

Conoil urged to remediate oil leak impact on eco-system

By **AHERHOKE OKIOMA**,
Yenagoa

S sequel to the delay in carrying out proper remediation

the oil leak on the environment, the lawmaker representing Brass Federal Constituency in the House of Representatives, Hon.

Sunny Goli, has called on Conoil to swing into action to mitigate the adverse impact on both the eco-system and human lives. The leak that

occurred in Akassa, Brass Local Government Area has continued to discharge volumes of oil into the environment, resulting in high level
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Atiku, Okowa, others face questions over certificates



Atiku and Okowa

Atiku, Okowa, others face questions over certificates

By **TUNDE JOSHUA**,
Politics Editor

Ahead of the 2023 polls, more candidates of political parties have notified the election management body, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), of their inability to provide as required by law, certified copies of educational qualifications they claimed to possess.

More revelations emerged after perusal of forms submitted to INEC, particularly affidavits sworn to, by these political gladiators.

Hardly had the dust raised by the inability of the presidential candidate of All Progressives Congress (APC), Asiwaju Bola Tinubu and his running mate, Kabir Masari, to present their certificates died down than it was revealed that other parties' standard bearers were caught in the web.

Presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Alhaji Atiku Abubakar and his running mate, Governor Ifeanyi Okowa, are enmeshed in

the certificate saga.

Questions were raised after scanning through documents submitted to INEC by Atiku. He submitted a Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSCE) result with the name Sodique Abubakar. Space meant for the primary school he attended was left unfilled as well.

He, in an attached sworn affidavit, declared to be addressed as Atiku Abubakar in his position as Deputy Preventive Superintendent attached to Customs Preventive Station, Apapa Wharf, Lagos.

The PDP presidential candidate, who was resident at No 3, Ayanboye Street, Anthony Estate, Ikorodu, declared in the sworn affidavit: "That I was known, addressed and called Atiku Abubakar. That in the year 1965, I changed my name to Siddiq Abubakar."

Also of concern in Atiku's certificate is that he claimed to have a Master's degree without mentioning the University from where he had his first degree or its equivalent. He mentioned just a Diploma certificate



Atiku

from Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria.

Dr. Okowa, the Vice Presidential candidate of PDP, also claimed that he lost his educational certificates. He attached affidavit of loss of original certificate.

The affidavit obtained from the High Court of Justice, Delta State, in the Asaba Judicial Division on October 3, 2006 reads in part: "I, Ifeanyi Okowa, adult, male, Christian, medical doctor and Nigerian citizen of House No. 4, Commissioners' Quarters, Asaba, Delta State, do hereby make oath and state as follows:

"That I personally enrolled and sat for the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) West African School Certificate (WASC) examinations in the year 1974 at Edo College, Benin City, in now Edo State.

"That I passed the said examinations and was subsequently issued the said certificate therefore. "That the original of the said certificate issued to me is now missing, lost and cannot be found."

The presidential candidate of the Young People's Party (YPP), Prince Abdul Malik Ado Ibrahim also claimed to have lost all his

certificates.

Cited in the documents he submitted to INEC was an affidavit sworn to at the Federal High Court of Justice, Maitama, Abuja, on June 3, 2022, in which he disclosed that on July 17, 2021, while in transit from Kaduna to Abuja, he lost certain documents which included "original BSc certificate issued by American College of Los Angeles, dated 1988; High School Diploma issued to me by Langley High, Norwich, UK dated 1979 and official degree transcript.

"Also lost was expired international passport issued by Nigeria Immigration Service. "That all efforts made to trace the said documents have proved abortive."

Ado Ibrahim also attached a Police Entry signed by Assistant Superintendent Mohammed Hulli, Judges Protection Unit, FCT, High Court, Maitama, Abuja, on the lost documents dated June 6, 2022.

As aforementioned, the certificate issue started with Chief Tinubu who left blank columns meant for his primary and secondary schools education.

He, thereafter claimed to have bagged a degree from Chicago State University. This raised eyebrows as to how someone can have university learning without preliminary primary and secondary school formal education.

The issue was complicated when references were made to INEC which forms he filled pre-1999 election when contesting Lagos State governorship poll in which he claimed to have attended a primary school in Arolaya area of Lagos and Government College, Ibadan for his secondary education.

Tinubu, in the recent forms however submitted an affidavit in which he claimed that he lost all his certificates to an invasion on his Lagos residence while away on exile during the Abacha military era.

Likewise, his 'holding' running mate, Kabir Masari declared to have lost his certificates.

Masari in a sworn affidavit for the loss of some original documents submitted to INEC claimed to have misplaced vital documents including C of O of one plot KT 17522 in Katsina state, his Grade II certificate from Katsina Teachers College and his primary school certificate.

"That sometimes in January 2021, while on transit within Wuse Area, FCT-Abuja, I discovered that my original Certificate of Occupancy (C of O) of Plot, No KT 17522, GRA Katsina, Katsina State; Certificate of Kaduna State Development Centre from 1994 - 1995; Grade II Certificate from Katsina Teachers' College (KTC) from 1978 - 1983 and First Leaving School Certificate issued by Masari Primary, Katsina State, from 1972 - 1978, got lost," partly stated the affidavit sworn by Mr Masari at the Supreme Court in July 2021 and submitted to INEC on June 17, 2022.

"That all efforts made to trace the documents proved abortive hence this affidavit," the affidavit added," he declared.

Conoil urged to remediate oil leak impact on eco-system

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pollution, emission of toxic, noxious gas, and hydrocarbon which is injurious to human health.

In a statement, Goli reiterated the need for Conoil to take responsibility and move in without further delay to stop the noxious gas which is life-threatening from spreading further.

The statement says: "Regrettably while the previous oil leak is yet to be cleaned properly, another incident has occurred, emitting volumes of noxious gas at the Adriatic 1 offshore oil rig, Otuo field, OML 59, operated by Conoil Nigeria Producing Ltd, in Akassa, Brass Local Government Area of Bayelsa State, leaving inhabitants of the impacted communities, as well as marine life in

grave danger.

"This is the second time we are witnessing this ugly situation, particularly on this facility, operated by Conoil Producing Nigeria Ltd, as a similar noxious gas leak was experienced on it, some time ago in October, 2021, and nothing was done to mitigate the impact on the affected communities."

He noted that the impacted communities are Fishtown, Sangana, Okumbiri-Belu, Opu-Okumbiri and Ogonibiri, while the leak has continued unabated with the spread going viral. Goli submitted that as debilitating and life threatening that the incidents pose to inhabitants of the communities, the management of Conoil has shown absolute disregard for the

sanctity of human lives, as well as the impacted environment.

The federal lawmaker reasoned that with a clear knowledge of the danger associated with inhaling noxious gas and hydrocarbon, the management of Conoil would speedily evacuate all its staffers working on the Adriatic 1 offshore oil rig, while measures are never in place for the safety of children, the youths and aged persons residing in the impacted communities. Peeved by the double standard in dealing with their host communities, Goli reiterated: "leaving the inhabitants of the impacted communities to their fate, without any recourse to putting in place concrete measures to mitigate the impact of the gas leak on the environment and its inhabitants, or carry out

remediation work on the impacted environment, is the height of corporate irresponsibility from a corporate entity that should exhibit a good measure of rectitude."

Hon. Goli lamented the untold hardship that inhabitants of the affected communities whose natural occupation are farming, fishing, canoe carving and woodwork, are grappling with owing to the oil leaks that have destroyed their environment and economic life. Accordingly, he stressed that the oil leak has polluted the source of water of the impacted communities, as well as economic trees, farmlands and aquatic life, as lifeless fishes are seen floating on the surface of the river.

He warned: "The

affected communities must not be left to wallow in pain bearing in mind that they feed from their God-given marine environment, nor the misery of losing their sources of economic sustenance."

He warned that such corporate nonchalance and high-handedness, as being exhibited by Conoil to neglect the impacted communities is unacceptable, and cannot be tolerated.

Goli called on the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA), the Nigerian Upstream Regulatory Commission (NURC) and other relevant agencies of government to urgently swing into action and ensure that the company responsible for this environmental disaster is held to account.



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INEC tasks journalists on factual reporting ahead of Osun governorship poll

By **TUNDE JOSHUA**, Abuja

Ahead of the July 16 governorship election scheduled to hold in Osun State, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has tasked journalists to be factual in their reportage of activities of the body and indeed the process.

National Commissioner and Chairman of the Information and Voter Education Committee (IVEC), Festus Okoye Esq, made the call during a Capacity Building Workshop for Journalists on new innovations in the conduct of elections, organised with support from the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), held in Osogbo, the Osun state capital at the weekend.

The IVEC Chairman who spoke on a wide range of issues including legal matters with regards to the new Electoral Act, innovative approaches in election management, said; "We plead with the media to be factual, objective and professional in reporting the election".

He added that "journalists covering the election must on no account interfere with the processes and procedures of voting or in any way distract Presiding Officers in the performance of their duties".

"The media must on no account attempt to know or report on the way someone has voted. The secrecy of the ballot is at the heart of the democratic process. The media must also not make any declaration or return of any election as it is the exclusive preserve of the Commission", he urged.

The National Commissioner also disclosed that as part of the Commission's efforts to ensure all loose ends were tied and Osun Governorship election is organised in a free, fair, credible and inclusive manner, the Chairman of the Commission and some National Commissioners will be in Osun state from Sunday for a readiness assessment visit, and will use the opportunity to engage stakeholders to solicit their support.

He said; "the Chairman of the Commission and some National Commissioners will be in Osun State from tomorrow on readiness assessment. The Chairman will observe mock accreditation processes. He will visit and

interact with traditional rulers".

"He will hold top level meetings with traditional rulers. He will visit some of our Local Government Offices. He will hold meetings with Staff of the Commission and members of the National Union of Road Transport Workers".

In his welcome remarks, the Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC) for Osun state, Prof. Abdulganiy Raji, spoke on the preparedness of the Commission to conduct the election come July 16.

He said Voter Education and Sensitization through the Media, House to House campaigns with the Support of the NYSC INEC Ambassadors, Jingles and social media enlightenments have been ongoing in the state.

The REC noted that the state had witnessed a surge in the interest to get registered and collect their Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs), a development which he attributed to massive enlightenment campaigns, especially in the Media.

He assured that the ongoing PVC distribution will continue until every registered citizen collects

his/her PVC before the election, and announced that the state will take delivery of additional 3,000 PVCs tomorrow.

The REC also disclosed that election will be held in all polling units in the state, as no polling unit had zero registered voters in the state. He said the expansion of voter access to polling units earlier embarked on by the Commission has led to an increase from 3,010 to 3,763 in the state.

Prof. Raji, used the medium to appeal to the Media to give INEC consideration and fair hearing. He urged them to ignore faceless peddlers of fake news, and merchants of campaign of calumny, especially on social media, while urging them to explore the open door policy of the Commission to verify information before feeding the public.

"Balanced news is what we want. don't destroy us while attempting to sell your medium", he urged.

In his presentation on INEC Social Media Platforms, the Chief Press Secretary to the INEC Chairman, Rotimi Oyekanmi, explained that the Commission was



Yakubu

one of the most active on social media with huge followership.

He said there was a lot of information being churned out on the INEC social media every minute, and challenged participants to take advantage of the social media to enhance their work.

Mr. Oyekanmi noted that every serious organisation, and journalist must have social media presence at this age and time.

In his remarks, the Chief Technical Adviser (CTA) to the Hon. Chairman, Prof. Bolade Eyinla, called on all journalists to ensure they get accredited for the election. He warned that their Identity cards may not give them free access to

cover the elections.

The CTA also challenged the participants to create a profile on the INEC Result Viewing Portal and follow the real time update of election results from the Polling Units.

He said "Make sure you keep your eyes on our processes and procedures. Ensure you create a profile on our result viewing portal as results from all 3,763 polling units in Osun will be uploaded in real time. You can even know the outcome of the election before it is officially announced".

In his good will remark, the Deputy Country Director for IFES, Mr. Obaje Ukeh, observed that the way journalists do their job

can make or mar elections.

He said the workshop was important and a bridge builder between the Commission and the Media, as it provided an avenue for journalists to ask questions about the electoral process and acquire more knowledge on the workings of INEC.

He expressed optimism that the Osun election will be better than the Ekiti, which according to him has been rated as one of the best elections conducted in recent times, and stressed that it can only be possible with the contribution and support of members of the 4th estate of the realm.

The Chairman Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) Osun state, Ajadosu Wasiu, appreciated the Commission for putting together such a commendable workshop.

He said it is the Union's belief that its members will be better equipped and the knowledge acquired from the workshop will go a long way in enhancing their capacities in reporting the electoral process.

Mr. Wasiu assured that whatever they learn from the engagement will be put to practice in the interest of the state and the country.

USA Senate members decry churches' destruction, killing of Christians in Nigeria

By **FRIDAY OMOSOLA**, Akure

Some members of United States Senate have condemned continuous violence and killings targeted at Christians and churches in Nigeria. Their outcry came as a result of terror attack on St. Francis Catholic Church, Owa-luwa in Owo Local Government Area of Ondo State. They faulted the removal of Nigeria's designation as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) as well as demanded its immediate re-designation by the USA.

They, in a letter addressed to the USA's Secretary of State, Honorable Antony Blinken Secretary, stated that the Nigerian government has failed to protect the religious freedom and basic safety of its Christian citizens. The letter was signed by Senators Josh Hawley; Mike Braun; Tom Cotton; Marco Rubio and James M. Inhofe. They particularly listed the June 5th Owo terror attack and the killing of Deborah Emmanuel Yakubu as evidences of persecution of Christians in Nigeria.

The letter reads: "As you are well aware, horrific acts of deadly violence have been committed against Nigerian Christians in recent weeks, including the massacre of churchgoers on Pentecost Sunday and the stoning of a Christian college student.

"Sadly, such violence has become all too familiar for Christians in Africa's most populous country. Last year, however, you inexplicably removed Nigeria's designation as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) despite no demonstrable improvement in the country's religious freedom conditions. On the contrary, the situation in Nigeria has grown worse. We previously urged you to immediately reverse your misguided decision, and we write today to renew our call. Recent high-profile acts of violence underscore the intense religious persecution that is regularly experienced by Nigerian Christians.

"On Pentecost Sunday, gunmen attacked St. Francis Catholic Church in Nigeria's Ondo State, reportedly killing at least 50 churchgoers. Last

month, a violent mob brutally stoned to death Deborah Emmanuel Yakubu, a student at Shehu Shagari College of Education in northwest Nigeria. According to reports, some Islamist students were enraged by a 'blasphemous' message Deborah had posted in a WhatsApp group, in which she said that 'Jesus Christ is the greatest. He helped me pass my exams.' Merely expressing one's Christian faith has apparently become tantamount to a death sentence in many parts of Nigeria.

"Religious violence and intolerance directed toward Nigerian Christians has worsened in recent years. One report documented more than 4,650 cases of Nigerian Christians who were killed for their faith in 2021. Accordingly, Nigeria earns the dubious honor—for the second consecutive year—of being the deadliest country on earth for Christians. We wrote last year that not only has the government of Nigeria failed to take meaningful steps to mitigate such violence, but Nigerian authorities restrict and crack down on religious

minorities and detain individuals indefinitely on blasphemy-related charges.

"We remain concerned that the Nigerian government is failing to protect the religious freedom and basic safety of its Christian citizens. Furthermore, as this year's annual reports from the bipartisan U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) and from your own Department make clear, Nigerian government authorities directly participate in the persecution of Christians, Muslims, and even non-theists, most notoriously through arrests and convictions under blasphemy laws.

"Make no mistake: continued enforcement of state-sanctioned blasphemy laws enables the type of deadly violence that killed Deborah Emmanuel Yakubu and so many others. When we previously wrote to you, we were met with a response which failed to answer our questions about why the State Department views Nigeria as not having engaged in or tolerated 'systematic, ongoing,

and egregious violations of religious freedom' or even 'severe violations of religious freedom.' This is unacceptable, especially because you are required by federal law to consider the recommendation of USCIRF—which, since 2009, has been to designate Nigeria as a CPC. In fact, USCIRF reiterated in its 2022 Annual Report that it was 'appalled' at the removal of Nigeria's CPC designation.

"Despite public statements from you and other State Department officials condemning the recent bloodshed in Nigeria, the fact remains that the Department still does not officially regard Nigeria as a severe violator of religious freedom. The State Department released its 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom on June 2, which starts the 90-day timeline for the Department to make its religious freedom designations.

"Given the abysmal state of religious freedom in Nigeria, it is incumbent upon you to reverse last year's decision and redesignate the country as a CPC. The moment demands that you do so without delay."

Police rescue 77 church members, arrest pastors in Ondo

By FRIDAY OMOSOLA, Akure

Ondo State Police Command has rescued 77 persons who were found locked in the cell of 'Whole Bible Deliverance Church' in Ondo Town. The police disclosed that the victims were twenty six children, eight teenagers and forty three adult members who were deceived by the Assistant Pastor of the church, Pastor Josiah Peter, that Jesus will come in September, this year.

The Trumpet gathered that the pastors of the church popularly known as 'Ondo Church' told the worshippers to devote themselves, vacating whatever they were executing and camp in the church for a seven-day programme ahead of the coming of Jesus Christ. Report had it that pupils, workers and their spouses left school and their respective offices to devote themselves for the coming of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, it was reported that some members of the church who did not believe the prophecy and got annoyed reported the development to the state police command.

The police operatives invaded the church and rescued the worshippers kept in an underground apartment of the church. While parading the victims and the pastors at the command's headquarters in Akure, the state capital, the Police image maker, DSP Funmilayo Odunlami, said the two pastors are in Police custody and preliminary investigation had commenced into the matter.

"Preliminary investigation is ongoing and further information will be communicated to the public. We urge the good people of Ondo State to be calm as the State Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department have taken over the case."

She further added that the suspects would be charged to court after the completion of the investigation. Meanwhile, the family of the victims who were at the scene when the police operatives arrived said their children and husbands abandoned work and schools because the pastors hypnotized them.

They said the pastor told the congregation that Jesus Christ was coming in September and that members should stay in church, abandon sinful life by staying in God's presence. They said the pastors instructed students to quit schooling, workers should halt working, wives and husbands to leave themselves and come to meet their Lord. They disclosed that their daughter had left home since January 2022 and had been living in the Church.

Another family who was also around during the rescue said their daughter, a Part 3 student, dropped out of school due to the strange teachings of the Pastor and left home in January 2022 to start living in the Church. However, some of the victims who spoke with our correspondent debunked being kidnapped by anybody, saying it was their faith to be a member and attendees of the church without their parent's permission.

