

United, banditry-free Nigeria possible, Tinubu tells FG

■ Says enough of excuses, lamentations

By **BENJAMIN OMOIKE**

National Leader of All Progressives Congress (APC), Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, at the

weekend, said Nigerians are tired of excuses and lamentations of the past over numerous challenges such as epileptic power supply and banditry bedeviling the

country, saying a united and banditry-free Nigeria is possible.

The former Lagos State Governor spoke at a rally under the aegis of Progressive Youth of South-West to declare their

support for his presidential aspiration at Mobolaji Johnson Arena, in Onikan area of the state.

The youths from different states in the region, such as Lagos, Ogun, Osun, Ekiti, Ondo and Oyo States, had

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



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EDITORIAL:

As Christians celebrate Easter, what lessons?

→ 12



Pope pleads for peace, criticises Russia over Ukraine invasion

→ 24

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Scientists discover cure for heart attacks

→ 18

Leaders, others urge peace, unity, hope at low key Easter

■ Buhari has failed Nigeria, says Kukah

■ Emulate Christ's virtues, NOA enjoins Nigerians

→ 2



Buhari



Kukah

Leaders, others urge peace, unity, hope at low key Easter

By **EDWARD ADAMIDENYO, TUNDE JOSHUA** (Abuja), **AMOS AHEROKHE** (Yenagoa) and **GODWIN AWODEHA** (Asaba)

Religious, political and civil society leaders are among others who at the weekend implored the people to embrace tolerance and peace for national unity and development.

Nigerians were also enjoined to have hope and faith in God and the country while leaders were implored to be selfless to checkmate instability.

"The greatest challenge for Nigeria is not even the 2023 elections. It is the prospect for the reconciliation of our people. Here, the Buhari administration sadly has divided our people on the basis of ethnicity, religion, and region, in a way that we have never witnessed in our history," was how Catholic Bishop of the Diocese of Sokoto, Matthew Hassan Kukah, mirrored Nigeria under the Muhammadu Buhari administration in under eight years.

He described the prevailing conditions under Buhari on insecurity, corruption and division of the country as a total failure.

Kukah, in his Easter sermon on Sunday titled, 'To mend a broken nation: The Easter metaphor said every aspect of life in Nigeria has been destroyed by the administration while corruption is enthroned.

He said "Our dear country, Nigeria, still totters and wobbles as we screech towards a dangerous and avoidable canyon of dry bones.

"One would be tempted

to ask, what is there to say about our tragic situation today that has not been said? Who is there to speak that has not spoken? Like the friends of Job, we stare at an imponderable tragedy as the nation unravels from all sides. The government has slid into hibernation mode.

"It is hard to know whether the problem is that those in power do not hear, see, feel, know, or just don't care. Either way, from this crossroad, we must make a choice, to go forward, turn left or right or return home. None of these choices is easy, yet, guided by the light of the risen Christ, we can reclaim our country from its impending slide to anarchy.

"The challenge of fixing this broken nation is enormous and, as I have said, requires joint efforts. With everything literally broken down, our country has become one big emergency national hospital with full occupancy. Our individual hearts are broken. Our family dreams are broken. Homes are broken. Churches, Mosques, and infrastructure are broken. Our educational system is broken. Our children's lives and future are broken. Our politics is broken. Our economy is broken. Our energy system is broken. Our Roads and Rails are broken. Only corruption is alive and well.

"The greatest challenge for Nigeria is not even the 2023 elections. It is the prospect for the reconciliation of our people. Here, the Buhari administration sadly has divided our people on the basis of ethnicity, religion, and region, in a way that we have never witnessed in our history. This carefully choreographed agenda has made Nigerians vulnerable and ignited the most divisive form of identity consciousness among our



Buhari

people. Years of friendships, cultural exchange, and collaboration built over time have now come under serious pressure from stereotyping."

He also faulted amnesty granted to terrorists and former governors of Plateau State, Senator Joshua Dariye; and Taraba State, Rev Jolly Nyame.

Kukah said, "We need to start thinking of a Nigeria beyond banditry and kidnapping and the endless circles of violence that have engulfed our communities and nation. We cannot continue to pretend that there are no religious undertones to the violence in the name of God that has given our religions a bad name.

"The way out is for the state to enforce the secular status of the Nigerian state so as to give citizens the necessary freedoms from the shackles of semi-feudal confusion over the status of religion and the state in a plural Democracy. We must be ready to embrace modernity and work out how to preserve our religions and cultures without turning religion into a tool for tyranny, exclusion, and oppression.

"I cannot be against a



Kukah

repentant sinner or criminals changing their ways. After all, the doors of forgiveness must always remain open. However, in this case, Nigerians have very little information as to the entire rehabilitation process. Have these terrorists felt the heat or have they seen the light or, is their repentance a mere strategic and tactical repositioning? So far, we have no evidence that these terrorists have been able to confront their victims not to talk of seeking forgiveness from them. Something is wrong.

"We see these terrorists adorned in our national colours in their green and white kaftans, trousers, and looking like heroes of the state! Are we to assume that they have become acknowledged models for Nigerian youth? Perhaps the next graduating set might be treated to Presidential handshakes, receptions at the villa with full national colours!

Delta State Governor, Dr. Ifeanyi Okowa has called on Christians to pray for socio-economic and political rejuvenation of Nigeria to stem insecurity, political and economic challenges plaguing

the country.

Okowa made the call in a message to Christians in the country on the celebration of Easter, saying that the resurrection of Jesus Christ, symbolised in Easter, remained a turning point in the lives of Christians.

In the message contained in a statement by his Chief Press Secretary, Mr Olisa Ifeajika, in Asaba, the governor reminded the Christian faithful of the sacrifices of Jesus Christ for mankind, and urged them to return to God in full supplication for a rebirth of Nigeria.

According to him, the power of the resurrection provides opportunity for Christians to seek God for His intervention at this critical period in Nigeria when citizens were weighed down by unprecedented hardship.

The governor asserted that the turbulence in the polity could only be surmounted through dedicated prayers by Nigerians, adding that with prayer at Easter, challenges bedeviling the country would be overcome.

He said that it was a time for people to show love to one another, especially at the backdrop of the prevailing hardship occasioned by insecurity and economic challenges, and urged well-meaning Nigerians to render assistance, particularly to the downtrodden in the society.

He said that as 2023 general elections in the country beckoned, Nigerians should exercise their power to enthrone a new leadership in the country that would rescue it from imminent precipice.

His words, "On behalf of my family, the government and people of Delta, I congratulate Christians all over the world as they celebrate 2022 Easter.

"I call on Christian faithful to go to God in prayer to heal

our country from insecurity and economic challenges.

"As Christians, we must reflect on the importance of Easter in our daily living, not only with other Christians, but with people of other religious beliefs.

"Let me urge Nigerians to extend the spiritual benefits of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, which include love, peace, justice, sacrifice and kindness, to one another, especially in these trying times.

Leaders of the House of Representatives have enjoined Christians to pray for the unity of the country.

Speaker of the House of Representatives Rep Femi Gbajabamila and the Minority Leader, Hon. Ndudi Elumelu while congratulating Christian faithful on the occasion of this year's Easter said the period calls for sober reflection and dedication to nationhood.

Gbajabamila in a statement signed by Lanre Lasisi, his Special Adviser to the Speaker on Media and Publicity, said Nigerians, especially Christians should be concerned with the security situation in the country and always pray for peace in the country.

He as well solicited the support of the citizens for government's efforts towards tackling insecurity, noting that as a nation, Nigeria is currently facing one of its most daunting challenges.

The Speaker called for peaceful coexistence of Nigerians irrespective of any perceived differences.

Also, Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, Hon. Ndidi Elumelu noted that, "celebration of triumphant resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead and the hope of a brighter

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

United, banditry-free Nigeria possible, Tinubu tells FG

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

converged on Lagos in their large numbers to drum up support for the aspiration of the national leader of the party.

Tinubu, while addressing the teeming youths that filled the arena, described them as the brightest and most brilliant; urging them to team up with him in his bid to change the story of Nigeria for the youths and tomorrow, which they represent.

He said, "All you need is courage, determination and perseverance, if the YouTube alone has 2.9 billion people following it, including you all standing here, then Nigeria can excel, we can do it. You must develop the can-do attitude, you must believe that this country is yours and you want to change the story. You must change the story of potential, the story of banditry, you must change the story of tribalism.

"We as a nation can conveniently feed ourselves by being creative, visionary and committed. Anybody who says we cannot, they can get out because it is voluntary. We cannot continue the lamentation of the past, we cannot continue with excuses of power failure. No nation that made rapid development without electricity, give us light and if we cannot be successful then you can abuse us, you cannot give us erratic light that is undependable and then blame us again that we are lazy.

"Nigeria, it is about time! We have enough gas to fire up electricity and supply the rest of Europe and make money, long term from it. You know it. We don't want to bore you with it, when I started, we used to pick dead bodies on the streets, but today Lagos is one of the cleanest, most progressive states in the country."

He urged the youths to revalidate

their Permanent Voters Cards and be ready to vote in the forthcoming 2023 general elections.

In his keynote address, Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, who appreciated the grand support for Asiwaju Tinubu, noted that youths will continue to be identified as critical stakeholders, just as he enjoined all delegates to the APC Primary to exercise their franchise wisely.

The South-West youth leaders at the event took their turns to speak on why the youths were promoting the APC National Leader, Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, to become the next president of Nigeria, come 2023.

Speaking, Dr. Muritala Seriki, Dayo Israel, Muhammed Sulaiman, among others, applauded the achievements of Tinubu in infrastructure, education and in raising the Internally Generated Revenue (IGR), of Lagos, while he was governor of the state, saying

some of them were his products, having brought them to the level they had attained presently.

This was just as they described the APC National Leader as a detribalised Nigerian, who would take the country to greater heights, come 2023, if voted as president of the country.

Seriki, in his speech, itemised the achievements of the former Lagos State Governor to include increase in the State's IGR, which brought about growth and development in all sectors of the economy, describing him as a detribalised Nigerian, who would replicate his achievements in Lagos at the national level if elected the country's next president.

Israel, who also spoke in the same vein, charged the youths to go for their voter cards and be prepared to vote in the coming general elections, saying that they should be prepared to speak with

their votes, by electing Asiwaju Tinubu as next president of the country.

According to Sulaimon, who also paid tributes to Tinubu's leadership quality, as well as his closeness to the youths, assured that all the youths in the North-Central were behind Asiwaju Tinubu in his ambition to become Nigeria's president in 2023, even as he prayed for him for the fulfilment of the dream.

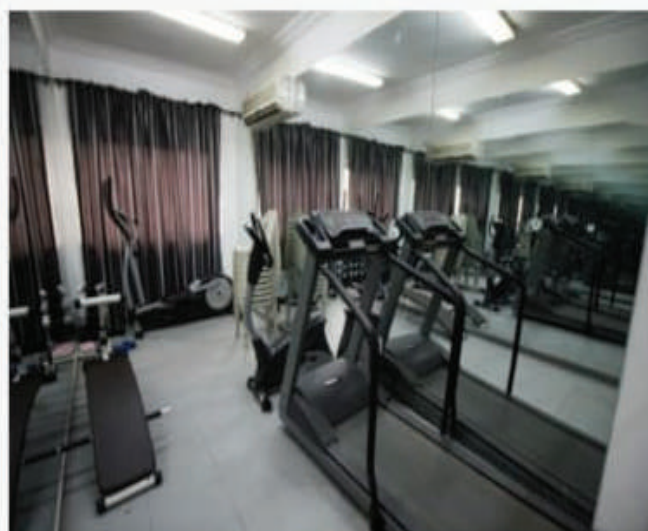
The support for Tinubu's presidential election was not limited to the youths, as South-West State Assemblies also showed their support at the event.

A member of Lagos State House of Assembly, Hon. Desmond Elliot, representing Surulere Constituency 1, in his short remark, said the state Assemblies in the Zone were unanimous in their support for Asiwaju Tinubu's presidential ambition.



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Yari, Marafa, back in PDP, to battle Matawalle for Zamfara Govt House

By **TUNDE JOSHUA**, Abuja

Zamfara State Governor Bello Matawalle may now have a tough time winning re-election on the platform of the All Progressives Congress (APC) as two of his political arc-rivals have returned to the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

They are a former governor of the state, Alhaji Abdulaziz Yari, and Senator Kabiru Marafa.

Yari and Marafa have been having running battles with the state governor over supremacy in Zamfara politics.

While Yari's effort to bounce back to reckoning in the state failed with his APC national chairmanship ambition, Marafa has tried effortlessly to take control of APC in the state after the defection of Gov. Matawalle and Senator Hassan Gusau from the PDP, a platform on which they won election, to the APC.

Zamfara State PDP Chairman, retired Colonel Bala Mande who announced the defection of the duo shortly after a stakeholders' meeting in Gusau, the state capital, on Sunday said both had agreed to not only return but work for the PDP in the build-up to the 2023 election.



Yari



Marafa

NIFOR boss submits N100 million outstanding vouchers to Senate panel

By **TUNDE JOSHUA**, Abuja

Executive Director of Nigerian Institute for Oil Palm Research (NIFOR), Dr. Celestin Ikuenobe, has submitted the outstanding payment vouchers of N100 million to Senate Public Accounts Committee.

The Senate panel through had queried the Institute of spending N210 million without payment vouchers.

The query was consequent upon the report of Auditor General of the Federation which alleged that infractions against the Institute were committed during the previous administration.

But, the NIFOR Executive Director was able to present N110 million vouchers to the Committee and it was resolved that the Institute should provide the outstanding vouchers of N100 million to the panel two weeks ago.

However, at the resumption of the Committee Investigative meeting, the Director presented the outstanding of N100 million to put to rest the allegation of spending the N210 million without payment vouchers.

He presented relevant vouchers for clearance before panel.

The initial query had read "Four hundred and twenty-three (423) payments totalling ₦210,921,849.66 (Two hundred and ten million, nine hundred and twenty-one thousand, eight hundred and forty-nine naira, sixty-six kobo) were made without payment vouchers and internal audit checks, contrary to Financial Regulations 601 and 1705 which stipulate that all payments must be vouched for, and the head of internal audit unit in all Ministries/Extra-ministerial offices and other arms of government shall ensure that 100% pre-payment audit of all checked and passed vouchers is carried out and the vouchers forwarded under security schedule direct to the appropriate central pay office for payment.

"The Executive Director's response vide Ref. No. OAU/GF/EIAD & SD/ FMARD/NIFOR/2018/2 dated 30th April 2018, claimed that no payment was made without raising payment voucher and advised that the vouchers in question be attached."

Leaders, others urge peace, unity, hope at low key Easter

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2
future for our nation."

Elumelu on Sunday, in a statement in Abuja said Easter, which points to the victory of life over death, reinforces hope and confidence irrespective of miserable and daunting situation.

He said "our nation will surely overcome with our trust in God, love for one another and determination to unite and democratically enthrone a purposeful leadership in our country.

"Indeed, Easter offers inexorable lessons in faith, hope, patience and assurance of the imminent triumph of light over darkness, justice over injustice, happiness over despondency, prosperity over poverty, peace over chaos and unity over division under a new leadership that truly cares for the people.

"The sacrificial death and triumphant resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ demonstrate mercies of God in redeeming the sinful world, His love for mankind and readiness to bring solution to our individual and collective challenges when we put our trust in Him.

"It is therefore time for

us as a people to put aside all parochial differences and rekindle the virtues of love, forgiveness, piety, honesty, mutual respect, regard to rules as well as industry and resilience for which we are known all over the world.

"We must begin to look after one another, irrespective of social, ethnic, religious and political differences so as to foster the national rebirth which we all yearn for.

"In the spirit of the season, our caucus calls on those behind acts of terrorism in our country to retrace their steps. We call for the release of our brothers and sisters in their captivity including those abducted in the recent terrorist attack on Kaduna/Abuja bound train."

"The Minority Leader, therefore urge the Federal Government to immediately review its economic policies, curb corruption and waste as well as restructure the management of our national resources in a way that will revamp productivity, infrastructural development, engender reduction in cost of food, essential commodities and critical services, boost employment and job creation and ensure lasting peace in

our nation."

As Christians all over the world celebrate this year's Easter, the National Orientation Agency (NOA) has urged Christians in Nigeria to emulate the virtues of love, service, selflessness and sacrifice which Jesus Christ exemplified.

In an Easter message to the Christian faithful, the Director General of NOA, Dr. Garba Abari noted that Easter is a period of sober reflection which should inspire a recommitment to those virtues that make for better humanity as seen in the life and death of Christ. He also urged Christians to use the Easter celebrations to pray for God's guidance to help the country navigate its present challenges and emerge a stronger nation.

Abari further urged Nigerians, irrespective of religious persuasions, to use the occasion of Easter for sober reflections on how they can add value to the lives of the neighbours and the country at large. In his words, "Just as Easter teaches that Jesus died to save mankind, if we can imbibe such love and selflessness in our dealings with our compatriots, we

would make great positive impacts in the lives of others and most of our teething challenges as a nation would be things of the past".

While wishing Nigerians happy Easter celebrations, the NOA Director General admonished citizens to remain vigilant and security conscious throughout the celebrations.

In Bayelsa, Chairman of the State Advocacy group, Gender Response Initiative Team (GRIT), Barr. Dise Ogbise led other women advocacy groups to felicitate with parents and children in by urging them to watch and pray for their children against sexual abuse and violence.

Ogbise, who expressed concern over the rising cases watch over vulnerable children and wards against abusive acts from relatives and rise in cases of domestic violence between parents, called on parents to watch over their children and spend adequate time with them and ensure that they are protected from sexual abusers including unsuspecting relatives and strangers.

Ogbise, who made the call while speaking to

parents and children in an Easter message to Women in Bayelsa State particularly all over the world, also encourage parents to be more tolerant of one another so as to avoid cases of domestic Violence in the home.

She said it is important that parents watch out for their children, spend adequate time with them and ensure that they are protected from sexual abusers including unsuspecting relatives and strangers.

She also advised children to stay at home and take out time to study their books rather than going to houses of neighbours. She specifically emphasised on the above based on recent cases of abuse on children who recently visited the houses or homes of neighbours.

She however urged her colleague in the legal profession under the Nigerian Bar Association Women's Forum in Bayelsa State to remain steadfast in the defence of the legal profession and wish them a great Easter celebration and wish them more progress, development, upliftment and promotion in their legal practice.

N'Assembly passes revised budget, adds N193b

By **EDWARD ADAMIDENYO**, Deputy Editor

The National Assembly has passed a revised budget of N17.31 trillion for the fiscal year of 2022.

The two chambers of the legislature revised the budget after considering reports of appropriations committees last Thursday.

President Muhammadu Buhari had asked the House of Representatives and Senate to make adjustments to the 2022 budget, citing the impacts of the Russia-Ukraine war on the country's economy.

The revised figure represents an increase of N193 billion from N17.12 trillion in the earlier 2022

budget already signed by the President.

The NASS also adjusted the medium-term expenditure framework (MTEF) and fiscal strategy paper (FSP) — documents any budget is premised on.

