



News as it breaks

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ASUU States condition for schools' resumption

The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Abuja zone has said there will be no resumption in public universities until renegotiated 2009 agreement is signed, implemented and the University Transparency and Accountability Solution (UTAS) deployed.

The ASUU Zonal Coordinator, Dr Salawu Muhammed Lawal, who made this known said members are ever ready to return to their duty post as soon as their demands are met by the Federal Government.

NAN reports that the zone comprises the Federal University of Lafia, Federal University of Technology Minna, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai, and the University of Abuja.

He said, "You would recall that the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) declared a four-week rolling strike at the University of Lagos National Executive Council (NEC) meeting held on Feb. 14

"Owing to the failure of the Federal Government to act within that period, the national action was rolled over for another eight weeks following the resolution taken at an emergency NEC meeting at the Festus Iyayi National Secretariat on March 14.

"The action as you are probably aware is to among other things, compel the Federal Government to sign and implement the draft renegotiated 2009 ASUU-FGN Agreement submitted to it by the Prof. Munzali Committee in May 2021.

"Deploy for use in the Nigerian university system, was the home-grown payment and personnel solution called UTAS developed by ASUU as a replacement for the failed IPPIS.

"As usual, the Federal Government has ignored ASUU's call for full implementation of that famous agreement and other memoranda signed with the union.

"No meeting has been held between the two parties since the commencement of the ongoing strike. The only exception is our union's re-submission of UTAS for a retest.

"The summary is that unless and until the renegotiated 2009 agreement is signed and implemented and UTAS deployed, there will be no work in public universities," he added.

"I have no son"

- * Tinubu reacts as Osinbajo declares for president
- * Meets El-rufai, Buni, 12 other APC Govs in Abuja
- * Osinbajo's declaration tears his political base apart.

National Leader of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Bola Tinubu, is says he is unperturbed by the declaration of Vice President Prof. Yemi Osinbajo, to contest for president in the 2023 election.

Emerging from a meeting in Abuja with 17 APC Governors, Tinubu spoke to the press.

"I have no son grown enough

to declare," Tinubu replied when asked his thoughts about his political 'son's' declaration this morning.

Osinbajo was Attorney General and Commissioner of Justice of Lagos State during the eight years' reign of Tinubu as governor of the state.

The governors in attendance at the meeting with Tinubu include Governors Abubakar Bagudu

of Kebbi State, Nasir El-Rufai of Kaduna State, Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos, Abdullahi Ganduje of Kano, Gboyega Oyetola of Osun, Mai Mala Binu of Yobe, Simon Lalong of Plateau and Abubakar Badaru of Jigawa.

Others include Dapo Abiodun of Ogun State, Hope Uzodinma of Imo State, Abdullahi Sule of Nassarawa state, amongst others.



Tinubu may leave APC if he fails to secure ticket

As the contest for All Progressive Congress (APC) Presidential ticket tightens, former Lagos Governor, Bola Tinubu, might leave the party if he fails to clinch the ticket, reliable sources close to the APC national leader have said. Osinbajo, after months of speculations, rumours and sponsored advertisement, opened up on his desire to succeed his boss, President Muhammadu Buhari, in 2023.

"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 peoples.

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

However, the controversial declaration, according to feelers in

Bourdillon, has rattled Tinubu and the former Governor is making plans to exit the party should he lose at the primaries.

"Baba didn't expect that Osinbajo would make the declaration at that time. Even though reports were getting to Tinubu about Osinbajo's rumoured ambition, everyone here thought the whole publicity stunt would die down," a source stated.

Another source stated that while Tinubu is ready to slug it out with any aspirant at the primaries, he won't hesitate to leave the party if the outcome of the election does not favour him.

"Where we are going next after that, we don't know but that is the plan B," he revealed.

A few months ago, Tinubu announced his intent to run for the office during a visit to the Aso Villa. Asked what the response of the president was to his ambition, the former two-time Lagos State

governor replied, "That's our business. He is a democrat. He didn't ask me to stop. He didn't ask me not to attempt and pursue my ambition, which is a lifelong ambition.

"So, why do I expect him to say more than that? You are running a democratic dispensation, and you must adopt the principles and the values and the virtues of democracy. That's it."

The APC leader stated, "I don't want to discuss individuals now. I must discuss myself. I have the confidence, the vision, the capacity to rule, build on the foundation of Mr. President, and turn Nigeria better. I've done that with commitment, you know, in Lagos State. You've seen that experience and the capacity to turn things around and that is what we are doing."

Analysts believe that having two candidates from the same political base might affect the chances of both Tinubu and Osinbajo.

Stakeholders move to drive friendly policy options for national development

By Joyce Remi-Babayaju

Stakeholders from the Federal Ministry of Budget and National Planning at the 21st Edition of the Joint Planning Board of the Ministry of Budget and National Planning at a two day meeting moved for friendly policy options to drive the development of the nation.

The 2 Day Conference held in Abakaliki, Ebonyi State with the theme "Good Governance and Institutional Capacity: Pathway to Sustainable National Development" comprised of Commissioners and Permanent Secretaries of Economic Planning at the Sub-national including critical Stakeholders to brainstorm and plans formulation with a view to proposing policy options that would enhance the economy.

Ebonyi State governor, His Excellency, Engr. David Uweze Umahi, who officially opened the forum noted that the theme of the conference, was in line with the policies of the Ebonyi Government which places high priority on good governance and sustainable development with testimonies of the changed narratives by indigenes.

The Deputy Governor who represented the governor added that the State Government was mindful of the economic challenges facing the country and also the need to institutionalize good practice, which has yielded success.

He urged all participants both to adhere to all the proceedings and make inputs for the good of Nigeria.

Permanent Secretary, Budget and National Planning and Chairperson of the Board, Mrs. Olusola Idowu, noted that the theme of this year's gathering was apt considering the fact that Nigeria for many decades had been faced with a lot of challenges working against her development as a nation.

According to Idowu some of the challenges include: weak institutions, policy inconsistencies, mono-cultural dependence on oil, weak coordination mechanism, and lack of attitudinal change, among others.

She noted that sustainable development hinged on the total commitment of both the leadership and follower-ship adding that both parties must work together in harmony to achieve the desired goals of the country.

Furthermore she stressed that pursuit of sustainable national development, accountability, transparency, efficiency and rule of law at all levels are crucial.

The Permanent Secretary charged stakeholders to brainstorm on the theme of the meeting, relating institutional capacity to governance at all levels and proffer policy options while taking into cognizance the peculiarities of the country to remedy the development challenges.

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 kidnapers 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 checked" 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 his reaction to the attacks and the state 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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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.

