



News as it breaks

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@daybreaknews247



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editordaybreaknews@gmail.com



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Akeredolu dismisses death rumours, backs wife's senatorial bid

Ondo State governor Rotimi Akeredolu has endorsed the senatorial ambition of his wife, Betty.

Betty Akeredolu has declared her intention to contest the Imo East Senatorial seat on the platform of the All Progressives Congress (APC).

Akeredolu's wife is from Imo State.

The governor endorsed his wife's senatorial ambition shortly after returning to the country from Germany amid rumours that he has passed on.

It was rumoured over the weekend that the governor was sick and eventually died in a German hospital.

However, Akeredolu has dismissed the rumours after releasing a video where he was seen singing and dancing.

A statement posted by his Chief Press Secretary, Richard Olatunde, on Facebook said Akeredolu arrived the country late Sunday evening.

"Ondo State Governor Arakunrin Oluwarotimi Akeredolu, SAN, arrived at the International wing of the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja, Nigeria, at exactly 10:35 pm on Sunday, April 17, 2022.

"Few hours after his arrival in the country, the governor declared his support for his wife's ambition in a statement he personally signed.

"Recall that the state opposition Peoples Democratic Party had on Sunday alleged that the governor was using the state's fund to sponsor the wife's senatorial ambition in Imo state.

"But in a subtle response, Akeredolu said he believed in the mission of the First Lady to emancipate women from the shackles of all forms of oppression.

"He described her as a fiercely independent personality who is never afraid to voice her dissent on any issue," Olatunde said in the statement.

During Akeredolu's stay in Germany, there were reports that he was receiving treatment in a hospital.

But Olatunde, in a statement, faulted the reports, saying that the governor had on March 23, 2022, sent a letter to the State House of Assembly that he would be away for 14 working days as the first part of his 2022 annual leave, thereby transferring power to his deputy, Lucky Aiyedatiwa.

Last week, another report emerged that the governor died in a German hospital.

But, in reaction to the rumours, Akeredolu's wife posted a video on her Facebook page. The video showed the governor singing gospel songs and dancing.

'Your wicked intention shall not come to pass'

- * Femi Adesina replies Rev Matthew Kukah over Easter message
- * Accuses him of divisive and unguarded utterances

By our correspondent

The Presidency on Monday said the wicked intention of those who divided Nigeria with their mouths shall not come to pass.

The Special Adviser to the President on Media and Publicity, Femi Adesina, said this in a tweet.

His reaction came a day after the Catholic Bishop of Sokoto Diocese, Most Rev Matthew Kukah, criticised the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari.

But in subtle response, Adesina tweeted: "Those who divided Nigeria with their mouths, with evil, unguarded speaking, are the ones now accusing President Buhari. How sad! Their wicked intentions shall not come to pass."

Kukah, in his Easter message titled, 'To mend a broken nation: The Easter metaphor', had alleged that every aspect of life in the country had been destroyed while corruption was enthroned under President Buhari.

The bishop, who also criticised the president over his government's "inability to tackle insecurity and corruption", further claimed that President Buhari had divided Nigerians on the basis of ethnicity, religion, and region.

According to him, "The challenge of fixing this broken nation is enormous and, as I have said, requires joint efforts. With



everything literally broken down, our country has become one big emergency national hospital with full occupancy.

"Our individual hearts are broken. Our family dreams are broken. Homes are broken. Churches, Mosques, and infrastructure are broken. Our educational system is broken. Our children's lives and future are broken. Our politics is broken. Our economy is broken. Our energy system is broken. Our security system is broken. Our Roads and Rails are broken. Only corruption is alive and well.

"The greatest challenge for Nigeria is not even the 2023 elections. It is the prospect for the reconciliation of our people. Here, the Buhari administration

sadly has divided our people on the basis of ethnicity, religion, and region, in a way that we have never witnessed in our history.

This carefully choreographed agenda has made Nigerians vulnerable and ignited the most divisive form of identity consciousness among our people. Years of friendships, cultural exchange, and collaboration built over time have now come under serious pressure from stereotyping."

He chided the President for what he said showing far greater commitment to integrating so-called repentant terrorists than getting our children back from kidnappers or keeping our universities open.

PDP Presidential candidate will emerge through indirect primary -Fayose

Former Ekiti State Governor and PDP presidential aspirant, Ayodele Fayose has said the presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) will emerge through indirect primary. He stated this through his media aide and House of Representatives aspirant, Lere Olayinka.

According to him, the party has the tradition of picking its presidential candidate through indirect primary.

He however stated that the venue of the party's national convention would not have any effect on the conduct and outcome of the primary.

Fayose's aide said, "The PDP has the tradition of indirect primary for the emergence of the presidential candidate. The Electoral Act made it clear that for consensus to happen, all aspirants must agree. They must write that they have agreed to a consensus, even if it is one person that refuses to agree, then, there must be an election.

"He (Fayose) has made it clear that he will not step down. It means that there will be primary. The PDP has never adopted direct primary to pick its presidential candidate, but indirect mode.

"The delegates that will be coming to vote are already known. If you like, take the national convention to the backyard of anybody, it will not change anything. The delegates are specified.

"In 2018, the national convention to produce PDP candidate was done in Port Harcourt, the River State capital. The state Governor, Nyesom Wike, supported former House of Representatives Speaker, Aminu Tambuwal, but former Vice President Atiku Abubakar won the primary there in Port Harcourt."



Marafa, Yari deny dumping APC



Senator Kabiru Marafa of Zamfara state has denied reports that he and ex-governor, Abdulaziz Yari have dumped the All Progressives Congress, APC for the Peoples



Democratic Party, PDP.

Marafa on Sunday evening during an Interview with Tambarin Hausa, said; "All we know is that we are into negotiations with many political

parties that have invited us to join them in the state."

"...For now any news that said we have decamped is falsehood."

"All that I know is that there are lots of political parties, not only the PDP, that have invited us and wanting us to join and up till now we are still discussing with them."

"To the best of my knowledge up till now we have not reached a decision with anyone of them....It is not true that we have decamped to the PDP, whoever said so has erred."

"In my capacity, I'm calling on people to discard any information about the issue from any person, until they hear from us,...We have not yet reached at any decisions."

EDITORIAL

Kaduna Train Attack And The Growing Tragedy Of Insecurity In Nigeria

Nigeria is faced with an unprecedented wave of different but overlapping security crises - from kidnapping to extremist insurgencies - almost every corner of the country has been hit by violence and crime

The Abuja-Kaduna highway has become one of the most dangerous roads in the country as kidnappers regularly ambush and attack vehicles at several points along the expressway.

Over the last few years this has pushed many to avoid the 150km (93-mile) journey by road instead opting for the rail link, which opened in 2016. It is more expensive but considered safer as the trains have armed guards on board. Many Nigerians opt for the train to avoid the dangerous Abuja-to-Kaduna highway

But the ill fated attack on the rail line that happened on Monday evening of 28th of March 2022, changed everything.

Terrorists detonated an IED on the track forcing the train, carrying 970 passengers, to a stop. Gunmen subsequently surrounded the carriages and opened fire, an unknown number of passengers were abducted from the train, 8 persons were reported killed, 26 persons injured during the attack.

The Minister of Transportation Rotimi Amaechi reacting to the attack said he had warned that lives would be lost. Amaechi who was speaking to reporters after visiting the scene of the attack, said the unfortunate event could have been avoided if a N3 billion digital security equipment had been acquired. He lamented that now it will take more than N3 billion to replace what has been lost to the attack on the Abuja-Kaduna rail route. "We knew what the problem would be. We knew we needed to have digital security equipment. We applied for it. Because if we had those equipment, you will see nobody on that track. And I warned that lives will be lost. Now, lives are lost". Speaking on the security situation Chairman, House Committee on Aviation, Hon Nnolim Nnaji recalled that on Friday, 25th of March, 2022, there was a horrific armed banditry attack at the Kaduna International Airport, culminating in the death of a security guard of the Nigerian Airspace Management Agency NAMA. He noted that coupled with train attack it means nowhere is safe again in Nigeria. "The armed bandits attacks at Kaduna International Airport may escalate to other airports across the country, if not checkmated" he said. "No one is safe to travel by air if positive steps are not taking urgently to safeguard our airports from banditry attacks, considering the international standards on airport security management as outlined by International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)", he said in a motion. Speaker further on the issue, Nnaji said that the implication of the attacks was that international flights may stop coming into the country. The Nigerian Railway Corporation has however issued a statement suspending passenger activities along line.

“We were challenged some few days ago, for us to have an infraction at the airport, which means no way is safe. If our roads are not safe; if our rails are not safe; if our airports are not safe, then it calls for us to suspend everything political to begin to address the critical needs of Nigerians” said Nnolim. The Kaduna State Governor, Nasir El-Rufai, in reaction to the attacks and the spate of insecurity in Kaduna state, vowed to hire foreign mercenaries to fight terrorism if the federal government fails to do its job. He said, if actions are not taken, it becomes a must for governors to take measures to protect citizens, according to him, “even if it means we will import mercenaries from outside the country to do it. If our soldiers fail, I swear to God, we will do that. This issue has gotten to an alarming state”. El-Rufai disclosed an interview conducted in Hausa language with the BBC. The reaction of the Kaduna state governor to the train attack has been described by many commentators as extreme. It is however a reflection of the growing state of frustration to the Federal Government’s seeming inability to check the growing state of insecurity in the country.



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Micheal Goldrish International Ltd, Block 6 Suit 8,
ECOWAS Estate, Diplomatic Zone, Katampe Ext. Abuja.
Tel: 0704 573 8889, 0701 352 2528
Website: www.daybreak.ng

DR. PATRICK KEMU
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Online Editor

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Alfa Maidawa

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

Reduce Public Debt To Avoid “Doom Loop” -- IMF Tells Nigeria

International Monetary Fund has expressed concerns about a potential “doom loop” for Nigeria and other emerging economies.

According to the IMF’s April 2022 Global Financial Stability Report, the average ratio of public debt to the gross domestic product, a key measure of a country’s fiscal health—rose to a record 67% in emerging market countries last year.

Nigeria’s bank credit to the government topped N14.9 trillion in February 2022, up from N14.2 trillion in January 2022.

Bank credit to the government increased by N1.33 trillion in 2021, rising to N13.73 trillion as of December 2021 from N12.4 trillion recorded the previous year.

IMF stated that there is a reason to worry about this nexus between banks and governments. “Large holdings of sovereign debt expose banks to losses if government finances come under pressure and the market value of government debt declines,” it says.

It further noted that crisis with the credit to the government could force banks, especially those with less capital “to curtail lending

to companies and households, weighing on economic activity.”

“The sovereign-bank nexus could lead to a self-reinforcing adverse feedback loop that ultimately could force the government into default. There is a name for that, too—the “doom loop.” It happened in Russia in 1998 and in Argentina in 2001-02.”

IMF also explained that rising returns in advanced countries as central banks start to normalize monetary policy might make emerging-market debt less attractive and put upward pressure on borrowing prices.”

The Debt Management Office (DMO) revealed that Nigeria’s total public debt has risen to N39.55 trillion as of December 2021.

This represents an N1.55 trillion or 4.1% increase in 3 months when compared to the N38 trillion total public debt that was recorded as of September 2021.

Meanwhile, Nairametrics had reported that the Debt Management Office revealed that Nigeria became the first African country to raise USD1.25 billion through the issuance of Eurobonds in the International Capital Market.



Man stabs farmer to death in Jigawa over firewood

Police in Jigawa have arrested a 25-year-old man, Saminu Muntari, for allegedly stabbing a farmer, Murtala Alhassan, to death over a firewood issue.

Police spokesman, ASP Lawan Shiisu, stated this in Dutse, yesterday, that the deceased had challenged Muntari on April 15 for trespassing into his farm to fetch firewood.

He explained that Muntari later went to the residence of the deceased and stabbed him with a knife for challenging him over the cutting of firewood from his farm without authority. ASP Shiisu added that the victim died on the spot.

He said: “On April 15, the District Head of Kwalam Village in Taura Local Government Area informed the police that one Murtala Alhassan of Kaura Village noticed that one Saminu Muntari trespassed into his

farmland and cut firewood.

“That Alhassan enquired from Muntari why he cut firewood from his farm without his consent.

“Later in the day, Muntari went to the house of Alhassan and stabbed him with a knife on the right side of his chest as a result of which he died on the spot.

“Muntari also stabbed an eyewitness, Sunusi Nasiru, on his left hand for attempting to apprehend him,” the police spokesman stated.

According to him, upon receipt of the report, the police moved to the scene and took the eyewitness to Ringim General Hospital for treatment.

The deceased was confirmed dead by a medical doctor at the same hospital.

Shiisu added that the remains of the deceased were later released to his family for burial.

‘Power sector needs additional \$410bn investment’

Despite spending about N1.3 trillion in the past few years on the power sector, the Federal Government has said that it seeking additional \$410 billion investment to strengthen the nation’s transmission and distribution infrastructure.

The Vice President Yemi Osinbajo made this known at a virtual event on climate finance themed, Climate Finance and a Just, Equitable Energy Transition for Africa.

According to him, the federal government’s immediate priority is to create 20 million jobs, rebuild industries and add more than 200 Giga Watts of new power capacity, principally utility-scale solar by 2060.

He said, “Nigeria will require huge investments in new infrastructure. We’re going to build more roads, ports, industrial parks and especially power systems. For every Nigerian to consume the modern energy minimum of 1,000kWh per year by 2050 would require a 15-fold increase in our national power generation.

“We will need to upgrade our power infrastructure, especially for transmission and distribution, using a strategic mix of grid and minigrid systems. To be successful we will need partners.

The majority of investment in our energy transition will come from our own national resources. But we estimate

we need an additional \$410 billion above business-as-usual investment to meet our goals.

“If the global energy transition is going to become reality, if we are truly in this climate crisis together, then the priorities of African nations cannot be sidelined. Climate justice must include far greater support for countries with the greatest needs and who contribute the least to global emissions.

“It must include investments, not only to mitigate carbon emissions but also to ensure that developing countries can adapt to the impacts of climate change caused by the rich polluting nations. Climate justice must include ending energy poverty. Anything else would be the opposite of justice.”

Speaking to the issue of a just and equitable transition for Africa and others, the VP said: “What is a just transition for countries with no coal and deep energy poverty?”

A just energy transition means something very different for every other African country, including my own country, Nigeria. For us, a just transition means a lot more energy, not less.

“With the impacts of climate change bearing down on us, every nation must have enough energy to build resilient infrastructure, deliver essential public services, and provide the cooling and air conditioning to

withstand a warming planet. I’ll say this again: climate justice must include ending energy poverty.”

On expectations at the forthcoming Conference of Parties, in Egypt later in the year, Osinbajo said: “Every nation must play its part in solving the dual crises of global poverty and climate change.

“Africa must be committed to solving both of these emergencies because both poverty and a warming planet affect us more than any other region. We are absolutely clear that Africa must be proactive, we must be assertive of our needs, and we must do a better job of making our views heard. That is what to expect in Egypt.”

Another point raised at the meeting by Osinbajo was the use of alternative technologies. He stressed: “Every country must find its own path to a low carbon future. The EU decision to label both gas and nuclear as green energy is a clear recognition that Europe knows that countries need a wide range of options.

“The United States too has a long-term plan that includes an array of different technologies that meet the needs of diverse communities across the country. Africa too will find its own path. Africa too will use an array of technologies that meet the needs of diverse countries across the continent.”

Presidential pardon: Disband EFCC, ICPC now, Wike tells Buhari

Governor Nyesom Wike of Rivers State, also a presidential aspirant on the platform of the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, has called on President Muhammadu Buhari to disband the two anti-graft agencies in the country, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission, ICPC.

He stated this, yesterday, in Kano while responding to questions on the recent granting of pardon to some former governors convicted of corruption.

“By granting pardon to the former governors, President Buhari has disgraced the EFCC and the ICPC and should immediately disband them.”

Wike who also paid a courtesy call on Governor Abdullahi Ganduje of Kano State said that Nigeria was bleeding and they needs people like himself to rescue it, adding that Nigerians must begin to talk about the unity and togetherness of the

country beyond party lines.

