

Zamfara inaugurates community protection guards against terrorists

By PAUL MICHAEL

Monarch issues relocation ultimatum to herdsmen

Zamfara Governor Bello Mohammed Matawalle has launched the training of Community Protection Guards (CPG) to tackle terrorists

troubling the state. The governor also stated that nobody would prevent him from forming a formidable force to counter the bandits. He explained that the guards would implement new security measures that

could deal decisively with criminals. According to the governor, the decision to establish CPG was informed by his administration's desire to work out all possible options

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Akeredolu



IGP Alkali

Defend yourselves against terrorists, other criminals, Akeredolu tells citizens

By **FRIDAY OMOSOLA,**
Akure

Governor Oluwatorimi Akeredolu has charged the people of Ondo State to defend themselves against terrorists.

During a live television programme, Politics Today, he said the people of the state were indomitable, urging them not to flee whenever the attackers invade their lands.

The Senior Advocate of Nigeria, who promised to do more to make the state a safe place, said: "If they bring a fight to you, you also should fight them back. Our people

cannot afford to stay back and they think we are lazy people. We are not lazy. We are unconquerable people. When we believe and act this, we fight these people back."

Akeredolu who is also the chairman of southwest governors forum maintained that the lesson learnt from the Owo terrorists' attack on a church means the state must take security seriously, adding that the action had led to an Executive Order for the installation of CCTVs in all public places.

He disclosed that he had also tasked traditional rulers on readiness to defend the state and its people.

His words: "Take



Akeredolu

the fight to them in the forest, Whosoever has the higher hand

will survive. We have to be careful about the people around us and

we have to be on the alert. When incidents like this happen, don't run into the house. Go ahead and confront them.

"When the Federal Government said the terrorist act was committed by ISWAP, I reacted to that almost immediately. What evidence do they have? Because the security agencies were too quick to jump to the conclusion that it was done by ISWAP.

"Whatever it is, we stand by a position that it is a theology that is operating in our forest to cause havoc. We have Fulani herdsmen, bandits and ISWAP. It is the three of them that are working together in Ondo State and I

don't know how you want to separate them except if you have concrete evidence. And again, ISWAP most of the time, takes responsibility for their actions. I think if ISWAP had done this, they would have come up to say they were the one. Some of us have our fears that it is not ISWAP.

"We have a very vast forest in the Southwest. Unfortunately, these terrorists occupied the forest. They said they are searching for fertile areas to feed their herds. If you want to feed your herds, you do not need to carry an AK-47. If there is rustling, it is not enough for you to be involved in criminality."

Akeredolu further stated that no arrest had been made, stressing that the Amotekun commander only said they were on the trail of the perpetrators and they have recovered the vehicle and some evidence which they have handed over to the SSS for the required analysis.

"Because of the vast forest reserve we have, they can hibernate and we know. But the major problem we have now is that we are not in control of security agencies," he lamented.

Akeredolu said he had increased the number of men in Amotekun and armed them with more vehicles for patrols to prevent further attacks.

He added: "What we should prioritize today in the country is the State Police. That is the only way of getting out of this issue. As we are here, we run a state security outfit that cannot carry firearms.

"Amotekun has been doing wonderful work in the Southwest but the point is that it would have been more effective if they could carry weapons."

Zamfara inaugurates community protection guards against terrorists

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to deal with the increasing banditry consuming innocent lives and causing untold hardships.

He said, "As Community Protection Guards, you should endeavour to be patriotic, your names would stand out in history as people with remarkable patriotism, selflessness and love for peace.

"Only people with courage and bravery will offer to serve as guards of their communities, bravely standing up to face the brutal infamy of the bandits."

Matawalle also called on them to work within the parameters of the rules of engagement which he said would be clearly spelt out during the training. He pointed out that as the newly recruited CPG, they are agents for the restoration of normalcy, building peace and re-enactment of the golden era of harmonious inter-communal relationship in the northern part of the country.

He further explained that at the end of the training, the CPG members will be deployed to their various communities in the 19 emirate councils of the state to energetically complement the security forces in the fight against banditry and sundry crimes.

He reminded them to remain disciplined and obedient throughout the

exercise and to keep in mind that they were trained for a life-saving mission.

Zamfara State Police Commissioner Ayuba Elkana said the training of the guards was part of measures taken by the governor to save the state from all forms of crimes.

Elkana urged the recruits to always be law-abiding, God-fearing and objective in the discharge of their duties.

Commissioner for Security and Home Affairs, DIG Mamman Ibrahim Tsafe (rtd), earlier said the establishment of the guards was aimed at assisting the security agencies in securing the State from all heinous crimes.

Meanwhile, residents of Oshimili North Local Government Area of Delta State are living in fear of no fewer than 300 herdsmen occupying a community.

The traditional ruler (Ugoani) of Okpanam Kingdom, Michael Ogbolu, disclosed this, stating that the herdsmen are occupying the area without his authorisation.

He warned that the community has given the herdsmen a 15-day ultimatum to quit the area.

The traditional ruler raised the alarm last week during a tripartite meeting held at his palace in Okpanam, involving the indigenes, chairman of Oshimili North LGA, Innocent Esewezie and Fulani leaders.

Recall that as a result of the incursion of Fulani people into the woodland of Akwukwu-Igbo, Okpanam and other communities in Oshimili North, the council under the leadership of Louis Ndukwe, in 2020 passed an executive order mandating all Fulani herdsmen and strangers residing in the outskirt and undergrowth areas to relocate to the towns where natives live or vacate the communities.

The traditional ruler, however, said: "Fulani people just went to occupy one part of Obodogba land belonging to the Okpanam community. In our previous engagement, Obi Eluunor told us that anything concerning the Fulani people, we should route it through his office. I wrote to Obi Eluunor, I gave him seven days to remove the Fulani people from our bushes.

"Then the Commissioner of Police wrote, fixing a meeting for last week, at the same time, the local government chairman, Mr Esewezie, came around, asking that we sit down to address the issues. He galvanised the whole of them and we met here in my palace and I told them that the matter is very simple, only that the government in Delta State does not respect the laws made by it.

"During the tenure of the former council chairman, Louis Ndukwe, the council came up with an executive order requiring all Fulani people, herdsmen and strangers

in our bushes to vacate and come and live with us in the town, but nothing was done.

"Our position is that the chairman of Oshimili North, Esewezie, should give effect to the executive order; we cannot accommodate these people in our bushes. We are predominantly farmers, they bulldoze their way into the bushes, they eat up our farm crops and also rape our women.

"The long and short of it is that we gave them 15 days with which to relocate and that by July 14, 2022, the council chairman will go there (occupied area) himself to witness the evacuation."

Similarly, a community leader identified as Ndukwe, said: "The council chairman held a meeting with Fulani herdsmen even on Sunday, you know that the former council chairman came up with an executive order in 2020. It has to be implemented. Few days ago, he also met with Fulani people. He is dealing with the security challenges community by community.

"The truth is that these people (herdsmen) went to Okpanam, forcefully took a parcel of land and as we speak, they are turning themselves into a community of over 300 persons without authorisation from the community.



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LP to name eminent economist Baba-Ahmed as Peter Obi's substantive running mate

IPOB cautions Kwankwaso, says ex-gov not its member

By **TUNDE JOSHUA** (Abuja) AND **CHARLES ONYEKWERE** (Abakaliki)

Barring a change, Labour Party is to name prominent economist, intellectual and philanthropist, Senator Yusuf Datti Baba-Ahmed, as its vice-presidential candidate to run with ex-Governor in the 2023 general elections.

Baba-Ahmed from Kano is a 46-year-old academic, businessman and politician. He was a member of the House of Representatives between 2003 and 2007, and was elected Senator for Kaduna North, in April 2011 on the platform of Congress for Progressive Change (CPC). He had a remarkable record of sponsoring important legislation in a very short time.

Baba-Ahmed has four degrees: BSc and MSc in Economics from University of Maiduguri, an MBA from University of Wales, Cardiff and in 2006, earned the Doctor of Philosophy degree at the University of Westminster.

After his youth service at University of Agriculture Abeokuta, Ogun State, he worked as Projects Co-ordinator, Baze Research and Data Services Ltd and as Officer II in the Nigerian Security Printing and Minting Company, Lagos. He worked at First Bank of Nigeria Plc from July 1997 to Dec 1998 and then came back to become the Managing Director of Baze

Research and Data Services Ltd, July 1999 - January 2003, before venturing into politics.

In 2011, Sen. Baba-Ahmed established Baze University. It is an independent university in Abuja. Using his studies abroad as benchmark, he noted that the Nigerian educational system was "appalling." This inspired the birth of Baze University, "to contribute towards fixing the system in order for Nigeria to realize its potentials and address various challenges."

He is an accomplished philanthropist. Among many of his corporate social responsibility projects, he built and donated two junior secondary schools with total capacity of 4,000 pupils.

In 2015, Alhaji Baba-Ahmed was appointed as Chairman, Board of Trustees (BOT) of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Hope Alive Foundation. It campaigns for economic survival of corps members who suffered permanent disability during service.

Dr. Baba-Ahmed is currently the Pro-Chancellor of Baze University; Managing Director, Baze Research & Data Service Ltd; and Chairman, Baze Construction Ltd.

His companies employ over 1000 people including expatriates, and highly skilled professionals from the Diaspora.

Meanwhile, proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), on Tuesday, cautioned New Nigeria

Peoples Party (NNPP) Presidential Candidate Kwankwaso against linking its struggle with Obi.

IPOB said Obi is not one of its members and has never supported the agitation for Self-determination.

Emma Powerful, the spokesman of IPOB, said the group is not interested in the process of Nigerian elections. A statement by him reads: "The global family of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), under the command and leadership of our great leader, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, wish to advise the former Governor of Kano State, Rabiu Kwankwaso not to involve IPOB in the selection process they call an election in Nigeria.

"The Nigerian politicians generally and Kwankwaso, in particular, should desist from linking IPOB with Peter Obi's political ambition and campaign. Peter Obi is not an IPOB member, and never supported our agitation for freedom at any time because he pursues a totally different goal from that of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). We have no interest in the Nigerian morally decadent and fantastically corrupt political system and landscape.

"If Kwankwaso is threatened by the Labour Party & Peter Obi's teeming support by the creative and talented but downtrodden, neglected, deceived, deprived, killed (Endsars) Nigerian youths from even



Baba-Ahmed

the North which your generation does not have any good intentions for, then he should go forward and settle his differences and stop linking IPOB to their problem.

"IPOB is not interested in the worthless politics you play in Nigeria, we don't regard such daylight robbery, fraud, manipulation and selection as election. Maybe there is something Kwankwaso is not telling the world.

"Instead of saying the truth that because he is Fulani with the (born to rule mentality), he cannot play second fiddle to a Southern Christian presidential candidate, he has the temerity to associate our hallowed liberation movement with the shameless murky waters of the Zoo politics.

"There are no middle ways for us as a people as far as

our liberty and freedom is concerned. There is, therefore, nothing anybody can do to change our resolve towards our stated goal, which is the restoration of Biafra. IPOB does not know who Peter Obi is going by our biodata bank.

"Our demand is our inalienable rights to self-determination and this we seek through a universally recognised and accepted political process called *REFERENDUM* as stipulated by the United Nations Charter.

"IPOB wish to use this medium and opportunity to warn every politician in Nigeria to desist from linking IPOB with their politics and selection process because we are not politicians and have no common interest. We are freedom fighters."

Gunmen set filling station ablaze, kill security guard

By **FRIDAY OMOSOLA**, Akure

Unknown gunmen set Titolu Venture Filling Station in Igoba, Akure North Local Government Area, ablaze and killed a security guard.

In an interview with journalists in Akure, the station manager, Ajisafe Oluwatobiloba, disclosed that he was briefed about the fire outbreak in the station around 4 am on Monday. Ajisafe said he rushed down to the station and found the assassinated security guard tied with ropes, while the premises was set ablaze.

He said: "We could not trace anybody to the incident. I got a call from one of the residents at about 4 am, and on getting here, we saw the station burning. We called the fire service and they came to quench the fire and in the search to discover the cause of the outbreak, we found out that the perpetrators had killed our security guard."

He said they saw a keg filled with petrol which might have been used to wet the station before setting it ablaze. The remains of the guard had been deposited in a mortuary.

Confirming the incident, the Ondo State Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Funmi Odunlami, said investigation had commenced unfolding the circumstances that led to the incident.

Terrorists bomb Kuje Prison, attack Buhari's Daura advance convoy for Sallah

Fear and confusion enveloped Abuja last night as Kuje Medium and Maximum Security Prisons in the Federal Capital Territory came under attack.

However, operatives of the Department of State Services and Nigeria Police were battling the attackers as at press time.

In the attack on Tuesday night, explosives, said to be bombs, were used by the attackers first on the maximum prison.

The first explosion was reported to have gone off at

about 10.25pm, according to a report.

Two others followed in quick succession with sporadic gunshots.

Then followed explosions at the Kuje Medium Security Prison.

As at press time, operatives of the DSS and the Police were reported to have joined those of the Nigeria Correctional Centre in battling the attackers.

Meanwhile, the convoy of President Muhammadu Buhari has been attacked by gunmen in Daura, Katsina State.

The development was confirmed by the spokesman of the President, Mallam Garba Shehu, in a statement late on Tuesday.

However, Buhari was not in the convoy.

It was the advance team of the President.

The statement on the development however said no one died as operatives of the Military, Department of State Services and Nigeria Police repelled the gunmen.

Two persons were, however, injured.

Shehu said: "The Presidency has described as sad and unwelcome, the shooting incident near Dutsinma, Katsina State, at the convoy of cars carrying the Advance Team of security guards, protocol and media officers ahead of the President, Muhammadu Buhari's trip to Daura for Sallah.

"The attackers opened fire on the convoy from ambush positions but were repelled by the military, police and DSS personnel accompanying the convoy.

"Two persons in the convoy

are receiving treatment for the minor injuries they suffered. All the other personnel, staff and vehicles made it safely to Daura."

An Assistant Commissioner of Police, ACP Aminu Umar, Area Commander Dutsinma, Katsina State, was shot dead by over 300 armed bandits operating on motorcycles with AK47 rifles and Machine Guns (GPMG). They ambushed the officer and his team in Zakka forest, Safana LGA of Katsina State.



ACP Aminu Umar, Area Commander Dutsinma, Katsina State, slain by terrorists.

Police in Edo rescue kidnapped Italian priest, kill three suspects

By **ISAAC OLAMIKAN**

Massive deployment of police operatives to most of the identified volatile areas in Edo State has started yielding positive results.

Consequent upon this, operatives of the Edo State

Police Command attached to Iguobazuwa Division on Sunday at about 1745hrs received information that Rev. Fr. Luigi Brena, a 64yr old Italian of Somascan Father's Community was kidnapped by hoodlums suspected to be kidnapers, along Ogunwenyi through Usen

Community in Ovia South West Local Government Area of Edo State.

On receipt of the information, the operatives immediately swung into action and trailed the suspected kidnapers to their camp. The suspects on sighting the opera-tives, opened fire on

them. But the superior fire power of the police operatives neutralized three of the kidnapers while the rest escaped into the forest with various degrees of gun shot injuries abandoning their victim.

The victim was immediately rushed to Igbinedion Teaching

Hospital, Okada for medical attention.

Meanwhile, intensive bush combing is ongoing with the aim of arresting the suspected kidnapers now on the run.

Edo State Police Commissioner, CP Abutu Yaro, admonished

the good people not to be deterred in partnering with the Command through availing it with prompt and useful information that will lead to the arrest of criminals. He further reiterated the Command's commitment in the fight against kidnapping and other crimes in Edo State.

Delta to compensate victims of Ozoro-Oleh crisis

By **GABRIEL ELOZINO,**
Asaba

Delta State Government on Tuesday said it had released the White Paper on the resolution of the communal crisis between Ozoro and Oleh communities in Isoko North and Isoko South Local Government Areas, with approval to compensate families of victims.

Governor Ifeanyi Okowa disclosed this while fielding questions from newsmen shortly after inspecting ongoing projects at Delta State University of Science and Technology, Ozoro.

He said the State Executive Council had approved the White Paper sequel to the recommendations of the Judicial Panel of Enquiry on the crisis.

According to him: "we have looked into the

Ozoro-Oleh crisis and we are already implementing the decisions of the Judicial Panel of Inquiry which has finished its work and submitted its report.

"The White Paper has also been released by the state's Executive Council and the whole process to ensure peace is being implemented by the office of the Secretary to the State Government.

"Unfortunately, we lost

some people to the crisis. And, it's unfortunate we cannot bring them back, but I am also aware that approvals have been given to compensate the families who lost loved ones during the crisis."

"The cheques will be released on Thursday this week, I just hope and pray that we do not go into that level of communal crisis anymore," the governor added.

Ebonyi shuts down GTB over alleged tax indebtedness

By **CHARLES ONYEKWERE,**
South-East Correspondent

Ebonyi government has closed down Guarantee Trust Bank (GTB) in Abakaliki, the state capital, over alleged tax indebtedness.

A taskforce from Ebonyi State Board of Internal Revenue Service carried out the exercise, while the workers were attending to customers on Tuesday morning.

The taskforce leader, Mr. Okoro Celestine, who is also the head of Integrated Revenue, Ebonyi State Board of

Internal Revenue Service, said that the closure was necessitated by the inability of the bank to respond to demand notices to pay its accumulated tax.

He also disclosed that the taskforce sought for court order before coming to seal the bank.

He explained that several demand notices were served to the bank from January 14th till date, but there was no response.

"The reason we sealed the bank was that they have not been paying their taxes and levies which have accumulated,"

he said.

"This is not the first time we are coming here; several demand notices had been served to them from January 14, 2022 till date, and we have a procedure, we don't just come and seal. A court order was granted for us to come and seal it.

"First demand notice was giving to them; a remind notice was also giving to them but the refused. We don't have any other option; we are not going to fight them other than to do the needful by soughting court order to seal them.

"We feel that it is very necessary for it to be sealed today. We are not going to unseal it until they comply. We didn't just start this journey today; it has been from January till date which is seven months."

However, the amount of money owed as tax was not disclosed but a source said that the bank was owing over hundred million naira to Ebonyi State government.

All efforts to get the reaction of the bank manager failed as he declined to speak on the matter.

Dockworkers threaten to shut down APMT over poor salary, maltreatment

By **ADAKU WALTER**

Maritime Workers Union of Nigeria (MWUN) has restated its resolve to shut down activities at AP Moller Terminal (APMT) in Apapa over poor salaries and alleged mistreatment of workers by management of the company.

In a statement jointly signed by President-General of MWUN, Comrade

Adewale Adeyanju and Secretary-General of the union, Felix Akingboye, it said it had engaged the management of APMT four times and that each meeting ended in a stalemate.

They accused APMT of neglect and utter regard for the welfare of the workers, adding that the management of the terminal was offering the workers very poor salary

far below the industry standard and without room for negotiations.

"APMT Nigeria has overwhelmingly exceeded its projected profits and return on investments (RoIs) and our members have been a critical factor to its achievements. We are, therefore, appalled that our members, who toil day and night to achieve the height the company have been continually denied enjoyment of a fair share of their hard work.