Interview

By Achadu Gabriel, Kaduna

Give us a brief about the DanBuran Zazzau

DanBuran Zazzau is a political icon in Northern Nigeria and in Nigeria as a whole. It is on record that Alhaji Sani Sha'aban was the leader of the opposition party that later metamorphosed into the today's ruling All Progressives Congress (APC). He was also a founding member of APP and then moved to ANPP where he went on to become a member of the House of Representatives at the National Assembly. Hon Sha'aban further contested for the Governorship position in Kaduna state under the platform of the All Nigeria People's Party but was cheated of his victory. He then went to court to challenge the outcome of the election.

What is his pedigree and ambition?

As earlier stated, Hon. Sha'aban has a hand in the formation of the APP which later changed into ANPP and later to CPC and finally to APC. It was also Sha'aban who brought the mammoth crowd to the stadium in Kaduna to flag off the APC campaign, this culminated in Asiwaju Ahmed Bola Tinubu coming to the state to give him the APC flag as a recognized party stalwart and political gladiator.

Could we say that the hurricane that swept the PDP out of office was precipitated by Hon. Sha'aban?

Well, the originator of the political hurricane that kicked out the PDP was our leader, President Muhammadu Buhari, however, Buhari himself can attest to the fact that he played a critical role in the coming of the APC to power. Hon Sha'aban is also like Buhari when it comes to mass mobilization. Similarly, everyone in Kaduna also knows and understands that the Danburan Zazzau is a force to be reckoned with.

With that being said, we are ready to move to the next level in APC with our leader and we are ready for the next assignment. Let me reiterate that Hon. Sha'aban has never for one day moved to the PDP and he is not considering doing so.

There are rumours that some political parties are calling on the DanBuran Zazzau to decamp and contest for Governor under their banner, is there a possibility of him decamping?

Well, as of today, it is not the party that matters anymore but the individual. It is about whom you are, what have you done for your society and community? It is about your pedigree.

Everyone knows that Hon. Sha'aban is a man of the people, a philanthropist and a man with a vision. Right now, everyone is waiting for the whistle to be blown by Hon. Sha'aban that he is going to contest for the post of the Governor of Kaduna state. Once that whistle is blown, like the Muezzin who calls for prayers in



Why I want to be Governor of Kaduna state - Sani Sha'aban

Abdullahi Muhammed Sani Lema is a staunch supporter of Hon. Sani Sha'aban, the DanBuran Zaazzau and a top political stalwart of the All Progressive Party APC being rumoured to be the next Governor of Kaduna State. In this interview with journalists, the faithful and loyal devotee of the charismatic politician reveals some of the progressive and positive changes the electorate should expect from his candidature if elected as executive Governor of Kaduna state, among other revelations.

the Mosque, the faithful will pick up the gauntlet

Does that mean he has not declared his intention yet?

In a few days from now, he would declare and hundreds of thousands from the 23 Local Government Areas of the state would heed his call.

Hon Sha'aban has been the recipient of numerous awards for his philanthropy, why so?

Why not, for years now Sani Sha'aban drives his own car whenever and wherever he goes he would stop and pick up the masses along the road and drops them off at their destinations. If anyone goes to his house no matter the time, Sha'aban would welcome him. Nobody goes to him with a plea and comes out not satisfied.

Therefore, the issue of him getting awards for humanitarian activities is based on his closeness to the masses.

How popular is Sani Sha'aban?

It is a known fact that Sha'aban is a political heavyweight in the state that every party wants in its camp.

That is why the New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP) supporters got up one day, printed posters and banners and placed Sha'aban alongside Senator Musa Kwankwaso. Even the PDP people are wooing him and calling him to come over to their camp. Sani Sha'aban is the man of the moment and he is extremely popular, I tell

you one thing, If he declares for the Presidency of this country today, he would make a great impact and get a lot of support.

What is his relationship with traditional rulers and other stakeholders in the state?

Most people know how cordial his relationship with the late Emir of Zazzau, Dr Shehu Idris was. In fact, the late Emir took Sha'aban as his son. The new Emir and Sha'aban are from the same house -the Maulawa House. In the same vein, both the Derika and Izzala leadership also has a very cordial relationship with him.

On the Christian side, Sani Sha'aban is very close to most Christian leaders in the state. He does not discriminate on tribal or religious basis.

What do you think would be his priorities if elected as governor?

Sani Sha'aban has a plan of action right from the go. He is an old hand in the game of governance and administration, therefore when elected he would hit the ground running

What are some of his achievements as the chairman committee on pension?

He was the one who introduced the bill on pension reform and after it was signed into law, he was made chairman of the committee on pension. As the chairman of that committee, Sani Sha'aban never had time to rest as he was inundated with calls and complaints from individuals and corporate organisations. In all, he was able to introduce the pension reform which lead to ease of pensioners getting their dues when due.

How did he become a titleholder in Keffi, Nasarawa State?

He was and still close to the traditional ruler in Keffi and based on his hard work and philanthropy in that area he was given the chieftaincy title. Even now, the newly appointed chairman of the APC is also a close ally of Sani Sha'aban.

If Sani Sha'aban becomes the governor, how does he intend to ease the pains of the masses?

Kaduna state under EP Rufai has seen massive development in terms of road construction, social amenities and others. Incidentally, these developments have brought hardship to the citizens of the state.

It is time for the citizens to smile, Sani Sha'aban would wipe out the hardship of the masses and continue with good policies that would benefit the people, but these policies would have a human face.

It is also my belief that market men and women, business people that lost their properties in the process of EP Rufai developmental projects should be compensated. Honourable Sha'aban has a plan to take businessmen and women, market men and women and others to countries where they can learn further the art of business and marketing.

Insecurity: No plan to shift 2023 election -- INEC

Those who want the 2023 general elections should perish the thought, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) said yesterday.

The Commission said it was constitutionally bound by its timetable, despite threats.

INEC National Commissioner and Chairman of Information and Voter Education Committee, Festus Okoye, told The Nation: "Postponing and or suspending the 2023 general election are not options on the table."

"The Commission is not considering or contemplating such an eventuality."

"The Nigerian people empanelled the Commission to organise, undertake and supervise elections and not to lament."

"The Commission conducted the Anambra Governorship election in the context of challenging security conditions and Nigerians adjudged the election as free, fair, credible and inclusive."

"There are significant security challenges in Nigeria and no one is glossing over them."

"The security challenges in Nigeria will no doubt impact the electoral process but the conduct of the election is not a tea party."

"Conducting election is a complex and complicated venture involving a complex set of stakeholders with varying and differing perspectives and competence."

"The Commission will continue to work with and consult with the security agencies and all the critical

stakeholders towards degrading the security situation in the country."

"Nigerians must be in a position to access the polling units unimpeded."