The oil benchmark and projected daily crude oil production output were among the components

of the MTEF and FSP that were adjusted.

With these adjustments, the lawmakers had also approved N4 trillion subsidy payment for premium motor spirit (PMS), popularly known as petrol.

The federal government had initially approved N442.7 billion for subsidy

in the 2022 fiscal year.

Out of the total sum of N17.31 trillion naira passed, N817.69 billion is for statutory transfers; N3.97 trillion for Debt Service; N7.1 trillion for recurrent (non-debt expenditure); and N5.4 trillion for contribution to the development fund for capital expenditure.

Prevent politicians hijacking your revalidation process, PRP tells INEC

By ISAAC OLAMIKAN, Benin

Chairman of the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) in Edo State, Dr. Greg Osasere Igbinowanhia, has described the recent revalidation of Permanent Voter Card (PVC) as the first step towards rigging the 2023 general elections.

Assessing the exercise in the state, he claimed that information reaching him from some of his party field officers indicated that in some local government areas, officials of some of the parties were in the habit of hoarding the cards to the detriment of other parties.

"The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should do well in making sure that the process is not hijacked by some greedy politicians who are intent on short changing others," he said

According to him, field officers of the PRP had reported that some politicians were hoarding the PVC and depriving prospective voters of getting registered.

Bayelsa, Ebonyi, Rivers top list of invalid PVCs

By AHERHOKE OKIOMA, Yenagoa

Three Southern states of Bayelsa, Rivers and Ebonyi have emerged top on the list states in the country with the highest number of invalid Permanent Voters Card, PVCs.

This was revealed as the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC commenced distribution of 1,390,519 cards nationwide ahead of the 2023 elections.

Prof. Mahmood Yakubu, Chairman of INEC said

Bayelsa state top the list of invalid registrants with 67.1 percent, while Ebonyi and Rivers followed with 60.1 and 53.2 respectively.

Alagoa Morris, an environmental activist described the situation as confusing and blamed unscrupulous politicians and INEC officials for the lapse.

He said it was a sad and unfortunate situation, which added to the unacceptable low official population figure of Bayelsa state.

According to Morris, "I do

not understand" this invalid cards of a thing and how our people are trending on such fraudulent and criminal act against democracy"

He said there was more work to be done to prevent people winning elections with fake voters cards or such votes should be invalidated.

Bodesei Akperi, a Public Affairs analyst noted that nearly 45 percent of completed registration cards nationwide were invalid according to the electoral body, adding that this

figure rose as high as 60 percent or more in some states.

He posited that as far as he was concerned, no state is immune to this as the invalid registrants will not be included in the register of voters.

He further stated that the development was disturbing though time and resources have been expended in handling the cases, He said there were strong indications that some INEC officials may be culpable in causing all these infractions and they needed to be cautioned.



L-R: Managing Director, Greenville LNG, Ritu Sahajwalla; Chairman, Mr. Eddy Van Den Broeke and Minister of State, Petroleum Resources, Chief Timipre Sylva, during inspection of the site of the Brass NLG in Twon Brass, Bayelsa State.

Isoko community bemoans voter registration woes

By KELVIN OHOROR

Community leaders in Enhwe have decried poor network, lack of capturing machines, the slowness of the data capturing machine and distance of registrants centre as some of the challenges being encountered in the exercise. These are prevalent especially in the rural communities of Isoko South Local Government area of Delta State.

Speaking to the The Trumpet Newspaper correspondent, the immediate past assistant secretary of the community and also member of the community committee of the INEC voters registration exercise Mr. Dominic Emioyo said that, "The major challenge is that, only one data capturing machine is available in the whole of Isoko

South Local Government Area.

Mr. Emioyo noted that, "The Independent Electoral Commission drew a time table for us, after a period of time the time table never worked, as of this moment many people who have been pre-registered have not been captured", he stated.

According to him, "The problem is not the pre-registration, the pre-registration is done in various communities while the capturing is in Oleh, INEC office, the capturing is the major challenge Isoko South Local Government Area is having".

He stated that, if the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) could provide up to five Data Capturing Machines to rotate round Isoko South Local Government Area it would help to reduce the

stress registrants are going through at the moment.

He also lamented that mobilizing registrants from the community to Oleh for data capturing is stressful, saying that the community is paying much to hire vehicles to convey the people to Oleh.

On his part one of the community leaders, Mr. Emu Ovuede stated that, during the pre-registration the people used their own Android Phones to do the biometric thereafter the community had to convey them to Oleh for data capturing.

He also lamented that the major challenge was the poor network from the Independent Electoral Commission portal, which caused a lot of delay and frustration on the part of the people.



Prof. Mahmood Yakubu

IFC to support Lagos with \$50m loan for bus corridors

By JADAKU WALTER

Lagos State Government has entered into a partnership with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) to support the development of two bus corridors to increase access to public transportation and reduce vehicle emissions in the Lagos metropolis.

Through the partnership, IFC is providing a \$50 million loan to help the state develop, finance, upgrade and operate two bus corridors, measuring eight kilometres in the Abule-Egba-Command and Ile-Iwe, Ile-Epo neighborhoods, two of the most densely populated and congested parts of the city.

The projects are expected to benefit over 150,000 passengers per day, as well as reduce commuting times for residents.

Speaking on the development, Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu, explained that the partnership would drive economic opportu-



Kalim Shah nities and social development, as well as connect people to social services through the state's vast

transportation network.

"As governments continue to increase transportation capacity to meet the critical transport challenges, well-structured Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) under the right circumstances are one approach that will scale-up our deliverables in the T.H.E.M.E.S Development Agenda," he said.

Also speaking, Commissioner for Finance, Dr. Rabiul Olowo, expressed confidence that the partnership with IFC on the two bus corridors, would provide safe, efficient, cost-effective transportation in Lagos, as well as reduce travel time and noise along the corridors.

On his part the IFC's Senior Country Manager for Nigeria, Kalim Shah, said as urbanisation accelerates in the South West and other parts of the country, it is important that people have access to affordable and environmentally sustainable transportation.

He said the partnership with Lagos State would help to strengthen the economic growth, improve access to transportation,

address environmental pollution and ultimately improve the lives of Lagos residents.

The bus corridor development is part of Lagos State's Bus Reform Initiative, which aims to provide world-class, affordable public transport for residents.

"The local currency financing, which will help Lagos to minimise currency fluctuation risks, was made possible through the International Development Association Private Sector Window (IDA PSW) Local Currency Facility.

"Its financing is IFC's first sub-national engagement in Nigeria and the first to use the IDA PSW Local Currency Facility to support a sub-national engagement.

"It is in consonance with IFC's strategy to support sustainable urban growth, targeted at providing IFC's advisory services to support Lagos State in the public transportation sector and other infrastructure services," he explained.

FG moves against checkpoints on Lagos port access roads

Stories by JOHNMARK UKOKO

The Federal Government has commenced a special operation aimed at dismantling all illegal checkpoints and tackle corruption on access roads around Apapa and Tin Can Island ports in Lagos.

Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Transportation (FMOT), Dr. Magdalene Ajani, unveiled the *Operation Free The Ports Corridor*, an initiative of the Port Standing Task Team (PSTT) at the Nigerian Shippers Council (NSC) in Apapa recently.

She explained that the PSTT was established by the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) in collaboration with the Directorate of State Services (DSS), Nigerian Shippers Council (NSC) and the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) to entrench accountability and transparency, enhance enforcement activities and promote integrity in the country's maritime sector.

"Coming here this morning from the airport to Apapa Port took me only 40 minutes. This is an evidence of what the PSTT is doing. The important thing is that we need to treat this challenge holistically and that holistic treatment is what we are trying to achieve," she stated.

She said the Federal Government's policy of ease of doing business could not succeed if the task force fails in its task.



Magdalene Ajani

Environmentalist canvasses extension of Ogoni Cleanup to cover entire N'Delta

By AHERHOKE OKIOMA

Foremost environmentalist and Director, Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF), Reverend Nnimmo Bassey, has advocated the urgent need to extend the Ogoni cleanup to the entire Niger Delta region on account of the oil-induced pollution ravaging the region.

Bassey, who spoke at Gbarantoru Community in Yenagoa Council of Bayelsa State, during a one day sensitisation engagement tagged: *Community Diagnostic Dialogue*, enjoined stakeholders to fight and amplify the calls for the cleanup of the entire Niger Delta, lamenting that the region was becoming a sacrificial zone

in the country.

He said there was the need to engage local communities in advocacy activities to help curtail environmental recklessness, noting that when people become knowledgeable and aware of their environment, they respond in a different way.

Bassey said the Community Diagnostic Dialogue was organised to meet the people with a view to diagnosing their environmental and socio-economic issues and challenges and proffer lasting solutions.

He said: "We want to diagnose the roots of environmental problems in this community, because we realised that there has been a lot of environmental issues like oil spills, gas flares.

We have the biggest gas flare plant in this community and it has impacted on fishing, farming and the entire ecosystem.

"There are other issues, but we can't just assume that we know what all the problems are. And so, we are here to talk to the people, to diagnose the roots of the problem, the people will tell us what the situation of the environment was before the oil sector that took the prominent place in the communities.

"The exercise is to find out what has gone wrong, what can be done to change the situation as who is to do that. So, if they say it is the government, together we talk to the government and if it is something they can do themselves, we stand with them

to do it."

He explained that such conversations had helped to curtail the level of environmental recklessness, adding that it might not stop everything, but certainly when people get knowledgeable and aware of what is going on, chance are that they respond in a different way.

"Now we need to fight and amplify the need for the cleanup to cover the entire Niger Delta, because the Niger Delta is becoming the sacrificial zone, while some other places are viewed as sacred zones. They have all the best things, but here we have all the worst things, this is the change we want to see," he stated.

NOSDRA confirms leak, laments impact of oil theft on environment, economy

By AHERHOKE OKIOMA, Yenagoa.

National Oil Spills Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA) has confirmed an oil leak from a 12 inch Benisede-Brass Creek Delivery Line at Pereturugbene in Bayelsa.

The incident on the pipeline operated by Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria (SPDC) was investigated by NOSDRA.

The spill response agency which concluded its investigation on Saturday bemoaned the adverse impact of oil theft and pipeline vandalism on the environment and economy of the nation.

NOSDRA notes that frequent vandalism of gas pipelines was responsible for the massive drop in power generation and collapse of the national grid.

Mr Idris Musa, Director-General of NOSDRA stated this while reacting to a leak incident reported on the 12 inch Benisede-Brass Creek Delivery Line at Pereturugbene in Bayelsa.

Musa said that a Joint Investigation conducted by NOSDRA, the operator, and community representatives on the incident indicated that it was caused by oil thieves.

He explained that the investigating team discovered that suspected vandals installed

several 'tapping points' on the Benisede-Brass Creek pipeline from where they siphon crude.

He berated the unpatriotic wct which amounts to economic sabotage and called on stakeholders to rise against the menace which he said had reached an alarming rate.

"Despite several appeals to our people to put the nation's environment and the economy at a higher level of consideration and consciousness, some unpatriotic elements continue to inflict untold hardship on our environment and the economy.

"They do this by installing several tapping points on

crude oil pipelines, particularly the current incidents at 12" Benisede-Brass Creek Delivery Line at Pereturugbene in Bayelsa.

"The current collapse of the National Grid is also fueled by the incessant vandalism of the gas pipelines both causing embarrassment to the nation as well as sabotaging government efforts in providing quality services to the nation.

"The Agency is further calling on our people to join hands with the government in a bid to flush out the criminal elements that are bent on enriching themselves through pipelines repairs and oil theft," Musa said.

Obaseki seeks support of religious bodies to tackle food crisis, hunger

• Celebrates Deaconess Patience Eniye-Abbe at 70

Edo State Governor Godwin Obaseki has called for the support of religious bodies in the state to tackle hunger and food crisis.

Obaseki made the call at the

Okowa celebrates deputy, Otuario at 54

Governor Ifeanyi Okowa of Delta has facilitated with his deputy, Mr. Kingsley Otuario, as he turned 54, describing him as a resourceful and loyal public servant.

The governor, on behalf of the State Executive Council (SEC), government and people of Delta, join family, friends and associates to celebrate with Otuario on the auspicious occasion.

In a statement by his Chief Press Secretary, Mr. Olisa Ifeajika, in Asaba, Okowa commended Otuario for his gallant and astute contributions to the successes being recorded by their administration.

He said that Otuario was a dependable and resilient peacemaker, faithful public officer and loyal partner, especially in the march towards bequeathing a Stronger Delta to citizens.

He affirmed that Otuario's loyalty and dedication to duty had been exemplary, especially in ensuring that peace prevailed in the oil-producing communities in the state.

"On behalf of my family, the government and people of Delta, I congratulate you, my dear brother and deputy governor, a sagacious politician and leader, Deacon Kingsley Otuario, on your 54th birth anniversary.

"Your Excellency, I thank you for your immense contributions to the remarkable and modest achievements our administration has recorded in the last seven years.

"As Chairman of the Peace Advocacy Committee against Oil Facility Vandalism in the State, you and your team worked assiduously to ensure that there is relative peace for oil production in our country.

"As an outstanding patriot and humble administrator, you have given immense support to our administration and I can't appreciate you enough, my dear brother and friend.

"With your sustained partnership and that of all Deltans, I thank you for your courage, humility and resourcefulness, and I pray that the Almighty God will continue to grant you the strength, wisdom and good health to serve the state and humanity," the governor stated.

70th birthday thanksgiving service in honor of Deaconess Patience Eniye Abbe, held at United Baptist Church in Benin City, the Edo State capital

The governor said, working with religious organizations, his government plans to establish food pantries to help reduce hunger.

He noted, "On this 70th birthday celebration in your life, we want you to step up as we have a food crisis in the country, and in the next few months, a lot of people will be

starving and we can't live in a society where people can't eat.

"One idea I have, working with churches, is for us to come together and begin to think of having food pantries in our churches. Let us cook and make food available for our people, making them eat at least one meal a day.

"Let us start from this church by setting up the Patience Eniye Abbe Food Pantry. All of us will come together and contribute; I will contribute too. Let's see how we can cook a meal for our people, even if it's for 100 people every day until we go

through this crisis."

"Can we consider this as a birthday present?" the governor queried.

Hailing the celebrant for her contributions to the development of society, Obaseki said, "I have never seen her angry and she has a love for education. She is a mother full of love; a mother who is very caring, a pillar of the church and the society."

On his part, Rt. Rev. Usuanlele commended Obaseki for his developmental stride in Edo State, applauding him for prioritizing the welfare of Edo people.

The clergy said, "You don't do things anyhow but dialogue with stakeholders before embarking on projects or policies that are people-oriented. You moved to spread education across the state proposing campuses of the state-owned Ambrose Alli University to be sited in the three senatorial districts of the state.

"I see new projects all across the state. You are full of action and talk less. Your projects have touched the lives of ordinary Edo people. You are very quiet but have shocked everyone with your performance and projects."



L-R: Prelate of United Baptist Church, Rt. Rev. Osama Usuanlele; Edo State First Lady, Mrs. Betsy Obaseki; Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki; Deaconess Patience Abbe, with her husband, Gen. Godwin Abbe (rtd.), during Deaconess Patience Abbe's 70th birthday thanksgiving service, in Benin City, on Sunday, April 17th, 2022.

Fayemi felicitates with Christians at Easter

Ekiti State Governor, Dr. Kayode Fayemi, has congratulated Christians in the state and Nigeria in general for witnessing another Easter season.

The Governor, in his Easter message signed by his Chief Press Secretary, Mr. Yinka Oyeboode, urged Christians to emulate the sacrificial lifestyle of Jesus Christ who gave his life to save mankind.

Dr. Fayemi who felicitated Christians for the successful completion of the Lenten season, urged them to continue to intercede for the state and the country.

The Chairman of the Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) noted that the Easter season is a period of sober reflection, which lessons should be imbibed and reflected on at all times.

He said such fundamental values would go a long way in promoting and strengthening the foundation of love, peace, harmony and progress in the country, adding that the season should serve as a reminder to the selflessness, love, sacrifice and tolerance of Jesus Christ throughout His earthly sojourn, death and resurrection.

Stressing the essence of the season, the Governor said Christ exemplified the virtues of selflessness, love and tolerance during his sojourn on earth. He urged Christians to use the season to reflect on their individual and collective roles towards promoting and sustaining that foundation of love, peace, harmony and progress in the country.

Dr Fayemi advised Christians to

be modest in celebrating Easter, noting that the period is not for eating and drinking alone but to reflect on the past and hope for a better future for themselves and the State.

"We must see this period as a time that presents us the viable opportunity to reflect on how we can help to steer our nation back on the road to peace, stability and prosperity, by living peacefully with fellow citizens" the Governor said.

While noting that the gubernatorial election in the State is just two months away, the Governor urged Christians in the State to use the period to pray for peaceful conduct of the polls as well as offer intercession for peace, development and prosperity of Ekiti State and Nigeria in general



Dr. Kayode Fayemi

Terrorism: Buhari has failed, defend yourselves, group charges Nigerians

Stories by **PAUL MICHAEL**,
Defence Editor, Abuja

The Middle Belt Forum (MBF) has said the government of President Muhammadu Buhari has failed to defend Nigerians against incessant acts of terrorism across the country. Thereby urging Nigerians to defend themselves by every means possible.

MBF National President, Dr Pogu Bitrus, made this known in a statement on Friday in Abuja, insisting that the refusal of the government to deal with perpetrators of the recurring killings in the country reveals its complicity in the gale of bloodshed shredding the Middle Belt Region.

He recalled and lamented the ugly incidence of killing in recent times, nothing that as the 2023 campaigns gather momentum, the intensity of these attacks will increase, adding that the sole purpose of the invaders is to annihilate communities of the Middle Belt.

The statement reads, "The attention of the Middle Belt Forum, MBF, has been drawn to the renewed vicious attacks on communities of the Middle Belt Region in Southern Kaduna, Southern Kebbi, Niger, Plateau and Benue State that have led to hundreds of lives lost and decimation of our once-thriving communities.

"On March 8, 2022, daredevil terrorists

mounted an ambush for members of a vigilante group called 'Yan-Sa-Kai' in Zuru, Kebbi State, and eventually killed 65 of them. Attempts by the security forces to bring the bandits to justice led to the murder of 13 soldiers and five policemen, bringing the total number of the dead to 83.

"One week after the assault on Zuru Emirate, the blood-thirsty criminals attacked a police station in Nasko town in Magala Local Government Area of Niger State on March 15, 2022, where they slaughtered no fewer than eight people, comprising the divisional police officer, three policemen and four members of the community's vigilante group.

"One week after the murder of the DPO and seven others in Nasko, another group of butchers, dressed in military uniforms, on March 22, 2022, launched an attack on four communities: Tsonje, Agban, Katanga and Kadarko, all within Kagoro Chiefdom in Kaura Local Government Area of Kaduna State. No fewer than 34, according to the Kaduna State Government, were murdered and 35 homes razed down.

