

Daybreak

News as it breaks



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COVER

Residents flee community as bandits kill vigilante leader, six others in Zamfara.

Residents of Mada community in Gusau Local Government Area of Zamfara State have deserted their homes for fear of more attacks from bandits after the killing of seven vigilante members on Sunday, in what some residents say was a reprisal attack.

Confirming the incident, the police authorities in the state told this newspaper on Monday that officers have been sent to ensure that residents of the community are safe.

Yusuf Anka, a resident with deep knowledge of the conflict in the area, said the vigilante commander, Danmudi Na Mada, led his colleagues to attack a hideout of the bandits and killed one notorious bandit known as Mala'ikan Hausawa (Angel of death in Hausa).

Mr Anka said the killing of the bandit angered other bandits which led to the reprisal.

"Last week Dan-Mudi's group recorded the killing of a notorious bandit nicknamed 'Mala'ikan Hausawa', he was also recently accused of setting ablaze homes of innocent Fulani in 'Isafe'," Mr Anka said.

The slain Vigilante leader was praised for securing Hausa communities, especially Mada and Wonaka but it was also alleged that he was involved in the killing of innocent Fulanis in the area.

A local source who asked not to be named over concern for his safety told this newspaper that they attacked the vigilante members around 10:47 pm.

"The bandits wanted to take over Mada town Wanakat stiff resistance from the vigilante members. The exchange of gunfire between them lasted for hours before they overpowered the vigilante and killed seven of them. They however couldn't get into the town after the arrival of soldiers and policemen," he said.

It was learnt that most of the residents of the community have fled.

"We don't know what will happen this night because they (bandits) may decide to return to take over the town. They are angry with the way some of our people are providing information to vigilante members which sometimes leads to the capture and Killing of the bandits. Even last week, some of them were captured and killed by the vigilante members. They (bandits) see us as their enemies," he said.

Zamfara, like in other areas in Nigeria's North-west region, is convulsing under the attacks by gunmen locally called bandits who attack mostly rural communities and travellers.

These bandits have been blamed for killing thousands of people. They have also abducted many more in what is shaping to become one of the worst kidnap-for-ransom syndicates in the history of the country.

In the face of the failure of the government to protect residents of the area, many communities have set up vigilante groups to protect residents from attacks by bandits but this has worsened the security challenges in the area as it has given rise to an explosion of tit-for-tat killings between the bandits (who are mostly of Fulani extraction) and the vigilante groups set up by the majority Hausa communities in the area.

Death toll in Imo explosion rises to 110

- * **NEMA intensifies search and recovery says victims to get mass burial*
- * *Buhari orders security agencies to clamp down on illegal refineries*
- * *Group slams Buhari, Uzodimma for not visiting explosion site 48hours after accident*



By our correspondent

The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) has disclosed that the death toll in the illegal refinery explosion in Abaeze community Ohaji/Egbema Local Government of Imo had risen to 110.

The Acting Head of Imo/Abia Operations Office of the agency, Ifeanyi Nnaji, disclosed this to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on Monday.

Mr Nnaji said they recovered more dead bodies in Orashi River, near the scene of the incident on Sunday, while some died at various hospitals to increase the total casualty figure so far.

An illegal refinery at the Abaeze forest in Ohaji/Egbema Local Government exploded on Friday night and killed over 100 people.

Emergency workers in Imo led by Mr Nnaji had been on the ground since the incident to carry out rescue operations and evacuate dead bodies.

The NEMA boss further disclosed to NAN that arrangements were on to carry out a mass burial of the corpses.

When asked about the cause of the disaster, Mr Nnaji said "we are yet to ascertain what led to the fire disaster.

"Those who should tell the story and give insight to the

incident are all dead, we are still on ground, we will soon come out with a report on the incident", he said.

Mr Nnaji further appealed to the government to create an enabling environment for genuine business to flourish within the oil-producing communities in Imo, to discourage youths from engaging in illegal activities.

He also appealed to oil companies in the area to assist the government in job creation for their host communities.

The Igbo National Council (INC) on Monday expressed shock that President Muhammadu Buhari and the Governor of Imo State, Hope Uzodimma have not physically visited the deadly site where over One Hundred (100) Igbo Youths were burnt and roasted like goats to condole with the Abaeze people, in Ohaji Egbema, 48-hours after the ugly incident.

The group also demanded the immediate arrest and prosecution of the owners of the site inclusive of all the security agents that were protecting and aiding the operation of the illegal refinery site.

INC stated this in a press release signed by its President, Chilos Godsent and made available to newsmen in Owerri, Imo State capital.

The group said, "The Igbo National Council condemn in

its totality the ugly incident that occurred at Abaezi in Ohaji Egbema Local Government Area on the night of Friday 22nd April 2022 where over One Hundred (100) Igbo Youths were burnt and roasted like goats in a forest at Abaezi, Ohaji Egbema Local Government Area Imo State at the site of illegal refinery activities.

"Consequent upon the above, the Igbo National Council INC, therefore, call on the Imo State Governor and President Muhammadu Buhari to immediately visit the site and also declare a State of Emergency on Youth Employment in South-East and South-South Geopolitical Regions in other to forestall the reoccurrence of this satanic incident.

The group requested the Governor of Imo State, Hope Uzodimma to immediately visit the site within forty-eight (48) hours of the press release to have first-hand information about the sufferings of the unemployed Igbo Youths.

Finally, we call on the Youths of Ohaji Egbema Local Government Area to immediately disengage from illegal mining of petroleum Resources in the oil-rich communities as INC cannot afford to see a repeat of this ugly incident in Igbo land, the statement said.

Buhari congratulates Macron on re-election victory

President Muhammadu Buhari has rejoiced with French President, Emmanuel Macron, 44, for winning his second term in office.

The President, in a statement issued Monday by his spokesman, Garba Shehu, also felicitated with him for making history as the only sitting leader of the country to return in two decades.

President Buhari said the iconic leadership style of the French President, who spent six months in Nigeria working as an intern at the French Embassy in 2002, had continued to inspire a new generation of leaders and interest in politics and governance, starting from his country and beyond.

The President also noted the warmth and friendliness that had redefined Nigeria/France relations since President Macron assumed office in 2017, as he paid an official visit to Nigeria in 2018.

He said the re-elected French President had "consistently" created lines for improved ties in economy, culture and security, which had culminated in France-Nigeria Business Council, African Cultures Season in 2020, and the France-Africa Summit.

President Buhari congratulates the French President, his wife, Brigitte Macron, friends and political associates on the historic feat.

He assured President Macron of Nigeria's support as he continued with his advocacy of humanizing policies, promoting peace and stability, and encouraging development through innovation.

The President wished the President Macron God's guidance and wisdom for a second term in office.



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.

News

NDLEA arrests suspect behind N3 billion tramadol linked to Abba Kyari

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has arrested a suspected billionaire drug baron allegedly behind the N3 billion Tramadol deal involving the suspended Deputy Commissioner of Police, Abba Kyari-led Intelligence Response Team, IRT.

The NDLEA named the alleged drug baron as Afam Mallinson Emmanuel Ukatu, who is the Chairman of Mallinson Group of Companies.

A statement by the Director Media and Advocacy, NDLEA, Femi Babafemi, on Monday in Abuja, said they arrested Mr Ukatu on April 13 after months of surveillance and evading arrest.

The agency said they eventually nabbed the suspect aboard a flight to Abuja at the MM2 terminal of the Lagos airport.

Mr Babafemi said that investigations revealed that he had been a major importer of large consignments of different brands and high dosages of Tramadol Hydrochloride, ranging from 120mg, 200mg, 225mg and 250mg, all of which are illicit.

According to him, Mr



Ukatu owns pharmaceutical and plastic manufacturing companies, which he used as a cover to import illicit drugs into Nigeria.

"This is in addition to operating 103 bank accounts, most of which are used to launder money.

"Ukatu came under watch last year after five cartons of Tramadol 225mg were seized from his staff on May 4, 2021 when he sent them to sell to undercover police officers (unknown to Ukatu) from the then Kyari-led IRT of the Nigeria Police, Ikeja Lagos.

"The price of a carton of Tramadol was negotiated at

N17 million each as against the then black market value that ranged between N18 million and N20 million a carton in Lagos.

"After the arrest of Ukatu's staff: Pius Enidom and Sunday Ibekwete, Kyari's men were then led by the suspects to Mallinson's warehouse at Ojota in Lagos where 197 additional Cartons of Tramadol 225mg were seized by the IRT Team.

"The monetary value of the 202 cartons of Tramadol seized from Mallinson in one day was over N3billion," he said.

According to the spokesperson, three weeks after the seizure, the Kyari's IRT team transferred only 12 Cartons of the Tramadol with one truck and a suspect to the Lagos Command of the NDLEA, leaving 190 cartons unaccounted for.

"After over eight months of following the lead, anti-narcotic officers of the agency eventually arrested Ukatu at the Lagos airport on April 13, 2022.

"Kyari and four top members of his team are already facing trial for a different but similar offence at a Federal High Court in Abuja," he said.

Explosion rocks Yobe one killed, seven injured

Barely five days after Boko Haram killed ten persons in a beer parlour in Geidam, an explosive improvised device explosion has killed one person and injured seven others in another drinking joint in Gashua, the headquarters of Bade Local Government Area of Yobe State.

The seven injured persons are receiving treatment at the Specialist Hospital, Gashua. The explosion occurred on Sunday night around 7:20pm at Abasha Gidan Amarya drinking joint when a heavy

sound was heard which threw the entire residents of the town into pandemonium.

The Police Public Relations Officer, Yobe State Command, ASP

"It looks like a coordinated attack targeted at drinking joint. Our EOD detectives are at the scene to find out what type of explosion and the cause of the explosion.

"There is one person that is confirmed dead with seven others as casualties. More details will come up after the investigation. Dungus noted," Abdulkareem said.

2023: Consensus candidacy not solution to Nigeria's problem — Peter Obi

Presidential aspirant of the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, and former governor of Anambra State, Dr Peter Obi, has declared that a consensus candidate is not the solution to the country's myriad of problems.

Obi also asked Nigerians not to allow the All Progressives Congress, APC, to continue in office after 2023, noting that they have drawn the country backward.

He spoke at a meeting with chieftains of the PDP in Akure, Ondo State, ahead of the forthcoming primaries of the party. The Presidential aspirant said the consensus arrangement clamoured for by some aspirants was not what Nigeria needs at the present time.

"What the country needs at this particular period is somebody who can turn around the economy of the country and not a consensus candidate.

"The country needs someone that would work to rescue the country to get out of its challenges as the next president.

"We are not talking of who will be the next President of the country but who will start working for this country called Nigeria. Nigerians did not need a consensus candidate but a problem solver that can fix Nigeria.

"Nigerians are looking forward to having somebody capable of making the nation productive and pulling the country out of poverty.

"The children can no longer eat. We are at high level of misery. We cannot allow them to continue.

"If nothing is done on Nigeria's problem, it would consume all of us. It will consume our children too. We must not talk about consensus now, we must talk about who will work. Nigerians want consensus that will solve Nigeria's problem. We want someone that will take Nigeria from consumption to production level."

We must salvage Nigeria or perish. During his visit to Ekiti State, Obi also observed that unless critical decisions and actions are taken by Nigerians, the country is headed for deep crisis.

Obi, made the observation during a meeting with Ekiti State PDP stakeholders and delegates yesterday in the course of his consultation processes on the

need to choose the right candidate for the party. He noted that the economic crisis besetting Nigeria is humongous, warning that the country may go under if not properly managed.

He decried the high level of insecurity in the country, attributing it to the poor state of economy.

He lamented the high rate of unemployment, unstable education sector and deplorable infrastructure in the country.

Obi remarked that the challenge is how to pull the country out of its current crisis. He bemoaned the high incidence of borrowing by the country, without much to show for it.

He vowed that his commitment is to move Nigeria from a consumer society to a productive nation. The first step in this regard, he said, is to cut the cost of governance.

He asked Ekiti delegates not to be swayed by material or primordial considerations at the national convention but do due diligence on those seeking their votes to know if they have the capacity and vision for the job.

Obi warned that Nigeria will continue to lose with the present sharing culture, adding that his mission is to halt the trend.

In his address, the state chairman of the party, Lanre Omolase, lauded Obi for the good record he set while as governor of Anambra state. He described Obi as one of the best the party can offer for the presidency.

Earlier, the former Ekiti state governor, Ayo Fayose, had met with Obi where they discussed on many challenges facing the nation.



NCPC BOSS condoles Emir of Kanam, calls for FG intervention

Executive Secretary, Nigerian Christian Pilgrim Commission, Rev Dr Yakubu Pam has condemned the recent killings some communities in Kanam Local Government Area as he condoled the Emir of Kanam in Plateau state, Alhaji Muazu Muhammadu over the mishap.

This was contained in a press release signed by Celestine Toruka Head Media and Public Relations of the Commission, made available to Daybreak. Rev. Pam who paid a condolence visit to the Emir with his delegation in his palace at Dengi, headquarters of Kanam Local Government Council on 23rd April, 2022 said he was pained by the unprovoked killings of the good people of Kanam by those he called the "evil men". He described Kanam as a very peaceful place blessed with hardworking and peace loving people, adding that the recent attack and killings in Kanam is a trying time for the Emir and his subjects.

He urged him and his subjects to be strong and undaunted because trials are meant to strengthen us as a people and move us to the next level.

He said, "I am here to commiserate with the people of Kanam and

the entire people of the state." He called on the Federal Government and the Plateau state Government to come to the aid of the Kanam people, stating that the need help at this trying time.

According to him, the insecurity problem in the area cannot be handled by the Emir alone.

You alone cannot do it, you need the intervention of both the Federal and Plateau state government", he said.

Emir of Kanam, His Royal Highness, Alhaji Muazu Muhammadu said the visit of the Executive Secretary had given them so much hope and encouragement noted that as a spiritual father he was confident that his visit and his prayers would bring comfort to his people. He further disclosed that the communities where the killings took place have a large concentration of abundant natural resources with high mining activities which attracted the unknown assailants.

Aside this, he disclosed that the communities are border towns and share boundaries with Bauchi. The Emir also called on the Plateau state government to harness the mineral potentials in the area which would help in empowering the youth

and engage them meaningfully. Furthermore the NCPC boss paid a condolence visit to the Executive Chairman of Kanam Local Government Council, Hon Dayyabu Garga at the Local Government Secretariat.

Speaking on behalf of the Executive Chairman, the Secretary of the Local Government, Hon. Hashimu Umar thanked the NCPC boss for his humanitarian gestures across the country. He further thanked the him for his good heart and his love for the people of Kanam and Plateau state in general. The Executive Secretary was accompanied on the visit by the Chairman of Riyom Local Government Council, Hon Mafeng Gwallson, the deputy chairman of Barki-Ladi Local Government Council, Hon Dung Iliya, officials of Jos South Local Government Council, the Clergy and officials of NCPC. It would be recalled that few weeks back some communities in Kanam and Wase were attacked by some unknown gun men and over 80 people were killed and houses burnt down.

How NASS illegally divert funds meant for constituency projects — ICPC reports

THE Independent Corrupt Practices Commission, ICPC, has raised the alarm about how senators diverted money meant for their senatorial districts to non-existing projects, thereby denying their constituents from reaping dividends of democracy.

It consequently uncovered how the National Assembly illegally added N20 billion to N100 billion annual constituency projects.

The ICPC, in its interim constituency and executive projects tracking report obtained in Abuja, exposed how the National Assembly embedded additional projects into the 2021 mandate budget of MDAs, which is a long way affected budget performance, as well as distorted developmental planning and implementation of the 2021 fiscal year.

In the report, the ICPC cited other areas of infractions where lawmakers allegedly awarded contracts to themselves or to proxy companies.

The report read: “Budget insertion remains one of the egregious, yet illegally acceptable phenomenon that has distorted the nation’s developmental planning and implementation of developmental programmes.

“In addition to the N100 billion appropriated annually for constituency projects, the National Assembly embedded additional projects into mandate budgets of MDAs. This is done to increase the project portfolios of concerned legislators and their influence on MDAs. The value of the insertion was in billions.

“Analysing the 2021 National Budget alone across key sectors of education, water resources, health, power, science and technology, environment, works and agriculture, we found duplication to the tune of over N20 billion.”

The report also pointed out that the “contract for the construction and renovation of blocks of the classroom at the Federal University Staff School, Wukari, Taraba South

Senatorial District, executed by a company owned and operated directly by Senator Emmanuel Bwacha”, a project ICPC alleged was “haphazardly nominated, appropriated and executed in locations that have no need for such projects.”

In another development, ICPC alleged another contract infraction in the supplies of water rigs by a particular company to be executed in Taraba South.

The commission had alleged that “just two days after the award of the contract, ‘the said company’, wrote to the executing agency, Lower Benue River Basin Development Authority, informing it that it was involved in some sort of arrangements with its sister company in respect of the execution and requested that the contract sum should be into the bank account of the company owned by the sponsoring legislator.

“Funding was, therefore, made to the said company owned by the sponsoring legislator.”

