

Thousands denied voter registration in Imo

By **ATHAN AGBAKWURU**,
Owerri

Thousands of people in Orlu and Orsu local government

areas of Imo State are allegedly being denied the opportunity to participate in the ongoing Continuous Voter Registration, CVR, organized

nationwide by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) as a result of the precarious security situation.

The Trumpet

gathered that prospective voters who are eager to register and collect their Permanent Voter's Card, PVC,

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JULY 11-12, 2022

VOL. 1

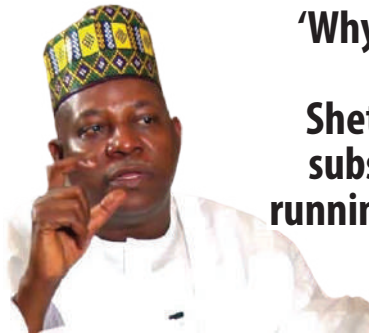
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Tinubu



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Strengths, weaknesses of major presidential contenders

By **TUNDE JOSHUA**,
Politics Editor

At the end of the June 9 deadline for the conduct of primaries by political parties, presidential candidates of 15 out of the 18 registered parties emerged.

They are Bola Tunubu for All Progressives Congress (APC); Peter Obi (Labour Party, LP), Atiku Abubakar, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso for New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP), Dumebi Kachikwu for African Democratic Congress (ADC), Kola Abiola for People's Redemption Party (PRP), Dan Nwanyawu for Zenith Labour Party (ZLP), Adewole Adebayo for Social Democratic Party (SDP) and Malik Ado Ibrahim for Young People's Party (YPP).

Others are Omoyele Sowore for African Action Congress (AAC), Hamza Al Mustsoha for Action Alliance (AA), Peter Umeadi for All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), Yabaji Sani for African Democratic Party (ADP), Christopher Imumolen for Accord Party (AP) and Okwydiki Nwa-Anyajike for Nigerian Renewal Movement

(NRM).

However, the real contest for the 2023 presidency is among four major parties and their candidates. The leading contenders are Tinubu, Atiku, Obi and Kwankwaso.

The four are by every standard, eminently qualified to lead Nigeria as they all have academic prerequisites as well as political experiences. But there are some factors that may determine how far they can go in the contest, prominent among which are the platforms on which they stand to seek election.

Some watchers believe that APC being the ruling party confers its candidate, Tinubu, with a better chance to leverage on power of incumbency. However, some observers say that the loss of the PDP as a sitting government to the APC in 2015, may make this assumption not tight. The latter analysts say that riding on the strength of the party may be tough for Tinubu considering some negative perception of many Nigerians about performance of the APC administration under President Muhammadu Buhari.

While the APC government may have scored some successes in



Tinubu

the area of infrastructure development, its rating in the general economic well-being of the citizenry is below average. Also the successes recorded have been marred by hydra-headed security challenges which the administration has failed to resolve.

Ethno-religious killings, acts of terrorism, banditry, high scale kidnapping and alleged ethnic cleansing in the North have soiled the gains of the APC government, thereby making it difficult for contestants on the party's platform to convince Nigerians that the current hardship will not be extended in another administration of the party.

Tinubu is expected

to do a lot during his nationwide campaign which starts in a few months to convince the electorate that he will bring a government with human face.

Aside party's influence, Tinubu is a widely acceptable politician who has built bridges of friendship across political, ethnic and religious divides. This makes him comfortable among many politicians.

He is believed to have political surrogates across board who are rooting for him and ready to work for his victory at the polls.

His performance at the APC presidential primary attested to his sagacity and acceptability, a factor that will further aid his

chances at the polls.

Considering the influence of money in Nigerian political contest, Tinubu is one politician with a very deep financial warchest to fund his campaign and mobilize votes. The influence of money could not be ruled out of his victory at the APC national convention.

As a politician with a large heart, the APC candidate hit the ground running by wooing his opponents at the shadow election. He personally visited virtually all of them imploring them to work with him for the victory of the party. This is a rare leadership quality.

The big threat to his chances remain his alignments ahead of 2023 which accounted for the delay in finding a suitable running mate. The outcome of this all important choice means a lot to Tinubu's chances.

Before his formal weekend choice of Shettima, there were back and forth arguments on who to pick as running mate and from where. While a northern candidate was a sure bet, which zone should the slot go remained in a problem.

Considering vote strength of the North West, some thought it was expedient for

the candidate to pick a running mate from the zone but a stronger argument said it will not be right for APC to have a Vee Pee from the area that produced President Buhari.

Tinubu therefore, had to jettison his preference for candidates like Kano Governor Abdullahi Ganduje or Kaduna's Nazir El-rufai and look up north east where he had Kashim Shettima, Yakubu Dogara, Boss Mustspha and Babachir Lawal to choose from.

But Tinubu has another naughty issue of religious consideration to contend with. Against the backdrop of reasonable arguments that a Christian northerner may not fetch him expected votes, he was said to have opted for a Muslim running mate.

This again raised the dust of a Muslim-Muslim ticket. While consultations were ongoing to find a perfect match for Tinubu, he sent the name of Ibrahim Masari from Katsina as running mate to INEC.

Tinubu cannot go far in the southeast and south south while he will do above average in his south west for obvious reasons.

In Lagos, he has the PDP candidate, Jide Adediran (Jandor) who is making wave with renegade APC members that defected with him to the state's opposition party to contend with. Also, those in Lagos who are rooting for Peter Obi are determined to deplete his votes.

He will split votes with PDP in states of Oyo and Ondo while he might not have sweeping votes in Ekiti, Osun and Ogun.

Going by past voting patterns in both the south east and south south, Tinubu and APC may not make great impact in those areas.

So, Asiwaju has to rely on the strength of the volume of votes he can get from far north, hence he succumb to the demand to have a Muslim running mate.

Peter Obi of LP
Peter Obi prior to his

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Thousands denied voter registration in Imo

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ahead of the 2023 general elections cannot register for now due to absence of registration centres. It was gathered that the registration centres of the two council areas were removed and relocated to the INEC headquarters in Owerri, the Imo State Capital, when security there became seriously compromised.

Indigenes and residents of the areas are lamenting over the ugly scenario. According to them, the situation is capable of denying them the right and power to vote in the 2023 polls, especially

if registration centres are not immediately provided in the two LGAs.

A community leader, Chief Emmanuel Okenwa, described the situation as a deliberate plot to disenfranchise many prospective voters in the areas. He noted that young ones who just clocked 18 years, registered voters who lost their cards, or those who relocated from other areas to Orsu and Orlu wanting to transfer their voting location have been stranded since the CVR commenced. He noted that all efforts to persuade INEC to come for registration in Orlu

and Orsu to help the teeming population waiting to register have been turned down because of the volatile security situation in the areas.

Okenwa pointed out that attacks on government properties like INEC offices, police stations, local government headquarters, other public institutions and wanton killings in the two areas had made access to INEC registration impossible.

According to him, some people of the areas can afford go to INEC Owerri to register, transfer or collect their PVCs while the rest

who cannot afford the transport fare stay back waiting endlessly for the commission to bring centres to them.

Another community leader, Chief Eugene Ubah, corroborated the position of Chief Okenwa and several others who preferred anonymity and pleaded for urgent steps to remedy the situation. He contended that thousands of eligible youths who just turned 18 years, returnees and holders of defaced PVCs would be denied the opportunity to vote in next year's elections if nothing is done immediately

about the absence of registration centres in Orlu and Orsu.

Contacted, the spokesperson of INEC in Imo, Mrs. Emmanuela N. Opara, explained that Orlu has a registration centre at its council headquarters. Orsu's centre is at the commission's headquarters, Owerri. She stated that the Orsu centre was vandalized by hoodlums who carted away all tables, chairs, windows, doors, registration machines, documents among others just as the lives of the INEC officials in the area were under severe threat.



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'Why Tinubu picked Shettima as substantive running mate'

■ Borno ex-gov beats El-Rufai, Dogara to pick APC Vice Presidential ticket
■ As Masari resigns as 'place holder'

By **TUNDE JOSHUA**, Abuja

A former governor of Borno State, Senator Kashim Shettima, has clinched the Vice Presidential candidacy of the All Progressives Congress (APC).

The party's presidential candidate, Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, was said to have settled for Shettima as his running mate in the 2023 election for some reasons.

Shettima's emergence put to rest speculations about possible choice of other politicians such a former Speaker, House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Yamubu Dogara also from the North East, governors of Kaduna and Kano states, Malam Nasir El-Rufai and Dr. Abdullahi Ganduje respectively from Northwest.

The Trumpet gathered that Shettima's choice followed popular demand by leaders of the party from the northern parts of the country based on the belief that his candidature will enrich the electoral prosperity of the APC in next year's presidential election.

Meanwhile, Kabir Ibrahim Masari from Katsina State, whose name was earlier forwarded to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) as APC Vice Presidential 'place holder' withdrew his nomination.

In a statement titled 'Resignation as APC Vice Presidential Candidate on Sunday, Masari said it followed a crucial discussion with Tinubu.

"Recall that I had the singular honour and privilege of being

nominated as the running-mate to Asiwaju Tinubu last month after a keenly contested presidential primaries ahead of the 2023 general elections.

"But, after much reflection and wider consultations, I now wish to step down. I realized that my decision will enable Asiwaju have more latitude to give more accommodation and inclusion that will position our party to win the coming elections, with the support of the people of Nigeria.

"In stepping down, I believe I can still serve our party and the country in several other capacities.

"I wish to confirm that I have submitted my withdrawal letter and affidavit to that effect as the Vice Presidential Candidate to Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu in the coming elections.

"On behalf of myself and family, I wish to sincerely thank Asiwaju Tinubu — the Incoming President, Insha Allah — for his trust in me and we promise to remain steadfast in our support for him and the party," the statement read.

Confirming Masari's withdrawal as running-mate was the Bola Tinubu Campaign Organization under Honorable James Faleke, as Interim National Coordinator.

Faleke said, "this is to inform and confirm that Alhaji Ibrahim Masari has stepped down as Vice Presidential nominee to the flag-bearer of APC in the 2023 presidential elections, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

"Alhaji Masari has communicated his decision to us from Saudi Arabia where he is presently performing the lesser hajj.

"While saluting Alhaji Masari's sacrifice, we believe this will give Asiwaju Tinubu an opportunity to take a decision that will further enhance the chances of our great party in the 2023 elections."

Who Is Kashim Ibrahim Shettima?

Born on the 2nd September, 1966, in Maiduguri to the family of Sir Kashim Ibrahim Shettima, the current Senator representing Borno Central senatorial district and a former governor of Borno State is of the Kanuri tribe.

Education:

Sen. Kashim attended Lamisula Primary School in Maiduguri from 1972 to 1978; Government Community Secondary School, Biu in southern part of Borno State from 1978 to 1980; transferred to Government Science Secondary School, Potiskum (now in neighbouring Yobe State) where he completed his secondary education in 1983.

He studied at the University of Maiduguri and earned a Degree (BSc) in Agricultural Economics in 1989. He had his one-year compulsory membership of the National Youths Service Corps, NYSC, at the defunct Nigerian Agricultural Cooperative Bank, Calabar, capital of Cross River from 1989 to 1990.

He obtained a master's degree (MSc) in Agricultural Economics in 1991 at the University of Ibadan in Southwest, Nigeria. Shettima joined the University of Maiduguri as a Lecturer with the Department of Agricultural Economics and was in the



Shettima

academia from 1991 to 1993.

Early career:

In 1993, he moved into the banking sector and was employed by (now defunct) Commercial Bank of Africa Limited as head of accounts unit at the bank's office in Ikeja, Lagos State, Southwest, Nigeria. He was there till 1997.

He then crossed over to the African International Bank Limited as a Deputy Manager and rose to become a Manager in 2001. In 2001, he moved to the Zenith Bank as head of its main branch in Maiduguri. At the Zenith Bank he rose to Senior Manager/Branch Head; Assistant General Manager (AGM)/ Zonal Head (North-East), Deputy General Manager/ Zonal Head (North-East) before he stepped out of the Zenith Bank as a General Manager in 2007 following his appointment as Commissioner for Finance in Borno State.

Later he became Commissioner in the Ministries of Local Governments and Chieftaincy Affairs, Education, Agriculture and later Health under his predecessor as Borno Governor, Ali Modu Sheriff.

Political career:

From 2007 to 2011, he served as Commissioner

in five different Ministries. In the January 2011 ANPP primaries, Engineer Modu Fannami Gubio was selected as candidate for the governorship.

However, Gubio was later shot dead by gunmen, and Shettima was selected in a second primary in February 2011. In the 26 April 2011 elections, Shettima won with 531,147 votes while the People's Democratic Party (PDP) candidate, Muhammed Goni, gained 450,140 votes.

He won reelection in 2015 under the All Progressives Congress, APC and was chosen as Chairman of the Northern States Governors' Forum, an umbrella body of Governors in the 19 States located in northern Nigeria.

As Governor of Borno State, he efficiently managed challenges arising from the Boko Haram insurgency which he inherited in 2011. With the approval of the National Security Adviser and the Nigerian Army in 2013, his government formalized establishment of youth volunteers called the Civilian JTF.

The volunteers played very significant role in supporting the military in ongoing fight against Boko Haram insurgents. He approves salaries, kits

and patrol vehicles for the civilian JTF while at the same time giving so much support to the Nigerian Armed Forces.

He led in mobilization of community-based intelligence gathering and the provision of hundreds of patrol vehicles and material logistics to the military in particular and to all other security agencies.

Although Maiduguri didn't fall, the insurgents succeeded in occupying 20 out of the 27 local government areas of the State before the Nigerian Armed Forces liberated them between 2015 and 2016.

The Governor coordinated and led the temporary accommodation, rehabilitation and resettlement of victims of the Boko Haram insurgents. With peace building, Governor Kashim Shettima championed Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Resettlement of victims.

His leadership credentials attracted positive recognition within and outside Nigeria. Shettima emerged the 2014 Governor of the Year (Leadership Newspapers), Governor of the Year, 2015 (Nigeria Union of Journalists, national body); Governor of the Year, 2015 (NewsWatchTimes Newspapers); Governor of the Year, 2015 (Vanguard Newspapers); Governor of the Year, 2016 (Tell Magazine); 2017 Zik Prize for Leadership; Kaduna NUJ Award for courage and exceptional leadership (2017), FCT NUJ Merit Award for exceptional Leadership, 2017.

In February, 2019 he became the winner of the Borno Central Senatorial District election, thereby replacing Senator Babakaka Bashir.

Strengths, weaknesses of major presidential contenders

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2
defection from PDP had no known political structure even in the southeast. He left PDP when it dawned on him that he may not win enough delegates even from his zone ahead of the party's presidential primary.

Though the Labour Party gave him an express welcome and its presidential ticket simply to boost the image of the amalgam of forces known as the third force, it is obvious that the LP does not

have a strong footing especially in the north and can only be said to be a movement among the youth and on social media.

He however can split PDP votes in the south east and even win there because of the agitation for Igbo presidency.

Even some in Obi's camp, maybe including him, accept that he is not in the race to win but to make an impact. His impact, however, may depend on the strength of any serious political alliance the LP

can forge.

Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso of NNPP

The former governor of Kano who until the formation of NNPP was a stalwart of PDP in the state is a politician to reckon with in the north west zone.

With his hold on the Kwanjwasiyya Movement, he can muster votes in states of Kano, Jigawa, Katsina, Zamfara, Kebbi and a part of Kaduna. He will surely rock the boat for both APC and PDP in

the zone.

Outside the zone, Kwankwaso is not strong in the north central and north east much less the southern parts of the country.

Hence, many thought he should have given a second thought to the proposed alliance with Peter Obi and the LP.

Even at that, some argue that even the combined ticket cannot win the 2023 poll but make an impact.

Atiku Abubakar of PDP

A veteran in the presidential race, Atiku came closer to getting it in 2019 but lost to President Buhari.

Atiku is one politician who could be said to have followers across the six geopolitical zones, largely due to the influence of his party the PDP that has ruled Nigeria for 16 years.

The PDP no doubt has its presence in all zones but is stronger in both south east and south south where it largely has been in control since 1999. This may as

well work for Atiku.

Tinubu's influence in the south west will constitute a threat to the PDP fortunes in the zone as the APC is largely popular in Yorubaland. This may not mean a total hopeless situation for the PDP and Atiku.

The north central may be a catchment ground for Atiku considering the negative perception about the APC and whoever represents it in the zone. People of the north central may want a departure

SERAP sues govs 'for failing to fund' poor children's education

A lawsuit against the 36 state governors "over their failure to redirect public funds budgeted to pay ex-governors undeserved life pensions, to pay the counterpart funds that would allow poor children to enjoy access to quality basic education in their states," has been filed by Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP).

Over N40 billion has been reportedly paid to 47 former governors from 21 of the 36 states in pensions and provision of houses, staff and motor vehicles replaceable between three and four years.

However, several states have reportedly failed to pay the counterpart funds to access over N51bn matching grants earmarked by the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC).

In suit number FHC/L/CS/1120/2022 filed last week at the Federal High Court, Lagos, SERAP is seeking: "an order of mandamus to direct and compel the 36 state governors to pay the counterpart funds that would allow poor Nigerian children to enjoy access to quality basic education in their respective states."

"An order of mandamus to direct and compel the 36 state governors to put in place mechanisms for transparency and** accountability in the spending of any accessed matching grants from UBEC.

"State governors are paying former governors in their states billions of naira in life pensions and other retirement benefits while failing to invest in education and pay funds that would allow poor Nigerian children within their states to enjoy access to quality education.

"Paying the counterpart funds for basic education in several states would be a major step forward for children's rights, and ensure the rights and well-being of all children, regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds.

"The report by UBEC that several states have failed to access N51.6bn of matching grants suggests that these states are doing very little for poor children. It also explains why the number of out-of-school children in the country has continued to rise. The number is currently over 13 million.

"States' dereliction in paying counterpart funds is antithetical to the Nigerian Constitution 1999 [as amended], the Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act, and the country's international human rights obligations.

"The persistent failure to pay counterpart funds has hugely contributed to denying poor Nigerian children access to quality basic education, opportunities and development."

Joined in the suit as respon-

dents are UBEC and the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory.