"Less than seven days after the bedlam on the four Kagoro communities, members of a madcap gang bombed an Abuja-Kaduna bound train on March 28, 2022. The blood-spilling outlaws abducted scores of passengers and murdered eight persons, among others. The Nigerian Railway

Corporation (NRC) is yet to account for the whereabouts of 165 passengers that were on the ill-fated trip.

"While the nation was mourning these avoidable murders, another deadly assault on Kadanye village in Kajuru LGA and Akilbu village in Kachia LGA left eight persons, mostly women and children, dead, while 28 were abducted on April 6, 2022.

"These killings seemed to have hit the peak on Sunday, April 10, 2022, when another group of armed brigands pounced on four villages in Kanam Local Government Area of Plateau State and killed about 80 people in cold blood. While these communities were still in deep mourning, another terror group launched yet another deadly assault on a military base located in Pole Wire Village in Birnin Gwari LGA of Kaduna State, slaying 12 soldiers and injuring 19 military personnel.

"To clearly convince the world they were in charge, the bandits, in a video clip shot in front of the captured armoured tank, announced the release of the Managing Director of Bank of Agriculture, Alhaji Alwan Ali Hassan, on compassionate grounds. Though they hinged the release of the BOA MD on the Ramadan season, the terrorists threatened to kill the kidnapped train passengers if the government did not meet their demands.

Terrorists kill two, injure others as group laments insecurity in Southern Kaduna

Terrorists popularly referred to as bandits on Saturday attacked Agban Kagoro community in Kaura Local Government Area of Kaduna State killing two persons.

A source from the community, Mr Christopher Derek told news men of the incidence, saying the terrorists killed two persons and wounded many others.

Former chairman of Kaura Local Government Area, Kumai Badu confirmed the report and said those injured were taken to the hospital.

Kaura is in the Southern senatorial district of Kaduna State. The latest incident came barely a month after similar attack on two communities of the same local government area claimed 34 and left property worth millions destroyed.

This is coming as a peace advocacy group, Northern Development Movement (NDM), has said southern Kaduna and northern Nigeria are bleeding from the incessant killings by terrorists in the region.

The group welcomed the recent parley of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), General Lucky Irabor, with critical stakeholders drawn from five local governments of Southern Kaduna as a way to restore peace in the area.

The CDS during the visit met with community leaders and representatives of various groups to seek solutions to the incessant attacks in the area.

Those who spoke during the stakeholders' meeting were representatives of Fulani, Atiyap, Hausa, Kagoro, and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) as well as Jamatul Nasir Islam (JNI). Others included representatives of the traditional rulers, members of the House of Representatives and House of Assembly, senator representing Kaduna South, representative of retired senior officers and president Southern Kaduna Peoples Union

NDM in a press release on Thursday commended the DHQ for the initiative describing it as timely.

The press release, which was signed by the convener, Ismail Nasir Bako and secretary, Patricia Gambo, urged communities in the North to support the armed forces of Nigeria to bring an end to the various crises which had affected socio-economic development.

According to NDM, "The North is bleeding, not just Southern Kaduna. Our March towards development has been hampered. It is time stakeholders realise the enormity of what we have done to ourselves.

"We cannot continue on this path. It will definitely take us years to recover from the damage the crisis has caused.

"NDM is making a passionate appeal to all in the region to give peace a chance. We also urge politicians to play with rules of the game as the 2023 general election draws near.

"NDM also commends the DHQ which took this peace initiative to Plateau State in 2021."

When contacted for confirmation of the incident, the Kaduna Police spokesman, ASP Muhammad Jalige declined comment on the issue.

Delta police uncovers hotel for underage sex business

The Delta State Police Command has reportedly uncovered one Fagoma Hotel at Aragba, Ughelli South local government area, where underage girls and teenagers are allegedly used as sex slaves.

The Trumpet gathered that the age range of the girls is between 12 and 16 years.

A human rights activist, Comrade Israel Joe, who disclosed the issue on Facebook, said people usually sleep with the underage girls for as low as five hundred naira (N500).

He said when the report came to him, he confirmed it and reported to the State Commissioner of Police, CP Ari Muhammad Ali, who immediately mobilized a team of policemen and women with more than 15 patrol operational vehicles for a sting operation.

The operation according to him, led to the arrest of the hotel management, some alleged criminals using the place also as hideouts, many underage girls and people that were there to take their turns.

Comrade Joe said, "Some of my followers on Facebook drew my attention to one Fagoma Hotel located at Aragba, after

Otokutu, Ughelli South LG where teenagers ranging from 12 years and above are used as sex slaves.

"People come, sleep with these children and pay as low as 1000 naira to the hotel management. Some of my comrades did investigations and reported back. I personally went there to see for myself and trust it was a gory sight. One of the girls told my comrade that even if it's 500 naira... my spine ran cold into my veins the moment I heard that.

"We made a report straight to the commissioner of police and I also pull a call across to the Ministry of Women Affairs through the Commissioner. It was alleged that police from Otu-Jeremi whose jurisdiction it was, covers up the Hotel management and also collect returns in cash and kind from the little girls.

"At the wee hours of the night yesterday 15th (Friday), a sting operation was carried out by a combine team of policemen and women with more than 15 patrol operational vehicles and sure we arrested a lot of the children, those who went there to take turns,

the hotel management and alleged criminals using the place also as hideouts."

When contacted for confirmation, Delta Police Spokesperson, DSP Bright Edefe, said "I don't have information on that for now please. I am trying to find out."



IGP, Alkali

War against terror: MNJTF kill ISWAP commanders, injure scores

A rain of multiple missiles at some training camps of Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) along the Lake Chad axis by the Air Components of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) has led to the killings of several commanders while scores are injured.

A military intelligence source who spoke to PRNigeria in confidence said that the coordinated attacks were spearheaded by the Nigerian Air Force on Thursday, April 14, 2022, at Tumbun Rego.

He said the airstrikes led to the

elimination of key ISWAP leaders such as Ibn Usman, Hani Abdullahi, Abakar Shuwa, Abu Jibrillah and Abu Ali among many terrorists that were killed while several others injured.

He further stated that a mop-up operations were conducted by the Nigerian Army under Operation Lake Sanity on the area on April 15, 2022, which led to the capturing of the terrorists camps in Tumbun.

He said, "The Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) of the joint air taskforce on April 13, 2022, specifically

sighted a large number of terrorists, a logistics and training camp, about 29 motorcycles and 4 vehicles concealed under trees at Tumbun Rego.

"With the credible intelligence, that indicated that the location also served as an abode for some top ISWAP commanders, the joint airstrikes were conducted on April 14 April 2022 which led to the elimination of Key ISWAP leaders including Ibn Usman, Hani Abdullahi, Abakar Shuwa, Abu Jibrillah and Abu Ali.

"Using a mix of NAF and Nigerian Air

Force aircraft, the aircraft attacked the adjoining locations that serve as havens of their fighters, followers and families.

"On April 15, 2022, the mop-up operations were conducted by the Nigerian Army under Operation Lake Sanity who have already captured most of the terrorists' enclaves in Sambisa Forest and with their ongoing onslaught in the Tumbuns.

"The airstrikes and the operations of the ground troops have led to the death of scores of terrorists where many others were seriously injured."



Legal, moral implications of granting pardon to ex-convicts, serving prisoners

By **MIKE OZEKHOME**, Ph.D

INTRODUCTION

Crimes are vices that should not be tolerated in any society. They are offences against the state and are punishable under the law. The essence of punishing people convicted of crimes is to serve the criminal just desert, make restitution to the victims and deter other people from engaging in criminal activities.

Sometimes, the President and Governor of a state may decide to show kindness to people found guilty of crimes. This practice is, respectively, sanctioned by sections 175 and 212 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, as altered. This practice is even Biblical. For example, Pontius Pilate wanted to grant pardon to Jesus Christ. When the mob protested, he released Barnabas instead of Jesus (Mark 15:6). Pardon is an unusual show of kindness to people who the State has condemned for certain ignoble acts they committed.

Pardon is a loud statement. The meaning of the statement is determined by the context of the publication. For example, in a state where there is a high record of kidnapping and cyber fraud, showing mercy to people convicted of kidnapping and cyber fraud could be construed as State connivance, or an impetus for offenders to commit more of such crimes. Nigeria, for example, is rated the 149th out of 180 most corrupt countries in the world and the second most corrupt country in West Africa, by Transparency International (TI), under its anti-Corruption Perception Index. Granting pardon to many people convicted of corrupt practices, whether still serving or having served, may be construed as a tacit approval of such corrupt practices. This becomes more worrisome under a government which made fighting corruption one of its tripodal programmes.

The 1999 Constitution in sections 175 and 212 have made provisions for the grant of pardon, respite or clemency to any person, either free or subject to lawful conditions as may be determined by the President or the Governor, respectively. It could be for an indefinite or specified period. They could substitute a lesser form of punishment or remit the whole or any part of such punishment, or substitute a less severe form of punishment. While under section 175 (2), the President shall carry out such an exercise after consultation with the Council of State, the state Governor shall carry his out "after consultation with such advisory council of the State on prerogative of mercy as may be established by the law of the State".

The moral implication of granting pardon to people may send different messages to different people. The messages could either be seen as genuine forgiveness, connivance, condonation, conspiracy, impetus, etc.

There is this aphorism often credited to Benjamin Franklin to the effect that "to err is human, to forgive is divine and to persist is devilish." This saying is true. It is Biblical that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Jesus also admonished that if 'we' say that 'we' have no sin, 'we' make Him (Christ) a liar and the truth is not in us. In the case of a woman caught in the act of adultery brought to Jesus Christ for just determination, Christ demonstrated forgiveness by challenging the mob to first cast a stone at the woman if they had



Mike Ozekhome,

no sin. Shortly after the mob departed, Jesus forgave the woman and commanded her not to go back to her sinful lifestyle. Christ gave this woman who was about to be stoned to death a second chance to mend her ways.

Pardon is however an exercise that should be carried out after due consideration of the implications of the exercise, and after full contrition and penance on the part of the offender. For example, during the military junta, some human rights activists were prosecuted unfairly and executed, some under retroactive laws. Such was the unforgettable grieving fate of the trio of Bartholomew Owoh (26), Lawal Akanni Ojulope (30) and Benard Ogedegbe (29), whose execution was sanctioned by Major General Muhammadu Buhari as military ruler. This, notwithstanding the intervention the heart-rending pleas by Playwites Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe and J.P Clarke. Granting pardon to people should be viewed by the society as a recognition of a cause worth celebrating, not offensive and fouling the air.

This brings us to the case of Senators Joshua Dariye and Jolly Nyame, both former Governors, who had been convicted and imprisoned for stealing billions of naira from the coffers of their state treasuries and thus impoverishing the very people they were elected to govern. These individuals were the Chief Executives of their states. They had sworn oaths of office and allegiance to the Federal Republic of Nigeria and vowed that they would govern their states with utmost good faith. However, they betrayed their people by stealing from them. They breached the trust reposed in them. None of them admitted their wrongdoings until the courts found them guilty, up to the Supreme Court. As a matter of fact, Joshua Dariye was a Senator when the Supreme Court affirmed the 10 year jail term passed on him. What then is the basis for granting pardon to these individuals in a country where corruption is the bane and struts around imperiously like a peacock? I had noted severally since 2013 (after my release from a 3 week horrific ordeal in the hands of kidnappers, that we must kill corruption which had become the 37th richest and most potent state in Nigeria, before it kills us. By granting pardon to these treasury looters, Buhari is reviving, nurturing and watering corruption.

When former Bayelsa State Governor,

Diepreiye Alamieyeigha (DSP) was given pardon by former president Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, I wrote and justified it. I did so for the following reasons: DSP had fully served his term of imprisonment after his conviction. He had earlier been pardoned by late president Yar'Adua who later died before consummating the pardon, until Jonathan succeeded him under the "doctrine of necessity". As noted by former Attorney General, Mohammed Bello Adoke, at page 62 in his 270 page book, titled "The Burden of Service", DSP had also showed contrition, pardoned by Yar'Adua, though not gazetted before his death; and helped greatly in brokering the peace process that led to amnesty in the restive Niger Delta region This in turn led to stability in the area and reduce pipeline vandalizing, thus improving oil production which had plummeted, leading to national impoverishment. DSP had thus earned the pardon after the Council of State recommended it. The same cannot be said of these two Governors who were still serving their jail terms.

The act of granting amnesty or pardon though discretionary, this discretion must be exercised judiciously and in the best interest of the country so as not to create doubts and dampen the confidence of the citizenry in the moral fabric and in the fight against corruption.

So, when the Council of State recently authorized the pardon of 159 convicts, including Senator Joshua Dariye of Plateau State and ex-Governor Jolly Nyame of Taraba State, who were both imprisoned for stealing N1.16 billion and N1.6 billion respectively, many Nigerians showed anger because these two political leaders had been duly tried and convicted for stealing money belonging to their respective states. The courts in Nigeria were unanimous in their verdicts that they were corrupt and had corruptly enriched themselves while serving as governors of their respective states.

These men had betrayed the trust their people reposed in them by stealing money meant for the development of their respective states while serving as chief executives of their said states.

Many Nigerians thus viewed the action of Mr president in granting them pardon as recommended by the Council of States, which is a body peopled mostly by friends and political benefactors or allies of the

convicts as an action taken in bad faith. This is more so that President Buhari had assumed office on the goodwill of the Nigerian people, largely fuelled by his avowed commitment to fight corruption in all its ramifications.

The purpose of criminal prosecution is to secure justice, not only for the accused, but also for the victims of crimes and the State; and to some extent get reparation and restitution for the victims, while deterring others from going same route.

Where lies the justice for the impoverished people of Plateau and Taraba States who will now watch their tormentors stroll out with red carpet treatment?

The government budgets hugely for the prosecution of such accused persons from the tax players' sweat, and if after the rigorous period of trial and subsequent conviction the guilty is simply let off the hook in such a brazen manner, the little remaining lean hope the citizens have in the system is further diminished.

I dare say that in these two instances, both the President and the Council of State have abused the their undoubted constitutional powers and privilege.

A constitutional issue as volatile as this could have been better managed if the minders of the president had told him the embarrassment this could cause the government in the estimation the comity of nations.

This brazen abuse of power will definitely erode the confidence of our international partners in the fight against corruption. It will also dampen the morale of the agencies fighting corruption, such as EFCC, the Nigeria Police Force and the ICPC, amongst others.

This singular ill-advised act will also definitely embolden political thieves and unrepentant pilferers of our national commonwealth. It shows that once you are a friend of the President or a member of his political party, or his acolyte and supporter, you can get away with any crime. In other words, in Nigeria, corruption surely pays!

With this action, the fight against corruption appears forlorn and a mirage. What is the essence of spending scarce resources in the name of fighting corruption if at the end of the day the convict will be pardoned in this ugly manner?

Granted that the constitution gives the President and the Governors the prerogative to pardon criminals in deserving circumstances, must it be done in the vulgar way and manner the instant case was handled?

In fairness to the president, not all the 159 convicts and ex-convicts granted presidential pardon are politicians, But the most prominent of them are the two former Governors. It could therefore be argued that the essence of the last meeting of the Council of State was to grant pardon to the two political heavy weights, while making up the number with some insignificant ones.

The president by so doing has violated the provisions of the Constitution and his oaths of office and allegiance to defend the Constitution. This recent pardon, in my humble thinking, is the worst way to fight corruption. It will nurture it and elevate it to a fundamental objective and directive principle of State policy. It is so sad.

How kidnappers, bandits pay SIM card dealers to link their phones to customers NIN

By ALEX OLISE

Following directives by the federal government to GSM service providers to block unregistered phones without the National Identification Numbers, it has now been revealed that criminals, especially kidnappers have gone extra step to connive with SIM card dealers to deceive new customers to give out their NIN which

they use to link phones of criminals.

The plan is for the dealers to obtain the NIN of customers who had come for registration of their SIM card only to inform the customer that the registration was not successful. They then persuade the customer to take another line. If this succeeds, the SIM will be given to criminals who will pay a huge amount.

The Trumpet, witnessed a scene in Lagos during the week when a customer threatened to call the police or report the dealer to MTN office. The pleaded to be forgiven but the matter was eventually reported to some officials who have took up the case. A senior Police officer who spoke to The Trumpet advised everyone to keep their NIN and BVN secret.

The Police advised Nigerians that after linking their NIN to SIM card, they must take note of the fact that they have become open to security agencies, further warning that people must safeguard their SIM cards more than their BVN and ATM PIN, "If you compromise your BVN and your ATM PIN, your money may only be affected, but if you do the same

to your phones and SIM cards, you may end up in prison.

It is not advisable to help people register their SIM cards. Now that this new system has come, don't help anybody to register their sim.

Be mindful of how you give people your phone to make calls or send texts. It's a mobile phone, let it always be with you.

Don't allow anybody to

use your phone to login into an account on social media or use your phone to create anything.

Henceforth understand that your "SIM card", is as important as your ATM card number, your BVN, or your ATM PIN.

This is because, you can be held responsible for what someone did with your SIM card, so be conscious" the Police officer warned.

Lagos govt suspends toll collection on Lekki-Ikoyi bridge indefinitely



By BENJAMIN OMOIKE,

Lagos State Government, through Lekki Concession Company (LCC), has suspended the collection of toll at the Lekki-Ikoyi link bridge toll plaza indefinitely, for further consultations with key stakeholders in the Eti-Osa Local Government Area and others.

LCC said that the suspension would also allow the toll collectors and stakeholders to address their concerns and arrive at a mutually favourable

resolution on all issues raised by the residents and motorists.

The company had earlier fixed resumption of toll collection on the bridge for April 16, 2022, but the move had been met with stiff resistance from residents, who claimed that the timing was wrong.

In a statement released by LCC, the company's Managing Director, Yomi Omomuwasan, stated that the shift would give customers more time to register for the electronic devices.

Omomuwasan stressed

that the decision was taken after several engagements with critical stakeholders, particularly the Lekki Residents Association, LRA.

"As a responsible organisation, we must take full cognisance of everyone within the axis. Therefore, we want to continue with the ongoing engagements with our stakeholders.

"The preparatory operations to resume tolling on the bridge have been smooth so far, and we are grateful to all the key stakeholders for their cooperation. The planned commencement

of toll collection has now been postponed, allowing more of our customers to register for the electronic toll devices to enable seamless passages at the toll plaza."

It would be recalled that a series of meetings were held recently between the management of LCC and key stakeholders, including residents' associations.

The first of such meetings was presided over by the Governor, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu, after which LCC and the residents' associations met on two occasions.

FCT minister visits Marwa, backs NDLEA on drug war

By BENJAMIN OMOIKE

Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Mallam Mohammed Musa Bello, has expressed his preparedness to continue to support the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), in its renewed war against drug abuse and trafficking of illicit substances in the country.

He expressed the commitment during a visit to the Chairman/Chief Executive of NDLEA, Brig. Gen. Mohamed Buba Marwa (Retd), at the Agency's National Headquarters in Abuja at the weekend.

In his welcome remarks, Gen. Marwa thanked the Minister for his unflinching support for the Agency and commended him for his good work in the nation's capital territory. He said the NDLEA has remained steadfast with outstanding performance in drug control efforts across the country to save the youths, families and communities from the drug scourge.