In the report, the ICPC revealed that it was able to track a contract for the supplies of 686 water pumping machines to Kebbi Central Senatorial District awarded to a particular company owned by the children of the lawmaker representing the district.

The report read: “Various other projects were awarded and executed in Kebbi Central by three other companies owned and operated by the biological children of the sponsor.”

Similarly, the ICPC said in the report that it was able to track the project for the supplies of 19 units of 500KVA transformer to Delta North senatorial district, two of which “were stolen and sold by an aide of the sponsoring lawmaker, while one was found kept in a private house since 2018.

ICPC stated: “While the culprit is on the run, the lawmaker has agreed to an undertaking to purchase and deliver to the commission the two transformers”.

Similarly, the commission cited the project valued at N149m for the training and empowerment of women and youths in Abaji, Kwali Federal Constituency awarded to a relative of the sponsoring legislator.

It was also replicated in Kastina Central Federal Constituency, where the sponsor single-handedly executed the contract after which the project said to have been valued at N49m was changed from its form and devalued by the lawmaker.

In another case, the supply of tricycles to Rivers West Senatorial District was an empowerment project, where the sponsor allegedly used one of her cronies as the contractor.

The commission alleged that “while the contract was never performed, the sum (N30m) was fully paid and shared.

The ICPC also revealed that some sponsoring legislators sometimes site projects on personal properties, which technically vests legal possession and ownership to them.

An example was cited of the diversion of funds for an agricultural empowerment project in Osun West Senatorial District to a training programme on cattle rearing and the actual supply of cattle.

The Bill of Quantities, BOQ, according to the ICPC report, indicated procurement and distribution of 250 cattle to beneficiaries.

The report said: “While the intended beneficiaries were trained, no cattle were given to them, instead the lawmaker established a private ranch using the cattle procured with government’s fund.”

In Bayelsa Central Senatorial District, the commission alleged that the investigation led it to another youth empowerment scam carried out by the sponsoring lawmaker.

The commission alleged that some of the beneficiaries found in the list were randomly contacted, even as none of them acknowledged ever receiving any grant.

2023: North divided over power shift to South

AHEAD of the 2023 presidential election, northern leaders are divided over the clamour for a power shift to the South.

While some northern leaders want the power to return to the South after President Muhammadu Buhari’s second term and are spearheading the quest of some southern presidential aspirants, some northerners, especially the Core North, still want the region to retain power, a top politician from the North told Vanguard, weekend.

As it is, the North may produce the presidential candidates of the All Progressives Congress, APC; Peoples Democratic Party, PDP; and some of the top parties, a development that may hurt the chance of the South producing Buhari’s successor.

Currently, most of the presidential aspirants in both the APC and PDP are from the South. While some northern aspirants are working on a consensus, the southern aspirants are not seriously looking in that direction. With fewer northern aspirants, a division of southern votes at the presidential primaries could throw up northern candidates in both the APC and PDP.

Of the 7,747 delegates expected at the APC presidential primaries, 4,414 are from the North, while 3,333 are from the South. The zonal breakdown is as follows: North West-1, 924 delegates; South West-1,568; North Central - 1,278; North-East - 1, 212; South-East-838; and South-South 927 delegates.

Speaking on power shift, a top northern politician told Vanguard that the North has 70 per cent of the votes and would not give it to

candidates who don’t understand the problem of the North and regard northerners as idiots.

His words: “Many southerners don’t understand the problems of the North. They are reading the political template and barometer wrongly and believe that power is heading South in 2023 and when it does not they will be crying blue murder.

“For us in the North, the issue is security, security and security. We can’t go to the farm. Villages are attacked by bandits and many people are killed on a daily basis. We want that to be tackled.

“If the atmosphere is not secure, you can’t do anything. For the South, the issue is restructuring, devolution of power and stopping open grazing. They don’t feel the pain of the North.

“Next election can’t be approached the way 2015 and 2019 polls were approached. It is not about the ambition of anybody now, it is about the survival of the country. The army we have now is not the army that went to Sierra Leone and Liberia.

“Most of the soldiers have not fought any war all their lives. The bandits carry AK-47s and go to the barracks bare-footed and sack soldiers. It is about the survival of the country now.

“War-chest and deep pocket will not determine 2023. The Alhaji Shehu Shagari 1979 example will be replayed and the 2023 presidency will not be for sale.

“70 per cent of the votes will come from the North. Northerners will not give the votes to somebody that considers them idiots.

FG recorded N2.23trn fiscal deficit in Q4 2021 says CBN

THE Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) says the federal government recorded N2.23 trillion fiscal deficit in the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2021.

The apex bank said this in its economic report for the fourth quarter of 2021.

A fiscal deficit is a shortfall in a government’s income compared with its spending. By implication, a high fiscal deficit means that the government is spending beyond its means.

The report said the 12 per cent contraction in fiscal deficit followed a decline in aggregate expenditure in the fourth quarter of 2021.

“Following a decline in aggregate expenditure in the fourth quarter of 2021, the fiscal deficit of the FGN contracted by 12.0 per cent to N2,232.33 trillion, relative to the preceding quarter,” the report states.

“Non-oil revenue maintained its dominance, accounting for 60.8 per cent of the total collections, while oil revenue constituted the balance of 39.2 per cent.

“Provisional federal government of Nigeria (FGN) retained revenue, at N1,265.34 trillion, declined by 36.6 per cent and 3.2 per cent, relative to the budget benchmark and the preceding quarter, respectively, reflecting the persistent revenue challenge over the past two years.”

The report added that the federation receipts in the fourth quarter fell below benchmark due to the shortfalls in oil revenue.

“The shortfalls were largely the result of poor performances in some oil revenue components. Non-oil maintained its dominance of gross federation receipts in the period, accounting for 60.8 per cent of the total collections, while oil revenue constituted the balance of 39.2 per cent,” the report added.

“This is a deviation from the 51:49 non-oil versus oil revenue mix, projected in the 2021 budget.

“Federation receipts in the fourth quarter of 2021 declined, following shortfalls in oil revenue. At N2,844.73 trillion, provisional federation receipts fell below the quarterly benchmark and the level in the preceding quarter by 7.5 per cent and 0.7 per cent, respectively,” the report added.

According to the report, growth prospects for the Nigerian economy remain positive but fragile in the near term, on the back of a rebound in manufacturing activities, improvements in vaccination rates, and the supportive impact of CBN interventions on growth-enhancing sectors.

CBN, however, said the lingering security challenges and the delayed implementation of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) are the major downside risks to the outlook.

Aviation sells above N500 despite intervention by government

DESPITE interventions by the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL) and the House of Representatives, aviation fuel or Jet A1 has continued to sell above N585 per litre.

The fuel is said to take about 40 per cent of an airline’s operating cost. The lawmakers last month met with stakeholders urging that the product sells for N500 as against N600 in some places while airline operators would be licensed to import Aviation Turbine Kerosene (ATK).

After that, a meeting between the Executive Director, Distribution Systems, Storage & Retailing Infrastructure of the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA), Mr Ogbuoko Ukoha

and the Group Executive Director, Downstream of NNPC, Mr Adeyemi Adetunji had worked out pricing template in a series of meeting with airline operators, fuel marketers, among others.

But it was learnt yesterday, from operators that nothing has changed as the jet fuel sells for over N500 per litre.

In a statement last week, the Airline Operators of Nigeria (AON) while listing causes of flight delays said, “Some of the more prevalent causes of delays and cancellations include: unavailability and the rising cost of Jet A1 (which today costs above N585 per litre in Lagos, N607 in Abuja and Port Harcourt, and N685 in Kano).”

A member of the AON, Barr. Shehu Wada said there was no drop in

the price of the fuel. A fuel marketer also confirmed this yesterday as he said the current prices remain due to the rising global price of crude oil.

“If that has not reduced, if forex has not reduced, then the price of aviation fuel cannot come down. What we did in the meeting we had with the airline operators in Abuja was to show them how we arrived at our price and they agreed that we are going to be using an average of platts for one month to calculate the price.

“When we use that to calculate the platts-based price, we now add our own margin. So, if marketer A’s margin is N40 plus platts and marketer B says he can still sell it and make profit at N30, any airline can go and meet market B,” the marketer said.

News

Taraba Commissioner Condemns bomb attack in Jalingo

By Danzumi Ishaku, Jalingo

The Taraba state commissioner Ministry of Budget and Planning, Mr. Solomon Elisha has condemned in strong terms the bomb attack in Nukkai Jalingo local government area of Taraba state that occurred at the let hours of Friday.

The commissioner who was

speaking with Daybreak news at the scene of the incident in Nukkai, described the attack as an act of wickedness and unprovoked aggression against innocent citizens.

Mr. Solomon Elisha appealed to Taraban to cultivate the habit of living in peace with one another to complement the peace matra of Governor Darius Ishaku of

“give me peace and I will give you development” in the interest of development.

The commissioner expressed sympathy with the families of those that sustain injuries and are receiving treatment in hospitals.

He charge youths to be vigilant and promptly report strange visitors to security agencies and traditional authorities in their communities.

Northern Taraba attack ‘callous’ matter of grave concern - Ali Sani Kona

By Danzumi Ishaku, Jalingo

The senatorial aspirant under the All Progressives Congress for Taraba North, Hon. Ali Sani Kona has described the recent attack in Iware Ardo-kola and Nukkai in Jalingo local government Area of Taraba state as ‘callous’ and a matter of grave concern.

Ali Sani who was Speaking with Daybreak News via telephone describe the incident as ungodly, inhuman, barbaric and a deliberate attempt by evil people to distabilize the state.

The APC, chaitain

condemned the attacks expressing his condolences to the people affected in the recent attacks.

The suicide bomb attack took place in a market place leaving at least 16 dead and 11 people injured.

“I commiserate with the families of the victims of Ardo-kola and Jalingo bomb blasts in Taraba State. My deepest condolences to all those affected”.

Ali Sani Kona appealed to Government of the day to ensure that the perpetrators of the evils act are found and

brought to justice.

The senatorial aspirant called on the people of Northern Taraba to continue to give law enforcement agencies all the needed support and resources they require to prevent these attacks and keep our communities safe.

“I repeat no one should be allowed to hold the state to ransom,” Ali Sani Said.

According to Ali Sani Kona, “like most Tarabans, I am deeply pained by its occurrence, the second of its type, which has resulted in the death and injuries of innocent souls.

Terrorists in Military uniform invade Gabari community in Zaria, Kaduna

By Achadu Gabriel, Kaduna

Suspected terrorists dressed in Military uniform have reportedly invaded Gabari Community in Samaru, Sabon Gari LGA in Zaria in Kaduna state, police has said.

The terrorists reportedly shot sporadically, and in the process abducted four person away into the forest who were later allegedly rescued by the security operatives.

This was contained in statement Issued and signed by Kaduna state police command’s spokesman Mohammed Jalige and made available to journalists on Sunday in Kaduna.

According to the release, “On the 15th April, 2022 at about 2340hrs the Kaduna Police Command received a distress call from an anonymous caller through DPO Daanmagaji Zaria.

The police release added “That unspecified number of suspected terrorists dressed in military gear have invaded Gabari Community Samaru of

Sabon Gari LGA Kaduna, shot berserkly and in the process whisked away four (4) victims into the forest

“On getting the information, the command immediately mobilised operational assets alongside men of Operation Puff Adder II and local vigilantes; the team courageously laid ambush on the bandits’ expected route

Fortunately, the strategy paid off as fierce encounter with the bandits ensued, which led to the rescue of two of the kidnapped victims at that very moment.

“Upon preliminary investigation, the rescued victims were identified as; Zaituna Muna ‘F’ and Grace Muna ‘F’ both of Gabari village Samaru. Similar strategy was adopted at Gwada village where the bandits were still expected to traverse with the assistance of vigilantes of the said village, the bandits who escaped the first onslaught were again intercepted and the remaining two kidnapped victims were also rescued unhurt namely Fatima

Ibrahim f and Amina Adamu f “Unfortunately, it was discovered that the bandits in the process of abducting the victims, shot and killed one Yarima Mohammed of Kufena village Wusasa who resisted been kidnapped .

“The Commissioner of Police CP Yekini A Ayoku psc(+), mni commended the gallantry and professionalism exhibited by the Officers during the operation which is in tune with his policing philosophy of ‘robust response to distress situation’ and tasked them not to relent in the fight against violent crimes.

“He also urged members of the Public to always avail the Police with prompt information at any time of the day as the Police under his watch must treat every information provided with absolute confidentiality.

The CP also uses the opportunity to condole with the family of the deceased and pray that he finds eternal rest”, it stated.

2023: Northern group endorses presidential aspirants from southeast

By Achadu Gabriel, Kaduna

Coalition of Northern Youth Support Group, under the leadership of Arewa Youth Assembly has described Prof. Kingsley Moghalu as the answer to Nigeria. The National Coordinator of group revealed this at the invitation and endorsement of Prof. Kingsley Moghalu, a presidential aspirant from the South East, whom the group is invited to come under the platform of APC. The event was held at the Arewa House Kaduna.

The Coalition of over 57 non governmental organisations made it clear that Kingsley Moghalu is a good material and capable to be Nigerian President come 2023 because of his quality credentials that are every where which so many are benefiting day and night

The coalition of over 57 NGO’s said that “ we are not forget that during the first four years of his leadership he was able to improve the life of Nigerian citizens by mapping out an economy and growth plan which focused on restoring economy by stabilizing the macro- economic environment, achieving agriculture and food security, ensuring energy sufficiency, improving transportation infrastructure (Road Network and railways), Industrialization by focusing small and medium enterprises, power, Job creation, Agriculture, security and social investment, all as an appreciation to the present administration under president Buhari.

The group identify Kingsley Moghalu as a transformational leader

with consistent track record of high impact success in domains including central banking, economic policy, development policy and finance, governance, transparency and accountability, international affairs and law, among others.

The croup also identified four other key achievements in some areas that includes National Security in which Prof. Kingsley Moghalu handled in united nations security operations in several countries, and addressed terrorism, armed conflict and counter insurgency.

In national building, Prof. Moghalu has extensive experienced in managing diversity, and helped rebuild several broken nations; for example Cambodia, Rwanda (after the genocide) and Croatia experienced.

Also in the economy, he supervised and stabilized a \$ 200BN banking sector after the 2008 committee global financial crises, developed BVN, and managed Nigeria’s \$37 BN external reserved, Member monetary policy committe that brought inflation down to single digit (8%).

“Foreign affairs, united nations diplomat for 17 years, rising to the highest career rank of Director”, they stated.

“With this, we the coalition of over 57 youth supports groups drawn from the North west, North East, North central, under the leadership of Arewa Youth Assembly and are here today to tell the world that we have endorsed and adopted Professor Kingsley Moghalu to be our Presidential flag bearer in the 2023 general election”, they added.

Umar Farouq Sympathizes With victims of Lagos, Imo, Ogun explosions

By Achadu Gabriel, Kaduna

The Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development Sadiya Umar Farouq has sympathized with victims of explosions which occured in Lagos and Imo states in less than one week as she described the incidences as incessant, disastrous but avoidable. Farouq sympathized with the government and people of Imo, Lagos and Ogun states following a deadly explosion which occurred at an illegal oil refining site on Friday night which killed scores of people at Abaezi forest in the Ohaji-Egbema Local Government Area of Imo State.

Earlier on Thursday, a tanker ladden with 45,000 litres of PMS crashed and spilled its content across Lagos and Ogun State along Lagos - Ibadan Expressway killing a male adult. She advised that caution should

be applied while plying the roads with inflammable substances while declaring the illegal bunkering of petrol in certain areas as a suicidal.

The incessant occurrence of explosions in Lagos and Imo states are unfortunate but avoidable. The consequences of such dastard acts that led to the death of many people cannot not be over-emphasized.

“Illegal bunkering of petroleum products is a punishable offense under the law, therefore, the culprits should be brought to book to face the full wrath of the law.

“I sincerely sympathize with the families of the victims and pray for the repose of the souls of the dead.”

“I also appeal to the people especially the youths to desist from illegal bunkering of petroleum products in the area.”

Meanwhile, rescue operations have commenced removal of several bodies burnt beyond recognition at the scene of the explosion in Imo state. Six vehicles were also razed during the incident.

By BALA IBRAHIM.

Daybreak
Issues

President Muhammadu Buhari said his ambition is to bequeath a better Nigeria for the present and future generations in the country. But I doubt if posterity would permit the realization of that ambition, at least with regards national security, as long as he is relying on the advise of Gen. Monguno rtd, the National Security Adviser.

Every time Gen. Monguno speaks on security matters, his remarks tend to ignite controversies, condemnations or a prolonged public disagreements, with the latest being his comment that, the failure to combat the growing insecurity in the country is due to the high cost of equipment and the inability to get hold of adequate technology.

NSA Monguno said that the various security agencies in the country were not deploying adequate technology to combat insecurity, because of its difficult procurement process, citing cost as a particular inhibitor.

Cost? I don't understand. Certainly Monguno's statement seems in conflict with the picture painted by the President, at least with regards the issue of meeting the financial requests of the security chiefs.

