



News as it breaks

Daybreak

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N200



Buhari responds to Niger Delta Avengers' threat, says demands have been met >>6



How Nigeria 'accidentally' discovered 206trn cubic feet gas reserve – Minister >>7



FG to impose heavy tax on Facebook, Twitter, other tech companies in Nigeria – Osinbajo >>8



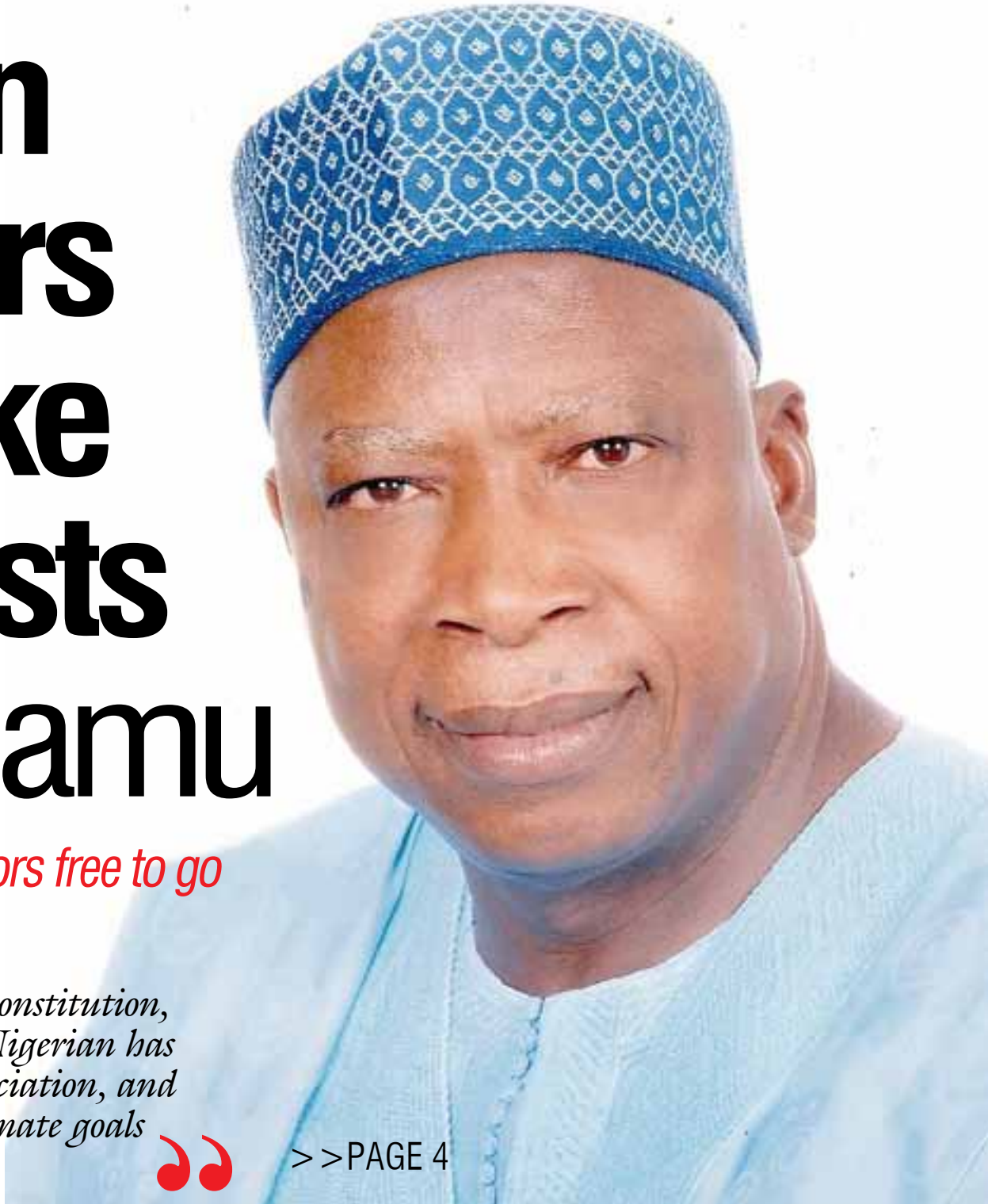
Media gag laws: SERAP drags Buhari, NASS to African Commission >>2

Southern governors acting like separatists - Sen Adamu

● *Says Secessionists' agitators free to go*

“*These governors know the constitution, and they know that every Nigerian has the right of movement, association, and the right to pursue legitimate goals*”

>>PAGE 4



>>PAGE 2 Zamfara Governor Bello Matawalle dumps PDP joins APC

Andy Uba emerges APC governorship candidate in Anambra >>PAGE 2

News

FG commences recovery of grazing routes

By Joyce Babayeju

There seems to be no going back on the Federal Government's stance on recovering grazing routes across the country, as it has been exclusively gathered that efforts have commenced to retrace about 415 grazing routes along the grazing reserves.

The Acting Director, Animal Husbandry Services, Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Winnie Lai-Solarin, who disclosed that most of the grazing routes have been encroached, said government will put into consideration if infrastructure on the routes are of public benefits like universities, general hospitals and others, but if otherwise, they would be retrieved back.

Recall that President Muhammadu Buhari recently approved the return to open grazing practiced during the first republic where herdsmen used designated grazing routes to move cattle to other states.

In furtherance of this, the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Sabo Nanono revealed that about 19 grazing reserves with an approximately 400,000 hectares of land in 10 states have already been earmarked for the pilot phase for the National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP). The 10 states are Taraba, Adamawa, Benue, Plateau, Nassarawa, Zamfara, Kaduna, Gombe, Kebbi and Oyo.

The minister said about 22 states and the Federal Capital Territory had subscribed to the NLTP programme, noting that when fully

implemented, it will bring to an end the incessant clashes between the farmers and herdsmen, and it will at the same time introduces the herders to modern way of raising their cattle.

While ruling out plans of carving-out new grazing routes, Lai-Solarin said it has become necessary to retrace back all the grazing routes because of the ongoing massive development of the grazing reserves, adding that it would be important to create routes for the cattle to come into the reserves.

"We are not creating any stock route, there is primary and secondary stock routes, but most of them have been encroached upon, we are not establishing new ones, but the existing grazing reserves will be retraced, especially for those one still available. Most

of the stock routes lead to the grazing reserves.

"So, with the development of the grazing reserves, the grazing routes that have been encroached will be retraced or if the encroachment is for public good like universities will be left, but for places where there are encroachment that are not for public goods, the route will be retraced for easy movement of the cattle," she said.

Lai-Solarin confirmed that the Federal Government is starting the development of the grazing reserves in 10 states with plans to extend to other states when it becomes necessary, noting that the aim is to have at least one grazing reserve in each states of the federation.

She disclosed that there is already massive development of grazing reserves in Niger State,

just as Katchia and Ladiga grazing reserves are also being developed.

The Acting Director also confirmed that work has started in Wawa-Zange grazing reserve, Gombe State, disclosing that government has put in place both the veterinary and human clinics, with the development of the earth dams for livestock and pasture's usage.

She said for the current year, they would put in place milk collection centres and borehole to service all the facilities, as water is a big challenge in the state.

The Acting Director further noted that the state government has also set up a committee to manage the grazing reserves through a Public Private Partnership (PPP) arrangement.

It should be noted that grazing reserves development is one of the arms of the National Transformation Plan of the livestock industry. Other transformation programme includes the National Dairy Programme, where herdsmen come into the grazing reserves; there is National Breed Improvement Programme and the National Pasture Programme. This is because improved milk production is dependent on availability of pasture and water.

The ultimate goal of the Federal Government, based on information is to encourage pastoralists to move from the extensive practice to the semi-intensive practice that would enable them have improved breed, more yields, thereby improve their productivity.

Lai-Solarin said: "I want to remind us that we didn't get here in one day, it's going be a long term thing, so we are asking for patience. The livestock industry has suffered neglect for the past 40 years, look at where we are coming from and the time it took us, but we are steadily moving with the support of the President and the minister. We are moving and we are moving fast."

She said the ministry is collaborating with the Myetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) and all other pastoral groups, to ensure government is reaching the right people, so that sustainability is assured. "If the association can be collaborating with us in capacity building on the use of the facilities we have put in place and linking the livestock farmers to the market, then it is okay," she stated.

Zamfara Governor Bello Matawalle dumps PDP joins APC

Despite repeated denials that he was not planning to join the All Progressives Congress (APC), the Governor of Zamfara State, Bello Matawalle, has now joined Nigeria's ruling party, an aide to President Muhammadu Buhari has said.

In a post shared on his verified Facebook account, the president's Personal Assistant on Digital and New Media, Bashir Ahmad, suggested that Mr Matawalle has

left the People's Democratic Party (PDP) for the APC.

"So Zamfara is back home! Welcome Matawalle," Mr Ahmad wrote.

Mr Matawalle was elected on the platform of the PDP after the Supreme Court nullified the victory of the APC in the 2019 elections in the state due to an internal party crisis. Before then, Zamfara was an APC state with the governor and majority of the

federal and state lawmakers from the ruling party.

Prior to Mr Ahmad's announcement, the Zamfara State Executive Council was dissolved by the governor, a move a source close to the governor confirmed was in preparation to join the APC.

Matawalle reportedly dissolved his cabinet due to the reluctance of some members to defect with him to the ruling party.

The governor however said that he sacked his cabinet members in a bid to reinvigorate his government for the second half of his tenure. He said he has not decided on defecting nor fixed a date for such.

Zamfara state officials close to Mr Matawalle confirmed again that the governor was set to join the APC. Some of them said they had already been told to start ditching the PDP flag in preparation for the official defection.

Andy Uba emerges APC governorship candidate in Anambra

By Mije Oboh

Former Special Assistant to ex-President Olusegun Obasanjo, Senator Andy Uba has been declared the winner of last Saturday's gubernatorial primary of All Progressives Congress, APC for the Anambra governorship election.

Uba defeated 13 other aspirants to emerge the party's governorship

candidate in the November 6 election, according to results announced by the chairman of the APC primary election panel and governor of Ogun State, Prince Dapo Abiodun.

In the result announced early Sunday morning, Uba recorded a landslide win, scoring 230,201 votes to the 28,746 votes of his closest rival, Johnbosco Onunkwo.

According to the committee, the primary election was conducted using the open ballot mode also known as Option A4.

The total vote cast was 348,490.

Full results as announced by the Dapo Abiodun committee for each of the candidates:

Senator Andy Uba – 230,201
Dr. Chidozie Nwankwo – 21,281
iii. George Moghalu – 18,596

Paul Orajiaka – 4,348
Geoff Onyejeagbu – 3,414
Azuka Okwuosa – 17,189
vii. Nwokafor Daniel – 3,335
viii. Ikoobasi Mokelu – 3,727
Kwebuike Ifeanyi – 1,466
Godwin Okonkwo – 5,907
Ben Etiaba – 4,244
xii. Onuwkwo John Bosco – 28,746
xiii. Edozie Madu – 3,636
xiv. Maxwell Okoye – 2,540

Media gag laws: SERAP drags Buhari, NASS to African Commission

Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) has sent a complaint to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in Banjul, The Gambia asking it to stop the Nigerian government and National Assembly from pushing through two bills to gag the media.

SERAP in the complaint urged the commission to "issue provisional measures" to stop the bills.

The bills seek to impose arbitrary

and harsh punishment on journalists, broadcast stations, media houses and media practitioners.

SERAP's complaint was addressed to the Chairperson of the Commission Mr Solomon Ayele Dersso, and Commissioner and Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa, Ms Jamesina Essie L. King.

It said the complaint was brought pursuant to Articles 55 and 56 of the African Charter on Human and

Peoples' Rights and Rule 100 of the Rules of Procedure of the African Commission.

The Complaint followed the move to push through two repressive bills to amend the National Broadcasting Act, and to amend the Nigeria Press Council Act. The bills are reportedly sponsored by Chairman, House Committee on Information, Mr Segun Odeunmi (PDP, Oyo State).

In the Complaint dated 26 June 2021 and signed by SERAP deputy

director Kolawole Oluwadare, the organization said:

"The push by the Nigerian government and the National Assembly to support and pass the two anti-media bills is unlawful, as passing the bills would be contrary to the country's obligations to respect, protect, promote and fulfil the right to freedom of expression, access to information and media freedom

Continued on Page 6

EDITORIAL

Obnoxious clauses in the NBC and NPC acts must be resisted

The sine qua non of any democratic society is freedom of speech and the freedom of the means of exercising free speech.

It is the norm in a democracy that people are free to hold and express even the most obnoxious and absurd views without let or hindrance by the state.

The beauty of democracy is that those who hold contrary views are equally allowed to express their views openly.

Freedom of expression is the bulwark and basis of any democratic society. The underlying philosophy of freedom of speech in a democratic society is rightly expressed in these Voltairean paraphrases:

“I don’t agree with what you say but I will defend to the death your right to say it”

“Think for yourselves and allow others the privilege to do so too”

The underpinnings of freedom of speech is equally hinged on the free market principle which holds that in a free market place of ideas and opinions, the best ideas will always prevail.

It is for this reason that prior restraints is always frowned upon.

Consequently any law that seeks to curtailed freedom of speech in a democratic society is not considered as law.

This is because without freedom of expression or the rights to lay before the public domain our thoughts and feelings we have no real freedoms or democracy, what we are left with under such situation is authoritarianism, despotism, tyranny and repression.

In a democracy sovereignty resides with the people and government fear the people because they draw their power and authority from the people.

As Thomas Edison said: “When government fears the people, there is liberty. When the people fear the government, there is tyranny.”

In Nigeria today do government fear the people or the people fear the government?

Is the basic ingredient of a properly functioning democracy, which is freedom of expression not being eroded with the swift ban of Twitter; plans to prosecute users of the platform under an unknown law and the proposed new regulation and clampdown on other social media platforms and the broadcast media?

The current attempts to amend the Nigerian Press Council Act, the National Broadcasting Commission Act can all be viewed as an attempt to curtail and strifle freedom of speech and freedom of the press.

Perhaps before we go further we should ask ourselves why has the American government been unable to place a ban or proscription on the activities of racist and hate filled White supremacists groups like the neo-Nazists, the KKK, QAnon and others who frequently use social media to propagate hate, fuel conspiracies and incite their members?

The answer is constitutionally enshrined. A close look at the First Amendment rights or bill of rights in the US constitution shows that there is no freedom of speech limitation or exception.

This was

recently affirmed in a US Supreme Court Judgment in the case between Matal v. Tam (2017) where the Justice Samuel Alito held that:

“The idea that the government may restrict speech expressing ideas that offend...strikes at the heart of the First Amendment. Speech that demeans on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, or any other similar ground is hateful; but the proudest boast of our free speech jurisprudence is that we protect the freedom to express the thought that we hate”.

The same view was expressed by Justice Anthony Kennedy who held that:

“A law found to discriminate based on viewpoint is an egregious form of content discrimination which is presumptively unconstitutional...instead; our reliance must be on the substantial safeguards of free and open discussion in a democratic society”.

In the United States freedom of speech and the means of expressing them is expressly protected against prohibition or restriction or at the whim of the US President.

It is impossible to have free citizens without freedom of speech. Any law that seeks to curtail freedom of expression is antithetical to the norms of democracy hence there is always a careful balance between freedom of expression and the need to protect public decency and national security.

National security issues must not be conflicted with issues of free speech. In a constitutional democracy like ours the rights enshrined in section 39 of the 1999 constitution should be revered.

In these fractious times the government must resist the urge to trample on the rights of citizens. Trying to silence those who are exercising their rights of freedom of speech using any platform of their choice must be denounced and resisted.

It is ludicrous that after two decades of unbroken democracy we are on reverse gear in promoting the basic rights of citizens.

Hence the attempt to insert obnoxious and striffling provisions into the NBC and the NPC Acts should be resisted by well meaning Nigerians.

The constitution remains the Supreme law of the land, an act of the National Assembly cannot be superior to the constitution which has already given Nigerians freedom of speech and of the means of exercising free speech as enshrined in section 39 of the 1999 constitution as altered.

Nigeria operates a constitutional democracy based on the rule of law we are free citizens and not subjects of an imperial leader.



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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.

Cover

Opposition of southern governors to open grazing

The southern governors are sounding like a broken record. You know what a broken record does? It cracks. I expected them to be more educated people with the responsibility of governance. Each of those governors is under an oath of loyalty, and of preservation of the sovereignty of this country. That means that each of them is duty-bound to stay away from any act, or word that has the tendency to be perceived as being separatists.

I was a governor for eight years, and I know what The Governors' Forum is because I headed it for five of my eight years in office. Before that, I was chairman of the Northern Governors' Forum. So, the secretariat that you see, and the bureaucracy were set up during my time.

But those that took over from us began to have a situation because we are in a democracy, and people will give to the president, shopping lists from their different zones. There are people in the cabinet, the National Economic Council, and the National Council of States, who once they get themselves out there, begin to talk for their states or their zones only.

Before the Asaba Accord, there was a meeting of all the state governors, and about 36 of them were there. And less than a week after that meeting, some people came out and claim to be members of the Southern Governors Forum. Really, there is nothing wrong with regional bodies, but these governors know the constitution, and they know that every Nigerian has the right of movement, association, and the right to pursue legitimate goals. However, if these governors are saying no to cattle routes and open grazing, what are the alternatives that they have provided? If northern governors come together and take a position, what will happen? What right have you to tell Nigerians not to move freely? If northern groups also say no to southern businesses in their domain, how will that end up?

There are killings of northerners going on in the South, but if the North decides to retaliate, we will call it genocide. What is happening to us? We only know about problems, but not solutions. People are openly calling for a breakup of the country.