"Nigerians must have confidence that their votes will count."

"The Commission will continue to make it possible for Nigerians displaced by conflicts and who are in IDP camps to vote."

Besides, Okoye said sections 76(2), 116(2), 132(2) and 178(2) of the Constitution provide that an election for the office of the president and governor must be held on a date not earlier than 150 days and not later than 30 days before the expiration of the term of office of the last holder of that office.

"This constitutionally circumscribed timeframe is not movable and no individual or court can extend this period."

"The alternative is a constitutional crisis that may lead to indeterminate outcomes."

"As a Commission, we have our eyes on the ball and will continue to plan and deploy conflict mitigation tools and strategies in the electoral process," the National Commissioner said.

On how the security situation may affect the election cost, Okoye said: "It is too early to make a determination whether the security situation in the country will dramatically affect the cost of elections."

"Nigerians must remain positive and work towards the peaceful resolution of the challenges of our nation."

"Democracy is not a finished product. We must continue to work and nurture it."

Army promises safe polls

The Nigerian Army said it would ensure hitch-free elections next year with Operation Safe Conduct.

It said the operation would provide a secured and conducive environment for the conduct of the 2023 general elections.

The Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General Faruk Yahaya, said the Army would remain apolitical.

Speaking at the closing of the Chief of Army Staff Quarter Conference in Abuja, he said: "As we carry out our constitutional duties of maintaining peace and security in aid of civil authority across the country, let me emphasise that we should all remain professional and glaringly apolitical."

"We should also continue to uphold human rights principles in the conduct of our operations in tandem with the constitution and our rules of engagement."

"This is particularly important as the activities outlined in the INEC calendar gather steam."

"In line with our constitutional responsibilities, we will continue to provide a conducive and secured environment for the conduct of the general elections through Operation Safe Conduct in aid to civil authority."

"I also want to reaffirm the commitment and unalloyed loyalty of the officers and soldiers of the Nigerian Army to the Constitution and to the President."

2023: Why Nigerians want PDP back — Ayu

The Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, must do everything possible to return to power at the centre in the 2023 general elections to unite Nigerians of all walks of life, ethnic diversity and religious affiliations, national chairman of the party, Dr. Iyorchia Ayu, has said.

Ayu made the declaration, weekend, in Abuja while giving his goodwill message at the wedding reception of Mixine Ewere Okowa, daughter of the Delta State Governor, Dr. Ifeanyi Okowa, and Dr. Daniel Igo at the National Ecumenical Centre.

According to him, the sacred challenge before the present generation of Nigerians is to bequeath to the youths a healthy and cohesive country that would outlive them.

He said: "We thought we were on an irreversible course to the top, but disaster struck along the line, and today we are back to the drawing board. Our generation, therefore, has the solemn responsibility to hand over to our children, a united, healthy and prosperous nation."

"That is the historic challenge of 2023. We have never had it so bad, and so bad on so many fronts, but we must remain united to rescue our country. There is hope on the horizon. There is light at end of the tunnel. With PDP coming, Nigeria will rise again."

The former Senate President

lauded the marriage between Maxine from Delta State and Daniel, from Benue State, as proof Nigerians were ready to be one, regardless of cultural differences.

Earlier, the officiating minister who joined the couple, the Rt. Revd. Moses Tabwaye, counselled the newly-wedded to make Christ the Head of their home, saying He was the foundation for lasting marital success.

Preaching on the Five Ps of Pastoring, Protecting, Parenting, Providing and Piloting, Rev. Tabwaye said the virtues offered a timeless recipe for happy homes, stressing that no groom had failed who followed the formula faithfully.

Dignitaries at the event included Gov. Ifeanyi Okowa and Evang. Edith Okowa (parents of the bride), Elizabeth Igo (mother of the groom), the governors of Akwa Ibom, Ekiti, Bayelsa and Sokoto states.

Others were former Vice President Atiku Abubakar; THISDAY Publisher, Nduka Obaigbena; Minister of Labour, Dr. Chris Ngige; former Governor of Gombe State, Ibrahim Dankwambo; ex-Senate Presidents, Bukola Saraki and David Mark; Chairman of Heirs Holdings, Tony Elumelu; House Minority Leader, Ndudi Elumelu; and frontline banker, Mr. Jim Ovia, among others.

N37b National Assembly renovation begins this week

Two years after it got Presidential approval to give the National Assembly a face-lift, the Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA) will begin the renovation of the sprawling edifice this week.

Thirty-seven billion naira was voted for the project in the 2020 Appropriation Act which President Muhammadu Buhari signed following request to that effect by the leadership of the National Assembly.

DAYBREAK learnt yesterday that the contractors have been mobilised to commence work.

As a result of prolonged decay,

the foyer of the White House and other parts of the Complex had succumbed to massive leakage due to torrential rainfall in June 2021.

Apart from the leaking roof, the leadership of the National Assembly often complained of excessive heat during plenary and committee sessions.

It was observed that two hearing rooms in the House of Representatives were recently fitted with industrial Air conditioning units as part of remedial measures to curb heatwave.

Last year, the Red and the Green chambers referenced the leaking parts of the complex as

a justification for its request to President Muhammadu Buhari to approve the N37 billion repair vote.

Some Nigerians had criticised the amount voted for the renovation.

The National Assembly also ordered a cooling system to serve as an alternative.

A source close to the leadership of the National Assembly, confirmed the development.

"The National Assembly has made a contingency plan by importing additional chiller as backup to the one the FCDA contractor is fixing in the renovation plan as budgeted for by FCDA," the source said.

Police arrest husband of late popular gospel singer, Osinachi

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

The Imo-born singer died at 42 last week.

She was a lead singer at the Dunamis International Church.

It was gathered that Osinachi was

hospitalised before her demise.

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 Akeh said: "He is now in our custody. The younger brother of the deceased reported the matter and we have commenced investigation."



News

Electoral Act 84 (12): Appeal Court stops Malami

The Court of Appeal has restrained the Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice Abubakar Malami (SAN) and others from frustrating the hearing of an appeal against a judgment mandating the AGF to delete Section 84 (12) from the Electoral Act 2022.

A three-member panel, led by Justice Rita Nosakhare Pemu, in a ruling, granted the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) permission to appeal, as an interested party, against the March 18, 2022 judgment by Justice Justice Evelyn Anyadike of the Federal High Court in Umuahia.

The Appeal Court made the order in a ruling delivered at the Owerri Division on April 7.

The court also granted an accelerated hearing in the appeal.

The ruling was on a motion marked: CA/OW/87m/2022 filed by the PDP, with Chief Nduka Edede (plaintiff in the suit decided by Justice Anyadike) and the AGF as respondents.