Only yesterday, I saw on the television, after an emergency meeting with the service chiefs, and in what looks like an indictment on the office of the National Security Adviser, a visibly disappointed PMB, saying the security agencies were not doing enough to end the security challenges in the country, despite the enormous logistics provided by him. "I approve every security request brought before me"-PMB

The President registered his displeasure at the fact that his previous directives to the military to end insecurity in the country had not yielded the desired results, hence, directing again, that all the operational and intelligence agencies should rescue unhurt, all persons kidnapped by terrorists, including those in the recent Abuja to Kaduna train attack.

If every request on security is approved and funds made available, why should Monguno be complaining about the cost of equipment? Who is responsible for making the request, and are

Munguno and the analogy of an antagonistic adviser

the requests made without getting the actual cost of the equipment?

Sometimes last year, shortly after PMB had relieved the former service chiefs of their positions, NSA Monguno told the BBC that the new service chiefs did not meet the money approved for arms purchase when they assumed office. The amount in question runs into billions of naira.

That statement from Monguno attracted an instant denial by the immediate past Chief of Army Staff, Gen. Tukur Buratai, saying no such funds, meant to procure arms and ammunition were missing while he was in office. NSA Monguno issued

a statement later, saying he was quoted out of context.

Last week, Monguno was quoted by the media, accusing the governor of Kaduna state, Mallam Nasir El-Rufai, of divulging sensitive security information. Monguno's remarks followed the pronouncement of El-Rufai, after some terrorists ambushed and attacked a Kaduna bound train coming from Abuja, where in he said, the Nigerian authorities know the camps, the identities and listen to the conversations of the armed groups terrorising large part of the North-west region, but the security agencies are reluctant on striking.

In anger, governor El-Rugai

said if need be, the governors of the affected region may opt for engaging mercenaries from outside.

NSA Monguno issued a statement later, saying he was quoted out of context. He said he was not referring to the Kaduna state governor in his comment on the protection of sensitive operational information.

When the comments of a National Security adviser are always allegedly quoted out of context, and he is responsible for advising the President on foreign policies and national security, as well as coordinating some security policies from various agencies, the President, and indeed the country, are at risk

of being given antagonistic advises, that could lead to attacks, or expose them to the possibility of being harmed by the enemy.

Monguno's attitude to work makes him look unsympathetic to the plight of Nigerians, or even antagonistic to the mission of Mr. President. He has not demonstrated anything in the discharge of his duties, to escape the accusation of belonging to the above classification.

Last week, members of the House of Representatives, while proposing that the National Assembly be shut down in order to compel PMB to rise to the occasion of ensuring the protection of life and property of Nigerians, asked, for God's sake, where is the National Security Adviser, Gen. Monguno? Some even rhetorically wondered whether he had resigned his position.

Eventually, in utter disappointment with his performance, the lawmakers called for his resignation or outright sacking by the President.

Monguno may be doing well in smart or fashionable dressing, and eloquent or persuasive in speaking the English language, but as a national security adviser, his performance is far below expectation.

And the President needs to factor the analogy, or comparison, between competence and cosmetics, especially as it affects the expected service of a national security adviser and see how it would help his mission to leave behind the legacy of a better Nigeria.



News



Chibok Girls: UNICEF urges FG to make learning environment safe for children

By Joyce Remi-Babayeju

Amid the unsafe learning space in Nigeria, the United Nations Children Fund, UNICEF, have called on the Nigerian Government to provide a safe and secured learning environment for children.

UNICEF made this call today in a statement to mark the eight year anniversary of the kidnap of some 276 School girls from Government Girls Secondary School in Chibok, Borno State.

The global agency frowned at the high rate of out of school children especially the girl child and called for an increased enrolment of girls in schools, their retention and completion of their education, noting that the spate of attacks on schools occasionally results into deaths.

UNICEF Representative in Nigeria, Peter Hawkins said, "Today marks eight years since the first known attack on a learning institution in Nigeria on April 14, 2014 in which 276 students of Government Girls Secondary School, Chibok, in North-East Nigeria, were abducted by a non-

state armed group."

"Since then, a spate of attacks on schools and abduction of students – sometimes resulting in their deaths – has become recurrent in the last two years, especially in the North-West and North-Central regions. Since December 2020, 1,436 school children and 17 teachers have been abducted from schools while 16 school children lost their lives."

"Unsafe schools, occasioned by attacks on schools and abduction of students, are reprehensible, a brutal violation of the rights of the victims to education, and totally unacceptable. Their occurrences cut short the futures and dreams of the affected students", Hawkins noted.

According to him, the attacks on learning institutions render the learning environment insecure and discourage parents and caregivers from sending their wards to schools, and the learners become frightened to the pursuit of learning.

"The invisible harm school attacks inflict on the victims' mental health is incalculable and irredeemable," as girls had particularly been

targeted, exacerbating the figures of out-of-school children in Nigeria, 60 percent of whom are girls, he stressed.

The global agency recalled that in Nigeria, 11,536 schools were closed since December 2020 due to abduction and security issues, adding that such school closures have impacted the education of approximately 1.3 million children in the 2020/21 academic year.

"This interruption of their learning contributes to gaps in children's knowledge and skills and may lead to the loss of approximately \$3.4 billion in these children's lifetime earnings. This perpetuate cycles of poverty and inequality."

UNICEF said that with funding from donors, it is collaborating with the Nigerian government to protect children's right to education in a safe and inclusive learning environment.

This involves building the capacity of school-based management committees on school safety and security and strengthening community resilience", the statement added.

Tourism Summit to market Nigeria's tourism potentials- Odusanwo

The National President of the Institute for Tourism Professionals of Nigeria (ITPN), Chief Abiodun Odusanwo had said that the 5th Edition of the 2022 International Tourism Transport Summit coming up in Abuja on Monday 25th and 26th, April will showcase and market Nigeria's tourism potentials to the African region and the world.

In a press release signed by Chief Odusanwo, made available to Daybreak in Abuja, the National President stated that the Transport Tourism Summit "seeks to explore such areas as human capacity training for quality labour mobility, developing and marketing of the Nigerian tourism potentials, infrastructural development in intra-modal transportation sector among others." The Expo comes up on Monday 25th and Tuesday 26th of April, 2022 at the International Conference Centre, Abuja with the theme: 'African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA): Strengthening Connectivity, Effect and Partnership'.

Odusanwo noted that the The National Tourism Summit and Expo since inception in 2018, offered the platform for public and private sector stakeholders, producers and consumers in Nigeria and the African Continent to come together, share ideas, experiences, exchange knowledge and showcase their skills in the growth, development and promotion of the nation's economic endowments.

Vice President, Professor Yemi Osinbajo, who is the Special Guest of Honour at the Opening Ceremony of the Summit will deliver

the Keynote Address on the Theme: 'Empower Youths, Empower Africa: Employment Opportunities for Africans in Tourism, Hospitality and Transportation'.

Participants at the two-day event are drawn from stakeholders in the transportation and tourism sectors such as the air transportation sector, such as airlines, tour and travel operators, the aviation industry; the maritime industry which includes sea transport, boats and sea cruising operators; Road Transportation including major transport owners among others.

Other participants are operators of the Tourism and Hospitality industry including tourism resort operators, National Parks .

The Tourism Transportation Summit and Expo programme will feature activities like Host City Walk, Tourism Transport Summit, Exhibition-B2B and G2B sessions, Tourism Transport Membership and Fellowship inductions and Awards to outstanding stakeholders in the industry.



2021 Pilgrimage: NCPCC soon to commence exercise to Israel, Jordan and Rome by end of May- Rev. Pam

By Joyce Remi-Babayeju

The Executive Secretary of Nigerian Christian Pilgrim Commission, NCPCC, Rev. Yakubu Pam has disclosed that the 2021 main Pilgrimage exercise to Israel, Jordan and Rome will commence by the end of May, 2022.

Rev. Pam disclosed this on 21st April, 2022 in Abuja, during a meeting of Conference of States, comprising States Chairmen and Executive Secretaries of states Christian Pilgrims Welfare Boards, including FCT. This was contained in a press

release signed by Celestine Toruka

Head Media & Public Relations, of the Commission made available to Daybreak today. According to the release, Rev. Pam urged the state Pilgrimage Leaders to work with the new date for the commencement of the 2021 main Pilgrimage Exercise by ensuring that they step up their mobilization drive for intending pilgrims in their various states.

Pam also enjoined the stakeholders to apply wisdom of God while carrying out their Pilgrimage assignment as Pilgrimage is a spiritual exercise. He posited that with such wisdom, they would be able to

break barriers and achieve much in the mobilization of intending pilgrims.

He decried the low sponsorship of intending Christian pilgrims from the North West region of the country as he admonished the pilgrimage managers from the North West to join forces with the Commission to change the narratives through effective mobilization and strong advocacy.

Furthermore the NCPCC boss also stressed that the Commission would soon commence aggressive mobilization drive to different geo-political zones for increased pilgrimage sponsorship, adding that he would lead his team to meet

with the States Chief Executives as well as relevant stakeholders on the need to sponsor someone on the Holy journey.

He added that during the mobilization drive, the Commission would be able to inspect some designated Airports that would be used for the airlift of intending pilgrims from that Zone.

Meanwhile Rev. Pam and the members of the Conference of States agreed to spearhead a meeting with Church leaders, Christian Association of Nigeria, CAN and Pilgrimage leaders to discuss the future of Christian Pilgrimage in Nigeria.



2023: Umahi endorses Ebonyi Speaker as successor

Stories by Ikechukwu Obi

As next month's gubernatorial primary of the ruling All Progressives Congress in Ebonyi State approaches, Governor David Umahi has thrown his weight behind the governorship ambition of the embattled Speaker of the State House of Assembly, Francis Nwifuru, as his preferred successor come 2023.

This is coming on the heels of reported opposition by stakeholders of the party from Izzi, Ebonyi, and Abakaliki Local Government Areas of the state.

The Association of Ebonyi State Indigenes in Diaspora led by Amb. Paschal Oluchukwu, had, on Friday, also kicked against the purported endorsement of the embattled speaker by a group known as Ezza Ezekuna youths and traditional rulers of the Izzi Clan.

Umahi gave the endorsement, on Saturday, at Okposi, in the Ohaozara Local Government Area of the state, during the burial ceremony of late Chief Dandy Omoke, a former Chairman of the council.

Umahi, while introducing Nwifuru at the occasion, described him as the next Governor of Ebonyi State.

Nwifuru, who has served as speaker of Ebonyi State House of Assembly since 2015, is in his third tenure in the House.

He was first elected into the Assembly in 2011 on the platform of the Peoples Democratic Party.

He was subsequently re-elected under the same platform in 2015 and in 2019, before he defected to the All Progressives Congress in 2020, alongside Governor Umahi and 15 other House members.

Commissioner for Information, in the state, Uchenna Orji, confirmed the endorsement, on Saturday.

While reacting to an inquiry by a national daily, the commissioner said Nwifuru possessed the necessary requirements to succeed Umahi, come 2023.

He said, "Yes, the endorsement is true. Nwifuru is our candidate for the 2023 governorship election in Ebonyi State."

In Ebonyi State, the APC stakeholders of the Izzi clan, comprising Ebonyi, Abakaliki, and Izzi local government areas, disagreed over who would succeed Dave Umahi in 2023. They expressed their opposition to the rumoured support of the governor for the Speaker of the state House of Assembly, Francis Nwifuru.

Also, the Association of Ebonyi State Indigenes in Diaspora, has decried the purported spates of 'induced' endorsements of the embattled speaker by faceless groups, some apolitical actors such as traditional rulers.

The President-General of the group, Amb. Paschal Oluchukwu, stated this in a statement, on Friday, urging the public to ignore social media reports that an Ezza youths group 'adopted' the embattled speaker, as its choice for the 2023 governorship election in the state.

According to him, "The news making round various Social media platforms that the embattled Speaker of the Ebonyi State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Ogonnaya Nwifuru was endorsed as the choice of Ezza nation for the 2023 Governorship election merely

exposes the level of desperation and ignorance on the part of both the alleged 'endorsers' and the endorsee.

"Therefore, the report that some 'Ezza-Ezekuna youths led by Hon. Victor Nwite, one of his aides, Haggai Nwokpor, Prince Chika Igboke, Okwudili Sampson Nworie, Nweke Ikechukwu, and Joshua Nwafor among others endorsed the sacked Izzi-born Speaker of Ebonyi State House of Assembly during a recent Courtesy visit should be utterly disregarded and ignored by every well-intentioned Ezza sons and daughters."

"The fact remains that the Ezza nation at home and in the diaspora are more determined and focused on ensuring that it produces the next Governor of Ebonyi State in 2023 than some treacherous political foes whose stomachs have remained their gods can ever imagine."

According to the group, Umahi was working in connivance with 'these' faceless groups and non-state actors, to foist his selfish agenda on the state, ahead of 2023.

Recall that Umahi had penultimate week convened a meeting of the stakeholders with the aim of harmonising and choosing two prospective candidates on the platform of the party for the governorship as well as for other positions.



Dariye may recover N500m mansion from EFCC after pardon

A former governor of Plateau State, Joshua Dariye, may recover his N500m mansion in Asokoro, Federal Capital Territory, from the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission following his PARDON.

Dariye, who was convicted for stealing N1.16bn while he was governor between 1999 and 2007, was pardoned by Buhari on April 14, 2022 following the recommendation of the National Council of State.

The former governor's conviction by Justice Adebukola Banjoko of the Federal Capital Territory High Court in 2018 was affirmed by both the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court.

On the strength of the affirmation of the conviction by the Supreme Court, the EFCC, through its lawyer, Mr Oluwaleke Atolagbe, approached a Federal High Court in Abuja seeking the final forfeiture of the property based on the argument that it was purchased with proceeds of crime.

The property, located at 19 Frederick Chiluba Close, sits on over 2,000 square metres in upscale Asokoro and in the middle of several governors' lodges.

A top source at the EFCC revealed that the property could not be worth less than N500m.

An EFCC official, who wished to remain anonymous, said, "That property cannot be worth less than N500m. The truth is that now that Dariye has been pardoned, it means the crime never occurred in the eyes of the law. That means the property may not be recovered from him. At this point, we don't even know what will happen to the forfeiture case."

"It will now depend on the Attorney-General of the Federation to determine how to enforce the pardon along with the instruments of the pardon."

The EFCC had told Justice Inyang Ekwo in February that since the trial had been concluded and Dariye

had been jailed for criminal breach of trust and dishonest conversion of over N1bn belonging to Plateau State, it was proper that the court order the final forfeiture of the convict's known assets.

Dariye, Nyame's pardon should've been on plea bargain - Methodist Prelate The application read in part, "The applicant (the EFCC) sought and obtained an interim forfeiture order of the respondent's (Dariye's) assets and properties, inclusive of the property at P No 1802 AO4, No. 19, Fredrick Chiluba Close, Asokoro, pending the determination of the charge against the respondent."

"The charge against the respondent (now convicted): FCT/CR/81/2007 between Federal Republic of Nigeria vs. Chief Joshua Chibi Dariye, was determined resulting in the respondent's conviction."

"Both the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court upheld the conviction of the respondent."

The apex court affirmed the conviction of the respondent on the charge of criminal breach of trust punishable under Section 315 of the Penal Code and also that the N1,161,162,300.00 belonging to the Plateau State Government had clearly been dishonestly converted by the respondent to his own use by the intricate dishonest contrivance."

The commission noted that with the decision of the Supreme Court in Chief Joshua Chibi Dariye vs. FRN, appeal No: SC/1206C/2018, it was affirmed that Ebenezer Retnan Ventures, an unregistered company, was involved and used to commit the crime for which Dariye was convicted.

It said by the decision of the Supreme Court, it was affirmed that there was credible evidence that Dariye was masquerading in the name of Ebenezer Retnan Ventures, an unregistered company, to cause wrongful gain to himself.

PDP consensus: Wike backs Ugwuanyi's stance on justice, equity, fairness

Rivers State Governor, Nyesom Ezenwo Wike has lent his support to the stance of Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi of Enugu State that the emergence of a consensus presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) should be based on justice, equity and fairness.

Gov. Wike maintained that he solidly stands by Gov. Ugwuanyi's position on the issue of a consensus presidential candidate of the PDP ahead of the party's National Convention.

The Rivers State Governor, who is also a presidential aspirant of the PDP in the forthcoming primaries of the party, stated his position when he addressed Ebonyi State PDP delegates at the party's State Secretariat, in Abakaliki.

Recall that Gov. Ugwuanyi

had advised Governor Aminu Waziri Tambuwal of Sokoto State, Bauchi State Governor, Senator Bala Mohammed, and two other presidential aspirants of the PDP (Senator Bukola Saraki and Mohammed Hayatu-Deen) who are propagating the emergence of a consensus presidential candidate for the party, when they visited him at Enugu State Government Lodge, Abuja, to ensure justice, equity and fairness in the process.

Addressing the Ebonyi State PDP delegates, Gov. Wike stressed that "Every consensus must be based on equity, fairness and justice as propagated by my brother Governor of Enugu State, Rt. Hon. Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi". According to him, "Gov. Ugwuanyi said he is not against consensus but that consensus must be based on equity, justice and

fairness, and I support his stance".

