

STILL IN CAPTIVITY

11 SCHOOLGIRLS OF FGC, BIRNIN YAURI

593 DAYS

1 STUDENT OF BETHEL BAPTIST HIGH SCHOOL, KUJAMA

565 DAYS

EDITORIAL

Buhari, the military, Ortom: Blood on your hands

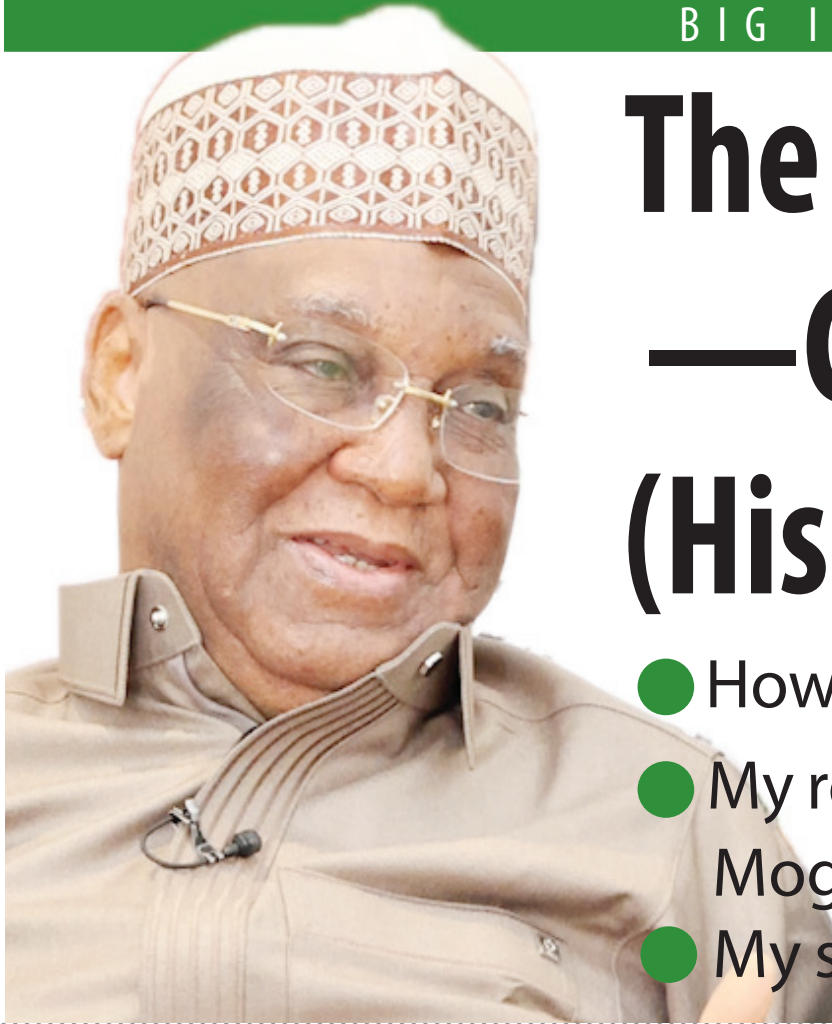
>>>Page 3

AGRIC BUSINESS

Grain business suffers as CBN's January deadline approaches

>>>Pages 26

BIG INTERVIEW



The Day Ironsi Died —Colonel Sani Bello (His Former ADC)

- How I was rescued at point of death
- My relationship with IBB, Abdulsalami, Mogoro, Nasko, others >>>Pages 5, 6 & 8
- My sojourn as banker, oil magnate

SPECIAL REPORT

Concerns rise over 'marry your rapist' practices in Nigeria >> Page 9 & 10

NEWS

Old notes deadline: Northerners will lose hard earned money - ACF >>>Page 4

Buhari pledges to eliminate chaos in currency swap policy >>>Page 4

INEC extends PVCs collection till Feb 5 >>>Page 4

RACE TO ASO ROCK

Kachikwu's rough road to presidential contest

>>>Page 30



Rescue our children, mothers of 6 abducted pupils beg govt, security agencies >>>Page 11

PAGE 3 COMMENT

Buhari, the military, Ortom: Blood on your hands

When a woman was killed by a policeman in Lagos last month, the whole country erupted in outrage, and rightly so. Last Tuesday, 38 Fulani men were gunned down in cold-blood by a military drone in Rukubi community of Doma Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, but there has been not a whimper of protest from almost anyone. Just a day before, airstrikes by the Nigeria Airforce reportedly killed “scores of persons”, as one newspaper put it, at Galkogo community, in the Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State. That too went almost without any notice.

Perhaps some Nigerian lives are more equal than others. But the massacre at Rukubi was not the first, and not even the tenth time Nigerians of northern extraction would be shelled to death near their homes, farms or internally displaced persons’ camps by Nigeria’s military authorities in the excuse of fighting terrorism. Immediate culpability for this most gruesome murder goes to the military authorities, who, up to till this moment, have remained dishearteningly silent. That the military authorities think they can get away with silence on so callous an attack is itself an indication of how worthless they presume the lives of certain categories of Nigerians. The military have got away with silence and terse reaction severally in the past, only to come back to kill again, and again.

When will this stop, or rather when is the next strike and how many will be killed?

According to a tally put together by this newspaper, 260 civilians have been killed by military airstrikes in 13 separate incidents since 2014. Five of those attacks have occurred in the northeast state of Borno, where a total of 116 people were killed between March 2014 and September 2021,

including the air raid on an IDP camp in the village of Rann in which 53 internally displaced persons were killed in June 2017. Two attacks each occurred in Niger and Zamfara states, with a total of 95 fatalities between 2019 and last week. One attack each were in Yobe, Katsina and Nassarawa states. A total of 49 people were killed in those separate incidents, including the 38 Fulani men who died in the latest incident last Tuesday.

It is remarkable that of these 13 incidents of military attacks on Nigerians, all but one occurred under the watch of President Muhammadu Buhari between 2017 and this year. Yet, the President has scarcely responded in a way that will forestall a recurrence. Not a single investigation into any of these attacks has been completed or made public, if any was ever ordered at all. No wonder, the incidents keep rising and the dead keep piling up. The President’s general silence on matters of life and death of innocent Nigerians is the unfortunate example which the military authorities have duly followed. And by that reasoning, the President shares even greater culpability than the military chiefs he appointed.

Let no one be in any doubt, we condemn terrorism in any form. We also, appreciate the difficulties of fighting it in an environment such as ours, as we have acknowledged on these pages several times before. But the Federal Government must realize that the challenge of fighting terrorism must be balanced by the higher demands of respect for the human rights of citizens, particularly the right to life. The rate at which innocent civilians in Northern Nigeria are routinely gunned down in the name of the fight against terror has reached unacceptable levels and we are compelled to speak out—since no one else would—because in no other part of this

country would such repeated incidents and increasing death toll be allowed to pass so quietly each time.

But if military authorities and the presidency bear culpability, one for repeatedly and increasingly shelling down innocent civilians, and the other for doing nothing about it each time, so too does the Governor of Benue State, Mr Samuel Ortom in this latest instance. For nearly eight years now, Ortom has used the powers of his office to target Fulani pastoralists, a very tiny minority in his state. He has passed punitive laws that are designed to economically emasculate and make life intolerable for them. He often speaks only the language of war and conflict, not of peace and belonging that his exalted position demands. He has built ethnic militias and sought to arm them with AK-47 rifles to further his ignoble ambition of ethnic cleansing in a federal Nigeria where all citizens have the right to live in every state of their choosing. He has represented the minority Fulani in dehumanizing and discriminatory language as “invaders”, “killers”, and “terrorists”, and the majority citizens of the state as victims, even though it is the pastoralists who are routinely killed by questionable military airstrikes.

Last Tuesday’s killing of the 38 Fulani, who had just paid a fine totalling N29 million to assuage one of Benue’s new punitive laws, is the direct result of Ortom’s intense and ceaseless profiling. For how long will the Federal Government and the National Assembly tolerate Ortom’s demagoguery? For how long will military chiefs keep mum as their men pull the trigger on innocent Nigerians? For how long will President Buhari continue to keep mum even after a dozen such incidents under his watch? The blood of the dead and the tears of the living demand answers, and a stop to it all.

TODAY IN HISTORY



On this day in 2021, Nigerian farmers win landmark case against Shell at Court of Appeal of the Hague - held accountable for oil spills and ordered to carry out a clean-up in Delta region

HAPPENING THIS WEEK



The application into the NIS, which began on two weeks ago will end on January 30, 2023.



The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) says its January 31 deadline for the validity of the old N200, N500 and N1,000 notes remains.



The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has said that it will conduct a mock accreditation of registered voters in 436 polling units (PUs) nationwide on February 4.

SUNDAYPHOTO



Madras Engineers Group soldiers perform 'Kalaripayattu', a traditional martial art from Kerala, during celebrations for India's Republic Day, Bengaluru, India

Photo: Manjunath Kiran/AFP/Getty Images

Buhari pledges to eliminate chaos in currency swap

By Muideen Olaniyi

President Muhammadu Buhari has assured that the federal government would ensure that citizens are unharmed in their businesses and no disruption is caused to the entire supply chain arising from the currency swap due to

end shortly.

The president gave the assurance yesterday while reacting to reports of long queues of people waiting for hours to deposit old notes and get new ones, triggering public anger and criticism.

In a statement issued by his spokesman, Malam Garba Shehu, President Buhari restated that the currency changes were aimed at

people hoarding illicit funds and not the common man, and that it had become necessary to prevent counterfeits, corruption and terrorists' funding.

This, he assured, would stabilise and strengthen the economy.

While taking note that the poorest section of society was facing hardship as they often keep hard cash at home for

various expenses, the president assured that the government would not leave them to their own fate.

He reiterated that a number of initiatives by the Central Bank of Nigeria and all commercial banks were underway to speed up the distribution of the new notes and do all that was necessary to forestall cash squeeze and chaos.



Customers queue for the new currency at a bank on Oba Akran, Ikeja in Lagos yesterday.

PHOTO: Benedict Uwalaka

INEC extends PVCs collection till Feb 5

By Abbas Jimoh

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has announced another one week extension of the deadline for the collection of permanent voter cards (PVCs) by one week.

The national commissioner and chairman, Information and Voter Education Committee,

Festus Okoye, noted this yesterday in a statement in Abuja.

According to him, the deadline, which was initially extended till January 29, has now been extended till February 5.

Okoye said the commission met on January 28, a day after its meeting with resident electoral commissioners (RECs) from the 36 states of the federation and

the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja and deliberated on a number of issues, including the reports from RECs on the ongoing collection of PVCs in its 774 local government offices nationwide.

It will be recalled that at the meeting with RECs on January 27, the chairman of INEC, Professor Mahmood Yakubu, indicated that the commission would not

hesitate to consider additional measures to ensure that all citizens have ample opportunity to collect their PVCs ahead of the general elections.

"Those that engaged in double and multiple registrations should not bother visiting any of the commission's offices as the commission did not print their PVCs," he said.

I have no friction with Buhari, Tinubu tells Zamfara APC supporters

From Shehu Umar, Gusau

The presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, has said there is no friction in his relationship with President Muhammadu Buhari, saying his support for the president is unalloyed and enduring.

Addressing an All Progressives Congress (APC) rally in Gusau, the Zamfara State capital yesterday, Tinubu promised to tackle problems bedeviling the state and enhance agricultural productivity.

He thanked the people of the state and key party leaders for the warm welcome and their continued support for the APC.

Tinubu said President Buhari was leading the country with courage and selflessness.

"He tackled the problems other leaders ran from. He has earned a place in history that cannot be denied.

"I have said this before and will say it again now: when the true history of this moment is written, President Buhari shall be treated very kindly because of his contributions," he said.

Tinubu said he was conscious of the challenges faced by the people of Zamfara State and had plans to ameliorate them.

RTEAN accuses govt of barring passenger vehicles from North in Lagos

From Abdullateef Aliyu, Lagos

The Road Transport Employers' Association of Nigeria (RTEAN) yesterday alleged that the Lagos State Government had stopped the operation of passenger vehicles coming from the northern part of the country.

The national secretary of the association, Comrade Yusuf Adeniyi, alleged that the directive came from the Lagos State Government agent, the deputy state chairman, Seyi Bamigbose (Student) of Park and Garages constituted by the Lagos State Government after the suspension of the operation of RTEAN in Lagos State.

Daily Trust on Sunday reports that the RTEAN has had a running battle with the

Lagos State Government after its operation was suspended while a Park and Garages Committee was constituted.

The association took the state to the National Industrial Court (NIC), where an order was given for status quo to be maintained.

But the RTEAN is alleging that the state government has failed to call the Parks and Garages Committee to order to abide by the court decision.

The association scribe said, "Now, the Association (RTEAN) is beginning to believe that the action of the Lagos State Government is tantamount to contempt of the court order.

"The recent action (stopping the operation of passenger vehicles coming from the northern part of the country) by the Lagos State Government through the

Park and Garages is in itself an act that may likely cause the breach of public peace.

"To this end, the association is calling on the Lagos State Government to immediately reverse its decision of not allowing passenger vehicles from the northern part of the country getting into Lagos State in order to allow freedom of movement of all citizens as guaranteed by section 41 of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria."

There was no immediate response from the state government as at press time. The spokesperson in the Ministry of Transportation, Mr Bolanle Ogunlola, promised to direct our enquiry to the special adviser on transport, Sola Giwa, but the response did not come as at press time.

165m Nigerians need treatment for neglected tropical diseases – Survey

By Ojoma Akor

About 165million Nigerians, representing 84 per cent of the population currently need treatment for one or more types of Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs), the Nigeria NTDs Economic Impact Survey has revealed.

The report, which was commissioned by END Fund and conducted by Deloitte Nigeria also revealed that the Nigerian economy would reap USD 18.9 billion from its citizens' increased productivity if NTD elimination is achieved by 2030.

NTDs are a diverse group of communicable diseases that prevail in tropical and subtropical conditions in Nigeria and 148 other countries, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO).

The 12 Neglected Tropical Diseases targeted for control and elimination in Nigeria are onchocerciasis, lymphatic filariasis, schistosomiasis, soil-transmitted helminthiasis, Trachoma onchocerciasis, trachoma, soil transmitted helminthes, lymphatic filariasis, and schistosomiasis, snakebite envenoming, rabies, buruli ulcer, leprosy, yaws, leishmaniasis, Human African Trypanosomiasis (HAT), guinea-worm disease (eliminated).