Buhari should not take all the blame

Southern govts acting like separatists - Sen Adamu

● Says Secessionists' agitators free to go

"These governors know the constitution, and they know that every Nigerian has the right of movement, association, and the right to pursue legitimate goals". Southern governors at their recent meeting in Asaba, the Delta State capital, as part of measures to address insecurity in the region had banned open grazing and also called on the President Muhammadu Buhari to restructure the country. Responding to the communiqué of the Southern governors the Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Abubakar Malami, SAN, described the ban as unconstitutional. He said, "It is as good as saying, perhaps, maybe, the northern governors coming together to say they prohibit spare parts trading in the North." In an interview with journalists in Abuja over the weekend, former governor of Nasarawa state and now Senator representing took a swipe at southern governors describing their ban on open grazing as actions of separatists. EXCERPT:



It is my first time since coming of age that somebody will just get up and say anything about the government and go scot-free. A lot of people are daily sabotaging this government, including those who are under oath. There are also those who are willing and lurking by the corner to do bad things, who now

have got the leverage since they now have people that are even in government, but are not showing satisfaction, loyalty, patriotism. So, what do you expect?

These are some of the issues that have joined forces to place us where we are today, and nobody can single-handedly, no matter what

power you give him, get us out of this mess. All Nigerians must be ready to get the country back on track. This is not to say that Buhari's government is blameless. I am not suggesting that at all. What I am saying is that we are contributing more to creating problems for the government than what we are doing

to solve the problems created by the government. This government is our government; it was elected. No matter what we say. The National Assembly has members from the PDP, APGA, YPP, and the APC. So, everybody is there. Indeed, there are people from every part of this country in the National Assembly and in the Federal Executive Council (FEC). Buhari cannot take all the blame. The idea behind every state having a member in the FEC is for them to bring value and add to Buhari's capacity. But where are they, and what are they saying today?

Is there anything in this country that says that a minister cannot talk? If a governor can talk, can't ministers also talk? But everybody is just folding his/her hands, and unfortunately for us, Buhari is not the talking type. If he were to open up, you would wish you were down the drain. But God has given him the capacity to absorb. It is part of the characteristics of a leader. Yes, there are certain things that have happened that he was supposed to react and respond to, but we have people who are not patient. You see a problem today and you want a solution today. I don't want to sound like I am justifying what you may see as a failure, but I am giving my thoughts as to why I think we are where we are, and why I think most Nigerians who have the responsibility are not living up to expectations.

If I am in government, you expect something from me. I am also part of the government and cannot exonerate myself. Most of us that are educated, even if we went to missionary schools, benefitted in one way or the other from the government's contribution to our education. So, there is a contribution that the government has made in preparing us to be where we are today. And as patriotic citizens, one would expect some level of concern, and the concern would not be genuine if we become critics. Even a critic can be positively critical, but where it is just a matter of picking whatever you want to pick and then throw it out without caring about the implications, it is not good. It is just bad.

Nigeria's problems didn't start with Buhari

When you're talking of somebody's leadership qualities, you don't just pass judgment. We have the misfortune of battling Boko Haram insurgency alongside other forms of security challenges. It is unfortunate. We must get



one fact very clear. This thing didn't start with Buhari. I cannot deny that there are a few cases, and in fact, an increase in general insecurity. That will be unfair. But the major problem is the failure of state administrations to take up the issue of security seriously. Just like Buhari, every governor has taken an oath to protect the lives and property of the citizens. They get money from the Federation Account and also generate revenues from their states. These are the facts. We agree that the central government

needs to handle the issue, but states have to play complementary roles in tackling the issues too. Go and take an inventory of the number of states that are paying salaries today. This is not just about Buhari. States are not paying salaries even with the Paris Club refunds and others that they got. If you have small problems from the various states over time, they aggregate and become big problems. Suddenly, they refer to the problems as Buhari's problems. Every state government has a responsibility to provide for its

people. Nobody said that Buhari is an angel; nobody also said because Buhari is now president, every state governor should abandon his responsibilities.

There is nothing new about restructuring

A few years ago, people were not talking about the breakup of the country, Why now? Political leaders are in support of what their people are doing. They cannot speak up and challenge them. They just lament; they want the president to handle it. They are talking about restructuring. What is new there? When you and I know that we passed a law in the National Assembly trying to free states' assemblies and judiciaries. Is Buhari responsible for that?

Were efforts made by the National Assembly to free local government councils, states' assemblies, and state judiciaries part of moves to restructure the polity? That was part of a restructuring. What is even this restructuring? Those saying it want us to take a look at the exclusive legislative list. We don't have to fight over restructuring. We have two chambers that can handle that. Both were elected, and this is our job. If you're dissatisfied with the issues in Nigeria, you can bring these issues to the National Assembly. They don't want that, they want to blame the president.

There is nowhere that the president can alter the constitution. He can't even give an order for that to be done. And these agitators are educated, people. Take the issues to us and Buhari will assent to it. We keep saying that Nigerians didn't write the constitution. Was it Buhari that wrote it? Why is everybody calling Buhari? It's sickening. There is a limit. Not that we can't talk. We have the capacity to do more. But what we won't take lightly, is for any part of this country to think that they have a louder voice. That is not true. When the North starts talking, maybe there will be sense.

If we want this country to stay on, we will. I speak as a Nigerian of northern extraction. I will defend that as long as I live. Those who want to leave can go. We will continue to exist as one Nigeria. Let's see where they will go. Separatists are taking laws into their hands and we are tolerating them. The next thing they would shout about human rights. We need to stop. It won't do us any good. No country has survived two civil wars. Army generals have told me that. We must watch out and guide against another war. We should be careful about what we say. These agitators can go. But we will remain.

“Buhari cannot take all the blame. The idea behind every state having a member in the FEC is for them to bring value and add to Buhari's capacity. But where are they, and what are they saying today?”

News



How Nigeria 'accidentally' discovered 206trn cubic feet gas reserve – Minister

Minister of State for Petroleum, Timipre Sylva, has said that the country accidentally discovered 206 trillion cubic feet of gas reserves while in search of crude oil.

Mr. Sylva, who disclosed this in Abuja at a News Agency of Nigeria forum, said that the country could discover an additional 600 trillion cubic feet reserve to enable it achieve the desired development required of a gas nation.

"We have a lot of gas in this country. We have 206 trillion cubic feet of gas reserves.

"This number is already discovered in gas reserves and this 206 trillion cubic feet reserve was found while looking for oil, so it was accidentally discovered.

"We were actually going to look for crude oil and we found gas, and in that process of accidentally finding gas, we have found up to 206 tcf.

"So, the belief is that if we really aim to look for gas dedicatedly, we will find up to 600 trillion cubic meters of gas," he said.

According to the minister, the country's transition from gas to renewable fuel will be gradual when it has fully utilised the benefits associated with gas.

"We are also transiting and that is why we are talking about gas. We are seeing gas as a bridge to renewable fuels.

"We came from coal which is solid, to crude oil; now we are

moving to gaseous gas and then to renewables.

"The belief in the industry is that if we have this kind of vast resource and we have not tapped it, why should we abandon it and move to renewables.

"We have not used gas to drive our cars and few people use it to cook; we have not used gas to generate electricity or used it to fire our fertiliser blending plants, then why should we abandon it and move to renewables?"

"What we are saying is that the western countries are in a position to move to renewables after using coal and crude oil to stabilise the electricity in their areas and

everybody there enjoys it.

"But we have a situation in Nigeria where a lot of people do not have access to electricity yet.

"So, what we are saying is that we agree to transit but let us use our gas first to develop our country and get the benefits of development, that point where everybody has electricity, then we can transit to renewable fuel," he added.

Mr. Sylva explained that so far gas was being used as a transition fuel, as Nigeria and Africa as a continent does not contribute more than one percent of global warming as carbon emission. NAN

NAF strikes decimates terrorists stronghold

A coordinated multiple airstrikes by aircraft from the Nigerian Airforce (NAF) have destroyed strongholds of terrorist's commanders at the Lake Chad axis.

This is despite the alleged reunion of Boko Haram and ISWAP factions in the area.

Report indicates that the intelligence inspired operation was targeted at various terrorists' camps in Sabon Tumbu, Jibularam and Kwalaram. The latest development is coming after a report suggested that Boko Haram and ISWAP terrorists

have reunited in a 13-minute video showing the gunmen placing "their hands atop one another, while chanting words of solidarity, to demonstrate their reuniting and togetherness." An intelligence source involved in the operation said that the aircraft also bombarded the spiritual base and training camps of the terrorists in the North-eastern part of Borno State and the fringes of Lake Chad. "Intelligence revealed that their leaders including Ali Chakkar and other top ISWAP commanders were holding a meeting when the attacks were

... SERAP drags Buhari, NASS to African Commission

Continued from Page 2

under articles 1 and 9 of the African Charter."

"These anti-media bills are the latest threats to freedom of expression, access to information and media freedom in the country. The bills are not in keeping with the provisions of the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa, which supplements articles 1 and 9 of the African Charter."

"The Commission has the power to request Provisional Measures from the Nigerian government and National Assembly under Rule 100 of the Rules of Procedure to prevent irreparable harm and threats to human rights including freedom of expression, access to information and media freedom as urgently as the situation demands."

The Complaint, read in part: "The bills include retrogressive provisions that threaten human rights, including freedom of expression, access to information and media freedom, and could criminalize reporting and give the government overly broad powers and oversight over journalists, broadcast stations, media houses and media practitioners."

"If passed into laws, the bills would be used by those in power to intimidate and harass their critics, and to stifle freedom of expression, access to information and media freedom. The bills would have a chilling effect on the media thereby inducing some measure of self-censorship."

"Media freedom, which is an aspect of the right to freedom of expression, is now generally recognised as an indispensable element of democracy. The mass media promotes the free flow of information, which enables citizens to participate in a meaningful and informed manner in the democratic process."

"The actions by the Nigerian government and National Assembly are contrary to Articles 1 and 9 of the African Charter, and have thereby violated Nigeria's positive obligation under Article 1 to recognise the rights, duties and freedoms and to adopt legislative or other measures to give effect to them."

"SERAP regularly relies on the media to carry out its mandate in the promotion of transparency and

accountability and respect for socio-economic rights of Nigerians."

"The Nigerian government and National Assembly are directly responsible for pushing the bills that would gag the media and impose harsh punishment on journalists, broadcast stations, media houses and media practitioners in the country, action in violation of the African Charter, and therefore also in violation of Article 1 of the Charter."

"Nigerians, broadcast stations, media houses and media practitioners in the country face a real and immediate risk of violation of their rights to freedom of expression, access to information and media freedom if the anti-media bills are not urgently withdrawn."

"The Nigerian government and National Assembly have failed to produce any evidence that the two bills are necessary or lawful, and in the absence of such, SERAP asks the Commission to order the immediate withdrawal of the bills by Nigerian authorities."

"The media also serves as a watchdog by scrutinising and criticising public officials over the way they manage public affairs and public resources. In the performance of these functions, the media's debate on public issues should be uninhibited, robust and wide-open. Speech concerning public affairs is more than self-expression; it is the essence of self-government."

"A free press is the lifeblood of a healthy democracy, one in which journalists are both benefactors and beneficiaries of human rights and carrying out their professional duties to inform their communities and enable democratic participation."

"Individual journalists cannot do their jobs if the institution of the press is compromised or if the legal protections for that institution are subject to approvals by political authorities."

"The exhaustion of domestic remedies requirements set out in Article 56(5) of the African Charter has been met. There are no effective or sufficient local remedies available to the Complainant."

"Nigerian courts do not entertain cases on the legality of anti-media and anti-human rights bills. Also, one of the lawmakers pushing the bills Mr Odegunni Olusegun has reportedly boasted that 'No court will stop us from passing the bills. Requiring SERAP to exhaust domestic remedies in such circumstances would be a mockery of justice.'"

"Under the bills, the National Broadcasting Commission can shut down TV and radio stations "in the public interest" and the press code must be approved by the Minister of Information. The overly broad definition of public interest opens the door for the Nigerian government to crackdown on freedom of expression, access to information and media freedom."

"The bills would also allow the Nigerian government to jail journalists, fine newspapers up to N10m naira (\$20,000) or close them for up to a year if they publish "fake" news. Under the bills, journalists could be held liable for the offence committed by their organisations and can be made to pay heavy fines."

launched on their locations. "The precision-guided airstrikes coordinated by the Air Task Force Command resulted in the killing of very large numbers of ISWAP Boko Haram Terrorists."

The NAF Spokesperson, Air Commodore Edward Gabkwet confirmed the attacks on the locations

He said: "We don't differentiate between Boko Haram and ISWAP terrorists as we successfully launched the devastating intelligence-led aerial attacks targeting the terrorists in those locations."

Buhari responds to Niger Delta Avengers' threat, says demands have been met

By Ike Obi

President Muhammadu Buhari has responded to the threat of Niger Delta Avengers to start bombing oil installations in the Niger Delta region, noting that the threat of sabotage of oil installation was unnecessary since their demand has already been met.

Recall that over the weekend the media was awash with threats and demands by a group, Niger Delta Avengers, to embark on economic sabotage through bombing of critical oil and gas installations unless certain demands, including development of the Niger Delta, and restructuring of the Federation, were attended to.

A press statement by presidential spokesperson Femi Adesina said the threat was curious and that the threat was coming less than 48 hours after President Muhammadu Buhari met with the leadership of the Niger Delta and Ijaw National Congress (INC), at the Presidential Villa, and the germane issues were responded to, especially call for restructuring of the Federation, and the inauguration of a Board for the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC).

"I warmly welcome all the Elders of the Niger Delta and particularly the National Executive of the Ijaw National Congress, under the leadership of Professor Benjamin Okaba. I thank you for paying this courtesy visit not too long after your election in April, and swearing-in last May.

"I also want to congratulate you all for your election and to add that a lot of responsibility is placed on your shoulders, especially coming from the fact that the Ijaw National Congress was almost without leadership for some time.

"As the symbol of the collective voice of the Ijaw people, which is one of Nigeria's main ethnic groups, the existence of a focused and people oriented leadership would go a long way in articulating the demands of the Ijaw people and making sure these demands are made part of the national discourse.

"I particularly note your ten point demand to the Federal Government in your inaugural speech and assure you that this administration is frontally addressing them.

"I am equally concerned about the rate of environmental degradation in the Niger Delta and as you are aware the HydroCarbon Pollution Remediation Project has started work with remediation efforts in Ogoni land and I have directed the Minister of Environment to ensure that the projects are implemented with a high percentage of local content and inclusion of the surrounding communities.

"Similarly, the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency, under the same ministry of Environment is working to make sure that oil spills are reduced and new ones prevented. As you are also aware, all the responsible agencies of government have been



President Buhari

directed to ensure that they enforce compliance by the International Oil Companies to international best practices.

"In addressing your call for immediate restructuring, the National Assembly whose responsibility it is to ensure that our constitution responds to the call for a restructured Nigeria, has already concluded regional consultations and as soon as they finalise the process, necessary action would not be delayed on my part.

"In the same vein, your call for creation of two additional states and more local government areas for the Ijaw people is a legislative matter, which should naturally be handled by the National Assembly and seeking concurrence at the state levels.

"I completely agree with your call to allocate operational licenses for marginal fields to Ijaw people. However, like you know, the process of granting licenses is guided by laid down rules and regulations, most of which even favour local content and local contractors. I see no reason why they should not be granted such licenses if they qualify.

"On the issue of fair and balanced appointments to reflect federal character principles, I reaffirm that this has always been my focus and would continue to be because I have always seen Nigeria as a country where everyone should be given equal opportunities.

"A contentious issue that has been a subject of discourse amongst the Ijaw people of recent has been the need for the Niger Delta Development Commission to live up to its billing by delivering the required succour to the people of the region. Based on the mismanagement that had previously be-devilled the NDDC, a forensic audit was set up and the result is expected by the end of July, 2021.

"I want to assure you that as soon as the forensic audit report is submitted and accepted,

the NDDC Board would be inaugurated. However, I would like to implore you that the Ijaw National Congress should play a more active role in making sure that the mismanagement that occurred in the past is not repeated.

"I am particularly happy to note your call for promoting ownership of modular refineries by the Ijaw people and I will urge you to interphase with your sons who are involved in the processes of establishing these refineries, especially the Honourable Minister of State Petroleum Resources to actualize this quest.

"Like you well know, completion of the East-West Road is top on my infrastructure agenda and I will look to its speedy conclusion. Again, the occasional disturbance by youths in some communities along the route to construction work would require your close attention and guidance.

"Furthermore, we have made considerable progress with the construction of the Bonny to Port Harcourt Bridge.

"I am very happy with the recent affirmation of your belief in a United Nigeria and while I thank you for standing with me, I will also implore you to use your leverage in making sure that we keep working together to keep this country a united, indivisible entity, so that we can tackle our problems together and overcome our challenges together.

"I would like now to commend Professor Okaba for your emphasis on supporting the fight against insecurity by developing internal control mechanisms as well as working with other institutions in the country to address our current security challenges.

"While I thank you once more for this visit and I will continue to count on your support as we work towards resolving our current challenges.

"God Bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria."

Kangiwa urges teachers to venture into tourism

By Joyce Remi- Babayeju

Director General of the National Institute for Hospitality and Tourism (NIHOTOUR), Alhaji Nura Sani Kangiwa has urged secondary school teachers to venture into tourism as a career which is a multidimensional industry.

Kangiwa who made the call at the opening ceremony of the second phase of 'Train the Trainer' program organized by the Institute for secondary school teachers in the Federal Capital Territory, said tourism as a multifaceted skill enterprise offers lots of opportunities for those willing to delve into it as either entrepreneurs or career teachers and trainers in tourism subjects.