It reads: "Leave is hereby granted the applicant (PDP) to appeal as person interested in this appeal – CA/OW/87/2022.

"Due to the exigencies of this appeal and its constitutional colourisation, there is need to hear this matter expeditiously.

"Accordingly, the appellant is hereby given up to Tuesday 12th of April, 2022 to file its notice of appeal and the parties are to file their respective briefs of arguments within three days from the date of service of the notice and record of appeal on the respondents.

"There shall be a further three days given to the appellant to file

a reply.

"Parties should desist from taking any step to frustrate the hearing of the appeal.

"The matter is adjourned to the 4th of May, 2022, for the hearing of the appeal.

"Fresh hearing notice to be issued on the 2nd to the 12th respondents."

The National Assembly has also indicated its intention to formally appeal the judgment by Justice Anyadike.

Justice Anyadike had in the March 18 judgment in the suit by Edede marked: FHC/UM/CS/26/2022, held that Section 18(12) of the amended Electoral Act is unconstitutional and should be struck down.

The judge noted that sections 66(1)(f), 107(1)(f), 137(1)(f) and 182(1)(f) of the 1999 Constitution already stipulated that government appointees seeking to contest elections are only to resign at least 30 days before the election.

She held that any other law that mandates such appointees to resign or leave the office at any time before the 30 days provided in the Constitution was unconstitutional and void to the extent of its inconsistency with the clear provisions of the Constitution.

Justice Anyadike then ordered the AGF to delete the said Section 18(12) from the amended Electoral Act.

Section 84(12) of the Electoral Act provides: "No political appointee at any level shall be a voting delegate or be voted for at the convention or congress of any political party for the purpose of the nomination of candidates for

any election."

The PDP has already filed a separate suit before the Federal High Court in Abuja in which it is challenging among others, President Muhammadu Buhari's request that the National Assembly should alter the provision of Section 84(12) of the Electoral Act.

The case marked: FHC/ABJ/CS/247/2022, before Justice Inyang Ekwo, has been adjourned till April 28 for hearing.

Minister of Transportation, Rotimi Amaechi, who at the weekend declared his interest in the race, may be affected by the Electoral Act provision.

Going by Section 84 (12), he is expected to resign to participate in his party's primary, being a political appointee.

Minister of Labour, Chief Chris Ngige, who had hinted that he may contest, will also be expected to resign should he eventually declare.



Insecurity: Akwa Ibom evacuates stranded citizens from Katsina over bandits' attacks

Akwa Ibom State Government weekend evacuated from Katsina State a total of 34 of her citizens, who were stranded following attacks by bandits and insurgents in some parts of Katsina state.

The victims, who arrived Uyo the State capital on Saturday were received by the Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Welfare, Dr Ini Adiakpan at the Women Development Centre along IBB Way, Uyo.

Addressing newsmen, Adiakpan explained, "The attention of the state government was drawn to a viral video on social media where some displaced Akwa Ibom indigenes in Katsina State were calling for help, because their houses, shops and other sources of livelihood were either vandalised or burnt by bandits.

"So the state government immediately ordered for their evacuation and safe return to the state. The Governor has made adequate arrangement for them to be received.

"Relief materials will also be

released to them, and we will then begin to reintegrate all of them with members of their families immediately."

One of the returnees, and President of Akwa Ibom Community in Katsina State Chief Effiom Williams, recounted the origin of the incident and how he was able to mobilize the citizens to his house for safety.

Williams who is also a lecturer in the Department of Mathematics, Federal College of Education, Katsina narrated: "I got a distress call from our members in Batsari, Danja, Dan Musa and other Local Government Areas that their houses, and shops were being attacked.

"I quickly mobilised them into safety in my house. When some of them arrived, they had nothing left because they had lost everything to the crises, so the Community had to raise money in order to get them clothes and other effects.

"We later reached out to the state government for assistance. We are very happy that the Governor has intervened."

A survivor and native of Ikono

LGA Elizabeth Emmanuel, explained that her shop and home were razed down by the arsonists, who attacked their community at night, killing several people in their sleep.

Mrs. Emmanuel who said she resides in Jibia LGA of Katsina State expressed appreciation to the State Governor, Mr. Udom Emmanuel for the timely intervention.

"We got back home and started hearing loud shooting at night. And we all started running for our dear lives. All I could take from our house are my children and few clothes. Luckily for us, we were escorted to the IDP camp by soldiers."

Emmanuel further narrated how they were, linked to the President of the Akwa Ibom Community in Katsina by a fellow Akwa Ibomite in the Internally Displaced Person's (IDPs) camp.

Similarly, a shoe cobbler who spoke on ground of anonymity lamented that his source of livelihood was completely destroyed during the attack by bandits, adding that it was by luck he was able to escape with his family to Katsina Metropolis

FG calls for synergy among Commissioners for workable national economic development

By Joyce Remi-Babayeju

Vice-president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo, has called for a synergy among Commissioners for an effective and workable national sustainable economic development.

Osinbajo at the closing ceremony of the 21st JPB/NCDP event held at Abakaliki, Ebonyi State capital, on Friday who made this call at that the Joint Planning Board and National Council on Development Planning's (JPB/NCDP's) annual event said the meeting is key to boosting cooperation between States and the Federal Government as well as providing a better coordination of economic policies for poverty reduction and sustainable development.

He stressed that the need for synergy among all tiers of government remained paramount "at this critical time when we continue to face the challenges of recovery from the onslaught of the Covid-19 now compounded by the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war."

The Vice President further noted that the Council had remained a very important platform for setting the tone of national economic discourses, adding that "it provides a good opportunity for Federal and State Governments to maintain their active collaboration for the well being of their people.

He commended the effort of stakeholders from the private sector and civil servants in articulating the National Development Plan, NDP, 2021-2025.

He stated that the strategic objectives of the NDP included establishing a strong foundation for a diversified economy, investing in critical infrastructure, enabling human capital development and improving governance, and strengthening security which would certainly contribute to achieving national development aspirations.

Osinbajo disclosed that the outcomes of poor governance includes ineffective delivery of public goods such as collection of taxes, or delivery of social investment programme, public education, health services, and delivery of performance, among others.

He said, "Any country that makes dishonesty, lack of transparency, bureaucratic corruption the norm has chosen backwardness and poverty of the majority of its citizens."

Addressing the Commissioners, Minister of State Budget and National Planning, Prince Clem Ikanade Agba, appreciated the delegates and stressed that the theme of this year's conference, "Good

Governance and Institutional Capacity: Pathways to Sustainable National Development" was a reflection of the current efforts of the Federal Government in ensuring the effective implementation of the National Development Plan (NDP) 2021 – 2025.

Agba stated that the conceptualization and effectiveness of good governance for sustainable development particularly in the context of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs had come into focus in recent years.

