

News as it breaks

Daybreak

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News

NDLEA launches operation "Offensive Action"

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* 15 drug dealers, including a woman on wheelchair, arrested

* NDLEA Chairman, Buba Marwa, commends officers for successful operations

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency says it has seized more than 8,268 kilogrammes of assorted illicit drugs, including cocaine, heroin, tramadol, methamphetamine and skunk, among others.

This happened in a weeklong coordinated raids in Ondo, Akwa Ibom, Adamawa, Enugu State, Bauchi State, Edo and Anambra, it said in a statement.

The agency's Director of Media and Advocacy, Mr Femi Babafemi, issued the statement on Sunday in Abuja.

Babafemi said that no fewer than 15 drug dealers, including a woman on wheelchair, were arrested during the "Offensive Action" operations.

He said that the operation which began on August 1 lasted until Saturday across the seven states.

He noted that the raids were aimed at mopping up illicit drugs in the affected states.

He said that the action was directed by the Chairman,

NDLEA, retired Brig.-Gen. Buba Marwa against all drug cartels across the country.

Babafemi said that the bulk of the seized drugs were recovered from Ondo State and Edo.

According to him, in Akure, a 27-year old Omokayode Adedayo was on Friday, arrested on Oda Road, Akure South Local Government Area.

Babafemi said that the raids in

Akwa Ibom led to the recovery of 64.903 kilogrammes of illicit drugs, including 1.203 kilogrammes of crack cocaine from a 26-year old Nwoye Solomon.

"In Adamawa state, a drug dealer, Ikechukwu Onuh, was arrested at Jimeta, Yola on Thursday with 14.400 kilogrammes of tramadol packaged as diclofenac to evade detection.

"In Enugu State, 19.08

kilogrammes of cocaine and skunk were recovered from three suspects, including a 35-year old cripple, Iyogwe Chinenye and 25-year old Aja David.

"Different quantities of cocaine and heroin were also seized from an 18-year old drug dealer, Jude Chinedu during raids at Inland town area of Onitsha, Anambra.

"More than 59 kilogrammes of a psychotropic substance,

pentazocine, was intercepted in a bus from Jos, Plateau to Bauchi State with more than 148 kilogrammes of different variants of skunk.

Meanwhile, different quantities of tramadol, methamphetamine and skunk going to the UK, Australia, New Zealand and UAE have been intercepted in two courier firms in Lagos, Babafemi said.

He also said that the arrests were made by narcotic officers of the Directorate of Operatwe're General Investigation in the agency.

Reacting to the outcome of the raids, Marwa commended the officers and men of the seven commands for their diligence and charged them not to rest on their oars.

He said that the nationwide offensive action would continue across all commands until the last gramme of illicit drug is retrieved from the street.

Presidency set to construct new state house clinic within Aso Villa

By Williams Anuku Abuja

The presidency has unveiled plans to construct a new State House clinic within the precinct of the Presidential Villa, but specifically to provide first class medical services to the first citizens.

Plans for the construction follows an approval by President Muhammadu Buhari on where the clinic should be located within the villa.

The state of the art clinic is expected to be completed in the next two years before the end of the Buhari-led administration.

Already, the Senate Committee on Federal Character and Inter Governmental Affairs has visited the site during its oversight function to know the level of utilization of budgetary allocation to State House.

This is as the Permanent Secretary, State House, Tijani Umar, has lamented that the non release of budgetary allocation to State House in full has become a

challenge as some of the facilities at the nation's seat of power have become obsolete.

Umar, noted that out of about N8,699 billion budgeted for State House in the 2018 fiscal year, only about N5,083 billion which was about 58 percent was released, leaving an outstanding balance of about N3,616 billion.

Umar told the committee that in 2019 out of about N6,955 billion budgeted, only about N2 billion which was about 38 percent of the total sum was released, leaving an outstanding balance of about N4 billion as the shortfall. While in 2020, the sum of about N4,878 billion was appropriated and fully released.

Fielding questions from journalists, the Permanent Secretary noted that the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic has an adverse effect on the economy.

Asked how the management of the State House was coping with the funding challenges, he said, "First and foremost, let me say that we are privileged to be in this

position, to be able to discharge these huge responsibilities and I'm also happy that you raised the issue of funding challenges.

"I also want to use the opportunity to distinguish very clearly between appropriation and release. Just like you mentioned now, in 2018, about N8 billion was appropriated, out of which only about N5 billion was released. Definitely, looking at the enormity of the challenges that we are dealing with from day to day, that is affecting our performance.

"However, we are in a tradition of prudence and we also have not lost sight of the challenges that we have internationally, especially with COVID in regard to how much money in the country in its entirety makes.

"However, I would like to say that the State House needs quite a formidable level of support and improvement in the funding. Especially because we are dealing with phasing out a lot of infrastructure that have come to the end of their lifespan.

"We have the issue of our ICT infrastructure, we have the issue of our equipment in the Conference Centre here, kitchen equipment, we have the issue of telecommunications, and operational and utility vehicles that are gradually coming to the tail end of their lives and we need to replace them.

"But majorly, I think the biggest intervention we require is in building and construction of the Presidential wing of the State House Clinic, which is of a strategic national importance and it's being done in form of a legacy project.

"And by the time this administration leaves office, we would have the Presidential wing of the State House Clinic in place so that it will be very clear that all the observations and all the hopes and aspirations that the general public has expressed of the State House Clinic and its facilities have been achieved.

"For now, we have already

started in earnest with activities that are required for the construction, we have received the necessary approvals. We have received the no objection from the Bureau of Public Procurement.

"We have already directed the contractor because he's going to come in form of a turnkey project, in order to mobilise and take over the site, and to develop the necessary drawings, and the geo-technical survey reports that we have, so that the two years that we have set for ourselves to deliver this project can be achieved."

Asked how much the project would cost, he said, "It is going to be delivered over two budget years: 2021 and 2022, and we have not yet finalised being a turnkey project, we need the contractors to conclude the development of the drawings and other necessary documents that we need, and for them to give us an estimate that is conclusive for the building.

"And then we also move forward to the issue of equipping the building after delivering it and then place it before the BPP for consideration."

Further asked whether there was a commitment by the senate committee to ensure that funds appropriated were released, Umar said, "I think, you know, during our meeting or interaction with the Senate Committee on Federal Character and Intergovernmental Affairs, it has become very clear to the membership of that committee.

"You know, the entire delegation that came today, that what we need to do is not something just for the executive. It is a project of national proportion and significance and therefore, we need all the support that we can get from the National Assembly."

Present at the meeting were the Chief of Staff to the President, Prof Ibrahim Gambari, members of the senate committee and the management staff of the State House.

Lagos-Kano train service to begin full operation August 13

By Gabriel Udeh

The Lagos-Kano train service is to resume operation from Friday, August 13, the regional district manager of the Nigerian Railway Corporation, Ismail Adebisi, said on Sunday.

The train would leave Lagos on Friday evening and arrive in Kano on Sunday morning, he said.

Mr Adebisi also said that plans have been concluded to restart the Kaduna to Kafanchan and Kaduna to Kano train service before the end of August.

He added that it would

rehabilitate 100 wagons to further strengthen the rail sector within the next two months.

He explained that 21 of the rehabilitated wagons would be used in the northern district of the rail service comprising Kaduna, Kano, Jigawa, Yobe, Katsina and Zamfara States.

He said the Kano to Nguru, Yobe train service was still active and that plans were at an advanced stage to enhance the traffic on the route by returning coaches that were dropped because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The regional district manager said the Minna-Kaduna rail mass transit

had also been active for the past one month and that patronage was increasing on every trip. The service runs on Sundays, Mondays and Thursdays.

The train leaves Minna at 7:00 a.m. and leaves Kaduna at about 2:30 p.m.

He added that since most of the routes were on a narrow gauge, the corporation would strengthen its maintenance work to ensure hitch-free operations.

Mr Adebisi stressed that the corporation had strengthened its collaboration with key security agencies and other relevant stakeholders to address vandalism on railway properties.

EDITORIAL

Insecurity: The ticking time bomb

The government can bury its head in the sand if it so wishes. The fact however remains that with the state of insecurity in the country Nigeria is a ticking time bomb!

The state of insecurity is now pervasive and has spread all over the country.

It is dangerous that herdsmen's killing, raping, and kidnapping of people in different parts of Nigeria has been politicised.

It is unfortunate that when the government should be firm and decisive it has chosen more often than not to politicize issues.

Some state governments and politicians may, for political calculation and the votes they expect to win elections, have decided to keep mute over the alarming development.

But the people who receive the swords and the bullets are crying out. They are not only crying out, they are also moving to defend themselves if the police, army and other security agencies appointed by the Constitution to protect them fail to do so.

At this juncture, it has become important that all Nigerians understand that the real intentions of those fuelling

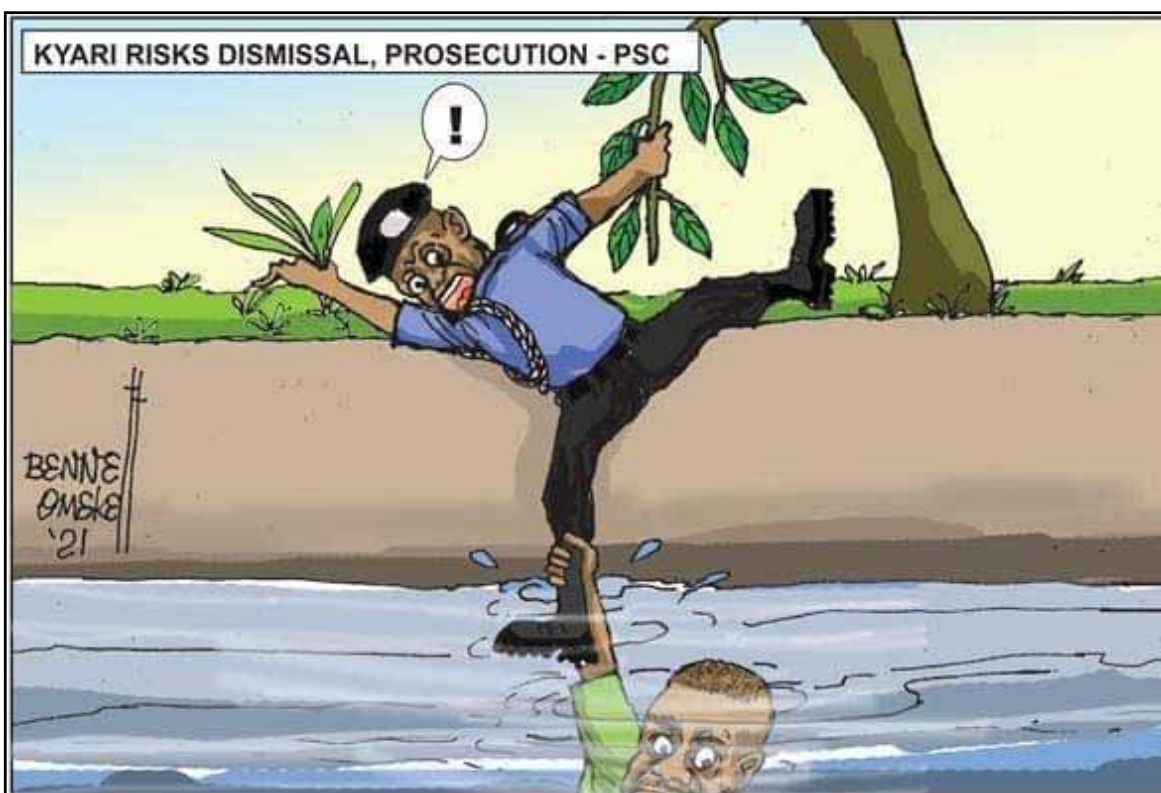
these mayhems are no longer hidden from Nigerians. We believe the sooner we came to a round table and honestly discuss the future of Nigeria, the better it will be for everyone.

For the security agencies to fail to stop criminal herdsmen from raping, killing and kidnapping people wherever they are raises a red flag of suspicion. Also disturbing is the assertion by some people that the criminal herdsmen have the constitutional rights to live wherever they choose, thus stoking and escalating the crisis.

Nigeria must not be dragged into another civil war. Injustice and oppression breed rebellion and war.

Those who rule over the affairs of Nigeria must work to enthrone justice and equity and nurture it to make for peaceful co-existence of people from different ethnic origins. One sure way of doing this is to create the enabling environment for us to talk to ourselves, and truthfully too.

With the ferocity of the herdsmen attacks spreading all over the country, even the blind can see that time is fast running out for Nigerians to come to grips with evil and danger that insecurity has become.



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Mission Statement

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

News

Parliamentary Staff Association Threaten to Embark on Strike Over Non Implementation of Financial Autonomy

By Isaac Kertyo, Makurdi

The Parliamentary Staff Association of Nigeria have threatened to embark on industrial action to press home their demand for the implementation of the Financial Autonomy for State Houses of Assembly.

It could be recalled that the association had embarked on strike in March this year over failure on the part of State Governments to grant state Houses of Assembly

Financial Autonomy.

Day Break gathered that it took the intervention of the state governors and other stakeholders who agreed that State Governments would implement their demands within 45 days which led to the suspension of the industrial action in June, 2021.

The ultimatum expired Thursday last week with the union members threatening to embark on another strike.

The Chairman of the Association, Benue State House

of Assembly Chapter, Mr Francis Adole said states like Ekiti, Sokoto, Plateau have commenced the implementation of the financial autonomy for their States legislatures and enjoined Benue State to emulate them.

Day Break learned that, Benue State House of Assembly had passed the Assembly Funds Management Law and transmitted same to the executive for accent to pave the way for its implementation of the aforementioned autonomy.

Fed. Poly Bali Matriculate 1,485 newly admitted students

By Danzumi Ishaku, Jalingo

The Acting Rector Federal Polytechnic Bali Mohammed Usman has Matriculated 1,485 newly admitted students into the 2021/2022 academic sections for HND and ND programs of different department.

Addressing the Matriculants during the ceremony in Bali, the Acting Rector Muhammad Usman charged them to responsible and obey the rules governing the instructions.

Usman warned students against lobbying or begging for marks, saying doing the will compromised academy standard.

The Rector who warned the newly admitted students to dress decently adding that it will not be tolerated as all acts of indiscipline will not go unpunished and urged them not to take the law into their hands.

According to the Rector, the Polytechnic received 1668 applications, offered 1485 ND/HND admission,

however only 1180 were duly registrater and Matriculated. The oath was administer by a legal practitioner Barrister Lawi Nickson.

The Rector however appreciated the administrators of the Matriculated students and urged the students to partner with the management and staff to promote academy excellent.

Highlight of the occasion included the traditional dances from students of various ethnic nationalities.

Over 1000 Women Matches Against Gendered-Based Violence In Kogi

By Noah Ocheni, Lokoja

In their bids to commemorate with this year's African Women's Day, no fewer than 1000 Women on Thursday in Lokoja matched against gendered-based violence in Kogi State.

"This year's Campaign is a global campaign on the elimination of violence against Women and Girls (VAWG), which aims at changing widely accepted harmful social norms that too often justify violence against women and girls, and work with communities and individuals to promote positive norms that promote gender equality and non-violence".

Speaking on behalf of the Women, the State Coordinator, Gender and Constitution Reform Network, (GECORN), Eunice Abimbola Agbogun called on the Government to support the campaign to put an end to all forms of violence against women and to ensure women are included in politics ahead of the 2023 general election.

Agbogun called on the Government and stakeholders to rise up to the challenge of negative stereotypes and norms

about Kogi and African Women adding that, they should become anti-gender-based violence champions in their communities.

"Women at the center of all, should be included in programming because of their role in society and with about with about 50% of the world's population, their contributions cannot be under-emphasized."

"It is important we celebrate the role of women beyond child-bearers and primary caregivers. We have seen women achieving greater heights in the society industrially, law, politics, agriculture, and education respectively."

"There is almost no level of human attainment that women have not been able to conquer. Astronauts, fighter pilots, scientists, mathematicians, Journalists and activists respectively."

She, however, called on the State Government to ascent to the Violence Against Persons Prohibition, (VAPP), a bill that was passed into law by the State Assembly recently.

Also speaking, the Kogi State Chairperson, International Federation of Female Lawyers, (FIDA), Mrs. Lilian Okolo

said almost all the states in the country have passed the VAPP bill, hence there is a need for Kogi State to follow the part of history. She explained that the bill is not only for women alone but for everyone.

Responding, the Kogi State Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Development, Hajia Fatima Kabir Buba said the day is a period to acknowledge African women who played a vital role in building the African continent.

Among the participants of the peace walks according to our correspondent includes, Gender and constitution reform network, International Federation of Female Lawyers, (FIDA), National Association of Women Journalist, (NAWOJ) and Federation of Muslims Women Association in Nigeria, (FONWAN).

Others are Women in Christian Association of Nigeria, National Council of Women Society, Market Women Association, including widows took a walk to the Kogi State Ministry of Women Affairs Lokoja calling for an end to all forms of violence against women in the State.

Ex-agitators vow to counter negative reports on Niger Delta

**Dikio, Udom, Essien, challenge ex-agitators on Niger Delta development*

By Amgbare Ekaunkumo, Yenagoa

Ex-agitators and members of the Strategic Communications Committee (SCC) set up by the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) have expressed their readiness to counter negative narratives about the Niger Delta.

Speaking after a three-day workshop organised for them in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, by PAP's Interim Administrator, Col. Milland Dixon Dikio, the ex-agitators said the skills and techniques they learnt from experts assembled for the event would help them change the negative perception about the region.

The Chairman of SCC, Pastor Nature Dumale said: "The training has given us the awareness and the enlightenment we never had. The knowledge we have received will be adequately used to change the narratives and perception of people about our region".

Akwa Ibom State Governor, Emmanuel Udom and Chairman, Pan Niger Delta Forum (PANDEF), Emmanuel Essien, who attended the grand finale of the workshop, urged ex-agitators to contribute to the development of the region.

Dikio asked them to channel their knowledge to the progress and development of the region appealing to them to emulate others, who were already making positive impacts in the region.

He advised the ex-agitators to minimize complaining and start working with vision and purpose.

Addressing them, he said: "Contribute to the development of the Niger Delta region instead of complaining. The agitation should be channeled to the right purpose. Progress is not measured

overnight; it starts with little beginnings just like this one."

In his remarks, Governor Udom Emmanuel, who was represented by Owoidighe Ekpoattai, SA to the Governor on Cottage Industries Clutters enjoined the committee to be proud of their region and report truth without prejudice.

He commended Dikio for challenging the ex-agitator to move from dependent stipend earners to independent entrepreneurs.

"With this, I know you will report positively about Akwa Ibom State and especially the Niger Delta region. This is a great region and a good place to be. I am proud to be from the Niger delta region because we speak the truth and we want to be free," he said

The PANDEF chairman, Essien described the workshop as a success and commended Dikio for bringing the event to Akwa Ibom saying it was the first time such event held in the state.

Essien said: "The amnesty programme is a special programme for the region and it would not last forever.

"Your job is to ensure that positive reporting is done for the benefit of this region so that investors will not runaway from this region.

We have to make this region peaceful to attract employment and opportunities for our people."

The workshop with the theme, "Communication for Positive Change" was organised for members of the SCC by Dikio through the PAP's Media Consultant, First Media Network Limited, to equip them with the skills to effectively discharge their mandate of changing the perception of the region through effective communication, especially at the grassroots.

APC Chairman kidnapped in Niger

By Samuel Itsede

The Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC) Zone 'C', Aminu Bobi, has been reportedly kidnapped by gunmen in Mariga local government area of Niger state.