“There is no gainsaying that the country is not getting it right and there should be a desperate effort to save the country, and by this, I’m out to right the wrongs.”

However, Wike agreed that should Ganduje be contesting the presidency, he wouldn’t have tried to contest because he knew he would not make it.

“If Ganduje is running for the Presidency, some of us will quickly withdraw our ambitions, but thank God he is not running and I’m sure he will help me to make it.”

In his address, Governor Ganduje explained that the diversity of the Wike presidential team was Nigeria, and this clearly shows that the man believes in the greatness of Nigeria.

“Party differences should not make us stupid, our diversity is an advantage, even though we failed to utilize our diversity, each one of us must try in his own bid to change the status quo.”

He called on the Nigerian

governors to be responsible for national integration, using their states and should act and see people as part of themselves by allowing them to own properties.

Recall that Mr Femi Falana, SAN, had faulted the state pardon granted to former governors of Plateau and Taraba, Joshua Dariye and Jolly Nyame, respectively.

Speaking during the one-year remembrance programme for the late Publicity Secretary of Pan-Yoruba Socio-Political Organisation, Afenifere, Yinka Odumakin, Falana described the release of the politicians as discriminatory.

Falana said: “My reaction is that all criminals, thieves in our prisons should be released.

“Because section 17 of the constitution says there shall be equality, equal rights for all citizens and section 42 said there shall be no discrimination on the basis of class, gender, whatever, so you can’t take out two people and leave the rest there. It’s illegal.”

Afe Babalola calls for suspension of 2023 elections, gives reasons

Legal icon and elder statesman, Afe Babalola, says an interim government should replace the current administration at the expiration of President Muhammadu Buhari's tenure in 2023.

Mr Babalola, the founder of Afe Babalola University, told a news conference in Ado-Ekiti on Monday that the interim government should be in office for six months to chart a new course for Nigeria.

He stressed that the 2023 elections should be suspended until Nigeria has "a new-look peoples' Constitution which should provide for part-time legislators and non-executive president".

Mr Babalola said members of the interim government should be drawn from all living former presidents and vice-presidents; some selected ministers and governors and delegates of prominent professional associations.

The professional associations could be the Nigeria Medical

Association, Nigeria Bar Association, Nigeria Labour Congress, Nigeria Union of Journalists, Academic Staff Union of Universities and Civil Society Organisations.

The elder statesman noted that such delegates should be elected on zero party basis.

He said it was regrettable that the current 1999 Constitution, foisted on Nigerians by the military was no longer in tune with the realities of the day.

"The same Constitution has made politics become not only very attractive, but the only lucrative business in Nigeria today.

"What this means is that any election that holds under the present scenario will end up producing transactional and recycled leaders, with no ability to turn things around," he said.

The university proprietor advised that the new Constitution which should be coordinated by the interim government, should spell out rules and regulations on improved qualifications of those

contesting elections

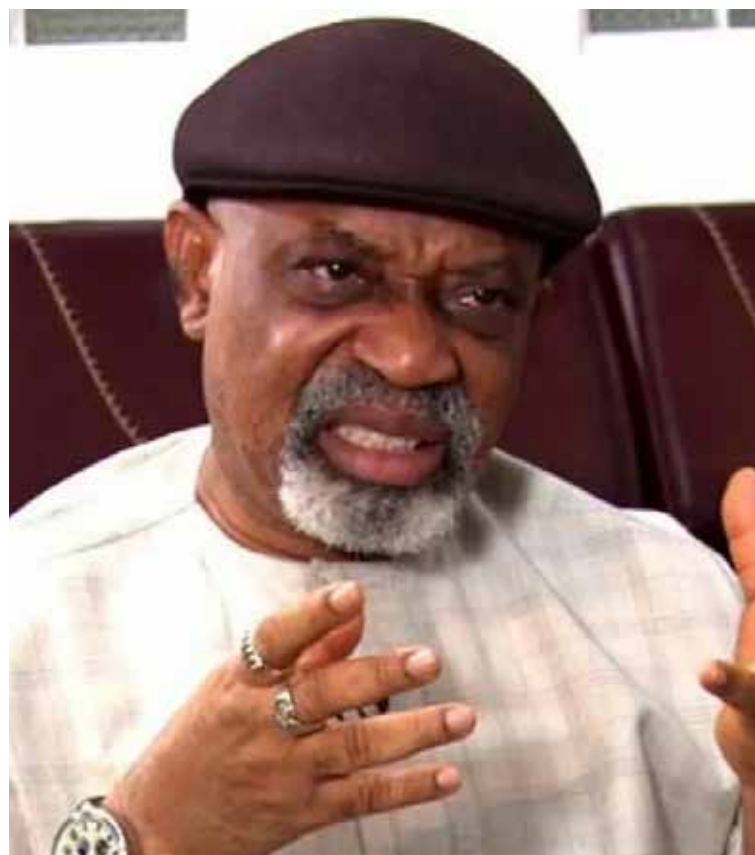
He added that the new Constitution should provide for part-time legislators and not full-time legislators, considering the attendant waste of resources.

"The new Constitution should also provide that there shall be no salary, but sitting allowances only for lawmakers.

"It should provide a true federal system of government, instead of the expensive presidential system of government. I suggest parliamentary system of government, with a unicameral legislature.

"The new Constitution should also provide a body at the local, state and federal levels to screen all aspirants on the sources of their wealth and means of livelihood, criminal record which includes pending suits," Mr Babalola said.

The legal luminary added that any person that would become the president of Nigeria should not be older than 60 years of age and must have a varsity degree. (NAN)



Chris Ngige joins 2023 Presidential Race

A Former Governor of Anambra State, Chris Ngige is set to contest for the 2023 Presidential Elections on the Platform of the All progressives Congress, APC.

The Minister of Labour and Employment, Chris Ngige, has joined the race for the presidential seat. His media office stated on Sunday that the minister had been consulting stakeholders in his All Progressives Congress (APC) party as well as stalwarts of opposition political parties.

He is scheduled to publicly declare his intention on April 19, the media office stated. It added that Mr Ngige gave his explanation for consulting opposition political parties when he addressed his supporters at Amansea, a border town with Enugu State after visiting Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi.

The media office stated also that Mr Ngige's standpoint was informed by his belief that his aspiration had a cross-party appeal.

"I visited Enugu State governor as part of my nationwide consultation. Even though he is in PDP, he is an Igbo man. He is a very realistic, discerning person. Don't forget also that Enugu is the capital of the former Eastern Region. And you know that respect is reciprocal."

"Over the week, I also consulted some other Nigerians not allied to any political party. Therefore, I had to consult the Enugu State governor over my

intention to contest and to seek his views too."

"He told me to kick the ball into the net."

"So this journey is not for APC members alone. Our brothers in PDP are easily agreed that I tower above some of the persons aspiring to the position in their party."

"I have no fear whatsoever. I am equal to the task. Even our brothers in the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) will join us in the task ahead," Mr Ngige was quoted as saying.

The minister said also that his antecedents, stewardship as a civil servant, governor, senator and minister stood him apart.

Ngige's Declaration is coming amidst a deep rift between the Political camps of APC National Leader, Bola Ahmed Tinubu and his former political 'godson', Yemi Osinbajo.

Since Osinbajo's declaration for President in 2023 a few weeks ago knowing fully well that his former boss was also contesting for the position sent shockwaves across the entire political space. Supporters of both men have been at each others throats with some going as far as putting posters branding the Vice President as a 'Betrayal'.

Ngige joins a long list of aspirants like, Rotimi Amaechi, Tinubu, Osinbajo, Adamu Garba, Orji Uzor Kalu who have so far declared to contest for the exalted position.

Nigeria records continuous decline in COVID-19 cases, deaths

The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control said the country recorded a continuous downward trend in the spread of COVID-19 infections.

The agency noted that there was also a decrease in the number of samples tested across the country in the past week.

This was contained in the COVID-19 situation report that was made available on Sunday.

According to the latest report on the daily COVID-19 Case Update by the agency, as of April 14 and 15, only two cases of the virus were recorded in the country.

The NCDC stated that since

the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, it recorded a total of 255,648 cases of the virus, discharged 249,847 persons and reported 3,143 deaths.

In the situation report, the agency stated, "The number of samples tested decreased to 68,911 from 83,642 reported in week 13.

"The number of new confirmed cases decreased to 116 from 182 with no difference in the percentage test positivity reported in week 13.

"The number of discharged cases increased to 131 from 89 in week 13. There were no deaths reported in the last one week."

"The number of inbound

international travellers tested was 4,416 of which 25 were positive compared to 70 in week 13.

"In week 14, the number of outbound international travellers tested was 6,413, of which 33 were positive compared to 15 out of 6,351 in week 13."

Globally, 499,119,316 cases of the COVID-19 have been confirmed, while 6,185,242 deaths were recorded.

In spite of the decrease, the NCDC urged Nigerians to get fully protected against the virus by taking the COVID-19 vaccine and to also follow all stipulated non-pharmaceutical safety measures to prevent the spread of the virus.

2023: Prepare to handover to Jonathan, ex-warlord tells Buhari

The former warlord of the defunct Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta, MEND, and chairman of the Movement for the Actualisation of the Dreams of Niger Deltans, MADND, Josiah Oyakonghan (aka Oyimi) has urged President Muhammadu Buhari to handover to Goodluck Jonathan who is a Southerner as President in 2023.

The ex-militant commander who made this appeal during a press briefing noted that it is only Goodluck Jonathan who can be trusted by Nigerians with the multiplicity of our country's problems.

He said; "First, our hearty congratulations to all Nigerians in this Easter, particularly to President Buhari. We therefore use this Easter celebration to urge Nigerians to continue to support President Buhari's administration for him to deliver on the promise of change we are committed to seeing, and also work for Jonathan to return to the Villa."

"The challenges before us as a nation are enormous. Insecurity, the economy, unemployment and the unity of Nigeria have never been this bad, if not worse in our national history. The solution to this, is returning Jonathan for the

presidency. Given that the people's expectations are very high and expectedly so, we therefore urge President Buhari to work for a Jonathan's candidacy who will salvage our country and reawaken a new hope for national cohesion and development."

"Goodluck Jonathan is a man of talent and experience, and at this moment the country needs him and we are lucky to have him. After the luck comes work. President Buhari should therefore support GEJ for president for a new dawn in our country. Virtually every facet of our national life needs urgent attention and GEJ is the answer", he noted.

News

FCTA To seal up govt offices, hotels to recover N10b waste collection debts

By Joshua Tashe

The Abuja Environmental Protection Board says it may lock down some government offices, hotels, plazas and other business premises due to debts owed the board.

The Director of the AEPB, Osilama Briamah, made the disclosure in a statement he issued on Monday in Abuja.

Briamah explained that the measure was coming on the heels of the Task Team set up by the FCTA Permanent Secretary, Olusade Adesola, to recover over N10 billion owed the AEPB by several government agencies, business premises and residential apartments.

He said: "As workers prepare to resume work after the Easter holiday, some government offices, hotels, plazas and other business premises may be under lock and

key due to debts owed to the Abuja Environmental Protection Board (AEPB)."

He said that the task team had been mandated to apply all legal means to recover the huge sums of money from the debtors.

The Director explained that the debts accrued over time due to the failure of those concerned to pay for services rendered to them by the AEPB.

Briamah said: "All of us desire to live and work in a world-class city compared to other beautiful cities around the world.

"But we can only do that successfully if we behave as responsible citizens and paid our utility bills, especially for solid and liquid waste collection.

"Unfortunately, many agencies, residential apartments, hotels, plazas and so on, are not paying their bills as expected.

"That makes it difficult to raise

the money needed to manage a mega-city like Abuja."

He said beginning from 5:30am. on Tuesday, based on a court order already obtained by the AEPB, the task team would embark on mass seal-up of the affected facilities with the aim of recovering the huge money being owed.

He lamented that the AEPB had made moves to provide a soft-landing for the debtors through negotiated settlement but to no avail.

Briamah added that the only option left was to apply the legal means of enforcing the court order to seal-up the affected premises.

The Director, however, said the affected debtors could avoid the impending embarrassment by ensuring prompt payment of their liabilities.

He explained that the payments could be made conveniently through the Remita Portal.

Rape of minor :Lagos govt shuts all Chrisland schools



The Lagos State Government has shut down all Chrisland Schools in the state amid public outrage over the rape of a 10 year-old girl by mates, while on a trip to Dubai, the United Emirates.

A video of the rape is in circulation in the social media.

After the girl's mum accused the school of an attempted cover-up of the scandal, outraged netizens condemned the school and called on the government to intervene.

The Education ministry issued a statement Monday afternoon and revealed that the criminal dimension of the matter has been reported to the commissioner of police.

The full statement: The attention of the Lagos State Government has been drawn to the alleged sexual violence case involving

students of Chrisland Schools which occurred in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

It is pertinent to note that all allegations are being investigated by the relevant Ministries, Departments and Agencies, including Ministry of Education, Office of Education Quality Assurance, Ministry of Youth and Social Development, Ministry of Justice and the Lagos State Domestic & Sexual Violence Agency, whilst the criminal allegations have been escalated to the Commissioner of Police.

In view of the allegations, we are committed to ensuring that adequate medical and psycho social support is provided.

This is to reassure members of the public of the State Government's commitment to safety and child protection, especially in ensuring that all child-centered

institutions within the state, formulate and implement policies and systems that are compliant with the Executive Order (NO.EO/AA08 of 2016), Lagos State Safeguarding and Child Protection Program.

We also use this medium to remind the general public that any person who engages in any visual depiction of sexually explicit conduct involving a child, commits an offence and is liable to custodial sentence of fourteen (14) years. This includes "producing, distributing, receiving, or possessing an image of child pornography"

In the meantime, all Chrisland Schools within Lagos State are hereby closed, pending further investigations.

Chrisland runs both primary and secondary schools in Lekki, Ikeja, FESTAC Town and Idimu in the state.

Rivers teachers raped 59 pupils in four months

The Nigerian chapter of the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), an all-women association fighting to protect the rights of the female gender in the country, has raised concern over the increasing rate of rape cases involving female students in Rivers State.

In an interview with The Punch, Adata Bio-Briggs, chairperson of the organisation in Nigeria, revealed that more than 50 female students have been sexually defiled by their teachers in the state.

According to the chairperson, most of the cases recorded since the beginning of the year are now being tried in court.

Bio-Briggs identified Ahoada, Elenwo and Rumuokuta communities as the areas where the

most recent cases of the abuse were recorded.

"It is sad and disheartening that we have a lot of students that have been defiled by their caregivers and teachers. We presently have a case from Ahoada; a seven-year-old child defiled by her teacher. We have another case of a child somewhere in Elenwo that was also defiled by her teacher," Bio-Briggs said.

"We have another one in Rumuokuta, where the child was also defiled by her teacher. So, we have a lot of cases of teachers defiling people they are supposed to be caregivers to. This year alone, we have had more than 50 defilement issues. All the matters of children being defiled by their teachers have been charged to court."

Imo: Security operatives, gunmen in Easter Sunday shootout as residents desert streets

By Emeka Uyo

People living in Orlu local government area in Imo state and its environs observed their Easter Sunday sit-at-home for the first time in the history of the celebration as security forces and unknown gunmen engaged themselves in broad daylight shootout, trying to outwit each other.

Although, the reason for the shootout was not known as at the time of filing this report, Blueprint gathered it lasted for hours and turned the whole area to a war zone, thus making both private and

commercial vehicles coming into and going out of Orlu town to turn back and abandon their trips or choose alternative routes to get to the town.

It was not also known whether there were casualties at the scene of the shootout or not, but a video which went viral showed a man who was hit by a stray bullet lying dead on the floor around Banana junction in the area, while his relations gathered around him weeping.

It was also gathered that shops, houses and other properties were burnt down during the shootout.

As at the time of filing this report, the Imo state Police command was yet to react to the incident.

FCTA Seals Ministry Of Works, Others Over N10bn Debt

The Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) has sealed the Federal Ministry of Works, Federal Character Commission, Merit House Maitama and Murg Plaza over waste management debts owed to Abuja Environmental Protection Board (AEPB).