The suit filed on behalf of SERAP by its lawyers Kola-wole Oluwadare and Opeyemi Owolabi, read in part: "Rather than spending public funds to pay ex-governors undeserved pensions and other retirement benefits, governors should prioritise investment in education by paying up any outstanding counterpart funds to UBEC.

"Redirecting public funds budgeted for life pensions for former governors to fund education would be entirely consistent with the constitutional oath of office, and the letter and spirit of the Nigerian Constitution, as it would promote efficient, honest, and legal spending of public money.

"Continuing to spend scarce public funds on these expenses would deny poor Nigerian children access to quality, compulsory and free basic education in several states, and burden the next generation.



SERAP boss, Adetokunbo Mumuni

"States should prioritise paying their counterpart funds over and above spending on life pensions and other misallocations of scarce resources.

"According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 1 in 3 children do not complete primary school in several states.

27.2 percent of children between 6 and 11 years do not attend school. Only 35.6% of children aged 3-5 months attend pre-school.

"Basic education in several states has continued to experience a steady decline. The quality of education offered is low and

standards have continued to drop.

"The learning environment does not promote effective learning. School facilities are in a state of extreme disrepair, requiring major rehabilitation. Basic teaching and learning resources are generally not available, leaving many teachers profoundly demoralized.

"This situation is patently contrary to Section 18 of the Constitution of Nigeria 1999 [as amended]; and the Sections 2(1) and 11(2) of the Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act.

"States are required to progressively implement socio-economic rights including the right to quality education commensurate with the level of resources available. Gross misallocation of resources to the detriment of the enjoyment of the right to quality education constitutes a human rights violation."

No date has been fixed for hearing of the suit.

Sustain hope in Nigeria, Peter Obi enjoins Nigerians, greets Muslims

Labour Party (LP) Presidential Candidate Peter Obi has felicitated with the Muslim faithful in Nigeria on the celebration of Eid el Kabir, while urging all citizens to sustain hope in the nation.

In a message, Obi said the Eid el Kabir celebrations reminded Muslims, and indeed Nigerians, of the need to sincerely love one another and pursue lasting peace and unity which he encouraged them to continue to preach as a critical requirement for national growth and development.

Obi said the season also afforded them the opportunity

to pray, in a special way, for the country which, he said, is passing through very severe challenges. He said the nation needs divine intervention to be able to overcome the challenges facing it.

"We are at a very dark moment in our nation's history, where it seems that every noble ideal that makes us a nation is collapsing before our eyes. Insecurity in the country has become unbearable, while our economy continues to struggle under the weight of bad governance and financial mismanagement of our leaders. With prayers and hardwork, we

shall overcome," Obi stated.

Obi urged Nigerians not to give up on the country, but renew their zeal in working towards building a new and more productive nation for all. He maintained that with good leadership, Nigeria will be rescued from the doldrums and placed on the path of growth and development.

"We have no other nation but Nigeria, and we must not let it collapse. Let us now break the barriers of religion that divide us, and unite to take back our nation for progress and development," he added.



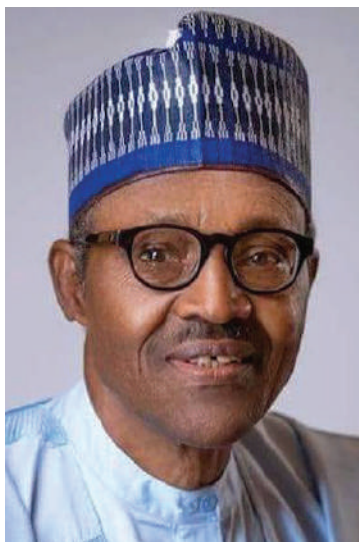
Peter Obi

CAN rages over spate of killings in Taraba, urges Buhari to match word with action

By **SURU CHARLES**, Jalingo

Taraba chapter of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) has deplored incessant killings in the state.

A statement on the issue at the weekend in Jalingo, the state



President Buhari

capital, pointed to the killings especially in Ussa and Takum local government areas, saying: it is high time that the Federal Government of Nigeria led by President Muhammadu Buhari, "begin to match words with action in the areas of security so as to save the nation from eminent collapse."

It stressed that the 'unabating' attacks have resulted in the death of many innocent people while several commuters also fall victims."

The statement signed by the state chairman of the association, Rev. Dr. Isaiah Magaji Jirapye, claimed that the "security breach has not only worsened but subjected the people to untold hardships, and hampering economic activities."

"CAN cannot fold its arms and watch innocent people killed. If government cannot guarantee the security of the people, there is need for the people to be

allowed to protect themselves," the association affirmed.

CAN said it "has observed with dismay the series of attacks and onslaught going on for some times along the Takum and Ussa local governments by suspected Fulani militia." It felt sad that the "same Fulani militia who have been killing people and of recent soldiers including the Commanding Officer of the 93 Battalion of the Nigeria Army in Takum, can still return within shortest time and attack innocent communities while Federal Government folds its arm as if it does not exist."

"Why were the security check points mounted along that axis (Mararraba -Takum road) removed prior to the attacks, Where are the security men, why were they withdrawn, who withdrew them, and for what reason?" Government, according to CAN, "must be truthful in its action against terrorism and

banditry so as to win the fight."

It also underlined the negative impact the attacks will have on the people of the state and the country at large as they "are coming at the time the people are supposed to be serious with farming activities." "If People are not allowed to go to their farms peaceful, only God knows what will happen as there are predictions on impending famine."

Calling on "believers not to relent in prayers at this trying moment" and not "only to be security-conscious but strive to prioritize their security and well being and resist any form of attack."

The Trumpet last week reported how soldiers and police personnel have become terrorists prime targets, a situation which has raised anxiety and fears among the people as they can no longer go to bed with their two eyes closed.

Strengths, weaknesses of major presidential contenders

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4
 from APC because of alleged persecution and insecurity.

In the north west, Atiku has the APC that controls nearly all the states in the zone to contend with. There is also the influence of the NNPP. The three parties no doubt will feast on the north west.

In his North East base, Atiku may make a headway but a running mate for the APC from the zone may decimate his strength.

But above all, he has more spread than any of the other leading contenders.

Chances of the four contenders depend on how effectively they can consolidate on their strengths while striving to amend their weaknesses.

Profiles of Candidates

Profile: Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu

He was born in Lagos on March 29, 1952.

After spending his early life in southwestern Nigeria, Tinubu studied accounting in the United States, worked abroad for several years before returning to Nigeria in the mid-1980s and continued working in financial management before entering politics.

He was a member of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), on which platform he was elected a senator to represent Lagos West senatorial district in 1992 during the aborted Third Republic.

After the then military president, late Gen. Sani Abacha dissolved the Senate in 1993, Tinubu became an activist campaigning for the return of democracy as a part of the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO) movement. Although he was forced into exile in 1994, Tinubu returned after Abacha's 1998 death triggered the beginning of the transition to the Fourth Republic.

In the first post-transition Lagos State gubernatorial election, Tinubu won by a wide margin as a member of the Alliance for Democracy over the Peoples Democratic

Party's Dapo Sarumi and the All People's Party's Nosirudeen Kekere-Ekun. Four years later, he won re-election to a second term over the PDP's Funsho Williams by a reduced margin.

Tinubu's two terms were marked by attempts at modernizing the city of Lagos and his feuds with the PDP-controlled federal government.

After leaving office in 2007, Tinubu retained his status as one of Nigeria's most influential politicians as his allies often filled high offices throughout the southwest and he played a key role in the formation of the All Progressives Congress in 2013. Long and controversial, Tinubu's career has been plagued by accusations of corruption and questions about the veracity of his personal history.

In June 2022, he was chosen as the All Progressives Congress candidate in the 2023 Nigerian presidential election] having polled 1,271 votes to clinch the party's ticket, defeating 13 other aspirants in the process.

Profile: Atiku Abubakar

Atiku Abubakar GCON (born 25 November 1946) in Jada formerly in British Cameroon but now in modern day Adamawa State, Nigeria.

He is a businessman of international repute and politician.

He served as the vice president of Nigeria from 1999 to 2007 during the presidency of Olusegun Obasanjo. He ran as governor of Adamawa State in 1990, 1997 and later, in 1998, being elected before becoming Olusegun Obasanjo's running mate during the 1999 presidential election and re-elected in 2003.

An educated Atiku Abubakar worked in the Nigeria Customs Service for twenty years, rising to become the Deputy Director, as the second highest position in the Service was then known; he retired in April 1989 and took up

full-time business and politics. He started out in the real estate business during his early days as a Customs Officer. In 1974, he applied for and received a 31,000 naira loan to build his first house in Yola, which he put up for rent.

He started his political career with the Peoples Front of Nigeria in 1989 and since his entry into politics, Atiku Abubakar has unsuccessfully contested five times for the Office of President of Nigeria in 1993, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019.

He was a member of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) from 1989 to 1993. He contested the SDP presidential primaries losing to Moshood Abiola and Baba Gana Kingibe. He was a presidential candidate of the Action Congress in the 2007 presidential election coming in third to Umaru Yar'Adua of the PDP and Muhammadu Buhari of the ANPP. He contested the presidential primaries of the People's Democratic Party during the 2011 presidential election losing out to former President Goodluck Jonathan.

In 2014, he joined the All Progressives Congress ahead of the 2015 presidential election and contested the presidential primaries losing to Muhammadu Buhari. In 2017, he returned to the Peoples Democratic Party and was the party presidential candidate during the 2019 presidential election, again losing to incumbent President Muhammadu Buhari.

In May 2022, he was chosen as the Peoples Democratic Party candidate in the 2023 Nigerian presidential election.

Profile Peter Obi

Peter Gregory Obi CON is a Nigerian businessman and politician who served as the Governor of Anambra State three separate times from 2006 to 2014. In May 2022, he became the Labour Party nominee for President of Nigeria in the 2023 presidential election.



Atiku

Born in Onitsha in 1961, Obi graduated from the University of Nigeria in 1984. Afterwards he entered business and banking, eventually rising to hold several high-ranking executive positions at banks. By the early 2000s, Obi was the chairman of Fidelity Bank before leaving the position to enter politics.

He held leadership positions in some private establishments. Some of the companies he served includes: Next International Nigeria Ltd, Chairman and Director of Guardian Express Mortgage Bank Ltd, Guardian Express Bank Plc, Future View Securities Ltd, Paymaster Nigeria Ltd, Chams Nigeria Ltd, Data Corp Ltd and Card Centre Ltd. He was the youngest chairman of Fidelity Bank Plc.[2][13][14]

Obi ran for governor in 2003, as a member of the All Progressives Grand Alliance but his main opponent was unlawfully declared victor. After three years of legal battles, Obi was declared winner in 2006 and assumed office that March. He was then impeached that November before the impeachment was overturned and he returned to office in February 2007. Again, Obi was removed when a new election was held in April 2007 but the judiciary intervened again and ruled that he should be allowed to complete a full four-year term. In 2010,

he won re-election to a second term. Obi's terms were marked by improvements in state finances, education, and healthcare.

After leaving office in 2014, Obi gained new status as an advocate for good governance and national political figure after decamping to the Peoples Democratic Party in 2014. In 2019, he was selected as the vice presidential nominee in the presidential election running alongside Atiku Abubakar, but lost to incumbent president Muhammadu Buhari and vice president Yemi Osinbajo. By 2022, Obi ran for president himself, first in the PDP until defecting to the LP in May 2022.

Profile: Musa Rabi Kwankwaso

Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso, FNSE, FNIQS (born 21 October 1956) is a Nigerian politician who was the Governor of Kano state from 1999 to 2003 and 2011 to 2015. After he lost his re-election in 2003, he was appointed the first Minister of Defence of the Fourth Republic with no prior military background from 2003 to 2007, under the administration of former president Olusegun Obasanjo. He was later elected to the Senate in 2015, serving one term under the platform of the All Progressives Congress (APC) representing Kano Central Senatorial District.

In 2011, he was re-elected governor of the

state and went on to join the All Progressives Congress (APC) in 2014. In 2015, Kwankwaso unsuccessfully contested the presidential primaries nomination under the opposition All Progressive Congress, but lost to Muhammad Buhari. In 2018, he returned to People's Democratic Party (PDP) and contested the presidential primaries losing out to Atiku Abubakar.

He has moved across parties in his political career. He was a member of the People's Front of Nigeria in 1989, Social Democratic Party (SDP) 1989 to 1993. At return of democratic rule in 1998, he joined the PDP until in 2014 when he defected to the APC where he stayed till 2018 before returning to PDP.

He is currently the national leader of the New Nigeria Peoples Party. Kwankwaso enjoys widespread support in Kano and north-western Nigeria; he has been viewed as a charismatic populist.

Why Tinubu has an edge over Atiku and Obi

Political alignments, parleys and consultations across parties after the emergence of presidential candidates tend to shape focus and opinion about chances of the candidates.

Tinubu's emergence as APC's candidate is an attestation of his doggedness. He is a relentless fighter for a course firmly believed in. Midway into the contest ahead of the APC primary, machinations against his candidature were so thick to the extent that some of his supporters were becoming weary that their hero was about losing out.

But the forward looking Asiwaju, undaunted by the swelling antagonism and campaign of calumny against his person and alleged betrayal by those he trusted, was busy marshalling plans to gain grounds, mop up

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

Maintain peace until govt's final report, Uzor urges feuding Isoko communities

By **KELVIN OHOROR**

Special adviser to the Government of Delta State on Peace Building and Conflict Resolution, Chief Edwin Uzor, has urged the people of Uzere, Igbide and Emede communities in Isoko South Local Government Area of to maintain the existing peace pending its release of the report on the Oruzu farmland dispute.

He made this known to the three communities during a tour of the disputed land after he received a petition from Igbide over the boundary adjustment given to them by IDU.

Uzor admonished the communities to be patient with the state and IDU, noting it has not been easy all along.

According to him, "Today we are here and I can see that the whole situation is peaceful despite the various argument here and there. It is normal and

it is expected.

"We must have it in mind that there is always a solution to every problem. The existing peace must be maintained, everybody will die and nobody will go with the land. Our forefathers who were fishing and farming on the land here are no more."

He warned the three communities that as they go home, they should tell their leaders, youths and followers that there should be peace, stating that whatever the government will come out with they should take it in good faith.

"Let nobody go behind and charge the people to fight over this land issue," he said.

A patron of IDU, Chief Iduh AMADHE, stated that when they did the settlement all parties involved agreed to the terms, noting that for peace to reign, they must endeavour to make sacrifice.

He reiterated that "when

we did the settlement we all drank together, we knelt down, prayed and sing praises to God Almighty for giving us lasting solution and peace.

He commended Uzor for coming to the disputed farmland to see things for himself and not just listening to hearsay of the explanation they gave him in the IDU Secretariat or in his office.

He urged him to appeal to the three communities to accept the boundary given to them by IDU and maintain the existing peace among themselves.

The Ist vice-president of Emede community, Mr Lucky Arumari also said: "I want to appeal to the President General of Igbide community to tell his people to abide by the boundary given to them by Isoko Development Union in order not to ignite crisis again between them.

He appealed to the Igbide indigenes to stop farming on the

land ceded to Emede: "Yes, IDU as the mediators gave recommendation based on what they interpreted, though we protested and raised observations.

"I want to tell all of us here that whatever decision Chief Edwin Uzor and his committee are going to take here will be accepted by Igbide:

"Igbide complained to him because we see him as our last bus stop; from his findings and investigations, whatever he decides to come out with, we will accept it.

"There is no gain in crisis, peace is golden, we will stand for peace, the entire Igbide people will stand for peace," he added.

On his part, the President General of Uzere, Chief Brooklyn Essi, said the community does not have any problem.

He added: Let nobody cross from the other side to the other so that we can sustain the existing peace."

NBA Oleh branch elects new exco

By **KELVIN OHOROR**

Nigeria Bar Association, Oleh Branch has elected a new executive to run its affairs for the next two years.

The election was held at Exxon Oil Nigeria Limited conference hall, Irri in Isoko South Local Government Area of Delta State.

Barr. John Urete was unanimously elected unopposed as chairman. Others elected are: Barr. R. Akpoghalino - Vice Chairman, Barr. David Ezech -Secretary, Barr. A. D Eni-Mukoro - Assistant Secretary, Barr. Okemena Edi (Mrs.) - Treasurer, Barr. Nkechi Tracy Ogude -Social Secretary, Barr. Ijeoma Justice Adiela - Publicity Secretary, Barr. Itedjere O. Jude - Welfare Secretary and Barr. Israel Ekperuru - Provost.

In his acceptance speech, Urete thanked members of the branch for the confidence they reposed in him by unanimously electing him unopposed as their chairman.

He promised to ensure unity among members of the branch, stating that the new executives will reach out to aggrieved ones.

He pledged that the new executives will collaborate with members of the branch to ensure the speedy completion of the Bar centre. It will also build a sustainable bar and bench relationship.

Urete also assured members of the branch that his era will facilitates stamp and seal request among others.



L-R: Edo State Commissioner for Information and Orientation, Hon. Andrew Adaze Emwanta; Edo State Acting Governor, Rt. Hon. Comrade Philip Shaibu, and Chief Imam, Benin Central Mosque, Alhaji Abdulfattah Enabulele, during an event to commemorate the Eid-El-Kabir celebration, at the Government House, in Benin City, on Saturday, July 9, 2022.

Shaibu tasks Nigerians on religious tolerance

Edo State Acting Governor, Rt. Hon. Comrade Philip Shaibu, has called on Nigerian leaders to demonstrate the virtue of religious tolerance in the spirit of the Eid-el-Kabir celebration.

Shaibu said this while receiving the Muslim faithful who were at Government House, Benin City, to commemorate Eid-El-Kabir.

He noted: "Edo State is one of the states in Nigeria where

Muslims and Christians live peacefully and work together for the development of the state.

"If Nigeria emulates Edo, things will work well for the nation. It's only in Edo State that a Reverend Father was kidnapped and a Muslim went to the bush to rescue him and lost his life in the process."

The acting governor called on political leaders and the entire citizenry to eschew bitterness

and work together to engender sustainable development.

Shaibu added: "Politicians should avoid playing politics with religion as it will certainly divide us. Let us reject such politicians as they don't mean well for Nigeria.

"We don't have a choice but to save Nigeria from collapse. The general elections are coming in 2023. This is the time to pray for good leaders that will move

the nation forward.