Represented at the occasion by Dr. Taiwo Famogbiyele, Director Research and Development of the Institute, Kangiwa noted further that the tourism subsectors offer such entrepreneurial skills and business opportunities as Tour Guiding, Tour Operations, Travel Agency Operations, Cabin Crew, Gardens Operations, Events Management, Recreational Management Centres, Hospitality Management, Pastry and Cookery amongst a host of others, saying that one can also take up teaching career in the afore-mentioned

tourism subsectors in both secondary and tertiary institutions as instructors and lecturers.

He commended the participants for choosing the training within the Federal Capital Territory and advised them to make judicious use of the knowledge and skills they will acquire to impact positively in improving the lots of the Nigerian Travel Tourism and Hospitality industry.

Speaking at the occasion, Mr. Edwin Enenta, Head of Department of the Travel Tourism Department of the Institute called on the trainees to remain focused and resilient in their chosen career as teachers of tourism subject in the schools so as to adequately nurture a generation of tourism enthusiasts and professional practitioners for the Nigerian tourism industry.

It would be recalled that the first phase of Train the Trainer program by the Institute began in September 2020 in its quest to advance the frontiers of tourism training and education in the country.

The hospitality agency initiated the teaching of tourism to teachers teaching tourism in secondary schools to support and enhance their skills and competency.

This initiative the agency said is further justified by the inclusion of tourism into the secondary school curriculum and as a WAEC examination subject.

NAWOJ FCT felicitates with Dr Ramatu Aliyu on coronation as Onyiza of Ebiraland

By Joyce Remi- Babayeju

The Nigeria Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ), FCT Chapter, has facilitated with the Minister of State FCT, Dr. Ramatu Tijjani Aliyu, on her coronation as the Onyize of Ebiraland (Mother of Wealth) by His Royal Majesty Ohinoyi Dr. Ado Ibrahim (Attah Ibara).

The FCT Minister of State was conferred with the title on Saturday at the Palace of the Attah of Ebara in Okene, Kogi state, amidst celebration and encomium from party leaders, community members, and supporters of the Kogi-born politician.

The female journalists in a press statement by the chairperson, Comrade Annah Daniel, Sunday in Abuja, said the minister was deserving of the recognition given her contribution to Kogi state and Nigeria as a whole.

"The recognition of the Minister by her people is a testimony of her dedication as the Minister of State in the FCT and her contributions to society."

"Also, this recognition has changed

the belief that a prophet is not recognised in her home. Indeed, this 'prophetess' has been recognised and will certainly encourage and inspire many, especially women in our male dominated society."

The Association's Chairperson also felicitated with the Minister on her 51st birthday and prayed God to bless her and continue to endow her with wisdom and knowledge to discharge her duties more effectively and with the fear of God.

Comrade Daniel noted that Dr Ramatu has represented the Nigerian women effectively and has been an inspiration to many young Nigerians, especially the girl-child.

"Her antecedent as former Woman Leader of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) and President of the Council of African Political Parties continues to inspire more women to join politics and take up positions of authority in government," she further stated.

She urged the minister to keep up the good work and continue to empower the less privileged, especially widows and vulnerable women, as she wished her the best in her endeavours.

News

ACF, Ohanaeze Ndi Igbo, Afenifere, South-South Leaders to meet soon

By Gabriel Udeh, Kaduna

Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) said it will soon organized a meeting with leaders of Ohanaeze Ndi Igbo, Afenifere and South-South Leaders to discuss the lingering issues in the country that have tended to pitch ethnic and regional groups against each other.

The Forum also expressed satisfaction with the recent stand of the South east Leaders and Governors on the violent agitation for secession from Nigeria by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and Eastern Security Network (ESN).

ACF disclosed this in a communique issued at the end of the National Executive Council (NEC) meeting held at its headquarters in Kaduna on Wednesday.

The forum, in a communique presented by its national chairman, Chief Audu Ogbeh, also commended two Northern Governors, Senator Atiku Bagudu of Kebbi State and Professor Umara Zulum of Borno State for demonstrating unusual courage in their fight against terrorism in their states. ACF thus urged other Governors in the North to demonstrate similar bravery in



Yerima Shettima

the fight against insecurity that is ruining everything that the North has always stood for.

The Forum also praised the gallantry of the country's fighting forces who, against all odds have continued to risk their own lives in the fight against banditry and insurgencies. "The Forum expressed satisfaction with the recent stand of the South east Leaders and Governors on the violent agitation for secession from Nigeria by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and Eastern Security Network.

"Forum also expressed satisfaction that Igbo Elders have finally disowned the agitators and called on the elders to take concrete measures to ensure that such agitations come to an end.

"The ACF notes that the South East Leaders called on



George Obiozor

Northern leaders to protect their indigenes who are living in the North. we wish to assure them that all Ibos who are living in the North are guaranteed their personal security; sometimes they enjoy a security which even Northerners do not enjoy.

"On the other hand, we have received reports on a daily basis of Northerners, ordinary citizens who are earning their daily life as nail cutters, suya makers, shoe shiners, onion sellers, are being bullied, beaten and even killed. We hope these ordinary Northerners are given the same protection we have given the South-Easterners in our midst.

"In the very near future, the Forum hopes to meet with leaders of Ohanaeze Ndi Igbo, Afenifere and South-South leaders to discuss the lingering



Ayo Adebajo

issues in the country that have tended to pitch ethnic and regional groups against each other", it stated. On the economy, the Forum regretted the high rates of interest charged on bank loans in the country.

According to the Forum the interest charged by banks on commercial loans are so high that instead of promoting business, they are killing all indigenous business enterprises. "No business can function in Nigeria or anywhere without a friendly environment of loaning from banks. We call on the government to intervene because the collapse of business has direct links with unemployment and insecurity.

It also stated that "ACF wants to commend the Federal Government for the effort it is making to improve the state

of the infrastructure in the country. "The fact, however, remains that the northern part of the country, with the largest proportion of land (over 75%) and the highest number of population is definitely not getting its fair share of the new infrastructure being developed", it added.

On Food Security, the Forum stated that it's not happy with the scant attention paid to Animal Husbandry by States and Federal Government in the country. "Animal Husbandry alone accounts for 6% of our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) Nigeria spends \$1.6 on importation of milk alone. If animal husbandry is well harnessed it will save Nigeria, this large expenditure.

"Many Nigerians are not aware that those involved in the business of animal husbandry are themselves victims of insecurity their cattle are often rustled and they are kidnapped for ransom too. "There is need to encourage alternative means of dispute resolution as those involved in farmers/herdsmen clashes are rural illiterates who sometimes are not comfortable with the police and the modern court system but would prefer traditional way of resolving issues. The Forum also regretted that a laudable program like the Normadic Education embarked on during the Babangida administration has been abandoned.

"There is need to revive and expand this laudable programme so that the pastoralists who have been profiled, exploited, abandoned and left behind by the modern society will also acquire skills to live in harmony with their brothers and sisters in Nigeria.

On Local Governments, it state that, this tier of government is not being allowed to work and the failure is having a devastating effort on the security architecture of the country. "They must be allowed to work and ACF calls strongly on the Federal Government and the States Government to allow the Local Government to perform the roles and functions they were constitutionally created to perform", it lamented.

The forum chairman also said that "Given the realities of the time over issues of security, food scarcity, drug abuse,, he urged members of the Forum to adopt, more proactive measures in addressing problems facing the North and the nation.

FG to impose heavy tax on Facebook, Twitter, other tech companies in Nigeria – Osinbajo

Vice President Yemi Osinbajo has disclosed that the Federal Government will soon impose heavy tax on giant technology and digital companies in Nigeria.

Osinbajo said the Federal Government will utilize its legal provisions to collect taxes on profits made in the country by global technology and digital firms not based in the country, but with significant economic presence.

He disclosed this during an interactive session with a delegation of the Chartered Institute of Taxation of Nigeria, CITN, led by its President, Mr Adesina Adedayo at the Presidential Villa on Friday and was

contained in a statement by his spokesman, Laolu Akande.

Osinbajo, however, assured Nigerians that government would not be increasing tax any time soon.

The statement reads partly: "While the Federal Government will not be raising tax rates at this time, based on the Finance Act 2019, it is already empowered to widen the tax net, including by collecting taxes on the Nigerian income of global tech giants with significant economic presence here, even if they have not established an office or permanent establishment and are currently not paying taxes in Nigeria.

"In this regard, Section 4 of the Finance Act 2019, provides

that "the Minister (Finance) may by order (of the President) determine what constitutes the significant economic presence of a company other than a Nigerian company.

"We have had severe economic downturns which of course implies that we may not be able to collect taxes with the aggressiveness that would ordinarily be expected.

"I think the most important thing is that we must widen our tax net so that more people who are eligible to pay tax are paying. Several efforts have been made, and I am sure you are aware of the initiatives including the Voluntary Assets and Income Declaration Scheme (VAIDS) which was also an attempt to

bring more people into the tax net, including those who have foreign assets."



Osinbajo

By JOHN C. AZU



Perspective

China's 100 years of CPC leadership and lessons for Nigeria



In 1978 when China embarked on its audacious reform and opening up programme, it was one of the poorest countries in the world. With a population then of 956 million and GDP at \$149 billion, China's GDP per capita was less than Nigeria's by about \$360 at \$36 billion and a population of 69 million. Indeed, most sub-Saharan African countries had better living standards than China in that period.

Fast forward to July 2021 when the governing party, the Communist Party of China (CPC) is marking 100 years of its formation, and you have the second largest economy on earth and still growing in leaps and bounds.

The founding of the Communist Party of China (CPC) on July 1, 1921 in Shanghai was a watershed in the country's development trajectory, which has shown what visionary and determined leadership can accomplish for an equally mobilised and inspired people.

Leader Deng Xiaopeng, while announcing the reform and opening up programme in 1978, shortly after the country had undergone tumultuous years of cultural revolution, the country was abandoning its contentious centuries of protectionism to usher in a world of competitive growth.

Polished by the dynamism of the National Peoples Congress (NPC) and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) in charting the development plans, China has attracted the best of investments, grown an innovative economy and advanced new frontiers of all forms of exploration for mankind.

In one generation, the Chinese have leapt forward with growth rate consistent at above 6 percent, and a GDP in 2020 at \$15.45 trillion. It now has a per capita of \$10,000 as against United State's GDP of \$21.4 trillion with per capita at \$65,297.5 in 2019.

With a population of 1.4 billion, it is daunting to envisage a modest living standard for the people. But this is exactly what the CPC government has done these years by lifting over 800 million people out of poverty. By December, 2020, the government saw millions of citizens in 832 national level counties lifted out of poverty and provided with sustainable livelihoods. China reached purchasing power parity of above 4.2 LCU in 2019. As of November, 2020, disposable income for rural dwellers in China was ¥27,540 which is \$2,463.55, while that of urban dwellers is ¥64,084 which is about \$9,868.34.

Yet, the country's domestic market is largely untapped and would be open for exploitation. This is because the country is a leader in big data and digital economy. Previously, Chinese

economy was not as credit-driven as the United States. With big data and biometrics now developed from across the country even in rural country sides, many Chinese can have access to more consumer and luxury goods, with flexible payment systems.

By the end of 2020, 300,000 5G base stations were extended to prefecture level cities, hiking internet users to about 1 billion.

Before the formation of the CPC, the area that formed the present country of China was beset by centuries of dynastic rule, feudalism and imperialism. Eventually, the foreign occupation of China and the acquiescence of the ruling Qing Dynasty between 1644 and 1911, awakened a great deal of national solidarity and revolutionary spirit in the face of humiliation.

The national pride inspired by the resistance of the peasantry in the Yihetuan Movement or the Boxer Rebellion and the marches across the country calling for an end to imperialism culminating in the May Fourth Movement of 1919 when the students and workers rallied in various parts of the country, led to the formation of the party.

A crucial decision point was reached after the successful wresting of the country from the feudal monarchs in 1911 by the coalition led by US-trained Dr Sun Yat-sen's Nationalist

Party and building a united front with Li Dazhao on the way forward for the new republic as its people remained largely semi-feudal, backward, rural and poor, and beset by warlordism.

That moment of truth came at the rejection of Chinese delegation's demand for German concessions on Shandong, end to imperialism, extraterritoriality, legation guards and leases at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919-1920, with its impact at home, which forced the delegation to abstain from the

Other factors such as the fallout of the World War I and the success of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 in Russia, helped inform the decision of the young leaders of the republic such as Li Dazhao and Mao Zedong that the Marxist-Leninist philosophy, despite its unpopularity in the Capitalist West, was the ideological leaning best suited to the Chinese condition.

Once that realization dawned, there was no wavering by the people. Even when faced with the futile attempt by the Kuomintang or National Party led by Chiang Kai Shek to restore Western capitalism in the country, which resulted in a bloody war in 1934 to 1935.

From the formal declaration of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949, and a shift from revolutionary struggles to development and global relationships, the Chinese political

bureau has not rested on its oars; it is continuously interrogating its reality amid competing international systems and have maintained a rigorous theoretical, scientific, open and people-oriented approach.

This method as the ideological underpinning of the Hegelian dialectic, impels the operators of the system to be eternally vigilant and shun all forms of complacency.

Thus, Mao wrote that "Some contradictions" are characterized by open antagonism, some are not. Based on the concrete development of things, some contradictions, originally non-antagonistic, develop and become antagonistic, while some contradictions, originally antagonistic, develop and become non-antagonistic.

Mao's critical style demands a constant reappraisal of changing forces in society, for new "contradictions" may appear among the masses and even within the party capable of reversing every progress. He was convinced that this immutable force was essential for change. Indeed, Mao has stated explicitly that struggle to resolve contradictions is necessary for the party's very survival. A corollary is that a certain amount of stress, strain and flux is desirable for China's political development.

Herein lies Nigeria's lessons. Nigeria had its first political party, the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), which later metamorphosed to the National Congress of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) in 1923, almost the same time as China. Although the early pre-independent political parties were primed to wrest government from the colonial powers, they were consumed thereafter by several intractable contradictions and military coups.

The newer parties which have been floated over the years of civil rule, has largely lacked ideology, discipline and internal democratic mechanism. Indeed, party politics is seen essentially as a platform to secure political office, not for any general good. In other words, it is purely for the advancement of personal and group interests rather than floating the banner of an overarching national developmental vision, which outlives generations. Nigerian political leaders acquire power for its sake.

With a motley crowd of adherents, revolutionary struggles in Nigeria over the years had swiftly assumed ethno-religious dimensions and easily suppressed, with no transformative outcomes for the society. This calls to question the embodying character of the Nigerian state itself and the people's developmental aspirations.

It is time to begin the journey of nation-building in Nigeria.

John C. Azu, a journalist and author, is based in Abuja.



Opinion

Key to Success of the Communist Party of China Over the Past 100 years

The year of 2021 bears a lot of significance to China. It marks the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China (CPC), marks the first year of the implementation of the China's 14th Five-Year Plan, and marks the start of China's new journey of building up a modern socialist country in an all-round way. Over the past 100 years, the CPC whose membership grew up from 57 in 1921 to more than 92 million nowadays, has developed into the largest Marxist ruling party, and brought tremendous changes to China, the most populous country in the world.

Since its 18th National Congress in 2012, the CPC, by holding high the great banner of socialism with Chinese characteristics, has united and led the people of all ethnic groups in China, adhered to the people-centered development concept, fully implemented the five-sphere integrated plan for promoting economic, political, cultural, social, and ecological progress, and coordinated progress of the four-pronged comprehensive strategy to build a moderately prosperous society, deepen reform, advance the law-based governance and strengthen Party self-discipline. Based on these endeavors, the Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era has been formed up, and thus ushering the socialism with Chinese characteristics into a new era.

Under the leadership of CPC, China has already built a moderately prosperous society in all respects, achieved the first centenary goal, and embarked on a new journey of building a modern socialist country. Currently, China is advancing to the second centenary goal on the basis of the new stage of development, by applying the new development philosophy, and creating a new development pattern. According to CPC's two-step strategy in the new era, China will basically realize socialist modernization in 2035, and turn to be a great modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious, and beautiful in the middle of this century.

Why could such brilliant achievements be made by CPC? The key lies in the lofty ideals and missions born by it, which could be summarized as everything the CPC does is for the well-being of the Chinese people, for the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation as well as for the peace and development of mankind.

Firstly, the CPC comes from the people and serves the people. Its original aspiration and mission has always been to seek the happiness of the Chinese people.

Serving the people wholeheartedly is the fundamental purpose of the CPC. In 1945, Chairman Mao Zedong pointed out that the typical symbol, which distinguishes the CPC from other political parties in China, is that "it has established the closest contact with the broadest masses of the people; serving the people wholeheartedly and never for a single moment cut itself off from the masses; everything done by it lies in the interests of the people, not in the interests of individuals or small groups". Afterwards, "serving the people wholeheartedly" has been

kept in a prominent chapter in the CPC Constitution. General Secretary Xi Jinping, in his report to the 19th National Congress of the CPC in 2017, once again stressed that, the aspirations of the people to live a better life must always be the focus of Party members' efforts.

Serving the people wholeheartedly is not a political rhetoric, but can be seen in practical actions. Over the past 100 years, the CPC united and led the people to build their homeland by self-reliance and hard-work, and then to fight the battle against poverty with strong determination, concerted effort, and unwavering faith. By the end of 2020, through eight years' hard-work since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012, China has achieved the goal of eliminating extreme poverty, a key goal of building socialism with Chinese characteristics. The 98.99 million people in rural areas who were living below the current poverty standards all shook off poverty; all the 128,000 impoverished villages and 832 designated poor counties got rid of poverty. China has won the battle against poverty and achieved the poverty reduction goals set out in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development 10 years ahead of schedule.