The Director of the board, Engr Osilama Briamah, says the affected agencies refused to pay for the services of the board and had huge amount laying without response from the defaulters.

According to him, the exercise which has just commenced, will cover all public and private offices owing the board.

He says "We tried to negotiate to have a better way to achieve results but there was no positive response; we gave them payment plan but many of them refused to take the opportunity seriously, the board then resorted to legal means to recover the debts. The board got court orders to seal the premises."

The defendants had been summoned to appear before a senior magistrate court sitting in Wuse II, Abuja on March 30, 2022, but they failed to show up.

The breakdown of the debts showed that Federal ministry of Education owed N25,838,275, Federal Ministry

of Defence -N17,220,775.00 and Federal character commission—N10,128,906.25.

Others include Civil service commission—N2,451,649.50, Revenue mobilisation and fiscal commission—N21,683,750.00; Federal ministry of Health N14,204,843.75, Fed ministry of Trade & Investment—N19,222,287.50, Federal ministry of Works —N9,998,625.00, Nigeria Security and civil Defence corps wuse—N16,583,031.25.

The Senior Special Assistant on Monitoring Inspection and Enforcement to the minister of FCT, Ikahro Attah, who led the enforcement operation, says it followed the initiative put forth by the minister of FCT and the permanent secretary to recover the extreme debts owed the board.

Attah noted that the FCT Administration is worried about the high amount being owed FCTA.

"FCT Administration needs enough fund to build infrastructure and keep the city running. The administration has decided to go after the Ministries, parastatals, agencies and private individuals.

"We cannot wait to see government money tied down, it's wrong for people not to pay for services rendered," he added.

By Dr. Austin Maho



Issues

When a media house go rogue

In the weekend edition of aljazeera newspaper of 15th April 2022, the cover story had a banner headline titled: "China set to sponsor Ameachi for President"

This piece is a response to the article, because it falls within the growing spat of misinformation about China and the Chinese which is fuelled mostly by ignorance, foreign -sponsored media misinformation and propaganda.

A response is appropriate to the convoluted and one sided article to correct the gross misrepresentation of facts.

The entire article is a well-worn out rehash of conjectures, hearsays and tittle-tattle. The central thesis of the article is that the Chinese government is sponsoring the Honourable Minister of Information Rotimi Ameachi in his bid to contest for the Presidency of the country.

The narrative in the story is built around a single source whose name was not mentioned.

The Statement by Spokesperson of the Embassy of China Nigeria on April 16th 2022, promptly discribed the report as "misleading" and "fake news" and advised Nigerians to ignore it and be vigilant.

The full statement as captured below highlights the offensive publication:

"The attention of the Embassy of China has been drawn to a misleading report on an online news portal, alleging that Mr. Rotimi Amaechi, Hon. Minister of Transport of Nigeria and one of the aspirants to the 2023 Presidential Election, "has secured the backing of the Chinese Government", and "...several meetings were held between Amaechi's allies and the Chinese Government", even claiming that "China needs to ... install its dominance in Africa".

The general public is kindly reminded to ignore it and keep vigilant on this kind of fake news, which is fabricated with ulterior motives.

Mutual respect and non-interference in each other's internal affairs is the basic principle and long-term commitment of China's diplomacy. With respect to Nigeria' democratic political system, we are confident on the capacity of the Nigerian Government and people of organizing and conducting a

successful general election"

End of statement. Evidently, to build a narrative around a nebulous and single "source" does not equate to fact.

Attribution remains the heart and soul of journalism because it gives credibility and perspective to a story, where this is missing what we are left with is mere speculation and conjecture.

Truthfulness and Verification are key components of the ethics of Journalism. "Aljazeera" made no attempt to verify its source through other layers neither did it explore the option of seeking the views of the Honourable Minister nor of the Chinese Embassy before going to press with its story!

This betrays a lack of objectivity and fairness,

which further leads one to believe that it was a sponsored story by mischief makers.

How ridiculous does it sound that the minister would need the support and endorsement of China to contest for the highest office in Nigeria.

In any case, the Honourable Minister is as at today an aspirant and has not even won the ticket of his party to contest for the position of president.

As the political tempo in the country hots up, the media should be circumspect and not allow itself to be used by paid agents and distractors that are out to undermine Nigeria's democracy by all means.

No where in the world has China ever been accused of interfering in the internal affairs of any country.

The Chinese government foreign policy as everyone knows has always been based on the policy of non interference in the internal affairs of other nations.

This policy of non-interference and policy thrust of China in Africa was captured by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2018 during the FOCAC Beijing Summit 2018

"We respect Africa, love Africa and support Africa. We follow a "five-no" approach in our relations with Africa:

1. No interference in African countries' pursuit of development paths that fit their national conditions;
2. No interference in African countries' internal affairs;
3. No imposition of our

will on African countries;

4. No attachment of political strings to assistance to Africa; and

5. No seeking of selfish political gains in investment and financing cooperation with Africa."

The world is in the cusps of anti-intellectualism. Intellectuals who ought to bear the torch of enlightenment have themselves become hired pens, spin doctors of misinformation and fake news. Nigeria is going through many challenges and the media has a great role to play for the country to get right and must not allow itself to be used otherwise.

The media must be at the forefront at promoting and protecting our democratic ethoes and giving Nigerians the right information they need to be active participants in the democratic process.

Since establishment of diplomatic relations between Nigeria and China in 1971 the relationship has grown steadily.

China is today considered as one of Nigeria's closest allies and bilateral partner. China is also one of Nigeria's important trading and export partners.

According to a 2014 BBC World Service Poll, 80% of Nigerians view China's influence positively, making Nigeria one of the most pro-Chinese nation in the world.

It is important that journalists and Nigerians in general should desist from allowing themselves to be used to propagate the virulent hatred currently being exhibited against China as a result of the global geopolitical struggle for supremacy between the East and the West.

That some Nigerians and worst still journalists are ready to believe the very worst of allegations against China without seeking or obtaining verifiable evidence, should be deprecated and condemned by all well-meaning people.

Opinion is free but facts are sacred. "Aljazeera" should have done more investigative journalism rather than allow its space to be used to publish wild allegations and misinformation.

The writer, Dr. Austin Maho is a lecturer at the International Institute of Journalism, and publisher Daybreak newspaper. A weekly newspaper based in Abuja



Business & Economy

First Bank of Nigeria has revised operating hours for its branches

According to a publication on the website of the tier 1 bank, some branches are to operate from 8am to 1pm based on their locations, others 8am to 2pm, 8am to 3pm and 8am to 4pm.

"We have revised our banking hours across all our locations. The revised opening and closing hours will be effective from Monday, 11 April 2022," the bank stated in the publication.

Rising energy cost, particularly diesel, has affected all the sectors of the economy, forcing many organizations to stagger operating hours in a bid to manage cost.

In some areas, the pump price of diesel per litre has risen to as high as N800 from the N225/litre in January 2021.

Nigeria is also battling with epileptic power supply as a result of incessant national grid collapse.



Firm Launches Whistle App To Address Traffic Challenges In Nigeria

Glenwater Limited, a technology solutions provider today launch the Whistle Mobile App, which it says will address many of society's social challenges, especially the ones that have to do with road users.

Speaking during the launch of the app today via zoom press conference, the General Manager of Glenwater Limited, Temitope Hundeyin explained that the Whistle App is a purpose-built solution for Nigerians to solve uniquely Nigerian problems.

"Whistle grew out of trying to address some of the daily frustrations that we all face as Nigerians getting about with our daily lives. We looked at the issue of constant hazards on our roads, the incessant traffic and other various social problems that affect our quality of life and we developed a solution that relies on the power of everyday Nigerians to collaborate to make an impact," she said.

According to her, Whistle is a mobile app that utilises crowdsourced information to achieve several key things such as report dangerous vehicles and dangerous driving, report traffic congestion and get the appropriate authorities to clear bottlenecks, report Accidents to secure aid for accident victims and ensure the road is clear for smooth traffic and flag vehicles driving with expired paperwork and instantly notify authorities to issue fines where applicable.

"We refer to our app users as Whistlers, every report submitted by a Whistler is backed by picture or video evidence and then seamlessly escalated to the appropriate authorities

to provide a resolution. Part of what makes Whistle unique is that we have integrated a virtual wallet into the app that houses the rewards Whistlers receive for filing a report. This means that for reporting a vehicle driving with expired papers, the Whistler will earn a share of the fine paid," she explained further.

She added that Whistle will save lives on the roads.

The submissions from such

reports, according to her will automatically provide officers with the precise location of the dangerous vehicle as such alerts for traffic congestion and others will work in a similar fashion.

While urging Nigerians to leverage the app to improve their lives and create a safer and saner society, Hundeyi disclosed that the app is currently available for download on the app store and play store.



Somatrix Marine Signs Strategic MoU With South Africa's Sandock Austral Shipyards In Durban

In an effort to strengthen maritime relationship between Nigeria and South Africa, as well as promoting the development of modern marine infrastructure, a Nigerian indigenous ship design and construction company, Somatrix Marine Ltd has concluded the signing of a memorandum of understanding on strategic partnership with Sandock Austral Shipyards, SAS.

SAS is formerly known as South African Shipyard. Top management of both companies were present for official sealing of the partnership deal.

The delegation of Somatrix Marine was led by the CEO, Engr. Eferebo I. Sylvanus who also signed on behalf of his company while Prasheen Maharaj who is the Chief Executive Officer of Sandock Austral Shipyards signed on behalf his organisation.

The signing ceremony which took place on Friday, April 8, 2022 at SAS shipyard Durban, during a joint management meeting is expected to advance African legacy

in the global shipbuilding industry.

The expanded collaboration will also strengthen maritime relationships of both companies to promote the development of modern marine infrastructure (Shipyard) to provide quality services in the entire value-chain of the ship design and construction industry of both countries and the African continent in general.



MTN Nigeria secures CBN license to compete with traditional banks, POS operators

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has granted MTN a final approval to operate as Momo Payment Service Bank Limited (Momo PSB).

This was disclosed on Monday in a press release titled "the central bank of Nigeria grants final approval for momo payment service bank limited to commence operations" signed by Uro Ukpanah, the Company Secretary.

The statement by MTN reads, "MTN Nigeria Communications Plc (MTN Nigeria) announces the receipt of a letter dated 8 April 2022 from the CBN addressed to Momo PSB conveying final approval to commence operations."

However, the statement failed to announced the date of commencement.

It said, "the date of commencement will be communicated to the CBN in accordance with its requirements".

CBN in its guidelines published on its website said the key objective of issuing PSB licenses was to boost financial inclusion, especially in rural areas and facilitate transactions.

"To enhance financial inclusion in rural areas by increasing access to deposit products and payment/remittance services to small businesses, low-income households and other entities through high-volume low-value transactions in a secured technology-driven environment," the CBN had stated.

The new move by MTN Nigeria will see it competing with traditional banks and Point Of Sales (POS) operators for market shares.



Business & Economy

43% of Nigerian girls get married before age 18, says World Bank

The World Bank says 43% of Nigerian girls get married before they turn 18 years which stalls the chances of attaining their full potentials.

It also said Nigeria ranks highest in terms of under five mortality rate in the world.

This was disclosed at the launch of Policy Note by World Bank yesterday in Abuja tagged: Supporting Adolescent Girls to Kick-Start the Stalled Demographic Transition and Harness the Demographic Dividends in Nigeria.

Presenting the policy note, Samik Abdulkarim of World Bank, said less than 10% of Nigerian secondary school female finish secondary schools and attend up to higher education as a result of cultural and religious practices, particularly in the Northern part of the country.

Other factors he listed include: High poverty rate in the country and lack of resources, which according to him push young girls into early marriage and high teenage pregnancy.

This development, Abdulkarim said stalls demographic tradition and dividend Process in Nigeria.

Also, he said the trend further exacerbate the poverty ratio in the country and that dependent rate will also continue to go higher as human capital development continues to suffer.

Demographic dividends is the

economic benefits accrue by a country when it undergoes a rapid declining mortality rate for a rapid declining birth rate, resulting to small and healthier families and ready to address the labour market.

According to him, some of the states in the Northern region of Nigeria have continued to push this figure up, making the country to rank highest in the world.

“Advancement in medical sciences leads to decline in death rate, increase in adult longevity and child survival second stage. Several studies from Nigeria have shown very strong link between declining in fertility rate with increase in economic growth. Fertility in one child can lead to 29% increase income per capital by 2050.

According to the report, Nigeria is one of only 4 countries in the region that has total fertility rate that is higher than 5% and stalled demographic dividend, which is less than 5% per year in the last two decades.

Similarly, one of the key consequences is that Nigeria will continue to have a large number of young dependants in the population in the next 30 years.

The implication is that by 2050, Nigeria will have 1 out of 5 young people within the working age population compared to other countries.



Pfizer raises awareness on adult vaccines

In its quest to curb the menace of infections amongst the adult population, Pfizer Africa has stepped up efforts towards managing the burden of preventable diseases.

One of the steps the global pharmaceutical body has taken is to organise awareness and bring to the fore underlying issues that could affect older persons.

At a virtual media roundtable by Pfizer recently, discussions centred on the need for vaccination in adults and the burden and management of vaccine preventable diseases in older people.

Amongst the panel of discussants at the roundtable was Professor Olufunke Olayinka Adeyeye, a Consultant Physician at the Lagos State University College of Medicine Ikeja Lagos and Dr. Ogugua Osi-Ogbu, Chief Consultant and Head of Geriatrics Unit at

the National Hospital Abuja, who emphasised the importance of adult vaccination as well as the challenges and gaps in adult vaccination as these individuals have a decreased immunological response when they are exposed to infections.

According to Prof. Adeyeye there is need for a “systematic review of infections in individuals older than 65 years found that coronary heart disease, diabetes mellitus, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, were all associated with significantly higher risk of acquiring pneumococcal infections.”

Osi-Ogbu noted that “Pneumococcal disease is an important cause of morbidity and mortality in older adults. Many high-income countries recommend pneumococcal vaccination in older adults but, even where policies are in place, coverage is often low. Very

few Low and/or mid-income countries currently provide pneumococcal vaccination to older adults as a part of a routine programme.”

Justifying the need for Pfizer’s involvement in the forum, Dr. Kodjo Soroh, Medical Director, Sub-Saharan Africa, Pfizer said, “Pfizer has a long history in vaccine research and development. Through the development of innovative delivery systems and technologies, we’ve created scalable solutions that address prevention of deadly bacterial infections.

“The key to maintaining and building on these advances is constant vigilance and continued access to immunisations is essential to preserving the progress we’ve made against vaccine-preventable conditions and strengthening our ability to address emerging health threats.”



National Grid Collapses Again As Kano, Lagos, Abuja, Others Hits Blackout

It is another blackout in Kano, Lagos, Abuja, Katsina and Jigawa States after the national grid collapsed on Friday evening.

At least three Distribution Companies (DISCOs) confirmed the development via their respective social media handles, informing their customers of the situation in their respective domains.

They include Eko Electricity Distribution Company

(EKEDC), Abuja Electricity Distribution Plc (AEDC), and Kano Electricity Distribution Company (KEDCO).

While their various updates, they blamed the outage being experienced by consumers in various states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) on a general system collapse that occurred at about 6:30pm and 8:50pm.

“Dear Esteemed Customers, we regret to inform you that

a system collapse occurred on the National Grid at 6:30pm, Friday, April 8, 2022,” EKEDC said in a tweet. “Our partners are assessing the extent of the damage to the National Grid and how soon it will be restored, more information will be provided soon.

“We sincerely apologize for the inconvenience this has caused to our customers and we assure you that we are working on a swift resolution.”

AEDC, on its part, sought the understanding of its customers with an assurance that the relevant stakeholders were working to bring the situation under control.

In its update to consumers in Kano, Katsina, and Jigawa States, KEDCO apologised for any inconveniences the outage might have caused.

“We write to inform our numerous customers in Kano, Katsina, and Jigawa States that

the current power outage is due to a system collapse on the National Grid.