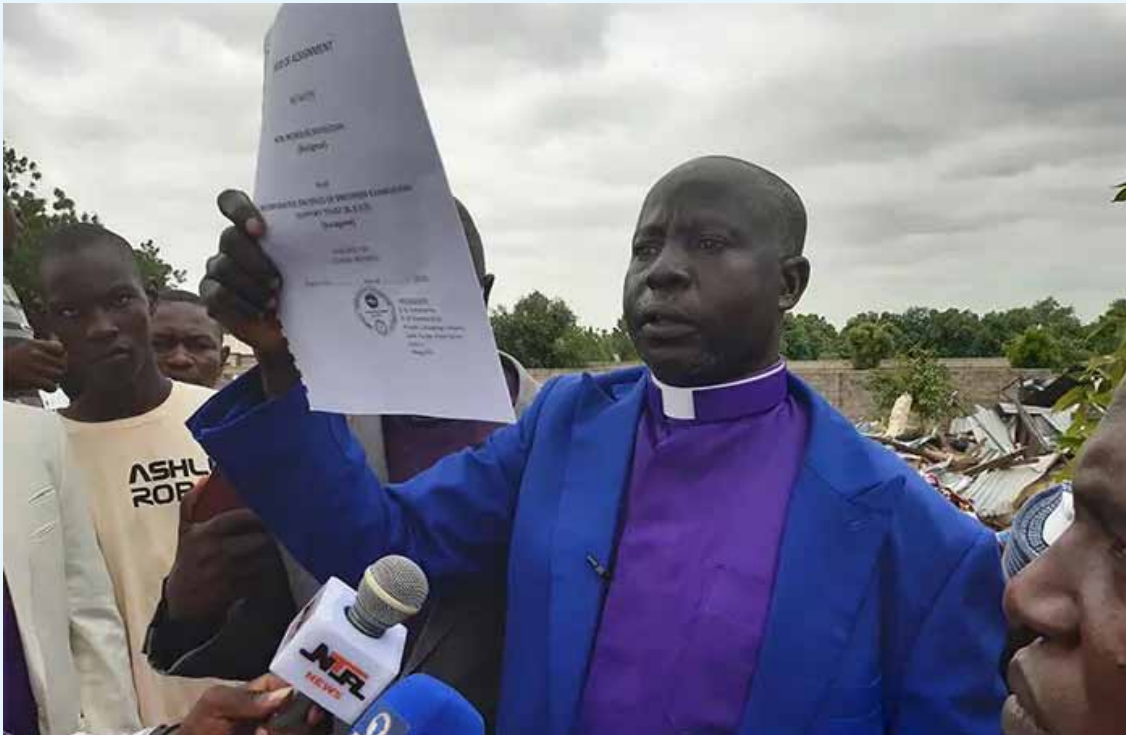
It was gathered that Bobi was abducted Saturday evening while he was on his farm supervising farmhands working for him.

A source close to the victim said the gunmen invaded the

farm on six motorcycles, with each motorcycle carrying three people shooting sporadically.

He said the APC Zonal Chairman was the only one who was abducted by the bandits as none of the Labourers were abducted.

Attempt to confirm the incident from the police was unsuccessful as the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), DSP Wasiu Abiodun, could not be reached as at the time of filing this report.



Over 50 Pastors and Youth Groups Demand Immediate Reconstruction of Demolished EYN Church

...Passes Vote Of No Confidence On CAN Chairman In Borno.

By From Dauda R. Pam Maiduguri

No fewer than 50 inter-denominational Pastors and youth groups, Friday, converged at the demolished site of the Church of Brethren, Ekkliyyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN), Maduganari in Maiduguri Borno state capital.

With a call on Governor Babagana Umara Zulum, to immediately reconstruct the destroyed Church building, its pure water factory and security post among other facilities destroyed by officials of Borno Geographic Information System (BOGIS).

The dastardly act which has since attracted outright condemnation by section of the society over the demolition of the church and subsequent firing of gun shots by a member of Civilian Joint Task Force, CJTF, as well as some persons who hurled stones at the task force during an encounter, Thursday, with officials of BOGIS, led by its Executive Secretary, Engineer Adam Bukar Bababe resulting to the death of one person and several others in hospital.

In a swift reaction, the Borno State Governor, BABAGANA UMARA ZULUM in a state wide broadcast, appealed for calm, and ordered for immediate investigation into the matter, so as to punish anyone found wanting.

And has equally delegated his Deputy, Umar Usman Kadafur we who visited the victims at the hospital and ordered for settlement of their medical bills.

Addressing a press conference at the demolished site of the EYN Church on Friday, the Pastor in charge, Reverend Shawulu Auta Ndahi, condemned the killing of

one of his church member while attempting to protect the Church from demolition.

He said, there is nothing worth on earth that can compensate life and placed a request to the State Government to immediately assist the families of the deceased and those who sustained gunshot wounds currently receiving treatment at a State Specialist Hospital, Maiduguri.

Hear him, "We have gathered here today to express our displeasure over what has happened to our Church and its members.

"Yesterday (Thursday) morning at about 11am, we received a distress call that some officials of BOGIS in company of some CJTF and graders came and demolished our Church with all facilities destroyed.

"In the process, some of our aggrieved members started hurling stones at the officials of BOGIS, before Some CJTF members opened fire after seizing their communication gadgets, which led to the killing of Mr. Ezekiel Bitrus, May His Gentle Soul Rest In Peace.

"In view of these unwholesome conduct, we are hereby displaying all our Certificate of Occupancy and other relevant Documents used in acquiring this land which are legal documents.

"Therefore, as a Church which believe in peace and unity, we have some immediate demands for Governor Zulum to; Immediately reconstruct our demolished Church and other facilities including our pure water factory.

"Although, there is nothing worth on earth that can compensate life, we request the State Government to immediately assist the families of the deceased

and those who sustained gunshot wounds currently receiving treatment at a State Specialist Hospital, Maiduguri.

"We called on the state government to immediately remove Engineer Adam Bukar Bababe from heading BOGIS which is an agency of government tasked with responsibility of land maintenance.

"The Church which has 99% of its membership are citizens of Borno, also want the State Government to lift the ban on the teaching of Christian Religious Knowledge (CRK) in all our Primary and Secondary schools as it has been the practice in the past, as the constitution allows for freedom of worship in the country." The Pastor in charge stated.

Similarly, the Youth CAN Chairman Metro, Mr. Sunday Ishaku, in his remarks condemned in strong terms the unfortunate incident on behalf of Christian Youth Groups and prayed for the repose of the soul of the deceased and quick recovery of those who sustained injuries during the fracas.

The CAN youth chairman used the occasion to pass a vote of no confidence on the state CAN Chairman, Bishop Mohammed Naga, whom he alleged led some officials and individuals to meet with Governor Zulum some hours after the incident at the Government House just for their selfish interest.

"We are disappointed with the CAN leadership under the Chairmanship of Bishop Mohammed Naga, because as I address you today, Bishop Naga has failed to officially come out with a statement regarding this unwholesome treatment meted to us by BOGIS and men of CJTF".

Why Kaduna relocated NYSC Camp from Kaduna-Abuja Highway

As 2,300 commences registration in new camp

By Gabriel Udeh, Kaduna

Apparently owing to increasing wave and terror of banditry attacks, kidnapping and abduction, the Kaduna State Government has relocated the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) from the permanent camp Kaduna-Abuja highway.

Although the government has attributed the relocation of Corps members to renovation of permanent camp, the initiative is however seem as a commendable one.

A total of 2,300 2021 batch 'B' (stream 1) prospective corps members to Kaduna State currently registering at the temporary camp at Government College, Kurmi Mashi, Kaduna, ahead of their swearing-in ceremony on Monday, August 9, are aware of the fragile nature of state interms of insecurity.

The Coordinator of the scheme Alhaji Isah Wana, on behalf of kaduna state government, appealed to the people of the new host community to cooperate and be tolerant with corps members' activities through the three weeks orientation exercise.

Wana, however said that the temporary relocation was due to the intention of the state government to renovate the facilities at the permanent orientation camp which has been in use for decades.

According to him, "the orientation camp is a direct responsibility of the state government based on the act that set up the scheme.

"The Kaduna State government just told us that they want to renovate the camp because they felt it was not befitting for us and asked us to move to a temporary venue which is the Government College here in Kurmi Mashi. You can see that the building has just been painted as if they have planned to bring us here".

On the need for tolerance, he said "as long as we'll be here, we must live with the community and the community must understand that we have come to live with them for this temporary period. We want them to give us a corresponding affection while we are here.

"The adjoining families and communities here who are not used to our system will be hearing bugle calls, trumpet calls, drums intermittently

which they are not used to. We want them to be patient with us. We want them to tolerate us.

"They should know that we are inconvenient to be here as an ideal camp should certainly be far from an environment like this. So, both of us may not like what we are seeing, but we must tolerate one another for these few weeks we will be here.

On security, he said, "we have been there at the permanent camp and there has never been any attempt to attack us. Don't forget that NYSC is a brainchild of the military and they have been doing so much to protect the corps members across the country. As the manager of the scheme in the state, I did not see any threat.

"If there is going to be any security threat at this temporary camp, it will be that of theft and drugs especially cannabis which of course cannot be said to be peculiar to this place alone.

"But, don't forget that NYSC is the most organised and formal youth outfit in Nigeria with proper planning in all we do. We have security personnel all over and men of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) are in the ground to respond to any threat day and night", he explained.

The Coordinator further explained the readiness of the state government to ensure that corps members coming from within and outside the country have a hitch-free exercise in terms of accommodation, feeding, health and security.

"Usually, there are associated difficulties with human needs when you move to a new environment. Needs like accommodation, water, toilet and feeding. Again, the timing for moving was just one week. The facilities are large enough to accommodate us but because some of the buildings have been fallow, facilities like toilets are minimal.

"But, we are coping as we build fast new ones. We are sinking a new borehole while other collaborating agencies are moving around with tankers to supply water.

"There is a bigger clinic here. We just adopted it. Officially, we are expecting 2,300 corps members but of course, the human factor will play up and we may not have the exact number at the close of registration", Wana said.

News

Nnamdi Kanu's trial: IPOB suspends sit-at-home order

By Emeka Ogenyi

The planned sit-at-home ordered by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) scheduled to have commenced tomorrow (Monday) has been suspended due to the just began National Examination Council (NECO) Exam for junior secondary schools.

A new date for the commencement of the sit-at-home order, IPOB said would be announced later.

The pro Biafra group had penultimate week, in what appeared to be in solidarity with its detained leader, Nnamdi Kanu, ordered for sit-at-home that would be observed every Monday throughout Igbo land, starting from August 9, until when his trial would end.

However, in a statement the IPOB leader's younger brother, Kanunta Kanu said the group arrived at the decision, after listening to pleas from well meaning individuals and groups

within and outside Biafra land that the order be suspended to allow students from Igbo land to participate in the NECO Exam.

"IPOB has listened to pleas from well-meaning individuals and groups within and outside Biafra land that we consider the fate of our children who will be involved in the NECO Exam and based on that, we decided to shift grounds over the sit-at-home order".

The statement added that

IPOB on its part, having realized the academic deprivation the already marginalized Biafra students who entered for this year's NECO would suffer, decided to suspend the sit-at-home order to a later date, to allow the students take their exams.

Kanu equally made it clear that allowing the sit-at-home to go ahead as earlier announced, in the face of the NECO Exam would amount to assisting enemies of Biafra to inflict more injuries on her children.

"As a group fighting for the

liberation of her people from oppression from her enemies, we realized that it would amount to assisting the said enemies to inflict more harm on our children if we do not suspend the sit-at-home order to allow Biafra students take their exams".

While making it clear the sit-at-home order has not been cancelled, but only suspended for the sake of Biafra students taking this year's NECO Exam, the statement called on all IPOB global family members and Biafrans at large to await further directives in this regard.

Coalition Calls for arrest of DSS Officials over Journalists harassment in Abuja

By Gabriel Udeh

Coalition in Defence of Nigerian Democracy and Constitution has called on the Director General of the State Security Service, (DSS) Mr Yusuf Magaji Bichi to immediately effect the arrest of its officials who harassed and terrorized journalists at the Federal High Court, Abuja, on Monday.

In a widely circulated video in

the country and seen by many Nigerians, the converner Ariyo-Dare Atoye noted that the DSS officials of abused their responsibility and demonstrated a reckless and condemnable act, that must be condemned by all. "We also wish to ask the Inspector General of Police to immediately investigate this shameful incident and ensure that the recurring episodes of rights violation and harassments of journalists by security agents are halted.

"It is also instructive at this point for the Nigerian Union of Journalists to rise up against overzealous security personnel and protect journalists from frequent harassment", it stated. Coalition also urged the NUJ body to explore different options to fight for the rights of journalists, including withdrawing its services from such institutions with utter disregard for constitutional provisions.

COVID-19: WHO Donates 26 Ventilators, Other Items To Nigeria

The fight against COVID-19 in Nigeria has received a boost, as the country received 26 ventilators and other equipment from the World Health Organisation.

Nigeria also took delivery of 3,560 fingertip oxygen pulse oximeters as authorities step up efforts to curb the spread of the disease in the period of a third wave.

Minister of Health Dr. Osagie Ehanire received the donated items on behalf of the Federal Government on Thursday in Abuja.

"We thank you and appreciate these additional assets as we have to deal with the fears of the third wave of COVID-19," Ehanire told the WHO's Country Representative Dr. Walter Kazadi, who presented the items to him.

The items were delivered on the same day Nigeria recorded its highest daily infections in six months, amid a strike by resident doctors in the country and growing concerns about widespread protocol violations by citizens.

Dr. Ehanire expects the ventilators

to come in handy in the race to halt the spread of the pandemic.

"Ventilators are becoming very useful, especially for early response in the period of COVID-19, and even after COVID-19, they will remain assets all over the country," he said.

Dr. Kazadi believes Nigeria has performed relatively well in containing the first and second waves of the pandemic.

He also found Nigeria's national case fatality rate which he put at 1.3 percent, a level that was half the regional average, encouraging.

Buhari, Obaseki mourn passage of Captain Hosa Okunbo

By Doris Ferdinard

President Muhammadu Buhari and the Edo state governor Godwin Obaseki have sent condolence messages to the families, friends and associates of the late Captain Hosa Okunbo who passed away early Sunday morning in a private hospital in the United Kingdom.

In a condolence message signed by presidential spokes person Femi Adesina Buhari commiserated with the family and associates of the late Captain Idahosa (Hosa) Okunbo, who is the Chairman of Ocean Marine Solutions Limited describing him as a renowned businessman and philanthropist.

The President noted that the late Okunbo with investments spanning the petroleum, telecommunications, maritime, and power sectors, among others, contributed immensely to the development of the Nigerian economy,

providing sustenance to many families in the process.

He prayed for the repose of the soul of the late Captain and urged those who mourn him, particularly the people of Edo State to whom he devoted time and resources, to sustain his legacies of well-spiritedness and large heartedness.

In a message he personally signed the Edo state governor Godwin Obaseki described the late Captain Hosa as a brother, "It is with a heavy heart that I mourn the passing of a great son of Edo State, a brother, a distinguished Nigerian, an illustrious businessman and an accomplished philanthropist, Captain Hosa Okunbo.

"A man of unparalleled energy and accomplishments, Captain Okunbo saw opportunities in adversity and from an early age in life, carved a niche for himself to become one of Nigeria's most outstanding businessmen".

A trained pilot, he conquered the air at an early age and set for the waters

and land, building enterprises that distinguished him in the business world and embodied the hard work, perseverance, dexterity and acumen that espoused his Edo heritage.

Okunbo was a philanthropist who gave lavishly of himself and his resources; thousands of Edo sons and daughters benefited from his charitable works and benevolence.

As a mortal, Captain Okunbo was not a perfect person just as none of us can claim to be, but he will be remembered for his undying love for Edo people.

His desire for the development and progress of our dear state, the Niger Delta region and Nigeria as well as his invaluable contributions to building bridges of peace across the country will never be forgotten.

I commiserate with the Okunbo family, friends and associates of our departed brother and pray that God will grant all the fortitude to bear this irreparable loss".

Gov Zulum orders probe as task force demolish church, kill 2 worshipper

Borno State Governor, Babagana Zulum has ordered the Police Command to investigate the demolition of a church and death of two worshippers.

There was a violent confrontation between a Joint Security Task Force operating with the Borno Geographical Information System (BOGIS) and EYN Church members at Maduganari, in Maiduguri.

The Thursday incident sparked outrage within the Christian community in Borno.

"These daylight murders and demolition of a church wouldn't have happened at a mosque", an indigene of the state based in Lagos stated.

A disturbed Zulum, who now faces the task of proving that his administration is not bias to the

Christians, has condemned the shooting.

Five persons are currently hospitalized. The governor, in a statement by his spokesman, Isa Gusau, commiserated with families of those who died and the injured.

He already telephoned the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) Chairman, Bishop Mohammed Naga to mourn with the Christian community and the EYN Church.

Zulum also invited the CAN leadership for a meeting scheduled for later today at the Government House.

He further directed the Deputy Governor, Umar Kadafur to visit the hospital where the wounded are receiving treatment, to empathize and take over the cost of their treatment.

Four dead as gunmen attack Imo police station

Gunmen on Thursday night attacked the Divisional Police Headquarters in the Orlu Local Government Area of Imo State.

The attack claimed the lives of four persons which included a police Inspector and three of the attackers.

While parts of the police Division were burnt, cars parked on the premises were not spared.

Reports gathered that the attackers and the policemen on duty engaged in a gun battle for some time.

The police spokesperson for the state police command, Mike Abattam, who confirmed the development to our correspondent, disclosed that the incident took place around 11.35 pm on Thursday.

He informed that some of the surviving bandits escaped with bullet wounds.

Abattam said, "On August 5, about 21:35 hours, armed bandits, in their numbers attacked and threw explosives and petrol bombs on top of the roof of Orsu Police station damaging the roof and causing

fire outbreak in the station which spread and affected some of the vehicles parked at the parking lot. The command's tactical teams on the ground engaged the bandits in a gun duel.

"And due to the superior firepower of the police the bandits were subdued. Three of the bandits were neutralized and their guns, one pump action gun, and two locally-made double barrel pistols were recovered while others escaped into the bush with bullet wounds. Unfortunately, a police inspector lost his life in the attack.

"Meanwhile the command is using this medium to call on the good people of Imo State especially, the Orsu community to assist the police with credible information that will lead to the arrest of the escaped bandits and to report to the nearest police station any person seen with or treating bullet wounds. Also, hospitals are advised to ensure that they report any person who comes to them for treatment of bullet wounds."



FG Urges States to Domesticating Relevant Economic Policies

The Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, Mrs. Zainab Ahmed, has advised sub-national governments to continue to support, replicate and domesticate germane economic policies of the federal government in their respective states to ensure developmental consolidation, impactful deliverables and huge successes.

She called for a collective spirit and aspiration in building a nation of everyone's dreams, especially for the upcoming generation in particular and the world at large, by ensuring trans-economic development of all sectors of the economy that will support job/wealth creation and unimpaired operational security across board.

Ahmed spoke at a meeting of the 20th National Council on Development Planning (NCDP) in Maiduguri, Borno State organised by her ministry in collaboration with Borno State Government.

The NCDP is a meeting of states' commissioners for budget and economic planning organised annually to serve as a veritable platform for senior officials of the federal and state ministries,

representatives of the organised private sector, development partners and civil society organisations.

It is designed for such stakeholders to engage in technical discussions on contemporary economic policy issues in order to come up with effective and functional approaches towards enhancing economic management processes at both federal and sub-national levels.