Speaking yesterday during a town hall meeting organised by the World Health Organisation, in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Health and other partners in Abuja to mark this year's World Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) Day, the END Fund, Senior Director of Public Affairs for Africa, Oyetola Oduyemi, said COVID-19 caused a significant setback and interruption in the efforts towards the elimination of NTDs.

She said this led to increase in the number of people in need of treatment for the diseases.

Old notes deadline: Northerners will lose hard earned money – ACF

From Maryam Ahmadu-Suka, Kaduna

The Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) has raised the alarm over the inability of many rural dwellers to exchange their old notes for new ones, saying the ordinary people, especially in the North would lose their hard earned moneys through no fault of theirs.

The ACF secretary-general, Murtala Aliyu, in a statement issued yesterday, called on the government to be sensitive to the plight of the citizens and safeguard their interests in all areas.

He called the president and the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to, as a matter of urgency, extend the expiration date of the exercise and improve on the arrangements so as to accommodate everyone with genuine cases.

"As the deadline for the exchange expires this coming Tuesday, we are afraid that majority of our people in rural areas are unable to change their old currencies for the new ones. This is because even in the urban centres, the new notes are scarce.

"Also, where the CBN made some arrangements to facilitate such, the exercise is being challenged by numerous factors, such as lack of adequate access to bank services on the part of the people, cumbersome exchange procedure etc. This has subjected innocent people to hardship, uncertainty and anxiety.

"We are of the strong belief that ordinary people, especially in the North, will lose their hard earned moneys through no fault of theirs.

"The government must be sensitive to the plight of the citizens to safeguard their interests in all areas," the statement reads.

He appreciated efforts by the National Assembly to intervene and call to order what he described as 'the arrogance and insensitivity being displayed by the leadership of the CBN'.

BIG INTERVIEW

By Kabiru A. Yusuf

Eighty years ago, it was rare to be an only child; did your position in the family have any influence or impact on the choices you made in life and how you turned out?

I don't think my being an only child had any relevance to what I turned out to be. This is because although I was the only child of my parents, I didn't grow up with them. I grew up with my grandparents, who sent me to an Islamic school with other children.

In those days, first children never really related well with their parents because there was a kind of shyness between them. So I didn't miss that because in my grandparents' house there were many other grandchildren. And as you know, grandparents tend to treat their grandchildren softly. I enjoyed their love. I had a very good upbringing from my grandparents.

Was this in Kontagora?

Yes. I was there throughout my primary school and part of my secondary school. I went back to my father's house after I had already developed. I was in Form Three, and by that time I had already formed my own life; so it didn't have much relevance.

You attended Bida Government College with classmates who later became famous. Out of eight of you, two became heads of state and some became governors. What is special about this group? Was it a coincidence that all of you joined the military and made a big success of it?

I wouldn't say all of us deliberately wanted to go into the military. When we were in secondary school, I think in Form Five or so, the late Sardauna of Sokoto came to our school, literally canvassing that young men like us should join the army and aim to become senior officers.

He said it was unacceptable to him, and of course, the Government of Northern Nigeria, that we would form 75 per cent of other ranks; not less than 15 per cent of officers should come from the core North.

I think we took that call seriously. As fate would have it, to go to the university in those days you had to go through what they called Higher School Certificate (HSC), and to get that you must sit for a common entrance examination.

Our school was not qualified as a centre for the common entrance exam, so some bright boys were selected. The centre was Government College, Keffi.

Out of 25, 16 or 17 of us were selected to go to Keffi. As we were finishing the exam, the army came. Literally, all of us who went for the HSC exam went to sit for the army examination.

Although not really all of us were serious about the examination, when the result came, it became exciting for us because we found over 1,000 people across Nigeria coming from all walks of life. Some of them came with GCS - six subjects, A-levels. And by that time we had not even done our school certificate examination in 1962.

We were told by the officers conducting the exam that every morning we should check the notice board, and if you saw your name you would go to the paymaster, collect your money and say goodbye. So the

The day Ironsi died — Colonel Sani Bello (his Former ADC)

- How I was rescued at point of death
- My relationship with IBB, Abdulsalami, Mogoro, Nasko, others
- My sojourn as banker, oil magnate

Colonel Sani Bello had a distinguished career in the Military, Diplomacy and Business. In this interview, the 80-year-old former military governor of Kano State opened up on what happened on the fateful morning of July 29, 1966, the day of the bloody counter-coup that overthrew the government of General Aguiyi-Ironsi.



■ Colonel Sani Bello

challenge was there. So, we went to the board everyday but our names were not there.

There were several events, including medical examinations, physical examinations, written examination and tests, interviews. So, after each of these you go to the board.

Fortunately, almost all of us scaled through. We received congratulations for being accepted into the army. Again, as God would have it, those of us who passed the army examination also passed the HSC examination.

This group became very well

known. Do you have a name for yourselves? Are you close to all of them?

We sat in the same class for at least six years, so we must have personal relationships. We have always had a competitive life, so we knew one another very well. Babangida, Abdulsalami, Mogoro, Sani, Nasko and I were close; and we are still close. We are the surviving ones.

Funny enough, those of us who joined the army are surviving. Except two other people, all the rest have died.

After your training at Sandhurst,

where were you posted?

After my graduation at Sandhurst on July 29, 1965, I was posted to Enugu. My internal posting in the battalion was operating in Benue. This was during the Tiv riot. After two or three days, the commanding officer would shake your hand and say "goodbye, you have to go to Benue and join your company."

I went to Makurdi, where I met my first company commander, the late General Gibson Jalo, a good gentleman. He left me in Makurdi for some time. After that, I think Gboko

was on fire, so he said I should go there. I spent a month or so in Gboko until things improved.

Aliede was the hottest of the Benue crisis, so I was asked to go there. I was there until January 10, 1966 when the company was supposed to be relieved by another company from another battalion. So we went back to Enugu in January 10, 1966.

So the coup met you on January 15?

Yes, the January 15 coup met me in Enugu. By that time I had spent five days in the battalion.

It was believed that the coup was led mostly by Eastern officers; how dangerous was the situation for you?

When the coup took place, we didn't know what was happening. First of all, I was a very young and fresh second lieutenant.

Suddenly, we were called together and told that there was a coup, but we didn't know who organised it. There and then, we were assigned responsibilities. I was assigned to join another company to go and take over the government of Dennis Osadebe in Benin.

The officer commanding the company, Captain Modiebo, who was an ex-Sandhurst too, said we should go and I followed him. He knocked at the door of the premier's house and a steward came out, dressed in white on white. He demanded to see his boss but he said he was sleeping. He ordered the steward to go and wake him.

Obviously, that was the first time the steward was seeing a soldier in Benin - a tough-looking captain - so he went and called his boss.

He came down after few minutes, looking furious that he was being disturbed. My officer commanding stood up, saluted smartly and announced that he was directed to take over his government. He said, "You must be joking." But the officer replied that he was not joking, explaining that there was a

Continued on page 6

The day Ironsi died

Continued from page 5

He was told to look through the window. The premier looked through the window and saw some soldiers with machine guns around and piped down.

"What would you like me to do?" the premier asked. He was told to bring all his ministers so that they would be addressed and given time to vacate their houses. He said okay and started calling them. When they assembled, he told them that government had changed and the military had taken over, so they should vacate their houses immediately. He gave them a short time to leave. There was mass scrambling in Benin for everybody to get out.

I told you that I was a very junior officer, so I didn't know what was happening. Then, by that time we were settling down to enjoy Benin, suddenly, we received a signal from our battalion from Enugu, ordering us to rush back. We abandoned everything in Benin to go back.

By the time we got to Enugu, we found that the whole battalion was redeployed and mortars were arranged because there was no artillery; everything was arranged and everybody was in trenches. I was not sure what was happening, so we asked.

We were told that we were asked to come back because there were some officers coming with armoured vehicles and there was the fear that they would cut us off and deal with us. That was why they wanted us to come back to reinforce the battalion.

Were they against the coup?

No, they were coming to punish Enugu for not participating in the coup and doing what they were supposed to do. Apparently, they wanted us to do some killings there but it was not done. Everything was peaceful in Enugu barracks.

So, because of that, Lagos organisers were coming to Enugu, and that was why our battalion was uncomfortable. We went back and joined the defensive position of Enugu.

The following morning we were told that the attack had failed because they were stopped at Ore and they went back. It was then that we started seeing the kind of coup they organised.

We settled down in Enugu peacefully, but of course we were waiting to hear new orders. We still remained loyal and didn't do anything in Enugu during the coup.

Loyal to who?

To the central government, not the coupists. It was apparent that the coup would be crushed.

Gen Aguiyi-Ironsi had taken over?

Yes. After we spent few days, the commanding officer took a few of us with him to Benin.

After about a month I was called back to Enugu where I stayed for few weeks before I was redeployed. I was then asked to go for interview to become the ADC to the supreme commander.

Did it surprise you sitting in Enugu, an officer from Niger?

It more than surprised me. I was

not in any way qualified to be an ADC to the supreme commander. I was a second lieutenant and they needed a captain, and the one there was a captain. Also, I was in the battalion for less than one year, by all identifications I was not qualified. Shehu (Yar'Adua) and I were contemporaries.

Was Shehu not a captain by then?

He was a second lieutenant like me. An adjutant, a very powerful person in the battalion, so I wondered why I would be nominated. I went there and they gave me a Land Rover and I headed to Lagos the following day.

When I got to Lagos I went to the Supreme Headquarters, which is the old State House on Marina. I met one Captain Sylvester and saluted him smartly because he was in his final term at Sandhurst when I was going in. And fortunately for me, we were in the same college.

He was surprised to see me. He asked why I was there and I told him I was asked to attend an interview for ADC selection. He said I was late as the interview had been conducted and everybody had gone.

I saluted smartly and said I was going back to Enugu. I don't know what he thought but he said I should let him talk to the chief of staff. He called the chief of staff on his open intercom and said that one Second Lieutenant Sani Bello from first battalion came for ADC selection.

Ogundipe was a brigadier-general and Sylvester was a captain, while I was a second lieutenant; look at the gap. He said they did not have time for a second lieutenant in that place. I said there was no problem, so I would go back.

I was about to go back, suddenly, Ogundipe called Sylvester and said I should wait. He said he was tired of the first battalion commanding officer because he was not doing the right thing. He said they would give me a docket to take to my commanding officer.

Were they blaming Enugu for sending you?

Yes, I was late. Not only that was I late, a brand new, a second lieutenant was dispensable in the army. After some time he called Sylvester to bring "that officer." We went and I saluted.

By this time, my legs were shaking. If he gave me a docket, how would I go to the commanding officer and tell him that I received a docket for him from the supreme commander?

What is a docket?

It is like a reprimand. So, I sat down and waited. After some time, General Ironsi came out, spoke



Colonel Sani Bello

something to Ogundipe and they went back to the office. After a few more minutes he called back to say the ADC should bring me.

So I went to his office. As I was entering his office he was looking for something; I don't know what he was looking for. I later found out that he was reading something, probably something about me. I saluted smartly.

Was Sylvester his ADC?

Yes. He turned to Sylvester and asked if he had shown me my room, saying I would take over from him. He said I should be taken to Madam for introduction and asked if I would be able to start work on Monday. It was a Saturday.

I told him that I came for an interview, which they said had ended before I got there. He, however, said I could come on Wednesday or Friday. Both Captain Sylvester and I saluted and walked out. He took me to Madam.

Was Madam the next important person in hierarchy when you were appointed ADC?

Yes. He took me to Madam and introduced me as Second Lieutenant Sani Bello. He gave me some kind of polish I didn't deserve to make me look more important. She welcomed me nicely and wished me well.

I went back with Sylvester and he told me what to do and what not to do. I thanked him, saluted and left.

I went back to Benin that Saturday and stayed with Ejoor because he

knew me. He asked and I said it went well. From there, I suspected what happened; probably he discussed about me but I was not told. He was a military governor.

So he had spoken to the head of state?

I guess so, I am not sure. The following morning, I went to Enugu and quickly packed my things. After three days I went back to Lagos.

On getting to Lagos I found something that was a little odd. General Ironsi had four ADCs - army, navy, air force and police, and they were all assigned duties.

Despite the fact that I was the youngest of the lot and the newest, I was still given charge of duty.

But did you become the overall ADC or everybody had his role?

I took over, but he was in the role. He got his own assignment, but every time the supreme commander was going out, it was with me.

Were you his official ADC?

I was the one posted next to him in the car.

Looking at it from outside, I am surprised that Ironsi appointed you as ADC, even ignoring the normal processes, why did he do that?

I am more surprised than you, even till today.

Do you think it was an attempt to strike a balance?

I don't know, but of the four ADCs, one was already a northerner, the police ADC, so it was not necessarily balancing. I don't know why he picked me.

I must admit that I was the least qualified for the job because I was not ready for it. I was too young. I was only 23 under a unit as an officer and was taking over from a captain. The gap between a captain and a second lieutenant is wide.

How would you describe your experience as an ADC to Ironsi?

It was good but demanding. Ironsi demanded the best because he was very experienced. He was the first and probably the only African officer who worked with the Queen.

As an ADC?

Yes, as an ADC to the Queen. When she was coming to Nigeria, I think he had to stay in Birmingham Palace for some days or months to be trained on the etiquette of being an ADC. So, because of that, his demands were very high. And he was sometimes very impatient. Few times we had some clashes that were not very pleasant to all of us.

Does that mean it was a tough job for you?

It was a tough job.

Were you there on the night of the coup when he was killed?

Sure. After he took over, many events followed. There was something called the May riot, which killed a lot of people in the North, especially the Igbo.

However, peace was later restored. After the riot, things settled down and Ironsi decided to embark on meeting the people; so we came to the North and visited Kaduna, Zaria and Kano.

Didn't you visit Sokoto?

No. And we were received well in all the places we visited, only one slight incident happened in Zaria - there was an accidental discharge by a soldier, but it was not an issue; it was not meant for us.

After Lagos, things started to slow down a lot more, then Ironsi decided to embark on a tour of western Nigeria.

South West?

It was called western Nigeria, not South West. We went to Abeokuta and everything went well. From there we went to Ibadan, where we met Fajuyi

The governor?

Adekunle Fajuyi, a colonel, was the governor. The three ADCs were there - myself, the air force ADC, Andrew Nwankwo, a lieutenant, then the police ADC, who was a superintendent, DSP Timothy Pam. There was one other person who was never mentioned in that group - Thomas Aguiyi Ironsi.

His son?