"The leadership of MWUN on Wednesday, June 22, 2022 met with the management of APMT to discuss a review of the conditions of service or collective bargaining for our members for the year 2022. The meeting was the fourth in a series of meetings and all attempts to resolve the lingering issues raised during the negotiations, but like the others, it ended in a stalemate.

"This is as a result of the refusal of the management of APMT to concede to the workers

demand for appropriate and industry compliant increase in their salaries across board. The union has long noted that APMT has no modicum of regard for the welfare of its employees, who are largely Nigerian workers," the statement reads.

The union also lamented management's penchant for hiring foreign personnel in utter disregard for recruiting Nigerians, who are qualified for the responsibilities of the positions, as demanded by the country's local content laws.

"Also of note is the disparity in the salaries and allowances of foreign personnel and Nigerian employees, who perform the same functions. As a union, we are aggrieved at the mistreatment of our members and we can no longer tolerate this.

"Consequently, the MWUN should not be held liable in the event of disruption of industrial peace and harmony at the APMT Terminal," the statement added.



Governor Ifeanyi Okowa

'APC is party for all, with zero tolerance for crime'

Links alleged kidnap kingpins to PDP

All Progressives Congress (APC) has reacted to reports about the nabbing of two alleged kidnap kingpins in Ekiti State, Alhaji Abashe Adamu Idris and Ibrahim Mumini Toyin.

A statement by Mr. Segun Dipe, Ekiti State Publicity Secretary of APC, said: "According to the police command in the State, the duo coordinated numerous high-profile kidnappings in the State, including that of one Adeeko Ademola and Nasiru Salisu at Adamsy Sawmill, Aisegba-Ekiti and were arrested by the command's Rapid Response Squad (RRS), in synergy with the vigilantes, acting on credible intelligence.

"We commend the efforts of the security operatives and urge them to further tighten their noose around the neck of other kidnap-pers who have been tormenting the innocent and peace-loving people of the State.

"We have no reason to deny the fact that Alhaji Adamu Idris was a member of the Farmers-herders Peace Committee inaugurated by the State Government on January 21, 2021. This was made possible by the virtue of his being

a community leader and a known herder in his area.

"The Committee, we are aware, was set up to find a lasting solution to the incessant famer-herder crises in the State and nothing more. Ibrahim Mumini Toyin who was the former's Personal Assistant and translator, on the other hand, was identified as an elected Counsellor of a Ward in Ido/Osi LGA under the People's Democratic Party, PDP government of Segun Oni.

"We hasten to say therefore that that was the last political party both were traceable to. Donning an APC-branded attire could not have conferred membership of APC on them, as they were not known to have been registered as such.

"Our stand as the ruling party, at this juncture is to identify with the determination of the security operatives to rid the state of kidnap-pers and make whoever is caught to face the full wrath of the law. Anyone disrupting the peace of our State does not have our party's sympathy. Rather they should all be pursued and tracked down until the State is finally rid of kidnap-pers and other sundry crimes."



Adewale Adeyanju

Ondo PDP senator seeks disqualification of ex-deputy governor

The senator representing the Ondo South district, Nicholas Tofowomo, has sued a former Deputy Governor of the state, Agboola Ajayi at the Federal High Court sitting in Akure, the capital, asking for the latter's disqualification.

The former deputy governor defeated the senator at the last senatorial primary of the Peoples Democratic Party, held in Okitipupa Local Government Area of the state in May.

In the primary supervised by the officials of the Independent National Electoral Commission, Tofowomo scored 74 votes behind Ajayi, who scored 78 votes to become the candidate of the party in the district.

Not satisfied with the process, Tofowomo approached the court to challenge the academic qualifications of the PDP senatorial candidate.

Apart from Ajayi who is the first defendant, the PDP and the INEC were also joined in the suit as second and third defendants respectively.

In a suit number, FHC/CS/AK/ 83 /2022 filed on Tuesday July 5, 2022, by the plaintiff's lawyer, Mr Femi Emodamori, the senator said Ajayi did not meet the

constitutional requirements for contesting the 2023 general election as contained in the interpretation and application of Section 66(1) (i) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended) and Section 29(5) & (6) of the Electoral Act, 2022 as well as other relevant laws.

Tofowomo also prayed the court to determine if together with the totality of the facts before the court, the 1st defendant (Ajayi) did not present false information and/or forged certificate(s) in his INEC Form EC9 and the other documents attached



Nicholas Tofowomo

thereto which he submitted to the third defendant (INEC) as the candidate of the PDP for Ondo South

Senatorial District in the 2023 general election.

The senator's prayer also includes, "An order of this honourable court disqualifying the 1st defendant as the candidate of the 2nd Defendant for Ondo South Senatorial District in the 2023 General Elections."

"An order of this Honourable Court declaring the Plaintiff, having scored the 2nd highest number of votes in the 2nd Defendant's Primary Election for Ondo South Senatorial District held on 23rd May 2023, as the candidate of the 2nd Defendant for the

said Senatorial District in the 2023 General Elections.

"An order of this Honourable Court directing the 2nd and 3rd Defendants to substitute the Plaintiff for the 1st Defendant as the candidate of the 2nd Defendant for Ondo South Senatorial District in the 2023 General Elections,"

He also said, "I verily believe that the 1st defendant lied and/or swore to false information when he stated in Exhibit FEE4 (the Affidavit For Correction of Date of Birth which he submitted to the 3rd Defendant) that he was issued the 2004

WASSC (Exhibit FEE3) No. NGWASSCS 5529745 and claimed, "that in the said certificate my date of birth was mistakenly printed as December 8, 1980, instead of 24th September 1968".

The Senator further stated, "Whether, having regard to Section 29 (6) of the Electoral Act, 2022, the 1st Defendant (Agboola) should be disqualified as the candidate of the 2nd Defendant (PDP) for Ondo South Senatorial District in the 2023 general election." Culled: Punch.

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Islamic group endorses Oyetola for second term

Ahead of the Osun governorship election slated for July 16, 2022, a frontline Islamic group, Tijjaniyya Grassroots Mobilisation and Movement Initiative of Nigeria, TIGMEIN, has endorsed Governor Adegboyega Oyetola, the candidate of the All Progressives Congress, APC, for a second term.

TIGMEIN disclosed that its members across the State had embarked on grassroots mobilisation and door-to-door campaign to ensure his re-election.

The Islamic group said their support for Oyetola was informed by his out-

standing performance, verifiable credentials and track records in the last three and a half years, saying he had not disappointed the State and the Muslim community.

Speaking on behalf of members of the group, the National Coordinator of TIGMEIN Nigeria, Sheikh Ahmad-Tijani Thanni Awwal, lauded the achievements of Governor Oyetola since assumption of office, noting that he has proven to the world that Muslims are responsible and responsive to be entrusted with power.

He disclosed their readi-

ness to mobilise the voting population of the group to vote in their respective domains, assuring block votes from members of the group for the Governor.

"We are committed to this project and I can assure you of block votes coming from us. We have no choice than to do this, aside the fact that you are the only Muslim Governor in all the 17 southern states, this noble decision is the only way to reciprocate your kind gestures and monumental strides across strata of the economy in the State.

"As part of effort to guarantee our votes and ensure your re-election, we have embarked on voter's sensitisation and we will stop at nothing to ensure that every voting member of Tijjaniyya in Osun votes for you. Our target is to ensure that each member of the group mobilises 20 persons to the polling units to vote and this will have a multiplier effect on your popular vote.

"Each of the 20 persons will also bring at least one person. The aim of this endorsement is to get you returned for second term. As you can see, for the first time, we are bringing ourselves together to bring a destiny for our people. The time will come when it will be happening across the states of the federation. The importance of this is also aimed to show to the

world that coming together as a united front, our votes are useful.

"We are members of a noble Islam group and we don't just endorse, we do so by conviction, you have convinced us by your modest achievements in the last three and a half years, it shows that you really mean well for the State and supporting you is the only way to make Osun to soar higher with good things.

"The leadership of this group across the country had reached a compromise on this endorsement and we are solidly behind you and we are ready to partner with you on anything, be it education, security, health among others. We want you to continue the good works. We are not after money or any political

interest but the goodness of the state because if Osun is good, everyone is good. We need our state to progress and succeed.

"Our endorsement is a knockout blow to the opposition parties and Inshallah, Tijjaniyya will give you more than half of the votes that will come for you", he added.

In his remarks, Governor Adegboyega Oyetola expressed gratitude to the members of TIGMEIN all over the world particularly in Osun for their unflinching support and cooperation, saying their endorsement was an appreciation of the little things God had made him to do.

He described his endorsement for a second term as an encouragement to do more just as he promised not to disappoint them.

"I don't have much to say than to thank God and my fellow Muslims for your love and support. With what you have done today, it shows to me clearly that Islam is a good religion. I am encouraged today with this move. I am also a son of a cleric. When I was seeking this position, some where asking how i will do it, but today, we are able to successfully paddle the ship of the state to this great level. You have further encouraged me to do more, and I will not disappoint you", he assured.



Gov. Adegboyega Oyetola

I won't dance naked in village, woman tells court

A divorce-seeking trader, Sandra Iyenanye, on Tuesday approached an Igando Customary Court, seeking dissolution of the long distance marriage to her husband.

The Petitioner, a resident of No. 8, Jaiyeoba St., urged the court to grant her a divorce from Mr. Vestus Iyenanye on grounds of abandonment, cheating and negligence.

"My husband who is based in Austria has since abandoned the home, he has come home a total of four to five times since our marriage in 2019, he has once beaten me up with a belt because of another woman

"I found out he was seeing another woman in 2010 and I confronted him only for him to beat me up with a belt, I later ran to my uncle's house for protection but my uncle mediated and settled our misunderstanding and my husband promised not to lay his hands on me again.

"After settling, he travelled back with a promise to come back a year later but he did not, so due to frustration we exchanged words on the

phone; his family held on to what I said and termed it abominable and labelled me a bad wife.

"Unfortunately, the next time he would come back was 2022, but before then he stopped sending money for upkeep for our children and left all responsibilities to me; all efforts to speak with him proved abortive.

"The one time I called, it was a lady that picked the call and she later told me I was waiting for my husband in vain and I should better move on, she said all types of spiteful and hurtful words to me which my husband didn't see any wrong in it," she said.

She further told the court that throughout the period her mother was sick and later died, her husband did nothing about it neither did he call or check up on her.

"He later sent a meagre money after I expressed my displeasure, and in his words, he said I should better be grateful as he didn't even have money to send to me; that the money he sent was borrowed from his girlfriend.

"When I saw that my husband was not trying

to make the marriage work nor even attend to my sexual needs, I had a one time affair, his family said I must dance naked in the village square as atonement and pay the sum of N100,000.

"After the whole rites then I can be free to go, I asked my husband if he would still accept me, he said NO, because of this I want a divorce from him as I do not even intend to perform the rites either; its best we both go our separate ways and I be granted custody of the children," Mrs Iyenanye said.

Standing in for the respondent was his brother, Mr Cobina Iyenanye, who had good things to say about his brother's wife and sang praises of her.

"I commend her resilience and patience, she's a good woman, she has tried, she is not a bad person; I only agreed to come to the court because I want them to separate without fights and all dues be given to the woman," he said.

The Court President, Mr Adeniyi Koledoye, adjourned until August 2, for judgment.

Last batch of Oyo pilgrims arrive in Jeddah

Sixty-three pilgrims from Oyo State arrived in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia on Tuesday morning via a Boeing 747 jumbo jet.

They are the last batch who arrived at about 8.00 a.m and spent close to two hours before clearing their hand luggage at the airport, according to Commissioner for Information, Culture and Tourism, Dr. Wasiu Olatubosun.

He said they joined other

Nigerian pilgrims to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, for this year's Hajj. This took the total of pilgrims so far airlifted by Oyo State to 655 in four flights.

Olatubosun added that government functionaries on the flight included the Executive Secretary, Oyo state Primary Health Board, Dr Muhideen Olatunji; as well as Pilgrims Welfare Board (Muslim wing) members. Alhaji Abdulmajeed

Akinwumi and Alhaji Abdrahman Abubakri.



FG taking money from hospitals, patients to buy diesel – Official

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

An official of a government-owned hospital has made an explosive revelation about Nigeria's health sector.

The doctor deplored the poor state of hospitals in the country, alerting that the public healthcare system is deteriorating.

The senior staffer disclosed that patients now raise cash for diesel while the government draws out the funds which hospitals generate internally.

The official, who craved anonymity, reacted to the story of power outage at the University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital (UPTH).

There are concerns over the news that about 14 babies placed inside incubators passed away recently at the UPTH due to unstable electricity.

Surgery procedures were also affected, while patients were allegedly referred to private hospitals.

Furthermore, relatives said they used phone lights to assist doctors and nurses during the treatment of persons rushed to the Accident and Emergency Ward.

Reacting, UPTH confirmed there was a power failure triggered by a "faulty transformer" but that it did not affect operations.

The management clarified that "the standby generator serviced the hospital for the period, with all emergency areas fully powered".

Our source appealed to the authorities to urgently intervene to save lives and restore public confidence in government establishments.

Providing an insight into what's going on, the medical expert said patients have been gathering money to buy diesel.

The official warned that the situation may degenerate because the government



Minister of Health, Dr Osagie Ehanire

is taking funds from its health facilities. "This is serious, hospitals cannot buy diesel. Patients now contribute money to buy diesel in some hospitals.

"When the money goes to the center (government), it doesn't come back to the hospitals.

"It is going to be worse because the government is now mopping all funds from the hospitals.

"Remita will start collecting money in some hospitals from this week", the source divulged.

Remita is a payment solution used by companies, federal and State administrations to receive payment for bills.

Already, the University College Hospital (UCH), Ibadan, Oyo State, has asked

patients to pay N1,000 daily for electricity.

The hospital explained that the levy was caused by the hike in electricity tariff and the increasing reliance on diesel to power generating plants.

Ministry of Health's Deputy Director, Media and Public Relations, Ahmadu Chindaya said he could not comment on the questions regarding the contribution for diesel and the UPTH issue.

"I am hearing it for the first time, I don't know these things you are talking about. I cannot answer what I don't know", Chindaya told DAILY POST.

The spokesman, however, suggested that enquiries be directed to "relevant directors" at the ministry's headquarters in Abuja.

Lamenting his experience, Peter, a citizen working for a logistics company, recalled how he had to "buy everything" during the treatment of a relative.

"This happened at the Lagos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH) in Idi-Araba, Surulere. It was in July 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I went there almost every day for about two weeks. I bought/paid for face masks, hand gloves, cotton wool, syringes, drip and bed space.

"I was always angry but I had no choice but to buy. Your patient wouldn't be treated if you don't do these things", the youth fumed.

Meanwhile, Nigerians have called for an investigation into the reported demise of infants at the UPTH.

Just over one month ago, the plight of a bereaved citizen, who called out the hospital, gained attention.

With photos of him and his late mother, Olajide Adebayo (@Jidejnr) tweeted: "6:05 pm May 28th 2021 I lost you, (it) has been the worst one year of my life.

"You fought a good fight and you ended well. Nigeria failed you, our health system failed you, UPTH failed you. Keep on resting mum."

In May 2020, during the lockdown for coronavirus containment, Governor Nyesom Wike declared that the hospital was in a bad shape.

The Rivers helmsman spoke while clarifying his failure to participate in the commissioning of the isolation, testing and treatment centre.

"If you have anybody that is sick, you can't take the person there because it is so bad that you can't even touch the walls.

"My father-in-law was there. When I went to see him, I shouted and asked what he was doing there", Wike said.

NSSF proffers solutions to brain drain in health sector

By SHARON O. ISAALAH

Nigeria Solidarity Fund (NSSF) has proffered solutions and recommendations to stem the rising brain drain in the nation's healthcare system.

This is contained in a communique issued by Dr Fejiri Chinye-Nwoko, the General Manager/ Chief Executive Officer, NSSF, on Saturday in Lagos at the end of its talk shop on brain drain in the health sector.

The discussion was entitled: "Nigerian Healthcare System and Brain Drain – Step up or Sink".

NSSF said that the discussion was organised as an advocacy strategy with the aim of highlighting current challenges in human capital flight in the Nigerian health sector, and proffering solutions to same.

The discussion was also a rallying call for individuals and organisations to partner with the NSSF on strengthening the healthcare system in Nigeria.

The communique highlighted the following challenge's in Nigeria's healthcare system; poor working conditions stemming from epileptic power supply, dilapidated hospitals, inter-professional rivalry, security challenges exposing doctors to kidnapping and harassment



Dr Fejiri Chinye-Nwoko

from patients' relatives.

Others included non-existent training opportunities, delays in payments of salaries lasting as long as 23 months in states such as Abia and Imo; and poor follow through of government policies.

The communique argued that it was difficult to train a doctor today to replace the experience and knowledge of consultants who were leaving the country.

According to the communique, the enumerated factors above are in stack

contrast to conditions in the West, where salaries and emoluments are paid in a timely fashion; equipment are available and modern; and general conditions are conducive.

The communique noted that NSSF seeks to address this by identifying and funding high impact solutions in line with government strategies.

"Support for human resources for health is in line with the NSSF's priority of strengthening the healthcare system which is a complex system that is incomplete without available healthcare workers.

"NSSF pools resources from individuals and corporate organisations to support national response to the COVID-19 pandemic which has impacted various sectors and worsened migration of healthcare workers," the communique said.

The communique, however, acknowledged the efforts made by government in solving the problem of brain drain.

"This included: examining the statistics and the push factors, embarking on a reform programme chaired by Vice president, Professor Yemi Osinbajo.

"Negotiating for better pay and infrastructure, establishing the National Health Act to empower workers.

"Establishing the basic health care provision fund, which was created as a source of sustainable and predictable

financing for health.

"Exploring mutually beneficial partnerships with countries that have high numbers of Nigerian healthcare workers in a bid to strengthen the healthcare sector in Nigeria

The communique said that if the recommendations were implemented, brain drain in the nation's healthcare sector would be a thing of the past.

It said that the government should commit to implementing agreed policies such as hazard allowance which took eight months to negotiate and is yet to be implemented.

According to the communique, the government should convene roundtable discussions with relevant stakeholders to discuss workable solutions.

"Government should identify data gaps and research agenda and use the information gathered to understand and address brain drain as well as the risks of the health care system completely breaking down.

'Government should work toward increasing patriotism by meeting the basic needs of the average citizen and creating an enabling environment," it added.

The communique also called for regular disbursement of Basic Healthcare Provision Fund.

Health expert urges Lagos to provide safe water for residents

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

Former Chairman, Association of Nigeria Private Medical Practitioners (ANPMP), Dr Tunji Akintade, has appealed to the Lagos State Government to improve access to clean water for residents.

Akintade made the plea in an interview on Monday, July 4, 2022, in Lagos while reacting to the comment of state Commissioner for Health, Prof. Akin Abayomi, on the unsafe condition of boreholes and well water system in Lagos.

Abayomi had disclosed that tests had confirmed the contamination of the boreholes and well water by pathogens, making them unsafe for consumption.

Akintade said that the state government

should move beyond notifying the public about the unsafe conditions of the water system to expediting actions to improve access to clean and safe water.

The physician stressed that doing that would mitigate the health risk associated with consumption of unsafe water, especially as rain and flooding were bringing waterborne diseases to communities.

According to him, many patients that visit hospitals nowadays are being treated for waterborne diseases such as cholera, typhoid fever, diarrhoea and hepatitis A, among others.

