches English at the University of Lagos.



By
Promise Adiele

Money ritual: Nigeria's new normal (2)

money and offer front seats to those who donate more to the church. 'Pay your tithe' is the new mantra, the source of the money from which tithe is paid does not matter to our churches. These pressures lead the weak to make money by all means. Our societies too and those who control them share part of the blame. We celebrate money and wealth to honorific levels and make hard work pale into insignificance. Once a person has money, all other considerations are reconciled and rationalized, and the next thing we hear is "he/she is doing well". I take the federal government, state governments, religious bodies, all parents, our traditional institutions, schools, and many other branches of our

society to task in the money ritual matter. The National Orientation Agency (NOA) has work to do. Our secondary schools and universities should dedicate special days to educating the students about the dangers of money rituals. Religious bodies should preach against this practice. Together, we are all involved in it. The boundaries of victims can extend to anybody at any time. The argument that hardship drives people to indulge in money rituals is inane and jejune. This is because money rituals come with severe consequences. Some people have accused Nollywood producers of advertising and promoting money rituals, but I disagree. In Nollywood movies, those who

indulge in money rituals receive their comeuppance which ranges from madness, death, and grisly disgraceful ends. The end of such movies should act as a deterrent to those who are inclined to wealth by rituals. The African practices of magic, animism, sorcery, and voodoo through rituals have been compromised by the custodians of chthonic essences and that is why they do not perform any positive functions again. They don't heal, they don't correct, and they do not serve prognostic purposes anymore because their altars have been desecrated for destructive, tragic ends. We must collectively stand up against money ritual before it destroys our psychosocial currency.

CONTINUED FROM
LAST EDITION





These churches celebrate the



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College officials in appreciation visit to Reps leadership

Stories by OROWO VICTORIA OJIEH

Federal College of Education, Pankshin provost, Dr. Amos Bulus Cirfat (Fstan, JP, P.Amb), management of the Institution and Chairman of the Governing Council Hon. Abubakar Adagu, have paid an appreciation visit to the Speaker, House of Representatives, Rt. Hon.

Femi Gbajabliamila and the Member representing Pankshin, Kanke, Kanam (PKK) who is Chairman, House Committee on Navy, Hon. Yusuf Gagdi.

The visit was to appreciate the member for sponsoring the bill that leads to the elevation of the Institution from Federal College of Education Pankshin (FCEP) to Federal University of Education, Pankshin.

Speaking during the visit, the

Provost and Governing Council chairman conveyed the gratitude of the institution to the leadership of the House of Representatives as well as the Hon. Member representing the Federal Constituency, who also is an alumnus of FCEP for initiating the process that led to the accomplishment of the long awaited dream of becoming a Federal University of Education.

Gbajabliamila and Gagdi praised the institution's officials for the visit.

Constitution allows women to wear Hijab in schools, says education minister Adamu

Education minister Adamu Adamu has insisted that female Muslim students should be allowed to wear hijab in schools because the Nigerian constitution allows Muslims to practice their faith according to the dictates of their religion.

He explained: "The wearing of hijab by Muslim women is in line with the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), as recommended in Qur'an 33:59."

Delivering a keynote address at the 2022 World Hijab Day Public Lecture in Abuja, Adamu who was represented by Sidikat Shomope, deputy director of social mobilisation, Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), said the constitution guarantees freedom of religion for all citizens. He therefore, called for dialogue on matters of religious differences, rather than resorting to violence.

This, by implication, means that all citizens are allowed to practice their religion according to the dictates of their faith, as long as no harm or inconvenience is caused to other people," the minister asserted.

However, there has been much

controversy on this matter in the country, which has unfortunately gone down to the school level and generated violent fights

He reminded fellow citizens that there was "a lot we can gain by dialoguing on matters of religious differences, rather than resorting to violence."

"Our children will remain citizens of Nigeria, irrespective of their belief. They will live and interact in the world outside their schools, where no boundary exists between the religions."

The minister further appealed to traditional, religious, and community leaders to use their offices to douse tension and ensure peace, harmony and tolerance. He also called on parents and school teachers to ensure that in both words and actions, they present the best model to children to emulate.

The guest lecturer, Ishaq Akintola, said hijab was a vehicle of unification both nationally and internationally, as it helps Muslim women to identify themselves. Akintola also said the Hijab was a symbol of social justice, freedom, equal rights and a key to

morality.

During the programme, a member of the House of Representatives, Aishatu Dukku, pledged that the National Assembly would ensure the passage of the Religious Discrimination Prohibition Prevention Bill, 2021.



Adamu

Lawan moves to stem crisis in ivory towers over fees hike

Meets with education regulatory agencies

By JOSHUA OMOLOYE, Abuja

Senate President Ahmad Lawan on Tuesday moved to douse brewing tension over an alleged hike in registration fees in some tertiary Institutions.

He held a meeting with heads of regulatory agencies in education sector at the National Assembly.

In attendance at the meeting were the Executive Secretary of the National University Commission (NUC), Professor Abubakar Rasheed, Executive Secretary of the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), Professor Paulinus Chijoke Okwelle and Hajia Bilquis Salihijo Ahmad representing the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE).

Lawan said the meeting was a follow-up to an earlier engagement which he had last week with the Coalition of Northern Groups - Students' Wing which brought a complaint of a plan by some tertiary institutions to hike registration fees.

"We felt that we actually owe it a duty to listen to our students and of course also hear from you because we need to establish

beyond reasonable doubt what the situation is," Lawan said.

The Senate President cautioned that "whatever situations we find ourselves, we must not do anything that will jeopardise the position of our students particularly at a time that is so difficult.

"We understand that our tertiary Institutions have need for more resources but we equally understand that our students are mostly from very poor background and we must do everything possible to protect those who are so vulnerable.

"The finances for their education must never be hurdles between them and actualising their dreams. So we have to find out how this situation is and we take the appropriate measures.

"Because you represent the supervising bodies for our tertiary Institutions, we felt that we should start with you, listen to you and then we can now find a way out of this."

He assured the students that the National Assembly and indeed the government would always work to protect and support them to continue with their education.

Responding on behalf of his other colleagues, the NUC Executive Secretary, Professor Rasheed

commended the Senate President for his timely intervention.

"Your concern is shared by all of us. It will, at this point, be difficult to know exactly which Universities are violating or not. But after this meeting, we shall consult all the Universities with a template to complete and tell us exactly what charges they have.

"We shall advertise. If we are misled, we shall be able to get to know. We understand that the Universities cannot be forced to charge uniform fees across the country because they have different demands and they come from different situations.

"Possibly a University in Lagos or Port harcourt may charge slightly more than Universities in some rural areas. But there should be a base line.

"One University cannot charge 20,000 naira while the other charges 150,000 naira to Nigerian students where tuition has been free since 1978 at the undergraduate level.

"We are happy that you have now raised this alarm on time and I will go back immediately, consult Vice Chancellors and if possible we shall bring them to a meeting to discuss whatever resolution we arrive at, at the end of this meeting," Professor Rasheed said.

Senate okays six more Law School campuses

By JOSHUA OMOLOYE, POLITICS EDITOR, Abuja

The Senate on Tuesday passed a bill approving creation of addition six campuses of the Nigerian Law School.

If the passed bill is signed into law, Nigeria will have 13 campuses of the law school.

The Bill, titled: "A Bill for an Act to amend the Legal Education (Consolidation, etc) Act by establishing the campuses for the Nigerian Law School, and for other related matters" was sponsored by Kogi West Senator Smart Adeyemi.

The passage of the Bill followed the adoption of the recommendation of the Senate Committee on Judiciary, Human Rights and Legal Matters that considered the Bill presented by committee chairman, Senator Opeyemi Bamidele.

According to the Bill, "There shall be established a minimum of two campuses in each of the six geopolitical zones, as specified in the schedule to the Bill.

"Subject to the provision of subsection 3, of this section, creation of additional campuses of the Nigerian Law School shall be approved by the National Assembly through legislation whenever the need arises."

According to the Bill, campuses of the Nigerian Law School and their locations include: Bwari Law School Campus, FCT, Abuja; Kabba Law School Campus (North Central); Jos Law School, Plateau State (North Central); Yola Law School Campus, Adamawa (North East), Maiduguri Law School campus, Borno State (North East); Lagos Law School Campus (Southwest) and Ilawe Law School campus, Ekiti State (Southwest);

Others are: Kano Law School Campus (Northwest); Argungun Law School Campus, Kebbi State (North West), Enugu Law School Campus, Enugu State (Southeast); Okija Law School Campus

(South East); Yenegoa Law School Campus, Bayelsa State (Southsouth); Port-Harcourt Law School Campus, Rivers State (South South) and Orogun Law School campus, Delta State (South South).