The Pastor in charge of the church, Peter Josiah, said he only taught them what the Bible says about the second coming of Jesus Christ.

"The prophecy that is being fulfilled this time is showing that the rapture is close. I never even mentioned years to the church. I never taught them to run away from their parents. I only taught them the gospel. I told them to obey their parents in the Lord."

Another pastor in the church, Pastor David Anifowose, denied the allegation of hypnotising or abducting the victims, saying they only preached undiluted words of God to the members, adding that they didn't teach them to

disobey or abandon their parents.

Public Relations Officer of the State Command, SP Funmilayo Odunlami, told newsmen on Saturday evening that a parent of one of the victims reported at a local police station in Ondo town that her children had left home for days.

Her complaint was said to have prompted the police to accompany her to where she thought the children were hiding.

"The police followed her to check. When they tried to talk to the pastor, the church members became violent and attacked the police officers. However, people around there assisted the police and police called in

for reinforcement.

"At the end of the day, 77 members were rescued. They were there in the church.

"According to what we heard from some of the parents of those rescued, the assistant pastor was the one piloting the affairs of the church.

"He claimed rapture was going to take place in April. But he later changed his mind that it would take place in September," Odunlami said.

According to her, the pastor ordered the victims to always obey whatever he told them.

She said that the pastor, who was not named, told the worshippers that education was not

necessary and that rapture would take place very soon.

The police spokesperson further disclosed that one of the members left home in January and abandoned her admission to a tertiary academic institution without informing her parents.

"Investigation is ongoing. The two pastors are in custody, and 77 members have been rescued," the spokesperson added.

A short video of the church that went viral on social media showed a Bible kept on a table, flanked by bottles of exotic whiskeys, while some members spoke in hushed tones. Some parents were seen in the video lamenting over the development.

BRT ex-driver excretes 90 pellets of cocaine

• NDLEA uncovers N4.5b heroin in baby food, seizes 2,453.65kg Khat, Colorado

By PAUL MICHAEL

Operatives of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) have arrested a 39-year-old former driver of BRT for ingesting 90 pellets of cocaine.

A statement on Sunday by the Agency's Director of Media and Advocacy, Femi Babafemi, said the suspect, Muyiwa Babalola Bolujoko, was placed under excretion observation after body scan result confirmed drug ingestion.

Babafemi said the suspect later excreted the 90 pellets of cocaine while in custody.

"NDLEA officers at the airport had on Monday 27th June arrested a former driver with a public transport company, BRT, Muyiwa Babalola Bolujoko for ingesting 90 pellets of cocaine.

"He was arrested at the screening point before boarding a Qatar Airways flight enroute Doha to Sharjah, with his trip expected to terminate in Dubai, UAE.

"The 39-year-old from Ijebu South LGA, Ogun State, was placed under excretion observation after body scan result confirmed drug ingestion. While in custody, the suspect excreted all the 90 pellets in four excretions.

"He claimed he left his N60,000 per month job as BRT driver in February and decided to work as drug courier to raise funds to buy a shuttle bus popularly called Korope in Lagos to continue his transport business."

In another development, blocks of heroin concealer in packs of baby food with value



Marwa

of N4.5 billion were intercepted by the anti-narcotics agency last Wednesday.

According to Babafemi, "NDLEA intercepted 22 blocks of heroin weighing 23.55kilograms concealed in packs of Nestle Cerelac baby food at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport, MMIA, Ikeja, Lagos.

"The consignment with a street value of over N4.5billion came from Johannesburg, South Africa

on board South African Airways flight on Wednesday 29th June as part of a consolidated cargo that arrived the SAHCO import shed of the Lagos airport.

"After series of follow up operations that led to the arrest of two freight agents, the actual receiver of the drug consignment, Chike Okeke Eweni who distributes the substance for his South Africa based partner was arrested the following day, Thursday 30th

June at a logistics warehouse in Ajao Estate, Ikeja.

"Chike who hails from Anaocha LGA, Anambra state claims during preliminary interview that he's also into fish farming."

He added that operatives also intercepted an inbound consignment of khat leaves, which arrived the NAHCO import shed of the Lagos airport on Royal Air Maroc flight from the Middle East on Thursday.

"A total of 71 cartons of dried khat leaves with a gross weight of 2,434.3 kg were discovered in the cargo," he said.

Similarly, operatives of the Agency also last Thursday seized 36 parcels of Colorado, a variant of cannabis with a total weight of 19.30kg which arrived the NAHCO import shed from Los Angeles, US on a Delta Airlines flight.

"After series of follow up operations in which four persons were arrested, the actual owner of the drug consignment, Abibu Afis Sola was eventually nabbed on Friday 1st July in Gbagada area of Lagos," Babafemi stated.

Meanwhile, operatives in Rivers State on Wednesday arrested a 68-year-old woman, Mrs. Celina Ekeke at Obunuku community, Oyiabo LGA with 231.2kg cannabis, while one Shedrack Eze, was arrested the following day at Yankarfe, Zaria, Kaduna State with 250,000 tablets of Exol 5, weighing 75kg.

In Borno State, one Usman Haruna, 27, was arrested at BCG checkpoint in Biu on Saturday with 19.7kg cannabis.

Group alleges threat to judicial officer's life

• Urges arrest, trial of culprit

A group, "Participation Train for Development Initiatives," has frowned at a porported threat to the life of a magistrate, Mrs. Ejiro Diejomaoh, of the Delta State Magistral District Warri.

In a communique issued from its Ota office in Ogun State, the group emphasized that the statement of Mr. Agbro on Facebook is a

threat to the feminine gender, the Nigerian judiciary and a worrisome impediment to the administration of justice in the country.

The public relations officer of the group, Mrs. Abosede Olanrewaju, wondered why any individual or group will be so callous as to publicly issue such threats via a

social media platform.

"Such impunity should not be allowed to fester in our society," she said.

Olanrewaju, therefore called for the arrest and prosecution of the man who issued the threat to serve as a deterrent to others who may tow this line of lawlessness or who may have been agitated by his inciting comments on Facebook.

"The perpetrator of this heinous

threat is a disgrace to the exalted people of Warri Kingdom and its environ," Olanrewaju added.

"His Royal Majesty will not be happy to hear that one of his subjects is breaching the peace by issuing such an unsolicited threat to a magistrate who is merely doing her job."

"The matter which elicited the unwarranted threat to the life of the magistrate has been adjourned."

Despite epileptic electricity supply, DisCos gross N2.4tr

By **JOHNMARK UKOKO**

Electricity Distribution Companies (DisCos) in the country have raked in N2.4 trillion as revenue between 2015 and 2020, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) has revealed.

According to the NBS electricity report for June 2022, revenue generated by the DisCos in 2015 stood at N278.89 billion and rose to N303.03 billion in 2016, representing a growth rate of 8.65 per cent.

Also in 2017, revenue generated by the DisCos increased by 22.25 per cent to N\$70.46 billion and further rose by 19.48 per cent in 2018 to N442.63 billion.

The revenues further increased by 9.03 per cent in 2019 to N442.63 billion, rose by 9.03 per cent in 2020 to N482.61

billion and sustained positive growth of 19.15 per cent by generating N526.15 billion in 2020.

The NBS electricity report, which presents statistics on electricity supply and payment from 2015 to 2020, focuses on customer base, metered customers, estimated billing customers and most importantly, electricity supply and revenue collected within the review period.

In the 2020 revenue receipts, the Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company (IEDC) collected the highest revenue at N102.10 billion, closely followed by the Eko Electricity Distribution Company (EKEDC) with N81.39 billion, while the least collection was recorded by the Yola Electricity Distribution Company (YEDC) with N10.64 billion.

Nonetheless, electricity supplied to customers during the

period under review showed an unstable trajectory, adding that in 2015, about 20337.40Gigawatt hours (GEh) were supplied across the country, but the figure fell by 6.36 per cent in 2016 as 19044 30GWh were supplied.

Also, it rose in 2017 by 2.04 per cent with 19,432.139GWh and further rose in 2018 by 10.55 per cent, with 21,483.25GWh. Total electricity supplied in 2019 stood at 22,450.67GWh, but declined in 2020 by 1.82 per cent.

The NBS report also revealed that customer numbers in the period under review increased on a year-on-year basis with the highest numbers recorded in IBEDC.

Generally, customer base rose from 6.99 million in 2016 to 10.37 million in 2020, while the customer numbers were highest in IBEDC with 1,282,136 and lowest in EKEDC in 2020 with 269,027.

Commenting on the statistics, Statistician -General of the Federation, Adeyemi Adeniran, said: "With the overwhelming global demand for energy and the emphasis positioned by the Sustainable Development Goal 7 on access to energy for all places, the need for statistics on electricity as a form of energy is important.

"Thus, electricity statistics remain a very useful tool for socio-economic planning and development, particularly for

a developing economy like Nigeria. These numbers will provide an insight and shape policy making on improving energy, especially electricity supply in Nigeria."

The report further stated that the trajectory of metered customers had shown yearly positive growth rates consecutively except in 2020, even as metered customers rose to 3.15 million in 2015 and rose slightly by 0.23 per cent in 2016. This increased in 2017 and 2018 with 3.57 million and 3.58 million customers respectively.

Metered customers in 2019 stood at 3.80 million showing a 5.96 per cent growth rate, but lower in 2020, as 3.51 million customers were metered.

Police present body of man, 70 in place of 30-yr-old allegedly tortured to death

By **ALEX OLISE**

The death in custody of 30-year-old Chinonso Omeh has continued to generate furore as family members have accused the Police of using their son for ritual purpose. The accusation is coming on the heels of the Police presenting the corpse of a 70-year-old man to the family in place of their son.

A family source said Chinonso was arrested by the Anambra Police Special Tactical Squad and allegedly tortured to death while in custody at the defunct notorious Awkuzu Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) now renamed State CID Annex.

Addressing journalists in Onitsha, during the weekend elder brother of the victim, Onyebuchi Omeh said Chinonso, who had a car wash at Ogbunike former toll gate, was arrested on February 4, 2022, at the instance of one Austin Izunnwanne on trumped-up charges of threat to life.

Omeh said Chinonso was subsequently detained at Ogidi Police Station before his transfer to Awkuzu but there they were refused access to see him in the cell and even initially denied ever having him in their custody.

According to Omeh, after repeated attempts by himself and the family to see Chinonso at Awkuzu State CID Annex failed, they petitioned the AIG in charge of Zone 13, Ukpo, Anambra State through a lawyer and the Investigating Police Officer (IPO) at Ogidi was summoned. Upon interrogation, he gave a graphic account of how, when and to whom he handed Chinonso

over at Awkuzu.

He said when the team from Awkuzu was also summoned to Zone 13 Ukpo, they confessed that Chinonso was in their custody but had died having reportedly slumped in their cell and later pronounced dead by a medical doctor.

Omeh disclosed that when they requested to see his corpse, they were taken to a private mortuary and shown the corpse of a 70-year-old man in place of their brother, Chinonso. He alleged that the police at Awkuzu State CID Annex might have killed his brother and used him for ritual purposes since they cannot produce his body.

"The last time they (the family) had an appointment with the police team investigating the matter at Zone 13, Ukpo, they were totally surprised to hear that the two policemen from Awkuzu, the IPO, Michael Nelson and his team leader known as Big Sam who handled their brother's matter earlier detained over the case had been released and they are now walking freely," he said.

Calling for justice over the matter, the family insisted that the police should come clean and tell them what happened to their brother and show them the corpse if he is truly dead. The family called on human rights bodies to assist in ensuring that those involved in the heinous crime are brought to justice.

The zonal command spokesperson (Zone 13), Ukpo, Nkiruka Nwode, who spoke to journalists said she had not been briefed on the extent of investigation on the matter. She, however, promised to make enquiries and act accordingly.

Congestion looms as importers abandon vehicles at ports

By **EDU ABADE**, Business Editor

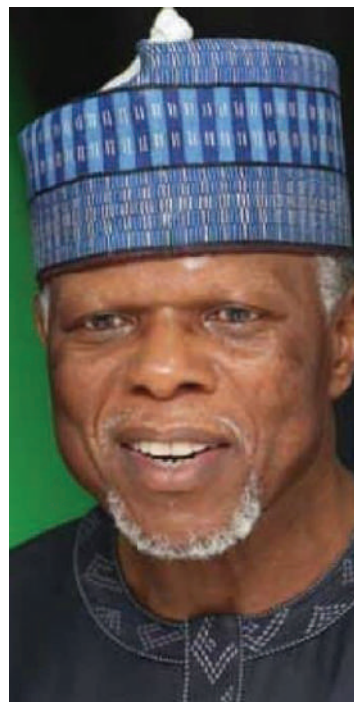
In spite of review of the VIN Valuation policy, importers and freight agents are having tough times as they have been left with no choice than to abandon their vehicles at the port terminals with attendant accumulation of demurrage and other sundry charges.

Speaking at a roundtable organised by the Maritime Journalists Association of Nigeria (MAJAN) in Lagos, a member of the Association of Professional Freight Forwarders and Logistics in Nigeria (APFFLON), Clinton Okoro, said the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), should exercise patience in test-running the VIN Valuation policy and expressed concern that Customs officials seem to be implementing the policy in a hurry.

"Although the NCS gave a three-month window after the protests that greeted its introduction, but the way they made us believe it will work is not the way it is working. So, the policy is not okay with us, because it is causing a lot of delays, which come with congestion and accumulation of demurrage. Worse still, the officials don't explain the challenges to the terminal managers," Okoro lamented.

However, on what he thinks should be done, Okoro said two widows should be created in the VIN Valuation System to incorporate the manual and standard systems before gradual harmonisation of the entire system.

Also responding to the effects and workability of the VIN Valuation policy, another member of APFFLON, Iyke Umelo, said: "It is true that the Federal Ministry of Finance introduced the new system through the NCS to facilitate trade, but it is also true that we applauded the Customs when they introduced the policy because we were seeking a



Ali Hammed, Custom boss

way of harmonising clearance procedures to save time and eliminate bottlenecks.

"But we have found out that there are several contradictions in the new valuation system to the extent that some vehicles like Toyota Corolla and Mercedes Benz have not been imputed into the system."

He pointed out that the major problem was non-standard value, because of the delay and high duty on non-standard rated vehicles, which he said, was causing a lot of stress for car dealers, freight forwarders and importers.

"Furthermore, everyone is complaining about the high valuation, which is forcing people to abandon their vehicles at the ports. Terminal operators are not also having it easy with congestion in their terminals. Even the Customs officers are not left out of the lamentation, because there is a drop in revenue generation and meeting their target is becoming an Herculean task.

"People are also suspicious

that the Customs is systematically phasing out the importation of over-aged vehicles, which is why the difference between 2016 model of Toyota Corolla and that of 2013 is so wide," he said.

On his part, George Okafor of the National Association of Government Approved Freight Forwarders (NAGAFF), lamented that the high valuation of vehicles was due to the fact that the NCS was trying hard to meet the target given to it by the Federal Government, while also trying to plug the gap left by the 20 per cent drop in duty collection.

"The value of Mercedes and Toyota Corolla are so outrageous, if you are on 846, they use the new template of 2003 to 2013, which cost is about N2.8 million, as against between N390,000 and N400,000. This has made most owners to abandon their vehicles, although consultations and meetings are going on to find a solution to the anomaly," he said.

Another stakeholder, Mrs. Jewel Igwe of NCMDLCA, said: "Non-standard value is the cause of the outrage, as there was no circular to that effect. What we had was 15 years, before they said they were going to work with 12 years, but they imputed nine years into the system."

She urged the authorities to adjust the duty and review the age limit of vehicles adding: "The letter of error in valuation is causing serious congestion in most terminals, but at Tin Can, the CAC Code will rescue the situation, because it has been routed to the Controller instead of the registry.

"The Customs has said there is no going back on the VIN Valuation policy and we agree with them, because of our experiences with the Ad-hoc Task Force, which usually extort us on the roads."

Edo tasks students on skills development, cybercrime

By ISAAC OLAMIKAN

Edo State Government has urged students to take advantage of its skills development programmes to boost their capacity to survive in the information age.

Addressing students during a sensitization programme on crime-free society by the Edo State Ministry of Social Development and Gender Issues, the Director of Child Development, Mrs. Kate Bello, said the government will continue to intensify enlightenment on the dangers of cybercrime.

She said, "Cybercrime is a pathway to self-destruction. Over the years, we found out that a lot of children are gradually engaging in these activities. We want to start our sensitization from your level. We want to catch you young from JSS 1 and above. We don't want you to get to higher levels first and fall to that path before you become aware that this is not something you need to get involved in."

"I want to let you know that this is not a good way

to get wealth, to tell you that cybercrime is not good. You need to work hard, study your books and by the time you finish your secondary school and you don't want to go further, you can acquire valuable skills.

"In the Ministry of Social Development and Gender Issues, we have several units that handle issues that have to do with skills development. After school, you can come to us and there are lots of skill areas to focus on including programmes in Information Technology and other lucrative jobs as long as you put effort into what you do."

"Cybercrime comes with so many negatives on the individual including lack of integrity, untimely death, waste of resources, hardships among others in the society, as well as prosecution or even jail term," she added.

The Director urged the students not to give in to peer pressure to engage in cybercrime but rather engage in meaningful and legitimate means of livelihood.

The functional Director,



John McDonald

Planning, Research and Statistics in the Ministry, Mr. John McDonald, said students can channel the same intelligence they should have used for

criminal purposes into areas like IT and the medical sciences among others, adding that these will help them build more stable means of income.

Suspected robbers killed by police

By GABRIEL ELOZINO, Asaba

Delta State Police Command has said about six suspected armed robbers have been killed by its operatives after a gun duel.

According to a statement by the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), DSP Bright Edafe, operatives attached to 'B' Division Warri Surveillance Team while on Aberdeen Patrol along lower Erejuwa Street in Warri, received a distress call, that a suspected armed robbery gang were terrorizing Igbudu Market/Old Welfare.

He disclosed that the team, acting on this distress call moved to the scene, where the hoodlums, on sighting the police took to their heels. The team chased them to Old Welfare Road, where the hoodlums engaged them in a gun battle but were overpowered by the superior firepower of the police.

He explained that, during the gun duel, five of the hoodlums sustained serious gunshot injuries while, two locally made cut-to-size single barrel guns, three rounds of expended cartridges, three rounds of live cartridges and one dagger were recovered from them.

"The injured suspects gave up the ghost while they were being taken to the hospital. Investigation is ongoing," he added.

Similarly, police personnel belonging to the Rapid Response Squad (RRS) attached to the State Command, Asaba, have also neutralized a gang of four robbers killing one of them in the process.