Akintade said that clean water did not necessarily mean that it was safe for drinking, adding that it was important to conduct tests to judge the safety of water.

He said that test for water usually considered microbiological, chemical

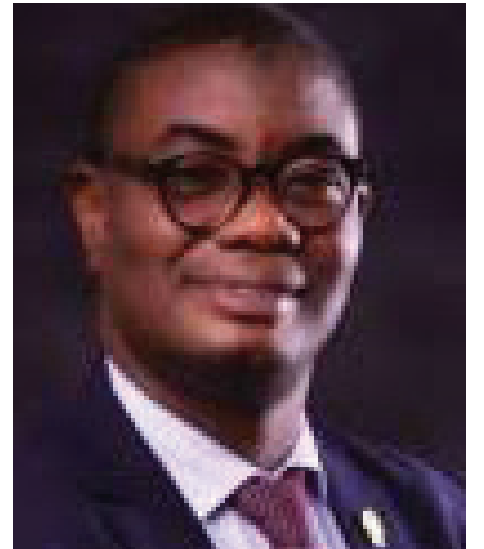
and physical qualities to ascertain the safety for drinking.

The physician noted that microbiological contamination was a major concern since it was responsible for most illnesses and deaths related to drinking unsafe water.

He noted that ensuring availability and sustainable access to safe water required a systemic and strategic approach in view of the changing climatic conditions, increasing populations, poverty and the negative effects of human development.

Akintade urged the government to explore multi-sector collaboration to provide home water-treatment capability through the use of filters and solar disinfection to make drinking water safe.

He added that the government should partner professional drillers to enhance their capacity and operations in the state.



Dr Tunji Akintade

'Nigeria doesn't recognize medical degree certificates from Ukraine'

By SHARON O. ISAALAH

Nigerian students who managed to leave Ukraine amid the war and pursue their degrees online are now struggling to have their qualifications recognized in their home country.

The Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria published statements on its Facebook and Twitter pages, noting that certificates by medical schools in Ukraine would not be recognized, Erudera.com reports.

In the formal message, Nigeria's medical council said that online qualifications will not be accepted until returning to normal activities.

"The Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria (MDCN) wishes to inform the General Public that Medical and Dental Degree Certificates issued by Medical

Schools from Ukraine from 2022 will NOT be honoured by the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria until when normal academic activities resume," the message reads.

The Council advised students studying medicine or dentistry at Ukrainian higher education institutions to transfer to other universities in other countries which are accredited.

"In the light of the above, the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria will not honour any Medical Degree Certificates issued at the end of any online medical training," MDCN tweeted.

Student Moses Damilola Fehintola told BBC that escaping from Ukraine and being able to continue his degree online was a relief; however, things turned out differently after receiving the same message; that his online degree

would not be recognized.

Fehintola was in his final year of studies at Ukraine's Sumy State University when the war in Ukraine began and could not continue his education for several weeks until he was finally home.

He further told the British Broadcasting Corporation that he even wrote to the Ministry of Health asking to be posted to a hospital, but the medical director mentioned that certificates from Ukraine were canceled by the MDCN.

"I will say this to Nigeria: if that's what Nigeria wants, so be it. I will look for other countries to practise and that will be Nigeria's loss," he said.

Before the Russian aggression, Ukraine hosted thousands of international students every year. According to data by Erudera, in 2019, some 80,470 international students chose Ukraine

as their study destination. That year, India was the top source of international students in Ukraine, sending a total of 18,429 students, followed by Morocco with 8,233.

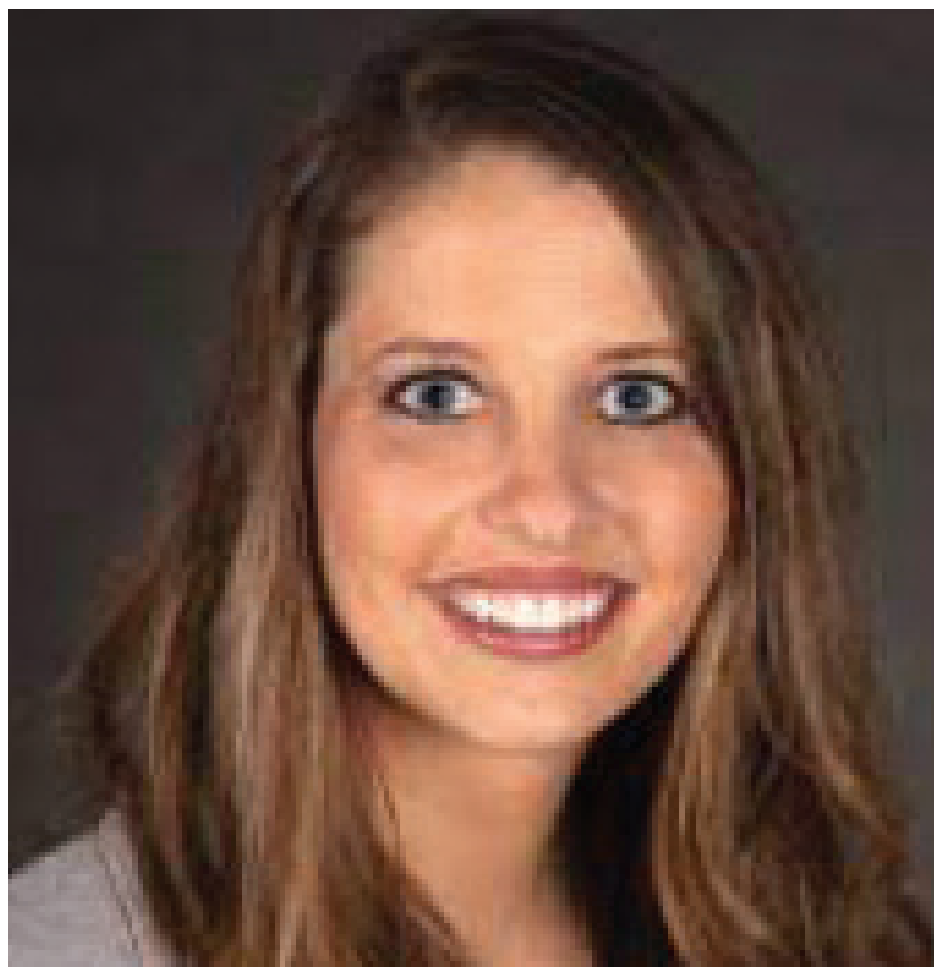
Nigeria ranked fifth on the list, sending 4,379 students to Ukraine in 2019.

As of 2020, Morocco, Nigeria, and Egypt represented 20 percent of all international students in Ukraine, according to the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science.

The majority of international students in Ukraine pursued studies in Medicine, Medical Practice, Dentistry, Management, and Pharmacy.

Erudera data also indicate that almost a decade before the war, the number of international students in Ukraine increased by nearly 50 percent.

Florida county quarantining after invasive giant African land snails



Christina Chitty

By SHARON O. ISAALAH

A Florida county is under quarantine due to the discovery of a fast-growing population of invasive giant African land snails.

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) confirmed there were giant African land snails in the New Port Richey area of Pasco County on June 23, according to FDACS' website.

The snails pose a health risk to humans because they carry a parasite called rat lungworm, which can cause meningitis, Christina Chitty, a public information director at FDACS, told CNN.

They can produce up to 2,500 eggs per year, so the population is difficult to control.

According to Chitty, the population in Pasco County likely originated from the illegal pet trade. Giant African land snails are illegal to own as pets in the United States. But some exotic pet owners still keep the invasive pests. If the owners discard them into the wild or accidentally lose them, they can quickly establish a foothold, feeding on over 500 different plant species and even consuming the paint and stucco off houses as a source of calcium.

Chitty said the department is currently investigating the population and determining how many snails are in Pasco County. The snails are native to east Africa and can grow up to 8 inches long.

The quarantine took effect June 25 and prevents residents from moving the snail or related items, like plants and soil, in or out of the designated quarantine area. Residents who think they have spotted a giant African land snail are advised to call the FDACS hotline and avoid touching the snail without gloves on due to the meningitis risk.

According to Chitty, FDACS plans to spend three years eradicating the population in Pasco County, using the pesticide metaldehyde to treat the soil.

"The goal is to eradicate" the snails, said Chitty. "It is a comprehensive and extensive process."

This is not the first time Florida has dealt with an invasion of giant snails. In 2011, a population of the pests was discovered in Miami-Dade County. It wasn't until 2021 the population was fully eradicated.

While the snails in Miami-Dade County had grey-colored flesh, the snails in Pasco County have white flesh, said Chitty.



PDP women, youths storm Abuja streets on PVC sensitization campaign

By TUNDE JOSHUA, ABUJA

Women leaders of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) on Tuesday staged a road show, walking along major streets of Abuja in a convoy of vehicles with mobile musicians to sensitize Nigerians on the need to register and collect their Permanent Voters Card (PVC) and ensure they participate in the 2023 general elections.

Dressed in T-Shirts of various colours with different inscriptions with fez-caps to match, the campaigners were urging the public to get their PVCs and exercise their franchise during next year's election.

The train of vehicular and human convoy led by the National Woman Leader, Professor Stella Effa-Attoe and National Youth Leader, Mohammed Suleiman took off from the party's Presidential campaign office, Legacy House in Maitama District of the Federal Capital Territory.

The convoy moved through the Central Business District to the popular Wuse Market distributing sensitization leaflets, singing specially composed songs and engaging traders on one-on-one talk to create time to register for PVCs.

Somewhere along the movement, a group of about 20 youths gathered to reply the sing song "get your PVCs" with the shout of "Obi, Obi, Obi".

The convoy also went round the entire length and breadth of the Area 10 market, hosting the Abuja printing hub. The shout of "Obi, Obi, Obi" rent the air more at the Ibo populated area but there was no confrontation.

Most of the traders responded well by dancing to various music tunes, collecting sensitization leaflets and shouting PDP slogans.

Some traders were even bold enough to display already collected PVCs expressing their readiness to vote come 2023.

The National Publicity Secretary, Hon Debo Ologunagba who addressed the crowd at the area said Nigerians need to help themselves out of the present predicament staring everyone in the



Hon Debo Ologunagba

face by rejecting the party, the APC that brought hardship to the citizenry.

On behalf of the party, he said there is hope at the end of the tunnel if the people are desirous of changing the situation.

Ologunagba said the PDP is providing an opportunity for Nigerians to come out of the the debacle of "economic hardship, starvation, impoverishment, insecurity and hopelessness", only for them to vote wisely for PDP to have a change of government.

At the Area 1 Shopping Mall, where there are large concentration of traders, the National Woman Leader, Prof. Stella Attoe-Effah who addresses said "every eligible Nigerian electorate has the constitutional right to determine who governs the country in which they are citizens.

She said "Nigerians have the power to change a bad and non-performing government through the use of their votes at the polling units during elections, and install a good one. The power through which this can be done is the acquisition of the Permanent Voter's Card (PVC)."

"Nigerians from the age of 18 and

above should turn out in the various Voters Registration Centres in their local government areas and get registered.

"To make it faster, Nigerians can also get registered online. The period for registration has been extended and all Nigerians should take advantage of this window to get their PVCs."

A day earlier, the party held a pre-event press conference at the PDP national headquarters, Wadata Plaza, to highlight activities earmarked for the Tuesday event.

On behalf of the national chairman, Dr. Iyorchia Ayu, the deputy national chairman (North), Amb. Umar Damagum said Nigerian citizens have the opportunity to change the bad narratives being experienced under the APC administration by getting their voters cards, votes for the PDP and protect their votes, to ensure their votes count.

Damagum said "most of our youths today are idle. What is the course - bad governance? How do we change that - go get your PVC? Go out there and sensitize people, let them come out enmasse. All these ASUU strikes that we see, unemployment, banditry and what have you are all due to bad governance. How do you change bad governance, it is to use your votes and act now.

"You have to go out there, get people informed, let them come out and get their PVC so that we vote out this senseless government that has no direction.

"If you look at them, they don't even have the mind to initiate this kind of thing. What they are thinking about is that come 2023, they will come and buy you off and continue to labour you, leave you at home, close down your schools and allow you to enter banditry. It's up to you now to go out there and get your PVC."

National Woman Leader for the party, Prof Stella Effah-Attoe asked the electorate to ignore those who dissuade people from voting under the pretext that votes will not count.

"Your Votes will Count! Don't listen to anyone who tells you that your votes will not count. Today, we have the

Electronic Transmission of Elections Results signed into law. All your Votes will surely Count. Your PVC is your Power to determine your future and the destinies of your family members. Take it seriously and use it wisely. No one should use his own hands to destroy himself.

"No one needs a soothsayer to tell us that bad leadership is responsible for the life threatening challenges we have in Nigeria today".

She urged Nigerians to turn out massively on the days of elections and vote out bad leadership adding, "If you don't turn out, then, you have thrown away your Constitutional Power to decide your future destinies".

The PDP National Youth Leader, Hon. Mohammed Suleman itemized the level of insecurity in the country, closure of the ivory towers, persistent fuel scarcity and lack of electricity supply as indication that the All Progressives Congress lacks the capacity to turn around the fortunes of the country. Such party, he said, shouldn't remain in office.

"The rate of insecurity is alarming and calls for urgent national attention. The Nigerian students have been out of school for over five months, with no solution in sight. The APC led federal government has paid deaf ear to the plight of the Nigerian student, thereby forcing them to roam about the street and become vulnerable to negative tendencies. It is therefore imperative for the Nigerian youth to go out and get their permanent voters card in order to use their vote to unseat the wicked APC led federal government.

"We call on all well-meaning Nigerians to take up their destinies in their hands and activate the office of the citizen by going all out to get their permanent voters" Mohammed said.

He said the PDP is no doubt the last hope for the common Nigerians on the street. "And so we encourage you all to get your PVC ready for a brighter future. Your PVC is your power. No PVC is your strength. Your PVC is your equipment to shape the future of your country," he added.

Female Bayelsa NRM candidate unfolds agenda

By AHERHOKE OKIOMA, YENAGOA

Princess Preye Joy Amgbare, candidate of the National Rescue Movement (NRM) has pledged to



Princess Preye Joy Amgbare

make a good and quality representation in Bayelsa state House of Assembly from Sagbama constituency 11.

She also pledged to embark on infrastructural development and massive empowerment of the youths, men and women within her resources, if voted 2023 as lawmaker.

Amgbare, disclosed in a press statement Tuesday, "I want to contribute my quota in human capital and infrastructure development through legislative business in 2023 Bayelsa State House of Assembly. I have concern for sustainable infrastructural development as well as empowerment programmes for youths, women/men in my constituency. I have seen that youths, men and women need various kinds of support in my constituency as the poverty rate is high due to joblessness," She promised.

Princess Joy Amgbare, lover of youths and visionary young leader from Sagbama constituency 11, noted that

she has all it takes to represent her constituency with a good leadership and passion to serve her constituents.

Amgbare, a graduate of the prestigious University of Port-Harcourt who bagged Education political science and Msc. Education, said her people have spoken with her severally, urging her to give them robust and purposeful representation. She assured that she would not let them down, if given the mandate in 2023.

"Apart from participating in good lawmaking, I will engage vigorously on my oversight functions by carrying out empowerment programmes of youths, women and men to justify and compensate my people for voting me.

My empowerment programmes will cut across the entire constituency, irrespective of political party affiliation. Don't forget, I will also make a good bridge with the executive arm to attract robust constituency projects and ensure

all projects are closely monitored for proper execution to thank my people as payback.

"I have passion to serve my people. I want my people in Sagbama constituency 11 to send me as their messenger in 2023 to the Bayelsa state House of Assembly. I have the courage and the grace to stand tall in male dominated hallow chambers to look them eyeball-to-ball to speak without fear or favour on behalf of the good people of Sagbame and for all Bayelsans to yield the dividends of democracy, making my impact in lawmaking. Good lawmaking and genuine leadership know no gender. But capacity makes the difference. As a woman, I will not let my constituents down. And I am here to serve all Bayelsans, if voted into power by the grace of God, Sagbama constituency 11 shall sing song of joy for sending me to the Bayelsa state House of Assembly" she promised.

Again, APC goes for Muslim-Muslim ticket in Kaduna, picks El-Rufai's deputy as Uba's 2023 running mate

BY TUNDE JOSHUA, ABUJA

Ahead of the 2023 governorship election in Kaduna State, gubernatorial candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Senator Uba Sani, is contesting on a Muslim-Muslim ticket with Dr. Hadiza Balarabe as his running mate.

Hajia Balarabe is currently the deputy governor of Kaduna State. Malam Nasir El-Rufai is the governor.

Against expectation that he would pick a Christian as running mate, the serving senator on Monday said he was constrained to chose El-Rufai's deputy after consultations with cross section of critical APC stakeholders in the state.

The candidate, in a statement, said he was attracted by Balarabe's contribution to the giant strides recorded by the

El-Rufai administration in infrastructure and human capital development.

"Dr Balarabe has demonstrated hard work, punctuality, dedication and team spirit in the discharge of her responsibility as deputy governor which has endeared her to the critical stakeholders in the state.

"I wish to therefore call on the good people of Kaduna State to support the choice of Dr Hadiza Balarabe as my running mate.

"I also enjoin them coming out en-masse to vote for our ticket during the forthcoming 2023 general elections.

"Your mandate in 2023 will enable us to build a peaceful, prosperous and greater Kaduna State.

"Together, we are determined to make the state a reference point for good and responsive governance," Sani declared.



Malam Nasir El-Rufai



Senator Uba Sani

'Kwankwaso will be liability to Peter Obi'

BY TUNDE JOSHUA, ABUJA

Presidential candidate of the Labour Party (LP), Mr. Peter Obi, has been asked to discontinue talks with the Rabiw Musa Kwankwaso team over a possible alliance ahead of next year's presidential election.

The call followed unsuccessful efforts by the camps of both presidential candidates at teaching agreement to work together for a joint presidential ticket.

Calling for an immediate discontinuation of the negotiations and alliance between the LP and Kwankwaso's New Nigerian Peoples Party, the Peter Obi Support Network (POSN) categorically said Kwankwaso's continuous association with Obi's candidacy will be a liability rather than an asset.

POSN argued that continuous association with Kwankwaso may run off negatively on Peter Obi electoral revolution.

Director, Strategic Communication, POSN, Onwuasoanya Jones in a statement on Monday faulted Kwankwaso's recent comments during a Channels Television programme, Politics Today.

The statement, entitled, 'Why Labour Party must immediately discontinue any alliance negotiations with Kwankwaso,' read: "It has therefore become pertinent to advise the leadership of the LP to immediately call off any discussions with the NNPP, on the issue of forming an alliance between them.

"The NNPP and her candidate have consistently displayed a most unfortunate insensitivity to the aspirations and desires of long-suffering Nigerians for a working, united and equitable Nigeria and have show themselves as being incapable and unready to support or participate in the process of electing a President that will make this happen in 2023.

"Following his recent outing on Politics Today aired on Channels Television, all doubts have been erased that the presidential candidate of the fledgling NNPP, Dr. Rabiw Kwankwaso, is not ideologically inclined to Mr Peter Obi or the Labour Party, especially on the key issues driving the former Anambra governor's aspiration to the presidency.