“Which as a result causes the current power outage on our network. We sincerely apologise for any inconveniences this may cause to our customers,” it tweeted.

Despite the government’s effort to improve the power supply, major cities in the country experienced blackouts at least twice in March

Politics Feature

The Ever Crumbling Empire

No empire lasts forever. History is filled with examples of even the most powerful empires that have crumbled either due to implosion or explosion. As powerful and formidable as the Roman, Carthage, Assyrian, Persian, and Babylonian empires were, they all crumbled due to their inability to withstand sustained pressures or currents. Therefore, no empire – no matter how formidably built – is too big or powerful to crumble.

Just like the great empires of old, the political empire of Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, former Governor of Lagos state is crumbling right before our eyes. Yet, he thinks or he is deluded to believe that he is waxing stronger politically.

This was exactly what the captain of TITANIC – the biggest ship in the early 20th century – thought. He was quoted to have said the ship was too big to sink that even God will not allow it to wreck. As though by some stroke of fate, that night, the ship sank and that was the last time it saw the sun.

Tinubu's supporters have told everyone who cares to listen that he single-handedly installed the current administration of All Progressives Congress (APC) in 2015. To them, he is politically invincible. Tinubu's empire, to them, is waxing stronger when it's actually crumbling. Nobody is telling him just yet or truthful enough to him that the ground has shifted beneath him since 2015 when he thought to overstretch his so-called empire.

In 2015, in trying to prove his political invincibility after the presidential election, he thought about gaining control of the leadership of the National Assembly.

Controlling the National Assembly, he thought, will strengthen his hands to control the APC-led administration. Of course, we all know how the June 2015 NASS leadership election went. Like Napoleon's 1812 invasion of Moscow, his ego suffered badly. The signs were clear, but he whom the gods will kill, he first makes blind!

The emperor of a crumbling empire later took his sights to Kogi state. The APC had a bright chance of winning the Kogi gubernatorial election in 2015. Former Governor Abubakar Audu won the party's ticket and Tinubu lobbied for

one of his boys, James Faleke, a member of the House of Representatives representing Ikeja, Lagos to be Audu's running mate. Tinubu knew about Audu's failing health. So, he thought with Faleke he would effectively get to control Kogi. As fate will have it, Audu died just before the elections were concluded with APC in clear lead. The debate as to who inherits his votes arose. It was up to the APC leadership to decide. Tinubu's boy Faleke was everywhere insisting he should be the one to inherit Audu's vote being the running mate. The law was clear on the matter that the votes should go to the runner up in the APC primary. This was how the party picked Yahya Bello, the current Governor of the state. Tinubu again left Kogi empty handed.

Desperate for a victory to boost the morale of his supporters, his sights were in Ondo state. Ondo state has a history of resisting emperors. This explains why Ondo was never under the Oyo Empire. While Benin conquered Akure, it soon declared its independence in the 1890s. Emperor Tinubu thought he could subjugate Ondo state in 2016. He tried imposing Olusola Oke (formerly of the People's Democratic Party, PDP) as the APC gubernatorial candidate against the more tested and independent-minded Rotimi Akeredolu who was the party's flag bearer in 2012 under ACN. Akeredolu won the APC ticket against all Tinubu's treacherous scheming. Oke later went to the Alliance for Democracy (AD).

Well, as history will have it, APC won the election without Tinubu. In fact, some analysts think ACN's Akeredolu would have won the gubernatorial election in 2012 if not for too much of Tinubu's influence. Tinubu did not realize how much of a political liability he had become in the scheme of things.

In 2018, he tried to control Ekiti state. His least favoured candidate, Kayode Fayemi, won both the APC primary and the election. Tinubu was again humbled. He largely kept a safe distance from the state. Fayemi realized he does not need baggage like Tinubu for his 2018 campaign after his 2014 fiasco.

In Osun state, Tinubu deployed all measures he had. He could not afford to lose Osun, his home state. He insisted on his cousin, Gboyega



Oyetola, becoming APC's flag bearer. Despite being the ruling party in the state, APC struggled to retain a state that is naturally a Progressives' fortress. Even with "almighty" Tinubu spending his very last blood.

The signs of his crumbling empire began showing after the Osun Governorship election. His erstwhile lieutenant, Rauf Aregbesola, largely fell out with him. To spite his former master, he was appointed as Minister of Interior, after APC's victory in the 2019 election. Tinubu has not found it funny ever since.

Nobody likes to be told the hard truths. It is understandable if none of Tinubu's subordinates are telling him his political empire and fortunes are waxing stronger when in fact, it's waning. Tinubu is simply desperate to re-assert himself politically for relevance.

The signs are getting clearer to him even though his core supporters are not getting the message. He is contesting for president that he is sure to lose only to prove a point. He is using the last remaining crumbs of his relevance to bully South-West Traditional Rulers to save his political fortunes. He has visited a number of them.

These Traditional Rulers – most of whom he helped install – don't necessarily support his political ambition. They are simply urging the Emperor to keep dancing in his "new clothes" when he is actually dancing naked!

Tinubu's empire has long crumbled and 2023 would show just that.

Olalekan Adigun, a public affairs analyst, writes from Lagos

Politics

2023: Ignoring zoning'll spell doom for PDP —Bode George

Former Deputy National Chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, Olabode George, weekend, warned that any attempt to jettison the zoning arrangement will affect the PDP's chances in 2023.

George, who gave the warning when he met with selected journalists in Lagos, insisted that the PDP will lose the trust of Nigerians if it goes against zoning.

Citing Section 7, sub-section 3(c) of the party's Constitution, he noted that in the spirit of equity, fairness and justice, the PDP must zone the presidential ticket of the party to the South East.

Violence mars Enugu PDP meeting, lawmaker escapes death

Recalling how the founding fathers of the PDP came up with the idea of zoning, he said the leaders took the decision to ensure equity and fairness, just as he urged the National Working Committee of the party not to ignore it.

His words: "So no zone, whether you are minority or majority, will go home without something to show to their people. But when you look at it like that, after eight years, all positions in the South will go to the North and all the positions in the North will come to the South.

"But they never envisaged a situation where you will have another political party that can

produce the president. It wasn't in their political equation. And you know we were always boasting that we would remain in power for the next 60 years. But the APC produced a Northern President in 2015."

George, who was a member of the PDP zoning committee, said the zoning committee had only made a recommendation by saying the Presidential ticket should be thrown open, urging the National Executive Committee, NEC, of the PDP "to listen and feel the pulse of the people on the issue."

He said: "When the National hears all the voices coming from the country, and they see that this can break or make Nigeria, maybe some sense will come into the discussion.

"Some people are arguing that President Muhammadu Buhari is not from our party and I laughed and told them that he may not be a member of our party but he is from the North.

"Personally, my view is that the PDP should make a definitive statement that this thing is zoned to the South, so that we will be seen as not only obeying the law of our party, we will appear before that lady of justice blindfolded with the sword and the scale. She doesn't care who you are, the truth will come out and I am saying this for posterity's sake.

"If we start counting from 1960, together with the military era, how many people have occupied this position from the north and how many from the south? We should stop counting from 1999; it is half-measured counting. The party must come out and be honest and say that this thing must go to the south.

"Though, we don't have the power to override our national Constitution which gives every Nigerian the right to contest for any position of the land except you are an ex-convict. We must be strong enough, to tell the truth to power, that is the very fundamental of democracy."

Expressing worry over the lingering crisis rocking the Lagos PDP and other state chapters as a result of the last state congresses held by the party, he urged the National Chairman of the party, Iyorchia Ayu, to as a matter of urgency to revisit these issues with a view to finding a lasting solution.

He warned that failure to adhere to this warning may affect the chances of the party in the states where these crises seem unresolvable, citing Lagos and Kano as examples.

George pointed out that looking into these issues and addressing them on time will prepare the party for the battle ahead.



Why I'm running for President, by Osinbajo

Dear Nigerians, for the past seven years, I have served as Vice President under a true Nigerian patriot, a servant of the nation in war and peace, and a man of integrity, President Muhammadu Buhari. We have, together, worked through some of the most difficult times in the history of our nation, but we have remained focused on securing the country, providing infrastructure and growing our economy. As stipulated by the Nigerian Constitution, our tenure will end next year.

In this period of seven years, I have served the government in several capacities, and I have, at the direction of Mr. President, represented our country in sensitive high-level international engagements. I have been to practically all local governments in Nigeria. I have been in markets, factories, schools, and farms. I have been in agricultural, mining and oil-producing communities in the Delta, in Kebbi, Enugu, Borno; Rivers, Plateau and Ondo; and in all other States of the federation, listening to the diverse experiences and yearnings of our people.

I have visited our gallant troops in the North East and our brothers and sisters in the IDP camps. I have felt the pain and anguish of victims of violent conflicts, terrorist attacks, flooding, fire and other disasters. I have been in the homes of many ordinary Nigerians in various parts of the country. I have sat with our techpreneurs in Lagos, Edo, and Kaduna, with our Nollywood and Kannywood actors; with our musicians from Lagos, Onitsha and Kano. And I have spoken to small and large businesses.

I stood where they stood and sat where they sat. I know their hopes, aspirations and fears; and I believe that those hopes and aspirations are the seeds for the great Nigeria that we all desire.

I believe that the very reason why the Almighty God gave me these experiences, these insights, and these opportunities, is that they must be put to the use of our country and its great people.

This is why I am today, with utmost humility, formally declaring my intention to run for the Office of the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, on the platform of our great party, the All Progressives Congress, APC.

If by the grace of God and the will of the people, I am given the opportunity, then I believe that first, we must complete what we have started, radically transforming our security and intelligence architecture; completing the reform of our justice system focusing on adequate remuneration and welfare of judicial personnel, ensuring justice for all

and the observance of rule of law, rapidly advancing our infrastructure development, especially power, roads, railways and broadband connectivity. Providing an excellent environment for businesses to thrive; taking the agriculture revolution to the next level especially mechanization and developing the farm to table value chain.

Making sure that the government, its agencies and regulators serve the business community, creating a tech economy that will provide jobs for millions, enhancing our Social Investment Programmes to a full-scale social welfare scheme, completing the promise of lifting 100 million Nigerians out of poverty within this decade.

Completing the task of ensuring that all Nigerians, male and female, attend school, reforming our educational system for relevance to the challenges of this century, completing the task of universal health coverage for all and strengthening the capacity of States and Local Governments to deliver on their respective mandates.

Above all, front and centre of our efforts will be the provision of jobs and opportunities for our young people. I now most solemnly and respectfully seek the support of fellow Nigerians everywhere in this land, and the diaspora, young and old, male and female, in the great and exciting journey that we have ahead of us. I seek your own support.

We will work together, established by the grace of God, the Nigeria of our dreams in a few short years. We will build on the foundation laid by our predecessors. We will need to move, with much speed, intentionality, and perseverance, towards the vision of a prosperous, stable, and secure nation.

I am convinced beyond doubt that we have the creativity, the courage, the talent, and the resources to be the foremost black nation on earth. Let us now birth the expectations of greatness conceived generations before us.

Let us build a Nigeria where the man from Nnewi sees the man in Gusau as his brother, where the woman in Warri sees the woman in Jalingo as her sister, where the love of our nation burns alike in the hearts of boys and girls from Gboko to Yenogoa. Where everywhere in this land is home for everyone, where our diversities, tribes and faiths unite, rather than divide us.

Let our tribes become one tribe; the Nigerian tribe, where all are treated fairly, justly and with respect. Where all are given equal access to the abundant opportunities that God has bestowed on this nation.

May God bless and keep our Republic and her great people.

Prof. Yemi Osinbajo, SAN, GCON Vice President, Federal Republic of Nigeria

Lawmaker condemns terrorists' attack on Plateau communities

The member representing Pankshin, Kanam and Kanke (PKK) in the House of Representatives Yusuf Adamu Gagdi, has condemned the terrorist's attacks on several communities in Kanam Local Government Area.

The communities are Kukawa, Kyaram, Gyambau and Dungur, among others.

The lawmaker, in a statement, said he was in Medina for Lesser Hajj along with some of his colleagues when the news of the attack broke.

He commiserated with the families of those who lost their lives and prayed to God Almighty to forgive their shortcomings and grant them everlasting rest.

The lawmaker, who is the Chairman of the House Committee on Armed Forces, said he contacted the Minister of Defence,

General Magashi (rtd), to request immediate military presence in the affected communities and those bordering them in order to arrest the surging activities of bandits in communities within his constituency.

Gagdi flayed the Federal Government's act of negligence to provide security for Plateau communities, despite intelligent reports by the Directorate of State Service (DSS) concerning the influx of bandits into Plateau State and other neighbouring states.

According to him, the Federal Government, which has exclusive control of the security apparatus in the country, has woefully failed in its primary responsibility of protecting the lives and property of Nigerians.

Gagdi said he was going to cut short the Lesser Hajj and return to the country in order to visit the

affected communities to console victims of the attacks, provide relief materials, as well as to see for himself the extent of damage inflicted on the communities by the marauders.

He commended Plateau State Governor Simon Lalong for his swift response to the situation.

He stated that even though Lalong has no direct control over the security operatives within the state, his swift action to reach out for security interventions in times of infractions has always been commendable, the lawmaker said.

Gagdi raised the alarm for citizens within boundary communities, particularly in Wase and Kanam local government areas, to be on the alert, as fleeing bandits from Zamfara and other Northwest states are traced to be camping within the thick bushes in the mentioned local government areas.

2023: Southern PDP aspirants clash with Southeast governors

The crisis over the zoning of the presidential ticket of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) for next year's election has pitched aspirants from Southeast with two governors from the region.

Four presidential aspirants from the Southeast have complained that Governors Okezie Ikpeazu of Abia state and his Enugu state counterpart, Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi, are working against their aspirations.

The aggrieved aspirants are former Senate President Pius Anyim, former Anambra State Governor Peter Obi; renown industrialist Mazi Sam Oluabunwa; and United States-

based medical doctor Nwachukwu Anakwenze.

They have expressed disappointment with the two governors over their alleged support for another aspirant from the Southsouth, Rivers State Governor Nyesom Wike.

The friction between the aspirants and the two governors got to a climax at the weekend when they attended stakeholders meetings on Friday and Saturday where they reiterated their demand zoning to the South.

Ikpeazu and Ugwuanyi had joined four other PDP governors at a meeting on Friday night

without inviting the four Southeast contenders.

The Abia and Enugu governors had attended the meeting with Governors Seyi Makinde (Oyo); Wike (Rivers); Duoye Diri (Bayelsa) and Udom Emmanuel (Akwa Ibom), who hosted the meeting in Abuja.

The six PDP governors, had, after their meeting, reiterated their demand for zoning to the South.

However, there were speculations that the governors had adopted a resolution at the meeting to support one of their own, who is also eyeing the ticket.

Perspective



Photo shows wetlands of the Yellow River Delta National Nature Reserve in east China's Shandong province. (Photo by Zhao Yingli/People's Daily Online)

China turns saline-alkali land in Yellow River Delta into high-yield farmland

By Yu Jianbin, Zhang Yafeng,
People's Daily

Li Ruitian, who works for a demonstration base of modern agricultural experiment on saline-alkali soil in the Yellow River Delta in east China's Shandong province, squatted down to check on the growth of crops in a vast expanse of green farmlands as lush crops swayed in the spring wind.

Just a few years ago, the fertile land beneath his feet was saline-alkali soil in endless whiteness, while now it's the demonstration base of the Agricultural High-tech Industrial Demonstration Area of the Yellow River Delta in Dongying city, Shandong province.

In the vast river delta where China's second-longest waterway, the Yellow River, splits and spreads out into several branches before entering the sea, fresh water mingles with salt water, creating a fragile ecological environment.

Due to the high salt content in soil, almost no plants grew in the Yellow River Delta, except a few saline-alkali tolerant ones like seepweed.

In 2009, China started to exploit and harness barren alkaline land with plans. In the next year, the state farm Li worked for was transformed into an efficient eco-agriculture demonstration area in Dongying city. In October 2015, China's State Council approved the plan to establish the Agricultural High-tech Industrial Demonstration Area of the Yellow River Delta in Dongying city, turning the eco-agriculture demonstration area into the second national agricultural high-tech industrial demonstration zone in the country.