According to the force spokesperson, on 30/6/2022 at about 0230hrs, operatives of the Command Rapid Response Squad (RRS) while on visibility patrol along Ezenei Street, Asaba, sighted four suspicious looking young men in a parked mini bus without registration number.

He said, "When the team advanced towards them to find out their identity, they zoomed off towards Asaba-Benin Expressway. The operatives gave them a tireless chase till they got to Issele-Asagba in Aniocha South LGA. The team while trying to double cross the vehicle were faced with stiff resistance from the hoodlums, who crashed into the Police van, abandoned the vehicle and fled into adjoining bush while firing at the policemen.

"This confirmed the suspicion of the operatives, they followed them into the bush while exchanging gunshot. Consequently, one of the suspects sustained gunshot injury while others escaped with bullet wounds. One (1) cut-to-size english double barrel, one (1) locally made pistol, six (6) expended cartridges, two (2) live cartridges and a big iron cutter were recovered. The injured suspect was taken to Agbor General Hospital, where he died while receiving treatment.

Bayelsa, New Jersey to partner on investment opportunities

•Diri seeks new educational partnerships

By AHERHOKE OKIOMA, Yenagoa

Bayelsa Government and the State of New Jersey in the United States of America, have resolved to explore mutually beneficial business opportunities.

Governor Douye Diri, who is in the United States with a delegation to seek investment opportunities and possible collaboration with some key institutions in New York and New Jersey, presented his initiatives to the the Secretary of State, Ms. Tahesha Way, who represented New Jersey Governor, Mr. Philip Murphy, at a meeting in Trenton, the capital.

Diri, in a statement by his Director, New Media, Dr. Kola Oredipe, noted that both Bayelsa and New Jersey had similar coastal terrain and said his administration was desirous to understudy key models of infrastructural development in the American state. He informed his host that the Bayelsa State delegation had met with Donald Milford Payne Jr., top USA Congressman representing New Jersey, and members of the African American Chamber of Commerce. It also visited Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, Newark, Stevens Institute of Technology, and Ricovr bio-laboratory, an arm of Princeton University, that is developing cutting-edge saliva diagnostic technology to seek partnership

and support.

According to the governor, his state is seeking partnership in the development of Bayelsa Medical University in Yenagoa, exchange programmes for students, investments in renewable energy, and broadband technology to improve connectivity.

"We are here to seek further opportunities for the growth of our country and our dear State of Bayelsa. Bayelsa State is the golden egg of the country where crude oil was first struck in commercial quantities. But

today, we are all aware that oil is almost giving way. We are richer in natural gas deposits and that is a great source for cleaner energy that the world seek. We are looking for investors in this area. In the area of health, we have a young Medical University, we have been looking for opportunities for programmes exchange, modelling our curriculum to suit modern medical technology, opportunities like this to see other institutions that will collaborate with us. This

is a massive opportunity," he stated.

Ms. Way who presented a letter of welcome personally signed by Governor Murphy to Senator Diri, appreciated the genuine intention of the Bayelsa Governor to attract investments opportunities to his State and assured that the government in New Jersey would be willing to help mobilise investors to identify opportunities in Bayelsa State.

Mr. Victor Lawrence, a Senior Research Scientist at Stevens Institute of Technology and an expert in Broadband technology, said Brass Island in Bayelsa State had been identified as a great location to site a landing station for Telcom submarine cables that would be commercially rewarding to the oil-rich State.

The Permanent Secretary, Bayelsa State Ministry of Trade, Industry and Investments, Barrister Patience Ranami Abah, said the delegation was excited at the huge opportunities at the various facilities visited and that a technical team from the State would immediately explore the opportunities so identified.

The Consul-General, Nigerian Consulate in the New York, Ambassador Lot Egopija, had accompanied Diri, to most of the meeting and visits.



Gov. Douye Diri,

Three N'Assembly members to dump PDP for LP in Enugu

By CHARLES ONYEKWERE,
South East Correspondent

Barring any last minute change, three federal lawmakers from Enugu State have concluded arrangements to dump the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP). The three that are members of the House of Representatives The Trumpet learnt will be leaving to pursue their political careers under a new platform after failing to secure the ticket of the PDP. An impeccable source told our correspondent that the lawmakers are from two of the senatorial zones of the state.

"The plans are almost completed and I can tell you that it's going to change the political landscape of Enugu State," an aide to one of the lawmakers from Enugu North Senatorial Zone said.

"It's not only him that's leaving. I can confirm to you that two others from Enugu West Senatorial Zone are also leaving. My Boss might be seeking for a higher office under a new platform but I don't want to let the cat out of the bag yet because the time is almost here and he will be making the big announcement."

On the platform the decampers will be joining, the aide, who doesn't want his name in print because he's not authorised to speak to the press on the matter,

said "your guess is as good as mine on the platform it will be. I can assure you the i has been doted and the t almost crossed on this platform.

"You are in this country and have seen the political party with the biggest momentum in the country presently. Our destination won't be far from this platform that's unlocking a new voting demography in our country. In the coming week, expect this big political announcement in Enugu State," the source said.

A close source to one of the lawmakers from Enugu West Senatorial zone said "my oga will join other labourers in Obi's vineyard. This will no longer be speculation in the coming days.

"My boss will most likely be contesting for the current position he's occupying under Labour Party and I can assure you that nothing will stop him from clinching the position in February 2023."

The source also disclosed that they're consulting widely to get grassroots mobilizers to fly the ticket of the party in Enugu West Senatorial zone so they can stand a chance against the PDP at the polls. He added that this move was slowed down by some factors but his boss and others from other zones are ready to take the decision.

The Trumpet learnt that the delay was because of the



Ike Ekweremadu

permutations to draft one of the governorship aspirants and former Deputy Senate President, Ike Ekweremadu, into the governorship race. There are also speculations that a serving senator will join the defectors. But The Trumpet couldn't verify this as at press time. Similarly, a former member of the House of Representatives from Enugu

North Senatorial Zone who failed to pick the ticket of the PDP is tipped to be in the race too.

Imo abolishes payment of pensions to ex-govs, others

By ATHAN AGBAKWURU, Owerri

Imo State Government has abolished the payment of pensions and gratuities to all former governors, deputy governors and speakers of the House of Assembly, IMHA. This followed Governor Hope Uzodinma's assent to a bill passed into law by the state legislature repealing the law on payment of pensions, allowances and gratuities to former governors, deputy governors,

assembly speakers and deputy speakers.

Uzodinma while signing the bill into law at Government House, Owerri at the weekend, noted that the repealed law runs contrary to the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic, as amended, which stipulates that a pensioner must have worked for at least 10 years and must be up to 45 years of age.

The governor decried the practice whereby some of the

beneficiaries of such payments also get huge amount of money as salaries and allowances in other positions they occupied such as serving as senators or members of the House of Representatives or ministers.

He argued that apart from the inconsistency of such a law to the provisions of the grundnorm which is the nation's Constitution, it has set an unfortunate "precedence that does not encourage diligence and prudence in service delivery."

Uzodinma applauded the State House of Assembly for rising to the occasion and embracing totally the desire of government to strengthen the Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) base of the state by discouraging leakages and wastage of the meagre resources of the state.

Speaking on the occasion, Speaker of the Imo House of Assembly, Hon. Kennedy Ibeh, stated that the House of Assembly presented two bills for the governor's assent namely: the Bill on Imo State University of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences and Bill on the Repeal of Pensions and Gratuity.

Commending the governor for signing the bill into law, Ibeh stated that the bill on pensions and gratuity has long been repealed in many states of the federation when it was discovered to run contrary to the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended).



Gov. Hope Uzodinma

Fake police officer nabbed in Ebonyi

By CHARLES ONYEKWERE,
South-East Correspondent

Ebonyi State Police Command on Sunday arrested a fake officer, Enyi Friday, who parades himself as such and deceives people.

Enyi hails from Umunwagu Idembia Community in Ezza South Local Government Area of the state and was arrested for alleged impersonation.

Enyi was arrested by one Anyigor Lazarus, who is a Commander of Ebubeagu Security outfit in Ezza South LGA of Ebonyi State. Enyi, who is not a police officer, was caught wearing the uniform of a Police Corporal hence his arrest.

The commissioner, in a statement, signed and made available to journalists in Abakaliki, through the Police Public Relations Officer, PPRO, SP Chris Anyanwu, said the suspect has been handed over to the State Investigation and Intelligence Department for further investigation.

He urged the general public to continue to partner with the Police in Ebonyi State in a bid to rid the communities of criminal elements.

Guber candidate seeks cordiality among contestants, supporters

By CHARLES ONYEKWERE,
South-East Correspondent

All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) governorship candidate in Ebonyi State, Professor Bernard Odoh, has advocated for a peaceful and convivial relationship among candidates of various political parties and supporters ahead of the 2023 elections.

He made this known at the weekend while fielding questions from newsmen after a consultative meeting with the Speaker of the State's House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Francis Nwifuru at his Abakaliki residence.

The APGA candidate, a Professor of Geophysics, said he believes that elections are only a significant and critical component of our entire democratic process which ensures successful regime transition and not a time to pick a fight or quarrel with anybody.

"Yes, in continuation of our consultative visits which has been on for two weeks now, I have just visited and spent quality time with the number three citizen of the state in the person of the Speaker of the State's House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Nwifuru.

"I know you (the Press) and even some individuals are wondering why I'm consulting a 'candidate' of another political party like the Speaker. But then, that's what makes us different," he responded.

Odoh stated that the essence of the visit was simply to solicit the support of every Ebonyian, high or low, no matter where they dwell or their political leanings on his governorship ambition.

"First of all, we are brothers and long time friends who served in the same government before I left on grounds of personal principles. There's therefore no issues or misunderstanding between us as leaders and the collective interest and better welfare for our people have remained the goal.

"We will therefore continue to deepen our consultations with our people, elicit their supports and exchange views and opinions on how the future of our people and

generations yet unborn can best be secured.

"Elections are only an aspect of the entire democratic process and I want aspirants, my fellow candidates and their teeming supporters to understand this. It is very important they are made to understand this so that some misguided and overzealous supporters and even the electorates do not think that there is war, a misunderstanding or a fight between the candidates and their various supporters and then hide under that to cause crisis or violence in any part of the State," Odoh replied.

The former Secretary to the Ebonyi State Government further told journalists that he also enjoins other aspirants and candidates to pay similar consultative visits to their fellow candidates and their supporters, noting that such is how leaders should live by peaceful examples.

Odoh had also earlier disclosed that he has visited people across party lines including; the Deputy Governor of the State, Barrister Eric Kelechi Igwe; a former Senate President and ex-Secretary to Government of the Federation, Senator Anyim Pius Anyim; a former Minister of State for Health, Engr. Fidelis Nwankwo; the Senatorial candidate of the PDP in Ebonyi Central Senatorial zone, Hon. Lazarus Ogbee; leader of the State's House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Victor Nwite; incumbent Chairman of Ezza North/Ishielu Federal Constituency, Dr. Nora Aloh among numerous other leaders, candidates and aspirants of political parties across board.

He also listed some serving members of the State's Executive Council, religious leaders, traditional rulers and influential individuals from various spheres as being part of those he has consulted so far, promising to engage in more interactive engagements and consultative visits including paying one to his former boss and the State Governor, Engr. David Umahi in the days ahead.

Nigerian arrested in S'frica for alleged \$12m online fraud to be extradited to USA

BY PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

A 28-year-old Nigerian, James Junior Aliyu, has been arrested by officers of International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) for allegedly defrauding dozens of United States citizens of money totaling \$12m.

Aliyu was arrested in Sandton, Johannesburg, South Africa on Wednesday in a 'takedown operation' carried out

by INTERPOL with assistance from members of the South African Police Service (SAPS).

According to a statement issued by the South African police, Aliyu is "believed to be part of a cybercrime ring involved in phishing, internet scams and money laundering."

The South African police further stated that authorities in the US, where the investigation originated and where most

of his alleged victims are based, have applied for the extradition of the suspect.

The police noted that the suspect was charged to court the day of his arrest, adding that the case would be heard on Tuesday, July 5, 2022.

The statement added, "Just after 10:00 on Wednesday, 29 June 2022, members from the Interpol National Crime Bureau (NCB) in Pretoria with the assistance from members of the SAPS Gauteng Highway

Patrol Unit swooped in on the upmarket estate where they effected the arrest.

"His arrest follows a widespread investigation involving law enforcement authorities from South Africa (SA) and the United States of America (USA).

"The cybercrime suspect who has been conducting his criminal activities from South Africa is accused of swindling dozens of US citizens millions in USD through email and text messages."

ICPC, CCB team up against corrupt practices

BY PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

Oyo State Office of the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) has offered to collaborate with the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) to confront graft by public officials.

A statement by the Commission at the weekend applauded the CCB on its initiative of sensitizing the public on the Bureau's guidelines on the fight against corruption.

Mr Oluwole David, an Assistant Commissioner, who represented the ICPC Oyo Resident Anti-Corruption Commissioner (RACC) at a sensitization session organized by the two agencies, assured the CCB of the Commission's readiness to collaborate in whatever capacity as the fight against corruption cannot be done in isolation by any anti-corruption agency.

Deputy Chief Superintendent of the Bureau, Mr Amao Bolaji, who delivered a lecture at the sensitisation programme,

said that it became necessary to sensitise ICPC staff because most officers of MDAs only knew of the "Asset Declaration" among the 14 guidelines as enlisted in the Fifth schedule of the 1999 Constitution.

According to Bolaji, "there were 14 guidelines listed in the Fifth Schedule of the 1999 Constitution and the essence of these is to ensure a very high level of public morality."

He said it is imperative for ICPC operatives to know all the guidelines to ascertain whether public officers had complied fully with all the provisions.

Also speaking at the event, Superintendent Ologun Adebola, another officer of the Bureau, expounded on how to fill the Assets Declaration form accurately and correctly.

Given a closing remark, Mrs Faustina Adeoluwa of the Legal department of ICPC, acknowledged and praised the efforts of the CCB in taking out time to educate and enlighten ICPC officers in readiness for the fight against corrupt practices.

ICPC restates commitment to corrupt-free healthcare system

BY PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) has reiterated its readiness to continue supporting the activities of the Anti-Corruption and Transparency Unit (ACTU) of the Federal Ministry of Health. It is in a quest to promote a corruption-free ministry.

Mr Demola Bakare, a Deputy Director in the ICPC, made the pledge during a two-day Sensitisation Workshop and Retreat for the Directorate Cadre of the ministry in Abuja.

Bakare emphasized that the participants and ACTU members of the Ministry should abhor corruption and check unethical practices in the Ministry.

He further expressed the Commission's gratitude to the management and ACTU members of the Ministry for their consistency in organising workshops and retreats every year, noting that it has greatly contributed to the building of the right ethical standards and a culture

of transparency within the Ministry.

Permanent Secretary of the Ministry, Alhaji Mahmuda Mamman, in his remark thanked the ICPC for its support in addressing the issue of corruption in the administrative procedures, especially at this time where the use of ethics is abused by public officials.

Also speaking, the Executive Secretary of the Presidential Advisory Committee Against Corruption (PACAC), Professor Sadiq Isah Radda, stressed that Nigeria had achieved a lot in the fight against corruption, "looking at what ICPC, EFCC, JAMB and Nigeria Customs Service have accomplished compared to what they were before this administration."

Meanwhile, Mr Hassan Salihu, an Assistant Commissioner of the ICPC, in his lecture titled, "Effective Communication: A Veritable Tool for Monitoring and Reporting Corruption", stated that effective communication is beneficial to making recoveries, assessing corruption risks, mitigating the risks and preventing of corruption in the Ministry of Health.

Court jails fake America military officer for cybercrime

BY PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

Justice Muhammed Sani of the Federal High Court, Ilorin has sentenced a 300-Level Student of Federal University, Lokoja, Adesanya Adeolu Tosin, to one-year imprisonment for posing as an America military officer to defraud his unsuspecting victims.

Adesanya was convicted on Friday alongside one Usman Abubakar from Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State.

The Ilorin Zonal Command of the Eco-

nomics and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) arraigned the duo on separate charges bordering on cybercrime and retention of proceeds of unlawful activities.

The defendants pleaded guilty when the charges were read to them.

Following their guilty pleas, Innocent Mbachie and Sesan Ola who prosecuted the cases on behalf of the Commission reviewed the facts of the cases and tendered the extra-judicial statements of the defendants, phones, drafts which they brought as restitution to their victims

and fraudulent messages printed from his devices, which were admitted in evidence.

The prosecutors urged the Court to convict the defendants in line with their pleas.

Justice Sani in his judgment said from the totality of evidence brought by the prosecution, the court was convinced that the EFCC has proved its cases beyond reasonable doubt and subsequently convicted the defendants as charged.

The judge sentenced Adesanya to one-year imprisonment with option of N400,000

fine. and ordered that one iPhone 12 Pro Max which he used to perpetrate the crime and a draft of N600,000 which he raised as restitution to his victims, be forfeited to the Federal Government.

Justice Sani slammed a jail term of three years on Usman with option of N479,290.00 fine.

In addition, the court ordered the convict to forfeit his iPhone X 5 and Samsung s8 which he used to perpetrate the crime and also retribute the sum of N279,290.00 to his victim.

UK ex-convict returns to prison for credit card fraud

BY PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

Lagos Command of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has secured the conviction and sentencing of one Ahmed Soetan Adebola, a United Kingdom ex-convict for credit card fraud.

Adebola was sentenced to one year imprisonment by Justice Mojisola Dada of the Special Offences Court sitting in Ikeja, Lagos

The EFCC had on June 3, 2022, arraigned the convict on a one-count amended charge bordering on obtaining by false pretence, which is contrary to Section 312 of the Criminal Law of Lagos State 2011.

The charge reads, "Ahmed Soetan Adebola sometime between the 23rd day of October 2020 and 4th November 2020 in Lagos within the Ikeja Judicial Division with intent to defraud, checked

into RADISSON BLU Anchorage Hotel for the sum of N4,449,633.12 with the understanding that your payment will be made using an American Express card with pretence you knew was false."

The convict pleaded "guilty" to the charge when read before him.

The prosecuting counsel, Ahmed Yerima, had led in evidence, his witness, an operative of the EFCC, Godwin Okara, who gave a review of the facts against the defendant, detailing how the EFCC received a petition from RADISSON BLU hotel in Lagos, sometime in December 2020, alleging that the defendant who had lodged in their facility, "off and on", made payments through credit cards, American Express in favour of the hotel and that "the payments were recalled by the unified payment system".