"His Excellency Dr. Rabiw Musa Kwankwaso has regrettably manifested a most distasteful understanding of the Nigerian situation, as he advertised him-

self as primarily hinging his aspiration to the presidency on the basis of where he comes from rather than where he wants to take Nigeria to, by arguing that his candidacy is propelled by the North rather than by Nigerians and also emphasising on our ethnic differences rather than blunting them.

"We should understand that Dr. Kwankwaso sharing a ticket with Peter Obi will alienate genuine Nigerian patriots who have bought into the Peter Obi candidacy out of their conviction that it is a unifying, ideas driven and masses propelled pan Nigerian project.

"By coming on television, even while the alliance talks are yet to be finalised, to categorically foreclose the chances of pairing with Mr Peter Obi as running mate, Dr. Kwankwaso has shown himself as coming to this alliance negotiations with a closed mindset and as a self-centered manipulator rather than being open to superior ideas, logics and credible electoral and political data or having the slightest pretext to patriotism.

"And it is without any iota of doubt that should Kwankwaso by any political magic or dangerous spin of fate emerge President, he will be one of the worst primordialists and religious bigots to

have presided over the affairs of this country.

"Kwankwaso's continuous association with the Peter Obi candidacy will be a liability rather than an asset as his utterances and those of his aides and key supporters have continued to raise eyebrows among patriotic Nigerians who are driving the Peter Obi electoral revolution out of their conviction on his competence and unquestionable patriotism.

"It bears reiterating that Peter Obi, the presidential candidate of the Labour Party, is not motivated by any ethnic, sectional or religious sentiments nor is he banking on the votes of a particular section of the country against the other, but inspired by the dream to, working together with like-minds, accomplish a working, productive, secured and equitable Nigeria, for all, and through the votes of all Nigerian patriots from all sections and classes of Nigeria.

"Dr. Kwankwaso's motivation and confidence in vying for the presidency are clearly rooted on some self-serving ethnic and class biases, and such an individual shouldn't be allowed to taint the purely progressive, selfless and people-inspired aspiration of His Excellency, Mr. Peter Obi."



Rabiw Kwankwaso



Peter Obi

Why CSO asks court to try Tinubu for perjury

A Civil Society Organization (CSO), Incorporated Trustees of Center for Reform and Public Advocacy, has approached the Federal High Court sitting in Abuja, to compel the Inspector General of Police (IGP), Usman Baba, to initiate a perjury case against the presidential candidate of the ruling All Progressives Congress, APC, Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

The organisation on Monday in the suit marked FHC/ABJ/CS/1058/2022, cited the Inspector General of Police and the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) as respondents.

The applicant, prayed the court for, "an order of mandamus, compelling the Respondents to comply with Sections 31 and 32 of the Police Act and Section 3 of the Criminal Justice Act, 2015 in respect of alleged crime laid out in complaint of the Applicant encapsulated in the letter of June 16, 2022 received by the Respondents on the same date and titled: Demand for Criminal Prosecution of Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu under Sections 191,192 and 463 of the Criminal Code Act, Law of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004 Consequent upon the Findings of the Lagos State House of Assembly Ad-hoc Committee, 1999".

Counsel to the group, Mr. Mike Nwankwo, told the court that the suit was necessitated by the IGP's refusal to take action on its petition against APC's presidential candidate over an offence it said was established by report of an investigation that was conducted by the Lagos State House of Assembly in 1999.

The CSO told the court that it earlier forwarded a petition to Police authorities, demanding further action on the said investigative report.

The group submitted that by virtue of Sections 214 and 215, of the 1999 Constitution, as amended, as well as Section 4 of the Nigerian Police Act, 2020, the Police, have the statutory responsibility to "prevent, detect and investigate criminal allegations whether brought to their notice by individuals, person or persons, corporate bodies, institutions etc."

It further claimed that by Section 31 of the Nigerian Police Act, the Respondents, are duty bound to investigate alleged crime brought to them and report their findings to the Attorney General of the Federation or of a state, as the case may be, for legal advice.

The applicant further averred that by Section 32(1) of the Police Act, "a suspect or Defendant alleged or charged with committing offence established by an Act of the National Assembly or under any other laws shall be arrested, investigated and tried or dealt with according to the provisions of this Act, except otherwise provided under this Act".

ICPC arrests S'Court contractor for alleged money laundering

By PAUL MICHAEL, DEFENCE EDITOR, ABUJA

Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC) has arrested a Supreme Court contractor, Temitope Banjoko, for alleged money laundering and contract scam.

Sources within ICPC confirmed the arrest and detention of Banjoko, the managing director of Asbat Construction Limited on Tuesday while noting that the construction company was allegedly awarded a contract worth N46,305,000 (N41,674,500 after tax deductions) for the demolition of four houses and evacuation of debris at the Justices' residences in Maitama, Abuja, in 2017.

The sources added that though the full sum was disbursed to Asbat Construction Limited, however, the contract was not executed, which prompted the investigation of ICPC.

It was also confirmed that during the inter-

rogation of the suspect and in his statement, the contractor claimed to have utilised the money for something else and expressed regrets that some funds he was expecting were not forthcoming. An act, which is against the law.

However, the owner of the company, Banjoko was said to have made a commitment to repay the money after the ICPC began probing the matter, but out of the contract sum, the contractor had only been able to repay the sum of N5 million, leaving a net balance of N36,674,500.

According to the sources, the investigations carried out by the ICPC revealed that some of the houses earmarked for demolition have been renovated and are now occupied by new judges.

This indicates that the houses were not intended to be demolished but to siphon money out of the system.

ICPC is expected to charge the contractor to court in the coming days.



ICPC Boss, Professor Bolaji Owasanoye

Court threatens revocation of alleged fraudsters' bail

By PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

Justice Abimbola Awogboro of a Federal High Court sitting in Lagos has threatened to revoke the bail and order the arrest of two alleged fraud suspects, Seun Awosanya and Amaechi Osita for refusing to appear for their trial on an alleged N130 million fraud.

Awogboro, who dangled the axe at the resumed hearing of the fraud charges brought against the two defendants by the police, said their bail would be revoked if they fail to appear in court on the next adjourned date.

The men of the Police Special Fraud Unit (PSFU) arraigned the defendants before the court in 2016, on a two-count charge of alleged conspiracy and fraudulent conversion of the sum of N130 million belonging to a company, Logic Vantage and Trust Limited to personal use.

The police had alleged in the charge marked FHC/L/c/2016 that the defendants committed the offences sometime in March 2015, with one Okoli Chigozie Kingsley, who is said to be at large, and a firm, Osymaco Investment Limited, belonging to the second defendant, Amaechi Osita.

The offences, the police maintained, are contrary to Section 1(1)(a) (b) of the Advance Fee Fraud and Other Fraud Related Offences Act, 2006. And section 15(1)(a)(ii) (3) of the Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act, 2004 as amended.

The defendants pleaded not guilty to the charges when they were formally arraigned before Justice Saidu Saliu, who has since retired from the Bench. On two occasions that the defendants' matter came up before Justice Awogboro, they refused to appear for their trial, the development forced the prosecutor, Daniel Apochi, to ask the court for a Bench warrant, which was granted.

Ruling on the submissions of the lawyers, Justice Awogboro, declined to revoke the defendants' bail and urged police not to arrest them before the next proceedings.

Further hearing on the matter has been fixed for September 21.

ICPC charges corps members to be change agents

By PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) has charged members of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) to be the change they would want to see in the fight against corruption in Nigeria.

The Commission, in its nationwide Integrity Lectures in all 37 NYSC Orientation Camps for the 2022 Batch "B" Stream 1 Corps Members, emphasized the need for the youths to support ICPC as major stakeholders in the war against corruption.

At the Kubwa NYSC Camp, Mrs Ijeoma Ozor of the Public Enlightenment and Education Department of ICPC, noted that the Commission would continue to vigorously pursue its public education mandate in order to engender zero tolerance for corruption amongst the youths, whom she described as the future leaders of our country.

"It must be emphasized that corruption does not recognize the public or private

sector, young or old, and if allowed to thrive, can pervade and permeate every stratum of the society, the same way cancer spreads and destroys the human tissue," she said.

While listing corrupt acts to include gratification, fraudulent acquisition of properties, making false statements, examination of official records, cultism, and internet fraud, among others, Ozor maintained that these corrupt vices had the capacity to breed societal degeneration and bring about poverty, diseases and social insecurity.

She added that the Commission has put in place different initiatives that will ensure that youths were carried along in the anti-corruption crusade amongst which were anti-corruption vanguards in tertiary institutions, anti-corruption clubs in secondary schools, and anti-corruption community development groups for the Corps Members after their orientation exercise in partnership with NYSC.

According to her, other initiatives include the National Values Curriculum to bridge

the gap that existed in subjects' contents in Nigeria educational institutions, essay competitions to sustain awareness amongst the youths, and the University Systems Study and Review during which the Commission reviews University systems based on intelligence, petitions, complaints and public comments against the tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

She further noted that the youths were endowed with strength and creativity and can easily accept new social standards, urging them to become part of the general struggle for liberation against endemic corruption.

"If you assimilate and imbibe the culture of corruption, you will be a danger to society. But as you carry out your duties in your areas of primary assignments and in your vocations and future endeavours, choose to imbibe and exhibit strong moral values and shun corruption.

"This would make you stand out. You have a choice in this matter to do this or ignore the opportunity and help seal the doom of our dear nation," she advised.

ICPC tells REDAN to adopt self-regulation on money laundering

● *Tasks body on low-cost housing construction*

● *Investigates completed, unoccupied estates in Abuja, others*

By PAUL MICHAEL, ABUJA

Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), has charged the leadership of the Real Estate Developers Association of Nigeria (REDAN) to adopt self-regulation of its members as part of measures to prevent money laundering and Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs).

Chairman of the Commission, Prof Bolaji Owasanoye, SAN, gave the charge in his goodwill message at the 13th Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Conference of the Association held at the Amadeo Event Centre, GRA, Enugu.

Prof Owasanoye, who was represented by the Commission's Director of Asset Tracing, Recovery and Management, Mr Adedayo Kayode, urged the leadership of REDAN to introduce the Know-Your-Customer (KYC) principles for its clients to avoid serving as a conduit for money launderers and IFFs offenders.

According to him, "It is my position that self-regulation is a way out of this quagmire for the association. REDAN should con-

sciously draw up programmers to build the capacity of its members on modern trends in construction and also hold its members to the highest level of ethical standards.

"The Association should introduce and enforce high ethical standards for its members, especially to ensure their processes are not used for Money Laundering. In this regard, the Association may introduce KYC principles."

The ICPC boss stated that the theme of the AGM "Enhancing the Real Estate Sector through Effective Regulation and Collaborations" was in line with the Commission's mandate of partnership and collaboration with relevant institutions toward building a mass mobilisation vanguard in the curbing of corruption and IFFs within the system and out of the country.

The ICPC Chairman, however, expressed regrets that some members of REDAN are engaged by unscrupulous individuals and Politically Exposed Persons (PEPs) to launder their ill-gotten wealth thereby exposing honest and patriotic members of the association to being labeled corrupt by perception.

Prof Owasanoye also encouraged the

REDAN leadership to play a pivotal role in bringing down the mounting cost of housing construction in Nigeria as well as closing the enormous gap in housing construction by collaborating with relevant government agencies.

"REDAN can serve as a buffer for its members by importing building materials in large quantities which will be made available to members at a lower cost than the open market thereby forcing down the cost of housing construction in the country.

"The Association should also exploit the possibility of partnering with manufacturers in order to reduce the cost of building materials and assist in making housing affordable for all," he said.

The ICPC Chairman further urged the real estate association to consider direct involvement in low-cost housing constructions nation-wide to assist the "Housing for All" Programme of the Federal Government.

Meanwhile, the ICPC boss further disclosed that the Commission was currently investigating cases of fully completed but unoccupied estates in Abuja, Lagos, and Port Harcourt

in order to identify developers serving as a conduit for money laundering and IFFs.

While urging the Association to support law enforcement agencies in their investigations, Prof Owasanoye advised it to intensify its compliance monitoring of members in areas of unwholesome practices by low-quality housing deliveries and shady financial practice.

"The Commission conducted a System Study and Review of Mass Housing delivery in the FCT where it was discovered that members of the Real Estate Developers Association of Nigeria (REDAN), who had been allocated huge plots of land for mass housing development in Nigeria through the Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria (FMBN) with particular responsibility to provide infrastructure after which allocations are made to the NHF contributors failed in the payment of their counterpart funding and in the delivery of infrastructure to the project sites and rather resorted to offering and selling the Estate plots to the highest bidder contrary to the government policy," he said.

Is Nigeria tending towards gerontocracy?

Judging from available statistics, citizens and institutions of most African countries are not sensitive to the age factor in their choice of elected and appointed public officials. The average age of retirement in most parts of the continent is 60 years. However, from Cameroun to Guinea, Ivory Coast, Ghana, South Africa, Uganda, Sao Tome and Principe, Zimbabwe, as well as Nigeria, an average president or prime minister is seventy-five years old: that is fifteen years above the average retirement age in most countries. What is the implication of this for national development?

Nigeria, the giant of Africa is being ruled by a 77-year old, retired Army General who was once ruled the country as a military dictator. The federal government is dominated by old men and women sitting atop ministries, departments, and agencies. For example, the Minister of Health is 77, Information is 70, and Education is 68. Seventy-seven years old President Muhammadu Buhari has two aged men running as presidential candidates of the two major political parties jostling to succeed him. They are above 70!

The scenario painted above suggests that a form of oligarchic rule by political elite who are significantly older than most of the adult population is gradually being formed. This leaves one with the question: is Nigeria tending 'towards gerontocracy?

It is true that political power within the ruling class accumulates with age and sometimes inevitably make the oldest the key actors. We acknowledge that this can produce experienced leadership that can aid decision processes and law making. But we are equally aware that several contradictions may greet a political system dominated by the aged. Such contradictions include the significant concerns of age-related cognitive decline which limits the capacities to effectively coordinate the tedious affairs of governance. There are many others. The old may be ill equipped to fully understand the modern

world and the tools to navigate it; especially when it comes to technology and prevailing global culture.

Political parties and offices in a gerontocratic country often become pre-ancestral retirement homes. People who occupy such homes, knowing they have only little life before joining their ancestors, are prone to throwing caution to the wind and being insensitive to the future of the country, especially when compared to youngsters who think and know they have many more years in the polity. The political system is thus left to be run by accumulated money and personalized influence, not fresh ideas from fresh minds. Youth who have fresh global ideas are sidelined, and, on the average, may not have the opportunity to lead until they

also become old. With gerontocracy there appears to be no serious impact that can be made on the welfare of the citizenry and development of a country.

The foregoing is what our country cannot afford at this period of her history. Citizens who are too old to participate in politics can either make themselves available for consultation or retire permanently from politics. This can inject huge energy and ideas to the political system. It also will save the country medical bills accumulated by any old presidents and other political leaders who always travel abroad for medical treatment. Where, for some reasons, the political system does not produce young political competitors as in the current preparation for the 2023 elections, available old candidates must undergo mental and physical medical clearances before being nominated by their political parties and cleared by INEC.

Youths in the country should recognize their ability to mitigate the loss of some cognitive function in the aged, so, they need to be available to work with old political leaders that are thrown up by the political system. Also, the youths need to rise to the occasion of rounded political participation and take charge from old breed politicians. If the youths make up to 45 percent of Nigeria and democracy means the rule of majority, it begs logic that the Nigerian political scene will be dominated by the aged.

As Nigerians await the end of the septuagenarian administration of President Buhari, we call on Nigerians to be conscious about the age factor in electing the next set of leaders in the country. It is an anomaly that a population that is dominated by the youth will be permanently ruled by old men who have been in different discredited governments that have plunged the country into its current mess. Civil society organizations should help to educate the public on the dangers of creating a gerontocracy in the political administration of the country.



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Ekweremadu: Our collective hypocrisy

Recently, various news outlets were inundated with reports that Nigeria's lawmaker, a former Deputy Senate President, lawyer of repute and career politician Ike Ekweremadu and his wife were arrested in the United Kingdom for allegedly attempting to harvest the organ of a fifteen-year-old minor David Ukpo Nwamini. According to reports Ekweremadu and his wife were desperate to provide a replacement organ for their ailing daughter hospitalized in the United Kingdom. While some reports insist that the boy is a fifteen-year-old minor abducted from Nigeria by Ekweremadu and his wife to harvest his organ for the survival of their daughter, other reports maintain that the lawmaker followed due process but was dealing with a scheming, desperate, dishonest, opportunistic twenty-one-year old adult. We should recall that David Ukpo Nwamini's available BVN record shows that he is twenty-one years as against the fifteen years he is presently claiming in the United Kingdom. While we must patiently wait for the UK authorities to conclude their investigation, I sincerely and honestly wish Sonia, Ekweremadu's daughter a quick recovery.

However, Sonia's case and the arrest of her parents present an excellent opportunity to dissect and interrogate more fundamental issues in the unfolding scenario. From different reactions to the Ekweremadu's saga, it is obvious that many Nigerians, effortlessly, without apologies wallow in the labyrinth of hypocrisy. Many Nigerians speak from both sides of the mouth especially those one would otherwise, ascribe a measure of intelligence and cognitive maturity. It is indeed sad that those that try to exonerate Ike Ekweremadu and absolve him of blame in the matter mindlessly traffic in an unstable mental

attitude akin to amnesia. While we can, based on the strength of available evidence, conclude that David Ukpo Nwamini lied and Ike Ekweremadu is innocent, we cannot totally give the embattled senator a clean bill of health, slap him by the wrist and ask him to sin no more. No, we cannot and should not do that.

Over the years, Nigerians have been unanimous in berating government officials that frequently patronize foreign medical facilities while our hospitals and Medicare transmute into a crying necropolis. Even when the President, Mr Muhammadu Buhari was at the cusp of death and travelled to the UK for medical attention, many Nigerians seized the opportunity to criticize him despite his health challenges. There was no issue of ethnicity. We spoke with one voice as Nigerians. We agreed that if our health sector were fixed, if the political class did the needful, there would be no need for anyone to seek medical attention abroad. The rich and the poor will benefit from it and everyone will be happy. Ike Ekweremadu has been in the Nigerian Senate for nineteen years, occupying the exalted office of the Deputy Senate President for twelve years. By the prevailing constitutional hierarchy, he was the fourth man in official decision ordering as Deputy Senate President. If Buhari was blamed for travelling abroad for medical purposes, the former Deputy Senate President should also receive the same treatment for flying his daughter abroad to seek medical help.

Ike Ekweremadu belongs to a long list of our political wayfarers whose only major means of income is Nigeria's bleeding and exploited political industry. He made his money by making laws in a country lacerated by a lack of enduring mass-oriented, populist laws. How many bills did he sponsor or influence as a Deputy

Senate President for the upgrading of Nigeria's numerous university teaching hospitals? No, the senators will not upgrade or care for our healthcare system. They trust in their enormous wealth which they earned for doing practically nothing. Their consolation is to fly abroad for the slightest of ailments. It is therefore shocking that Nigerians, famous for identifying the inherent criminality in the attitude of our political class junketing abroad for medical tourism, will turn around and dress Ekweremadu in glowing apparel.