"We have been trying our best to make Edo State great. We are working hard to ensure we are safe in our state. We all should be security conscious.

"I want to join the Chief Imam of Benin Central Mosque, Alhaji Fatai Enabulele, to pray for Nigeria as she needs prayers; it's only prayers that can change this country for good."

The Chief Imam of Benin

Central Mosque, Alhaji Fatai Enabulele, called on Nigerians to choose competent leaders as the nation prepares for 2023 general elections.

"Let us ensure we elect competent leaders that will lead us in 2023. Choose leaders that will not discriminate and implement evil policies. Let's look for leaders with the political will to stop the killing in our nation."

Strengths, weaknesses of major presidential contenders



Obi



Kwankwaso

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

delegates using his affinity with many APC governors and consolidating on his strengths.

His emergence proved some bookmakers who have written him off, wrong. And destiny placed him side by side other candidates who are not ordinary politicians: Atiku Abubakar of PDP, Peter Obi of Labour Party and Rabiu Kwankwaso of NNPP.

The leading candidates definitely have their strongholds but ability to make incursion into other areas to eke out votes from the enemies zone, is what some observers believe will stand out Tinubu in the coming election.

Obi, no doubt, the political rave of the moment has the south east as the base of his 'Obi- Dient' movement with Igbo elders and cultural associations anchored by the Ohanaeze N'digbo marshalling support for an Igbo President as represented

by him.

Obi's mass movement if concentrated in the East alone cannot guarantee the Presidency. He definitely needs other tribes and zones, hence his consultations with the Kwankwaso's NNPP for a North West - South East alliance.

Lurking in the political terrain to weaken Obi's support base is the PDP whose influence in the South East though dimming, will definitely earn reasonable percentage of votes from Igboland.

Also, Tinubu's APC will not be completely run over in the zone. The party will still muster votes from APC-controlled states of Ebonyi and Imo and reap from PDP crisis in states of Anambra, Abia and Enugu. It is instructive to be mindful that the states in the zone are traditional PDP areas not minding that they are currently under the control of APC.

So, in essence, whatever

votes gained by Obi may not be able to secure him constitutionally required 25 percent votes in 2/3 of the states of the federation.

This is so because Obi and his Labour Party are not really feasible or on ground in both North East and North Central as well as South West.

The 2023 election, according some analysts, is just to create awareness for an Obi future presidency.

In the same vein, Kwankwaso is just a political giant in mainly Kano, not even in all the North West states. His influence is very minimal in the North East while he could be said to have no root in the North Central.

The Kwankwaso movement is not known among the voting populace in the entire three zones of the south. He is known just within the Hausa communities.

So, Kwankwaso is just in the race to trouble the political waters and possibly strike a deal with any willing party

or candidate. Tinubu is not a neophyte in such political dealings.

The major threat to Tinubu is the veteran in the presidential race, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar of the PDP.

The Waziri Adamawa, like Tinubu is a widely known and acknowledged political figure whose influence cuts across ethnic and religious borders.

His most successful outing was at the 2019 presidential election in which he came closer to President Buhari showed that he is a loved politician in whom many Nigerians have hope of rebuilding the nation.

His influence within the PDP will always win the presidential ticket despite stiff challenges such as the one put forward by Rivers State Governor Nyesom Wike in the May 28 primary.

The PDP as a once ruling party has support base across regions, zones and states, to which its candidate can latch on. However, such support base is weakend in some states presently controlled by the ruling APC.

Atiku's chances no doubt, will be tied to the strength of PDP in states. Crises of disaffection caused by pre-congress and pre-convention matters have polarised the PDP and some members want to distance themselves from activities of the party. This, if not resolved may affect Atiku's fortune at the polls.

Also, a wide crack among stakeholders of the party resulting lately from the choice of Delta Governor Ifeanyi Okowa as Atiku's running mate as against the popular preference for Wike by a large section of PDP members portends great danger.

Atiku stands the risk of losing votes in South South states of Rivers, Cross River and Edo where Wike has strong associates as other candidates are already wooing him for alliance. He has been visited by Obi, Kwankwaso and the Tinubu camp.

It is obvious that Atiku will have to struggle with Tinubu for South West votes, Obi for South East votes and Kwankwaso for North West votes.

Atiku stands the chance of becoming the runner up like he did in 2019, except anything changes.

Tinubu has the South West in his firm grip as the APC controls states in the zone except Oyo which is under PDP. Even in Oyo, APC is not a pushover

as it parades strong politicians and all the three senators from the state are now in the party.

In the southwest, there is ongoing town to town enlightenment that its sons and daughters irrespective of their political leanings should support Tinubu and not allow the chance of a Yoruba President in 2023 slip away.

Beyond Yorubaland, the awareness campaign is the same among town unions and associations in Yoruba communities in the north and east.

The APC controls most of the North Central states except Benue. Most of the governors are favourably disposed to the former Lagos State helmsman.

Tinubi's alliances in the North East are many, hence the quest and why he picked his running mate from the zone, Kashim Shettima, former governor of Borno. Likewise his successor, Babagaba Zulum, is for Tinubu. Also, the Senate President, Ahmad Lawan from Yobe who contested the presidential primary election with Tinubu have no option than to support the APC candidate.

For Tinubu in the North West are strong politicians like present Kano State governor, Abdullahi Ganduje and his counterparts in Jigawa, Kaduna, Katsina, Zamfara and Kebbi. They have resolved to break Kwankwaso's stronghold to bring out massive votes for Tinubu from the zone.

In the South South which is dominantly in the control of PDP, there are politicians with electoral value who can deliver some votes at least in their domains for Tinubu. Immediate past ministers from the zone such as Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi, Godswill Akpabio, Dakuku Peterside and serving federal legislators will work for the emergence of Tinubu.

Outside the political circles, Tinubu has many technocrats he had made, serving in federal agencies and parastatals who owed their appointments to him. These people are providing expertise and opinions for the development of a blueprint for a Tinubu Presidency. A few of them with deep pockets are discreetly funding some of the numerous Bola Tinubu Support Groups.

Tinubu also may ride on the strength of influence wielded by political icons like President Muhammadu Buhari to coast home to victory. Many northerners will see a government of Muslim Tinubu as an extension of Buhari's and APC's administration.

Police burst kidnap syndicate, kill one

By ISAAC OLAMIKAN

Kidnapping in Edo State has suffered a setback. Following the charge by Acting Governor, Rt. Hon. Philip Shaibu, to security agencies to flush out armed gangs from the state, operatives of the Edo State Police Command have killed a kidnapper on the Benin-Auchi Expressway.

In a statement, Deputy Police Public Relations Officer, ASP Jennifer U. Iwegbu, said the kidnapper was killed by at Iyuku Road by Imeke Junction, Benin-Auchi Expressway,

on Saturday, July 09, 2022 at about 1920hrs, during a routine patrol.

She said, "As a fallout of the recent strategic engagement of stakeholders in Edo State Security by the Acting Governor, Rt. Hon Philip Shaibu, and Command CP, CP Abutu Yaro, a kidnapper was decimated at Iyuku Road by Imeke Junction, Benin-Auchi Expressway, on 09/07/2022 at about 1920hrs while operatives of the command were on routine patrol; others were wounded and took to flight.

"Subsequently, during bush combing along that

axis, a corpse on black mask suspected to be one of the hoodlums was discovered. A locally made pistol was discovered on him."

Iwegbu noted that the Edo State Commissioner of Police, CP Abutu Yaro, while reassuring the general public of the command's unalloyed commitment towards ensuring a peaceful state for Edo people, called for the spirit of patriotism by availing the command with credible information as such information will be speedily treated with high level confidentiality.

INEC excludes Lawan, Akpabio from senatorial race for alleged malpractice

BY PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has told politicians that are aggrieved over the conduct of primaries and subsequent exclusion from its final list of candidates to seek redress in court.

The ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) submitted names of Senate President Ahmad Lawan and former Minister of Niger Delta affairs, Godswill Akpabio, as its candidates for Yobe North and Akwa Ibom North-west Senatorial Districts, respectively.

However, in the list of candidates for the 2023 senatorial district elections published by INEC, Lawan and Akpabio were conspicuously excluded following the Commission's resolve to work with the reports of its monitoring teams.

"In relation to the primaries for the

Akwa Ibom North West and Yobe North Senatorial Districts, the Commission stands by the monitoring reports received from our state offices.

"For this reason, the Commission did not publish the particulars of any candidate for the two constituencies at variance with the State reports," Festus Okoye, INEC spokesperson, said in a statement on Saturday.

He added that aggrieved parties should take their cases to the Federal High Court "as provided in section 285 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended) and sections 29 (5) and 84 (14) of the Electoral Act, 2022."

According to Okoye, INEC's staff have been working hard to meet the deluge of requests received on the issuance of certified true copies (CTCs) of documents.



Ahmad Lawan



Godswill Akpabio

EFCC tasks varsity on fight against corruption



EFCC Boss, Abdulsheed Bawa

BY PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has charged the management and students of Greenfield University to get involved in the fight against corruption in the country.

According to a statement by the EFCC, Kaduna Zonal Commander of the Commission, Assistant Commander of the EFCC, ACE Harry Erin, gave the charge when a delegation of the management of the university paid a courtesy call to the Command.

The EFCC has in recent times engaged in drastic sensitisation and awareness campaign to schools and corporate organizations against corruption and the need to imbibe integrity and report corruption practices.

The Commission has been inaugurating its Anti-Corruption Club in public schools across the country in a bid to get young people involved in the fight

against economic crimes.

Erin said the EFCC is determined to nip corruption at the bud, and called on the management and students of the Institution to join hands with the Commission to achieve its mandate.

The statement reads, "The EFCC has called on the management and students of Greenfield University to show more commitment to the fight against economic and financial crimes.

"This call was made in Kaduna on Wednesday, July 6, 2022, by the Kaduna Zonal Commander of the EFCC, Assistant Commander of the EFCC, ACE Harry Erin when a delegation of the management of the University paid a visit to the Command.

"Receiving members of the delegation, Erin, stressed that the EFCC was committed to its preventive mandate as an effective mechanism of tackling cybercrime and enjoined the University to be involved in driving awareness against the menace among its students."

Police rescue kidnapped Chinese nab alleged human parts trafficker

BY PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

A Chinese abducted by gunmen on July 3 at a construction site on Shao-Oloru Expressway has been rescued by operatives of the Kwara State Police Command.

Public Relations Officer of the Command, Ajayi Okasanmi, a Superintendent of Police (SP), disclosed this in a statement in Ilorin while noting that police are still on manhunt for the culprits.

"The pressure mounted on the kidnapppers by the rescue teams became so intense that the criminals could no more stand the heat, forcing them to abandon the victim and escape for their lives," Okasanmi stated.

Meanwhile the rescued Chinese is currently undergoing medical examination to ascertain his state of health before he will be reunited with his family.

In another development, security operatives apprehended some suspected human traffickers as they were taking a human skull from Lagos State into

Ilorin.

"Upon reception of information, security operatives arrested a 41-year-old man in Ilorin for the crime.

"The suspect had earlier received the package from a motor park, when he was searched, a human skull concealed in a carton with his name and phone number inscribed on it was recovered.

"Preliminary investigation into the matter revealed that the suspect actually procured the human skull, a horse head, a chimpanzee head and other items.

"The other items were recovered in his house and he confessed he intended to use them for money-making rituals," he said.

Okasanmi added that Commissioner of Police, CP Tuesday Assayomo, commended the operatives for a job well-done.

He admonished the investigating team to ensure that other accomplices of the kidnap suspect were arrested and prosecuted.

He also urged transport unions in the state to work with law enforcement agents to get rid of crime.



Ajayi Okasanmi

NSCDC deploys 1,620 personnel for security coverage at Sallah in Rivers

By **CHRIS EZEONOH**,
Port Harcourt

Rivers State Commandant of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Michael Ogar, has said the command has deployed over 1600 officers and men to provide adequate security before, during and after the Sallah celebration. Ogar who disclosed this in a

strategic security briefing with the management staff and 23 local government area divisional officers at the state headquarters said security reports are fundamental and indispensable in order to combat the spate of insecurity in the nation especially in a crucial time like this.

The commandant said that the Divisional officers must work very closely with churches, mosques

and traditional rulers in their respective local government area in order to gather credible intelligence and information needed to forestall crime across the state.

"It is a notable fact that criminal minded persons do take advantage of festive seasons to perpetrate their nefarious acts, we must be on top of the game in safeguarding of critical national assets and infrastructure and provisions of adequate security for the good people of Rivers State.

"The Command Antivandal Squad has been fully briefed on the need to secure the waterways and effect massive arrests of those

dealing illegally in petroleum products.

"Our Intelligence and Undercover team, Counter Terrorism and Arms Squad are to be on red alert; we must justify the trust and confidence of the public in us by discharging our duties with all sense of responsibility and commitment", the Commandant charged the personnel.

He further said that the Command would synergize with respective stakeholders and sister agencies in curbing all forms of criminal activities in the State and assured the good people of Rivers State that the

Eid-el-kabir celebration would be hitch free.

The Commandant also advised parents and guardians on the need to caution their wards against unlawful association and enjoined the public to report all suspicious movement of criminals to the NSCDC and other security agencies.

While wishing the Muslim faithful happy Eid-el-Kabir, Ogar reaffirmed his commitment to anti-vandalism war insisting that perpetrators of illegal dealings in petroleum products would be arrested and prosecuted accordingly.

Tin Can Customs uncovers syndicate forging area controller's signature for cargo clearance

By **JOHNMARK UKOKO**

The Tin Can Island Command of the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) has uncovered activities of a syndicate that specialises in forging the signature of the Comptroller, Kunle Oloyede to clear containers at the command.

Findings by The Trumpet revealed that a huge number of containers involved in the scam have been intercepted by the command and were undergoing investigation at the enforcement unit as of the time of filing this report.

The Tin Can Island Port is famous for being the most notorious port in Nigeria with criminal activities including forging of clearance documents popularly known as 'Machine Outside' or M.O., a practice referred to by the players in the past as 'Canteen Boys,' who usually hang around the Tin Can Port food canteen to await opportunities to carry out their nefarious activities.

Their activities were effectively curtailed during the era of the late former Comptroller General of Customs (CGC), Abudullahi Inde Dikko, who busted and arrested many members of the syndicate, but apparently, the scourge had resurfaced at the port.

Although, it could not be ascertain if any arrests have been made in connection with the seized containers, The Trumpet learnt from reliable sources that

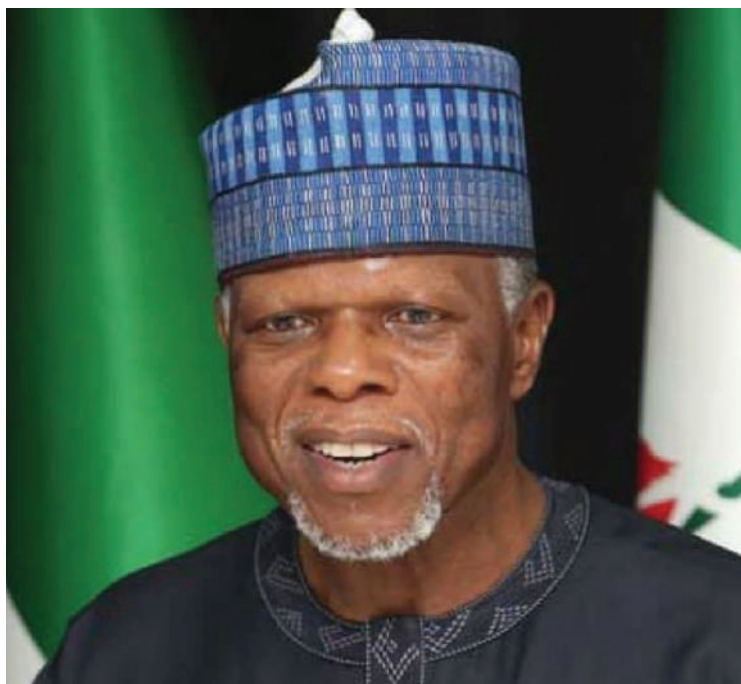
Comptroller Oloyede was angry about the development and had vowed to nip the criminal activities in the bud.

Public Relations Officer (PRO) of the command, Uche Ejiesieme, confirmed the development, saying the command uncovered activities of the criminals through the deployment of technology and artificial intelligence.

"The intercepted containers are being investigated. I cannot give you the number of containers intercepted, but the truth is that we uncovered a syndicate that forged the comptroller signature and all the items associated there to have been impounded and are undergoing investigation.

"In every trade value chain, there must be criminals on the prowl, but the good thing is that a set of Information Communication Technology (ICT) officers deployed from Abuja by the Comptroller General, Col. Ali Hameed (rtd.), are helping to do a wonderful job."

Speaking further, Ejiesieme said: "If you go to the office now you will see them very busy with their systems, checking and profiling the system. It is not new to us because we know that criminals would always want to be ahead, even in America, which is best developed in technology, people try to be ahead of the government. We preempt some of these criminal activities and try to see how we can block them."



Ali Hammed, Custom boss



President, Gotabaya Rajapaksa

Distracting politics and looming food crisis in Nigeria

By **FRANK TIETIE**

As the fever of political permutations are rising among Nigerians over the 2023 general elections, many forget that issues of national security are far beyond the present scourge of terrorism, banditry and kidnappings.

The United Nations (UN) and the Economist have predicted a food crisis in the developing world in 2022 and beyond, particularly in Africa, which would have severe consequences in terms of political and economic stability.

The ongoing mass protests in Sri Lanka, which have sacked its government over lack of food, should serve as a warning to Nigeria and other developing countries of Africa. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed these countries, including Nigeria, as having weak systems that are unable to absorb the slightest economic shocks on a global scale.

Pictures and videos of angry Sri Lankans in their thousands

taking over the presidential palace in Colombo show how much rage could be generated by widespread lack of food. And as one commentator noted that even Sri Lankans, who were once divided by religion and political ideologies, were all united by hunger to chase away the President, Gotabaya Rajapaksa and his government.

This should, therefore, remind Nigerian politicians and bureaucrats that the widening ethno-religious divides among Nigerians may not prevent a popular revolt against the government if such revolt is driven by hunger.

With signs that some state governments will no longer be able to afford the payment of salaries in the coming months, urgent questions should now be raised about Nigeria's national food security preparedness. The statistics of Nigeria's strategic food reserves must be examined to know how much Nigeria can cope in the face of global disruptions to food imports.

