



News as it breaks

Daybreak

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President Muhammadu Buhari receives briefing from Imo state governor Hope Uzodinma at the State House Abuja.

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COVER

By Joshua Tashe

President Muhammadu Buhari yesterday met with Governor Hope Uzodinma of Imo State, the Minister of Power, Abubakar Aliyu, and the Chief Economic Adviser, Prof Doyin Salami, to a meeting at the Presidential Villa.

The President according to a statement by his spokesman, Garba Shehu, scheduled a meeting separately with them to be apprised of the latest developments in Imo State, the power sector and the state of the economy.

It would be recalled that the President, while condemning the spate of violence in Imo state, in the aftermath of the destruction of buildings and

State of the Nation

* *Buhari meets with Imo Governor, Power Minister, Economic Adviser*

assets of the Police and the home of Prof. George Obiozor, President-General of Ohaneze Ndigbo, pledged to review the

security situation in southeast Nigeria.

President Buhari has also voiced his concern over the

frequent power outages in recent weeks, apologising to Nigerians and assuring them of a quick resolution.

Tension as Kaduna declares 24 hours curfew in 2 LGs

By Achadu Gabriel, Kaduna

Kaduna State Government has declared a 24-hour curfew in Jema'a and

Kaura local government areas with immediate effect to down tension following advice from security agencies in the affected LGAs.

The curfew is to assist the security agencies to stabilize the situation in those areas to save lives and property and enable the restoration of law and order, in the places ravaged by terror attacks and killings.

A statement from the Ministry of Internal Security and Home Affairs commissioner Mr Samuel Aruwan stated that security agencies have full authorization to enforce the curfew. "Government appeals to all residents of Jema'a and Kaura local government areas to cooperate with the security agencies in the urgent task of restoring peace and upholding law and order.

Government condemns the violence and all acts of lawlessness that have occurred in the area", it stated, adding further updates would be issued as necessary.

Recalled that reported emanated from the areas had it that terrorists attacked and killed scores and destroyed properties in early hours of Monday, with casualties figures, unauthorised sources put at 23 persons so far.

Court sacks 20 Cross River lawmakers for defecting to APC

By Samuel Itsede

A Federal High Court in Abuja has sacked 20 members of the Cross River State House of Assembly for defecting to the All Progressives Congress (APC).

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) had instituted a suit against the lawmakers over their defection to the APC.

The affected lawmakers are Michael Etaba, Legor Idagbor, Eteng Jonah William, Joseph A. Basse, Odey Peter Agbe, Okon E. Ephraim, Regina L. Anyogo, Matthew S. Olory, Ekpo Ekpo Basse, Ogbor Ogbor Udop, and Ekpe Charles Okon.

Others are Hillary Ekpong Bisong, Francis B. Asuquo, Elvert Ayambem, Davis Etta, Sunday U. Achunekan, Cynthia Nkasi, Edward Ajang, Chris Nja-Mbu Ogar, and Maria Akwaji.

In opposing the suit, Mike Ozekhome, counsel to the 4th-25th defendants, had challenged the court's jurisdiction to hear the suit.

He submitted that the cause of action arose in Calabar and that the matter should be transferred to the high court in Calabar.

In his judgement, the presiding judge, Justice Taiwo Taiwo, held that "there is nothing against the law that the suit be heard by this court". He said the 4-25th defendants are joined with other defendants who have their offices in Abuja.

Furthermore, in their defence, the lawmakers had argued that there was rancor in the PDP which led to their expulsion from the party.

The APC had in their submissions, told the court that the lawmakers are not registered members of their party.

However, the judge held that the defendants had intentions to mislead the court. He said he found gaps and loopholes in their defence as they tried to twist events to suit their own narratives.

Taiwo noted that they not only defect loudly but "took pictures of their defection and were received by the officials of the 26th defendant.

"There is no doubt that the defendants can belong to or join any political association and assembly as they are free to do so. However, the truth must be told.

"I consider the attempts of the 6th - 25th defendants to justify

their defection, feeble in the circumstances of this case."

Taiwo noted that the public voted for the lawmakers through the plaintiff who sponsored them and they were not voted for as independent candidates.

"They had a vehicle which conveyed them and that vehicle belongs to the plaintiff. They cannot abandon the vehicle," he held.

He stated that politicians treat citizens that elected them into power as if they do not matter when they assume office, adding that a day will come when elected officers must resign their post if they migrate to another party or seek the permission of the people for permission before they decamp.

EFCC Recovers N152bn, \$386m; Records 2,220 Convictions in One Year -- Bawa

The Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Abdulrasheed Bawa, on Monday said the Commission had within the last year, secured an unprecedented conviction record of 2, 220 and recoveries in excess of N152billion, \$386million, among other recoveries.

Bawa spoke at the opening ceremony of the 5th Annual General Assembly (AGA) meeting of the Network of National Anti-Corruption Institutions in West Africa (NACIWA)

Speaking to journalists after the opening ceremony of the two-day event, Bawa added that out of the over 2000 convictions recorded in the last one year, 641 took place in 2022 alone.

"The Commission has also embarked on several reforms aimed at strengthening the institution, including the development of a reporting application named Eagle Eye, to ease the reporting of incidences of economic and financial crimes by the public.

"The EFCC has further developed a five-year Strategic Plan that guides its operational approach in law enforcement action," he said in his speech at the opening ceremony. The NACIWA Assembly was co-hosted by both the EFCC and the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC).

Why we are Keeping Obiano in Custody

The Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Abdulrasheed Bawa, on Monday also said the Commission has granted former Governor of Anambra state, Willie Obiano, bail.

He however added that the EFCC is still keeping him because he has not fulfilled his bail conditions.

Bawa, who fielded questions from journalists on the margins of the ongoing 5th Annual General Assembly (AGA) meeting of the Network of National Anti-Corruption Institutions in West Africa (NACIWA), rejected the allegation by the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) that Obiano's travails are political in nature.

"He has been granted bail and we are waiting for him to perfect the bail conditions and everything is going well."

"There is nothing political here. We have no business with politics. We are just doing our job and we will do what we have to do professionally. We will keep doing all we have to do to ensure we stick to the rules and we are as professional as possible.

It would be recalled that Obiano was arrested at the Murtala Mohammed International Airport, Lagos, last Thursday, few hours after he handed over to his successor, Governor Charles Chukwuma Soludo.

The anti-graft agency subsequently transferred him to its office in Abuja for further interrogation.

The former governor, who had been on EFCC's watchlist, was among other offences, accused of misappropriating public funds totalling about N42billion.



Human Right: From left: Human Right Lawyer, Femi Falana; Executive Director, Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre, Clement Nwankwo and Chairman, House Committee on Human Rights, Hon. John Dyegeb during the PLAC capacity development retreat for House committee on Human Rights held in Abuja yesterday

EDITORIAL

National Assembly must review its position on gender equity bills

It is shocking and disgraceful that after several years of agitation the National Assembly stepped down crucial gender equity bills in the just concluded vote on constitutional amendment.

For several years, the male-dominated NASS has frustrated bills that seek to empower women.

The gender equity bill suffered similar fate in the Sixth Senate in 2010 when Chris Anyanwu first initiated it. The same flimsy ground of religion was adduced for its rejection in blatant negation of Nigeria's secularity as enshrined in the constitution. Such retrogressive attitude, especially from the North, keeps Nigeria down.

The Africa Report details how 11 pieces of legislation that seek to promote gender equality have similarly been frustrated in the last decade. They include the Gender Equal Opportunities, Abuse and Administration Bill, 2010; Gender Equal Opportunities Abuse and Administration Bill 2012 (both sponsored by Helen Esuene). Others include the Affirmative Action (Equal Opportunity for Women) Bill, 2012; Gender and Equal Opportunity Bill, 2014 both sponsored by Uzoma Nkem-Abonta; Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Act, 2015; Electoral Act (Amendment) Bill, 2015 to ensure that all Political Parties are Gender-Sensitive and to eliminate all forms of discrimination in all political parties; and the Women Participation in Election Support Bill, 2018.

Nigeria is signatory to several international treaties and conventions, including the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women ratified in 1985; and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, better known as the Maputo Protocol; an international human rights instrument established by the African Union guaranteeing comprehensive rights to women, including the right to participate in the political process, to social and political equality with men.

It is saddening that the legislators who swore to uphold the constitution allow their religious beliefs to becloud their judgement. They must be reminded that Nigeria is not a theocracy, but a democratic polity where the constitution remains supreme over any other law. Lawmakers should separate law-making from religion, which ought to be based on personal conviction. For long, unscrupulous politicians have manipulated religious sentiments to gain political advantage and deny the citizens the dividends of democracy.

On religious grounds, some northern states have refused to domesticate the Child Rights Act that says no child under the age of 18 should be allowed to be married. Instead, last year, moves were made by some senators to give voting rights to underage married girls.

When will such folly end? Ironically, in Saudi Arabia, the birthplace of Islam, the minimum age for marriage is 18. Muslim majority countries like Bangladesh and Pakistan have produced female heads of state. Surely, this debunks the falsehood that religion precludes women from holding positions of leadership.



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Mission Statement

To tell the truth at all times and hold government accountable to the governed and to give the citizens the information they need to be active participants in the democratic process. In this light Daybreak newspaper refuses to be an ally of any special interest but to maintain objectivity, fairness and balance as its core principle especially in an age of misinformation and fake news.

News



Court strikes out bid by Ebonyi Gov, Deputy to stay execution of sacking

Justice Inyang Eden Ekwo of the Federal High Court, Abuja, on Monday struck out an application by the embattled Ebonyi State Governor, Dave Umahi, and his deputy, Kelechi Igwe, seeking to stop the execution of the judgment of the court that removed them from office on account of their unlawful defection.

The judge threw out the suit following confirmation that a valid appeal had been entered at the Court of Appeal, Abuja division, challenging the verdict that sacked them for defecting from the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, to the All Progressives Congress, APC.

After several minutes of arguments by Chukwuma Machukwu Umeh SAN, counsel to the governor and the deputy as well as Chief James Ogwu Onoja SAN for PDP, the attention of the court was drawn to the substantive appeal already pending at the Court of Appeal.

Ume thereafter applied for withdrawal of the application to enable his clients to focus and concentrate on the substantive appeal.

The request was not opposed by the PDP counsel prompting Justice Ekwo in a brief ruling to strike out the suit.

Justice Ekwo ordered Governor Umahi and his deputy

to shift their legal battle against the judgment that sacked them to the appellate court.

A similar decision was invoked in another application for judgment stay by the sacked 16 lawmakers of the Ebonyi State House of Assembly

Umahi and his deputy had two weeks ago asked the Federal High Court for an order staying the execution of its judgment that ordered their removal from office as governor and deputy governor of the state respectively.

In a motion on notice filed by their counsel, the governor and his deputy prayed the court for an order staying the execution of the orders made in the judgment delivered on March 8, 2022, directing the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, to immediately receive from PDP the names of its candidates to replace them.

The court was also prayed to stay the execution of its order directing INEC to hold a governorship election in accordance with Section 177(c) of the 1999 Constitution.

The motion on notice dated March 9, 2022, equally sought an order staying the execution of the order of the court directing INEC to immediately declare the persons nominated by the PDP as governor and deputy governor of Ebonyi State respectively.

Buhari To Commission Newly Built Terminal At Lagos Airport Today

President Muhammadu Buhari, will on Tuesday, commission the newly built international terminal at the Murtala Muhammed Airport, Lagos.

The Lagos terminal is one of the five built in a bilateral arrangement between the Federal Government of Nigeria, and the People's Republic of China. The terminals are in Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt, Kano and Enugu.

In a press statement by the acting general manager, Corporate Affairs, Federal Airport Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), Faithful Hope-Ivbaze, the international terminal will generate about 3,000

direct and indirect employment for Nigerians, as well as enhance passenger facilitation and comfort at the Lagos airport.

According to her, the terminals in Abuja and Port Harcourt have been completed and commissioned while, Kano terminal will be completed and commissioned soon.

The FAAN spokesman further stated that the new terminal, built on 56,000 square metres, has 66 check-in counters will also facilitate 14 million passengers per annum.

“Other facilities in the terminal are, 5 baggage collection carousels, 16 Immigration desks at arrival, 28 Immigration desks at departure,

8 security screening points, 6 passenger boarding bridges (out of which 2 has already been installed), 2 food courts, 4 premium lounges, 22 guest rooms and spa.

“Others are, 16 airline ticketing offices, Visa on Arrival and Port Health facility, as well as praying area and more than 3,000 square metres of duty free space, amongst others.”

“The Authority will also sign a memorandum of understanding with the Lagos State Government on the 9km Airport-Shasha-Alimosho link Road to be constructed by the State Government,” she added.



APC convention: South-West govts reject Buhari's allies as secretary, vice-chair

By Richard Akintude

South-West politicians from the Congress for Progressive Change bloc in the All Progressives Congress are set to lose out at the national convention following their rejection by governors in the region.

The defunct CPC bloc is made up of politicians, who joined Major General Muhammadu Buhari (ret.) to merge with the Action Congress of Nigeria to form the APC in 2013 before he won the 2015 presidential election.

The former Minister of Communications, Adebayo Shittu, who is running for the national secretary of the APC; and the Executive Director, Niger Delta Power Holding, Ife Oyedele, were being resisted by the APC governors in the South-West.

It was also learnt that a former Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Iyiola Omisore, might be endorsed as the national secretary ahead of a former Oyo State Commissioner for Finance, Zaccheus Adedeji.

Also, Dayo Israel was tipped to emerge as the national youth leader of

the APC according to sources.

A top source in the APC said, “There are attempts by some people in Abuja to impose some of the CPC elements on the South-West. Let me restate that the governors are the leaders of the party. We have met and have micro-zoned the positions given to our region.

“We will not tolerate any interference from outside. Shittu, Oyedele and others have lost out completely.”

External forces trying to impose persons on S'West, says Akeredolu. In a statement on Sunday, Ondo State Governor, Rotimi Akeredolu, who is also the Chairman, South-West Governors' Forum, said the governors had agreed on micro-zoning, adding that those scheming from outside the region were only trying to cause confusion.

Akeredolu said in the statement titled, ‘External forces trying to impose persons on South-West’, that a former Chairman of the APC in the state, Isaac Kekemeke, had been endorsed as the national vice chairman for the South-West.

The statement by the Commissioner for Information and Orientation,

Donald Ojogo, stated that all the governors of the South-West had endorsed Kekemeke.

It read in part, “This is to confirm that one of our own, the former APC state chairman, Duerimini Isaac Kekemeke, is in the race for the position of the National Vice-Chairman (South-West). Kekemeke has the full backing of Governor Akeredolu and his brother governors in the South-West.

“It should be noted that critical stakeholders in the South-West had earlier micro-zoned the positions that were brought to the region. Among these were the national vice-chairman, which was retained in Ondo, and the secretary, which was micro-zoned to the Oyo/Osun axis.

“For emphasis, what we are going for is national vice-chairman with Kekemeke as our candidate, and not national secretary. Those outside the South-West, who are attempting to micro-zone our offices for us in the South-West, are only creating unnecessary confusion and any such of their permutations outside the decision of stakeholders in the South-West should be ignored.”



Tambuwal, Bala, Saraki ready for North's consensus candidate

Ahead of the May 29 Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) presidential primary, Sokoto State Governor Aminu Tambuwal, former Senate President Bukola Saraki and Bauchi State Governor Bala Mohammed have agreed to produce a consensus candidate among them.

The three met at the Government House in Bauchi yesterday.

Their decision comes a few days after former Vice President Atiku Abubakar obtained his nomination form.

Saraki told reporters that Atiku would be consulted.

He said: "Our concern for the hardship our people are going through is the reason for the meeting.

"We're also looking ahead towards 2023 because it's very clear that PDP is the only viable option to rescue this country from its present situation.

"That's why we felt the need to hold this meeting because the stability and unity of this country are more important to us than our ambition.

"We felt the need to work together because we believe the three of us here are committed and with a lot of reserve energy moving ahead. There is great hope for this country to move ahead.

"The three of us have shown aspiration to lead this country but we have also come to realise that we are all capable of leading this country but at the end of the day, it's only one person that will get the ticket.

"That's why we have resolved to work closely together to ensure a consensus arrangement emerge among the three of us moving

forward."

It was learnt yesterday that the PDP will decide zoning after receiving and deliberating on the report of the committee it recently constituted for the purpose.

Senate Minority Leader and Chairman, Senate Caucus of the PDP, Senator Enyinnaya Abaribe, disclosed this during a telephone chat with our correspondent in Abuja.

The PDP had set up a 37-member committee to determine suitable zoning formula for all elective offices, particularly the Presidency, Senate President, and House of Representatives Speaker.

Abaribe said: "The party just set up zoning committee and that zoning committee which is made up of one person from each state of the federation will come up with the zoning formula."

A former Ekiti State Governor, Mr Ayodele Fayose, said he would abide by whatever decision the PDP takes on zoning.

Speaking through his media aide, Lere Olayinka, he said: "Fayose will not have a contrary opinion to that of the party leadership on which zone should produce our candidate for the 2023 presidency."

PDP National Secretary, Senator Samuel Anyanwu, also said the zoning decision was yet to be made.

He said the party was waiting for the committee to turn in its report on the issue before a decision on it would be taken.

"This is why we have set up the 37-man committee to advise us on the issue of zoning," he said.

However, a former PDP National Vice Chairman, Dr. Eddy Olafeso, believes it was too late for the party

to zone the presidential ticket.

He said southern governors were entitled to their opinion to demand a president from their regions.

"If they decide to zone, we might come up with a presidential candidate that will not make any difference in the future of the country.