However, it was resolved that the Bwari Law School should be for the Federal Capital City, while the proposed campuses in Kabba, Kogi State and Jos, Plateau state, would be for the North Central zone.

According to Senator Bamidele, the committee observed "That in view of the exponential increase in the number of law graduates from our universities and even foreign universities, coupled with the backlog that existed over the years, this legislative intervention measure is not only apt and timely but paramount;

"That without prejudice to the establishment of the Law School Campus in Port-Harcourt, the provision for additional campuses in the six-geopolitical zones of the federation in this Bill is appropriate as it has not tampered with the seven existing campuses p, established by administrative responsibilities of the Council of Legal Education;

"That the existing campuses are overstretched and the infrastructures are not enough to accommodate thousands of law students graduating from the universities;

"That apart from the statutory requirement for the creation of additional campuses, it should be strictly on the basis of need assessment and fulfillment of other indicators, such as, convenience, and accessibility by lecturers, staff and students, availability of office, lecture theater and hostel facilities, proximity to courts and law offices; and

"That the Federal Government should, as a matter of priority, provide adequate resources for the funding of the infrastructural needs of the Law School campuses, across the country."



Lawan

LAW & JUDICIARY



Issues in appointment of card-carrying political parties' members as INEC officials

BY ONYEBUCHI SAMPSON

•Lawyers urge adherence to constitutional provisions

Lawyers among them senior advocates of Nigeria have raised constitutional issues over last week's clearance by the Senate of Professor Rhoda Gumus from Bayelsa State as National Electoral Commissioner for the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC), representing South south.

With 2023 elections near the corner, the legal minds, who spoke to The Trumpet, said abidance to the provisions of the constitution remains the only way to demonstrate the ruling party's preparedness to superintend a free and fair elections in 2023.

According to reports, the Senate had in performing its constitutional role confirmed Rhoda Gumus, a card-carrying member of the ruling All Progressives Congress, as a national commissioner (south-south) and six other nominees as commissioners and resident electoral commissioner of INEC.

President Buhari's confirmation request is in compliance with the provision of Section 153(1)(f) of the constitution and according to the provision of Section 154(1) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended).

However, after the action, Gumus' registration documents, which confirmed her membership of the ruling party, an action that would violate the Nigerian Constitution if allowed to stand, flooding the media space.

According to the document, Prof Gumus, whose mobile telephone numbers were given as 08054938760, registered on March 3, 2021 in the form marked: BAY/YEN/08/58315.

What the law says

The 1999 Constitution as amended, specifically declares that appointees to the electoral

body must be non-partisan and also not a card-carrying member of any political party.

Section 14(2a) of the Third Schedule of the 1999 Constitution as amended states that "a member of the commission shall be non-partisan and a person of unquestionable integrity."

And Section 14(3b) of the same Schedule states that "there shall be for each state of the federation and the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja, a Resident Electoral Commissioner who shall be a person of unquestionable integrity and shall not be a member of any political party." This, however, directly applies to members appointed as Resident Electoral Commissioners.

While preceding paragraphs empowers the president to make appointments and the Senate to make confirmations, 3b, demands that the integrity of an appointee must not be in question.

The interpretation of this Section of the law raises questions as to whether it was considered before the appointments were made.

Similar Appointments

Prof Gumus' controversial appointment was not definitely the first as only recently,

Ms. Lauretta Onochie, a personal aide to President Buhari was appointed a National Electoral Commissioner for the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), which was described as unconstitutional.

However, the appointment of Ms. Onochie, who hails from Delta State, and currently President Muhammadu Buhari's Personal Assistant on Social Media was not confirmed by the Senate following public outcries.

Those, who opposed her appointment, was concerned with credibility of future elections.

To them, Ms Onochie has openly displayed partisanship and total support for the president and the All Progressives Congress (APC) in general.

There was also a case in October 2019, when a "former" APC member was nominated as a resident electoral commissioner by the president.

The nominee, Olalekan Raheem had confessed to being a member of the APC during his screening exercise in November of the same year. He also confessed to have contested for local government chairmanship in Osogbo, Osun State even though he said he stopped being a card-carrying member of the party in 2017.

"I am a member of APC and I contested for the chairmanship

of Osogbo local government in 2013. In 2015, I moved on to go and study psychology in University of Ibadan. I had the card then when I had the intention of contesting.

"I was a DG of a contestant in 2017. I was part of the campaign. I am no longer a card-carrying member since I left to go back to school. I have not been attending political function again," he told the panel.

His nomination was, however, rejected by the Senate.

The chairman of the panel, Kabiru Gaya, had then asked his colleagues to stand down Mr Raheem's screening because a petition had been written against him accusing him of being a card-carrying member of the APC.

Lawyers' Reactions

Legal minds, who spoke on the matter are worried that the Senate did not followed established precedents by confirming Prof Gumus against the provisions of the constitution and the laid down rules.

Criticising the action, a constitutional lawyer and Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), Chief Mike Ahamba, said despite the confirmation, Prof Gumus should step down as her nomination was not in line with the constitution.

Although, the renowned lawyer said, he had criticised the constitutional provision barring party members from such appointments in his books in 1980 and 1982, since it was provided in 1979

and 1999 constitutions, the Senate should abide by it or the action should be challenged with a view of quashing her confirmation in court.

Another constitutional lawyer, James Ezike, said if the Senate did not confirm Onochie based on the said constitutional provision, they should do same in Gumus' case.

According to him, the Senate should follow their rules by not allowing a person, who is a member of a political party to become an official of INEC, knowing the nation's antecedents.

He said: "If you put you put a card-carrying member of a political party to superintend an election, the result is already well known, because our people do not know what is honour."



President Muhammadu Buhari



Senate President, Ahmed Lawan



Nigeria CJN, Justice Muhammad

Court fixes March 25 for argument on bank's suit against Sonny Odogwu's family

BY ONYEBUCHI SAMPSON

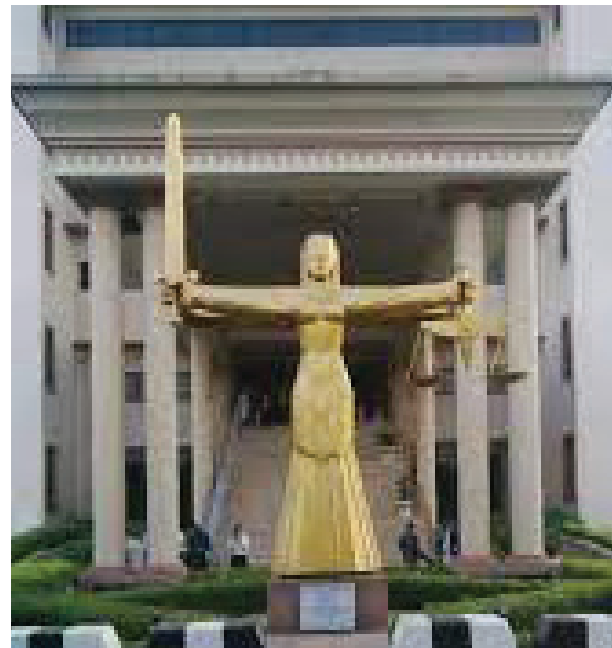
A Federal High Court, Lagos had adjourned further hearing on the new suit filed by Access Bank against the family of the late Ide Ahaba of Asaba, Chief Sonny Odogwu over Ikoyi property till March 25, 2022.

Trial judge, David Osiagor on February 4, fixed the new date for argument on March 25, 2022.

In the new suit, Access bank is seeking to set aside the consent judgment delivered by Justice Aikawa in suit N0 FHC/L/CS/156/2017 between Robert Dyson & Dike Limited & 2 Ors v Diamond Bank Plc on October 11, 2019, and enforce the judgment of Justice Saidu delivered in Suit N): FHC/L/CS/1633/14 between parties.

The suit filed by Access Bank Plc and Siet Trading Limited has Robert Dyson & Diket Limited, SIO Properties Limited, Kenneth Odogwu (sued as beneficiary and in the representative capacity on behalf of all the administrators of the estate of late Chief Sonny Odogwu and the Registrar of Title Federal Land Registry for want of jurisdiction as respondents.

In the suit, the plaintiffs submitted that the judgment



creditors have refused to hand over the Dubai property to the judgment creditors in line with the settlement agreement.

They also stated that the judgment debtor has refused to grant vacant possession to the properties at Kirikiri as well as the Dubai property to date in line with the consent judgment.

The judgment creditors are determined to protect depositors funds and realise the fruits of their judgment by recovering the

judgment sum of N26 billion.