"President Muhammadu Buhari has taken the lead and in our efforts to actualise the presidential

mandate of eliminating the menace, we need more support from all stakeholders and every citizen," the NDLEA boss stated, while urging the Minister to give more logistics support to the Agency to effectively carry out its mandate in the FCT.

He said with 10 percent drug use prevalence in Abuja, the Agency has remained on the offensive against cartels in

the capital territory, with the arrest of 142 suspects; conviction of 53 offenders; 66 users counselled and rehabilitated and 760 kilograms of illicit substances seized, all within the first three months of the year.

He urged the Minister to set up an FCT Drug Control Committee that will be replicated at the Area Councils and the communities, in addition to adopting drug testing

as a policy for students, prospective couples, workers and political office seekers in the capital territory, as is being done in Kano State.

In his response, the Minister granted the requests by the NDLEA boss and promised a formidable partnership, which would secure the FCT against the menace of drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking.

While commending Gen. Marwa for the impactful job he's leading the NDLEA to do in Nigeria, he said, "the nation is very proud of you, especially for upscaling the fight against drug abuse beyond just arresting people on the streets and communities but going to the roots to arrest the big time players, producers and traffickers. You have sent a very strong message with the

profile of your arrests and prosecution. This has encouraged citizens to give information and sent fears to the drug cartels."

A major highlight of the visit was the appointment and decoration of the FCT Minister as the Grand Ambassador of War Against Drug Abuse, WADA, by the NDLEA boss, in appreciation of his support for national drug control efforts.



K1 debunks reports of quarrelling with wife

By **BENJAMIN OMOIKE**,

Handlers of popular Fuji music maestro, King Ayinde Marshal, have debunked social media reports that the music crooner is having issues in his marriage.

In a recent release made available to The Trumpet, Kwam 1's team denied the report, claiming that it was totally false.

"The attention of the K1 Organisation, has been drawn to a wild allegation making the rounds by a faceless blogger.

"The said blogger had gone on the social media, to allege that Fuji king and Mayegun of Yorubaland, K1 de Ultimate had quarreled with his new wife, Emmanuella Ropo Marshal and that the lady had even slapped the Fuji king during the said altercation.

"The faceless blogger had also alleged that Ropo Marshal follows the Fuji maestro to his official engagements and distracts the Fuji lord on such occasions.

Ordinarily, we would not have bothered to exchange words with this barefaced liar, who chooses the holy month of Ramadan to tell hideous lies.

"We merely want to state that at no time did the Mayegun quarrel with his wife Ropo, to the extent of her raising her hands on him. We are shocked that such allegation can be thrown so casually.

"We also state that Mrs. Emmanuella Ropo Marshal is very busy with her wifely duties than to follow the Fuji lord to his official engagements.

"In the recent time, the only party she has attended with her husband was the one held in GRA Ikeja, Lagos, when a top society buff, who is a common friend of the couple celebrated his 60th birthday.

"We make bold to say that this allegation is malicious and shudder even more that it could be peddled during Ramadan. Let the evil peddlers repent and seek the face of Allah for forgiveness," the statement read.



Lagos NSCDC deploys 2,000 personnel to protect critical national assets, infrastructure



By **ALEX OLISE**

Consequent upon the declaration of public holidays by the Federal Government, to mark this year's Easter celebration, the Commandant, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, NSCDC, Lagos State Command, Commandant Eweka Edenabu Okoro, has deployed two thousand officers and men to ensure adequate security and the protection of critical national assets and infrastructure in the state, before, during and after the celebration.

The Commandant disclosed that it is germane to turn on the eagle eye of security during festival celebrations as such, and at all times.

He said, "This effort, which is pragmatically strategic, will further help to rid of criminals and utterly eradicate the nefarious activities of vandals and other criminal elements that could be inimical to the economic growth and development of the state.

Okoro, in a bid to ensure peace, tranquility and the protection of critical

national assets and infrastructure; which include oil and gas pipelines, communication cables, rail stations, electrical cables and power installations, local and international airports and other property belonging to the Federal, State and Local Governments, amongst other critical assets, in the state, internationalised and institutionalised new operational strategies in the State Command Headquarters, Area Commands, Divisional Offices, Rights of way and other tactical formations of the Command.

He went further to elucidate the significance of the Standard Operational Procedures(SOP), to the Head of Departments, Head of Units in the Command, six Area Commanders, twenty Divisional Officers, thirty-seven officers-in-charge (OCs) of sub-divisions and outposts, Unit and Tactical Commanders.

He also expediently charged the officers to bring the right and appropriate impetus on board to protect all strategic locations, points, facilities, rights of way, oil pipeline installations, religious and worship

centres, parks and gardens and all assets belonging to the Federal, State and Local Governments of Nigeria, in the state, before, during and after the celebration, through the use of robust intelligence gathering and processing, intensive patrols of land and creeks, physical and psychological, crime prevention mechanisms, Quick Intervention Squad approach (QIS), propagation of the school safety initiative through the Special Female Squad (SFS), to safeguard children during the event and collective security approach.

The Commandant, while congratulating the Christian faithful in the state, over this year's Easter celebration, warned the officers and men deployed to various places in the state, to be on the alert as they discharge their duties without fear or favour of any kind.

He further charged the officers and men deployed to remain professional, competent, respect the rights and privileges of the civil populace, in the course of discharging their duties, before, during and after the celebration.

As Christians celebrate Easter, what lessons?

As Christians in Nigeria join the international family of followers of Christ to observe the festival of Easter, we use this opportunity to call on our citizens of all faiths to reflect on the values which the celebrations evince as we struggle to lift our nation from the abyss of uncertainty and despair.

Nigerians attach great importance to the rituals of Christmas, Ramadan, and Easter often to the detriment of the lessons that these religious festivals espouse. Easter is a big event in Christendom. Without Easter, which embodies the death and resurrection of Christ, there would be no Christianity. It is, indeed, the foundation of Christianity. An adulteration of Easter is synonymous with compromising the tenets of Christianity. The lesson of Easter which is the story of God's supreme love for mankind, as evident in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, is much more relevant than ever before to the world which is now embroiled in incessant wars and conflicts.

In fact, the first lesson of Easter celebrations is that of love. This is the love of God for the world in such a way that He gave His Only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life. This is the divine contrarian doctrine of love rooted in grace, rare in our lost world.

There is also the lesson of love displayed by Jesus in giving all for the salvation of others. Easter is a story of Agape love that is not rooted in reciprocity. It is the type of love we need in Nigeria. We need love in our country more than ever before to neutralize hate messages, fake news, propaganda, misinformation, disinformation, distortion, blackmail, character assassination, libel, defamation of character, lies, manipulations, stealing, killings, kidnappings, and destructions that have become the order of our turbulent days.

In a way, Easter also shows the fleeting and transient hailing of any government in power by gullible followers. The similarity of this is in the Hosanna during the Passover that was quickly overtaken by the vehement cries of 'crucify him' by the same crowd that had hailed the Saviour a few days earlier.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ has a great lesson in the sacrifice of a sinless Saviour dying for the trespasses of the entire world. Jesus committed no sin but was labelled, maligned, blackmailed or roped-in to die the most disgraceful and heinous death on the cross of Calvary.

Easter carries the message of hope for a hopeless world. No matter the adulterations

of the scriptures, the Holy books of the major religions of our world acknowledge that Jesus, a man of peace, died, rose again from the grave and will reward the just with eternal life.

The lesson of servant-leadership is well embedded in the resurrection of our Lord. That is the type of leadership that is not for the benefit of leaders but for the followers. Jesus exemplified this throughout His life, culminating in paying the ultimate price for the sake of the salvation of humanity.

Easter sends a signal to the entire world to shun wars, corruption, bitterness and embrace love and tolerance of our neighbours. Our neighbours may not be the people of our own ethnicity or religion. Jesus gave a classic example of what a true good neighbour is in His proverb of the Good Samaritan. Christians, Muslims, and Animists in our land should, therefore, treat one another as brothers and sisters so that genuine peace and stability can be achieved in our country.

God in His infinite wisdom has purposely streamlined Easter period for Christians to coincide with the Ramadan of Muslims this year to probably remind their adherents to put into practice the teachings of love and peace preached by both religions. That will go a long way to bringing about the much needed reconciliation in our terribly traumatized nation. Nigerians should emulate the author of unfettered love, Jesus Christ, our Saviour, whose resurrection the whole world is commemorating.

The Trumpet wishes all Christians, and indeed, all Nigerians a very memorable celebration and also enjoins all to imbibe the fundamental lessons of this blessed season in order to foster enduring love and peace that will fast-track the growth and development of our country.



THE TRUMPET

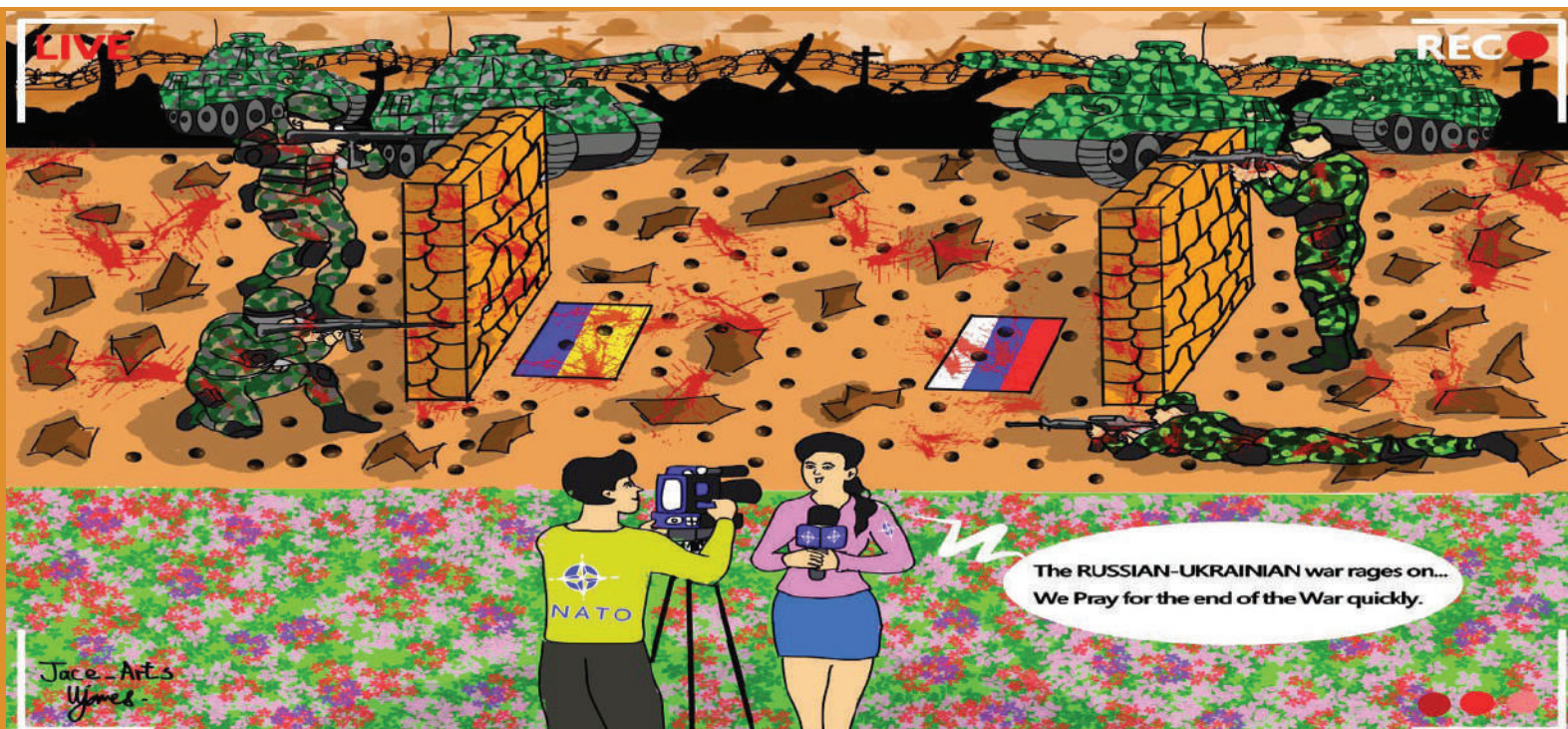
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Human beings, especially powerful people, often take offence at criticisms which they find offensive even if the contents of the criticism were true. This defensive attitude seems to say: do not say anything that could embarrass me even if you are right. Across the world, officials of government often go after critics whom they perceive as enemies. Will Rogers once wrote that 'if you ever injected truth into politics, you have no politics. Governments tell lies, try to hide the truth often. It is the duty of the citizenry to dig deep and uncover the truth using the media. The Freedom Charter guarantees free speech. Yet free speech could cost one his job or limbs or life! Notorious President Idi Amin of Uganda was once quoted as saying that he could guarantee 'freedom of speech before free speech, not after!

Reactions of government to criticisms could be mild or extreme. Even in the biggest democracies, free speech could sometimes be expensive despite constitutional guarantees. The harshest reaction to criticism is that of silencing the critic through death as in the experience of Kamal Khashoggi, the Saudi journalist who lost his life in the Saudi Embassy in Turkey. Journalist Dele Giwa also lost his life in a parcel bomb attack in October 1986. There are also other ways of silencing critics too. The finances of the critic are attacked. There is physical harassment by security agencies. Have you ever been trailed by security men or some shadowy figures? Has a spouse received threat messages? There is also the sack option. Today I am writing on the sacking of Chief Imam of the National Assembly Mosque

Abuja Sheikh Muhammad Nura Khalid.

Until April 1, 2022, Sheikh Khalid had a job, as a cleric in charge of a Mosque, doing Allah's work which commands always speaking the truth. The Prophet Muhammad states that 'adhere to truthfulness for truthfulness guides to Paradise'. We are told further that 'Islam emphasizes not only the duty to be honest, truthful and trustworthy, but also the social obligation to always support truthful people, to associate with the truthful ones and to keep their company'. With this arcane and powerful injunction in mind, that fateful Friday, while preaching the sermon the fearless cleric made comments on the security situation in the country which the chairman of the Mosque Management Committee Senator Saidu Dansadau found unbecoming. Khalid was suspended from office even before the echoes of the Imam's words died off!

In the sack letter, the Committee stated that it regrets 'to inform you that from today the 4th day of April 2022 you have been disengaged from the services of the above-mentioned mosque. Continuing, the Committee tried to create a context for the sack when it observed that 'this action is occasioned by the non-remorseful attitude you exhibited following your suspension on 2nd April this year'. Sheikh Khalid had been suspended shortly after preaching the bomb of a sermon which practically called out the government of the day in a lucid and convincing manner, without diatribes, without insults.

The sheikh had preceded his talk with drawing attention to the 'relationship between the Ramadan

That sermon in the Mosque

and supplication'. 'this is very important at a time when Nigeria is facing a very serious challenge', the Imam said, 'everything is not working well. People are dying. Our roads are not secure. Most of the parts of the country are not secured. The government is always telling us what we don't understand that they are doing their best, and we deserve more than that their best.' He also said that people should vote in 2023 only if security of life is guaranteed'.

Dansaudu did not find this funny. In the sack letter, he stated 'Akamakallah, you know better than me by the teaching of Islam, the essence of administering punishment is to correct behaviour. Unfortunately, your media reaction to the suspension creates the impression that you are not remorseful, NOT to talk of humbly reflecting on the consequences of your utterances. Leadership demands a great sense of responsibility. If our words do more harm than good to larger interest of the country or the public. We have a responsibility to maximum restraint for the good of public. It is obvious however, that you don't seem keen to modify your Friday sermon to be reflective of the volatility of security situation in the country. You are an influencer; your words carry a lot of weights (sic), your words can make or mar our situation. Your words can be taken advantage of by mischief makers, those responsible for these security challenges or enemies of the country for their devilish agendas.' Really? If this ascribed power is true, then Dansaudu has taken a step that will give the government sleepless nights. The Imam is not keeping his mouth shut. He has found another mosque where he can preach the truth without let or hindrance. The teen CNN hero Malala says that 'you can shoot the body you can't shoot the dream!

The Committee wrongly focused on the messenger not the message. What the imam said reflects public opinion in the land. The politicians are jostling over 2023. Even the APC government that should hide its head in shame for failing the

people is struggling for power in 2023. With the dismal security situation in a government led by a general, how does this party think that Nigerians will entrust the fortunes of the country to her in 2023?

Senator Dansaudu is an elected official of the state. He is a legislator and not a member of the Executive Arm of government, the target of the attack. He ought to stand on the side of the people just as the cleric took sides with the people. There have been too many deaths arising from insecurity. Not everyone can stomach the criminal ineptitude or connivance between state and non-state actors and keep quiet. The perception is that the government is unwilling to deal with the situation and most people are willing to sell their conscience. The government is used to having people who would rather pray than complain. Too many. Therefore, Khalid's statement sounds like an incitement. 'In a room where people unanimously maintain silence, one word of truth sounds like a pistol shot'.

Government should encourage persons like Khalid to speak up. The man has gained more following. I didn't know him before. I didn't not hear the sermon in question until the fire-brigade attitude of the Committee brought it to my attention. Fix the security situation. Let our roads be safe. Let our homes be safe. Confront the scoundrels who have seized the road between Abuja and Kaduna and other roads in the country and exterminate them. Stop kidnap gangs from attacking homes and seizing people for a ransom in Abuja and elsewhere. Make the southeast governable. Except the government deals with the security situation, it is a no-no about winning in 2023. In a democracy, it has passed a vote of no confidence on itself for the 2023 elections. Listen to the message. Get your eyes and hands off the messenger.

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Something happened at Ogijo, a fast growing boundary community of Ogun State. It can be qualified to part of the Lagos metropolis. This incidence was reported by the Trumpet Newspaper of April 16, 2022. A 29 years old Olabisi Onabanjo University undergraduate was killed by a thief who was also a rapist and a thief. After stealing a sewing machine in the custody of his mother, he graduated with his friend into the crime of stealing sewing machines. But this time, like the first act, he set out to steal from a hardworking undergraduate who was also a neighbour in the neighbourhood. He averred to the police that she was strangled to death because she recognised him. The criminal in this case is one Ikenna James Joshua. His friend-in-crime, at now at large, was simply named Rasheed. Their undergraduate victim was one Ms Adefisayo Tosin.

What strikes one in this case is the reported reaction of the criminal's mother. It was reported that: 'Ikenna's mother, who was said to have described her son's arrest as good riddance, said that she had given up hope as he had always been a bad son.' If we are go by the account of Ikenna then we are really done for it as a people. 'I was on the street early and started smoking cannabis at the age of six. I learnt it where I grew up at Idi Oro in Mushin. ... Apart from cannabis, I'm also involved in the use of other hard drugs such as cocaine, Colorado, amphetamine (popularly known as

ice), loud and skuchices (a mixture of cannabis, Tramadol, codeine, zobo drink and water)." If this account is chilling, register it it as something that is commonplace in our universities, colleges of education and polytechnics. The use of hard drug among our young ones is escalating. It is also taking a destructive turn on us. Sadly, it is easily and readily available in our entire neighbourhood.