He added that recognizing the role of the government in the management of the economy and the joint participation of state and non-state actors, civil society and the private sector was essential in the process of public governance.

Agba said "Emerging trends point to good governance as a panacea towards accelerated development in economic, political and social sectors of nations making it imperative for any country wishing to realize, promote or maintain economic, political and social strides to strive to embrace good governance. Efficient political and economic strands promote social order."

He stressed the need for achieving good governance, as well as, institutional capacity as very important objectives of the National Development Plan (NDP), launched by President Muhammadu Buhari is a holistic plan for the Nigerian economy particularly in the era of the COVID-19 challenges the president's vision to lift 100 million Nigerians out of poverty in 10 years remains an achievable dream.

He said, "I have always posited that good governance lies in the mindset of people. As long as the people do not remain a stumbling block to the ease of doing business, the people of Nigeria will reap a lot of benefits from the National Development Plan 2021 – 2025."

"We must remove all encumbrances to doing business, the biggest of which is the human factor linked to an unacceptable attitudinal disposition and the lack of a sense of urgency."

In overcoming these impediments to national development, the plan has a volume which captures the binding constraints and legislative imperatives for the ease of doing business" the minister explained.

Prince Agba assured that the outcome of the meeting would be taken into action, also acknowledged that the success of the 21st JPB/NCDP event was as the efforts of the Permanent Secretary and other stakeholders in the ministry.

By Zhong Sheng



Perspective

U.S. will finally hurt itself by weaponizing its economy

Countries are in a tough situation today, having to cope with COVID-19 while ensuring economic development and livelihood.

However, ignoring global stability and livelihood concerns, the U.S. has imposed a series of unilateral sanctions against Russia and forced other countries to obey them through the threat of secondary sanctions. Its practices of weaponizing its economy, economic hegemony and financial terrorism have triggered widespread concerns of the international society, and are condemned by many countries.

Since the outbreak of the Ukraine-Russia conflict, the U.S. has made every effort to avoid direct military engagement. However, by providing massive military assistance for Ukraine and imposing sanctions, it has launched hybrid warfare against Russia.

The U.S. not only imposed sanctions on Russian government officials, but also excluded a number of Russian banks from the SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication) messaging system, the main system underpinning global financial transactions. Besides, it has frozen the assets of Russia's central bank, placed new debt and equity limitations on Russian enterprises and entities,

imposed bans on the exports of over half of its high-tech products to Russia, and prohibited the purchase of petroleum and natural gas from Russia.

The facts demonstrate that the target of these unprecedented sanctions is not a truce, but rather the militaristic and economic annihilation of Russia. Even after positive signals were released from the new round of negotiations between Russia and Ukraine held on March 29, the U.S. and its allies still said they would keep intensifying sanctions on Russia. It's fair to say that the Ukraine crisis once again

revealed the true colors of the "sanctions superpower" - to safeguard its hegemony by fair means or foul and at the expense of the interests of all the people in the world.

Driven by economic hegemonism, the U.S. implemented comprehensive and indiscriminate sanctions, which impeded global economy and hurt the people.

Kristalina Georgieva, managing director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) noted that the war in Ukraine and massive sanctions against Russia have triggered a contraction in global trade, driving up food and energy costs and forcing

the IMF to lower its global growth forecast. According to Oxford Economics, the sanctions against Russia may bring down the GDP in the Eurozone by 0.5 percentage points before the end of 2023.

It is obvious that if the U.S. further escalates its sanctions, a major crisis may hit global trade, finance, energy, food, and industrial and supply chains, wreaking havoc on the already slow global economy.

Plundering the world with financial terrorism, the U.S. has exacerbated global poverty and inequality. The middle-income trap in Latin

American countries, Japanese economic crisis and Southeast Asian economic crisis were all related to American financial hegemony. The number of sanctions imposed by the U.S. has surged tenfold during the past 2 decades.. Economic and financial sanctions are what the country constantly resorts to.

Recently, the White House unfroze and embezzled \$7 billion in Afghan funds in U.S. banks, sparking protests in many places across Afghanistan. Such practice was called a bare robbery. Today, freezing the assets of Russia's central bank, the U.S. is once again making the rules of international finance a tool for it to plunder others.

The U.S. will definitely hurt itself upholding economic hegemonism and financial terrorism. Chief Economist of Euro Pacific Capital Peter Schiff believes that the U.S. would suffer a long-term consequence of turning the U.S. dollars into a weapon with sanctions, which will cause countries to worry about whether this weapon would be used against them one day. IMF Chief Economist Gita Gopinath said the world would reevaluate the security of taking U.S. dollars as foreign exchanges. Zoltan Pozsar, a senior adviser at the U.S. Department of the Treasury noted the U.S. and other Western countries have shaken the foundation of the existing international monetary system by freezing the assets of Russia's central bank.

Even the allies of the U.S. are trying to mitigate the damaging consequences of U.S. sanctions. An expert pointed out that a crack is appearing in the monetary system from which the U.S. has long benefited, and the Ukraine crisis will hasten the process.

It is neither responsible nor ethically justifiable for the U.S., under the disguise of the so-called "rules," to undermine international order and provoke confrontations with economic and financial hegemony.

The U.S. should immediately discard the Cold War mentality. It needs to see farther and pursue common interests, rather than hegemony and private gains, so as to work with all relevant parties to safeguard the long-term stability and sustainable development of the world.



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. Eferibo 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

Akeredolu's wife seeks senatorial ticket in Imo

The wife of Ondo State governor, Mrs. Betty Anyanwu-Akeredolu, is seeking to represent Imo East Senatorial District next year.

She has got the backing of some groups, including the Coalition of South East Youth Leaders (COSEYL), which is canvassing support for her to realise her ambition.

In a statement yesterday in Owerri, the Imo State capital, COSEYL President General Goodluck Ibem said Mrs. Anyanwu-Akeredolu's ambition to represent her people at the Red Chambers "is borne out of her genuine concern and compassion for her people who trained and

nurtured her in school before giving her out in marriage".

"Women of her kind are not easy to come by in a generation. She is a special women sent by God to be a blessing to her people and we are grateful to God for touching her to make herself available to serve humanity.

"As a woman who has the interest of her people at heart, despite being married in Ondo State, she attracted the construction of a 10.5-kilometre road worth N1.6 billion from Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and it is currently under construction. What a woman of good heart and virtue."



IPOB: Can Soludo Fill the Southeast Leadership Vacuum?

By Mukhtar Ya'u Madobi

"The current trajectory is a road to desolation. Let us get around the table and talk. Let the elite in the closet come out and let's debate our future and forge a consensus. The elite conspiracy of silence should end."