But Siet Trading Limited, (the second plaintiff in the suit) has filed a withdrawal notice, while Access Bank has also filed notice of withdrawal against Federal Registrar of Title (the 4th defendant).

In a motion of notice filed by its counsel at Federal High Court, Lagos, Siet Trading Limited is seeking to withdraw from the suit.

The notice for withdrawal was

brought pursuant to order 50, Rule 2 of the Federal High Court (Civil Procedure) Rules 2019 and under the inherent jurisdiction of the court.

In the motion, the firm stated that it has withdrawn from all its claims as it relate to the originating summons of December 20, 2021 against the defendants in the suit.

Before the motion seeking to withdraw by the second defendant, Odogwu's family had in a motion on notice filed on December 31, 2021, urged the court to dismiss or in the alternative strike out the suit filed by Access Bank Plc and Siet Trading Limited.

The notice of preliminary objection was brought on the grounds that the suit constitutes an abuse of court process, that the plaintiffs (Access Bank and Siete Trading Limited), lack the locus standi to institute the suit as well as that the action as presently constituted did not disclose any reasonable cause of action against the defendants.

They also contended that the entire action is frivolous, vexatious, malicious, tantamount to abuse of the judicial process, that the action as presently constituted is an attempt to use the court to perfect fraud, as no leave of court was obtained before the filing of the suit seeking to set aside a consent judgment.

Electricity consumers file suit against Discos over estimated billing

BY ONYEBUCHI SAMPSON

Power users under the auspices of All Electricity Consumers Protection Forum have filed a suit against Ikeja Electric and Eko Electricity Distribution Companies for their failure to implement the order capping estimated billing.

The suit filed before Justice Lateef Lawal-Akapo of an Ikeja High Court has been fixed for hearing on March 2.

In the originating summons filed by the group's lawyer, Olalekan Matti, and supported by a 25-paragraph affidavit deposed to by its National Secretary, Kehinde Akinloye-Jones, the group alleged that the defendants had failed to comply with the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission Order on capping of unmetered Residential 2 and Commercial 1 electricity customers.

The plaintiff averred that both Discos failed to comply

with the capping Order NO/NERC/197/2020 for a period of 10 months from February 2020 to November 2020 to the consumers affected by the capping Order.

They asked the court to determine whether it was within the power of Discos to disobey the directives of NERC pursuant to section 63(1) of Electric Power Section reform Act 2005.

They also asked the court to declare that the act of the first and second defendants' violation of the capping method was unlawful.

The group also asked the court for an order directing the defendants to refund the consumers affected by unlawful billing for the period of 10 months under a repealed estimation billing instead of capping.

The claimant further asked the court to direct the defendants to pay the sum of N500, 000 for the cost of the suit.

LAW & JUDICIARY



NBA moves to set up court monitoring scheme

BY ONYEBUCHI SAMPSON

•Lawyers urged to report harassments

There is indication that the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) would soon establish a comprehensive court-monitoring scheme following the recent approval for its proposal.

When established, the scheme will enable lawyers determine with accuracy and generate statistics identifying the primary causes of delay in court proceedings, and thus, make remedial actions more targeted and scientific.

The approval is contained in a communiqué signed by the Chairman, Judiciary Committee of the NBA, Dr. Babatunde Ajibade (SAN), at the end of the Justice sector summit organised by NBA and the Justice Research Institute (JRI) in collaboration with the National Judicial Council (NJC), the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Justice Reform Project (JRP).

The summit with the theme: 'Devising Practical Solutions Towards Improved Performance, Enhanced Accountability and Independence in the Justice Sector' was held at the Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Centre Abuja on January 25, 2022.

According to the resolution, such would complement existing monitoring schemes like the Administration of Criminal Justice Monitoring Committee created by the Administration of Criminal Justice Act/Law and the Corruption and Financial Crimes Cases Trial Monitoring Committee (COTRIMCO) set up by the NJC.

"It approved a shift of orientation that would require the Judiciary to exercise the power already provided to it in almost all the rules of court to award costs on a full indemnity basis to compensate parties who are the victim of lack of preparedness on the part of opposing counsel or litigants and to incentivise counsel to shun dilatory tactics.

"It approved a shift of orientation that would require the Judiciary to use the case

management powers already provided to it in almost all the rules of court to ensure that the admissibility of documents to be relied on at the hearing/trial of matters are dealt with either as a pre-hearing/pre-trial issue, or as a post-hearing/post-trial issue to be dealt with in closing submissions, so as to ensure speedy conclusion of matters.

"The summit also approved the proposal for the enactment of provisions that would abolish the right to stay proceedings in matters pending interlocutory appeals, except in very limited and narrowly drawn circumstances," the communiqué stated.

In addition, it endorsed the NBA's proposals for a constitutional amendment that would enable all the superior courts of coordinate jurisdiction created pursuant to section 6 of the Constitution to exercise a power of transfer to the appropriate court, whenever their subject matter jurisdiction is successfully challenged, rather than striking the matter out as well as a proposal restricting the right of appeal against such determination.

"Thus eliminating the phenomenon of lengthy litigation and appeals about which of the superior courts of record of

coordinate jurisdiction is the appropriate court to hear a matter. It also endorsed the enhanced use of virtual hearings for the disposal of paper applications that do not involve oral witness evidence; the scheduling of cases for specific times and duration; and the elimination of the "court is not sitting" phenomenon to the barest minimum, the document stated.

Also, the Association has urged lawyers in Nigeria to report incidents of harassment, intimidation by any of the security apparatuses to the newly inaugurated NBA-Security Agencies Relations Committee

(NBA-SARC) for immediate action.

The call followed cases of maltreatment of legal practitioners by security operatives whilst discharging official duties and obligations to clients.

The committee, which was inaugurated on January 7, 2022, is to work in liaison with all security agencies across the country to forestall the ugly trend.

NBA Publicity Secretary, Dr. Rapulu Nduka, in a statement, said the terms of reference of the NBA-SARC are to formulate policies to be implemented by the NBA (whether alone or in collaboration with other stake-

holders) that will deal holistically with the risk posed to Nigerian lawyers by security agencies.

He said: "Collaborate with the relevant security agencies to promote and advance a mutually beneficial relationship between the said agencies and lawyers in Nigeria.

"Develop and promote proper protocols for engagement with security agencies by lawyers, in the course of carrying out their professional duties.

"Work with the various branches of the NBA to achieve, at the branch level, objectives that are similar to those set out in these terms of reference."

NBA elects new committee for annual general conference

BY ONYEBUCHI SAMPSON

•Urges public inputs on potential Federal High Court judges

The Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) Technical Committee on Conference Planning (NBA-TCCP) has elected new members to oversee the 2022 Annual General Conference (AGC).

NBA president, Olumide Akpata in a statement, on Monday, tasked committee with the responsibility of delivering a world class NBA-AGC in August 2022.

He stated that the leadership of the TCCP is at liberty to co-opt additional members into the TCCP as the needs and circumstances require.

Akpata recalled that the 61st Annual General Conference of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA-AGC) held in Port-Harcourt in October 2021, was a remarkable success despite the challenges that came with its organisation especially in the light of the ravaging Covid-19 pandemic and other setbacks.

He said: "At the 2021 NBA-AGC, not only were our colleagues able to network and socialise in person after a prolonged period of public-health safety induced lockdown, the



NBA president, Olumide Akpata

conference also afforded us an opportunity to deeply consider issues affecting our profession and agree on the urgent steps that need to be taken; make

far-reaching amendments to the NBA Constitution; re-launch the NBA Bar Journal which had been out of print since 2017; launch for the first time a Sexual

Harassment Policy for the Legal Profession in Nigeria, etc.

"As we approach the twilight of the current administration of the NBA, it is important that we begin early preparations for the next NBA-AGC, during which other serving national officers of the NBA and I will hand over to a newly elected administration."

The newly elected members for TCCP are Tobenna Erojikwe – (Chairman), Ronke Adeyemi, Mustapha Imam, Olumide Babalola, Inemisit Dike – (Secretary), Blessing Udofia-Poromon, Orji Uka, Ada Obinna Edozie, Rotimi Ogunyemi, Jonathan Agbo, Nta Ekpiken and Omobayode Okelola.

Akpata noted that the exact date, venue, theme and other details pertaining to the 2022 NBA-AGC will be announced in due course.

He thanked the new members of TCCP for accepting the call to serve the noble Association and enjoin us all to accord them the cooperation needed to deliver on their mandate.

MEANWHILE, the association has requested members of the Bar and the public to submit petitions and or make

comments on the suitability of those recently released as potential appointees of the Federal High Court judges.

NBA Publicity Secretary, Dr. Rapulu Nduka disclosed this in a statement on Monday.