Even in the wave of politics in the current election cycle in

Nigeria, the government should not shy away from debates on national food security. Importantly, the presidential aspirants of the various political parties must be put to task on providing a realistic roadmap to ensure food sufficiency in Nigeria. Thus the kind of Peter Obi's response to the alarming crisis of electric power shortage is also needed in food security before a crisis happens.

The present situation in Sri Lanka is most likely in Nigeria, if urgent steps are not taken by the government to reverse the country's increasing dependence on importation of food.

To this end, Food Avail Nigeria would be engaging with relevant stakeholders in food security to raise interests and responsibilities in ensuring that a food crisis in Nigeria does not result in incalculable and irreversible socio-economic and political damage to Nigeria.

•Tietie, a Human Rights Lawyer, Executive Director of CASER and Convener of Food Avail Nigeria, writes from Lagos



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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				
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 Print Process - Web Offset Litho
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Federal government's abandoned assets

It was widely reported recently that the Ministry of Water Resources auctioned assets of the Federal Government of Nigeria valued at N2 billion for a paltry N13.6 million. Trimmers and lawnmowers bought in 2004 and 2005 were sold for N2000 and N6500, respectively. The said agency further disposed of three Peugeot 504 station wagons bought for N2.9m each for N26, 400 each. A Mitsubishi Canter lorry of N8.55m was sold as scrap for N80, 000. A DAF (1000) lorry bought for N5m was auctioned for N90, 000. A Toyota Hilux pick-up van bought for N3.75m (that could be serviced at the cost of N187, 500) was auctioned at the same of N187, 500.

Consequently, the Office of the Auditor-General for the Federation rightly queried the management of the Ogun-Osun River Basin Development Authority. The OORBDA, for whatever reasons, by her action has simply undercut the taxpayer by "pricing away" the government's plant, property, and equipment valued at over N2bn at a paltry sum of N13.618m.

The act of "selling away" the assets of government under ubiquitous headings such as 'unserviceable', 'abandoned', 'unprofitable', etc. is common knowledge to observers in Nigeria. The evaluation of these assets is often questionable as most valuers deliberately undercut taxpayers. Often, they do this to benefit their benefactors who appointed them in the first place. Their dubious goal is to sell or auction these priceless assets to public servants, politicians, and their corporate concerns. These assets, most of which seat on a very large expanse of land, ultimately end up in the hands of those who under-priced them and who, paradoxically, ought to manage them in the public interest.

Government property and assets that suffer this fate fall into various categories. We have many federal government buildings littering the streets of Lagos. They were abandoned when Abuja became the Capital City of Nigeria. The Armed Forces are not exempted. Such government corporations as NITEL, NEPA,

NNPC, are also guilty of this.

A major factor why most of these assets are left unsold is intrigues involved in their disposal processes. The actors involved fight among themselves on who should get what. The entire process of disposal becomes messy and muddy. The assets are left to rot. Many government properties in Lagos are now dens for criminals, even on busy streets such as Marina. Many lands have been taken over and occupied by neighbouring host communities who use them as markets or for agricultural purposes.

It is unfortunate that the federal government seems to think that the properties and assets cannot be re-purposed for the public interest. A few examples would suffice. The vast asset of NITEL at Oshodi, Lagos can be handed

over to the University of Lagos to serve as a campus of the University. Most of the abandoned secretariat buildings in Lagos can be re-purposed to become referral health facilities and hospitals. Many can be converted to blocks of flats for Nigerian workers or converted to staff training facilities or guest houses. The ASUU-FGN 2009 Agreement stated that such property should be handed over to Nigerian universities as revenue-generating units. These are measures only people driven by a spirit of the common good would consider as viable options.

It may be difficult to retrieve government property and assets that were auctioned away cheaply. Nevertheless, the option of reprimanding those responsible for acts that are inimical to the public interest and the common good is one that is viable. As a form of deterrence, the government should quickly enact laws that will spell out measures that may be visited upon such saboteurs.

Important FGN assets that are being put forward for the auction should be published. The processes and outcomes should also be published nationally. There should be a call for contributions from the public on the best ways to effectively use these facilities or the best ways to sell them. The fact that some officials of government can secretly give up crude oil wells, institutions, property, and houses sitting on a very large expanse of land is an outrightly immoral action to take. It is also a betrayal of public trust. The buyers of some of these assets sell the land and equipment of some of these corporations they acquired cheaply.

There is an urgent need to retrieve all property and assets of the FGN, especially in Lagos. It is high time the FGN conducted a thorough audit of her assets in Lagos and considered as the 'first option of decline' her agencies that can take over these properties. There is the need to collaborate with the various state governments as well as communities on the exercise. If well carried out, the assets are veritable sources of income that can defray some of the FGN's internal indebtedness.



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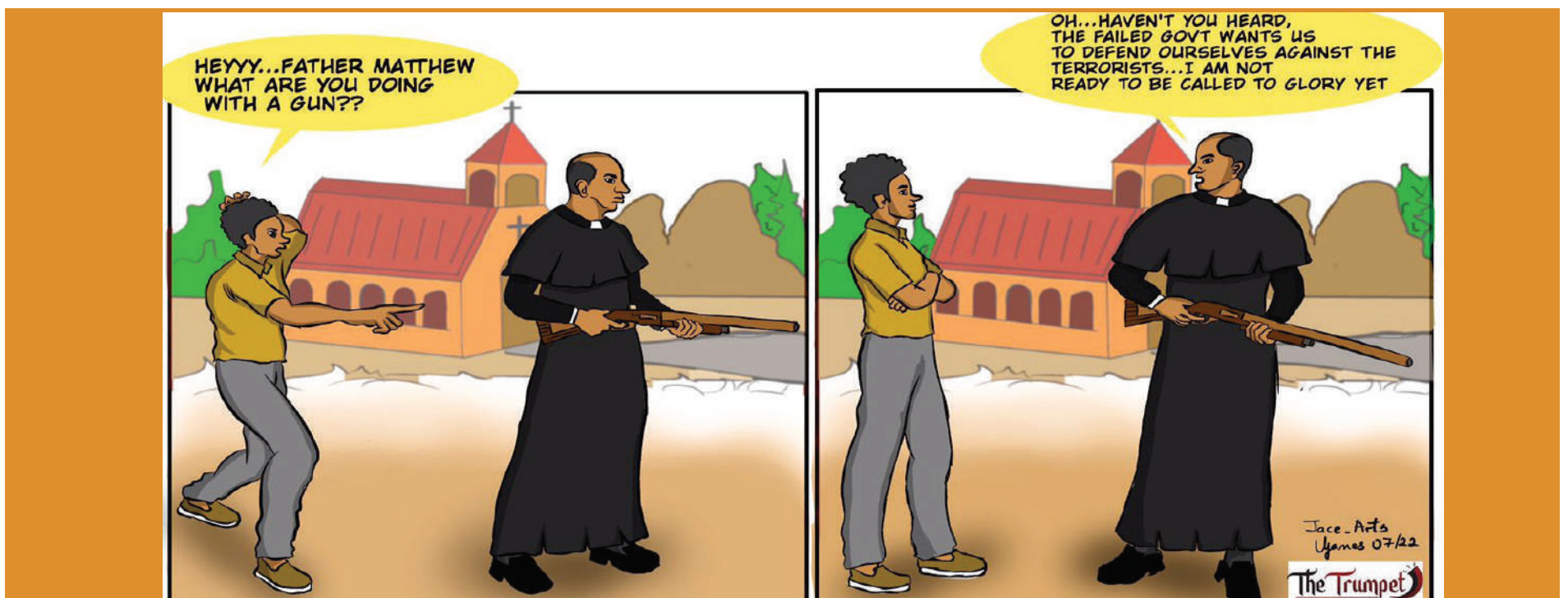
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State Governors and State Security

In the light of vicious attacks on communities across Nigeria, resulting in loss of thousands of lives, and the apparent helplessness of State governors, it is necessary to examine the powers which the governors possess (if any) to protect the people who elected them in office. If we consider the primary function of government to be protection of life and property, then we must know that we are in a serious situation if government can no longer secure its citizens.

Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project reports that in Nigeria more than 2600 civilians were killed in 2021, an increase of over 250% from 2020. The situation has gotten worse. Nigeria Security Tracker (NST) reports that 2968 people were killed and 1484 abducted in Nigeria between January and March 2022. These are human beings, loved ones to people, fellow Nigerians who are currently dealing with trauma and near hopelessness. They were domiciled in states that were and are under the administration of elected governors.

This leads us to ask questions. What can state governors do when their people are massacred daily without adequate response from the federal government? Are the state governors Chief Security Officers in word, in deed, and constitutionally? Do they have any security force or outfit totally at their disposal that they can deploy at short or long notice? What are the implications of this anomaly for the development of the state? Does this not suggest that we urgently need to restructure the country and enable State Police in the Constitution?

Three reactions to insecurity by three state Governors of the constituent parts of the federation provide for us an entry into the vexatious question of

federal government ambivalence to dealing with the massive loss of lives to bandits, terrorists, and kidnapers in the country. In 2020, Governor Samuel Ortom of Benue State called on the federal government to 'grant licenses to responsible citizens to carry sophisticated weapons such as AK47 to deter criminals from attacking innocent and helpless Nigerians. In March this year, Ortom, while lamenting how Fulani herdsmen had carried coordinated attacks in some local government of the state, reiterated his call on the people of the state to defend themselves over their land. Nigerian Tribune of April 12 reports that while 'reacting to the killing of 25 people by herders in some parts of the state on Monday night', directed 'the people of the state to rise and defend themselves!'

A few weeks ago, Governor Matawalle of Zamfara State said that in order to empower his people to defend themselves against terrorism and banditry, the state government 'has directed the state Commissioner of Police to issue license to all those who are qualified and are wishing to obtain such guns to defend themselves'. Explaining further, Zamfara Commissioner for Information, Ibrahim Dosara said that 'the act of terrorism has been a source of worry and concern to the people and government of Zamfara state and in order to deal decisively with the situation in most of the communities, government has no option than to allow people to buy guns and defend themselves'.

There is a video in circulation of Governor Emmanuel Udom decrying the presence and arrest of some eighteen armed men in fake army uniforms in Akwa Ibom State. In the video, he says the Commissioner of Police asked

that the arrested men be released with their guns. He says that they have the videos and pictures of the men. The matter has been reported to all arms of security agencies and nothing has been done. He simply alerted the world about the incident and called on the federal authorities to remove the CP. 'We've called on the powers that be international community that this is a war that has been declared against the Akwa Ibom people... whatever happens in this state is caused by the police'.

In addition to this are the experiences of Uwheru and Okpanam communities in Delta State. The bushes of Uwheru community have been violently taken over by armed herdsmen who sometimes as villagers to pay a toll before getting to their farms. In 2020, some eleven community youths were slaughtered by some Fulani herdsmen who are permanently embedded in the bush. Abraka community also reports that herdsmen are permanently lodged in their bushes, attacking, and killing indigenes at will. In the case of Okpanam, according to Vanguard Newspaper of 5th July, 'no fewer than 300 Fulani indigenes, mostly herdsmen, have taken over a section of Okpanam community. Following the incursion it is reported, there has been an increase in killings, kidnappings and maiming of residents'. Whereas the community leaders have ordered the herdsmen to leave the community, the state government through its Commissioner for Information, Charles Aniagwu, has said that 'government was not aware of invasion of part of Okpanam by herdsmen'.

The reactions of these governors bring to the fore the challenges of securing the territories which are



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supposedly under the control of Chief Executive of the State. Section 176 (2) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria states this clearly. However, the Constitution does not place the Police under the governor. He can only depend on the goodwill of the CP who is posted to his state. The CP takes direct orders from the Inspector General. Thus, if the order of the State Governor contravenes that of the IG, the CP would rather obey the IG. Which is an anomaly. But it is a strait jacket which we have boxed ourselves into. It need not be!

A solution can be found through a political arrangement. Across party lines, the governors must see themselves as one, whether PDP or APC. They must come together and stress communal defence as a way out of the current state of anomie we have found ourselves. This way, communities should acquire arms and ammunitions for the men who have been assigned to defend communities. Matawalle gave the correct response, not minding the cries of illegality from the federal government. Nothing will happen to him. What is good for Zamfara is good for Benue, good for Delta, good for Edo and Anambra. If criminals can have access to arms and

ammunitions in the scale we currently witness, it will not be wrong for the federal government to empower the constituent parts of the federation to organize defence committees.

Finally, a caring and responsible federal government ought to by now seek ways to end the massacres and kidnappings going on in the country. A conventional approach will not work. That is the subtext of Matawalle's courageous directive. It is the way to go. If the state fails, let the people rise to defend themselves. That the federal government asked citizens to surrender their licensed arms early in the Buhari administration has given room for some insinuations. Were we asked to surrender our arms so that we would be vulnerable to attacks from federal government backed anarchists? Former Chief of Army Staff retired General Theophilus Danjuma had called on citizens to defend themselves. The State governors do not have the Constitutional power to equip a defence force. However, they have the political power. It is this power that we call on them to invoke to save the citizens who entrusted power to them.

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Kaduna State can justifiably be called out on the series of killings in Nigeria on many grounds. Early in the life of the Kaduna State-led government of Mallam Nassir el-Rufai, precisely in 2016, fifty-three villages were razed down, 16 churches and 1422 houses were burnt, 808 innocent and armless Nigerians were dispatched to their early graves with 57 injured. Prior to the 2015 elections, el-Rufai was at the forefront of those who criticized and lampooned President Ebele Goodluck Jonathan. He described him as an incompetent and clueless leader who could not solve the insecurity problem in Northern Nigeria in general and Kaduna State in particular. So people thought electing General Muhammadu Buhari as President of Nigeria and Mallam el-Rufai as Kaduna State Governor respectively, would bring about the security of lives and property; especially against the backdrop of the fact that Kaduna State has one of the highest concentrations of military installations and training academies in Nigeria

Unfortunately, today, we all have lost count of the number of citizens killed since this government assumed power. We cannot be too specific with the number of the injured and maimed, the abducted kidnapped, as well as the missing and untraced persons. We pin our analysis on the tenure of the Muhammadu Buhari-led government because in the wake of the carting away of the Chibok school girls, the incumbent government, then as opposition, made insecurity a campaign issue as well as a political weapon against the PDP-led government of President Goodluck Jonathan. At the vanguard of this APC-led opposition was one who is now the incumbent Governor of Kaduna State.

On June 09, 2022, armed gangs killed 32 persons on motorcycles in four villages; moving from village to village. They did so unimpededly by the nation's security men. This came shortly after the killing of over 30 worshippers in a Catholic Church in Ondo State on Pentecost Sunday. On June 19, 2022, three people were killed in another attack on two Churches – Baptist and

Senseless ceaseless killings in Nigeria

Catholic - in Kajuru LGA, Kaduna State. The "unknown" gunmen adopted the same strategy which in the words of the Kaduna State Commissioner for Internal Security and Home Affairs, "gunmen riding motorcycles targeted four villages, beginning from Ungwan Fada and moving to Ungwan Turawa, before Ungwan Makama and Rubu. In Rubu village, the unknown gunmen attacked worshippers in the Baptist and Catholic churches."

Against the backdrop of the high spate of killings in Kaduna and elsewhere in Nigeria, many well-meaning bodies have called both the Federal and State governments to intensify the manhunt of so-called "unknown gunmen", terrorists, bandits, and kidnapers. It is even more worrisome that farming and Christian communities in Southern Kaduna are the main targets of this killing. A few villages are already captured and occupied by these so-called gunmen and terrorists. Nobody has been officially apprehended, prosecuted, and punished for such heinous crimes against humanity. This reign of blood and terror against Christian communities, priests, and churches is now gaining international attention. Non-Nigerians are now known to have "successfully" displaced indigenes and are occupying the captured communities. They even impose taxes on farmers. Is there still a government of the "people of Nigeria?"

We recall that El Rufai attributed Goodluck Jonathan's inability to quell the Boko Haram attacks to the incompetence and deliberate connivance with the criminals by

the then government. Today, the situation is worse. With the latest Nigerian Railways Corporation train killings and adoption of high-profile citizens, the Chibok girls' case is now a mere child's play. But the attacks in the north have some patterns that ought to help our security system. This includes attacks on Christian communities in Southern Kaduna and a deliberate desire to forcefully dislocate the indigenous owners of the land and their occupation by non-Nigerians; The use of motorcycles by the gunmen; abduction of women and children; attacks on Churches; and demand for high ransom fees that are often used to purchase more arms, with the abducted children trained as terrorists, and women married out or shared among the gunmen. These are hints honest security operatives could use in solving the challenges at hand.

Section 14, sub-section (2b) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) states that the primary purpose of government is to guarantee the security of the citizens and their property. The government is expected to provide for the welfare of citizens. So far it is clear that our government has not achieved much in this direction and citizens are becoming impatient. The call for self-help is now rife. The Zamfara State Governor's call for people to acquire guns to defend themselves attests to this fact. Non-governmental players are daily drawn to this challenge that we are now seeing in the expanding growth of emerging organizations and groups such as State/Regional security outfits

and vigilante groups. Recently, in spite of the huge budget allocated for security, the Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority (NSIA), through the Presidential Infrastructure Development Fund (PIDF) donated some 16 fully equipped operational patrol vehicles for surveillance on the Abuja-Kaduna road. The cars were presented to the Inspector General of Police, Usman Baba by the NSIA Management. The lesson here is that our security arms need extra-budgetary help.

Nigeria is currently facing a security crisis. The government should urgently work with the communities being attacked by terrorists in order to find lasting solutions. The first is to recruit young men from these communities, train and organize them into units that can support the Nigerian Army in the defense of their communities. They can be reintegrated into the Nigerian Army as soon as normalcy is restored in their communities. Since motorcycles are being weaponised by terrorists, a logical thing to do is to totally outlaw their use by anyone. Government should massively procure tricycles for transportation nationwide. The FGN must urgently do some self-scrutiny of a few of her policies; especially those that encourage easy access into Nigeria from neighbouring northern States. Enough is enough. Nigeria must be for Nigerians.

•Dr Karo Ogbinaka lectures at the Department of Philosophy, University of Lagos. He is a member of The Trumpet's editorial board.