Hard drugs are sold on bikes. Most so-called local concoction sellers commonly called "agbo hawkers" are drug peddlers. The "mallam" manning your gate that is doing so well is probably into it. That woman hawking groundnut, fruits, and even the neighbourhood chemists are often disguised places and avenues for the sales of hard illicit drugs. Our communities must not play ostrich over the damaging effects of drug use on our youth. The most problematic aspect of this scourge is the culture of silence, and even cooperation, among parents, the youth and society. In most of the hostels in our campuses cleaners usually complain of left over, and used packages of, drugs of various forms. Cultism, fights, violence, rape cases and thefts in our campuses are usually associated with substance abuse among the youth. Employers of labour are beginning to notice the huge problem that drug abuse is posing to our society. Not even the NYSC is spared as she has mounting complaints from employers of Corps members into drug addiction across the nation.

It is not enough for parents to say that they have

Youth, hard drug abuse and public health safety

given up on their children. What, you may ask, would the police do than to prosecute criminals. We have a huge problem before us. It requires the concerted efforts of every one and sector of the society. Your own ward or child may be a decent child. Yet no decent child is safe living in the midst of the cranks that are hooked to hard drugs. More than ever before, our society requires an effective and efficient social work and welfare care-units that should collaborate with anti-hard enforcement agencies to put this problem in check. The first step towards curtailing the drug addiction problem is to treat addicts as patients who are sick and require treatment. They deserve more than sympathy. They require empathy and medical attention. Parents should be educated on the need to report suspected children and wards to the social welfare units for counselling, and other drug therapy.

Landlords should do more. Many in our neighbourhood have very poor and scanty profile of the persons living with them. Details of parents and children should be well-catalogued. The police should have detailed information of persons in their neighbourhood. As is done in some universities in Nigeria, all persons apprehended for crimes of theft and violence should be made to undergo medical tests for hard drug or substance abuse.

Too much emphasis is being put on the victims of drug abuse. The pedlars are hardly tracked and punished. Many hawkers of fruit, ice cream, etc., road side retailing stores, stalls and many more are a threat to the health and well-being of our growing populations. The users and abusers of drug may be apprehended and punished, but they may have damaged and punished the innocent before this is done. The truth is that they are simply addicts!

Now come to think of it! Ikenna has two Christian names - James and Joshua. His mother

was returning from the Church. Rasheed, the other alleged criminal, bears a Muslim name. This is instructive. Our religious organisations need to do more than sermonising. Many so-called Christian and Muslim youth are Janus-faced persons. They need to be rescued from substance abuse. Religious organisations and communities should collaborate to create more recreational centres and facilities for youth development. People should grow up in communities that have sports facilities and youth training and leadership organisations such as Scouting, Brigade, Football, basketball, etc. clubs. No religion can be said to have fulfilled its purpose if those born into it end up as criminals registered in the police records with the names of their pious patrons and saints as we have in this case of James and Rasheed!

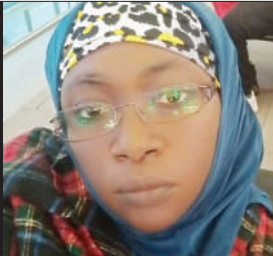
Drug abuse may be the reason behind our youth being unemployed and unmarried. It may be responsible for the frequency of being sacked in their workplaces. Anti-drug abuse agencies - of government and NGOs - should therefore step up their efforts in educating the public as well as in returning addicts to normalcy. It is sad that we are getting used to deaths in Nigeria daily. Our blood is becoming cheaper than the ink of our pens in Nigeria. The harbingers of death are on the increase in our communities. Senseless and mindless politicians, kidnappers, terrorists, armed robbers, killer herdsmen, quick-rich pastors and ritualists, etc. are all hunting for our blood. That we now have them as neighbours who are drug addicts is to compound our already bad situation. This is the time to act at the level of the grassroots

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Domestic abuse: Why respect is more important than love in marriage

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Here's the thing. While love is important in getting marriage started, it certainly is not what keeps marriage intact. Love is fickle, needy and selfish. Love is unrealistic and often self-deceiving. Love has impossible aspirations and love is always hungry. Yes, love feels wonderful and fantastic, especially when it is reciprocated; love makes you feel happy and alive in ways only people who are truly in love will understand; but love is not enough. It may surprise you to know that it is often the culprit in domestic abuse. Why? Because love is jealous. Love has led many people to kill their spouses out of jealousy, it has led many to become bitter enemies. One day you're pointing at a couple as a shining example of love and the next day you're astonished to find them tearing at each other's throat. Again, why? They love each other but they do not respect each other.

Mutual respect is what keeps violence and abuse at bay. You will never insult a person you respect, and you most definitely will not be violent towards a person you respect. But what does respect mean? Let us get one thing straight – respect and obedience are not the same thing. You can force obedience, but

you can't force respect. In fact, if your spouse is too obedient or gives in too easily to your demands, you should question whether he or she truly respects you. It may well be one of two things – either your spouse is afraid of you or your spouse has so little respect for you that they feel you are not even worth arguing with. Neither case means respect. Keep in mind that the person who argues a point with you respects you enough to want you to see things from their perspective; if they didn't respect you they would simply dismiss you as stupid or incompetent and not worth the effort it would take to convince you.

To respect a person is to acknowledge their humanness and their right to be different from you; it is to concede their right to an opinion and to still be willing to live with, and accommodate their difference from you. To respect someone is to desire to understand them as a human being, to want to know what makes them tick, what moves them, what drives or motivates them, what environment makes them flourish, what brings out the worst and the best in them, what their fears, hopes and aspirations are, how they think and how they see the world. To respect your spouse is to turn your spouse into a priceless book, the pages of which you turn

with delicate care and reverence; or a vintage car which you drive with care and pride and which you wipe clean with tenderness always ensuring all its parts are well oiled and in top form. We value books in this way and we value cars in this way; do we value our spouse in this way?

Respect is also not a one way street. Do not ever expect respect where you're willing to give none. If you're fond of insulting your wife or your husband, you can be sure that disrespect will follow, even if you are feared. And if fear is the only thing that is keeping your spouse in check, then know that you have a tenuous hold on your household because fear almost always leads to rebellion when the victim reaches breaking point. So, when men say that their wives ought to treat them as kings, or when women say their husbands ought to treat them as queens, I smile, because the life of kings and queens is nothing to envy – except perhaps for the wealth and its trappings, all of which one could get without being an actual king or queen. Kings have a hard time relying on the loyalty of their followers; their lives are constantly in danger; they live in fear of being betrayed by their close family; they are often completely surrounded by enemies and fair weather friends. Rarely do you find a king or queen that has a single true friend. Is that really what you want? I would have thought rather, that the most valued spouse would be one that their husband or wife could call friend. Your friend always has your back; a true friend will not betray you; will always bring out the best in you; will care for you and stick by you; will unite with you against the world; and has a genuine interest in you – laughing at your bad jokes, smiling

at your weaknesses, crying at your pain, loving all your idiosyncrasies, indulging your ridiculous whims, pointing out your wrongs or mistakes; in essence, making you a better and better version of yourself. And we all know, you are never friends with a person you don't respect. And besides, do we not set our expectations too high when we ask to be treated as kings or queens by our spouse? Come on.

To respect your spouse is also to demonstrate your trust in them. If you keep acting as though you have to keep monitoring your spouse's every movement; and you must know everyone they have met or conversed with outside the home, it means you do not respect them enough to trust that they will handle themselves with maturity. This attitude brings out the worst in your spouse because nobody enjoys a meddling, paranoid, distrustful spouse who is always checking up on them. Mutual respect also makes you mindful of the manner in which you address your spouse. Where there's respect spouses do not talk down on each other much less shout at one another. They argue, but without insults; and they use reason, not sentiment, to resolve their differences. Respect also prevents a person from wanting to control their spouse; and as psychologists would tell you, the desire for control is one of the most important triggers of domestic violence or abuse. So, by all means, love thy spouse; but respect them even more. Let us end domestic abuse by both men and women.

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A recent walk down the street somewhere around my neighbourhood revealed a large crowd of people gathered around the 'Agbo' seller, each waiting to buy a dose of 'Agbo', the popular concoction of herbs usually used for treating malaria and other maladies like 'Jedi Jedi' (Haemorrhoids); Typhoid fever; and so on. Many people who cannot afford the high cost of malaria drugs regularly visit the 'Agbo' joint to get a dose of this herbal concoction in order to relieve their symptoms. Even many others who have been taking prescribed malaria medications, but whose symptoms keep recurring, come to visit the 'Agbo' joint for a dose of this herbal concoction.

{Agbo is a herbal concoction native to Yoruba tribes in Nigeria, and is slowly penetrating communities across Africa. It is made by boiling leaves, roots, and/or barks of specific trees in water or infusing them in alcohol}.

Malaria is a preventable and treatable disease that continues to have a devastating impact on the health and livelihood of people around the world. In 2020, there were an estimated 241 million new cases of malaria and 627 000 malaria-related deaths in 85 countries. More than two thirds of deaths were among children under the age of 5 living in the WHO African Region.

World Malaria Day is observed annually on April 25, to bring global attention to the efforts being made to bring an end to malaria, and

encourage action to reduce suffering and death from the disease. World Malaria Day 2022 will be marked under the theme "Harness innovation to reduce the malaria disease burden and save lives." The World Health Organization (WHO) is calling for investments and innovation that bring new vector control approaches, diagnostics, antimalarial medicines and other tools to speed the pace of progress against malaria.

What is malaria? Malaria is a life-threatening disease caused by parasites that are transmitted to people through the bites of infected female Anopheles mosquitoes. Its symptoms include fever, chills, sweats, headache, body aches, nausea, and vomiting. The symptoms may sometimes recur every 48 to 72 hours, depending on the type of parasite involved and how long the person has had the disease.

Malaria is one of the major health issues affecting many countries around the world. Most malaria cases and deaths occur in sub-Saharan Africa. And Nigeria, the most populous Black country, is one of the countries most affected. Therefore, this year's World Malaria Day reminds us of the need to protect ourselves against mosquito bites by using insecticide treated mosquito nets, wear clothes that cover most parts of the body, and use insect repellent on exposed skin.

Children under five years of age are the most vulnerable group affected by malaria. Statistics have shown that each year in Nigeria, an average

High Prevalence of Malaria

of 300,000 children are killed by malaria. The disease is similarly responsible for 11 per cent of all maternal deaths. What is disturbing is that a vast majority of these deaths are linked to highly-preventable causes, such as basic healthcare, hygiene, homelessness and sanitation practices. Most of these deaths were also fuelled by poverty and a lack of awareness in the general populace.

In view of the foregoing, creating awareness on the need to keep our environment clean can be very helpful. All stakeholders, including government, health practitioners, corporate organisations, and NGOs, can get involved in creating such awareness on malaria prevention and control.

Another method that can help in malaria control is surveillance. This entails tracking of the disease and programmatic responses, and taking action based on the data received. Countries with a high burden of malaria such as Nigeria require effective surveillance at all points on the path to malaria elimination. Therefore, stronger malaria surveillance systems are urgently needed to enable a timely and effective malaria response in endemic regions, to prevent outbreaks and resurgences, to track progress, and to hold governments and the global malaria community accountable.

Although a lot of progress has been made in efforts to control the malaria scourge, there still remain some serious issues that threaten the progress that has been made thus far. What are some of these issues? One of them is the emerging resistance to insecticides among Anopheles mosquitoes. According to one World Malaria Report, 68 countries reported mosquito resistance to at least one of the five commonly-used insecticide classes in the period 2010-2017. Among these countries, 57 reported resistance to

two or more insecticide classes.

There is therefore an urgent need for new and improved tools in the global response to malaria. The WHO also underscores the critical need for all countries with ongoing malaria transmission to develop and apply effective insecticide resistance management strategies.

Yet another serious issue undermining malaria control efforts is the issue of antimalarial drug resistance. Resistance to antimalarial medicines is a recurring problem. Protecting the efficacy of antimalarial medicines is critical to malaria control and elimination. Regular monitoring of drug efficacy is needed to inform treatment policies in malaria-endemic countries such as Nigeria. It also helps to ensure early detection of, and response to, drug resistance.

Government can support prevention of malaria by ensuring there is good environmental sanitation to prevent breeding of mosquitoes that transmit malaria. It is also important to provide preventive tablets and mosquito nets to pregnant women, under-five children and their mothers, to prevent the disease. Government must ensure that testing kits are readily available at all health facilities, so that people can get tested before treatment to prevent resistance to the current drugs for treatment.

What steps can individuals and families take to protect themselves against malaria? It is good to note that malaria is both preventable and curable. A lot of lives can be saved by simply observing basic hygiene standards. It is important that people keep their environment clean and clear drainage to avoid stagnant water where mosquitoes live.

•Daniel Ighakpe writes from FESTAC town, Lagos.

Presidency, Wike trade words over pardon of Dariye, Nyame

● *Decision ridiculous, mockery of anti-corruption war – Governor* ● *Rivers helmsman lacks moral justification – Garba Shehu*

BY PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

The Presidency and Rivers State Governor Nyesom Wike have traded words over the federal pardon granted a former governor of Plateau, Joshua Dariye and his Taraba counterpart, Jolly Nyame, by President Muhammadu Buhari.

In a meeting presided over by President Muhammadu Buhari last Thursday at the State House, Abuja, the National Council of State granted state pardon to about 159 prisoners including Dariye and Nyame, who are serving jail terms for corruption.

Also pardoned are a former military General and minister under the late General Sani Abacha regime, Tajudeen Olanrewaju, an army lieutenant colonel, Akiyode, who was an aide of former deputy to General Abacha, Oladipo Diya; and all the junior officers jailed over the 1990 abortive Gideon Orkar coup.

Nyame, who is 66 and Governor of Taraba State from 1999 to 2007, was serving a 12-year jail term at the Kuje prison for misappropriation of funds while he was in office. The Supreme Court upheld his conviction in February 2020.

Dariye, 64, who governed Plateau between 1999 and 2007, was jailed 10 years for criminal breach of trust having stolen N2 billion of public funds during his time as Governor. He was elected as Senator representing Plateau Central in the Senate in 2015 and was sentenced in June 2018 but still completed his tenure from jail in June 2019.

While reacting to their pardon, Wike described the pardon as ridiculous especially

on the judiciary which had convicted both men of corruption.

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) presidential hopeful, spoke in Minna on Saturday, where he met with delegates of the PDP. He lamented that the Buhari government is selective in its war against corruption.

Wike said, "I want to tell you that this government is very deceptive and they have deceived us enough. You have big people, you jail them after all the court proceedings and waste of money, then you ridicule the judiciary by granting them pardon."

How will the international community look at us with these type of things we do? Look at the amount spent in the prosecutions and you wake up one morning and messed it up all because of politics."



Buhari

While alleging that the pardon was strategically done in the interest of 2023 general elections, he said, "He obviously wants them to help him during the elections, he wants Dariye to help with Plateau while Nyame will work for Taraba."

"If it is not for election purpose, why did he not grant pardon to the likes of James Ibori and Atuche?"

However, in a swift reaction, Senior Special Assistant on Media and Publicity to the President, Mallam Garba Shehu, said Gov Wike lacked moral justification to criticise the state pardon.

In a statement on his Facebook page on Saturday, Shehu faulted Wike's criticism, saying the Governor ought to have made it known at the meeting where the state pardon was issued, which he was invited

to attend, instead of airing his views after the meeting.

He said, "I do not see the moral justification for Governor Wike's criticism of the decision of the government to pardon Governors Dariye and Nyame at a meeting to which he was duly invited but did not attend."

"The Rivers State Deputy Governor, Dr Ipalibo Barigo who joined the Council of State meeting virtually switched off her camera so it was difficult to determine whether she sat behind the dark screen or just walked away after first joining."

"If the Governor felt so strongly about the pardons, the right thing was for him or his representative to sit through the meeting and assert his views. This he did not do. A press release after the meeting is boleka politics."



Wike



Nyame

Makinde vows to recover Oyo stolen funds, petitions EFCC

By PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

Oyo State Governor Seyi Makinde has vowed that he will recover the funds stolen during the administration of his predecessor, the late Senator Abiola Ajimobi.

The governor said he has sent a petition to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to probe the companies used to siphon the state's funds.

Makinde spoke in Ibadan during a programme, State Affairs, on Splash FM, his Chief Press Secretary, Taiwo Adisa said. The governor said his administration has taken steps to block and remove ghost workers and pensioners from the payroll.

He indicted a company called Chinese Global. According to him, though it is presented as a Chinese company, he knows those behind it.

He said, "Let me give you an example – when I came in, I looked at how some monies were spent and I believed it was the Paris Club refund they moved, which was about N7bn to N8bn, to Oyo State Road Maintenance Agency."

"This is an agency that operates normally on a budget of about N45m every month but this money came in around November 2017, and in early 2018, they started spending the money."

"When we came in, we discovered they finished spending the money on nothing within one year. They stole the money and I know those behind the stealing and I am after them right now. There is a company called

Chinese Global. They said they are Chinese people but we know the people behind it. The company has been shut down as we speak."

Makinde said he had already questioned the General Manager of OYSROMA on the issue, and he was told there were no fresh recruitments or contracts awarded.

He added, "He (the GM) said the company supplied asphalt and I said if the company did, was the asphalt used to repair roads without employing new people and giving out contracts? He said the money was moved from OYSROMA to Chinese Global and two other companies without any supply from

the companies.

"As a result of that, I wrote to the EFCC and reported the matter about what we are facing here. Chinese Global is also the company they awarded the Bembo-Apata Road contract to, and the same company got the Ido-Eruwa project. But I said to them, 'guys, you have Oyo State money with you. Go ahead and use the money to finish up the roads and they promised to do it.' As soon as former Governor Abiola Ajimobi passed on, they reneged on all those projects. And I said, fine. As long as you have Oyo State money with you, I will get it back for our state."

The Governor said the money was between N12bn and N15bn and that those who stole the money were not Chinese but people from Oyo State.

Makinde added that "We know them, and very soon, wherever they have investment or property in the world, I will go after them and collect this money for our state."

"This is a promise I made and I am not saying it outside of what I have discussed directly with the people involved. Oyo State's money will come back. Those who stole the money are the members of the APC who were in the government then."

Not enough law to combat corruption in Nigeria — Prof Osunbo

● *CSO tasks government on laws to protect whistleblowers*

A former Governor of Edo state, Professor Oserhemen Osunbo, weekend, said there are not enough laws to fight corruption in Nigeria.

Prof Osunbo stated this during a colloquium organised by a Civil Society Organisation (CSO), the Corruption Observatory (CO) in Abuja with the aim of finding a common definition of corruption for Nigeria.

He added that whatever conduct that needs to criminalise must be defined in a law passed by the National Assembly, noting that corruption on its own is not a crime.

He said, "If you ask virtually every Nigerian, they will say corruption is bad and we must fight corruption; it is harmful to society. But, it ends there. So, that is why I mentioned even in my own presentation that we must do more than just talking about it. It's okay

to talk about it and arouse the consciousness of people that corruption is bad, but you can't change society just by only talking. You must do as they say, walk the talk because, sometimes, it's not everything you can regard as immoral conduct that you can describe as corruption."