He said NBA had on January 7, 2022, through its judiciary committee called for expression of interest, from suitably qualified legal practitioners from specific States in Nigeria for appointment as Judges of the Federal High Court. This call was based on a request for nomination sent to the NBA President by the Chief Judge of the Federal High Court of Nigeria.

NBA therefore urged members of the Bar and the public to submit petitions and or make comments on the suitability for appointment of any of the listed members.

According to him, the exercise is aimed at fostering the resolve and commitment of the NBA to strengthen our Judiciary by enthroning a transparent process, which would ensure that only suitably qualified candidates are appointed to the Bench.

Death of innocence: A concerning epidemic of depravity

BY ADEKUNLE ADENEKAN

Just as the country was grappling with how to give some meaning to the rude awakening occasioned by cruel, premeditated murder of five-year-old Hanifa by her teacher/minder in Kano, news broke of yet another killing of 12-year-old Zuwaira, a schoolgirl also in kano in circumstances not dissimilar to those of Hanifa's.

Hanifa, the petite and dainty girl next door was the only child of her parents who had gone ahead, unmindful of their daughter's death to raise and pay the ransom demanded by her killer shortly before her mutilated body was

found days later.

This pathetic case should be deeply troubling to all as it is sadly emblematic of a gradual, almost systemic malaise now confronting us as a country. Whilst the angst generated by the murder of the young girls had yet abated, the news circuit was again abuzz with yet another horrific beheading of a 19-year-old young woman in Abeokuta by 4 teenagers, each 17 years of age and one of whom was allegedly her "boyfriend". They confessed to have conspired to kill her because the native doctor requested for her severed head as a material for money making rituals. It was also reported in Ogun State how a traditional ruler and his associates

were literally roasted to death in his car in a pathetic act of involuntary cremation. There are regular and unabating reports of similar acts of extra judicial killings in Niger, Sokoto, Zamfara and Kaduna states apart from those from the customary epicenters of terrorism, kidnapping and sundry criminalities in the North East.

To be sure, not since the civil war days have we witnessed such unimaginable monstrosity on this huge scale in this country. If we factor in the unspeakable bloodlettings resulting from seemingly unabating acts of banditry, kidnapping, terrorism and sundry spectacles of criminality, one could very easily surmise that Nigeria, in recorded history, has

never had it so bad in terms of the needless loss of lives she had suffered in the recent past.

Whilst one would genuinely concede that there is enough blame to go round practically all facets of society for these acts of depravity, the inescapable truth and reality is that leadership at the political, social, religious and traditional levels ought to take a hefty percentage of the blame for the rot

The mindless acquisition of wealth by any means and at whatever cost is now the hallowed object of veneration in the society. The mode of acquisition does not seem to matter anymore. Cutting corners to attain wealth, relevance, status and importance

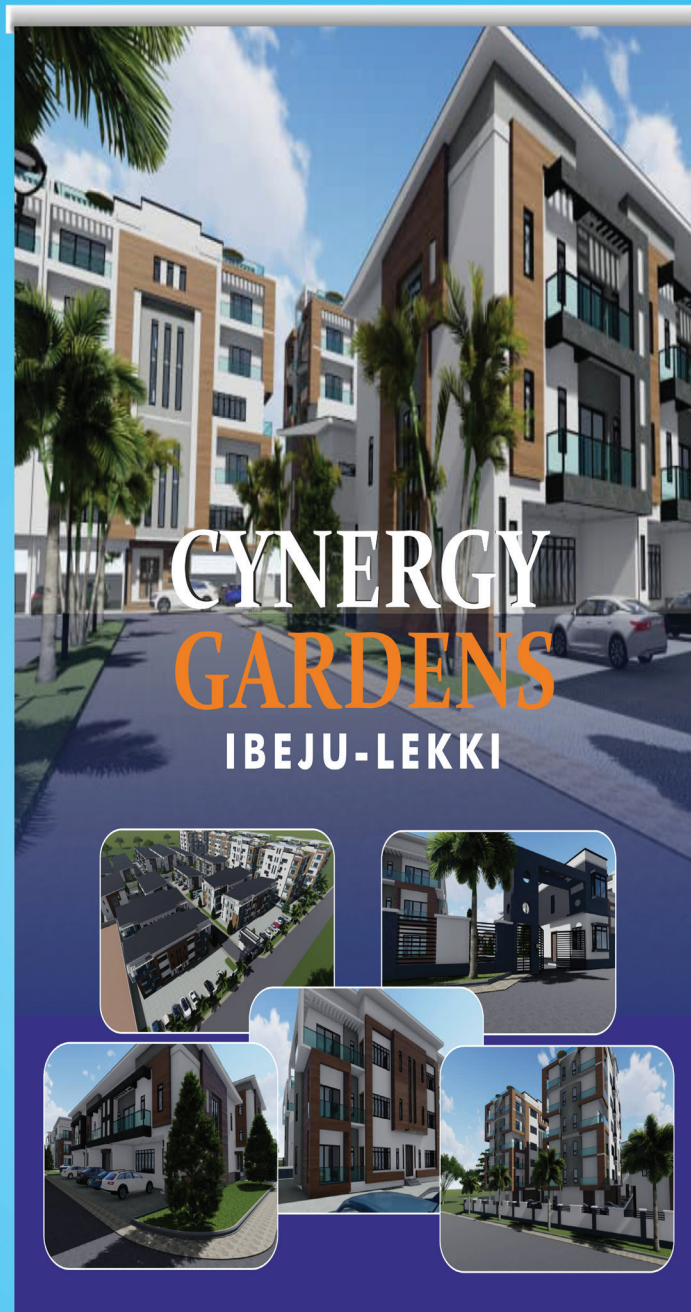
is the new normal.

The near total abdication of parental responsibility, poor upbringing, lax moral standards, peer pressure, broken school system as well as the epidemic of broken homes are chief culprits here. What better representation of these unedifying attributes is the get rich recourse often referred to as yahoo-yahoo which truth be told has found manifestations in several facets of the society even those previously not thought possible. As the famous scripture posits- Let him who is guiltless amongst you cast the first stone.

As sociologists and anthropologists will aver, there is a symbiotic relationship between the origin, organization, institutions, develop-

ment and functioning of society as a self-contained organic unit and the behavior, culture, orientation, and belief systems of people in the society. These acts of moral turpitude and depravities represent a potent negation and repudiation of the values we use to hold dear in times gone by.

Our youth population suffer extravagant distress and disabilities not only from the poverty of avenues for critical thinking and positive engagements of the mind but also from want of direction, leadership, mentorship and quality orientation. It beggars belief that students in our primary and secondary schools are now active members of clans and cult groups.



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APFFLON seeks effective system for cargo evacuation from ports

 By **ADAKU WALTER**

African Association of Professional Freight Forwarders and Logistics of Nigeria (APFFLON) has called for effective multi-modal transport system to aid quick evacuation of cargoes in order to decongest the ports in Lagos.

The National President of the association, Otunba Frank Ogunojemite, who made this call during a chat with newsmen in Lagos, said there was need to complete the upgrade of existing rail lines in Apapa, while making effort to link the Tincan Island port to the rail.

"We know that the passenger train is up and running now, we should also think of how we can move containers by rail. Look at the traffic situation, these two (road and rail) can be connected with other means of transportation to decongest the port. Government should think about cable transport where people and cargoes can move with ease.

"We need different modes of transportation that will ease the hardship people are faced with on daily basis in evacuating their cargoes from the ports," he said.

Ogunojemite also called for the immediate completion of the ongoing upgrade of infrastructure at the Lagos seaports.

He recalled that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) delegation, which visited Nigeria in 2019 to assess the Nigerian ports, enumerated some factors affecting the growth and efficiency of the port industry in Nigeria with infrastructure deficit topping the list.

Ogunojemite, while admitting that reconstruction of roads within the ports and upgrade of some critical infrastructure were ongoing, however, hoped that they would be concluded as soon as possible.


Ogunojemite

The APFFLON boss, while applauding the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) for deploying scanners to some ports across the nation, also called for their immediate commissioning so as to enhance cargo clearing at the ports and reduce corruption in the system.

According to him, "How many containers will an officer examine in a day compared to what a scanner can examine in a day? Customs officers need to be retrained because the way they handle importers and their agents need to be actually addressed."

On the ongoing review of the Customs and Excise Management Act (CEMA), Ogunojemite called for the involvement of the freight forwarders and other critical stakeholders to ensure a time tested law for better reforms in the nation's ports.

He also stressed on the need to address the shipping companies and terminal operators

excesses as well as ensuring they observe all the safety measures and standards set for them.

He cited the incident of the freight forwarder who was accidentally killed by a crane recently at KLT terminal, noting that some of the equipment used by terminal operators are obsolete.