The minister stated that the theme of the 20th NCDP meeting is "Managing the Nigerian Economy for Sustainable Development in a Challenging Environment: The Way Forward" which was carefully crafted to address the numerous challenges being faced by the Nigerian environment in recent times.

She said: "It is noteworthy that the objective of this 20th NCDP meeting is for the delegates to discuss deeply on the best adoptable approaches towards effective management of the nation's economy to foster equitable economic development across the states of the federation even in the face of challenges in the country.

"In the light of this, I want to urge the honourable commissioners of budget and economic planning, states' permanent secretaries, key stakeholders, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I enjoin you to continue to support and replicate/domesticate the germane economic policies of the federal government in your respective states for developmental consolidation, impactful deliverables and enormous successes.

"Let us all rise together in one spirit and aspiration and build the Nigeria of our dreams especially for the upcoming generation in particular, and the world at large, by ensuring trans-economic development of all sectors of the economy that will aid in job creation, wealth creation and unimpaired/operational security across board."

He implored the stakeholders to ensure maximum utilisation of the period of discussions and contribute immensely to the deliberations in order to chart the best ways forward towards actualising the economic aspirations of Nigeria as the giant of Africa in this event.

150 Nigerian doctors set for exams to enable them practice in the UK

150 Nigerian doctors interested in practising in the United Kingdom are currently set to take clinical examinations which will decide their eligibility.

According to Punch, the coronavirus pandemic delayed the examination usually conducted by the General Medical Council, who are responsible for granting licences to medical doctors in the UK.

No fewer than 8,384 Nigerian medical doctors were practising in the UK as of June 9, 2021. But the council's Senior Media Officer, Miranda Newey, in an e-mail sent to the

publication, said the figure of Nigerian doctors in the UK would have increased if not for the pandemic.

Newey said, "There have been significant delays for Nigerian doctors taking our clinical examination before gaining registration due to the pandemic. From the information I have here, we have 150 doctors who have been delayed. I hope to get more data to share with you to enable you to do the comparison you want."

Reacting to the news, the National President of the National Association of Resident Doctors, Uyiawa

Okhuaihesuyi, called on the Federal Government to quickly address the emigration of highly trained medical practitioners.

Okhuaihesuyi made the call in an interview with Punch.

He said, "It is normal for us to experience brain drain and I don't blame the doctors migrating. Look at those of us who have chosen to stay behind. The only way the Federal Government can address this is if it attends to the demands of doctors.

"Look at resident doctors; most of our members are still being owed. If our welfare is of paramount interest, there won't be a need to migrate."

I fought corruption better than Buhari – IBB

Former Head of State, Ibrahim Babangida, has criticized President Muhammadu Buhari's handling of corruption.

Babangida, popularly known as IBB, boasted that he fought graft better than the current administration.

The retired General spoke to ARISE TV on Friday.

IBB said individuals who worked under him were saints compared to those in power.

He recalled how he sacked a former military governor who embezzled N313,000.

Babangida fumed that those who stole billions are walking freely.

"From what I read, from analysis, I think we are saints when compared to what is happening under a democratic dispensation, he said.

"Today, those who have stolen billions and are in court are now parading themselves on

the streets. Who else is better in fighting corruption?"

Babangida, who annulled the 1993 presidential election, has been severally accused of corruption.

However, no known formal charges have been filed against him by successive democratic governments or individuals/groups.

Even former President Olusegun Obasanjo looked the other way while in power despite previous comments against IBB.

In an interview with TELL magazine in April 1993, Obasanjo described Babangida as Nigeria's biggest problem.

He said of IBB's regime: "...Deficit budgeting, deficit financing, deficit trading but more importantly, we have an administration that is deficit in credibility. It is deficit in honesty, deficit in honour and deficit in truth."

President Buhari approves change of ministry's name

President Muhammadu Buhari has approved the change of name of the Ministry of Science and Technology to the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation.

Dr Ogbonnaya Onu, Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation, announced this in a news briefing on Friday in Abuja.

He said the change of name was to facilitate economic growth and global competitiveness as well as to make Nigeria a nation of innovators.

The minister said that in 2017 the Federal Executive Council, under the leadership of President Muhammadu Buhari, approved the National Science, Technology and Innovation Roadmap (NSTIR 2017-2030).

"This was to use Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) to catalyse Nigeria's economic growth and competitiveness.

"This document laid out a core policy for driving positive socio-economic outcomes through science, technology and innovation in all activities of the economy," Onu said.

The minister said this had necessitated the ministry's change of name to the Federal Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, as approved by the Presidency.

He noted that the new development would require the ministry to drive the Innovation Agenda by embarking on a branding campaign, in line with its expected mandate in ensuring productivity and economic growth.

Onu said that the change would help to meet the needs of other sectors of the economy and all stakeholders by supporting the generation and application of knowledge to solve socio-economic challenges.



Buhari



Issues

Who do U.S. politicians really stand with?

--- Truth about U.S. blatant interference in China's internal affairs on Hong Kong-related issues

The human rights situation in China is at its best in history. Since the national security law in Hong Kong came into effect more than a year ago, human rights and freedoms of the overwhelming majority of Hong Kong citizens have suffered "zero damage."

If the United States really wants to "stand with" the Chinese people who "pursue" human rights, it should side with the overwhelming majority, not the other way around.

Since the new U.S. administration took office, it has not changed the hegemonic behavior of its predecessor on issues related to Hong Kong, having launched at least 13 smear attacks against China on those issues and raved about "standing with Hong Kong people" many times.

The U.S. side has also churned out fallacies about the proper measures taken to boost the long-term stability of Hong Kong, including China's implementation of the national security law in Hong Kong and measures to improve Hong Kong's electoral system. Washington has also ganged up with some Western forces to launch a propaganda campaign against China, and even imposed so-called "sanctions" against Chinese officials.

The unprovoked attacks on China by the new U.S. administration on issues related to Hong Kong are listed below in a bid to restore truths through an account of facts.

PART 1

After China's National People's Congress (NPC) adopted a decision on improving the electoral system of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) on March 11, the U.S. State Department issued a statement to attack and discredit China's decision. The U.S. side also issued a statement with other Group of Seven members to defame China. On March 17, the U.S. State Department announced so-called "sanctions" against 24 Chinese officials, including 14 vice chairmen of the NPC Standing Committee, on the eve of a high-level strategic dialogue between China and the United States in the U.S. state of Alaska.

After the NPC adopted the decision on improving the electoral system of the HKSAR, a spokesperson for the U.S. State Department claimed that the decision attacked Hong Kong's democratic process. However, it is purely China's internal affair to design and improve Hong Kong's electoral system, and no foreign force is entitled to interfere. In fact, the United States has its own strict laws against foreign interference in elections, and the U.S. House of Representatives had passed a bill to improve the U.S. electoral system. Why can the United States itself amend its own electoral laws any time it deems necessary but go all out to denigrate China's improvement of such laws for one of its special administrative regions?

While the U.S. side alleged that the targets of its so-called "sanctions" have "undermined the high degree of autonomy promised to the people in Hong Kong," the U.S. accusation was not consistent with the facts. The NPC has made decisions on safeguarding national security in Hong Kong and improving the electoral system of Hong Kong respectively. The improved electoral system has ensured the implementation of the principle of "patriots administering Hong Kong," which excludes anti-China, destabilizing forces from the governance structure and better guarantees the national security and the safety of the HKSAR's body of power. It has also better reflected the extensive and balanced political participation by Hong Kong residents, which in no way weakens Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy, but is more conducive to the healthy and orderly development of Hong Kong's democratic system.

China's measures to maintain the long-term stability of Hong Kong have also won broad international support. During the 46th session of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), 70 countries issued a joint statement urging relevant parties to stop interfering in issues related to Hong Kong and in China's internal affairs. In addition, another 20-plus countries also voiced support for China's position and measures on issues related to Hong Kong in their respective remarks at the HRC.

The U.S. side, by choosing to announce the so-called "sanctions" against Chinese officials on the eve of the high-level strategic dialogue between China and the United States in Alaska, sought to use extreme pressure to gain bargaining chips. However, such unilateral "sanctions" were only a bluff. The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) said previously that the U.S. unilateral sanctions are not adopted by the United Nations, thus having no legal effect in Hong Kong. The HKMA's position on unilateral U.S. "sanctions" is clear: Hong Kong banks have no legal responsibility

to act in concert with those "sanctions."

After the announcement of the so-called "sanctions" by the United States in 2020, anti-China and destabilizing forces rejoiced, claiming that those sanctions were "significant indicators" and "champagne corks will be opened tonight for celebration." They also predicted with confidence that "more sanctions will be imposed in the future, not only on senior officials and middle-level officials, but also those who directly endanger the rule of law in Hong Kong." The truth of the claim that "the United States stands with Hong Kong people" is that the U.S. side will always stand with those who create disturbances and undermine Hong Kong's prosperity and stability.

PART 2

On March 30, the amended Annex I and Annex II to the HKSAR Basic Law were passed at the 27th session of the Standing Committee of the 13th NPC, with a unanimous vote from all committee members in attendance. On March 31, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken certified to U.S. Congress that Hong Kong remains undeserving of "special treatment" by the United States under U.S. law. On April 1, U.S. Consul General in Hong Kong Hanscom Smith raved that Hong Kong elections would not produce "meaningful democratic results."

The designing and improvement of the electoral system of the HKSAR is China's internal affair. The amendments enjoy sufficient legal basis and fully embody the spirit of the rule of law in governing the country and Hong Kong by law. The newly amended Annexes I and II of the HKSAR Basic Law are systematic amendments to the method for selecting the HKSAR chief executive and the method for forming the HKSAR Legislative Council, respectively. By focusing on reconstituting the Election Committee and increasing empowerment, the amendments represent an overall planning and design for Hong Kong's electoral system, which have not only fixed the loopholes and defects of the original system in a timely manner, but also effectively enhanced the broad representation and balanced participation of the electoral system. They have optimized and developed Hong Kong's democratic system, and have by no means "weakened democracy."

It is of great significance to improve the electoral system of the HKSAR. By making institutional arrangement at the constitutional level, it combines adherence to the principle of "one country" with respect for the differences between "two systems," and also combines the upholding of the central government's overall jurisdiction over Hong Kong with a guarantee of a high degree of autonomy of Hong Kong. It has fully implemented the fundamental principle of "patriots administering Hong Kong," thus ensuring Hong Kong's long-term stability and prosperity, safeguarding the steady and sustained implementation of the principle of "one country, two systems" in Hong Kong, and giving Hong Kong people a promising future.

In any country in the world, loyalty to one's

homeland is a basic political ethic that must be observed by civil servants and those who run for public office. In Britain, the electoral system of each region is decided by the central government of Britain. For example, with the highest degree of autonomy, Scotland's electoral system was set by the Scotland Act passed by the British Parliament in 1998 and amended in 2012.

Xulio Rios, director of the Observatory of Chinese Politics in Spain, said that the electoral reform shows the firm will of the Chinese government to preserve the stability of Hong Kong and not to sacrifice sovereignty under any circumstances. In an interview with Chinese media, George Galloway, a former member of the British Parliament, used a vivid expression to illustrate the need to improve Hong Kong's electoral system: to remove hidden enemies in the "Trojan horse."

Hong Kong's special economic status is protected by the Basic Law and is generally recognized and respected by the international community. After Hong Kong's return to its motherland, its fiscal and taxation independence, free trade, issuance of its own currency, free flow of capital, and its status as a free port and a separate customs territory have been maintained and consolidated, which fully demonstrates that Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy is working well. While claiming to support Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy, the U.S. side has cancelled the so-called "special treatment" for Hong Kong. Facts have proved that it is the U.S. side that has undermined Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy.

Hong Kong's development achievements stem from the continuous hard work of generations of Hong Kong people and its great advantage of relying on the motherland. They have never been gifts or charity from any foreign country. The cancellation of the so-called "special treatment" by the U.S. side will stop neither Hong Kong's development and prosperity, nor the general trend of Hong Kong's continued integration with the motherland to gain more space for development.

Smith denied the significance of improving Hong Kong's electoral system, because under the principle of "patriots administering Hong Kong," U.S. agents in Hong Kong, namely anti-China and destabilizing forces, will be completely excluded from the governance structure of the HKSAR. This is a huge defeat for those anti-China forces in the United States and the West who stand with such agents.

PART 3

On April 16, anti-China Hong Kong disruptors, including Jimmy Lai Chee-ying and Martin Lee Chu-ming, were sentenced by a Hong Kong court according to law.

Later, Blinken tweeted that the sentences "are unacceptable," and called for the release of those disruptors. He also added the hashtag #StandWithHongKong at the end of his tweet.

U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi also tweeted that she was "saddened and disturbed" by the sentences, and smeared the sentences as

"another sign of Beijing's assault on the rule of law."

Hong Kong is a society under the rule of law. The evidence for the illegal activities of those anti-China Hong Kong disruptors is rock solid, and no external force has the right to butt in.

The West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts announced on April 16 to sentence Jimmy Lai to 14 months in prison for organizing and participating in illegal assemblies on Aug. 18, 2019 in Hong Kong Island, and for participating in an unauthorized assembly on Aug. 31, 2019.

The court also heard two other cases that Lai was involved in, including suspected of violating the national security law in Hong Kong and fraud, which were adjourned to June 15 and May 6 respectively.

The prosecutor also filed charges against Lai over collusion with external forces to endanger national security and conspiracy to pervert the course of public justice.

Facts showed that such perpetrators as Lai and Lee have colluded with Western anti-China forces for a long time and raised the devil. It was also made public that Lai has built shady connections with the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy, a U.S. government-sponsored entity.

During the illegal "Occupy Central" movement in 2014 and the chaos over the amendments to the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance and the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Ordinance in 2019, the local Apple Daily newspaper, controlled by Lai, served as a propaganda tool for the anti-China and destabilizing forces.

Even after the implementation of the national security law, the perpetrators still kept "fighting for the United States" under the disguise of media workers. Their repeated breaking of the bottom line has made them a common enemy of the Hong Kong society.

The sentences of those who organized and took part in unauthorized and illegal assemblies are based on sufficient factual evidence, with the procedure totally legal and the verdict made public according to law.

Some U.S. politicians, despite chanting the slogan of upholding international rules, have repeatedly trampled on international law and basic norms governing international relations, and wantonly interfered in Hong Kong affairs and China's internal affairs. That fully exposes their entrenched double standards on international rules, the use of which depends on whether they conform to U.S. interests.

When illegal demonstrations broke out in Hong Kong, Pelosi called them "a beautiful sight to behold." In sharp contrast, she unscrupulously slandered the normal law-enforcement measures by the Hong Kong police, who had shown maximum restraint.

When large-scale riots erupted in Los Angeles in 1992, the same California politician did not meet and incite the organizers of the riots.

In 2021, when the U.S. Capitol Hill was under attack, Pelosi, as a congresswoman, did not view the riot as "a beautiful sight to behold," but instead condemned the attackers hard. The ironic contrast laid bare the true color of U.S. politicians' "promise" to firmly stand with the anti-China and destabilizing forces in Hong Kong.

PART 4

On May 7, Blinken wrote on Twitter that the country "stands with the people of Hong Kong," while asking the Hong Kong government to immediately release multiple instigators of riots in the city, including Joshua Wong.

On May 6, four instigators of the Hong Kong riots, including Wong, were sentenced to four to 10 months in prison respectively by the District Court of the HKSAR, for knowingly participating in an unauthorized assembly. The facts of the cases are well-founded, and Wong and the others are guilty as charged. The ridiculous demand for the immediate release of the defendants does not respect the rule of law, revealing Washington's attempt to interfere in China's internal affairs.

While Hong Kong's laws always respect and protect rights and freedoms under the Basic Law, these rights and freedoms are not absolute, and shall be built upon the maintenance of public order and the protection of rights and freedoms of others. Wong and the others knew the assembly was unauthorized but still took part in it.

David Gosset, a French expert on international issues and founder of the Europe-China Forum, described certain Western politicians as hypocrites who turned a blind eye to the violence in Hong Kong. He stressed that the violent and extremist acts in the city, which damaged its people's rights, should be condemned. John Ross, former director of

Economic and Business Policy of London, said that he thinks it is a typical example of hypocrisy that certain U.S. politicians play the human rights card only when it comes to Hong Kong affairs.

British barrister Grenville Cross, who started working in Hong Kong in 1978 and served as Hong Kong's first director of public prosecutions after the city's return to China, pointed out that international anti-China forces are trying to undermine the practice of "one country, two systems" by destroying the prosperity and stability of Hong Kong in order to contain China's development.

In 2019, when the Hong Kong government sought to introduce amendments to its extradition laws, anti-China forces in the United States and some other Western countries incited crimes of violence in the city from behind the scenes, insanely challenged the bottom line of "one country, two systems," gravely undermined Hong Kong's prosperity and stability, and put its people under extreme anxiety. In 2021, the U.S. side is still sparing no effort to speak for the criminals, including Wong. This demonstrates again that by claiming it "stands with the people of Hong Kong," Washington is actually siding with criminals and treating the Hong Kong people as enemies.

PART 5

On May 27, the Legislative Council of the HKSAR voted overwhelmingly to pass the Improving Electoral System (Consolidated Amendments) Bill 2021. On May 28, Blinken made rash criticism of the bill, calling for the release of all those charged under the national security law in Hong Kong, and dismissal of charges against them.

Under the improved electoral system in Hong Kong, the composition of the Election Committee and the Legislative Council is more broadly representative, which reflects the interests of all sectors of the Hong Kong society in a comprehensive and balanced manner, safeguards the executive-led political system, ensures that the Legislative Council performs its duties in accordance with the law, and enhances the effectiveness of the HKSAR's governance. It is also conducive to pushing forward joint social efforts to solve deep-seated problems and promoting people's livelihood and economic development.

Before and after the adoption of the NPC's decision on improving the electoral system of the HKSAR, the central government collected opinions from people from all walks of life in Hong Kong in various ways. On March 15-17, the Commission for Legislative Affairs of the NPC Standing Committee, together with the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council and the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the HKSAR, held more than 60 symposiums for three consecutive days on the implementation of the NPC's decision on improving the electoral system of the HKSAR. Together with additional visits and interviews, the relevant views of over 1,000 representatives from all walks of life in Hong Kong were extensively and carefully listened to.

More than 2.38 million signatures were collected in Hong Kong in support of improving the electoral system of the HKSAR during an 11-day campaign starting from March 11. According to a survey by Hong Kong's think-tank Bauhinia Institute, more than 70 percent of Hong Kong residents believe that the improvement of Hong Kong's electoral system has enhanced their confidence in Hong Kong's future. After the passage of the bill, various sectors of the Hong Kong society, including the Hong Kong Civil Servants General Union, the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Hong Kong Guangdong Community Organizations, expressed support for the bill.

The United States has many electoral laws. In the past two years alone, members of the U.S. Congress have introduced more than 40 bills to improve the U.S. electoral system. On the same day when China's top legislature announced its agenda for improving Hong Kong's electoral system, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a "For the People Act" to improve the electoral system and ensure election security.

On March 5, Belarus delivered a joint speech on behalf of over 70 countries at the 46th session of the UNHRC, emphasizing that Hong Kong affairs are China's internal affairs and should not be interfered by external forces. Ambassador Yuri Ambrazevich, head of the Belarus mission to the UN in Geneva, said in an interview after the meeting that "we emphasized that Hong Kong is an integral part of China and Hong Kong affairs are China's internal affairs," stressing that China has the sole authority and responsibility to make any decisions, including on improving Hong

Who do U.S. politicians really stand with?

Kong's electoral system, to promote Hong Kong's long-term prosperity and stability.