"It is better advised to encourage every Nigerian to participate. If we have a good president, unfairness, inequity, nepotism will be a thing of the past," he said.

The Niger State Chairman of the PDP, Tanko Beji, is confident that the best candidate will emerge.

Speaking when he hosted former Anambra State Governor Peter Obi at the PDP Secretariat in Minna, Beji said: "We Will provide an enabling environment for all aspirants at the state and federal levels."

The faction of the PDP led by Chief Bode George is set to meet to decide their position on zoning.

A leader and chieftain of PDP, Chief Ebenezer Babatope, said: "I am a fanatical member of PDP and I belong to the faction of Bode George.

"We are going to meet very soon to decide what to do with the presidential election, especially on zoning."

Those who have declared their intention to contest for president on the PDP platform from the Southeast are former Senate President Anyim Pius Anyim and renowned pharmacist and former Senator Sam Oluwabunwa.

Obi said he was still consulting, while Rivers State Governor Nyesom Wike is rumoured to be interested.

AGF Malami approves NDLEA request for seizure of Kyari, accomplices' assets

By Afam George

The Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Abubakar Malami, SAN, has approved a request by the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency for the confiscation of suspended DCP Abba Kyari and his co-accused assets.

It was gathered that the NDLEA's request, which was dispatched to the justice ministry penultimate week, had received the AGF's nod.

With this development, the former Commander, Inspector-General of Police Intelligence Response Team and his accomplices may lose their assets, cash and money in bank accounts; vehicles; real estate, notably hotels, residential and commercial buildings; personal effects such as wristwatches, jewellery and other valuable possessions.

Media reports last week indicated that about N4.2bn was traced to Kyari and his co-accused, ACP Sunday Ubuja's bank accounts.

The NDLEA had on March 7 arraigned Kyari, Ubuja and four members of the IRT, Sunday Ubia, Bawa James, Simon Agirigba and John Nuhu, on eight counts of conspiracy, obstruction and dealing

in cocaine, and other related offences before the Federal High Court, Abuja.

Two other suspects arrested at the Akanu Ibiam International Airport in Enugu, Chibunna Patrick Umeibe and Emeka Alphonsus Ezenwanne, were also listed as defendants in the suit marked FHC/ABJ/57/2022.

A senior justice ministry official said, "The AGF has endorsed the request by the NDLEA seeking approval for the confiscation of the assets of Abba Kyari, Ubuja and the other police officers involved in drug dealing.

"With the approval, the drug agency can now go after their property such as real estate, bank accounts, cash, vehicles, stocks, bonds and anything of monetary value."

The source further said the seizure of the embattled DCP and his co-accused assets was to ensure that they did not benefit from the proceeds of crime.

The NDLEA spokesman, Femi Babafemi, had confirmed that the accused persons' bank accounts would be frozen, noting that this was standard practice.

Kyari, who is wanted in the United States for alleged involvement in a \$1.1m scam carried out by a notorious Internet scammer, Ramon Abass, aka Hushpuppi, was suspended by the police last July.

Ganduje's ex-aide Yakasai dumps APC, gives reasons

By Hassan Jibril

Salihu Tanko Yakasai, a former Director-General, Media and Communications to Kano State Governor, Abdullahi Ganduje, has finally dumped the ruling All Progressives Congress.

Yakasai, who announced the decision in a statement on Monday, noted that he ceased to be a member of the party from March 21, 2022.

Yakasai was sacked in February 2021 by Ganduje after criticising the President, Major General Muhammadu Buhari (retd.), for his failure to end the security crisis rocking the country.

The statement read in part, "I have been a bonafide member of the All Progressive Congress party of Nigeria right from its inception almost a decade ago, precisely in February 2013.

"I travelled to different parts of the country to campaign for the party at the local, state and federal levels. I stuck out my neck, risked my life, gave my word and trust, and extended my belief in a party that we all thought in 2015 will usher in the leadership that will answer the cry of millions of Nigerians for good government, social stability, and material prosperity.

"By 2019, we reelected the APC again to manage the affairs of the country with the hope that its first term of four years was not enough to clear the mess it inherited from the defeated PDP administration.

"Regretfully, the trust and confidence we reposed in the APC (the government as well as the party) on two occasions (first and second terms) was betrayed. If anything,

things became worse in the second term. The benefit of the doubt we gave the party in the first term vanished as we moved deeper into the second term.

"Failure', our people say, 'is an orphan', especially when everyone recognises it as such. No one in his right mind wants to be associated with it. But in the case of the ruling APC, those in power do not see themselves as having failed Nigerians. On the contrary, they perceive themselves as performing excellently. They douse themselves in self-praise, self-congratulations, and self-centred behavior in public office. Many people in this country will rightly see their conduct as delusional. But the privileged ones in the office today hardly notice the reality surrounding the lives of ordinary citizens:

"No food, no potable water, no stable power supply, no jobs for the youth, no regular salary for public servants, no pensions and gratuity paid; no respect for government agreement with university teachers; no control over inflation, no security of life and property, and no defeat of the stubborn insurgency in the north-east, with petroleum theft in the south-south becoming an existential threat to the entire nation.

"In the interim, I will take a few weeks to further consult, reflect and digest the political terrain, before deciding on my next line of action.

"I cannot end this exit message, without thanking the Governor of Kano State, Dr Abdullahi Umar Ganduje, OFR, for believing in me, and giving me a platform in his government for over five years, to serve my state as the Director General Media and Communications, and later as his Special Adviser on Media."

News

Police to enforce Soludo's ban on touting, illegal revenue collection

By Mike Oboh

The Commissioner of Police, Anambra State, Echeng Echeng, has given the marching orders to heads of tactical units, divisional police officers and heads of departments across the Command to strictly enforce the state government's ban on touting and illegal revenue collection.

The governor, Prof Chukwuma Soludo, had, in his inaugural address on Thursday, announced the ban on touting and illegal revenue collection.

In a statement in Awka on Sunday, Echeng tasked officers and

men of the Command to ensure full compliance with the order, especially at motor parks and other designated places.

The CP also warned those engaged in touting and other unlawful acts to desist forthwith as the police and other security agencies had been deployed around the state to arrest and bring to justice anyone caught flouting the order.

He affirmed the commitment of the Command to crime prevention, restoration of law and order, and enjoined Anambra indigenes and all residents of the state to be vigilant and security conscious at all times.



Panic as further increase in food prices loom

By Joyce Babayeju

There are growing concerns that the price of bread and other food items may rise again across the country, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Russia and Ukraine are major wheat exporters to Nigeria and some African countries. Wheat is the main ingredient for food items such as bread, cereals, biscuits, pastries, and pasta.

Even before the Russian army crossed into Ukraine, bread and food prices had been on the rise for the past year. So far, prices of bread have risen by 100 per cent in most parts of the country, no thanks to incessant increases in the prices of baking materials, factory rent and wages, which had made it difficult for the bakers to break even.

Due to Nigeria's dependence on

Russian durum wheat, the nation is at risk of suffering from significant food shortages and uptick food inflationary pressure, due to the war.

Speaking with journalists in Abuja, the National President, the Federation of Agricultural Commodity Associations of Nigeria (FACAN), Dr. Victor Iyama, noted that the war in Ukraine could push up the price of bread as Nigeria and other countries rely on Ukraine and Russia, which are major producers of wheat, most of which is imported by countries in the Middle East and Africa.

According to him, higher wheat prices would translate into higher bread prices for all.

The financial consequences on consumers will be large given the relatively high percentage of income spent on food, and bread in particular, experts said.

Right now, there are no subsidies for staples such as wheat and could drive the price of bread with inadequate local production.

A university don, Prof Abiodun Adeloye warned that the hostility in Ukraine could have a possible ripple effect in African nations. His words: "Bread is a staple in household diets. It is the delicacy of the young growing children. Bread forms one of the easy to access foods which are offered by parents at affordable prices but the main constituent of bread is wheat. Thirty per cent of the global production of wheat comes from the war affected zones, Russia and Ukraine. So, it is expected that the cost of bread may rise soon. Such rise in cost of bread would cause a shift in household dietary needs to other alternatives such as yam, cassava, and cocoyam – the costs of which would equally rise."

Edo APC, PDP clash over Obaseki's achievements, governance style

The Edo State chapters of the All Progressives Congress and the state government have again clashed over the projects executed by Governor Godwin Obaseki as well as his leadership style.

In a statement by the state APC chairman, Col David Imuse (retd.), titled, 'Things have fallen apart in Edo State,' the APC condemned Obaseki for bringing the PDP National chairman, Iyorchia Ayu, to commission what he described as phantom projects in the state.

The statement read in part: "Obaseki belittled the office of the National Chairman of the PDP by bringing him to commission some of his phantom projects like a mini-jetty for canoes and an uncompleted motor park, whereas his mates across the country are busy commissioning better development projects like flyovers.

"This type of commissioning, which ought to be for local government ward councillors, portrays Mr Obaseki as a political

jester, who has completely run out of ideas.

"It is now clear to Edo people that, despite our great human and material resources, Mr Obaseki's administration has not been able to meet the legitimate expectations of our people. This is because he has neglected governance as a result of his inordinate and unattainable ambition to control the Edo PDP structure and become a new godfather.

"On the alarming insecurity situation in our state, the APC as a party again calls on Governor Obaseki to be more proactive and make judicious use of the N800million he collects monthly as security vote."

In his response, the state Commissioner for Communication and Orientation, Andrew Emwanta, described Imuse's statement as a baggage of lies, noting that the governor was committed to fulfilling the MEGA manifesto.

He said: "The Government of

Edo State, under the leadership of Godwin Obaseki, remains committed to fulfilling the MEGA Manifesto. The Making Edo Great Again manifesto was fully endorsed by the good people of Edo State on September 19 2020, when they voted overwhelmingly for the Governor and his Deputy, who flew the flag of the Peoples Democratic Party.

"So, it is rather unfortunate to hear Imuse, a retired soldier, who became the APC Chairman in Edo State by default, spew all manners of falsehoods in the name of a press conference.

"The baggage of lies of the Imuse-led Edo APC is never empty of mischief. The lie Imuse concocted that the Edo State government is about to source for a N7 billion facility from the capital market to fund an already completed street light project can only come from an idle mind that is remotely controlled by the devil."

Queues persist in northern states despite 1.824 billion litres fuel supply

By Gabriel Achu

The queues by motorists for Premium Motor Spirit, popularly called petrol, particularly in Abuja and northern states have refused to clear despite the supply of about 1.824 billion litres of PMS by the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited.

Also, the NNPC on Sunday denied claims that it had reviewed the ex-coastal, ex-depot and the NNPC Retail prices for petrol downward. It described the claims as fake news, in a series of tweets via its official Twitter handle.

Figures obtained by our correspondent from the company on Sunday showed that between February 14 and March 13, 2022, the oil firm released a total of 1.824 billion litres of petrol in a bid to keep the country wet with petrol.

But the queues in filling stations, which were triggered by the imports of adulterated fuel in January this year, refused to disappear and had persisted for about two months.

Meanwhile the presence of black marketers who sell petrol in jerrycans is currently a normal sight in Abuja, as some filling stations in the capital city now dispense PMS far above the approved price of N162-N165/litre.

A filling station in Kubwa, Khalif Civic Oil and Investment Limited, for instance, dispensed petrol at N280/litre on Sunday and still had queues of motorists, while the few major outlets that had products were greeted with massive queues.

Petrol supply data from the NNPC indicated that the oil firm distributed a total of 387.59 million litres of PMS from February 14 to 20, 2022, in its bid to bridge the petrol supply gap.

The NNPC also stated that it evacuated 381.88 million litres of petrol between February 21 to 26, 2022, adding that from February 28 and March 6, 2022, it supplied a total of 538 million litres of PMS.

The company went ahead to state that it evacuated a total of 514.69 million litres of petrol between March 7 and 13, 2022. This brings the total supply during the one month period to 1.824 billion litres.

In its most recent petrol supply data for March 7 to 13, the company stated that over 70 per cent of all the evacuation took place at the top 20 high loading depots, as other loading depots evacuated less than 30 per cent

The top 20 high load-out depots, according to NNPC, include Pinnacle-Lekki, Matrix, Nipco, A.A. Rano, Aiteo, Ardova, 11 Plc, Fradro, AYM Shafa, Prudent, MRS, among others.

Other depots that evacuated less than 30 per cent include Integrated Oil, Pinnacle, Virgin Forest Energy Limited, Nepal, Conoil, Petrostar, MRS Plc, among others.

The NNPC has been the sole importer of petrol into Nigeria for about four years running. It had ensured that the commodity remained available nationwide, being the supplier of last resort.

However, despite efforts by the firm to keep the country wet with petrol, the queues in the nation's capital have refused to clear, as well as in some other locations across the country.

The few filling stations along the Zuba-Kubwa expressway that dispensed petrol on Sunday, such as A.A Rano, Nipco and the NNPC, had lengthy queues.

Similarly, the queues in the two filling stations, Conoil and Total, located directly opposite the headquarters of NNPC in Abuja, have continued to be greeted with queues since January, as the queues persisted on Sunday.

The Minister of State for Petroleum Resources, Chief Timipre Sylva, and the Group Managing Director, NNPC, Mele Kyari, had repeatedly stated that efforts were ongoing to clear the queues nationwide.

Also, the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority had assured citizens in Nigeria that the queues would be cleared following the imports of billions of litres of petrol by NNPC.

Their promises have, however, not materialised in full yet.

Meanwhile, NNPC tweeted on Sunday that "it has come to the attention of the NNPC Limited that the company has reviewed ex-coastal, ex-depot and the NNPC Retail prices. This is not true."

The company added, "It is fake news obviously concocted to cause confusion and to undermine the progressive drive of the NNPC to restore normalcy to the market.

"The general public and in particular industry operators at all levels should disregard this mischievous act of misinformation."

The NNPC said it remained focused and determined to reposition itself to provide value to its shareholders while meeting its statutory obligation as a provider of energy security for Nigeria.

By Zhong Sheng, People's Daily

Daybreak
Issues

The U.S. should clarify thoroughly its military biological activities around the world with a responsible attitude and stop standing alone in opposing the establishment of a Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) verification regime, so as to help improve global biosecurity.

Russia recently exposed military biological cooperation projects conducted by the U.S. in Ukraine, further unmasking the U.S., an empire of military biological activities.

Among all countries in the world, the U.S. has carried out the most military biological activities. The country has inherited the evil legacy of the notorious Unit 731 of the Imperial Japanese Army that waged the war of aggression against China, and developed biological weapons with Fort Detrick as the major base.

Its research and development of biological weapons at the base has continued even after it joined the BWC in 1975. The international community has therefore referred to Fort Detrick as "the center of the U.S. government's darkest experiments".

In the past few decades, the U.S. has continuously expanded its scope of military biological activities. According to data released by the country, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) carries out biological cooperation projects in more than 30 countries around the world.

The country controls several hundred biological laboratories using pretexts including cooperation for reducing biosecurity risks and strengthening global public health. Its military biological activities in Ukraine are only the tip of the iceberg.

Despite the international consensus on ensuring compliance with the BWC through multilateral verification, the U.S. has regarded its global military biological activities as its domestic affairs and allowed no external inspection and verification. Therefore, its military biological activities have been running wild.

In 2001, when the international community already reached an agreement on the establishment of a BWC verification mechanism, the U.S. suddenly withdrew from negotiations over the

U.S. should truly abide by Biological Weapons Convention for global biosecurity



establishment of the mechanism on the pretext that such verification would harm its security and economic interests, and has since been standing alone against the establishment of the mechanism.

It's exactly because of the lack of verification mechanism that the country's military biological activities have increasingly aroused grave concerns in the international community.

However, the U.S. has taken a more radical stance on compliance with the BWC when questioned by the

international community. The country stubbornly insists that only itself can decide whether it has abided by the convention.

Not only doesn't it allow the international community to carry out verification, but it rejects questions from any foreign country about its military biological activities and accuses those who raise such questions of spreading disinformation. This is typical bandit logic and hegemonic behavior.

The U.S. often contradicts itself. The self-contradictory

information released by the U.S. probably couldn't even convince itself. Last November, the U.S. said it had cooperation facilities including 26 biolabs in Ukraine. On March 11, the country changed the figure to 46.

The U.S. claimed that it hasn't controlled labs in Ukraine, but only sent personnel to the country to help ensure lab safety occasionally. However, according to an agreement between the DoD and the Ukrainian side signed in 2005, representatives of the DoD

have the right to participate in all related activities at U.S.-Ukraine cooperation facilities, including labs in Ukraine. The agreement also stipulates that all dangerous viruses in Ukraine must be stored in these labs and provided for the U.S. side as required, and information marked or designated by the U.S. side as "sensitive" should be withheld from public disclosure by Ukraine.

The international community can't help but wonder: Who on earth do these labs belong to? How many of these labs are there? What does the U.S. need so many viruses for? Why can't public health information be made public? Given that the U.S. runs biolabs all over Central Asia, East Europe, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Middle East, and Africa, do all these biolabs operate under the so-called "cooperation" model as that in Ukraine?

The international community has no reason not to support the U.S. if it really intends to safeguard biosecurity and strengthen public health. Nevertheless, if the U.S. is using its biological research facilities overseas to grab biological resources and even develop biological weapons, it's quite another matter.

For the sake of the health and safety of people in Ukraine and its surrounding regions as well as the entire world, it's time the U.S. gave the international community an explanation for its military biological activities.

It's hoped that the U.S. will clarify thoroughly its military biological activities around the world with a responsible attitude and stop standing alone in opposing the establishment of the BWC verification regime, so as to help improve global biosecurity.