"Few days ago, equipment killed one of the freight forwarders at KLT. Is it actually an accident? Is it as a result of obsolete equipment? Is it as a result of negligence? Are the crane operators having proper training? Are they adhering to safety regulations?"

"We have to conclude the ongoing review of the port concession agreement by the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA). These are the things we needed to work on to make out ports to be efficient and attractive," he concluded.

Belgium partners Nigeria to develop, modernise seaports

Belgium has expressed its willingness to partner the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) in its quest to develop and modernise the country's seaports to make them more efficient and user-friendly.

Speaking during a one-day working visit to the Marina, Lagos corporate headquarters of the NPA, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Belgium to Nigeria, Daniel Bertrand, said he was pleased with the recent reforms being carried out by the management of the authority at the seaports, which have tremendously enhanced efficiency.

Recall that the current management of NPA had intensified efforts to automate the port systems, improve traffic flow in and out of the ports as well as the introduction of multimodal transport system in the movement of cargo through the use of barges to move laden and empty containers to enhance speed.

The Managing Director of NPA, Mohammed Bello-Koko, who was on ground to accord a warm reception to the Ambassador, assured that the management, under his watch, is poised to transforming Nigeria's port system to make the seaports globally competitive.

Bello-Koko also assured the visiting Ambassador that the authority and the Federal Government are open to partnerships and synergies towards developing the seaports, arguing that no man can possibly be an island unto himself.

It is on record that Port of Antwerp, Europe's second largest seaport after Rotterdam, is one of the most efficient seaports in the world and is owned by the Kingdom of Belgium. Nigeria's landlord port model adopted after the port reform programme in 2006 is fashioned after that of the Antwerp Port.

Garlands for Rotimi Amaechi in transforming Nigeria's transport sector

Nigerian transportation industry which consists of aviation, land (road and rail) and maritime sub-sectors has faced challenges of infrastructure deficit since Nigeria got her independence.

This is even as different administrations have taken steps to address these challenges in the sector.

Since assuming office on May 29, 2015, President Muhammadu Buhari has taken giant strides to address these challenges across the transport sectors ranging from airport to rail.

The desire to address such challenges and boost economic activities in the country led to the negotiations between the government of China and Nigeria on getting funds to address the immediate transport challenges as well as to create thousands of direct and indirect jobs.

Aa such, the chief executor of the plan was Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi who has been working round the clock to ensure that the country gets the best transport system it deserves.

The first step taken by the Minister of Transportation, Rotimi Amaechi, was to complete the abandoned 276 km Itakpe-Warri rail line linking Warri in Delta State to Ajaokuta, in Kogi State for transporting steel products and raw materials from the Delta Steel Company, Aladja which is now completed after it was abandoned for 35 years.

So far 13 coaches and four locomotives have been deployed to the route for commencement of commercial activities.

The other project completed was the Abuja-Kaduna Modernisation rail line which was funded with the \$500m China loan collected by the former President Goodluck Jonathan administration in 2010 for infrastructural development in the country.

Aviation workers suspend planned strike, sign pact with FG

 By **ADAKU WALTER**

Aviation workers have called off their planned industrial action following an agreement reached with the Federal Government and its assurance to implement the minimum wage/consequential adjustment and approve the reviewed Conditions of Service (CoS).

The aviation workers, under the auspices of the Air Transport Services Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (ATSSSAN), National Union of Air Transport Employees (NUATE), Association of Nigeria Aviation Professionals (ANAP) and Amalgamated Union of Public Corporations, Civil Service Technical and Recreational Services Employees (AUPCTRE) had expressed their displeasure over FG's failure to release negotiated CoS of the aviation agencies since 2013 and non-implementation of Minimum Wage/Consequential Adjustment since 2019.

This made the unions issue a seven-day ultimatum to the government to resolve the issue or it will ground flight operations in the country by withdrawing its services nationwide yesterday, February 8.

The Minister of Labour and Employment, Chris Ngige, in a bid to avert the impending strike capable of crippling air travel nationwide, hosted a meeting with the aggrieved unions to resolve the issue, which also had in attendance, the Minister of Aviation, Hadi Sirika, and other relevant government officials on Monday, February 7.

Ngige, who thanked the aviation workers

for the way the unions handled the matter, said that they acted in the spirit of labour reconciliation.

"I am happy that the Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Aviation reported that they did so with you, but there are two major areas that they couldn't reach agreement with you and therefore, you had to escalate the matter by issuing an ultimatum to close the entire air space.

"I can see that all of you are here, both the air traffic controllers and engineers. We thought there might be some openings in the air space, but I can see that all of you are united. I can assure you that we are going to reach agreements here and some of the agreements will be reached with the speed of a flash and we will get back to them".

At the end of the meeting, it was agreed that by March 31, the Ministry of Aviation must ensure the approval, release and implementation of the reviewed CoS for all the workers in the agencies under the aviation ministry.

After the agreement was signed, the seven days ultimatum issued for a planned industrial action was suspended.

In the communique after the meeting, it was agreed that on the matters of the minimum wage and consequential adjustment, the National Salaries, Income and Wages Commission (NSIWC) should issue a Service of Wide Circular informing all organisations in the public and private sectors that they are bound to implement the wage and adjustment.

While the Ministry of Aviation is to do same to all agencies under its supervision, requesting them to implement it without further delay and clarify that the payment became effective from April 18, 2019 when the minimum wage was signed into law. It also adds that those that have exited the system during the period to date would also be paid arrears.

On his part, the Minister of Aviation, said the agitation for the rights and privileges of workers was lawful and acceptable, adding that the government takes the issue of labour very seriously.

Speaking on behalf of the aviation unions, the National President of ATSSAN, Ahmadu Ilitrus, called for urgency in addressing their demands.

Ilitrus lamented that since 2019 when the Minimum Wage Bill was signed, no worker from the aviation ministry had benefitted.

He urged the government to pay everyone deserving of it, including all aviation workers that have left service.

Other union leaders who were present at the meeting and signed the agreement include, the President, National Association of Aircraft Pilots and Engineers (NAAPE), Abednego Galadima; National President of the National Union of Air Transport Employees (NUATE), Ben Nnabue; National President of the Association of Nigeria Aviation Professionals (ANAP), Kabir Gusau and the National President of the Amalgamated Union of Public Corporation, Civil Service and Technical Employees (AUPCTRE), Benjamin Anthony.

LASG lifts suspension of abandoned vehicles panel

By **ADAKU WALTER**

Lagos State Government has lifted the suspension earlier placed on the Removal of Abandoned Vehicles Committee (RAVC) ad-hoc operation.

The Special Adviser to the Governor on Transportation, Oluwatoyin Fayinka, who disclosed this revealed that the decision was reached after thorough appraisal and review of the operational guidelines of the team in accordance with the Law of the State as captured in the Traffic Sector Reform Law (TSRL) 2018.

The Special Adviser maintained that the RAVC Committee will be back better and stronger, having gone through professional trainings for the discharge of their duties on removal of stationary and abandoned vehicles, which hitherto posed as environmental nuisances, security and traffic impediments.

On the responsibility of the RAVC team, Fayinka stated that the creation of the Committee was mainly for the removal of Stationary and abandoned vehicles parked indiscriminately on highways and inner roads across Lagos State to reduce traffic for the motoring public.

The Special Adviser also stated that thousands of abandoned vehicles are parked

daily indiscriminately on highways and inner roads across Lagos State, contributing to the daily traffic gridlocks.

He noted that some artisans have turned the road to their workshop, repairing vehicles on the road, loading and unloading on the road without due consideration for other road users.

Fayinka, while acknowledging several abandoned vehicle removal requests received from members of the public especially estates, urged motorists to keep their vehicles off the road to avoid encounter with RAVC.

He added that companies with fleet of vehicles should maintain parking garages for them saying, 'the road is not anyone's parking lot.'

Assuring that the Committee would adhere to its statutory responsibility, Fayinka advised the Public to forward requests for the removal of all sort of abandoned or stationary vehicles in their respective areas to Office of the Special Adviser to the Governor on Transportation, Ministry of Transportation, the Secretariat, Alausa, Ikeja.

It would be recalled that the Removal of Abandoned Vehicles Committee, (RAVC) was placed on suspension on the 27th September, 2021 in view of several complaints by members of the public on the activities of some of the Units, which was causing embarrassment to the State Government.



Fayinka

Port users threaten court action over VREG failure

By **ADAKU WALTER**

Stakeholders in the maritime industry have threatened legal action against the Federal Government over the attendant demurrages accruing from the persistent breakdown in the operations of the National Vehicle Registry (VREG) at Tin Can Port.