"What kind of unpleasant or unwholesome conduct do we define as corruption? If we are able to achieve that, in today's colloquium, then it will be a concrete step forward in the battle and in the fight against corruption in Nigeria, over and above merely sermonising and talking about corruption."

"Corruption itself is not an offence, it is not a crime. It is immoral conduct and it is reprehensible. It does a lot of damage to society. But, corruption is not defined in law as a

criminal offence. What is defined as criminal offences must be by way of legislation? Like bribery is a criminal offence under the ICPC Act; receiving gratification, the Code of Conduct Act also prohibits certain conduct like you being a public servant and operating a foreign bank account, that is unwholesome and those are defined by law."

"So, if we are to condemn something and be able to punish conduct that we disapprove of, then it must be prohibited by law. That is where the legislature comes in, either by the National Assembly or by the House of Assembly of the states, or through sub subsidiary legislation or other instruments. The reason for this is that section 36, subsection 12 of our constitution says that nobody can be convicted of a criminal offence except that offence has been so defined in the law, and the penalty for that offence is prescribed by the law."

Buhari, Adamu, Omisore, key national APC stakeholders shun Udoedehe's reception

By **TUNDE JOSHUA**, POLITICS EDITOR, ABUJA

The sharp difference among leaders of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Akwa Ibom State manifested over the weekend as majority of national leaders of the party were conspicuously absent at the reception ceremony held in honour of the immediate past National Secretary of the defunct Caretaker/Extra-ordinary Convention Planning Committee (CECPC) Senator (Dr) John James Akpan Udoedehe in Uyo.

Absent were, National Chairman of All Progressives Congress (APC), Senator Abdullahi Adamu, governors of the party and members of the CECPC.

The invitation letters to the event which took place at the Ibom Hall grounds on Saturday shows that

President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR was invited as the Principal Guest of Honour, while Governor Mai Mala Buni of Yobe State and former Chairman of CECPC under which Senator Udoedehe served as Secretary was to serve as Chief Guest of Honour. The invitation also indicates that all governors elected on the platform of the APC were to serve as Guests of Honour.

No reasons have been given for the absence of these dignitaries, but the reasons may not be far from the recent developments in the Akwa Ibom State Chapter of the All Progressives Congress (APC) where Senator Udoedehe has insisted to dragging the party along in a lawsuit pending at the Appeal Court.

This followed the judgement of the

Federal High Court sitting at Abuja which declared Mr. Stephen Ntukekpo as Chairman of its Akwa Ibom State Chapter.

In deference to the said judgment, the APC withdrew its appeal and same was struck out while the party went on to swear in Mr. Stephen Ntukekpo.

Senator Udoedehe has threatened to initiate contempt proceedings against the National Chairman of the party if the swearing in of Mr. Stephen Ntukekpo was not reversed within 24 hours.

Until the CECPC was rested on March 26, 2023, Senator Udoedehe held sway as the National Secretary of the party until shortly before the end of his tenure, when a 'vote of no confidence' was passed on him by 10 out of the 12-member committee.

It is yet unclear what may have led to this fallout but recent events suggest that the Senator may have stepped on many powerful toes while he served as Secretary.

The reception which was chaired by former Petroleum Minister and one-time National Chairman of ANPP Chief Don Etiebet saw the attendance of largely members of the Udoedehe political family. The MD of OGFZA Mr. Umana Okon Umana and Chief Victor Giadom, APC National Vice Chairman South-South were also in attendance and made brief remarks.

It is doubtful if the recent peace moves of Chief Etiebet to the National Secretariat of the party seeking for 'soft-landing' for the embattled former Secretary is yielding positive results or not.



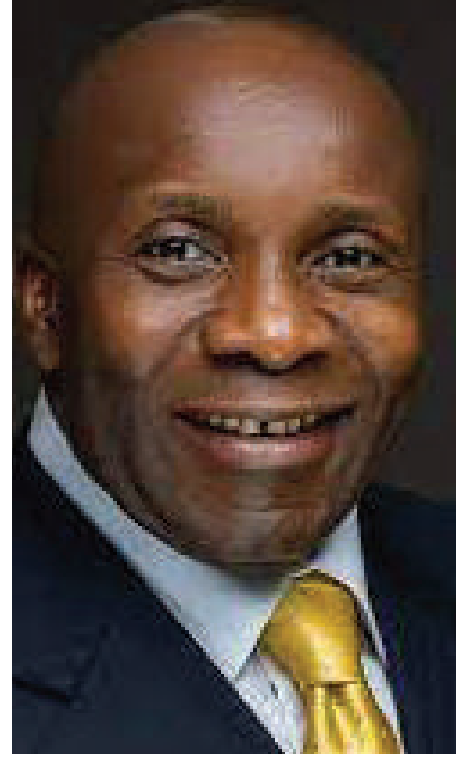
Buhari



Adamu



Omisore



Udoedehe

Obi Cubana's brother to challenge Chidoka for Idemili Reps seat

By **BEN OREVA**

Chief Ikenna Iyiegbu Cubana's (immediate elder brother of Obi Cubana) has joined the race for Idemili North and Idemili South Federal constituency of Anambra State seat in the green chambers of the National Assembly come 2023.

He has obtained nomination form under the platform of All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA).

Cubana is set to slug it out with the incumbent House of Representatives member representing the area under the umbrella of the people's democratic party (PDP), Obinna Chidoka, who is seeking a re-election.

It is interesting to note that the incumbent, Obinna Chidoka is younger brother to former Minister of Aviation, Osita Chidoka while Ikenna Cubana is the immediate elder brother of billionaire businessman, Obi Cubana.

The decision of Ike Cubana to join the race has attracted the backing

of his celebrity brother, Obi Cubana as well, and he took to his verified Facebook page on to express his excitement.

Obi Cubana expressed delight that



Chidoka

his brother has joined the race for the House of Representatives and promised to mobilize support for him.

He said : "My Good people!!!



Iyiegbu

Yesterday, my immediate elder brother @ike_cubana Mr Ikenna Iyiegbu (Onyechimeleze) came and briefed me on his intention to represent our local government constituencies, Idemili North and Idemili South local government areas, at the Green Chamber of the National Assembly in the 2023 General Elections, under the great APGA Party!!!

"I was excited because the young people are now coming out to vie and be part of decision making that will shape our life and existence!!

I pray that God will see you through this journey, my most beloved brother.

"I pray you continue the good work we have been doing, which is 'Putting the People First' in everything!!

We are solidly behind you on this!!!

It is worthy of note that, while APGA has repeatedly won Anambra State governorship elections in recent years, the PDP has always had the upper hand in National Assembly elections in the state.

Nnaji speaks on rotation, his Enugu guber race

Former Minister of Power, **Prof. Bath Nnaji** is a governorship aspirant in Enugu State on the platform of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). After submitting his nomination forms at the party's national secretariat Abuja on Friday, he granted interview where he explains the conventional rotation arrangement in the state and concludes that Enugu East is justified to produce governor in 2023 and that he is qualified to emerge PDP candidate and win next year election. Politics Editor, **TUNDE JOSHUA** bring excerpt.

Has the party in Enugu State agreed on zoning and which zone is expected to produce governor?

The zoning in Enugu State has really maintained peace in the state. It has been possible for us to have peace because of rotation. The governor is in support of zoning and looks at himself as a product of zoning and we all look at zoning as a way for us to continue to maintain peace in Enugu state. Therefore am fully in support of zoning.

However, we know that constitutionally, there is nobody that can be prevented from running from any part of the states simply because the Constitution doesn't have the zoning formula in it. So the issue is that we do have a system that is working and we should maintain it.

Now you'll come to the Enugu East senatorial zone, which according to the zoning formula should be the beneficiary of the zoning now. You have Enugu East local governments, you have Isiuzo and Nkanu East that have not produced governors. We come from Nkanu East and we are saying that we have people who can take up this position and do well for the state. That's why we from Nkanu East are putting ourselves forward.

What are your selling points?

Well, I have served the nation as Minister twice. Each time that I have come to serve, I think people know that I have brought some good innovations. When I was Minister of Science and Technology for a very short time the ministry was abolished. So I put together what you now know as Ministry of Science and Technology and within a very short time.

I was Minister of power. When I came to the ministry, there was power reform agenda, there was an Act made as far back as 2005 and this Act was basically put on the shelf. We dusted it off and started the reform program, which is the practical implementation of it. And the outcome is privatization of the power sector. But of course, I left before the finalization of the privatization because what we wanted to see was that anybody who was going to take off any of the assets will come with two particularly important capacities, the financial capacity and technical capacity. So they were not coming up with those then and that has been part of the challenge the country today.

I am coming with a lot of experience both in this country and government, and private sector. We have built the only power project



Prof. Bath Nnaji

that is a complete utility of itself that has generated better generation and distribution to ensure 100% reliability 24/7 power supply in Aba region. So I have that.

I have experience from the United States as a distinguished professor of engineering from one of the best schools in the world. I run the United States National Science Foundation Center of Excellence in design. So my experience is that wide.

What we have been saying is that we need technocrats in government who can come and perform and that's what we're bringing in. We want to build on what our governor has done and continue to progress the states.

Insecurity in the South East is of great concern. What agenda do you have to improve security of life and property?

Well, security is not a public discourse. But if our governor has managed to maintain a peaceful

environment, in the region, definitely anybody who's coming into this position, wants to do everything, to continue that and even progress, so that, it cannot spread in the region and perhaps the country.

If you have peace, then people would come to invest, you know, money is a coward. Money doesn't go where there is a crisis. And so what we want is to have peace so that we can have investors.

Is there any possibility of a consensus candidate emerging?

There are so many aspirants in Enugu State. I believe that if the governor asks us that this is where he wants to go, why not. The party is very important. I mean, that it is supreme. We have to respect the party and the leadership of the party and the governor is the leader of the party in the state.

How you intend to provide power in Enugu to make the state an industrial tiger?

I can assure you that should I get this opportunity, Enugu will have reliable electricity. There is actually no place where it says that the states cannot generate electricity, there's nothing in the national constitution that says so.

In fact, there's a demonstration of it in Akwa Ibom and River states, they all have power plants. But you don't really have to have a power plant for the state to have reliability, but you need to have a firm way of paying your bills, which is that distribution company has to be credit worthy. And so if we get the distribution company in such a way that it becomes credit worthy then you can actually import power in Enugu and have reasonably reliable electricity. But also we have a lot of stuff in Enugu. We have gas in Ugwuoba, and other places in Enugu. We can harvest the gas and build power plants and generate power embedded in Enugu State. There are all kinds of opportunities to have reliable electricity.

'You'll need NIN to board trains from May'

Intending railway passengers should get their National Identity Number (NIN) ready as it will be a requirement from May.

Managing Director of the Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC), Mr Fidat Okhiria, stated in Abuja that the NIN would be needed to enhance profiling of passengers.

This, he explained, would also enhance safety and security of rail users.

"The process of linking passengers to their NIN for improved profiling is on-going. This layer of passenger screening will commence by May.

"The Abuja-Kaduna Train Service (AKTS) will resume as soon as possible with additional security measures put in place," Okhiria stated.

The NRC suspended the Abuja-Kaduna route following a March 28 attack by assailants, who injured passengers and kidnapped some.

Okhiria said the security agencies were working tirelessly to ensure the rescue and release of all abducted passengers.

He stressed that 362 passengers and 20 crew members were on board the train when it was attacked.

"While we continue to sympathise with families of those who lost or have not seen their loved ones, we encourage anyone still looking for a loved one to please call us. "The numbers to call are: 08033546208, 08060044600 and 07066700150.

"The corporation will continue to update the general public of the latest developments," he stated.

Okhiria added that the NRC had re-railed the last rolling stock affected in the attack.

"This means that all the 14 derailed rolling stock (11 coaches, two rescue coaches and one Locomotive engine on the Rescue Train) have all been re-railed from the incident site to our stations at Idu, Abuja and Rigasa, Kaduna.

"Intensive track repair work continues at site. An advanced level of track repairs has been achieved and hopefully it will be rounded off in 10 days," he explained.

"The NRC expresses its profound gratitude to security agencies for the continued support, especially for the security cover provided to our officials and staff at the incident site," Okhiria stated.



Fidat Okhiria

Scientists discover cure for heart attacks

Stories by **SHARON O. ISAALAH**, Head, Health, Science & Technology Desk, Abuja

Genetic tracking used to create Covid vaccines is now being adapted to help regenerate hearts damaged from cardiac arrests.

Scientists at King's College London have tracked genetic codes called mRNAs which produce proteins to generate healthy heart cells.

The ground-breaking research could lead to the world's first cure for heart attack victims, The Times reports.

Similar technology was used to create the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines.

Lead researcher Professor Mauro Giacca said: "We are all born with a set number of

muscle cells in our heart and they are exactly the same ones we will die with. The heart has no capacity to repair itself after a heart attack. Our goal has been to find a treatment that can convince surviving cells to proliferate.

"Regenerating a damaged human heart has been a dream until a few years ago, but can now become a reality.

"We are using exactly the same technology as the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines to inject micro RNAs to the heart, reaching surviving heart cells and pushing their proliferation. The new cells would replace the dead ones and instead of forming a scar, the patient has new muscle tissue."

Giacca's team is based at the British Heart Foundation Centre for

Research Excellence at King's



Mauro Giacca

College London.

In addition to helping hearts regenerate, they also working towards a treatment to stop cells dying during a heart attack.

Cardiac arrests caused severe trauma to the heart muscle and kill up to

100 billion hearts cells.

The human heart has no ability to heal itself, leaving many cardiac arrest victims with debilitating scars that lead to further complications.

Scientists believe the new RNA (ribonucleic acid) therapy could revolutionise cardiovascular medicine and stop millions of heart attacks progressing towards heart failure.

Trials to regenerate damaged pig hearts have so far been successful, with tests due on humans in the next two years.

Major breakthrough in dementia treatment

Another 42 genes linked to Alzheimer's have been found by scientists, in what they claim is a major discovery from the biggest study of its kind.

Alzheimer's is the most common form of dementia, and slowly robs people of their memories and independence. No cure exists yet, although drugs can help alleviate some of the symptoms.

But experts say the new findings could open the door to new ways of treating the disease.

An international team of scientists discovered 75 regions of DNA linked to the cruel disease. These included 42 genetic quirks never before linked to Alzheimer's.

They have also developed a genetic risk score to evaluate which at risk patients are most likely to go on to develop the disease within three years.

Experts welcomed the new study as providing another "piece of the puzzle" of what causes the disease but added it will take more work to turn this into new treatments for patients.

A plethora of research has indicated that an individual's genes can increase the risk of developing Alzheimer's, with the disease known to run in families.

Dr Rebecca Sims, co-author from Cardiff University, claimed the findings more than "double the number of identified genes" thought to influence the risk of Alzheimer's.

She said, "It provides exciting new targets for therapeutic intervention and advances our ability to develop algorithms to predict who will develop Alzheimer's in later life."

Cardiff's Professor Julie Williams another author of the study added, "This is a landmark study in the field of Alzheimer's research and is the culmination of 30 years' work.

"The results support our grow-

ing knowledge that Alzheimer's disease is an extremely complex condition, with multiple triggers, biological pathways and cell types involved in its development."

She added that while lifestyle factors like smoking, exercise and diet influence our risk of developing Alzheimer's, our genes were the single most important factor.

"60-80 per cent of disease risk is based on our genetics and therefore we must continue to seek out the biological causes and develop much-needed treatments for the millions of people affected worldwide," she said.

The UK experts carried out the research alongside colleagues from the French National Institute of Health and Medical Research.

They analysed genomes, the total genetic instructions that make a person who they are, of just over 111,000 people with Alzheimer's disease and 677,000 healthy controls.

Some of these genes were found to play a role in the two proteins which build-up in the brains of people with Alzheimer's: amyloid-beta and tau.

Other genes were found to be related to a dysfunction of the body's immune system and microglia — an immune cell in the nervous system that normally clears away the build-up of toxic materials in the brain.

Researchers also found genes governing the activation of a protein called tumour necrosis factor alpha, which is involved in triggering inflammation in the body, and is also linked to Alzheimer's disease.

The researchers published their genetic findings — dubbed a "major discovery" — in the journal Nature Genetics.

Lead author Dr Jean-Charles Lambert claimed their work would help scientists learn more about the biological mechanisms

at play in Alzheimer's.

Dr Lambert revealed how they used the findings to create a genetic risk score, which could predict which patients will be struck down with Alzheimer's.

While not yet ready for use as a clinical tool, the neuroscientist claimed it could help spot patients who may see the most benefit from drug trials.

Dr Susan Kohlhaas, director of research at Alzheimer's Research UK, welcomed the new study.

"Creating an extensive list of Alzheimer's disease risk genes is like having the edge pieces of a puzzle put together," she said.

"And while this work doesn't give us the full picture, it provides a valuable framework for future developments.

"The research also, however, tells us just how complex Alzheimer's is, with several different mechanisms implicated in the development of the disease. "It's going to take a concerted and global effort to develop

life-changing treatments.

"But this seminal study also gives us hope that research will win, and it gives us the opportunity to work on new treatment targets."

The new research has some limitations, one of which is that the genes analysed were from primarily Caucasian populations.

Therefore, the results may be of limited use for other groups.

This is something the researchers say they wish to expand upon in further studies.

Around 850,000 Britons and 5.8million Americans have Alzheimer's disease.

Alzheimer's is characterised by the build-up of toxic proteins in the brain that cause cells to die and for parts of the organ to shrink.

Alzheimer's disease is most common in people over the age of 65, although people can develop it earlier.

While there is no cure, medications are available to combat some of the symptoms.



Lead author Dr Jean-Charles Lambert

NCC, Google collaborate to drive Nigeria's digital transformation

Stories by **SHARON O. ISAALAH**, Head, Health, Science & Technology Desk, Abuja

Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) and Google Global Services Nigeria have expressed determination to work together toward advancing the actualisation of auspicious national targets for ubiquitous broadband access in furtherance of the country's digital transformation policy.

This aligns with and gives unambiguous expression to NCC's strategic vision plan centering on strategic partnership and collaboration with necessary stakeholders in order to achieve regulatory objectives.

The two organisations made the commitment when a delegation from Google Global Services Nigeria paid a courtesy visit to the Commission's Head Office in Abuja recently to deliberate on viable collaborative interventions to propel digital transformation across the country and Africa.

Receiving the Google del-

egation, the Executive Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer (EVC/CEO) of NCC, Prof. Umar Garba Danbatta, said the Commission's expectations, initiatives, and vision towards increasing broadband penetration, quality of service, advancement of a digital economy and commitment to improving national security through technological advancement are at the front burner of its regulatory interventions.

Understanding the importance of such synergy between the Commission and Google, Danbatta, who was represented by the Executive Commissioner, Technical Services (ECTS), NCC, Engr. Ubale Maska, said the Commission looked forward to making the initiatives of both parties more impactful by enhancing cooperation between the NCC and Google Nigeria for quantifiable and remarkable impact.