Compliance with a convention doesn't equal shouting slogans. All countries must uphold the authority of international law.

The international community has every reason to assess the documents disclosed by Russia under the framework of the United Nations and the BWC, and at the same time listen to the explanation of the U.S. side in a fair and just way. This will help restore the international community's confidence in America's fulfillment of its international obligations and improve global biosecurity, which conforms to the common interests of the international community.

Business & Economy

Nigeria's February Inflation Rate Rises To 15.70%

Nigeria's consumer price index, (CPI) which measures inflation has increased to 15.70 per cent for the month of February.

This is according to the National Bureau of Statistics, which disclosed this in their CPI and Inflation Report on Tuesday.

The report states that "this is 1.63 per cent points lower compared to the rate recorded in February 2021 (17.33) per cent," indicative that the headline inflation rate slowed down in February when compared to the same month in the previous year.

Also detailed in the report, were increases in all COICOP divisions that yielded the Headline index. On a month-on-month basis, the

Headline index increased to 1.63 per cent in February 2022, this is a 0.16 per cent rate higher than the rate recorded in January 2022 (1.47) per cent.

"The percentage change in the average composite CPI for the twelve months period ending February 2022 over the average of the CPI for the previous twelve months period was 16.73 per cent, showing 0.14 per cent point from 16.87 per cent recorded in January 2022."

Concerning the urban inflation rate, an increase to 16.25 per cent (year-on-year) in February 2022 from 17.92 per cent was recorded in February 2021, while the rural inflation rate increased to 15.18 per cent in February 2022 from 16.77

per cent in February 2021.

"On a month-on-month basis, the urban index rose to 1.65 per cent in February 2022, up by 0.12 the rate recorded in January 2022 (1.53) per cent, while the rural index also rose to 1.61 per cent in February 2022, up by 0.19 the rate that was recorded in January 2022 (1.42) per cent."

"The twelve-month year-on-year average percentage change for the urban index is 17.29 per cent in February 2022. This is lower than the 17.44 per cent reported in January 2022, while the corresponding rural inflation rate in February 2022 is 16.18 per cent which is lower than the 16.31 per cent recorded in January 2022," the report also said.

Nigeria's public debt set to peak at N45tn in 2022

The Nigerian equity market closed negative on Thursday, reversing the previous day's gains.

The NGX-All Share Index fell to 47,353.22 points from 47,364.46 points, indicating a Year to Date (YtD) return of 10.85 per cent.

Similarly, the market capitalisation declined by 0.02 per cent to N25,52 trillion from N25,53 trillion, making a decrease of N1 billion.

The market turnover rose to N3.89 billion from N2.54 billion recorded the previous day.

The negative performance of the market was driven by price depreciation in large and medium capitalised stocks which are: Sterling Bank, WAPIC, Royal Exchange Assurance and Transcorp.

The market breadth was positive as 18 stocks advanced against 17 stocks that declined.

Nigeria Insurance led the losers' chart in percentage terms by 0.02 per cent to close at 22k per share.

Cornerstone followed with 0.04 per cent to close at 58k while Veritas Kapital lost 0.01 per cent to close at 21k per share.

Seplat declined by 3.13 per cent to close at N930, while LASACO shed 2.80 per cent to close at N1.04 per share.

On the other hand, UACN drove the gainers' chart in percentage terms with 10 per cent to close at N12.10 per share.

Royal Exchange Assurance followed with 9.80 per cent to close at N1.12, while Wapic was up by 8.16 per cent to close at 53k per share.

Presco appreciated by 6.40 per cent to close at N133. Also, Multiverse gained 4.55 per cent to close at 23k per share.

The total volume traded increased by 64 per cent to 239.73 million units valued N3.89 billion exchanged in 3,848 deals.

This was against the total

volume of 145.83 million units valued N2.54 billion and exchanged in 4,113 deals on Wednesday.

Transactions in the shares of Veritas Kapital topped the volume chart with 30.01 million shares valued N6.3 million.

United Bank for Africa (UBA) followed with 27.73 million shares worth N235.18 million, while First

Bank of Nigeria Holdings (FBNH) traded 23.02 million shares valued N272.01 million.

Guaranty Trust Bank of Nigeria Company (GTCo) traded 18.24 million shares worth N447.56 million, while Fidelity Bank transacted 16.11 million shares valued N47.76 million.

AfDB secures \$15.6bn for Lagos-Abidjan highway

The President of the African Development Bank, Dr Akinwumi Adesina, announces that the bank has secured \$15.6bn for the construction of the Lagos-Abidjan highway corridor, which would ease transportation across West Africa.

He made this announcement during the 2021 Africa Investment Forum virtual boardroom closing session on Thursday.

The AfDB president said, "The biggest deal for the boardroom is the \$15.6bn deal for the Lagos-Abidjan highway corridor. The 46-lane highway corridor will connect Lagos, Cotonou, Lome, Accra and Abidjan."

According to him, this project would support trade in West Africa, impacting the lives of over 500 million people, reducing transport costs and increasing intra-regional trade volume.

"It will support 75 per cent of the trade in the West African region. The project will impact the lives of over 500 million people. It would reduce transport cost by 48 per cent. It would increase intra-regional trade volume by 15 to 25 per cent. It would connect landlocked cities to port countries," he added.

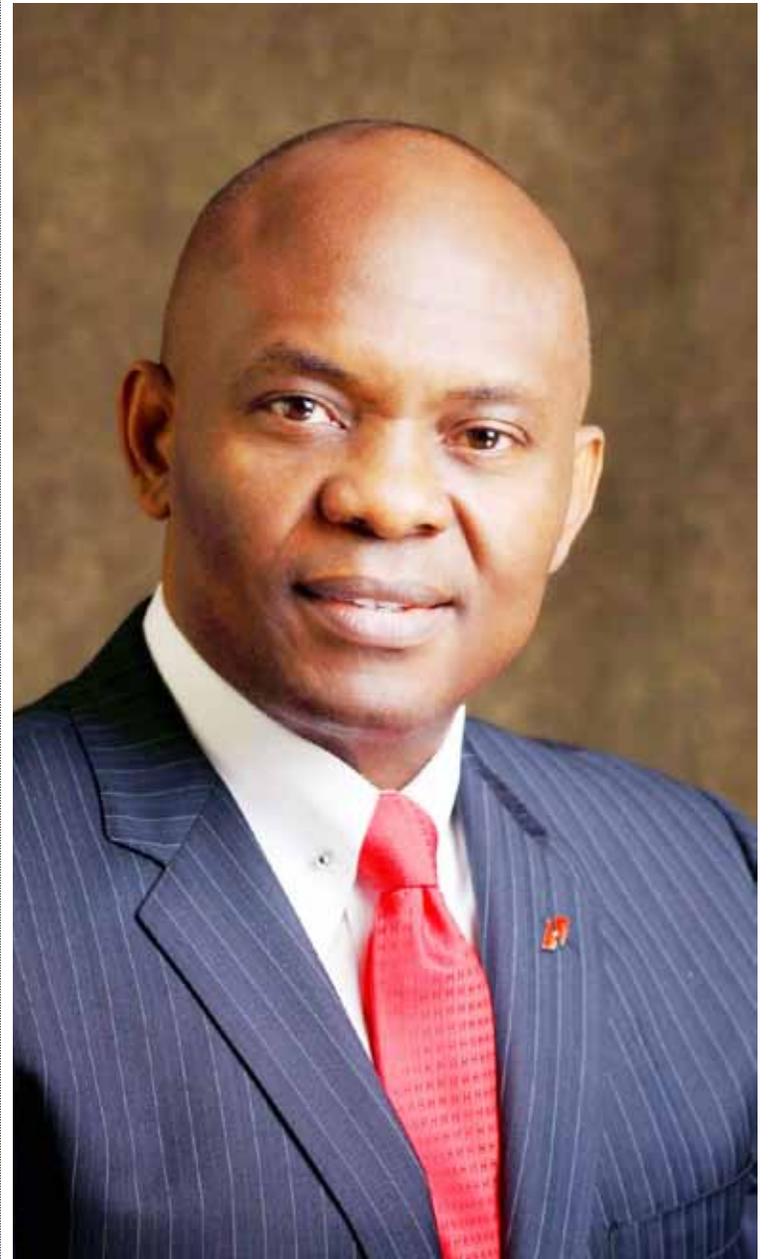
The AfDB president also said that the Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa has been critical in supporting women's businesses in Africa.

According to him, in 2021, the AfDB provided \$450m in support of women businesses in Africa and in 2022, the Bank expects to provide \$500m in support of women-owned businesses.

The AfDB will also be establishing a \$1m AFAWA women advisory facility to support women with advisory services.



Adesina



Businesses Are Suffering, Elumelu Laments Over Hardship, Poverty In Nigeria

Nigerian Economist and businessman, Tony Elumelu on Thursday lamented over the worsening electricity, hike in prices of diesel, and its effect on businesses in the country.

The CEO of Heirs Holdings in a series of tweets said businesses are suffering under the situation with Nigerian citizens groaning under food inflation as well.

"How can a country so rich in natural resources have 90% of its citizens living in hardship and poverty?," Elumelu said.

"This morning, I am listening to my colleagues at the office bemoan the very pressing issues that they face every day in this country, and how things have been getting worse and worse – no electricity for 5 days, hikes in the price of diesel, frightening food inflation, etc.

"I have often said that access to electricity is critical for our development, alleviation of poverty and hardship. And speaking of security, our people are afraid!" he lamented.

Speaking further, the entrepreneur who also runs a leading non-profit organisation, Tony Elumelu Foundation said the country is unable to meet its OPEC production quota due to oil theft.

"Businesses are suffering. How can we be losing over 95% of oil production to thieves? Look at

the Bonny Terminal that should be receiving over 200k barrels of crude oil daily, instead, it receives less than 3,000 barrels, leading the operator @Shell to declare force majeure," he said.

"Why are we paying taxes if our security agencies can't stop this? It is clear that the reason Nigeria is unable to meet its OPEC production quota is not because of low investment but because of theft, pure and simple!

"Meanwhile, oil-producing countries are smiling as their foreign reserves rising. What is Nigeria's problem? We need to hold our leaders more accountable!"

Concerning the 2023 election, Elumelu urged those running for offices to prioritise security and urged Nigerians to advocate for leaders that deliver.

"Elections are coming – security and resources need to be everyone's agenda – let's be vocal for our nation's priority.

"Evil prevails when good people are silent. We need to be vocal about 2023. Let's focus on Nigeria. Demand and advocate for leaders that deliver.

"In 2023, Nigeria must be on a strong trajectory for progress and development."

Elumelu in 2020 was named on Time's list of the 100 most influential people in the world.

Business & Economy

NGX: Market capitalisation down by N38bn

The Nigerian Exchange Ltd., (NGX) closed on a downward note on Friday occasioned by loss in 20 stocks, as market capitalisation depreciated by N38 billion.

Specifically, market capitalisation of listed equities decreased by 0.15 per cent to N25.483 trillion, from N25.521 trillion recorded on Thursday.

The All Share Index (ASI) also depreciated by 70.55 points to 47,282.67 from 47,535.22 recorded on Thursday.

Investors, however, traded 599.51million shares valued N3.83billion in 3,848 deals

against 239.73 million shares worth N3.891 billion traded in 4,289 deals the previous day, representing 150.07 per cent increase in volume..

Market sentiment was negative as 20 stocks depreciated in price while 13 constituted the gainers' chart.

On the price movement chart, MRS shed 9.96 per cent to close at N12.5., Ikeja Hotel depreciated by 9.87 per cent to close at N1.37 per share.

WAPIC lost 9.43 per cent to close at 48k per share while Mutual Benefits Assurance dropped 7.41 per cent to close at

25k per share.

Also, Access Bank shed 5.77 per cent to close at N9.80 per share.

However, PZ recorded the highest gain increasing by 9.55 per cent to close at N8.60 per share.

CWG(BLS) trailed with a gain of 8.08 per cent to close at N1.07 per share.

Royal Exchange Insurance inched up by 7.14 per cent to close at N1.20 per share.

Niger Insurance gained five per cent to close at 21k per share while AIICO appreciated by 4.35 per cent to 72k per share.

Diesel price: Telcos mull tariff hike

Telecommunications services providers under the aegis of the Association of Licensed Telecoms Operators of Nigeria have said a tariff review for telco services may happen if the rise in the price of diesel is sustained.

The Chairman, ALTON, Gbenga Adebayo, disclosed this to our correspondent in an interview.

According to him, the telecoms industry is one of the major consumers of diesel in the country.

The sector, he said, had already been impacted by the current hike in diesel prices and scarcity of the product.

He said, "It is already impacting us and very significantly so. We are one of the industries that have the highest consumption of diesel across the country.

"Our need is not just in the major cities; it is all across the country. Diesel is required in all the places that require services. We are already significantly impacted. And it is not just about the high costs, it is also about availability. Suppliers are beginning to find it difficult to supply the commodity because of scarcity.

"When they find, costs of haulage have gone up. The cost of procurement of the diesel itself has gone up significantly. We are actually in a very bad situation.

And how this will play in end-user pricing requires us to follow the right channel, the regulatory procedure for conveying our complaint to the regulator."

According to Adebayo, telcos will continue to ensure that there are no service disruptions in the nation. However, he added that there might be a need for a tariff review if the present diesel crisis persists.

He said, "The diesel situation is a problem at this time. We are doing all that we can to ensure the business continues as usual in all cases and other every circumstance. The assurance for the public is that there would not be a time of outage because of the current diesel crisis. What I cannot assure is that at some point there may not be a consideration for some form of tariff review.

"I cannot guarantee that it will not happen sometime in the near future. I cannot guarantee that. But as it stands today, I will reassure the public that there would be continuous service at all times.

"We will continue to solve the problem to the best of our ability. We certainly need to approach the government for some intervention at some point. We are where we are. All that we are doing at this

time is to ensure there are no disruptions to service."

According to a source in one of the telecoms companies in the nation, the operating environment for telcos is now tougher. The source added that the present crisis might cause service disruptions if it persists.

The source said, "For instance, we have about 20,000 base transceiver stations across the nation, and each one of them has two industrial generators.

"You can imagine what it must be costing to fuel two generators in over 20,000 places. It is a lot. As you are aware, we do not directly manage those stations anymore. But irrespective of who is managing it, the cost has definitely been impacted. Operating is more difficult now.

"In the long-term, this will cause service disruptions. We might have to renegotiate contracts with those helping us manage to the stations. As you know our call rates are regulated, meaning there is a ceiling and a floor. We cannot because of this change our call rates."

The price of diesel has tilted towards N850/litre, and is continuing to increase daily. In January, diesel was N350 per litre in Lagos.



Elon Musk

Elon Musk's net worth hits \$232 billion as Tesla stock goes on rampage

Elon Musk, CEO of Tesla and SpaceX, continues to remain the world's wealthiest person. Tesla shares surged at the end of the trading week, adding to Musk's wealth.

Musk's current net worth is \$232 billion after gaining nearly \$8 billion on Friday. The tech billionaire, however, has lost about \$38.8 billion this year. His net worth exceeded Jeff Bezos' net worth by \$46 billion.

He currently has a net worth equivalent to about 120 million troy ounces of gold and 2.15 billion barrels of crude oil.

Prices for the stock rose nearly 4% on Friday, pushing its market value to about \$935 billion.

According to Musk's recent tweet, Tesla's stock is gaining momentum. "We are currently working on Part 3

of our master plan," he said.

Following a report tagged Part Deux, published in 2016, a Part 1 authored by Musk in 2006 comes with Part 3 of the master plan.

The first plan called for an expensive, low-volume car that would help build a mid-range vehicle.

Part 3 could focus more on autonomy. As well as Tesla's plans to expand its vehicle line to more segments, it will be included. In order to maintain its growth, Tesla will eventually need to build smaller, lower-cost EVs.

Meanwhile, as the intensity of the Russian President's campaign in Ukraine escalates, a billionaire South African businessman offered an unorthodox but traditional solution a few days ago.

Afreximbank agrees to \$207m facility with NEXI in combating COVID-19

African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) has announced the finalisation of a 207 million dollars facility granted by Nippon Export and Investment Insurance (NEXI), the state-owned Japanese organisation focused on trade and investment.

Afreximbank's Media Contact, Amadou Sall said this in a statement in Abuja that the agreement was consummated on Friday in Cairo, Egypt.

The facility would support the bank's broader response measures to the Covid-19 pandemic, especially its financing efforts for the acquisition of COVID-19 vaccines for Africa through the African Vaccine Acquisition Trust (AVAT).

"Today's announcement represents the second collaboration between Afreximbank and NEXI.

"In 2020, NEXI approved a 520 million dollars facility which was also designed to support the

Bank's response to the COVID-19 pandemic by enabling it to finance the import of Covid-19 containment materials as well as related essentials.

"The range of facilities supports the implementation of the Japanese Government's decision at the TICAD7, to support African countries by facilitating the deployment of private capital," he said.

Sall said that Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group (MUFG) acted on

the deal as Mandated Lead Arranger, Bookrunner, Agent, and Global Coordinator, and was involved in the first of NEXI's facilities agreed with Afreximbank in 2020.

He said that the President and Chairman of the Board of Directors of Afreximbank, Prof. Benedict Oramah, said.

"This facility, the second in a series demonstrates the strong commitment of the Government of Japan to the African continent

as it emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It will significantly bolster Afreximbank's activities in financing vaccination acquisition and delivery on the continent.

"The Japanese government made a commitment to assist African countries to manage, and adjust to, the pandemic, and today's announcement provides yet another evidence of this in action," Oramah said.