They lamented that a lot of people are paying unnecessary demurrage and storage charges leading to millions of naira daily since the introduction of VREG.

They said while the demurrages accrued are not the fault of the importer or agent, the federal government must be compelled to pay the accruing demurrages on their vehicles.

The Vice President, Association of Nigerian Licensed Customs Agents (ANLCA), Dr. Kayode Farinto, said clearing agents have been unable to generate the VREG in the last three weeks due to server failures.

He said every vehicle imported into the country through the seaports was expected to pay some amount of money before migrating to the customs portal for assessment, noting that failure to pay the VREG fee would prevent access to the customs portal for valuation.

He observed that in the last few weeks when payments are made to the VREG portal, it fails to update the customer's status to enable him to move to the next level to clear the vehicle thereby forcing the vehicle to accumulate storage.

"VREG was introduced in 2021 by the Ministry of Transportation to have data of all vehicles coming into the country. Nobody is addressing this issue from Customs as they say it is not their making. VREG is domiciled in the Federal Ministry of Finance and the issue is believed to be between the consortium and the Ministry.

"I believe that the sector does not need VREG because it seems to be another means to extort importers. If the government wants data of vehicles cleared legitimately from the ports, all they need to do is to liaise with the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS).

"Honestly, if it continues like this, we may not have a choice but to go to court to challenge the federal government on this issue of VREG so that the government will start paying demurrages for our consignments because it is not our making," he lamented.

Farinto admonished the Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, Zainab Ahmed to look into the issues affecting VREG to simplify it and make the process seamless.

Also, Five Star Logistics Terminal, one of the biggest roll-on-roll-off (RORO) vehicles at the Tin Can Island port of Lagos, lamented that due to the VREG failure, vessels are now being delayed for several days.

The Customer Care Manager, Chuks Okerefor, confirmed that the VREG failure impedes trade and needs review.

"I have witnessed where VREG delayed vessel for four days. Once you capture 500 cars and during upload to get Customs assessment, errors will not be easily traced and the delay of custom documentation consequently delays receivers from taking direct delivery from the RoRo vessel.

"Customs can generate same VINs from PAAR and upload same for VREG for their usage. VREG personnel does not show capacity and to understand the consequences of their delays," he said.

Dana Air decorates new captain, to recruit more Nigerian

By **ADAKU WALTER**

Dana Air has decorated a new captain on its Boeing 737 aircraft, Andrew Igbe-Arase in Lagos, stating that the airline will continue to invest in training and re-training of pilots having commenced the recruitment of more qualified Nigerian pilots.

Director of flight operations, Captain Segun Omole, who decorated the new captain said: "It gives me joy every time and anytime I decorate young Nigerian pilots

who grow through the ranks with rigorous training both in Nigeria and abroad doing excellently well.

"And this is why we are currently recruiting more young and qualified Nigerian pilots as part of our expansion plans and as we have taken delivery of more of our aircraft from maintenance checks to boost our operations further across Nigeria, while introducing superior options for our guests.

"Captain Andrew is a meticulous, vibrant

and smart young pilot who has been a captain on the Turbo prop with over 5,000 hours and with over 80% of our pilots homegrown, our commitment at Dana Air is to continue to invest in capacity building, training and re-training of our pilots for efficiency, safety and comfort of our guests."

Dana Air is one of Nigeria's leading airlines with a mixed fleet of nine aircraft and daily flights from Lagos to Abuja, Port Harcourt, Enugu and Owerri.

37 comptrollers redeployed in Nigerian Customs shakeup

By **ADAKU WALTER**

Comptroller General of Customs, Hameed Ali, has approved the deployment of 37 comptrollers to various units, departments and commands across the country.

In the postings released yesterday by the Deputy National Public Relations Officer, Timi Bomodi, the CGC charged the newly posted comptrollers to justify the confidence reposed in them by NCS management by bringing to bear their years of experience and training in trade facilitation and anti-smuggling activities on their new assignment.

Among those deployed are Comptroller AAS Oloyede who shall be moving from

ICT/MOD to Tin Can Island Port Command, Comptroller SI Bomoi to FCT Command, while Comptroller Joseph Oboshi Attah will assume the office of Area Controller in Kebbi Command.

Other postings are Comptroller BA Jaiyeoba to Oyo/Osun Command, Comptroller A Dappa-Williams to Eastern Marine Command, Compt. MA Umar Kano/Jigawa, Compt. KC Egwuh ICT/MOD, Compt. LM Mark Enugu/Anambra/Ebonyi, Compt. T Tachio CTC Kano, Compt. AA Umar Western Marine, Compt. M Dansakwa North Eastern Marine, Compt. AC Ayalogu T & T and Compt. KD Ilesanmi will assume duty as Controller Board among others.

Given the enormous expectations of government regarding revenue generation in the current year, the Comptroller General reiterated the need for all Area Controllers and Unit heads to take full charge of the affairs of their commands by ensuring absolute compliance with extant fiscal policies, while leveraging on the efficient management of data to optimize trade facilitation and revenue collection.

The CGC further directed all officers to be extremely vigilant in protecting the lives and wellbeing of Nigerians by ensuring the full fortification of our borders against the incursion of smugglers and other cross border criminals.

Lagos to divert traffic for rail mass transit project

By **ADAKU WALTER**

In preparation for the launch of Precast Beams for the Phase 1 of the Lagos Rail Mass Transit project, the state government will divert traffic on Muritala Mohammed Way between Saturday, February 12 and Sunday February 13, 2022.

In a statement released by the Ministry of Transportation, the Commissioner, Dr. Frederic Oladeinde, explained that a lane will be barred from vehicular movement as part of the safety precaution to protect road users during the installation of the Precast Beams.

Oladeinde revealed that traffic on Muritala Mohammed way will be diverted to Abeokuta

Street to access Borno Way through Coates Street to further link Muritala Mohammed Way.

He added that motorists can alternately access their destinations from Cemetery Street.

In the same vein, according to the transport Commissioner, traffic on Apapa road will be accommodated with the temporary lanes constructed before the overpass and will be channelized to two lanes on Muritala Mohammed Way.

The Commissioner assured that the construction site will be cordoned off for the safety of the citizenry, adding that emergency vehicles will be on ground to

tow faulty vehicles along the axis.

He also stated that signage's will be placed on the access roads with the presence of the State's Traffic Management Authority to manage traffic flow and minimize inconveniences.

The State Government while commending motorists for their patience, reiterated its continuous commitment towards the development of transport infrastructure within the metropolis.

He maintained that it is vital for the Multi-Modal Transportation System of the State Government which will in turn boost the economic prowess of the citizenry.



Get spoilt in the Gold Coast country

Stories by **OMONIYI ALLI**, Lagos

Ghana is arguably one of Africa's true jewels. Formerly called the Gold Coast, Ghana's rich tradition means that it is truly one of the best places to visit in West Africa.

Throw in a growing tourism industry as well as an incredible energy about the capital Accra that makes it ideal for a getaway.

Ghana is one accessible to Nigerians by road, and there are quite a number of transport companies which ply the Lagos-Accra route. For those who prefer to travel faster, the Kotoka International Airport in Accra is the gateway to Ghana.

Of course, citizens of West African countries do not need visas to visit Ghana but an ECOWAS passport is a requirement.

Despite the ethnic diversity in Ghana, English language is widely spoken and communication is unlikely to be a problem regardless of the parts of Ghana you find

yourself. What is likely to create some measure of

confusion however, is the Ghanaian currency.

The 2007 redenomination changed the old Cedi and rates, most Ghanaians however, still think and calculate in terms of the old Cedi and this can be rather confusing.

A tourist is likely to be spoilt for choice in Ghana as to places to visit because Ghana has a bit of everything.

The Beach

The Kokrobite and Winneba beaches are great places to relax, kick your feet up and enjoy some of that famed Ghanaian sun. It's an added attraction that you get to watch fishermen at work while you're catching up on your vacation.

The Volta Lake and Lake Bosomtwi are more inland if you'd prefer to be away from the beaches.

The park

The Kakum national park is reputed to be the perfect spot if you enjoy bird

watching or other animals in the forest. If you want to catch the sight of big cats and elephants, the Mole National park is recommended.

Ghana's rich history can easily be explored by visiting sites such as the WEB Du Bois centre, the Independence square as well as the Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum.

The National Museum in the capital city of Accra is also great if you're into history.

The Market

The Kejetia market in Kumasi is reputed to be the largest market in West Africa and it is not without reason. With over 11,000 stalls, you'll find yourself struggling to take it all in as every possible commodity is for sale here.

Have you really been to Ghana if you didn't have Banku? You should also try the Ghanaian Jollof rice, a delicacy that is an endless source of rivalry between the Ghanaians and their Nigerian neighbours.