At the same time, Li became a staff member, taking care of the new

varieties of saline-alkali tolerant crops planted by researchers in the experimental fields of the demonstration area.

Following the establishment of the demonstration area, a major campaign was launched to leverage scientific and technological achievements to bring new looks to the estuary of the Yellow River in Dongying city.

Researchers gradually grew saline-alkali tolerant food crop varieties including triticale, quinoa, and soybean and saline-alkali tolerant forage crops such as alfalfa and oat in the demonstration base of modern agricultural experiment on saline-alkali soil, which covers an area of 12,800 mu (about 853.33 hectares).

The once barren river delta has been adorned with an increasing number of green plants, thanks to the efforts to promote the application of high and new technologies and the support from favorable policies and measures rolled out by the local government.

"Our team has searched every corner of the Yellow River Delta for high-quality germplasm resources in a bid to breed saline-alkali tolerant plants," said Xu Hualing, head of the halophyte and eco-agriculture research center under the agricultural science research institute of Dongying city.

According to Xu, The Agricultural High-tech Industrial Demonstration Area of the Yellow River Delta has built a germplasm resource bank, serving as a solid foundation for subsequent efforts to breed saline-alkali tolerant plant varieties. Up till now, the bank has collected a total of 15,000 copies of germplasm resources covering domestic and foreign halophytes of 89 species, 42 genera and 13 families, with the types of the salt-tolerant plants including food crop, forage grass, medicinal plant,



A 500-meter-long self-propelled truss sprinkler irrigates a wheat field in Lique township, Guangrao county, Dongying city, east China's Shandong province, April 11, 2022. (Photo by Zhou Guangxue/People's Daily Online)

vegetable and fruit.

Research teams concentrating on breeding such varieties have preliminarily developed 37 new varieties and planted them in 92,000 mu of land for demonstration. These new plant varieties have increased the yield of land by 15 percent to 20 percent per mu.

"Water holds the key to harnessing saline-alkali land," pointed out Wang Guangmei, head of the Yellow River Delta field ecosystem scientific observation and research station under Yantai Institute of Coastal Zone Research, Chinese Academy of Sciences.

By installing water-saving irrigation devices, such as micro spray hose and dripping irrigation tubing, researchers have continuously reduced the salt content in the soil of the Yellow River Delta and significantly improved the soil properties.

During the past nearly three years, soil fertility in the demonstration base of modern agricultural experiment on saline-alkali soil has been generally raised by one to two grades.

Wang's team has just been laying drip irrigation pipes in the experimental fields of the demonstration base. The team hopes to reduce the salt content in the soil of the area from between 0.4 percent and 0.6 percent to less than 0.3 percent and save fresh water by more than 38 percent in irrigation in three years.

The Agricultural High-tech Industrial Demonstration Area of the Yellow River Delta is listed among the country's national high-tech industrial development zones and enjoys related current policies, according to the State Council's reply to the proposal submitted by Shandong province for the establishment of the demonstration

area.

In collaboration with research institutes, the demonstration area has built five pilot-scale research and development platforms for work related to smart agricultural machinery, seed breeding for saline and alkaline land, biotechnology, beneficial insect resource, and observation of saline-alkali land ecosystem as well as a protected agriculture test and validation platform. So far, it has gathered 116 expert teams from 56 scientific research institutes.

China has 1.5 billion mu of saline-alkali land, with 500 million mu has the potential for development and utilization.

It is anticipated that the development of saline-alkali tolerant crops would play an important role in guaranteeing food security in China, and more saline-alkali land in the country would become high-yield farmland.

Perspective

By Song Yiran, People's Daily

China moves faster to build unified national market

To break local protection and facilitate the smooth flow of economic circulation, China on April 10th issued guidelines on building a unified national market at a faster pace.

The guidelines will help promote the smooth flow of goods, factors, and resources on a wider scale for the purpose of building a unified national market that is highly efficient, rules-based, fair and open.

China is the second largest consumer market in the world. However, the large consumer market isn't equal to a truly large-scale market. The new regulation eyes a comprehensive push for the country's market to shift from being big toward becoming powerful.

The lack of unified system and rules, impeded flow of factors and resources, market segmentation, as well as other prominent problems, have hindered the realization of functions of its market.

In an effort to address these problems, the guidelines clarified the major tasks for building a unified national market, including promoting efficient circulation and expansion of the domestic market, fostering a stable, fair, transparent and predictable business environment, further reducing market transaction costs, boosting scientific and technological innovation and industrial upgrading, and cultivating a key competitive edge in international competition and cooperation.

A unified national market is by no means a large market of egalitarianism. Each region in China has its own resource endowments and different comparative advantages in goods and factors.

By building a unified national market, China will remove obstacles that hinder the flow of factors, give full play to the comparative advantages of various regions, and ensure efficient performance of capital, resources, commodities, services, data, and other market factors.

Besides, the country will be able to achieve optimal resource allocation, maximize the benefits of the entire economy and society while helping each region make the most of the market.

The document clearly charted the basic routes for advancing the construction of a unified national market.

China will further unify the basic systems and rules, including those for property rights protection, market access, fair competition and social credit, said the guideline. It will strictly implement the "one negative list for the whole country" management model, treat all market entities equally, and form a full-coverage credit information network, according to the document.

To build a unified national market, the country needs to stimulate the



Customers buy duty-free goods at the Global Premium Duty Free Plaza, Haikou city, south China's Hainan province, Nov. 11, 2021. (Photo by Wang Chenglong/People's Daily Online)

flow of factors and resources so as to vitalize the economy.

Based on previous pilot reforms, the guidelines stressed building unified markets in factors and resources including land, labor, capital, technology, data, energy, and ecological environment.

The faster flow of factors and resources is expected to generate a multiplier effect and give new impetus to economic development.

In a bid to advance the construction of a unified national market, China

should provide higher-quality products and services by constantly improving relevant standards.

Laying high emphasis on the role of goods quality and standard systems in market construction, the guidelines proposed systematic institutional designs in this respect. The country will carry out a campaign for upgrading goods quality management system, which is expected to effectively enhance quality management throughout the whole industrial chain.

The document said that the country will align the quality standards of major consumer goods in key areas with international standards, and ensure that products sold domestically are produced on the same production lines, meet the same standards, and are of the same quality as exported ones, thus effectively facilitating the connection between domestic and international circulation.

As regards the construction of the standard and measurement system,

the guidelines proposed integrating and simplifying national and industry standards, and pointed the way forward for the construction of standards in emerging fields.

China needs to supervise the market in a more scientific way in order to ensure the latter working in a stable and predictable way. The guidelines stressed the necessity to standardize the market supervision, regulate law enforcement behavior, unify law enforcement standards and procedures, and reduce discretionary power, which is expected to effectively improve the efficiency of supervision and promote fair and just law enforcement.

In order to guarantee sound development of new business forms and models, the country needs to lay emphasis on both regulating supervision and promoting development and close the loopholes in relevant laws and standards in time while promoting online and offline integrated supervision, said the document.

By accelerating the construction of a unified national market, creating more market demands, releasing greater consumption potential, expanding circulation space and forming a more transparent business environment, the country will stabilize market expectations, promote sustainable and healthy economic development, and make its economy more vibrant and dynamic.



Logistics workers are busy transferring products in Fancheng district, Xiangyang city, central China's Hubei province, Jan. 17, 2022. (Photo by Xie Yong/People's Daily Online)

News

2023: Oyetola asks appointees nursing political ambition to resign

The Osun State Governor, Adegboyega Oyetola has given marching order to all political appointees to resign their appointment ahead of the 2023 general election.

The statement issued on Tuesday directed all political appointees in the state interested in taking part in the 2023 general elections to resign their appointments with immediate effect.

This is sequel to the Executive Council meeting of Wednesday, April 13, 2022 and the combined

effect of Sections 84 (12) and 29(1) of the Electoral Acts 2022 as well as the Electoral timetable released by the Independent National Electoral Commission.

The notice was contained in a statement signed by Prince Oluwale Oyebamiji, Secretary to the State Government.

Notice is hereby given to all political appointees in Osun State to comply with the directive of Mr Governor and the provision of the law," the statement reads.

Interim Government Idea, a Needless Resort to Anarchy – Uzodinma Lambasts Babalola

Imo Governor, Hope Uzodinma, has described the idea of an Interim Government to succeed President Muhammadu Buhari as an invitation to anarchy.

He spoke on Tuesday with State House Correspondents after a meeting with President Buhari.

Legal icon and founder of Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti, Chief Afe Babalola, during a media briefing in Ado-Ekiti on Monday, called for suspension of the 2023 general election and the setting up of an interim government for the country.

Babalola premised his call on the need for a new constitution that will deliver the country from falling beyond redemption.

Reacting to the call by Babalola, Uzodinma said the 1999 Constitution does not have any provision for such circumstance, adding that an interregnum would throw the country into anarchy.

"By May 29, if there is no

elected government, our Constitution has not provided for an interregnum. There shouldn't be a gap, otherwise you are creating room for anarchy.

"What will be the process of selecting the interim government because after May 29, the President may not have constitutional powers to function as a president anymore. So, I don't think we will decide to abandon our Constitution.

"The Constitution is like a bible. Some of us who are Christians, the Bible is the manager of our faith. So, the Constitution should be the instrument guiding our actions as a country.

"If you think there is an opinion you think that is worthy to be canvassed, superior to what is in the Nigerian Constitution, such opinion should be taken to the National Assembly and they will, through due process, amend our Constitution to factor in such an opinion," he said.

2023: Jubilation in Akure as Osinbajo declares for presidency

Some All Progressives Congress (APC) members in Ondo State, on Monday, organised a gathering to show solidarity for Vice President Yemi Osinbajo's declaration to run for the presidency in the 2023 general elections.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that many of the supporters also trooped to the streets of Akure on Monday morning to celebrate the declaration.

Mr Ifeoluwa Fasant, Director General, Yemi Osinbajo Campaign Organisation, who addressed the crowd at Akure Town Hall, said the people are happy to hear that the vice president has finally declared interest in the presidency.

"We thank God the vice president has declared his intention to contest. He has all the qualities needed to be president. This is the first vice president who has had no face-off with the president.

"Southwest is ready for Osinbajo. Some people said he would not declare but now the eagle has landed.

"As a member of the cabinet, if you have one of 10 proposals approved, you're lucky. So, we cannot say that he should take full responsibility of whatever happened in government.

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2023: Southern PDP aspirants clash with Southeast governors

The crisis over the zoning of the presidential ticket of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) for next year's election has pitched aspirants from Southeast with two governors from the region.

Four presidential aspirants from the Southeast have complained that Governors Okezie Ikpeazu of Abia state and his Enugu state counterpart, Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi, are working against their aspirations.

The aggrieved aspirants are former Senate President Pius Anyim, former Anambra State Governor Peter Obi; renown industrialist Mazi Sam Oluabunwa; and United States-based medical doctor Nwachukwu Anakwenze.

They have expressed disappointment with the two governors over their alleged support for another aspirant from the Southsouth, Rivers State Governor Nyesom Wike.

The friction between the aspirants and the two governors got to a climax at the weekend when they attended stakeholders meetings on Friday and Saturday where they reiterated their demand zoning to the South.

Ikpeazu and Ugwuanyi had joined four other PDP governors at a meeting on Friday night

without inviting the four Southeast contenders.

The Abia and Enugu governors had attended the meeting with Governors Seyi Makinde (Oyo); Wike (Rivers); Duoye Diri (Bayelsa) and Udom Emmanuel (Akwa Ibom), who hosted the meeting in Abuja.

The six PDP governors, had, after their meeting, reiterated their demand for zoning to the South.

However, there were speculations that the governors had adopted a resolution at the meeting to support one of their own, who is also eyeing the ticket.

Governors Wike and Emmanuel have purchased the PDP presidential nomination forms.

Also, Wike has intensified consultations with critical stakeholders in recent times.

Piqued by the actions of the two governors, the four presidential aspirants have also called a meeting on Saturday where they demanded zoning to the Southeast.

The meeting, which held at a popular hotel in Asokoro District, Abuja, was attended by all the four aspirants.

Anyim, who addressed reporters after the meeting, was diplomatic when asked if the four aspirants were working in tandem with the PDP Southern governors that met the previous day.

He asked reporters to direct the question to the PDP Southern Governors.

Anyim said: "Whatever they (PDP Southern governors) are doing or whatever they are not doing is not necessarily before us. So, when you meet them in their own meeting, you can ask them.

"Well, if our position tallies with that of the Southern governors, good luck. But, we are taking this position in the interest of national unity, in the interest of PDP, and in fact, in line with the PDP constitution.

"We believe that the PDP constitution favours what we are doing and we have to boldly step out with this position".

A top PDP chieftain confided in our correspondent yesterday that the four aspirants became suspicious when the six governors did not invite them to their Friday meeting.

The party chieftain, who did not want his name in print because of the sensitivity of the matter, further hinted that Anyim and his fellow aspirants felt betrayed by the two governors from their zone.

"The four aspirants from the Southeast felt betrayed by the two governors from the zone, considering the loud clamour by the zone to produce the next president of Nigeria.

APC Chairman condemns killing of party chieftain in Osun

Chairman of All Progressives Congress (APC) in Osun, Mr Gboyega Famodun, has condemned the killing of the party's Chairman in Atakumosa East Central Local Council Development Area (LCDA), Chief Gbenga Ogbara, by unknown gunmen.

Spokesperson of Police Command in the state, SP Yemisi Opalola, had earlier confirmed that Ogbara was killed at 12.00 midnight on Monday by unknown gunmen at his Igangan residence.

It was also learnt that the deceased's wife, Ruth, and his child, were also wounded by the hoodlums and are currently receiving treatment at an

undisclosed hospital in Ilesa.

Famodun, in a statement issued by his Spokesman, Kola Olabisi, described Ogbara's killing as wicked, callous, shocking, primitive and uncalled for.

According to him, it is grossly improper to settle any rift with killing, for whatever reason.

Famodun enjoined the police to unravel the circumstances surrounding the killing of the APC chieftain and those who might be responsible.

According to him, it is only a thorough investigation by the police that can assuage the family of the deceased and his political allies.

The APC chairman commiserated with the family of the deceased and members of the party in his council area.

He prayed to God to grant the widow and the child of the deceased speedy recovery.

"On behalf of my family and the entire members of our party in Osun, I am expressing my condolences to the family of the deceased and all our party members in Atakumosa East Central LCDA.

"I share in your grief. May God grant the family, party faithful, relations and well-wishers of the deceased the fortitude to bear the irreparable loss," Famodun said. (NAN)

Tinubu meets with APC Gobs over 2023

All Progressives Congress (APC) presidential aspirant Asiwaju Bola Tinubu on Monday met with Governors elected on the platform of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Abuja to seek their support.

The meeting, which took place at the Kebbi Governor's Lodge, Asokoro, Abuja, lasted for about an hour with 12 Governors in attendance.

Addressing newsmen after the meeting, Tinubu said his meeting with the Governors was to seek their support for his presidential ambition.

According to him: "My mission here is to seek collaboration, support and encouragement of my party, the APC, for my ambition to become the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to succeed President Muhammadu Buhari after his tenure."

Dropping hints on what transpired at the meeting with the APC National Leader, Kebbi Governor and Chairman Progressive Governors Forum (PGF) Abubakar Atiku Bagudu, said Tinubu sought the support of the forum in actualising his presidential ambition.

He said: "Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, this morning, met members of the Progressive Governors Forum where he stated what he has made public already – his intention to seek for the office of the President come 2023 which he has already announced publicly. He briefed us on his reasons, his thinking and his message."

"All the Governors in attendance graciously came to listen to him. He acknowledged the role of the Governors in the last convention of our party, where, according to him, the Governors of the party steadied the party by helping in the evolution of the leadership that is accepted and widely acknowledged as that which we wish for our party."

"We appreciated him, and his message and will discuss the message at one of our forum meetings."

The PGF chairman faulted insinuation that the presidential ambition of Tinubu and Vice President Yemi Osinbajo may be putting the Governors in a tight corner.