Politics

2023: Nigeria deserves the Best – Gowon

Gen. Yakubu Gowon, a former military Head of State, has said that Nigeria deserves to be led by its very best in 2023 and beyond.

He said this on Friday in Abuja when officials of the Progressive Consolidation Group (PCG) paid him a visit at his Asokoro, Abuja residence.

Gowon emphasised that while he had no partisan involvement with politics, he believed that leaders and citizens at all levels had a duty to sustain peace, progress and national unity of the country.

He also affirmed his conviction that no matter the level of intrigues and circumstances, God would ultimately decide the final outcome.

Gowon said that in the country's interest, all politicians and their followers must look beyond the struggle for positions and sustain faith in Nigeria.

He urged the mass media to do more towards consolidating national unity.

"Sustain hope, believe in Nigeria and believe in the cause of unity and peace," Gowon said.

Our correspondent reports that leaders of the PCG earlier had a closed door meeting with the former Head of State.

The leaders include its Deputy National Chairman (North), Alhaji Musa Kwande, who is also the Baraden of Lafia Emirate, and its Co-ordinator, Alhaji Ahmed Zagi.

Zagi told newsmen that the visit was a matter of courtesy, adding that as an elder statesman, Gowon embraced everyone.

"You all know that our message and mobilisation for the 2023 presidential



candidature of Prof. Yemi Osinbajo has reached every part of this country.

"And our visit to this great patriot is out of much deserved courtesy rather than partisan considerations," he said.

He said Osinbajo had never been desperate for positions, but God and his rich credentials had always made things possible for him.

"General Gowon took us down memory lane to scenarios of January 13, 1966 and he believes that the scenario of ascension to high position without desperation or unnecessary intrigues is something that all must consider.

"He said that he never knew that he would occupy that seat and that whoever God has destined to be president would become president, regardless of his circumstances or

challenges.

"While expressing his conviction that only God can confer power, Gowon said he has interacted with Nigerians who have a lot to offer when the time comes for them to inherit great responsibilities.

"He counselled that what all citizens need to do is to pray for all candidates being brought forward by various political parties so that we can have the right persons who can further consolidate national unity," he said.

He added that Gowon also emphasised his long held belief in one united Nigeria, saying that it was only those that could further enhance national unity, peace, progress and development for Nigeria that could truly lead successfully in the years ahead.

2023: Atiku set to declare Presidential Ambition

All is now set for the official declaration of interest in the 2023 Presidential election by former Vice President, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar.

In a letter of notification transmitted to some political leaders and interest groups, the declaration is slated for Wednesday, 23rd day of March, 2022 in the nation's capital.

The official declaration comes on the heels of several meetings and consultations between Atiku and leaders of the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP in the past few months, within and outside the shores of the Federal Capital Territory, FCT.

In a letter of invitation sighted by our correspondent, the event will commence at 11AM with important dignitaries expected to attend.

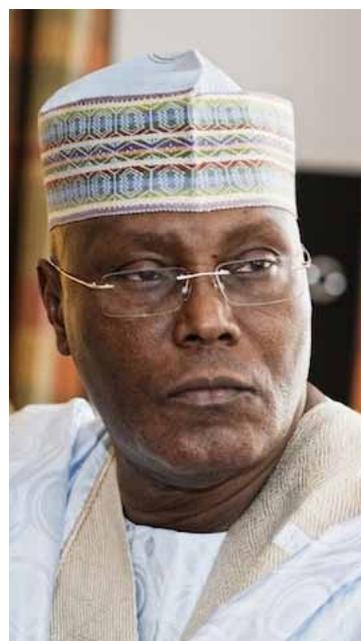
Signed by the chairman, Technical Committee of the Atiku 2023 Presidential Project, High Chief Raymond Dokpesi,

the letter reads in part: "It is with great delight and respect that the Technical Committee, TEECOM cordially invites you to the official declaration for the Office of the President, Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2023 by His Excellency, Atiku Abubakar, GCON, Wazirin Adamawa, Vice President, Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999-2007).

"The historic event will hold at the International Conference Centre, Abuja on Wednesday, March 23, 2022 at 11AM. Your presence will certainly add colour to the event as we expect your presence at the ceremony."

It would be recalled that a few hours after the Office of the National Organizing Secretary of the PDP, commenced sale of nomination forms for all elective offices in the 2023 general election last week, a group, North-East Business Forum, stormed the party's secretariat and obtained the Presidential expression of

interest and nomination forms for the former Vice President at a combined sum of N40m.



APC Convention: Chairman and Members of Venue/ Site Servicing Committee Inspect Eagle Square

As the countdown to the National Convention of the All Progressives Congress (APC) continues, Chairman and members of the Venue, Decorations and Site Servicing Committee have visited the Eagle Square Abuja, venue of the proposed convention scheduled for 26th March 2022.

Leading the Committee to the Eagle Square, Chairman of the Committee and Plateau State Governor Simon Lalong said they were at the venue to see the state of the facility and also interface with the management.

He said the Committee would have started making arrangements at the venue before now, but for the Science and Technology Expo which just ended at the same venue.

Nevertheless, Governor Lalong said the Committee has been meeting and engaging relevant stakeholders to ensure that the plans for the venue and associated services are put in place for the comfort of delegates and officials

during the APC Convention.

Lalong said they are working closely with the Committees on security, protocol and others to ensure that there is synergy which will lead to the conduct of a hitch-free exercise.

The Governor appealed to all members of the APC to unite and work for the success of the National Convention which will strengthen the party ahead of the 2023 elections.



I Will Never Negotiate with Terrorists Again – Masari

Apparently regretting his rapprochement with terrorists in Katsina State, Governor, Aminu Bello Masari, has vowed not to negotiate or trust the hoodlums again because of their nefarious activities despite the two peace deals he had with them.

The governor added that with the benefit of hindsight, his government should never have negotiated with the terrorists, let alone grant them amnesty because "they are not propagating any ideology, they are criminals."

Masari explained that some of the 'so-called repentant' terrorists who were released from custody as a result of the peace deals are now leaders of terrorists with more than 100 gangs and various camps in Zamfara, Sokoto and Katsina states.

In an interactive session with members of a high-powered foreign delegation led by the Head of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Nigeria, Mohammed Yahya, at the Government House, Katsina, Masari insisted there was no need to negotiate with the criminals.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Representative in Nigeria, Peter Hawkins, Head of Cooperation, European Union in Nigeria, Cécile Tassin-Pelzer and Norway Ambassador to Nigeria, Knut Eiliv Lein, were among the delegation.

Although Governor Masari said he never regretted his decision at the time, he admitted that information available to him confirmed that engaging the terrorists who had killed and raped innocent citizens in the state was not the right thing to do.

Consequently, he urged the United Nations Development Programme, European Union

(EU) and the United Nations (UN) to support the Nigerian government with the provision of technologies that will enable security agencies to have access to the nation's ungoverned forest areas.

He said: "Because they (terrorists) said they are Muslims, we went as far as asking them to swear to the Holy Qur'an that they will never participate in banditry again. All of them did in this office but even those that have been in jail for over two years that were brought out are today bandits' leaders.

"In fact, I will never trust them again because we realised they are not ideologically inclined. So, we are negotiating with thieves. Anybody who says he is going to engage them on anything is free. I will pray for him but I will not do it again.

"They have failed me once; they have failed me twice so I will be a fool to go the same way. And you even see the Zamfara governor who engaged them. They have failed him more than three times."

Masari added: "They are common criminals. Even in Katsina not to talk of Zamfara, there are more than 100 gangs: a gang of two, three, four and a gang of 10, so with whom are you going to talk?"

Earlier, Yahya told the governor that the delegation was in the state to ascertain the security challenges afflicting the state and know what the international community can collectively do towards the development of the state.

According to him, the delegation was in Sokoto and Zamfara states as well as Niger Republic on the same mission where it discussed with security agencies, stakeholders, religious and community leaders



2023: FCT PDP endorses Anyim

Executives of the FCT Chapter of the PDP have thrown their weight behind the presidential ambition of a former Senate President, Chief Anyim Pius Anyim.

The endorsement was announced late on Thursday in Abuja when the party chieftains met with Anyim as part of his ongoing nationwide consultations on his political aspiration.

Our correspondent reports that Anyim, who is from Ebonyi in the South East, is one of over a dozen aspirants, wanting to become the president of Nigeria in the next political dispensation.

Receiving the executives, Anyim said he was fully aware of the socio-political and developmental needs of the FCT.

Anyim said that his understanding of the FCT had positioned him as the presidential aspirant with the best ideas to tackle the problems of the city.

He said that he had lived all his working life in the FCT, dating back to 1989, noting that he had been part of the growth and development of the FCT.

Anyim said that he had clear ideas of how to tackle the challenges that had been plaguing the FCT, following the rapid growth witnessed in the city.

"I am one of you. FCT is the landlord of Nigeria and I am one of you. When I completed my NYSC in Sokoto State in 1989, I moved down to Abuja and I have remained here till date.

"I, therefore, have the confidence as one of your own to ask for your support. Entrust me with the critical assignment to rebuild our dear country. I promise you that I will not fail you.

"With your votes for me at the presidential primaries, you will be making a worthy and invaluable investment in building the Nigeria we and our children will be proud of.

"Together, let us go for a greater Nigeria, where security, peace, unity, inclusiveness and prosperity will be our collective heritage," NAN quotes him as saying.

Anyim said that he had a clear understanding of the problems facing Nigeria as a country and that he had solutions to the problems.

In his remarks, the leader of the group, Mr Zakka Sunday, who is also the FCT Chapter Chairman of the PDP, assured Anyim of their unalloyed support.

He expressed his delight that the former secretary to the government of the federation understood the problems facing the FCT.

Sunday assured Anyim that they would support him to become the president of Nigeria in 2023.

Leaked Obiano's video in EFCC detention surfaces online

A short video of former Anambra Governor Willie Obiano in the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission's detention has surfaced online.

In the video which lasted 12 seconds, Obiano was seen sipping water from a bottle.

He was also discussing with an unidentified person in the video.

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission said former Governor Willie Obiano of Anambra State is being quizzed over the alleged misappropriation of N42 billion belonging to the state.

The agency had last year placed the former governor on its watch list and also asked the Nigeria Immigration Service to stop him from leaving the country in a letter to the Comptroller-General of Immigration dated November 15,

2021.

Obiano was arrested by EFCC on Thursday night, hours after handing over to the new Anambra Governor, Prof. Chukwuma Soludo.

The EFCC spokesman, Wilson Uwujaren, said, "Obiano has been flown to Abuja (on Friday). He is currently at our Abuja office.

"Obiano was arrested for alleged misappropriation of public funds, including, N5bn Sure-P and N37bn security vote which was withdrawn in cash. Part of the funds was also allegedly diverted to finance political activities in the state."

Meanwhile, the All Progressives Grand Alliance has condemned Obiano's arrest by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission.

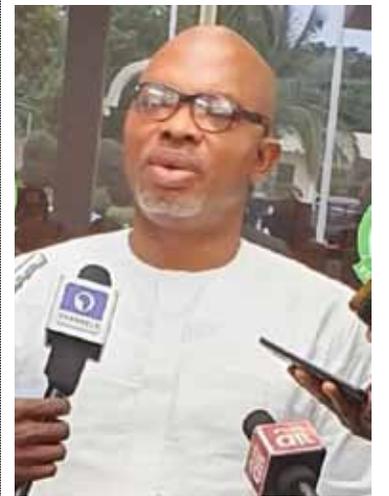
The party described the arrest of the former governor as a

"politically-motivated witch-hunt", saying that the EFCC had resorted to the use of fifth columnists.

Addressing journalists in Awka, on Saturday, the National Coordinator, APGA Media Warriors Forum, Evang Chinedu Obigwe, said the allegation that the former governor misappropriated N42bn, out of which N37bn was used to fund political activities was baseless and does not hold water.

Obigwe said efforts by the EFCC to dent the hard-earned reputation of Obiano would not succeed as he remains innocent until proven guilty by a competent court of law.

He said as of today, Nigerians don't have confidence in the anti graft agency anymore, saying that "when they see the real corrupt politicians joining APC, they would turn to toothless bulldogs.



DSS Raises Alarm Over Planned Protests Against Fuel Scarcity

The Department of State Services has raised the alarm over a plot by aggrieved persons to stage protests over the worsening fuel scarcity.

The DSS said in a statement by its Spokesman, Peter Afunaya, that university lecturers who are part of the ongoing strike embarked on by the Academic Staff Union of Universities would also be part of the demonstrations.

The agency alleged that the plan was to hold protests that would be similar to the #EndSARS demonstrations that rocked the country in 2020.

The statement read in part, "The service is also aware of a plot to use students, striking university teachers, labour unions, disgruntled individuals and strategic groups as well as exploit the global energy situation to carry out a mass protest like the ENDSARS. This is despite ongoing efforts by the government to address the issues.

"While the service views the machination as unpatriotic, it is on the trail of the agents of destabilisation who are desirous of using violence to achieve ulterior goals.

"Though it has placed measures to disrupt these tendencies, it warns the ring leaders and their cohorts to desist from acts capable of causing a breakdown of law and order."

The DSS added that there was a sinister plan by some elements to stoke violence in parts of the country particularly the North-Central.

It said the aim is to cause ethno-religious crisis, ignite reprisals and heat up the polity.

"In a bid to achieve this, the sponsors have mobilised foot soldiers and held several meetings in and outside the target areas," it said.

The DSS said it would work with other security agencies and go "after the sponsors of this scheme and ensure the law takes its course."

It advised citizens to engage according to rules but should resist persuasions to be used to destroy their own country.

"Those who may wish to go contrary to the law will, however, face the consequences," the DSS threatened.

Nigeria In Deep Mess Because God-Fearing Leaders Aren't Allowed To Lead- Peter Obi

Peter Obi, People Democratic Party (PDP) Vice Presidential candidate in the 2019 elections, has attributed the challenges confronting Nigeria to lack of God-fearing leaders.

Speaking at a reception organised for the President of Afrieximbank, Dr. Benedick Okey Oramah, who was honoured with a Doctorate Degree on Development Economics at the Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Obi called on the Federal Government to possibly suspend all political activities ahead of 2023 and address pressing issues.

Obi said Nigeria's problem is more than 2023 election, which seem to be capturing the attention of the government at the moment.

"If possible, suspend all political activities for now and focus on how to address the lingering fuel scarcity and other societal challenges confronting Nigerians at the moment," he said.

Obi said if things continue this way, the electorate may not have the appetite to participate fully in the 2023 electoral process.

He said something must be done to minimise the suffering of the masses, particularly as a result of fuel scarcity and Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) strike saga.

"Nigeria is in economic

mess today because it failed to implement the right policies and refuse to allow those with skills and God-fearing heart to govern."

"In my observation as a true democrat, I can tell you that several businesses are shutting down, especially as the fuel crisis worsens. Millions of Nigerians can no longer afford three square meal and there is high rate of prostitution among young ladies.

"Farmers are not free from the situation, with repeated threats from bandits, who have taken over most of the farm settlement, especially in the northern part of Nigeria.

"It has been proved everywhere in the World that the more educated a society is, the better it is for development. The only way we can measure development is through Human Development Index (HDI), which is hindering in education. And if you check countries that have same trajectory like Nigeria. For instance, in the year 2000, Bangladesh, Ghana, to mention but few, had same low Human Development Index (HDI) with Nigeria, but they have moved from low-medium while Nigeria remains in same low position.

"In the year 2010, Nigeria per capital was 2,250 dollars while Bangladesh was 780 per capital,

because the country invested in education, thereby pulling people out of poverty. Today, their per capital is 2,650, ours is still 2000, meaning that the Nigerian economic is collapsing.

"More Nigerians are getting poorer, Universities are closed, those that are working can not longer live on their salaries and their income while we politicians are here busing talking about 2023 general election. Is it what we are supposed to be doing now? We should be preoccupied with how poor will put better food on their table. Bread and other foodstuffs are on the high side. Politics is all about caring for the people that elected you into power and the society at large."

Obi urged Nigerians to always vote for people with competent capacity and the fear of God.



President Buhari Doesn't Understand Dynamics of Nigeria – Tambuwal

Sokoto State Governor Aminu Tambuwal on Saturday said President Muhammadu Buhari lacks the capacity to govern Nigeria.

He made the comment during his visit to the Kaduna State PDP Secretariat to solicit support for his presidential ambitions in 2023.

Mr Tambuwal, a stalwart of the opposition PDP, has declared his intention to run for President.

"The President doesn't understand

Nigeria and the dynamics of modern governance," he said. "And we need, for us to really address the challenges of Nigeria's situation today, have at the top of the leadership of this country someone that understands Nigeria itself.

"Someone that can reach out and consult and build consensus on issues that concerns Nigerians.

"You can only do that if you have the necessary network.

"We need someone that can unify this country, someone that is Pan-Nigerian, someone that understands the dynamics of modern day governance. Someone that has democratic governance experience, in terms of either being in the executive or legislative arm of government."

Speaking on the state of the nation, Governor Tambuwal described the administration of President Buhari as a tale of forced marriage.



Yang Jiechi Expounds China's Position on the Ukraine Situation

On March 14, 2022 local time, Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Director of the Office of the Central Commission for Foreign Affairs Yang Jiechi met with US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan in Rome, Italy, and expounded China's position on the Ukraine situation.