The son, who was with us. He came from the United Kingdom on school holidays, so he was to join us on this tour. The reason we went to Ibadan was for Ironsi to address the Council of Emirs, Obas and Obis, who assembled there. The address was to take place on July 29, 1966.

We were hosted to a cocktail by 7:30pm to 8:00pm. We were sent an invitation for that, but on the late minute the general said we should make it between 6pm to 7pm. We had the cocktail, everything went well and we all retired for the night.

Was that after receiving the emirs and chiefs?

No. This was on 28th and the following morning was the meeting of emirs and chiefs.

After we retired, about 12am we started hearing that something was happening. The commissioner of police in Lagos called me to say there was riot in Ikeja cantonment, so I called oga.

On the intercom?

Yes. Later on, the commissioner of western Nigeria called to say there was an uprising. The one in Ikeja was mutiny. Later on, the commissioner of police of western Nigeria called to say there was an uprising in Abeokuta and there were few casualties and I should tell the supreme commander.

I told the supreme commander and he said every one of us should be on uniform.

About that time, something extraordinary happened. After sometime

Continued on page 8

It was good but demanding. Ironsi demanded the best because he was very experienced. He was the first and probably the only African officer who worked with the Queen.

New naira notes: Ganduje postpones Buhari's visit to Kano

From Zahraddeen Yakubu Shuaibu, Kano & Aliyu Jalal, Abuja

Governor Abdullahi Umar Ganduje of Kano State has confirmed that he sent a letter to the Presidency seeking for the postponement of President Muhammadu Buhari's visit to the state to commission projects.

Daily Trust on Sunday reports that President Buhari is expected to pay a one-day visit to the state on Monday to commission some key projects executed by the Ganduje administration.

However, the governor yesterday said that because the state was deeply concerned over the hardship occasioned by the limited time given for halting the use of old naira notes by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and attendant security reasons, he wrote to the Presidency asking that the visit be postponed.

He made this known during an interactive session he had with scholars, legislators, political leaders and the business community at the Government House,

Kano, adding that the decision was taken to avoid any unforeseen circumstance.

"As we are waiting for this important visit, we found ourselves in this situation which puts citizens into untold hardship. For security purpose, we wrote to the Presidency that President Muhammadu Buhari's visit to Kano be postponed.

"We got an acknowledgement copy of the letter. People are really suffering because of this policy.

"There are no banks in most of our rural communities. How these people get new naira notes is of great concern. Just look at what is happening in our urban areas; people go and spend hours upon hours in banks and without any assurances of getting the new notes," he said.

Governor Ganduje emphasised that Kano, being a commercial hub, must be heard loudly, insisting, "This problem affects all of us; therefore, our voice must be heard in all nooks and crannies. As a commercial hub, our position must be loud and clear."

A statement by the chief press secretary to the governor, Abba Anwar, noted that during the meeting with sections of citizens

in the state, they accepted that the decision was unanimous.

Meanwhile, it was gathered that the decision to postpone the visit was connected to the recent protest by people in Katsina State over the naira policy.

During the visit of the president to commission projects in Katsina, youths took to the streets to protest the hardship inflicted on them as a result of the CBN's naira redesign policy.

... Atiku seeks extension of deadline

Meanwhile, the presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Atiku Abubakar, has called for an extension of the deadline by the CBN to phase out old naira notes in circulation.

The apex bank had issued January 31 as the deadline for the old naira notes to stop being a legal tender, insisting that it would not extend the period.

In a short video released on the social media yesterday, Atiku said the deadline was inflicting hardship on Nigerians.

He, however, said redesigning of currency was a normal thing across the world, hence the situation in Nigeria is not unusual, but

the January 31 deadline is creating hardship on the people.

He said, "The ongoing policy by the CBN to redesign the naira notes has generated wild reactions across the country and beyond.

"This exercise is a worldwide practice and not anything new, but as the January 31 deadline draws closer, a large number of Nigerians, out of good conscience, have expressed apprehension about how the policy and the deadline would make life more difficult for them.

"Many Nigerians, especially farmers, artisans and those in the rural areas do not have bank accounts, so the timeframe for the change of old notes to new ones is not achievable."

He appealed for the extension of the deadline so as to address the situation of hardship facing the people.

"The January 31 deadline is certainly going to cause a heavy discomfort on our people; hence it will be magnanimous on the part of the government and the regulatory agency to ease the burden on the people for public interest," he said.

L-R: Dr Patrick Adah, Country Director PANAFRICARE; Gbemisola Abudu, NBA Africa Vice President and Country Head of Nigeria; Adedoyin Adelabu, ExxonMobil Business and Government Relations General Manager; Cedric Ceballos, 1995 NBA All-star and 1992 Slam Dunk Champion, with the participants of the ExxonMobil, NBA Africa and Panaficare Jr. NBA Clinic and the Power Forward third place games in the girls' and boys' divisions at MKO Abiola Stadium in Abuja on Friday.

Photo: Ikechukwu Ibe



Gunmen attack Reps spokesman's constituency office in Abia

By Itodo Daniel Sule

Gunmen have attacked the constituency office of the spokesperson of the House of Representatives, Benjamin Okezie Kalu, in Uzuakoli, Bende federal constituency of Abia State.

Kalu, who confirmed the attack while speaking with journalists in Abuja yesterday, said the incident occurred on Friday night, leading to destruction of valuables.

"The office was attacked about few minutes past 10pm. Over 100 bullets were found, destroying the windows and ceilings. All Progressives Congress (APC) flyers were pulled down and torn into shred. The billboards were also destroyed.

"There was no presence of any security agent until they left. The matter has been reported by my aides at Uzuakoli police station under Bende division. I wish to state that to advance our democracy, violence is not part of it.

"My message to them is that we are neither deterred nor distracted," he said, calling on his supporters and constituents to keep hope alive, adding that they started well and would not end now."

Moody downgrades Nigeria on revenue, debt pressures

●Raises outlook to 'stable'

From Vincent Nwanma, Lagos

Moody's Investors Service has downgraded the Nigerian long-term foreign-currency and local currency issuer ratings, as well as its foreign currency senior unsecured debt ratings to Caa1 from B3 due to the country's low revenue and high debt profile.

Moody said it had also downgraded Nigeria's foreign currency senior unsecured MTN programme rating to (P) Caa1 from (P)B3.

It said the rating actions announced Friday marked the conclusion of a review for

downgrade initiated on October 21, 2022.

"Moody's expectation that the government's fiscal and debt position would continue to deteriorate is the main driver behind the rating downgrade.

"Government faces wide-ranging fiscal pressure, while the capacity to respond remains constrained by Nigeria's longstanding institutional weaknesses and social challenges. Ultimately, the risk that a negative feedback loop sets in over the next couple of years between higher government borrowing needs and rising interest rates has intensified,

exacerbating the policy trade-off between servicing debt and financing other key spending items," Moody noted in a statement announcing the rating actions.

Moody's said that fiscal pressure from falling oil production, the increasingly costly oil subsidy, as well as rising interest rates would likely persist over the next couple of years, while a policy response post-election is likely to take some time to put Nigeria's fiscal position on a more sustainable path.

Under its baseline scenario, the rating agency projects that interest payments would consume about half of general government

revenue over the medium term, up from an estimated share of 35 per cent in 2022. And that general government debt-to-Gross Domestic Products (GDP) will continue rising to about 45 per cent up from 34 per cent in 2022 and 19 per cent in 2019."

The rating agency noted that Nigeria's "outlook is stable." It observed, however, that while a new administration could reinvigorate the reform impetus in Nigeria after the general elections planned for February 25, 2023, and thereby support fiscal consolidation, "implementation will likely remain lengthy amid marked social and institutional constraints".

Olam to deliver 1 trillion fortified food by 2030

By Ojoma Akor

Olam Agri, a leading agribusiness, has promised to deliver one trillion servings of fortified food, such as wheat flour, edible oil, and rice in order to provide essential

micronutrients to over 250million people each day by 2030.

Speaking at the World Economic Forum (WEF), Ashish Pande, senior vice president, Olam Agri, said the organisation was committed to

raising the standard of public health as it contributes to meeting the growing demand for healthy foods across the African continent and beyond.

He said, "Food fortification is at the core of Olam Agri's purpose of transforming food,

feed and fibre for a sustainable future. In 2021, we produced more than 83 billion servings of fortified foods for consumers in Africa, which included fortified rice in Ghana and Cameroon. By 2030, we pledge to deliver 1 trillion servings of fortified food

- wheat flour, edible oil, rice - to provide essential micronutrients to over 250 million people each day."

He said there was the need for partnerships between millers and technical partners to help address unhealthy diets.

Continued from page 6

there was a Land Rover coming in but because of where the two superiors were sitting, they could see it.

Fajuyi called his ADC, A B Umaru, to see who was coming in because it was late in the night; and he quickly did that.

A.B. Umaru asked me and Timothy Pam to go with him. As we were going, there was a telephone ringing, so he said we should go back to answer. We allowed him to go because he was used to the house; we were guests. As we were going to answer the phone, there were shots from a submachine gun. Then there was a return of pistol fire. We didn't know that A.B. Umaru had a pistol in his pocket; then there was a rapid shot of a submachine gun.

We assumed that A.B. Umaru was dead. By now, everybody knew that something was happening.

We were inside the Government House. After sometime we felt like going to see if we could rescue A.B. Umaru in case he had not died.

We went out and met one officer who said they had him. But we did not know what that meant – were they holding him or they had killed him?

Were you with Ironsi and Fajuyi in the same place?

No, we couldn't see them, but we could talk to them because we were at separate wings.

After sometime Fajuyi said we should send for vehicles. We started sending orderlies to bring the vehicles, but unfortunately, the Government House in Ibadan was very badly constructed. All the services were outside the Government House. So, we sent the orderlies, including very old sergeant-major who was very close to Ironsi, and they never came back.

Finally, I decided to go and see what was happening. It was around 7am and I was very unlucky. As I was going out, on reaching the gate, the police that would take us to Mapo Hall where the address of the Obis, Obas and Emirs would take place were coming in as our escort. The coupists assumed that I called them to come and give us support and I came to receive them, so they arrested them with all the dignitaries, including the press secretary.

Were you arrested with them?

I was arrested with them and pushed to the guardroom. It was when I got into the guardroom that I knew what happened. Everybody we sent was captured and detained there, that was why they never came back. So we completely lost information

From the guardroom we peeped through the window and saw General T.Y. Danjuma and one officer, a lieutenant or second lieutenant.

They went to the house and brought out Fajuyi and Ironsi. When they brought them out, they opened the guardroom and asked us to enter the Land Rover. We entered the Land Rover and five of us were driven to God-knows-where. Later on we were told that it was along Owo road.

In the bush?

No, on the road. I called a friend and classmate, the late Ibrahim Umaru, a lieutenant who was in Abeokuta. He was in armoured corp and a very good officer. I told him that it was hot in Ibadan but he said it was hotter there. I told him that I was not likely to stay alive and he said if I could stay alive for the next two hours he would come with his armoured vehicle to rescue me. But I told him that it was too late as I would soon be dead.

We drove some distance. In those days there used to be a small forest along the Owo road on the left. Unfortunately,



■ Colonel Sani Bello

all the leaders on that convoy were NCOs, no single officer.

Suddenly, the staff officer who was holding a machine gun took an initiative. He cocked it and took a step backwards and put his hand on the trigger. I pleaded that he should not do it there; instead let's go into the bush. The sergeant-major saw the danger he was facing and said we should go into the bush. We were ushered into the Land Rover again and drove off.

We drove for sometime until we reached a level crossing. We were still moving. I didn't know whether it was a flyover. When we reached there we turned right into the bush as was demanded by the staff-sergeant. We drove for some distance and stopped.

As we were stopping, as God would have it, Lieutenant Dada, the adjutant of first battalion who I spoke to earlier and who told me to locate Mogoro, decided to come and see what was happening at the Government House.

He went to the Government House and found that it was empty. He asked what happened and I think somebody told him we followed Owo road, so he decided to follow the road and came after us. That delay at the small forest gave him time to cover the distance.

As we were stopping at execution point, Dada was there. We were the same intake and took the same courses in military college.

He ordered Andrew (Nwankwo) and I jumped into his Land Rover, and of course, the sergeant-major started murmuring and trying to disobey, but Dada was a very influential and strong officer.

Specifically, Dada told them to keep the two senior officers and await further instructions, and said we should jump into the Land Rover.

As we were jumping into the Land Rover, we heard a machine gun fire. Dada rushed back. The sergeant-major said "he was trying to run away and we shot him".

They killed Fajuyi while we were there. I did not see the body but we heard the shot and they told Dada that they killed him. That was the last I heard of Ironsi.

As the ADC, it got to a point where you would either save your life or stay and die with him; was that a choice you faced?

There was no choice; if not that Dada came, we were all going to die.

What about Thomas Aguiyi-

Ironsi?

I told you that Thomas was not left alone; he was with a policeman, Timothy Pam. They were the only ones left in the house as he told me later on. He said that after everybody had gone and the place was quiet, he discovered that they were the only two left in the house. He then said to Thomas, "We are the only two left in the house, my duty left is to take you back home to your mother but you will do what I tell you to do."

Fortunately, Timothy Pam was a very experienced policeman. He served in the CID and SIB. He was very experienced in covert operations, so he went to town and brought Fulani dress with hat and glasses; he took one and gave Thomas one to wear and they went to the train station and headed to Lagos. He took him back to Lagos to his mum, and that was the end of the relationship.

Was it a northern coup?

It was.

Were you seen as part of it?

No. I was not part of it nor was I opposed to it because I had no knowledge. I was caught off balance. I heard so many stories, some of them outrageous, including that I had an agreement with my Igbo colleague, Andrew Nwankwo, such that in case it was an Igbo coup he would rescue me, and if it was Hausa or northern coup I would rescue him. But there was nothing like that; we were all looking for survival collectively.

The only person who did not go through the kind of harassment we went through was Timothy Pam, and of course, Dennis Okocha, the naval officer we left at home.

It seems you were part of the coup that overthrew the government of Gowon. And you held Kaduna as the commandant of the 81 Division for

the coup that brought in Murtala; is that correct?

It was not possible to hold a coup without involving somebody in Kaduna. While the coup was being planned, I was initially not involved, but later on I was involved. Although I was in Kaduna, my family members were in Ikeja, Lagos and I used to visit them once in a while, especially over the weekend.

Did you sense that something was happening?

No.

I heard it from the airport that I was appointed a military governor and I was supposed to report to Dodan Barracks the following morning.

Do you think it was a reward for your role and link to the relevant officers?