That was vintage Professor Charles Chukwuma Soludo saying it as it is and rallying all stakeholders, at a low key, but eventful inaugural ceremony to mark the beginning of his tenure in office on Thursday, March 17, 2022.

It is not surprising for the Governor to have solicited the support of stakeholders and other community leaders in the state in order to surmount the challenges being faced by the state and the entire eastern region.

When Soludo was announced as the winner of last November gubernatorial election in Anambra, he clearly knew he had his job cut out for him as the activities of unknown gunmen would post the biggest threat to his reign.

It is no longer news that the eastern region of the country has over the years become a hub for maiming,

killings and wanton destruction of citizens' properties, occasioned by the activities of the miscreants tagged as 'unknown gunmen.'

The origin of these so-called unknown or faceless gunmen is allegedly traceable to the military wing of the outlawed Indigenous People of Biafra, IPOB, known as Eastern Security Network, ESN.

The group, under the leadership of Nnamdi Kanu, who is currently languishing inside the Department of State Services, DSS, dungeon after being rearrested in Kenya, has over the years been actively clamouring for the creation of an independent Biafra nation from Nigeria.

According to them, the eastern region and Igbos have been marginalised and treated as second class citizens in the country in terms of appointment into political offices, resource sharing and allocation, governance among a host of other allegations.

But alas, instead of the outlawed group to adopt a legitimate approach in registering their grievances, they subscribe and resort to violence.

In the midst of IPOB agitation, several attacks have been carried out by the unknown gunmen on government facilities including security outfits, Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC Offices, markets, prisons among other strategic locations.

They kill various personnel of security forces of Nigeria at will including the Police, Military, DSS, Prison etc.

It is also on record that IPOB militants have been enforcing sit-at-home order every Monday across the entire five states of the eastern region since Kanu was re-arrested. According to the group, this is to serve as a means of solidarity and to force the government to succumb to their demand for his unconditional release.

However, this order has been crippling the economic activities of the region and causing a lot of unintended harm.

Not only that, a number of important personalities in the Igbo region cutting across traditional rulers, politicians, public servants

and business moguls have been murdered by the gunmen.

In the midst of this madness, one thing that has been lacking in the region is leadership - the presence of a strong, loud, respected voice that can rein-in the IPOB extremists. It looks as if since the passing of charismatic leaders like Emeka Ojukwu, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Alex Ekwueme and others, the southeast has lacked a rallying figure that can speak sense into the youth and everybody will follow. While present day political leaders get busy with their corrupt and selfish politics that alienates the people, a certain Kanu emerged from one corner in London to fill the huge leadership vacuum but he has obviously done a bad job at it, having armed the youth with fake news, hateful messaging, divisive rhetoric, violent narratives, and mobilised them for all the wrong causes.

However, it is gratifying to learn that Governor Soludo is taking the right steps, saying the right things and making himself that Philosopher-King that has been lacking in that region for years.

He has stepped up efforts to stem the rising tides of insecurity haunting the state and the region at large.

Soludo, while featuring in an interview with the Channels Television recently, promised to grant amnesty to IPOB members who lay down their arms and embrace peace.

To that effect, the governor has just appointed and unveiled a 15-member Truth, Justice and Peace Commission to negotiate peace with the group. The committee is headed by human rights activist, Prof Chidi Odinkalu with Ambassador Bianca Ojukwu as Secretary.

The former CBN governor has done in days what other governors in the zone have not been able to do in years.

If Soludo continues this way, southeast may soon regain its mojo and trace his way back to the old peaceful, industrious and enterprising part of Nigeria.

Inadequate funding delaying P/Harcourt-Maiduguri rail project —Amaechi

By Dirisu Yakubu, Port-Harcourt

The Minister of Transportation, Rotimi Amaechi, has blamed paucity of funds for the slow pace of work on the Eastern narrow gauge railway project.

Amaechi, who stated this in Port-Harcourt yesterday, however, expressed optimism of the possibility of track-laying getting as far as Enugu by September this year.

Accompanied by top officials, including Dr. Magdalene Ajani, Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Transportation and Fidet Okhiria, Managing Director, Nigerian Railway Corporation, NRC, Amaechi lamented the slow pace of work by China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation, CCECC, urging them to come up with the number of equipment and personnel needed to quicken construction of the project.

"The project was inaugurated last year but it is at this level because enough funding was not given to them. Now, they have something that can make them go further from where they are. They have some level of funding and I hope that we secure the loan before they exhaust what we currently have.

"Our expectation is that they get to Enugu by September in terms of track-laying. I think we also need to ask them whether they will be able to construct the stations because there are stations that are yet to be approved by the cabinet. We need to go back to the cabinet to ask for those approvals," he said.

He also harped on the need to provide cover for the workers, saying "I think we need more security here than we currently have, so we don't have any kidnap cases."

On what to expect of the stations along the corridor, Amaechi said: "What we are trying to do in this narrow gauge is to build the same

infrastructure that you have on the standard gauge because you can never tell when you will have a standard gauge on this line.

"Now, when building the standard gauge on this line, if I were still the Minister for Transportation, I would have asked that whoever is designing should design it in such a way that they use the same stations. That way, you reduce cost."

On what to expect on his next inspection tour, the Minister noted: "I expect that they should have cleared up to Imo river; I expect that they should have started formation work and they should have gone far, because there is nothing much to do here. It already exists, it is a reconstruction.

"So, I expect that by the time we come back, formation work should have commenced and got close to Elele and should have either got to Imo river or exceeded Imo river, if we must meet the target of September to get to Enugu."

PDP crisis: Only Okowa can save party, says Okocha

Bothered about the seemingly intractable power-sharing crisis that has overwhelmed the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), an auto magnate, Chief A.C. Okocha has said that only the Delta State Governor Dr Ifeanyi Okowa has the wisdom and expertise to salvage the party from the power-sharing crisis it is enmeshed in.

Okocha, who is equally the National Chairman of Ogwashi-Uku PDP Leaders' and Elders' forum, noted that it was a thing of joy when about every leader in the PDP was declaring to be President; Governor Okowa kept his cool and was watching keenly from a distance.

"Governor Okowa is much more qualified than most of those clamouring to be president," Okocha said, "but this governor prefers to do things differently. He is a man of great wisdom who watches issues keenly before dabbling into them," he said.

Okocha stated that now that key members of the PDP have fought themselves into a cul-de-sac, Dr Okowa would have no choice but step out and provide quality leadership so as to create a sustainable atmosphere.

Okocha mentioned that anything short of this could affect the chances of the party taking over power at the centre in 2023.