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INEC restates stance on A'ibom N'West, Yobe North Senatorial Districts

●Lawan, Akpabio remain disqualified

By TUNDE JOSHUA, ABUJA

Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has said there is no variance in its position relating to the nomination of candidates by the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Akwa Ibom North West and Yobe North senatorial districts.

National Commissioner and Chairman, Information and Voter Education Committee, Barrister Festus Okoye made the clarification on issues relating to candidate nomination in a statement at weekend.

The Commission thereby warned the public to disregard speculations circulating online on the outcome of some of the recent primaries conducted by political parties and related issues. In particular, allegations intended to impugn the integrity of the Commission.

Setting the record straight, Okoye said the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria mandates the Commission to monitor the organization and operation of political parties, including their finances, conventions, congresses and party primaries.

He added that in line with its constitutional and legal obligations, the Commission deployed monitors to the various constituencies and received reports of such exercise.

"In relation to the primaries for the Akwa Ibom North West and Yobe North Senatorial Districts, the Commission

stands by the monitoring reports received from our State offices. For this reason, the Commission did not publish the personal particulars of any candidate for the two constituencies at variance with the State reports.

"Right now, the Commission is *funtus officio* in the two cases. Aggrieved parties are at liberty to approach the

Federal High Court and seek redress as provided in section 285 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended) and sections 29(5) and 84(14) of the Electoral Act, 2022," Okoye clarified.

With this clarification, candidature of both Senate President, Ahmad Lawan and former governor of Akwa Ibom

State, Sen Godswill Akpabio remain in limbo.

Speaking on the issuance of Certified True Copies (CTCs) of documents, he said staff of the Commission have been working hard, including weekends, to meet the deluge of requests received.

According to him, as at Friday 8th July 2022, the Commission has processed 433 requests involving the certification of One million, Six Hundred and Sixty-Two Thousand, Seven Hundred and Seventy-Six (1,662,776) pages of documents, adding that many of them are awaiting collection at the INEC Headquarters by some of the same applicants complaining of delay in issuance of the CTCs.

"Section 29 (4) of the Electoral Act provides that any person may apply to the Commission for a copy of nomination form, affidavit, and any other document submitted by a candidate at an election and the Commission shall, upon payment of a prescribed fee, issue such person with a certified copy of document within 14 days. Persons applying for CTC of documents should endeavor to act timely and within the ambit of the law," he said.

The Commission, he added, will continue to uphold the integrity of the electoral process, including the deepening of the deployment of technology to enhance the credibility of elections.



Ahmad Lawan



Godswill Akpabio

FCT indigenes will not tolerate security breach, says Senator

●Aduda condemns Kuje Prison attack

By TUNDE JOSHUA, ABUJA

Senate Minority Leader, Sen. Philip Aduda, has said that indigenes of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) will no longer tolerate acts of terrorism in the area.

He said this at the Kuje Correctional Centre facility when he led a delegation from his constituent to assess effect of damage on the facility as a result of the recent terrorists attack.

Aduda said "I had the privilege and honour of the Senate President and other senators, to lead a delegation of people in my constituent, after the very ugly

incidence that has occurred.

"I want to condemn this dastard attack, in it's totality and entirety, and say that we in the FCT or any other state, will not fold our hands to watch this degeneration and malady.

"In my humble assessment, I observed that the Prisons were porous, ill equipped and not properly managed.

"There was absence of even a CCTV camera which ought to have been recalled now, for footages. This, I think is absurd and unacceptable, especially in the FCT, where the seat of power is."

The lawmaker urged all residents, to

remain calm but vigilant in the coming days, as "the released inmates will seek for reintegration into the nearby communities. Let our slogan remain "See Something, Say Something".

He said he is "willing to partner with the National Assembly and the security framework, to enact laws that will stop future occurrences as this, in the FCT where I represent.

"For the ones, whose lives were lost, I pray for the repose of their souls and may God grant them the fortitude to bear the loss. Together, we will defeat, this menace."



Sen. Philip Aduda

Your selection as VP candidate deserved, PDP Governors' Forum tells Okowa @ 63

●Aduda condemns Kuje Prison attack

By TUNDE JOSHUA, ABUJA

Peoples Democratic Party Governors' Forum, (PDP-GF), under the Chairmanship of the Governor of Sokoto State, His Excellency, Rt. Hon. Aminu Waziri Tambuwal CFR, has felicitated with Governor Ifeanyi Arthur Okowa of Delta State as he turned 63.

A statement by Hon. C.I.D. Maduabum, LLM, Director-General, PDP Governors' Forum said "we join members of your family, friends, political associates and citizens of Delta State in thanking God for his blessings of good health, wisdom and forbearance on you all these past years.

"The Forum is glad to be associated

with your many achievements in private and public career especially your recent selection as the Vice Presidential candidate to Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, Wazirin Adamawa, the flagbearer of our party for the 2023 presidential election.

"Your selection is roundly earned and we are confident you will bring value and purpose to the ticket, following your exemplary demonstration of capacity and dedication to service, in the other public offices you have held in public administration, since the return of the country to democratic ways in 1999.

"We are particularly delighted and encouraged by the lofty achievements you will leave behind in Delta State, after your two terms as Governor, in education

through your vocational and technical initiatives, massive roads construction, for which citizens of Delta fondly call you "The Road Master", infrastructure provision by way of flood control interventions and other urban renewal works, graduate and youths employment and empowerment schemes, healthcare services and equipment deployment, power, sports, security amongst others.

"The Forum also appreciates your salient contributions to its growth, our party, PDP, and the country in general.

"We pray to God Almighty to continue to bless you with more wisdom, good health of body and mind, as you prepare to assume the office of the Vice President, after the 2023 election."



Ifeanyi Okowa

Insurer unveils AXA Roots to check climate change



Jumoke Odunlami

● **Collaborates with LASPARK to plant 5,000 trees in Lagos*

By SHARON O. ISAALAH, Head, Science, Technology and Health Desk

The movement kicked off during the yearly week dedicated to Customer Service Relation (CSR) activities termed "AXA Week For Good." One of the first activities undertaken by the insurer to introduce the initiative was in collaboration with the Lagos State Parks and Gardens Agency (LASPARK) to plant queen palm trees in Victoria Island.

At the event, the Chief Customer and Marketing officer of AXA Mansard, Jumoke Odunlami, said the various solutions addressing the scourge of climate change, tree-planting is the most effective means to capturing and storing carbon.

She explained the AXA Roots Movement is part of a week-long CSR activities under the global umbrella of the "AXA Week for Good", an Initiative that encourages employees in over 50 AXA entities globally to come together to give their time and resources to act for good.

Odunlami, stressed that for AXA Mansard, "this is more than an activity. We have tagged it a movement, in line with one of the two pillars of CSR agenda which are; Climate change & biodiversity and Inclusive protection".

"So, besides the trees we are planting here today with our partner, LASPARK, we are also encouraging and providing trees for all our employees to plant in their Homes. Over trees in their various homes, in what we have tagged "AXA Roots at Home", she enthused.

In her remarks, the General Manager of the Lagos State Parks and Gardens Agency, Adetoun Popoola, commended AXA Mansard for the initiative. She noted that with Lagos projected to experience population explosion over the next few years, environmental assets will be impacted, hence initiatives like the AXA Roots Movement must be encouraged.

She explained that tree planting is still one of the cheapest ways to tackle the climate crisis, calling on other organizations to emulate AXA Mansard by instituting initiatives to beautify and protect the environment.

AXA believes that it is the collective responsibility of all stakeholders to protect the environment; hence its commitment to promoting climate change awareness throughout the world.

Why Elon Musk terminates \$44bn Twitter buyout deal

By SHARON O. ISAALAH

Elon Musk's tumultuous \$44 billion bid to buy Twitter is on the verge of collapse — after the Tesla CEO sent a letter to Twitter's board at the weekend saying he is terminating the acquisition.

The chair of Twitter's board, Bret Taylor, tweeted that it is "committed to closing the transaction on the price and terms agreed upon with Mr. Musk and plans to pursue legal action to enforce the merger agreement. We are confident we will prevail in the Delaware Court of Chancery."

Twitter could have pushed for a \$1 billion breakup fee Musk agreed to pay under these circumstances. Instead, it looks ready to fight over the deal, which the company's board has approved and CEO Parag Agrawal has insisted he wants to consummate.

The possible unraveling of the deal is just the latest twist in a saga between the world's richest man and one of the most influential social media platforms. Much of the drama has played out on Twitter, with Musk — who has more than 100 million followers — lamenting that the company was failing to live up to its potential as a platform for free speech.

On Friday, shares of Twitter fell 5% to \$36.81, well below the \$54.20 that Musk had offered to pay. Shares of Tesla, meanwhile, climbed 2.5% to \$752.29.

Musk lawyer Mike Ringler wrote in the letter to Twitter dated Friday that for nearly two months, Musk has sought data to judge the prevalence of "fake or spam" accounts on the social media platform.

"Twitter has failed or refused to provide this information. Sometimes Twitter has ignored Mr. Musk's requests, sometimes it has rejected them for reasons that appear to be unjustified, and sometimes it has claimed to comply while giving Mr. Musk incomplete or unusable information," the letter said. It also said the information is fundamental to Twitter's business and financial performance, and it's needed to finish the merger agreement.

"From the beginning this was always a head scratcher to go after Twitter at a \$44 billion price tag for Musk and never made much sense to the Street, now it ends (for now) in a Twilight Zone ending

with Twitter's Board back against the wall and many on the Street scratching their head around what is next," Wedbush analyst Daniel Ives wrote in a note to investors after the letter was published.

On Thursday, Twitter sought to shed more light on how it counts spam accounts in a briefing with journalists and company executives. Twitter said it removes 1 million spam accounts each day. The spam accounts represent well below 5% of its active user base each quarter. To calculate how many accounts are malicious spam, Twitter said it reviews "thousands of accounts" sampled at random, using both public

and private data such as IP addresses, phone numbers, geolocation and how the account behaves when it is active, to determine whether an account is real.

Last month, Twitter offered Musk access to its "firehose" of raw data on hundreds of millions of daily tweets, according to multiple reports at the time, though neither the company nor Musk confirmed this. Private data, which isn't available publicly and thus not in the data "firehose" that was given to Musk, includes IP addresses, phone numbers and location. Twitter said such private data helps avoid misidentifying real accounts as spam.



Bret Taylor

GetBundi to equip youths with STEM skills

By SHARON O. ISAALAH

To boost economic growth and development in Africa, a new educational technology platform has been launched. It is to equip African youths with quality, accessible and affordable Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) learning and STI digital skills.

The platform, GetBundi, a product of Wings of Justice Limited, was unveiled in Lagos to refocus Africa's education towards STEM and digital skills as a way to lift millions out of poverty.

CEO/founder of GetBundi, Osita Oparaugo said the idea of the platform came from an understanding that only countries with STEM-enabled citizenry can achieve meaningful development as STEM learning encourages creativity, innovation, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills needed in the 21st century world.

"Singapore used science and technology in turning from a developing country to developed country. China went from having a no-flush problem to being a global leader in science. These countries have flourishing economies as a result of the critical role scientific and technological advancements have played.

"What China and Singapore have achieved in less than 50 years, Africa can also attain using STEM Education

and STI Skills acquisition, especially when one considers the abundance of human capital and the resilient nature of Africans, especially the youths," he said.

GetBundi, Oparaugo said, currently hosts over 1,008 hours of audio-visual content covering six years of secondary school work using the West African curriculum and covers subjects such as Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, ICT, Data Processing, English Language, etc. There is also revision for competitive examinations, such as WAEC examinations, for up to three years with monthly live question and answer sessions.

He emphasised that GetBundi is not intended as a replacement for the traditional method of teaching or physical secondary school but as a supplement that can be used as a teachers' aid, to support continuous learning in-school students and as a study guide for out-of-school students/homeschoolers.

GetBundi is also working to include three years of JAMB, IELTS, and TOEFL revision classes, as well as Science, Technology and Innovation skills in its next product deployment, he said. The STI skills would include video editing, digital marketing, graphic design and coding courses, and users who successfully complete a course and its accompanying assignments

would earn a diploma.

"Acquiring digital skills is a must for anyone in the 21st century, especially in Africa. STEM-focused remote jobs are in high-demand and are well-paying, and with so many people willing to make the switch but not knowing where to start, GetBundi is the one-stop shop for you," he said.

The GetBundi founder projected that the platform would support and upskill 10 million Africans in the next 10 years through STEM and STI digital skills acquisition via a strategy tagged 'The GetBundi Vision 2032'.

He urged the African Union and regional economic organisations on the continent, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), to key into the GetBundi vision.

Juliet Ijeh, programme coordinator of GetBundi, said the motivation for the project is to get STEM learning across as many youths as possible irrespective of their location, especially with the high level of insecurity across Africa which has made learning in schools more difficult.

"This product will make innovative learning attractive to young minds such that even after secondary school, some of them can decide to be entrepreneurs, or go into creative and productive activities," Ijeh said.

NISS trains farmers, extension agents on agro-mobile app

By SHARON O. ISAALAH

South East NISS Zonal Coordinator, Prof Charles Asadu, has flagged off a training workshop in Nsukka, Enugu State on an agriculture mobile application. Known as NISSAGRO mobile application, it can be downloaded from Google Play Store.

NISS is an agency under the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. Its mandate is to regulate the profession of soil science in Nigeria as well as providing a scientific basis for enhancing and sustaining productivity of soil resources with minimal environmental degradation especially with regard to food production in the country.

He stressed that the app will help guide farmers, extension agents and other stakeholders in soil and agricultural industry on the best ways to improve soil and food production.

"The development of the app by NISS is in accordance with the mandate of the Institute in regulating the profession in Nigeria. The ultimate purpose is to promote sustainable agricultural production systems that will not degrade the soil while ensuring high and sustainable food production to stem food scarcity.

"NISS primary purpose of the app is to promote registered soil scientists' service and engage farmers, extension workers, researchers, agro-dealers and other stakeholders on good agricultural

practices, fertilizer recommendation and technology needed for improving soil and food production in each locality in Nigeria.

"Any person or group who is interested in the information/data needed to improve our soils, increased and sustainable agricultural production will benefit from the mobile app," he said.

Earlier, Prof Charles Igwe, the Vice Chancellor of University of Nigeria, Nsukka, (UNN) commanded the organisers of the workshop for training members as well as providing farmers with knowledge, service and tools that will help them improve productivity.

Igwe, a former Dean, Faculty of Agriculture, UNN, expressed happiness that NISS had mandated itself

to ensuring that farmers, extension workers and other stakeholders in soil science and agriculture were equipped with modern technology in helping farmers to boost agriculture.

"I commend Prof Adadu, the NISS coordinator in South East who in spite of the ongoing nationwide strike in public universities has continued to train and re-train farmers and extension workers on how to ensure adequate productivity in agriculture," he said.

Mr Augustine Agbakoba, the resource person from NISS headquarters, Abuja, said that the application was created to help farmers have adequate knowledge of soil and its functions by providing knowledge, service and tools that will enhance productivity.

Farmer whose cows died from mysterious disease helped unravel origin of toxic chemicals

By SHARON O. ISAALAH

If Wilbur Earl Tennant's cows hadn't died from a mysterious wasting disease during the 1990s, the world might have never learned about the secret history of toxic forever chemicals.

Tennant was a West Virginia farmer whose family owned land near a DuPont factory on the Ohio River where the chemical giant made one of its signature inventions: Teflon nonstick and anti-stain coatings used in carpets, clothing, cookware and hundreds of other products.

The Tennants had sold some of their property to DuPont years earlier. Company officials told one of Tennant's brothers in person and in writing they planned to turn it into a landfill for office garbage — nothing hazardous.

A few years after the sale, Tennant suspected DuPont had filled the landfill with more than just garbage.

Foam began appearing in a creek that meandered past the landfill before spilling into the Tennants' pasture, he later testified

in a court filing. Cows that drank from the creek had been healthy. Dozens began dramatically losing weight, dying even after Tennant doubled their feed on the advice of veterinarians who couldn't determine what was killing the animals.

A videotape Tennant shot with a VHS camcorder shows emaciated cows with tumors on their hides. He focuses on the froth-covered creek before the tape cuts to a dissected calf with blackened teeth and oddly colored organs.

"There is something wrong with this water," Tennant says on the videotape.

Lawyers in Parkersburg, West Virginia, turned him down when he urged them to sue DuPont, then one of area's biggest employers. But friends knew the grandson of one of their neighbors had become an environmental lawyer in Cincinnati. Call him, they suggested.

On paper, Rob Bilott didn't appear to be one of those crusading lawyers in legal thrillers. (He later would be played by actor Mark Ruffalo in the 2019 film "Dark Waters.")

Bilott's law firm, Taft Stettinius & Hollister, typically represents corporate clients like DuPont in environmental cases, not people like Tennant. "In short, I was playing for the opposite team," Bilott recalled in his memoir about the lawsuit he ended up filing against DuPont — and the explosive aftermath.

During the years before DuPont settled the lawsuit — paying the Tennants an undisclosed amount without assigning blame for the dead cows — the company sent Bilott boxes of documents he requested through the normal court process.

Nothing jumped out in page after page he reviewed, Bilott recalled. But a single letter, sent by a DuPont scientist to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, began unraveling a more alarming story.

The June 23, 2000, letter listed something in the landfill that didn't appear in the other documents or in Taff's chemical dictionaries. Nor was it on the list of substances regulated by the EPA. Bilott later determined it was one of the forever chemicals — perfluorooctanoic acid, commonly referred to today as PFOA.

DuPont appeared to be concerned enough about PFOA that the company tested employees at the Teflon plant and found the chemical in their blood, the letter to the EPA revealed.

Revelations by another chemical company gave Bilott leverage to go back into court and request more records from DuPont.

A month before DuPont's letter about PFOA, the Minnesota-based conglomerate 3M announced it would stop making a chemical with a similar sounding name: perfluorooctane sulfonic acid or PFOS. For decades it had been the backbone of 3M's Scotchgard brand of stain-resistant products.

It turned out 3M also made PFOA and sold it to DuPont, which used the chemical cousin of Scotchgard to keep Teflon from clumping during production.

3M and DuPont have argued in court and in public statements that neither chemical is harmful to people at typical levels of exposure. But two years before 3M announced its phaseout in 2000, the company informed EPA officials for the first time that PFOA and PFOS accumulate in human blood, take years to leave the body and don't break down in the environment.