Yang Jiechi pointed out that China

does not want to see the situation in Ukraine to become what it is today. The Chinese side always maintains that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries must be respected and the purposes and principles of the UN Charter must be observed. China is committed to facilitating dialogue for peace, and believes that the international community should jointly support the peace talks between Russia

and Ukraine for early substantive outcomes, so as to deescalate the situation as soon as possible. All parties should exercise maximum restraint, protect civilians and prevent a massive humanitarian crisis. China has provided emergency humanitarian assistance to Ukraine and will continue to make its efforts to that end.

Yang Jiechi said that it is important

to straighten out the history of the Ukraine issue, address the problem at the root, and respond to the legitimate concerns of all parties. He also stressed the need to take a long-term perspective, actively follow the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, and encourage the parties concerned to engage in equal-footed dialogue and seek to put in place a balanced,

effective and sustainable European security architecture in line with the principle of indivisibility of security, so as to safeguard peace in Europe and the world at large.

Yang Jiechi stressed that China firmly opposes any words and deeds that spread disinformation and distort and smear China's position.

Xi Jinping says China, U.S. should work for world peace and tranquility



China and the United States should shoulder their share of international responsibilities and work for world peace and tranquility, Chinese President Xi Jinping said during a video call with his U.S. counterpart Joe Biden Friday evening at the request of the latter.

The talks were the first between the two leaders since their virtual

summit last November, when Xi and Biden exchanged views on China-U.S. relations and issues of mutual interest.

Noting the new major developments in the international landscape since then, Xi said the prevailing trend of peace and development is facing serious challenges, and the world is neither tranquil nor stable.

The Ukraine crisis is not something China wants to see, he said.

The events again show that countries should not come to the point of meeting on the battlefield, Xi said, adding that conflict and confrontation are not in anyone's interest, and peace and security are what the international community should treasure the

most.

"As permanent members of the UN Security Council and the world's two leading economies, we must not only guide the China-U.S. relations forward along the right track, but also shoulder our share of international responsibilities and work for world peace and tranquility," Xi told Biden.

United States president Joe Biden has reiterated the importance of the relationship between the US and China describing it as critical to shaping the world in the 21st century.

The two Presidents spoke recently in a video call where they exchanged views on China-US relations, the situation in Ukraine, and other issues of mutual interest. President Biden said that 50 years ago, the US and China made the important choice of issuing the Shanghai Communiqué. Fifty years on, the US-China relationship has once again come to a critical time. How this relationship develops will shape the world in the 21st century.

Biden reiterated that the US does not seek a new Cold War with

China; it does not aim to change China's system; the revitalization of its alliances is not targeted at China; the US does not support "Taiwan independence"; and it has no intention to seek a conflict with China. The US is ready to have candid dialogue and closer cooperation with China, stay committed to the one-China policy, and effectively manage competition and disagreements to ensure the steady growth of the relationship. President Biden expressed readiness to stay in close touch with President Xi to set the direction for the US-China relationship.

President Xi noted the new major developments in the international landscape since their first virtual meeting last November. The

prevailing trend of peace and development is facing serious challenges. The world is neither tranquil nor stable. As permanent members of the UN Security Council and the world's two leading economies, China and the US must not only guide their relations forward along the right track, but also shoulder their share of international responsibilities and work for world peace and tranquility.

President Xi stressed that he and President Biden share the view that China and the US need to respect each other, coexist in peace and avoid confrontation, and that the two sides should increase communication and dialogue at all levels and in all fields. President

US, China relationship would shape

Biden has just reiterated that the US does not seek to have a new Cold War with China, to change China's system, or to revitalize alliances against China, and that the US does not support "Taiwan independence" or intend to seek a conflict with China. "I take these remarks very seriously," said President Xi.

President Xi pointed out that the China-US relationship, instead of getting out of the predicament created by the previous US administration, has encountered a growing number of challenges. What's worth noting in particular is that some people in the US have sent a wrong signal to "Taiwan independence" forces. This is very dangerous. Mishandling of the Taiwan question will have a disruptive impact on the bilateral ties. China hopes that the US will give due attention to this issue. The direct cause for the current situation in the China-US relationship is that some

people on the US side have the important common interest of both sides. President Xi underscored will continue to be different US. What matters is to keep control. A steadily growing interest of both sides.

The two sides exchanged Ukraine.

President Biden expounded expressed readiness for control prevent the situation from President Xi pointed out to see the situation in Ukra

By Becky Adi

FG Seeks Activation of MoU With China To Boost Tourism

The Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, has called for the signing of the two Memoranda of Understanding between Nigeria and China in an effort to boost tourism between the two countries.

The Minister, made the call in Abuja when he received the Chinese Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr. Chui Jian Chun, on a courtesy visit to his office.

He said the two MoU are on the Facilitation of Group Travels by Chinese Tourists to Nigeria as well as Travel Facilitation through the Approved Destination Status (ADS).

He said Nigeria, like China, has huge tourism attractions to give effect to the MoU, adding that if just 1% of the 130 million Chinese tourists who travel annually comes to Nigeria, that will be 1.3 million tourists, which will be a big boost to tourism in Nigeria.

“There are two MoU between Nigeria and China on the Facilitation of Group Travels by Chinese Tourists to Nigeria and Travel Facilitation through the Approved Destination Status (ADS). Though the two MoU date back to 2019, they have not been signed. It is important that our two countries work together to negotiate and sign these MoU to promote tourism between them,” Alhaji Mohammed said.

He recalled that in 2002, Nigeria and China signed a Bilateral Agreement to encourage cooperation in the field of tourism between both countries, adding that the Agreement focused mainly on exchange programmes, human capacity building, joint marketing

and investment.

The Minister said though some Nigerian officials received short training on tourism in China and online, the dearth of skilled manpower in the tourism sector in Nigeria has made it imperative to seek more advance capacity building and scholarship programme in

Tourism Statistics and Tourism Satellite Account (TSA), tourism development, product development among others from the Chinese government.

He also harped on the need to encourage exchanges between the two countries in the area of film production, which will avail

Nigerian filmmakers the opportunity to improve on their technical competence in film-making.

Alhaji Mohammed commended China for extending its cooperation with Nigeria beyond culture and tourism to infrastructure development in the country.

He listed the Lagos-Ibadan and

Abuja-Kaduna standard gauge rail lines, which are already in operation, the ongoing work on the Kaduna-Kano railway, Abuja Light Rail, the upgrade of the Port Harcourt-Maiduguri narrow gauge, Abuja-Keffi-Makurdi road and the building of new airport terminals in Abuja, Lagos, Port Harcourt and Kano, among others, as the “visible monuments that testify to the warm relations and great cooperation between the two countries”.

The Minister also lauded the cooperation between the StarTimes of China and the Nigerian Television Authority, which culminated in the birth of the Integrated Television Services (ITS), which is the Federal government-owned signal distributor that is playing a major role in the Digital Switch Over in Nigeria.

He urged the Chinese Ambassador to facilitate the granting of the 500-million-dollar loan to Nigeria by the China Export-Import Bank for the execution of three major projects in the public broadcast sector.

“Also worthy of mention, Your Excellency, is the 500-million-dollar loan which we are seeking from the China Export-Import Bank for three major projects - the digitization of the NTA, the construction of a headquarters complex and transmission network for Integrated Television Services (ITS), a Federal Government-owned signal distributor that is a major component of the country’s Digital Switch Over (DSO), and the construction of an ultra-modern Media City in Ikorodu.

“I want to use this opportunity to appeal to Your Excellency to continue to use your good offices to fast-track the evaluation and approval process of the loan by the China Export Import Bank, and to thank you for your efforts so far in this regard,” Alhaji Mohammed said.

In his remarks, Ambassador Chui said China is re-strategizing its bilateral relations with Nigeria to focus on Growth, Development and Progress.

He said the new strategy, tagged “5 GIST” will be a holistic, complete and sustained approach to focus on political support, economic cooperation, security and military collaboration, international affairs coordination, infrastructure, ICT, industry, investment, import and export, among others.

The Ambassador said the new focus will be anchored on people-to-people communication and relationship as well as cultural exchanges.

Segun Adeyemi Special Assistant To The President (Media) Office of the Minister of Information and Culture Abuja 17 March 2022



Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed (second left); Chinese Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr. Chui Jian Chun (third left) and other delegation from the Chinese Embassy, when the Ambassador paid a courtesy visit to the Minister in Abuja on Thursday.



Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, presenting a Bida Brass Work as a souvenir to the Chinese Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr. Chui Jian Chun, when he paid a courtesy visit to the Minister in Abuja on Thursday.

Shape the world in 21st century

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stands for peace and opposes war. This is embedded in China’s history and culture. China makes a conclusion independently based on the merits of each matter. China advocates upholding international law and universally recognized norms governing international relations. China adheres to the UN Charter and promotes the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security. These are the major principles that underpin China’s approach to the Ukraine crisis. China has put forward a six-point initiative on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine, and is ready to provide further humanitarian assistance to Ukraine and other affected countries. All sides need to jointly support Russia and Ukraine in having dialogue and negotiation that will produce results and lead to peace. The US and NATO should also have dialogue with Russia to address the crux of the Ukraine crisis

and ease the security concerns of both Russia and Ukraine.

President Xi stressed that with the need to fight COVID-19 on the one hand and protect the economy and people’s livelihood on the other, things are already very difficult for countries around the world. As leaders of major countries, we need to think about how to properly address global hotspot issues and, more importantly, keep in mind global stability and the work and life of billions of people. Sweeping and indiscriminate sanctions would only make the people suffer. If further escalated, they could trigger serious crises in global economy and trade, finance, energy, food, and industrial and supply chains, crippling the already languishing world economy

and causing irrevocable losses. The more complex the situation, the greater the need to remain cool-headed and rational. Whatever the circumstances, there is always a need for political courage to create space for peace and leave room for political settlement. As two Chinese sayings go, “It takes two hands to clap.” “He who tied the bell to the tiger must take it off.” It is imperative that the parties involved demonstrate political will and find a proper settlement in view of both immediate and long-term needs. Other parties can and should create conditions to that end. The pressing priority is to keep the dialogue and negotiation going, avoid civilian casualties, prevent a humanitarian crisis, and cease hostilities as soon

as possible. An enduring solution would be for major countries to respect each other, reject the Cold War mentality, refrain from bloc confrontation, and build step by step a balanced, effective and sustainable security architecture for the region and for the world. China has been doing its best for peace and will continue to play a constructive role.

The two Presidents agreed that the video call is constructive. They directed their teams to promptly follow up and take concrete actions to put China-US relations back on the track of steady development, and make respective efforts for the proper settlement of the Ukraine crisis.

By Owei Lakemfa

The unfolding tragedy in the Ukraine's war with Russia deserves the universal attention it is receiving. Where better to discuss it than the United Nations, UN? Where best in the UN than the Security Council which has all the powers of the world body, has teeth and can bite. But when the matter was discussed at the Security Council, it suffered defeat because that exclusive club of five permanent members that dictates to the rest of humanity, runs on veto power. That group comprising the United States, US; China and three European countries: Russia, France and the United Kingdom, UK, decide what is best for the rest of the world irrespective of the opinion of the rest of humanity.

The war is a matter in which the members of the big boys club had differing interests and the rule is that if any of them objects, no binding decision can be taken. So, calling a meeting of the castrated UN General Assembly on the issue became more a motion without movement; an academic exercise or more of moral suasion.

Also, the motive of calling the Assembly was more of the West showing that there are more countries that supports it than its rival Russia. A more meaningful objective would have been how the world can pressure both sides of the conflict to accept immediate ceasefire, a negotiated settlement and return of peace, more so when an escalation may have negative consequences on the world.

A non-legal or non-binding vote was taken of the 193-member assembly with 141 states voting against Russia, five in favour, 35 abstentions, while 12 did not vote. In a world supposedly wedded to democracy, this Assembly would have been an opportunity for the world to insist on changing the power relations in the UN to allow the equality of votes or the will of the majority to prevail rather than a world where the vote of a single country overrides that of the entire world. That was why the manifest evil called Apartheid in South Africa endured until 1994; because the US and UK would not allow the world take decisive steps at the UN against that Evil Empire.

When in 1976, Africa boycotted the Montreal Olympic Games because the International Olympics Committee refused to disqualify New Zealand that was making rugby tours in Apartheid South Africa, some Western countries denounced us for allegedly mixing sports with politics. Interestingly, the US boycotted the 1984 Moscow Olympic Games because the Soviet Union intervened in Afghanistan; the same country



Commentary

Sense and nonsense in Nigeria voting against Russia



America was to invade 17 years later. Today, Russian sportsmen and women are being barred from international competitions; is this not mixing sports and politics? The point I am making is not to justify any attacks or invasion, including the war in Ukraine. Rather, it is to make the point that countries play international politics primarily based on the promotion and defence of their national interests. So in Nigeria voting against Russia at the UN Assembly, what interest was being served? National interest or a mindless casting of vote? First, in taking sides in the intra-European squabble, we have lost the opportunity to play the needed mediatory role and lost relevance in the resolution of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

Secondly, we lost sight of the fact that unlike the West, Russia

has never constituted a threat to Nigeria or Africa.

Thirdly, the Buhari administration displayed a lack of historical knowledge. The defunct Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, USSR, which was inherited by Russia, was in the forefront of the global struggles against colonialism. It applied pressure that colonies like Nigeria must be freed. Even while being colonised, the Soviets and their allies provided thousands of Nigerians scholarship to ensure an independent Nigeria has the trained manpower required to run a new country.

Moscow also provided African colonies fighting for liberation with funds, military training, arms, scholarship and vital international support. This it did in the bloody liberation wars in Algeria, Angola, Mozambique,



Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa. The Soviets did not mind that the colonialists they armed us against were their fellow Europeans!

In the specific case of Nigeria, when the civil war broke out and

countries like France and Israel equipped the then rebels with military hardware and training to secede, the UK refused to supply Nigeria needed air force equipment as it did not want the federal side to have air superiority, and the US declared itself neutral.

It was Moscow that came to Nigeria's aid. On August 2, 1967, then Information and Labour Minister, Chief Anthony Enahoro, was in Moscow to sign an arms deal, including the supply of aircraft. Soviet ally, Czechoslovakia followed six days later, agreeing to supply the federal side military aircraft and training.

The Soviet Union did not mind that Nigeria was opposed to socialism; its position according to Premier Alex Kosygin, was based on the Soviets desire to "prevent the country from being dismembered".

Nigerian Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Brigadier George Kurubo, declared that Russian support was "responsible for the federal victory more than any other single thing, more than all other things put together".

In November 1968, while the war was on, Moscow came to Nigeria's aid by agreeing to provide the funds to build the crucial Kainji Dam.

Also, when in Nigeria's quest for development it decided to build an iron and steel complex, the West refused on the basis that we did not need this mother of all industries.

It was Moscow that came to our rescue by providing funds and building the Ajaokuta Iron and Steel complex.

Nigeria as the giant of Africa forgets that in the event of a conflict between a NATO member and an African country, like the one brewing between Mali and neo-colonial France, the Europeans will collectively fight against the African country. It forgets that with the shortage of gas from Russia, desperate European countries will turn on countries like Nigeria for gas they will want virtually for free even if it means subverting us or removing a non-compliant government.

This is our experience. The basis of Buhari's foreign policy is truly amazing: from supporting the military coup in Chad to abstaining on December 31, 2020 in the UN Resolution on: "A global call for concrete action for the elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance..." In other words, it refused to vote for the universal elimination of discrimination and racism!

At the UN General Assembly, Nigeria should either have abstained or not voted like its more sensible brothers such as Cameroun, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Morocco, Togo, Mali, Burundi, Equatorial Guinea and South Africa. Like we say in Nigeria: Common sense is not common.



Stop TB Nigeria laments Nigeria got only 31% funding in 2020

Nigeria will continue to lag behind in Tuberculosis control activities as only 31% of TB funding got into the coffers of the country. This position was disclosed by the Acting Board Chairman of Stop TB Partnership Nigeria, Dr. Queen Ogbuji who said that out of the \$373 million needed for Tuberculosis (TB) control in 2021 only 31% was available to all the implementers of Tuberculosis control activities in Nigeria totalling (7% domestic and 24% donor funds), with 69% funding gap.

According to Ogbuji, less than half of the Global US\$15 billion annual funding for TB which world leaders promised promised at the United Nations High-Level Meeting (UNHLM on TB in 2018), has been delivered. The Stop TB Nigeria head said that TB remains one of

the world's deadliest infectious killers that kills about 4,100 people daily and nearly 30,000 people fall ill with this preventable and curable disease.

She said, "TB is the leading cause of death of people with HIV and a major contributor to antimicrobial resistance. Global efforts to combat TB have saved an estimated 66 million lives since the year 2000."

"The COVID-19 pandemic has reversed years of progress made in the fight to end TB. For the first time in over a decade, TB deaths increased in 2020."

She noted that the 2022 World TB Day is an opportunity to focus on the people affected by this disease and to call for accelerated action to end TB suffering and deaths, moreso in the midst of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

"The theme for 2022 World TB Day is "Invest to End TB. Save Lives". And the slogan

for Nigeria is "Give More, Do more, End TB Now!" The theme – 'Invest to End TB. Save Lives' conveys the urgent need to invest resources to ramp up the fight against TB and achieve the commitments to end TB made by global leaders".

"This is especially critical in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic that has put End TB progress at risk, and to ensure equitable access to prevention and care in line with the drive towards achieving Universal Health Coverage. More investment to TB will save millions more lives, and accelerate the end of the TB epidemic."

"The Stop TB Partnership and all partners are calling on all those involved in the fight against TB to unite under this overarching theme and sound the alarm that the low levels of funding for the TB response year after year cannot continue

nor be accepted anymore".