The Rivers State Governor pointed out that the primary aim of the PDP at the moment is to win the election and return to power at the centre, urging the delegates to vote for him during the presidential primary election as he has the needed qualities to win the presidential election and transform Nigeria for the better.

Gov. Ugwuanyi, former Governor of Gombe State and Wike's Campaign Director General, Ibrahim Hassan Dankwambo, Senator Obinna Ogba, the member representing Enugu East/Isi-Uzo Federal Constituency, Hon. Prince Cornelius Nnaji, the PDP National Vice Chairman (South East), Chief Ali Odefa, Chief Chris Ubah, members of Ebonyi State House of Assembly were among the dignitaries at the event.

Politics

2023: Adebajo, Clark, gobs dialogue on Igbo presidency

Elder statesman and Afenifere leader, Pa Ayo Adebajo and South-South leader, Chief Edwin Clark, alongside other eminent Nigerians are set to participate in a dialogue aimed at making a stronger advocacy for a Nigerian President of Igbo extraction in next year's general election.

The Greater Nigeria Conference, GNC, which is slated for Monday at the International Conference Centre, ICC, Abuja, is led by a former Governor of Enugu state, Chief Okwesilieze Nwodo, Sen. Victor Umeh and Sen. Chris Anyanwu among other Igbo patriots at home and in the diaspora.

A statement from the GNC Media Office signed by Collins Steve Ugwu disclosed that the conference is organized as a pan-Nigerian dialogue by the non-partisan 'Nzuko Umunna', a global Igbo Think-Tank.

"It is dedicated towards awakening the best ethnic and political fraternities of Nigerians to appreciate the binding need for accommodation and sacrifice, in supporting a Nigerian President from the South-East region of Nigeria come 2023 elections.

"The plannings are complete, the audience is ready, and more patriotic Nigerians are now selfless

in championing the truth, that our country can only get better and faster on the wheels of equality, justice, fairness and deliberate inclusion, to all her citizens, especially the Southeast people of Nigeria," Ugwu added.

He said aside the nationalist patriots expected in Abuja from all over the country, four governors from the Southeast, who will play central roles to the big idea of a Nigerian President from the Southeast persuasion project, will also be in attendance.

"It is already heart warming, and a sign of great awareness what one of them, Governor Hope Uzodinma of Imo state declared passionately this week that Ndigbo have cried enough on their marginalization, and Nigerians should grant the region a fair playing ground, come 2023 general elections for the Presidency.

"Hear him in clear sync with the GNC project: 'No one in Nigeria can deny the fact that Ndigbo are zealous, patriotic and committed to the oneness of Nigeria. All that they demand is a level playing field for all of us to operate and compete'.

"Amplifying this firm and fair resolve, he again called Nigerians' attention to history, thus, 'Most of the patriots who engineered

the plan that made the Southwest region produce the presidential candidates for the two major political parties in 1999 are still alive and active in Nigerian politics.

"That same underlying love for the country that inspired them to do what they did for the Southwest in 1999, should inspire them to do the same for the Southeast in 2023".

"That simply is a factual foretaste to the many more of what Greater Nigeria Conference will put in the front burner, as it gathers all the presidential aspirants from Southeast before Nigerians to dialogue and persuade the election of one as Nigeria President in the spirit of together-we-can-do-better for this country," he stated.



Akwa Ibom guber aspirant promises to diversify economy

A governorship aspirant in Akwa Ibom State, Mr. Akan Okon, has promised to diversify the economy if allowed to serve.

Okon, the immediate past Commissioner for Economic Development and Ibom Deep Seaport made the pledge during his formal declaration for the number one seat in Ekiad Itam, Itu Local Government Area of the state.

His words: "We shall diversify

the economy of the state. We shall follow up and implement the 2020 post-Covid-19 Economic Reconstruction Committee recommendations.

"We shall also make efforts to establish links with the Federal Government to ascertain the number of solid minerals in the state. Currently, there is no state policy or master plan on infrastructure.

"We shall develop a

comprehensive infrastructure development plan as part of the 50-year long term Economic Development plan."

In addition, we shall ensure even spread of critical infrastructure including roads.

"We shall develop a holistic state health policy to proactively implement strategies to achieve universal health coverage in the state using primary and mobile healthcare."

Atiku not part of northern consensus arrangement — Dokpesi

Former Vice President and leading presidential aspirant, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, has said that he was never a party to the northern consensus arrangement.

The Technical Committee for the Actualization of Atiku Abubakar's Presidency in 2023, in a statement by its chairman, High Chief Raymond Dokpesi, said the former VP did not subject himself to any purported consensus process and thus not bound by any of the recommendations and conclusions of the report.

"As an avowed nationalist, Waziri Atiku Abubakar strongly believes that Nigeria has never been as divided as it is today.

"He strongly believes that any 'consensus' arrangement premised on any regional, zonal, ethno-religious, and/or sectional gang-up will further deepen and widen this divide, and worsen the wounds that urgently need to be healed.

"Consequently, Atiku Abubakar

is anxious to implement plans, policies and programmes that will rescue and rebuild Nigeria.

"This is his unwavering and resolute pledge and commitment," he said.

The Committee which said it has been inundated with several calls



and text messages on the purported consensus, urged its supporters and other critical stakeholders to continue with consultations and town hall meetings with delegates across the country.

"We urge them neither to be deterred nor distracted in our collective mission to rescue our nation," he said.

It would be recalled that Prof. Ango Abdullahi, Magajin Rafin Zazzau, on Friday, released the report of consensus efforts amongst four aspirants of northern extraction within the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP.

The aspirants, who presented themselves for the said exercise were Sokoto governor, Aminu Tambuwal; his colleague from Bauchi, Bala Mohammed; former Senate President, Bukola Saraki and Mohammed Hayatu-Deen.

Saraki and Mohammed were placed to on the list released by Prof. Abdullahi.

Consensus candidate: Afenifere knocks Northern Elders

Yoruba socio-cultural group, Afenifere, has criticised some Northern Elders for picking two of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) presidential aspirants as its consensus candidates.

The aspirants picked by the Northern Elders were Bauchi Governor Bala Mohammed and former Senate President Bukola Saraki.

But Afenifere said the decision of the Northern Elders exposed the quagmire of conscience they found themselves in the critical question of moving Nigeria forward.

It said the overriding interests of the continued corporate existence of Nigeria required more reflective statesmanship.

Secretary General of Afenifere, Sola Ebiseni, in a statement in Akure, said some leaders from the north have orchestrated several schemes at keeping the office of the President in the north after the 8 years tenure of President Buhari from the zone contrary to the popular and prevailing mood of the nation in favour of the power rotation to the south.

Ebiseni noted that it was intriguing that the Northern Elders inconsistently set aside all their vaunted factors in preference for equity.

According to him: "In their sermons they settled for aspirants from the North Central and North East against that of the North West only on the ground of adjudged equity that the zone had produced Presidential candidates and Presidents.

"They are deliberately oblivious of the indubitable history of Nigeria that the first executive ruler of Nigeria, Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa, August 1957-January 1966, was from the North East and specifically Bauchi State and that most of the Military Heads of the Nigerian State were of the North Central origin.

"It beats the imagination that the northern elders would fervently seek to execute their northern agenda in the PDP which controls only five of its 19 States. The nation weights in the wings to see the outcome of this gerrymandering.

"The resolves of the Southern and Middle Belt Leaders Forum that the next President of Nigeria, after Buhari's 8 years full term, should a person of Southern Nigeria origin, in the interest of equity, national sense of belonging and cohesion is the national consensus. No group or section is greater than Nigeria and the compelling interest of its corporate existence."

2023: Sule Lamido denounces Saraki, Bala as PDP's Northern consensus candidates

A former governor of Jigawa State, Sule Lamido, on Saturday, said reports that some Northern leaders and presidential aspirants under the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) chose the governor of Bauchi State, Bala Muhammad and a former Senate President, Bukola Saraki, as northern consensus candidates for the party's presidential primary was not true.

The media had reported that the duo were shortlisted by northern leaders of the party ahead of its presidential primary on May 28.

The recommendations were contained in a communique signed by former Vice-Chancellor of Ahmadu Bello University, Ango Abdullahi, Vanguard reported.

The northern leaders said the decision to elect Messrs Saraki and Mohammed was based on certain criteria adopted in the assessment of the four aspirants who submitted themselves for the exercise.

But Mr Lamido in a statement said such a decision was never reached and it was the opinion of those who issued the communique.

"The attention of key stakeholders of the PDP in the Northern State is drawn to reports in the media that some Northern Elders have shortlisted two of our prominent and deserving aspirants as consensus PDP Presidential

Candidates

"Having widely consulted Party Leaders across the 19 Northern States and FCT, it is hereby stated to our teeming Party members and the general public that what is reported in the Media is only the personal opinion of those who issued the statement and not the position of the PDP members in the North," Mr Lamido said.

"Discussions are ongoing with ALL the aspirants in our party with a view to having a National Consensus if possible or at least working towards having smooth acrimony free National Convention.

"The position of the Northern Elders is not only injurious to the North but equally injurious to the Northern Aspirants," Mr Lamido added.



By OWEI LAKEMFA



Perspective

Jesus lost elections, so can Bishop Kukah lose to Buhari

When a government like that of Muhammadu Buhari, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces, is doing very well, it is manifestly immoral for a Bishop to divert its attention, especially with unsolicited homilies.

That is the problem I have with Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah of the Sokoto Archdiocese. He has this strategy of waiting until the Easter period of salvation to release nuclear-powered inter-continental missiles against the Buhari Presidency as if he were the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, NATO, putting Russia in its sight.

In the 2021 Easter Buhari-Kukah war, I had uncritically taken sides with the Bishop, lambasting Baba Buhari. But as I waited for the 2022 war, I was tempted to advise Kukah to be silent as I suspected that the Presidency not only had a format prepared to respond to whatever he said, especially if it is the truth, but also to possibly fire scud missiles at him.

I should have listened to my instincts and the Bishop would have been saved the headache of an attack spokesperson of Buhari instructing the Bishop on what he should say, and what parts of the Christian Holy Book he should quote, or is permitted to quote. Kukah fired the first shot in the 2022 Easter war with his 19-point Homily titled, 'Mending a Broken Nation'.

In it, he declared that: "Nigerians can no longer recognise their country which has been battered and buffeted by men and women from the dark womb of time."

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

The falsehood, he said, had been created that somehow, one religion is superior to the others, adding that "the way out is for the state to enforce the secular status of the Nigerian state".

Government, he argued, has shown far greater commitment to integrating so-called repentant terrorists than getting their captives freed. The military, he said, has the capacity to end banditry, but that: "In reality, the military cannot fire beyond the radar set by their Commander-in-Chief."

He argued that all criminals should meet the full force of the law. The Bishop wrote that

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

Consequently, he argues: "We stare at an imponderable tragedy as the nation unravels from all sides. The government has slid into hibernation mode".

The Presidency, he said, is not a human right based on ethnic, religious or regional sentiments, and that: "We have no need for any further empty messianic rhetoric laced with deceitful and grandiose religiosity."

To his fellow religious leaders who eat from the table and cannot speak truth to power, he reminded them that: "Caesar's embrace is often full of thorns...A leader must know when to call Caesar a fox and

not a horse (Luke 13:32)."

The Buhari Presidency did not respond to the points raised by what it called the "bully-pulpit" because they were "merely assertions" based on hatred.

It condemned Kukah for not devoting his Easter message to "Christ's death and rebirth so Man might be saved – but to damning the government in the most un-Christian terms."

It wondered why with the jostling for the 2023 elections in the two leading parties, Kukah "could still find the time for a lengthy homily..."

The Presidency accused the Bishop of neglecting the Bible's teachings in James 1:26 which states that: "If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless."

The Presidency proclaimed

that this is a time in Nigeria: "... as in Titus 3:9 to 'avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless'".

Quoting Galatians 6:1-2, the Buhari government said even if it were "...caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness" not criticise it.

It claimed that religious leaders who choose to criticise government "do an injustice to their flock by filling their ears with talk of division and hateful thoughts."

Bishop Kukah had specifically declared that "the real challenge before us now is to look beyond politics and face the challenge of forming character and faith in our country."

However, the Buhari Presidency disagrees, giving Bishop Kukah two options: either "to leave government to the voters and the politicians they elect... or else, he should put away his clerical garb, join partisan politics and see how far he can go."

I think Buhari's challenge that Kukah removes his cassock for electoral contest is a knockout punch. Imagine a Kukah who went to seminary as a boy, ordained a priest in December 1976 and has remained in the church since then, being in an electoral contest with Buhari.

Before Kukah's ordination, President Buhari had been in politics first as military governor of the North-East, then Borno State and then Minister of Petroleum and Natural Resources. Buhari had in December 1983 returned to full politics as Military Head of State.

Even in retirement, he had served the Abacha dictatorship as Chairman of its Presidential Task Force, a body that ran a shadow government.

While Kukah was busy in the church, Buhari had in 2002 become a full time politician first as a chieftain of the All Nigeria Peoples Party, then as leader of his own party, the Congress for Progressive Change and then leader of the All Progressives Congress, APC.

Unlike Kukah, Buhari also has experience running for the Presidency in the last five general elections: 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019, winning the last two. I do not think that Bishop Kukah should be ashamed that he would lose any secular elections because when there was an election on whose life was to be spared between Jesus Christ and Barabbas, a convicted murderer, the latter won by a landslide. And when Governor Pontius Pilate asked: "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?"

They all say unto him, Let him be crucified." Matthew 27: 15-22.

In the 2022 Buhari-Kukah Easter war, even the Bishop missed out on the symbolism.

For instance, people tend to forget that when Our Lord was nailed to the cross, he had two convicted thieves on either side.

So, while we were celebrating Christ rising in the Easter period, the Buhari Presidency seemed not to have forgotten the two others nailed on the cross, so it freed two convicted politicians: former governors Jolly Tavoro Nyame and Joshua Chibi Dariye. This is a master stroke against Bishop Kukah and his supporters.



Centre Spread

Nepali President: Vision of building community with shared future for mankind and BRI proposed by Xi draw blueprint for global governance and development

By Zhao Yipu, People's Daily

When meeting with People's Daily reporter again in Kathmandu, capital of Nepal, Nepali President Bidya Devi Bhandari recognized the reporter immediately. "I remember you. You interviewed me in 2019 before Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Nepal. China is a good friend of Nepal, and I'm willing to answer the questions from People's Daily," Bhandari said.

In the subsequent interview that lasted more than two hours, Bhandari recalled her meetings and communication with Xi. The Nepali people are proud to have a good friend like China, and the Nepal-China friendship across the Himalayas is always as firm as a rock, she said.

China and Nepal have always stood alongside each other and supported each other in times of difficulties and challenges. Bhandari still vividly remembers her phone conversation with Xi in May 2021 when the COVID-19 situation in Nepal was grim.

"I told President Xi over the phone that Nepal faced a serious shortage of vaccine. Xi said China would provide much-needed medical supplies and vaccines for Nepal, share its experience in epidemic prevention and control as well as diagnosis of and treatment for the disease with Nepal, and continue trying its best to support Nepal. We talked for 45 minutes that time. President Xi showed his solicitude for the Nepali people just like an elder brother," Bhandari told People's Daily.

After the phone conversation, the Chinese government soon sent COVID-19 vaccines and medical supplies to Nepal. "The timely support and help from President Xi and the Chinese people saved the lives of many Nepali people," Bhandari said.

The entire nation has been deeply moved by China's selfless assistance, according to Bhandari, who said that with a good friend like China, "Nepal dares to face up to any difficulties."

"President Xi is a sincere friend," Bhandari stressed. She disclosed that she and Xi have met, talked over the phone, and exchanged letters for many times and maintained close contacts and a

sincere friendship.

"Even the high mountains and language barrier can't stop us from becoming friends," Bhandari said.

During the interview, Bhandari recalled Xi's state visit to Nepal in 2019. She and her daughter Usha Kiran Bhandari welcomed Xi at the airport when he arrived, according to the Nepali President.

"I remember that after President Xi walked down the gangway ladder, my daughter presented him with a bouquet of flowers and we welcomed him like he was family. Almost all the senior officials of Nepal went to the airport to greet President Xi," Bhandari recalled, explaining that Xi's visit was of great significance to Nepal, so the whole country took it very seriously.

"During that historic visit, President Xi and I jointly announced that China and Nepal had agreed to upgrade their relations to a strategic partnership of cooperation featuring everlasting friendship for development and prosperity," Bhandari said.

The first and second volumes of the Nepali edition of Xi Jinping: The Governance of China are among the books on the bookshelf in Bhandari's office. The book covers all aspects of the governance of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in China, said the Nepali President, who stressed that Xi has always put the people in the first place, adhered to the people-centered development philosophy and made great efforts to advance major undertakings, such as the fight against poverty, infrastructure construction, and ecological civilization construction, winning support and respect from the Chinese people.

The vision of building a community with a shared future for mankind and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) proposed by Xi have drawn a blueprint for global governance and development, Bhandari pointed out.

"President Xi is one of the most influential leaders in the world. Under his leadership, China has made remarkable achievements in various sectors and seen its global influence grow with each passing day," Bhandari said.