Rather, he said their aspirations have further thrown up APC as the choice party with an array of capable hands showing interest to lead the country.

According to Bagudu: "On the contrary, we appreciate our party because it has become a party that has endeared itself to Nigerians."

"We have many brilliant people in our party, some serving and some not serving. The fact that we have people in our party that express a desire to lead the party into the highest office in electoral contests shows how much our party has resonated with Nigerians and our party members."

"For us, it is a hallmark of success that people are showing interest but at the end of the day and because they are leaders of the party, they will always put the party's interest at heart."

On the possibility of the party adopting a consensus candidate for its presidential flag bearer, the PGF Chairman said the party will adopt the best option insisting the party always goes for the best.

"Don't forget that in the 2015 presidential election primary, President Buhari contested against several others and it was a beauty contest."

"There is nothing wrong. Members of the party always want to see consensus if it is possible but we are a democratic party."

"In our last convention, we had consensus in some of the offices and election in some others. There is always misrepresentation of consensus as if people are being snowballed into positions they would rather not take."

Governors in attendance at the meeting were those of Lagos, Kebbi, Imo, Kwara, Yobe, Osun, Kaduna, Plateau, Kano, Nasarawa, Ogun and Jigawa.



By Chidi Anselm Odinkalu



Features

The curse of an incapable state

By the beginning of this century, the police and security agencies in Nigeria had come to adopt the methods of the people whom they were supposed to hold accountable.

Nigeria's response to the onset of murderous mass violence has evolved through phases of co-optation, brutal reprisal, appeasement, and state incapacity. The two options that have never quite been attempted with conviction are effective accountability and civic inclusion. Through phases of anti-terrorism, counter-terrorism and, now, interminable and metastasising counter-insurgencies, the country has found itself mired in chronic mass violence as the only language of political dialogue. With many reluctant to acknowledge how the country quite ended up in this denouement, it is important to look back briefly in order to look forward.

Outlawry in post-colonial Nigeria has a long and tawdry history. Stephen Ellis, who spent a lifetime researching and analysing this in some detail, recounted in his final book, *This Present Darkness: A History of Organised Crime in Nigeria*, when the spike started: "shortly before the civil war, when government broke down in some parts of the Western Region and there was a blurred line between political violence, crime, and organized insurgency." Many would argue that Nigeria has been one long insurgency since then, in what has been – on close inspection – a long war against the logical consequences of chronic leadership failure.

The post-war continuation of the error that we can shoot our way out of this failure of both leadership and national inclusion, can be traced back to the public executions by firing squad of armed robbers, which began at the former Bar Beach in Lagos on April 26, 1971. The spike in armed robbery in Nigeria coincided with the mismanagement, by the Yakubu Gowon regime, of demobilisation in the aftermath of the Nigerian Civil War. With neither preparation for post-military life nor skills to survive in the rough and tumble of civilian existence after the war, the tens of thousands of hurriedly demobilised men found alternative uses for their arms and skills, often not in the most civil way possible. Public execution did not end armed robbery. If anything, violent robbery escalated in both frequency and brutality.

The onset of presidential politics in 1979 did not just make civilians of soldiers, it also made civilians of armed robbers, who provided the violent brawn to complement the political brains of politicians in savage electoral brigandage. The numbers confectioned by this criminal tag-team, as acknowledged by the Bolarinwa Babalakin Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the Federal Electoral

Commission (FEDECO), often received judicial benediction from election tribunals. Senior Police officers, including former Inspector-General of Police Sunday Adewusi and former Police commissioner in the old Anambra State, Bishop Eytene, both now sadly late, compiled infamous records of electoral joint enterprise with these merchants of violence.

With the return of the military to government in 1983, we had a gradual escalation of violence to the point where, by the mid-1990s, the regime of General Abacha fully deployed criminal gangs and networks against peaceful civic advocacy in the Niger Delta. In institutions of tertiary education, vice chancellors in various universities and rectors of polytechnics did the same. By the time the country returned to civil rule in 1999, the politicians were happy to resume their marriage with violence and its unlicensed suppliers. This time, as former senator, Shehu Sani, recalls in the title of his book, in addition to using them to rig elections, they were also freely deployed as tools of political assassination.

When the Police liquidated a little known Islamic Cleric, Mohammed Yusuf, and hundreds of his followers in Maiduguri, North-East Nigeria, in July 2009, they did not realise how swiftly or steeply the violence would switch gears. Law enforcement, hitherto used to deniable means of committing such atrocities, had become fully converted to the methods of outlawry. The blowback ended any pretence to

a law enforcement response to Nigeria's violence and launched the country into an interminable season of mass atrocities.

In 2011, President Goodluck Jonathan, embattled in the North-East, invited a blue-ribbon panel to help the country understand the issues and think through its options. To lead this task, he tapped Gaji Galtimari, a former public administrator and diplomat and leader of the Borno Elders Forum, who died in 2019. When it reported at the end of 2011, the Galtimari Committee "traced the origins of private militias in Borno State, of which Boko Haram in particular is an offshoot, to politicians who set them up in the run up to the 2003 general elections. The militias were armed and used extensively as political thugs. After the elections and having achieved their primary purpose, the politicians left the militias to their fate since they could not continue keeping them employed. With no visible means of sustenance, some of the militias gravitated towards religious extremism, the type offered by Mohammed Yusuf."

The Galtimari Report recommended that the government should "beam their searchlight on some politicians who sponsored, funded and used the militia groups that later metamorphosed into Boko Haram and bring them to justice." In its White Paper issued in May 2012 on the report, the Federal Government accepted this recommendation and directed the National Security Adviser to co-ordinate compliance. One decade later, nothing has come of this

recommendation.

Instead, what followed has been a descent into sovereign abdication followed by capitulation. Three years later, in 2015, the crisis in North-East Nigeria had become a source of earnings, not merely for elements in the security services but also for mercenaries imported by government and paid with public funds. This, notwithstanding that Nigeria was one of the prime movers behind the Convention for the Elimination of Mercenarism in Africa adopted in 1977, which criminalises mercenarism and renders liable to punishment all persons involved in it.

As candidate in 2015, Muhammadu Buhari cashed in on this and promised to provide the kind of leadership to end it. Far from keeping his word, Buhari doubled down on the abdication, and scaled it up to capitulation before replacing it with the bare-faced coddling of terror and insurgents. This appears to have led the rest of the country to the conclusion that insurgency was the only path to dialogue. So, from the North-East, mass violence has been replaced by an epidemic of mass atrocity and from the North-East, the sites of these atrocities under him have spread to all of the country.

As The New Humanitarian memorably reported around the time of the Galtimari Whitepaper, the conclusion was inescapable that "Nigeria's criminal justice system has failed under the strain, with security force abuses not being investigated and those responsible for Boko Haram attacks not being prosecuted."

One decade later, the situation is inestimably worse, not better.

In what looks like an ultimately doomed effort to divert attention from capitulation to mass atrocity this past week, the Chief Judge of Nigeria's Federal High Court issued new rules directing that all terrorism trials "shall be held in camera." This is a breathtaking assertion by one judicial officer of power to re-write with administrative ink the clear provisions of the Constitution and of international treaties on human rights to which Nigeria is party. Section 36(4) of that Constitution requires that every accused person is "entitled to a fair hearing in public" and the only person or authority who can order trials in camera is the trial judge before whom the person is charged under section 36(4)(a) or "the court or tribunal" before whom the accused is charged.

Indeed, in its 2017 Report, the Justice Biobele Georgewill Presidential Investigation Panel on the Compliance with Human Rights Obligations and Rules of Engagement by the Nigerian Armed Forces, insisted, in a recommendation accepted by the Federal Government, that "an arrest under the Terrorism Prevention Act 2015 as amended or any other Acts of Parliament, must be followed by expeditious prosecution within a reasonable time before a court of competent jurisdiction as prescribed by the provisions of Chapter IV of the Constitution of Nigeria 1999 as amended." As important as his office is, the Chief Judge of the Federal High Court lacks powers to blithely amend the Constitution or so cavalierly expropriate rights granted by it.

This mis-step by the Chief Judge of the Federal High Court is the latest in a series of symbolic acknowledgements of the far-reaching collapse of state capacity to guarantee that most basic affirmation in section 14(2)(b) of the 1999 Constitution that, "the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government." By the beginning of this century, the police and security agencies in Nigeria had come to adopt the methods of the people whom they were supposed to hold accountable. Two decades later, the courts appear keen converts to outlawry in a pretence to fight outlaws. The politicians and their families had for long lived by the mantra that all is fair in the rat race to power. With all of Nigeria's rulers so committed to denuding it of legitimacy, is it little wonder that the curse of state incapacity in Nigeria is delivering that which communism failed to deliver – a proletarian Nirvana – in which all are joined by the assurance of painful death in mass atrocity or decapitation following mass abduction? 2023 will be interesting.



Inside FCT

FCTA flushes out 150 Beggar of Abuja, to repatriate 1,000 more

By Joyce Remi-Babayehu

The FCT Administration has evacuated about One hundred and fifty (150) beggars and destitutes from the major streets of Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), for allegedly constituting nuisance and disturbing the peace in the city.

The beggars mainly women and children including old men were carried out at the weekend, by officials of the Social Development Secretariat (SDS) in collaboration with the Abuja Environmental Protection Board (AEPB), Directorate of Road Traffic Services, FCT Security Department and office of the Senior Special Assistant to the FCT Minister on Monitoring, Inspection and Enforcement.

The exercise was following FCTA's renewed clampdown on street begging in the nation's capital of complaints about the menace of street begging.

The team picked up the beggars from streets having shopping malls, supermarkets, Mosques and other notorious spots for alms begging within Maitama, Wuse II and Garki and other areas of the city.

After profiling them, they were later given Iftar meal to break their Ramadan fast in the evening, by the FCT administration.

The Secretary Social Development Secretariat (SDS), Hadiza Mohammed Kabir, who revealed that the FCTA is targeting to evacuate between 400 to 1,000 beggars from the city, said the FCT Minister of state had embarked on removing beggars from the streets and



cleaning the environs of Abuja.

She added that by the time they finished evacuating beggars and camping them in some of FCTA centres, for proper documentation, the Minister will liaise with all the governors of their states of origin, and thereafter, they will be repatriated back their respective states.

"As you are seeing today, the Minister has just sent a strong and sound warning through me as the leader of this team to them that they should go off the streets, because we are coming

out massively for them."

"The minister has already sent them food and drinks to eat and break fast in the evening, but we are coming for them if they don't leave the streets, as they stop begging on the streets of Abuja", the SDS Boss reaffirmed.

The secretary however announced a ministerial pardon by the Minister of State for those evacuated during the weekend with a strong warning that they should not return back to the street.

Meanwhile, the Senior Special Assistant to FCT Minister, on

Monitoring, Inspection and Enforcement, Ikharo Attah, noted that what the FCTA did was to evacuate the beggars from the streets and take them to a safe place, profile and ensure that they are that most of them are well catered for and subsequently repatriated.

Attah said, "During the month of Ramadan where most of Muslim brothers and sisters are devoting themselves to the service of Almighty Allah, we saw excessive beggars who from across the country flooding into FCT so we had to move

them off the streets, sensitive areas where they gather in large numbers to beg for alms, and in the process they disturb people, and the complaints came in, and we moved in and cleared them in a friendly manner that most of them very happy about."

We are promising that we will take them back to their respective states, so that they would actually leave the streets. But with the pardon by the Honourable minister of state it is now left for them to vacate the streets, Attah said

FCTA gives Galaxy Backbone waiver to operate security Broadband in Abuja

By Joyce Remi-Babayehu

The FCT Administration has granted Galaxy Backbone, the Federal Government's ICT infrastructure development organisation, a waiver on fees for Right of Way on the utilization of one quarter duct space of existing telecommunication ducts in the nation's capital.

Following the waiver, Galaxy Backbone would freely execute the second phase of the National ICT Infrastructure Project in

the FCT and further strengthen telecommunication network, improve security, boost the economy and expand broadband penetration in the territory.

FCT Minister, Malam Muhammad Musa Bello at a press briefing presented the letter of waiver to the Managing Director, Galaxy Backbone, Professor Muhammad Bello Abubakar at the offices of Galaxy Backbone in Abuja, also said that the waiver was part of efforts by the FCTA to make Abuja a smart city, equipped with an excellent

telecommunication network.

Represented by the Secretary of Economic Planning, Revenue Generation and PPP, Hon. Lukman Agboola Dabiri, the Minister said upon execution, the project will also facilitate a robust broadband connectivity between the FCTA and all its agencies and other Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) of government in the FCT.

The minister said, "We will continue to pursue enthusiastically, the provision

of Infrastructure towards the development of Abuja in particular and Nigeria in general."

Managing Director and Chief Executive of Galaxy Backbone, Professor Muhammad Bello Abubakar, who received the letter thanked the Minister for granting the waiver and promised that it will go a long way in broadening broadband penetration in FCT and the country at large.

Prof. Abubakar Commended the FCTA for the giant strides

it has made in developing the information Communication Technology sector, describing the FCTA as a pacesetter in terms of providing positive ICT directions and pledged the support of his organisation to the FCTA in this regard.

Present at the event were, the Director, Engineering Services FCDA, Engr. Obiora Ezeoha, Director of Projects, Office of the FCT Minister, Builder Saka Isiaka Ahmed and other senior officials of the FCTA as well as Executives of Galaxy Backbone.

Entertainment

Alleged infidelity: 'Please stop attacking my husband' - Yewande begs fans



Nollywood actress, Yewande Adekoya, has urged her fans to forgive Abiodun Thomas, her husband, amid claims that he's been abusive and cheated on her.

On Monday, the 39-year-old thespian spoke on the rumoured collapse of her marriage in a now-deleted Instagram post.

The 'Kudi Klepto' star said she's been keeping the "truth" about her marital issues private to avoid external interference.

"I know you all mean well for me, please kindly stop dragging Daddy Precious online. In the name of God, if not that I had to

debunk a false narrative being told against me regarding our issue, the truth about our present situation would still have being kept private like I wanted it," she wrote in the post.

"I beg you in the name of God, please I don't want to be responsible for the death of anyone.

"I know he has made a lot of mistakes. Please kindly forgive him. All I wish for Abiodun Thomas is for him to finally attain the best version of himself in this lifetime, whether he is with me or not.

"He is human and far from perfect. I am human too and I also have my own flaws."

Find my man, DJ Cuppy tells Mr Eazi, sister

Popular disc jockey, Florence Ifeoluwa Otedola, aka DJ Cuppy, has reacted to the news of her sister's engagement to popular singer Mr. Eazi.

On Sunday, the news of Mr. Eazi's engagement to Temi Otedola hit the internet when the couple shared a 38-second video on their social media platforms to announce the occasion.

Overjoyed with the news, Cuppy disclosed she has always desired to have an older brother as she welcomed the 'Banku' music pioneer to the Otedola family.

She wrote: "I am so happy that my baby sister @temiotedola has found her personal person and love of her life.

"Yo @mreazi I have always

wanted an older brother. WELCOME TO THE FAMILY."

The 29-year-old billionaire heiress further revealed she's behind the duo's meeting while obliging them to find her 'own' man.

"PS: I introduced you guys so you better find me my own o," Cuppy added.



Obi Cubana pledges N40m for struggling ex-classmates

Billionaire businessman, Obi Cubana has pledged N40million support for his secondary school classmates.

The Abuja-based socialite stated this while hosting his secondary school classmates to a reunion party tagged "DMGS C92 reunion", 30 years after graduation.

During the event at his Abuja mansion, the popular hotelier pledged to support 20 of his ex-

classmates with N2million each while also calling on others who are financially buoyant to join the course.

Obi Cubana further proposed a trust fund to that effect.

He said: "Life is not just about taking pictures and posting on Instagram. I mean, many people think that we have made it in life. People are going through hell and to the glory of God, some of us, God has actually blessed us.

Entertainment



Police arrest husband of late 'Ekwueme' singer Osinachi

Peter Nwachukwu, the husband of late popular gospel artiste, Osinachi Nwachukwu, has been arrested by the police over her death.