The CPC has always relied on the people, served the people, and been deeply rooted in the people. The CPC and the Chinese people are inseparable. Without the CPC, there would be no new China, and without the CPC, there would be no strong China. In recent years, surveys by pollsters in western countries have shown that the support of the Chinese people for the CPC and the Chinese government has been as high as over 90%.

Secondly, the CPC shoulders the great mission of national rejuvenation, unites and mobilizes various social forces and leads China to a path of peaceful rise.

Upon its founding, the CPC shouldered the historic mission of national rejuvenation, united the people and led them to overthrow the "three big mountains" of imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism, and established the New China in 1949. The CPC united the people and led them to complete the socialist revolution, establish socialism as China's basic



system, and reverse the fate of the Chinese nation from the continuous decline to steady progress toward prosperity and strength. The CPC launched the great new revolution of reform and opening up in 1979, removed all ideological and institutional barriers to the country's development, and embarked on the path of building socialism with Chinese characteristics. Thus was China able to stride ahead to catch up with the times.

Based on the long-time practice of the Chinese revolution, construction and reform, the CPC explored the socialist political party system with Chinese characteristics, featuring in "multi-party cooperation under the leadership of the CPC, with the CPC holding power and the other eight parties participating fully in state affairs". Based on the principle of "long-term coexistence, mutual supervision, treating each other with sincerity and sharing each other's weal and woe", the CPC and the other eight parties work hand in hand in developing socialism with Chinese characteristics. This practice has already proved that the system of multi-party cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the CPC suits China's actual conditions and shows the great vitality and advantages.

China led by the CPC, has always been committed to a path of peaceful development, and to peaceful coexistence and mutually beneficial cooperation with countries around the world, instead of seeking hegemony. The wisdom from China's thousands of years' history

reveals that hegemony will lead to a country's failure, not that a strong country should seek hegemony. China is blazing a path of peaceful rise distinct from the trajectory of traditional powers.

Thirdly, with the aspiration of benefiting the world, the CPC actively promotes the building a community with a shared future for mankind and firmly seeks peace and development for humanity.

The Chinese people are open and inclusive. Since ancient times, they have always held these beliefs dear, such as "all people under the heaven are of one family", "all the people are my brothers and sisters", and "all nations should live in harmony". Meanwhile, they have always wanted to create a better world in which "a just cause is pursued for the common good".

To make new and greater contributions for mankind is the CPC's lofty mission. Where it would benefit the humanity, China has always step forward, take action, and get the job done. General Secretary Xi Jinping of the CPC has made the proposal of "building a community with a shared future for mankind". As he said, while people across the world live under the same sky, share one and the same home planet and belong to one and the same family, they should be guided by the vision that all people in the world are of one family, and should endeavor to build a community with a shared future for mankind.

In 2013, China launched the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), aiming at promoting peace and development of mankind. To date, China has signed more than 200 cooperation documents with 140 countries and 31 international organizations. The BRI is serving as a solution for China to participate in global opening-up and cooperation, improve global economic governance, promote common development and prosperity, and build a community with a shared future for humanity.

Against the background of major changes and COVID-19 pandemic unseen in a century, the right attitude for all countries is to bond together and tide over difficulties with solidarity. China is among the first counties to initiate and act on the pledge to make vaccines a global public good. After the Sinopharm and Sinovac vaccines are listed for emergency use by the WHO, China is working actively to advance providing vaccines to the COVAX.

The past 100 years of the CPC is a period of fulfilling its original aspiration and mission, a period of enduring the great hardship and laying the foundation, and a period of creating brilliant achievements and opening up the future. At the new historic starting point, the CPC will stay true to its original aspiration and founding mission, and continue to pursue happiness for the Chinese people, rejuvenation for the Chinese nation, and the common good for the world.

(Mr. CUI Jianchun is the Ambassador of China to Nigeria)

Business & Economy

Why multiple currencies, insecurity threatens implementation of AfCFTA

**Moves to boost Intra-African trade*

The Secretary General of the African Continental Free Trade Area Secretariat (AfCFTA) Wamkele Mene has decried the high level of insecurity as well as multiple currencies on the African continent, saying that it threatens the full implementation and gains of the agreement.

He said Africa has about 42 currencies operated by different countries.

Recalled that West African leaders present at a summit in Ghana over the agreed a new road map to launch a single currency in 2027.

The bloc had planned to launch a common currency this year but postponed the plan due to challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic.

ECOWAS Commission President Jean-Claude Kassi Brou said the pandemic had upset plans to implement the convergence pact.

“We have a new road map and a new convergence pact that will cover the period between 2022-2026, and 2027 being the launch of the eco,” he said.

The Eco currency is expected to unify many currencies on the West African region, which will facilitate regional trade and boost the implementation of the AfCFTA.

Making his submissions at a meeting with select journalists in Abuja on Tuesday, Mr. Wamkele said “Africa has 42 currencies and it is a constraint as we cannot boost trade with 42 currencies, maybe not for all countries.

“Another issue we are currently working on to achieve with this trade agreement is to boost intra African trade. For instance, Intra-African trade is 18% while intra- EU trade is 70%. Which means we trade significantly with the Europeans than ourselves in Africa.

“The heads of states know the importance of trade to development which is why 15 years from now, our target is that 97% of products should be traded at zero tariff.”

Speaking further on the current level of AfCFTA, he explained that “38 countries have so far ratified the agreement out of 52, the delay is expected as legal and political process must be followed before it is ratified.

“Overall, we are at the initial stages of implementation. Remember phase 1 deals with trade in goods and services while phase 2 captures international property rights, so we have to conclude the initial stages as well as the market integration

“I am not worried about the slowness of the process because we are engaging with head of states on the need to get involved and reap the benefits. And it will interest you to know that the head of states have given us six months to conclude the initial stages.”

Answering question on infrastructure and security deficits on the continent, the SG admitted that if security challenges are not addressed, it will form a major challenge.

“I share concerns of stakeholders on the Insecurity on the continent as conflicts will not allow the trade agreement to have full implementation. The leaders on the continent are fully aware which is why they held a summit on the AfCFTA and tagged it decade of silencing the guns.

“For infrastructure, we are also aware of that problem and making efforts to address that. The African Development Bank estimates that we have an infrastructure deficit of about \$100 billion and we see it as an opportunity to invest in infrastructure.

Reps Summon NNPC Over \$300m Slush Fund

The House of Representatives ad hoc committee investigating the status of all recovered loots and assets from 2002 – 2020 by agencies of the Federal Government has summoned the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) to appear before it to explain the \$300 million alleged slush funds it deposited with the defunct Skye Bank, now Polaris.

Chairman of the committee, Adejoro Adeogun, handed the summon on Thursday when the Acting Managing Director of Polaris Bank, Innocent Ike, appeared before it during its resumed investigative hearing.

Polaris Bank’s MD had told the committee that the NNPC opened a current account with the then Skye

Bank in January 2012 in which various deposits totalling \$300 million were made over time.

He said the money that was in Skye Bank and subsequently Polaris was money deposited in normal business transactions as any other customer, saying it was not a slush fund.

“When the instruction was given by the federal government to transfer the money to the TSA, we simply could not pay because of the challenges the bank was having at that time. We engaged the various government agencies and we disclosed the amount to them.

“Somewhere along the line, precisely December 2018, the federal government through the now disbanded presidential

investigation panel for the recovery of public property instituted a suit on this matter.

“We started that payment as agreed and entered as consent judgement and we have to state that as of today before this honourable committee, we have made a total payment of \$224, 324, 958 and 75 cent which was outstanding as of February 2019. We have fully repaid that amount of money, we don’t have anything outstanding in our books.”

However, the committee told Polaris Bank that the NNPC in its recent letter, said it was yet to receive the said payment as claimed and therefore, directed the bank to furnish it with the evidence of repayments to the NNPC.

FG, States, LGs Share N605b May Revenue

The Federation Accounts Allocation Committee (FAAC), at its June meeting shared to the three tiers of government, N605.958 billion as federation allocation for May 2021.

The communiqué released at the end of the meeting showed that from the above amount, inclusive cost of collection to the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) and the federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), the federal government received N242.120bn, the states received N194.195bn, the Local Government Areas (LGAs) got N143.742bn while the oil-producing states received N26.901bn

as derivation (13% of Mineral Revenue).

The communiqué by FAAC also indicated that the gross revenue from the Value Added Tax (VAT) for May, 2021 was N181.078bn as against N176.710bn distributed in the preceding month of April 2021, resulting in an increase of N4.368bn.

The distribution is as follows; the federal government got N25.260bn, the states received N84.202bn, and LGAs got N58.941bn.

The distributed Statutory Revenue of N428.198bn for May was lower than the N497.385bn received in April by N69.197bn, from which the federal government received N175.541bn, states

got N89.037bn, LGAs got N69.644bn, and Derivation (13% Mineral Revenue) got N24.666bn.

The communiqué also revealed that Company Income Tax (CIT), Oil and Gas Royalties, Import and Excise Duty recorded decreases; only the VAT increased marginally.

It disclosed that total revenue distributable for May was N605.958bn derivable from Gross Statutory Revenue of N357.888bn, N168.403bn from VAT, Solid Mineral Revenue of N7.940bn, Exchange Gain of N1.727bn and an augmentation from non-oil of N50bn and N20bn.

CBN Out to Finance Agriculture, plans on removing middlemen from Rice Sales – Official

By Gabriel Udeh, Kaduna

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has expressed readiness to finance Agriculture in other to provide adequate food for Nigerians and Africans countries in general.

The Controller Kaduna state branch of the Bank Ahmad Mohammed Wali disclosed this during the 2021 Flag-off paddy sales and wet season Anchor Borrower Program (ABP) by Rice Farmers Association (RIFAN) at farin Goda, Mando Kaduna.

Mr Wali said the program is about sale of rice to the rice milling processors with the intention to reduce the price for the benefit of a common people in Nigeria and beyond.

Wali also said that Central Bank is ever ready to ensure food security and improved rice farming in the country.

“It’s a nation wide program with an

intention to provide food on a common man table, that is why central Bank is always ready to ensure there is funds for farmers”, he said.

Also speaking, representative of the Director Development Finance of the Central Bank Mr Chika Nwaja, said the bank has the intention to removed the issue of a middle men during the sales of rice to processors for Nigerians to buy at the cheaper price.

“Because the market is the people of the country. With this, Nigerian citizens must get it affordable price, there is a reduction between the market price and the price that the central Bank is giving out to processors, now we are selling at 190,000 against the market price with a difference of 35,000 naira.

In his speech, the national president of the Rice farmers Association of Nigeria Alhaji Aminu Goronyo, said all that is taking place at the venue are provided

by the CBN just to move the country forward.

“Even with the issue of security, rice farmers are trying to provide rice to the country”.

Amongs those presents at the event include representative of the Emir of Zazzau, the Dan Makwayon zazzau District head of Kawo Alhaji Jibrin Muhammad Sani Magaji that called on Government to re double efforts on the issue of kidnapping and insecurity in the Land.

Mr Andy came from the Rice processor association of Nigeria, Hajiya A’isha Umar Lere from unity Bank, Alhaji Bello Dogon Daji, representative of Hajiya Halima Lawal commissioner of Agriculture Kaduna state and the state chairman Rice farmers Association of Nigeria Kaduna state chapter Alhaji Mohammed Umar Numbu Dan galadimawa Numbu amongs others.



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Politics

Buhari Receives Briefing from APC Caretaker Committee

President Muhammadu Buhari on Friday received the Progress Report of the All Progressives Congress (APC) Caretaker (Extraordinary National Convention) Committee.

The president was handed the report by the committee's chairman, Governor Mai Mala Buni.

Also received by President Buhari today, is Senator Peter Nwaoboshi who decamped from the PDP into APC in Delta State.

Here below are photos from the report presentation exercise by the APC Caretaker Committee.

Gov Ortom Lauds NSCDC Over Fight Against Insecurity In Benue State

By Isaac Kertyo, Makurdi

Benue State Governor Samuel Ortom has lauded the Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corp, NSCDC, over its fight against insecurity in the state.

The Governor gave this commendation when the new Commandant of the Corp in Benue State, Mr Philip Okoh paid a courtesy visit to him at the Government House Makurdi.

He stressed that the Agro Rangers of the organization have distinguished themselves in the fight against banditry and criminality in the state.

Ortom promised to sustain the support of his administration to the Corp as well as other security operatives to enable them carry out their duties more efficiently.

The Governor stated that the implementation of the shoot at sight order by President Muhammadu Buhari against people who illegally carry AK47 rifles would help in no small measure in tackling security challenge in Nigeria.

Earlier in his remarks, the Commandant of the Corp, Mr Okoh said his mission in the state was to ensure peace and order. He appealed to the Governor to support the Command to enable it address some of the challenges confronting it.



Ortom

Senator Nwaoboshi dumps PDP for APC

Senator Peter Nwaoboshi has defected to the ruling All Progressives Congress, APC.

Nwaoboshi's defection was confirmed when President Muhammadu Buhari received him at the State House on Friday

The Senator who represents Delta North District, Delta State, was presented to Buhari at the State House by the Deputy Senate President, Ovie Omo-Agege.

Buhari was quoted to have welcomed him to the All Progressives Congress

(APC)

He had said, "You are welcome to the progressives family."

Recall that Sen. Nwaoboshi was suspended from the PDP a few days ago.

PDP had said the lawmaker was suspended over "anti-party" activities.

Jigawa LG Poll: NSCDC deploys 1,300 personnel

The Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC) in Jigawa, says it has deployed 1,300 personnel for the Saturday's council elections in the state.

Our correspondent reports that the Jigawa State Independent Electoral Commission (JISIEC) had fixed June 26 for the conduct of election in the 27 Local Government Councils across the state.

According to the electoral body, 18 political parties have fielded candidates for the 27 chairmanship and 288 councillors in the election.

The spokesman of the Corps, CSC Adamu Shehu, told our correspondent in Dutse on Thursday that the gesture was to provide

adequate security during pre and post election periods.

Shehu said the personnel would be deployed to the Polling Units (PUs), collation centres and other strategic places.

He said the Corps would work in synergy with other security agencies to provide security to both JISIEC offices, election materials, election workers, voters and members of the public during the election exercise.

The Corps, he said, would ensure 24-hour surveillance through mounting of mobile and static patrol teams at flash points across the state.

He said Rapid Response Teams (RRTs)

were being mobilised in all its formations to enhance emergency response to distress situations.

"The State Commandant, Mr Mustapha Talba, in a quest to record a hitch-free electioneering process, strongly admonished his personnel to strictly adhere to the rules of engagement which include the use of minimum force, professionalism, zero tolerance to corruption, fairness, among others.

"The commandant also enjoined parents and party stalwarts to caution their wards and supporters against acts capable of breaching the relative peace in the state," he said.

Nigeria must continue to borrow to survive – Senate President

President of the Senate, Ahmad Lawan has explained that it is significant for the Federal Government to continue to borrow responsibly to fund critical projects in Nigeria because the country is poor.

Lawan disclosed this on Thursday while briefing State House correspondents following a closed-door meeting with President Muhammadu Buhari in Abuja.

The Senate President believes it is not reasonable for the Federal Government to tax the people more in the face of the present economic condition, adding that the country's infrastructure must be developed.

He said, "You can't, in my view and judgement, tax Nigerians further for you to raise the money for infrastructural

development; other countries do that, but we've serious situation across the country.

"So, you can't put taxes on the people. The only option left is for us to borrow responsibly, utilise prudently and economically, and ensure that the projects are self-sustaining; that they can pay back the loan."

He added, "Our options are really very limited as a country. First, we don't have the necessary revenue; Nigeria is poor, we shouldn't deceive ourselves. Nigeria is not rich given the circumstances we live in, given the challenges we have.

"Our resources are so low, our revenues are so low; therefore, the option of not doing anything just to sit (because we've no money, we should not go for infrastructure

development) is not an option worthy of consideration. You cannot keep the economy stagnant."



Ortom

FG makes U-turn, denies sponsoring bills to regulate social media

The Federal Government on Friday denied sponsoring bills purportedly meant to gag the press and regulate social media.

Recall that the Minister of Information and Culture, Lai Mohammed, had urged the House of Representatives to include regulation of Twitter in the National Broadcasting Commission Act.

The Minister made the call at the public hearing on a bill to amend the NBC Act organized by the House Committee on Information.

"I will want to add that specifically, internet broadcasting and all online media should be included in this because we have a responsibility

to monitor content— including Twitter," he said.

However, in an interview with newsmen in Lagos, Mohammed said the bills concerning the Nigerian Press Council and the National Broadcasting Commission were private member bills sponsored by a lawmaker in the National Assembly.

"First, let me say how disappointed I am that those who have been berating me on these bills have been doing so on a false premise that the Federal Government had sponsored bills to stifle the press.

"This is a classic case of misinformation because the Federal Government did not sponsor any bill to gag the press.

"It baffles me that those who rushed to the media to slam the government didn't even try to verify the facts," he said

The minister further stated that the National Assembly member who sponsored the bills had done nothing wrong. He said the legislator was only doing what he was elected to do.

"I insist that the bills were not sponsored by the Federal Government.

"I was invited, as the Minister of Information and Culture, to make my contributions, just like many other stakeholders at the public hearing.

"It was an opportunity for stakeholders to make their input into the bills.

"I attended and made my contributions," he added.

Special Reports

With love and respect, Chinese people cherish memory of Zambia's Kaunda, 'an old and good friend'

Kenneth Kaunda, Zambia's founding president and the founder of China-Zambia ties, died of an illness at the age of 97 on Thursday, local time, in Lusaka, capital of Zambia.