We therefore call on the government at the federal, state and local government levels as well as corporate sector and philanthropists to invest in TB and prevent people from dying from a preventable and curable disease, she said.

According to the Executive Director of KNCV TB Foundation, in Nigeria Dr Odume Bethrand, the World TB Day is a day set aside to educate the public about the socio-economic impact of TB. Bethrand disclosed that the KNCV TB Foundation Nigeria, along with funding Partner the USAID, the STOP TB Partnership Nigeria and the Government will use the opportunity to share successes, create awareness and most importantly highlight the key challenges that hinder the progress toward meeting set targets for TB control in

Nigeria.

He said, "Nigeria still accounts for 4.6% of the global estimated TB cases, with the highest TB burden in Africa, the 6th globally and 1 of 10 countries that accounts for 70% of the global gap between the estimated global incidence of multidrug resistant TB each year and the number enrolled on treatment."

"About 75% of TB patients in Nigeria and their households are facing catastrophic costs. Though Nigeria is 1 of 4 countries that improved case notification against the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, but we can do so much more to close the about 70% gap in TB notification."

He enjoined that "To end TB in Nigeria we must address the funding gap; invest more in human and material resources needed to control the TB epidemic."

FG to transform health system as NPHCDA hosts PHC Summit

In a bid to transform Nigeria's Primary Health Care (PHC) system, Executive Director of the National Health Care Development Agency, NPHCDA, Dr. Faisal Shuaib has said that agency in collaboration the Ministry of Health is set to host the PHC Summit on 24th and 25th of March, 2022 in Abuja. In a release made available

to health correspondents, the agency said that the launch of the programme is aimed at transforming the PHC in Nigeria for a strengthened quality health care system in the country. Shuaib in a statement said, "The Summit is geared towards launching a historic programme to transform the under-resourced, weak primary health care system

in Nigeria by leveraging private sector, international agencies and government collaboration." According to him, the Summit themed: "Reimagining PHC" will converge national elected leaders, top government officials, and leading private sector executives to brainstorm on attainable plans that will on a large scale move Nigeria's primary health care

(PHC) system by the year 2030, adding that the programme is solutions-focused and dedicated to delivering improved PHC services across the country. "Thus, the Summit will kick-start fund mobilization to realize the programme's goals – it will be an inclusive project, leveraging the know-how and resources of the private sector, government, and

global development agencies."

Minister of Health, Dr. Osagie Ehanire who noted that "Primary health care is the foundation of the entire health system, its strength is crucial to the functioning of all other levels." said that the nation's health care needs urgent and comprehensive reform.

By Amgbare Ekaunkumo, Yenagoa



Features

Highlighting the impact of prosperity government to Bayelsans in two years



The government of Senator Douye Diri of Bayelsa State was birthed following the Supreme Court judgement sacking the governor-elect Mr. David Lyon as a result of certificate discrepancies observed by the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC form in the 2019 gubernatorial election.

The verdict then thrown most Bayelsans especially APC supporters into a sorrowful mood in February 14, 2020 being the World Valentine day, not knowing the numerous benefits that come with it. One major benefit behind the verdict was that a messiah was giving to transform the landscape of Bayelsa State, and since then He has been displaying an egalitarian nature who give no preference to execution of life-changing projects which are scattered across the nooks and crannies of the state.

Available statistics showed that the Prosperity Government has achieved tremendously ranging from tangible to intangible sectors of the economy such as infrastructure to education, health, sports, youth and women empowerment, human capacity development, urban renewal, promotion of peace, reconciliation and unity as well as worker-to-people oriented policies and programs. The governor continues to write his name in the Golden Book of record.

There is a biblical connotation that says when the righteous rule the people rejoice, this proverb is replicated in Bayelsa within just two years of reins of governance of the state, Senator Douye Diri, has remained stoic in his avowed commitment to changing the developmental landscape of the 25-year-old state.

The governor has demonstrated the leadership of inclusion irrespective of political affiliation, economy status. He has redefined the political system of Bayelsa State by moving away from the old fashion ways of politics. It is evident that the two leading political parties in Bayelsa State can wine and dine together as one people.

The administration has roll out policies that encourage political parties to be at peace with themselves. It is an enduring legacy that can be sustained if only all concerns work together as one for the common good of the state.

In a fora, Senator Douye Diri was caught saying, "I like to use this forum to commend politicians across the parties, particularly those of the APC (All Progressives Congress) and PDP extraction. I give thumbs up to both parties for the brotherliness and for exhibiting maturity in the politics of our dear state." The State Governor's maturity is noticeable in his style of leadership and calmness despite the challenges poised before him ranging from dwindling economy, coronavirus pandemic and people who subjectively and destructively criticizing the policies and programs of the government.

Chronicling the achievements of the Prosperity Government, the government has recorded gigantic stride in the area of infrastructural development which has turned the state into a construction site. The legacy projects embarked upon by the state government which many have been completed while others near completion. These include the newly commissioned 4.5km Igbedi

community road in Kolokuma/Opokuma Local Government Area which was built from the scratch.

Also, the Administration embarked on the construction of Yenagoa-Oporoma road project linking various communities of the River banks. Although the project is a federal government project which was in the drawing board for over five decades, inherited from the Senator Seriake Dickson led administration to lessen the suffering of the riverine people of Southern Ijaw. Being one of the largest and oldest local government council, many communities in the council area, is only accessible by boat.

The people of the council area is now jubilating as Vice President Yemi Osinbajo officially flagged off the construction of a bridge linking the council headquarters, Oporoma, at Angiama as part of the activities marking the second year anniversary.

The people of Angiama and Igbedi communities share some similarities in terms of unavailability of good road network until the Prosperity Government led by Senator Douye Diri, making the people in the Kolokuma/Opokuma and Southern Ijaw council areas to have sense of belonging, which has changed the narrative of the people.

The Angiama people are always joyful; a people that only see vehicles perhaps either on television, in books or whenever they travel to the city for greener pastures. Their farm produce now has economy value which can be exported to Yenagoa and other cities.

Another gigantic project is the Mega Media Complex housing all the state-owned media outfits – Radio Bayelsa, Niger Delta Television and the Bayelsa State Newspaper Corporation – the imposing edifice has 340 offices, 107 restrooms, two restaurants and other facilities. The three storey building is fully equipped with state-of-the-art broadcast equipment and printing machines that will enhance the productivity of media practitioners. A model which is hard to find anywhere will compete favourably with other media outfits nationally and globally.

As government of continuity, the Prosperity Government continued all abandoned projects inherited by his predecessor including the second phase of Isaac Boro Road, the 89km Sagbama-Ekeremor Road, the 38km Yenagoa-Oporoma Road and the 22km Elebele-Igbogene Ring Road, which the first phase

from Igbogene-Okarki is already inaugurated. The government also inherited uncompleted key projects like the Glory Drive Road from Igbogene to Onopa, where the Government House is located, was conceived during the Timipre Sylva administration. The road is now under construction after clearing all court litigations that put the project on hold for years.

Moreover, the Government also facilitated the commencement of commercial flight after the administration secured the certification of operational licence last year from the Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA). Since then the airport airlifting passengers to different parts of the country with affordable fees.

To enable night-time flights at the airport, the Diri administration has procured Instrument Landing System (ILS) and other required equipment. It had earlier undertaken the construction of the airport's perimeter fencing, a condition that the NCAA insisted upon even though there were other considerations for delaying the operational licence.

The world valentine day which coincided with Bayelsa State second year anniversary, many Bayelsans describe Douye Diri as a valentine gift to Bayelsans as the state now enjoying peaceful atmosphere as he strengthening the security architecture of the state with provision of operational vehicles to all the security and paramilitary agencies. Importantly, the government reintroduced the

Bayelsa security outfit code-named "Operation Doo-Akpo", which has significantly reduced crime and criminality in Yenagoa and its environs. It also strengthened the state's complementary security outfits – Bayelsa Volunteers and Bayelsa Vigilante – by harmonising their operations with the Operation Doo-Akpo after the Bayelsa Community Safety Corps Law came into force. The inhabitants of Bayelsa can now sleep with their two eyes close, which the security personnel are visibly stationed in all the strategic locations of the state. The administration also embarked on massive expansion of roads and roundabouts like the Swali ultra-market and the Tombia roundabouts which cultists and some criminal elements used as a hideout to perpetuate crime and criminality.

In addition, the administration also embarked on the construction of 18 new internal roads in the state capital alone out of 20, while 51 other internal roads were rehabilitated within the period under review.

The administration also commissioned The Unity Bridge connecting the Nembe people of Ogbolomabiri and Bassambiri in Nembe Local Government Area of the state. It gathered that the bride got damaged several years ago at the height of a protracted dispute between both communities. The rift was so deep that the communities could not even agree on rebuilding the strategic route that bonded them.

The Administration seen the youths roaming the streets without gainful employment, created the Centre for Youth Development and roll out programmes that making youths self-reliant and self-employed. The administration has trained youths on vocational and technical skills on Information Communication Technology (ICT).

The government in its calculated attempt to empowering the youth population initiated the Diri Digital Entrepreneurship Empowerment Programme (DDEEP) under which 8,000 persons from the eight local government areas of the state would be trained to acquire ICT skills under the Ministry of Communication, Science and Technology. According to statistics at our disposal, out of the initial 4,700 applicants, 50 of them, also from the eight councils, were selected for a three-month pilot scheme that commenced in November last year.

Another remarkable area of achievement in education sector is the new focus on vocational, technical and science education. Apart from establishing technical and vocational colleges in all the local government areas of the state, it is vigorously pursuing the introduction of Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics literacy in secondary schools.

The government also launched Ijaw history book, The Izon of the Niger Delta. An idea conceived and nurtured by late Dr. Diepreye Peter Solomon Alamiyeseigha's led government but did not see the light of the day until the present administration. The intention of the book is to revive the Ijaw language which was gradually going into extinction. It also make the compulsory learning and teaching of the Ijaw language in our primary and secondary schools across the state.

The administration has also commissioned the Kaiama Referral Hospital, which it inherited from his predecessor and increase the testing capacity of the infectious Covid-19 pandemic, and the sustenance of the Bayelsa Insurance Scheme which is enjoying by all Bayelsa civil servants and their family members.

Ensuring food sufficiency, the government of Senator Douye Diri provide land and seedlings to farmers in collaboration with the apex bank (Central Bank of Nigeria) build fish processing plant of over 20,000-metric tonnes capacity, which are all effective and functional.

First in history in Nigeria that state-sponsored football clubs, the Bayelsa United and Bayelsa Queens, win the 2021 Federation/AITEO Cup for both the male and female categories. No other state in the country has achieved such feat in their football history, knowing fully well that the football teams are coming third for the first time at the Edo 2020 National Sports Festival.

It is evident that the administration created the enabling environment for its sportsmen and women to strive as well as a motivating reward system. This achievement chronicled the fact that the governor is a sports lover. It was observed in the novelty football match featuring the executive and legislative arms of the government held in Siasia Samson Sports Complex as part of activities to mark the second year anniversary in the state.



Inside FCT

Minister commends students brilliance at technology expo, expresses committed to science, technology education

By Joyce Remi-Babayehu

FCT Minister, Malam Muhammad Musa Bello has commended the students of Government Science Secondary School, Area 3 Garki, and Government Secondary School, Gwagwalada for their brilliance on scientific inventions and presented at the just concluded 2022 Technology and Innovation EXPO organized by the Federal Ministry of Science, Technology and innovation in Abuja.

The two schools won laurels for their presentations at the National Junior Engineers, Technicians and Scientists (JETS) category at the EXPO. While Government Science Technical College Area 3, Garki came second for its project which was the production of re-useable sanitary pads from banana trunks, Government Secondary School Gwagwalada came third for its automated water sprinkler system project.

The Minister who congratulated the winning students for their performance at the EXPO, said that the FCT Administration is committed to the development of science and technology education in the FCT.

He noted that from global evidence of the crucial role of Science and Technology in the overall development of countries FCTA is encouraged to continue to support programmes like the Science and Innovation EXPO

Speaking after the presentation of the prizes to the students, the Director, Department of Science and Technology of the Education Secretariat, Mr Kola Olobashola, said that FCT schools had always been innovative and even clinched 3 top prizes at the 2021 edition of the EXPO.

Olobashola attributed the success of FCT Schools in Science and Technology innovation to the support of the FCT Minister and Administration as well as adequate preparations of the students and

schools.

He said “we make sure each of our schools has a particular innovation peculiar to it and its community and when programmes such this come up, we showcase the best of what our schools have to offer.” The Minister he said has not relented in his support to inculcate a culture of science, technology and innovation in the life and heart of our students”

He also said the FCT has a well-organized school system with committed and qualified teachers and a very effective Quality Assurance Department that ensures that the school curriculum is implemented to the letter.

The FCT school system, he said does not tolerate any gaps in its teaching process citing the FCT Education Secretariat’s E-learning platform which was effectively deployed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Secretary for Education, Malam Dahir El-Katuzu, stated that the FCT had won the three top prizes as it had done previously and promised to ensure that the it retains the top positions.

El-Katuzu admonished parents to encourage their children and wards to take up science and technology subjects in schools, noting that science and technology were imperative to living in the world today.

He however said that efforts were being made to further encourage students to overcome the phobia for mathematics which is the bedrock of science and technology education.



FCTA to pay attention to PHCs, traditional rulers’ welfare

By Joyce Remi-Babayehu

The Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) said it would pay special attention to Primary Health Centres development and welfare of traditional rulers across the territory.

The Mandate Secretary FCT Area Council Services Secretariat, Acts, Abubakar Dantsoho disclosed this today at an interaction with staff of the Secretariat to mark his 100 days in office.

He reiterated the secretariat’s commitment to the health of the rural dwellers, adding that focusing on PHCs and traditional rulers would help in giving life to the rural

people.

Dantsoho said that traditional rulers are key stakeholders in FCT and must be given serious attention.

He also promised that all the ongoing projects in the Area Councils would be given priority and completed while new ones will be initiated.

“There are projects ongoing, there ones that are yet to be awarded I am doing my best to see that the projects are awarded so that it will better the life of the people.”

I am going to see that our royal fathers get the best in their respective areas especially in areas of infrastructure, our rural roads will be given attention, ongoing projects will be completed with new ones will be awarded Dantsoho assured.

Minister order immediate removal drug, criminal hideouts in Abuja

The FCT Minister, Malam Muhammad Musa Bello has ordered the immediate removal of drug hideouts, shanties, batchers and illegal criminal elements in the territory.

In a clean up exercise following the Minister’s order the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) has promised to rid Abuja of drug peddlers and other criminalities.

The Senior Special Assistant to FCT Minister on Monitoring, Inspection and Enforcement, Comrade Ikharo Attah said their is no going on the Minister’s directive as the whole city of Abuja will become one of the best cities in the world.

Attah who disclosed to journalists immediately after a clean up exercise in Utako and some parts of Jabi Park, said that the people have become a torn on the flesh of the administration but “we will not take tolerate that.”

According to him, “This place has been cleared severally in recent years because it was used by drugs lord’s, we have cleared the place over and over again and the people keep coming back to build their shanties and batchers. If this is not checked, they will come back as usual to do their illegal businesses.

“Sadly, owners of the landed property have failed to develop their property and people take advantage of the fallow land to build all manner of shanties and batchers. Yesterday, we went to Utako village to clean the place, to be taking over by its rightful owner, the Nigeria Police.”

“We are going round the city to clean up the environment, the minister has mandated us to commerce intensive clean up of transportation lapses beginning from the Airport road, we are going to be clearing the areas, with strong focus on traffic-related violations.”

“The new Director, Directorate

of Road Traffic Services (DRTS), Dr Abdulateef Bello as you all know is knowledgeable about security. He will be leading a comprehensive team to commence massive traffic clean up starting from Monday. There is so much he intends to achieve and we all will be working with him”, he added.

Also Assistant Director and Head of Monitoring and Enforcement of Abuja Environmental Protection Board (AEPB), Mr. Kaka Bello in a worrisome tone said that a lot of scavengers and illegal squatters are building makeshift shanties that deface the territory.

He said, “We have been here severally to clean up this area and unfortunately, they still come back . We appealed to owners to go and build their property.”

Kaka however appealed to property owners to takeover and develop their plots to prevent them from turning into criminal hideouts.

APC FCT Chapter inaugurates 36 man state executive council

The FCT Chapter of the All Progressives Congress (APC) of the (FCT) on Wednesday had charged the newly inaugurated a 36 man state executive council members to spread peace within the party.

The State chairman of the party, Abdulmalik Usman, who was earlier inaugurated by the national body during the inauguration said that the state executive would elevate fairness and equity in running its affairs.

Usman advised the new executive members to find means of consolidating on the current achievements of the party.

He said, “This is our party, and whatever issue that members are not happy with will definitely be resolved.”

“Having a government, or forming government in the centre is greater than any interest that someone may have, so we have to work tirelessly to deliver the party.”

“Members should all come

together and support the leadership of this party at all levels, so that we can form the national government by electing our members that will be contesting for positions.”

APC in the Federal Capital Territory is concerned with the party’s victory, urging members to take the party above personal interest, he said.

“Let us take the party above our personal interest, the party’s interest should be paramount”, Usman stressed.

FCT to crush 1,500 impounded motorcycles

The Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) is set to crush 1, 500 motorcycles popularly known as okada, it was learnt at the weekend.

The motorcycles were impounded by the Directorate of Road Traffic Services (DRTS) otherwise known as the Vehicle Inspection Office (VIO) by riders who violated traffic rules and regulations in the FCT.

The Director of the Directorate of Road Traffic Services (DRTS), Dr Abdulateef Bello said this when he paid an on-the-spot-visit to the DRTs task force office in Wuye to acquaint himself with the activities of the task force team.