I don't think there was any kind of reward or link. I think they looked at officers with competence and some kind of qualities of leadership they could rely on.

You were a young man, was it difficult to govern Kano?

It was difficult. My first secretary to the government, Alfa Wali, was helpful but apparently not very popular with the Kano people, especially civil servants. And I don't know why.

Then I had my brush with Murtala Mohammed, who wanted to strengthen my government.

One of the highlights of your achievements in Kano is the science secondary schools, which helped to bring a new generation of graduates in sciences; is there any other thing you think has been omitted from your tenure in Kano?

Quite a number of roads were built. I was all round, when I came to Kano, fortunately (Audu) Bako has done a lot; he planted seeds of irrigation in Kano State. He had Kadawa Irrigation and Pilot Scheme. He constructed Tiga Dam, but I completed it, he wanted it for the queen, I changed it to something else, he started it, I finished it.

Now, Kadawa Irrigation was a very small scheme. One day, the former agriculture minister, one Bukar Shua'ib came to me and said, Your Excellency, we had a problem with your predecessor.

I asked what problem, he said this irrigation which was started by him, the federal government wanted to take it over, so as to expand it for more value but he refused that it was his project and he didn't want anybody to take it. I asked why, if you would expand it, who will manage it? He said you. Who share the plus? It's you. Who will look after (it)? He said you. The only thing we want to do is to expand it for your people. I said he should go ahead. That's how the Kano West canal came into being. The Kano East canal, I started the Challawa Gorge Dam, which provided water to the Kano East canal. I think we did a lot. We started Aminu Kano Hospital. When we came to government, there was this kind of excitement to take over all missionary institutions, hospitals, schools, so my commissioners came

and said we should take over St. Louis, St. Thomas and all missionary institutions and the hospitals. I said no, but they insisted, they said but other states have taken over why not you? I asked them, are we going to pay them compensation or we seize it? They said we pay them compensation. I said if we will pay them compensation, why not build our own and compete with them? I asked how much money you give to these institutions, they said nothing. I said let's give them some kind of subvention, like St. Louis and insist on a seat in the council and also quota. Then the money we are going to use to pay compensation for schools and hospitals, we go and build our own hospital. So, with that money for the hospital, we build an additional ward in Nasarawa Hospital, and started a clinic which now became Aminu Kano Hospital.

When you retired as a military governor and principal staff officer you became an ambassador in Zimbabwe. That is a bit strange. Did you look for that job; and did you enjoy it?

I didn't look for the job, it looked for me. Ibrahim Babangida, who had been a very good friend of mine from school, masterminded it.

Was that the beginning of your movement into business?

When I was leaving Harare, Babangida didn't leave me empty-handed. Although I rebelled against what he wanted, he was very kind.

He appointed me the chairman of Chase Merchant Bank, which later became Continental Merchant Bank. So I didn't move from Foreign Service to emptiness, I moved to become a banker. That was the best experience I ever had because it opened my eyes from being a routine military officer who could not count more than 10 without my fingers. In the bank, I started learning a little bit of how people were managing funds and resources. It really gave me a good insight into what I wanted to do in future businesses.

You have also done very well in other businesses, including oil and telecom, being the vice chairman of the MTN. Indeed, I saw somewhere in your biography that you have made vast sums of money in business; would you want to speak more about it?

I am not sure about vast sums of money, but I am comfortable.

I am now in the energy sector. That is the only thing I am doing. I am old now, so I don't want to have any more adventures. I am managing to stay in the power sector for some time, after that I will say goodbye to business and allow the younger generation.

Is part of your money channelled into the Sani Bello Foundation?

Yes; my love is for education. The Sani Bello Foundation helps disadvantaged and young people, women, widows, orphans. We give scholarships and hold annual medical outreaches. This year, we held one on my birthday. So far, we have treated over 5,000 people since we started.

It seems you have no plan to retire.

If I had no plan, retirement will force me to retire. And I think I have retired from the army.

But you have not retired from business yet?

Well, I think I am getting less active now; I am leaving the younger generation to take over the mantle. Fortunately, my sons are doing very well. I have 10 sons and each of them is doing fairly well. So I am very happy. God has been very kind to me by giving me good health, which is the most important thing. I really appreciate that I am still around.

As we were jumping into the Land Rover, we heard a machine gun fire. Dada rushed back. The sergeant-major said "he was trying to run away and we shot him". They killed Fajuyi while we were there. I did not see the body but we heard the shot and they told Dada that they killed him. That was the last I heard of Ironsi.

SPECIAL REPORT

Concerns rise over 'marry your rapist' practices in Nigeria

By Lami Sadiq

Two years ago, Raliya Hassan was married off. She was a Junior Secondary School (JSS) 3 student in Kaduna State, but her education was cut short after a 30-year-old neighbour lured her into an uncompleted building and raped her. Three weeks later, Raliya, who was only 13 years old and living with her half sister, was forced to marry her rapist. Now 15, Raliya is divorced, out of school and works as a housemaid in Dan Bushiya community in Kaduna State. She told *Daily Trust on Sunday* that the sexual violation and forced marriage to the man who raped her is permanently seared in her memory.

To escape prosecution, and to 'shield' Raliya's family from shame and stigma, the neighbour proposed to marry her. Raliya had no say in the matter and there was no festivity during the marriage preparations.

"My mother was not happy, but my father and his brothers agreed to the marriage. Some of our neighbours said the rape was my fault, that I had wanted to marry him," she said.

Raliya's mother, Zakkiya, whose marriage to Raliya's father had ended six years before, was against the marriage.

"I wept and asked my current husband to intervene because my daughter's uncles insisted that marriage decisions were for the father's side of the family. I wanted my husband, being a man, to fight for my daughter, but he was told he had no right over her. She was not his biological daughter," Zakkiya said.

Raliya's paternal side of the family had insisted that the marriage arrangement was the right thing to do as it would 'protect' against the "temptation of premarital sex."

And so, with just N2,000, Raliya's aged and bedridden father had been persuaded by the perpetrator's family not to press charges. Just like that, the rapist, who had committed a criminal offence which carries a life sentence, had been rewarded with a child-bride.

Raliya said the abuse, which formed the foundation of her forced marriage, had continued into the union in the form of starvation and domestic violence. This was until early 2022 when her mother, with the help of Ummulkhairi Foundation, a local initiative fighting human rights violations, got a Kaduna Magistrate's Court to annul the marriage.

While 20 countries in the

Nigeria's legal system has no provision for the harmful practice of "marry your rapist," legal practitioners have said. But perpetrators of sexual violence make arrangements to marry their victims with blessings from families and communities. In this report, *Daily Trust on Sunday* looks at the harmful practice that robs girls of their childhood and rewards rapists with child-brides.



world have legal provisions for the harmful practice that allows men to escape criminal prosecution if they marry the girls or women they raped, in Nigeria, all instances of rape are criminal. Sections 358 of the Criminal Code and 283 of the Penal Code used in the southern and northern parts of the country respectively provide a maximum sentence of life imprisonment for anyone convicted of rape.

However, despite the provision of the law, "an aberration such as girls being forced to marry their rapists still takes place at the family and community levels," says Zainab Atoba, the former chairperson of the Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) in Kaduna State.

Such arrangements are traditionally meant to 'shield' a victim's family from the rape scandal and 'protect' the victim from the 'temptation of premarital sex.' But they also violate the victim's rights and provide opportunities for alleged criminal

offenders to escape justice, says Kabir Momoh, a constitutional and administrative legal practitioner at Abdullahi Ibrahim and Co chambers in Kaduna State.

"The idea alone is an abuse because you are asking a victim to trust and live with her abuser," said Momoh, a lawyer, adding that such arrangements only expose rape victims to further abuse.

He reiterated that the law is clear about what constitutes a crime of rape and its punishment is spelled out in sections 358 of the Criminal Code and 283 of the Penal Code.

Repugnant practice

Ibrahim Hassan has one thing on his mind: to get his friend, Dauda Mohammed, who raped his 13-year-old daughter, Halima, out of security custody on bail.

The alleged rapist was arrested by officers of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) in Nasarawa State, North Central Nigeria, on the allegation that he lured the 13-year-old in the guise of running an errand

for him, and raped her. When arraigned for the alleged offence in early October 2022, Dauda Mohammed told journalists in Nasarawa State that he was willing to marry the 13-year-old.

When *Daily Trust on Sunday* reached out to Ibrahim Hassan over the alleged rape of his daughter, the 40-year-old hinted that he regretted reporting the matter to security agents and described his action as "too hasty and driven by anger."

He said his resolve to prosecute a friend and religious figure in the community had waned after some elders in the community pleaded with him to drop the matter. Moreover, when the suspect pronounced his intention to marry Hassan's 13-year-old daughter, he suddenly forgave the man who had betrayed his trust. He now wants security agents to drop all charges against the alleged rapist.

"I feel much better now that he has accepted responsibility and is willing to marry her," Hassan told this reporter during a 15-minute telephone conversation, during which he tried to justify that the man who sexually abused his daughter should be allowed to marry her.

"I know who he is, and I can tell you that he is not a bad person. He used to lead prayers in the mosque. All I can say is that what happened was unfortunate," he said of the alleged rapist.

Asked about the rights of his

daughter, Hassan, who pulled Halima out of school to avoid stigma, insisted that parents always know what is best for their children.

Several cultures in Nigeria place a high value on virginity, and in the country's majority Muslim northern region, a woman is expected to come into marriage without prior sexual experience. This, according to Hajiya Maryam Yahaya Sani, the head of Ummulkhairi Foundation and Khalifa Mahmud Community Development Initiative, is why parents such as Ibrahim Hassan sometimes force their daughters to marry their rapists.

Sani's foundation facilitated the annulment of Raliya's marriage with her alleged rapist.

"Our culture puts a lot of emphasis on a girl's virginity and many families would rather the perpetrator marry the girl to protect the family name and eliminate any stigma she may face later in life," she said.

"In other cases, the girl's family may be poor, and if the rape results in pregnancy, the two families would rather cover it up and let the man marry her to avoid a scandal," she said.

While both Ibrahim Hassan and Raliya's parents are Muslims, a Sharia lawyer, Fausat Omowumi Abdulsalam says their actions and beliefs are not in tune with Sharia law - the Islamic religious law that

And so, with just N2,000, Raliya's aged and bedridden father had been persuaded by the perpetrator's family not to press charges. Just like that, the rapist, who had committed a criminal offence which carries a life sentence, had been rewarded with a child-bride

Continued on page 10

Continued from page 9

governs the day-to-day lives of Muslims.

“Marrying off a girl to her rapists is repugnant to natural justice. Sharia law frowns at rape, and whoever is found guilty is dealt with under Sharia.

“Sharia law states that anyone who commits rape will be punished by stoning to death if he is married. If the convict is unmarried he will be given 100 lashes, plus one year in exile, which is now substituted with imprisonment,” the lawyer said.

Scarred for life

Child and forced marriages such as that of Raliya are human rights violations and a harmful practice that disproportionately affects women and girls globally, according to the United Nations. The negative practice robs girls of their childhood and threatens their lives, health and security, according to UNICEF, which also states that nearly 650 million women globally became brides before they turned 18, and some, even before the age of 10.

In Nigeria, while the rate of child marriage has decreased over time, close to two out of 10 girls are married off before their 15th birthday, according to the most recent demographic health survey.

Unless she is saved from her father’s beliefs, 13-year-old Halima could become part of the 12 million child brides which UNICEF estimates are married off each year.

The harmful practice is common in some parts of the world, according to a 2021 UN Population Fund report, which states that in some countries, men convicted of rape have the verdict overturned if they marry the women they have assaulted.

Nigeria, though a patriarchal society, is not among the 20 countries around the world where marriage may be considered as a legal “cure” for rape, by allowing perpetrators to marry their victims and escape criminal prosecution.

However, last October, the Sexual Offences Awareness and Response (SOAR), a Lagos-based non-governmental organisation, raised the alarm that some families were marrying off adolescent girls to their rapists.

The executive director of SOAR, Chinyere Eyoh, said rape and any other form of sexual violence against girls is a crime against the rights and dignity of a child and expressed shock that some communities and families in Benue State cover up the acts and marry off the girls to their violators.

Zainab Atoba of the Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) stressed that the practice had no legal backing in Nigeria.

Reinforcing Raliya’s claim of her neighbours accusing her of deliberately making herself vulnerable so she could marry her alleged rapist, Atoba said the marriage of a victim of rape to her abuser was not sustainable as it is “made to look like it was the girl’s fault.”

“Rape is a capital offence, and where the defendant is convicted, sentence is likely going to be applied. So, anyone who tries to settle is aiding and abetting the crime. It shouldn’t be seen as finding a soft landing for the

Concerns rise over ‘marry your rapist’ practices in Nigeria



CHILD MARRIAGE



While the rate of child marriage has decreased over time, close to

2 out of every 10 girls are married off before their 15th birthday

ATTENDANCE



About

4 out of every 10 girls of primary school-going age do not attend school.

Source: dhsprogram.com

perpetrator by allowing him to marry the victim,” Atoba explained.

Legal gaps that aid rapists

The Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) in Nasarawa State say they are faced with several cases similar to Halima’s, where parents of sexually violated girls turn up to plead on behalf of the suspects. It is a similar situation in Ebonyi, in Nigeria’s South-East region, where in 2021, the National Human Rights Commission expressed disappointment that parents of survivors of sexual violence plead with the commission to close rape cases so that the families can settle at home.

Speaking with Daily Trust on Sunday, the public relations officer of the NSCDC in Nasarawa State, Jerry Victor, said the case of Dauda Mohammed, the alleged rapist of 13-year-old Halima, had been transferred to the state’s Ministry of Justice for investigation and prosecution. He, however, said though the offence of rape was against the state, many parents insist they want to settle informally because of stigma and shame.

When asked about Dauda Mohammed’s marriage proposal to the 13-year-old, Victor said, “What they are trying to do as parents is against the law. We are trying to protect the rights of the girl. She is underage, so whether there was a proposal or not, our job is to arrest

the suspect and charge him to court. Let the court decide his fate.”

In its 2020 annual report, the National Human Rights Commission stated that it received 11, 200 reported cases of rape across the country. According to the commission, while rape remains at an epidemic level in Nigeria, “there are no accurate or consolidated statistics on rape.”

However, legal practitioners and stakeholders, including Nigeria’s Minister of Women

Affairs, Pauline Tallen, attribute low conviction rate of rape cases to multiple factors, including stigma and shame, unwillingness of victims and their families to cooperate with investigations and a slow justice system.