Thousands of miles away, numerous people in China cherished the memory of the great man who devoted his life to Zambia's independence and development, and who had made remarkable efforts in promoting the friendship between China and Zambia, as well as China and Africa.

China deeply mourns the death of Kenneth Kaunda, Zambia's founding president, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said on Friday.

Kaunda was an old and good friend of the Chinese people, having long been committed to the cause of China-Zambia friendship, Zhao noted.

On Chinese social media, many netizens, with love and respect to Kaunda, on Friday shared and forwarded a video of Chairman Mao Zedong meeting Kaunda in Beijing in 1974.

In the video's nostalgic yellow tone, Mao warmly shakes hands and talks with Kaunda, who wears a Mao's badge. Mao put forward the well-known "Three Worlds" theory in the meeting, expressing China's willingness to make friends with developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Standing firm with China

Born in April 1924, Kaunda was an internationally renowned leader of African independence movements, politician and social activist, who had made historic contributions to the independence of Zambia and the liberation movements of southern Africa.

He had also been activity pushing forward the friendship and cooperation between Zambia and China throughout his life. He announced that Zambia would establish

diplomatic relations with China on October 24, 1964, the day after Zambia declared its independence. With the efforts of both sides, China and Zambia soon officially built diplomatic ties and sent ambassadors to each other on October 29 that year.

Kaunda always stood firmly with China. He had greatly contributed to the restoration of the lawful seat of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations. He once remarked at the UN rostrum that it was wrong for the UN to have no representatives from the People's Republic of China.

Kaunda had slammed the allegations of Westerners that China was "grabbing resources in Africa." Amid the 45th anniversary of the establishment of China-Zambia diplomatic relations in 2009, he told Chinese media that [some Western forces] who were accusing China of coming here to grab wealth, had actually been coming to the continent for hundreds of years to grab economic benefits.

China, instead, has helped many countries in Africa, including Zambia, to struggle for independence, and is continuing to work with the countries to help them develop their economies, Kaunda said.

He cited the Tanzania-Zambia Railway Authority (TAZARA), saying the project developed by China in the 1970s was part of the contributions of China to the development of Africa, and a model of the friendship between Africa and China.

"That's what China is doing - helping us, as friends, genuine friends," Kaunda said in an interview with Xinhua News Agency in October 2009.

In November 2009, Kaunda was honored with the China-Africa Friendship Award in Beijing, and was chosen as one of the "Five African People Who Deeply Moved the Chinese People."

The creative term "all-weather friend,"

which vividly describes a friendship that remains strong under all kinds of conditions, was firstly put forward by Kaunda.

Decades later, "all-weather friend," often mentioned by leaders of China and some African countries on various occasions, has become a special witness that highlights the long-standing China-Africa relations, observers said.

Friendship with generations of Chinese leaders

Kaunda had visited China several times from the 1960s to the 2010s. He met and talked with Chinese leaders in Beijing or Lusaka, keeping consolidating and promoting China-Zambia ties during the decades.

Kaunda became the first witness of Chairman Mao's "Three Worlds" theory in his second visit to China in 1974.

"In my view, the United States and the Soviet Union belong to the first world. The in-between Japan, Europe and Canada belong to the second world. The third world is very populous. Except for Japan, Asia belongs to the third world. So does the whole of Africa and Latin America," Mao, then 81, told Kaunda.

Kaunda responded that he agreed with Mao's analysis, saying it was precise and accurate. Through the years, China, as a member of the Third World, has been firmly supporting Third World countries, including Zambia, in their struggles against hegemony and interference by the Western superpowers and pursuing self-development.

People's Daily reported that President Hu Jintao had a thorough, warm and sincere communication with Kaunda in 2007 in Lusaka, with the two looking back on history and the friendship between the two countries.

President Hu warmly greeted the 83-year-old Kaunda on February 4, 2007 in Lusaka. He told Kaunda: "You are an old friend of the Chinese people. You and the older generations of Chinese leaders including Chairman Mao

Zedong, Premier Zhou Enlai and Comrade Deng Xiaoping have forged a profound friendship. I am very happy to see you today."

Kaunda replied that it was great to be able to greet leaders from China - Zambia's all-weather friend - in Lusaka. The Chinese people have always been Zambia's genuine friends, he said.

"There is an old Chinese saying: Don't forget the well-digger while drinking water. The Chinese government and people will never forget your outstanding contribution to the development of China-Zambia and China-Africa friendship," President Hu responded emotionally.

Hu praised that "during your tenure as President of Zambia, the Tanzania-Zambia Railway, built by China, Zambia and Tanzania, has become a monument in the history of China-Zambia, China-Tanzania, and China-Africa relations," according to People's Daily.



China conscientiously fulfills its duty as UN Security Council rotating president

China held the UN Security Council's rotating presidency last month. With a responsible and constructive attitude, China worked closely with the members of the UN Security Council, held in-depth discussion of the issues on the agenda, took swift responses to the tensions in the Middle East in order to practice true multilateralism with real actions and push the Security Council to give play to the important role of maintaining international peace and security.

The council had held 31 meetings during the month, one for each day on average, three of which were at the high level of foreign ministers. The council also adopted the annual Security Council report and four resolutions, as well as two presidential statements, six presidential press statements, and two press

elements.

Safeguarding and practicing true multilateralism have been the "keynote" of China's presidency of the Security Council, which is a concrete manifestation of the concept of building a community with a shared future for mankind and the major country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics, said China's UN Ambassador Zhang Jun

Uniting countries to tide over difficulties with concrete actions

With the joint efforts of all member states, the Security Council reiterated its strong commitment to multilateralism, reaffirmed the correct direction of upholding true multilateralism; sent out a unified message on supporting international solidarity and cooperation in fighting the COVID-19

pandemic, in particular on advancing post-pandemic recovery and post-conflict reconstruction in Africa.

Under the initiative of China, the UN Security Council held a high-level meeting on "Maintenance of International Peace and Security: Upholding Multilateralism and the UN-centered International System" on May 7. It was attended by foreign ministers or vice foreign ministers from 15 member states, which mirrored the high importance placed by the member states on safeguarding multilateralism.

"Pursue win-win cooperation, not zero-sum game. Seek equity and justice, not bullying. Focus on actions, instead of only talking the talk. Respect diversity, and refrain from pursuing supremacy." The four proposals

raised by China at the meeting to promote true multilateralism have won broad recognition.

Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov remarked that maintaining multilateralism and the UN-centered international system is as topical as ever and demands the UN Security Council's constant attention. Mexico's Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard said multilateralism is not only an option, but a need.

Combating the COVID-19 pandemic still remains the most important task of the international society today. Under the initiative of China, the Security Council held an Open Debate on "Peace and Security in Africa: Addressing Root Causes of Conflict in Post-Pandemic Recovery in Africa." It adopted an outcome document on post-pandemic reconstruction that both addressed the urgent demand of pandemic alleviation and aimed to enhance the sustainability of development for the continent.

In a speech delivered at the Open Debate,

Special Reports

Three astronauts enter Tianhe core module of China's space station

By Yu Jianbin, Wu Yuehui,
People's Daily

Chinese astronauts Nie Haisheng, Liu Boming, and Tang Hongbo onboard China's Shenzhou-12 spaceship entered the Tianhe core module of the country's space station at 18:48 on June 17, 2021 Beijing time after Shenzhou-12 completed a fast automated rendezvous and docking with the orbiting Tianhe module, which marked the first time the Chinese have entered their own space station.

The crewed Shenzhou-12 spaceship, atop a Long March-2F Y12 carrier rocket, was launched at 9:22 a.m. on June 17 from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwest China's Gobi Desert as planned.

About 573 seconds later the spaceship separated from the rocket and entered its designated orbit. The Shenzhou-12 crew is in good condition and the launch is proven a complete success.

The three astronauts are expected to work and sleep according to Beijing time, and stay at the space station for three months. They will return to the Dongfeng landing site in north China's Inner Mongolia autonomous region aboard the return capsule of Shenzhou-12.

The Shenzhou-12 manned spaceflight mission is the fourth spaceflight mission in the stage for the verification of key technologies and the first manned spaceflight mission during the construction of China's space station.

The mission will further verify the functions and performance of the manned space transport system and astronauts' ability to complete extravehicular activities and operations in orbit with the robotic arm. It will also comprehensively verify various technologies that help guarantee astronauts' long-term in-orbit stay, including those related to the Bioregenerative Life Support System (BLSS), supply of goods and materials in space, as well as astronauts' health management.

China has planned two extravehicular activities for the Shenzhou-12 manned spaceflight mission, said Ji Qiming, assistant to the director of the China Manned Space Engineering Office (CMSEO).

According to him, astronauts will first perform extravehicular activities for a relatively long time, including assembling equipment, repairing and maintenance operations, and the mission will for the first time examine the astronaut research and rescue capabilities at the Dongfeng landing site.

Among the crew members of the Shenzhou-12 spaceship, Nie, the commander of the mission, has been to space twice in the Shenzhou-6 mission in 2005 and the Shenzhou-10 mission in 2013. Liu has participated in the Shenzhou-7 mission in 2008, while Tang is a newcomer to space.

The significantly increased extravehicular time and multiple extravehicular activities and operations would make the mission more complicated and challenging, said Liu at a press conference on June 16. That's why he and his fellow astronauts have undergone strict, systematic, and comprehensive training, he added.

"I firmly believe that with professional ground support and close cooperation among the crew members, we will be able to meet challenges with full confidence, no matter how difficult, risky, and heavy our tasks will be," Liu said.

"We will successfully complete each extravehicular activity, especially under the protection of the domestically developed new-generation extravehicular spacesuit. There will definitely be more Chinese marks in the vast space," he said.

According to China's plan for the construction of its space station, a total of 11 spaceflight missions have been

scheduled for this year and the next, including three launches of space station modules, four cargo vessel flights, and four manned missions.

The in-orbit construction of the space station is expected to be completed by 2022. Upon the completion of the country's national space laboratory, the space station will be applied to use and embrace further development.



immediate ceasefire.

The open debates chaired by China, which stressed to immediately cease fire, carry out humanitarian aid, enhance international support and advance the two-state solution, triggered active response from the international community. After the two sides stopped military and hostile actions, under the promotion of China and joint efforts of all parties, the Security Council issued press statement that called for the full adherence to the ceasefire, which was the first Security Council press statement about the Palestine-Israel conflict since 2014.

China's stand and proposals to solve the Palestine-Israel conflict with political resolutions are praised by parties concerned. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the open debates initiated by China came just in time as the tension between Palestine and Israel reached a peak in recent years. Nicolas de

Rivière, Permanent Representative of France called to firmly follow the two-state solution and fundamentally realize peaceful coexistence between the two parties, or there would only be more pain and violence. A Representative from the League of Arab States pointed out that the two-state solution will help realize comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

On May, the Security Council also discussed issues on Bosnia and Herzegovina, Syria and Yemen, and also adopted a resolution to renew the South Sudan sanctions regime, so as to consolidate the trend to solve relevant problems with political means. Recently, the Security Council took timely actions in response to the coup in Mali and issued a press statement to alleviate the tension. China has made a lot of contribution to pushing the Security Council to cope with hotspot issues and emergencies, which showcases a strong leadership, said Selassie.

Making the work of the UN Security Council more effective and practical

In recent years, the world has been facing more diverse security threats. Under China's initiative, the Security Council held an Open Debate on "United Nations peacekeeping operations: Improving safety and security of peacekeepers," and an Arria-formula Meeting on The Impact of Emerging Technologies on International Peace and Security in May, so as to better protect the safety of peacekeepers, regulate the development and application of emerging technologies, and safeguard international peace and security.

Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General of the UN for Peacekeeping Operations noted that China has made significant contributions to UN peacekeeping missions. He said China is an important troop contributor and financial contributor of UN peacekeeping operations, and also a staunch supporter and important participant in UN peacekeeping operations. China chaired an open debate and pushed for the adoption of a presidential statement, which proved the country's consistent and firm support

for UN peacekeeping operations, he said, adding that he also appreciates the professionalism and selflessness of the Chinese peacekeepers.

Pascale Baeriswyl, the Swiss Permanent Representative to the UN remarked that emerging technologies are a double-edged sword, saying China has showcased its foresight by promoting the Security Council to focus on the impact of emerging technologies on international peace and security.

When China held the rotating presidency of the UN Security Council, the country advanced UN Secretary-General election-related matters, and arranged for informal dialogues between Security Council members and Secretary-General candidates. China took active measures to improve the Council's working methods to enhance efficiency, transparency and inclusiveness while eliciting views from various sides and attaching importance to the legitimate concerns of the member states concerned. China also took steps to reinstate face-to-face meetings at the Council on the precondition of respecting science and ensuring safety.

Norway's UN ambassador Mona Juul said China's exploration and practice during the special period has brought a new atmosphere to the Security Council, adding that the country has successfully held the rotating presidency with a more progressive attitude.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the restoration of China's lawful seat in the UN. Participating in UN affairs, the country has always adhered to true multilateralism, and never put itself first, followed double standard, or practiced hegemonism despite the changing international landscape.

China will, as it has always done, firmly safeguard and practice true multilateralism, protect the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, support the UN to play a bigger role in coping with global challenges, and support the Security Council to practically fulfill its responsibilities, in a bid to make more contributions to safeguarding international peace and security.

Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi chairs the UN Security Council open debate on "Peace and Security in Africa: Addressing Root Causes of Conflict in Post-Pandemic Recovery in Africa" via video link on May 19, 2021. (Photo from the website of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Chairperson of the African Union Commission Moussa Faki Mahamat called on certain countries to end vaccine protectionism and vaccine nationalism to fill the divide in pandemic control. Tunisian Foreign Minister Othman Jerandi said human beings must maintain solidarity when facing the virus. Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the UN Taye Atske Selassie Amde praised the unique role played by China in helping Africa cope with complicated challenges. Cavince Adhere, a Kenyan researcher of international relations, noted that China is helping Africa with concrete actions to make the continent better cope with political, economic and social governance challenges.

Advocating to solve regional conflicts and disputes with political resolutions

Facing new challenges such as stoked up regional hotspot issues, in particular the continuous escalation of the Palestine-Israel conflict, China and other Security Council members, including Norway and Tunisia coordinated closely and convened four open debates in ten days to deliberate over the situation, forming a strong voice calling for

Politics

Governor Lalong Charges New Bishop Of Lafia On Prayer For Nigeria

Governor Simon Bako Lalong and his Nasarawa State Counterpart Abdullahi Sule were among thousands of guests that joined the Catholic faithful for the ordination of Most Revd. David Ajang as Bishop of Lafia Diocese.

Governor Lalong who was accompanied by his wife Regina and a high powered delegation from Plateau State comprising of the Speaker of the House of Assembly Abok Nuhu Ayuba, some members of the State Executive Council, Traditional Rulers led by the Gbom Gwom Jos Da Jacob Gyang Buba, and prominent elders said Plateau State was highly delighted by the appointment of Most Revd. David Ajang as a Bishop.

Lalong said "Having worked closely with him as the Chaplain of the Government House Chapel in Jos for the past six years, I can testify about his deep passion for the salvation of the souls of men. Indeed, he has endeared himself to our hearts through his kindness, love for God and humanity. Bishop David Ajang is a man who undertakes his spiritual calling with utmost humility and the fear of God".

He charged the Bishop never to cease praying for the country saying "My Lord Bishop, please continue to uphold Plateau and Nasarawa States as well as the entire nation in prayers for peace, security and prosperity of the land. You contributed a lot to the restoration of substantial peace and security in Plateau State by prayers and godly counsel. Please do not relent to offer same to my brother, the Governor of Nasarawa State His Excellency Governor Abdullahi Sule who by the way is another "Jos boy" on loan to Nasarawa".

Governor Abdullahi Sule congratulated the new Bishop and assured him of the support and collaboration of the Government and people of Plateau State whom he said are looking forward to a wonderful experience during his tenure.

Sule said the State will benefit from his experience and knowledge, having left a good legacy in Plateau State where he held several positions in the Church including Chaplain, Government House Chapel Jos before his appointment as Bishop.

He also called on religious leaders to pray for the nation and give good counsel to help those in position of leadership to serve the country dispassionately.

Papal Nuncio, Most Revd. Antonio Fillipazzi performed the ordination in line with the tradition and protocols of the Catholic Church.

Arch Bishop of Jos, Mathew Ishaya Audu who is the immediate past Bishop of Lafia addressed the congregation for the last time and appreciated them for their support and prayers during his term as Bishop. He asked them to extend same to the new Bishop.

Zamfara assembly to investigate alleged diversion of PHC fund

The Zamfara House of Assembly has resolved to investigate an alleged diversion of N1.258 billion intervention fund by the Basic Healthcare Provision Fund to Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs) in the state.

This is contained in a statement by the Director-General, Press and Public Affairs of the House, Mr Mustafa Jafaru-Kaura in Gusau on Friday.

Jafaru-Kaura said the resolution followed the adoption of a motion by the Majority Leader, Mr Faruku Dosara during plenary on Thursday.

Dosara said the money was released by the agency to PHCs to augment their urgent healthcare needs.

"He said each of the PHCs was allocated N610,000 but unfortunately only N276,760 was given to them, while over N1.2 billion was diverted," he said.

The majority leader explained the money was for common drugs consumables.

"The sum of N500,000 was cornered to a different account domicile in drugs and consumables management agency while each PHC was left with only N110,000,"

he said.

He urged the lawmakers to ensure thorough investigation of the matter so as to unravel the truth of the matter.

Dosara said that investigating fraud as well as recovery of looted funds was one of the primary responsibilities of the lawmakers.

The Speaker, Alhaji Nasiru Magarya commended the lawmaker for raising the issue.

Magarya directed the House Committee on Health and Human Medicine to investigate the matter and report back its findings in one month.