The trial judge had at the last sitting on June 3, 2022 fixed July 1, 2022 for

judgement.

In his ruling, Justice Dada declared the victim guilty as charged.

According to the ruling of Justice Dada, "The defendant is hereby sentenced to one year in prison.

"All the items recovered from him are hereby ordered forfeited to the

Federal Government and he must sign an undertaking with the EFCC never to go back to the same crime again."

He was however, given an option of fine of N2million, and ordered to retribute the money he was alleged to have defrauded the hotel, within four months.



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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	
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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				
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The five months shutdown of universities

Crisis in the nation's educational sector aggravated on the 14th of February, 2022 when the Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities commenced yet another industrial action over the refusal of the Federal Government to implement the agreements and memoranda signed with the Union. It started as warning, but soon transformed into full blown strike when the union sensed insincerity on the part of the government. Other universities' workers' unions soon joined by commencing their own strikes over the same scenario of the Federal Governments disrespect for agreements and memoranda. This is the fifth month of complete breakdown of teaching, research and other activities in governments' owned universities across the nation.

The impacts of this sectoral crisis are unimaginably dangerous and devastating to the existence of our nation. WAEC and NECO continue to conduct the Senior School Certificate Examinations for secondary school leavers. But the school leavers are stuck in the strike space and the flow in the entire educational system is broken. Inside the universities research, teaching, learning and even community services are disrupted. Active youngsters that form 50 percent of Nigeria's population are kept idle. More and more of them are taking to drug and fraud. Many others are being recruited as political thugs for the 2023 general elections. Students whose parents can afford overseas education are forced to leave en mass, and to face many new environments where they are vulnerable to being re-socialized into strange ideas that may be antithetical to humanity. Anxiety of future uncertainties grip the youngsters and their parents alike.

Also, as a result of the crisis, the striking university workers are being denied their salaries. Their families starve. Many of them can no longer pay rents nor purchase drugs to manage their health conditions. Brain drain is once again renewed and aggravated as many lecturers now escape to get jobs in other countries. Aside the universities' students and workers,

other families that operate businesses on the universities' campuses are equally in agony as a result of the crisis. Once again, they are returned to the streets to join the army of unemployed Nigerians.

Although the Federal Government claims it has been negotiating with the striking university unions, concrete results are yet to hit the public. The entire scenario appears like implementation of agreements to address industrial crisis is a rocket science, especially when the agreements and memoranda have been severally signed and re-signed over the years. Amidst all these, sadly, Nigerians read daily the disturbing news of how individual government officials continue to steal national wealth, latest of which is that of the Accountant General of the Federation. The quantum of money that exchanged hands

amongst politicians during the primary elections leaves everyone wonder why the university sector has for long been abandoned as agitated by the striking workers. It is even soul depressing that none of the leading presidential aspirants in the political parties is making the crisis an issue in their campaigns. Geopolitical agitation, religion, ethnicity and circulation of elite are the defining characters of their campaigns.

Indeed, a period of five months shutdown of universities is a national emergency, and in managing emergencies, nations must go to the extents of collapsing structures and taking painful policy options to address the emergency and forestall the disasters it may bring. It is on this note that we call on the Federal Government of Nigeria to treat the current strike in the universities as national a emergency, and take all steps necessary to end it. Whatever it takes: budget, policy redress and even radical political reversal must be brought to the table at this time to ensure the fast and immediate end of the five months strike. As part of their agenda setting roles, the civil society organizations should mobilise the entire Nigerian society into making education a front burner issue during political campaigns. Parents association, students, religious leaders and traditional rulers who have joined in pressurizing the federal government should not relent. This is the time all sectors in the Nigerian State should mount pressure on the government to act timeously to save the nation.

Finally, we are not unaware that the Professor Briggs led committee currently negotiating with ASUU is making some progress, but the Committee needs to make the difference this time by using the press, the civil society and other social structures across the country to ensure that its final decisions with the unions are implemented to the letter. This is how the Committee will not end like others before it whose reports were either discarded or disregarded. This is when our students can return to class, and university workers return to work. This when we can re-kindle the hope that our country can work again.



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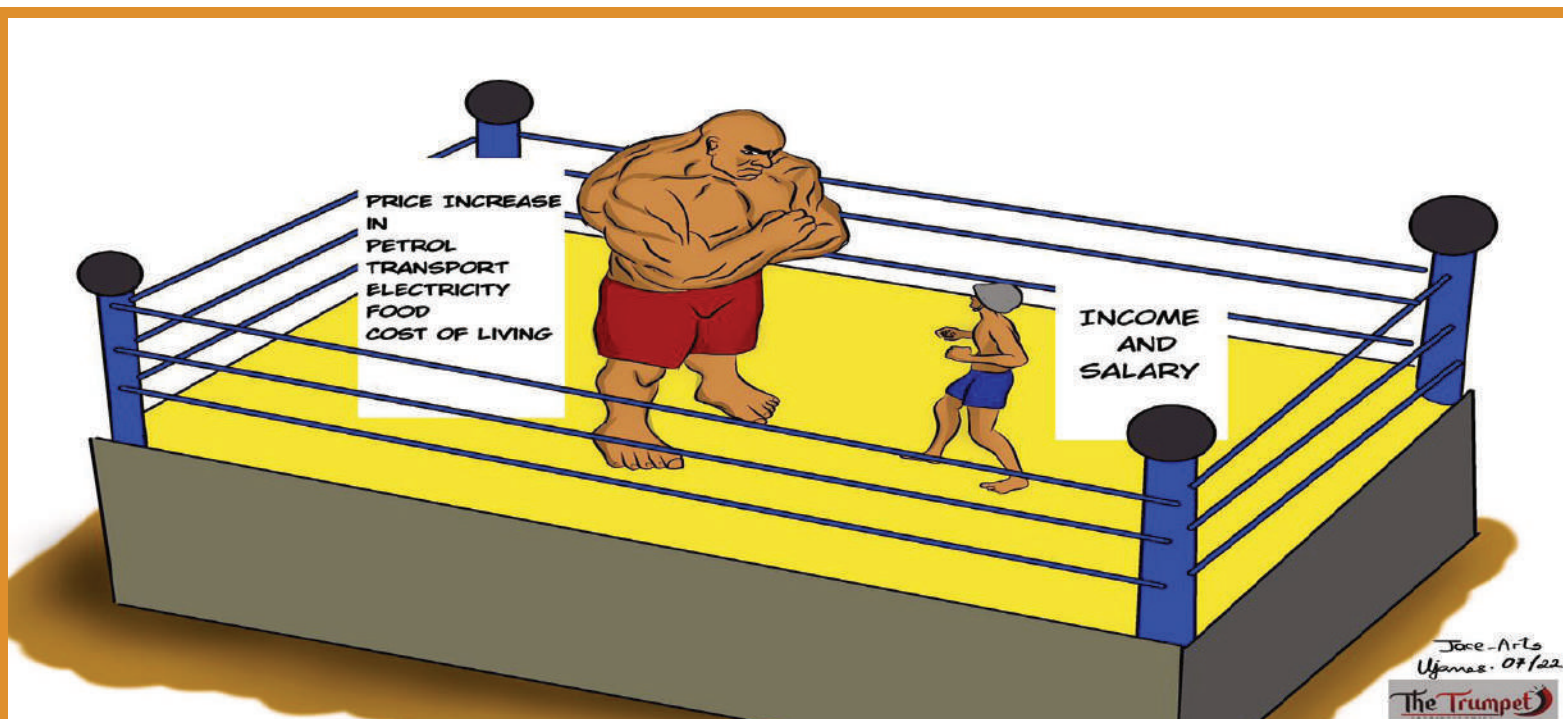
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'Ashewo' politics and the future of Nigeria'

Ashewo' originally a Yoruba word, is our local street word for a prostitute. Of course, it connotes debauchery, sex for money, loose character, a woman of easy virtue. In modern parlance, we call them 'runs girls', or 'commercial sex workers. Other local terms for them include 'Opio', 'Kpons', 'Olosho', 'Igberaja', 'One Chance', 'Asharamuta', 'Eboi', 'Okpo', 'Ashe otse' (collective wife in Eggon), 'Igbijaja', 'Ayamgba', 'Okpoto', 'Akpara', 'Obrosho', 'Ofurukpo', 'Nobi', 'Pay as You go', 'Ogbongidi', 'Karuwa', 'Akawuna', 'Okpomiliki'. Whatever name we call them, a runs girl is an ashewo! Period. No decent lady wants to be called ashewo, except the ones who reside in brothels. Those ones in cheap redlight districts hotels, or the ones who line up Allen Avenue in Ikeja or around Law School! I was shocked once when one of those ladies greeted me 'Good evening, Sir' near my hotel in Osabi. She thought I was one of their patrons! Holy Moses! Of course, I have said a permanent goodbye to the once decent and affordable hotel!

I first encountered use of the word in St. Augustine's popular highlife tune of the 1970s titled 'Ashewo no be Work! Ironically, that track was very popular in the brothels and hotels that dotted the murky districts of Sapele where I grew up! I always wondered how those ladies felt when that song ruled the airwaves - 'Ashewo no be work o/ Na management o! Was it a stop gap business for them?

Were they proud of that dirty business? Were there good *Ashewos*? In literature Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw had explored the theme of prostitution in his play Mrs. Warren's Profession in which he contended that if labour paid starvation wages, if there were men willing to pay there would always be prostitutes. Iconoclastic and Marxist dramatist Bertolt Brecht also interrogated the *ashewo* idea in *The Good Woman of Setzuan* in which when the gods came visiting, the only good person willing to offer them accommodation was a prostitute! Any by the way, do we know the story of Rahab the Harlot in the Old Testament, the woman who housed the spies sent from Isreal, and who received commendation from the erudite Apostle Paul in the Book of Hebrews?

Lest you begin to wonder whether I was a patron of that dark business, Cemetery Road by Ogodo Road Junction was my regular route to my primary and secondary schools in the 1970s. And those familiar with Sapele (Safa City) would understand that reference! Apart from moral revulsion instilled by the narrow path of church and family, I was too young to contemplate such debased behaviour! Cavorting with *Ashewos*? That would be the day!

Ashewo politics and the future of Nigeria! What a title! I am sure my readers don't for one moment believe that I have set out to pour one thousand words on Ladies of the Night. This quaint title came to my mind as I contemplated events which preceded and dominated the last PDP and APC conventions in

Abuja. The use of money to induce people against their wish or the use of money to make delegates vote for their anointed men and women! Or the rain of dollars in a Nigerian event meant to usher in a patriotic government.

Indeed, when I requested for some local names for *Ashewo*, one of the most intriguing and relevant was 'Delegate -Money for hand, back for Ground! Hahahaha! How creative can our people be in coinages! Very soon, 'Delegate' will be another name for *Ashewo* in Nigeria! We are reliably informed that '*Ashewos*' collect money from any man who can pay and render due service. No man big or small, handsome, or ugly, fat, or thin, healthy, or unhealthy gets a no from a prostitute. She is everybody and nobody. Can any man lay claim to an *ashewo*?

The delegates' system is a corrupted adoption of the American system. But there they vote according to their conscience, their convictions. Their votes are not dictated by local leaders and party stalwarts. In the Nigerian version, the delegates are herded into hotels. Before D Day, they met at designated spots like ladies of the night and aspirants came calling with different sums of money to make them malleable. If these are the men and women to whom we have entrusted electing our leaders, what is the future of politics in Nigeria? In some cases, they had been permanently bought/paid for by the Governor of the State. He managed to service them for four or eight years. Some delegates col-

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lected money and did not perform as expected. In this regard, they were worse than the *Ashewos* at Ayilara Street in Surulere!

To rewind a little, the two main political parties APC and PDP are Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs). They are designed to serve all, anytime and anywhere, just like the Pay As You Go girls at Allen Avenue Ikeja Lagos. For this reason, a former member of PDP became Chairman of APC just before the elections. Senators and governors crossed from one party to another without batting an eyelid. APC today, PDP tomorrow. PDP today, APC tomorrow. That is, they are designed to open their arm and legs to all comers like the *Akwuna Akwuna* of Ayilara. So, the delegates who received payments in form of inducement were in distinguished company like their *Ogas* in the mainstream of the Party. For them it was now or never. Some have bought cars. Land. Married a new wife. Upgraded certain aspects of their material life. The delegates are serviced once in a season unlike the bigwigs who are serviced every day

and night by the oily machinery of the government in power.

If I have appropriated the metaphor of ravishers and *Ashewo* to depict the partymen in our country, it is because Nigeria is like a succulent woman whose flesh has been serially abused by the people entrusted with power. Here I pay homage to South African poet, Dennis Brutus in *A Simple Lust!* Nigeria, our beloved home, is for sale. The conscience of the leaders is for sale. Pay more get more services. On one hand are politicians. Gun totting herdsmen stand on the other side ready to destroy lives, cause disunity and throw the country into an abyss of doom. How long more can this body take the bashing? Our elders say that when a prostitute becomes old, her clientele also shrinks. When the Body of Nigeria can no longer take the savage pummeling actions of political nymphomaniacs what shall become of the children of the land?

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Need for President of Igbo extraction

Unfortunately, since independence, the benefits of this diversity, material resources and her population strength have not been explored nor exploited. Our human and materials resources are largely left to lie and remain fallow. They have not been effectively utilised. These resources are gradually becoming burdens as they have become readily available tools that are used to threaten the corporate existence of the country. The reason for this underutilisation of human and materials resources and its attendant underdevelopment of the country is largely because we have not gotten our leadership choice right.

It is on the premise of this leadership problem that the need to address the lopsidedness and insensitivity in choosing our leaders becomes an issue of national concern. In the wisdom of our founding fathers, this country was divided into geopolitical zones. The southeast region remains the only region that has not produced a substantial president since independence in 1960 except for the short-lived reign of Major General Johnson Thomas Umunnakwe Aguiyi-Ironsi of blessed memory. The best they had had were a ceremonial president and a vice president.

Constitutionally, the Ndigbo might not have a unilateral claim to produce the next president but logically, morally and on the principle of equity, the southeastern region is long overdue to produce the next president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria come 2023.

One might be compelled to ask why the Ndigbo are not considered fit enough to produce the country's president after the ugly civil war? Could it be because of their political leanings? The fear that they might cede or disintegrate the country? They have not been forgiven for their roles in the civil war? Or could it be that their business prowess is seen as a threat to other regions?

None of the above reasons nor any other that any person, persons or group can put forward are enough to deny the Ndigbo a sense of belonging in their own country. They have paid their dues. They were also victims of the war. They are the economic power of Nigeria. Their business acme is a major contributor to national revenue. They are the pride of the black race. They fly the flags of the country and the continent high in the diaspora. No region in modern day Nigeria has contributed economically more than the Ndigbo to Nigeria's gross domestic and national products.

An Igbo president come 2023 is not out of pity. It is not a consensus. It is not an option nor a political opinion. It is an overdue necessity to heal our country of the unjust treatment of a particular region that is not only qualified to lead this country but also has some of the best administrators, technocrats and economic gurus of international class. It will also pacify our illustrious brothers and sisters of the eastern origin and the Biafrans heroes and heroines who lost their lives in the unfortunate

civil war. It will be a spirit lifter for the victims of the war on the Nigerian government side. It will ensure that our First Republican heroes who paid the supreme price rest in peace. It is national duty. A duty that all must collectively partake in to write their names in gold.

Thus, all political parties that wish to field presidential candidates for 2023 General Elections should not only zone their presidential tickets to southern Nigeria, they must also micro zone it to the southeastern region of the country. This is a cause we all must collectively ensure sees the light of the day. This cause is not only for the Ndigbo but for all Nigerians.

On the other hand, the Igbos must put their house in order. They need unity of purpose to get their rightful due. This is not the time to divide their ranks. They should conduct primary/local elections and come out with the best candidate. A popular candidate from their region. A candidate with the best and practicable blueprint to set the basis for national development. A candidate that will convince all of all the country has missed by denying the Ndigbo their rightful role in national development.

God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

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History taught us about the state of nature when man was a wanderer and a gatherer. When man lived in caves and slept on branches of trees. When man competed severely with animals and fellow man for survival. When man fed on wild animals and fellow man. When wild animals fed on man. When man ate his food raw. When the environment was the master of man because man had little or no power to master his environment.

With time, man evolved and began to live a settled lifestyle. He domesticated plants and animals for food and for company. Man began to build houses for himself and other necessities of life. This was the beginning of what is to be known today as modern man.

All this was not achieved by luck. It involved hard work and agreement. It was on the basis of this agreement that government was formed. Man agreed to surrender some of his rights to an authority which in return guaranteed him of his safety.

For ease of governance, customs, norms, morals and ultimately laws were made to regulate the activities of man. Hence, government was fully formed. Constitution was made. On the basis of this agreement, government conceded to ensure the safety of man.

The Nigerian society of today is not an exception. It was a product of the evolution that man went through before today's modern society came to be.

A country like Nigeria with her colonial history has found it necessary to strike a balance in the distribution of her resources and developmental projects. Her heterogeneous nature compelled her founding fathers to put into consideration an appropriate system of government that would ensure that no part was left behind.

Of a truth, Nigeria was not created on the agreement of her indigenous peoples. The British created Nigeria in this conglomerate largely for their economic interests. But in the long run, it has been discovered that this diversity is a blessing.

Amosun's political camp explodes over alleged financial underhand dealings

By GABRIEL OMONHINMIN

Just eight months to the 2023 general election in Nigeria, one of the registered opposition political parties in the country, the Allied Peoples' Movement, is neck-deep in crisis, over alleged financial recklessness, political intrigues and underhand dealings.

Available facts before Trumpet Newspaper showed that the crisis tearing the party apart, is not only protracted, but also irresolvable. The ripple effect of this particular crisis has resulted in the suspension and counter suspension of some key members of the party by the two warring factions at the center of the crisis.

The aggrieved Board of Trustee National Chairman groups said, "The reasons we are not ready for any reconciliation is because under Alhaji Yusuf Mamman Danttalle, the suspended National Chairman, APM, has sadly normalized absurdity, indecency, and outrageousness to a degree we've never seen with any political party, since the formation of parties in Nigeria. These reasons, among others, is the reasons most of the political inroads we have already made as a political party since 2019 general elections, especially in Ogun State and the country in general, is gradually now being eroded. And if we don't do something to stop this drift, our party will soon go into oblivion and become irrelevant any moment from now.

"Some of the political big wigs in the country, who had earlier shown keen interest in APM, are no longer ready to do business with the party, because according to some of them, Alhaji Danttalle, our suspended National Chairman, is not ready to grow the party, due to his selfish and pecuniary interest."