Delicacies & Restaurant & Hotels

The local delicacy is nothing strange as it contains many familiar dishes. Fufu, plantains and a lot of rice based meals.

The top picks of restaurants in Ghana are, Khana Khazana, where there is an offering of affordable Indian delicacies. La Chaumiere is a lot more upscale and grand with their posh interior and classical music.

If you're wondering where to stay in Ghana, the Golden Tulip Hotel, Polo Heights Hotel, Crystal hotels and Fiesta Residences are some of the best hotels in Accra.

Here are three fun facts about Ghana

- The Volta River is the longest in Ghana.
- Rich in Gold, it was formerly called the Gold Coast.
- Ghana was the first sub Saharan country to gain Independence from the British.



Kejetia, Kumasi, Ghana

Funke Kuti strikes gold with event planning

Up until 2011, Funke Kuti was a popular fame and dancer. She was a member of Femi Kuti's positive force band.

Currently the Chief Executive of FK Management, not many know that this 50-year-old has worked in several capacities within the media, marketing communications and entertainment industry.

Armed with a degree in Business Administration from the University of Lagos, FK, as she is fondly addressed, has been able to chart a new cause in the world of event planning while still holding on to the entertainment threshold.

On her incursion into the world of event planning, she admitted never to have thought she would find a career in it.

"Honestly I like to say event planning found me. I never thought I would become an event planner. I actually studied Business Administration but I have always loved to bring people together and I am very passionate about my family and friends celebrating their birthdays, Christmas etc.

"no matter how small as long as we can spend some quality time together," she began on her journey into the world of event planning.

Continuing, she said, "So I started organizing intimate events first, then every job I had when I entered the workforce always had the event management portfolio attached to it. That's when I started organizing

events professionally for the companies

where I worked till I eventually set up mine, FK Management in 1998. I am a super organizer, coordinator,

a multitasking master with great people and time management skills. So, it sort of came very natural to me. It takes a special type of person to be an event planner, we



Femi Kuti & son Made Kuti

'Nigerian fashion industry has gone global'

The love for good fashion sense gave rise to leading and biggest online luxury store in Nigeria, 'TheLuxurysale.' It is a bespoke online fashion store that deals in top unique luxury designers collections including clothes, shoes, purse, leather accessories among others.

Speaking on why he created the online store, the CEO, Ikuomola Juwon Junior, pointed to the need to bring luxury closer to the people.

He said: "Also as a lover of good fashion sense who loves to get great compliment for looks, there was a need to let the people around me know the value of looking good.

"It started with me dressing up for

events and seeing people compliment me and trying to know where I got what I was wearing, some of them don't even mind buying off what I had already worn. I started from small, buying for friends whenever I'm on a trip abroad and from there, started selling from my car, before I finally decided to set up my online luxury store in 2015. We have been doing this for over a decade now.

"Being in the business for 10 years, TheLuxurysale online portal officially launched in 2015 when nobody knew online luxury business could thrive in Nigeria and ever since the brand has grown in leaps and



Juwon

Nigerian Idol gets over 10,000 audition entries for Season 7

MultiChoice Nigeria and Africa Magic, producers of Nigerian Idol, have revealed that they received about 10,000 entries when they opened for auditions. The Executive Head, Content & West Africa Channels at MultiChoice Nigeria, Dr Busola Tejumola, also confirmed it's the most entries they have ever received for the show.

Nigerian Idol has proven to be a coveted springboard for aspiring musicians in its past seasons. So, the number of people trying to get on the show is not surprising. However, it's interesting to note that about 10 out of the 10,000 people that applied will make it to the live shows.

Perhaps even more exciting is the fact that there'll be only one winner who will take home all the prizes.

Speaking about the audition process, Dr Busola Tejumola said, "For this season, we held auditions online, and for the first time after a long time, we also had physical auditions. This year, we had a hybrid just to give more hopefuls of the Nigerian Idol format a chance to enter and get a shot at fame. We had a record number of almost 10,000 entries, an increase from last season." She also thanked the team of selectors, hailing them for a job well done and reminding everyone that it isn't an easy process.

The three-month-long music reality show will follow talented musicians through rigorous training to create the next Nigerian music superstar.

They will be judged by award-winning artiste, Oladapo 'D'banj' Oyebanjo; singer-songwriter, Simisola 'Simi' Kosoko; and creative industry entrepreneur, Obi Asika. IK Osakioduwa will return as the host of the show. The winner for this season will walk away with N100 million worth of prizes.

Following the completion of the online and physical auditions last November, the seventh season of the show, since it's premiered last Friday having receiving positive reviews from views of the show.

Meet award winning OAP Honey Chiamaka

Honey Chiamaka F. Ojukwu is a multiple-award-winning Broadcaster/On-Air Personality, Events Host, prolific Writer, and Business & Entertainment Influencer. She is known as the Lioness of New School Radio who has worked and served in over 4 Radio Stations in various cities across Nigeria.

She has received international and national training certifications in broadcasting and public relations. With the famous name; Honey Ojukwu, she began her broadcasting career in 2014 and worked with GOUNI Radio for three years, moving to HitFM Calabar. In 2017, she moved back to Enugu after her National Youth Service and got her first official Gig job with Urban Radio 94.5fm Enugu as Lead anchor of the show - Urban Fuse.

Since then, she has worked on various projects such as The Face of Xymoments, Prince Mega Cosmetics, Pizza jungle, and cohosted a TV Show called The Amazing Show. Honey also serves as an Event & Red Carpet Host, and she is currently working with Cool FM Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The Radio Lioness is the Host of the Biggest Drive Time NIGHT SHOW (The NightCafe) on COOLFM 95.9 Port Harcourt, Rivers State (8 pm to 12 am every weekday) and the Weekend Groove on Saturdays (6 pm to 9 pm). This show centers on Lifestyle, Business, Hit Music, and Premium Infotainment every Radio Lover would desire, and it sells out brand products and services on HIT RADIO, COOLFMPH.



Danger of Selfie Syndrome

By **OMONIYI ALLI**, Lagos

The popular trend 'Selfie' is fast becoming a worldwide phenomenon that has not only gotten the attention of teenagers but even adults, artists and celebrities alike. Likewise selfie syndrome has been on the increase in different nations of the world, among teenagers especially.

What is selfie syndrome?

It is pertinent that the word 'selfie' is first defined. This is before the exposition of 'selfie syndrome' is given. A selfie is a photograph that a person takes of himself or herself with the use of a smartphone, a camera or with the support of a selfie stick and is usually uploaded to social networking sites such as Facebook,

Instagram and Twitter.

According to Child/Teen Development Specialist and Body Image Expert, Dr. Robyn Silverman, selfie syndrome is "a matter of adolescents and teens constantly trying to define themselves. They crave positive feedback to help them see how their identity fits into their world.

Social media offers an opportunity to garner immediate information [about their identity]. The problem is they are looking in a dangerous place."

In its literal sense, selfie syndrome is the obsessive and excessive desire to constantly upload selfies online because of the voracious crave for attention and approval from people. As of press time, more

than 31 million Instagram photos have been hash tagged #selfie, and according to a recent study from the Pew Research Center, 91% of teens have posted a photo of themselves online.

Factors responsible for prevalence of Selfie syndrome in the world today.

The core reason for peoples' posting of selfies is for other people to see, like and comment on them. Thus, the underlying factor responsible for selfie syndrome is the quest for attention and identity-approval.





Barcelona CEO Ferran Reverter resigns

Stories by OVIRI KELVIN

Barcelona Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Ferran Reverter has resigned from the club citing personal and family reasons.

Reverter on Tuesday informed Barcelona President Joan Laporta that he has tendered resignation at the time the club is negotiating to sign a new sponsorship deal with Spotify.

According to Barcelona, Reverter who joined the club barely 7 months ago in July 2021 to help through a strategic plan, drive its restructuring process until 2026, has resigned.

The Spanish football giant's contract with its current sponsor, Rakuten, due to expire by the end of the season, is already in talks with a new sponsor to take over the club's sponsorship deal.

As a result of the poor management system by previous administrators and the emergence of the coronavirus pandemic, Barcelona which has been highly indebted developed a keen interest in Spotify's important deal with the target to get the club out of the financial mess.

This financial crisis bedeviling the club is one of the numerous reasons it parted ways with Lionel Messi in 2020 after effecting the restructuring plan that has slowly repositioned its finances.

However, reports by the La Vanguardia newspaper, Spain, stated that Reverter resignation is centered on his disagreement with the club's President and some discrepancies noticed in the negotiation with Spotify.