Again CSOs Fault Transmission Of Laretta Onochie's Name To NASS For Confirmation

By Williams Anuku Abuja

Over ten civil society organisations have again faulted the Federal Government for transmitting the name of Mrs Laretta Onochie to the National Assembly for confirmation as one of the National Commissioners of the Independent National Electoral Commission INEC.

At a program on Wednesday in Abuja, they prevailed on the Senate to reject her nomination on the grounds that she is too partisan and infact a card carrying member of political parties in Nigeria and the United Kingdom.

Some of the CSOs who moved against her nomination includes Yiaga Africa, Peering Advocacy and Advancement Centre in Africa

PAACA, International Press Centre, the Albino Foundation, Centre For Citizens With Disability CDD among others.

They equally demanded that beyond Onochie's rejection by the Senate Committee on INEC, the National Assembly must ensure that proper scrutiny and due diligence should be exercised in confirming other nominees, including ensuring that nominees to positions of INEC are individuals with impeccable character, unquestionable neutral inclinations, disposition and competence.

According to the CSOs, failure to yield to these demands may elicit legal actions against the presidency because the development may set a negative precedence for the electoral body.

"Mrs Laretta Onochie is not qualified to be appointed as INEC's

National Commissioner based on the fact that she is a British citizen, thus falling short of the constitutional requirements for being appointed to that position as stated in sections 156(1a) and 66(1a) of the 1999 Constitution.

"Further proof of Mrs Onochie being a British citizen is contained in the fact that until recently, she was a full, card carrying member of the British Conservative Party, even contesting elections for a councillorship position in Thames Ward in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham in 2010 as a member of the UK Conservative Party.

"The fact of her dual citizenship and political activities in the UK raises major questions on her loyalty and commitment to Nigeria," the CSOs insisted.

Lawan To FG: NAssembly Won't Approve Frivolous Loan Requests

Senate President Ahmad Lawan has said the National Assembly would only approve loans they could ascertain their targeted projects, saying there would be no frivolous support of intents of the executive.

Lawan was addressing reporters after a meeting with President Muhammadu Buhari to discuss important national issues, at the Presidential Villa, Abuja.

He said the National Assembly would always observe due diligence before giving approval to the executive for any loan request.

He said such requests would be subjected to thorough scrutiny to be sure they are necessary and when approved, the use of the loans would be monitored through oversight.

He said as a poor country, Nigeria would only be able to meet most of its development targets by acquiring loans as it could not over-tax the citizens and yet unable to strike public/private partnerships because of the unfavourable atmosphere across the country.

"So, we'll not be frivolous and will not take it lightly to just approve any loan. Our options are really very limited as a country. First, we don't have the necessary revenues, Nigeria



Ahmad Lawan

is poor, we shouldn't deceive ourselves.

"Nigeria is not rich, given the circumstances we live in, given the challenges we have; our resources are so low, our revenues are so low and therefore the option of not doing anything, just to sit because we have no money, we shouldn't go for infrastructure development is not even an option worthy of consideration. You cannot keep the economy stagnant.

"Two, you cannot, in my view and judgment, tax Nigerians further for you to raise the money for infrastructure development. Other countries do that, but we have serious situation across the country,

so you cannot put taxes on people.

"The other option is public-private partnership. You need to create the environment to attract investors to come into our country because of the security challenges we face today. Not many investors would like to come to Nigeria, in fact, even those inside Nigeria may not like to invest properly in this sector of infrastructure development.

"So, the only option left is for us to borrow, borrow responsibly, utilise prudently and economically, and ensure that the projects are self-sustaining that they can pay back the loans that Nigerian economy will benefit from the implementation of such infrastructure development.

"So, that's the only option we have and I believe that Nigerians will understand, of course, it's not desirable, it's not something that we like too, no Nigerian would like to have, in fact, even an individual not like to be on loan, but when you must, then you have to, and I want to be very practical here that we do so with that feeling of 'this is our country, we must move forward, we must provide the enabling environment for our economy to grow and Nigeria to develop," said Lawan.

INEC Launches Online Portal For Voters To Register

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has launched an online portal for eligible voters to register.

Addressing journalists shortly after launching the portal, Professor Mahmood Yakubu, Chairman of the Commission, said the portal was created for intending registrants to commence the process online.

He asked willing voters to register by providing relevant details before booking an appointment to visit the commission's office.

Yakubu said as a result of security challenges in some parts of the country, the commission decided to start the registration online before it commences fully at all the 2,673 registration centres nationwide.

"In addition, those who are already registered as voters can carry out all the other activities such as transfers, correction of personal details and replacement of damaged or defaced PVCs online," he said.

"We hope that through this portal, we shall reduce overcrowding at our registration centres, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, make the registration processes generally easier, thereby giving Nigerians a pleasant electoral experience.

"However, I must quickly reiterate that the online registration is a public service and therefore free of charge. There is no INEC-approved cybercafe, no online registration centre and no scratch card to be purchased for the exercise. All you need is a device, including your mobile phones, that can connect to the internet."

INEC halted voter registration six months to the 2019 general elections.



Yakubu

Entertainment



Tonto Dikeh is reportedly dating activist Prince Kpokpogri

The movie star is dating anti-corruption activist and chairman of Anti-Corruption and Integrity Forum, Comrade Prince Kpokpogri. Ossai Ovie Success, the media aide to Delta State Governor, Ifeanyi Okowa, revealed this via his Facebook page on Sunday,

June 27, 2021, while wishing Kpokpogri a happy birthday. "Happy Birthday to Prince Kpokpogri .THE LOVE OF TONTO W. C. DIKEH LIFE. As you Celebrate today, May God Almighty be with you always. Congratulations," he wrote. The movie star also took to

her Instagram page where she showered praises on her lover. "Happy birthday to you My BABY You've shown me that love is best presented as true as they come,you put a spring In my steps. Falling in love with you is like the wildest roller coaster ride. Because of you, I have gotten to

appreciate the finer things in life. Thank you for making me a better woman," she wrote. "I pray that the kisses I blow transform into thousands of wishes come true and into fulfilled dreams and aspirations. Thank you for bringing immense joy and happiness to me as a woman."

"My biggest kisses and tightest hugs are reserved for you today. THANK YOU FOR CHANGING ME TO THE WOMAN I AM TODAY. GOD BLESS YOU, I LOVE YOU SO MUCH MY WORLD HAVE A BLESSED DAY MY OGA AT THE TOP?"

DMX to get special honour at 2021 'BET Awards'



Beatz, Griselda, and a special appearance by Michael K. Williams.

BET will celebrate the life and music of DMX from his early beginnings with the iconic hip hop label, Ruff Ryders, to now, by debuting a new song from DMX's upcoming posthumous album, 'Exodus.'

"We look forward to celebrating DMX's indelible mark in music and pop culture. DMX inspired fans around the world with his signature raspy voice, the delivery of raw emotion through his lyrics and performances, and his giving spirit. We are proud to pay our respects to a hip-hop legend on our biggest stage, the BET Awards" said Connie Orlando, Executive Vice President of Specials, Music Programming & Music Strategy.

Video choreographer, R&B, and Hip Hop veteran, Fatima Robinson, will act as creative director, and the tribute will include some of DMX's iconic hits like Slipping, Party Up, What's My Name?, Ruff Ryders Anthem, and many more.

HEAD of the 2021 BET Awards scheduled for Monday, June 28, 2021, late American rapper, DMX, will be getting a special honour.

Organisers of the awards ceremony announced that beloved rapper will be honoured with a special tribute at the ceremony.

The tribute is being curated by producer Swizz Beatz, who had a longstanding friendship with the late musician.

The tribute, it was further stated, will include standout performances from Busta Rhymes, Method Man, Swizz



Hollywood's Samuel L Jackson, Danny Glover in Line to Receive Honorary Oscar Awards

Legendary American actors Samuel L Jackson and Danny Glover will receive honorary Oscars ahead of the main event in 2022, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announced on Thursday. Norwegian actress Liv Ullmann and the American actress-director Elaine May will also be honoured.

The Academy, in a statement, added that Jackson, May and Ullmann will be awarded honorary statuettes, while Glover will receive the Jean

Hersholt Humanitarian Award at the Governors Awards on 15 January, next year. The latter award is given to an individual in the motion picture industry whose humanitarian efforts have brought credit to the industry.

The 74-year-old Glover first earned widespread recognition on the big screen in Steven Spielberg's adaptation of the 1985 film, The Color Purple, a film that follows the life of Celie, a young black girl growing up in the early 1900s, before he starred opposite Mel Gibson in the popular Lethal

Weapon cop buddy movies. Jackson, on the other hand, has garnered an extensive portfolio; appearing in dozens of films, and notably earning an Oscar nomination for his memorable turn in director Quentin Tarantino's 1994 movie, Pulp Fiction. The Twice as Tall singer took to his Instagram page with pictures and a video showing the jubilation in his house More congratulatory messages poured in for the Nigerian music superstar in his comment section.

Diplomatic Corner

Former Minneapolis police Officer Derek Chauvin was sentenced Friday to 22 1/2 years in prison for the murder of George Floyd, whose dying gasps under Chauvin's knee led to the biggest outcry against racial injustice in the U.S. in generations.

The punishment — which came after Chauvin broke his yearlong silence to offer condolences to the Floyd family and express hope that they eventually have “some peace of mind” — is one of the longest prison terms ever imposed on a U.S. police officer in the killing of a Black person.

Still, Floyd family members and others were disappointed. The sentence fell short of the 30 years prosecutors had requested. And with good behavior, Chauvin, 45, could get out on parole after serving two-thirds of his sentence, or about 15 years.

“Just because it's the most time doesn't mean it's enough time,” said Nekima Levy Armstrong, a Minneapolis protest leader.

Judge Peter Cahill went beyond the 12 1/2-year sentence prescribed under state guidelines, citing Chauvin's “abuse of a position of trust and authority and also the particular cruelty” shown to Floyd.

Floyd family attorney Ben Crump said the family had gotten “some measure of accountability” but is hoping Chauvin gets the maximum at his upcoming federal civil rights trial. Crump said this was the longest sentence a police officer has ever received in Minnesota.

But he added: “Real justice in America will be Black men and Black women and people of color who will not have to fear being killed by the police just because the color of their skin. That would be real justice.”

Outside the courthouse, a crowd of about 50 people clasped hands or placed them on each other's shoulders. The reaction was subdued as people debated whether the sentence was long enough. Some cursed in disgust.

At George Floyd Square, as the intersection where Floyd was pinned to the pavement is now known, members of the crowd broke into applause, and several said, “We'll take it.”

Chauvin was immediately led back to prison. He showed

little emotion when the judge pronounced the sentence. His eyes moved rapidly around the courtroom, his COVID-19 mask obscuring much of his face.

The fired white officer was convicted in April of second-degree unintentional murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter for pressing his knee against Floyd's neck for up to 9 1/2 minutes as the 46-year-old man gasped that he couldn't breathe and went limp on May 25, 2020.

Bystander video of Floyd's arrest on suspicion of passing a counterfeit \$20 bill at a corner store prompted protests around the world and led to scattered violence in Minneapolis and beyond, as well as demands for overhauling police departments.

On Friday, Chauvin, who did not testify at his trial, removed his mask and turned toward the Floyd family, speaking only briefly because of what he called “some additional legal matters at hand” — an apparent reference to the federal civil rights trial, where his words could be used against him.

“I do want to give my condolences to the Floyd family. There's going to be some other information in the future that would be of interest. And I hope things will give you some peace of mind,” he said without further explanation.

Defense attorney Eric Nelson had asked that Chauvin be let off on probation, saying the former officer's “brain is littered with what-ifs” from that day: “What if I just did not agree to go in that day? What if things had gone differently? What if I never responded to that call? What if? What if? What if?”

Chauvin's mother, Carolyn Pawlenty, pleaded for mercy for her son, saying his reputation has been unfairly reduced to that of “an aggressive, heartless and uncaring person” and a racist.

“I want this court to know that none of these things are true and that my son is a good man,” she told the judge, adding: “Derek, I want you to know I have always believed in your innocence, and I will never waver from that.”

“I will be here for you when you come home,” she said.



Chauvin gets 22.5 years in prison for George Floyd's death

Prosecutor Matthew Frank, in asking the judge to exceed the sentencing guidelines, said “tortured is the right word” for what the officer did to Floyd.

“This is not a momentary gunshot, punch to the face. This is 9= minutes of cruelty to a man who was helpless and just begging for his life,” Frank said.

Floyd family members had tearfully asked the judge to impose the maximum, which was 40 years. Several spoke before the sentence, and his 7-year-old daughter, Gianna, was seen in a recorded video.

“I miss you and I love you,” Gianna Floyd said in the video when asked what she would say to her daddy. She had a list of things she would have liked to do with him: “I want to play with him, have fun, go on a plane ride.”

Afterward, Floyd's nephew Brandon Williams said the sentence was insufficient, “when you think about George being murdered, in cold blood with a knee on his neck for 9 minutes and 29 seconds execution-style in broad daylight.” LaTonya Floyd, George Floyd's sister, said of the punishment: “That's nothing. That's nothing. He should have got the max, period.”

The concrete barricades, razor wire and National Guard patrols at the courthouse during Chauvin's three-week trial in the spring were gone Friday, reflecting an easing of tensions since the verdict.

Before the sentencing, the judge denied Chauvin's request for a new trial. The defense had argued that the intense publicity tainted the jury pool and that the trial should have been moved out of Minneapolis.

The judge also rejected a defense request for a hearing into possible juror misconduct. Nelson had accused a juror of not being candid during jury selection because he didn't mention his participation in a march last summer to honor the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Prosecutors countered the juror had been open about his views.

Philip Stinson, a criminal justice professor at Bowling Green State University, said 11 non-federal law officers, including Chauvin, have been convicted of murder for on-duty deaths since 2005. The penalties for the nine who were sentenced before Chauvin ranged from six years, nine months, to life behind bars, with the median being 15 years.

With Chauvin's sentencing, the Floyd family and Black America witnessed something of a rarity: In the small number of instances in which officers accused of brutality or other misconduct against Black people have gone to trial, the list of acquittals and mistrials is longer than the list of sentencing after conviction.

In recent years, the acquittals have included officers tried in the deaths of Philando Castile in suburban Minneapolis and Terence Crutcher in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

“That's why the world has watched this trial, because it is a rare occurrence,” said Arizona-based civil rights attorney Benjamin Taylor.

Chauvin has been held since his conviction at the state's maximum-security prison in Oak Park Heights, where he has been kept in a cell by himself for his own protection, his meals brought to him.

The three other officers involved in Floyd's arrest are scheduled for trial in March on state charges of aiding and abetting both murder and manslaughter. They will also stand trial with Chauvin on the federal charges. No date has been set for that trial.

Diplomatic Corner



Boris Johnson's home pelted with tennis balls as thousands gather in London for anti-lockdown march

● Covid-19 restrictions in England were meant to have been lifted on June 21

Thousands of anti-lockdown protesters marched through central London on Saturday, with Parliament and Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Downing Street residence pelted with tennis balls.

England was meant to have lifted all restrictions on June 21, but a rise in coronavirus cases owing to the emergence of the Delta variant, first identified in India, has pushed those plans back by at least four weeks.

The protesters marched from Hyde Park, through Oxford Street

and towards Parliament, carrying flags, whistling and shouting as they demanded an immediate end to restrictions.

There were also widespread calls for health minister Matt Hancock to resign after he admitted breaking Covid-19 guidance by kissing and embracing an aide in his office.

The Metropolitan Police said they made 12 arrests.

"The main reason I'm here is because I feel this lockdown has come at the cost of our liberty and rights," said Iain McCausland,

who had travelled from Devon on England's south-west coast.

"Our freedom to assemble, our freedom to travel, and work. I'm really quite angry with the government; so are everyone here."

One placard demanded "arrest Hancock", in reference to Mr Hancock, who hit the headlines on Friday after CCTV footage emerged of him kissing an aide inside a government office.

Mr Hancock, 42, was at the centre of the government's fight against the pandemic, routinely

telling people to follow strict rules and even welcoming the resignation last year of a senior scientist who broke restrictions in a similar manner.

He apologised for breaking the regulations he helped to craft and resigned on Saturday night.

Last year, Mr Johnson's then most senior adviser, Dominic Cummings, also broke the rules at the height of the pandemic.

It had led to accusations that members of Mr Johnson's government believed themselves to be above the law.

'We won the election twice': Donald Trump hints at 2024 election plans at Ohio rally

At his first rally after leaving the White House, former President Donald Trump on Saturday lambasted the Biden administration's immigration policies and sought to energise Republicans to take back majorities in Congress next year.

Appearing to relish being back in front of thousands of supporters, Mr Trump repeated his false claim that his defeat in the November 2020 election was marred by fraud.

Mr Trump left office in the aftermath of the deadly January 6 attack on the US Capitol by his supporters, shortly after a speech in which he urged a crowd to "fight" when then President-elect Joe Biden's victory was about to be certified by lawmakers.

Mr Trump survived a second impeachment on a charge linked to the violence and has kept broad influence over the Republican Party, in part by leaving open the question of whether he will run for office again in 2024.

"We won the election twice and it's possible we'll have to win it a third time. It's possible," he said.

Mr Trump won the 2016 election against former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. He lost in 2020.

Whether he runs again could be influenced by the outcome of various legal troubles. The Manhattan district attorney's office has told Mr Trump's lawyers it is considering filing criminal charges against his family business, the New York Times reported on Friday.

The former president highlighted parts of his regular grievance list at the rally, with particular focus on the rising number of immigrants crossing over the US southern border, an issue Republicans have zeroed in on to rally their voters.

"You have millions of people coming into our country. We have no idea who they are. Joe Biden is doing the exact opposite as we did," Mr Trump said.