The APM National Chairman Alhaji Danttalle's group also countered, accusing the party's Board Of Trustees National Chairman, Mohammed Musa Bagana group of greed and avarice, and a deliberate effort to want to use the political party to trade, which we have refused."

In view of the forgoing, Trumpet Newspaper decided to get to the bottom of this crisis. As expected, we reached out to all the principal actors in the conflict.

First to speak with us, is the party's Board of Trustee (BOT) Chairman, Mallam. Mohammed Musa Bagana, who took time to paint a graphic picture of the possible reason(s) why the National Chairman of Allied Peoples' Movement, Alhaji Yusuf Mamman Danttalle, is allegedly up in arms against him and some other key national members of the party.

The party's BOT National Chairman said, "When the idea for the formation of this particular party was muted, sometimes in year 2018, since I was not too active in the country's political terrain, I immediately reached out to a longtime friend called Faruk, who has been disturbing me to join one of the political parties in Nigeria. This friend of mine is resident in Lagos. I asked him to help get a suitable person who could assume the position of the party's National Chairman. This was how, Alhaji Danttalle was sought after and invariably appointed the party's interim National Chairman alongside other key members of the party, who are presently occupying various position. And since I wasn't too familiar with the political terrain in the country then, I opted to be at the back ground as the APM National Chairman, Board of Trustee.



Ibikunle Amosun

"Immediately, APM certificate of registration was released by INEC on the 14th of August, 2018 to me, the certificate which is still in my possession up till today, I took up the responsibility of personally funding the party without any assistance from any other member. This was how my private office in Utako, Abuja, became the APM National Headquarters in Abuja for almost three years. It was during this crisis, that Alhaji Danttalle and Ayodele moved the party's National Headquarters away from my place. Before the crisis rocking the party began, some members have begun to complain about the excesses of the party's National Chairman. When the murmur and complaints became pronounced, I reached out to the suspended National Chairman and pleaded with him to endeavor to be fair to all members of the party in all that he does.

"He Alhaji Danttalle, during our discussions over the complains of other members of the party, promised to carry other members along in all that he does and change for the better. I then after decided not to interfere in all that he was doing as the APM National Chairman.

"We the members of the party's BOT were shocked and surprised, when we heard moths after this discussions, that sometimes in November, 2021, that Alhaji Yusuf Mamman Danttalle, the APM National Chairman was arrested and detained by security operatives, over an alleged case of kidnapping, gun-running and other sundry crimes. As expected, members of the BOT could not fold their arms and do nothing over these grievous allegations. It was also dangerous for our party to allow this ugly situation which impacted on our party's image and integrity to continue and fester.

"Hence, we decided to do something urgent, to manage the crisis until Alhaji Danttalle is release from detention. We thus, went about doing all within our powers to control the situation. This we did, so as not to adversely affect our party's image nationally. As you might be aware, our party slogan is 'integrity, sacrifice and service'. We therefore had to do, all we could to assist in any way we could for him to be released from detention. When he was finally released, after about three weeks in detention, members of the BOT paid him a sympathy visit.

"It was then after, the BOT members had due deliberation over the matter and it implications, if he continue to remain our party National Chairman. In one of our meetings we then resolved to write him a

letter, which was dated 17th January, 2022, entitled "Urgent need to step aside from the position of the National Chairman of our great party pending the final outcome of your trial at the Federal High Court in Lokoja."

"Paragraph 3 of that letter, reads as follows, "We the members of the Board of Trustee of our great party, having considered the precarious condition of our great party which was occasioned by your unavoidable absence, as a result of your pending criminal prosecution at the Federal High Court in Lokoja, and in view of the fact that the general election in which our party has the intention of fielding candidates at various levels, is fast approaching, we have during our extra-ordinary meeting which took place on December 12, 2021 came up with the following resolutions.

1-That the BOT, being the conscience of our party, is our firm view that it will be morally and legally wrong and reprehensible for you to continue to preside over the affairs of our party, while still answering a criminal charge, which is preferred against you at the Federal High Court in Lokoja. Enclosed herewith is a copy of the said charge sheet for your careful perusal.

"The concluding part of that letter after our three point resolutions, we urged him not to take our position in this matter in bad faith, as his stepping aside, will enable us as members of the BOT to help other members of the party to reposition the party for a robust politics thinking in the months ahead.

"We were shocked beyond words over his uncontrolled out bust alongside his ungentlemanly conduct on the day in question.

"Since that particular day, we were no longer surprised over his antics and calculated attempt to destroy every key member of the party whom he perceived as his enemy for selfish reasons."

Countering, the National Chairman of APM, Alhaji Danttalle, dismissed the BOT National Chairman's allegations and claims. He said, "It is true, it was the BOT National Chairman, who reached out to me, when the main financial of this party, who is resident abroad, was planning to help set up this party.

"The BOT National Chairman Mallam Bagana being a novice in political matters then took interest in the formation of the party because the main financial had promised then, to make available to us a huge sum of three billion Naira to run the party after its formation. A promise

the main financier later did not fulfill. As at this time, I was already a well-known politician in my state, Kogi state. Because I contested the Governorship seat in Kogi State under the Labour Party in the years 2015 and 2019 general elections.

"When they contacted me, it took quite some time and hard work, to convince my party followers to join me in APM. It was after then, I began to work tirelessly to put the party's structures in place nationally.

"While working to put the party structure in place, I noticed a major defect in the APM VP, which was the original name for the party. It took me quite some time to liaise with the people at the INEC National Headquarters to streamline things. It was after this, that I now came up with the name the party now bears today which is the Allied Peoples' Movement APM. Ever since then, I have been working round the clock daily with my other colleagues in the party to strengthen the party's structures, so as to make it more effective, and pro-active.

"Several attempts have been made by a group of people, who wanted the party sold out rightly to buyers, who are ready to pay huge sums of money. But I have been the stumbling block, as I refused to agree to the selling of APM to the highest bidder, this is part of my crime.

"Since the inception of this party, if you must know, I have been the person running the affairs of the party, with my personal resources. If it is true, according to the suspended BOT National Chairman claims, in which he said, that he has been the person financing the party, I challenge him to provide evidence of his expenses over the years. I am ready to show the receipts, vouchers and other bank statements, with which I either bought him rams during Sallah, or sent him money when he requested for some assistance.

"Alhaji Danttalle explained further, "On the 5th of February, 2022, at the Allied Peoples' Movement (APM) National Working Committee (NWC) meeting in Abuja, the former Chairman of APM BOT, the BOT Secretary, alongside other BOT members were suspended indefinitely for inefficiency and gross misconducts. Their suspension was done while they were present at the NEC meeting. It was at this same meeting, which was witnessed by two officials from INEC, that 6 National Officers and 3 State Chairmen were also suspended for Anti-Party activities.

He said the suspended officers of the party, allegedly held a kangaroo meeting where they made the former party National Treasurer, Mrs. Rose Gyar, as the APM National Chairman in violation of the APM constitution, which is registered with the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC.

He stressed, "Article 10(7) of the party constitution provides that, 'Two-third majority of the Executive Committee at all levels shall form a quorum' for any meeting at the instance of the National Chairman.

"But unfortunately, in the so called National Working Committee meeting where Mrs. Gyar was purportedly elected as my replacement, only six out of the 20 members of APM NEC members, were in attendance. And as such, whatever decision reached in that meeting was null and void and of no effect whatsoever in the operations of the party."

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Again, Ohanaeze alleges political machinations against Igbo

By TUNDE JOSHUA, ABUJA

President General of Ohanaeze Ndigbo Worldwide, Professor George Obiozor, has described the alleged machinations demonstrated by some Nigerian leaders during the recently concluded political party primaries as gross historic injustice towards the Igbo beyond expectations.

He predicted that the political manipulation would end in a pyrrhic victory for those who rejoiced and celebrated the injustice.

Hence he urged Ndigbo not to lament much but wait for that verdict of history this is sure to happen.

Ambassador Obiozor spoke through a statement by the National Publicity Secretary of the Ohanaeze Ndigbo, Dr. Alex Ogbonna.

He thanked Nigerian statesmen and patriots across the country, who supported the idea for the South-East to produce the president of Nigeria in 2023, based on Nigerian proven history of rotation of power between the north

and the south as well as commitment to equity, justice and fairness.

According to him, Nigeria, by its deliberate injustice, has failed the Rotary Club International four-way tests, "which are: First – Of the things we think, say or do: Is it the TRUTH? Second – Is it FAIR to all concerned? Third – Will it build Goodwill and Better Friendships? And Fourth – Will it be Beneficial to all concerned?"

The former Nigeria's Ambassador to the United States of America, in the statement titled: "What does Nigeria want from Ndigbo?" said, "Now it is clear that the Nigerian national political elite have successfully orchestrated to deny the South-East an opportunity to produce the president of Nigeria come 2023.

He made reference to how Bola Tinubu, from the South-West, emerged the presidential candidate of the ruling APC, while former Vice President Atiku Abubakar from the North-East emerged the PDP presidential candidate in elections.



Professor George Obiozor

Need for President of Igbo extraction

By QUDUS ADEWALE LAWAL

History taught us about the state of nature when man was a wanderer and a gatherer. When man lived in caves and slept on branches of trees. When man competed severely with animals and fellow man for survival. When man fed on wild animals and fellow man. When wild animals fed on man. When man ate his food raw. When the environment was the master of man because man had little or no power to master his environment.

With time, man evolved and began to live a settled lifestyle. He domesticated plants and animals for food and for company. Man began to build houses for himself and other necessities of life. This was the beginning of what is to be known today as modern man.

All this was not achieved by luck. It involved hard work and agreement. It was on the basis of this agreement that government was formed. Man agreed to surrender some of his rights to an authority which in return guaranteed him of his safety.

For ease of governance, customs, norms, morals and ultimately laws were made to regulate the activities of man. Hence, government was fully formed. Constitution was made. On the basis of this agreement, government conceded to ensure the safety of man.

The Nigerian society of today is not an exception. It was a product of the evolution that man went through before today's modern society came to be.

A country like Nigeria with her colonial history has found it necessary to strike a balance in the distribution of her resources and developmental projects. Her heterogeneous nature compelled her founding fathers to put into consideration an appropriate system of government that would ensure that no part was left behind.

Of a truth, Nigeria was not created on the agreement of her indigenous



Qudus Adewale Lawal,

peoples. The British created Nigeria in this conglomerate largely for their economic interests. But in the long run, it has been discovered that this diversity is a blessing.

Unfortunately, since independence, the benefits of this diversity, material resources and her population strength have not been explored nor exploited. Our human and materials resources are largely left to lie and remain fallow. They have not been effectively utilised. These resources are gradually becoming burdens as they have become readily available tools that are used to threaten the corporate existence of the country. The reason for this underutilisation of

human and materials resources and its attendant underdevelopment of the country is largely because we have not gotten our leadership choice right.

It is on the premise of this leadership problem that the need to address the lopsidedness and insensitivity in choosing our leaders becomes an issue of national concern. In the wisdom of our founding fathers, this country was divided into geopolitical zones. The southeast region remains the only region that has not produced a substantial president since independence in 1960 except for the short-lived reign of Major General Johnson Thomas Ummakwe Aguiyi-Ironsi of blessed memory. The best they had had were a ceremonial president and a vice president.

Constitutionally, the Ndigbo might not have a unilateral claim to produce the next president but logically, morally and on the principle of equity, the southeastern region is long overdue to produce the next president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria come 2023.

One might be compelled to ask why the Ndigbo are not considered fit enough to produce the country's president after the ugly civil war? Could it be because of their political leanings? The fear that they might cede or disintegrate the country? They have not been forgiven for their roles in the civil war? Or could it be that their business prowess is seen as a threat to other regions?

None of the above reasons nor any other that any person, persons or group can put forward are enough to deny the Ndigbo a sense of belonging in their own country. They have paid their dues. They were also victims of the war. They are the economic power of Nigeria. Their business acme is a major contributor to national revenue. They are the pride of the black race. They fly the flags of the country and the continent high in the diaspora. No region in modern day Nigeria has contributed economically more than the Ndigbo to Nigeria's gross domestic and national products.

An Igbo president come 2023 is not out of pity. It is not a consensus. It is not an option nor a political opinion. It is an overdue necessity to heal our country of the unjust treatment of a particular region that is not only qualified to lead this country but also has some of the best administrators, technocrats and economic gurus of international class. It will also pacify our illustrious brothers and sisters of the eastern origin and the Biafrans heroes and heroines who lost their lives in the unfortunate civil war. It will be a spirit lifter for the victims of the war on the Nigerian government side. It will ensure that our First Republican heroes who paid the supreme price rest in peace. It is national duty. A duty that all must collectively partake in to write their names in gold.

Thus, all political parties that wish to field presidential candidates for 2023 General Elections should not only zone their presidential tickets to southern Nigeria, they must also micro zone it to the southeastern region of the country. This is a cause we all must collectively ensure sees the light of the day. This cause is not only for the Ndigbo but for all Nigerians.

On the other hand, the Igbos must put their house in order. They need unity of purpose to get their rightful due. This is not the time to divide their ranks. They should conduct primary/local elections and come out with the best candidate. A popular candidate from their region. A candidate with the best and practicable blueprint to set the basis for national development. A candidate that will convince all of all the country has missed by denying the Ndigbo their rightful role in national development.

God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

● QUDUS ADEWALE LAWAL writes from Lagos, Nigeria and can be reached on alaniadewale05@gmail.com,

As tech companies pull back from Russia, China looks on with concern

Extensive efforts by Apple and other Western tech companies to curtail their business with Russia over its invasion of Ukraine have raised a question for product users in China: Could the same thing happen there?

Much of Chinese consumers' concern has been focused on Apple, which like Google, Microsoft and other tech giants moved quickly to curb its Russia business after President Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24. The company has stopped product sales and exports, limited services like Apple Pay and removed the Russian state news outlets RT News and Sputnik News from the Apple Store outside Russia.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine, as well as the global response, have been closely watched in Asia, where there are long-standing tensions between China and the self-ruling island of Taiwan, which Beijing claims as its territory. Chinese leader Xi Jinping has said "reunification" with Taiwan is inevitable and has not ruled out the use of force to achieve it,

though the Taiwanese government says there are no signs of imminent attack.

Chinese officials reject any comparison between Taiwan and Ukraine, saying only Ukraine is an independent country. But some online commenters in China, where social media is dominated by nationalist and pro-Russian sentiment, have criticized Apple's actions in Russia and said China should prepare itself for similar tactics.

"If one day China finally decides to liberate Taiwan, who can guarantee that our own iPhones won't get deactivated?" one user asked on Zhihu, a Chinese social media platform similar to Quora.

Experts say it would be difficult for Apple to walk away from China, which is a critical manufacturing center for the company as well as its third-largest market after the United States and Europe.

"It is a very different story than what is happening in Russia," said Kendra Schaefer, head of tech research at Trivium, a policy research team based in Beijing.

Schaefer pointed out that Chinese regulations require Apple and other companies to store Chinese customers' information on servers inside the country.

"The question would be, does pulling out of China mean that Apple not only loses its customers, but all of its customer data completely?" she said.

Apple did not respond to emailed requests for comment.

Before the war in Ukraine, China was already pursuing a national strategy of "tech independence," emphasizing indigenous innovation and the recruitment of overseas talent. Xi has stressed its importance in recent years as both the Trump and Biden administrations have tightened U.S. restrictions on Chinese tech giants like Huawei and ZTE that they deem threats to national security.

"The U.S. sanctions on Huawei and ZTE during the Sino-U.S. trade war already abruptly awoke Chinese policymakers about the importance of technological self-sufficiency," Angela Zhang, director of the Center for Chinese Law at the

University of Hong Kong, said in an emailed response to questions.

But Zhang said it could take decades for China to catch up with the United States and Taiwan in the manufacturing of semiconductors and other essential components of electronic devices.

"It is also very costly, if not impossible, to achieve complete self-sufficiency of many hardcore technologies, which involve a very long and complicated supply chain," she added.

Russia's growing isolation from companies like Apple has added to calls for China's tech independence from the West, which is also referred to as the "great decoupling."

One commenter on Weibo, China's equivalent of Twitter, noted his reliance on Apple's cloud storage service.

"Now I'm really worried that if anything happened, a company like Apple would deactivate my phone and my data," he said.

"The great decoupling is inevitable," he added.

VC Funding, Nigeria Startup Bill and other Soundbites from 10th Digital Africa Conference

Despite the Covid 19-induced global business disruptions and economic difficulties faced by most countries of the world in the past two years, international venture capitalists continued to hunger for new and existing tech startups.

Collectively they poured \$643 billion in VC funding to these startups globally in 2021, a 92% year-on-year growth compared to \$335 billion in 2020.

Ready access to the largest chunk of global VC funding is the principal factor for the continuing leadership and dominance of the global tech space by US companies today. They received \$329 billion, 51% of the funds available globally in 2021.

Less than \$10 billion of this amount came to the 54 countries of Africa combined. There's a tremendous room therefore for the growth of VC funds in Africa, the world's second largest continent both in area and population; the region that has recorded the fastest growth rate in mobile subscription and internet usage in the past two decades; and a region whose youth population is increasingly comprised of digital natives.

Based on the latest annual report for 2021 by Partech Ventures (a Paris-based VC company), Nigeria received \$1.799 billion in VC funding for its tech startups,

continuing its continental leadership in this critical area.

South Africa came 2nd with \$832 million, with Egypt, Kenya, Senegal and Ghana receiving \$652 million, \$571 million, \$353 million and \$167 million respectively in 2021.

Startups in Tanzania, Algeria, Mauritius and Tunisia received \$46 million, \$43 million, \$38 million and \$33 million respectively.

The forthcoming Nigeria Venture Capital Summit, slated for November 10-11, 2022 in Abuja is aimed at helping the country to substantially step up its game in attracting even more VC funds for its growing number of tech and non-tech startups in 2023 and beyond.

Signed, Sealed and Delivered: The 10th Digital Africa Conference and Exhibition ends on exciting note

An event that is organized consistently on a fixed frequency (monthly, quarterly or annually) is one of the most powerful tools that you can deploy to brand your company.

This was my clear understanding when, back in May 2012, my company proposed to our client (Compumetrics Solutions Limited, chaired by Dr. Evans Woherem), to establish an annual tech show.

Dr. Woherem didn't just embrace this proposal, he brought out his massive clout, as Nigeria's most accomplished banking technology leader till date, to bear on the task of successfully birthing the event.