I see bleeding hypocrisy on the Nigerian horizon. How some Nigerians, like the Shakespearean Plebeians, turn sixty degrees to defend or accept what they have always abhorred and criticized is beyond comprehension. Assuming there were world-class hospitals in Nigeria, our politicians will not immediately jet out of the country for a regular health breach as minor as a headache. Assuming that in all our criticism we succeeded in stampeding the government to make laws stopping politicians and members of their families from travelling abroad for medical purposes, Ekweremadu would not have been enmeshed in the current embarrassing imbroglio in a foreign land. It is indefensible by any stretch of the imagination that someone who earns our money for making laws for us will use the money to take his child abroad for medical attention while the people who should submit themselves to the law made by our lawmakers can hardly afford to access the cheapest Medicare in the country. What kind of crass irony is that?

What is the state of the National Hospital in Abuja? What is the state of all the university teaching hospitals in the country? What have our lawmakers done by way of initiating bills to better and improve the state of these mere consulting clinics in the country? It

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is indeed shameful and disrespectful to millions of Nigerians that while they grapple with a non-existing healthcare system, those who make laws for them bury their heads in various hospitals abroad. It summarily violates cosmic principles that our politicians will take suffering, taxpayers' money here and spend it abroad where taxpayers' money has been put to good use. This kind of wicked behaviour, this abominable culture of earning money in naira and spending it in hard currency has completely crippled our local currency and Nigerians are worst for it. Selective criticism in this regard only degrades our humanity. This hypocrisy must stop. To bring ethnic bias into the matter is to genuflect on the quicksand of moral debasement. I read a certain commentator popular for courting controversy and making a caricature of public commentary write that the South-Easterners should not condemn Ekweremadu since the Hausa/Fulani did not condemn the implicated former police boss Abba Kyari. It is this kind of anaemic ethnic sentiment through the obvious manifestation of idiocy that has held our country backwards for many years. So, if our kinsman runs afoul of the law, we should keep quiet and not condemn him? Then we are hypocrites and should all cover our faces in shame. Did the

same Ekweremadu not openly canvass votes for a Fulani/Northerner against a fellow South-Easterner like him? Please spare me the ethnic mindset. It is disgraceful.

If we have been shouting and criticizing politicians for entrenching the practice of foreign medical tourism, then Ekweremadu should also receive the stick. Nigerians want a functional and affordable infrastructure which everyone can benefit from. Our hospitals are dead, our university system is dead too. The cry and anguish of Nigerians as the direct victims of this official irresponsibility by the ruling class will surely catch up with them. The God of heaven will surely stop them in their tracks and their poisoned fingers will inevitably make contact with their mouth. It is for these reasons that the current youth revolution in the country is soaring with implacable fury. INEC recently announced that more than ten million voters have registered in the immediate past. Nigerians want a new beginning. The old order must be legitimately overthrown through the ballot box. Say no to foreign medical tourism for our politicians when our health system is dead. Say no to foreign education for our politicians when our universities are shut. Get your PVC.



Michael OWHOKO

In the absence of 11th hour miracle, when an assessment of performance of the Executive arm of government will be carried out on May 29 next year, using the economy, security and corruption as index, President Muhammadu Buhari may likely go down as a failed President. If this happened, the Legislative organ of government should largely be blamed. Firstly, for failing to invoke the doctrine of checks and balances to ensure the President discharges his statutory obligations in line with national interest and aspirations. Secondly, for failing to halt breach of federal character principle by the President. Thirdly, for failing to interrogate the Executive for sliding economic indices, worsening corruption, rising insecurity, capital flight, mounting loans, multiple tax burden, unemployment, and decaying infrastructure, including poor electricity and education.

For these flops, the 9th National Assembly is an accessory to current woes of the country, and cannot be absolved. The Legislature is the second organ of Government, free and independent from the control of the Executive, yet, the lawmakers have made it an extension, and apron string of the President.

Signs that the 9th National Assembly will be a weakling and lacking a mind of its own, emerged when the Senate President, Ahmad Lawan said "any request that comes from Mr. President is a request that will make Nigeria a better place", and would therefore expeditiously

ensure passage of legislation therefrom.

I am most certain that even the Chairman of Presidential Advisory Committee Against Corruption, Prof. Itse Sagay (SAN), whom Lawan was receiving at the time he made this remark, might be shocked at the statement.

With this declaration by the Senate President and head of National Assembly, the Legislature has violated the doctrine of separation of powers and checks and balances as enunciated by French philosopher, Charles Baron Montesquieu, in his book, *The Spirit of Law*. The intention of Montesquieu was the need to separate the three organs of government, namely, the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary, to enable each arm serve as check on the other to ensure equilibrium.

It is aimed at protecting their respective liberty, and preventing any organ of government from becoming too powerful as to transmute into tyranny and authoritarianism. The doctrine has become a template for good governance and global reference for protection and advancement of egalitarianisms. It forms part of constitution in countries where democracy is practiced.

For undermining this doctrine, Lawan has not only sacrificed the trust of the people on the altar of self-aggrandizement but projected President Buhari as all-knowing and omniscient President who can do no wrong, and whose intellectual capacity is beyond the competence of the Senate and House of Representatives

May Nigeria never experience 9th National Assembly again

combined.

Besides, the National Assembly (NASS) has encouraged the creation and emergence of an all-powerful President with uninhibited liberty to go off course at will even on matters of national interest. For example, the federal character principle as contained in the 1999 Constitution is breached with impunity by President Buhari, and despite criticism, has shown no remorse.

Section 14, Sub-section 3 of the 1999 Constitution says that "The composition of the Government of the Federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and also to command national loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that Government or in any of its agencies."

The Buhari Administration has done exactly the opposite. All key national appointments contravene Section 14, Sub-section 3 as evidently reflected in the dominance of people from the north, particularly, from the Fulani ethnic group. Yet, the Senate sees nothing wrong with this imbalance, as long as it originates from the President. By this, the President has promoted what the constitution intended to avoid - disunity and national disloyalty.

All key and juicy ministries, departments and agencies of government (MDAs), including security agencies, are headed, and firmly in the hands of northerners, just as all three organs of government were headed by northerners up till few weeks ago when Ibrahim Tanko Muhammad resigned as Chief Justice of Nigeria, paving the way for the most senior justice, Olukayode Ariwoola, a southerner, in acting capacity.

It is small wonder therefore that Nigeria is currently plagued by disunity, disloyalty and suspicion induced by disenchantment arising from dominance of the Northern region over other sections. This is an aberration for a country that is made up of different ethnic nationalities, which have agreed to come together under a federation of equal partners, anchored on

sincerity, equity and justice, particularly in matters pertaining to appointments and distribution of resources.

In advanced democracies, the Senate would have compelled the President to reverse such appointments to reflect federal character or face impeachment. But the National Assembly lacks the courage to reject Buhari's nominees or even initiate impeachment threat, obviously, for fear of Executive intimidation.

Put differently, despite the dangers posed to the unity of the country by this constitutional contravention, the Senate has seen no reason to veto the President's nominees despite backlash concerns and fear of disunity and national disloyalty as envisaged by the Constitution.

When a country deliberately closes its doors against other sections and ethnic groups just to achieve ethnic dominance, unwittingly, misses contributions of intelligent and bright minds from the neglected areas to national development. That the country has been on a downward swing in the last seven years, is the price of nepotism.

Ironically, those who have been favoured by this structural abnormality do not see anything wrong with it, even within the context of the constitution. They keep blind eyes, reminding others that Nigeria's unity is not negotiable. This is an illusion. Attaining peace in the face of obvious mismanagement of diversities and dishonest policies, is a tall order.

From the demeanor of NASS, the law makers are overwhelmed by subservient corporatism and loss of liberty. This has eroded its influence and degraded the premium placed on it by the Executive. This is evident during NASS committee meetings where some ministers, including senior officials of the Executive flagrantly snub summons, particularly during budget review sessions by Committee on Finance and Appropriation. Yet, these same ministers and senior officials are the first to raise grounds for further amendments after budgets have been transmitted to the President, leading in some cases, to delay in passage of the country's national budget.

Unfortunately, the Judiciary is also unable to invoke the doctrine of checks

and balances, as it appears not to have recovered from the intimidation it suffered in the hands of the Executive when operatives of the Department of State Service (DSS) in 2016 raided the homes of some federal judges, including serving Supreme Court justices.

Perhaps, if the law makers were courageous enough, and the Judiciary lives up to its billings to restrain the President appropriately, the Executive would have been shaped up.

Calls for federalism, and emergence of separatist movements in Nigeria are symptoms of national discontent. When majority of people are not happy owing to domination of one ethnic group or section over others, coupled with rising insecurity and worsening economy, implies that the government is inefficient.

An efficient government is one that is able to provide "the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people". This is a measurement performance tool developed by English philosopher and Jurist, Jeremy Bentham, which world researchers and political scientists deploy to assess governments globally.

Since NASS has abdicated its autonomy and authority, who then can challenge the Executive over breaches of federal character principle and other statutory obligations, including economy and security management? If Chief Gani Fawehinmi of blessed memory were alive, no doubt, would have instituted litigation.

NASS appears not to understand the essence of Montesquieu's theory. Therefore, it will do the country good for law makers to take basic courses in Political Science during their training at the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies.

As it stands, what legacy will the 9th National Assembly under the chairmanship of Ahmad Lawan be leaving as the law makers vacate office in less than a year from now? Certainly, they cannot be divorced from the performance of the Buhari Administration when the score card is evaluated on May 29, 2023.

•Dr. Owhoko, Lagos-based journalist and author, can be reached at www.mikeowhoko.com.

Army says proliferation of small arms, light weapons declining

By PAUL MICHAEL,
Defence Editor, Abuja

Proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria is reducing.

Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lt - Gen Farouk Yahaya, stated this at a media parley in Owerri. It was as part of activities marking the 2022 Nigerian Army Day Celebration (NADCEL). He restated the resolve of the Force to checkmate the proliferation of small arms and light weapons across the country.

NADCEL is an

annual event held by the military. This year's celebration marks the 159th year of the Nigerian Army's existence since its formation. The week-long event offers the Nigerian Army an opportunity to take stock, assess its performance, interface with the public, and set goals for the succeeding year.

The COAS, who expressed worry over the possession of arms by non-state actors and non-licensed individuals, said that the National Centre for the Control of Small Arms and

Light weapons was working assiduously to checkmate the menace.

Yahaya warned financiers of the arms and weapons to desist forthwith or be ready to contend with the Army, as the Force would "leave no stone unturned in fishing them out."

He also called for concerted efforts by Nigerians to report suspected unlawful possession of firearms to the appropriate quarters.

According to him, "The National Centre for the Control of Small Arms and Light weapons is working



Lt Gen. Yahaya

tirelessly to stem this tide and we are achieving positive results.

"As our border troops continue to re-strategise

and stay many steps ahead of the culprits, we warn all financiers of these light weapons to desist forthwith or have the law to contend

with.

"It's quite a challenge but we're facing it head-on," he said.

Yahaya listed some of the achievements of the Nigerian Army in the last one year to include the return of Nigerians in the North-East to their homes, mass surrender of terrorists and reopening of all schools in the geo-political zone, including the Government Girls Secondary School, Chibok.

Other achievements according to him include foiling of kidnap plots and other forms of criminal arrangements as well as improvement of the welfare and well-being of troops.

The Army boss thanked President Muhammadu Buhari for providing sufficient logistics and other forms of support that had enabled the Force to record tremendous successes in its operations.

He assured Nigerians that the troops would always stick to the professional rules of engagement and respect for human rights, in line with the core values of the Nigerian Army.

Abducted Kaduna Catholic priest regains freedom

By PAUL MICHAEL,
Defence Editor, Abuja

A Catholic Priest, Reverend Father Emmanuel Silas, who was reportedly abducted on Monday has regained freedom barely 24 hours after his alleged abduction by gunmen.

Silas was said to have been kidnapped from the parish rectory at St. Charles Catholic Church in Zambina, Kauru Local Government Area of Kaduna State in the early hours of Monday.

Confirming his release on Tuesday, The

Chancellor of the Catholic Diocese of Kafanchan, Kaduna State, Reverend Father Emmanuel Okolo, thanked everyone who offered prayers for the quick release of the priest.

"With hearts filled with joy, we raise our voices in a symphony of praises as we announce the return of our brother, Rev Fr Emmanuel Silas.

"He was abducted by armed persons from the parish rectory at St. Charles Catholic Church, Zambina, in Kauru Local Government Area, in the early hours of Monday, July 4th, 2022," the

Chancellor said.

While announcing the abduction of the priest on Monday, Father Okolo solicited prayers for the abducted priest and said the Diocese would adopt any legitimate means to ensure the quick and safe release of the priest.

"It is with great pain that we announce to you the kidnapping of our Priest, Rev Fr Emmanuel Silas. The event occurred in the early hours of July 04, 2022, when he could not turn up for morning Mass.

"He was abducted from the parish rectory at St.

Charles Catholic Church, Zambina, in the Kauru Local Government Area of Kaduna State.

"We solicit an intense prayer for his quick and safe release. We equally wish to call on all and sundry to refrain from taking the laws into their hands.

"We will use every legitimate means to ensure his quick and safe release.

"May Jesus crucified on the Cross, listen to our prayers and hasten the unconditional release of His Priest and all other kidnapped persons," the Chancellor said.

Meanwhile, this is

coming less than a week after the remains of the slain Reverend Father Vitus Borogo, also a Catholic priest, killed by terrorists on his farm, were buried in the state capital on Thursday.

Borogo was killed on June 25, 2022, while his brother, CY Borogo was kidnapped by his killers.

The development sparked protests among priests in the Kaduna Archdiocese, forcing them to carry placards in venting their anger over the deteriorating spate of insecurity across the country, especially in the state.

FG replies five US Senators over Christians' alleged persecution

By PAUL MICHAEL,
Defence Editor, Abuja

Federal Government has condemned the call by five US Republican Senators asking for the re-designation of Nigeria as a country of particular concern because of the alleged persecution of Christians.

The Senators, in a letter to the US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, had also alleged violation of freedom of Christians' rights to practice their religion in Nigeria.

Responding to the allegation in an interview with journalists in London, the Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai

Mohammed said the call by the USA Senators was based on a false premise and misunderstanding of what was going on in the country.

The Minister, who is in London for engagements with international media as well as some relevant Non-Governmental Organisations, said there is no persecution of Christians or any believers of any other religion in the country.

He said, "You will recall that only a few months ago Nigeria was taken out of the list of countries of particular concern because it was proven that there is no iota of truth in the allegation that Christians or any religion was being persecuted or

people were not allowed to practice the religion of their choice.

"We want to say once again that Nigeria does not have a policy that denies people the freedom to practice their religion.

"The country also does not have a policy of violating freedom of religion and it is not true that Nigeria persecutes anybody on account of his or her faith."

Mohammed noted that the Constitution of Nigeria guarantees the right of anybody to practice his or her own faith without molestation and the government has always safeguarded the constitutional provision.

According to him, most commentators who were not well versed in the politics and happenings in Nigeria took criminalities and communal clashes as issues of religious persecution.

"Nobody in Nigeria is being persecuted but we have issues of criminality going on and the criminals really do not make a distinction of any religion.

"They kidnap for money, they hold people on ransom irrespective of their religion and there are some issues of communal matters dating back to many years.

"If the statistic is to be taken, I can say confidently that more Muslims than Christians have been victims

of these criminals," he added.

The Minister further stated that the only known group that targeted Christians was the Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP).

He, however, said that the Federal Government has mounted large-scale military operations to wipe out the criminals and it is yielding results accordingly.

"What ISWAP is doing is that because of their dwindling influence, they are now attacking Churches and Christians in order to create a crisis between the various religious groups.

"But as a government, we are after them," he said.

While stating that some

NGOs were also feeding the international community with wrong information to get funds from donors, Mohammed solicited support from multilateral organisations and foreign countries in tackling the challenges of insecurity.

He reaffirmed that the two major religions in Nigeria, Islam and Christianity are also collaborating to find solutions to the crisis and bring peace and harmony to the country.

The Minister gave an example of the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC), which is working to foster unity and better understanding between the Christian and Islamic faiths.



Nigeria, others to benefit from FAO's \$18m GEF project

Stories by **JOHNMARK UKOKO**

Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations (UN) has said that Nigeria and four other countries will benefit from its \$18 million Global Environment Facility (GEF) project.

According to the FAO, the GEF, which comprises three new projects in Nigeria, Venezuela, Malawi and Uganda are expected to improve the management of protracted areas, protect adversity in lowland forests, as well as build water security and resilience.

Deputy Director-General of the FAO, Maria Helena Semedo, said resilient and productive land and aquatic ecosystems are the foundation of sustainable agricultural and food systems transformation, adding that approval of the three projects

would strengthen the capacity to help countries to move on the path of sustainability that would leave no one behind.

She explained that the project in Nigeria would improve conservation, sustainable use and restoration of low landscapes to protect globally significant biodiversity and sustainable livelihoods of local communities.

"The project will also improve the management of the threatened one million hectares of landscape encompassing 12 forest reserves and the Okomu National Park. One of the aims is to replicate the success across the full Nigerian lowland forests ecological region," she said.

However, it was learnt that the approval of the projects marked the end of GEF's 2018-2022 funding cycle with over \$600 million in grant financing earlier secured for member countries.



Maria Helena Semedo

FG replaces Acting AGF over alleged corruption

Alleged shady deals may have compelled the Federal Government to sack Chujwulyere Anamekwe as the country's acting Accountant-General of the Federation (AGF) and call for his immediate replacement.

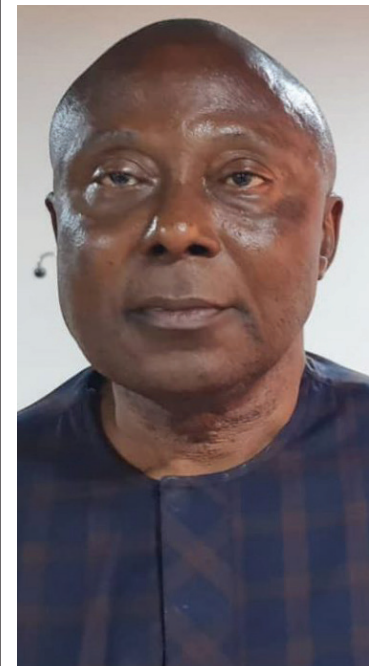
It was learnt that arrangement for his replacement was completed at the weekend, as he was replaced with Okolieaboh Ezeoke Sylvia, who was the former Director of the Treasury Single Account (TSA).

The Trumpet learnt that Anamekwe's replacement followed allegations that he was being investigated by the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) for corruption and that the Federal Government was not comfortable with his revelation that it was borrowing to pay salaries.

He was appointed as Acting AGF on June 14, 2022 and he was removed seven days after, raising suspicion that something was wrong with his appointment. The newly appointed Acting AGF will leave office in the first quarter of 2023.

It was further learnt that the Federal Government has already embarked on a search of who will replace the Acting AGF when his tenure lapses in about nine months.

It would also be recalled that the former AGF, who was removed following alleged misappropriation of over N 98 billion, is currently standing trial in a Federal High Court, Abuja over the graft allegations brought against him by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).



Chujwulyere Anamekwe

First batch of STS cranes, RTGs arrive at Lekki Port

Indications have emerged that prior to commencement of operations, three Super Post Panamax Ships to Shore (STS) cranes and 10 Rubber Tyred Grentries (RTGs), which will be used for the first time in Nigeria, arrived the Lekki Port last weekend.