Mr Biden's White House has called Mr Trump's immigration policies inhumane.

While keeping his political plans vague, the former president spoke forcefully in favour of getting his party back in control of the US House of Representatives and Senate.

"We will take back the House, we will take back the Senate, and we will take back America, and we will do it soon," he said.

Democrats' razor-thin majorities in both chambers of Congress will be on the line in the 2022 midterm elections and history favours Republicans' chances of gaining seats in those contests.

Five killed in New Mexico as hot air balloon crashes into power lines

A hot air balloon crashed in a neighbourhood of Albuquerque, New Mexico, on Saturday, killing five people after apparently being blown into power lines by the wind and catching fire, police said.

The pilot and three passengers were pronounced dead at the scene, police said. The fourth passenger was taken to an Albuquerque hospital where he died of his injuries.

The basket crashed into a street corner in the city's West Side neighbourhood, about 10 kilometres west of Albuquerque International Sunport Airport, according to a report from the Federal Aviation Administration.

The balloon separated from the basket after it crashed, and landed elsewhere, police said.

The ages of the victims are between 40 and 60, police said,

but no names were released. No one on the ground was injured.

Witnesses told police the balloon hit a power line shortly after 7am local time.

"We know from experience here in Albuquerque that sometimes winds kick up or things happen that make it difficult for balloons to navigate," Albuquerque Police spokesman Gilbert Gallegos told reporters.

The intersection where the balloon crashed was still cordoned off late Saturday afternoon. The multicoloured balloon had skirted the top of the power lines, sending at least one dangling and knocking out power to more than 13,000 homes, said police spokesman Gilbert Gallegos.

The gondola fell about 30 metres and crashed in the street's median, catching fire, the FAA said. Bystanders frantically called out

for a fire extinguisher to put out the flames and prayed aloud, video posted online showed.

The envelope of the balloon floated away, eventually landing on a residential rooftop, Mr Gallegos said. The FAA did not immediately have registration details for the balloon but identified it as a Cameron 0-120.

Authorities haven't determined what caused the crash. The National Transportation Safety Board sent two investigators to the scene on Saturday who will look into the pilot, the balloon itself and the operating environment, said spokesman Peter Knudson. A preliminary report typically is available in a couple of weeks.

Mr Gallegos said hot air balloons can be difficult to manage, particularly when the wind kicks up.

"Our balloonists tend to be very

much experts at navigating, but sometimes we have these types of tragic accidents," he said.

Albuquerque residents are treated to colourful displays of balloons floating over homes and along the Rio Grande throughout the year. While accidents are not common, they happen.

"This is a tragedy that is uniquely felt and hits uniquely hard at home here in Albuquerque and in the ballooning community," said Albuquerque Mayor Tim Keller.

Since 2008, there have been 12 fatal hot air ballooning accidents in the United States, according to an NTSB database. Two of those happened in Rio Rancho just outside Albuquerque, including one in January where a passenger who was ejected from the gondola after a hard landing died from his injuries.

Diplomatic Corner

British health secretary Matt Hancock has resigned after he admitted breaking Covid-19 guidance by kissing and embracing an aide in his office.

Downing Street published Mr Hancock's resignation letter to Prime Minister Boris Johnson and within two hours had named former finance minister Sajid Javid as his successor.

"The last thing I would want is for my private life to distract attention from the single-minded focus that is leading us out of this crisis," Mr Hancock said.

"I want to reiterate my apology for breaking the guidance, and apologise to my family and loved ones for putting them through this. I also need [to] be with my children at this time."

The woman involved in the scandal, Gina Coladangelo, has also lost her job at the ministry, and the government will face ethics questions over how Mr Hancock hired her, a university friend.

Mr Johnson said in reply that he was sorry that Mr Hancock had to leave.

"You should be immensely proud of your service," he wrote. "I am grateful for your support and believe that your contribution to public service is far from over."

Mr Hancock stood down after failing to live up to his government's rules on social distancing.

At a past news conference he said it was on "us at the podium to do our bit" and criticised other public figures who broke Covid rules.

In his resignation letter, he said he owed it to the health workers, volunteers and military personnel who had worked on the UK's pandemic response to resign.

He also publicly apologised for his own family. "I want to reiterate my apology for breaking the guidance, and apologise to my family and loved ones for putting them through this," Mr Hancock wrote. "I also need to be with my children at this time."

Mr Johnson had been under mounting pressure on Saturday to fire his health secretary after Mr Hancock admitted kissing an employee in breach of Covid-19 guidelines.

On Saturday, Mr Johnson's home was pelted with tennis balls as thousands of anti-lockdown protesters marched through London. Some carried placards calling for Mr Hancock's resignation.

Labour, other opposition parties, and even some Conservative MPs welcomed the resignation but still have questions for Mr Johnson's government.

Liberal Democrats leader Sir Ed Davey Mr Hancock's legacy was one of "failure".

Mr Hancock, 42, has been at the centre of the government's fight against the pandemic, routinely telling people to follow strict rules and even welcoming the resignation last year of a senior scientist who broke restrictions in a similar manner.

On Friday, Mr Hancock apologised after The Sun newspaper showed him kissing



UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock leaves 10 Downing Street followed by his aide Gina Coladangelo earlier this year. Getty

UK health secretary Matt Hancock resigns over Covid-19 breach kissing scandal

● 'I want to reiterate my apology for breaking the guidance', minister said in resignation letter

a senior aide in his office last month, when it was against the rules for people to have intimate contact with anyone outside their household.

On Saturday, Duncan Baker became the first Conservative politician to openly call for his resignation, while the opposition

Labour Party and the Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice group had called for him to be sacked.

"To allow Matt Hancock to continue to hold the position of health secretary compounds the heartache of bereaved families who sacrificed so much while he

broke the rules," the Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice group said.

"It is not only an insult to bereaved families and all those who have obeyed the rules but it undermines the public's trust in measures designed to save others from the loss we

have suffered."

Last year Mr Johnson's then most senior adviser, Dominic Cummings, also broke the rules at the height of the pandemic.

It has led to accusations that Mr Johnson's government believes itself to be above the law.

Mr Johnson has refused on a number of occasions to sack ministers, including Priti Patel, the Home Secretary. She was found to have broken rules by shouting and swearing at staff, prompting the official ethics adviser to resign after his ruling was ignored by the prime minister.

The country's spending watchdog has also criticised the government for the way it awarded billions of pounds of contracts at the height of the pandemic, after some multimillion-pound contracts went to companies with links to ministers and officials.

The health ministry has justified the contracts on the grounds it needed to move quickly.

Mr Hancock, who is married, has said he is now focused on getting the country out of the pandemic and has asked for privacy for his family.

Last month, Mr Cummings accused Mr Hancock of lying and said the prime minister should have sacked him for failing to deliver on his promise that elderly patients in hospitals would be tested for Covid-19 before being returned to care homes.

According to Care Quality Commission data, the policy of returning infected people to care homes was responsible for 25,000 deaths in Britain.

Engineer had warned of structural damage before Florida building collapse -NYT

A consultant had warned three years before the deadly collapse of a South Florida condominium building that there was evidence of "major structural damage" to the concrete slab below the pool deck and abundant cracking and crumbling in the underground parking garage, the New York Times reported early on Saturday.

A large section of the 12-story building in the Miami suburb of Surfside collapsed suddenly in the early hours of Thursday as residents slept, in a disaster whose cause is not yet known.

Four people have been confirmed killed and 159 are still unaccounted for, with search-and-rescue teams working around the clock through an unstable mountain of debris.

The Times said that consultant engineer Frank Morabito's October 2018

report had helped shape plans for a repair project that was set to get underway soon, more than two and a half years after the building managers were warned.

The paper said the complex's management association had disclosed some of the problems in the wake of the collapse. But the release by Surfside officials late on Friday of Morabito's report made apparent the full nature of the concrete and rebar damage, it said. Most of the damage was probably caused by years of exposure to the corrosive salt air along the South Florida coast, it said.

Morabito gave no indication in his report that the structure was at risk of collapse, but noted that the needed repairs would be aimed at "maintaining the structural integrity" of the building and its 136 units, the Times said.

"Though some of this damage is minor, most of the concrete deterioration needs



to be repaired in a timely fashion," the Times quoted Morabito as writing about damage near the base of the 40-year-old building.

The paper quoted Kenneth S. Direktor, a lawyer who represents the resident-led association that operates the building, as saying this week that the repairs had been set to commence, based on extensive

plans drawn up this year.

The Times added that Direktor said the process would have been handled much differently if owners had had any indication that the corrosion and crumbling — mild instances of which are relatively common in many coastal buildings — were a serious threat.

Sports



Athletics-Farah not ending track career after missing Olympic qualifying mark-coach

Britain's multiple world and Olympic long distance champion Mo Farah will not end his stellar track career after failing to make the Olympic qualifying time for the 10,000-metre race at the Tokyo Games, his coach Gary Lough said. Farah, 38, who won gold in 5,000m and 10,000m at the 2012 and 2016 Games, needed to clock 27 minutes, 28 seconds to be available for selection but was nearly 20 seconds too slow at the British Athletics Championships on Friday. Farah, who also has six world titles, faced questions about his future after the race but Lough

said such talk was premature. "There's no way Mo Farah is going to end his career running around the track here," Lough was quoted as saying by the BBC. Farah had focussed on the marathon for more than three years but returned for another shot at the Olympics. Lough said he was not sure what is next for Farah, who also fell short of the 10,000m qualifying mark at a meet in Birmingham this month. "There wasn't really a Plan B - this was kind of a plan B after Birmingham, and there's definitely not a plan C right at this minute," Lough said.

'I've never been more bored by a transfer in my life' - Sancho saga at Man Utd frustrates Neville

The former Red Devils defender wants to see a deal done for the Borussia Dortmund winger, but is now tired of waiting. Gary Neville is among those growing tired of the incessant Jadon Sancho rumours at Manchester United, with the Red Devils legend admitting he has "never been more bored by a transfer in my life". The Old Trafford icon is eager to see a deal done with Borussia Dortmund that allows the England

international winger to return to his homeland. That agreement has, however, been in the pipeline for well over a year now and a protracted saga is starting to grate on those watching on from afar. Neville has posted on social media amid renewed talk of a big-money deal being close to completion: "Manchester United closing in on Sancho. "A transfer should be a joy and a moment of excitement. I've never

Kane claims no contact with Spurs over future amid talk of £100m bid from Man City

The England international striker is fully focused on events at Euro 2020, with no thought given to a possible summer transfer. Harry Kane claims to have had no contact with Tottenham regarding his future, with the England captain focused on Euro 2020 as talk of £100 million (\$139m) bids from Manchester City rages around him. The prolific frontman was expected to push for a switch away from north London this summer as he looks to land the major silverware that has so far eluded him. City are ready to open their doors to a proven Premier League performer, with Pep Guardiola looking to replace Sergio Agüero at the Etihad Stadium, but Kane says domestic matters will not become a distraction for him while away on international duty.

On his dealings with Spurs, the 27-year-old added: "I have good luck messages and things like that but nothing to do with the personal stuff with the club really. "If I'm totally honest I don't really read anything, no media. "The most important thing is about us as a group and as a nation and when you are in these tournament modes, sometimes it's easy to get caught away with other stuff but the experience I've had in the last few tournaments, is just to focus on this and do what you can in the moment and leave no regrets."



Bernardo Silva was meant to be Ronaldo's successor but Man City star is struggling to shine for Portugal

The midfielder has been substituted in all of his country's Euro 2020 matches to date, ahead of the defending champions' last-16 clash with Belgium. It was only two years ago that Bernardo Silva was named Player of the Tournament after Portugal won the inaugural Nations League. He had even managed to somehow overshadow teammate Cristiano Ronaldo, who had scored a hat-trick in the semi-final victory over Switzerland. Bernardo's tireless running and impudent skill marked him out as the leader of a new generation of Portuguese players ready to take over from a team understandably built around the brilliance of their superstar No.7.

The Manchester City winger had gone into that summer tournament on the back of an incredible club campaign in which he was the standout player in a draining domestic treble. Virgil van Dijk was named Player of the Season but Bernardo was regarded by many, including his manager, Pep Guardiola, as the key player in a dramatic title race

with Liverpool which went all the way to the final day. He also finished eighth in the Ballon d'Or at the end of the year - higher than any other City player - and, at 24, seemed destined to take his place among Europe's elite. Fast forward to this summer's European Championship and while Bernardo is still an important figure, he is not having quite the same impact for club or country. The 26-year-old has been substituted in each of Portugal's three matches at the tournament so far, after a stuttering start to the defence of their crown. Ronaldo, meanwhile, continues to be the Selecao's key man, scoring five goals as they sneaked into the last 16 as one of the best third-place teams to set up a clash with Belgium on Sunday. Comparisons with undoubtedly one of the best two players of the last two decades are, of course, unfair. As is judging Portugal on their performance in what was unquestionably this tournament's Group of Death, which would have been tough for any team to survive.

Sports

Arsenal cleared to beat Manchester United to big-name transfer for £43million

Arsenal are reportedly being cleared to seal the transfer of Merih Demiral as Juventus are ready to listen to offers of around £43million for the defender.

Demiral has shown some potential in his time at Juventus, despite never quite managing to establish himself as a regular starter for the Turin giants.

According to reports in Italy, it now looks like Demiral will be cleared to move on this summer, with Arsenal among his main suitors, along with Manchester United, Everton and Leicester City.

The Turkey international looks like he could be a fine purchase for £43m, though it remains to be seen if the Gunners will make him a top priority as they close in on a deal to sign Ben White.

Arsenal need to strengthen in a number of positions this summer, so are perhaps unlikely to splash the cash on bringing in two centre-backs in one window.

Barcelona's new Neymar? How Depay will fit alongside Messi at Camp Nou

Many people questioned the Blaugrana's decision to sign the 27-year-old on a free transfer but he's proving his worth at Euro 2020 with Netherlands

If there were doubts – and there were – about Barcelona's decision to sign Memphis Depay, they have been quickly dispelled at Euro 2020.

With two goals and two assists in three group games, Depay has been the creative leader of a Netherlands side with a 100 per cent record – far better than they were expected to be before the tournament.

Coach Frank de Boer had supporters and even players turning against him over his choice to play with a 3-4-1-2 system, instead of the trusted 4-3-3 that his predecessor Ronald Koeman operated, but the players have pulled the team through.

They face the Czech Republic in the last 16 on Sunday and, with Wales or Denmark lying in store after that, could easily go on to reach the semi-finals.



Euro 2020: Huge blow for Croatia as star player tests positive for Covid-19 ahead of Spain tie

Croatia have been dealt a blow to their preparations ahead of Monday's Euro 2020 last-16 tie against Spain after winger Ivan Perisic tested positive for Covid-19 on Saturday.

Perisic, 32, has scored twice in three matches at the tournament to help drag the 2018 World Cup finalists into the knockout stages after a slow start.

However, the Inter Milan player's tournament looks to be over as he must isolate for 10 days and would therefore miss the quarter-finals and semi-finals should Croatia make it that far.

"During Saturday evening, (the) Croatian Football Federation received the results of regular testing for the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which showed that player Ivan Perisic has tested

positive for novel coronavirus," the Croatian football federation said in a statement.

"Medical staff isolated Ivan from the other members of the national team and immediately and thoroughly informed competent epidemiological authorities about the situation, providing evidence of complying with all the necessary measures aimed at protection against the spread of coronavirus.

"Perisic will spend 10 days in self-isolation and during that period will not participate at the matches of the Croatian national team."

The rest of the Croatian squad and backroom staff have tested negative.

Perisic scored his side's third goal in a 3-1 win over Scotland on Tuesday just days after a

positive case in the Scotland camp for Chelsea midfielder Billy Gilmour.

England duo Mason Mount and Ben Chilwell were forced into self-isolation after talking to club teammate Gilmour following the goalless draw between the sides on June 18, but no other Scottish players were required to isolate.

Mount and Chilwell could be available in time for England's last-16 game against Germany on Tuesday, with the pair set to leave isolation on Monday.

Along with captain Luka Modric, Perisic is one of Croatia's key men and heroes of their run to the World Cup final three years ago. His two goals at Euro 2020 took the 32-year-old's tally at major international tournaments to nine.

Euro 2020: Harry Kane, Jack Grealish and England stars tune up for last 16 clash with Germany - in pictures

England coach Gareth Southgate is set to be offered a new deal by the Football Association whatever the outcome of Euro 2020.

The Three Lions were busy preparing for the last 16 encounter with Germany amid news that Southgate is wanted beyond the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, according to FA chief executive Mark Bullingham.

The 50-year-old Southgate led his country to the World Cup semi-finals in 2018 and a third-place finish in the inaugural 2019 Nations League and Bullingham said there was no desire for change.

The coach watched as Harry Kane, Marcus Rashford, Jack Grealish and his England players worked out at St George's Park as the countdown began to the Wembley clash with the Germans, which will take place in front of 40,000 fans.

"We would love him to carry on, for sure, beyond this contract," said Bullingham. "Gareth knows exactly how we feel about him. He knows we think he's doing a great job and we'd like him to carry on."

"We'll get into that formal conversation after this tournament. But if you ask me now, I'd say yes, we'd like him to carry on."

"Gareth has done a brilliant job, finishing top of the group, really solid defence, and he's done really well on and off the pitch, in every aspect."

Former England defender Southgate was given the post in 2016 after the departure of Sam Allardyce. He signed a new four-year deal in 2018 to take him through next year's World Cup. He has won 36 of his 57 games in charge of England, a win rate of 63 per cent.