She has visited China four times since 1995, and has been to southwest China's Tibet autonomous region, and many Chinese cities including Beijing,



Nepali President Bidya Devi Bhandari (right) unveils the Nepali edition of the second volume of Xi Jinping: The Governance of China at a grand event held at the Rastrapati Bhawan, the official residence of the President of Nepal Sept. 24, 2021. Photo by Chinese Embassy in Nepal



Face masks, protective suits, ear thermometers, and other anti-epidemic supplies provided by the People's Government of Sichuan Province for Nepal arrive in its capital Kathmandu by a chartered plane sent by the Chinese side, May 19, 2021. Photo by Chinese Embassy in Nepal

Shenzhen, Shanghai and Xi'an, according to Bhandari.

She has seen through these visits that China has both modern metropolis and villages with picturesque natural scenery, Bhandari said, who noted that China has achieved more balanced, coordinated, and sustainable development under the strong leadership of the CPC.

"I have a lot of interesting stories about and happy memories of each of my visit to China. I can talk about my love for China for days, and still can't fully express my deep feelings for the country," she said.

The lofty Mount Qomolangma, which straddles the China-Nepal border, has witnessed the history of the friendly ties between the two countries.

During the past 67 years since the establishment of the diplomatic relations between China and Nepal, generation after generation of people committed to China-Nepal friendship have continuously scaled new heights in bilateral relations under the guidance of leaders of the two countries, finally making the China-Nepal relations flourish.

China and Nepal are close neighbors linked by the same mountains and rivers and enjoy a long-standing friendship, Bhandari pointed out, stressing that the mutual trust and friendship between the two countries have withstood the test of time.

Nepal is grateful to China for its long-term generous support and assistance, said Bhandari,

who noted that Nepal will remain steadfast in upholding the one-China principle and supporting China in safeguarding its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and will definitely not allow any forces to carry out any activities against China on Nepali territory.

Nepal supports the joint construction of the BRI and looks forward to accelerating the construction of a Multi-dimensional Connectivity Network across the Himalayas with China, which is an opportunity to bring a new look to the infrastructure of Nepal, according to Bhandari.

"I hope we will continue working together to elevate the Nepal-China friendship to a new height," she said.

Centre Spread

Traditional handcrafts give impetus to China's rural vitalization



Long Laoxiang (middle), a master of Miao embroidery, teaches a college graduate apprentice to weave cloth with a handloom in Zila village, Shilan township, Huayuan county, Xiangxi Tujia and Miao autonomous prefecture, central China's Hunan province, April 29, 2020. (Photo by Long Enze/People's Daily Online)

By Chen Anying, professor at Tsinghua University

China's Ministry of Culture and Tourism and five other departments recently issued a guideline on promoting the development of cultural industries in a bid to advance rural vitalization, with traditional handcrafts listed as one of the seven key fields that can help boost rural vitalization.

Rural vitalization cannot be achieved without the formation and development of a new type of relations between urban and rural areas.

China's urbanization process, during which resources and population have crowded into megacities, has seen a break point of counter-urbanization on its journey toward a moderately prosperous society in all respects. A development pattern featuring urban areas' dependence on and support for rural areas and urban-rural integration has been gradually formed.

The resurgence and revitalization of traditional handcraft in rural areas couldn't have been possible without such a macroscopic social development pattern.

Heqing county in southwest China's Yunnan province, and villages under its administration give a good example of the point.

The resurgence and revitalization of metal craft in Heqing has undergone four stages. The first stage came at the beginning of China's reform and opening-up, when a large batch of tinkers left their hometown Heqing to work in big cities, and learned skills and accumulated capital. In the mid-to-late 1990s, they returned home to start their own businesses,

and Xinhua village in the county gradually earned fame because of local silverware. After 2010, Heqing entered the third stage, when it started to exploit China's teaware market besides the artware market. Since 2019, the county has attracted and gathered a group of creative people and developed cultural tourism, which signifies the fourth stage.

It can be seen that during the first and second stages, Heqing was mainly developing manufacturing, a development model similar to that of rural industry since the reform and opening-up, except that the former focused on traditional handcraft and the latter modern industry.

After entering the third and fourth stages, the county witnessed a shift

of focus in development from rural handcraft industry to high value-added cultural tourism, with new business forms and features similar to those in Jingdezhen city, east China's Jiangxi province, Yixing city, east China's Jiangsu province, and Longquan city, east China's Zhejiang province, all frontrunners in integrating local culture and tourism.

Such a change is in accord with China's policy on intangible cultural heritage protection and social development concepts, and was facilitated by Heqing's unique advantages in geographical and transportation conditions. The county, which is endowed with spectacular scenery, is situated along a popular tourist route between the Dali Old Town and the Old Town

of Lijiang, two well-known tourist destinations in Yunnan, and is 20 minutes' drive away from Lijiang Sanyi International Airport.

Heqing is, therefore, not only able to communicate more easily with other regions on the production of silver and bronze ware, but enjoys favorable conditions in drawing creative talents, running homestay business and promoting out all-for-one tourism.

The transformation and upgrading of rural handcraft industry has been guaranteed by the popularization of the ideas of intangible cultural heritage protection and "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets", as well as a series of related natural and cultural ecological protection policies.

China has established national eco-cultural protection zones since 2007, and vigorously advanced the construction of cultural belts, national parks and national cultural parks in recent years, creating a good environment for the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage and preservation of traditional villages.

Intangible cultural heritage inheritance relies on the overall environment and audience as well as on core inheritors, especially the younger generation of inheritors.

Since 2015, the government has made great efforts to implement a training program to cultivate and enhance the inheritance and innovation capabilities of the new generation of intangible cultural heritage inheritors.

In 2016, it began to set up traditional craft work stations to introduce high-quality art design resources into regions with traditional crafts and underdeveloped areas. On the basis of these work stations, it has promoted the establishment of a good number of intangible cultural heritage workshops for poverty alleviation, driving rural residents to make innovations and start businesses to march toward prosperity.

During the process, a host of young and capable traditional craft inheritors and promoters have emerged.

By introducing design teams and commercial orders, a traditional craft work station in Hami city, northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, which is committed to revitalizing Uygur embroidery, has established a handcraft industry cooperation system that links the vast rural areas in the city. Thanks to the system, many villagers went to big cities including Beijing to share and learn skills.

Kader Rehman, a member of the work station, has grown from a skillful embroiderer to a pattern designer and the work station's liaison to customers, bringing a stream of orders to his hometown.

In Qiandongnan Miao and Dong autonomous prefecture, southwest China's Guizhou province, intangible cultural heritage inheritors of various ethnic groups have greatly benefited from the training program, traditional craft work stations and intangible cultural heritage workshops for poverty alleviation.

Yang Xiufang, an inheritor of Miao batik in the prefecture, sharpened her skills at Tsinghua University under the training program in 2016. After that, she returned to her hometown in a mountainous area and has led a group of Miao women in the production of handcrafts using the batik technique.

With the popularization of education and improvement in transportation and communication conditions, more and more rural craftspeople have strengthened communication with the outside world, carrying out cooperation with universities, participating in exhibitions and hosting livestreaming shows.

Besides, many college graduates have chosen to return to their hometown in the countryside to start businesses. They have become the new generation of inheritors or designers and managers, helping fill the gaps in the local industrial chain.



Villagers learn how to make moss paintings in Maoyang township, Jingning She autonomous county, Lishui city, east China's Zhejiang province, April 13, 2022. (Photo by Li Suren/People's Daily Online)

News

Terrorists kill village head in late Gov Yakowa's home town

By Achadu Gabriel, Kaduna

Terrorists suspected to be Fulani militias have reportedly killed Maiungwa of Ungwanpa in Fadan Ikulu in Ikulu chiefdom, the home town of former Governor of Kaduna state late Ibrahim Yakowa.

Information from the family of the deceased through a cousin averred that the victim, Nebu Bauna, was shot dead while he was sleeping by suspected Fulani killer.

It was however alleged that the community has never had any known records of disagreement with the Fulanis previously.

The statement read in parts: "Killer Fulani Killed my Cousin Last Night 23 April 2022.

Nebu Bauna the maiungwa of Ungwanpa, Fadan Ikulu, in Ikulu Chiefdom in Kaduna State was killed in his sleep by gunshot.

"The area is tensed. The people have no history of disagreement with Fulani but Fulani killed him all the same", the statement added.

A local source confirmed that, "Like in most other areas suffering attacks, there was never any disagreement with the Fulani. This is why I laugh when I here people say farmers/herders clashes.

All efforts to clarify details of the killing by the alleged terrorists Fulani militias failed, as the Police Command spokesman Asp Mohammed Jalige could not respond when contacted.

Taraba: 11 person sustain injured in another bomb blast in Jalingo

By Danzumi Ishaku, Jalingo

Eleven people have sustain serious degrees of injury following an explosion at a local bear palour in Nukkai Jalingo the headquarters of Taraba state.

Investigation by Daybreak news revealed that the bomb skyrocketed a local joint located at the ward head of Nukkai resident destroying three rooms apartment.

An eyewitness, Andrew Nokani told our correspondent that the blast took place at about 8:30 pm at the House of the ward head we're they are taking local bear know as "Brokutu" in Nukkai.

Speaking on the ugly situation, the ward head of Nukkai John Awoshiri said eleven people mostly children sustain injuries during the

blast in his compound where they take local bear know as "brokutu" alongside with others unknown people.

He appealed to youths in Nukkai not to take the law into their hands but be vigilant to report any suspicious character for prompt action.

When contacted the state Police Public Relations Officer PPRO, Abdullahi Usman confirmed the incident and call on the community to be vigilant.

The PPRO, called on social media users to stop spraying rumor and allow Police and Journalist to report incident currently.

It could be recalled that on Tuesday there were a blast at the Iware market that claim 16 lives at the local joint in Ardo-kola local government area of Taraba state

Taraba: After bomb blast in Jalingo Gov. Ishaku Orders 'Operation Stop And Search.

Taraba State Governor Darius Ishaku on Saturday ordered security agencies in the state to immediately introduce operation stop and search across the state, especially in Jalingo, the state capital.

The directive comes after two bombings were recorded in the state within four days.

The latest bombing was ren Taraba After Two Bombings In Four Days corded at Nukkai Market in Jalingo metropolis on Friday.

Terrorist group ISWAP has taken responsibility for Tuesday's bombing which injured 11 person at least.

"Governor Ishaku described the

incident as ungodly, inhuman, barbaric and a deliberate attempt by evil people to destabilize the state," a statement signed by his spokesperson, Iliya Bekyu Akweh, said.

"He directed Security Agencies in the state to network through proper investigation to fish out the terrorists whom he said are working relentlessly to destabilize the peace of the state

"The Governor further directed Security Agencies to immediately introduce operation stop and search across the state especially in the State Capital to check mate the nefarious activities of terrorists and their cohorts who have infiltrated the

state recently

"According to the Governor, it is disheartening for lives of innocent citizens and their properties be destroyed without any act of provocation by criminals who do not have an iota of regard for the sanctity of human lives and assured that no stone will be left unturned to unravel the mystery surrounding their heinous and dastardly act

"The Governor however advised people of the state to be vigilant and report any suspicious persons in their midst to Security Agents for immediate action with a view to averting a recurrence of the ugly incident "Ishaku particularly implored

the people of the state to avoid public places such as recreational centres and other crowded areas which are possible soft targets of the terrorists, emphasizing that Taraba State needs peace to develop and not bombers to destabilize the state

"He further frowned at the recent happenings in the state and pointed out that his administration would not allow evil people and their sponsors including those harbouring them to destabilize the peace he had worked hard to restore in the state.

"The Governor directed the Ministry of Urban Planning and Environment to ensure

and counter-insurgency."

"In Nation Building Prof. Moghalu has extensive experience in managing diversity, and helped rebuild several broken nations; for example Cambodia, Rwanda (after the genocide) and Croatia."

"In the economy, he supervised and stabilized a \$ 200BN banking sector after the 2008 committee global financial crises, developed BVN, and managed Nigeria's \$37 billion external reserves He was a member of the monetary policy committee that brought inflation down to single-digit (8%)."

"In Foreign affairs, he was a United Nations diplomat for 17 years, rising to the highest career rank of Director."

"With this, we the coalition of over 57 youth support groups drawn from the Northwest, North East, Northcentral, under the leadership of Arewa Youth Assembly and are here today to tell the world that we have endorsed and adopted Professor Kingsley Moghalu to be our Presidential flag bearer in the 2023 general election."



2023: Arewa Youth Drum Support for Kingsley Moghalu

The coalition of Northern Youth Support Groups under the leadership of the Arewa Youth Assembly has described Prof. Kingsley Moghalu as the answer to Nigeria come 2023.

Barrister Faruku Ofoku, the National Coordinator of Northern Youth Support Groups revealed this at the invitation and endorsement of Prof. Kingsley Moghalu, a presidential aspirant from the South East, who the group is inviting to contest under the platform of the APC.

During the event held at the Arewa House Kaduna, the Coalition of over 57 non-governmental organisations made it clear that Kingsley Moghalu is a good material and capable to be Nigerian President come 2023.

They said his quality credentials were everywhere which have continued to benefit the nation.

The coalition said that " we have not forgotten that during the first four years of his leadership, he was able to improve the life of Nigerian

that hawkers and traders who have establish mini markets at unapproved places in the state capital to evacuate those areas forthwith or have themselves to blame

"Ishaku further assured the people of the state of his administration's readiness to rid the state of criminality and advised them to go about their lawful duties stressing that the government was on top of the situation

"He commiserated with those injured in the blast and are receiving treatment in the hospitals and promised Government assistance to ameliorate their suffering."



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Inside FCT

Illegal structures to go to prevent flooding in FCT- FEMA

Stories By Joyce Babayeju

The FCT Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), said it plans to pull down illegal structures in every corner of the territory to prevent seasonal urban flooding this season.

The Agency emphasized that all identified infractions no matter how big it is would be removed, as government is expected to protect

FEMA Director General, Alhaji Abbas Idriss, who spoke with newsmen in Abuja cited that the flooding in the Lokogoma area has seriously reduced due to the proactive measures taken by the Administration.

Idriss said, "Seasonal flooding in Lokogoma has reduced in the past three years, because we removed obstructions to the flow of water. People went and built on the water ways, those structures will be pulled down."

He hinted that the agency would on assessment tour with key stakeholders including the Department of Development Control, Engineering Services Department and Estate Developers.

The FEMA boss noted that flash floods witnessed in some parts of the territory as a wake up call, and appealed to residents to adhere to the master plan and approved building codes.

Normal onset of rainfall in the Federal Capital Territory is expected by the 24th of May, going by the seasonal climate prediction by the Nigeria Meteorological Agency.



FCTA pays off N150B Liabilities owed Contractors

Stories By Joyce Babayeju

The Federal Capital Territory Administration has said that the present administration has cleared over N150 billion liabilities inherited from previous administrations.

This was disclosed at the FCTA Executive Committee meeting chaired by the FCT Minister of State, Dr. Ramatu Tijjani Aliyu, held in Lifecamp, Abuja.

Reacting to the security report, the minister said the administration is mulling the option of "operation know your neighbour" as part of efforts to address the persistent security challenges in the nation's capital.

Aliyu, said this has become necessary in view of recent security challenges facing the Federal Capital Territory, just as she also noted that the Executive meeting was to x-ray some of the challenges facing the Administration.

She tasked the FCDA to come up with policies that would address the development of the human component, as well as policies that would outlive the present administration.

The FCDA Executive Secretary, Engr. Shehu Hadi Ahmad, revealed that the current FCT Administration has cleared all the liabilities inherited from the previous administrations, which has led to the completion of some major infrastructural projects within the city centre,

The FCDA boss noted that before now, most contractors have abandoned their sites because of

accrued liabilities from the previous administrations worth over N150 billion.

According to him, "The minister took the bull by the horn and cleared all the liabilities of these and other contractors, including those developing the Airport Expressway. So all the liabilities were cleared, he stated

"So all the none completed segments of the works along this axis were completed. Now you can operate in dual mode on the Constitution Avenue and we are making efforts now to also finalize the development of the dual carriage of the Independence road."

"So this is what has actually eased the traffic right from the City Centre, from Three Arm Zone through to World Trade Centre, and to the National Hospital. And the travel time for most commuters, passengers to the airport has drastically reduced. You can almost plan your travel time now from your home to the airport."

While enumerating some of the challenges, which include inadequate funding, uncontrolled population influx and resettlement of original inhabitants, the Executive Secretary, advocated for the review of the Master Plan to address some of these challenges.

Ahmad, also called for a coordinated development strategy to be pursued by the Administration with its contiguous states that would ensure the development of the satellite areas between the states and the FCT, as viable economic areas.

Present at the meeting include the FCTA Permanent Secretary, Mr. Olusade Adesola, Chief of Staff to FCT Minister, Mallam Bashir Mai-Borno, Executive Secretary FCDA, Engr. Shehu Hadi Ahmad, Director Human Resource Management, Mallam Mohammad Bashir, the six Mandate Secretaries, Coordinators and other top management staff.

NURTW condemns plans to commence Park management plan, says it's exploitative, fraudulent

The National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) has strongly condemned plans to commence park management structures plan by some states across the country, saying it is exploitative, fraudulent and an attempt to create political miscreants.