Managing Director of the Lekki Port, Me Du Ruogang,



Me Du Ruogang

who disclosed this in Lagos, said the STS cranes are highly sophisticated port equipment, which will be deployed for the first time in Nigeria, will be at the forefront of container operations in West Africa and the global maritime map.

"This is the first batch of our port machinery and equipment. We will mobilise the second batch of two STS and five RTGs in August. By the time of the commencement of the port operations, there would be no fewer than five STS cranes and 15 RTGs in place," Ruogang said.

He commended the principal stakeholders of the port, including the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA), Lagos State Government, China Harbour Engineering Company (CHEC) and Tolaram for their commitment to making the Lekki Port project a reality.

The cranes and the RTG equipment will be used in the container-terminal to be operated by Lekki Free Port Terminal, a subsidiary of the CMA Group.

The ZHEN HUA 28 vessel, which conveyed the STS cranes and RTGs to the country, left

Shanghai, China on May 17, 2022 and arrived the Lekki Deep Seaport on July 1, 2022.

Responding to the development, Chairman of Lekki Port, Biodun Dabiri, expressed delight at the arrival of the STS cranes and RTG equipment at the Port, stating that the ZHEN HUA 28 vessel could only berth in the Lekki Port and nowhere else in the country and would continue in the Draught Department at the port.

He recalled how the port project was conceived during former President Olusegun Obasanjo's administration and since then, Lagos State governors from Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Babatunde Fashola, Akinwunmi Abode and Babajide Sanwo-Olu have contributed immensely to the development and actualisation of the port.

He also acknowledged the contributions of Tolaram and China Harbour Engineering Company, the major promoters of the project.

Also speaking, Managing Director of NPA, Mohammed Bello-Koko, described the delivery of the cranes as historical,

as it signified the readiness of the promoters of the port to take trade facilitation a notch higher, while also optimising the opportunities of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement to which Nigeria is a signatory.

He disclosed that the Lekki Port, being the first fully automated port in the country, would contribute a great deal to enhancing port efficiency, adding that the NPA as a regulator was ready to work with all stakeholders under the technical guidance of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) in the deployment of the Port Community System (PCS) to adequately respond to the dictates of global trade facilitation.

General Manager of China Harbour Engineering LFTC Enterprise (CHELE), Xie Xianju, said the contractor of the port also expressed delight at the event, noting that the Lekki Port is the first project in Africa for the China Construction Company (CCC) and CHEC, which integrate investments, construction and operations.

NNPC, Sahara partner on building jetties to boost supply of cooking gas

Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) and Sahara Group, through their joint venture (JV) business-WAGL Energy Limited, have disclosed their readiness to develop and construct jetties in West African countries to boost the supply and penetration of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), popularly called cooking gas within the sub-region.

Managing Director of WAGL Energy Limited, Emmanuel

Ubani, said in a statement made available to journalists recently by Sahara Energy that discussions were already ongoing in stages for the first phase of the project.

Ubani said the move was part of the company's several efforts to take advantage of the opportunities in the energy transition space, adding that WAGL had embarked on developing infrastructure to take advantage of the emerg-

ing energy transition era and create robust benefits for all stakeholders.

While acknowledging growing LPG demand in Africa, Ubani admonished that more strategic policies and investments were required to further promote and deepen the products utilisation in rural communities on the continent.

According to him, for LPG to increase to a significant or dominant market position in

sub-Saharan African countries, an enabling environment must be put in place for the sector.

He listed the elements that made up the enabling environment to include infrastructure of both liquefaction and regasification plants, pipelines and gas distribution trucks, as well as cylinder distribution or segmented local distribution to individuals, homes and industries.

Zenith wins best commercial bank award

By **EDU ABADE**, Business Editor

Zenith Bank Plc has emerged as the Best Commercial Bank in Nigeria, thereby retaining the award for the second year and Best Corporate Governance Bank in the World Finance Corporate Governance Awards 2022.

The awards, which were presented to the Group Managing Director and Chief Executive (MD/CEO), Ebenener Onyeagwu, at the London Stock Exchange (LSE), were in recognition of the bank's ability to embrace digital transformation and best-in-class sustainability and corporate governance practices, leading to a stellar business performance in a difficult economic climate.

Reacting to the recognition, Onyeagwu said: "These awards reflect our strong business fundamentals, resilience and ability to adapt to the ever-changing dynamics of the market through our innovative solutions, as well as our commitment to global best practices."

"As a member and signatory to various domestic and international sustainability frameworks including the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) and the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Sustainable Banking Principles, we will continue to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by creating value for our shareholders, customers, clients, investors, communities and the environment through our practices, operations and investments."

He dedicated the awards to the Founder and Group Chairman of the bank, Jim Ovia, for his pioneering role in building the structures and laying the foundation for an enduring and successful institution; the Board for the outstanding leadership they provide; the staff members their commitment and dedication; and customers for making Zenith Bank their preferred financial institution.

World Finance is a leading international magazine that provides comprehensive coverage and analysis of the financial industry, international business and the global economy.

The editorial combines award-winning reportage, covering a broad range of topics from banking and insurance to wealth management and infrastructure investment, with contributions from notable economists, theorists and consultants in government think tanks and the World Economic Forum (WEF).



Ebenener Onyeagwu

ICRC plans \$22b worth of 53 PPP projects in 2022

By **EDU ABADE**, Business Editor

If insinuations by the Infrastructure Concession Regulatory Commission (ICRC) are anything to go by, the commission will gazette 53 eligible and bankable public private partnership (PPP) projects worth \$22 billion in 2022.

Acting Director-General and Chief Executive Officer of ICRC, Micheal Ohiani, stated this at the Africa Public Private Partnership Network Investment Summit 2022 in Abuja.

He said: "As of May 2022, there are 77 post-contract PPP projects under implementation at the ICRC Projects Disclosure Portal, which is the first disclosure portal in the world, established in collaboration with the World Bank."

"ICRC has also issued 50 Full Business Case Compliance Certificates to date. These are projects to be submitted to our Federal Executive Council (Cabinet) preparatory to their Commercial and Financial Closures."

He also revealed that the ICRC had issued 128 outline business case compliance certificates till date, noting that they

were certified bankable projects and that the certificates would enable them to proceed to the procurement phase.

"Between 2010 and 2021, following the inauguration of our governing board, under the regulatory guidance of the ICRC, the Federal Government approved PPP projects worth over \$9 billion and in 2021, the agency published a pipeline of 51 eligible and bankable PPP projects valued at \$17 billion," he said.

According to him, the list contained the projects from different economic sectors, which have been granted the outline business case compliance certificates, but which did not have identified bidders.

He said with fiscal and budgetary funding constraints plaguing governments across the continent, the reality was that private participation in infrastructure was an economic necessity, rather than an optional financing solution.

"Partnership between the public and private sectors for the financing, design, build, maintenance of infrastructure and delivery of associated services are absolutely necessary



Micheal Ohiani

for Africa governments to meet the need for modern and efficient infrastructure, and for reliable cost-effective delivery of public services," he further said.

"The ICRC is set up to superintend and regulate PPP efforts of the Federal Government with a view to addressing Nigeria's physical infrastructure

deficit and boosting PPPs on the continent.

Also speaking, Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Boss Mustapha, explained that given the constraints on the budget for financing increasing infrastructure needs and in keeping with the practice in other countries with similar situations, the Federal Government had encouraged and supported the strengthening of the framework for PPP policy.

"The country's current financial situation, occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic and dwindling revenues have made the shift to PPPs more compelling than ever before. However, the government will continue to maintain that integrity and transparency must form the basis of all decisions on PPPs to ensure the right framework for effective partnership and value for money," he said.

Mustapha stressed that there was the need for financial sector development by strengthening regulatory and institutional frameworks to improve governance and increase competition, while boosting access to finance and financial literacy, payment systems and creditor rights.

Delay dangerous for graphic health warning policy on tobacco products

By **ANTHONIA UFUOMA**

The decision of the Corporate Accountability and Public Participation Africa (CAPPA) to call out SmokeBoxNG and DaSmokeHub, two popular tobacco vendors for marketing tobacco products on social media has put tobacco industry activities in Nigeria on the spotlight again.

Both organisations, operating from Lagos and Abuja were called out in CAPPA's *Report on Tobacco Industry Capture of the Virtual Space in Nigeria* for engaging popular music icons in the promotion of tobacco products and an alternative lifestyle that kids may innocently believe is hype.

One of the most striking finds that informed the writing of the report is the sheer number of visibility engagements that the tobacco industry promotes online which of course, do not come cheap. This finding would seem to corroborate a report by the United States Center for Disease Control (CDC) which noted that cigarette and smokeless tobacco companies spend billions of dollars each year to market their products. In the US alone, the largest cigarette and smokeless tobacco companies are said to have spent a mind-boggling \$8.2 billion on advertising and promotional expenses in 2019.

While availability and veracity of data is still a big issue in Nigeria, it may not be out of place to conclude that the tobacco companies operating here also spend huge sums of

money on their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities that are visible online and subtle marketing through their front groups.

The CAPPA report identified 226 of such visibility events in the virtual space in Nigeria in the period between 2016 and 2021 and goes on to make a strong argument for the current ban on Tobacco Advertising Promotion and Sponsorships (TAPS) to be enforced more rigorously in online spaces such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, among others where the tobacco industry currently enjoys a free rein. Through these channels they burnish their image and make tobacco products easily accessible to the under-aged and the un-informed.

The findings do not preclude the fact that there are multidimensional efforts by the Nigerian government to arrest the tobacco menace in the country. The Federal Government's introduction of Graphic Health Warnings (GHWs) on tobacco products is still one of such novel initiatives that have drawn the acclaim of the public health community at home and abroad. The policy which kicked off in November 2020 is believed to be good in many ways: Nigerian citizens, especially children are better educated on the dangers of tobacco, and the government can genuinely monitor the kinds of products being marketed in Nigeria.

Under the new policy, tobacco packages must come with pictures and warnings that

cover at least 50 per cent of the front and back of the packages. Text-only health warning is also to be displayed on one of the lateral sides of the packages. The warnings will be rotated every 24 months and will be increased to 60 per cent in June 2024. Most laudable is the fact that the text of the new requirement replaces the former which only required manufacturers to inscribe the message: "The Federal Ministry of Health warns that smokers are liable to die young". Tobacco products in Nigeria now come with messages such as "this product kills," and "this product causes cancer," among others, providing users and potential users information that could influence their decision making.

The policy is in sync with the World Health Organisation (WHO) mandate to Parties to the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) to put in place policies to check the glamourisation of cigarettes or tobacco products. The WHO argument is that a combination of pictures and texts is more effective than text only warnings for communicating the risk of smoking to adolescents to discourage smoking uptake.

Almost two years after the policy kicked off, the enforcement exercise has only taken place in Abuja and Lagos, with no sign on the horizon that enforcement in other parts of the country will begin soon. Most worrisome is the fact that while the Federal Ministry of Health is expected to take the lead in enforcing the policy, it is somewhat laid back. It is

the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC) that has taken the gauntlet in ridding Nigerian markets of the old tobacco packs and educating retailers and vendors on the penalties for flouting the law.

Good as the FCCPC's intervention is, for an industry that is always a step ahead of its regulators, the slow pace and lack of synergy in government enforcement presents an opportunity for tobacco companies to continue with business as usual. For this not to happen, agencies of government that must urgently wake up and be alive to their responsibilities include the Nigeria police, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), the Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON) and the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), among others.

If Nigeria must checkmate the tobacco industry quest for the lungs of our kids, all hands must be on deck. This was the same message that the Federal Ministry of Health conveyed during penultimate week's convening of enforcement stakeholders in Abuja where an implementation template was unveiled.

But the public health community is no longer swayed by words. It is now time to walk the talk. How the Federal Ministry of Health will make that happen is left to be seen, but one thing must influence that decision. A stitch in time saves nine.

• *Anthonia wrote this piece from Warri, Delta State*

NPA to review 30% incentives for Calabar Port users

Stories by **ADAKU WALTER**

Federal Government is planning to review earlier incentives granted importers, exporters, shipping companies and other users, as well as enhance safety of the Calabar Port in Cross River State.

Before now, Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) had granted shipping companies 30 per cent incentives to use the Calabar Port due to decaying infrastructure and its shallow draft, which had discouraged the patronage of vessels.

Managing Director of NPA, Mohammed Bello-Koko, stated this at the commissioning of the

new mini-safety station at the Calabar Port.

According to him, the proposed review was necessitated by the need to ensure that the aims and objectives of such incentives were achieved.

He explained that the review of the incentives was to further ensure that their economic benefits trickle down to all segments of the port stakeholders, which would in turn increase the patronage of the port.

Bello-Koko also said the NPA was committed to increasing economic activities at the Calabar Port, as part of measures to improve the level of its patronage, maintaining that the NPA was

seeking an out-of court settlement with the contractor dredging the Calabar Port channel to find a lasting solution to the limitations in the patronage of the port.

He disclosed that the contract for the dredging of the Calabar Port was awarded several years ago, but pointed out that there had been litigation between NPA and the contractor of the project, adding that the development hindered the dredging of the channel.

Bello-Koko stated that dredging of the channel has been a top priority for the NPA, which he said, made the authority to seek an out-of-court settlement on the contract.



Mohammed Bello-Koko

FAAN meets airline operators over planned closure of runway

Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) has hinted that it may close the 2.7 kilometre 18L/36R domestic runway of the Murtala Mohammed Airport (MMA). It is to enable it to install the Runway Airfield Lighting (AFL), which has been absent since it was last rehabilitated in 2008.

Insider sources say the runway might be closed from July 7, 2022 and work will commence without disruptions, as normal operations would continue on the International Runway 18R/36L.

In a letter written by the airport managers and signed by the Acting Regional General Manager for South West, Arewa

Olatokunbo, a copy of which was obtained by *The Trumpet*, they invited the airline operators for an emergency meeting yesterday to determine the challenges that might result from the closure.

The letter titled: Proposed Plan For Closure Of Runway 18L/36R, read in part: "You are invited to an emergency meeting to discuss the closure of Runway 18L/36R for the completion of the lighting installation of the Runway Airfield.

The insider said major works in installation of approach lights, Runway Lights (Threshold and Centre, edge light and others will be installed so that runway 18L/36R returns to full 24/7 operations after 10 years of abandonment.

Another stakeholder hinted that discussions would centre around contingency for access to operations, stressing that the FAAN was trying to fix long overdue problems to ensure better operations and allow the airlines to work out the chinks, "as every operation of this nature may lead to some disruptions and discomfort.

It would be recalled that the Minister of Aviation, Hadi Sirika, had in March 2022 secured N3.5 billion approval for safety-critical projects of the ministry, as the Federal Executive Council (FEC) approved N3.5 billion for two different major projects on

facilitation and airfield lighting.

It was reported that of the amount, N2.3 billion was earmarked for the supply and installation of airfield ground lighting for the Murtala Mohammed International Airport (MMIA), Lagos, Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport (NAIA), Abuja and the Mallam Aminu Kano International Airport (MAKIA), Kano.

Managing Director of FAAN, Rabiu Yadudu, had recently hinted that a solution would soon be worked out, as agreements have been reached in principle, but that the delay was due to an existing contract that had been delayed for years and as such the Federal Government could not approve a new project when there was an existing one on the same facility.

He said: "The 18 left has been delayed because of a contract that was awarded for several years and finally, the minister has accepted to resolve the protracted issue and he has agreed to grant us permission or approval to quickly procure a new lighting system.

"FAAN is a Federal Government agency and so we cannot work and procure a new project when there is an existing one on the same facility. So many things that are delayed are not delayed because of negligence or lack of attention. It is because we have to follow due process."



Rabiu Yadudu

TRACE to improve traffic management in Ogun gridlock corridors, others

Ogun Traffic Compliance and Enforcement Agency (TRACE) has hinted that it has put measures in place to ensure safe and responsible driving through effective traffic management in the 12 major traffic corridors in the state and other roads during the Eid-El-Kabir festive period.

Public Relations Officer (PRO) of TRACE, Babatunde Akinbiyi, who stated this in a statement, said the operation, which commenced from July 4, 2022 and ends on July 18, 2022, will involve monitoring all praying grounds in the state during the Eid-el-Kabir celebrations to prevent indiscriminate parking and avoidable obstruction of traffic.

He added that the Corps would provide maximum monitoring for motorists and other road users, including high and low capacity vehicles for safety of life and property to be guaranteed on Ogun 12 major traffic corridors, especially at diversions and rerouting points, where road reconstruction are ongoing in addition to timely clearance of obstructions.

He said TRACE would also ensure prompt rescue, emergency service and collaboration with other safety and security agencies.

According to the state traffic agency, the two weeks exercise would include surveillance on 12 Ogun major traffic corridors, the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway, Atan-Lusada-Agbara-Badagry Expressway, Interchange-Sagamu-Ijebu-Ode-Benin-Ore Expressway, Muhammadu Buhari Expressway, formerly Abeokuta-Kobape-Siun-Interchange Expressway, and the Lafenwa-Rounder-Olorunda-Aiyetoro-Imeko-Ilara Border, among others.

Akinbiyi, who felicitated the Muslim faithful on the Eid-el-Kabir celebration, admonished them to avoid night travels, stressing that they should be safety conscious and ensure strict adherence to traffic rules and regulations.

He, however, cautioned that any vehicle contravened any traffic infractions during the celebration would not be released until July 18, 2022, when TRACE would have ended the special Eid-el-Kabir operation order.

Sanwo-Olu commends Julius Berger over Lagos transportation network

Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu has commended Julius Berger Nigeria Plc for assisting Lagos State government to actualise its dream for a better transportation network.

Sanwo-Olu, who stated this at the completion of the first Pile Casting of the Lagos Opebi-Maryland Link Road bridge, described Julius Berger as "the country's leading engineering construction company."

The governor, who was represented by his Special Adviser (SA) on Works and Infrastructure, Aramide Adeyoye, said Julius Berger has been instrumental to translating the state government's

transportation network vision and ideas on paper.

Speaking while explaining the basics of the Link Road project to officials of the Lagos State government, the Project Manager, Denysenko Dmytryi, said the first pile cap being completed was to create a stable foundation for the bridge to be constructed over them, adding that it also offers a larger area for the spread of concrete load that will eventually be anchored on the piles.

He also said the project had been very challenging given its difficult terrain, as all water from Ikeja pass through the link road before discharging into the

Lagoon, adding that nevertheless, Julius Berger would deliver a professional, excellent and quality job even in the challenging topography.

"This project is important to the Lagos State government because of its unique utility value and we remain strongly committed to its accomplishment," he further stated.

The Ojota-Opebi Link Bridge has a total length of 3.89 kilometres comprising 2,829 metre road with 276-metre Deck-on-Pile Bridge and 474 metre Mechanically Stabilized Earth Wall (MSEW) approach sections.

The Lagos State government's legacy project as it called in official

circles, whose construction is taking off 20 years after conception, is expected to link Opebi in Allen Avenue area with Ojota and Maryland through Odo-Iya Alaro underpass.

Sanwo-Olu at the flag-off ceremony last January said that the project scheduled to be completed in 2023, is strategic because of the huge traffic bearing capacity of the area, as it will help reduce the perennial gridlock along the Mobolaji Bank-Anthony Road that leads to the Murtala Mohammed International Airport (MMIA).