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 Oluwabunwa; 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 a simulation image of China's Tianzhou-2 cargo spacecraft. (Photo/China Academy of Space Technology)

China's Tianzhou-2 cargo spacecraft accomplishes mission and reenters Earth's atmosphere

By Yu Jianbin, Zhang Yafeng,
People's Daily

China's Tianzhou-2 cargo spacecraft was deorbited and re-entered the Earth's atmosphere under ground control according to plan on March 31, Beijing time, after completing all of its scheduled tasks involving key technology verification and extended application tests in orbit for the construction of China's space station.

Most of the spacecraft burned up during the re-entry process, while a small amount of the debris fell into the intended area of safe water in the South Pacific.

The re-entry of Tianzhou-2 into the Earth's atmosphere means that Chinese astronauts sent into space onboard the country's Shenzhou-13 spaceship will also return to the Earth soon.

The Tianzhou-2 is the first cargo spacecraft sent into orbit in the key technology verification phase of the China Space Station, carrying 6.8 tonnes of supplies to the space station.

The regular duration for Chinese astronauts to work and live in China's space station during its operations is six months, which means that crew rotation and cargo replenishment are carried out every six months. Before crew members leave the space station, the cargo spacecraft normally leaves first to take away most of the waste produced during their space life.

After Tianzhou-2 cargo spacecraft's recent separation from the space station, China's Shenzhou-13 crew members are preparing for their return to the Earth in mid-April.

Deorbiting and destroying cargo spacecraft that has accomplished its tasks represents another vivid practice of peaceful utilization of space resources, and demonstrates China's sense of responsibility as a major player in space, according to Li Zhihui, deputy commander-in-chief of the Tianzhou-2 cargo spaceship with the China Academy of Space Technology (CAST).

Generally speaking, it is extremely dangerous for an in-orbit spacecraft to hit space junk larger than 10 centimeters. Space junk often makes spacecraft have to change orbit to avoid collisions and ensure its own safety, and sometimes severely affects spacecraft's orbital flight missions.

The treatment of space debris faces huge difficulties. It takes years or even decades for space debris in low-Earth orbit at an altitude of 400 kilometers to gradually drift out of the orbit and disappear.

For China, deorbiting its spacecraft that has completed tasks is an inevitable choice.

At the end of their life, low-Earth orbit satellites or other spacecraft descend to lower altitudes with the aerodynamic forces intensifying under the action of atmospheric drag or control system; at this point, the spacecraft can be



considered to have re-entered the Earth's atmosphere, said a designer of Tianzhou-2 with the CAST.

During the re-entry, low-Earth orbit spacecraft travels at a speed of eight kilometers per second. Under the action of aerodynamic heating and forces, the spacecraft gradually disintegrates, and then again, finally burns up, the designer added.

To reduce the risk to ground personnel, the common practice for deorbiting large near-Earth spacecraft is to carry out a controlled re-entry. In this way, it is able to fall out of orbit and into a safe area, which are generally the

uninhabited areas in the South Pacific.

China already accomplished the controlled reentry missions of its Tianzhou-1 cargo spacecraft and Tiangong-2 space laboratory in 2017 and 2019, respectively.

The deorbiting of Tianzhou-2 cargo spacecraft according to international practices this time can not only reduce the amount of space debris to avoid hazards to in-orbit spacecraft and the ground and create a safe and clean space environment for other spacecraft, but play an important role in global space environment governance and

avoid occupying orbital resources.

In the next five years, China will advance the construction of a space environment governance system comprehensively. The country will strengthen space traffic control, build and improve its space debris monitoring facility system, cataloging database and early warning service system, and coordinate the work related to in-orbit maintenance of spacecraft, collision avoidance control, and space debris mitigation to ensure the safe, stable and orderly operation of the space system.

Perspective

By He Yin, People's Daily

China, EU make contributions to progress of world peace

Chinese President Xi Jinping met via video link with President Charles Michel of the European Council and President Ursula von der Leyen of the European Commission in Beijing on the evening of April 1.

Providing guidance and charting a course for the healthy and sustained relationship between China and Europe, President Xi stressed that China and the EU should act as two major forces upholding world peace, two big markets promoting shared development, and two great civilizations promoting human progress. He also shared his views on how to settle the Ukraine crisis under the current circumstances.

When President Xi paid a historic visit to the EU headquarters in March 2014, he suggested that China and Europe work together to foster a China-EU partnership for peace, growth, reform and civilization, which has endowed the China-Europe comprehensive strategic partnership with new connotations.

This vision remains unchanged today and is of practical significance under the current circumstances. As the world has entered a period of new turbulence and transformation, China and the EU should offset uncertainties in the international landscape with the stability of China-EU relations, deepen economic globalization through open cooperation, and meet global challenges through solidarity and collaboration.

China and the EU are two major independent forces that share broad strategic consensus and common interests. Dialogue and cooperation remain the mainstream of China-EU relations, and mutual benefit is the keynote of China-EU cooperation. It's a consensus between the two sides that they need peace, multilateralism and dialogue, instead of war, unilateralism, and confrontation.

China and the EU should perceive their relations from broader strategic and more profound historical perspectives. Xi said they should take the lead in defending the international system with the UN at its core, the international order underpinned by international law, and the basic norms governing international relations based on the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, and jointly reject the resurrection of rival-bloc mentality and oppose attempts at a new Cold War, with a view to maintaining world peace and stability.

Xi called on the EU to form its own perception of China, adopt an independent China policy, and work with China to promote the steady and sustained growth of China-EU relations and to add stabilizing factors to a turbulent world.

China and the EU are important trading partners of each other. They



Chinese President Xi Jinping meets with European Council President Charles Michel and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen via video link in Beijing, capital of China, April 1, 2022. (Photo by Yin Bogu)

carry out cooperation in a wide range of fields and their interests are interwoven.

China has remained the largest trading partner of the EU for two consecutive years, and the trade volume between the two sides reached a record high of more than \$800 billion last year. The trade structure between them is constantly optimized, with prominent growth observed in aerospace, biology, optoelectronics, and electronics.

China's solid efforts to deepen reform and expand opening up have created important opportunities for European business investment. The China-EU agreement on

geographical indications has further facilitated bilateral trade, and the China-Europe freight trains are also contributing to the stability of the international industrial and supply chains.

As two major economies, China and the EU enjoy strong resilience and huge potential in economic and trade cooperation. The cooperation between them is conducive to not only their own development, but also the economic recovery of the world.

Facing increasing global challenges, China and the EU need to follow true multilateralism and advocate a vision of global

governance featuring the principle of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits.

From jointly making important contributions to the reaching of the Paris Agreement to leading cooperation on biodiversity, and from offering mutual assistance in the fight against COVID-19 to further enhancing anti-pandemic cooperation for narrowing the global immunity gap, China and the EU enjoy a solid foundation in strengthening cooperation.