Records obtained by Bilott showed DuPont had determined in 1961 that PFOA is toxic in animals. In 1970, a company that purchased 3M's PFOS-based firefighting foam abruptly halted a demonstration after it killed fish in a nearby stream. Eight years later 3M paused one of its animal studies after every monkey fed PFOS died.

DuPont determined that PFOA passed from pregnant employees to their fetuses. Two of seven babies born to Teflon plant employees in 1981 had facial deformities similar to what 3M had found in newborn rats.

Other testing by 3M found the compounds in apples, bread, green beans and ground beef. DuPont detected PFOA in the drinking water of communities near the Teflon plant.

None of this information was shared with the public. DuPont and 3M kept the U.S. EPA in the dark for years, company and government records show.

Bilott also discovered that years before he sued DuPont on behalf of the Tennants, company scientists had tested the creek running through the family's pasture. It was contaminated with high levels of PFOA.

DuPont and the family settled the lawsuit soon after Bilott shared that information with one of the company's lawyers, who had referred to PFOA in an email as "the material 3M sells us that we poop into the river and into drinking water."

Nigeria records new 7m subscriptions in months

By SHARON O. ISAALAH

Nigeria's broadband penetration recorded a quantum leap in the last seven months from November 2021 with a record of seven million new subscriptions. It indicates a steady rise in the nation's quest to achieve 70 per cent national coverage by 2025.

Executive Vice Chairman (EVC) of Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), Prof. Umar Danbatta, presented the figures in Lagos at the launch of a book on the impact of broadband on the economy. He said the steady growth in broadband penetration is positively impacting other sectors of the economy such as healthcare, education, agriculture, finance, transportation, commerce, governance, and other sectors.

Danbatta said the sector has impressive statistics as he presented the keynote at the 11th eWorld Forum, which featured the launch of a book: "Nigeria Drivers of Digital Prosperity: The Trajectories of the Digital Evolution, Sector Analysis and Players Contributions," authored by the Convener of the forum, Mr. Aaron Ukodie, a veteran Information and Communication Technology (ICT) journalist and publisher of eWorld News Online.

"Internet subscribers have grown from 90 million in 2015 to 150.36 million as at May



Prof. Umar Danbatta

2022. Also, within the period under review, broadband penetration increased from 8 per cent to 43.67 per cent, indicating that over 83.3 million subscribers are on broadband networks of 3G and 4G. Indeed, between November 2021 and May 2022, the networks have added 7 million new users," Danbatta said. At the event, chaired by the former EVC of the NCC and current Chairman of MTN Nigeria, Dr. Ernest Ndukwe, Danbatta, who was represented by NCC's Head, Spectrum Administration, Abraham Oshadami, stated

that in the fourth quarter of 2021, the sector contributed 12.61 per cent to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), a reasonable leap from 8.50 per cent in 2015. He stated that active mobile voice subscription also increased from 151 million in 2015 to over 204 million as at May 2022, while teledensity is 107.17 per cent. On universal access and service, the NCC chief executive said the Commission, through the Universal Service Provision Fund (USPF) has recorded huge successes towards ensuring that telecommunications services are accessible to a large number of people (and communities) at affordable prices, in addition to various projects being implemented by the Commission to increase universal access and service as well as to enhance government efforts in poverty reduction. He said through the Commission's Strategic Vision Implementation Plan (SVP) 2021-2025, also known as NCC's 5-Point Agenda, a number of steps have been taken towards implementing all the digital economy-oriented policies that require the attention of the Commission, including the Nigerian National Broadband Plan (NNBP) 2020-2025, and the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS), 2020-2030. "It is our belief that the communications industry will continue to experience more quantum leaps that will be beneficial to the nation's economy and its citizens," the EVC stated.



Situating AMCON and delivery of its core mandate 12 years after

*The Assets Management Corporation of Nigeria (AMCON) was created by the Federal Government through the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) in 2010 to prevent commercial banks from collapsing due to huge toxic loans in their books. It was mandated to take over the bad debts from the banks and pursue the obligors to repay their various credit facilities. But over a decade after it was created, the corporation has only succeeded in recovering N1.4 trillion and some forfeited property, while a whopping N5 trillion remains outstanding. The situation is exacerbated by several litigations at different stages in various courts across the country. In this analysis, **JOHNMARK UKOKO** wonders whether the corporation will be able to ultimately deliver its core mandate, considering that it now has less than five years to wind up.*

The Assets Management Corporation of Nigeria (AMCON) was established in 2010 during the administration of former President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan through the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) with Mustapha Chike Obi as its pioneer Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer. Its core mandate was to protect nine deposit money banks (DMBs) from going under due to huge toxic debts in their books after the CBN carried out due diligence on them and declared them 'stressed.' The CBN then injected hundreds of billions to make the banks remain operational, until they were acquired by 'healthier' banks.

AMCON was then mandated to takeover all the bad debts in the books of the banks, with a view to recovering the bad debts for the country. Its establishment was also necessitated by the fact that many rich Nigerians obtained huge loans from the banks with the mindset of not repaying, as and when due. Curiously, such people simply walk to other banks to obtain more loans until the bad loans almost sank the banks. Such was the profligacy at that time!

As of when the corporation was established in 2010, the total toxic debts inherited by AMCON amounted to over N5 trillion, which was about the size of Nigeria's yearly budget at that time. However, 12 years after the establishment of the corporation, most of the notorious obligors in the financial sector that necessitated the establishment of the corporation have continued to obtain more loans without fulfilling their financial obligations to the banks.

The notorious and super rich Nigerians have been largely emboldened by the country's legal system and the unpatriotic attitude of some lawyers, who keep moving from one bank to another to avoid repayment of their debts.

Notwithstanding, findings have shown that some of the toxic credit facilities that prompted the Federal Government to establish the corporation in the first place had existed for over two decades. While some of the legal battles by the banks to recover their credit facilities also lasted several years before they are adjudicated upon by the courts.

Rather than honour the terms of their loan agreements and repay their facilities, some of the powerful debtors, who willingly approached the banks to obtain loans, would rather assemble several Senior Advocates of Nigeria (SANs) to plead their cases in the courts.

Worse still, the coming on stream of AMCON to take over the bad debts of commercial banks and later some other firms, has not changed the situation, as the local obligors have continued to approach the courts.

The plethora of court cases and the attitude of most high court judges, who are fond of giving conflicting injunctions and rulings, are giving not only the board and management of the corporation, but also the National Assembly very tough times.

To that extent, the National Assembly Committee on Banking and Currency recently assembled in Lagos to brainstorm on the challenges of the several court cases against the corporation and sometimes the various conflicting court rulings by courts of the same jurisdictions.

Chairman, House of Representatives Committee on Banking and Currency, Hon. Victor Nwokolo, said apart from the challenges the courts were giving the corporation, there were also problems emanating from government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), which have impacted negatively on the actualisation of AMCON's mandate.

Nwokolo threatened that the committee would soon summon heads of the MDAs to ensure that the corporation achieved its mandate, adding that the National Assembly would, as a matter of urgency, summon the leadership of the various committees overseeing the different agencies to investigate why the interagency committees on recovery of the huge outstanding debts owed AMCON had not yielded the desired results.

He disclosed that in September 2019, Vice President Yemi Osibajo inaugurated an inter-agency committee to speedily resolve the challenges of recovering the over N5 trillion AMCON debts and tasked its members to deploy their expertise in the assignment to ensure that AMCON met its mandate within reasonable timeline.

Members of the committee include heads and representatives of the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU), Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation (NDIC) and the Federal Ministry of Justice, among others.

The committee, headed by Chairman of ICPC, Prof. Bolaji Owasanoye, was expected to review the status of the huge debts owed AMCON, deliberate on practical, legal and other strategies



Former President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan



Mustapha Chike Obi

for recovery of the outstanding debts.

At a retreat with the theme: *Assets Recovery As Tool For Enhanced Growth And Stability Of The Banking Sector: Sustaining The Impact And Bridging The Challenges Of AMCON*, Nwokolo expressed sadness that government agencies were working at cross purposes rather than collaborating to ensure that they support the Federal Government in its economic recovery efforts.

His words: "We cannot continue like this, because we are answerable to Nigerians and our constituencies as lawmakers. They will hold us accountable, if we fail to take decisive actions that would help AMCON to recover the huge outstanding debts.

"In saner climes, MDAs are supposed to work together to ensure that nobody shortchanges the Federal Government, but from the reports we get from AMCON, it is obvious that the corporation is facing frustration from not only the obligors, but also the judiciary, as well as the MDAs. There is no reason why that should happen in a decent country."

He promised that the National Assembly would, in no distant time, organise another retreat, which would involve about six critical stakeholders to discuss in great details the strategies to be adopted in ensuring that Nigeria recovers its money, which some obligors owe the country, adding: "Yet they are hiding under all manner of tricks to evade repayment."

In spite of the lawmakers' pain and frustration, he commended the leadership of AMCON, led

by the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (MD/CEO), Ahmed Kuru and the board for their resolve to persistently chase the debtors, some of whom feel they are bigger than the country.

He, however, restated the fact that given that the AMCON Act has been amended and already signed into law by President Muhammadu Buhari, the National Assembly will continue to strengthen the laws of the country for greater enforcement and implementation.

Nwokolo said enforcement has become critical, given the tactics of the debtors, which has constrained the corporation from achieving optimum results, especially since public funds were used to buy the loans that helped prevent system collapse of the banking sector at the time AMCON was created in 2010.

In his presentation, Kuru, disclosed that till date, the corporation had recovered about N1.4 trillion, which comprises cash of N681 billion, forfeited property, N279 billion forfeited shares and N116.9 billion from Polaris Bank after the bank's acquisition.

Kuru, who was represented by the corporation's Group Head, Assets Management Directorate, Matthew Coker, told the lawmakers that despite the special powers provided in the AMCON Act, the corporation was still struggling with the implementation due to the country's judicial system.

He said the corporation's recovery process at this point majorly depended on the judiciary through obtaining possession orders or orders for sale of

forfeited property.

"The slow pace of our court processes and sometimes, conflicting orders by the courts, especially at the Federal High Court, which is AMCON's court of first instance, frustrates recovery processes. There are also delays in obtaining dates in court to hear AMCON matters, while the courts do not enforce deposit of judgment sum as provided in the Act.

"Some of the obligors are still active contractors of the government. They carry out businesses with government, with debtor companies or other pseudo names. Also, the big time obligors still manage to obtain more credit facilities, while they have not paid their initial loans," he lamented.

Some of the revelations by Nwokolo and Kuru are sad and shocking, to say the least. How can government MDAs work against AMCON in its bid to realise its mandate? Why should government give contracts to obligors, who have refused to pay the debts owed the country and still work freely on the streets? Why should the judges of equal jurisdiction (Federal High Court) give conflicting orders on the same cases? If it takes AMCON almost 12 years to recover N1.4 trillion, how many years will it take to recover N5 trillion?

While some sections of the government are already pushing for extension of AMCON lifespan, the slow pace of its recovery process may take much longer to be achieved.

One verifiable fact is that signposts are seen of hotels, factories, compounds and commercial places under receivership by AMCON in every nook and corner of the country, which the courts have handed over to the corporation.

Following the development, the question agitating the minds of most Nigerians remains whether with the various challenges highlighted by Nwokolo and Kuru, the corporation ever be able to deliver its mandate?

The courts and judges remain crucial to the successful tackling of some of the issues hindering the actualisation of AMCON's mandate, which prompted the corporation to organise a retreat for high court judges late last year.

At the event, President of the Federal High Court judges, Justice John Soho, promised to work on his colleagues to be up and doing in supporting AMCON in its task, but it is sad that almost a year after Justice Soho's assurances, the situation has not changed. At the end, it will amount to waste of funds, time, energy and logistics if AMCON fails to deliver its core mandate.

NCRIB, NAICOM canvass greater collaboration in harnessing Insurtech opportunities

By **EDU ABADE, Business Editor**

Nigerian Council of Registered Insurance Brokers (NCRIB) and the National Insurance Commission (NAICOM) have canvassed greater collaboration in harnessing opportunities of conducting the underwriting and broking businesses through the use of technology.

This was the focus of the 2022 Mid-Year Workshop organised by the Lagos Area Committee (LAC) of NCRIB with the theme: *Opportunities and Challenges of Insurtech* and sub-theme: *Automation of Returns, Filing and Licence Renewal Application on National Portal*, which held at the council's corporate headquarters in Yaba, Lagos.

In his opening remarks, President and Chairman, Governing Board of NCRIB, Barrister Rotimi Edu, who lamented the low penetration of insurance in the country, urged participants to leverage opportunities presented by Insurtech to harness not only the accounts of big government corporations like the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), but also other large, medium and small-scale industries that abound in the country's business space.

Chief Executive Officer of Flutterwave, who was Guest Speaker at the workshop, Gbenga Agboola, highlighted the several opportunities in the brokerage and underwriting business, stressing the need for

greater synergy between core insurance practitioners and registered brokers.

Agboola, who further stressed the need for building a technology-dependent insurance sector, canvassed the deployment of a domain presence for successful execution of Insurtech businesses among brokers and underwriters.

He said over 80 per cent of travels in Nigeria were business-driven, maintaining that chief executives who travel by air across the country do so for one business negotiation or the other and that opportunities abound in all the sectors of the Nigerian economy, including oil and gas, aviation, banking and finance, maritime, transportation, fire and telecommunications, among several others.

On his part, Deputy Director, Information Technology at NAICOM, Aribike Abiodun Ladipo, who spoke on the sub-theme: *Automation of Returns, Filing and Licence Renewal Application on NAICOM's Portal*, told the brokers and all participants at the workshop that the insurance sector regulator has automated all licence renewal application processes on its portal.

Ladipo, who took the brokers through a practical demonstration of the application process, explained that brokers no longer needed to go through the manual application process as it had been phased out, adding that they could now apply for all their requirements to NAICOM



Rotimi Edu

from the comfort and confines of their offices.

Earlier in his welcome address, Chairman, Lagos Committee of NCRIB, Rotimi Olukorede, said: "Recently, the National Insurance Commission opened its portal to all brokers. We have started using it, but there are still challenges. Therefore, the executive decided to bring the deputy Director, Aribike Abiodun Ladipo to explain, train and do justice to the issue. Our desire is that no member of the LAC should have problems with

NAICOM on this issue.

"It is hard to imagine modern businesses producing a much output as they do today without the help of technology and its innovations. As a matter of fact, technology has improved business operations and overall productivity in several ways. Faster penetration, speed of response to customers, better communication, better customer service and others have been achieved in this age of technological revolution. Technology on its own cannot make business productive, but the right technology must be deployed in the right way for maximum productivity."

He pointed out that insurance practitioners have been desirous of a magic wand that would drastically improve penetration and cause a turnaround in the sector, stressing that insurance

penetration was still very low, but 50 per cent penetration would do the sector a great deal of good.

Olukorede further explained that Insurtech refers technological innovations created and implemented to improve efficiency in insurance businesses, adding: "It is revolutionising insurance globally by providing customers with seamless and error-free ways of doing the business. Insurtech is a technology capable of disrupting our industry and bring about unprecedented improvements in the fortunes of brokers."

Citing Henry Ford, who once said: "If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself," he stressed the need for brokers to work together in unity towards a common vision, as team collaboration, productivity and greater achievements are inseparable.

Insecurity, poor infrastructure killing businesses, says NACCIMA

By **JOHNMARK UKOKO**

National President of the Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA), Ide John C. Udeagbala, has lamented that endemic insecurity and poor infrastructure were worsening Nigeria's operating environment and killing several businesses.

Udeagbala disclosed this in statement made available to The Trumpet in Lagos at the weekend shortly after the recent opening of Right Choice Electronics showroom on Azikiwe Street, Aba, Abia State.

He commended the promoter of Right Choice Electronics for his resilience that birthed the business outfit, despite the worsening business environment in the country.

His words: "The business environment has not been good because of the obvious reasons of insecurity, which has become endemic and the poor infrastructure. Community buses cannot deliver products and goods and so we are still suffering from poor infrastructure, which are all factors responsible for the worsening business environment.

"We have been talking about what can be done to improve things. You could see now that the government is broke. If you look at the budget and capital expenditure, government is barely having more to pay. So, if we must get to the root of the problem, rather than scratching the issues from the top, it is either we fix our refineries or we will continue the sad stories."

The NACCIMA boss said the chamber was in support of the removal of fuel subsidy because it was riddled with corruption and the right people were not benefiting from it.

Catholic Bishop of Aba Diocese of Abia, Bishop Augustine Echema, who blessed the outfit, urged youths to be responsible in their places of work and businesses to grow such establishment and create more jobs for others.

He cautioned them against destroying the endeavors of their employers and relatives because of greedy and jealousy, adding that such actions reduce employment opportunities for others and also draw God's anger.

Stressing that anyone who bites the hand that feeds him would not eat from such hand again, Udeagbala urged the youths to desist from obtaining money by trick, robbery, kidnapping and destruction of businesses and work places under their watch, but be productive, since God blesses genuine efforts.

In his remarks, Managing Director of Right Choice Electronics, Chief Ogochukwu Mgbi, said the company was incorporated in 2007 with focus on importation of electronics and distribution of electrical appliances.

He said from a small shop on 20 Pound Road, Aba, Abia State, the company has expanded businesses to Port Harcourt, Rivers State and Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, saying the establishment and opening of the Ava world-class showroom as is obtainable abroad was a dream come true and thanked the company's supporters and customers, who made the project possible.

Responding, Abia State Governor, Okezie Ikpeazu, who was represented by the state Commissioner for Transport, Godswill Nwanorue, expressed delight over the establishment of the showroom in Aba and pledged that Azikiwe Road, Aba would be rehabilitated for easy accessible to customers.



Ide John C. Udeagbala

Exxon, Shell may pursue part of \$1.8b award against Nigeria

By **JOHNMARK UKOKO**

A United States of America (USA) Court on Friday, July 8, 2022, said Exxon Mobil Corp and Royal Dutch Shell Plc affiliate may enforce part of the \$1.8 billion arbitration award against Nigeria state-run oil company in a dispute concerning oil extraction near the country's coastline.