He said: “As we did the last time, these motorcycles were impounded and would be crushed. They are motorcycles whose riders were arrested

because they contravened the traffic law and regulations by driving against the traffic within the city centre.

“Right now, we have over 1,200 motorcycles to be crushed. As much as the exercise is ongoing, we are estimating that when we have 1,500 motorcycles, then we begin another second round of crushing.

“These motorcycles were impounded within three to four months. We did the last exercise around November/ December, and then we started assembling the newly impounded motorcycles.”

Bello, however, said the government will not rest its oars until the FCT is free from

okada, which constitutes a nuisance and security threat.

He warned motorcycle riders to obey the rules and the restraining order not to ply the FCT routes.

He said: “They should stay within the confined areas such as estates and market places, not to approach the highways. So, all those that contravened traffic rules will face this particular punishment of having their motorbikes crushed.”

On what they will use the crushed motorcycles for, the DRT boss said it will be given to auctioneers who have use for the parts.

“They can be converted to

Entertainment



Simi makes history with 100 million streams on Audiomack

Singer Simi has become the first Nigerian female artiste to reach 100mi streams on Audiomack.

She was elated for the historical achievement on the popular global music streaming platform.

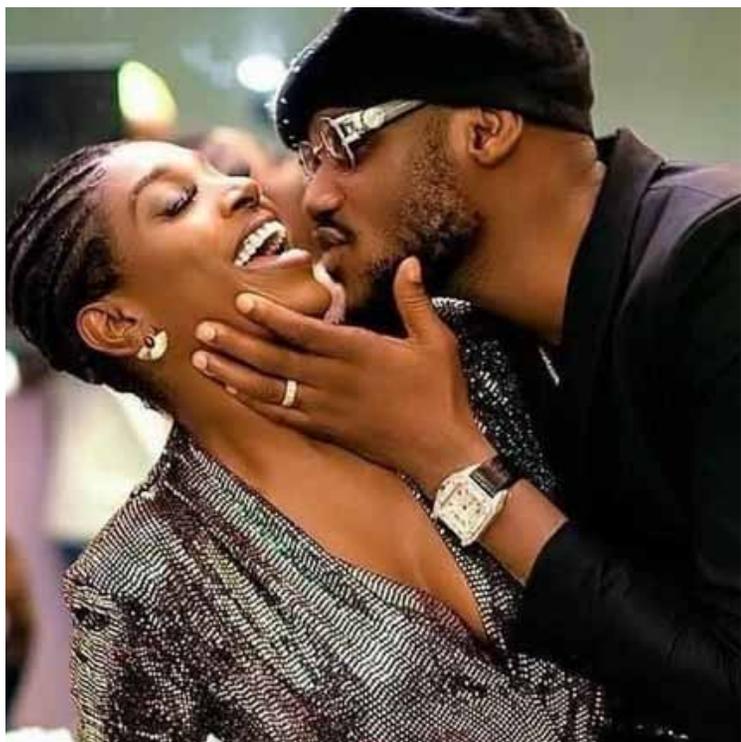
The Duduke singer expressed gratitude for the honour, praising God and fans for the accomplishment.

The mother of one tweeted: “@audiomackafrica thank you so much for the honour. First female to get 100 million plays on audiomack. I like it very much” she wrote.

“Thank God for growth and thank my amazing fans for always supporting me.”

Audiomack is a free global limitless music streaming and discovery platform that allows artistes to share their music and fans to discover new artistes, songs and albums.

2Face Idibia defends wife, Annie over comments on reality TV show



The music icon says his wife's sincerity is one of the reasons he loves her.

Nigerian music icon 2Face Innocent Idibia has come to his wife Annie's defense following her recent outburst on the reality TV show, Young, Famous and African.

The movie star had expressed her frustration over her husband's infidelity while they were dating.

In a post shared via his Instagram Stories on Monday, March 21, 2022, the music star defended the mother of two of his daughters.

“I have never been a fan of this reality TV thingy but I

must ask or rather point out the fact that whatever Annie felt she said, it was straight up to whoever,” he wrote.

“She never laughed with anybody and said different behind. That's one of the reasons I love this African Queen.”

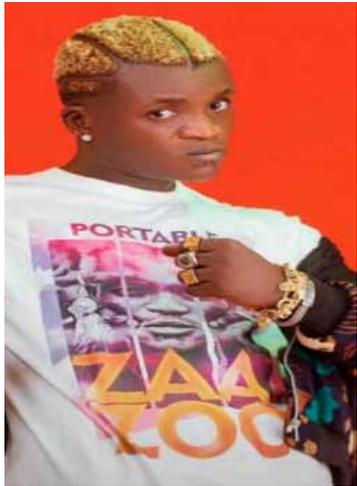
Annie had revealed during one of the episodes of the show that she has been subjected to many humiliations and embarrassment and would always question how 2face made the same mistake twice.

“When you meet someone,

then you know them first and then you wake up to different people are having babies for him and then he has five different kids with other women, my first child is his fifth and I met him before everybody,” she said.

“So you know what that is? You know how many humiliations and embarrassment and damn and I was like... man... How do you repeat the same mistake twice?”

Annie and 2Face got married in May 2012 and they have two daughters, Isabella and Olivia.



'Portable needs rehab not shows'

A journalist, Taiwo Alabi, has attracted reactions from social media users with his assertion about popular 'zazu' crooner, Portable.

On his Twitter handle, the freelance journalist reproached the fast-rising singer's benefactor for aiding him achieve fame and riches.

Alabi argued they should rather have taken the controversial music artiste to a rehabilitation centre instead because according to him, Portable has been 'ruined by drugs.'

"They gave Portable money and fame but ignored the fact that the dude is damaged and needs help. Drugs has ruined the guy, he needs to be in rehab not performing at shows," he tweeted.

Reacting to the journalist's post, some Twitter users accused him of being judgmental while others took sides his stance.

@ashman_babane tweeted: "You only hate good thing. Nobody dey give fame, he no force himself blow, It's just his time make una rest.. all your favourite artists do drugs, na them chop banku pass. Take them to reharb. Abi you just say this to portable because he's portable?"

@taabiyi01 said: "Let's get facts right before we comment... personally...ialso dont like how he manages his fame.... Some big artists do all these drugs than him!!!"

@Tomi_official31 wrote: "Only God can help him he has gone wild out of range."

@iamzeezaga stated: "You can only take a horse to the stream, you can't force it to drink water."

@MenOracle asked: "I don't know portable neither do I care about him but you see people like you are the reason why I pray and want him to succeed in whatever he's doing. What kind of prejudiced statement is this? Who is "they" that is now Sharing Fame and money?"

@Takeoffpunter tweeted: "Everything na "bad Belle/hate" to some of you till the person involved gets to the points of no return. One true about this tweet - the boy needs urgent help & guidance. But continue fanning the flames of his erratic behaviours!"

@DJKaarmaNG said: "At least someone else also sees this about this guy, he seriously needs help, not to be celebrating him like he's OK, he's not."

AMVCA: Funke Akindele dances as 'Omo Ghetto' bags nine nominations



Actress Funke Akindele-Bello has danced excitedly over her project's massive nominations at the AMVCA.

On Saturday, March 19, the list of nominees for the 8th Africa Magic Viewers' Choice Awards (AMVCA) was announced by the show's hosts, Adesua Etomi-Wellington and Daniel Etim Effiong.

Following the announcement by the show's hosts, the 45-year-old award-winning movie star wore her dancing shoes and showed off some 'Ghetto-some' moves to express her excitement and gratitude to organisers of (AMVCA).

Funke Akindele-Bello also congratulated the entire cast and crew members of 'Omo Ghetto: The Saga' for giving it their best shot.

"Thank you so much #AMVCA8 for these nominations; 1) Best Actress in a comedy - Movie or Tv Series 2) Best Movie - West Africa 3) Best Movie Overall 4) Best Costume Designer 5) Best Actor in a Comedy- Movie or Tv Series 6) Best Supporting Actress 7) Best Picture Editor 8) Best Sound Editor 9) Best Makeup

"A Big Congratulations to the cast and crew of #omoghettothesaga we killed it!! Omo Ghetto (The Saga) to the world!!!!"

You're number one star maker, Nkechi Blessing hails Mercy Aigbe

Actress Nkechi Blessing Sunday has hailed her colleague, Mercy Aigbe for the pivotal role she played that led to her becoming a movie star.

According to NBS, when collating names of star makers, Mercy Aigbe's should be number one on the list.

Nkechi Blessing said this in reaction to her colleague's post where she recounted and praised her growth process.

The 44-year-old actress-cum-businesswoman shared a throwback photo of a movie poster that captured her and Nkechi Blessing.

Sharing same, Mercy Aigbe narrated how Nkechi Blessing approached her eight years ago in tears and told her she was about to throw in the towel on her acting career.

Aigbe revealed she encouraged her colleague not to quit and also put in words about her to some movie producers and they eventually both ended up starring in the movie, "Omoge Lekki."



Foreign

Hu Wei is the vice-chairman of the Public Policy Research Center of the Counselor's Office of the State Council, the chairman of Shanghai Public Policy Research Association, the chairman of the Academic Committee of the Chahar Institute, a professor, and a doctoral supervisor.

The Russo-Ukrainian War is the most severe geopolitical conflict since World War II and will result in far greater global consequences than September 11 attacks. At this critical moment, China needs to accurately analyze and assess the direction of the war and its potential impact on the international landscape. At the same time, in order to strive for a relatively favorable external environment, China needs to respond flexibly and make strategic choices that conform to its long-term interests.

Russia's 'special military operation' against Ukraine has caused great controversy in China, with its supporters and opponents being divided into two implacably opposing sides. This article does not represent any party and, for the judgment and reference of the highest decision-making level in China, this article conducts an objective analysis on the possible war consequences along with their corresponding countermeasure options.

I. Predicting the Future of the Russo-Ukrainian War

1. Vladimir Putin may be unable to achieve his expected goals, which puts Russia in a tight spot. The purpose of Putin's attack was to completely solve the Ukrainian problem and divert attention from Russia's domestic crisis by defeating Ukraine with a blitzkrieg, replacing its leadership, and cultivating a pro-Russian government. However, the blitzkrieg failed, and Russia is unable to support a protracted war and its associated high costs. Launching a nuclear war would put Russia on the opposite side of the whole world and is therefore unwinnable. The situations both at home and abroad are also increasingly unfavorable. Even if the Russian army were to occupy Ukraine's capital Kyiv and set up a puppet government at a high cost, this would not mean final victory. At this point, Putin's best option is to end the war decently through peace talks, which requires Ukraine to make substantial concessions. However, what is not attainable on the battlefield is also difficult to obtain at the negotiating table. In any case, this military action constitutes an irreversible mistake.

2. The conflict may escalate further, and the West's eventual involvement in the war cannot be ruled out. While the escalation of the war would be costly, there is a high probability that Putin will not give up easily given his character and power. The Russo-Ukrainian war may escalate beyond the scope and region of Ukraine, and may even include the possibility of a nuclear strike. Once this happens, the U.S. and Europe cannot stay aloof from the conflict, thus triggering a world war or even a nuclear war. The result would be a catastrophe for humanity and a showdown between the United States and Russia. This final confrontation, given that Russia's military power is no match



Possible outcomes of the Russo-Ukrainian war

for NATO's, would be even worse for Putin.

3. Even if Russia manages to seize Ukraine in a desperate gamble, it is still a political hot potato. Russia would thereafter carry a heavy burden and become overwhelmed. Under such circumstances, no matter whether Volodymyr Zelensky is alive or not, Ukraine will most likely set up a government-in-exile to confront Russia in the long term. Russia will be subject both to Western sanctions and rebellion within the territory of Ukraine. The battle lines will be drawn very long. The domestic economy will be unsustainable and will eventually be dragged down. This period will not exceed a few years.

4. The political situation in Russia may change or be disintegrated at the hands of the West. After Putin's blitzkrieg failed, the hope of Russia's victory is slim and Western sanctions have reached an unprecedented degree. As people's livelihoods are severely affected and as anti-war and anti-Putin forces gather, the possibility of a political mutiny in Russia cannot be ruled out. With Russia's economy on the verge of collapse, it would be difficult for Putin to prop up the perilous situation even without the loss of the Russo-Ukrainian war. If Putin were to be ousted from power due to civil strife, coup d'état, or another reason, Russia would be even less likely to confront the West. It would surely succumb to the West, or even be further dismembered, and Russia's status as a great power would come to an end.

II. Analysis of the Impact of Russo-Ukrainian war On International Landscape

1. The United States would regain leadership in the Western world, and the West would become more united. At present, public opinion believes that the Ukrainian war signifies a complete collapse of U.S. hegemony, but the war would in fact

bring France and Germany, both of which wanted to break away from the U.S., back into the NATO defense framework, destroying Europe's dream to achieve independent diplomacy and self-defense. Germany would greatly increase its military budget; Switzerland, Sweden, and other countries would abandon their neutrality. With Nord Stream 2 put on hold indefinitely, Europe's reliance on US natural gas will inevitably increase. The US and Europe would form a closer community of shared future, and American leadership in the Western world will rebound.

2. The "Iron Curtain" would fall again not only from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, but also to the final confrontation between the Western-dominated camp and its competitors. The West will draw the line between democracies and authoritarian states, defining the divide with Russia as a struggle between democracy and dictatorship. The new Iron Curtain will no longer be drawn between the two camps of socialism and capitalism, nor will it be confined to the Cold War. It will be a life-and-death battle between those for and against Western democracy. The unity of the Western world under the Iron Curtain will have a siphon effect on other countries: the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy will be consolidated, and other countries like Japan will stick even closer to the U.S., which will form an unprecedentedly broad democratic united front.

3. The power of the West will grow significantly, NATO will continue to expand, and U.S. influence in the non-Western world will increase. After the Russo-Ukrainian War, no matter how Russia achieves its political transformation, it will greatly weaken the anti-Western forces in the world. The scene after the 1991 Soviet and Eastern upheavals may repeat itself: theories on "the end of ideology" may reappear, the resurgence of the third wave of democratization will

lose momentum, and more third world countries will embrace the West. The West will possess more "hegemony" both in terms of military power and in terms of values and institutions, its hard power and soft power will reach new heights.

4. China will become more isolated under the established framework. For the above reasons, if China does not take proactive measures to respond, it will encounter further containment from the US and the West. Once Putin falls, the U.S. will no longer face two strategic competitors but only have to lock China in strategic containment. Europe will further cut itself off from China; Japan will become the anti-China vanguard; South Korea will further fall to the U.S.; Taiwan will join the anti-China chorus, and the rest of the world will have to choose sides under herd mentality. China will not only be militarily encircled by the U.S., NATO, the QUAD, and AUKUS, but also be challenged by Western values and systems.

III. China's Strategic Choice

1. China cannot be tied to Putin and needs to be cut off as soon as possible. In the sense that an escalation of conflict between Russia and the West helps divert U.S. attention from China, China should rejoice with and even support Putin, but only if Russia does not fall. Being in the same boat with Putin will impact China should he lose power. Unless Putin can secure victory with China's backing, a prospect which looks bleak at the moment, China does not have the clout to back Russia. The law of international politics says that there are "no eternal allies nor perpetual enemies," but "our interests are eternal and perpetual." Under current international circumstances, China can only proceed by safeguarding its own best interests, choosing the lesser of two evils, and unloading the burden of Russia as soon as possible. At present, it is estimated that there is

still a window period of one or two weeks before China loses its wiggle room. China must act decisively.

2. China should avoid playing both sides in the same boat, give up being neutral, and choose the mainstream position in the world. At present, China has tried not to offend either side and walked a middle ground in its international statements and choices, including abstaining from the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly votes. However, this position does not meet Russia's needs, and it has infuriated Ukraine and its supporters as well as sympathizers, putting China on the wrong side of much of the world. In some cases, apparent neutrality is a sensible choice, but it does not apply to this war, where China has nothing to gain. Given that China has always advocated respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity, it can avoid further isolation only by standing with the majority of the countries in the world. This position is also conducive to the settlement of the Taiwan issue.

3. China should achieve the greatest possible strategic breakthrough and not be further isolated by the West. Cutting off from Putin and giving up neutrality will help build China's international image and ease its relations with the U.S. and the West. Though difficult and requiring great wisdom, it is the best option for the future. The view that a geopolitical tussle in Europe triggered by the war in Ukraine will significantly delay the U.S. strategic shift from Europe to the Indo-Pacific region cannot be treated with excessive optimism. There are already voices in the U.S. that Europe is important, but China is more so, and the primary goal of the U.S. is to contain China from becoming the dominant power in the Indo-Pacific region. Under such circumstances, China's top priority is to make appropriate strategic adjustments accordingly, to change the hostile American attitudes towards China, and to save itself from isolation. The bottom line is to prevent the U.S. and the West from imposing joint sanctions on China.

4. China should prevent the outbreak of world wars and nuclear wars and make irreplaceable contributions to world peace. As Putin has explicitly requested Russia's strategic deterrent forces to enter a state of special combat readiness, the Russo-Ukrainian war may spiral out of control. A just cause attracts much support; an unjust one finds little. If Russia instigates a world war or even a nuclear war, it will surely risk the world's turmoil. To demonstrate China's role as a responsible major power, China not only cannot stand with Putin, but also should take concrete actions to prevent Putin's possible adventures. China is the only country in the world with this capability, and it must give full play to this unique advantage. Putin's departure from China's support will most likely end the war, or at least not dare to escalate the war. As a result, China will surely win widespread international praise for maintaining world peace, which may help China prevent isolation but also find an opportunity to improve its relations with the United States and the West.