Judging from its call for releasing all those charged and dropping charges against them under the national security law in Hong Kong, the U.S. position is very clear: the United States stands "firmly" in opposition to the national security law in Hong Kong, which has guaranteed the transition from chaos to order in Hong Kong and effectively restored the sense of security of Hong Kong citizens.

PART 6

On June 3, Blinken issued a statement on the website of U.S. Department of State, claiming that the United States will "stand with the people of China as they demand that their government respect universal human rights." On the following day, he tweeted a call for "the immediate release" of some people in Hong Kong that were arrested.

During the disturbance in Hong Kong following the proposed ordinance amendments in 2019, anti-China extremist and secessionist groups supported by the United States did not pursue human rights, but trampled on human rights in an attempt to seize the jurisdiction in Hong Kong and subvert the state power.

From June 2019 to mid-March 2020, there were more than 1,400 demonstrations and public gatherings in Hong Kong, many of which eventually turned into serious violent incidents, such as throwing petrol bombs, vandalism, and burning shops. Rioters attacked police stations and officers, besieged innocent citizens, doxed people who expressed opinions different from theirs, destroyed subways and public facilities, paralyzed airports, blocked traffic and "occupied" university campuses, posing a long-term grave threat to public safety and order in Hong Kong.

Data showed that the number of crime cases in Hong Kong had been on a downward trend in the past years before the "Black Terror" in 2019, but the social unrest reversed the trend, as the number rose by 9 percent and 7 percent respectively in 2019 and 2020.

Luo Changqing, a 70-year-old cleaner in Hong Kong, was hit by rioters and died of serious wounds. A Hong Kong resident surnamed Lee was poured with flammable liquid and set ablaze, following an argument with rioters who were thrashing public facilities. He suffered from burns on almost half of his body, and was once in a critical condition. Chan Tze-chin, a Hong Kong lawyer, was surrounded and viciously beaten up by rioters after he berated them for thrashing shops in a busy shopping area in Causeway Bay, and suffered multiple physical injuries. More than half of the stores of Best Mart 360, the Hong Kong-based snack chain, were vandalized in the social unrest.

Yonden Lhatoo, chief news editor at the South China Morning Post, wrote in an article in 2020: "So when Americans take to the streets in an eruption of rage against systemic racism that has afflicted their country since its founding, they are 'rioters' who deserve to be shot dead? But when radicals in Hong Kong go on the rampage, hurling petrol bombs, destroying public property ... they are mighty champions of freedom?"

The United States itself has terrible human rights records. The Russian Foreign Ministry on July 9 released country reports on human rights situation, which point out that the United States continues to grossly violate human rights both inside the country and beyond its shores. The freedom of the press in the United States, to which Washington declares adherence, is sliding into complete degradation, and the level of racism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and other manifestations of discrimination and xenophobia continue to rise.

The human rights situation in China is at its best in history. Since the national security law in Hong Kong came into effect more than a year ago, human rights and freedoms of the overwhelming majority of Hong Kong citizens have suffered "zero damage." If the United States really wants to "stand with" the Chinese people who "pursue" human rights, it should side with the overwhelming majority, not the other way around.

PART 7

In June, Smith said in an interview that the imposition of the national security law in Hong Kong had created an "atmosphere of coercion" that threatens both the city's freedoms and its standing as an international business hub.

The disturbance in Hong Kong following the proposed ordinance amendments in June 2019 dealt a heavy blow to Hong Kong's economy

and people's livelihood.

In 2019, Hong Kong's economy posted the first negative growth in 10 years. Official data showed that around half of service industries recorded year-on-year decreases in business revenues, as accommodation services and retail industries dropped 14.3 percent and 11.1 percent respectively, with tourist visits to Hong Kong slumping, and unemployment in retail, hospitality and catering sectors staying high.

Since the national security law in Hong Kong took effect by the end of June 2020, the society has returned to the right track and residents have lived in peace, opening up a new situation in Hong Kong where order replaces chaos.

In the first quarter of 2021, the city's number of crimes dropped about 10 percent year-on-year, while gross domestic product (GDP) saw a 7.9 percent year-on-year increase.

In June, the International Monetary Fund released a report that reaffirmed Hong Kong's position as an international financial center.

According to the World Investment Report 2021 released by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Hong Kong remained the world's third largest destination for foreign direct investment in 2020.

The national security law in Hong Kong only targets four types of offences, namely, secession, subversion, terrorist activities and collusion with a foreign country or with external elements to endanger national security. It is designed to deter and punish a handful of criminals seriously jeopardizing national security, and to protect the overwhelming majority of law-abiding Hong Kong people.

All efforts and law enforcement relating to safeguarding national security will be conducted in strict accordance with legal provisions, mandates and procedures. The legislation will not affect the rights and freedoms, including those of speech, of the press, of publication and of assembly that Hong Kong residents enjoy under the law. It will enable them to better exercise their lawful rights and freedoms in a secure environment.

The legislation, since taking effect, has better ensured the city's high degree of autonomy in accordance with law, and created conditions for resolving deep-rooted problems concerning Hong Kong's economy and people's livelihood. It also contributes to Hong Kong's rule-of-law and business environment, addresses the concerns in the business communities on social turbulences, and creates better conditions for people around the world who are willing to work, invest and live in Hong Kong.

Washington, while chanting the slogan of "stand with Hong Kong people," has in fact engaged in actions against the national security law in Hong Kong and imposing the so-called "sanctions." Such self-contradictory behaviour exposed its hypocrisy and despicableness.

PART 8

On June 25, the White House put out on its website a statement regarding the closing down of Hong Kong's Apple Daily, in which it falsely accused China of suppressing press freedom.

The Apple Daily, under the cloak of a media outlet, had long engaged in illegal acts of harming the country and destabilizing Hong Kong, seriously violating the journalistic ethics and jeopardizing the media environment of Hong Kong.

The newspaper had long been engaged in concocting fake news to mislead the public. During the turbulence over proposed ordinance amendments in Hong Kong in 2019, the newspaper produced a flurry of fake news and peddled wrong values to perplex the public, disseminate "anti-police" and "anti-China" remarks, and instigate "Black Violence."

Hong Kong is a society governed by rule of law and everyone is equal before the law. No one has extra-legal privileges, and no institution is an extra-legal entity. Hong Kong police act against individuals and companies suspected of endangering national security in strict accordance with the law, and their actions are a just move to crack down on crimes and maintain the rule of law and social order.

Those who describe moves on an individual news organization and on those in charge of an individual news organization as acts to crack down on press freedom have ulterior motives and are seeking to talk black into white.

It is the United States which has brutally suppressed the media and restricted press freedom. Analyses by The Guardian and Netherlands-based investigative journalism website Bellingcat showed from May 26, 2020 to June 2, 2020 alone, there were 148 arrests

or attacks on journalists covering protests ignited by the killing of George Floyd, among which 34 instances involved officers physically assaulting journalists, and 33 instances involved journalists being arrested or detained. A female photojournalist was left blinded in the left eye by a police projectile during one of the protests. In 2021, the U.S. government forcibly shut down more than 30 foreign news media websites.

German writer Michael Lueders has revealed in his new book "The Hypocritical Superpower" that the U.S. government and its interest groups are apt at influencing and shaping public opinion by selecting information and polarizing public views, so that people are brainwashed without any realization. Washington's repeated provocations in this respect reveal that it is in fact a mastermind of troubles and a public opinion manipulator.

In fact, the press freedom in Hong Kong has not been damaged, but has been consolidated. At present, there are 93 local, 69 overseas and 39 online media organizations registered with the government, respectively, showing increases from a year ago. The press and the general public exercise the right of supervision every day and enjoy the freedom to criticize the administration of the HKSAR government. There is no obstruction for overseas media to interview people with different positions.

PART 9

On July 7, the White House announced the extension of the so-called "national emergency with respect to Hong Kong" and of relevant Hong Kong-related sanctions for one year, and continued with the cancellation of preferential treatment for Hong Kong.

The so-called "national emergency with respect to Hong Kong," a measure announced by former U.S. President Donald Trump's administration on July 14, 2020, is a gross interference in China's internal affairs. The extension of the so-called "national emergency" also marked the first time that Joe Biden, since taking office as U.S. president, continued with Trump's thinking on Hong Kong from the perspective of policy implementation, and once again publicly intervened in Hong Kong affairs, which are China's internal affairs. Such an act seriously undermined China's sovereignty, security and development interests.

Hong Kong had always been an excuse for Washington to put pressure on Beijing during the Trump administration. At the end of June 2020, the Law on Safeguarding National Security in HKSAR was promulgated and implemented. Trump then signed an executive order, declaring that the United States immediately entered a "national emergency" on the grounds that the situation in Hong Kong would pose a "threat" to the national security, economy and foreign policy of the United States. At the same time, the country also ended its special treatment for Hong Kong. Previously, Hong Kong enjoyed treatment that many cities in the Chinese mainland did not have, mainly in immigration, import and export control, tourism and economy.

The Biden administration followed the Trump administration's wrong acts on Hong Kong, extending the so-called "national emergency," and continued with its outrageous sanctions against China.

Sanctions on Hong Kong, however, will surely backfire and bite the United States. Official data released by China last year showed that there were around 85,000 U.S. citizens and more than 1,300 U.S. enterprises in Hong Kong, including almost all of America's major financial firms. Over the years, the United States has gained a huge trade surplus from its trade with Hong Kong, and its interests in Hong Kong have been deep and direct. Sanctions will bring "complexities" to U.S. enterprises in Hong Kong, subjecting their normal operations to political risks.

In as early as 2020, there was wide condemnation around the world against the so-called "sanctions" imposed on Hong Kong by countries such as the United States. Chester Humphrey, president of the Senate of Grenada, pointed out that the United States just wanted to divert the attention of the American people from domestic problems, and that its "sanctions" against other countries were illegal. Patricio Giusto, director of the Sino-Argentine Observatory, said that the so-called "sanctions" will not pose a substantial threat and have no legal basis, which once again exposed the "double standards" of U.S. politicians.

"Standing with Hong Kong" on one hand and relentlessly sticking to sanctioning it on the other is the absurd logic of U.S. politicians and a logic that no one, including Hong Kong people, can understand.

By Adefolarin A. Olamilekan

Recently, the massive floods that brought movement and commercial activities to a standstill in Keffi LGA, Karu, LGA Nasarawa LGA and Nasarawa Eggon LGA and some part of Lafia Metropolis and other areas in Nasarawa state over the previous weeks did not come as a surprise. Given that efforts to stem the recurrent annual flooding in the North Central Geopolitical zone and the entire Nigeria have been less than adequate.

Conversely, the failure of both the Federal and State governments to prepare and protect citizens from flooding, having budgeted billions of naira as their capital project for Ecological infrastructure is overwhelming.

Interestingly, Nigeria has been experiencing yearly flooding. There are double rainfall maxima occurring in June and September. In retrospect, the 2012, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019 and that off 2020 in Nasarawa LGA in Nasarawa was devastating. Those flood disasters were landmark experiences we cannot forget in hurry.

Consequently, it is for this reason that flood warnings are issued to sensitize people and the authorities on the need to prepare. Flooding occurs in Nigeria from a combination of heavy torrential downpour, ocean surges, or the release of water from dams. Especially with stringent warning from the Nigeria Hydrological Services Agency (NIHSA) no new holding dam had been constructed across the River Niger in Nigeria and the course of the Ladgo Dam in Cameroon to mitigate the impact of flood arising from the possible opening of the dam.

Fundamentally, Nasarawa state is one of the young promising states in Nigeria without major remarkable flood control structure put in place to protect a low-lying coastal communities and villages on flood plains. The floods the other day, following over 7 hours of torrential downpour, caused grief and anguish to many residents whose homes were submerged. Similarly, resident and indigenes of Keffi LGA and commuters were stuck in gridlock for hours in different parts of the council resulting from flood in around the council areas and Abuja Keffi expressway were flooded.

My humble self was stuck at the Keffi overhead bridge on my way to Lafia only at my returned to be confronted by huge floods destruction from Keffi to Masaka

and Mararaba in Karu LGA.

Seriously, Nasarawa state coastal communities and villages on flood plains, especially; on the Niger/Benue rivers are bearing the pains. Besides, once the Shiroro Dam in Niger state is opened to release water, the floods in the North-Central states may be worse.

For instance, whereas North Central States are low-lying at the River Niger and Benue River with flood-prone. Regrettably, despite the recurrent yearly flood events, states in this zone have taken any serious measures to checkmate flood disasters. And not even the Federal Government has done much in that regard. This now stand reasons and to ask a

pertinent what the Nasarawa state government would do to mitigate the yearly flood risk. Beyond constructing dual carriage way in Keffi LGA? What are the proactive measures been put in place by Nasarawa state government and LGA?

Today, as it were, the stage is set for another round of rain in this Month of August 2021. For us Nasarawa State government, resident and indigenes alike should heed the warning from the Nigeria Hydrological Services Agency (NIHSA) as ignoring it could be a death warrant. Additionally, there should be public enlightenment, at the community level, to sensitize everyone young and old. The

Media, Schools, Traditional rulers, council management, community and youth leaders and relevant Nasarawa state agencies should rally to educate the people in their domain. They should ensure that blocked drainage channels are cleared.

Furthermore; there is needed to designate camps for those that might be displaced by floods. With availability of relief materials and health kits. We accept as true that it is not enough for government to raise alarm on an impending environmental disaster; it must put in place pragmatic measures that people can cue into to avert the disaster or minimize its impact. Meanwhile, flood warning should not be ignored to avoid unpleasant consequences.

We however charge the Nasarawa state government and other states on the bank of River Niger and Benue River bordering the Rivers Niger/Benue system to take proactive measures to protect lives and properties. The Federal Government should collaborate with the states to execute flood control projects.

We believe Governor AA Sule at this point should not tolerate any official negligence and abdication of duty by official assigned to take charge of flood victims in the state, as Nasarawa state try to avert indigenes and resident suffering from flood fate.

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Opinion

Preparing and protecting against flood in Nasarawa state



Business & Economy

Institutional investors increase stake in equities ahead dividend payment

The Nigerian Exchange (NGX) recent report on domestic and foreign portfolio participation in equities trading showed that total equities market transactions increased in June 2021 compared to the volume of transactions executed in May 2021.

The report revealed that domestic institutional investors gradually took position amid releases of corporates' half-year financial results which have been generally positive and the prospect for half-year dividend payments.

According to the NGX, domestic institutional investors transacted the most during the period, followed by retail investors; while foreign portfolio investors' contribution was the least but with a larger increase.

Hence, the ratio of total domestic transactions to total foreign transactions tilted lower to 77:23 in the month under review, from 79:20 recorded in May 2021.

Total domestic transactions rose marginally by 0.59 per cent compared to N76.90 billion reported in May while total foreign portfolio transactions which increased by 15.43 per cent.

Specifically, total transactions on the NGX rose to N100.77 billion in June 2021 from N97.19 billion printed in May 2021; of which total domestic transactions increased month-on-month (m-o-m) to N77.35 billion from N76.90 billion.

The FPI transactions rose to N23.42 billion or \$56.91 million in June from N20.29 billion or \$49.33 million recorded in May.

Maritime safety: NIMASA set to commence wreckage removal

Stories by Amadin Idahosa

All is set for the flag-off of an intensive wreck removal exercise in Nigerian waters by the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA).

The agency's Director-General, Dr Bashir Jamoh, disclosed this during a Ministerial retreat organised by the Federal Ministry of Transportation (FMOT) in Lagos.

Dr. Jamoh also said arrangements had been concluded for the recycling of wrecks and derelicts recovered from the waters in partnership with Bayelsa State Government and the Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC), which already has a foundry in Lagos for wrecks recycling, with the ultimate aim of creating wealth from waste while providing jobs for Nigerians.

Speaking at the opening of the retreat, Minister of Transportation, Rt. Hon.

Chibuike Amaechi, said the two-day event was organised to assess the performance of the Agencies under the Ministry in order to enhance efficiency of service delivery to Nigerians.

Amaechi stated, "We are here to assess the progress made so far in the maritime sector in order to enhance efficiency in our operations."

"This administration has achieved a lot in areas, such as rail transportation, port operations, maritime safety, and security, among others, and our goal is to do more to enhance productivity."

The NIMASA DG appreciated the Minister for approving the creation of the Maritime Intelligence Unit and the NIMASA Maritime Stakeholders Experience Contact Centre (MSECC), which are both initiatives to improve intelligence gathering and enhance stakeholders' communication to ensure sustainable growth of the country's maritime industry.

He also disclosed that the automation drive in the Agency had led to the integrated use of technology in the Certificate of Competency (CoC) verification process, which has seen a fall in manual verification practice.

Jamoh said, "In 2020, the number of manual verification of CoCs dropped from 4,112 in 2019 to 2,750, representing 33 per cent drop in manual certificate verification. There was a total online verification of 9,723 in 2020."

On disbursement of the Cabotage Vessel Financing Fund (CVFF), Jamoh said NIMASA was working with the Ministry to resolve all grey areas and ensure seamless distribution of the Fund.

According to the DG, "The CVFF is in the Treasury Single Account and there are guidelines for the disbursement, one of which is the use of Primary Lending Institutions (PLIs).

NNPC revenue jumped to N535 billion in April - Report

The Monthly Financial and Operations Report (MFOR) released by the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) on Sunday showed that the national oil company's operating revenue in April 2021 increased by 17.73 per cent amounting to N535.61 billion.

"The NNPC Group operating revenue in April 2021, as compared to March 2021, increased by 17.73 per cent or N80.67 billion to stand at N535.61bn," the report stated.

"Similarly, expenditure for the month increased by 17.24 per cent or N72.34 billion to stand at N492 billion, while expenditure as a proportion of revenue stood at 0.92, same as last month."

It also revealed that the corporation recorded

a trading surplus of N43.57 billion in April, representing a 23.64 per cent increase over the N35.24 billion surplus it recorded in the previous month of March.

Trading surplus or trading deficit is derived after deduction of the expenditure profile from the revenue for the period under review.

The report attributed the rise in trading surplus to the activities of the corporation's upstream subsidiary, the Nigerian Petroleum Development Company (NPDC) such as crude oil lifting from OML 119 (Okono Okpoho) and OMLs 60, 61, 62, 63 (Nigerian Agip Oil Company) as well as increase in gas sales.

It noted that the positive outlook was further consolidated by the robust gains of

two other subsidiaries namely: Duke Oil and the National Engineering and Technical Company (NETCO).

In the Downstream it revealed that a total of 1.67 billion litres of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) translating to 55.79mn liters/day were supplied in the month under review.

The report also showed a 34.29 per cent reduction in the number of pipeline points vandalised from 70 in the previous month of March 2021 to 46 in April 2021.

"While the Port Harcourt area accounted for 54 per cent, the Mosimi area accounted for 46 per cent of the vandalised points," it said.

In the gas sector, the report noted that a total of 209.27 billion cubic feet (bcf) of natural gas was produced in the month under review, translating to an average daily production of 6,975.72 million standard cubic feet per day (mmscfd).

"For the period of April 2020 to April 2021, a total of 2,902.52 bcf of gas was produced, representing an average daily production of 7,369.76 mmscfd during the period."

"Period-to-date production from Joint Ventures (JVs), Production Sharing Contracts (PSCs) and NPDC contributed about 62.07 per cent, 19.95 per cent and 17.98 per cent respectively to the total national gas production," it added.

In terms of natural gas off-take, commercialisation and utilisation, it said that out of the 206.40 bcf supplied in April, a total of 126.83 bcf of gas was commercialised consisting of 42.92 bcf and 83.91 bcf for the domestic and export markets respectively.