Tallen, who spoke in late November 2022 at the Orange Ceremony and lighting of the UN House, in commemoration of the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, stressed that concrete action was needed

to tackle “rape crisis in Nigeria.” She said women and girls had been “failed by a system that makes it increasingly difficult for survivors to get justice, while allowing perpetrators to get away with gross human rights violations.”

Rape and child-marriage are combined human right violations that Raliya has faced and Halima could face unless the law takes its course on her alleged rapists. Even where there is no prior rape, child marriage remains prevalent in Nigeria, rooted in traditional, religious, and economic conditions.

Although the federal government enacted the Child Rights Act (2003), which prohibits marriage below the age of 18 years, the law is yet to be domesticated by at least 9 states, which are all in the northern part of the country. In states where the law has been domesticated, some northern states, including Kaduna, where Raliya was raped, accede to child marriage as long as the girl is above 14 years.

The Childs Welfare and Protection Law 2018 in Kaduna State nullifies any marriage contracted with a girl below 18 years. Section 24 (2) of the law states that a person, parent or guardian who marries off a child or promotes the marriage of a child commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine of not less than N500,000 or imprisonment of a term of not less than five years, or both.

That section of the law, however, does not apply to Muslim girls such as Raliya. Instead, section 24 (3), which applies to Muslim girls, states that, “Notwithstanding the provisions of sub-section (1) and (2) of this section, a child who is a Muslim who has not attained the age of 18 years shall have the right to contract a marriage under Islamic Law, and the marriage so contracted shall be valid, provided that the child is 14 years or above.”

Even with 14 years, which the law assents to as age of maturity and the right to enter a marriage for Muslim girls, Raliya was only 13 when she was married off, an indication that those who forced her into marriage not only violated her rights but also broke the law. Section 24 (2d) of the law prescribes that upon conviction “a fine of not less than N500,000 or imprisonment or a term of not less than five years or both” to anyone who promotes the marriage of a child.

This penalty applies to Raliya’s parents and relatives, whom Kabir Momoh said that by their actions have encouraged or promoted the marriage of a child, and should, therefore, be held responsible for collusion and having condoned the act.

This report was supported by the Africa Women Journalism Project (AWJP), in partnership with the International Centre for Journalists (ICFJ) and the sponsorship of the Ford Foundation.

In Nigeria, while the rate of child marriage has decreased over time, close to two out of 10 girls are married off before their 15th birthday, according to the most recent demographic health survey.

Unless she is saved from her father’s beliefs, 13-year-old Halima could become part of the 12 million child brides which UNICEF estimates are married off each year



■ Mrs Christiana Alhaji, mother of a 4-year-old Dominion Alhaji who was kidnapped by gunmen at LEA, Alwaza in Doma LGA of Nasarawa State

Rescue our children, mothers of 6 abducted pupils beg govt, security agencies

By Umar Muhammed, Lafia

Parents of six pupils abducted from the Local Educated Authority Primary Alwaza in Doma Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, have begged the state government and security agencies in the state to do everything within their powers to rescue the remaining four children from the hands of their abductors unhurt.

Daily Trust on Sunday had, last week, reported that gunmen invaded the school premises around 7.30am on Friday and abducted some pupils.

Sharing her grief in an interview with our correspondent, Mrs Blessing Emmanuel, mother of 7-year-old Success Emmanuel and 5-year-old Awazi Emmanuel, said she took her children to school around 7.30am and returned home to finish the rest of her domestic work, adding that shortly after, she heard a neighbour calling out her name. "She then informed me that some gunmen invaded my children's school and abducted them."

Mrs Emmanuel said upon hearing the sad news, she fainted and hasn't been able to eat since then.

She said: "I am confused. I can't imagine that my children have been abducted from their school. The situation is too big for me to bear. I am finished. I am appealing to the state government and security agencies to please come to my aid and rescue my children. They are all I have and

On January 20, 2023, *Daily Trust* reported the kidnapping of six pupils at the LGEA Primary School, Alwaza, in Doma, the headquarters of Doma Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. In this report, *Daily Trust on Sunday* spoke to parents of the missing children who shared their burdens.

my future hope and I can't do without them."

Narrating his ordeal, Mr Baba Emmanuel, father of Success and Awazi Emmanuel, said that morning, he had instructed his wife to bath the children and take them to school, noting that while in his farm, he heard people crying that kidnappers invaded their community and abducted six children from the school.

He explained that upon hearing the sad news, he rushed to the school and unfortunately found out his children were among those kidnapped.

He said he learnt that the kidnappers came on three new motorcycles loaded with weapons and started shooting sporadically into the air, scaring people away, before they abducted the children to an unknown destination.

"They came into our community and nobody could identify them because they covered their faces with black masks." He appealed to the state government and security agencies to come to their aid and help rescue the children.

Also speaking to our correspondent, Alhaji Yerima, father of 7-year-old Dominion Yerima, explained that he took his son to school that day and returned home but afterwards went to his farmland to clear some grasses, noting that few minutes

later, he heard people shouting that gunmen had kidnapped six children from Alwaza Primary School in their community.

According to him, at first, he thought it was a joke, until he went to the school and discovered that his child was among the six children abducted by the gunmen.

"It was like a drama. This sort of calamity has never befallen our community. Oh my God, please protect my child for me and save those that were kidnapped," he prayed.

"When do I see my son again?"

Alwaza community is becoming something else. God help us. What we have been hearing in other states has come to our community."

"As I speak to you now, I am in pain. I pray that my son and the other children abducted return home safely. Right inside me, I feel bad and feel suicidal," Alhaji Yerima said amidst tears.

He noted that, "We need a police outpost in our community. I am appealing to the Nasarawa State government to deploy more security to our community. This will go a long way in protecting

our children from bandits and kidnappers."

He, however, urged the state government to renovate the primary school and fence it, saying the school, which was established in 1976 is located on the outskirts of the community and needs to be safeguarded as it's the only primary school in their community.

On his part, Mr Oga Jacob, father of 7-year-old Success Oga, said he has three children but lost one some years back, and now one has been kidnapped by gunmen from the two left.

According to him, he has been traumatized over the abduction of his child, while asking, "Where do I start from here? Out of the three children, I am now left with just one."

Mrs Christiana Alhaji, mother of a 4-year-old boy who was also kidnapped, said she has two boys - one in nursery school and the other in primary two. She narrated that her older son refused to go to school that day after he had his bath and only obliged after he was forced to go to school.

"He didn't eat the food I prepared for him before he was kidnapped by gunmen. I never knew my son saw danger ahead which was why he didn't want to go to school. If I had known, I wouldn't have forced him to go to school that day."

Still narrating her ordeal on how she got the news of her son's kidnapping, she said, "I saw my mother crying and when I asked her, she told me that my son had been kidnapped from school by gunmen."

Reacting to the ugly development, the Aren Alwaza community, Yohana Alex Atomi, told our correspondent that he was at home when he saw some pupils running from the school to the community, crying and shouting for help, saying that some gunmen entered their school on three motorcycles, heavily armed, and abducted six children from the school."

The Aren Alwaza who spoke through the Ayuba Jattau, Sarkin Dawakin of Alwaza community, added that the kidnappers injured a four-year-old girl and abandoned her in the bush.

He disclosed that through the help of Alwaza vigilante groups, some youths and elders in the community who went after the kidnappers found the little girl who was rushed to an undisclosed hospital for treatment.

The Aren Alwaza added that the state deputy governor, Dr Emmanuel Akabe, alongside the state commissioner of police, Mr Baba Maiyaki, visited the scene of the unfortunate incident and promised to pay the medical bill of the injured 4-year-old girl.

"The girl, after receiving treatment for her injury, has been reunited with her parents," he added.

However, a source who didn't want his name in print, told our correspondent that 4 Special Forces Command, Doma Barracks, has since deployed its personnel to the bush and effort has been intensified to ensure that the remaining pupils are rescued unhurt.



■ Baba Emmanuel and his wife Mrs Blessing Emmanuel, parents of Success Emmanuel and Awazi Emmanuel who were kidnapped by gunmen at Alwaza in Doma LGA of Nasarawa State

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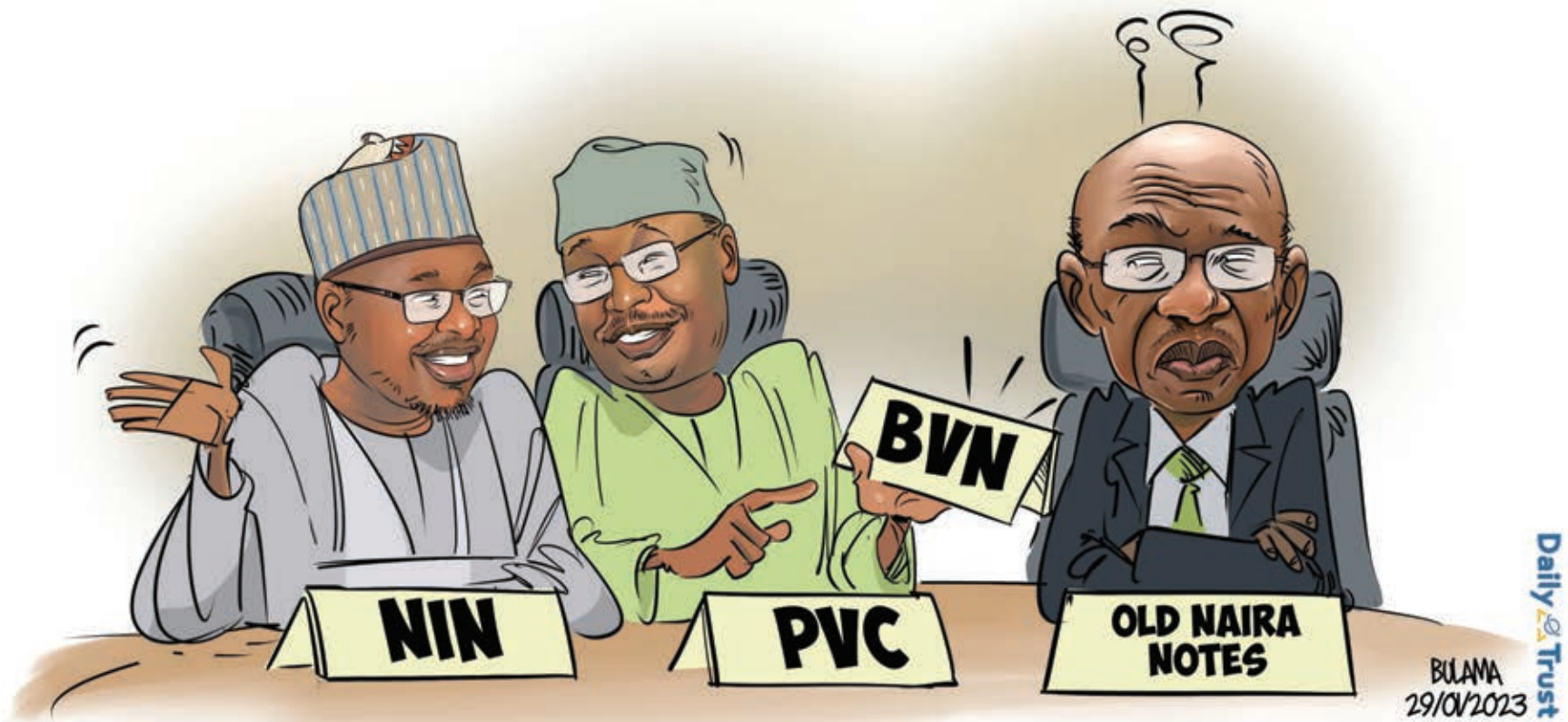


The Board, Management and Staff of Mainstream Energy Solutions Limited,
operator of the Kainji and Jebba Hydro Power plants,
heartily congratulate our Chairman, Col. (Dr.) Sani Bello (RTD)
on his conferment of an Honorary Doctorate Degree
(Doctor of Science, Honoris Causa)
by the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

An honor well deserved!



We won't shift Jan 31st deadline of old Naira notes- Emeziele



The editor welcomes brief letters on topical issues. Write an e-mail to sunday@dailytrust.com or sundaytrust@yahoo.com.

Unspoken issues: Kaduna State BBC Hausa debate

The BBC Hausa Kaduna governorship debate was keenly competitive by the three candidates of the forefront political parties in the state. The candidates are: Uba Sani of the ruling party (APC), Isah Ashiru of the main opposition party (PDP), and Suleiman Hunkuyi of NNPP.

The debate, which held at Kaduna State University auditorium, witnessed a large turnout of supporters of the political parties, stakeholders and NGOs. The three candidates came well prepared and 'armed to the teeth' with relevant information, facts and figures that will enable them sell their candidature

and manifesto to the people of Kaduna State.

It was also quite impressive, particularly to a non-partisan observer on how the candidates answered questions ranging from insecurity, economy, education, agriculture, economy and healthcare. Although, there were some variations in the presentation of facts and figures between the figures quoted by Sen. Uba Sani and that of his counterpart Hon. Isa Ashiru. While Uba Sani put the total number of medical doctors in the employment of Kaduna State Government at more than 400, Isa Ashiru of PDP insisted that they were only about 200.

The debate as we all know was anchored by a polished and pedantic BBC Hausa presenter; Badariyya Kalarawi. The debate was a confab between the candidate of the ruling party, Sen. Uba Sani and the main opposition candidate Hon. Isa Ashiru of PDP, assisted by Suleiman Hunkuyi of NNPP.

In 2019, Kaduna State development plan reported that Kaduna state has the highest female school dropout in the state. They estimated that about 37 per cent of pupils drop out in primary six has females having the highest non-completion rate of 24.8 per cent compared to males with 20.7 per cent. This

was not discussed by the candidates. It is also imperative to note that none of the candidates talked about the welfare of staff, particularly primary and secondary school teachers.

In the end, BBC Hausa did an exceptional work for organising such a debate. As this has given us the opportunity to have insight into the direction of each of the three candidates. The destiny of citizens is in their hands to vote the right candidate that will pilot the affairs of the state to the promised land.

Abdulazeez Alhassan is the President of Universal Writers and Authors (UWA).

Feminists or retaliators?

We don't need oppositors, we don't need regressors, we don't need repressors and retaliators, we don't need dominators all we ask for is equity, transformation, tenacity and tremendous change to our world. Let's create a world where conjugation exists and not subjugation.

Feminism has been taken to views by different people and has brought about different responses depending on people with different backgrounds, race and culture. While the major basic feminist theory is women suffrage, subjugation, gender inequality etc. Feminism in the 21st century has a divergent method and theory as compared to the 19th and 20th century ideology of feminism. Feminism was an exercise to educate and support, and enlighten women on their basic rights, but as it is now the same route of superimposed domination of the men is what it turns out the feminists of this century wants the females to do.