The Nation reports Imo-born singer died at 42 last week.

The Nation learnt Osinachi was hospitalised before her demise.

She reportedly spent days at an undisclosed hospital in Abuja.

Many of her colleagues, including Frank Edwards, Asu Ekiye and some others, had accused her husband of physical assaults on several occasions.

Different accounts of what the deceased went through in the hands of her husband became a subject matter on social media.

Ms Favour Made, elder sister of late Gospel singer Osinachi in a recent interview with Vanguard, blamed the deceased's husband for her death.

Confirming Peter's arrest, FCT Police Public Relations Officer, Josephine Adeh said: "He is now in our custody. The younger brother of the deceased reported the matter and we have commenced investigation."

Tekno to Davido: don't talk to me again if...



Singer Augustine Miles Kelechi aka Alhaji Tekno or simply Tekno has issued a subtly warning to his colleague, Davido ahead of his new album.

The multi-talented artiste, in a post on his Twitter handle, stated his desire

to feature on the DMW boss' next album.

While anticipating a feature, Tekno warned Davido never to speak to him again if the album eventually gets released without that happening.

"@davido if the new album comes

out and I no dey inside don't talk to me again," the 'Pana' crooner tweeted.

In response, Davido retweeted Tekno's tweet and wrote: "Hmmm tek."

In 2018, Davido, took to his social media page to share a video of where

he was performing hit 2017 single "If".

Captioning the post, he thanked Tekno for the life-changing song.

Davido wrote: "Thank you teknoofficial 'IF' CHANGED MY LIFE !!

Why Deeper Life changed stance on TV, technology, by Kumuyi

The General Superintendent of Deeper Christian Life Ministry (DCLM), Pastor William Kumuyi, has explained why the church changed its long stance against use of TV and other technologies.

The church was against the use of TV and other modern technologies in its early years reportedly to keep members away from worldly corruption.

But Kumuyi, in a Facebook video, explained the paradigm shift became imperative following knowledge of the agenda by forces against the gospel using technology.

The church leader who regretted late adoption of technology said: "We are going to take it away from them and use it for the propagation of the gospel."

He added: "People are getting new methods and they are doing evil.

"These are the last days and evil

is growing worse because people go beyond using their natural strengths, natural technology, they use telephones, they use the media, they use all these connections, the Zoom and all these things to expand the evil they are doing.

"If those messengers of Satan are using the present-day technology and they are expanding, how about you?"

The preacher is now known to have changed his stand on a lot of issues bordering on technology.

Wide criticism greeted his use of a private jet and a limousine to a crusade in September 2021.

But Kumuyi who is bent on embracing change emphasised: "The church is waking up and we are seeing that technology is to spread the gospel, for the word of God gets everywhere.

"We will be wiser than the people of the world.

"The Lord will wake us up."



Foreign

Beijing honors winter Olympics and Paralympics heros

A ceremony was held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on the morning of April 8 to honor those who have made outstanding contributions to the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics and Paralympics.

President Xi Jinping, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, delivered a speech.

Xi said that a great cause nurtures a great spirit, and a great spirit promotes a great cause. The participants in the Games cherished the opportunity presented by the great era, and in the process of bidding, organizing and hosting the Games, they have created the spirit of bearing in mind the big picture, being confident and open, rising to the challenges, pursuing excellence, and creating a better future together. Xi called for carrying forward the spirit of the Games, and forging ahead more confidently and more determinedly toward the second centenary goal and toward the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation.

Premier Li Keqiang chaired the ceremony. Other members of the Standing Committee of the CPC Central Committee Political Bureau also attended the event. They are Li Zhanshu, Wang Yang, Wang Huning, Zhao Leji and Han Zheng. Vice President Wang Qishan was also present. Han Zheng announced the decision on the awards.

The atmosphere was solemn and warm in the main hall of the Great Hall of the People. A streamer bearing the words "Beijing Winter Olympics and Paralympics Review and Awards Ceremony" hangs above the podium. In the middle of the curtain behind is the glowing national emblem of the People's Republic of China, with 10 red flags on both sides. A streamer hanged outside the balcony of the second floor reads "Rally closely around the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core, carry forward the spirit of the Beijing Winter Olympics and Paralympics, and strive together to build a modern socialist country in all respects and to realize the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation."

The ceremony began at 10:30 a.m. All rose and sang the national anthem.

Han Zheng read out the decision of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council to commend groups and individuals who have made outstanding contributions to



the Beijing Winter Olympics and Paralympics. According to the decision, to commend role models and encourage the whole Party and the Chinese people of all ethnic groups to strive to build a modern socialist country in all respects, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council decided to award 148 groups and 148 individuals for their outstanding contributions to the Beijing Winter Olympics and Paralympics. They include the venue operation team of the National Speed Skating Oval and snowboard gold medalist Su Yiming. Deng Xiaolan who led a choir of village kids for the Games' opening and closing ceremonies and just passed away was also awarded.

To the accompaniment of cheerful music, Xi Jinping and other leaders presented awards to the representatives of groups and individuals who were commended for their outstanding contributions to the Games.

After enthusiastic applause, Xi Jinping delivered a speech.

Xi said that after seven years of arduous efforts, the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics and Paralympics have been successfully hosted, drawing wide attention both at home and from abroad.

By overcoming various difficulties, the Chinese people, along with people from around the world, have once again presented a global sport event that will go down in history and together shared the glory of Olympics, he said.

Xi said it is the solemn promise

that the Chinese people have made to the international community to ensure the delivery of safe and splendid Winter Olympics and Paralympics as scheduled.

Over the past seven years, under the strong leadership of the CPC Central Committee, all relevant departments, as well as provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities cooperated closely to overcome difficulties, he said.

Beijing and Zhangjiakou, the two host cities, deployed their best resources, and worked closely with global sports organizations, including the International Olympic Committee and International Paralympic Committee, to surmount challenges including the COVID-19 pandemic and present the world with streamlined, safe and splendid Games, Xi said, noting that China has honored its solemn promise.

Xi said that Beijing has become the world's first "dual-Olympic city", gathering momentum for the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

The Games are splendid, patriotism was fully manifested, the goal of involving 300 million people in ice and snow activities has come true, he said.

Xi said that the Games have left a fruitful legacy, with the success of the Games promoting regional development and the COVID-19 prevention and control being targeted and effective, which have played a key role in promoting solidarity, cooperation and joint

efforts to overcome difficulties globally. It has also brought confidence and hope to a world overshadowed by instability, and sent the world a message of the times - Together for a Shared Future, Xi said.

Noting that the glory of the Games is built on seven years of arduous endeavors, he said that the Beijing Winter Olympics and Paralympics were prepared and hosted amid great difficulties.

Upholding the spirit of "never stop, never make a single mistake and never miss a day's work," all participants have made painstaking efforts, he said.

Xi said that the athletes and coaches bore in mind the expectations of the Party and the people, competed bravely, and performed beyond their limits.

They achieved China's best-ever results at the Winter Games and got a lot of credit for the Party and the people, he added.

Driven by a strong sense of responsibility, mission and honor, participants in the Games have accomplished all the tasks outstandingly with their hard work, perseverance and courage, Xi said, noting that they have made achievements worthy of the motherland, the people and the times.

On behalf of the CPC Central Committee, the State Council and the Central Military Commission, Xi extended congratulations to the awarded groups and individuals. He offered salutations to all the builders, workers and volunteers, all the athletes and coaches,

and members of the People's Liberation Army, the People's Armed Police Force, the public security police and the fire and rescue services. He also expressed heartfelt gratitude to all the people of Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, as well as the overseas Chinese, who have supported the Games enthusiastically.

During the preparations, the International Olympic Committee, the International Paralympic Committee and members of the Olympic and Paralympic families helped a lot with China's work, and governments and people of many countries and international friends provided great support, Xi noted. Athletes from all over the world respected and encouraged each other during the competitions and exceeded the limit of their endurance. They perfectly substantiated the Olympic motto "Faster, Higher, Stronger - Together" and the Paralympic values "Courage, Determination, Inspiration and Equality."

On behalf of the Chinese government and over 1.4 billion Chinese people, Xi expressed sincere gratitude to the International Olympic Committee, the International Paralympic Committee, members of the Olympic and Paralympic families and friends from countries and regions around the world. He also paid high tribute to athletes from all participating countries and regions who courageously strived for the best during the Games.

Achievements are from hard work and victory does not come easily, Xi stressed. Reviewing the seven-year extraordinary process of preparation and hosting of the Games, we have harvested not only the joy of success, but also abundant intellectual wealth and valuable experience, which are worth cherishing and carrying forward, he said.

Xi underlined the need to uphold the Party's centralized, unified leadership. The CPC is the most reliable backbone for us to ensure great achievements. As long as we unwaveringly uphold the Party's leadership, we will definitely overcome all difficulties and obstacles that we meet and ensure every success in our future work.

We must pool all resources to accomplish major tasks, Xi said. The socialism in China with extraordinary capabilities of organization, coordination and implementation, as well as our country's solid economic and technological strength and composite national strength gave us tremendous confidence and laid a solid foundation for the success of the Games.

Xi also stressed the need to prevent and address risks and challenges proactively. He called for keeping in mind the worst scenarios, adhering to a problem-oriented approach, staying alert against potential

Foreign

dangers, and giving high priority to preempting and defusing risks and challenges, so as to take the initiative to adopt a proactive strategy.

The hosting of the Games must be combined with serving the people and promoting development, Xi said. China has been committed to the principle that the people share the fruits of the Games, who now enjoy better physical and mental health, better employment and better life. Common participation and joint efforts have resulted in shared development.

Xi summarized the spirit of the Beijing Winter Olympics and Paralympics as bearing in mind the big picture, being confident and open, rising to the challenges, pursuing excellence, and creating a better future together.

Bearing in mind the big picture means to have the motherland in mind, aim high, and regard the preparation and hosting of the Games as one of the country's most fundamental interests. It also means that people should take it as their duty to win glory for the country and their honor to make contributions to the country, and have the courage to shoulder responsibilities, unite and work hard for the motherland and the people.

Being confident and open means to be inclusive, to remain confident in the path, theory, system and culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and to pass on the country's profound cultural heritage by innovative transformation and development. It also means to substantiate the country's time-honored civilization through simple manners and in simple words, to show the sincerity and friendliness of the Chinese people with hospitality, and to promote mutual understanding and friendship among different peoples through exchanges.

Rising to the challenges means to work hard with perseverance, to keep the high morale while knowing the burdens ahead heavy but still facing challenges, to overcome difficulties and risks, and to forge ahead.

Pursuing excellence means perseverance, dedication and meticulousness. It also means to stick to the highest possible standards and requirements, to refine every plan and measure, to seek perfection through rehearsals, and to achieve breakthroughs and miracles one after another.

Creating a better future together means coordination, interaction and cooperation. It also means to align the motto "Together for a Shared Future" with "Faster, Higher, Stronger - Together", with a vision to the future of China's development and human development at large, and to call on all members on Earth to jointly build a community with a shared future for mankind.

Xi noted that it took us seven years to ensure a success in hosting the Games, and now we have prepared ourselves well for



the next stage. We should make plans proactively and work hard persistently to make the most of the legacy of the Games.

He said the Games have left us not only venues and facilities, but also cultural heritage and human resources, all of which are valuable assets we must make full use of.

He said we will continue to make ice and snow sports more popular by strengthening strategic planning, and help maintain the general public's enthusiasm for these sports.

Xi added that we will fully tap cultural resources from the Games to bolster confidence in our own culture and make China's voice heard globally and tell China's stories well.

He said we will carry forward the spirit of humanitarianism, respect and safeguard human rights, and promote all-round development of programs for people with disabilities.

He noted we will promote throughout society the spirit of volunteers featuring contribution, friendship, mutual support and progress and allow full play to the active role of volunteers, to facilitate social progress.

Xi said we will carry forward the Olympic spirit, ensure the Olympic Games play an important role in promoting

peace and development, and offer more Chinese wisdom and Chinese strength to the progress of human civilization.

He said we will attach great importance to and fully leverage the important role of sports in advancing people's well-rounded development, continue to promote reform and innovation in sports, improve the public fitness programs and raise awareness of sports and fitness among our people, the young people in particular.

Xi added that we will promote the country's overall strength and competitiveness in international competitive sports, and step up efforts to build China into a country strong on sports.

Premier Li Keqiang, who chaired the ceremony, stated that General Secretary Xi Jinping gave an important speech which is of great political, theoretical and guiding significance. Xi fully affirmed the tremendous achievements of the Beijing Winter Olympics and Paralympics, reviewed the seven-year extraordinary process and summarized the valuable experience of preparation and hosting of the Games. Xi elaborated on the spirit of the Games and put forth clear requirements for making full use of the legacy of the

Games to facilitate high-quality development. It is essential to conscientiously study the speech and apply it thoroughly.

We must more closely rally around the Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core and follow the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. We must acquire a deep understanding of the decisive significance of the establishment of both Comrade Xi Jinping's core position on the Party Central Committee and in the Party as a whole and the guiding role of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, and boost our consciousness of the need to maintain political integrity, think in big-picture terms, follow the leadership core, and keep in alignment with the central Party leadership. We must stay confident in the path, the theory, the system, and the culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and firmly uphold Comrade Xi Jinping's core position on the Party Central Committee and in the Party as a whole and uphold the Central Committee's authority and its centralized, unified leadership.

We will carry forward the spirit of the Games, forge ahead determinedly, set the stage for

the 20th National Congress of the CPC with concrete actions, and work tirelessly to build a modern socialist country in all respects and achieve the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation.

Representatives of the Chinese sports delegation, volunteers, and the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games gave speeches at the ceremony. They include: Ni Huizhong, director of the Winter Sports Administration Center under the General Administration of Sport of China; Yang Hongqiong, para cross-country skier and biathlon athlete; Yuan Weiting, student from School of Journalism, Hebei Normal University; and Zhang Suzhi, executive deputy director of the Yanqing Operation Center of the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games.

Prior to the ceremony, Xi and other leaders had a cordial meeting with representatives of groups and individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the Games, as well as all members of the Chinese sports delegation, and posed for a photo.

Members of the CPC Central Committee Political Bureau and members of the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee in Beijing, vice chairpersons of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, state councilors, the President of the Supreme People's Court, the Procurator-General of the Supreme People's Procuratorate, as well as vice chairpersons of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and members of the Central Military Commission in Beijing also attended the ceremony.

About 3,000 people took part in the event. They include leading officials from all central departments, the leading group for the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics and Paralympics and its relevant agencies, the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games, and the governments of Beijing Municipality and Hebei Province, all members of the Chinese delegation to the Games, as well as representatives of working staff for the Games, the media and volunteers.

Lay down your arms, Russia urges Ukrainians

Russia on Tuesday called on Ukrainian forces to "immediately" lay down arms and issued a new ultimatum for the defenders of the besieged port city of Mariupol to give up their resistance.

The Russian defence ministry's warning came after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky announced late on Monday the start of a new offensive by

Moscow, focused on the east of the former Soviet state.

"We once again call on the Kyiv authorities to show reason and give the corresponding orders to fighters to cease their senseless resistance."

"But, understanding that they will not get such instructions and orders from the Kyiv authorities, we call on (the fighters) to voluntarily take this decision

and to lay down their arms," the Russian defence ministry said in a statement.

The statement made no direct mention of a new ground offensive in eastern Ukraine.

But it warned that Moscow had "real-time proof about terrible new crimes being prepared by the Kyiv regime".

The defence ministry added that Ukrainian fighters resisting

the advancing Russian forces in the Sea of Azov port of Mariupol were in a "catastrophic situation".

"The Russian armed forces once again offer the nationalist battalions and foreign mercenaries a chance to stop all military activity and to lay down their arms, starting at noon."

"Everyone who lays down their arms will be guaranteed survival," he said.

Sports

Ramos: I would like to play four or five more years

The veteran defender's first season at Paris Saint-Germain has been plagued by injury but he hopes to spend a few more seasons at the top level

Sergio Ramos hopes to continue playing at football's top level for up to five more years.