It said this translated to a total supply of 1,430.90 mmscfd of gas to the domestic market and 2,976.94 mmscfd of gas supplied to the export market for the month.

"This implies that 61.45 per cent of the average daily gas produced was commercialised, while the balance of 38.55 per cent was either re-injected used as upstream fuel gas or flared."

"Gas flare rate was 9.74 per cent for the month under review (i.e. 670.19 mmscfd) compared with average gas flare rate of 7.42 per cent (i.e. 542.22 mmscfd) for the period of April 2020 to April 2021," it said.

The report further noted that a total of 795 mmscfd was delivered to gas-fired power plants in the month of April to generate an average power of about 3,416 MW.

The April MFOR is the 69th edition of the publication

98% of businesses in Nigeria's informal sector pay taxes — but to non-state actors

SBM Intelligence, an Africa-focused geopolitical research firm, says 98 percent of businesses in Nigeria's informal sector paid their taxes — but to non-state regulated actors.

The research firm disclosed this in its report titled, "Under the Hood: A Look into Taxation in Nigeria's Informal Sector."

The informal sector has business activities that operate outside of government regulation and are largely unregistered.

They include commercial bus drivers, artisans such as dressmakers, hairdressers, vulcanisers etc., mainly those in the low socio-economic strata, with low skills and poor education.

It surveyed the informal sector in nine states across Nigeria, including the Federal Capital — Abuja, Anambra, Bauchi, Cross River, Delta, Oyo, Kano, Lagos and Rivers.

Nigeria's tax-to-gross domestic product (GDP) ratio at 6 percent is below the World Bank's recommendation of a minimum of 15 percent for economic growth and poverty reduction.

According to SBM, a major reason for the low tax-to-GDP ratio in Nigeria is the large size of the country's informal economy.

The informal sector is "estimated by the International Monetary Fund to be around 65 percent of the GDP, which is higher than the sub-Saharan average of 34 percent. By comparison, the informal economy in Europe is 23 percent of its GDP, and 17 percent of the GDP in OECD countries."

The SBM report added that a participant in the informal sector earns about N150,000/month on average and pay to prevalent tax groups, including trade unions.

"Most (38 percent) participants in the informal sector earn N5100 a day and above,

followed by those whose earnings are between N2100-N3000 and N3100-N4000, an equal percentage of 17 percent for both income groups," the report said.

"16 percent of the participants earn between N4100-N5000, 8 percent earn between N1100-N2000, and a small percentage earn less than N1000."

"This shows that most informal sector participants earn between N2100-N5,000 and above. Segregating this by types of businesses shows that bus drivers (52%), open market traders (52 percent) and okada riders (48 percent) have more high earners (people who earn N5100 and above) than the other categories of informal businesses."

"Also, a slim majority in the hairdressing (33 percent) and dressmaking (30 percent) businesses also earn between N5100 and above. Vulcanisers have the highest percentage of people who earn less than N1000."

The report added that most of the tax payments were made to prevalent tax groups such as state governments, local governments, market organisations and unions. They paid the taxes either daily, weekly or monthly.

It stated that taxes are paid to governments, trade unions are largely informal with no legal backing or framework. This is because they can command compliance from their members. These are "lords" or members of the union who acts as tax collectors.

Also, a significant number of businesses in the informal sector pay multiple taxes in Delta and Lagos.

"About 39 percent of the respondents were taxed by the local government, 30 percent said they were taxed by their unions. 16 percent of the taxes accrued to market organisations,

while 15 percent of the taxes went to the state government," the report added.

"The location of the informal sector participants is also a determining factor with regards to the number of groups they pay taxes to. For instance, while the responses show that all participants in Bauchi paid taxes to only one group, there is a significant number of respondents in Delta and Lagos who pay taxes to more than three groups."

"Also, the type of business that a respondent is involved in also determines the number of tax collectors they may encounter."

"Bus drivers are more likely to pay taxes to more than three groups than those in the other forms of business and on the whole, multiple taxations is recorded across all the business types. No business group had not experienced multiple tax collection by different groups."

The report advised the government to set a mechanism in place to incorporate the informal sector into the tax base of the country. It identified the NIN registration as one way to give a foundational identification to Nigeria upon which tax numbers can be tied.

In May, Zainab Ahmed, minister of finance, budget and national planning, said the federal government is planning to attract more taxpayers by ensuring efficient tax administration.

Ahmed had explained that the government will do this by deploying modern technology-driven processes and systems to facilitate quantum growth in tax revenue collection.

Also, Mohammed Nami, executive chairman of the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), had said the adoption of technology is needed to improve tax collection and block revenue leakages.



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Politics

PDP-GF Not Unresponsive To Intraparty Wranglings – Tambuwal

... Ask For Calm, Tell Detractors To Leave Party Alone

By Muhammad Goronyo, Sokoto

The Chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party- Governors Forum, Rt. Hon. Aminu Waziri Tambuwal has assured party stalwarts and followers that the forum has not been detached from the myriads of challenges the party faces.

Consequently, Gov. Tambuwal assured that all the governors under the aegis of the party have been doing their utmost best in the background to bring the problems under control.

Tambuwal, who is also the Governor of Sokoto state gave the assurance on Tuesday while reacting to the resignation of seven national officials of the PDP.

In order to address the situation the PDP-GF, he said “has scheduled an emergency meeting to discuss the affairs of the Party and the way forward,” while re-assuring that the PDP remains the only “hope of the nation for good governance,” which “must show an example to Nigerians and also take advantage of the current disarray in the APC and its rudderless government.”

According to him, “we have not been aloof to the situation of our party, we have been working quietly to resolve the issues.

In the same development, the PDP-GF while expressing “regrets and sadness the recent rumblings in the PDP,” appealed to members of the party and indeed all stakeholders to remain calm in the face of the current developments.

“We plead with all aggrieved persons and those with the interest of the PDP at heart to keep their gun powder dry, as efforts are being made in consultation with members of the PDP Board of Trustees and other stakeholders to resolve all contending issues,” Governor Tambuwal noted in a statement he issued.



Tambuwal

Why June 12 election was annulled - IBB

Former Military President Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida (IBB) has explained why his junta annulled the June 12, 1993 presidential election.

The election was adjudged by most Nigerians as the freest and fairest in the nation’s democratic experience.

It was contested between Chief Moshood Abiola of the defunct Social Democratic Party (SDP) and Bashir Tofa of the defunct National Republican Convention (NRC).

Babangida, while speaking with Arise TV during an interview on Friday monitored by The Nation, explained if he had not annulled the election, a violent coup d’etat would have happened.

He said: “If it materialised, there would’ve been a coup d’etat — which could have been violent. That’s all I can confirm.

“It didn’t happen thanks to the engineering and the ‘maradonic’ way we handled you guys in the society. But that could’ve given room for more instability in the country.”

Babangida said there was pressure on his junta within and outside the military to nullify the election for that reason.

“Both. The military can do it because they have the weapons to do it, and others (civil society groups) can use agitation,” he added.



Babangida

2023: APC stands the better chances of taking over Taraba

By Danzumi Ishaku, Jalingo

The former Acting Governor of Taraba state Garba Umar UTC, last week said that the All Progressives Congress (APC) stood a better chance of taking over power in the state come 2023.

Garba UTC, made the declaration while speaking to Daybreak news in Jalingo.

He said that the party had more responsible members at present, adding that the shenanigan process which characterised selection of candidate for the party in the past would not come to play in the subsequent process.

Garba UTC, also pointed out that the mass decamping of politicians from other political parties into the APC in recent time was a pointer that the party would triumph in its quest to wrestle power from the PDP in the state.

The former acting governor however, called on the APC stalwarts to develop cohesion among themselves before and after all processes leading to the nominating and selection of candidates.

He therefore, called on members of the party to support whichever candidate that would emerge for the party in next election.

According to him, I am ready to support whoever that emerges as the candidate for the party in next election.

UTC, declared that his quest to be

the next governor of the state was to continue with those good projects he initiated while serving as the acting governor in the state.

He said that the people of the state were in dire need of a leader that would focus on human capital development and security.

He said that most areas of such had been neglected leaving the people of the state into abject poverty.

“It is now evident that our party, the APC stands a better chance of taking over power in the state in the coming election.

“As you can see that the party has more responsible and organised people now and I want to assure you that those things that have happened in the past will not happen again.

“We are growing from strength to strength as more people are decamping into our party day by day.

“We need people because it’s the people you have in a political party that gives the party the strength to be able to excel.

For me, I am the race to continue with those projects I started that have positive impact on the people.

“I learnt that most, if not all the project’s I started have being abandoned.

“Today, it’s on records that I am the last governor to pay gratuities, bursary allowances to students, boosting of security agencies in the state with patrol vehicles among many other things.

“I am advising our members to support whoever candidate that would emerge as candidate for the party.

“I am ready to support whoever that will emerge because we are all members of the party and in whatever we do, the interest of our party first.

“The state needs APC to rescue bad administration in the state,” Umar said.

Garba Umar, served as a deputy governor to late Danbaba Suntai.

He also held the position of acting governor when Suntai had an accident and was taken for treatment in Germany.



Umar

Inside China

China quickens pace in building modern airport system

By Qiu Chaoyi, People's Daily

China is accelerating the building of a modern airport system that features a good layout and complete functions by transforming and expanding hub airports and building small and medium airports in remote areas.

During the first half of this year, fixed-asset investment in China's civil aviation industry amounted to 43.5 billion yuan (\$6.72 billion), an increase of 8.5 percent year on year. By the end of June, 23 airports were under construction in the country.

Some newly-built airports made their maiden flights during the first six months of the year. On June 27, an aircraft of Sichuan Airlines left Chengdu Tianfu International Airport, a 4F-class airport situated in Chengdu city, southwest China's Sichuan province, with 262 passengers. It was the first commercial flight of the airport after it was officially put into operation.

During the same period, the country also made progress in the construction of some airports. For example, Ezhou Huahu Airport, an airport under construction near Duwan village, Yanji township, Ezhou city, central China's Hubei province, is changing with each passing day as over 6,000 constructors work around the clock amid busy cranes and roaring concrete delivery trucks.

Ezhou Huahu Airport is the first professional cargo airport in Asia, said

Zhang Gan, head of the planning and development department of Hubei International Logistics Airport Co., Ltd. After it is put into operation, the airport will achieve an annual cargo and mail throughput of more than two million tons, Zhang added.

Besides newly-built airports, airline hub transformation and expansion projects also represented a large proportion of the investment in civil aviation industry from January to June.

According to Han Jun, an official with the Civil Aviation Administration of China, 40 of the 50 busiest airports in China will undergo reconstruction and expansion.

Many airline hubs haven't been able to satisfy the demands of rapidly growing air passenger traffic in recent years, which makes it necessary to increase their capacity and improve their comprehensive abilities and services, Han pointed out.

Another highlight of the investment in civil aviation during the first half of this year is the momentum of smart aviation.

As smart aviation construction is continuously advanced, air travelers' experience has been significantly improved, Han said. This year, 40 airline hubs in China will be covered by Radio Frequency Identification (RFID), an advanced technological means of luggage management in civil aviation industry, according to Han, who explained that if applied in



Photo taken on Nov. 20, 2020, shows the busy Hangzhou Xiaoshan International Airport in Hangzhou city, east China's Zhejiang province. (Photo by Ding Junhao/People's Daily Online)

whole-process luggage tracking system, RFID technology ensures faster and more accurate baggage claim than barcode recognition, not only saving passengers' time, but allowing them to track luggage on their mobile phones.

Airports, which used to be a basic symbol of megacities, are increasingly seen in small towns. Since it began operation in September last year, Ankang Fuqiang Airport, located in Wuli township, Ankang city, keeps setting new records almost every day. In the first six months this year, its

passenger throughput reached 132,400, said Ji Yinghui, general manager of the operator of the airport.

Cao Bo, deputy secretary of the commission for discipline inspection at the operator, stressed that the airport has made it easier and faster for local people to travel to other regions, and effectively attracted visitors to the area.

China will put more efforts into building a batch of small and medium airports in central, western and remote areas across the country, like airports under construction in Chenzhou city, central China's Hunan province, and Zhaosu county, northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, Han noted.

China plans to build over 30 new airports from 2021 to 2025, mostly in central and western areas of the country, in a bid to continuously extend its airline network and helping more people get access to convenient air traveling services, according to Han.

During the second quarter this year, civil aviation industry saw a sharp rise in passenger traffic from the first three months, while domestic air passenger transport volume basically recovered to pre-COVID-19 levels.

Although China's passenger traffic ranks second in the world, its civil aviation industry still faces unbalanced and inadequate development.

Considering the fact that the country has a middle-income group made up of over 400 million people and an even larger low- and middle-income group, Han believes that Chinese people's demands for air transport will continue to grow significantly and that China's efforts to boost the development of civil aviation come right in time.



Chengdu Tianfu International Airport, situated in Chengdu city, southwest China's Sichuan province, gets ready for its first commercial flight, June 26, 2021. (Photo by Yang Fei/People's Daily Online)

Inside China

China keeps its promise of making COVID-19 vaccines global public good

By Qu Song, People's Daily

China had offered over 700 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines and concentrates for the world as of July 29, according to the latest data released by China's Joint Prevention and Control Mechanism of the State Council. The figure is more than that of all other nations combined.

China has always called for closer international cooperation on vaccines to ensure their accessibility and affordability in developing countries and to make them a global public good.

Despite its own huge population and tight vaccine supply, China has actively responded to other countries' requests for vaccine cooperation, which has injected confidence and strength into the global fight against the pandemic.

The Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization recently announced that it has signed advance purchase agreements with Chinese vaccine manufacturers Sinopharm and Sinovac, whose COVID-19 vaccine products have been included in the WHO's Emergency Use Listing after strict reviews by WHO's Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization. It means that the doses produced by the two companies will join the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) program to make greater contribution to pandemic control in developing countries.

As Chinese vaccines are being administered to a growing number of people around the world, their safety and efficacy are backed by more and more data.

Many developing countries obtained their first batches of vaccines from China, and that's why Chinese vaccines are hailed as a "timely rain."

Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of Equatorial Guinea, said the Chinese vaccines have brought hope for the country's fight against the epidemic. President Emmerson Mnangagwa of Zimbabwe compared the vaccines donated by China to a light at the end of a dark tunnel.

The nearly 2 million Cambodians probably couldn't have been vaccinated were it not for

China's assistance and the doses purchases from China, said Prime Minister of Cambodia Hun Sen when addressing the opening ceremony of the 26th International Conference on the Future of Asia.

Gaston Browne, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, said China has always been leading the world when it comes to helping and supporting developing countries. China's generous aid has become even more precious as certain countries are hoarding vaccines, he added.

Apart from vaccine donation and export, China is also cooperating with developing countries, including the UAE, Egypt, Indonesia, Turkey, and Brazil, for joint research and production of COVID-19 vaccines.

It supports relevant enterprises to conduct

phase III clinical trials with partners from the above countries, so as to contribute to global anti-pandemic efforts by expanding local vaccine production capacity. So far, production capacity in these nations has expanded to 200 million doses.

This February, Brazilian biologic research center Butantan Institute carried out a mass vaccination trial in Serrana, São Paulo. After most residents received two shots of Sinovac vaccines, the number of symptomatic cases in local community dropped 80 percent, and hospitalizations by 86 percent. More importantly, deaths plunged by 95 percent. Besides, infections among the residents under 18 and other groups ineligible for the vaccine also declined.

To build the strongest immunity barrier, protect the health of foreigners in China,

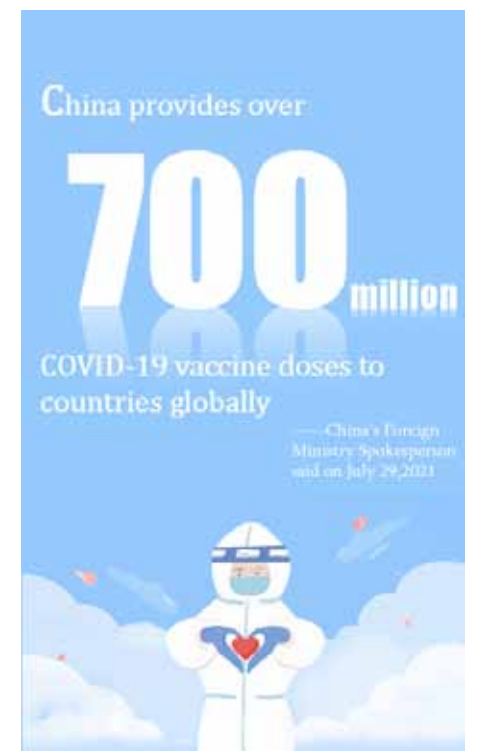
and ensure their work, life and studies in the country, China has included the eligible age group among foreigners in the country into the scope of inoculation with domestic vaccines. So far, more than 600,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been administered to over 350,000 foreigners in the country.

The efforts of the Chinese government and medical staff to advance the vaccination drive are melting the hearts of many foreigners. Recently, a courier in Shanghai shared on a short video platform a special order he received. According to him, a German guy surnamed Frank living in Shanghai bought drinks for health workers at a community health center in Shanghai, just to express his gratitude for their vaccination efforts.



A foreigner is vaccinated in Jinhua, east China's Zhejiang province, June 6, 2021.

(Photo by Li Jianlin/People's Daily Online)



Gross turnover of China's national carbon market close to 300 mln yuan in first half month

By Zhao Zhanhui, People's Daily

China's national carbon emission trading market, which commenced trading on July 16, saw its total trading volume reach nearly six million tons and total turnover approach 300 million yuan (\$46.44 million) as of July 30.

The national carbon market officially started trading at 9:30 a.m. on July 16. After 10 minutes, the cumulative volume of transactions exceeded 20 million yuan. During the four-hour carbon emission trading on that day, a total of 4.1 million tons of transactions were completed, with the carbon price closing at 51.23 yuan per ton on the very first day, up 6.73 percent from the opening price of 48 yuan.

Since carbon emission trading was kicked off, the national market has witnessed active transactions, steadily rising transaction price, and stable operation.

In the first industrial cycle of the national carbon market, more than 2,000 key carbon dioxide emitters in the power generation industry are included in the first batch of trading, covering approximately 4.5 billion tons of carbon dioxide emissions per year.

Before the national carbon market was launched, relevant pilot projects had been carried out in a number of provinces around the country for 10 years, promoting green transformation of many enterprises.

"Back then, our company bought about 250,000 tons of carbon dioxide emission quotas at around 60 yuan a ton," said Zhou Shuiliang, deputy general manager of Guangzhou Hengyun Enterprises Holdings Ltd., a key emitter of greenhouse gases based in Guangzhou, capital of south China's Guangdong province, referring to the first

time when his company tried carbon emission trading in 2014.

Guangdong was one of the first batch of provinces in China that piloted carbon emission trading. As a major power generation enterprise in Guangdong, Guangzhou Hengyun Enterprises Holdings Ltd. was included in the province's carbon emission management system in 2014, and bought carbon emissions quotas worth about 15 million yuan that year as its actual amount of carbon emissions surpassed its quota.

With the in-depth implementation of the pilot project, Guangzhou Hengyun Enterprises Holdings Ltd. has realized that reducing carbon emissions does not just bring pressure, but also economic benefits as a result of carbon asset management and the application of technologies related to carbon emission reduction.

The company therefore established a work group for energy conservation and carbon reduction, upgraded and retrofitted generator sets, and vigorously carried out low-carbon and clean energy projects including natural gas power generation projects.

A sequence of transformations and upgrades have enabled the company to realize the change from buying carbon emission quotas to profiting from selling carbon assets. Last year, the company gained more than 30 million yuan from selling its carbon assets.