For instance, a lady who chose feminist theory is about leaving the man to do the house chores while she remains at work or having her man come back from work to take care of the house. As a feminist your idea should be getting good insights on to how you and your spouse stay equal in the house and not intent on you dominating your husband when you don't want to be dominated.

We (women) need to know the real meaning of feminism and not impose our own meaning of feminism and still call ourselves feminists. We need to learn from the past suffragettes like Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Rose Scott, Angela Davis, Bell Hooks and many more firm feminism activists. We really need to let our young women and children know that feminism is way more than women trying to control their men.

Odoh Maria wrote via mariagodwin94@gmail.com

Much ado about Osun tribunal's verdict

The verdict pronounced by the Osun State Governorship Election Petition Tribunal chaired by Justice Tetse Kume against Sen. Ademola Adeleke of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), and in favour of Mr Oyetola Adegboyega of All Progressives Congress (APC) has generated scorching ruckus and immaterial exchange of bellicose statements on social media platforms.

It will be recalled that Sen. Ademola Adeleke was proclaimed as the fortuitous megahit in the last gubernatorial election held on July 16, 2022, by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). After his triumph, in his characteristic manner, began the jubilation by dancing unbeknownst to him that the appearance of the situation would metamorphose into another shape.

Like sugar attracts ants, the dancing senator's victory attracted a flood of congratulatory letters and messages from his well-wishers, friends, supporters, etc. from all walks of life while some people, especially the political pundits admonished

him on the pages of newspapers to quickly swing into action of meticulously performing the arduous responsibilities as the number one citizen of the state reminding him that governance is more than mere dancing.

Nonetheless, according to the stringent investigation and verdict recently unmasked by the Tribunal, it showed that despite the strenuous efforts of the INEC to forestall the manipulation of the gubernatorial election through the technological gadgets put into place, election rigging still played out if not so, there will not be over-voting in some polling units as claimed. It was professed that after the nullification of some invalid ballots, Oyetola of APC had 314,931 votes to defeat Adeleke's 290,266 votes.

The manipulation of the election saga in Osun state as unveiled by the Tribunal pitched me to the speculation if the Nigeria presidential election come February 25 will be free and fair.

Olayode Inaolaji writes from Ogbomoso, Oyo State.

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The petrol queues and the hollow ritual

Here is a timeless wisdom. If you cannot solve a problem, delegate it to a committee. President Muhammadu Buhari has just opted for that wisdom. He recently set up a 12-man committee to solve the national shame and embarrassing problem of fuel shortage that forces Nigerians to waste productive hours daily in fuel queues at petrol stations.

The president chose motion, not movement and placed the burden of movement on the committee. A committee performs two functions, namely, it investigates a problem, identifies the cause, or causes, and proffers solution (s) to it. I wonder what this presidential committee will investigate here. Is there something it will unearth that has not been in the public domain all these years?

Fuel shortage is not a new national problem; fuel queues are not a new national shame and embarrassment. We have lived with them for as long as anyone can remember. They form part of our national ironies and contradictions, to wit, Nigeria is the fifth crude oil exporting nation in the world, but it is the only OPEC member that faces fuel shortage year in, year out.

We were never ignorant of the cause nor of the solution to the problem of fuel shortage. The solutions were never elusive. They stared, and stare, every federal government in the face. The committee will find nothing different from what the president, as the petroleum minister, knows only too well, namely that the shortage of fuel is caused by the difference between demand and supply. We consume more than is available to us. It is basic maths that where there is a huge gap between demand and supply, there is shortage and consumers suffer.

Ordinarily, the solution that easily recommends itself is to close the gap between supply and demand. But we are not dealing with an ordinary problem here. We are dealing with the complex and complicated problems associated with the powerful oil cartel, corruption in the administration of the so-called fuel subsidy that subsidizes the rich at the expense of the poor, the lack of will on the part of successive leaders to rescue the petroleum industry and make its wealth serve the nation as well as the poor management of our wealth from crude oil.

What the will committee say about these problems that have made Nigeria a crude oil resource deprived nation? Buhari knows that the committee is a joke. Its findings and recommendations will not solve the problems of fuel shortage and cure the nation of one of its many nerve-grating ironies. The country does not currently meet its OPEC daily production quota. Insecurity and crude oil theft are to blame. This has given rise to the new problem of the inability of NNPC Limited, according to the Punch newspaper of January 22, to honour its crude swap deal for refined products it "had with oil firms and traders."

The newspaper also quoted a senior government official as saying that "the fuel scarcity might get worse in the days and weeks ahead" because NNPC Limited did not have sufficient funds to import the required quantity of fuel to meet

domestic consumption. It would be unfair to suggest that the president was not aware of this problem.

Buhari returned to a familiar turf in 2015 as his own minister of petroleum resources. He was commissioner for petroleum resources in the Murtala/Obasanjo military administration. Nothing in the industry could be strange to him – not the corruption in the system, not the insecurity posed by the militants, not the crude oil theft and, certainly, not the shenanigans in the administration of the fuel subsidy. As soon as he assumed office, he announced that the subsidy regime had come to an end. Except that it had not. He is unable to deal with it and will now pass the problem to his successor in Aso Rock.

Buhari met critical challenges in the industry that should have fired his zeal as his own petroleum resources minister. He met the challenge of an oil producing nation exporting crude oil and importing the refined products. He met the challenge of our four oil refineries run aground. The independent oil marketers sprang up from the ashes of those refineries. I thought he appointed himself minister of petroleum resources in order to tackle these and other challenges bedeviling the industry.

It has been nearly eight years since he took on the job; and it has been nearly eight years in which nothing particularly radical has changed in the industry. The refineries are still dead; NNPC Limited is still unable to fund the quantity of petroleum resources the country needs to meet its domestic consumption; oil thieves have grown more daring and fuel subsidy remains a needless albatross on the Nigerian state. Everything that did not need to go wrong with the industry has gone wrong with it. Its problems and challenges have, alas, also defeated the president as president and as his own petroleum resources minister. As it was in 2015, so it is in 2023. It is all so bleak.

I thought Buhari took a radical step to free NNPC from the chaotic bureaucracy and make it independent when he turned it into a limited liability company with the freedom within acceptable limits, to be run like a limited liability company and render annual accounts to the Nigerian state as its primary share holder. Its new name has apparently not afforded it the freedom it ought to have to take full charge of the oil industry to fix non-arbitrary prices for petroleum products and respond meaningfully to the shortages that give rise to the unsightly and embarrassing queues at petrol stations and the army of young people peddling petrol outside the petrol stations.

In hailing the decision to make the corporation a limited liability company, I forgot that the word 'limited' after its name does not really affect its status as a corporation. I forgot that the NNPC, limited or not, is the nation's cash cow and therefore every president must necessarily keep it on a short lease. Buhari's committee is, to borrow from my colleague Ray Ekpu, a hollow ritual. The shortage continues; the queues continue. As my good friend, Dr Haroun Adamu, liked to say, "the struggle continues."

PERSPECTIVE

With 10mw of solar energy, President Buhari sets Kano industry on the march

By Garba Shehu

For an electricity distribution area, Kano DISCO that gets between 250-360 Megawatts hour, on a day by day, many will dismiss the commissioning of the 10MW, Challawa Kano Solar Power Project as inconsequential.

Yet, in terms of both significance and consequential impact, this power plant, the first of its kind in Nigeria is a game-changer in many respects.

It is important to note that this is the largest grid-connected solar power plant in the country so far. Not only this, it is a pointer to growth in the power sector and a strong and unambiguous message that large-scale renewable projects can be successfully delivered in the country.

The plant is equally a personal goal achieved by President Muhammadu Buhari, a globally recognized champion of awareness creation and the mitigation of climate change. He is a recognized promoter of biodiversity and a strong advocate of clean energy sources.

For him, the destruction of the natural environment, be that from uncontrolled carbon emissions or the destruction of natural environments is an anathema; the reason for most, if not all of the security and socio-economic challenges, from terrorism to banditry, hunger and poverty that confront us.

The Challawa Kano plant is built to generate energy that produces no greenhouse emissions from fossil fuels and reduces air pollution.

The intention is for the project to supply the Challawa Water Works, the backbone of public water supply to the city of between 4-5 million people and the provision of unbroken power supply to streetlights in the state capital thereby helping with security. The effect will be to ease pressure on the overstretched power distribution to the Challawa industrial estate, the city's second but largest industrial layout, to help spur industrial production and motivate other companies to invest in additional capacity and allow them to reach full capacity utilization.

We are also informed that the choice of contractors was done in a way that a local contractor must have a foreign partner and vice-versa, the reason being to ensure local participation, local creation and value retention and knowledge (technical) transfer. The

goal is for the sector to grow into maturity to such point where no foreign content is required to undertake similar complex technical projects in the future.

At the construction stage, the project created 300 direct jobs and indirect jobs (transportation, food and beverage, hospitality etc) in excess of 2,000.

The project is a demonstration pilot project, intended to stimulate investment in the Nigerian power sector. Kano wasn't initially chosen for it. Another state among the country's large number of states in the sun solar belt was chosen but their indecision and failure to meet deadlines cost them this project.

To meet an irrevocable deadline, the Kano State Government was challenged by an order of the president to respond to the requirements, and in time. Can Kano government respond in time, asked the Presidency? Happily, the Governor, Dr. Abdullahi Umar Ganduje and his Deputy, Gawuna did not disappoint.

In just one week, the governor sent a duly registered Certificate of Occupancy covering a 24-hectare parcel of land, valued at N322 million at market value to the president, meeting thereby a strong requirement, for his approval. An agreement was signed with an ownership structure in which the federal government has 80%, Kano State Government with 15% and Kumbotso Local Government, 5%. Power generated will be directly supplied to the distribution system.

On January 4, 2019, following a directive from the president, the Federal Ministry of Finance instructed the office of the Accountant General of the Federation, to transfer the approved sum of N4.71 billion from the Development of Natural Resources Development Account to the Nigerian Sovereign Investment Authority, NSIA.

The president chose the NSIA to be the funds and project manager for the development and construction of this solar project because of the seriousness he attached to it. The president chose them because the NSIA has a record of adherence to transparency and are known to go with the highest environmental and social standards. The Covid epidemic and consequent lockdown, and the currency fluctuation impacted negatively on the project's execution but the good news is that the NSIA has, notwithstanding the delay, done its part by delivering the project.

Kano, home to 15-16 million people and is poised to overtake Lagos as the most populous state. With 60-plus integrated rice mills today in Kano, the city has transformed into the country's rice processing hub in the seven years of the Buhari administration and with this, a growing and voracious appetite for energy.

With this commissioning, President Buhari will put Kano on the front line of the combat against climate change. It will also mark the president's big push on renewables to decarbonize the power sector and reduce air pollution starting with Kano on Monday.

All these put together will lead to a huge transformation of Kano from a semi-arid state to a solar state.

Garba Shehu is the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Media and Publicity.

With this commissioning, President Buhari will put Kano on the front line of the combat against climate change. It will also mark the president's big push on renewables to decarbonize the power sector and reduce air pollution starting with Kano on Monday

COMMENT & DEBATE

[PENPOINT]
0805 9252424 (SMS only)

with
Monima Daminabo
email: monidams@yahoo.co.uk

Presidential agenda for 2023 polls: Voters beware!

Hardly could any other intervention in the country's political turf been more timely than the 20th Daily Trust Annual Dialogue which held last Thursday at the Nigerian Air Force Conference Centre in Abuja. With its theme as 'Interrogating the 2023 Presidential Agenda', it offered the country a welcome assault on the wide range of campaign promises - being the very planks on which candidates contesting for various leadership positions - especially the presidency, hinge their successes upon. The forum did not disappoint with respect to dissecting the various aspects of the promises by presidential candidates on the grounds of integrity, appeal, and timeliness of such. And at the end of the day, a consensus of the forum was a vote of no confidence on the agenda of the presidential candidates especially from the perspective of their campaign promises.

Campaign promises are notionally offerings made by contestants to public offices in which they provide a foretaste of what constituents expect to gain by electing them into office. At the best of times and in country after country, the issue of campaign promises by politicians has always been a matter of 'caveat emptor', which demands that the voter should beware of such promises as any of them could be a poisoned chalice, or an offer to unrealistic Eldorado or even a clear wait for Godot which may be endless. The bottom line remains what the voter should make of the campaign promises. In the Nigerian political terrain, campaign promises have become matters that need to

be interrogated beyond the utterances by the candidates.

This is where the build up to the forthcoming presidential polls of February and March this year, provides interesting insights with respect to the twists and turns in the flow of campaign promises by the contestants - especially the leading ones. Just as the forum noted correctly, whereas the contestants have been clamouring to outdo each other in terms of soap box pugilism, not only does the cross section of the voting citizenry remain mostly in the dark with respect to specifics of what to expect from the contestants. This is the basis for a gnawing feeling that the country is being taken for a ride by the miasma associated with the mainstream of the promises. Not a few Nigerians actually think that in the final analysis, the citizenry may be going into the polls literally blindfolded. And the best candidates that should serve as change agents may not emerge. Just as well, nothing would have changed with the 2023 polls - with all its high vaunting promise.

As things stand, the voting process may mimic a situation like a visit by blind men to see the elephant. He that touched the body described the animal as a wall, while the one that wrapped his hands around one of the legs called it a tree, and the other that held the tail, celebrated the beast as a rope! This is the state of confusion which Nigerians across the country are being pushed into with respect to the coming polls, courtesy of the inchoate state of campaign promises which sound laudable but offer limited scope for citizens

to buy into.

So far the thrust of campaign promises has featured three main dimensions. In one vein is the resort to didactic and empirical submissions in respect of the burning issues of the day. This has presented the proponents as the ones with a grounding on the way out of the country's deluge of socio-economic challenges, and which shall provide a bitter welcome for any incoming administration that succeeds the present one.

Another campaign thrust is that which derives from a sense of entitlement that runs from the federal to the state level and seeks to uphold prearranged succession plans that pay scant premium to the proclivities and sensitivities of the wider society. This is so even when it remains crystal clear that an anointed candidate constitutes a mismatch with the office aspired to, and may be an unmitigated disaster waiting to happen if allowed ascent into leadership. Yet there is the other which builds on a personal ego trip to achieve a purely parochial ambition of self actualisation, and not the altruism that thrives on public interest.