About 11 months down the road, the 1st Digital Africa Conference and Exhibition was held in April 2013 in Abuja, with Chief Oba Otudeko, Chairman of Airtel Africa, chairing the occasion; and Mrs. Omobola Johnson, the then Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, officially cutting the ribbon to declare the event open.

The baby (an annual tech conference in Abuja, aimed at helping Nigeria and the rest of Africa to embrace tech far more passionately than ever before) was born on April 23-25, 2013!

The 2nd Digital Africa Conference and Exhibition 2014 was held in Lagos. The event was moved to Lagos on purpose, so that it could be held, side by side, the World Electronics Forum (WEF) which Woherem and his friends from abroad brought to Nigeria that year.

WEF is the global body of the consumer electronics association of the leading tech countries of the world today: USA, China, Japan, Germany, India, UK, France, South Korea, etc. WEF is held annually, rotating

from one host city to another.

Digital Africa Conference and Exhibition returned to Abuja for its 3rd edition in 2015. From then onwards, the show has been held every year, without fail.

Even with the Covid 19 pandemic, which brought several challenges and disruptions to economies worldwide, the 9th Digital Africa (DA) was held successfully in 2021, albeit in a virtual format.

Prof. Isa Ali Ibrahim (Pantami), presented his keynote address from his desk at the Federal Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy in Abuja. Other speakers from Nigeria and abroad similarly hooked up virtually.

Though this is a tribute to Evans Woherem, let me however mention Mr. Biodun Omoniyi, MD/CEO of Lagos-based VDT Communications Limited, who has attended all the 10 editions; and whose company has exhibited in all of them. I'll do a separate post on this tomorrow.

At the closing ceremony of DA 2022, which had earlier been declared open by Isa Ibrahim Pantami, Nigeria's Chief Technology Officer (CTO), Woherem's joy was full. He couldn't contain his excitement on this successful journey of the past 10 years.

Stanbic IBTC hosts 'Women in Tech'

Stanbic IBTC Bank has held the second edition of its Women in Tech event.

The event is a celebration of women in the Nigerian tech space while encouraging more women and young girls to take up careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). It preaches the need to close the gender gap and empower women and young girls to seize the opportunities that the tech world offers.

The event, themed "Building a career in tech: break the glass ceiling", was held on the Zoom virtual meeting platform. It had in attendance guest panelists from different tech-led careers, including Bisola Alabi, founder, Heels and Tech; Olatokunbo Ogunlade, System Engineer,

Factorial HR; Ibifuro Apiafi, Manager, Entrepreneur Selection and Growth, Endeavor; and Moyinoluwa Aiyeniko, Software Developer, Stanbic IBTC Bank. The event was moderated by Vivian Obiajulu.

Bunmi Dayo-Olagunju, Executive Director, Client Solutions, Stanbic IBTC, said the event is one of the ways the organisation is supporting women to bridge the gender gap in the tech space. "With today's conversation, we will attempt to debunk those myths that have become obstacles to us women fulfilling our potentials in the tech world"

She said, "Despite the advancement in technology globally, studies have shown that women only account for about 30 per cent of professionals in the field.

More women in the tech space means the reduction of inequalities, leading to a more gender-balanced society and an increase in technological innovation, productivity, and job creation. All these will give a boost to our economy and Stanbic IBTC is ever ready to support and encourage women, and young girls, to take up careers in technology."

Bunmi stated that women have demonstrated the capacity to excel beyond expectations when they are encouraged in their endeavours and technology will not be an exception.

Stanbic IBTC is committed to the advancement of a gender-balanced society while providing excellent innovative services to its customers.



Bunmi Dayo-Olagunju, Executive Director, Client Solutions, Stanbic IBTC,

Nigeria hints on Blockchain technology regulations

Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Prof. Isa Ali Ibrahim (Pantami), has assured key industry players and indeed Nigerians of the Federal Government's commitment to create and enforce regulations that will fast-track effective utilisation of Blockchain technology for the development of the country's digital economy.

He said this while delivering a keynote address on the Applications of Blockchain Technology for Intellectual Property (IP) Enforcement at the American Business Council event, in partnership with the United States Patent and Trademark Office.

The Minister, represented by Dr. Salihu Abdulkareem of the National Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics (NCAIR), alluded to the fact that the theme of the event: "Blockchain for IP Enforcement; More than Crypto and NFTs" is apt and timely especially at a time when crypto currency is presently the headlines of financial losses.

The Minister noted that in today's knowledge based economy, an increasing share of business value is derived via intangible assets, which means success often depends upon the ability to manage and exploit IP.

He stressed that for that reason, businesses require managers to effectively acquire, govern and commercialize copyright-and patent-protected content.

"You would all agree that, traditional businesses that rely on IP-protected material are confronting internal and external factors that pose several key challenges. Internally, unsynchronized IT systems do not enable data to flow, creating friction to locate and comply with copyrights under control. Externally, firms are recently operating in more complex, and diverse business networks with the need

to validate multiple IPs within a single transactions model", he said.

Prof. Pantami highlighted the benefits of Blockchain technology which he said represent a paradigm shift in how various companies protect their information exchange, adding that emerging technology provides a secure and fault-tolerant distributed ledger platform for transactions.

"No doubt, Blockchain technology has evolved greatly since the introduction of Bitcoin in 2008, the first decentralized peer-to-peer electronic cash system. Today, innovators in various fields are realizing the benefits behind this great technology. From medicine to agriculture, finance to governance, education to transport and across global supply chain; many sectors are looking for ways to integrate Blockchain into their infrastructures", he added.

While observing that governments and businesses all over the world are realizing the powerful usability of Blockchain, Prof. Pantami affirmed that the Federal Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy as well as its parastatals are not left behind, as they are inclined to employ the statutory responsibility towards innovative technologies, to develop corresponding strategies for a healthy ICT ecosystem that encapsulate emerging technology such as Blockchain.

He said, "It may interest you to know that one of the Agency's under my supervision, the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), has developed a National Blockchain Adoption Strategy that seeks to facilitate effective utilisation of Blockchain technology for the development of the Nigerian digital economy. The strategy outlines the roadmap and schemes for the adoption of the Blockchain technology by government in its digital transformation



Professor Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami

agenda in a way that supports efficiency, transparency, and productivity".

Although, it is an established fact that the technology drives new businesses and service models, the Communications and Digital Economy Boss made it known that there is need to equally create and enforce regulations to protect citizens and ensure fair markets while letting innovation and business flourish.

He went on to register the Federal Government's concern on how the technology can be used to foster healthy growth of the nation's digital economy and safety through the right regulatory instruments and implementation strategy that drive the adoption of the technology by both public and private sectors.

"In this regard, we directed NITDA to develop a national infrastructure for the deployment of Blockchain solutions that integrate identity and incentive platforms,

promote research and development, in addition, to focus on the skilling of the workforce, and create a procurement process to enable government agencies to adopt Blockchain solutions", he noted.

As a way of exploring ways to develop regulatory actions that would strike the right balance between facilitating innovation and mitigating new risks, the Minister confirmed that the ministry has further directed NITDA to introduce regulatory sandboxes that enable participants to test products and services on a small scale in a controlled environment, reducing innovation costs and barriers to entry.

These sandboxes, Pantami emphasized will also allow regulators to collect important information about innovative products before deciding which regulatory action to take.

"Through sustained engagement with stakeholders like you and many others, implementation of these regulatory guidelines would be enhanced and in turn, would engender a conducive regulatory environment for all players in the digital economy to thrive and fulfill their potential for prosperity and national development," he added.

Meanwhile, Prof. Pantami recounted many IT issues that still remain unresolved, such as "the interoperability of different Blockchain platforms, and legal issues such as data ownership, privacy, liability, and jurisdiction".

However, Pantami expressed his belief that with engagements such as the event, all business stakeholders and IP communities would reap the full benefits of Blockchain technology to promote innovations, support anti-counterfeit and anti-piracy operations; grow businesses, create jobs; entrench security, reliability, and transparency in all processes models.

Varsity gets MLSCN nod to offer BMLS programme

Medical Laboratory Science Council of Nigeria (MLSCN) has given authorization for Fountain University's Bachelor of Medical Laboratory Science (BMLS) programme to be offered.

The report was signed by Dr. Tosan Erhabor, the Council's Registrar and Chief Executive Officer, and it contained

the approval notice.

The permission came after a fruitful resource verification visit to the University by the professional organisation earlier this year.

The body gave the University great marks for the excellent human and scientific facilities it provided throughout the visit.

After learning the news, Professor Amidu Sanni, the vice chancellor of Fountain University, thanked the organisation for the professional favour and promised that the school would do everything in its capacity to take advantage of the opportunity.

He also praised the university's stakeholders—faculty, staff, and students—for their

capacity for collaboration and degree of commitment, both of which had a role in the institution's ultimate success.

Finally, the Vice-Chancellor urged prospective students to view this as another justification for visiting the fortress of learning's knowledge fountain.

Nigeria to support global efforts against marine plastic pollution

President Muhammadu Buhari has pledged Nigeria's commitment to an international legally binding instrument to reduce the menace of marine plastic pollution from land-based sources and activities.

The President gave the assurance weekend in a speech at the 2022 United Nations Ocean Conference in Lisbon, the capital of Portugal.

Highlighting Nigeria's effort at ensuring the health and sustainability of oceans, seas and marine resources, the President represented by the Minister of State for Environment, Sharon Ikeazor, said a national policy on plastic pollution and the road map on tackling solid and plastic waste management has been formulated and established.

The President, who lauded the United Nations for leading the process of effective ocean governance, said Nigeria had mainstreamed ocean management into the economy, constituting a Presidential Committee on Sustainable Blue Economy.

He also announced that Nigeria has

embarked on the creation of two marine protected areas.

President Buhari reaffirmed Nigeria's commitment to participating constructively in the ongoing negotiations for various multilateral agreements, including on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

According to him: "The entire Southern border of Nigeria is the Atlantic Ocean with a coastline of about 853km being the longest in the West African region.

"It is endowed with enormous biodiversity resources such as the freshwater and mangrove forest ecosystems with diverse species of fauna and flora.

"We acknowledge the fact that a healthy ocean and coastal environment is key to sustainable development. We must therefore conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources.

"The ocean is key to the global economy,

with an estimated 40 million people projected to be employed by ocean-based industries by 2030.

"Our oceans and seas are repositories of tremendous wealth, in terms of natural capital, ecosystem services, living and non-living resources. We are conscious of the fact that our maritime and aquatic resources are critical for the livelihoods of our people.

"Hence, our commitment to the Africa Union 2063 Agenda and the attainment of United Nations SDG 14".

The President also stressed the need for more scientific partnerships and knowledge sharing to protect humanity's common ocean heritage.

His words: "The science tells us that in order to stop the downward spiral we are witnessing in the ocean, we must fully and highly protect at least 30% of the global ocean by 2030, and dramatically strengthen the management of human activities in the other 70%.

"This must be reflected in the text we negotiate here as well as in upcoming negotiations planned in December 2022 at the upcoming Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) of the Conference of Parties (COP).

"Nigeria is a member of the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People and the Blue Leaders Campaign.

"The global community needs to agree to the effective protection of 30% of the global ocean by 2030 at the CBD COP in December, and a robust high seas treaty that doesn't simply endorse the status quo, but the one that ensures all nations manage their activities in the high seas to prevent significant effects on the ocean.

"These two steps will go a long way in restoring the health and resilience of our oceans."

Buhari Pledges Nigeria's Support for Global Efforts to Tackle Marine Plastic Pollution



Tackling menace of substandard materials, products in Nigerian markets

A few years ago, the United Nations (UN) declared that about 70 per cent of products and materials on sale in the Nigerian market were either fake or substandard and have done serious damage to their users or consumers. Curiously, in spite of the efforts of the regulatory agencies charged with the responsibility of monitoring to rid the country of them, the country's markets are still flooded with fake or substandard products or materials on daily basis, which has been causing health challenges to Nigerians and building collapses in the construction industry across the country, JOHNMARK UKOKO writes.

In the 1950s and up until the early 1980s, products offered for sale were of high quality. Nationals of many countries from West Africa, Central Africa and even East Africa travel all their ways to Nigeria to buy high quality products.

Most of those products were churned out from the country's many industrial factories then in existence. That runs for 24 hours then.

Some of those factories were located in Ogba Industrial Estate, Oregun Industrial Estate, Ikeja Industrial Estate, Eric Moore Industrial Estate, as well as Surulere, Iganmu, Korodu, Apapa, Amuwo-Odofin and Isolo industrial estates, among others in Lagos State.

There were also other industrial estates located in Kano, Kaduna, Bauchi, Emene in Enugu State, Aba Industrial Estate in Abia State, Warri Industrial Estate in Delta State and the Port Harcourt Industrial Estate in Rivers State, among such other locations across the country.

The products and items manufactured in those industrial hubs then were of top quality that competed favourably with imported products and items from across the globe.

However, since the mid 1980s when Nigeria began an unholy romance with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) during the regime of former military President Ibrahim Badamosi Babaginda (IBB) by taking loans from the IMF and World Bank and the exploitative conditions that crippled the country's industries and ruined the economy.

Most of the companies that dotted the above named industrial estates have long closed shops, just most of the large factories have gone comatose and their premises overgrown with weeds.

Some of the large warehouses and factories in those industrial estates that were once famous for keeping top quality locally produced products have been converted to religious and worship centres, as their owners closed down the factories, while several others simply relocated to neighbouring countries that with friendlier operating environment, such as Ghana and other African countries.

Consequently, Nigerian businessmen and their women counterparts rather opted to either import or smuggle substandard products into the country, as most of the local factories have either closed

down or continued operating at minimal production levels.

To curb the menace of influx of substandard products into the country, the Federal Government established the Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON) to check importation of substandard goods, set standards for products to be locally produced and imported and ensure that products being sold in the country were of high quality.

However, the Federal Government and Nigerians have not been impressed with the type of products in the markets, as several Nigerians have died or have been harmed by consumption of substandard products, especially fake drugs and medicines.

Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Otunba Adeniyi Adebayo, who addressed journalists at a press briefing recently, said the Federal Government was worried about the influx of substandard and fake products into the country and that the government was aware of the many Nigerians who have died from the consumption of such products.

He also stressed that the government was aware that most incidents of collapsed buildings in the country in the recent years arose from the use of substandard materials in the construction of such buildings.

Adebayo, who noted that the government knows that many road crashes would have been avoided, if the owners of such vehicles have not patronise substandard tyres, pledged that the Federal Government would do everything within its power to support the SON in winning the war against substandard products.

He disclosed that one of the ways the government hoped SON would be able to win the war, would be through the establishment of a world-class standard laboratory recently put in place at SON's facility in Ogba, Industrial Estate, Ikeja, Lagos.

The minister added that similar laboratories were being set up in Enugu, Ado-Ekiti, Abuja and elsewhere to ensure that goods and materials produced in Nigeria or imported into the country meet international standards.

But while the country still awaits the realization of such aspiration, the two critical government agencies that are crucial to the realisation of the government's aspiration—the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS)



Farouk Salim

and SON recently disagreed and traded blames against each other over the influx of fake products into the country's markets.

Director-General of SON, Mallam Farouk Salim, who fielded questions from journalists recently fired the first salvo and blamed the Customs for the influx of substandard products, insisting that the Customs was responsible for the influx of fake products into the country.

When asked how fake and substandard products find their way into the country's markets despite his men participating in joint cargo examination with the customers, he said: "We are not always invited for joint inspection. In fact, our invitation for joint inspection is rare and in-between. But, I can guarantee that if our officers get opportunities to inspect products, the moment they look at the items from their experience, they will detect substandard goods.

"Don't forget that our counterparts in the Customs Service are only trained to charge duty payment, they have no idea what cables look like or what substandard goods look like. But SON's officials have unfettered access as stipulated in the 1999 Constitution as amended.

"The laws setting up the agency provided that we must be allowed to be at the ports. It is not a favour that we should be waiting on someone to call us into the ports. As an agency, we are part of the government by the law unless the National

Assembly changes or amends the law. The laws enacted by the National Assembly and signed by President Muhammadu Buhari stated that the SON must and should be at the ports, not at the discretion of any other organisation."

Salim's comments infuriated management of the Nigeria Custom Service (NCS), which responded swiftly and fired back at the SON, stating its side of the story through its Spokesman, Timi Bomodi.

Bomodi said the comment credited to the Director-General of SON was not true, adding that there were open channels of communication between the officials of SON and Customs Area Commands if the need arises for clarification or intervention.

"SON's officials usually partake in examination of cargoes. We want to state that the allegations are not true. The Nigeria Customs Service is fully cognizant that strategic co-operation among security and regulatory agencies lies at the heart of national security and as such we willfully work in tandem with other security and regulatory agencies including the SON to achieve national goals," Bomodi said.

He further clarified that under the Nigeria Integrated Customs Information System (NICIS 11), the SON and other regulatory agencies of government are linked directly and frequently make inputs in reference to their operations.

"At no time did the NCS refuse to oblige the SON of any request. Indeed, the Nigeria Custom Service, even without intervention from the SON on its own directs suspicious items bordering on brand and intellectual property rights infringements to them. Therefore, the statement ascribed to the SON boss, creates a totally false narrative, it is questionable, raises serious concerns and calls for scrutiny by discerning members of the public. It is also self-condemning.

"The SON has access to our systems and it officials are informed and fully participate in examination of goods and even go as far as collecting product samples where necessary during examinations for their investigation. Even the field inspection process chart on the SON's official website shows its involvement at the ports and borders, during examination of goods.

"Therefore, the statement credited to the SON boss is unfortunate. While success is said to breed opposition, the success of the NCS is not achieved by tarnishing the image of other agencies, just to look good or score cheap points," Bomodi stressed.

He, however, blamed the influx of substandard products in the country on the incompetence of SON officials.

While the war of words rages on between the two government agencies funded by taxpayers money, more lives continue to be lost daily in the country. For instance, on June 29, 2022, a three storey building under construction in Port Harcourt, Rivers State collapsed due to suspected use of substandard materials. Several persons, who were believed to be trapped under the rubble of the collapsed building died, while many others sustained varying degrees of injuries.

Hardly a week passes in Lagos State without report of one building collapse or another with various degrees of casualties. A few months ago, a 21-storey twin towers building collapsed in Ikoyi, killing scores of workers on the site, visitors and some owners of the project due the use of substandard materials.

The question most Nigerians are asking is when will the authorities rid the country of killer items? Will there ever be a time when Nigerians will be able to buy products in the market with confidence that they have bought real value for their money? Only time shall tell.