Like Guangzhou Hengyun Enterprises Holdings Ltd., many other enterprises that have made efforts to control greenhouse gas emissions have benefited from carbon market.

"More and more companies have realized that only by taking the initiative to reduce carbon emissions can they get a leg up in the wave of green and low-carbon transformation," said Meng Meng, general manager of China Emissions Exchange

(Guangzhou), the largest local carbon market in China.

Carbon market piloted in Guangdong has seen active transactions, and ranked first in the country in terms of the cumulative volume of carbon emission quota transactions, which had exceeded four billion yuan by June this year, according to Meng.

"More importantly, carbon markets have practically promoted and yielded good results in reducing carbon emissions. By implementing mechanisms for controlling the total amount of carbon emissions, assigning quotas for carbon emissions, and honoring agreements, Guangdong's carbon markets have realized an overall reduction in carbon emissions in absolute terms," Meng said.

In 2019, Guangdong reduced 11.4 percent of carbon emissions, or 43.74 million tons from a year ago, according to Meng, who pointed out that practice in both foreign countries and domestic pilot areas has proven that carbon market is a policy instrument that can realize the reduction of carbon emissions with the lowest cost and highest efficiency.

The product in carbon markets is the trading of GHG emission permits. Companies that have been included in carbon emissions cap and trade systems like Guangzhou Hengyun Enterprises Holdings Ltd. are assigned quotas for carbon emissions. They need to buy carbon emission quotas from carbon market when they emit more greenhouse gases than they are allowed to, and can sell surplus emission allowances on the market when they successfully bring their actual amount of carbon emissions below their quotas.

The weighted average price for carbon quotas over the past few years stood at about 40 yuan a ton, according to the pilot carbon trading programs in seven cities.

Although pilot areas have carried out helpful exploration, due to limited market sizes, transaction prices of carbon quotas that can truly reflect the social cost of carbon emissions have not been formed, said Mei Dewen, general manager of China Beijing Environment Exchange.

Finding reasonable and effective prices for carbon quotas is an important goal and task in the construction of the national carbon market, according to Mei.

"The carbon market can be more dynamic and carbon quotas more efficiently priced only when diversified financial institutions and products are introduced into the market," noted Mei, who explained that diversified market players have different risk preferences, forecasts, and sources of information, which helps form a relatively fair price and an effective market-based pricing mechanism.

To facilitate the development of spot carbon market, China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC) has actively provided guidance for Guangzhou Futures Exchange on speeding up the construction of carbon futures market, said Gao Li, spokesperson with the CSRC.

The permits to emit carbon emissions already have some basic properties of futures, such as a high degree of standardization, and long-term demand caused by the time difference between the issuance and performance of carbon emission quotas, said an executive from Guangzhou Futures Exchange.

Spot market is the foundation of the development of the futures market, the executive said, adding that when the futures market related to carbon trading takes shape and grows to a certain size, it will promote the development of the carbon market in various aspects.

Politics

My Administration Won't Allow Benue People Turn Into Slaves - Gov Ortom

By Isaac Kertyo, Makurdi

Governor Samuel Ortom of Benue State says his administration would not allow the people of the state to be made slaves under the watch of the All Progressives Congress's led Federal Government.

The Governor made this declaration at the Government House Makurdi when he received on a courtesy visit, the former Chairman, Benue State Internal Revenue Service, BIRS, Mrs Mimi Orubibi who recently defected from the opposition APC to the PDP.

Ortom maintained that it was by God's grace and prayers of the Benue citizens that has

prevented the people from being attacked and killed by those who vowed to take over the state.

He lauded Mrs Mimi Orubibi and her teeming supporters over decision to dump the APC for the ruling PDP which he said has the bright future to lead the country and give Nigerians purposeful leadership in 2023.

Ortom assured Mrs Urubibi and her teeming supporters of equal opportunities in the PDP, adding that the party is capable of accommodating more members.

In her remarks, Mrs Mimi Orubibi contended that their decision to dump the party was due to the fact that PDP has demonstrated high capacity for leadership.

PDP Elders' Intervention gives Secondus Another Day

The intervention, yesterday, by some political elders in the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) saved the embattled national chairman of the main opposition party, Prince Uche Secondus, from a planned removal by certain forces opposed to his leadership.

The indication that the elders' had achieved a breakthrough in their intervention emerged, when Deputy National Publicity Secretary of the party, Diran Odeyemi, who was among the seven that resigned their positions on Tuesday, changed his stand and withdrew his resignation letter.

Even more instructive, it appeared, was Odeyemi's pledge to work with the Secondus-led National Working Committee (NWC) to ensure a successful national convention, which would usher in new national officers in December.

The PDP elders comprised members of the Board of Trustees (BoT) and the National Executive Committee (NEC), governors elected on the platform of the party, and other prominent stakeholders. The BoT and NEC members at their meeting yesterday set up a committee to resolve the crisis in the party.

Members of the committee include 13 PDP governors, three former governors, three members of the National Assembly, two former ministers, all NWC members, all former senate presidents, all former deputy senate presidents, all former speakers of the House of Representatives and their Deputies.

Although the elders of the party, including the governors, at their meeting on Monday were to consider some of the last options before them. They gave the Secondus-led NWC a lifeline of 72 hours, inside party sources claimed the worst might have been over for Secondus and his NWC.

Some of the PDP elders

were former Vice President Atiku Abubakar; former Senate President Anyim Pius Anyim; one of his successors, David Mark; former Jigawa State governor, Sule Lamido; Professor Jerry Gana, Dr. Iyochia Ayu, Senator Ahmed Makarfi, Senator Enyinnaya Abaribe, and Senator Ibrahim Mantu. They said their goal was peaceful resolution by disagreements in the party.

Other elders of the party, who shared this position, included Senator Adolphus Wabara, Dr. Okwesilieze Nwodo, Dr. Ibrahim Dankwambo, Senator Helen Esuene, Hajiya Zainab Maina, Olagunsoye Oyinlola, Hon. Austin Okpara, Senator Biodun Olujimi, Senator Zainab Kure, Senator Agboola Hosea, Senator Odion Ugbesia, Chief Mike Ogiadomhe and Hajiya Hadiza Adodo.

Secondus, too, warned that any dislocation in the party now would do the PDP no good. He said the meeting was essential, because "a time like this is a time that we must brace up and be able to come out very strong and even stronger."

Sources at the meeting said Secondus was able to survive his removal because a majority of the stakeholders held the view that the NWC he led should be allowed to conclude its tenure, which is due to end on December 9, 2021.

They said the removal of Secondus would be a bad omen for the party currently. Those who wanted him out were bent on having him to publicly declare that he would not contest the office of the national chairman at the December national convention, for peace to reign. The importance of yesterday's meeting also underscored by the attendance of Governor Nyesom Wike of Rivers State, who for the first time, attended a BoT meeting of the party and had been at the forefront of the Secondus Must Go movement.

Akwa Ibom endorses Dikio's recovery plan for Niger Delta

Urges ex-agitators to seek opportunities beyond N65,000 stipends

By Amgbare Ekaunkumo, Yenagoa

Akwa Ibom State Governor, Udom Emmanuel, has thrown his weight behind the Niger Delta Recovery Plan (NDRP) prepared by the Interim Administrator, Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP), Col. Milland Dixon Dikio (rtd) for economic empowerment of ex-agitators and the Niger Delta region.

Emmanuel particularly appreciated an aspect of the plan designed to enable ex-agitators explore other economic potential of the region instead of depending mainly on N65,000 monthly stipend.

Emmanuel, who spoke in Government House, Uyo, on Thursday, when Dikio paid him a courtesy visit, described the new model of Train, Mentor and Employ (TME) contained in NDRP as a step in the right direction saying the strategy would turn ex-agitators into successful entrepreneurs.

He called on ex-agitators and beneficiaries of the programme to grab the opportunity offered them by

Dikio and develop other economic potential in the region.

Insisting that stipends would not solve their economic problems, the governor urged them to embrace the opportunities in the maritime sector, which he observed was a major focus of PAP's recovery plan.

He said: "Maritime resource is key to the development of any economy and it is a sector where people of the Niger-Delta region need to be trained. The fishery industry will be of great benefit to the region as it is surrounded by water.

"There are endless opportunities beyond payment of stipends. As a people, we can launch into these different industries that will benefit the region".

Emmanuel thanked Dikio for acknowledging his work in the state and commended him for adding value to the region since he assumed office as the Interim Administrator.

Earlier in his speech, Dikio applauded the governor's strides especially in floating the Ibom Air, which he described as a trailblazer.

He further congratulated the governor for the crowning of Akwa

Ibom United as the Nigeria's Premier league champion.

Dikio said he planned to key into the human capital development of Akwa Ibom by seeking opportunities in the state to train ex-agitators.

"Akwa Ibom is known for its human capital development. Others are agriculture and financing, particularly microfinance banks. The industrial strength of Akwa Ibom is well known so we have come to key into all these for the ex-agitators", he said.

The amnesty boss insisted that his major vision was to turn ex-agitators into successful entrepreneurs and job creators, who would look beyond N65,000 monthly stipends.

He said: "Over the years, many of our people have been trained and they have all been added to the pool of the unemployed. We are looking out for big business concerns where our people can be trained.

"PAP will pay for the training but with the understanding that our people will employ and mentor afterwards. We are adopting the Igbo apprenticeship system so that at the end of the day it's a win-win for everybody".

2023: IBB Gives Criteria for Next Nigerian President

Former Military President, General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida (IBB), might have ruled out a former vice president, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar and a former governor of Lagos State, Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, from the 2023 presidential run, because they would be in their 70s by the next election.

Although IBB as Babangida is fondly called did not in any way mention their names as ineligible for the nation's number one seat, he however suggested that individuals in their 60s should be the focus of Nigerians as potential presidential candidates in 2023.

By the next general election in 2023, Atiku, who is 75 this year would be 77, while Tinubu, who marked an official 68th birthday in March, would have turned 70 years.

Babangida, who himself will be 80 on August 17 this year, was confident that the nation is endowed with both human and natural resources, hinted at a few individuals, whom he said were in their 60s, had the capacity to become president and could effectively run the country.

Speaking in a sneak preview of a two-part series of an exclusive interview to be aired on the Arise News, focusing on the State of the Nation, IBB said one of the reasons Nigeria has refused to progress and achieve the dreams of the founding fathers was because Nigerians no longer believed in the future of their own country.

The former leader, who accused the Nigerian people of creating

and at the same time, destroying their own country, identified bad leadership as yet a major reason for the socio-economic challenges facing Nigeria.

Talking about the presidential hopefuls he had in mind, IBB said they were persons in their 60s with contacts across the nation and who had been traversing the geo-political zones marketing their acceptability and capacity.

Specifically on the importance of leadership in nation-building and where he thought the likes of Atiku and Tinubu no longer fit the bill, IBB said: "If you get a good leadership that links with the people and tries to talk with the people; not talking on top of the people, then we would be okay. "I have started visualising a good Nigerian leader. That is, a person, who travels across the country and has a friend virtually everywhere he travels to and he knows at least one person that he can communicate with.

"That is a person, who is very verse in economics and is also a good politician, who should be able to talk to Nigerians and so on. I have seen one, or two or three of such persons already in his sixties." But when asked if the person could emerge victorious in the 2023 presidential election, the Minna-born former military leader said, "I believe so if we can get him."

Responding to a question on whether or not he still believed in the future of Nigeria, the former

military president, who turns 80 on August 17, 2021, said: "I do believe in the future of Nigeria, but Nigerians don't believe in the future of their country. They created and they destroyed."

Reiterating his belief in the future of Nigeria and urging Nigerians to remain patriotic, Babangida, who claimed to feeling good as he was about to turn 80 years, with gratitude to God for sparing his life, advised Nigerians to go for the person that has what it takes to transform the country when the time comes.

IBB served as head of state between 1985 and 1993. Born in Niger State, he received military training in Nigeria, India, Great Britain, and the United States. He rose through the ranks and was known for his courage, having also played a major role in suppressing an attempted coup in 1976, when he walked into a rebel-held radio station unarmed.

After Murtala Mohammed became the military head of state in 1975, Babangida joined his Supreme Military Council, and as military president after taking over power on August 27, 1985, he introduced economic policies such as the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), that altered the course of the nation and liberalised the economy.

At 80 on the 17th, Babangida is one of the leaders like Muhammadu Buhari who have dominated Nigeria's political space since 1966.

Inside FCT



As FCT Development Control, links abandoned structure to security threat

By Ephraim Joshua

The creation of the Federal Capital Territory FCT, was to have a model city, which would be patterned after a city like Washington, D.C., that could attract foreigners from over the world to visit, possibly for vacation, as it is been done in Dubai and other developed beautiful cities in the world.

However, with over 40 years of the existence of the FCT, not even half of its vision has been achieved, as most of the master plan designs have been violated by both the rich, poor, and even the government. Things seem never to be working, in terms of developmental structures that would originally beautify the city when completed because the reverse is a case.

Recent findings in Abuja, revealed that there are over 600 uncompleted buildings in different stages of development that had been abandoned by their owners for many years, either as a result of the economic situation, litigation, and inheritance crisis among family members.

A drive around the FCT would reveal that most of the uncompleted buildings which are in various states of deterioration

are located in the highbrow areas like Gwarimpa, Wuse, Garki, Maitama, Asokoro, and other parts of Abuja, and they had become hideouts for criminals and homeless persons, and this has contributed to the failure in achieving the desired beauty and safety of the territory.

It would be recalled that some time ago, the FCT authority tried to address the situation, by proposing a special fund to acquire the buildings from their owners and resell them to workers under its mass housing scheme, and the former Director, FCT Development Control department, Mallam Muktar Galadima, explained that the FCT administration planned to send a memo to the Federal Executive Council on the acquisition of the abandoned buildings across the FCT.

According to Galadima, the federal government may create a special purpose fund through the Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria to acquire the buildings, "We went to the sites and issued identity numbers for ease of integrity test. We invited the owners to a meeting where we had some discussions and about 130 owners complied, but we are not comfortable with that number.

"Because we have done what we can do within our capacity, we are sending a memo to the minister to look at options of revocation and acquisition. But our challenge with revocation is that it would lead to litigation."

"So, the best option is through the Federal Executive Council; if some of these abandoned buildings can be acquired by the federal government so that where it is residential houses, workers can be given such houses.

"Where it is an office or commercial buildings, government offices can take over. This is the last point we are; we are trying to see if the Federal Executive Council can come in, maybe, by creating special funds through the Federal Mortgage Bank or other housing facilitators. The acquisition of the buildings by the government would address the housing deficit in the FCT," he said.

However, some residents of the FCT believed that those were mere words without actions because the political will to actualize it was not there, as things remained the way they were, with more abandoned structures continued to come up in the FCT.

Continued >>Pg 18

Death toll from cholera outbreak hit 3 in FCT

Stories by Kingsley Madaki

Number of lives lost to the recent cholera outbreak in the nation's capital Abuja has risen to three, despite assurances from the FCT Administration of adequate measures to halt cholera cases.

A senior community health officer in Kobi health centre, who preferred anonymity, said the outbreak even affected Madaki of the Community. "The Madaki lost his sister, while himself and his son are also infected"

The health officer explained that while the Centre has Inadequate facilities to care for the patients, it can't admit them, because of unavailability of cholera drugs in the centre.

Kobi community which is in Abuja Municipal Area Council AMAC, is few kilometre away from Asokoro district and had recently being ravaged with cases of cholera outbreak without any proper action by the appropriate authorities.

It was gathered that lack of drugs and other essential medical items have crippled operations at the PHC in the community, making the officials to refer many cases to some private hospitals due to the ongoing industrial action by resident doctors, while some less acute cases are been managed by the affected people at their various homes.

Another resident of the

community who simple identified himself as Joel said, "there is a cholera outbreak here in Kobi. We just referred one case to ECWA clinic Karu, because of the doctors' strike.

"I don't have the accurate record of those that have died, but I know of one death, and in that same compound, about two person, I was able to manage one, but referred one to same ECWA Clinic. "I don't have drugs for cholera here, AMAC people said they are not aware. We have facilities to admit patients here, but we don't have drugs", the officer said.

When contacted, the Acting secretary FCT Primary Healthcare Development Agency, Dr Ndaeyo Iwot said the community mentioned is under Abuja Municipal Area Council AMAC, not under the purview of his agency.

However, Iwot said he had contacted the Director of public health in AMAC to urgently make provision for the supply of drugs to the PHC in Kobi.



Dr Ndaeyo Iwot





Inside FCT

As FCT Development Control...

<<< Continued Pg 17

A civil servant and a social analyst Mr. Simon Baba-Yerimah blamed the continued increase of abandoned structures in the FCT on the greed of some politicians and wealthy Nigerians who want to have gigantic structures in the heart of the city without proper plans and preparation on how to complete them when they leave office.

Baba-Yerimah said that the lack of failure to put into consideration the needed amount to complete a particular project can easily lead to abandonment, and the building will then provide cover for criminals activities.

“The FCT is growing in crimes today because the government and wealthy people have originally provided shelters for criminals through the numerous abandoned buildings in the heart of the city. Criminals no longer think of hiding places in the rural communities again, because they have a lot of them in the city.

“This is because our politicians steal government money and invest it on elephant structures that could take years to complete and might not even be completed at all, because the money will stop flowing when they leave office and the building will stand like a symbol of corruption begging them for completion, to be avail.

“The truth is that all the buildings that are uncompleted and abandoned around the city belonged to rich and powerful people, mostly those in government and out of government. That is why you see that the FCT administration has not been bold enough to revoke or demolish any uncompleted structures, since they started boasting to do it years ago. The FCT authority is scared of touching the high and mighty in society.

“They are only bold to make do their threats when it has to do with the common man in the rural communities or the satellite towns, where you see them go into the communities to demolish structure without recourse to humanity. But, the uncompleted buildings that encourage crimes in the city, are a no-go area. This government has to sit up and do what is right for the benefit and safety of its people, no matter who is involved,” he said.

However, not too long ago, the FCTA director of the Department of Monitoring and Inspection, Olawale Labiyi, during a site inspection lamented the number of abandoned buildings in the Abuja city center, that abandoned buildings were a security risk because they could serve as hideouts for hoodlums and criminals.

Libiyi advised residents of the territory to always be vigilant and report any suspicious movements around any abandoned building

in their neighborhood, urging developers to ensure that no site or building was left unoccupied.

He also advised them to make a proper search before developing their plots, to avoid litigation and illegal development that could lead to them being abandoned, urging developers to make proper costing and estimation of buildings before commencement to avoid abandoning the building halfway.

Despite all the admonition to ensure completion structures by the developer, the FCT is still scattered with uncompleted buildings with threat marks of the department of development control. Such markings usually read, ‘Stop Work’, ‘Demolish Within So And So Time Frame’, Or ‘Complete Or Risk Demolition,’ signs which are usually ignored and owners of such buildings carry on as if nothing is at stake.

This, of course, raises the question as to whether the department is just a fancy arm of the federal capital development agency FCDA, or maybe the department’s personnel are so friendly with offenders that they mutually ignore one another’s mistakes until a tragedy is recorded. Also, there are some ‘offenders’ that are not so lucky with the department.

A director at the FCT development control agency, who preferred anonymity, said that they are aware of the increase in numbers of uncompleted structures in the FCT, but admitted that the development has overwhelmed the strength of the agency, because of the owners of the property involved.

“We are very much aware of the situation and we have been doing media campaigns, advising people to complete their structures. But I believe it is just the situation, probably because of the economy. To the extent that the Minister of the FCT even gave an ultimatum sometimes for people to complete their structures or risk demolition, but still, nothing has changed.