The EVC expressed optimism that Google's investment in the subsea cable, Equiano, which

is expected to land in Nigeria by end of April 2022, will be more impactful in driving NCC's ongoing implementation of the Nigerian National Broadband Plan (NNBP), 2020-2025, aimed at increasing broadband penetration to 70 percent by 2025. "I am hopeful that Equiano will have additional landing points in the hinterlands through collaborative efforts with the licensed Infrastructure Companies (InfraCos) to reduce retail data prices significantly and thereby complementing the Commission's efforts at ensuring affordable Internet services are available to boost the Commission's ongoing broadband policy drive," he said.

Earlier in her remarks, the Director, Google West Africa, Juliet Ehimuan, who led the delegation to NCC, commended the NCC for its consultative approach in formulating regulatory policies, as engine room for optimal delivery of telecommunications services that will in turn impact the digital economy drive of the government.



Umar Garba Danbatta

She particularly applauded the Commission for its seamless, fair, credible, impartial and successful auction of the 3.5 Gigahertz spectrum for the deployment of Fifth Generation (5G) in Nigeria, stating that it is evident that both the NCC and Google share a common goal.

According to Ehimuan,

demands for internet services have increased the need for more capacity, and sustainable collaborations with all relevant stakeholders within the public and private sectors.

She asserted that Google's commitment of \$1 billion across five years in various interventions will support digital transformation in Nigeria and across Africa.

Ehimuan stated that research has proven that Africa will have an additional 300 million Internet users and Nigeria will lead in that number, given its current statistics of over 141 million internet subscribers and broadband penetration of over 40.88 percent as at

January 2022.

The Equiano cable system is the third private international cable owned by Google and the 14th subsea cable invested by Google. Equiano connects Portugal and South Africa, running along the West Coast of Africa, with branching units along the way that can be used to extend connectivity to more African countries. The first branch is expected to land in Nigeria by the end of April 2022.

Twitter moves to block Elon Musk from increasing stake

Adopts 'Poison Pill' Plan

Twitter Inc. moved to prevent Elon Musk from significantly increasing his stake, a day after he unveiled a \$43 billion unsolicited takeover bid for the social-media company.

The company adopted a so-called poison pill that makes it difficult for Mr. Musk to increase his stake beyond 15%. The billionaire founder of Tesla Inc. already owns a more-than 9% stake that he revealed earlier this month.

Poison pills, also called shareholder-rights plans, are legal manoeuvres that make it hard for shareholders to build their stakes beyond a set point by triggering an option for others to buy more shares at a discount. They are often used by companies that receive hostile takeover bids to block an unwanted suitor or buy time to consider their options.



Elon Musk

Twitter said in a statement that the rights plan doesn't prevent the company from engaging with potential acquirers or accepting a takeover bid if the board determines it is in the best interest of shareholders.

It earlier confirmed it received Mr. Musk's offer and is reviewing it.

The Wall Street Journal reported Thursday that Twitter was weighing installing a poison pill.

Mr. Musk may not be the only suitor for the company, as people familiar with the matter say that Thoma Bravo LP and other private-equity firms are now circling as well. But just because they are running the numbers doesn't mean any of the firms will make a formal bid or that such a deal would come together.

Taking Twitter private would be no small feat; indeed, private-equity firms have explored and decided against it in the past. It would rank as one of the largest leveraged buyouts of all time, and Twitter doesn't have the attributes of a typical LBO target like strong, stable cash flow. It is possible the buyout firms are also eyeing something short of a full takeover.

The New York Post earlier reported on Thoma Bravo's interest in Twitter.

The private-equity firm, which specialises in the technology sector and manages roughly \$100 billion, has been busy lately at a time of heightened buyout activity. It agreed to buy Anaplan Inc. for \$10.7 billion in March, and SailPoint Technologies Inc. just days ago for \$6.1 billion.

Mr. Musk, the billionaire founder of Tesla and privately held rocket company SpaceX, offered to pay \$54.20 a share for Twitter and said that was his "best and final" bid. He has been criticising how Twitter moderates content, among other

things, and briefly agreed this month to join its board before backing out.

His takeover offer has prompted speculation that a white-knight bidder such as another technology company or private-equity firm could surface as an alternative to a deal with the unpredictable and outspoken entrepreneur.

One possible outcome is that Twitter rejects Mr. Musk's offer as too low but leaves the door open for him to return with a higher one, some of the people said. Mr. Musk said if the offer isn't accepted, he will reconsider his position as a shareholder of the company. He also has said he has a Plan B, without detailing it.

One big question mark is how Mr. Musk would fund any deal. Though he is the world's richest man, much of his wealth is tied up in Tesla shares and his offer didn't have details on financing plans, which, like other aspects of the bid, is unusual. The Journal reported Thursday that Morgan Stanley would provide some debt financing for the bid and that Mr. Musk has received approaches from investors interested in backing it.

"There are a plethora of multibillionaires eager to fund Elon for whatever he wants to do," said Joe Lonsdale, an Austin, Texas, venture capitalist and co-founder of Palantir Technologies Inc.

One big name who doesn't plan to put in money is Peter Thiel, a longtime associate of Mr. Musk dating back to their days as executives at PayPal Holdings Inc.

While Mr. Thiel, a fellow billionaire who has invested in several of Mr. Musk's companies, has expressed to friends broad support for Mr. Musk's anything-goes vision for Twitter, he doesn't plan to back any bid, according to people familiar with his plans.

Facebook struggles as Russia steps up presence in unstable West Africa

Facebook is struggling to contain pro-Russian and anti-Western posts that are contributing to political instability in west Africa, investigators and analysts have said.

The platform, which has expanded rapidly across the continent in recent years, has made significant investment in content moderation, but still faces enormous challenges in curbing deliberate disinformation campaigns. One major area of concern is the strategically important Sahel region, which has suffered a series of military takeovers over the last 18 months.

Campaigns on Facebook appear to have prepared the ground for many of the coups, pushing an anti-western, pro-Russian agenda that has undermined governments. The efforts are similar to the "hybrid warfare" campaign launched by Moscow in Ukraine and elsewhere.

A report by investigators from the Digital Forensic Lab, a global network of digital forensic researchers run by US-based thinktank the Atlantic Council, reveals how pro-Russian Facebook pages in Mali coordinated support for anti-democracy protests and the Wagner group, a

controversial Russian private military contractor that was invited into the unstable country last year after the overthrow of President Bah N'daw by the military.

The US and others have alleged that Wagner is funded by the powerful businessman Yevgeny Prigozhin, who is closely linked to Vladimir Putin.

It has a growing presence in Africa and its mercenaries have been deployed in Mozambique, Sudan, Libya and in the Central

Africa Republic, where Wagner group fighters committed human rights abuses while fighting alongside government forces against rebels, according to a group of independent UN experts. Prigozhin and the Kremlin have denied any knowledge of Wagner.

Western officials described Wagner as the "thin end of the wedge" and a "Trojan horse" for a Russian effort to extend its influence covertly in resource-rich and unstable parts of the continent. Earlier this year,

France announced that it was withdrawing thousands of troops from Mali, ending a near decade-long effort to fight Islamist insurgents from bases there. The Wagner group has deployed between 400 and 600 fighters, trainers and support staff to Mali and appears to have already launched offensive operations against extremists.

In early April Human Rights Watch reported that suspected Russian mercenaries had participated in an operation with Mali's army in March in which about 300 civilians died. HRW did not mention Wagner specifically.

The DFR Lab identified a coordinated network of five pages pushing narratives that promoted Russian intervention in Mali while disparaging the west, and France in particular. The pages have published nearly 24,000 posts and are followed by more than 140,000 accounts.

In September 2021, the pages of the network began promoting Wagner as an alternative to the French forces. Pages in the network frequently posted identical content, often less than 20 seconds apart, the DFR Lab found.



Nigerians celebrate low key Easter amid economic hardship

*As Nigeria joined all Christians around the world to celebrate this year's Easter to commemorate the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the harsh socio-economic and political environment most Nigerians are grappling with made it difficult for most of them to have a robust celebration compared to past experiences. **JOHNMARK UKOKO** reports.*

This year's Easter celebration is being marked on low key due to the harsh economic crisis most Nigerians are grappling with, making it one of the worst celebrated in several years.

A survey around Lagos showed that this is due to high cost of foodstuffs and other items generally.

For instance, a bag of 50kg rice that was sold for between N23,000 and N25,000 in the same period last year, now sells for between N27,000 and N31,000 depending on the brand and the market.

A bag of garri that was sold for between N9,000 and N11,000 during the 2021 Easter celebration now goes for about N14,000 and N17,000.

A live chicken that was sold for between N4,000 and N5,500 during the same period last year now is now being sold for about N6,000 or N8,000 depending on the size and the market.

A bag of beans that was sold for about N20,000 and N22,000 in the same period last year now goes for at least N24,000 and N30,000 depending on the quality of the brand and the market.

The same goes for price of fresh fish and stock fish, which have almost doubled in the last one year, while eggs, vegetables, tomatoes, pepper and other cooking items continue to rise on daily basis.

Bread, which most Nigerians take with tea, beans or pap on daily basis has doubled in the past one year, a situation that is blamed mostly on high cost of wheat, flower and sugar.

The prices of clothes, shoes and other household items that people use during the festival period have also doubled since last year.

To make matters worse, electricity supply that people rely on to watch movies and engage in other pastime during festive periods and to make up for the harsh realities of the times was none existent during the period.

During the Easter, most homes were in total darkness, while some Nigerians, who even have money to buy diesel for their generating sets in the past were no longer able to do so.

A liter of diesel that was sold for between N260 and N300 last year, has increased to as much as N650 and N800 per litre, to the extent that most Nigerians and some corporate organisations were unable to afford the product.

The situation also made many companies to either reduce their employees due to lack of diesel and the harsh business operating environment or reduce their

operating hours by almost half.

Most Nigerian youths are currently being disengaged from their places of work to the extent that since the beginning of the year, thousands of employees have lost their jobs.

Many manufacturing companies that formally hire many workers are daily closing their shops or reducing their staff strength. So, the harsh operating environment had impacted negatively on all Nigerians of all creed and class.

Even wealthy Nigerians are feeling the harsh economic situation, as Vice President of Airlines Operators of Nigeria (AON), Allen Onyema, who addressed journalists recently announced plan of local airline operators to shut down their operations.

He explained that their decision was based on the fact that aviation fuel or Jet A1 oil had increased from about N300 to N800 per litre.

Onyema announced that the airline operators were no longer able to access Jet A1 oil used by the airlines, adding that they now buy the product from the black market.

He said that airlines operators now pay upfront to be able to buy fuel, adding that at the height of the Russia and Ukraine war, the



Allen Onyema

price of Jet A1 rose to as much as N750 and N900 per litre.

In its meeting with the airline operators, the House of Representatives Committee on Aviation mandated the airlines

operators to be buying Jet A1 oil for N500 per litre, while the Federal Government settle the balance.

The result of the challenge is

that most Nigerians were also unable to travel as was the case in the past Easter celebrations.

The economic situation has worsened to the extent that terrorists, kidnappers, bandits and the nefarious activities of Yahoo-Yahoo boys have taken a new dimension, such that most Nigerians, who used to travel easily or visit their loved during festive period as was the past, are beginning to shun such journeys.

Again, thousands of Nigerians, old and young have been kidnapped, killed, while the lucky ones had been harassed by criminals.

Findings by The Trumpet showed that 2022 Easter is the worst celebrated in many decades, as women complained that the prices of their clothes and ladies' wears have become generally prohibitive.

They disclosed that the prices of wigs, creams, makeup, powders, ear rings, wristwatches and other items they use have increased beyond the reach of the average women.

Also, the prices of drinks, malt, liquor, beer, wines and bottled water and even sachet water have doubled since last year's Easter celebration. In all, Nigerians celebrated the worst Easter ever.

Ogun signs \$400m MoU on Olokola FTZ, agro-processing zone

Stories by **JOHNMARK UKOKO**

Ogun State government has signed a \$400 million Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Arise Integrated Industrial Platform on the development of the Olokola Free Trade Zone and Remo Agro-Processing Zone.

Governor Dapo Abiodun signed the MoU with Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Arise Integrated Industrial Platform, Gagan Gupta, at the Government House, Abeokuta.

Speaking shortly after the signing ceremony, Gupta said his organisation would focus on the Olokola Free Trade Zone and Remo

Agro-Processing Zone, adding that the \$400 million would be use to complete the phase of the projects saying by July 2023 and that it would increase its investments.

According to him, the company would focus on developing the infrastructure at the Olokola Free Trade Zone and the Remo Argo Airport to boost processing of agricultural produce.

Gupta also noted that his organisation would ensure that work commences on the industrial zone, adding that his firm would also focus more on the upstream sector.

He pointed out that the

company would bring equity to the floor by leaving 35 per cent open for national players and the state, saying: "We will be glad to have Ogun as a partner."

"Our ethical moral is that we have 65 per cent equity and leave 35 per cent for the national players including Ogun State. We want the state be our partner and the state will take some equity, while some national players will take some equity."

Gupta commended the level of information the state government has been making available to his team when it visited the state for an assessment of the zone.

"After visiting Ogun State for two weeks, we are pleased at the amount of information that was shared. I did not expect that the information would be so readily available, it looked like we were dealing with the private sector and not government, he added.

On his part, Abiodun, who commended the company for choosing Ogun, noted that the project would not only create employment opportunities, but would also be a training hub, as the company was ready and willing to set up a technical training centre to train artisans to sustain the project.

AllCO pays N47.3b claims for 2022

A tier one player in country's insurance sector, American International Insurance Company (AllCO) Plc, at the weekend, disclosed that it paid a N47.3 billion claims and benefits to its customers in 2021.

It explained that timely settlement of claims was the hallmark the company's obsession with customer satisfaction and key driver for its customer retention.

Its Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (MD/CEO), Babatunde Ariyo Fajemirokun, made this known in a statement issued by the company's Head Strategic Marketing & Communications, Segun Olalanda.

He noted that while AllCO Insur-

ance considers several metrics when assessing the quality of its services for a lot of its customers, especially retirees, paying of claims and benefits when due remained a key determinant of the quality of their experience.

"The company currently serves a variety of customer groups from individuals and small-scale entrepreneurs to the largest businesses in the country, with easy segment having its own peculiar needs and requirements.

"In 2021, 70 per cent of total claims reported, about N33 billion was paid to individuals with about 14 per cent or N6.5 billion gain to retirees, who have life time contracts

with the company claims to business across the spectrum, made up 30 per cent or N14 billion of total claims paid to customers.

"In total, the company paid N47.3 billion in claims and benefits to customers, up by 19.1 per cent in 2020. We also paid N29.1 billion and N30.6 billion in 2018 and 2019. This growth along with the growth in its overall financial position over the years underscores its incremental capacity to create for the needs of the existing and prospective customers," the statement reads.

Commenting further on the report, Fajemirokun, said: "We put the customers first in everything we do.

We believe that our customer-centric philosophy is especially crucial today.

"As customers seek to protect themselves from the volatility of their environments, most of our customers have been with us for decades and others will have a relationship with the company for the rest of their lives.

"We understand the risks that they face and we have made it out priority to continue to adapt to their changing needs as they go through life helping them to manage their risks where possible to improve their overall quality of life. Our customers trust us to be there for them and we will stop at nothing to continue holding our end of the deal."

Dangote commends media, experts urge practitioners to embrace Internet activities

Stories by JOHNMARK UKOKO

Dangote Group has commended media practitioners in the country for their support towards the growth and expansion of its activities over the years.

The company's spokesman, Tony Chiejina, gave the commendation at the weekend, during a one-day media training for journalists in Lagos.

Chiejina said Chairman of Dangote Group, Aliko Dangote, who expressed gratitude to the media practitioners for their support for the group and its activities over the years, charged them not to relent and pledged not to undermine the massive support his firms have enjoyed from the media industry.

He promised that the company would continue to set standards by continuously churning out top quality products, adding that apart from the government, Dangote Group remains the largest employer of labour in the country.

Faculty lead of the

event, Uche Nworah charged journalists to fully use the various social media tools to enhance their organisations' revenue base.

Nworah, who was the immediate past Managing Director of the Anambra Broadcasting Service (ABS), Awka, argued that any journalist, who was aspiring to survive the harsh media environment, must do well to embrace the social media handles.

He also charged them to apply the marketing communications tools to reach out to their stakeholders, adding that no media practitioner or media house that continued to use the traditional format could survive the industry today.

"You must shoot your shots by employing the various social media tools to attract traffic and revenue to your organisation. Most of the adverts traditional media houses get today, are just getting them on compassionate ground. The owners of those adverts can reach their target audience by using the various social media platforms," he

stressed.

In her presentation, former Online Editor of The Punch, Mrs. Adesola Ayo-Aderele, charged journalists to embark on social media training, if they wished to grow and upgrade themselves in the profession.

Ayo-Aderele said her knowledge of social media tools had opened several doors to her and the organisation she worked for over the years.

She disclosed that ample opportunities abound to embark on foreign travels, financial grants and other opportunities in the Internet that wise media practitioners could benefit from, adding that each time she did any social posts, she tagged the intended audience.

She added that she always ensured that she responded to each feedback from her posts individually, she said journalists should try to attain expertise of their fields of reportage, adding: "Ensure your write-ups are rich with exclusive content. Focus on simple topics and ensure you become expert in your field."



Aliko Dangote

Buhari reconstitutes board of Federal Mortgage Bank



President Buhari

President Muhammadu Buhari has approved a reconstitution of the Board of the Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria (FMBN) with a view to repositioning the bank as

a core-banking institution with core competences in mortgage finance.

The Trumpet recalled that the President had appointed Ayodeji Ariyo Gbeleyi as

Chairman of the board earlier in the year.

In the new board, Hamman Madu, who has background of over 30 years in the mortgage industry, is the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (MD/CEO) and represents the North East zone.

Other members of the board are Umar Zubaida, Executive Director Finance and Corporate Services, representing the North West zone, Chukwuma Kingsley Edi, Business Development & Portfolio Management (BD&PM), representing the South-South zone; Mustapha Lukman Olayiwola, Executive Director, Loans & Mortgage Services (L&MS), representing the Federal Ministry of Works and Housing, Ejezie Sandra Nkechi, South East and representative of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN).

The appointment of the board takes effect from April 13, 2022, with the exception of the Gbeleyi, whose appointment took effect from January 5, 2022.

MAN mourns Makoju, celebrates his impact

Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) has commiserated with the family, friends and associates of the late Joseph Oyeyani Makoju, who died last week after a brief illness, describing him as "a long-standing member of the National Council of MAN."

This was contained in a statement signed by its Director-General, Segun Ajayi-Kadir, and made available to *The Trumpet* at the weekend, saying the news of Makoju's death was sad and devastating to the association.

It maintained that the late Makoju played a significant role in the advancement of the association's advocacy efforts during his lifetime, adding that he ranked highly in the contributions to the growth and advancement of MAN.

The statement pointed out that Makoju contributed to the

growth of MAN for over three decades, adding that he brought his wealth of experience in the public and private sectors to bear in the service of MAN.