National president of the union, Alhaji Bikunle Baruwa who expressed the Union's displeasure said that the planned initiative was not in tandem with the promulgation of Decree numbers 21 and 22, as a trade union in Nigeria having affiliation with Nigeria Labour Congress.

In a statement issued by Baruwa on Wednesday, he said that the NURTW is saddled with the responsibility of organizing workers who are qualified for membership into the union.

It explained that prior to 1976, the management, administration and activities of drivers in the motor parks were at the mercies of commission agent, which was igniting conflicts and violence between the drivers and the commission agents.

The president further said that the union seek the protection and advancement of the social economic and cultural interests of workmen, and to organize all gainfully employed transport workers such as taxi, township bus service and trailer drivers operating in all local government controlled motor Parks that convey passengers, goods and food stuffs.

The statement read, "Imposition of park management is unconstitutional, the union is among the forty - two trade unions formed as a creation of

Decree. A letter issued on August 15th, 1978 was communicated to the secretariat of the 'Union' as Trade union with number 00054."

"With this development, park management is not known to any law establishing the union, rather is meant to encourage reign of terror."

The statement also disclosed that the event in Lagos State Council leading to the National Administration Council's decision to suspend Mr. Musiliu Akinsanya was meant to instill discipline among the members of the 'Union'.

The overwhelming Lagosians who viewed Musliu Akinsanya as thug, clown and devil in human flesh were happy at the decisions of the National Administrative council of the Union at the Abuja headquarters.

World Earth Day: FCTA pledges commitment to environmental protection

Stories By Joyce Remi-Babayaju

As the Federal Capital Territory Administration, FCTA, commemorates the 2022 World Earth Day, today in Abuja, the Administration pledged commitment to protecting the environment as a responsibility in ensuring that the earth serves all that depends on it for live and livelihood.

FCT Minister of State, Dr. Ramatu Tijjani Aliyu, at the event today in Abuja urged the education sector to ensure that environmental subjects are taught in schools from foundation classes.

The minister who was represented by the FCTA Permanent Secretary, Mr. Olusade Adesola, also called on community based organisations to be fully involved in spreading the message and taking positive actions to demonstrate support for environmental protection.

Aliyu, described as heartwarming and encouraging the resolutions reached at the World Climate Change Conference and the joint commitment by majority of nations to keep faith with efforts of protecting the environment.

The minister decried instances where human activities such as overconsumption, population growth and technology, the biophysical environment is being degraded causing adverse and extreme weather phenomena such as flooding, heatwaves, hurricanes, typhoons and desertification.

“The consequences of these have adversely affected the lives and livelihood of millions around the world and resulted to drought, famine, and forced migration, which has led to clashes amongst communities and even an increase in diseases caused by the consumption of foods from contaminated farmlands, rivers, oceans and even meat and livestock.”

The minister also called for collective and sustained efforts of all, stressing that mass mobilization and awareness campaigns should be stepped up to galvanize the public into taking positive actions against the dangers facing mankind due to the degradation of the environment.

FCTA Permanent Secretary, Mr. Olusade Adesola, who was represented by the Director Operation, Planning and Strategy, Mr. Atang Samuel, noted that the occasion has provided the global community a sense of shared responsibility and a common goal to protect the earth, the source of livelihood. He said, “the significance of

commemorating the World Earth Day cannot be over emphasized. For over forty years, the Earth Day has provided us with a sense of shared responsibility and a common goal to protect the Earth which has our environment, our source of livelihood and our one and only home.”

The Permanent Secretary noted that in the quest for economic growth and development, people have engaged in activities that are inimical to the Earth, which are responsible for the complete disappearance of some species and the acceleration of the climate change.

He noted that the good news is that governments around the world are making serious effort in reducing carbon footprint by regenerating the environment through various initiatives such as planting of trees, introduction of policies aimed at achieving cleaner rivers and skies and reducing global warming.

“We at the FCT Administration are doing our part by ensuring the implementation of policies and programmes that will aid the protection of the environment.”

“Therefore, our message to the public is that we must learn to live in balance with the planet that sustains us by doing things the better way i.e cleaner, greener and healthier. Each of us has a role to play and each of us is part of the solution.”

Adesola therefore urged all the residents of the nation’s capital in commendation of the 2022 World Earth Anniversary to commit themselves as good stewards of the Earth, adding that “our home and the FCT our abode for generations to come.”

While commenting on this year’s theme; “Invest in our Planet”, the Convener of the Programme and Senior Special Assistant to the Minister on Environment and waste management, Arc. Tunde Imolehin who called for cleaner environment hinted that the FCT Administration is doing its best by ensuring the implementation of policies and programmes that would aid the protection of the environment.

Daybreak reports that part of activity to mark the event was a road walk along the streets of Abuja to arouse public consciousness on the environment, and the need to preserve and protect it as well as a panel discussion on environmental sanitation and sundry issues.

FCTA moves to prevent seasonal flooding in Gwarimpa, removes over 400 illegal houses

The Federal Capital Territory Administration, FCTA, on Thursday began demolition of over 400 illegal houses in Gwarimpa, Abuja.

The illegal houses were converted from corner shops to residential buildings most of which were covering the water way, were removed by the term of Development Control and FCT Task Force.

Director, Development Control Department, Murkhar Galadima who spoke to newsmen at the scene of demolition lamented the poor hygiene and sanitation said that waste are being released directly to the stream and this is a time bomb waiting to explode.

Galadima said, “This buildings you are seeing were not suppose to be houses, they were actually corner shops but people have converted them to residential abode. We have over 400 shops that were converted to residential buildings.”

“We are working with Federal Housing Authority, after we had some discussions with them on how to convert it into a modern mall but for now the thing that is called corner shops is not being used for that particular purpose, it being used as residential buildings.”

“And when you look at the number of people staying here, their hygiene and sanitation is zero so for safety reasons it is better to remove them.”

Galadima who spoke on the notice of demolition exercise Director speaking on notice of demolition, said the illegal occupants were given one month

notice before today’s exercise. “We gave them over a month notice, I remember we came here for sensitization and we marked it. When you go round you see the markings on the wall.”

He condemned the fact that people built on water ways.

“What we are trying to do is to recover the flood plain within Gwarimpa, People built on water way. The area is not properly planned because they are just discharging their waste directly to the stream. And this could be a source of epidemic, a time bomb waiting to happen.”

“If we don’t take action immediately the consequences will be unimaginable.”

“I advice them not to interfere with water channels and to also tell others that those guilty, that we are coming for them.”

The senior Special Assistant on Monitoring Inspection and Enforcement to the minister of FCT, Ikahro Attah expressed shocked at the level of illegality in the area.

He said, “I am very surprised at the level of illegality here, thanks to Development Control who spotted this illegality here. People decided to build on water way, constructing on stream making this area Gwarimpa prone to flooding.”

“They even pushed the stream to a point that if there is an heavy rain, there will be massive flooding and this is a disaster waiting to happen.

Very sad here, the FCTA through Federal Capital Territory, Emergency Management Agency, FEMA and other components agencies

had given warning, the Federal Government had given warning through the water resources, NIMET has also warned against an impending flooding.”

But people decided to build on the flood plain with only about 15 meters distance, some built zero meters, some on minus 3 meters thereby constricting the water way.

If when disaster strikes, they will blame Government as unserious, this is why we are removing all of them by the water corridor, Attah explained.

He said that work is still ongoing emphasizing that all houses on the water plain are going, “We are counting them, we don’t know the number yet.

The Development Control are really showing commitment to save lives, so that flooding would not happen in Gwarimpa.

“The FCTA is really committed to ensuring that lives are not lost as a result of flooding.”

Speaking on the environmental of sanitation in the affected area, Attah lamented that not even one soak away in the whole community, adding that once anyone defecates and urinate everything comes straight to the stream and that is a disaster waiting to happen anytime soon.

He stressed that the people cannot dig soak away because the place is a water bed.

FCTA is also trying to prevent flooding so that when rain comes, it will have a wilder flood plain to pass through, Attah said.

SGBV: NGO urges stakeholders to provide safe-places for victims

A Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), Abiodun Essiet Initiative for Girls (AEIG), has urged relevant government agencies and stakeholders to provide safe place centres in communities and institutions, where victims and people can go to report cases of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), in the FCT.

AEIG emphasized that the such safe-place centres should be connected to different institutions like legal, police, medical and social units across different areas.

Executive Director of the NGO, Abiodun Essiet, at a recent one-day training of village heads and traditional rulers in Kwali and Abaji

Area Councils, themed “Strengthening traditional justice system of FCT original inhabitants to combat sexual and gender-based violence” made this call.

Essiet said, “This is so that when you have a case, there will be necessary people to address it squarely. Some of the issues that are affecting the prosecution of offenders, like when victims are being pressurized to pay money for case file and arrest suspects.”

“These are victims that don’t have enough money, as they are in poverty, and are being stressed on daily basis by different institutions that are supposed to curb issues around sexual and gender based violence to raise money

for them to prosecute.”

“It’s not the responsibility of the victims to fund the prosecution of cases, as government institutions that are supposed to take that authority and fund the prosecution of cases.”

“Every violence happens in a community, and from what the participants are sharing with us, it shows that they have been experience such issues, which portrays the importance of this training.” The trainees are happy with the training, and are requesting that we should organise it every three months, for them to really refresh their memories and check experiences so far in handling cases, she explained.

Entertainment



Iyabo Ojo lauds daughter for acquiring new Benz

Popular movie star, Iyabo Ojo has lauded her daughter, Priscilla Ojo over her latest acquisition.

Priscilla on Sunday announced that she had acquired a 'new whip'

The 21-year-old influencer shared photos posing with her luxurious automobile, a Mercedes-AMG GLE 63 S Coupe worth over N30million.

She also shared a video which showed her cruising in it accompanied with the caption: "MEET MY NEW WHIP. OKURRRR. BIG."

The proud mother of two applauded her daughter as she noted it was every parent's wish to have their kids grow and record immeasurable successes in life.

She wrote: "It's every parent's

joy to see your kids grow and succeed in life, indeed I'm blessed.

"@its.priscy congratulations on your new whip, you work so hard and you deserve all the best life has to offer, keep winning! More to come my win."

The GLE SUV is Priscilla's second ride in two years as she acquired a Mercedes-Benz CLA in 2020.



Nigerian travelling on bike ride from London to Lagos arrives Africa

A London-based Nigerian Kunle Adeyanju, who commenced a cross-country charity ride from London to Lagos on a motorbike, has arrived Africa.

Adeyanju, who began his journey on April 19, was spotted taking a selfie in Casablanca, Morocco.

The Nation had reported Adeyanju made the announcement of his travel in a post on Twitter, noting that the trip is expected to last for 25 days and cover 12,000km.

starting from London, through France, Spain, Morocco, Senegal, Mali, Ghana and Lagos, Nigeria.

According to him, the funds raised during the course of the charity ride will be dedicated to primary healthcare, polio plus project, water and sanitation.

The ride will traverse London – France – Spain – Gibraltar – Morocco – Western Sahara –

Mauritania – St Louis – Senegal – Gambia – Mali – Cote d'Ivoire – Ghana – Togo – Benin – Lagos.



Chris Rock's mother breaks silence on Oscars slap

Rose Rock, mother to Chris Rock, the US comedian, has reacted to Will Smith's 10-year ban from the Oscars for slapping his son.

Smith had slapped Rock at the 2022 Oscars after the comedian joked about Jada Pinkett's shaved head — which is due to the hair-loss condition called alopecia.

The actor's action had attracted a wave of criticism on social media and sanctions from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS).

In an interview with WIS, the South Carolina-based media outlet, Rose condemned Smith's action.

You reacted to your wife giving you the side-eye and you went up and made her day because she was mulled over laughing when it happened," she said.

"I have no idea what I would say other than, 'What in the world were you thinking?' ... Because you did a slap, but so many things could have happened.

"Chris could have stepped back and fallen. You really could have gotten taken out in handcuffs. You didn't

think. You reacted to your wife giving you the side-eye, and you went up, and you made her day because she was bowled over laughing when it happened."

The motivational speaker and author said she was hurt by Smith's action, adding that "he slapped all of us."

"I told someone when Will slapped Chris, he slapped all of us, but he really slapped me. When you hurt my child, you hurt me," she said.

She also argued that Smith's punishment by the Oscars could have been stricter since not everyone attends the award ceremony annually.

"What does that mean? You don't even go every year," she said of the ban.

Rose also claimed Smith's apology was not genuine. She said he ought to have reached out to Rock personally if he was indeed remorseful for his action.

"I feel really bad that he never apologised. I mean his people wrote up a piece saying I apologise to Chris Rock, but you see something like that is personal, you reach out," she added.

Entertainment

Ronaldo challenges 2Baba to be better dad



Uche Ogbodo to single ladies: good men abound

Actress Uche Ogbodo has encouraged single ladies not to give up on love.

The mother of two, who recently confirmed that she's happily remarried to her younger lover and baby daddy, Bobby Marris advised single ladies to improve on themselves while waiting to be found by their rightful partners.

Ogbodo insisted good men still abound as she urged the single ladies to wait patiently and theirs would find them.

"Ladies Be Patient, there are still Good Men Out there, your own will find you. Work On being the best version of yourself first," she wrote.



Football superstar Cristiano Ronaldo has reawakened the desire for qualitative fatherhood in singer 2Baba who laments times lost with his kids.

The African Queen singer became emotional after watching

a video of Cristiano Ronaldo and Manchester United ex Manager Sir Alex Ferguson, speaking about the importance of family.

Ronaldo described a moment with his father and said: "Family is more important to him than

the games."

Tagging the video of the 37-year-old Manchester United forward player, 2Baba wished he could turn the hands of time to gain back lost times with his kids.

"This got me teary. I have lost so many precious times with all my kids and I can't rewind. I am so sad about that," he wrote.

The father of seven challenged himself to better execute his fatherly duties henceforth.



Singer T-Classic hospitalised after alleged poisoning

Singer Tolulope Ajayi also known as T-Classic has been hospitalised after allegedly being poisoned.

A friend of the pop star posted the news on social media with the former on the hospital bed.

Although not much information was given as to where, when and how the incident occurred, it was however alleged that it was an attempt to take his life.

"Evil people everywhere, what's your gain by trying to kill someone with poison? Wetin una drag reach like that," the post reads.

Rema: Why I switched from gospel to secular music

Nigerian singer, Rema, says poverty was the reason he made a transition from gospel music to the secular genre.

The singer, whose real name is Divine Ikubor, spoke in a chat with Ebuka Obi-Uchendu on Channels TV's Rubbin' Minds, on Sunday.

The 21-year-old said contrary to popular belief, he became a secular singer before he got signed to Mavin Records.

He said he was singing at Christ Embassy, the church founded by Chris Oyakhilome, for several years before the pangs of poverty made him switch to secular music.

"Church made me decide that I would do music. It started from the Christ Embassy Benin City," he said.

"Transitioning from singing and serving in church was weird for me and I believe it was weird for them (my people). I didn't really ask much or how they felt about

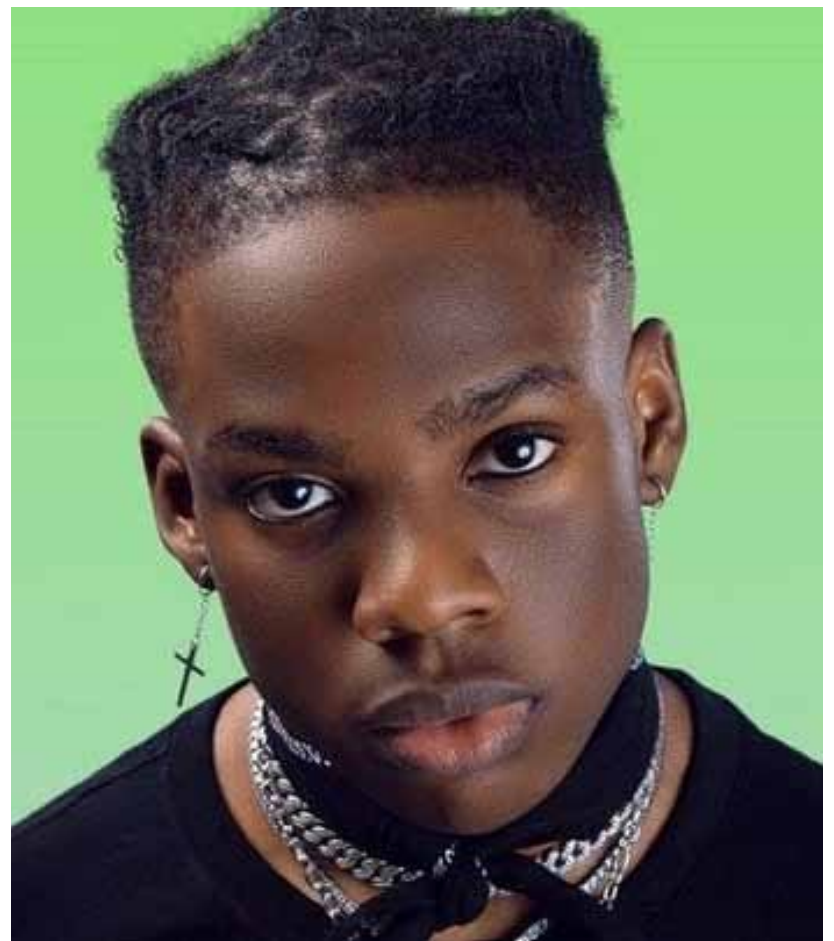
it. It was weird and most importantly to my mom because she was well known in the church.