“Sometimes when you go deep into the ownership of some property, you will discover that some of them have litigation challenges. Some times late last year, we went around the FCT to eject people from uncompleted buildings, because that criminals usually stay in some of them and it contributes to security threats.

“Besides, apart from the criminal aspect, most of the houses have been abandoned for a very long time and the structures are weak. The buildings can collapse any day and if that happens, the people that stay in them will be affected.

“Example is a gigantic structure close to Legacy House at the central area when we went there, we ejected about 47 illegal



occupants of the building. We also went to Maitama district and we ejected almost the same numbers of illegal occupants with the help of the police from an uncompleted building we feared might collapse any time,” he said.

He said that this year, there are close to 600 uncompleted structures littered within the city, and they serve as a threat to the lives and property of people because most of them are occupied by miscreants and even armed robbers. “Like the house, we ejected 47 occupants, they do not even know anything about themselves and for example, any one of them commits a crime, it will robe on others. The criminal can come in any time and collect his things and run away.

“Most of these houses, even undeveloped plots, we have been hammering on it that they should be renovated, completed, or face removal. But the problem is that when you say a house should be completed, but you did not support the owner with money, what do you expect?

“Some of these houses are owned by people that are already dead, and they have litigation on the property amongst themselves, so you cannot force them to complete the house when they are still in court. That is one of the challenges we are facing.

“The Minister has written to some property owners, given them time to complete their projects or their plots might be revoked. However, for the government to take over abandoned structures, will still require litigation. The owners might not be there, but when he heard that the government has taken over his property, he will return to claim it.

“Moreover, most of the houses have been sold to different people, to the extent that you cannot trace the address of the current

owner. I will tell you that it is difficult for the government to revoke such a plot, because of those connected to it.”

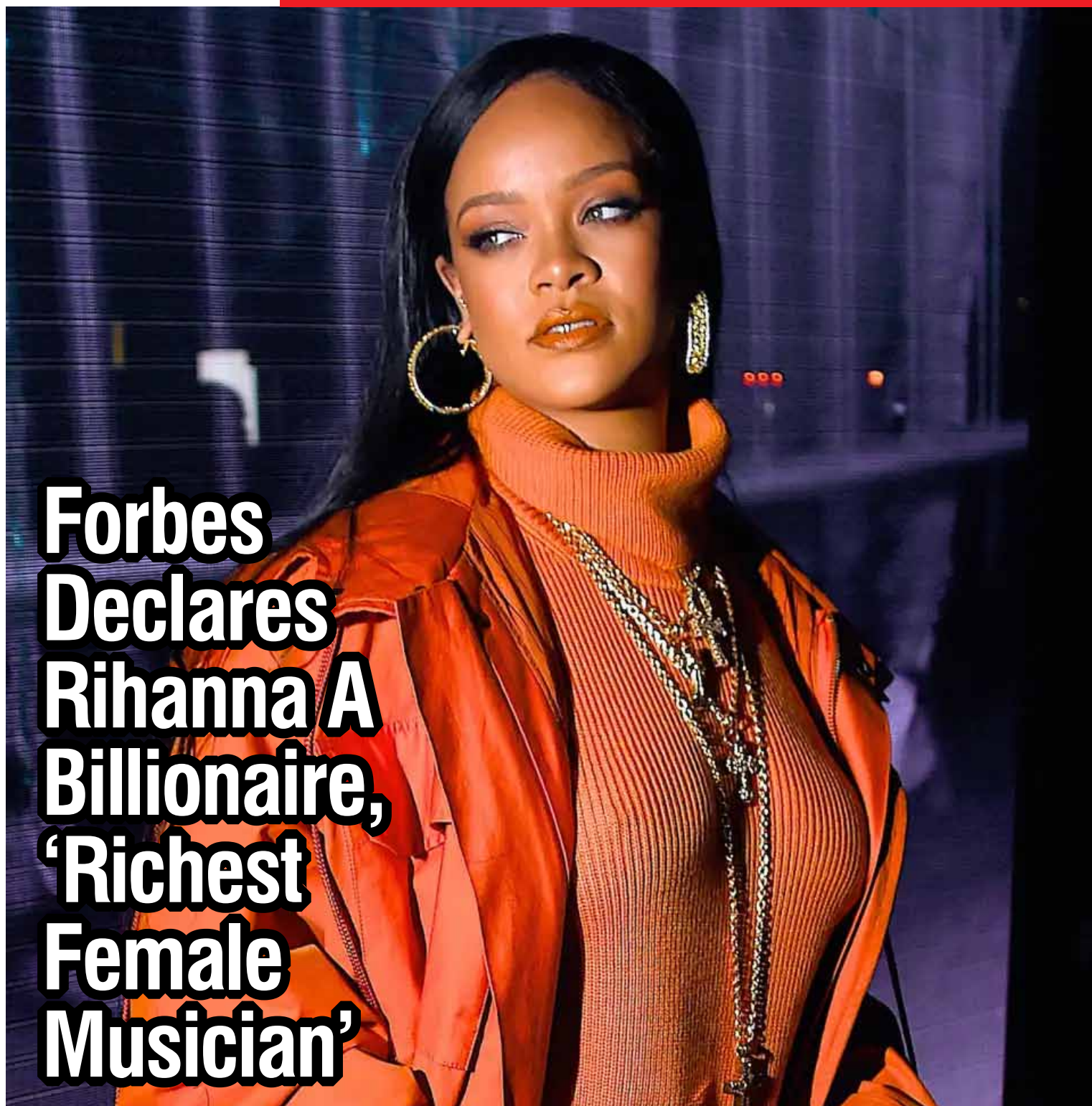
He also said that another challenge that the agency is experiencing is that when most of the uncompleted structures are raided to eject illegal occupants, they returned because their owners are not visible and the houses remained abandoned for years.

“There is another uncompleted building, Chelsea Hotel near Grandsquare, Diepreye Alamiyeseigha, former governor of Bayelsa state, tried to acquire it. He paid some money, but could not complete the payment. To the extent that the Bayelsa government said that they should complete the money for the structure and take over the building because the money used to buy the place was stolen money. But bureaucracy has affected the process. The building is still there, there are bushes everywhere in the compound. That is the kind of place criminals hid to perpetrate evil.

“Whereas money has been sinking into that place, Chelsea has gone to build another hotel somewhere else, but that building remained uncompleted. The truth is that even the government is not helping matters in such a situation. So, like those houses, we go there to eject illegal occupants, but we do not have the power to ensure that they do not return there again.

“Unfortunately, most of those structures that we go to eject people, you will discover that even some police personnel are also occupying the buildings. So, even if you eject them today, tomorrow they will return since the place has not been made use of. All these abandoned and uncompleted structures in the FCT are owned by rich people and some of them are owned by those in authority. Because some of the plots cost between N500m to N1bn, even more,” he said.

Entertainment



Forbes Declares Rihanna A Billionaire, 'Richest Female Musician'

Rihanna has officially been declared a billionaire by Forbes.

Forbes estimates that the 33-year-old singer and businesswoman is now the wealthiest female musician in the world with a fortune worth \$1.7 billion. That makes her second only to Oprah Winfrey for the world's richest female entertainer.

While music is what made her famous, Fenty Beauty is what made her rich, the magazine says. She owns 50 percent of the company, which expanded to skincare in 2020.

Born, Robyn Fenty, the singer launched Fenty Beauty

in 2017 in partnership with luxury goods conglomerate LVMH. The brand's launch focused on inclusivity with a then-unprecedented 40 shades of foundation, which prompted the "Fenty Effect" in which other brands expanded their shade ranges for complexion products.

Forbes estimates \$1.4 billion of her worth comes from Fenty Beauty and \$270 million coming from her lingerie brand Savage X Fenty — the business magazine said the rest of the \$1.7 billion is sprinkled in from the star's music and acting career.

Earlier this year, Rihanna and LVMH "jointly made

the decision to put on hold the ready-to-wear activity, based in Europe, pending better conditions," according to an emailed statement from LVMH at the time.

Members of Rihanna's "Navy" fanbase excitedly shared news of the "Umbrella" singer's financial status.

"i stan a billionaire," @anthnybuford wrote.

"THE REAL SELF-MADE!!! My queen @rihanna FOREVER," @hvymetalgirl wrote.

"So happy for Rihanna. All things are possible. It's really wonderful to see women of colour conquer and rise. Setting the bar for

all women," @alegrafitzgerald wrote.

Rihanna's Fenty Beauty company is further expanding by entering the fragrance industry. The brand announced last week it would be launching Fenty Parfum, a unisex scent inspired and created by Riri herself, in August.

With Fenty Beauty and Savage X Fenty keeping her so busy, fans are now left wondering when or if she will ever release another studio album. Since releasing her 2016 album "Anti," the singer has only appeared as a feature on songs with Drake, DJ Khaled, and PartyNextDoor.

Nollywood veteran Rachel Oniga to be buried on August 26

Nollywood veteran actress Rachel Oniga will be laid to rest on Thursday, August 26, 2021.

This is according to her son, Mr Tunji Oniga who made this known during a phone interview with the News Agency of Nigeria on Wednesday in Lagos.

Oniga said that the wake keep would hold August 26 at her residence in Magodo, Lagos State, while she would be laid to rest on August 27 at a cemetery yet to be disclosed by the family.

"My mother's death is shocking to me, in fact, I don't believe she is dead. When I see her phone ring and she is not there to take the call, the reality will be dawn on me," he said.

"She was a philanthropist, who is always bothered about the needs of others."

The movie star passed away on Friday, July 30, at the age of 64.

According to a statement released by her family, the movie star died from a heart-related issue.

Originally from Eku in Delta State, the movie star was born on 23 May 1957, in Ebutte Metta, Lagos State.

She made her Nollywood debut in the 1996 hit movie 'Onome.'

Oniga went on to star in several big productions including 'Sango,' and Wale Adenuga's television series, 'Super story.'

Her most recent movies include 'Chief Daddy,' 'Royal Hibiscus Hotel' and 'My Village People.'

She was survived by three children and several grandchildren.



Entertainment

BBNaija 2021: Big Brother introduces 4 new housemates

Biggie surprised fans and viewers of Nigeria's most-watched reality TV show on Sunday, August 8, 2021, when he introduced new housemates.

The new housemates were introduced to the viewers in between the live eviction show.

Here are the five new surprise housemates.

Michael

Michael says he is bringing excitement to Biggie's house. I'm coming for all the tasks. I am not a good loser and would do anything to win.

Michael who is an artist says the housemates should be ready to feel all his good vibes.

Kayvee

28-year-old Kayvee is from Ogba in Lagos state. He is bringing his handsome face to the show...vain like that! He doesn't like rude people. He says he is bringing vibes

and positive energy to the house. The photographer says he is going to show the world his view.

JMK

Kwara State-born Jumoke says she loves to enjoy herself. She hates bad vibes. She says she is bringing positive energy to the house.

The Lawyer says she is going to do everything all the lawyers who have been to show didn't bring to the show. She wants us to watch out for her dance moves.

Queen

Queen who hails from Akwa Ibom state says she is the complete package. She hates gossip and is a nice person. She says she can be good, bad and ugly.

The 26-year-old philanthropist says she loves sleeping naked and the housemates should be wary of her 'bad mouth.'

Comedian Basketmouth and wife celebrate daughter as she turns 10

Nigerian comedian Basketmouth and his wife Elsie have celebrated their daughter, Janelle on her tenth birthday.

The celebrity couple took to their Instagram pages on Friday, August 6, 2021, where they shared photos of the birthday girl captioned with cute messages.

"Happy Birthday to my beautiful PRINCESS #JanelleOkpocha, May

your day be as special as you are. Thank you for making it so easy to be proud of you, Daddy and Mummy love you so much. Welcome to the 10th floor," Basketmouth wrote.

"My real-life Princess. My precious child. My daughter with a beautiful heart, fearless, sooo kind, and exceptional. You forever make us so proud of you. Happy 10th birthday baby. I love you always and forever," Elsie wrote



Burna Boy and Mr 2kay bury the hatchet 4 years after messy beef

Mr 2kay was almost thrown from the 7th floor of a hotel in 2017

It looks like Nigerian singers Burna Boy and Mr 2kay have ended their rift after their messy beef four years ago.

Mr 2kay was beaten to a pulp in Eko Hotel and Suits under the alleged orders of Burna Boy.

The music stars were spotted at a nightclub hanging out, bonding and giving out all shades of 'bromance.'

This is first time since 2017 that the music stars have been spotted publicly together.

Burna Boy and Mr 2kay made the headlines in 2017 after their messy beef went public.

It would be recalled that on

Sunday, October 22, 2017, Mr 2kay was robbed and beaten to a pulp after the "Buckwyld N Breathless" concert which took place at the Eko Hotel and Suits.

Mr 2kay after the assault by robbers in his hotel room

Mr 2kay after the assault by robbers in his hotel room

After the incident, four suspects were arrested and they later confessed to being responsible for the robbery and assault of Mr 2kay including his road manager, Joel.

During interrogation, the robbers confessed that they were hired by Burna Boy.

Four suspects, Balogun Ademola, Obina Igwe, Tunmise Omotore and Joel Kantiok, alleged to have robbed Mr. 2kay claimed they received instruction from Burna Boy to carry out the activity.

Four suspects, Balogun Ademola, Obina Igwe, Tunmise Omotore and Joel Kantiok, alleged to have robbed Mr. 2kay claimed they received instruction from Burna Boy to carry out the activity.

The police then declared Burna Boy wanted over the incident.

Burna Boy was later arraigned in court over the crime.

Oba of Benin, fifth wife welcome quadruplets

The Oba of Benin, Ewuare II, and his fifth and youngest wife, Queen Aisosa, have welcomed a set of quadruplets, three boys and a girl.

Frank Irabor, the Secretary of the Benin Traditional Council, broke the news in a statement posted on the Oba of Benin's official Facebook page on Friday night.

Mr Irabor described the birth of the babies as an "unprecedented and historical event" in the Benin Royal family.

"By the grace of the almighty God and the benevolence of our ancestors, the Benin Traditional Council on behalf of his royal majesty Omo N'Oba N'Edo, Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Ewuare II, Oba of Benin and the Royal Palace of Benin kingdom, joyfully wish to

"The palace of the Oba of Benin is delighted to announce that her royal highness, Queen Aisosa Ewuare of Benin Kingdom, has delivered a set of Quadruplets (3 boys and a girl). Yes Quadruplets," the statement read.

The children and their mother are in excellent health, the statement noted.

The palace said that the date

for the naming ceremony will be made public as soon as possible.

Ewuare II, who is the 40th Oba of Benin and one of his queens, Owamagbe, welcomed a princess in October 2020.

The baby's birth coincided with the monarch's birthday and coronation anniversary, October 20.

The Edo State Government had approved the monarch's appointment on April 29,

2016.

Earlier before the appointment, the palace of the Oba had announced the death of his predecessor, Omo n'Oba n'Edo Uku Akpolokpolo Oba Erediauwa on April 29 even though it was believed by many Nigerians that he had passed on long before the formal announcement.

Oba Erediauwa, who ascended the throne in 1979, was 92.



Diplomatic Corner

Ex-President Zuma Hospitalised Ahead of Graft Trial

South Africa's former president Jacob Zuma, jailed for contempt of court last month, was admitted to hospital on Friday, less than a week before he is due in court for a separate graft trial.

The Department of Correctional Services "can confirm that former president Jacob Zuma has today, 6 August 2021, been admitted to an outside hospital for medical observation", it said in a statement.

Zuma, 79, is scheduled to attend the resumption of a long-running corruption trial on August 10.

The hearing will include a plea to drop 16 charges of fraud, graft and racketeering against him related to the 1999 purchase of fighter jets, patrol boats and equipment from five European arms firms when he was deputy president.

He is accused of taking bribes from one of the firms, French defence giant Thales, which has been charged with corruption and money laundering.

Proceedings have been repeatedly postponed for more than a decade, sparking accusations of delaying tactics.

In a separate case, Zuma was handed a 15-month jail sentence in late June for snubbing a commission probing state corruption under his 2009-19 presidency.

He started serving the sentence on July 8 at Estcourt prison, in the east of



the country.

Zuma's legal team had used a range of reasons to turn down invitations to testify, including alleged bias, preparations for the graft trial and medical concerns.

The former leader travelled to Cuba last year to receive treatment for an undisclosed illness.

No reason was given for the

hospitalisation on Friday, apart from that it was prompted by "a routine observation".

Zuma has already been allowed to leave prison for 24 hours to attend his brother's funeral last month.

His imprisonment sparked a spree of violence and looting in his home KwaZulu-Natal province and the financial capital Johannesburg.

Biden calls on New York Governor to resign

U.S. President Joe Biden has called on New York Governor Andrew Cuomo to resign after an investigation found that he had sexually harassed 11 women.

Mr Biden, at a White House press conference on Tuesday, said he believed the prominent democrat should resign.

When asked if the governor should be impeached, Mr Biden said, "Let's take one thing at a time here."

"I think he should resign. I understand that the state legislature may decide to impeach, I don't know that for a fact. I haven't read all that data," the president said.

Mr Biden added that he had not read the report or spoken to Mr Cuomo.

New York Attorney-General Letitia James released the report on Tuesday, saying at a press conference that Mr Cuomo had "sexually harassed current and former state employees in violation of both federal and state laws."

The independent investigation found that Mr Cuomo harassed multiple women, many of whom were young women, by engaging in unwanted groping, kisses, hugging and by making inappropriate comments.



Thousands flee in Greece as wildfires sweep through Mediterranean

Thousands of people fled their homes on the outskirts of Athens on Friday as Greece faced a fourth day of wildfires fuelled by strong winds and searing temperatures.

Hundreds of residents were also evacuated by boat from the nearby Island of Evia

Like elsewhere in Europe, Greece has been grappling with extreme weather this summer and a week-long heat-wave - its worst in 30 years - has sparked simultaneous wildfires in many parts of the country.

It is burning homes and killing animals as flames tore through thousands of acres of land.

In neighbouring Turkey, authorities are battling the country's worst-ever wildfires, which forced the evacuation of tens of thousands of people.

In Italy, hot winds fanned flames on the Island of Sicily this week.

On Friday, Greek authorities ordered the evacuation of more suburbs north of Athens, where wildfires on the foothills of Mount Parnitha burst back into life late on Thursday, after dying down earlier in the week.

The fire burned around the main

highway linking the capital to northern Greece and hundreds of fire-fighters with water-bombing aircraft were trying to prevent the flames reaching the nearby town of Marathon.

"We might have to spend the night in the car if we don't find a friend to host us," said Yorgos, 26, who had to leave his home in the suburb of Polydendro.

Athenians were told to stay indoors again to avoid toxic fumes as the blaze, fuelled by winds and explosions on high-voltage power lines, sent a cloud of smoke over the capital.

Temperatures have been over 40 degrees Celsius (107 Fahrenheit) all week and no let up was expected on Friday with gale force winds expected to spread the flames further.

The Athens power grid operator announced staggered power cuts in the surrounding region to ensure there were no major outages in mainland Greece.

On Evia, coastguard vessels assisted by tourist boats have picked up 631 people since late Thursday from three beaches on the island.

Flames on the island have burned through a vast area of pine forest since

Tuesday and reached the sea.

The island's deputy governor, George Kelaiditis, called it "the biggest catastrophe in Evia in 50 years," with hundreds of damaged houses and thousands of acres of burned forest land.

In the Peloponnese, where fire-fighters saved Ancient Olympia, the site of the first Olympic Games, from a raging fire this week, the flames left behind scorched earth and dead animals.