It further noted that the deceased served as the Chairman of Cement Manufacturers Association of Nigeria and that he was also a leading member of the Non-Metallic and Mineral Sector Group.

"Even after his retirement as the Group Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (MD/CEO) of Dangote Cement Plc, he was elevated to the prestigious status of strategic member of the national council.

"He will be sorely missed for his all-encompassing knowledge, administrative skills, patriotism and immense contributions to the growth and development of the manufacturing sector, and by extension, the country's economy," the statement reads.



late Joseph Oyeyani Makoju



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1 x 2	12,448.80	13,382.46	1 x 2	11,294.45	12,141.54	1 x 2	9,174.94	9,863.07	1 x 2	7,573.97	8,142.02	
2 x 2	24,941.96	26,812.61	2 x 2	22,588.91	24,283.09	2 x 2	18,349.89	19,716.64	2 x 2	15,147.94	16,284.03	
3 x 2	37,413.09	40,219.07	3 x 2	33,987.48	36,622.04	3 x 2	27,524.84	29,589.20	3 x 2	22,721.91	24,426.05	
4 x 2	49,884.02	53,625.42	4 x 2	45,177.83	48,566.17	4 x 2	36,700.09	39,452.60	4 x 2	30,295.53	32,657.70	
5 x 2	62,355.15	67,031.71	5 x 2	56,472.29	60,707.71	5 x 2	45,866.19	49,315.34	5 x 2	37,863.00	40,710.09	
6 x 2	76,142.50	81,853.18	6 x 2	67,975.12	73,073.25	6 x 2	55,049.68	59,178.41	6 x 2	45,443.82	48,852.10	
7 x 2	87,297.21	93,844.50	6 x 3	101,962.78	109,609.99	6 x 3	54,074.55	61,200.90	7 x 2	53,017.79	56,993.61	
7 x 3	166,172.00	179,229.37	6.5 x 3	110,459.64	118,744.11	6.5 x 3	89,455.78	96,164.94	8 x 2	60,591.76	65,136.14	
7 x 4	197,125.00	211,909.37	7 x 2	79,304.29	85,252.11	7 x 2	64,224.63	69,041.48	9 x 2	80,454.83	86,488.95	
8 x 2	99,768.24	107,250.85	7 x 3	128,456.43	138,090.67	7 x 3	96,336.94	103,562.21	10 x 2	86,147.92	92,609.02	
9 x 2	112,183.69	120,597.47	7 x 4	158,608.73	170,504.38	7 x 4	145,965.10	156,912.48	14.5 x 2	124,915.92	134,284.61	
9 x 3	168,358.90	180,985.39	7 x 5	198,260.25	213,129.77	7 x 5	182,500.19	196,187.71	5 x 3	56,804.77	61,065.13	
10 x 3	187,065.45	201,095.35	8 x 2	90,633.42	97,430.92	8 x 2	73,399.58	78,904.54	6 x 3	68,170.86	73,283.67	
14.5 x 2	260,395.00	279,924.62	8 x 3	135,950.22	146,146.48	8 x 3	125,871.78	134,674.05	7 x 3	79,526.68	85,491.18	
8 x 4	199,536.48	214,501.71	8 x 4	181,266.93	194,841.95	8 x 4	167,043.40	179,022.80	8 x 3	103,375.58	111,130.80	
9 x 4	224,478.54	241,314.43	8 x 5	226,238.74	254,477.52	8 x 5	208,805.79	224,469.23	6 x 4	100,634.10	110,944.41	
10 x 4	299,302.72	321,752.57	8 x 6	271,900.48	292,008.02	8 x 6	250,284.32	269,911.09	7 x 4	120,404.56	129,434.90	
14.5 x 4	520,790.19	559,849.45	9 x 2	101,962.78	109,609.99	9 x 2	93,773.60	100,872.44	8 x 4	137,692.17	148,019.082	
7 x 5	218,243.02	234,629.74	9 x 3	152,944.01	164,414.81	9 x 3	141,108.54	151,691.68	10 x 4	172,301.37	185,224.22	
8 x 5	299,304.72	321,752.57	9 x 4	203,925.29	219,219.69	9 x 4	187,921.52	202,015.71	14.5 x 3	187,057.43	201,086.73	
8 x 6	359,165.65	386,103.08	9 x 5	305,373.04	328,276.02	9 x 5	281,288.07	303,022.10	14.5 x 4	249,838.03	268,575.88	
9 x 5	404,061.37	434,365.97	9 x 6	367,065.92	394,595.86	9 x 6	337,805.68	363,141.11	7 x 5	141,001.98	161,793.93	
10 x 5	448,957.08	482,628.86	10 x 3	169,651.36	182,375.21	10 x 3	156,602.81	168,348.02	8 x 5	172,116.65	185,025.40	
11 x 5	493,852.78	530,891.74	10 x 4	226,258.00	243,176.28	10 x 4	208,808.58	224,469.23	9 x 6	278,649.91	299,548.66	
9 x 6	484,873.39	521,239.16	10 x 5	354,037.54	380,590.16	10 x 5	325,815.11	349,966.25	11 x 5	295,636.20	317,808.91	
10 x 6	538,748.49	579,154.53	10 x 6	424,845.04	456,708.42	10 x 6	390,978.13	420,320.48	11 x 6	340,573.10	340,466.08	
11 x 6	592,622.16	637,068.82	11 x 5	389,441.887	418,650.01	11 x 5	358,396.62	385,276.37	HP7.25 X 6	218,226.87	234,593.89	
HP 7.25 x 6	317,178.40	340,337.5	11 x 6	447,303.49	480,851.24	11 x 6	412,916.45	443,885.19	FP14.5 X 6	379,943.00	408,438.72	
FP 14.5 x 6	560,500.00	602,537.50	14.5 X 2	197,128.09	211,912.70	14.5 x 2	151,178.45	162,516.84				
			14.5 X 4	394,256.19	423,825.40	14.5 x 4	362,827.71	390,039.79				
			14.5 X 5	472,286.06	507,707.52	HP7.25 X 6	246,131.63	264,591.50				
			HP7.25 X 6	269,191.05	289,380.38	14.5 X 5	431,525.39	463,889.79				
			FP 14.5 X 6	460,275.00	594,225.62	FP14.5 X 5	423,373.39	455,126.39				
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Earpiece Back Page 2x2	409,687.50	440,414.06	4x6 Front Page	5,187,000.00	5,576,025.00
Earpiece Back Page 3x2	628,187.50	675,301.56	6x6 Front Page	6,982,500.00	7,506,187.50
Inside Earpiece 2x2	199,500.00	214,462.50	7x6 Front Page	9,975,000.00	10,723,220.00
Inside Earpiece 3x2	285,000.00	307,325.00	10x6 Front Page	14,250,000.00	15,318,750.00
Centre Spread	1,795,500.00	1,930,162.50	FP (Strip) 2x6	641,891.25	690,033.09
Double Spread	1,558,000.00	1,674,850.00	BP (Strip) 2x6	625,452.64	670,319.08
Centre Spread (HP)	1,017,063.80	1,093,343.59	Back Page 10x6	5,320,000.00	5,782,750.00
Double Spread (HP)	741,000.00	796,575.00	ROP 2x12	771,400.00	829,255.00
Page 2 (Full Page)	1,420,250.00	1,526,768.75	ROP (Strip) 2x6 Colour	266,000.00	285,950.00
Page 3 (Full Page)	1,311,000.00	1,409,325.00	ROP (Strip) 2.6 (B/W)	717,000.00	768,825.00
Page 4 (Full Page)	1,187,500.00	1,276,562.50	3x6 Front Page	1,140,000.00	1,225,500.00
Page 5 (Full Page)	1,064,000.00	1,143,800.00	2x6 Under Mast Head	3,990,000.00	4,289,250.00
Page 6 (Full Page)	940,500.00	993,937.50	12x2 Front Page	4,788,000.00	5,147,100.00
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India 2022: Flamingos 4-0 win humbles Egypt in Abuja

By **OVIRI KELVIN**, Sports Editor, Abuja

Nigeria U17 female football team

has thrashed Egypt 4-0 in the first leg of the qualifiers to India 2022 Women World Cup at MKO National Stadium, Abuja.

Flamingos, after kick-off,

started the dominance and finally got their first goal in 28 minutes from Opeyemi Ajakaye.

The goal-thirsty Flamingos did not rest on their oars as 10

minutes after they took the lead, Omowonmi Bello scored in the 38th minute to double the goal margin.

At the start of the second half, Nigeria continued to dominate the pitch with superb performances in all positions while firing from all cylinders to triple the scoreline.

However, the wait was not far-fetched as 9 minutes into the second half, Miracle Usani fires in the third to make it 3-0 for Flamingos.

More so, Omowonmi Bello longing to complete a brace finally got it 8 minutes later after Miracle's to ice the cake of victory over the Egyptians on a 4-nil streak.

With this win, the Flamingos who will be going for the second left clash in Egypt in a fortnight after a comfortable victory, are most likely to play Ethiopia in the final round of the series for a ticket to the FIFA World Cup in India. Ethiopia trounced South Africa 3-0 away from home on Saturday.



NFF defends appointment of Yusuf as S'Eagles B head coach

Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) says Salisu Yusuf possesses the technical abilities to lead the Super Eagles Team B to victory having worked with a series of Nigerian senior men's team coaches.

The NFF through its Vice President and Chairman of Local Management Company (LMC), Shehu Dikko refuted the allegations engulfing the social media criticizing the appointment of Salisu after he was indicted for bribery and corruption.

Dikko on Arise TV, said Salisu was never found guilty of bribery but only broke the code of ethics by collecting a gift from someone who intended to influence the team's selection.

He said, "Well, I think for us we find it very, very amusing to say the least because this thing keeps coming up over and over again, anytime Salisu Yusuf is getting a job, either with a club or even with the national team.

"And yes, he made an error of judgement which he has paid for it. This is going to be around his name for the rest of his life. But the fight is that people need to be fair and analyze the whole matter. Because part of the complaint when you look at the social media and the internet, and the news is that a coach has been banned for bribery for this, for that, which is not factual.

"That was not the issue that he was banned with. He was charged with those offenses, but at the end of the day, he was only found guilty by the committee of taking a gift, which was considered to be far and above what the court of ethics will allow. And he has served his sentence and has come back to do his work," he said.

The LMC chairman continued, "infact even after the issue, the NFF actually handed him over to the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences (ICPC) and he was also investigated internally not just on that issue, all issues he has done, both the job he has done, his assets, all his accounts to see whether he was in possession of any asset or revenue or money that he cannot explain.

He came out clean from that investigation because ICPC didn't find anything with him. That is correct. So he has paid the price and I think we should move forward and let it be because he is still relevant to the system both at club level and national team level," he added.



'I'll bring professionalism to U17 team'

Olarewanju Yemi Daniel says he is going to bring professionalism to the U17 national team after he was appointed to assist Head Coach Nduka Ugbade by the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF).

Daniel, describing the appointment as a big challenge, said he has garnered experience in the past four years having worked with different national clubs. He added that working alongside other technical crew will produce great results.

The former coach of Vandrezzor FC explained that the U17

national team is the bedrock of the Super Eagles and anything short of excellence will affect the Nigerian senior men's football team because a lot of U17 players will not progress to the next level if they fail.

He said: "I am a young coach so, with my experience of what I've been doing for the past four years, I think it's going to come in handy with other technical crew that you know, we were selected together.

"I will work hand to hand to bring professionalism to the team.

And you know there is a lot of work to be done. I believe we got to achieve a great thing, though it is a big challenge, we had to because it is the bedrock of the national team.

"And if we fail at the U17, Super Eagles are going to pay for it, because a lot of players will not move to the next level," Daniel added.

According to Daniel, he is the youngest among the list of national team coaches recently appointed by the NFF, after the recommendation by the NFF



Technical and Development Sub-Committee.

Nationwide League 2021/22 Season kicks off on April 22



The Nationwide League of the National Women Football League (NWFL) is set for a new 2021/22 season on Friday, 22 April, 2022 with the opening matches to be played in Benin City, Edo State, **The Trumpet** reports.

The opening matches will take place at the Western Boys Stadium and School of Health Technology Stadium.

According to the statement by

the General Co-ordinator of the Nigeria Women Football League Nationwide League, Sir Joe Amene, sixteen clubs from across the country are to battle for two promotion tickets to the NWFL Championship.

The football administrator assured fans and football lovers around the country of the determination of the league management to ensure matches are

properly officiated by providing meticulous referees.

He said, "Now is the time for the NWFL Nationwide to showcase what they are worth, as they storm Benin City to forge their progress to the NWFL Championship and bid farewell to the amateur cadre of the women's football league in Nigeria.

"It would be complete fireworks in Benin City, as 16 NWFL Nationwide League clubs battle for

two promotion tickets. And we are going to be very meticulous in our choice of officiating referees for the league in our drive to ensure the best teams gain promotion to the NWFL Championship," he added.

The sixteen teams divided into four groups (A1, A2, B1, B2) comprising four teams each are Lakeside Queens FC, Abruka Queens FC, Celestial Queens FC and Ijebu United Queens in Group A1.

Papa Soccer Academy, Ekiti Queens FC, Delta Babes FC and Society Teen Girls FC are in Group A2.

Furthermore, Unification Queens FC, Imo Strikers FC, Brave Hearts Queens and Ubalaka Queens make up Group B1, while P. Kassim Eletu Queens, FC Niger Amazons, Fortress Queens FC and Castmog FA completed Group B2.

Amene added that the NWFL Nationwide League will start with a technical meeting on April 22, while matches officially kick off on April 23, India 2022: Flamingos 4-0 win humbles Egypt in Abuja

"For I remember it is Easter Morn and life and love and peace are all new born."

— Alice Freeman Palmer



Pope pleads for peace, criticises Russia over Ukraine invasion

By **OROWO VICTORIA OJIEH** with agency report

Pope Francis, marking what he called an "Easter of war," has urged leaders to hear the people's plea for peace in Ukraine and absolutely criticised Russia for dragging the small country into a "cruel and senseless" conflict.

The Pontiff made the comments in his annual "Urbi et Orbi" (to the city and the world) address.

Addressing a crowded Saint Peter's Square of about 100,000 people on Easter Sunday after two years of muted celebration due to pandemic and Covid-19 restrictions in Italy.

He dedicated much of the message to Ukraine, comparing the shock of another war in Europe to the shock of the apostles when the gospel says they

saw the risen Jesus.

"Our eyes, too, are incredulous on this Easter of war. We have seen all too much blood, all too much violence. Our hearts, too, have been filled with fear and anguish, as so many of our brothers and sisters have had to lock themselves away in order to be safe from bombing".

"May there be peace for war-torn Ukraine, so sorely tried by the violence and destruction of the cruel and senseless war into which it was dragged," he said.

Moscow describes the action it launched on Ukraine on Feb. 24 as a "special military operation".

Francis, who did not mention Russia by name, has already rejected that terminology, calling it a war and previously using terms such as unjustified aggression and invasion.

"Let there be a decision



Pope Francis

for peace. May there be an end to the flexing of muscles while people are suffering," Francis said.

He also thanked those who had taken in

refugees from Ukraine, most of whom have gone to Poland.

The 85-year-old pontiff urged, "Please, let us not get used to war! Let us

all commit ourselves to imploring peace, from our balconies and in our streets. May the leaders of nations hear people's plea for peace "

The Pope said he holds in his heart "all the many Ukrainian victims, the millions of refugees and internally displaced persons, the divided families, the elderly left to themselves, the lives broken and the cities razed to the ground.

"I see the faces of the orphaned children fleeing from the war."

Earlier this month in Malta, Francis implicitly criticised Russian President Vladimir Putin over the invasion, saying a "potentate" was fomenting conflict for nationalist interests.

The UN said almost 2,000 civilians have died during the seven-week conflict, with thousands more soldiers estimated

to have been killed on either side. The war has left Ukrainian cities in awful humanitarian crises and led to allegations of war crimes against Russian forces.

Francis also called for free access to Jerusalem's holy sites for all worshippers and pilgrims in Jerusalem to "dwell in fraternity and enjoy free access to the holy places in mutual respect".

His plea comes after Palestinians clashed with Israeli police at the Al-Aqsa mosque compound in Jerusalem on Friday after more than 150 people were wounded.

The Pontiff also called for reconciliation among Israelis and Palestinians and among the people of Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Libya, Myanmar, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, which he is due to visit in July.

UN refugee agency opposes British plan to move asylum seekers to Rwanda

By **OROWO VICTORIA OJIEH** with agency report

A UN agency has queried the British government plan to provide failed asylum seekers, including those crossing the channel in small boats, with a one-way ticket to Rwanda, where they will have the right to apply to live in the African country.

In response to the announcement made by London, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN refugee agency, expressed strong opposition and concerns about the United Kingdom's plan to export its asylum obligations and urged the UK to refrain from transferring asylum

seekers and refugees to Rwanda for asylum processing.

Gillian Triggs, UNHCR assistant high commissioner for protection said, "UNHCR remains firmly opposed to arrangements that seek to transfer refugees and asylum seekers to third countries in the absence of sufficient safeguards and standards."

"Such arrangements simply shift asylum responsibilities, evade international obligations, and are contrary to the letter and spirit of the refugee convention," he said.

The British government announced a new and controversial relocation plan that would see asylum seekers

attempting to enter the UK sent to Rwanda for resettlement.

Triggs continued, saying those fleeing war, conflict and persecution deserve compassion and empathy.

"They should not be traded like commodities and transferred abroad for processing."

The refugee agency urged the UK and Rwanda to re-think the plans. It also warned that instead of deterring refugees from resorting to perilous journeys, these externalization arrangements will only magnify risks, causing refugees to seek alternative routes, and exacerbating pressures on frontline states.

UNCHR said

Rwanda has generously provided a haven to refugees fleeing conflict and persecution for decades, majority live in camps with limited access to economic opportunities.

The UNHCR believes wealthier nations must show solidarity in supporting Rwanda and the refugees it already hosts and not the other way around.

The UK has an obligation to ensure access to asylum for those seeking protection. Those determined to be refugees can be integrated, while those who are not and have no other legal basis to stay can be returned in safety and dignity to their country of origin, the agency said.

Meanwhile, UNHCR said the UK is adopting arrangements that abdicate responsibility to others and thus threaten the international refugee protection regime, which has stood the test of time and saved millions of lives over the decades.

Britain has supported UNHCR's work many times and provides essential contributions that help protect refugees and support countries in conflicts including Ukraine, the agency noted.

However, financial support abroad for certain refugee crises cannot replace the responsibility of states and the obligation to receive asylum seekers and protect refugees

on their own territory irrespective of race, nationality, and mode of arrival, the agency said.

UNHCR said it recognizes the challenges posed by forced displacement but developed countries are host to only a fraction of the world's refugees and are well resourced to manage claims for asylum in a humane, fair and efficient manner.

Uk Prime Minister Boris Johnson, has said the scheme costing around \$160 million, would "save countless lives" from human trafficking, and the often treacherous water crossing between southern England and the French coast, known as the English Channel.