"In consideration of the exponential growth rate of commercial activities and services

within the axis and to address the challenge of the huge traffic burden occasioned by the growth, we decided to provide carefully designed innovative solutions to ease the daily gridlock experienced by commuters on the Opebi-Mobolaji Bank Anthony Way- Ojota-Mende corridor," he said.

The governor had earlier stated that there was no direct link between Opebi, Maryland and Ojota, maintaining that the available road infrastructure that linked the axis was also limited in its connectivity options, thus worsening traffic during peak periods around the Ikeja area.

Okowa speaks on missing certificate

•Says I made second best result in 1976

Reports that Vice-Presidential Candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Dr. Ifeanyi Okowa, does not possess the West Africa School Certificate (WASC) have been debunked by him. He said he made the second best result in his set in the country in 1976.

The Delta State Governor said that the issue around the certificate was deliberate wrong perception and unnecessary politics, and explained that virtually all universities in the country offered him admission based on his outstanding performance in WASC and Higher School Certificate (HSC) examination.

Okowa made this known while speaking to journalists after inspecting ongoing projects at the Delta State University of Science and Technology, Ozoro in Isoko North Local Government Area.

He said: "On the issue of my certificate, I think it is a misconception. People try to play politics with everything."

"Yes, I lost my WAEC certificate, but I have the print out from Edo College, Benin City, which clearly stated that I have distinction in all subjects."

"The Higher School Certificate was attached and it has been acknowledged by Edo College and the school put it out there that I made an 'A' 'B' 'B'."

"I do not pride myself but it was very difficult to make such grade in higher school at that time."

"My high school result was the second best nationally in 1976, when I finished. So, many universities admitted me through

Telegram as at that time, and I had to start making choices of which to accept."

"Of course, it's very clear that I finished medical school at the University of Ibadan. I was 21 years and some months; I was less than 22 years of age."

On the ongoing strike by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), the governor called on the Federal Government to expedite action in resolving the issues. He stressed that every government should be sincere enough to keep to promises and agreements at all times.

"We continue to sympathise with our students who have been at home for several months now rather than being in school."

"I use this opportunity to call on the Federal government to do something urgently to end the strike."

"It's not a good thing for the children, parents and even education in general. It is unfortunate that the Federal government has not been able to attend to issues, as requested by ASUU."

"For every government, if promises are made, we must ensure that we keep to our promises and if there are things that cannot be done, you let people know," he said.

Okowa remarked that lecturers were not on strike in the four universities owned by the state, "for us in Delta State, we are fulfilling all the requirements and that's why you can see that this university and our three other universities are all active and in session because we do not have any issues with our lecturers."

"All our four universities

are in session because we pay special attention to education in Delta State, and our Presidential Candidate, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, has also assured that education occupies a prime position in our 'Rescue Nigeria' mission."

He expressed satisfaction with the Management of the university in Ozoro for successfully admitting 1,850 students in the first year, disclosing that no fewer than 3,000 applicants chose the university as first choice in the new session, starting in October.

"That over 3,000 applicants have chosen the University of Science and Technology, Ozoro, as first choice is very heart-warming and it goes to show that our decision to upgrade the Polytechnic to a University of Science and Technology is a very good decision."

He also lauded the university for using the engineering students to execute some projects in the school.

"We walked through some concrete paved roads executed by the university with engineering students and it is very encouraging that they are putting their students to practice and their lecturers also have the opportunity to practicalise what they teach."

"You will recall in the same manner when the school was a polytechnic that they used their students and their engineering staff to build the stadium in the campus."

"This is very encouraging because it is important that we actually ensure that our students are not only groomed up in theory but also put to practice what they learn and that's exactly what we look forward to," the governor said.



Prof. Emmanuel Osodeke

'ASUU will end strike as soon as FG signs pact'

By **OROWO VICTORIA OJIEH**
Education Correspondent

Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) is ready to call off its nationwide industrial action immediately after the Federal Government signs the negotiated agreement.

Speaking on Channels Television on Monday night, ASUU's president, Professor Emmanuel Osodeke, said the union is waiting for a positive response from President Muhammadu Buhari's administration.

ASUU on February 14 embarked on strike to press home its demands from the federal government which include revitalisation of public universities, payment of members' salaries through the recommended University Transparency and Accountability Solution (UTAS), among several others.

"As far as ASUU is concerned, the strike can end tomorrow. We have finished the negotiations. Let the government call

us this night that we should come tomorrow and sign the agreement, we will be there," Osodeke said.

"Let government tell us they have finished testing the UTAS, we have accepted it. By tomorrow, we will call off the strike."

"We are just waiting, and challenging the government. When will they sign the agreement, and when will they accept UTAS? Those are the two questions we need to ask the Nigerian government."

The ASUU President also accused the Federal Government of not taking the aggrieved lecturers seriously, saying it is the reason for the prolonged industrial action.

He also said that the government has failed to pay the striking lecturers their salaries for the past five months.

ASUU strike entered the 141st day on Tuesday with the union and the Federal Government failing to reach an agreement for the overall good of Nigerian students.

No exams on Sallah day, says NECO

By **OROWO VICTORIA OJIEH**
Education Correspondent

No examination has been scheduled for Saturday 9th July, 2022. The clarification was made by the National Examinations Council (NECO).

This is contrary to speculations that it scheduled examination on the day Muslims celebrate Eid-el-Kabir (Sallah).

The council explained this in a statement by its Head, Information and Public Relations Division, Mr Azeez Sani, debunking the rumors of a test fixed on Sallah day.

Mr. Sani said the council

was conscious of the religious festival, and as a result, has made proper provision for such days in fixing examination dates. He stated that NECO gave those sitting for the examinations a week.

"The council has given a whole examination free week, beginning from July 8, to July 13, in the ongoing Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) for school-based candidates."

"This is to enable Muslim faithful to have enough time to celebrate the festival," he said.

The 2022 SSCE for school-based candidates began on 27 June and will end on 12 August 2022.

'Why FG will enroll Ukraine-based students into Nigerian varsities'

By **OROWO VICTORIA OJIEH**
Education Correspondent

Admission of returning Nigerian students whose academics have been affected by the ongoing war in Ukraine



Geoffrey Onyeama

into tertiary institutions in the country will be facilitated by the Federal Government.

The offer was disclosed in a statement issued by the spokesperson of the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Fransisca Omayuli: "The Federal Government of Nigeria wishes to inform Nigerian students who returned from Ukraine following the conflict in that country, that efforts are being made to facilitate their placement into various Nigerian tertiary institutions, to enable them continue their studies."

"In this connection, Interested students should visit the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website: <https://www.foreignaffairs.gov.ng> and complete the online Nigerian Student in Ukraine (NSU) registration form with the required information on or before 15th July, 2022."

The Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24 triggered major threats to Nigerian students in the European country which led to their evacuation.

This offer of admission by the federal government came amid an ongoing strike by academic staff unions which has hindered activities in universities across the country.

Public universities have been shut down for months. It is due to the government neglect of its own universities and refusal to implement the agreements they reached in 2009. The accord includes adoption of the Universities Transparency and Accountability Solution (UTAS) for paying staff salaries instead of the Integrated Personnel Payroll Information System as well as payment of academic earned allowance (EAA), among others.

My journey to Fashion world bitter-sweet - Shade

By OMONIYI ALLI

For the love and passion for creating beautiful pieces, Abiodun Shade Sandra, CEO Anjy Luminee Couture, has revealed that the journey to her successful brand has been a bitter-sweet one because she had to sacrifice a lot to get to where she is now.

She disclosed that she has never for once gone to a fashion school to learn the craft. Instead, she was only inspired by her neighbour whom she watched peddle the sewing machine and all she did was go back home and practice using needle and thread.

Recalling those years, Luminee said 'I liked to craft anything; I will cut pieces of old leather bags and craft it into baby shoes. I used to take my dad's clothes (agbada) from his basket and cut it with razor blade then later sew use them to something nice.

"My dad used to wonder why I was so hardworking as a little girl. At the same time, he would scream out my name in the neighborhood that I had destroyed his clothes," she recalls. When asked where she trained as a professional designer, she said I never learnt this profession; as in I didn't go for any form of training in order to know this job up till now.

On growing up

I grew up in my own hometown, Ijesha-Isu in Ekiti state alongside my parents and siblings; I was never born with a silver spoon but I was able to make myself a queen in my own right and as such I am no resting on my oars until counting billions means nothing to



me. Growing up, my father especially was an advocate of every child have to know or learn something handy while my mother was keen on us all getting education at all cost.

Even at the time when I was destroying my father's beautiful clothes to make sketches; although he was not happy I parted with some of his favourite attires but he was indeed proud that at that little age, I could design, make sketches and even sew clothes. However so as not to disappoint my mother, I was enrolled at Ibadan Polytechnic where I bagged my National Diploma in Accounting but my mother was not satisfied with the Polytechnic degree alone; so I proceeded to Lagos State University where I bagged a degree in Business Administration. My mother was super proud of me that I graduated with 2:2.

Started with one sewing machine

It took a while before I could afford to buy a sewing machine but because I did not want to give up on the craft, I will go to a friend place, once she is on break to go have something to eat; I will immediately mount on the machine and quickly sew jobs that I have, while doing that, I learnt to make conscious use of the one hour break my friend goes off the machine to meet up with clients orders. As time went on, I was able to make saving good enough to get a machine of own.

However now, I can boast of several machines including industrial machines of my own

The big breakthrough

The fact that I had started sowing for while but yet only few family and friends supports and encourages me never to relent since it was something I have 100% passion for. There is use to be one friend of mine I call Adunni (Yinka) whom I sewed a dress from and when she posted it on her Instagram page, popular actress Mercy Aigbe admire it and reached out to her and asked for the brain behind the collection of designs Adunni wore and that was It.

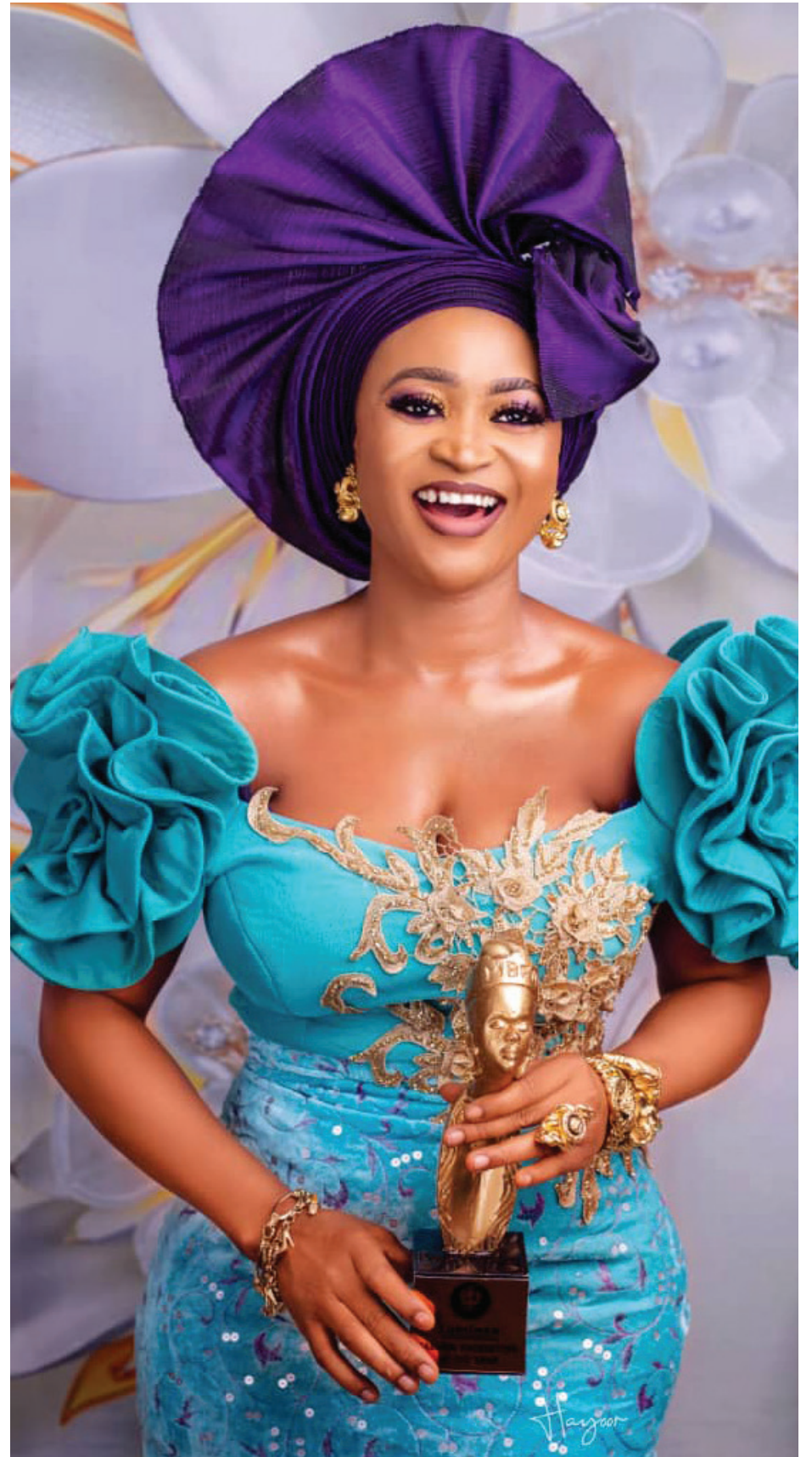
The Mercy Call

One morning, my phone rang and boom!! Mercy Aigbe called me and requested that she will want to come down to my place so that we can discuss on how to make a piece of cloth for her but because I was star stroked and lived with other friends; I told her instead I will come visiting her.

I made a mini feather dress for her that she rocked to an event and the dress sparked a lot of praises from her colleagues and the public; shortly after Iyabo Ojo also contacted me for jobs and the rest is history.

The award-winning AMVCA look

Recounting one of her biggest moment; Luminee as she is fondly called noted that one of her biggest moment which also help give her brand more prominence was the dress she made for Aigbe, which she wore to the 2016 Africa Magic Viewers' Choice Awards (AMVCA), which won her the best dressed award at the event, and which



wowed the over 5,000 guests at the Eko Hotel Convention Centre and a global TV audience.

Being a celebrity designer

From that first dress I made for actress Mercy Aigbe, she immediately made me her designer and kept supporting my brand till now and through her I can boldly say she made my breakthrough, made me popular, connected me to other celebrities and clients. If anyone would tell me my brand will be this big now, I will question such a person but in all, I believe this is God's calling for me, especially when I didn't learn it; it was just in thing "I had to put in a lot of hard work so that people will accept me, and that is how I arrived where I am today.

Clients rollcall

I have lost counts of my clients both home and abroad, I have made dresses for top socialites, queens and celebrities that's includes Mercy Aigbe, Iyabo Ojo, Sola Sobowale, Ini Edo, Oge Okoye, Sonia Ighalo, Fathia Williams, Dayo Amusa, Mide Martins, Queen Ogunwusi, Kemi Afolabi, Bobrisky, Bukola Adeeyo, Eniola Badmus, Ayo Adesanya to mention but few

Best wishes

Despite my parents efforts on all my siblings especially me; I wish my parents are alive to see what the moral they instill in me have brought me. I recall I did made a promise to my father that I will build him a mansion which I did but he died before I could complete the mansion. I am definitely sure they are both proud of what I have become.

Wellness

Amazing facts about hugging

To what extent do you know what hugging means and the benefits of hugging? Hugging is one of the physical expressions used by humans to show they care but the health benefits are not known to all. People hug for various reasons; to relieve someone of some stress, to comfort someone or as a sign of love. We often hug each other when we are happy. Hugging conveys a lot of feelings that words cannot express. When we hug each other, we express how we are feeling and how we feel about each other. It is really amazing how hugging a disturbed person could make the person relaxed to a large extent. We feel our troubles ease away and our worries replaced by happiness and trust when we hug. Some miracles happen when we hug. Do you know what wonderful things that happen when you hug someone? Have you wondered what happens within our body when we hug? Do you know hugging is effective at healing sickness, depression, loneliness, disease and stress?

Here are some of the most amazing physiological miracles that happen in our bodies thanks to hugs.

1. Elevates one's mood: Hugging can increase the production of serotonin from your brain, which improves your mood and can boost your self-esteem. A person experiences depression and loneliness when their serotonin levels are low. Serotonin is a neurotransmitter that is involved in depression, appetite. It is crucial in maintaining a sense of well-being and security. The release of this hormone elevates the mood and creates happiness. Hugging causes the brain to release serotonin and endorphin to blood vessels to create pleasure and negate sadness. Hugging also results in improved performance at work and at school. Hugging causes our body to relax and release all the tension in our body at that time. It brings about assurance. You can hug someone to ease the worry of the day.

2. Increases Bonding: Hugging can cause a release of oxytocin from the brain, causing us to bond with our partner. This hormone heals depression, anger, loneliness and isolation. The release of this hormone causes a rise in feelings of commitment and intimacy as we share feelings for each other through hugging. It helps to mend broken bonds. It can help in strengthening our bonds and can open up the gates to the depths of our minds. It can help in establishing a sense of trust between people and can make us open our hearts each other. Try hugging with your partner, friends and family to feel



your bond strengthen!

3. Relieves Pain: Hugging releases endorphins, which relieve pain by blocking pain pathways. This removes pain-stimulating peptides like bradykinins. Hugging relaxes the muscles. They soothe the ache by increasing circulation of soft tissues. When you feel pains, hugging someone is not a bad idea.

4. Balances Nervous System: Hugging balances the nervous system. The galvanic response measured from someone who receives a hug shows a marked change in skin conductance. The skin contains a network of tiny egg-shaped pressure sensors called the Pacinian corpuscles which are in contact with the brain through the Vagus nerve, they can sense touch. The effect of moisture and electricity over the skin during hugging shows

a balanced state of parasympathetic nervous system that slows the heart and relaxes muscles. This is achieved by psychophysiological coherence created by passionate hugging.

5. Increases empathy and understanding: Hugging helps to put yourself in the shoes of the person you are hugging, especially if the person is in a bad mood and needs your comfort. A sincere and passionate hug allows for the exchange of feelings across the bioenergetics field generated by the heart, causing us to empathize with the other person. It aids understanding because you begin to feel the way the other person is feeling. Hugging helps you open your heart to people you care about.

6. Boosts Immune System: Hugging stimulates the Thymus gland, which regulates and balances the



body production of white blood cell to keep the body healthy and diseases free. Hugging can decrease the stress hormone which inhibits the immune system and increase the hormones and peptides that regulate the functioning of immune cells. Learn to give your children hugs and keep them healthy and immune.

7. Alleviates Stress: Hugging alleviates stress by reducing the levels of circulating cortisol which is the stress hormones in the blood. This helps the mind to calm down. This helps in decreasing cortisol-induced hyperglycemia and diabetes mellitus. There is an amazing link between touch and relieving stress.

Hugging has a lot of benefits. It keeps our body relaxed and makes us feel happy. There is absolutely nothing to lose from hugging so keep helping people survive by hugging. For an inanimate object like a teddy bear to soothe individual's existential fears, simply imagining hugging a person you love the most can cause your brain to release serotonin, dopamine, and endorphin, triggering feelings of happiness and joy. This will also negate worries by decreasing the levels of stress hormone, by altering the perception of the brain, and by evoking positive emotions. Hug and live long!