The 35-year-old joined Paris Saint-Germain from Real Madrid last summer after his contract with the Spanish giants expired.

But the Spain international's time in France has been plagued by injury, limiting him to just seven appearances in all competitions this season.

Ramos' issues have sparked suggestions he could leave PSG after just one season at the club, but he insists he wants to see out his contract with the organisation and spend even more time playing in a top league.

"I would like to play between four and five more years at the top level and then live another experience," the centre-back told Amazon Prime.

"I have two years at PSG, we will try to do three and then we'll see. As long as my physical condition holds up, I think I can keep my mind focused.

"I prefer to play in the best team in the world than to be the best player because in the end football is a collective sport and it is about winning as a team.

"Before being the best in the world, I prefer to play world championships, Champions League. And for everything, you always need the work of the team."

Ramos made his sixth Ligue 1 appearance on Saturday when they beat Clermont 6-1.

It is the first time he has completed the full 90 minutes for PSG since January 23, when they beat Reims 4-0.

Since then, the defender had been out of action with a calf injury.

Earlier in the season he had been kept out by a previous calf injury and another muscle issue.



LMC fines Kano Pillars N9m for 'hooliganism', banishes club

Nigeria Professional Football League side Kano Pillars have been banished and fined for breaching the NPFL framework and rules.

The League Management Council, LMC, yesterday confirmed that Pillars have been punished for failing to provide adequate security" leading to the breakdown of law and order and destruction of property

"Kano Pillars have been charged for breaching the NPFL Framework & Rules in their Matchday 23 game vs Katsina Utd at the Sani Abacha Stadium in Kano," LMC said in a statement on its official Social

media account.

"The club breached the league rules when some of their supporters threw objects onto the pitch thereby leading to the disruption of the game."

"Kano Pillars failed to provide adequate security for the game which led to a breakdown of law and order at the Sani Abacha Stadium."

"Kano Pillars have been fined N1 million for the throwing of objects onto the pitch by their supporters. The club will also pay a fine of N5million for encroachment of the pitch by their supporters leading to the discontinuation of the match.

"For failing to provide adequate security, Pillars will pay a fine of N1 million & will pay another N1 million fine for allowing unauthorized persons access to restricted areas."

"The club are further fined N1 million for the unsporting behaviour of their supporters."

"Kano Pillars will also be responsible for the repair and/or replacement of the damaged bus of Katsina Utd as well as certified belongings (of players & officials of the away team) either damaged or lost in the bus."

"Kano Pillars supporters have also been suspended indefinitely

from league matches & the club will ensure full compliance with this order."

This punishment comes as a result of the violence unleashed on fellow NPFL side Katsina United during their recent meeting in the league.

Katsina were visitors at the Sani Abacha Stadium in Kano, where they shared the spoils with Pillars after a goalless draw on matchday 23.

Disappointed and miffed by the result, Pillars fans invaded the pitch and attacked Katsina United players, while destroying the team's bus beyond.

FG to restore National Stadium, Lagos — Dare

After successfully restoring life back to the National Stadium Abuja, the Federal Government is set to do the same for the Surulere National Stadium in Lagos.

Minister of Sports Sunday Dare on Monday says that President Muhammadu Buhari's administration is committed to bringing back the lost glory of the sports arena.

Dare stressed that the ongoing

rehabilitation was part of his Public-Private Partnership model on infrastructures across the country.

The Adopt a Sports facility initiative under the model brought back the National Stadium in Abuja which has been fully revived after 11 years of neglect.

Dare said: "Lagos National Stadium is a place many of our football legends made us proud in the past and it is sad that over 19 years, it has been

abandoned.

"We are proud that after the success recorded with the Moshood Abiola Stadium courtesy of the assistance from Aliko Dangote Group, Lagos national Stadium will also be back in style with the support from Chief Adebute Kessington. It has not been easy but we did that of Abuja and will do it also in Lagos.

"We gave the two of them (Dangote and Kessington) what we

needed to fix and they bought all the equipment themselves but we gave them the standard we wanted. It took Dangote nine months to buy all that we needed for Abuja while Kessington spent seven months. We are indeed grateful to them.

"It seemed impossible in the past decades but now the two national stadia are being fixed in under two years. For the Buhari regime, this is massive."

Sports



Asamoah Gyan: Former Sunderland ace reveals Suarez assault thoughts vs Liverpool

The Ghanaian opens up on his encounter with the Uruguay star after the 2010 World Cup in South Africa

Former Sunderland striker Asamoah Gyan has revealed he once considered physically assaulting then Liverpool attacker Luis Suarez as payback for Ghana's 2010 World Cup heartbreak at a Premier League game.

With the score at 1-1 in extra-time, Ghana almost scored a dramatic last-gasp winner but for Suarez, who handled a goal-bound Dominic Adiyiah header, conceding a red card and a penalty which Gyan struck against the woodwork before the South Americans went on to clinch a 4-2 penalty shoot-out victory.

"I remember a game between Sunderland and Liverpool. We were playing at home on that day and all players were shaking hands. I wanted to hit him [Suarez] because people had said things that stuck in my mind," Gyan, currently unattached, told Peace FM on Monday.

"I was naïve at that time but when I thought about it later, I realized that I had to let it go because I would have done the same thing if I was in his position."

Had Suarez not handled or Gyan scored the resulting penalty, Ghana would likely have won the game to become the first African nation to reach the semi-final of the World Cup.

At the time of the World Cup, Suarez and Gyan were on the books of Ajax and Stade Rennes, respectively, before securing transfers to Liverpool and then Premier League side Sunderland.

In 2012, the Ghanaian went on to become captain of the Black Stars, leading the side to the 2015 Africa Cup of Nations final where they lost to Cote d'Ivoire on penalties, a shoot-out the striker watched from the sidelines.

"As captain [of the Black Stars], I'll say it [my biggest regret] was in 2015 [Afcon] when I asked to be substituted against Ivory Coast in the final," Gyan said.

"I feel like if I was not substituted, I could've helped in the penalty shoot-out. But due to some things that were going on, I felt I needed to give the chance to another player."

Salisu: Ghana World Cup legend Asamoah Gyan backs Southampton star's call-up

The former Sunderland attacker believes the centre-back will be a good addition to the Black Stars for Qatar

Legendary Ghana striker Asamoah Gyan would welcome Southampton defender Mohammed Salisu into the Black Stars set-up ahead of the World Cup should the centre-back avail himself for national duty.

The 22-year-old, who has refused to play for Ghana, has become a major subject of discussion, particularly following the Black Stars' qualification for the global showpiece.

Although he has turned down

invitations to the national team so far, there have been reports that the World Cup qualification is likely to soften his stand. However, a section of Ghana fans have questioned the player's level of commitment to the country and if he deserves a place in the squad to Qatar.

"Why not, he is not only the best defender in the Premiership, but the Premiership is also the best league in the world," Gyan said on Peace FM when asked whether the Southampton man should be considered for the World Cup.

"If he is rated among the top three defenders, definitely he is

eligible to play for the national team if only he is in the plans of the coach and he [Salisu] has it in mind to play [for the country].

"Definitely, he should be ready for the national team, but it will depend on him and the technical team."

Ahead of their World Cup qualifying play-off clash with Nigeria last month, Ghana caretaker boss Otto Addo held another meeting with Salisu with the intention to convince the defender to change his mind.

The centre-back, however, rejected the call one more time.

"I watch him as a fan because

he is doing well at Southampton," Gyan added.

"I think he is one of the top three defenders in the Premier League and he being a Ghanaian, I think he is selling the country."

"He is performing well but I don't know if he wants to play for the national team."

Salisu has been hailed as one of the best defenders in the Premier League this season, as he currently stands as the player with the most interceptions so far.

He has made 29 league appearances for the Saints this term, starting in all but one of the matches.

Salah slammed for 'awful' first half for Liverpool vs Manchester City by Shearer

The former England star was not impressed by the winger's numbers in the first half but went on to laud him for his influence in after the break

Newcastle legend Alan Shearer was critical of Mohamed Salah's "awful" first half for Liverpool away to Manchester City in the Premier League game staged at the Etihad Stadium on Sunday.

The two title rivals played out a thrilling 2-2 draw, with the Merseyside charges twice coming from behind twice to earn a vital point that keeps them close to the Citizens on the table.

However, despite criticizing the Egypt captain for his struggles in the opening half, Shearer went on to laud him for the impact he had, when he set up Sadio Mane for the leveler moments after the half-time break.

"At half-time, I looked at some of Mohamed Salah's numbers: no shots, no crosses, no dribbles completed, and far

too many examples of giving up possession," the now 51-year-old told the Athletic.

"By his own standards, he

was pretty awful; and then he comes onto the pitch and shapes the perfect pass that sets up the equaliser."



The Pharaohs attacker has now gone five matches in all competitions without a goal, but the ex-England striker believes it is just a matter of time before the 29-year-old gets back to his best.

"Greats like Salah can never be written off and it's only a matter of time before he gets back on the goal trail. He can pull brilliance from nowhere," Shearer concluded.

This season, Salah has scored 20 goals in the Premier League and provided 11 assists.

In the Champions League, the winger has managed to find the back of the net on eight occasions after being involved in nine matches. He might add to these numbers on Wednesday when the Reds host Benfica in the second leg of their quarter-final.

During the last first leg in Portugal, the former English champions secured a 3-1 win, and they will be keen to have a positive outcome to make it to the semis of the annual competition.



I recommend that political parties set up mechanisms to ensure that they abide by all the rules and laws guiding their internal systems and external activities, regarding pre-election preoccupations, elections, and post-election ventures. Leaders in political parties should stop any action or inactions that are undemocratic and unlawful, which are the basis of conflicts within the party.

Democracy thrives with the rule of law. The fundamental principle is that the law is always supreme and must be the guiding spirit of all actions in public life. Those who fail to abide by the letter and spirit of the law get punished. If a law is found wanting or repressive, using the instruments of the legislature or judiciary, the law is interpreted, amended, or repealed. The Constitution is the bedrock of the law, and any rule or law that conflicts with the Constitution is null and void and of no effect. These are the foundations on which our democracy is built. Instead of abiding by these principles, politicians, political parties, and power wielders act rascally and abuse the law with impunity. Little wonder, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) recently warned all political actors and parties to comply with the Constitution, the Electoral Act, the provisions of their own party constitutions, and the guidelines they (INEC) have issued.

Is there anything in our genes or natures that says we cannot obey rules? From historical antecedents, Nigerian political parties and political elite have little or no room for compliance with rules, laws and statutes; and I mean any law at all. Nigerian political parties can pass for a good study in lawlessness and rascality. Partly, this may be why there is increased judicial intervention in our politics, both in internal party affairs and in electoral outcomes.

In our democracy, political parties are supposed to be vital institutions that provide the platform on which people participate in politics. Using a football analogy, political parties are like football clubs where all members share the same hope and aspiration that their clubs succeed in football games and tournaments. Each club creates its brand, ideology, and essence and puts in place the administration to select, coach and mobilise a team to compete effectively in football tournaments. So, the club is not just a vehicle for winning football games but an institution that represents an ideology, a way of life and the collective vision of its members and supporters.

Likewise, political parties are not just vehicles for winning elections, but critical institutions of democracy built on solid values, ideologies, and visions. As a critical democratic institution, a party must allow rules and laws to guide the power struggle. When this is not the case, anarchy is inevitable.

Backpage Column

Dakuku Peterside

Rascality of political parties and the 2023 elections

Parties must never cherry-pick which rules or laws to comply with and which ones to jettison. This flagrant disregard for the rule of law and even their own constitutions as political parties, has led to great distrust by the people and it is part of our perennial leadership malaise. No matter what political party leaderships say, Nigerians are sceptical that there is no place for rules in politics in this part of the world. At least, this is what the political actors have sown in the minds and heads of citizens. Nigerians now believe that politics is a game with no rules, and which is not fit for anybody with a modicum of a moral foundation.

This lawlessness and impunity exhibited by parties force the exclusion of capable leaders from joining politics. It is disturbing that whenever I discuss with great private sector leaders the importance of joining politics to increase the quantity and quality of leadership in our political space and enrich our democracy, and better the lives of our people, they often come back with "this your Nigerian politics is too dirty and uninspiring for us". The famous social scientist Professor McKenzie probably had Nigeria in mind when he warned several years ago that "if the rules limiting the struggle for power are not observed more or less faithfully, the game will disappear amid the wreckage of the whole system".

However, Nigerian parties are victims of society's rascality, which started in the military era, but they have gone ahead to perfect the lawlessness and rascality with impunity. Our political parties and stakeholders chose to borrow and adopt a military culture of impunity, by which a tiny clique of influential party leaders believes their interests are above the party rules and the laws of the land. The rules and laws make no meaning to these political overlords, and they breach them, while political parties expect that there will be no consequences for these acts. The rascality of political actors have led to the emergence of judicial rascality, especially on matters of political dispute.

Political rascality is an open invitation to anarchy, which we are yet to realise because the political elite often gets away with it. The established norm is that the rules to which we collectively subscribe guide the right of the individual members

of a political party and citizens.

Recently, INEC called on parties not to conduct primaries outside the constituencies for which parties are nominating candidates, in line with Section 84 of the Electoral Act 2022. This rule is clear, and all parties know about it. However, it will not surprise anyone interested in politics in Nigeria when some parties flagrantly begin to break this rule and conduct primaries outside the constituencies for which the parties nominate candidates. In the past, we had examples of party primaries happening entirely outside of the constituencies or sometimes in "unknown" places for the interest of some selfish leaders within the party.

I must state that there is a need for our country to move back to the period when such intra-party conflicts hardly existed, much more become sources occupying the precious time of our justices to adjudicate matters that they would rather not venture into at all.

I must state that there is a need for our country to move back to the period when such intra-party conflicts hardly existed, much more become sources occupying the precious time of our justices to adjudicate matters that they would rather not venture into at all.

There are many examples where the rascality of parties has cost the parties and their members dearly. The example of Zamfara State All Progressives Congress (APC) is still fresh in our minds. In the Zamfara case, the Supreme Court's decision significantly impacted the electoral system and allowed another incursion of the judiciary into our politics. The parties are still reeling from the consequences of the intra-party conflicts that led to those problems.

I hope all stakeholders would work hard to avert such conflicts and minimise judicial interventions in electoral outcomes. The basics of most intra-party conflicts are the impunity and rascality of the parties and their leadership, and they must reduce these to the barest minimum. They are, in fact, the bane of our democracy.

The rascality of parties is heinous in three significant ways. It is wishful thinking to expect a group of lawless individuals to lead a peaceful and prosperous country on the basis of law and order. No group

of individuals, be they a political party or otherwise, can give what they do not have. Besides, if the political parties can disregard their constitutions, ignore INEC guidelines, breach the Electoral Act, and assault the country's Constitution, then democracy is in danger. Furthermore, a political party lacking internal cohesion and discipline cannot successfully administer the state or the people, even if it succeeds in winning elections.

We expect parties to have mechanisms for internal discipline, internal self-correction, and internal protection of the rule of law. Nigerian political parties must follow the law. They must provide platforms credible enough to form governments that are peopled by individuals who agree with and abide by the ideology and principles embedded in their operations, have the leadership qualities to deliver the dividends of democracy to all and have an overwhelming desire to obey their own rules and laws, those of INEC, the Electoral Act, and the Constitution of the country. Intra-party conflicts, which often lead to pre-election litigations, are bad omens that do us no good, they subtract from our democracy and are distractions from the serious business of leading and serving the people.

In the end, I recommend that political parties set up mechanisms to ensure that they abide by all the rules and laws guiding their internal systems and external activities, regarding pre-election preoccupations, elections, and post-election ventures. Leaders in political parties should stop any action or inactions that are undemocratic and unlawful, which are the basis of conflicts within the party. The personal and selfish interests of leaders must be subsumed, whilst the collective interests of the members must dominate. Nigerians are becoming politically savvy. Recent events show that Nigerian youths are waking up to their responsibilities and mobilising to make an impact. Any party that neglects this fact and goes back to "business as usual" may be creating its doom. In the 2023 general elections, let us say no to party rascality and impunity!