Interestingly, these campaign thrusts are thriving on the simple condition that the citizenry remain subjected to relative dis-information, with majority of

them compelled to vote uninformed, for candidates and political goals which they know little or nothing about. It is in this respect that the expected intervention of at least two dispensations in the build up to the polls, remains welcome, given the impetus for rectitude which they are expected to offer the polls exercise. The first of these is the Biometric Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) device which has been designated for use by the INEC for administering the polls exercise. This, with its complicated voter identification protocol is expected to weed out the most critical electoral sin of voter identity theft, (vote juggling and buying at the voting point). Courtesy of the BVAS, there is hope that the INEC claim that every vote at the polls shall count, will be more than lip service, even if there may be operational slips here and there.

Another is the ongoing currency swap exercise which is akin to a stab in the back for perpetrators of the age-long vote-for-cash syndrome. It is not surprising that this singular measure by the Central Bank of Nigeria Bank of Nigeria is raising so much dust for the wrong reasons, even in some of the most powerful circles across the country.

With the most problematic syndromes of voter identity theft and money-for-cash now substantially caged, this is a call on the candidates to make themselves more convincing on their promises. Nigerians need to know where an incoming leader will take the country to. The consideration shifts to which model of administration comes after the Buhari era. Shall it be one of a progressive leadership and a retrogressive followership, or a retrogressive leadership and a progressive followership, or a retrogressive leadership and a retrogressive followership, or even the best model of progressive leadership and progressive followership.

By virtue of its status as the giant of Africa and a leading nation of the world, Nigeria's citizenry have always offered any leader the most progressive followership. Hence the country's present challenge is to facilitate a most progressive leadership community that will synchronise with the followership and take the country to the next level.

The starting point here is for the leaders to point the way so that the people will follow with conviction.

By virtue of its status as the giant of Africa and a leading nation of the world, Nigeria's citizenry have always offered any leader the most progressive followership. Hence the country's present challenge is to facilitate a most progressive leadership community that will synchronise with the followership and take the country to the next level

Artificial intelligence, a threat to humanity

By Esther Omowunmi Kayode

Artificial Intelligence has proven to be a quantum leap that has taken the world's technological advancement to a whole new level. It is predicted to completely change our way of life. We can see it in smart phones, homes, autonomous vehicles, self-diagnosis of health problems and personalized treatment.

It is a technology that allows computers to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence and can also be used in many areas of our life, from self-driving cars to medical diagnoses, enabling machines to understand their environment better and make decisions autonomously.

The spread of Artificial Intelligence is frequently applauded for making things a lot easier and a lot less time-consuming. However, AI poses great ethical, social and legal challenges and threats to our societies as some people claim that it will wipe out jobs for humans. But this claim needs to be examined in detail because if it were to be true, the development of artificial intelligence should stop and other technologies such as nanotechnology or quantum computing ought to be invented.

Moving on, AI cannot replace human jobs completely as it can only perform simple tasks and cannot replace a person's ability to think

Lastly, we should not worry about AI taking over the world since it is not possible for it to do everything because of the limitations. For example, even if AI has been programmed to be able to do any specific task or job, there are still certain things that it cannot do because these tasks require human interaction and knowledge

creatively or solve problems intelligently. AI also helps make us more productive and efficient in our day-to-day work life by automating repetitive tasks so that we can focus on higher-value activities such as strategic planning and innovation creation instead of just performing manual tasks over and over again like checking emails every day.

It is important here to understand what "human" actually means when it comes down to AI techniques because there are some misconceptions floating around about what

it really means in terms of job loss concerns based on how fast machines are evolving at the present time without any human intervention whatsoever; notwithstanding, this fear is not necessarily grounded in reality as well since most experts agree that while advances may seem sudden initially or sometimes scary, eventually everything balances itself out naturally over time without having any further impact whatsoever beyond what happens naturally.

However, if artificial intelligence becomes amazing in all areas, there will be few new opportunities as well. The reason for this is due to the nature of human beings and their need for creativity and innovation. If a robot can do everything from coding to designing clothes and furniture, then why would someone hire them?

The truth is that we do not know what those new jobs will be like. In fact, it's possible that they would not even exist at all! We may need to rethink our work purpose if these technologies take over completely - that means something entirely different than just replacing humans with machines. This would make people not to have a place to live and countries like Nigeria would not collect tax revenue, so they would have little money to pay the basic income.

If AI can make this happen, it is a bad scenario but luckily, it has serious limitations that may prevent it from taking over human jobs completely in the future.

Lastly, we should not worry about AI taking over the world since it is not possible for it to do everything because of the limitations. For example, even if AI has been programmed to be able to do any specific task or job, there are still certain things that it cannot do because these tasks require human interaction and knowledge. For instance, an AI cannot replace a teacher because their job requires them to interact with their students in order for them to learn new things. In fact, in some cases where teachers are replaced by robots or software programs like Khan Academy, they may fail at teaching because they lack empathy towards their students' needs or emotions.

This lack of understanding means they cannot provide adequate instruction on topics such as Maths problems which require creativity from both sides. The student wants answers quickly and easily while also having fun doing so together; meanwhile, the teacher needs patience since anything more complicated than simple addition/subtraction operations can become frustrating due too much repetition. So, society need not be afraid of this technology. It can only do what it has been trained to do and cannot adapt to new situations or learn from its mistakes.

Esther is a 200 level-student from Department of English, Lagos State University

Insecurity: Niger youths protest, issue ultimatum

By Abubakar Akote, Minna

Youths in Niger State under the umbrella of the National Youth Council of Nigeria (NYCN) protested yesterday, challenging the federal and state governments to address the ongoing killings of farmers in the state.

NYCN president in the state, Abdullahi Mohammed, lamented that over 200 schools in local communities have remained under lock and key for the past three years due to continued

attacks on residents.

Mohammed also said while the state had not tamed the tide of banditry and insurgency that have displaced thousands of rural farmers, Minna, the state capital, has continued to witness ungodly activities of thugs and miscreants who have been disturbing the peace of residents unchallenged.

He charged the government to engage traditional rulers and youths in the ongoing fight against insecurity, adding that security

operatives should be fully equipped with modern fighting gadgets to enable them discharge their duties effectively.

Mohammed said if the government did not take urgent measures to address the ongoing killings in the state within three weeks, youths would be forced to take further action.

The youths demanded that the federal and state governments compensate victims, villages and security operatives whose loved ones have been killed, kidnapped or displaced.

CBN disburses N120m new notes in Katsina

From Tijjani Ibrahim, Katsina

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) said it has disbursed over N120 million of the redesigned naira notes to rural communities in Katsina state to cushion the effect of the new policy.

Director of Currency Operations of the CBN, Alhaji Ahmed Bello Umar who disclosed this while briefing newsmen yesterday in Katsina, said the disbursement was through four designated banks.

"We had engagement with agents in Katsina; we have agents working for about four banks, all of them we allocated the sum of over N120 million of the new

currency for disbursement to those agents.

"And the agents are supposed to collect from the banks N500,000 per week to disburse in their communities. We know that there are some communities where there are no banks.

"And it's difficult for people in those places to go and deposit their old currency to get the redesigned ones", he said.

He said the apex bank had asked commercial banks to open throughout the weekend, including Sunday, to allow people to go and deposit their old notes before the deadline.

"We have also advised people that if they have challenges about banks, not

opening or not disbursing new notes on their machines, to report them to CBN immediately so that we can send our monitoring team.

"And we assured the banks that we have money to go round for them to be able to carry out the exercise," he said.

He also pointed out that there have been appeals by people for the extension of the deadline, but however said there are no new directives on the extension, hence, January 31 deadline remains

According to Umar, people have been advised to adhere to the deadline and deposit their old money so that they can always withdraw the new notes.



THE JULY 1966 COUNTER COUP

GENERAL AGUIYI IRONSI

REMINISCENCES

THE JULY 1966 counter-coup that toppled the first military government of General Aguiyi Ironsi has one living witness: his ADC, then Lieutenant Sani Bello, who was with him that fateful morning in Government House, Ibadan.

For the first time, now Colonel Sani Bello, former Military Governor of Kano State and multi-millionaire businessman, speaks to Trust Television on how Ironsi and his host Colonel Fajuyi lost their lives and how he survived to tell the story.

CATCH UP ON THIS BIT OF LIVING HISTORY ON TRUST TELEVISION, SATURDAY, 28TH JANUARY (8-9pm); REPEAT THURSDAY BY 10PM AND IN SUNDAY TRUST, JANUARY 29TH.



COLONEL (RTD) SANI BELLO

GUEST

SHOWING ON



28th
JAN 2023
8pm

SUNDAY TRUST

29th
JAN 2023



SUNDAY

MAGAZINE



City of David



Inside Daud's palace

Inside the 3,000-year-old palace of Prophet Daud, Suleyman

From Hamisu Kabir Matazu, Jerusalem

My journey to Jerusalem was an adventure that millions of people around the world would want to take to have a feeling of emotion.

Like any other visitor, I had formed a picture of Jerusalem in my imagination before the journey began, mostly from history books and media reports about its holiness and the crisis that currently engulfed the land.

It was a weeklong tour for selected Nigerian journalists, organised by the Israeli government through its Embassy in Nigeria, to introduce the pen warlords to some new breakthroughs and advances the country attained in many spheres of development.

However, for me, the most fascinating aspect of the tour was my encounter with new discoveries of relics and artifacts that will soon open a new vista of tourism, connecting Jews, Christians and Muslims to their roots of 2,500 to 3,000 years.

Shira Alan, a tour guide at City of David (Annabi Daud), revealed to *Daily Trust on Sunday* that five active excavations - still not made public - are currently ongoing in eastern Jerusalem to produce more solid evidence on ways that most of the prophets of God lived in the holy city of Jerusalem.

Of these discoveries, what kept me spellbound was the palace of Annabi Daud and Suleyman (David and Solomon) and the 3,000-year-old road leading to the historic pool of Siloam, where Jesus (Prophet Isa) healed the blind and lame.

For me, no matter which of the three faiths you practise, you can't be indifferent to these two new discoveries, especially if the end result of these excavations uncovered the original relics that are acceptable to all.

Pilgrims/tourists like Jennet Michaels believe that these discoveries would provide an opportunity for millions of faithful across the world to march on the three millennia-old road, and to get practical experiences of what the scriptures taught them.

"Within a square mile you are able to see and touch something we have heard for generations but not seen, especially now that people want proof and science," she said.

Earlier, our guide said that on average, Israel received over 1million visitors annually, and with these new discoveries, there would be a surge in the number of people to visit the holy sites.

However, since I set foot in the Old City of Jerusalem, every building has its unique story, and my clouds of ambiguity began to vanish soon after I started visualising what I read in some religion and history books.

As a Muslim, my gaze was focused on the Masjid Al-aqsa, recalling how Prophet Suleyman, who was bestowed with the ability to speak to jinn and animals, commended the jinn to restore the masjid, and the spiritual journey of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) to heaven through the same holy site.

However, my curiosity on Prophet Suleyman became more when Alan revealed that the palace of David was discovered, saying that archaeologists started excavating it in 2004 and were about to unveil it, but prior to that, nobody knew where the palace of David was.

According to history, it was where Prophet Suleyman (Solomon) ruled for 30 years following the death of his father, Prophet Daud (David).

According to the bible, Prophet Daud (David) said to the entire people that, "My son Suleyman (Solomon), the one whom God has chosen, is just an inexperienced

young man, and the task is great, for this palace is not for man, but for the Lord God.

"So I have made every effort to provide what is needed for the temple of my God, including the gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, as well as a large amount of onyx, settings of antimony and other stones, all kinds of precious stones, and alabaster (1 Chronicles 29:1-2) - emphasis mine.

Although the discovery was still not made public, I, along with my colleagues, was taken round to see the level of excavation work and how the palace looks like.

Alan said that several layers of the building erected centuries after centuries were excavated by archaeologists until they reached the bedrock of the original palace.

She said, after the demise of Prophet Daud and his son Sulayman, some empires came to the city and waged wars, destroyed the city and kicked everyone out before building on top of the old city.

Alan explained that at that time, people didn't have bulldozers and tractors to remove the rubbles, "So they build right on top of the

city's remnants.

"They would live on top for many years until another empire came, waged war, destroyed the city and kicked them out. Once again, they would plait it up and build another city on top. This continued to happen until it ended up in many huge layers, each one a different era, empire and time period.

"When archaeologists dug the layers, they found the base of the mounting, so they could not go deeper any longer, that's the high and most significant point, and the most protected part of the city.

"They reached the last layer of all the layers, looked around and found a massive building with 9 bedrooms; that is a huge house. 2,000 years back, there was only one person who had 9 bedrooms in his house, the king," she said.

Inside the palace, our correspondent observed a huge wall that surrounded the rectangular building with an inner face of the wall that has about four layers and a pillar to the eastern wall, which has a royal design.

Alan explained that archaeological investigations revealed that the design on the pillar was not popular in Jerusalem 3,000 years ago, suspecting that the particular design was from the neighbouring empires.

I looked all around the rooms to see if I could find the great throne of Bilqis bint Sharahil (the queen of Saba) said to be adorned with gold and different kinds of jewels and pearls. But alas, not a single artifact was on display so far within the palace, but Alan displayed 2 seals that were found during the excavation, and both bear names that were mentioned in the bible.

For the well designed pillar, Alan said when King David (Prophet Daud) was

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Continued on page 18

Continued from page 17

ruling Jerusalem, he created political ties with the neighbouring empires and created peace in the region.

“And, when you became friends with your neighbours, what do you do? You send them gifts.

“It is in Samuel 5 that the king of Panisha sent messengers to David, carpenters, stone smiths and they built a house for David” she said.

Road to the Pool of Siloam

The Pool of Siloam is one aspect of history that every Christian would want to explore because of its religious significance. “It’s where Jesus healed the blind and lame” our tour guide said.

She said the pool, which was first constructed some 2,700 years ago would be fully excavated and opened to the public for the first time in modern history.

Walking down a sloppy road in the southern part of Jerusalem’s City of David, we descended into a large tunnel where the excavation was going on, in a strict location.

Alan said the pool originally functioned as part of Jerusalem’s ancient water system, but later become a site of religious significance for ancient Jewish people.

“Religious pilgrims used it as a “mikveh” or ritual bath to cleanse themselves before visiting the holy temple,

She said the pool later took on a religious significance for Christians too. “According to the Gospel of John, the fourth of the four New Testament narratives, a blind man gained sight after Jesus told him to wash in the Pool of Siloam,” she added.