"It's just where life has drawn me towards and I have to take the opportunity. I was still in Benin when that switch happened. A lot of people felt that it was when I got signed.

"Actually, life was tough. In Benin, I'm not that guy to ask those in church to pay me because I'm doing God's work.

"But right then in Benin, I started going to competitions, bars, lounges, political rallies. Just trying to get on the stage or hold a microphone. To at least get sprayed some money to get back home and feed my family.

"Because we were going through tough times and I lost my dad and brother. I needed to come through for my family. At that point in time, I felt like that was where I started spacing out."



Foreign

Chinese President Xi Jinping's keynote speech at the opening ceremony of BFA annual conference 2022

Chinese President Xi Jinping delivered a keynote speech via video at the opening ceremony of the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) Annual Conference 2022 on April 21, 2022.

Following is the full text of the speech:

Rising to Challenges and Building a Bright Future Through Cooperation
Keynote Speech by H.E. Xi Jinping
President of the People's Republic of China.

At the Opening Ceremony of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2022

Beijing, 21 April 2022

Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government,

Your Excellencies Heads of International Organizations,

Your Excellencies Members of the Board of Directors of the Boao Forum for Asia,

Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

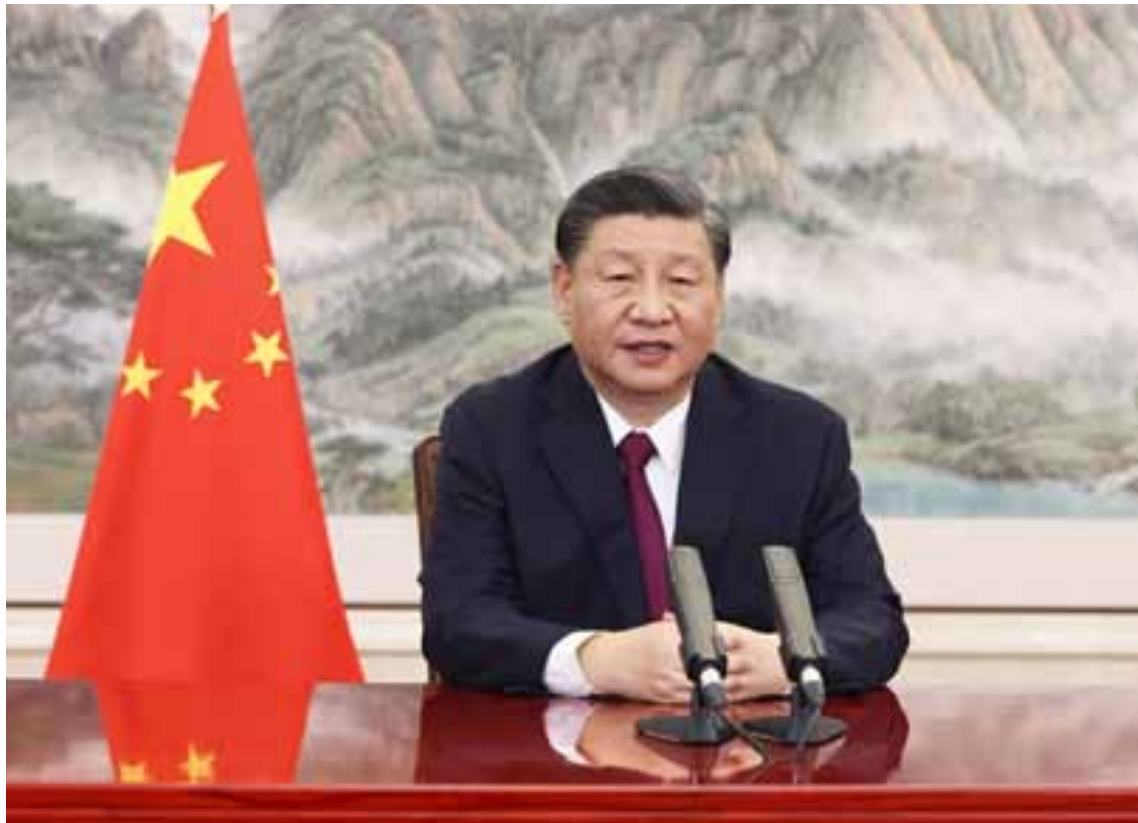
Dear Friends,

It gives me great pleasure to once again join friends old and new online for the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2022. I want to begin by extending, on behalf of the Chinese government and people and also in my own name, hearty welcome to all participating guests and warm congratulations on the convening of the Annual Conference.

Right now, changes of the world, of our times and of history are unfolding in ways like never before. These changes are posing challenges that must be taken seriously by humanity. We have yet to walk from the shadow of a once-in-a-century pandemic, but new traditional security risks are already emerging. The weak and faltering global economic recovery is compounded by a widening development gap. While governance deficit in areas like climate change has hardly been addressed, new issues such as digital governance are also vying for attention. Viewed in such a context, the theme of this year's Annual Conference "The World in COVID-19 & Beyond: Working Together for Global Development and Shared Future" cannot be more relevant.

As an ancient Chinese adage goes, "One must not change his commitment or give up his pursuit even in the face of danger and risk." A review of human history teaches us that the more difficult things get, the greater the need grows to stay confident. Problems are not to be afraid of, as it is one problem after another that have driven the progress of human society. No difficulties could ever stop the wheel of history. Faced with the many challenges, we must not lose confidence, hesitate or flinch. Instead, we must firm up confidence and press ahead against all odds.

*Ladies and Gentlemen,
Friends,*



For us to break through the mist and embrace a bright future, the biggest strength comes from cooperation and the most effective way is through solidarity. Over the past two years and more, the international community has been working extremely hard to respond to the COVID-19 challenge and boost global recovery and development. The hardships and challenges are yet another reminder that humanity is a community with a shared future where all people rise and fall together, and that all countries need to follow the trend of the times featuring peace, development and win-win cooperation, move in the direction of building a community with a shared future for mankind, and rise to challenges and build a bright future through cooperation.

-- We need to work together to defend people's lives and health. Safety and health are the prerequisite for human development and progress. For humanity to clinch a final victory against the COVID-19 pandemic, more hard efforts are needed. It is essential that countries support each other, better coordinate response measures and improve global public health governance, so as to form strong international synergy against the pandemic. We must keep COVID vaccines a global public good and ensure their accessibility and affordability in developing countries. China has provided over 2.1 billion doses of vaccines to more than 120 countries and international organizations. Be it in delivering vaccines abroad or producing them overseas, China has honored its commitments with concrete actions. China will follow through the pledged donation of 600 million and 150 million doses of vaccines to Africa and ASEAN countries respectively, as part of our effort to close the

immunization gap.

-- We need to work together to promote economic recovery. The COVID-19 pandemic has seriously eroded the gains the world has made in poverty reduction over the past decade. Uneven recovery is aggravating inequality across the world, further widening the North-South divide. We should stay committed to building an open world economy, stay on top of the dominant trend of economic globalization, increase macro policy coordination, turn to science and technology for more growth drivers, keep global industrial and supply chains stable, and prevent serious negative spillovers from policy adjustments in some countries, all in an effort to promote balanced, coordinated and inclusive global development. We should follow a people-centered approach, place development and people's well-being high on the agenda and, when policies are implemented, measures adopted and actions taken, always give top priority to bettering people's lives. We should pay due attention to the pressing needs of developing countries and advance practical cooperation in such key areas as poverty reduction, food security, development financing and industrialization, in a bid to address uneven and inadequate development. The Global Development Initiative (GDI) I proposed last year has been echoed and supported by the United Nations and other international organizations and nearly 100 countries. China is working with the international community on the solid implementation of the GDI.

-- We need to work together to maintain peace and stability in the world. An ancient Chinese philosopher observed, "Stability brings a country prosperity while

instability leads a country to poverty." Security is the precondition for development. We humanity are living in an indivisible security community. It has been proven time and again that the Cold War mentality would only wreck the global peace framework, that hegemonism and power politics would only endanger world peace, and that bloc confrontation would only exacerbate security challenges in the 21st century. To promote security for all in the world, China would like to propose a Global Security Initiative as follows:

It is important that we stay committed to the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, and work together to maintain world peace and security; stay committed to respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries, uphold non-interference in internal affairs, and respect the independent choices of development paths and social systems made by people in different countries; stay committed to abiding by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, reject the Cold War mentality, oppose unilateralism, and say no to group politics and bloc confrontation; stay committed to taking the legitimate security concerns of all countries seriously, uphold the principle of indivisible security, build a balanced, effective and sustainable security architecture, and oppose the pursuit of one's own security at the cost of others' security; stay committed to peacefully resolving differences and disputes between countries through dialogue and consultation, support all efforts conducive to the peaceful settlement of crises, reject double standards, and oppose the wanton use of unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction; stay committed to maintaining security in both traditional and

non-traditional domains, and work together on regional disputes and global challenges such as terrorism, climate change, cybersecurity and biosecurity.

-- We need to work together to tackle global governance challenges. Countries around the world are like passengers aboard the same ship who share the same destiny. For the ship to navigate the storm and sail toward a bright future, all passengers must pull together. The thought of throwing anyone overboard is simply not acceptable. In this day and age, the international community has evolved so much that it has become a sophisticated and integrated apparatus. Acts to remove any single part will cause serious problems to its operation. When that happens, both the victims and the initiators of such acts will stand to lose. In today's world, unilateralism and excessive pursuit of self-interest are doomed to fail; so are the practices of decoupling, supply disruption and maximum pressure; so are the attempts to forge "small circles" or to stoke conflict and confrontation along ideological lines. Instead, we need to embrace a global governance philosophy that emphasizes extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits, promote the common values of humanity, and advocate exchanges and mutual learning between civilizations. We need to uphold true multilateralism, and firmly safeguard the international system with the UN at its core and the international order underpinned by international law. It is particularly important for major countries to lead by example in honoring equality, cooperation, good faith and the rule of law, and act in a way befitting their status.

*Ladies and Gentlemen,
Friends,*

Having been through hot and cold wars, hardships and tribulations, people in Asia deeply cherish the value of peace and understand that development gains do not come easily. Over the past decades, Asia has enjoyed overall stability and sustained rapid growth, making possible the Asian Miracle. When Asia fares well, the whole world benefits. Therefore, we need to continue developing and strengthening Asia, demonstrate Asia's resilience, wisdom and strength, and make Asia an anchor for world peace, a powerhouse for global growth and a new pacesetter for international cooperation.

First, we should resolutely safeguard peace in Asia. Peace and stability in our region does not fall into our lap automatically or come as charity from any country. Rather, it is the result of the joint efforts of countries in the region. The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and the Bandung Spirit, first advocated by Asia, are all the more relevant today. We should honor such principles as mutual respect, equality, mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence, follow a policy of good-neighborliness and friendship, and make sure that we always keep our future in our own hands.

Second, we should vigorously advance Asian cooperation. Many Asian proverbs describe the value of solidarity and cooperation, such as "climb the hill together and go down the ravine together" and "sugarcane and lemongrass grow in dense clumps". Win-win cooperation is a sure path to Asian

Foreign

development. The entry into force of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and the opening to traffic of the China-Laos railway have effectively boosted institutional and physical connectivity in our region. We should seize these opportunities to foster a more open Asia-wide market and make new strides in mutually beneficial cooperation.

Third, we should jointly promote Asian unity. Choosing dialogue and cooperation over zero-sum games, openness and inclusiveness over a closed-door and exclusive approach, and exchanges and mutual learning over a sense of superiority: this is the only choice worthy of the broad-mindedness of Asians. We should cement ASEAN centrality in the regional architecture, and uphold

a regional order that balances the aspirations and accommodates the interests of all parties. Countries, no matter their size and strength, and both in and outside the region, should all add splendor rather than trouble to Asia. All should follow the path of peace and development, seek win-win cooperation, and contribute to an Asian family of unity and progress together.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends,

Two months ago, China presented to the world a streamlined, safe and splendid Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, bringing warmth and hope to people across the globe. In the second half of this year, we will convene the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China,

which will draw the blueprint for China's future development.

The fundamentals of the Chinese economy - its strong resilience, enormous potential, vast room for maneuver and long-term sustainability - remain unchanged. They will provide great dynamism for the stability and recovery of the world economy and broader market opportunities for all countries. China will fully apply its new development philosophy, accelerate the establishment of a new development paradigm, and redouble efforts for high-quality development. No matter how the world will change, China's faith in and its commitment to reform and opening-up will not waver. China will expand high-standard opening-up, fully implement the negative list for foreign investment, expand the encouraged catalogue for

FDI, improve services for investment promotion, and add more cities to the comprehensive pilot program for service sector opening. China will take solid steps to develop its pilot free trade zones and the Hainan Free Trade Port, align with high-standard international economic and trade rules, and move ahead with institutional opening-up. China will implement the RCEP in full, seek the conclusion of high-standard FTAs with more countries and regions, and actively work for joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement (DEPA). China will press ahead with high-quality Belt and Road cooperation to make it high-standard, sustainable and people-centered. China will unswervingly follow the

path of peaceful development, and always be a builder of world peace, a contributor to global development, and a defender of the international order.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends,

Let me conclude with an old Chinese saying, "Keep walking and one will not be daunted by a thousand miles; make constant efforts and one will not be intimidated by a thousand tasks." As long as we join hands and never slacken in efforts, we will build great synergy through win-win cooperation, overcome the various challenges along the way, and usher in a brighter and better future for humanity.

Thank you.

Construction of Greater Bay Area achieves prominent progress

By Cheng Yuanzhou, People's Daily

Prominent phased progress has been achieved in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area five years after the construction of the megalopolis started.

A number of policies have been rolled out and a series of infrastructure projects implemented in the Greater Bay Area, which has significantly enhanced the comprehensive strength of the region and brought much closer the cooperation between Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao, providing more sense of fulfillment for the people living there.

A "one-hour living circle" is built in the Greater Bay Area thanks to the accelerated railway development.

The total operating mileage of railways in the Greater Bay Area reaches nearly 2,500 kilometers, including 1,430 kilometers of high-speed tracks, and 975 kilometers more are currently under construction.

The nine cities of the Greater Bay Area located in the Pearl River delta have built 476 kilometers of urban rail transit, and 12 more inter-city railway projects are underway, which are expected to stretch the total urban rail transit mileage by another 362 kilometers.

The total operating mileage of rail transit in the nine cities has reached 1,092 kilometers, and 662 kilometers more are under construction.

As of the end of 2021, the operating mileage of expressways in the Greater Bay Area had hit 4,972 kilometers, delivering a road network density of 9.1 kilometers per hundred square kilometers, which ranks among the highest in major city clusters both at home and abroad.

In the Greater Bay Area, world-class airports and port clusters are taking shape. The airports in the area have a total passenger handling capacity of 200 million people, and the ports are able to handle over 80 million twenty-foot equivalent units.

At present, the four ports in Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai and Dongguan have seen their cargo throughput exceeding 100 million tonnes. The Shenzhen Port and Guangzhou Port rank fourth and fifth globally in terms of the total volume of cargo discharged and loaded.

Rules and mechanisms of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao are being more and more connected, accelerating the establishment of a

new system for open economy.

Guangdong has further shortened its negative lists for investment from Hong Kong and Macao, liberalizing the trade in services with the two special administrative regions (SARs). At present, enterprises from the two SARs enjoy national treatment when investing in legal, accounting and construction sectors in Guangdong. The southern Chinese province has also opened online business registration services for Hong Kong and Macao investors, which enables the latter to establish a company within a single workday.

Besides, the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin has launched cross-border business registration services, with which enterprises from Macao can set up offices in the cooperation zone without even actually going there.

As the Shenzhen-Hong Kong Stock Connect, the Southbound Scheme and the Cross-boundary Wealth Management Connect Scheme have been put into effect, RMB has become the largest cross-border settlement currency in the Greater Bay Area.

The number of mainland bank accounts opened by Hong Kong and Macao residents reached 180,000, and the residents in the Greater Bay Area are enjoying more convenient cross-border financial services.

At present, the Pearl River Delta is becoming an ideal destination for people from Hong Kong and Macao as it provides a sound business, working and living environment. It is building a closer bond between the residents of Guangdong and the two SARs.

Guangdong has already granted citizen treatment in livelihood area to Hong Kong and Macao residents. As of the end of 2021, 279,200 residents from the two SARs had registered for endowment, unemployment and work-related injury insurance in Guangdong.

The Macao New Neighborhood project implemented in the Guangdong-Macau In-depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin is able to provide 4,000 apartments for Macao residents. The cooperation zone saw 503 registered employees from Macao as of the end of the last year, up 114 percent year on year.