It was confirmed this week that 60,000 fans will attend the semi-finals and final at Wembley, the largest crowds assembled for a sporting event in the UK in more than 15 months due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

For the best photos from the training session at St. George's Park, browse through the pictures in the gallery above. To move on to the next photo, click on the arrows or if using a mobile device, simply swipe.



'Deschamps can no longer manage Mbappe's ego' - Rothen slams 'problematic' France striker

The former Paris Saint-Germain and Les Bleus player believes a 22-year-old forward has been handed too much power at international level

Kylian Mbappe may be one of the best players on the planet, but Jerome Rothen claims the Paris Saint-Germain forward's ego has become "problematic" and can no longer be managed by France boss Didier Deschamps.

At 22 years of age, a mercurial talent has already collected four

Ligue 1 titles and World Cup trophy - while now being in the process of chasing down European Championship glory.

Plaudits have rained down on the hottest of prospects, with ex-PSG and Les Bleus player Rothen suggesting that



power has gone to Mbappe's head as he becomes increasingly difficult to coach.



Euro 2020: Substitutes edge Italy past Austria in extra time to reach quarter-finals

Substitutes Federico Chiesa and Matteo Pessina struck in extra-time as Italy beat battling Austria 2-1 to reach the quarter-finals of Euro 2020 at Wembley on Saturday.

The two teams were locked at 0-0 after 90 minutes in London, with Italy enjoying the better of the first half but Austria rattled Roberto Mancini's side in the second period.

Chiesa struck early in extra-time to calm Italy's nerves and another goal from Pessina set up a quarter-final against the winners of Sunday's tie between Belgium and holders Portugal, despite late drama.

Having emerged as Group A winners with a 100 per cent record after playing all three of their games in Rome, Italy were on the road for the first time in the tournament.

Mancini made seven changes from the side that beat Wales as Marco Verratti started instead of Manuel Locatelli in midfield, while Giorgio Chiellini again missed out with a hamstring injury.

After belting out another rousing rendition of their national anthem with ample backing from the largely Italian crowd, the Azzurri made a lively start.

Leonardo Spinazzola's buccaneering bursts from left back were a constant threat and he had Italy's first sight of goal

with a blast wide from an acute angle.

Lorenzo Insigne was picked out by Verratti on the left side of the Austria penalty area moments later, but his curling shot was too close to goalkeeper Daniel Bachmann.

Nicolo Barella's low volley from Spinazzola's cross forced Bachmann to save with his legs.

Austria had a chance to snatch the lead on the counter when Marko Arnautovic ran through on goal after muscling past Leonardo Bonucci, only to fire wildly over from the edge of the area.

Unfazed by that scare, Italy were immediately back on the attack.

Ciro Immobile was inches away from putting them ahead when the Lazio forward whipped an audacious 20-yard strike against the woodwork with Bachmann rooted to the spot.

Even putting two men on Spinazzola could not contain him and the enterprising defender cut in from the left to test Bachmann with a low drive.

For all their possession, Italy lacked the cutting edge to kill off the Austrians.

Mancini's men almost shot themselves in the foot early in the second half when Giovanni Di Lorenzo's needless lunge conceded a free-kick that David Alaba curled just over.

Austria were competing gamely and Marcel Sabitzer's effort took a wicked deflection off Bonucci before flashing wide.

Arnautovic thought he had given Austria a shock lead in the 65th minute when he nodded home from Alaba's header, but the former West Ham striker was ruled to be marginally offside after a lengthy VAR review.

Austria were denied again by VAR when their penalty appeal was rejected after Pessina clashed with Stefan Lainer.

Substitute Locatelli fluffed his chipped effort and Domenico Berardi sent a bicycle kick well over as Italy's frustration mounted.

The match went to extra-time but it did not take long for Italy to make their mark.

The impressive Spinazzola found Chiesa, who controlled the ball and smashed in from close range five minutes into the extra half an hour.

Italy effectively ended the tie 10 minutes later when the ball fell for Pessina, and he drilled home before racing towards the corner flag and throwing himself on the turf.

But there was still time for late drama when Austria's Sasa Kalajdzic stooped to head the ball in at the near post from a corner with a little over five minutes to go but their frantic final efforts were in vain

Denmark make European Championship history after thrashing Wales to reach quarter-finals

Denmark made European Championship history after thrashing Wales 4-0 to reach the quarter-finals of Euro 2020.

Two goals from Kasper Dolberg and late strikes from Joakim Maehle and Martin Braithwaite completed a convincing victory for Kasper Hjulmand's side in Amsterdam.

In doing so they became the first team to score four or more goals in successive games in European Championship history, with their 4-1 win over Russia still fresh in the memory.

Denmark are currently riding a wave of emotion that stems from the horrendous scenes at the Parken Stadium in Copenhagen a fortnight ago, when midfielder Christian Eriksen collapsed on the pitch after suffering a cardiac arrest.

Thankfully, the Inter midfielder is on the road to recovery, but the sight of their stricken team-mate fighting for his life on the pitch was a traumatic experience for the team to endure.

However, that experience seems to have brought the squad closer together as they play on in the tournament in honour of Eriksen.

The result was an outstanding performance in their final

group game against Russia in Copenhagen on Monday, with goals from Maehle, Mikkel Damsgaard, Yussuf Poulsen and Andreas Christensen securing a 4-1 win that sealed a place in the last 16 - the first time a team has ever survived the group stage despite losing their first two matches.

They continued that momentum at the Johan Cruyff Arena, with Dolberg putting them ahead with a fine strike from the edge of the box midway through the first half - the third goal they have scored from outside the penalty area already this competition.

Dolberg doubled Denmark's lead at the start of the second half when he took advantage of a poor clearance from Neco Williams to blast the ball past Danny Ward from close range.

The impressive Maehle made it three with a powerful left-footed strike from inside the area with two minutes left, before Braithwaite stroked home in stoppage-time to complete the victory and seal their place in the record books.

Denmark progress through to the quarter-finals, where they will play the winner of Sunday's game between the Netherlands and Czech Republic in Baku.



Liverpool reject Basel transfer bid for Canada international Millar

Blackpool, Odense and New York Red Bulls are all interested in the 21-year-old forward, too

Liverpool have rejected an offer from Basel for striker Liam Millar.

The Canada international is expected to leave the Reds this summer, and the Swiss side have emerged as surprise front-runners to land the 21-year-old.

Blackpool, Odense and New York Red Bull are also keen on

the pacy forward, who can play as a winger or as a centre forward, and who made 27 appearances on loan at Charlton in League One last season.





Chidinma Ojukwu is beautiful, enchanting and voluptuous. No wonder predominant comments – especially from men-folk – on this 21-year old self-confessed killer of Lagos-based 50-year old Usifo Ataga, CEO of Super TV, are wrapped in the poser: was she a lethal, destructive woman the French call the femme fatale, or victim of a delinquent higher institution girls' sex trade that turned awry?

The story of Chidinma, student of the University of Lagos, which is trending on the social media radar at the moment, is riveting. It is a perfect script for a crime fiction thriller. She courted massive traffic to herself due to the horror of her narrative and the shock people get upon realizing that such physical beauty she represented could be a shawl hiding a dastard cruelty of immense proportion. She is no doubt a prominent member of that cult of young girls who are completely immersed in the flesh-for-cash barter trade that is the hub of the Nigerian social circle. Chidinma had confessed to murdering, via stabbing Ataga, her sexual liaison, at a service apartment in Lekki.

The femme fatale is no doubt an invention of a patriarchal French world. She is a mysterious but beautiful mannequin whose major stock-in-trade is seduction of men. With the ensnaring charms of her enchanting beauty, this French invention uses herself as deadly bait for men which, when swallowed, becomes the death of them. Her most notorious representations are biblical characters like Delilah, Jezebel and Salome whose beauty entrapped men to their graves. The femme fatale archetype was also depicted by Irish poet and playwright, about-the-most-successful-playwright of late-Victorian London, Oscar Wilde, in his play, Salome. In the play, Salome manipulated her lustful uncle, King Herod, with an enticing Dance of the Seven Veils. After seducing him, she then asked for the head of John the Baptist, an imperious demand Herod could not decline.

As an aside, Wilde himself was later convicted in a criminal trial for gross indecency in a consensual homosexual liaison with his gay partner, British poet, journalist and son of the Marquess of Queensberry, Lord Alfred Bruce Douglas. Douglas' father, who abhorred the homosexual relationship, mocked Wilde in the public and the Irish playwright sued him for libel, only for details of his romp with Douglas to become public knowledge. This prompted his conviction and sentencing to two years imprisonment with hard labour in 1895, in one of the first celebrity trials in the world. Imprisoned in Cell No C33 at the Reading, England jailhouse until 1897, Wilde's experience later formed the muse for his grim realism of life in prison depicted in his The Ballad of Reading Gaol. He later died of meningitis in 1900 at age 46, three years after his release from prison.

Even if you were as unfeeling as to be capable of making barbecue with the ugly, bony and sparse-meat head of a tortoise, when you read the grief-provoking story of Chidinma, you will be sorry for motherhood and for the mother who begot her. From you will flow empathy for that uncertain, painful moment of delivery at the maternity ward which the Yoruba carefully parceled in the panegyric, *ikunle abiyamo*. How could a child, apparently born with much celebration and rejoicing, turn this tragically into a demonic man mauler?

Details of the tragic story are in the public domain and have elicited diverse comments from Nigerians and beyond. They do not need a rehash here. Questions upon questions are being asked but none is yet able to explain the riddle of how such a young girl could perpetrate that gory crime to which she has confessed. In court, lawyers will battle whether the narratives conveyed in Chidinma's confession and evidence from the murder scene tally with the crime of murder or manslaughter.

Do the multiple stabs, her decision to

Backpage Column

BY FESTUS ADEDAYO

Bewitching Chidinma and this Water Bottle generation

pay for the hotel with a pseudonym, the withdrawals from deceased Ataga's account and the fake driving license bearing "Mary Johnson" with her photograph, constitute premeditated murder? Was there absence or presence of the mental element called *mens rea* in the killing? Those are however not our bother here. The society, enveloped in the Chidinma story, is. From all the narratives presented of this 21-year old, it is obvious that she lived a double-faced life like Janus, the Roman god with two faces. She was a reserved, angelic girl next door at home and in her neighbourhood and at the same time, a total delinquent in shrouds of innocence.

The second part must have been concealed from her parents, classmates and her tiny rank of friends, but totally open to the world where she caught her fun. Those who know, who have a social barometer that measures the pulse of the town, told me that many parents are like Chidinma's father and mother – they know very little about who their wards are outside of the home. Away from the English social reformer, statistician and founder of modern nursing, Florence Nightingale picture they cut at home, many of our children are nothing but whores, perverts and drug addicts who daily frequent fun arenas to get their fixes. From police report, Mr. Ojukwu, Chidinma's father, got violently antagonistic, like many parents will, when policemen came to their home to arrest his daughter. How could his angelic daughter be the homicidal psychopath the police were looking for?

Chidinma's viral confession also revealed that she was afflicted by the famous bug that has become a pestilence among the youth in our society – drug addiction. In October, 2017, I did a piece entitled, *Our Water Bottle Children Are Here* where I explored this menace. I termed the prevalence of drug consumption among our children the new wave of fire that will consume us all soonest.

Drawn into curiosity by the Yoruba language-rendered, high-tempoed hip-hop song of street boy musician, Temitope Adekunle, a.k.a. Small Doctor, entitled "Penalty", I was told that the fad among youth nowadays is to lace hard drugs in alcohol which they put in water bottles, clutched as youth identity at parties and social gatherings. Small Doctor, in the song, had sang of how the boys were "bringing water bottles into the dancehall" while the musician, who nicknamed self Omo Iya Teacher, deploying beer parlour lingo, enjoined the party crew to "yee ma sun, gba ko je! (don't be a dunce, so take it and swallow!)."

"We were in the lodge smoking. He was trying to make advances on (sic) me. I was tired and he became violent on it. I let him have his way. Towards afternoon, he ordered roofies. We took it together and ate food," Chidinma said upon being interrogated. She confessed to withdrawing N380,000 from the deceased's account to pay her school fees and said, "We smoked SK and Loud... I wanted to use the money I withdrew to pay my school fees. I felt disappointed when the police arrested me at my parents' house and it was when I was arrested around 10pm that my parents got to know about the incident."

Chidinma, at that tender age and like many of our children in schools, was already hooked on drugs. I am told that the world of drug

consumption has widened dangerously in the dimension of the hopelessness in the land.

Our children have moved away from WHO-classified narcotic substances and psychotropic substances like rohypnol, tramadol, diazepam and lextotan to more lethal ones. I said in the piece referenced above that "a rough survey I carried out indicates that this water bottle culture has become so pervasive among our youth that we could be having a pandemic on our hands. While the list of drugs known to previous generations included cocaine, heroin, marijuana (cannabis) – the latter now with different variants and cognomens – a host of other variants have since erupted. Rohypnol, a strong sedative also known as date rape drug; codeine, a cough suppressant; mephenthamine, alcohol, topiramate, methane from soak-aways, glue, petrol and such like narcotics are the drugs commonly consumed by our children, mostly on campuses."

While Buba Marwa, Chairman of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, (NDLEA) may be combing the nooks and crannies of Nigeria for drugs and may be making the success attributed to him in the public sphere, drugs in underground cells and cellars of universities and on the streets will continue blossoming except Nigeria addresses the huge hopelessness of unemployment in the land.

During the week that just ended, I accosted a secondary school dropout hooked on drugs who, when told the danger of its consumption, peremptorily retorted that die na die, parodying the Shakespearean assertion "... Seeing that death, a necessary end, will come when it will come." The Chidinma menace of the girl child's acute dependency on illicit sex for survival too has a lot to do with the failure of successive governments to shine light on Nigeria's dark economy. It is tied to the apron string of the menace of our children becoming tools in the hands of sex vampires like Usifo Ataga.

As I said in the piece, the political dictates the social and the social is the manifestation of the political; or vice versa. That probably was why late Jamaican reggae icon, Peter Tosh, at the One Love Peace Concert held on April 22, 1978 at the National Stadium in Kingston, Jamaica, was quoted as saying, "I am not a politician but I suffer its consequences."

We suffer the consequences of the cumulative bad governance in Nigeria from independence till date: the stealing of our commonwealth and the opaque governance by our military and civilian conquistadors. Parents have thus become victims of this time. That probably was why Mr. Ojukwu couldn't afford Chidinma's school fees, why a young girl like her had to depend on takings from hawking her flesh for survival. In many homes, those girls we see trading their flesh as bazaar at bioscopes, hotels and clubs are breadwinners whose families' ability to put food on the table is dependent on the number of men's nakedness these daughters of theirs see per day.

The family in Nigeria has, ipso facto crumbled, almost irretrievably. Parental failure is everywhere. Values and ethics of the home have taken unceremonious flights. Parents themselves have no time for the development of their children as they are

running helter-skelter to make a living. Men like Ataga – though we are not afforded the opportunity of hearing his own side since he is dead – are capitalizing on this collapse of the home and deploying our girls as lubricants of their social and economic dislocation.

Flowing from Tosh, it is obvious that we must all seek to have good governance in Nigeria so that we can embrace developments and low crimes, the type in saner climes. It is the only remedy to the hopelessness that breeds the calamities of Chidinma and the menace of Atagas.

Gumi and the Nigerian state Sheik Ahmad Gumi, self-styled go-between of Nigeria and her enemies was last week invited by the Department of State Services, DSS for questioning. He was said to have been questioned on account of an Arise TV interview he granted where he alleged that there was collusion between Nigerian security forces and bandits in the North.

Gumi had said in the interview: "These bandits, if you don't know, are cooperating with a lot of bad elements in our security system. This is a business. So many people are involved, you'll be so surprised. They were caught in Zamfara; they were caught everywhere, how do these big weapons cross our borders? How can these big weapons cross our borders and get into the forest without the cooperation of some bad elements of the security operatives assisting them? It's not possible. If I give you the same amount of guns, can you take them to the UK? You can't because the security is alert."

While knocking his claims, the Nigerian Army fumed and claimed it puts its life on the line, losing many of its soldiers in the process. It concluded that, "While the Nigerian Army will not attempt to excuse the possibility of black sheep amongst its fold, it must be stated unambiguously that it will not condone any form of sabotage or aiding and assisting the enemy by any personnel."

So, to this mullah, a bloody enterprise like kidnapping is business? It is obvious that Gumi may be making these arguments so as to make a case for his Northern malefactors. The truth however is that the sophisticated weapons in use by the bandits could only have got to them, either through connivance with the military or customs officials who look the other way while the weapons were being shipped into the country. In that wise, it may be hard to fault his argument.

On Saturday, I watched the Arise TV crew grill same Sheik Gumi. The crew was unsparing of Gumi, unlike its earlier mollycoddling of President Muhammadu Buhari at the Aso Rock Villa Cool, composed and armed with details of his intervention, this mullah seems not to be bothered about his typecast as a bigot who swivels in bed with coldblooded psychopaths. Save for the obvious ethnic colouration of his submissions and the fact that his type only luxuriate under the kind of government that Buhari runs, Gumi's logic was water-tight but obviously self-serving. He did not hide his being an apostle and megaphone of Hausa-Fulani criminals. He called on the Federal Government to grant amnesty to and negotiate with bandits and Boko Haram as same government did with Niger Delta militants, while claiming that both the bombing of crude oil pipelines and scaring farmers from their farms were both threats to the Nigerian economy.

What is not in dispute is that Gumi is part of a deep, choreographed plot to liberate a sizeable portion of Nigeria's patrimony for his northern people, regardless of whether they are criminals or not. His views are little different from Buhari's and the presidency's. The non-existent Nigeria is not his bother. It is not the bother of Buhari and his presidency, as it isn't many Nigerians'. Nigeria is an orphan in this equation.