Farmer Marinos Anastopoulos described the fire as "a catastrophe," adding "the fire came around midday with swirling winds and homes were burned, a lot of animals burned to death, including rabbits, sheep, dogs, everything."

Joining fire-fighters from countries including France, Cyprus and Sweden, Israel said it was sending a team of 16 fire-fighters to Greece.

So far, at least nine people have been taken to hospital with varying degrees of injury, including two volunteer fire-fighters treated for burns in intensive care units in Athens, health officials said

Sports



Team Nigeria finishes 74th at Tokyo Olympics, 8th best from Africa

Team Nigeria was placed 74th at the end of the 2020 Tokyo Games on Sunday and eighth best among the 54 African nations at the Games.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that Team

Nigeria won two medals – one silver and one bronze – after being represented by 55 athletes.

While Ese Brume won the bronze medal from the women's long jump event, Blessing Oborududu won the

silver medal from the wrestling event's women's freestyle 68kg.

The Games, which began on July 23 and ended on Sunday, had 93 of the 206 participating teams making it to the medals table, including 13 of the 54 from Africa.

Tokyo Olympics: Ministry of Sports Has Brought Shame To Nigeria – Dalung

Mr Solomon Dalung, a former Minister of Sports, has accused the Sports Ministry of bringing shame to Nigeria at the ongoing Olympics games in Tokyo, Japan.

The ongoing games go into record as Nigeria's worst outing at the Olympics.

Few days to the end of the games, Nigeria only has two medals – a silver and bronze – to show for its appearance.

Beside this, the Nigerian team has experienced different setbacks such as the disqualification of 10 athletes, shortage of kits, row over phones and most recently, the termination of PUMA contracts.

Speaking when he featured on an ARISE TV on Friday, Dalung faulted the dissolution of the boards of federations less than three months to the 2020 Olympic Games.

Sunday Dare, his successor, had dissolved the boards in April.

"I think the dissolution of boards. It is a lack of patriotic political will to consolidate on the gains on the ground.

"When I was the minister, I continued from where my predecessor ended. When we get to the field, we built on previous successes and Nigeria did very well.

"Dissolving federations three months to Olympics is an indication that we are not prepared for Olympics. No general dissolves his troops on the eve of an attack and expect to win a war. The dissolved boards have trained and catered for the he athletes for more than two years. Crises are part of human existence, the management is what determines the quality of leadership. I inherited many crises, but I resolved them.

"Leadership is about taking

responsibilities. When things go wrong, somebody has to be responsible. The entire drama of shame is avoidable. This is a shame that the country has found itself."



PUMA Terminates Four-Year Contract With Nigeria

German sportswear manufacturing giants PUMA has terminated its four-year contract with the Athletics Federation of Nigeria.

In the letter of termination of Sponsoring and Licensing Agreement, issued on Wednesday PUMA said, "we are referring to the licensing and sponsoring agreement signed between our company and your federation".

"As a direct consequence of the recent developments, particularly at the Tokyo Olympic Games 2020 and pursuant to clauses 9.2 and 7.3 of the Agreement, we hereby terminate the Agreement with immediate effect.

"PUMA especially declares

to be discharged from any or all obligations towards all stakeholders involved and reserves all rights against these entities and individuals," the statement added.

The termination of the deal comes amidst an alleged leadership tussle between the Ibrahim Gusau-led AFN board and that headed by the Minister for Youths and Sports, Sunday Dare.

Consequently, the minister is said to have vowed that the Nigerian Athletes will not wear the PUMA kits.

The Department of State Services had last year cleared Gusau and his vice president Sunday Adeleye over corruption allegations levelled against him by the sports ministry.

Iheanacho: Daka, Maddison, Vardy, all forwards not in battle at Leicester City



The Nigeria international striker maintained that all the Foxes attacking players have a role to play in Brendan Rodgers' squad this season.

Kelechi Iheanacho claimed he is not in goalscoring competition with Leicester City's feared frontline of Patson Daka, James Maddison and Jamie Vardy.

The Foxes began the 2021-22 season on a flying note – defeating Manchester City 1-0 in Saturday's FA Community Shield fixture.

Iheanacho came off the bench for Brendan Rodgers' team with just over 10 minutes on the clock and made an immediate impact, scoring from the penalty spot after drawing a foul from Nathan Ake inside the box.

After the game, the former Manchester City prodigy was asked about the competition among the team's forwards but the African – addressing the media – stated all the attacking players are important.

"We're not in a battle in our team," he told the club website.

"Everybody is important. We need everybody to get through this season. There are a lot of competitions, so we need everyone.

"Patson [Daka] will be important to the squad. Me as well. Vards (Jamie Vardy), Madders (James Maddison) – everyone is important in the squad.

"We are together as a team and as a family. I'll keep working hard and at the end of the season, we'll see what happens."

Iheanacho's effort against the Citizens was his 40th goal for the King Power Stadium outfit. He talked about what went through his mind before scoring the winning goal.

"I was a bit nervous when I was walking through to take it, but I just had one thing on my mind – just hit it hard. It could go anywhere, so I'm happy we got the win today," he continued.

Sports

Not again, surely? Robertson injury has Liverpool worried ahead of Premier League opener

The Scot hobbled off before half-time during Sunday's friendly with Athletic Club, and his misfortune may open the door for Kostas Tsimikas

Oh no, not again surely?

The season hasn't even begun yet, and Liverpool are fretting over injuries.

If Jurgen Klopp hoped he'd used up all his bad luck last year, it looks like he might have been mistaken.

Because a week before the new Premier League campaign, the Reds boss could have another sizeable headache to contend with.

The sight of Andy Robertson, one of the club's most consistent and durable performers, hobbling off during the pre-season friendly draw with Athletic Club at Anfield on Sunday is enough to send supporters into a panic.

Robertson went over on his right ankle blocking a cross from Alex Berenguer, shortly before half-time. The pain was immediate, the Scot covering his face as the Kop, for the first time all afternoon, fell silent.

There were huge cheers as, gingerly, he rose to his feet a minute or so later, but there was no chance of him carrying on. The stretcher was rejected, at least, but Robertson looked anything but comfortable as he was helped from the field. There was a quick word with Klopp on the sideline, before he headed down the tunnel for treatment.

Concerning, to say the least. Robertson didn't miss a Premier League game last season, but with only six days until Liverpool head to Norwich, that run looks to be in serious doubt.

Step forward Kostas Tsimikas, then. The Greece international managed less than 10 minutes of league football last season following his move from Olympiacos, but he could find himself under the spotlight at Carrow Road. The good news, at least, is that he has looked sharp during pre-season. He will feature here against Osasuna on Monday night.

It felt like Robertson's injury overshadowed what had, until that point, looked like being a more than useful exercise for Liverpool. Klopp will have been pleased by a lot of what he saw in the first half here, while the sight (and sound) of nearly 40,000 fans inside Anfield was enough to get the pulse racing again. How we've all missed that over the past 18 months.



'Don't cry son' – Eto'o sends message to Messi after Barcelona exit

The six-time Ballon d'Or winner had an emotional press conference at Camp Nou on Sunday afternoon where he confirmed his exit

Four-time African Footballer of the Year Samuel Eto'o has urged Lionel Messi not to cry about his departure from Barcelona after he "gave his all" for the club.

The Argentina forward's contract at Camp Nou expired at the end of June and Barcelona made efforts to renew his deal last week, but they were restricted by La Liga's financial regulations.

Three days after the Blaugrana announced that he will not be returning to the club, a tearful Messi held a press conference at the club premises on Sunday as he confirmed his exit after 21 years in Catalonia.

"Don't cry son, you gave it all but life is something we cannot explain. We love you," Eto'o captioned the video of Messi's final farewell on Instagram.

Messi stands as Barcelona's all-time top appearance maker and top scorer with 672 goals in 778 matches across all competitions since he made his debut appearance at the age of 17 in 2004.

He played with Eto'o for five years before the African legend left Camp Nou for another challenge at Inter Milan in 2009.

The duo won three La Liga titles, one Copa del Rey, two Spanish Super Cups and two Uefa Champions League trophies together at Barcelona between 2004 and 2009.

Eto'o, however, is unsure about Messi's next destination but he admits that it would be painful to see the six-

time Ballon d'Or winner wear another club's shirt after over two decades in Catalonia.

"What a pain to imagine [you] with another t-shirt. I want you, son," he wrote in another post.

During Sunday's session with reporters, Messi disclosed that a move to the French capital remains a possibility for him.

"Paris Saint-Germain is a possibility, yes," he said.

"At the moment nothing is confirmed, I received a lot of calls after the Barcelona statement. We're talking about it.

"A lot of things have been said about me, but on my behalf we did everything I could because I wanted to stay. Last year I didn't want to stay and I said it. This year I did and I couldn't."

'He's coming home' – Drogba hails Lukaku transfer to Chelsea

The Blues are on the verge of landing their man and his arrival has excited their former striker

Chelsea legend Didier Drogba has hailed the return of Inter Milan forward Romelu Lukaku to the club in a message on his social media pages.

On Saturday, Goal reported that Chelsea had reached an agreement in principle to sign the Belgian striker, with his £98 million (\$135m) return set to be officially announced soon.

The former Ivory Coast striker, who joined Chelsea in July 2004 for £24 million from Marseille, and left after managing 164 goals in 381 appearances, has celebrated the impending arrival of Lukaku at Stamford Bridge on his social media pages.

In a recent interview, Chelsea manager Thomas Tuchel refused to

accept whether Lukaku was among the players he was targeting to sign only stating "a lot of players want to join."

"I will not talk about players who don't play in my squad. He's a fantastic player but he's an Inter player and I will not talk about him in this situation," Tuchel said.

"You can imagine a lot of players want to come and join but we will not talk about that.

"The board isn't offering players, that's not how it works. We talk to the board about players, have our own opinions, and in the end, we target players who in our opinion could make our squad strong, which is quite a challenge.

"There are some players of which we think they can be a good target and improvement in our squad. I will not comment on names as I don't like it when other coaches speak about my players. So

hopefully you understand that."

The 28-year-old Lukaku turned out for Chelsea from 2011 to 2014 and he also featured for West Bromwich Albion, Everton, and Manchester United in the Premier League.

After leaving Chelsea, Drogba moved to China where he signed for Shanghai Shenhua and it was followed by a switch to Turkey where he also featured for Galatasaray.



Haaland is of interest to Bayern Munich, confirms Salihamidzic

The Allianz Arena chief has admitted that the German champions are keen on the prolific Borussia Dortmund frontman

Bayern Munich sports director Hasan Salihamidzic has confirmed that the club are interested in signing Erling Haaland.

Haaland is widely regarded as the

most talented young striker of his generation, having made a huge impact in both the Bundesliga and Champions League since joining Borussia Dortmund from Red Bull Salzburg in January 2020.

The 21-year-old has attracted attention from top clubs across Europe with his performances, with Salihamidzic now admitting

that Bayern are among those contemplating a big-money swoop for the Norwegian.

"This is a top player that the whole world probably wants," the Allianz Arena chief has told German outlet SPORT 1. "Of course we look there.

"Otherwise we would be full amateurs."

Joel Obi scores first Salernitana goal against Chukwuemeka's Aston Villa

The Nigeria international opened his goal account for the Garnets, but they lost to the Claret and Blue Army

Joel Obi scored his first goal for Salernitana in Sunday's 3-1 pre-season friendly defeat to Aston Villa at Villa Park.

Following the expiration of his contract at Chievo, the midfielder joined the newly promoted Serie A side on a one-year contract with the option of an extension.

Against the Premier League outfit, he found the net but his team bowed away from home to Dean Smith's men.

Following wins over Fermana and Palermo, the Italian outfit travelled to England in a bid to extend their winning run to three as well as end their pre-season campaign on a high.

Notwithstanding, Fabrizio Castori's team returned to Stadio Arechi with heads bowed low.

The Claret and Blue Army started brightly with Jaden Philogene-Bidace firing a shot on goal but Danny Ings was unable to score from the rebound.

Despite dominating ball possession, the English top-flight side conceded first after 20 minutes when a Salernitana free-kick was headed into the path of the former Inter Milan star, who made no mistake by nodding the ball past goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez.

The Italians almost doubled their lead when Nadir Zortea dashed into the hosts' penalty area, beat Ezri Konsa, hit his shot at Emiliano Martinez, but the rebound sailed wide.

That miss proved costly as Ings levelled the scores for Smith's side after converting a cutback from English midfielder Jaden Philogene-Bidace inside the box.

The Lions took the lead before half-time as Anwar El Ghazi scored from the penalty spot after Ollie Watkins was fouled in the box.

Both teams made plenty of substitutions heading into the second half, and it was former Manchester United star Ashley Young who tucked home the third goal after benefitting from a fine exchange between Matty Cash and Jacob Ramsey.

Burkina Faso international Bertrand Traore created more scoring chances for the home team, but they failed to convert any of them.





Conspiracy theories denote perspectives that are located on the furthest margins of the official and semi-official narratives about issues and events. They also describe fringe, unscientific, uncorroborated explanations that attribute historical or contemporary events to grand, scheming, almost superhuman and perpetually conniving, conspiracists.

Although the invocation of the term is sometimes no more than an idle, off-handed rhetorical strategy to marginalize and delegitimize alternative narratives that are at variance with officially sanctioned perspectives on an issue, there are indeed some really wacky and fringe narratives out there that are so bizarre in their illogic and paranoia they make you cringe in stupefied astonishment.

Take, for example, the wacky, out-of-this-world conspiracy theories about former U.S. president Barack Obama that luxuriated—and still do—on American right-wing circles, one which suggested that Obama had been primed from his very birth to become president of America.

Many so-called birthers (people who believe Obama was not born in America) say it was in furtherance of the grand conspiracy to make Obama president of America (in order to undermine it from within) that when he was born in Kenya in August 1961, Freemasons or some other villainously shadowy group caused his birth to be fraudulently published in a Honolulu newspaper on the day he was born!

Nigerians also expend inordinate energies hatching conspiracies about their national tragedies instead of confronting and understanding the etiology of the tragedies. We obsess with deploying the resources of our imagination to impose order on what is otherwise an anarchy of occurrences.

When Boko Haram abducted schoolgirls in Chibok, Borno State, on April 14, 2014, supporters of Goodluck Jonathan, including his wife, Patience Jonathan, spun all kinds of wild conspiracy theories to delegitimize the facticity of what had happened.

How could hundreds of students be kidnapped from a school without anyone noticing or alerting the authorities? Where was the school principal? How come no one in the town saw them? Who ever reported missing their children? The conspiracists concluded that it was all made up to make Jonathan look weak and to provide further fodder to the rhetorical staple of his famed cluelessness.

When a video of the girls later emerged, conspiracists still asked how come the students couldn't speak

BACKPAGE COLUMN

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Why Conspiracy Theories Persist Even When They're Stupid

English. How could they be taking the Senior Secondary School Examination at the time of their kidnap but be unable to communicate effectively in English? This must be a staged abduction to get at Jonathan!

The exact scenario played out when schoolgirls were kidnapped again in Dapchi, Yobe State, on February 19, 2018. But when some of the abducted schoolgirls were released and Leah Sharibu wasn't because she refused to give up her faith, the conversation shifted from conspiratorial incredulity about the kidnap to a fight for Sharibu's freedom—freedom from a captivity that conspiracists initially doubted.

When, on December 11, 2020, schoolkids were kidnapped (and later rescued) in Kankara, Katsina, conspiracists also said the kidnap was staged. Buhari supporters said it was planned by the PDP to embarrass Buhari who was in Katsina when the kidnap happened, and Buhari critics said it was staged to show that unlike Jonathan who couldn't rescue the abducted Chibok girls until he left office, Buhari was able to get the schoolkids rescued in a matter of days.

The insecurity that pervaded Goodluck Jonathan's administration was blamed by his supporters on northern politicians scheming to oust Jonathan from power. Northern conspiracists, on the other hand, blamed Boko Haram terror attacks and the incipient phenomenon of abduction for ransom in the last years of Jonathan's government, which has now become a full-scale cottage industry, on Jonathan's designs to depopulate the north.

Former Secretary to the Government of the Federation Babachir David Lawal, then a CPC politician, infamously said Boko Haram was a PDP plot to "depopulate" the northeast because the region doesn't vote PDP.

Former Adamawa State governor Murtala Nyako even pointedly accused

the Goodluck Jonathan regime of financing Boko Haram terror activities during a speech at the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) in Washington, DC. in March 2014.

"The security situation we are ... facing in Northern Nigeria today could be sponsored, financed and supported by evil minded and over-ambitious leaders of Government and the society for political gains," he said. "There is simply no person(s) in the North-Eastern zone rich enough to foot the financial and logistic bills on Boko Haram activities. Somebody outside the zone must have bought these arms, ammunitions and explosives somewhere which is easily traceable, paid the freight charges to Nigeria, cleared them at the Ports, conveyed them up-country through numerous check-points and put them in safe-houses in the States ready to be used by the appointed killers.

"Conspiracy theories have become more audacious and more mainstream in the last few years thanks to the legitimacy they have enjoyed from Donald Trump, by far the worst president America has had in its nearly three centuries of existence but who had the most symbolic power in the world for four years. Coronavirus conspiracies have proliferated and sickened or caused the death of hundreds of thousands of people thanks to Trump and his enablers who used to be consigned to the lunatic fringe of polite society.

But the truth is that life is too complex to always be amenable to conspiracies and deliberate, predetermined designs. There are coincidences, happenstances, misfortunes, serendipities, flukes, etc. that don't require planning, that aren't, and need not be, the consequences of machinations.

Conspiracists, particularly Nigerian conspiracists of the abduction of schoolchildren, ignore three things: that our governments are dreadfully incompetent; that terrorists are more

organized and more determined than our governments; that by roping governments into conspiracies when terrorists strike, we give the terrorists a pass since we imply that it is our governments, not they, who are responsible for acts of savagery; and that human lives, particularly lives of little schoolkids, are involved here.

To fixate on conspiratorial whispers where the lives of little children are involved doesn't strike me as particularly helpful or compassionate. As a parent, I feel the vicarious pains of abducted children's parents. I know of no parent or child who will willingly participate in this kind of barbarous self-immolation on behalf of any government or political group outside government. Although governments' habitual lies, deceit, and ineptitude fertilize and give credence to conspiracies, not everything is a conspiracy.

And any time you're inspired to form conspiratorial, often evidence-free, thoughts about events, people, issues, etc. remember that the human mind is notoriously supple and, when it's allowed to wander into uncharted cognitive territory unaided, it has the capacity to invent patterns and make connections where they don't exist. Psychologists call this apophenia.

When I was a kid in the 1980s, I recall that my Yoruba friends were always certain that they saw the manifest image Chief Obafemi Awolowo on the moon, but we Baatonu kids only saw Alhaji Shehu Shagari's image, and we would argue intensely over this. Our minds were predisposed to "see" a coherent, predetermined optical pattern in a chaos of illusory visual stimuli.

A lot of popular conspiracy theories are similar: they sprout from seeing patterns in random occurrences, and they are often fertilized by confirmation bias, which is also called a conclusion in search of evidence. That is why everything is amenable to conspiracy theories if we don't discipline our minds.

People who compulsively churn out or believe in wild conspiracy theories, for instance, have been psychologized as suffering from such mental disorders as paranoia, denial, schizophrenia, and what's called the "mean world syndrome." But many conspiracy theorists are normal people.

As a communication scholar, I know that certain kinds of conspiracy theories sprout and flourish in an atmosphere of insufficient or non-existent official information or of widespread, often well-founded, incredulity over the authenticity of official versions of events. But the lies of governments shouldn't make victims of every wild conspiratorial whisper out there.