China welcomes the EU's support for and participation in the Global Development Initiative. The two sides' efforts to promote world

peace, economic growth and common prosperity will contribute wisdom and strength to improving global governance.

Concerning regional and global peace and stability, the situation in Ukraine is receiving high attention from the international society. During the meeting with President Michel and President von der Leyen, President Xi called on the global community to encourage peace talks, prevent a humanitarian crisis on a bigger scale, foster lasting peace in Europe and the Eurasian continent, and prevent the regional conflict from magnifying. His proposals fully demonstrated China's major responsibility to always stand on the right side of history and play a constructive role in safeguarding world peace and the common interests of mankind.

Promoting peace talks, keeping the situation under control, preventing larger-scale humanitarian crisis and spillover of the Ukraine crisis are a consensus reached between China and the EU. Both of the two sides are unwilling to see the world divided, and oppose a new Cold War in any form.

There is no conflict of fundamental interests between China and the EU. Cooperation far outweighs competition, and consensus far outweighs disagreement. The two sides should maintain their mutual understanding, and adhere to mutual trust, dialogues and cooperation for win-win results, so as to make constant progress of China-EU relations, and make their contributions to world peace and development as two major forces, big markets and great civilizations.



Cooking utensils to be exported to the European and American markets are being assembled at a workshop of the Anhui Hualing Kitchen Equipment Co., Ltd. in Ma'anshan, east China's Anhui province, April 1, 2022. (Photo by Wang Wensheng/People's Daily Online)

News

Leadership failure, Nigeria's major challenge – Peter Obi

“One singular, biggest problem which we have seen to be affecting Nigeria essentially at present is leadership failure.”

A former governor of Anambra State, and presidential aspirant, Peter Obi, says Nigeria's biggest problem over the years is leadership failure.

Mr Obi stated this on Sunday when he appeared on a Channel's TV programme, “Sunday Politics.”

“One singular, biggest problem which we have seen to be affecting Nigeria essentially at present is leadership failure.”

“What we are experiencing now is the cumulative effect of the leadership failures over the years,” he said.

The vice presidential candidate of the PDP in the 2019 elections said, with the current situation in the country, Nigerians are yearning for “a leader who has the competence, and the capacity to genuinely start tackling the innermost problems affecting our country, starting from the issue of cohesion and unity.”

“We are so divided today as a nation. (We have) the issue of insecurity; the issue of the economy, especially tackling unemployment, which is currently at a level that is not acceptable.

“Dealing with the issue of education, power supply, corruption. The list is endless,” he added.

Mr Obi also expressed pain that universities are closed down in the country due to the industrial action embarked upon

by the Academic Staff Union Of Universities (ASUU).

He said it is unfortunate that politicians are discussing the 2023 elections even when Nigerian students are wasting away at homes due to the industrial action, adding that the situation was another evidence of leadership failure in the country.

“Our universities are closed for months and we (political leaders) are not even talking about it. Rather, we are talking about the next elections.

“It is painful. Our children are at home at this time when education is the most critical asset for tomorrow,” he added.

He contended that the Nigerian government would have fulfilled the agreements with ASUU if they placed enough value on education.

ASUU had embarked on a four-week warning strike on February 14th and later extended the action by another two months to press home its demands, with the prominent ones being the renegotiation of the ASUU/FG 2009 agreement and the sustainability of the university autonomy by deploying UTAS to replace the government's “imposed” IPPIS.

Other demands include the release of the reports of visitation panels to federal universities, distortions in salary payment challenges, funding for revitalisation of public universities, earned academic allowance, poor funding of state universities and promotion arrears.

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 Fazoranti, 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.

“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



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 Ohuabunwa; 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 Govs 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 Geogewill 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.



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

By Joyce Remi-Babayaju

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-Babayaju

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 heroes

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 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

Foreign

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 for the Games, as well as representatives of working staff for the Games, the media and volunteers.



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.



Lookman in awe of Leicester City's performance against Crystal Palace

The Super Eagle was on target as the Foxes silenced the visiting Eagles at the King Power Stadium

Ademola Lookman is gushing over Leicester City's 2-1 triumph over Crystal Palace in Sunday's Premier League fixture.

Unbeaten in their last three matches in all competitions, the Foxes welcomed the Selhurst Park outfit to the King Power Stadium - as they craved to extend their impressive form.

In the keenly contested affair, Brendan Rodgers' men took the lead in the 39th minute after Lookman converted Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall's assist.

The RB Leipzig loanee, in the process, equalled his best tally in a league campaign.

On the stroke of half time, Dewsbury-Hall extended the lead as the hosts went into the half-time break with a two-goal advantage.

Although Wilfried Zaha pulled a goal back for the visitors in the

66th minute, Leicester secured all three points to move up to ninth.

Reflecting on the result, the former England youth international player praised his side's showing, particularly in the first 45 minutes.

"It was a very strong performance against a strong opposition," Lookman told Leicester City TV.

"From us, the unit, togetherness, all the qualities were there today. I think we battled hard, especially in the first half, and I feel like we dominated a lot more.

"But in the second half, coming out, they put the pressure on us and obviously they got the penalty, but I think after that we showed resilience and we stayed together, and we won the game. That's the most important thing."

The 24-year-old also hailed academy graduate Dewsbury-Hall for his starring role against Patrick Vieira's side.

"I knew he was going to pass the ball inside," he continued.

Emery: Villarreal's respect for Bayern Munich must be enormous in second leg of Champions League quarter-final

The Spanish side have a 1-0 lead from the first leg of the tie but the coach has warned that they must be cautious.

Villarreal coach Unai Emery has warned his team to show "enormous" respect to Bayern Munich when they meet in their Champions League semi-final tie this week.

Villarreal beat the German giants 1-0 in the first-leg in Spain last week and travel to Munich to conclude the tie on Tuesday.

But Emery has warned that his team cannot underestimate Julian Nagelsmann's side and admits that the clash will be the most difficult of his coaching career.

"Respect for Bayern must be enormous in every way. It will be

very difficult and we must know how to respond," he told reporters.

"It will be complicated, we know that they are accustomed to scoring a lot of goals at home and that's normal.

"They have respect for us, but they know that if they play at a high level they're favourites and they score goals. They're optimistic and they feel strong at home.

"Naturally in the sense of difficulty [this is the biggest match of my career], but I'm convinced of competing against a team favoured to beat us.

"I'm trying to help the players to do their best, knowing that it is very complicated. Knowing the importance, and to show them the team is capable of facing teams of

this level.

"It will be a very different game from [the quarter-final against] Juventus and because it's away from home, it will be more complicated.

"We must hold them in defence and be dangerous in attack. But I expect a different game from the one at home."



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!