Climate action: Global oil reserves drop by nine per cent

Stories by **JOHNMARK UKOKO**

Total recoverable oil worldwide has indicated a dip, dropping by nine per cent from 2021 and threatening global energy security at a time price increases associated with falling supplies trigger inflation across major global economies.

A Rystad Energy's 2022 review, an independent and data-based analysis of global energy landscape, showed that the world has suffered a sizable drop in recoverable oil resources in the last one year, generating fears that underinvestment inflicted action was beginning to deliver negative impacts.

The Rystad Energy analysis also showed that global recoverable oil now stood at estimated 1,572 billion barrels, a drop of almost nine per cent since last year and 152 billion lesser barrels than the total in 2021.

Recoverable oil corresponds to the industry term, remaining technically recoverable crude oil and condensate. The hydrocarbon liquids include expected volumes from field discoveries and risked future discoveries.

Rystad Energy said the drop in reserves resulted from depletion of production, low discoveries to replace produced volumes and lack of access to exploration rights.

According to the firm, which provides critical advisory notes



Magnus Nysveen

for investors, the fall in reserves is driven by the 30 billion barrels of oil produced last year and a significant reduction in undiscovered resources amounting to 120 billion barrels.

The United States offshore sector, Rystad said, contributed the largest total to the drop, where 20 billion barrels of oil would remain aground, largely due to leasing bans on federal land.

It added that of the 1,572 billion barrels of technically

recoverable oil, only about 1,200 billion barrels would likely be economically viable before 2,100 at \$50 per barrel counting the carbon footprint expected from the global reserves against templates set by the United Nations, Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Rystad projected that economically, extractable oil would contribute about 0.1 per cent of additional global warming by the year 2100 due to expected absorption capacity of the earth's

natural carbon on sinks.

The analysts reported that the drop in global hydrocarbon liquid reserves represented the raging battle between climate activists on the one hand, as well as economists and petroleum industry players on the other

hand.

Head of analysis at Rystad Energy, Magnus Nysveen, stressed that the declining reserves figures will improve prospects of meeting climate targets, while hurting the global economy.

FG slams high tariff on tobacco firms, smokers

In a bid to discourage the habit of cigarette smoking, the Federal Government has slammed higher tariffs on tobacco products.

In its verified Twitter handle, the Federal Government said from June 1, 2022, it has commenced a new three-year tobacco tax regime, which will end in 2025.

"With effect from June 1, 2022, the Federal Government has commenced implementation of a new three-year tobacco tax regime which will end in 2025. This new regime increased the ad-valorem tax rate from 20 per cent to 30 per cent.

"In addition to the 30 per cent ad-valorem, a specific excise rate

has been increased from N58 to N84 per pack of 20 sticks of cigarette, which will further be increased to N94 per pack in 2023 and N104 per pack in 2024.

Also, the tax on Shisha is now N3,000 per litre and N1,000 per kilogramme and will be raised yearly by N500.

"The pro-health tax is an effective public health control measure against behavioral risk factors as it has the capability to reduce demand and consumption of tobacco products. It will also prompt tobacco users to switch spending their resources on tobacco products to health activities such as education, health and nutrition," the tweet added.

Apapa customs half-year revenue hits N522 billion

Revenue profile of Apapa Command of the Nigeria Customs Service has risen to N522.4 billion in the first half of the year 2022 saying that in the corresponding period of last year, it collected N366.5 billion, representing a 42.5 per cent increase in revenue generation.

Area Controller of the Command, Comptroller Malanta Ibrahim Yusuf, disclosed this during the weekend at a media briefing, saying the feat was made possible because of officers' resilience in ensuring that identified revenue leakages were mitigated, while sustaining importers and stakeholders' compliance level in the clearance value chain.

Yusuf hinted that the command has consistently strived in its core mandate of revenue generation, prevention and suppression of smuggling, trade facilitation and implementation of government policies to ensure ease of doing business at the port.

On non-oil export, the controller declared that the command recorded a boost in the exportation of non-oil commodities in the first half of this year from January to June.

According to him, non-oil export rose to 2.5 million metric tons above the 540 metric tons recorded in the first six months of 2021, adding that the Free on Board (FOB) valued of the exported items rose from \$1.38 million in 2021 to \$1.6 million in 2022.

He revealed that the exported items include steel bars, agricultural and mineral products among others, noting that the Federal Government policy and export incentive schemes have played vital roles in boosting export trade in the country.

On smuggling, Yusuf said the command's operation was guided by the Federal Government import and export prohibition lists, as



Malanta Ibrahim Yusuf,

well as other government policies as directed.

He stated that in the period under review, the command curbed the smuggling of dangerous items into the country, resulting in the seizure of 83 containers with Duty Paid Value (DPV) of N8.3 billion.

Giving details of the seized items, including 32 containers of processed and in-processed wood, 18 containers of used clothing and shoes, 12 containers of foreign parboiled rice, seven containers of vegetable oil and three containers of tomatoes paste, adding that a 20-foot container of Tramadol was currently being investigated.

He disclosed that the command had recently handed over two 20 feet containers marked: "SUDU 777479 and UETU 2798479" laden with 150 cartons of illicit hard drugs to the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) with a view to further strengthening the relationship between relevant government agencies at the port.

Fielding questions from journalists on the rising revenue profile, Yusuf stated that if the command could generate N522.4 billion in the first six months, it will definitely generate more in the second half of the year when activities would peak towards December.

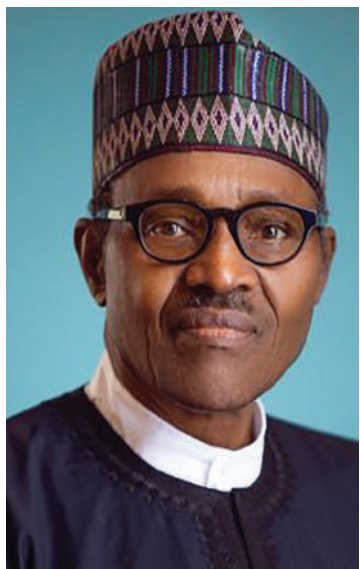
Russia-Ukraine war: Nigeria set to supply gas to Europe, says Buhari

•500bpd modular refinery begins operations in Edo

By **EDU ABADE**, Business Editor

As the war between Russia and Ukraine continues, Nigeria has expressed its readiness to fill the gaps in supply of natural gas to Europe and other countries of the world.

President Muhammadu Buhari made the disclosure at the weekend in Lisbon, Portugal, during a state visit to the country, saying that with over 200 million population of mostly young people, Nigeria was ready



President Muhammadu Buhari

to become the major hub of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

Commenting on collaboration between Nigeria and Portugal, he urged the European country to consider Nigeria as a valued and trusted partner in Africa, just as he identified five key areas of cooperation capable of boosting the economies of both countries.

He explained that the country was ready to collaborate with Portugal to harness the abundant crude oil and natural gas resources, tourism and hospitality industry, air travel, security and joint commission.

Buhari said with the current war between Russia and Ukraine, partnership between Nigeria and Portugal had become necessary to avoid further crisis in the gas demand and supply chain, insisting that the West African country was already to fill the gap as a major supplier of gas to Portugal.

On tourism, the President noted that Nigeria possesses huge potential in the sector and would like to benefit from Portugal's expertise, while stressing the need to sign a Bilateral Air Services Agreement (BASA) on air transportation and establish a

direct link between both countries.

This followed as promoters of the 2,500 barrels per day (bpd) capacity modular refinery at Egbokor and Ologbo in Edo State worth over N60 billion being executed by Duport Midstream and the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) disclosed that the project has been completed and ready for operations this month.

The project was conceived to include 30 metric standard cubic feet per day, while the modular refinery has capacity to process 30,000bpd. Also in the next 18 months, the modular Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) refinery will be ready to process 10,000bpd.

The Trumpet learnt that the two modular refineries located at Egbokor and Ologbo in Ikpoba Okha Council of Edo State, from which the state government hopes to collect Internally Generated Revenue (IGR), will begin full commercial production by July 28, 2022 subject to final approvals by the regulatory authorities.

It was also learnt that Walter-smith Modular Refinery in Imo State had already commenced refining of 5000bpd, while the Azikel Modular Refinery in Bayelsa State is near completion and on the verge of starting operations.

'Military personnel need physical, metal fitness for effective operations'

By PAUL MICHAEL, DEFENCE EDITOR, ABUJA

Chief of the Air Staff (CAS), Air Marshal Oladayo Amao, has said military personnel need strong physical and mental fitness to be effective in their operations, which are stressful.

Amao stated this at the 2022 Second Quarter Route March Exercise for Nigerian Air Force (NAF) personnel in Abuja at the weekend.

The Route March, which is routine, is part of the efforts aimed at continually promoting comradeship and 'esprit de corps' among personnel as well as physical and combat fitness with a view to enhancing NAF operational readiness.

According to Air Marshal, route march is a military tradition practiced worldwide and aimed at ensuring NAF officers, airmen and civilian staff are physically fit in order to handle the rigours and stress

associated with their daily tasks and responsibilities.

The CAS further reiterated the need for personnel to continue to be vigilant and security conscious, while remaining apolitical, even as the Nation gradually approaches another election year.

"While I encourage you all to exercise your franchise, please be guided by the ethics and discipline that has been inculcated in you. You must also continue to foster peace and be law abiding even as you carry out your civic duties," he said.

Air Marshal Amao, who led the route march, went on to state that in addition to the weekly sporting activities held in all NAF units, the NAF Sports Week has been planned for the Third Quarter of 2022 so as to promote peaceful coexistence amongst personnel and families as well as serve as an avenue for discovering new NAF talents for the upcoming 2022 Armed

Forces of Nigeria Games.

He also stated that the Games would give the NAF an opportunity to meaningfully engage the large youth-base population and divert their attention from the rampaging vices in the society.

While congratulating participants for a successful exercise, Air Marshal Amao expressed the profound gratitude of the NAF to the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, President Muhammadu Buhari, for his unflinching support to the growth and development of the NAF.

He also thanked the Commander 053 HQ NAF Camp and his team for professionally and successfully hosting the Route March with desired outcomes. The route march, which witnessed a large turnout, had in attendance Branch Chiefs, Directors, airmen and airwomen as well as Corps members serving in NAF Units in Abuja.



Chief of the Air Staff (CAS), Air Marshal Oladayo Amao

Delta CP moves to curb insecurity around Agbor

By PAUL MICHAEL

Commissioner of Police in Delta State, CP Ari Muhammed Ali, has vowed to tackle the growing insecurity around the railway station in Agbor.

CP Ali gave the assurance at the weekend when he visited the Railway Station at Owa Ewere in Ika North East LGA in company of the Assistant Commissioner of Police Operations, ACP Sa'ad

Ibrahim, the Area Commander Agbor, ACP Friday Idachaba, and the Commanding officer Army 181 Aphibions Agbor, for an 'on the spot' assessment of the security situation in the area.

According to a statement by the Command's spokesperson, DSP Bright Edafe, on Saturday, the CP assured residents of Ika South LGA, Ika North-east LGA, and other citizens who travel to

and from the State via the Railway Station located at Agbor, of adequate security and safety.

"The first point of call by the CP was the railway crossing by Emuhu in Ika-South, Benin-Asaba express way where these hoodlums sometimes kidnapped their victims and take them to the bush. Other places visited by the CP includes the third power line by Boji-Boji Owa, Idumuesah in Owa Alero road, and the Agbor Railway Station.

"After assessing the security situation and arrangements, he then paid a courtesy visit to HRM Obi Dr. Emmanuel O. Efeizomor II (JP) the OBI of Owa-oyibu and the Dein of Agbor HRM Benjamin Ikenchuku (Keagborekuzi I)," the statement said.

It added that the CP had during the visit discussed issues bothering on the kidnapping trend within the Owa-Oyibu and Agbor Kingdoms and solutions were proffered accordingly.

Meanwhile, the Obi of Owa-Oyibu, HRM Dr. Emmanuel O. Efeizomor, noted that the Government and the Police should support and empower the local vigilantes, adding that the Police cannot be everywhere at the same time.

The Traditional Ruler also noted that series of meetings are ongoing in the kingdom to fish out the moles in the Community that are conspiring with the hoodlums terrorizing the area.

"The CP assured the two monarchs that the Command is working in close synergy with the military and other security agencies and all modalities have been put place to ensure that this ugly trend is brought to a halt and residents/passengers boarding the train to and from Delta State will be adequately protected," the statement concluded.



Commissioner of Police in Delta State, CP Ari Muhammed Ali

Police arrest suspects for child trafficking, fake naira notes

By PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

Police operatives in Delta State have arrested three ladies for alleged child trafficking at Omerigboma Village Oko, Oshimili South Local Government Area.

Spokesperson of the Delta Police Command, DSP Bright Edafe, in a statement on Saturday, said the arrest of the suspects, Ado-Obi Oguguo, Chidima Osita and Nkirka Ikechukwu, followed a petition written on behalf of a 13-year-old girl who was trafficked at Ebonyi State and was to be taken to Onicha-Ugbo for prostitution.

"On 24/6/2022, the Command received a complaint via petition to the Area Commander Asaba, written on behalf of a victim of child trafficking (Name withheld) age 13yrs, a native of Izza North LGA of Ebonyi State, who was to be taken to Onicha-Ugbo for prostitution.

"A combined team of Policemen and vigilante embarked on an intelligence led operation, which led to the arrest of three suspects namely; Ado-Obi Oguguo 'f' age 38yrs, Chidima Osita age 36yrs, and Nkirka Ikechukwu 'f' age 30yrs, all residing at Omerigboma Village Oko, Oshimili South, Delta State.

"Preliminary investigation revealed that, suspects were into prostitution, and on 22/6/2022, they arranged for a girl named Chidima surname unknown age 16yrs to be taken to Mali for prostitution," Edafe stated.

He added that investigation and effort to arrest other members of the syndicate is ongoing.

In another development, a 45 year old native of Ebonyi State was arrested by the police after being rescued from the fierce grips of mobs who were attacking him for attempting to dupe a POS operator with fake Naira notes.

DSP Edafe said the suspect, who was arrest at Oko new international market in Asaba, was in possession of about N80,000 fake currency naira notes.

"On 28/6/2022, at about 1530hours, Operatives of Eagle-Net Special Squad while on routine patrol along Asaba/Onitsha bridge sighted a mob, attacking a man at Oko new international market in Asaba. The team rushed to the scene and rescued the suspect named Michael Ozor age 45yrs of Abakiliki in Ebonyi State.

"The suspect was alleged to have made a POS transaction with fake Naira notes with intent to defraud the POS operator. The suspect was arrested and fake naira notes to the tune of Eighty Thousand was recovered from him. Investigation is ongoing," Edafe said.



DSP Bright Edafe

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Super Falcons, Banyana battle for supremacy in Morocco

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

Nigeria and South Africa have another day in the sun as the Super Falcons and Banyana Banyana go to war for three points, in the opening game of Group C of the 12th Women Africa Cup of Nations which began in Morocco on Saturday.

Nine-time champions and FIFA World Cup ever-present Nigeria have not forgotten how, 10 months ago and on home soil, the youthful Banyana squad ran away spectacular 4-2 winners in the final match of the first edition of Aisha Buhari Women's Tournament. The venue was the Mobolaji Johnson Arena in Lagos.

Since then, however, the Falcons have flown with formidable wings, eliminating West African arch-rivals Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire in the qualifying series for the WAFCON and coming close to stripping the 'A' Women Team of Canada in the second of a two-match tour in that country three months ago.

Monday's spectacle will see Coach Randy Waldrum send out his best legs against a team considered Nigeria's strongest opposition on the African continent at the moment, and



Coach Desiree Ellis is expected to do likewise as both teams of titanesses battle for crucial three points at the Moulay Hassan Stadium.

"Naturally, this is a very big game and we are looking forward to it. It is also a game that should be a good advertisement for African women's football. When you have Nigeria playing South Africa at the senior women's level, it is a treat," Waldrum said.

"Our objectives and expectations remain the same: to earn a ticket to the World Cup and to win the trophy. We will take it one match at a time. It is interesting to play South Africa first, and we can move ahead from there," he added.

Team captain Onome Ebi, who is the oldest player in the

competition at 39, has featured in five FIFA World Cup finals and still looks vibrant enough to feature at the FIFA World Cup in Australia & New Zealand next year.

Falcons captain said, "For me, it is a good thing that we are playing South Africa first. It is a strong team and that will make our team to be strong and to give our best from the very beginning."

"I have won this trophy several times but I still have the hunger to win it, and also to go to a sixth World Cup. We will look first to pick up the World Cup ticket, and then the trophy," Ebi stated.

Nigeria will be without first choice goalkeeper Chiamaka Nnadozie, who is suspended for receiving yellow cards

in different matches of the qualifying series (against Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire), meaning Israel-based Tochukwu Oluehi could be between the sticks for the Super Falcons against the Banyana on Monday night.

In Saturday's opening match, Morocco's Atlas Lionesses pipped Burkina Faso 1-0 to surge to the top of Group A.

There are four teams in each of the three groups of the 12-team finals, with the top two teams in each of the groups and two best third-placed teams proceeding to the quarter-finals.

All the four semi-finalists will represent Africa at next year's FIFA Women's World Cup finals, with the fifth-placed team to be eligible for a Playoff Tournament that will hold next year.

Unseeded Cornet ends Swiatek's 37-match winning streak at Wimbledon

World-ranked number 1, Iga Swiatek, suffered a shocking defeat in the hands of French Alize Cornet who was unseeded at Wimbledon.

Cornet was in top form to win against Swiatek, who has kept her record since February in two straight sets, 6-4 6-2 to proceed to the quarter-finals.

The Polish, after the game, claimed she was a bit rusty and her opponent quickly took the advantage to deal a shocking blow to her.

Swiatek started the All England Club tournament on a good note winning Croatian Jana Fett, whose highest run in a Grand Slam event was at 2018 Australian Open, 6-0 6-3 in round one.

The world number one sustained the feat by defeating the Dutch Lesley Kerkhove 6-4 4-6 6-3 to record her second victory in Wimbledon before she was stopped on her way to the quarter-final by Cornet.

"What can I say? I know I didn't play good tennis. I was pretty confused about

my tactics," Swiatek said after the end of her 37-match unbeaten run.

"As a solid player, she used that pretty well. It wasn't a good performance for me.

"Right now even I am satisfied with this streak, so I'm happy that I was able to do that," world No 1 added.

Cornet, in her response, said she was excited over the victory which reminded her of the victory she recorded against Serena Williams in 2014.

"I have no words. It reminds me of the time I beat Serena on this court eight years ago so you guys are lucky for me," the Frenchwoman said.

"I just want to say I am a huge fan of Iga. I am very flattered I got to beat her today.