The increasingly frequent employment exchanges between Guangdong and the two SARs are driving the flow of innovation factors. At present, there are more

than 85,100 residents from Hong Kong and Macao that have registered for employment in Guangdong. Over 1,000 residents from Hong Kong and Macao have signed up for recruitment examinations held by mainland public institutions in the Greater Bay Area, and the first batch of the admitted have reported for duty.

The Shenzhen-Zhongshan Bridge to the south of Wangqingsha township, Nansha district, Guangzhou is under construction, April 3, 2022. It is another super structure after the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, and is expected to open to traffic in 2024. (Photo by Wei Jinsong/People's Daily Online)

Besides, Guangdong province is also planning to nurture 2,300 projects of youth innovation and entrepreneurship and attract more than 3,400 young residents from Hong Kong and Macao for work.

The province supports universities and scientific institutions in the two SARs to join the sci-tech schemes financed by the Guangdong provincial

government. More than 10 Hong Kong and Macao universities and scientific institutions have benefited from it. As a result, a synergetic development model in the science industry has been built, under which the scientific achievements made by Hong Kong and Macao universities and scientific institutions are well translated in the Pearl River Delta.

Russia announces ceasefire around Mariupol steel plant

Russia's defence ministry on Monday announced a ceasefire around the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol to allow a civilian evacuation from the industrial area that has been sheltering the remaining Ukrainian resistance in the port city.

Russian troops "from 14:00 Moscow time (1100 GMT) on April 25, 2022, will unilaterally stop any hostilities, withdraw units to a safe distance and ensure the withdrawal of" civilians, the defence ministry said in a statement.

It said the civilians will be taken "in any direction they have chosen".

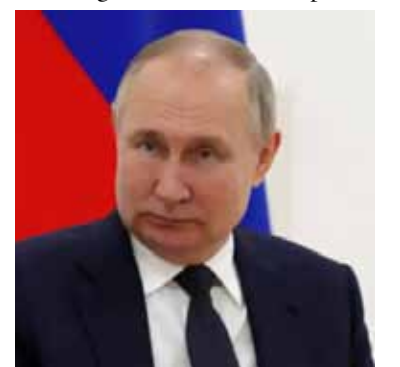
It added that the Ukrainian side should show "readiness" to start the humanitarian evacuations "by raising white flags" at Azovstal.

According to the ministry, this information will be communicated to those inside Azovstal "via radio channels" every 30 minutes.

Russia last week said it had gained full control of the strategic eastern Ukrainian city, except for its huge Azovstal industrial area.

President Vladimir Putin ordered

a blockade of the steelworks, where hundreds of civilians are reportedly sheltering with Ukrainian troops.



Sports



'Nketiah can make Arsenal shirt his own if he does exactly what Arteta wants' - Mills challenges Ghana target

The youngster played well for the Gunners in the last two matches and former defender believes he has qualities to excel

Ex-England international Danny Mills has challenged Eddie Nketiah to give his best in training and stick to the instructions given to stand a better chance of becoming a regular at Arsenal.

The 22-year-old has struggled for game time at the club but played an important role as the Gunners claimed 4-2 and 3-1 wins over Chelsea and Manchester United, respectively, in their last two Premier League matches.

The match against the Blues was Nketiah's second start this season, and he went on to score a brace.

In his interview with Football Insider, Mills said the Ghanaian prospect has what it takes to excel at a high level, but cast doubt on the youngster's attitude in training.

"We have seen that he can score goals, but there's obviously a reason why he doesn't get a lot of game time," the now 44-year-old said in a recent interview.

"He came to Leeds [United on loan] and didn't get much, and he

has had a couple of managers at Arsenal too. You have to ask the question of his performances in training – is he really doing all that he can?

"If you give him the opportunity, he can be brilliant in front of goal. That's not hard to see. I think he just needs to knuckle down in training now, work a little bit harder – and look at his weaknesses.

"He can make the shirt his own if he can do exactly what the manager wants of him."

Nketiah has made 16 appearances for the Gunners in the English top-tier this season, scoring twice and assisting once.

From his display in the club's last two matches, Mikel Arteta might consider giving him a starting role in the London Derby away to West Ham United this weekend.

The Gunners are chasing Champions League football and are currently fourth with 60 points from the 33 matches they have played.

They are, however, facing a stiff challenge from fifth-placed Tottenham Hotspur, who are on 58 points.



Too Good, Too Bad: The Best and Worst of Africans Abroad

Some players made crucial contributions as they emerged as winners, while others scored but found themselves on the losing side. Daybreak looks at how the stars from Africa performed over the weekend as they featured for their sides in various leagues.

TOO GOOD: MOHAMED ELNENY

The Egyptian midfielder provided an assist as Arsenal claimed a 3-1 win over Manchester United at the Emirates.

He provided the assist for the third goal scored by Granit Xhaka in the 70th minute, and now Arsenal have won 19 games in the Premier League this season, one more than they'd registered in 2020-21 and their most in a campaign since 2018-19 (21).

Black Stars prospect Eddie Nketiah played while Ivory Coast's

Nicolas Pepe was not involved.



TOO BAD: EMMANUEL DENNIS AND HASSANE KAMARA

Nigeria's Dennis and Ivory Coast's Kamara combined for Watford's 28th-minute goal in the 5-1 defeat against Manchester City.

Although the Super Eagles star made a career achievement, he could not celebrate it much as they conceded the big defeat at the Etihad. Dennis has now been directly involved in 52% of Watford's 31 Premier League goals this season (10 goals and six assists).

Only Teemu Pukki for Norwich (59%) has had a hand in a higher proportion of his club's goals in the competition in 2021-22.

TOO GOOD: MOHAMED KUDUS

The Ghanaian provided an assist as Ajax defeated NEC 1-0 in the Eredivisie game played on Saturday.

The second-half substitute provided the assist in the 88th minute as Ivory Coast's Sebastien Haller featured but had no impact on the game.



TOO GOOD: KARL TOKO EKAMBI

The Cameroonian scored and provided an assist as Lyon defeated Montpellier 5-2 in a Ligue 1 contest.

He found the back of the net in the 68th minute – for Lyon's third goal – before he assisted Houssein Aouar in scoring the fifth in the second minute of added time.



Sports

From dreamland to a horror trilogy: Xavi's Barcelona honeymoon is well and truly over



Barca have lost three successive home games for the first time in their history, with tactical issues, injuries and fan protests all playing a part

Routing Real Madrid, Atletico Madrid, Napoli, and others - Xavi Hernandez's arrival catapulted Barcelona into dreamland.

For better or worse, it has been a whirlwind start in the dugout for the former Barca midfielder, who compared the 4-0 hammering of Real Madrid at Santiago Bernabeu to a sci-fi flick, but also admitted there

have been "moments of horror".

There were further cuts from the latter genre screened at Camp Nou last week, as Barca fell 1-0 to relegation-battling minnows Cadiz on Monday, and then lost by the same score against Rayo Vallecano on Sunday.

More instalments lie ahead, with Mallorca, another side fighting for their lives, visiting Camp Nou this coming Sunday.

The script they need to follow to beat Barcelona was written by both Cadiz and Rayo. A low block,

organised time-wasting, rotating through different players going down injured or with cramp and stopping the game with repeated small fouls.

The Blaugrana's downturn in form has put their hopes of a second-place finish, and even Champions League qualification, at risk. The performances against Cadiz, in particular, was as disappointing and stolid as the end of the Ronald Koeman era.

The sheen of Barcelona's form at the start of the year, going 15 games

unbeaten, has vanished.

"I understand it's not as motivating for the fans and players to fight for second place," said Xavi, "but we have to be in the Champions League, we want to hear the Champions League music next season."

"We have to go into the games better. In the first half, we were not good. In the second better. We tried everything but the situation is difficult. I recognise as a coach that I made a mistake in not motivating them."

'Beast' Haaland 'needs to come to Arsenal' says Odegaard amid Premier League

The forward is wanted by major clubs from all across Europe; however, his international teammate has joked he should come to Emirates Stadium

Erling Haaland should join Arsenal if he is going to move to the Premier League this summer, says Martin Odegaard - albeit with tongue in cheek.

Haaland is one of the most sought-after strikers in world football and has been linked with virtually every major European club - something which does not surprise his Norway international teammate Odegaard, who calls the forward a "beast".

Manchester City have been especially heavily linked, with reports they have already agreed a deal; however, Odegaard feels that, if Haaland comes to the Premier League, it should be to north London.

Speaking to Stadium Astro, Odegaard said: "He [Haaland] is a funny guy. A good friend of mine and a great player."

"We will see what he will do. I don't know - but, if he is coming to England, he needs to come to us [Arsenal] of course!"

"No, I don't know what he will do but he is a great guy. To be honest we haven't talked too much about it. I know he has so many people trying to ask him and to tell him what to do and I don't want to do that. So, we will have to wait and see."

"He's a beast. He is strong, he is fast, and I think he has everything. So, I think he can play in every league, in every country to be honest."

Barcelona and Real Madrid have both registered interest in signing Haaland in the summer, while reports in the English media say Man City have agreed a £500,000-a-week contract with him.

Haaland reportedly has a release clause which will trigger this summer, meaning European giants are fighting to sign a world-class striker for a relatively smaller fee than they would expect to pay for his talent.

Arsenal have not been closely linked with a deal for Haaland, although they do need a striker with both Alexandre Lacazette and Eddie Nketiah out of contract in the summer.



Vinicius Tobias: Real Madrid's new teenage signing could be Brazil's answer to Alexander-Arnold

The 18-year-old could cost Los Blancos up to €17m having joined on an initial loan from Shakhtar Donetsk in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine

Dani Alves, Cafu, Carlos Alberto - when it comes to producing top-quality right-backs, few do it better than Brazil.

The well, however, has run dry in recent years, so much so that despite being less than a month away from his 39th birthday, Alves is expected to be the Selecao's starter in the position for the 2022 World Cup.

Quite who steps into the Barcelona star's shoes when he eventually hangs up his boots is anyone's guess right now, but there is hope that in a few years, the next top Brazilian right-back will be ready to pull on that famous yellow shirt.

The player in question is Vinicius Tobias, who has been raising eyebrows for a number of years in his homeland, having come through the ranks at Internacional.

The 18-year-old, who on April 1 completed a move to Real Madrid, appeared on the radars of Brazilian fans after helping the country's Under-15s win the South American



Championship in 2019, with Vinicius scoring in the final victory over Argentina.

He has since been likened to Trent Alexander-Arnold, in part because, like the Liverpool star, he started life as a central midfielder who has since been moved to the flank, but has been able to retain his playmaking abilities.

Madrid are in desperate need

of such a player within their first team, with Dani Carvajal having been exposed at times this season, particularly in the Champions League, while versatile duo Nacho and Lucas Vazquez are not natural right-backs despite having both filled in when Carvajal has been absent.

There are high hopes at Madrid for 16-year-old Alejandro

Jimenez, who is already a regular in the Blancos' U19s side, but with Bayern Munich sniffing around the Spain youth international, Vinicius has a real chance to nail down a starting role at Santiago Bernabeu for years to come.

His road to the Spanish capital has, however, not been an easy one.



IT'S election season in Nigeria. The political public relations industry is abuzz. Political hopefuls are hiring hacks to write tendentious screeds that make them feel good but that no one reads. And, of course, smears, coarse insults, illogic, and prevarications are the core constituents of what passes for political public relations in Nigeria.

I have written about Nigeria's peculiarly unpersuasive and unwarrantedly abusive political public relations in the past. I want to reflect on it again this week in light of the current political atmosphere and the heightened deployment of the same stale and sterile tactic of abuse as persuasion.

For the most part, Nigeria's political public relations is crude, vulgar, and intellectually impoverished. No one who desires to change the hearts and minds of people should rely on it. It does no more than attract enemies, scare away potential converts, and ossify negative opinions about candidates or issues.

It consists in barbarous, impulsive, sophomoric insults against real and imagined political opponents—and cloying, hagiographic defence of principals or issues. It lacks nuance, is childish, and seems unconcerned with logic and persuasion. It's also reactive and emotion-laden in the extreme.

The performance of Reuben Abati (who called critics of Goodluck Jonathan "collective children of anger") and Doyin Okupe (who described himself as an "attack lion"), Femi Adesina (who murdered grammar by labeling government critics "wailing wailers")—and several others before and after them—in the defence of their bosses and the demonisation of their bosses' real and imagined political enemies is a classic example of the kind of primitive political public relations that holds sway in Nigeria.

I think Femi Adesina and Garba Shehu have taken verbal primitivism in defense of their boss to an even higher plane. In their public relations, not only "political enemies" come under heavy fire; facts, truth, decency, and logic also become casualties.

They ignore the substance of critiques and try to muddy the waters by making the critic, rather than the critique, the issue.

Bishop Mathew Hassan Kukah is their latest object, as he had been in the past. As I pointed out in an April 19, 2022, article titled 'Buhari Regime's Bishop Kukah Obsession,' it appears that Adesina and Shehu are impelled by an uncontrollable urge to launch vicious personal attacks on Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah each time he says anything remotely uncomplimentary about the Buhari regime.

"There seems to be a standing order, perhaps even an article of faith, in the Buhari presidency that Bishop Kukah must never be left unanswered," I wrote. "Even a cough from him that remotely mimics the sound that Buhari's name makes must be responded to with the pettiest, most sullen, and least sensible comeback."

The desperation of the spokespeople

Backpage Column

Farooq Kperogi

Verbal primitivism as PR in an election year



of the Buhari regime is understandable, of course: The more a government comes to terms with its ineptitude, the more it feels the need to up its lies to mask its failures. That's why propaganda and lies are always proportional to governmental incompetence. That is, the more incompetent a government is, the more it uses propaganda and coarse attacks on critics as a tool of governance.

Nonetheless, the object of public relations, especially political public relations, should be to arm supporters with the ideational resources to defend a person or a position, to win over people who sit on the fence, to persuade opponents to see a person or a point of view as reasonable and worthy of their respect, etc.

This has been the core preoccupation of political public relations since 64 BC when Quintus Tullius Cicero wrote *CommentariolumPetitionis*, regarded by many scholars as the "first publication on electioneering and political public relations."

In the pamphlet, Cicero said the goal of what we call political public relations today is "securing the support of your friends and winning over the general public" in addition to "impressing the voters at large."

He advised people seeking elective office to "take stock of the many advantages you possess," "cultivate relationships," ensure "your family and those closely connected with you" are "all behind you and want you to succeed," "secure supporters from

a wide variety of backgrounds," "seek out men everywhere who will represent you as if they themselves were running for office," be aware that there "are three things that will guarantee votes in an election: favours, hope, and personal attachment. You must work to give these incentives to the right people," and, finally, that the "most important part of your campaign is to bring hope to people and a feeling of goodwill toward you."

Persuasion takes time and work. Even at its best, it is often a gradual process consisting of small, incremental changes at a time. Crude insults don't persuade; they only lead to a boomerang effect. Smart persuaders don't mimic the tactics and strategies of critics. While critics tear down, persuaders build up. And they can disarm critics with grace, warmth, and facts (if they have fact, that is).

In the run-up to the 2015 presidential election, by far the most sophisticated political campaign season in Nigeria since 1999, both APC and PDP deployed the services of well-known American political public relations firms to sway voters in Nigeria because all Nigerian public relations experts know to do is bribe Op Ed editors of newspapers to plan coarse, vulgar abuses against perceived political opponents or hire online troll factories to smear and heckle critics.

APC has used the services of AKPD Message and Media, a political consulting

firm owned by former Obama campaign manager David Axelrod. PDP also used the Potomac Square Group, another well-known consulting firm headed by Joseph Trippi, who managed Howard Dean's failed presidential bid in 2004.

Axelrod's AKPD Message and Media gave Buhari a rhetorical makeover. He went from being a perennial contestant who was dogged by the lumbering baggage of bigotry to someone more people than ever saw as an alternative to Goodluck Jonathan. There were no juvenile personal attacks against critics by overpaid minions hiding under the pseudonymic cover of the Internet.

They shunned Nigeria's crude, vulgar, illogical, abusive, and transparently mendacious political public relations. They are smart enough to know that the problem with crude, abusive political public relations is that it only excites and fires up supporters (who don't need it because their loyalty is already in the bag), but repulses opponents and puts off people on the fence.

The goal of every intelligent political PR should be, as I pointed out earlier, to convince people on the fence to join you and possibly also win over opponents.

Amnesic Romanticization of Jonathan I read that scores of people have marched to the home of former president Goodluck Jonathan to plead with him to run for president again. The major argument advanced by people asking for his return to power was that a bag of rice was between N7,000 and N11,000 when he was president.

Well, if we decide that governance should be reduced to the price of a bag of rice, maybe some people should also go beg former President Olusegun Obasanjo to revive his stillborn Third Term project because a bag of rice during his tenure was around N2,500. That's infinitely cheaper than the price during Jonathan's time.

And I'd advise the dewy-eyed revisionists to reserve some of their energy so that 4 or 5 years from now when the price of a bag of rice jumps from its current price of N33,000 to possibly N50,000—or more—they can beg Buhari to return to power to restore the price back to N33,000.

How can people be this simplistic and amnesic?