South Korea to send non-lethal military supplies to Ukraine

South Korea will send non-lethal military supplies to Ukraine, Defense Ministry spokesperson Boo Seung-chan said in a briefing Tuesday.

The supplies will be worth about \$800,000 and include bulletproof helmets, tents, blankets, bedspreads, non-perishable military food kits, first aid kits and medicines, a ministry official confirmed.

Delivery logistics have not yet been finalized, Boo added.

In February, the presidential Blue House ruled out South Korean military deployments or lethal support for Ukraine, a position reiterated by the Defense Ministry last week.

Zelensky writes to family of killed American journalist Brent Renaud

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has shared a letter he wrote to the family of American journalist Brent Renaud, who was killed in Ukraine.

"It is with deep sadness that I am writing to extend my heartfelt condolences to you on the tragic loss of your beloved son and brother, Brent Renaud." Zelensky said in a copy of a letter addressed to Renaud's family posted on Twitter.

"With all his courage and determination, he traveled to the most dangerous war zones to film the unprecedented ruthlessness and evil, also inflicted upon our nation by the aggressor state."

Award-winning reporter Renaud was killed by Russian forces in the Ukrainian city of Irpin, police in Kyiv said in social media posts Sunday.

CNN has not independently verified the account given by police.

Another American journalist, Juan Arredondo, was wounded. Time magazine told CNN that Renaud was in Ukraine in recent weeks to work on "a Time Studios project focused on the global refugee crisis."

On Monday, Russia's Ambassador to the United Nations said at the UN Security Council, without providing evidence, that Renaud died at the hands of Ukrainian forces in Irpin — not Russian forces.



Russia claims troops are making progress in Ukraine

The Russian army has advanced a further 12 kilometres into eastern Ukraine and reached the border of the settlement of Nikolske near Mariupol, says Russian Ministry of Defence spokesman Igor Konashenkov.

In a post on Facebook, the Ukrainian general staff said

that Russia is mobilising troops in the areas of Luhansk and Donetsk.

The self-proclaimed independent republics of Luhansk and Donetsk in eastern Ukraine have enjoyed the support of Russia since 2014.

Prior to the Russian invasion

on Feb. 24, the republics only covered a portion of the territory of the oblasts or administrative divisions, of Luhansk and Donetsk.

Seizing these areas in their entirety is one of the aims of Moscow in the invasion.

The Russian Ministry of Defence also says the Russian

army has now destroyed 214 drones, 1,438 tanks and armoured vehicles, 150 rocket launchers, 584 artillery guns and 1,279 vehicles of the Ukrainian army since the start of the invasion.

These numbers could not be independently verified. (dpa/NAN)

...as they bans Facebook, Instagram for 'extremism'

A court in Moscow has ruled the activities of Instagram and Facebook are "extremist" and banned their operations in Russia.

According to Russian news agency Tass, the Russian Prosecutor General's Office

said that extremist materials had been posted on the social networks, citing calls for violence against Russian citizens, including military personnel stationed in Ukraine.

Earlier this month, prosecutors called for a

criminal investigation into Meta, citing Russian propaganda and extremism laws.

Access to Facebook and Instagram had already been restricted in the country over what Moscow had described as "fake news."

Meta had said it would let users in some countries call for violence against President Vladimir Putin and Russian soldiers.

The judge said the court ruling does not apply to the messaging service WhatsApp, which is also owned by Meta.



Sports

Man Utd interested in Everton forward Richarlison as they seek attacking reinforcements

The Brazil international is in the sights of the Red Devils, who have laboured up front for a steady supply of goals this season

Manchester United are interested in signing Everton forward Richarlison as the Red Devils look to shore up their attacking options, GOAL can confirm.

Ralf Rangnick's side have struggled to find goals in several crunch clashes this season, with Cristiano Ronaldo's homecoming only able to bolster their haul so much.

Man Utd are weighing up a move for Brazil international Richarlison, who finds himself in a relegation battle with the Toffees this season.

Following a fifth consecutive season without silverware at Old Trafford, and one which saw their much-vaunted reset under Ole Gunnar Solskjaer fall short, the Red Devils are looking to rebuild once more - and could favour a younger face up front.

With Ronaldo's future in doubt after just one season back and Edinson Cavani expected to leave, the Brazilian would fill a major void up front for whoever succeeds interim boss Rangnick.

However, even if Everton were to be relegated, United would likely still need to pay a hefty price for his services.

The Red Devils are far from the only club thought to be circling the Brazilian, with Real Madrid likely to be an interested party after asking after his services last year.



1994 Eagles triumph at Tinubu's 70th novelty match

Lagos stood still yesterday for former Governor Bola Ahmed Tinubu, whose 70th birthday was marked with a novelty match between Nigeria's best of all time - the 1994 Super Eagles team that won the African Cup of Nations - and ex-Lagos Internationals.

Asiwaju Tinubu, whose birthday is March 29, is bidding for the presidential ticket of the All Progressives Congress (APC).

Star ex-Super Eagles Austin Jay-Jay Okocha, Kanu Nwankwo, Mutiu Adepoju, Julius Aghahowa, Victor Agali, Garba Lawal, Ifeanyi Udezue as well Victor Ikpeba, and a host of others show class in the match in which Victor Agali scored a brace to defeat the ex-Lagos

internationals.

Those who played for the ex-Lagos Internationals include Godwin Okpara and Friday Ekpo. A side was led by a former junior international Waheed Akani.

Ex-Eagles stars were coached by former Super Eagles assistant coach Fatai Amoo.

Asiwaju Tinubu was accompanied to the Mobolaji Sports Arena, Onikan, Lagos venue by his wife, Senator Oluremi Tinubu. Tinubu wore the Super Eagles jersey.

Lagos State Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu, Deputy Governor Obafemi Hamzat, Executive Council members, senators, House of Representatives members, among other political associated were present to honour the APC

stalwart.

The stadium was filled to capacity, with friends, loyalists, party faithful, and supporters in their various attires chorusing Tinubu's praise while his posters adorned the venue.

Also at the colourful event were Minister of Youth and Sports Development, Sunday Dare; Senators Adeola Solomon (Lagos West), Tokunbo Abiru (Lagos East), Rep James Faleke, Rep Ademorin Kuye, Senator Musiliu Obanikoro, ex-Deputy Governor Femi Pedro, Nigeria Ambassador to Spain, Mr. Demola Seriki, Senator Magnus Abe, Lagos Whitecap chiefs, among others.

Two matches preceded the star match of the day with the first being

played by Team Asiwaju Lagos (state excos, house of assembly members, council chairmen), and Team Asiwaju Abuja (National Assembly members). The match ended 1-1.

After ending the first half goalless, the ex-internationals were resplendent in their old jersey.

It was Agali who broke the deadlock in the second with an assist from Aghahowa to put the ex-Eagles ahead.

The mercurial midfielder, Okocha also dazzled with his skills when his long cross was nodded in by Agali to give the former Eagles a 2-0 win.

It was a free day for Ike Shorunmu who was in goal for the ex-Eagles. He was on holiday throughout the second half.



NUGA Games: Sanwo-Olu pledges more support for sport dev't

Lagos Sports Commission chairman Sola Aiyepetu at the NUGA Games opening ceremony at the University of Lagos on Saturday.

Lagos State Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu has pledged his administration's steady contribution to the development of sporting facilities in the state.

Sanwo-Olu who was

represented by Lagos State Sports Commission chairman Sola Aiyepetu as the special guest of honour during Saturday's opening ceremony of the 2022 Nigerian University Games Association (NUGA) championships being hosted by the University of Lagos (UNILAG), said as much, even as he reiterated his commitment to uplift the youths so that they

can express themselves in all fields of human endeavours.

Incidentally, both the Lagos Governor and Aiyepetu are both alumnus of UNILAG.

"As a great Akokite, His Excellency Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu is proud and honoured to support the Nigeria University Games Association (NUGA) and this is why Lagos State contributed

significantly to improving UNILAG Sports facilities for the games," noted Aiyepetu.

"Governor Sanwo-Olu is always interested in sports platforms that give youths opportunities to express themselves and we believe this games will offers the students so much fun and we want to wish all of them success," he added.

Sports



Bayern Munich make €25m Gravenberch bid as they move ahead of Manchester United for Ajax star

The German champions have formalised their interest in the teenager amid his latest impressive season at Johan Cruyff Arena

Bayern Munich have made a €25 million (£21m/\$28m) bid for Ryan Gravenberch to move ahead of Manchester United in the race to sign the Ajax star, GOAL and Voetbalzone can confirm.

Gravenberch has attracted high profile admirers across Europe since breaking into the Ajax first team at just 16 in 2018, showing off his talents in both Eredivisie and Champions League.

Man Utd and Real Madrid have been among those credited with an interest in the Netherlands international, but Bayern have made the first move to secure his services ahead of the summer transfer window.

The German champions have submitted an opening offer for Gravenberch, whose contract with Ajax is due to expire in June 2023.

GOAL and Voetbalzone have learned Bayern's opening bid came in €10m below Ajax's €35m (£29m/\$39m) asking price, but they are hopeful the Eredivisie club will be willing to compromise in order to avoid losing the 19-year-old on a free transfer next year.

Gravenberch is flattered by Bayern's interest and open to a move to Allianz Arena, where he would see his current salary demands met.

Brentford's Wissa fires Morocco warning with strike against Iheanacho's Leicester City

Ahead of this week's World Cup play-off against the Atlas Lions, the forward found the net against the Foxes

Yoane Wissa has sent Morocco a strong warning ahead of this week's 2022 Fifa World Cup qualification play-off with a goal in Brentford's 2-1 defeat to Leicester City on Sunday.

With the hosts leading by two goals in the Premier League outing, the DR Congo international found the net five minutes from full-time, but that could not rescue the Bees from crumbling at King Power Stadium.

Following back-to-back victories against Norwich City and Burnley, Thomas Frank's men travelled to East Midlands to face the Foxes - a team still

hurt by their defeat to Rennes during the week.

They showed promise from the very first blast of referee Darren England's whistle, but the Foxes' thwarted their attacks.

However, it was Leicester that raced into the lead in the 20th minute after Timothy Castagne unleashed an unstoppable shot into the top corner of goalkeeper David Raya after collecting a pass from Harvey Barnes.

Brendan Rodgers' men doubled their lead in the 33rd minute courtesy of James Maddison.

Not willing to go down without a fight, the Bees stepped up their game in the second half through Wissa.

Daniel Amartey's mistake allowed Bryan Mbeumo to tee up Wissa, who drilled the ball past Kasper Schmeichel from the edge of the box.

At the end of 90 minutes, Brentford returned home with heads bowed low as the Foxes gained all maximum points.

Wissa - who has now scored his fourth league goal of the 2021-22 campaign - was on parade from start to finish alongside Mbeumo. Whereas, Nigeria international Frank Onyeka was an unused substitute.

On the other side, Iheanacho was subbed off in the 86th minute for Zambia international Patson Daka, whereas, Amartey saw every minute of action.

Even at the setback manager,

Frank is impressed with Brentford's showing in the second 45 minutes.

"They scored two worldies - they put it in the top corner twice. I'm pleased with the second half; we need to play with that urgency and edge for 90 minutes," he told the media.

Wissa is expected to join the rest of the DR Congo squad on Monday to commence preparations for their play-off against Vahid Halilhodzic's Morocco.

The Leopards welcome the Atlas Lions to the Stade des Martyrs, Kinshasa for the first leg on March 25 before heading to the North African country four days later, with the winners on aggregate qualifying for Qatar 2022.

Juventus CEO confirms Vlahovic transfer affected Dybala extension talks as Argentine set to leave



The January arrival of the Serbian from Fiorentina has been a factor in the decision to let the attacker leave after seven years at the club

Dusan Vlahovic's arrival at Juventus has played a key role in the club's decision against renewing Paulo Dybala's contract, says CEO Maurizio Arrivabene.

The Argentina international had been in talks with the Serie A side over a new deal, but will instead depart the club for free at the end of the season.

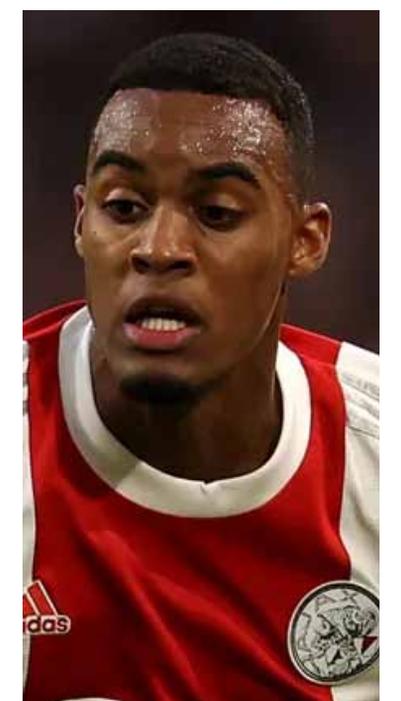
The January signing of Vlahovic from Fiorentina has changed the

club's plans for the coming years, Arrivabene said, resulting in the decision to let Dybala's contract expire.

He told reporters: "It was a friendly, clear and respectful meeting. We had a very sincere approach.

"With the arrival of Vlahovic, Paulo was no longer at the centre of the project and we made this decision.

"The arrival of Dusan changed the position. The technical structure of the team and the Juventus project has undergone some changes.





Every four years, the 17th of March signals the end of an era and the beginning of another for Anambra. It opens a new chapter that seeks to bend the destiny of the State, either for better or for worse. This year, it closed the door to the eight years of Willie Obiano's administration. The purpose of this piece is neither to do surgical analysis of his eight years in office nor to critique his performance. I am convinced posterity will do a perfect justice to that. No one makes a private bargain with history. However, it is imperative that the new man taking over the helms of affairs should try to avoid certain errors of his predecessor. Here are five errors of Willie Obiano that Prof Soludo must not repeat for him to succeed:

COMMUNICATION:

In governance, communication is key. People want to hear directly from their leaders, to interact often with them, to know that their leaders feel their pulse. Willie Obiano's communication skill is below par in the history of all the former Governors of Anambra State. It is on record that Willie in his eight years, never once appeared on the television or radio station to interact with Ndi Anambra, unlike his predecessors from Chinwoke Mbadinuju who had a tradition of observing Monday prayers with Onitsha traders, to Chris Ngige who made it a habit to once a month appear on Anambra Broadcasting service to divulge his master plan on road construction. There's this nostalgic remembrance of Ngige on ABS saying..." Nkwo to Nkwo, uzo nke a di na Phase 2 or Phase 3". Peter Obi as a Governor took every little opportunity he could find to communicate to Ndi Anambra. He was on TV, Radio and you can easily find him at burial ceremonies, child dedication, wedding ceremonies, church services etc, always looking for the minutest opportunity to interact. In this day, the development in ICT has made it even easier and more effective. Numerous platforms offer easy access for interaction. There are Twitter spaces, Instagram live, Facebook Live etc. Prof Soludo is an excellent communicator. Therefore, this will rather be a walk in the park.

CLANNISHNESS:

Willie Obiano took clannishness to a whole new level never seen before in Anambra State. The Governor completely abdicated his responsibilities to his kit and kins. On the streets, they were referred to as the Aguleri cabal. They controlled appointments, government revenues, contracts etc. It is a recipe for disaster and

Backpage Column

Dozie Kaidi Obiaku

Obiano's errors Soludo must avoid



Obiano



Gov. Soludo

mismanagement. The body language of Soludo already shows he won't go down such dangerous lane in leadership. His kins are already beginning to complain of his strict postures and restricted access.

VANITY:

Nothing destroys a leader like vain glory. It is the shortest path towards the institution of the culture of sycophancy as demonstrated by the Willie Obiano administration. Obiano is known for his vanities, from drinking expensive wines, to wearing expensive clothing, to building insignificant signature projects, hosting lavish parties etc. A leader must have clarity, must maintain soberness always and must not be distracted by vain things of life or carried away by the paraphernalia attached to his office. Eschewing vanities brings about prudent management of resources, which frees up funds for developmental projects.

FIRST LADY SYNDROME:

Never in the history of Anambra State

has a wife of a Governor been extremely powerful like Osodieme. It comes as no surprise that she is warming up for the Senate. She is drunk with power, and can no more get over the intoxication. She was the de-facto Governor and called all the shots. The framers of our Constitution understood that power without control is dangerous. So they made provisions for checks and balances. However, for Mrs Obiano, there were no checks because she wasn't elected. She was answerable to no one. When a leader with designated authority loses power or abdicates his responsibilities to an unelected person, it is always disastrous. Like President Truman said..." The buck stops here."

ARM-CHAIR LEADERSHIP:

A good leader is a doer. He is everywhere, either inspecting projects or holding town hall meetings, interacting with the people, getting first-hand information on challenges and issues going on in the state. He understands

that leadership requires one to roll-up his sleeves and get dirty. It isn't a retirement package, or an opportunity for top notch relaxation and maximum fun, while waiting for feedbacks from assistants and aides.

Obiano in his 8 years acted like a bull in a China shop. He was almost an ornament that exists as a mere decoration. At the peak of security challenges bedeviling the State, the Governor always travelled abroad. Nero fiddles, Rome burns. One hopes that Soludo will change these narratives. Already, he hinted that he will work for eight hours immediately after his inauguration. He insisted on using products made in Anambra State, and the significance is huge. Furthermore, he has gone ahead to make important appointments so the ship of the State can continue sailing. Morning shows the day. For the sake of our dear State, the only place we call home, may the winds be in his favour.