"I am like the good wine in France. Good wine always ages well," Cornet claimed.

From records, no woman had won as many matches in a row as Swiatek since Martina Hingis also put together a run of 37 in 1997.



Cricket trio returns after training in South Africa

■ NCF gets motorised roller for pitch maintenance

Nigeria's senior men's cricket team players, Sessan Adedeji, Sylvester and Isaac Okpe have returned to the country after undergoing a successful one-month training programme in Durban, South Africa.

This is part of the initiatives being undertaken by the Nigeria Cricket Federation (NCF) to expose, equip and develop the players of our national cricket teams and capitalise on gains achieved so far.

In a statement by the Public Relations Officer, Musa Bodie, this initiative is part of the plans to continuously increase the technical knowledge and skills of our national cricketers.

According to Bodie, NCF which hatched and sponsored the project ensured that the selected individuals attended a qualified academy on cricket, Hollywood Dolphin Academy, where they were exposed to new technology.

Bodie added that the skill enhancement programme exposed the trio to new ways of batting, bowling, and fielding

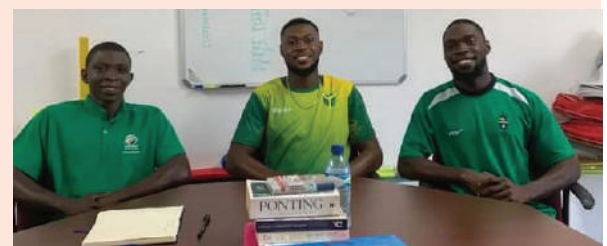
during his period. "The program was a huge success with the players returning to the country with valuable experience," he said.

"This placement program has been consistent in the last 3 years and NCF has assured that the initiative will be sustained as one of the pathways of developing our national team players at different categories," Bodie added.

Meanwhile, in a separate event, the NCF have acquired a motorised roller to maintain its pitch ahead of the U19 World Cup Africa Division 2 qualifier at the Package B of Moshood Abiola National Stadium, Abuja.

The qualifier which is slated to hold in September this year has spurred the federation into action to massively engage in facility upgrades and maintenance.

Nigeria cricket federation expressed that the motorised roller, received by the Secretary-General, Mr Taiwo Oriss and the groundsman, is to maintain the twin turf wicket pitches in the national stadium.



Brother-in-law sues Osimhen over \$500,000 debt from Napoli move

Osita Okolo has dragged Napoli and Super Eagles forward Victor Osimhen to a court in Lagos over an alleged \$500,000 debt that emanated from the latter's transfer deal to Napoli in 2020.

Okolo, a brother-in-law to Osimhen, said the Napoli striker owes Pavic Deals Ltd from the proceeds of the player's transfer from French Ligue 1 club Lille to Napoli.

According to the report by Calcio Napoli 24 where Okolo granted an exclusive interview with Paolo Braggia Tv, Osimhen received the proceeds which belong to Pavic Deals Ltd, a company he owns.

Okolo stressed that he has on several occasions and amicably requested a refund of the money from the Napoli striker but met stiff resistance, suggesting Osimhen is being advised wrongly.

He said, "Victor James Osimhen received the sums due to Pavic Deals Ltd, which Okolo owns, in the agreement for his transfer to SSC Napoli, with the excuse that such money would have been returned.

"Pavic Deals Ltd company has requested a refund several times, but Victor refused. We

have been looking for a way to resolve the matter amicably, so as not to compromise in any way his football career. It seems, however, that Mr Osimhen does not have wise advisors and managers.

"Debt shows that DW Sports Management has contract with me, for the modicum figure of 766,988,05 euros but this is not, it's about the boy. For completeness of the information, the number 9 of Napoli must give us back 439,918.65 dollars and 69,445 euros," Okolo stated.

However, Osimhen's brother-in-law noted he has forwarded the matter to a court to decide their fate as he has cogent evidence to defend his claims.

"The question is already under consideration by the court of Lagos, Nigeria. For now, I'll just give you the document certifying the originality of my power of attorney. Where the situation should not resolve itself, I will show you others documents even more burning," he claimed.

Following the interview granted by Okolo with Paolo Braggia Tv, the content of the document tendered as part of the evidence was published in the

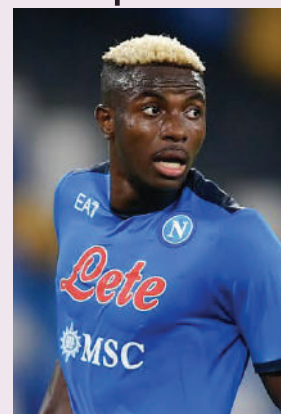
public domain by Calcio Napoli 24.

"With this power of attorney conferred on 27 December 2019, I, VICTOR JAMES OSIMHEN of No. 5B, Ayo Babalola Avenue, Magodo Scheme 2, Lagos, Nigeria (hereafter referred to as 'The Player, expression which, if the context allows it, includes my legal representatives) appoints and constitutes MR OSITA OKOLO, legitimate representative of the company 'Pavic Deals Ltd., a sports promotion company registered in Nigeria, which deals with representation of professional athletes and that has his residential address in Nigeria at No. 13 Bayo Aderiyi Street, Lagos State (hereinafter referred to as 'The Manager'), as my true and legitimate attorney in my name and on my behalf, with my full consent, to make and execute all acts on the following clauses:

1) That I am Victor Osimhen, male, born on December 29, 1998, PLAYER a citizen of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

2) Which with my full consent, I appoint Pavic Deals Ltd as my representative.

3) That the Manager will take charge of and will represent, negotiate, conclude, will agree



and accept a contract of football on my behalf both locally and international.

4) That and with my full consent that the Manager has the exclusive right to stipulate an agreement with third parties on my behalf and with any football club in the world.

5) That the Manager will be paid with the gross earnings accrued by my agent / appointed intermediary agent / intermediary appointed by me (plus any applicable taxes).

6) I hereby ratify and confirm whatever the Manager does or has done legitimately in relation to my career in accordance with this power of attorney, outside of any other person."

Engage youths through volleyball, NVBF charges coaches

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

President of Nigeria Volleyball Federation (NVBF) Engr. Musa Nimrod has charged coaches to engage youths in the nooks and crannies of the country in the sport.

He made this statement on Sunday at the Ahmadu Bello Stadium (ABS), Kaduna during the closing ceremony of Nimrod 6Nineteen Talent Hunt, a volleyball training programme he sponsored.

The NVBF President revealed that in the past, the country possesses tall players like Tony Oghuma, Thomas Aroko, Dennis Eleri, Emmanuel Jatto and many others but there is a huge gap yet unfilled.

The North-West Zonal Representative on the board of NVBF advised coaches to visit schools in their various locations to identify players who are above 6ft.

He said, "I am using this medium to call on Nigeria Volleyball Coaches in the country to engage our youths through volleyball. You will discover these days that most children are not interested in



sporting activities due to their school calendar. The only way to bring their mind back is by going to schools and identifying these talents.

"If you go to North Africa, most of their players are above 6ft and we all saw that during the U19 and U21 African Volleyball Championship Nigeria hosted.

"In the '80s, '90s and early 2000, Nigeria had tall and intimidating players but the narrative is different. This is a wake-up call to coaches and stakeholders that we need to do more," Nimrod insisted.

Nimrod advised the young players of Nimrod 6Nineteen Talent Hunt not to relent in their training after they get to their various destinations.

He continued: "The coaches that handled you during the Nimrod 6Nineteen Talent Hunt are some of the best handlers in the country. Do not relent when you get to your various destination because they have given you solid background knowledge of the basics of volleyball."

Meanwhile, the Head Coach of COAS Spikers, Elishama Elam commended

the players for their commitments and dedication during the exercise.

Elam said some players have the potential of becoming good players if given the necessary attention at their various training centres

The coaches engaged during the Nimrod 6Nineteen Talent Hunt includes; the Chairman of Nigeria Volleyball Coaches Association, Elishama Elam, the Head Coach of Nigeria Correctional Service, Adamu Nitte and the Head Coach of Kada Emeralds, Vincent Unogwu.

LMC's hammer falls on Katsina United

League Management Company (LMC) has charged Katsina United for multiple breaches of Nigeria's top-tier division Framework and Rules during their Matchday 35 fixture with Remo Stars at Muhammadu Dikko Stadium, Katsina, on June 26, 2022.

LMC, organisers of the Nigeria Professional Football League (NPFL),

stated that there was a breakdown of law and order resulting in harassment, and intimidation of match officials on that very day and this interrupted the seamless process of the match.

In a statement by LMC after concluding its investigations on what transpired in that very incident, Katsina United were found guilty of encroaching into the field of play to harass match officials, club supporters and players at game time.

The organisers of the Nigerian top-tier division added that the home team in the event of perpetrating the shameful act, capable of discrediting the league, failed to conduct their players and officials properly.

The statement reads in part: "Katsina Utd are guilty of causing disturbances during the match. The action of the club and their supporters also brought the league to disrepute.

"Katsina Utd are fined

N1m each for failing to provide general security, for encroachment unto the pitch, for failure to ensure the proper conduct of your players & officials, & for bringing the game to disrepute.

"Katsina Utd are further fined N250,000 being compensation to Mr Michael Onikute of Remo Stars.

"Katsina Utd are to replace the damaged equipment of Remo Stars at the face value of the certified receipts provided to the LMC by Remo Stars.

"Katsina Utd's home ground, Muhammadu Dikko Stadium, will be closed to fans indefinitely. The club's home games will be strictly under closed-door till adequate security measures including written guarantees by the Katsina Police Command to prosecute are put in place.

"In event of any further similar breach of the league rules in the course of this season, Katsina Utd shall forfeit 3 points from the points accruing to the club, in addition to any additional sanctions that may be deemed appropriate in the circumstance," LMC added.

However, on Saturday while in action in their Matchday 36 fixture at the Next of Champions with Dakkada FC, Katsina United struggling to beat the relegation zone at season's end, fell to a 2-0 defeat.



Adesanya beats Cannonier, retains middleweight belt

Nigerian-born New Zealander, Israel Adesanya, has convincingly outpointed American Jared Cannonier to retain his middleweight title at UFC 276 in T-Mobile Arena, Las Vegas,

Adesanya, in the fight against his opponent where he led in all five rounds, displayed better skills and agility to secure a victory that was unanimously decided in his favour.

The UFC middleweight champion, who won five of six UFC fights and has dominated the



division in totality, was too powerful for the American as he displayed ferocious knockout power.

According to reports, the 32-year-old after his

victory called Brazilian Alex Pereira, who defeated Sean Strickland on the same day.

Pereira and Adesanya have unsettled scores which the Nigerian-born New

Zealander wants to revisit.

Both fighters had fought previously and the Brazilian holds two victories against Adesanya in kickboxing before their promotion to Mixed Martial Art (MMA).

"We know who's next. I'll put him on skates," Adesanya told Pereira on phone.

Right from the entry precession, Adesanya, who entered the stage in a WWE Undertaker-like manner with his hat and urn to arouse the venue in awe, proved his superiority over Cannonier from that moment till he attained victory.

De Jong not for sale, Barca president tells Man United

Barcelona President Joan Laporta has insisted that Manchester United's prime target in the summer transfer window, Frenkie De Jong, is not for sale.

Laporta stated this stressing that he will do every possible to ensure the Dutch midfielder remains in Camp Nou

This is surprising after the Catalans had discussed at length negotiating how the Dutch midfielder could make a switch to Old Trafford at the right price.

Manchester United have had their previous bid of about €65m rejected by Barcelona and went further to tender one of about €80m reportedly.

Although the bid still falls short of what the Catalans are expecting for the defensive

midfielder, the recent statement made by Laporta at a tribute to late club legend, Johan Cruyff, has further worsened the woes of United.

"I am going to do what is in my power to that Frenkie stays but it is also a salary issue and it would have to be adjusted," the president said according to Mundo Deportivo.

"He is a Barça player, one of the best in the world in his position, according to the experts. We know that there are clubs that want him, not just Manchester United, and we have no intention of selling.

"We know that he wants to stay and the criteria of the player are very important. He is comfortable in Barcelona and as little as we can, I would do



everything I can to make him stay.

"What you have to look at is the salary level of some players, who do not suit those who we want but that is another discussion that has to be faced. Frenkie has a world level," Laporta added.

The Trumpet reports that

Manchester United are keen on securing the services of De Jong, who played under United's boss, Erik ten Hag, in Ajax. With Laporta's statement, United will have to go back to the drawing board to meet the Catalans' offer, reportedly about €5m above their last bid, for the Dutch international.

FIBA WC qualifier: Nigeria beats Uganda 91-72 in second round

Following President Muhammadu Buhari's decision to rescind the ban on Nigeria from participating in international basketball competitions, the country's male basketball team, D'Tigers, have started their qualifying matches to feature at the International Federation of Basketball (FIBA) World Cup in 2023, The Trumpet gathered.

With 3 wins from 5 games, D'Tigers booked their place in the second round where they defeated Uganda 91-72 in the 2023 FIBA World Cup qualifiers.

Having recorded a 20-0 points walkover win over Mali, Nigeria crossed the threshold with 8pts to join group leader, Cape Verde, Uganda in the next round.

According to the pre-qualification guideline, the top three teams in group A will be merged with the top three teams in Group C consisting of Côte d'Ivoire, Angola, Guinea, and the Central African Republic.

Addressing the players on Saturday, the President of the Nigeria Basketball Federation (NBBF), Engr Musa Kida, thanked the team for their dedication and swift response to the call of duty.

Kida, who was in the company of his Vice President, Babs Ogunade, conveyed the gratitude of Nigerians to the players for representing to the best of their abilities whenever they were called upon.

"Congratulations again for booking your deserved place in the second round. I bring you greetings from your compatriots back home who are solidly behind you," Kida told the Nigerian team.

"The job is far from over. We must start preparing for the second round immediately with the game against Uganda tomorrow.

"We must finish high and end this phase with a bang. The boys have been separated from the men and the race for the ticket just got hotter. We count on you to deliver on this task.

"We will do everything within our power as a federation to make things easy for you on and off the court," Kida assured.

The team under the tutelage of Alan Major repeated their first encounter in February when it swept off Uganda 95-69 points to decide the second and third spots.

The next round of matches will be held between the 22-30 of August.



Uganda discovers 31m tonnes of gold

By **OROWO VICTORIA OJIEH**

After several surveys, Uganda has announced that it has discovered 31 million metric tonnes of gold waiting to be extracted in the country.

Solomon Muyita, a spokesman for Uganda Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development said that these reports are aimed at attracting gold miners and investors in the

cryptocurrency sector. President Yoweri Museveni has called for local refinement of gold, labelling any external refinery criminal.

"It is criminal for anyone to advocate continuing commodity exports in Africa, when that commodity is 90% more valuable than what you are giving to outsiders," he said.

Refining gold locally could enhance job creation, and improve social service delivery to those living close to

where the mineral is extracted.

In an attempt to boost the country's economy, the Ugandan government has authorized the Wagagai gold mining company, a Chinese company, to start producing gold products in Busia district.

The company embarked on building its \$200 million gold refinery in phases in the district in 2016.

Muyita said the gold discovered could

start being mined immediately.

The general manager of the Wagagai gold mining company, Tan Chun Chi, said the investment has reached \$60 million. He explained that construction has been lingering behind due to lack of two licenses.

The company has recently obtained a gold production license in March this year and has a 21-year lease to mine gold in the country.

They are expected to double their speed because they need to begin gold production by July 2023.

"If this is really the volume we have, it's time to clean our house and do business, to develop ourselves and our country, moving to middle-income status



Solomon Muyita

and beyond." said Winnie Ngabirwe, an expert in gold mineral development.

Despite all the gold discovered in the country, the difficulty

of mining is extremely high and this impacts the amount of gold that is actually mined. About 2,500 to 3,000 metric tons are mined every year.

Moscow accuses Ukraine of hitting Russia in missile attack

By **OROWO VICTORIA OJIEH** with agency report

Ukraine has been accused of firing three missiles at the Russian city of Belgorod near the border in strikes that killed at least three people and damaged dozens of residential buildings.

At least 11 apartment buildings and 39 private houses were damaged, including five that were destroyed, regional Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov posted on the Telegram messaging app.

"I emphasise that this missile attack had been intentionally planned and was launched at the civilian population of Russian cities," Russian Defence Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said. He added that Russian anti-aircraft defences shot down three Tochka-U cluster missiles launched by Ukrainian nationalists.

At least four people

were injured and two hospitalized, including a 10-year-old boy, Gladkov added.

Belgorod, a city of nearly 400,000 some 40 km (25 miles) north of the border with Ukraine, is the administrative center of the Belgorod region.

Senior Russian lawmaker Andrei Klishas accused Ukraine of shelling Belgorod and called for a severe response.

"The death of civilians and the destruction of civilian infrastructure in Belgorod are a direct act of aggression on the part of Ukraine and require the most severe response," Klishas wrote on Telegram.

Since Russia launched its invasion on Ukraine Feb. 24, there have been numerous reports of attacks on Belgorod and other regions bordering Ukraine, with Moscow accusing Kyiv of carrying out the

strikes.

Ukraine has not claimed responsibility for previous attacks but has described the incidents as payback and "karma" for Russia's invasion.

Moscow calls its actions in Ukraine a "special military operation" to disarm Ukraine and protect it from fascists.

Ukraine and its allies in the West say the fascist allegation is baseless and the war is an unprovoked act of aggression.



Egypt shuts down beaches after shark kills tourist

By **OROWO VICTORIA OJIEH** with agency report

Egypt's Red Sea Governorate issued an order to shut down several beaches a day after a shark attack killed an Austrian swimming near the resort of Hurghada.

The 68-year-old woman was killed on a Red Sea beach off the coast of Sahl Hasheesh. She lost a leg and an arm in the attack. She died shortly after being brought to a private Nile Hospital in Hurghada, an Egyptian health official said.

She was barely alive when she was brought in on Friday, the official said, adding that attempts by medical staff to resuscitate her failed due to circulatory failure, which is a

sudden drop in blood pressure resulting from her injuries and blood loss.

The woman had been living in Egypt over the past five years with her Egyptian husband.

The closure was ordered by the governor of the Red Sea province. Authorities were to close off the area for three days, banning all sea activities including diving, snorkeling, wind

surfing and kite sailing. Fishing boats were also banned from the waters off Hurghada.

Shark attacks have been relatively rare in Egypt's Red Sea coastal region in recent years.

Egypt's Red Sea resorts, including Hurghada and Sharm el-Sheikh, are some of the country's major beach destinations and are popular with European tourists.