In a 3.0 decision, the 2nd United States Circuit Court of Appeal in Manhattan said a lower Court judge erred in rejecting the entire October 2011 award, which by 2018 had grown to \$2.67 billion including interest against Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC).

The judge said the lower court judge should have determined which parts of the award had been deemed enforceable by a Nigerian Appeal Court, as counsel to the companies did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The dispute arose from a 1993 contract for Esso Exploration and production Nigeria Limited and Shell Nigeria Exploration and Production Company to invest billions of dollars to develop the Erha Oilfield in the Gulf of Guinea and share profit with NNPC.

Extraction began in 2006, but disagreement soon arose and Exxon and Shell said that by late 2007, NNPC was lifting more oil than the contract allowed at the government's behest, thereby



Susan Carney

depriving the companies billions of dollars.

Following the arbitration ruling, Exxon and Shell sought to enforce the award in Manhattan, while NNPC sought to set it aside in Nigeria.

In Friday's decision, Circuit judge Susan Carney said Exxon and Shell did not prove that setting aside part of the award violated public policy and said United States courts should not second-guess the Nigerian court's substantive view on the country's laws.

But she said the Nigerian judgments were ambiguous, as to how much of the award was set aside and more fact finding was needed.

Friday's decision partially reversed a September 2019 ruling by United States District judge, William Pauley in Manhattan.

Following Pauley's death in July 2021, another judge will take over the case of Esso Exploration and Production Nigeria Limited and others versus NNPC and United States Circuit Court of Appeal.

Man excretes 47 wraps of cocaine

By PAUL MICHAEL, DEFENCE EDITOR, ABUJA

Operatives of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) have arrested one Aloysius Ajuruchukwu Onyekwe (a.k.a Kelvin), an alleged drug trafficker who ingested 47 wraps of cocaine in his stomach.

Director of Media and Advocacy, Femi Babafemi, in a statement on Sunday said Onyekwe was arrested alongside an eighteen years lady, Blessing Broke at Ojo park Ibadan where he went to board a vehicle enroute Sokoto to Algeria.

"The desperate bid by a drug trafficker, Aloysius Ajuruchukwu Onyekwe (a.k.a Kelvin) to travel by road to Algeria through Sokoto state with ingested 47 wraps of cocaine in his stomach has been frustrated by NDLEA operatives who intercepted him in Ibadan, Oyo state following intelligence shared by the Department of State Security, DSS.

"Onyekwe, 26, who hails from

Owerri West LGA, Imo state was arrested on Sunday 3rd July at Ojo park Ibadan where he went to board a vehicle enroute Sokoto to Algeria. He was traveling with an 18-year-old lady, Blessing Nwoke.

"The father of a 10-month-old child who passed out the 47 pellets of cocaine in five excretions confessed that he began his journey to Algeria from Cele area of Okota, Lagos where he ingested the illicit drug, weighing 1.1kg," Babafemi said.

In another development, attempt by a human trafficker, Mathew Bassey to export illicit drug to Dubai, United Arab Emirate by planting same in the luggage of an orphan, Ms. Peter Gift Eno recruited for a phantom job in the Arab nation was thwarted by the NNDLEA at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport (MMIA) Ikeja Lagos.

"Bassey, 29, from Oron LGA, Akwa Ibom state was arrested on Wednesday 6th July following the

interception of Eno at the departure hall of the Lagos airport.

"When Enos luggage was searched, 50 parcels of cannabis (2.80kg) concealed in food items were discovered while there were discrepancies between the age she declared and the date of birth on her international passport.

"Further interview reveals that the human trafficker who recruited and brought her to the airport, Mathew Bassey was still lurking around the airport, waiting for her departure. He was promptly tracked and arrested," he stated.

According to him, investigations showed that the victim who hails from the same Oron LGA of Akwa Ibom State like Bassey recently lost her mother and as a result made it easy for Bassey to recruit her with the promise of securing her a job in Dubai, UAE.

It was further discovered that the recruiter leveraged on the victims naivety and planted drugs in her bag for onward delivery to his



Femi Babafemi

contact in Dubai.

Meanwhile, no fewer than 1,900 tablets of Tramadol 225mg were seized from a drug dealer, Mustapha Ijabula, who was arrested in a Yola, Adamawa-bound commercial vehicle stopped for routine search along Lagos-Ibadan expressway, in Oyo State. Ijabula hails from Mubi area of Adamawa State.

Inmates' money not stolen in Kuje prison attack – NCoS

By PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

Nigerian Correctional Service (NCoS) has denied reports that monies belonging to inmates were stolen when the Kuje Medium Security Custodial center was attacked last Tuesday in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

NCoS' Public Relations Officer, Umar Abubakar, in a statement on Saturday, said the report was untrue while saying that all inmates' cash deposited in the custody of the authorities of the custodial centre is intact and safe.

Abubakar further stated that there is an existing instruction from the Controller General of Corrections that all officers superintending custodial centres must not keep huge sums in the facility.

He said, "We wish to inform the general public that the report in some quarters that the fleeing inmates from the Medium Security Custodial Centre, Kuje, stole money (local and foreign currencies) belonging to their fellow inmates, is not true.

"All Inmates' cash deposited in the custody of the authorities of the custodial centre is intact and safe as there is an existing instruction from the Controller General of Corrections that all officers superintending custodial centres must not keep huge sums in the facility.

"This clarification becomes imperative against the misleading narrative the unfounded information has generated and the unpatriotic diversion of attention from addressing the challenges at stake.

"The Controller-General of Corrections, Haliru Nababa is sparing no effort or resources in hunting down all the escapees and it is heart-warming that the integrated strategies are yielding favourable results.

"He expresses his deep appreciation to security agencies and patriotic Nigerians whose collaboration is facilitating the recovery exercise.

"Nababa assures the public of his irrevocable commitment to bringing back all escapees to answer for their crimes.

"He, therefore, appeals that citizens should assist in achieving this task by visiting the Nigerian Correctional Service's website <https://corrections.gov.ng/escapees> for the pictures of the escapees and alert the nearest security agency if they suspect or see any of them."

Terrorists free seven train attack victims days after Kuje onslaught

By PAUL MICHAEL

A few days after the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) successfully attacked Kuje Medium Security Custodial centre in an operation that lasted over two hours without early attempt to foil the onslaught by the country's security agencies, seven victims of the Abuja-Kaduna train killings have been freed.

Tukur Mamu, publisher of Desert Herald newspaper, confirmed the release of the abducted passengers at the weekend, stressing that the son of Ango Abdullahi, chairman of Northern Elders Forum (NEF), is among the seven freed victims.

On March 28, a passenger train heading to Kaduna from Abuja was attacked by terrorists with several persons killed, dozens injured and many abducted. In June, eleven

of the abducted passengers were released by the abductors.

According to Mamu, the newly-freed passengers include Muhammad Paki, Bosede Olurotimi, Abubakar Zubairu, Alhassan Sule, Sadiq Ango Abdullahi, Aliyu Usman and Muhammad Abuzar Afzal, a Pakistani.

"I want to assure the nation that everything that was achieved today was singlehandedly initiated and arranged by me with the full support and prayers of my principal, Sheikh [Ahmad] Gumi.

"That is why I keep emphasising that government has the power to end the agony of these innocent victims in one day. This is just one individual that sacrifice his life and even integrity.

"There is no military solution to the current security debacle in Nigeria. When you sincerely

engage them, these guys even though wicked with misguided religious beliefs, they are listening.

"I have sufficient evidence to prove that they do listen. It is this power of engagement and sincerity that resulted to the release of [these] seven victims," he said.

The coordinator of the families of the abducted passengers, Abdulfatai Jimoh, confirmed the release of the seven victims to news men.

"Yes, it is true seven people were released today [Saturday]. I just spoke with the family of one of those released," Jimoh said.

The development comes four days after insurgents attacked and freed close to a thousand inmates including 69 terrorists at the Kuje correctional facility in Abuja.

Reacting to the development,

Military worse victim of armed forces' rule, Defence HQ claims

By PAUL MICHAEL

Defence Headquarters has denied speculations that the military is considering a coup d'état. It said that the military is always the worse victim of armed forces' rule.

Director of Defence Information, Major-General Jimmy Akpor, said this at the weekend in a statement while reacting to a video where controversial politician, Femi Fani-Kayode, accused the military of professional negligence among others.

Fani-Kayode in the video alleged that the Department of State Security (DSS) had informed the military of the attack on the Kuje Medium Custodial Centre as well as the onslaught on the Kaduna-Abuja train.

He also claimed that the military did nothing about the intelligence but instead withdrew soldiers shortly before the prison attack. He also accused the military of contemplating a coup.

Describing the allegations as wild and unsubstantiated, Gen Akpor said the Nigerian Armed Forces have toiled to sustain and nurture the country's democracy, and as such cannot be contemplating a coup d'état.

"Mr Fani-Kayode is also called to refresh himself on the constitutional roles of the Armed Forces of Nigeria. In all, subordination to civil authority, is key.

"It is pertinent to state that, the Nigerian Armed Forces has toiled to sustain and nurture our democracy, hence the same military

cannot contemplate a coup de tat, as alluded to by Mr Kayode in his video.

"The Chief of Defence Staff, Gen Lucky Irabor has always stressed the unalloyed loyalty of the Armed Forces of Nigeria to the President, Commander-in-Chief and the Nigerian Constitution.

"Accordingly, as the 2023 General Elections approach, desperate persons must depart from their evil ways, for never again would they lure the military into their wicked machinations. If a confession must be made, Nigerians must know now: the military is always the worse victim of military rule," he said.

Akpor, denying all the allegations of Fani-Kayode, said: "In all these allegations, Mr Kayode is merely playing to the gallery. He is not

in any position to know whether the DSS notified the military of any attack or not.

"It may not be impossible that such a claim is part of a calculated attempt to cause division and rivalry amongst all Government Agencies that have been working collaboratively in addressing issues of insecurity in the country.

"The claim that soldiers were withdrawn from the Kuje Correctional Custodial Centre before the attack is laughable. It is sad that Mr Kayode is ignorant of whose responsibility it to guard prison."

Akpor urged the general public to ignore the claims of Fani-Kayode and continue to remain vigilant as well as report suspicious activities promptly to law enforcement agencies for actions.

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NFF sanctions Kano Pillars, ratifies LMC's league points deduction

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

■ Suspends match officials for a year

Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) Disciplinary Committee has sanctioned Kano Pillars and ratified the three points deduction from its accrued league points following their unruly behaviour in matchday 31 fixture against Dakkada FC on June 25, 2022.

The Disciplinary Committee on Friday, July 8, 2022, in a meeting held at the Parkview Hotel, Abuja, noted that the actions of Kano Pillars are capable of bringing the Nigeria Professional Football League (NPFL) to disrepute.

According to them, Kano Pillars on that fateful day failed to control its officials and this resulted in the attack on Daramola Olalekan, Assistant Referee 1 by the club's former chairman, Suraj Yahaya.

Recalled that last three months ago, precisely on April 17, 2022, Kano Pillars were involved in fisticuffs with Katsina United which instigated the League Management Company (LMC) to 'impose a sanction of forfeiture of three points accruing to the club in the event of a similar breach'.

Following the occurrence of a similar incident against Dakkada FC, the NFF did not hesitate to ratify the LMC's sanction which will result in the Kano State-based club dropping down on the Nigeria topflight division's table.

Furthermore, the Disciplinary Committee also sanctioned the Match Commissioner, Centre Referee and Assistant Referee 1 for rescinding their decision after first affirming the goal scored by the visitors.



NFF noted that whatsoever, the match officials had no right even under duress to cancel a goal that has already been awarded in favour of the visiting team, adding that they have no basis to justify their actions.

The statement by the Disciplinary Committee read in part: "The NFF Disciplinary Committee adopts the summary jurisdiction of the League Management Company dated 25th June, 2022 with respect to Match Day 31 Fixture involving Kano Pillars FC Vs. Dakkada Int'l FC, particularly paragraphs a - g of their decision.

"That the Match Officials, particularly the Match Commissioner, Centre Referee and the Assistant Referee 1 are hereby suspended for One (1) year from all football-related activities with immediate effect, the Match Commissioners and Referee Appointment Committees are by this decision put on notice.

"That despite the unfortunate circumstances surrounding the goal scored by Dakkada Int'l FC at the 92nd minute the committee lacks the power to reinstate or award a goal.

"The Committee awards the sum of One Hundred and Fifty

Thousand Naira (N150,000.00) only as compensation for their damaged camera (Sony HD Full HD 1920x1080).

"The Committee having found that Kano Pillars FC officials destroyed a camera (Sony HD Full HD 1920x1080) belonging to Dakkada Int'l FC and lost valuables belonging to Uchenna Iyioke hereby activates the three (3) points suspended sentence contained in the summary jurisdiction of the League Management Company between Kano Pillars FC and Katsina United FC in matchday 23 fixtures dated the 17th day of April, 2022. Particularly paragraph 5(k) to wit: "In the event of any further similar breach of the League Rules, Kano Pillars FC shall forfeit three (3) points from the points accruing to the club in addition to any other sanctions that may be deemed appropriate," the NFF said.

Meanwhile, Mr Jamilu Uba Adamu has criticised the Disciplinary Committee's decision to deduct three points from the accrued points by Kano Pillars lamenting that the criteria for the action are faulty.

According to Adamu, the destruction of Dakkada FC camera was never a subject of the appeal which the

committee used as a basis for its decision.

He explained that the decision is biased and unacceptable, stressing that it negates the principle of fairness and equity.

"The decision was clearly biased and it's unacceptable. I expected Kano Pillars' Management to appeal this biased decision of the Disciplinary Committee," Adamu said.

"There is a need for fairness and equity for all clubs, especially when it comes to applying disciplinary actions.

"It is totally wrong and unfair that some "Clubs" will receive lesser disciplinary sanctions for the same or worse offence but whenever it comes to Kano Pillars Football Club, it will be harsh, just because some forces at the top of football administration in Nigeria have strong hatred and jealousy against the club and can't see the reason to temper justice with mercy, and above all, be fair," Adamu lambasted.

Other members of the NFF Disciplinary Committee are Chike Onyeacho, Esq. (Member), Adamu Sani Osmond, Esq. (Member) and Queen W. Otarakpo, Esq. (Secretary).

First Bank team wins basketball tourney

First Bank Female Basketball Team have emerged as the winners in this year's Sam Oguche Basketball competition after defeating MFM Queens 52-40 at the Indoor Sports Hall of the National Stadium Surulere, Lagos.

The victors also called the Elephant Girls proved to be formidable to be surpassed and that reaffirmed their dominance in the game of basketball across the nation by replicating the same form in the Dr D.K Olukoya basketball championship.

According to a report by NAN, the match, dubbed a one-sided affair by fans, commenced at a fast pace with the former African Champions dominating their opponent in the first quarter by 16-6.

The second quarter saw the Bankers consolidating their hold on the lead with another excellent performance, winning 28-14.

Although the MFM Queens fought back in the third quarter, their resolve had little or no effect as

the FirstBank Female Basketball team held on to the lead.

Cheered on by their teaming fans in the fourth quarter, the Elephant girls showed their resolve to maintain their position as the best female Basketball team in Nigeria and one of the best on the continent, with their victory by 52-40.

Satisfied with the performance of the girls, the Coach, Lati Erinfolami, said that the team would continue to work hard to maintain the high standard they are noted for.

Erinfolami said, "It was a good game. The girls were determined to excel and that was why they dominated from the beginning to the end.

"I will continue to encourage them to work. This is just the beginning for us this season.

"With the team's current form, it's safe to say the team will replicate their victory runs in the ongoing Dr D K Olukoya Basketball tournament in Lagos," the coach added.

Lukaku's return makes Inter title favourites

Inter Milan newbie Romelu Lukaku, who recently returned to Italy after a big-money move to Chelsea last summer, has been identified as the player to bring Nerazzurri back to the glory days.

Lukaku relishing his time at the San Siro before the new season kick starts endured a tumultuous campaign last season where he managed to score 15 goals in 43 appearances for the Blues in all competitions.

Although the Belgium international was signed for a club-record fee with personal terms to make him one of the most highly paid players in Stamford Bridge, he failed to meet expectations that spurred his return to reunite with Simone Inzaghi.

Recently, Massimo Rastelli, an Italian and former Cagliari head coach said the 29-year-old arrival to San Siro has made Inter Milan a favourite for the 2022-23 season Scudetto.

According to Rastelli, Lukaku is a formidable striker whose return has

tilted Nerazzurri towards success in the new season.

"Lukaku will shift the balance also because he already knows the league," he said.

"he's already won here and is much-loved, even if no one expected him to leave last summer."

"He's a formidable player and will once again be at the heart of things.

"He'll figure out what it takes to make the difference," added Rastelli who also coached SPAL.

Inter Milan narrowly missed winning the Scudetto last season to AC Milan though it settled for the Supercoppa Italiana after defeating Juventus 2-1 in the final.



Bayern set to snatch De Ligt from Juventus

Following a recent development, reports from Italy have revealed that Matthijs de Ligt will play for Bayern next season in an agreement that is subject to Juventus ratification.

Since landing in Turin the player has not been able to perform at the expected level and his exit was a fait accompli.

To this should be added that the club needs to balance the income accounts to be able to face new additions and the centre-back is one of the assets that Bianconeri have that has caught the attention of top European clubs.

Bayern Munich has already

transferred an offer of €90M to Juventus, which would be close to accepting the proposal, so the player's future could be resolved shortly.

This would put an end to the rumours that placed the centre-back in both the Premier and Barcelona, so De Ligt will embark on a new adventure in the Bavarian capital.

If this move materialises, it sure means that Chelsea boss Thomas Tuchel will have to look for other alternatives to bolster the club's defensive reinforcement.

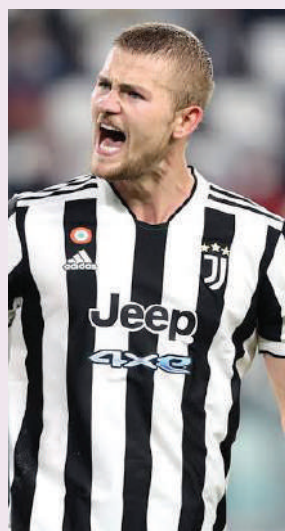
Chelsea have been on the trail of the Dutch defender but the asking price pegged at

about €90m by Juventus has created friction that has slowed down negotiations between both clubs.