According to the reports, "the deal with Spotify was imminent but the club denied it, saying talks with other brands remained ongoing. The deal with Spotify could be worth 280 million euros (\$320 million) over three years and would include sponsorship of the main shirt and titl rights for Camp Nou Stadium."

The Catalan club in its acknowledgment of Reverter's contributions said he was instrumental in "the restructure of the debt, reduction of the payroll, agreements with new partners, and others."

Also, Reverter said that after returning to Spain from Germany due to family reasons, he accepted President Laporta's offer to be the Chief Executive Officer of the club.

He said, "Personally, I have put in much effort and dedication during these months, but I now wish to focus on the reason why I returned to Barcelona, which is to spend more time on personal and family projects."

"These have been passionate months and I thank the president for his trust and, above all, his enthusiasm and capacity for leadership that mean FC Barcelona now has a first-class executive team that can reposition Barça as a world leader," Reverter added.

Chelsea settle racism case with four former players

Four former Chelsea youth team players will each receive six-figure payouts after the reigning European champions opted to settle a case brought against the club which alleged that they had been subjected to racist abuse by coaches formerly employed by the London side.

The players claimed that they were targeted between the ages of 14 and 18 by former youth coach Graham Rix and Gwyn Williams, who was in charge of youth development, more than two decades ago, and that they were hit with "a barrage of disgracefully offensive racist abuse."

Legal counsel for the four men claimed that Chelsea were "vicariously liable" for the allegations. The case seemed likely to go to trial but the Royal Courts of Justice on Monday was told in a Monday hearing that an out-of-court settlement had been reached by the parties in question.

"I'm pleased to let you know that a successful settlement agreement has been achieved between the parties," said lawyer David McClenaghan, who was representing the four ex-players.

Court documents also detailed that one of the four men claimed that he was confronted with "repeated and persistent bullying and harassment" which included "deliberately offensive racist insults".

He also alleged physical abuse

and that hot coffee had been poured over him - incidents he said caused him "great distress and upset".

Rix is said to have denied all the allegations against him while Williams accepted that he used racial language but said in evidence that it wasn't intended to be malicious. He denies claims that he engaged in physical abuse.

Chelsea, meanwhile, pledged support to the ex-players.

"The club is pleased that we have been able to conclude a settlement of these claims without any further litigation," they said in a statement.

"We will continue to offer support to the former players concerned through our dedicated Player Support Service."

The lawyers representing the players, meanwhile, stated that the settlement could be a watershed moment for former players who were involved in patterns of historical abuse.

"This is a historic moment for our incredibly brave clients, who have spoken out about their horrendous experiences that they suffered over many years at Chelsea Football Club as young boys at the hands of their football coaches," McClenaghan, along with Rebecca Sherriff, of the law firm Bolt Burdon Kemp said in a statement.

"This settlement will hopefully go some way in repairing the harm and ongoing trauma caused

to our clients, who were just children when the abuse was inflicted on them by those in positions of trust.

"Through our clients' courage,

we believe that this will prompt other victims of racial abuse to come forward and our clients hope that this case will prevent others from enduring what they had to."



McClenaghan

Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.
— Winston Churchill

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USA, Japan agree deal to end Trump tariff era

By **OROWO VICTORIA OJIEH**, Foreign Affairs Correspondent, Lagos

Washington and Tokyo have announced a deal to remove Trump-era tariffs from about 1.25 million metric tonnes of Japanese steel imports annually after the United States granted similar access for European Union steelmakers last year.

The agreement is aimed to remove unfair practices in the global steel industry, a similar deal has already been made with the EU by the Biden administration.

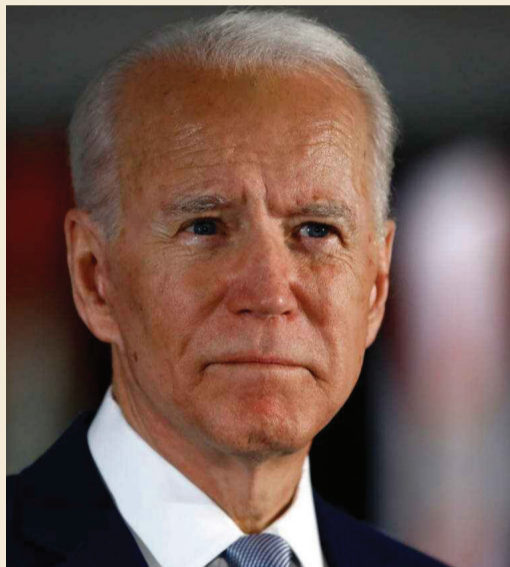
The agreement will become effective on April 1 and requires Japan to take "concrete steps" to fight global excess

steel manufacturing capacity, largely centered in China, U.S. officials said.

The Trump administration in 2018 imposed tariffs on steel and aluminum from several areas, including the European Union and Asia, claiming that the foreign products were a threat to U.S. national security.

The Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo said in a statement that the deal "will strengthen America's steel industry and ensure its workforce stays competitive, while also providing more access to cheaper steel and addressing a major irritant between the United States and Japan, one of our most important allies."

The US will stop charging a 25% levy on Japanese steel imports, excluding aluminium, up to a 1.25m metric tonne annually under the new deal.



Biden



Abe

UN rights chief urges Tunisia to restore judicial watchdog

By **OJIEH VICTORIA OROWO**

The United Nations UN human rights chief has urged President Kais Saied to restore a key judicial watchdog. Saied dissolved the Supreme Judicial Council (CSM) on Sunday, months after sacking the government and seizing wide-reaching powers in Tunisia, often praised as the only democracy to emerge from the 2011 Arab revolts.

"This has been a big step in the wrong direction," UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet said in a statement, stressing that the move "is in clear violation of Tunisia's

obligations under international human rights law".

The council "is a thing of the past", he said according to video footage released by the Tunisian presidency, accusing the CSM, an independent constitutional body set up in 2016 to guarantee the good functioning and independence of the judiciary, of serving political interests.

On Monday, Tunisian police blocked access to the council, preventing members and staff from entering the premises.

The supreme Judicial Council had been mandated to ensure the proper functioning of justice and the independence of the judicial authority

in Tunisia. The UN human rights office pointed out that its establishment in 2016 had been seen as a major advancement for the rule of law, separation of powers and the independence of the judiciary in Tunisia.

The Ambassadors to Tunisia from the G7 group said "a transparent, independent and efficient judiciary and the separation of powers are essential for a functioning democracy that serves its people".

Tunisia was the only democracy to emerge from the Arab Spring revolution 10 years ago, but civil society groups have expressed fear of slipping back authoritarianism a decade after the revolution.



Guterres

Eagles players missing in AFCON 2021 Best XI

By **OVIRI KELVIN**

Nigeria men's senior football team players failed to make the Africa Cup of Nations 2021 first-eleven team released by the Confederations of African Football (CAF) having crashed out in the knockout round of 16.

The list compiled based on the performances of the individual players in the AFCON 2021 tournament had the names of six players of the AFCON title

winners, five from the host nation and five from the Egypt national team included.

Moreover, while the players of the Lions of Teranga dominated the list, Cameroonian Vincent Aboubakar consolidated the top-nine position with Egypt Mohammed Salah and Mané playing from the right and left attack-wings respectively.

While Captain Kalidou Koulibaly, Famara Diedhiou made the substitutes list, Goalkeeper Edouard Mendy, left-back Saliou

Ciss, midfielder Nampalys Mendy, and Mohamed Elneny all featured in the starting lineup.

However, the inclusion of Comoros midfielder, Youssouf M'Changama, as a substitute has given calls for concern.

AFCON 2021 debutant, Comoros, crashed out in the round of 16 after qualifying from the group stage with only three points to play Cameroon; for the team to have one of its players in the substitute's list where Nigeria recorded maximum points has

given football analysts room to question the process.

AFCON Team 2021 Best Eleven

Edouard Mendy - Senegal
Achraf Hakimi - Morocco
Mohamed Abdelmonem - Egypt
Edminf Tapsoba - Burkina Faso
Saliou Ciss - Senegal
Mohamed Elneny - Egypt
Nampalys Mendy - Senegal
Ibrahim Blati Toure - Burkina Faso
Mohamed Salah - Egypt
Sadio Mané - Senegal

Vincent Aboubakar - Cameroon

SUBSTITUTES

Andre Onana - Cameroon
Collins Fai - Cameroon
Kalidou Koulibaly - Senegal
Mahmoud Handy - Egypt
Ahmed Abo Elfetouh - Egypt
Andre Anguissa - Cameroon
Youssouf M'Changama - Comoros
Bertrand Traore - Burkina Faso
Sofiane Boufal - Morocco
Toko Ekambi - Cameroon
Famara Diedhiou - Senegal

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