KEEP HUGGING!



World Athletics Council cancels China championships

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

World Athletics Half Marathon Championships Yangzhou 22 in November 2022 have been cancelled following the pandemic in China.

The world governing body in a meeting with the Local Organising Committee (LOC) and Chinese Athletics Association (CAA), mutually decided in the best interest of the sport and participants to terminate the Yangzhou event.

In a statement by Sebastian Coe, President of World Athletics, the championship cannot be held this year and the Chinese are innocent of any wrongdoing but assured prospective participants that there will be Riga next year to fill up the lapses.

“Unfortunately, the championships can’t be held this year, through no fault of the LOC, but our endurance athletes will have the opportunity to compete in Riga next year,” said Coe.

The President commended the LOC and CAA for the

excellent job done so far to ensure the event would have been top-notch.

He stressed that the world athletics governing body is amazed at the impressive organisation and have decided to award another athletics event to Yangzhou in 2027.

He added, “The Council’s decision to award another event to Yangzhou in 2027 indicates its faith in the organizing committee and willingness to return and stage a World Athletics Series Road running event there at the first available

opportunity.”

Meanwhile, the body has disclosed that the World Athletics Road Running Championships, which will make their debut in Riga, Latvia, on 30 September - 1 October 2023, will incorporate the half marathon championships in future, as well as introduce world 5km championships.

The athletics body added that Mass races will be held alongside the elite championships to allow recreational runners to be part of a global festival of road running.

Stephen Odey on Celtic’s, Rangers’ watchlists

Nigeria international Stephen Odey has surfaced on the watch lists of Scottish league giants, Celtic and Rangers.

According to Scottish media, The Horses striker in the Danish topflight league is amazed about the news but insists he will not be distracted from what he knows how to do best.

Though Celtic and Rangers are yet to make any official offer for the former Genk striker, who previously processed a loan spell at Randers FC, the Super Eagle, who has been capped three times for the national team stated that his agent will handle any intending offers.

“These are big clubs, and it is clear that this is something that I want to be open to. But I’m in Randers FC, and right now that’s the only thing that matters,” Odey told *amtsavisen.dk*.

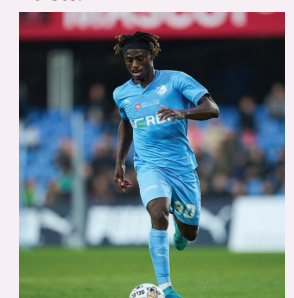
“As long as I have not been presented with anything concrete, as I said, I will not let myself be disturbed by it.

“Rumours can spread

quickly, but it’s not something I want to be distracted by. My agent takes care of everything that may be around the transfer market. I’m not trying to think about it. The important thing for me as a player is to focus on the preparations for the new season.

“If the right club comes, Randers FC has no choice but to let me go. But I am happy to be in Randers FC, and that does not change the fact that there are some rumours about other clubs,” he added.

Odey last season netted 7 goals in 15 appearances for Randers FC in Denmark Superligaen to complement his 13 goals in all competitions from 32 appearances for the Horses.



Great Britain selects 78 athletes for Oregon22 championships

Great Britain has selected 78 of its best athletes to represent the country in various categories at the World Athletics Championships taking place in Oregon, United States.

The world event which has been slated to kickstart in the next two weeks from July 15 - 23, has seen the likes of World champions Dina Asher-Smith and Katarina Johnson-Thompson featured in the list.

According to a report by World Athletics which added that 78 selected athletes will represent both Great

Britain and Northern Ireland, Olympic silver medalists Keely Hodgkinson and Laura Muir will compete in the 800m and 1500m respectively.

In a statement by the Olympic head coach, Christian Malcolm, he claimed that the numbers which are healthy for the competition will have athletes competing in various categories.

Malcolm said, “We are taking a large team of 78 to Oregon with athletes competing across a number of disciplines which is really encouraging to see and is healthy for



the sport overall.

“I look forward to seeing how they all perform in America in a couple of weeks,” the coach revealed.

Last year’s Olympic

bronze medalists in Japan, Pole vaulter Holly Bradshaw and 1500m runner Josh Kerr, coupled with 800m champion, Max Burgin also made the cut.

Premier League player arrested over alleged rape

A player in the English Premier League has been arrested by the Metropolitan Police over an alleged rape incident.

According to a report by The Telegraph, the player whose identity is being concealed for legal reasons has been detained and is currently in custody over the said incident that happened at the latter end of June.

A statement by the Metropolitan Police said: “On 4 July, an allegation of rape of a woman in her 20s was reported

to police.”

“It was reported the alleged rape happened in June 2022. Enquiries into the circumstances are ongoing.”

The report stated that the player who is currently in detention in north London has seen his club refusing to comment on the issue which may result in him not partaking in its pre-season tour.

Moreover, the said player is expected to go to the World Cup in Qatar with his national team.

Christensen joins Barcelona until 2026

Former Chelsea defender Andreas Christensen has signed a contract with Barcelona that will see him further his career in Camp Nou until 2026.

The Denmark international whose contract at Stamford Bridge ended last month refused to extend it with emerging rumours linking him to join Xavi Hernandez in Catalonia.

According to reports, Christensen becomes the sixth Danish in history to join the Catalans.

Although at present, there happens to be a Danish striker in the Barcelona team, a Spanish report claims that Martin Braithwaite is out of Xavi’s plans for the new season.

MundoDeportivo stated that the first Danish players in the history of Barça were Allan Simonsen (1979-82), Michael Laudrup (1989-

94), Thomas Christiansen (1991-93) and Ronnie Ekelund (1992-94). With Allan Braithwaite following the queue, Christensen emerged as the sixth to wear Barca’s jersey.

Reportedly, the 26-year-old defender’s contract with Barcelona contains a buyout clause that amounts to €500,000 should any club desire to sign him before his contract elapses in Camp Nou.

Barcelona on its official website has described the defender as a winner with experience, who was born on April 10 in the town of Lillerod in Denmark.

The club added that Christensen is ‘strong and with great vision’ and a “powerful centre back who is excellent in the air. Technically proficient with the ball at his feet also, he is a perfect fit for the Blaugrana back four”.

CAF announces 150% increment in WAFCON prize money

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

Confederations of African Football (CAF) has announced an increment of 150% in the prize monies of this year's Women's African Cup of Nations (WAFCON) taking place in Morocco.

CAF said the decision was in line with its new policy to make women's football in the continent competitive.

In a statement by CAF President, Dr Patrice Motsepe, on Saturday, he noted that the overall prize money in the 2022 TotalEnergies (WAFCON) event has increased from



\$975,000 to \$2,400,000.

According to Motsepe, the continental football governing body has identified women's football as one of its top priorities and will ensure they continue to add value to the

women's football events.

He said, "The winner of this year's edition of the TotalEnergies Women's Africa Cup of Nations, Morocco 2022 will pocket USD 500 000 – a 150% increase of USD 300

000. Previous winners of this competition received USD 200 000.

"The prize money for runners-up has almost doubled from USD 175 000 to USD 300 000 and the semi-finalists will get USD 225 000 each which has increased from USD 125 000," CAF President added.

The 2022 edition of WAFCON has taken off on a good note with host nation Morocco starting on a winning note against Burkina Faso at Prince Moulay Abdellah Stadium, Rabat, to record the first victory in the 2022 edition, while Senegal walloped Uganda 2-0 on Sunday in their opening game.

Arsenal signs Gabriel Jesus on five-year deal

Gabriel Jesus has officially made a switch to the Emirates Stadium after many talks surrounding the player's move away from the Etihad Stadium.

In a report this morning from Manchester City to confirm the deal that was reportedly concluded on the £45m mark, Jesus is already relishing his position as a top 9 striker for Mikel Arteta's team.

"I'm a number nine," Jesus said after completing the deal to Emirate Stadium.

"I'm a striker and I thank God every day that I can be alive, and that I can play in three or four different positions - but I think my position is nine," Arsenal newbie added.

Jesus further stated that he has come to help Arsenal score goals, a club he has followed right from the days of Thierry Henry.

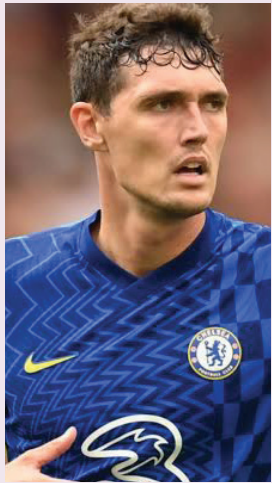
He continued: "My best

qualities are being on the pitch to help with or without the ball. Of course, I'm a striker and I have to score goals, and I've come to score goals and to help with assists and my work. But obviously, I want to score goals.

"I followed Arsenal when I was young because of [Thierry] Henry. Obviously I didn't follow too many European teams but when I saw some of the players that played here, I was like: 'Wow, this club is big'. I'm so happy to sign for this big club," the Brazilian added elatedly.

The move will see the player partner with Eddie Nketiah, who recently signed a new contract at the Emirates Stadium, to increase the firepower of the club that narrowly missed the UEFA Champions League spot to rivals Tottenham.

Eriksen picks United over Brentford



Denmark international and former Tottenham midfielder, Christian Eriksen has opted to join Manchester United than renew his contract with London club Brentford.

Eriksen joined Brentford in the second half of last season after coming back from a life-threatening cardiac arrest in Euro 2020 but with the player's deal having come to an end, he has chosen to join Erik ten Hag in Old Trafford.

According to emerging reports which reveal the player would be signing a three-year deal with the Red

Devils to keep him in the club until 2025, Eriksen agreed in principle to reunite with the United boss.

The 30-year-old will undergo a medical soon before completing a permanent switch subject to an agreement on personal terms.

Eriksen's choice of United over Brentford is more than the monetary value according to reports from England as the player considered certain factors while he mulled over the offers.

Should the player complete

the move, he would be among the first players to have been signed for the Red Devils since Ten Hag took over from United's interim manager Ralf Rangnick.

Sky Sports reports that the news of Eriksen agreeing to join United come after Ronaldo declared he want to leave United following their slow business in the summer transfer market.

The Portuguese national team captain went as far as missing Monday's pre-season training citing family reasons.

Southampton wants to sign Aribo of Rangers

Premier League club, Southampton, are weighing their options to take Super Eagles and Rangers midfielder, Joe Aribo, to St Mary's Stadium this summer.

The midfielder, who is being courted by several Premier League clubs still has a year left to run at Ibrox.

Aside from Southampton, the player has been heavily linked with a move to Villa Park to reunite with Steven Gerrard, who once coached the Super Eagle at Rangers.

Although Rangers expect The Saints to make a formal

offer for the player, who scored in the Europa League final against German club Eintracht Frankfurt in Seville last season, the Gers are in pursuit of PAOK forward Antonio Colak.

Premier League newcomer Nottingham Forest, Crystal Palace and Fulham are all courting the 25-year-old Gers' midfielder but a recent report by Daily Records reveals that Southampton are at the forefront of securing Aribo's signature.

Should Aribo consent to the deal to switch to head coach Ralph Hasenhüttl's



side this summer, it will be a return to England after leaving Charlton Athletic

for Ibrox on a free transfer 4 years ago.

The number 10 made his debut for the national side in 2019 under former coach Gernot Rohr and has earned 20 caps, netting 2 goals for Nigeria in international friendly matches.

Last season, Aribo played 70 matches to become the only player in Europe's top divisions to reach the mark in a single season, and he was also instrumental to help Rangers reach the Europa League final where they lost on penalties to Eintracht Frankfurt.

Kalvin Phillips completes £45m Man City switch

Leeds United midfielder Calvin Phillips has moved to Premier League champions, Manchester City.

According to the reports from England, the midfielder who is being tagged as a replacement for Fernandinho that left last season, joined City for about £45 million.

This is the first move the English international has made since he joined Leeds United's senior team eight years ago where his performances complemented the team's promotion to the Premier League last two seasons ago.

Phillips, under Leeds boss Marcelo Bielsa, has flourished in the midfield position netting 14 goals from 214 appearances and

this earned him a call-up to the Three Lions national team where he has earned 23 caps.

The player, in his interview after finalising the deal, said he is happy to make a move to the club considered the best in England and parades a manager that is one of the best in the world.

Phillips said, "I'm absolutely delighted to have joined Man City."

"City have proved again to be the best team in the country, with an amazing squad and a manager in Pep Guardiola who is rightly considered to be the finest in the world."

"To be able to play under Pep, learn from him and his coaching staff as well as being part of a

fantastic squad is a prospect that I'm incredibly excited about.

"City are a world-class club with world-class staff and facilities. It's a dream come true to join," the midfielder commended.

Commending the deal, City's football director Txiki Begiristain conceded that Phillips has long been on the radar of the club that fancied his progress in the English league.

He added that the player's abilities are commendable, including his energy and drive make him a good stock in the club squad.

"Kalvin is a player that we have long admired, and at both domestic and international level,

he has proved his fantastic ability and quality over the past few seasons," Begiristain revealed.

"His reading of the game, alongside his passing ability, energy and drive make him a formidable talent and he is a player who has a fantastic will to win."

"We feel he will be a superb addition to our squad and that he will complement our game perfectly."

"Everyone here is looking forward to watch Calvin play and develop even further over the next few years," he added.

The 26-year-old signed a six-year deal with Pep Guardiola's side and will remain in the Etihad Stadium until 2028.

Sadiq rejects Bayern, Benfica, waits for Sevilla

Almeria forward Umar Sadiq fancies a move to join Sevilla and could wait after his contract ends with Rojiblancos.

The player has been on the radar of several European top clubs but the Super Eagle prefers to remain in Spain with reports claiming he rejected offers from Bayern and Benfica to await Sevilla's offer.

Reportedly, Sadiq has been on the watchlist of Sevilla, who have spotted the goal poacher while he was at the Spanish Segunda division but with the club having gained promotion to La Liga, the issue becomes a bit complicated for Sevilla.

Sevilla needs Sadiq to bolster their attack having proven last season as a reliable goalscorer, netting 18 goals in 36 appearances for Almeria in the Spanish second-tier division to complement their promotion to the top-tier.

However, Sevilla can only finance the deal with proceeds from the sale of Jules Koundé, who is on heavily linked with a move

to Stamford Bridge, while Barcelona have planned a €45m bid for the defender.

More so, if Sevilla does not intend to proceed with the signing, the 25-year-old who months ago agreed verbally to join the Spanish club, could change his mind.

Other European clubs like Dutch champions Ajax and RB Leipzig are on standby having shown strong interest in the player.

With Almeria star eager to switch to the Spanish club, All is left for Sevilla director of football, Ramón Rodríguez Verdejo to facilitate the deal before the Super Eagles' striker changes his mind.



“Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself.”

— Leo Tolstoy



Pinnick denies planning media attacks on Buhari, Dare over alleged third term bid

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

■ I hold Buhari in high esteem, says NFF president

President, Nigeria Football Federation (NFF), Amaju Pinnick, has expressed shock at a report in a section of the media, which claimed that he had attacked President Muhammadu Buhari and Minister of Youth and Sports Development, Hon Sunday Dare, over a perceived aspiration for a third term.

In a report apparently syndicated, the FIFA Council Member was alleged to be on a “spending spree” in the media to “tarnish the image of the Minister and also undermine Mr President’s authority to speak about Nigerian football,” without any instance given or any quote attributed to Mr. Pinnick.

He had been allegedly fingered in a plot to launch a campaign of calumny against Buhari and Dare following their insistence that the September Congress to elect new national executives into the country’s football governing body must hold.

In June, Buhari wrote to the NFF to start all the necessary steps towards holding the September Congress, adding that the statutes be amended to accommodate all football stakeholders.

Following the above, the sports ministry last month met with all the aggrieved parties, who had dragged the NFF

to court to obtain an ex-parte order depriving the nation’s football governing body from holding its September Congress in 2022.

According to a plaintiff, Mr Seigha Obiene, a board member of Nembe City FC, who in 2021 approached a Federal High Court, Bayelsa State Judicial Division with suit number FHC/YNG/CS/133/2021, five members of the NFF Congress, who were part of the Elective Congress in Katsina in 2018 participated illegally in the elections. He asked the court to declare the elections null and void.

Suspecting that Pinnick is covertly working to see how he could extend his stay in office beyond 2022, using his relationship with the world football governing to achieve his goal and relying on the pending ex-parte order before a competent of

jurisdiction in Bayelsa State, the sports ministry meddled in. It appealed that the ex-parte order be withdrawn.

Pinnick was allegedly angered by the strides achieved by the ministry in ensuring that September Congress holds and his plans to extend his stay beyond office thwarted. Consequently, the NFF president has allegedly set up a media team to run a campaign of calumny against Buhari and the minister.

According to the report, Pinnick has informed his media mercenaries to be on standby to run amok on various platforms to tarnish the image of the President and Dare, while raising sentiments against the duo and possibly invoke a ban on football activities as was done to basketball before the decision was rescinded by Buhari.



Pinnick

However, on Tuesday, Pinnick in a statement, said: “This is a clear case of a dirty campaign. I have never given any interview or motivated any media person to write anything about the President’s directives or to insult the Honourable Minister.

“As I speak, we are making arrangements to hold the Annual General Assembly once the court

communicates to our attorney the Notice of Discontinuance of the two cases that have been delaying the convocation of the Congress.

“I could have kept quiet over this kind of silly campaign but it is important to put the record straight and also, I have the highest regards for the person of His Excellency, President Buhari, the Government and its

institutions. This is a hatchet job, and such can always happen in political times. The campaigners have failed woefully.”

Pinnick, who is at the ongoing Women Africa Cup of Nations in Morocco, said he was ready to return fire for fire with purveyors of falsehood and half-truths, whether they operate day or night, or on legacy or social media.

“It is time to give it in full measure to those who hawk blatant falsehood and spend their days and nights planning evil. It will no longer be business as usual.

“President Buhari has remained an amazing father and lover of Nigeria Football and the National Teams. None of these dirty campaigns by disgruntled persons and haters can have any impact,” the NFF President added.

Two police officers shot during July Fourth celebration in United States

By **OROWO VICTORIA OJIEH** with agency report

Two Philadelphia police officers were shot near the Benjamin Franklin Parkway on Monday as thousands of people celebrated a Fourth of July concert and fireworks show.

The shooting came hours after a gunman on a rooftop opened

fire on families waving flags and children riding bikes at a Fourth of July parade in the Chicago suburb of Highland Park, where six people were killed and over 36 were wounded.

Both officers in Philadelphia were released from hospital after suffering non-life threatening injuries, Philadelphia Mayor

Jim Kenney said adding that police were searching for the shooter.

Video from the incident showed hundreds of people running from the Benjamin Franklin Parkway after shots were fired.

Kenney said his administration was pleading with lawmakers to stop the flow of guns into the city.

“Our traditions cannot and will not be ruined by the scourge of gun violence,” he said.

The gunfire broke out late on Monday near the Philadelphia Museum of Art on the final day of a festival with a large number of people watching a fireworks show after a concert.

“There is a security incident on the Benjamin Franklin

Parkway,” emergency authorities said, referring to the shooting.

Police instructed people in surrounding buildings to shelter in place.

Philadelphia Police are advising people who are looking to reunite with loved ones on the parkway to meet at the Free Library of Philadelphia and others were asked to avoid the area.