However, Marca reports that Bavarian are preparing a bid of about €90m for the player who has about €120m release clause attached to his contract.

According to the report, Juventus need a bid which should not be less than €70m for the defender as a take-off point in negotiations.

Reportedly Bayern Munich would offer a €75m fixed fee plus another €15m in variables, meeting the demands of the Serie A club.



Aribo joins Southampton on four-year deal

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

Rangers midfielder, Joe Aribo, has joined the English Premier League side, Southampton on a four-year deal after weeks of speculation over his future.

Aribo, who was in top form in the first phase of last season's campaign for the Scottish top-tier side and scored in the final against Eintracht Frankfurt, finally committed to joining the Saints in a deal reportedly about £6m which is due to rise on add-ons to about £10m.

According to reports, the midfielder has one year left on his contract but his zeal to explore new challenges has seen him boycotting a move to extend his stay at Ibrox for a return to the English Premier League.

Aside from Southampton, Crystal Palace was also reported to be on the trail of the Super Eagle, who scored 26 goals in 148 appearances for Giovanni van Bronckhorst's side before he officially joined the Saints on 9 July, 2022.

In a statement by Ralph Hasenhuttl, Southampton boss, he acknowledged that Aribo is a player of many qualities, adding that the club is pleased to have him in the

Bids Rangers fans farewell



team.

"Joe is a player with many qualities to his game, and we are very excited to welcome him to the squad in time for the pre-season trip to Austria," he said.

"We believe Joe can bring energy and creativity to our side. Feeling comfortable in so many different positions is very helpful for a manager and shows he has a high level of football intelligence, with the ability to take on new information quickly.

"He has played a lot of games already in his career, at a very high level, and his performances in the Europa League prove he has the quality to play in the Premier

League. This is a big ambition for him, and he is hungry to show everybody he can do it," Hasenhuttl added.

Following the return to England, Aribo praised the Saints which he conceded has a rich footballing history.

"It's an amazing club with a lot of history here, and it's a good plan for what's to come next. I'm really excited about the journey," he said.

"The Premier League is the best league in the world. I've been watching it since I was a young boy, it's always been a goal for me to play here and show what I can do on this stage.

"It's an amazing feeling, a dream come true. This

is where I've wanted to be since I was a child growing up playing, so to say that I'm here now is really exciting," Aribo added.

However, the Super Eagle bade farewell to the Rangers' fans after completing the deal to join Southampton.

"It has been an amazing journey being part of this special club, I hold Rangers very close to my heart as they gave me the opportunity to showcase my talent on a bigger stage. Playing at Ibrox was a dream and I am glad I got to experience it," Aribo tweeted.

"I'm happy I was able to play a part in the historic 55 league title-winning season. I'd like to thank everyone associated with this great club for all you've done for me during my time here, you've always made me feel welcome and I've always had your full support.

"I've developed into an even better player, credit to the supporters who always had my back and stayed patient during the tough times. We created a lot of memories together, memories that I will carry with me throughout the rest of my career.

"I wish the club nothing but the best for the future and I'll always be checking in Joe Aribo," he said.

Man United improve bid for Lisandro Martinez

Manchester United have improved their offer to sign Ajax versatile player, Lisandro Martinez, after the first bid was rebuffed by the Eredivisie champions, The Trumpet gathered.

Martinez, who plays the central defensive position as well as the holding midfield role, is also on the radar of North London club Arsenal, inadvertently preparing to battle the Red Devils for the 24-year-old.

Reports for England reveal that United boss Erik ten Hag is interested in reuniting with Martinez, who both won the Dutch topflight league last season together.

The Red Devils earlier made an initial offer of €43m that was supposed to rise potentially to €45m, but the blunt refusal by the Jews resulted in the 2017-18 Europa league champions retracing their steps to make a better offer.

90 mins reported that Manchester United are about to present a better offer for the Argentine, who scored the second goal in the 5-0 romp of Willem II in an Eredivisie clash at Edwin van de Graaf last season.

Further in its report, 90 mins noted that the player suddenly became the prime target of the Red Devils following the refusal of Jurrier Timber to reunite with his former boss Ten Hag in Old Trafford.

However, United are not ready for the hanky-panky game as they have, reportedly, lined up €50m to lure Martinez from Ajax to the English top-tier league.

Meanwhile, a report by Daily Mail underlined that should United sign the defender eventually, he will become the shortest centre-back in the English Premier

League.

The English media outlet mentioned that the diminutive player will have a lot of strikers to contend with that are about six inches taller than him. Bournemouth's striker, Kieffer Moore and Manchester City newbie, Erling Haaland are examples of giant strikers that will definitely be the nightmare of the Argentine.

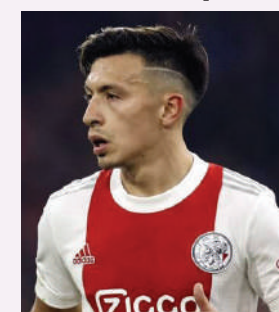
Former Manchester United defender Rio Ferdinand explained that a height difference can be of a great disadvantage to a defender.

Ferdinand said on his 'Five Youtube Channel', "You've got to be ready physically to play against these big strikers.

"[Darwin] Nunez and [Erling] Haaland have just gone into the big teams at Liverpool and Man City. They are over six feet; he is going to have to deal with people like that regularly.

"Chris Wood at Newcastle, these are big, big guys, you can go through the league and find players of this ilk. Will he be able to deal with people like that because physically, he's on the smaller side for a centre half," the former United player added.

No one knows why Erik ten Hag is very interested in a supposedly diminutive defender in the EPL but a report reveals that the Dutch coach needs a versatile player, who can play in two or more roles, in the United squad.



35 cyclists to represent Nigeria at African championship



Thirty-five cyclists have been selected to represent the country in the second edition of the Africa Cup Track Cycling Championship scheduled from July 14 to 17 in Abuja.

In a statement, Cycling Federation of Nigeria (CFN) technical director, Bashir Mohammed, said the cyclists who camped in Abuja were selected from the elite and junior teams.

"They have been undergoing intensive training for over four months at the velodrome of the Moshood Abiola National Stadium," Mohammed told NAN.

He added that the cyclists would participate in several events at the championship.

The Nigerian team will compete in events in both the junior and elite levels in the male and female categories. The 35 cyclists will be divided

into 17 for the juniors and 18 for the elite.

The 17 cyclists in the juniors category comprise 11 males and six females, while the 18 cyclists in the elite category have ten males and eight females.

He continued: "We are set for the championship, and it is good that it is taking place in our country where we will compete in all the 11 medal events."

Mohammed also disclosed that cyclists from 20 countries, including Nigeria, were expected to participate in the competition.

He listed the countries to be South Africa, Zimbabwe, Egypt, Morocco, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Republic of Benin, Guinea, Burundi, Eritrea, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Uganda, Algeria, Togo, Rwanda and Tunisia.

in the Premier League and Champions League.

"It's hard to say what the right choice is for him because I thought Manchester United would have been the right choice for him. Because he came back home," he said.

"He really wants to play in the Champions League. He aims to continue with his Champions League records. His agent is trying to find the best solution for him for next season. That's why he's talking to some clubs.

"Chelsea are entering a new era and even if it's just an image deal for the new owner and chairman, this could be a topic for the whole world to talk about.

"He could play in the Champions League with new 'emotions and ambitions'. I don't think there are other big solutions for him right now.

"PSG won't sign him as they have Messi, Neymar and Mbappe. It's difficult to find another club that will give him the opportunity to play in the Champions

The federation conducted a national trial from June 8 to June 12, where 139 cyclists participated, and 52 cyclists were picked for closed camping.

Nigeria hosted the championship's first edition in July 2019 in Abuja, and nine countries participated.

With a contingent of 21 cyclists of both female and male categories, Nigeria won a total of 51 medals comprising 21 gold, 18 silver and 12 bronzes to emerge champions.

Egypt finished second with eight gold, seven silver and seven bronze medals, while Morocco was third with four gold and three silver medals.

Burkina finished fourth with three silvers and five bronzes, Burundi fifth with two bronzes, and Ghana sixth with a bronze medal.

League.

"Italy is impossible for him. So I think Chelsea could be right for him. But it depends on him and what he wants. If he wants to play in the Premier League and Champions League, Chelsea is the only club at the moment," Marzio claimed.

Furthermore, the Italian football expert stressed that Ronaldo will not honour a move to Barcelona knowing fully well his heart since he holds Real Madrid in high esteem.

Marzio continued: "I don't think Cristiano could go to Barcelona. He's a (Real) Madrid player at heart. So I don't think he could join them. Barcelona want Lewandowski and they will try to sign him until the end.

"If Cristiano Ronaldo wants a different kind of experience, a move to MLS is also an option. I know they want Cristiano in MLS. If not this year, then probably next year. But I think he will definitely go to MLS before the end of his career.

'Chelsea, right choice for Ronaldo'

May seek exit to MLS

Manchester United forward, Cristiano Ronaldo has been faced with a move out of Old Trafford to explore the option of a Champions League football for the new season.

With United out of the Champions League qualifying spot and the 37-years-old former Juventus forward complaining of the club's slow activities in the summer transfer window, the wantaway Ronaldo is looking for the opportunity elsewhere to maintain his Champions League record.

Resulting from the fuss between Ronaldo and the Red Devils which has degenerated into the former missing a training day last week, top European clubs have been identified as a potential destination for the club's highest goalscorer last season in all competitions.

Although, the new Chelsea owner, Todd Boehly, has held a meeting with the player's agent speculating an imminent move to Stamford Bridge, some top Champions League eligible clubs in France, Italy, Spain and Germany are also on the player's radar.

However, in an interview with Wettfreunde, Gianluca di Marzio believes otherwise as he explained that some of the top European clubs already have their potential targets with Paris Saint-Germain's attacking lineup occupied.

According to Marzio, the likes of Lionel Messi, Kylian Mbappe and Neymar have created little or no room for the Portuguese national team captain to come in while a return to Italy is not feasible.

Marzio opined that Chelsea is the right place for him considering the new owner status and if he favours continuing

Dembele's contract extension needs Alemany's approval

French winger Ousmane Dembele has finally agreed with Spanish club Barcelona to extend his contract until 2024.

Dembele has been involved in a contract melee with the Catalans after he was told to take a pay cut to enable him continue under Xavi Hernandez beyond June 30, 2022.

According to an emerging report from Spain, both parties' agreement is now subject to the club's sporting director's approval.

"After many months of negotiations, offers, counter-offers, threats and disagreements, Dembélé is just waiting to receive the green light from Barça's sports director to sign his new contract to continue at the Camp Nou," MD said.

"There are only a few details left, the classic fringes, so that the French winger continues to be linked to the Barça club, as was the will of Xavi Hernández, Barça coach," the Spanish media added.

Corroborating the above report, SubNation added that the agreement reached by the club with the 25-years-old former Borussia Dortmund player, who has scored 32 goals in 150 appearances, will have to be ratified by Mateu Alemany.

Alemany now holds the decision to decide the player's fate in Catalonia but Barcelona's sporting director has never hidden his disgust for the Frenchman according to a report by RMC Sport.

"Dembele's future is known (only) by him and his agents," he said.

"I have my own personal opinion on this but it's not relevant. There is now news, the same as the last six or seven months," Alemany added.

The report, however, noted that Barcelona have not given up on the chase to sign Leeds and Brazilian winger, Raphinha from Elland Road and are looking to snap him up for €50m.



Sea pirates abduct five, seize boats in A' Ibom

By ISAAC JOB, Uyo

There is anxiety in Oron and Mbo Local Government Areas and other adjoining villages in Akwa Ibom State as sea pirates numbering over 700 invaded and kidnapped five victims, carting away nine boats belonging to fishermen at the weekend. Our correspondent gathered that the pirates also made away with outboard engines thereby frustrating voyage on the Oron-Calabar waterway as boat operators and commuters feared for their lives.

A source said that the

pirates, who stormed the fishing community, shot sporadically to scare away fishermen and other people in the locality though the location where the boats and engines were seized was close to the Naval base.

An eyewitness who pleaded anonymity alleged that the assailants met no resistance from naval officers as the attack lasted for hours.

He said after the operations, the pirates left behind a phone number for communication with the owners of the seized engines and negotiation of ransom.

"Each engine is worth up to between N6 million

and N8.5 Million while a fairly used one goes for about N3 Million depending on the horsepower rating.

"The pirates usually accept a ransom for seized engines but not in all cases as they sometimes sell the engines in other states in Nigeria and neighbouring countries," he said

When our correspondent visited the community, some open stalls at the beach were deserted while a few traders were displaying their wares such as fish and other goods.

A boat operator at the beach who identified himself as Bassey Effiong, said activities of the pirates



Sea pirates

have escalated in the area despite the presence of security agencies.

"As you heard, Ibaka is not safe for us fishermen

and people who come here for business. Sometimes we give the navy people some money for their upkeep but they cannot

defend us.

"Even the pirates, some of us pay them to allow us to do our work, but they always come back to kill and sometimes take away our engines. I want the government to look into this and bring a permanent solution to this problem," he remarked.

A fish trader, Mrs. Utibe Matthew, said that she came from neighbouring community to purchase goods at Ibaka.

"I am disappointed because the quantity of crayfish and fish that is available is below what I expected. I have a stall at Akpan Andem market in Uyo, and demand is very high. Insecurity should be addressed for full-fledged economic activities to resume," she stated in Ibibio language."

Nigeria records new 7m subscriptions in months

Stories by SHARON O. ISAALAH, Abuja

Nigeria's broadband penetration recorded a quantum leap in the last seven months from November 2021 with a record of seven million new subscriptions. It indicates a steady rise in the nation's quest to achieve 70 per cent national coverage by 2025.

Executive Vice Chairman (EVC) of Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), Prof. Umar Danbatta, presented the figures in Lagos at the launch of a book on the impact of broadband on the economy. He said the steady growth in broadband penetration is positively impacting other sectors of the economy such as healthcare, education, agriculture, finance, transportation, commerce, governance, and other sectors.

Danbatta said the sector has impressive statistics as he presented the keynote at the 11th eWorld Forum, which featured the launch of a book: "Nigeria Drivers of Digital Prosperity: The Trajectories of the Digital Evolution, Sector Analysis and Players Contributions," authored

by the Convener of the forum, Mr. Aaron Ukodie, a veteran Information and Communication Technology (ICT) journalist and publisher of eWorld News Online.

"Internet subscribers have grown from 90 million in 2015 to 150.36 million as at May 2022. Also, within the period under review, broadband penetration increased from 8 per cent to 43.67 per cent, indicating that over 83.3 million subscribers are on broadband networks of 3G and 4G. Indeed, between November 2021 and May 2022, the networks have added 7 million new users," Danbatta said. At the event, chaired by the former EVC of the NCC and current Chairman of MTN Nigeria, Dr. Ernest Ndukwe, Danbatta, who was represented by NCC's Head, Spectrum Administration, Abraham Oshadami, stated that in the fourth quarter of 2021, the sector contributed 12.61 per cent to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), a reasonable leap from 8.50 per cent in 2015. He stated that active mobile voice subscription also increased from 151 million in 2015 to over 204 million as at May 2022, while teledensity is 107.17 per cent. On

universal access and service, the NCC chief executive said the Commission, through the Universal Service Provision Fund (USPF) has recorded huge successes towards ensuring that telecommunications services are accessible to a large number of people (and communities) at affordable prices, in addition to various projects being implemented by the Commission to increase universal access and service as well as to enhance government efforts in poverty reduction. He said through the Commission's Strategic Vision Implementation Plan (SVP) 2021-2025, also known as NCC's 5-Point Agenda, a number of steps have been taken towards implementing all the digital economy-oriented policies that require the attention of the Commission, including the Nigerian National Broadband Plan (NNBP) 2020-2025, and the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS), 2020-2030. "It is our belief that the communications industry will continue to experience more quantum leaps that will be beneficial to the nation's economy and its citizens," the EVC stated.

Future of Mud – Championing lower-tech material than concrete

Stories by SHARON O. ISAALAH, Abuja

When Germany's President, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, came to Senegal last February for an economic summit, he took a break from conference rooms in the capital city of Dakar to get his hands dirty, literally, as he learned to make compressed-earth blocks from a mix of iron-rich soil, sand, water, and a bit of cement. His block-making tutorial was part of a groundbreaking event for a cultural institute promoting German-language study.

The institute's new building was designed by the distinguished Burkina Faso-born and Berlin-based architect Francis Kéré, who is renowned worldwide for his graceful structures adapted to their local climates. The building in Dakar is oriented so that nearby trees provide shade, and its thick walls—made of the type of unfired compressed-earth bricks Steinmeier tried his hand at making—insulate the interior from the hot Senegalese climate. A layer of claustral,

or perforated walls, wraps around the building like a membrane, filtering sunlight and directing airflow.

At the event, Senegal's minister of urbanism, Abdoulaye Saydou Sow, praised Kéré's choice of materials, promising that the government would "work to integrate these types of materials into our building projects."

The Senegalese-Cameroonian architect Nzinga Mboup, 33, was in the crowd for the occasion, her bronze dress shining amid the sea of dark suits, and she was thrilled by the minister's speech. Mboup, a co-founder of a Senegalese architectural firm called Worofila, is working with Kéré on his Dakar project. Her firm also works with the local climate, often borrowing low-tech, passive cooling techniques from West African vernacular building traditions. Such simple strategies may not sound revolutionary, but in Senegal's cities, they are.

Today, Dakar is primarily a city of boxy, concrete buildings, their flat roofs used for hanging laundry, lodging

sheep, or both. And new boxes are always sprouting: A panorama of grey-walled construction sites is visible from any balcony, and city sidewalks are chronically clogged with rebar, bags of cement, and piles of sand and gravel. Concrete's heat-retaining properties are all wrong for the Senegalese climate, which will continue to get hotter over the next few decades according to climate-change models. Yet concrete has become the "traditional" building material in a country where, as Mboup points out, at least four distinctive mud-construction techniques persist. In the north, where there's not much rain, people build houses with banco, a kind of adobe made with sun-dried bricks; in the forested areas of the south, builders use timber frames to create wattle-and-daub structures, or they hand-mould earthen buildings and top them with steep, overhanging roofs to keep rain away from the walls. For generations, Senegalese builders have used mud to construct not only small houses and granaries but multistory houses and imposing mosques.