She said that in the coming months the excavation would completely expose the ancient pool, allowing pilgrims and other visitors to view it as part of a tourist route.

On the length of the pilgrimage route, she explained that it is one and a half a mile that would take pilgrims back to 3,000 and 2,000 years of original heritage.

“This is the original heritage we talk about, feel connected with and learnt in the bible, other scriptures and things like that so that we can actually see it, touch it and hear it. It will come about only in the matter of faith, but a matter of fact you can see and become physical.

“You will experience it so that you can stand on the actual road and the preservation of the heritage when it is not just a speech but a physical connection. It is a kind of preservation we haven’t had in much of our history, but it will be uncovered and preserved for generations to come.

Inside the Old City of Jerusalem

When I walked into the Old City of Jerusalem I realised that the city is a land of many prophets, where different religions co-exist despite differences.

However, it was traditionally divided into four uneven quarters: the Muslim Quarters, Christian Quarters, Armenian Quarters and the Jewish Quarters.

Surprisingly, the sheer diversity within the walls, all the three religions considered the city as the holiest sacred ground, where the only God they all worship answered their prayers.

First, we walked to the Western Wall, also known as the “Wailing Wall” or the “Kotel,” which is the most religious site in the world for the Jewish people.

There, we saw Jews of different ages and gender in their hundreds, observing prayers. Some were reciting it and many others placed their written prayers in the cracks of the last remaining outer wall of the ancient Jewish temple,

The wall was split into two sections - males occupied the left area and the female congregation took over the right side.

Inside the 3,000-year-old palace of Prophet Daud, Suleyman



Inside the tunnel leading to the pool of Siloam



Alan, our guide, explaining the discovery of the palace



Another tourist site

What I will never forget about the Jews is their unity in approach and love for each other wherever and whenever I saw them.

However, at a walking instance from the Wailing Wall lies the Christian Quarters, which contains about 40 Christian holy places. Among them were the places we visited, including where Jesus was crucified and his tomb.

Our guide also said the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was the first among the

Christians’ holiest place, and thousands of tourists and pilgrims go there every year for fun and to perform religious rites.

The Muslim Quarters

Visiting the Al-aqsa mosque was one of the desires that pushed me to embark on the journey. Sadly, it wasn’t part of the visitations list handed to us by the Israeli officials, and personal efforts to visit the holy site wasn’t possible due to the back-to-back programmes that always began

very early and ended late at night.

However, from a distance, I saw the Dome of the Rock, which is Islam’s third holiest site, sitting on the Temple Mount. This shrine hosted the foundation stone that marks the spot where Prophet Muhammad began his spiritual Night Journey to heaven.

It is believed that the foundation stone was the first thing God created when forming the world. The building is decorated with beautiful mosaics, and its sparkling golden dome has become an iconic part of Jerusalem’s skyline.

Apart from Jerusalem, there is possibly no other city in the world where you can hear three languages being spoken by the inhabitants to a soundtrack of Church bells, the voice of Mu’azzin that call Muslims for prayers and the chatter of tourists from every corner of the globe.

Also, the streets that visitors take to different quarters of the city often intertwine and overlap, making it difficult for one to delineate his exact direction, unless by the help of a tour guide or vendors seated outside their shop fronts.

If you are lost in Jerusalem, simply ask these vendors for direction and they will tell you where to go and how long it will take you to get there.

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TAMBARi

Extra

CULINARY CORNER



Spicy Edikang-Ikong soup

PHOTO: Internet

Compiled by Rosemary Etim Bassey

This tasty cuisine originates from Nigeria's South-South area, more specifically in Akwa Ibom and Cross River states. This soup can be served with any choice of swallow and white rice.

Ingredients

Beef, ponmo, stock fish

(precooked), dried fish, shelled periwinkles, crayfish, meat stock, onion, palm oil, ground Cameroon pepper or habanero peppers, waterleaves, ugwu leaf, salt and/or bouillon powder.

Recipe

To prepare the meat, stockfish, and ponmo, combine them with the spice cubes and finely sliced onions. When the

meat and fish are cooked, there should be the least amount of water in the pot.

Take the meat out. To make sure there are no little bones in the stock, sieve it.

Add the ground crayfish and shelled periwinkles to the pot along with the palm oil, cover it, and cook for about five minutes while stirring often.

Add the chopped ugwu and the chopped water leaves. Mix in the pepper.

Cook for no more than one minute while covered.

Stir in the cooked meat and fish.

Stir everything together. When finished, season with salt to taste.

Serve with preferred swallow.

HEALTHY LIVING

Natural remedies to soothe heartburns

Heartburn has nothing to do with your heart, despite what the name suggests. Instead, it's a burning sensation in your chest brought on by a build-up of stomach acid in your oesophagus, the 10-inch tube that connects your mouth to your stomach. Heartburn can occur and continue from a few minutes to several hours.

Here are some easy methods to lessen and even prevent your symptoms if you're looking to stop acid reflux or get rid of heartburn quickly:

Eat ripe banana: Bananas are a fairly alkaline meal due to their high potassium content. Research suggests that it might aid in preventing stomach acid from irritating your oesophagus. Unripe bananas, on the other hand, are less alkaline, starch-heavy, and may even cause acid

reflux in certain people. So make sure you select a ripe banana.

Chew sugar free gum: Gum chewing causes more saliva to be produced. One study found that doing so can help prevent heartburn because saliva can encourage swallowing, which can help keep acid levels down and neutralise stomach acid that has refluxed into your oesophagus.

Avoid late meals, snacking before bed and eating before exercising: A full stomach when lying down might cause acid reflux and

aggravate heartburn symptoms. To give your stomach enough



time to empty before night, avoid eating three hours before going to sleep. Additionally, you might want to

wait at least two hours before working out.

Wear loose fitting clothes: If you frequently experience heartburn, wearing clothes that squeeze your abdomen and tight belts may be to blame.

Quit smoking: Smoking decreases saliva production and affects the efficiency of the valve that prevents stomach acid from entering the oesophagus, which increases the likelihood of heartburn. Giving up smoking might lessen acid reflux's frequency and intensity, and in some circumstances, even make it go away.

Source: www.houstonmethodist.org

Hello, there!

Welcome to another prosperous week. The point of life is to experience it fully, to reach out excitedly and fearlessly for fresher, more rewarding experiences. Accept whatever occurs in your life for everything happens for a reason. Looking forward to what tasty recipes we have this week? Head over to our culinary corner as we take you South with a spicy Edikang Ikong recipe and a yummy berry banana oats smoothie.

Going for a look that screams regal and royalty? Our women's fashion page is packed with a variety of lace styles that will leave you looking and feeling like the queen that you are.

Nothing completes a traditional attire like its matching traditional cap. Our men's fashion page features different traditional caps and how best to pair them with your traditional attire.

A man's beard is his pride. Therefore, they have to stay groomed and neat all the time. Our beauty section offers beard grooming tips that will give you a fresh look and keep your beards looking neat and healthy.

Until next week, stay safe and remain blessed.

Amina Alhassan
(Editor)

aminaalhassan@dailytrust.com

Berry banana oats smoothie



Start your day off right with this delicious and wholesome simple Strawberry Banana Oat Smoothie.

Ingredients

Frozen strawberries, banana, quick oats and unsweetened almond milk

Recipe

Blend all ingredients in a blender until they are smooth and creamy.

If you prefer a thinner texture, you can add more milk.

Add your preferred toppings after pouring into a glass.

WOMEN'S FASHION

Look regal in chic

Compiled by Rosemary Etim Bassey

Lace has a rich and unique vibe. Lace fashions are lovely, stylish, and appropriate for any situation. Whatever style you choose to create using lace fabric, you can be sure that it will make you stand out.



SOCIETY NEWS

Compiled by Rosemary Etim Bassey

Idris Ajimobi, Fatima Ganduje celebrate newborn



Idris Abolaji Ajimobi, the son of the late former governor of Oyo State, Senator Abiola Ajimobi, and his wife Fatima, the daughter of Kano State Governor, Abdullahi Ganduje, are celebrating the birth of their first child.

Last week, the couple gave birth to a girl, who is

their first child, and held her naming ceremony in the United Kingdom.

The naming was attended by the former first lady of Oyo State, Florence Ajimobi, as well as her in-laws, the Gandujes, and other close relatives.

The couple tied the knot in 2018

Thousands honour Late Ambassador Ademola Seriki



It was a shutdown in Lagos state as over 1000 guests attended the 40th Fidau prayers and celebration of life for Late Ambassador Ademola Seriki.

In viral videos shared on social media, the ceremony was a combination of tears and smiles as some mourned the passing of the late ambassador while others celebrated his long and eventful life on earth.

Present at the event was the Governor of Lagos State and his wife, Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu and Dr Ibijoke

Sanwo-Olu, Minister of Foreign affairs, Mr Godfrey Onyema, Mrs Shade Okoya, Late Ambassador seriki's three wives; Alhaja Oluremi Seriki, Mrs Wosilat Okoya-Seriki, Hajia Omosholape Safiya Demola Seriki, his children and many other well-wishers.

In a good will message, Alimah Seriki, Mrs Wosilat Okoya-Seriki's daughter said "My Dad dedicated his life to the community, his immediate family and friends"

It was indeed a celebration of life.

Regina Daniels shows off cash gift from husband

Nollywood actress Regina Daniels received \$100,000 and N100,000 brand-new notes as gifts from her husband, Ned Nwoko. Daniels announced the news in a video and on her Instagram Stories on different days this week.

The Nollywood actress displayed the new naira notes her hubby handed her in a video she published on Monday.

On Thursday, she wrote on her IG story:



"Okay! I can't believe an alert of 100,000 USD was sitting pretty in my account since yesterday afternoon. And I'm just discovering it. This husband has lots of mind-blowing doings up his sleeve, mehhhhnnn. Thank you, baby."

Traditional cap flair

Compiled by Rosemary Etim Bassey

It's not necessary to use traditional caps. However, having them is necessary. They assist in giving traditional clothing a finished appearance. Consider pairing your traditional attire with the ideal cap if you want to give it more flair and style.



ETIQUETTE

Social etiquette for colleagues



Compiled by Rosemary Etim Bassey

A person must act in a manner that is acceptable in society. At work, one should take themselves seriously and act reasonably. A person cannot act the same way at work as he does at home. Etiquette-challenged individuals are never taken seriously by their co-workers.

It will be challenging for an individual to survive at work if they are alone. To stand out at work, one must be an effective team player. In order to come up with better solutions, he must communicate with and share ideas with his co-workers. To produce results more quickly and effectively, employees must cooperate.

Here are a few social etiquette tips that will help foster positive working relationships between co-workers:

Respect your fellow workers: Misbehaving with co-workers ruins the environment and spreads negativity. No matter their ethnicity, caste, nationality, job title, or any other distinction, treat all co-workers equally.

Do not gossip about colleagues to fellow colleagues: Spreading untrue rumours about co-workers is not at all what a professional should be doing. It is improper to bring up co-worker relationships in the workplace because they have nothing to do with work. In the workplace, stay away from finger-pointing.

Invite new employees to join your group: To assist in integrating new employees into the company, think about bringing them along when you take breaks or go out to lunch. This can raise morale and cooperation at work.

Be cordial: Be cordial to everyone. Smile and say hello to everyone. Making faces at people is impolite. Become a little more flexible. You can't always get what you want. Never let anything get to you.

Be polite: Be courteous to your co-workers. Never respond angrily to someone who is shouting at you. Don't follow the crowd. Saying "sorry" won't make you smaller.

Offer help whenever you can: In each manner you can, assist your co-workers. Never give them bad advice. If you have a friend at work, you will enjoy your job more.

Respect boundaries: Asking for favours from co-workers should never be done. Never ask someone to pick up your son from school or go food shopping for you. It is not professional.

Never interfere in your colleague's work: Never disrupt a colleague's job. To open someone else's mail or read a co-worker's email is impolite. Respect the privacy of your co-worker. Never snoop around in other people's cubicles. Before going into your boss's cabin, knock.

Beard care 101

Compiled by Rosemary Etim Bassey

Healthy beard habits are essential for maintaining the healthiest possible facial hair and skin. It takes time, patience, and a consistent care routine to grow a nice beard. Taking time to take care of your facial hair has many advantages, including improving your appearance and preventing oil build up and dry, itchy skin.

Maintaining a consistent grooming routine will train your hair to lie in the desired manner, making overall upkeep easier. As soon as you make the decision to grow a beard, you should begin maintaining it. To ensure that the hair grows in evenly, you should repress the impulse to trim, style, or totally shave your face for the first 4-6 weeks. However, this does not imply you should wait until then to begin using a beard care routine and beard care products.

Follow these beard care guidelines and you'll have a healthy, great-looking beard:

Wash your beards regularly: Beauty experts advise cleaning your beard roughly twice a week, but depending on your skin type and level of activity, this may need to be altered. You shouldn't wash your beard with ordinary shampoo because the hair on your face is likely to be considerably rougher than the hair on the rest of your body. At least once a week, use a beard softener after your wash to replenish your skin's essential moisture.

Dry your beards: Your hair follicles experience more tension and stress the longer water remains on your beard. If you decide to use a towel as your drying tool, be careful to pat your beard dry rather than rubbing it. When damp, your hair follicles are more fragile, so it's crucial to treat them gently. In addition to damaging hair follicles, vigorous rubbing can tangle your beard hairs and even rip them out.

Soften your beards: Your beard needs moisture if it is prickly, itchy, or if it has beard ruff. Consistent grooming practises and the use of moisturising creams might assist ease discomfort.

Apply beard oil: A beard's best buddy is definitely beard oil. It is not only easy to use, but it also maintains your skin and beard soft, moisturised, and manageable. Additionally, it has a wonderful scent and gives your beard a shine that shows everyone you take good care of it. Beard oil should be your first choice in the morning if you just have time for one product. Apply it immediately to your beard

after first massaging it into your palms. Use your fingers to smooth it evenly through your hair and down to your face skin.

Brush and comb your beards: Your beard will be healthier overall if you know how to properly brush or comb it. When towel-damp or first thing in the morning, brushing your beard provides

volume, smoothness, and sheen while also dispersing your skin's natural oils and exfoliating the skin underneath. Beard combs easily detangle and style longer beard hairs while comfortably gliding through moist strands.

Trim your beards: Regular trimming will keep your beard in the desired form, promote

healthy beard development, and guarantee a bigger, fuller beard. To get things going, use a comb or brush to detangle the hairs in your beard and direct them downward. Grab your beard shears to trim the stache and any remaining hairs if you are satisfied with the length. For large parts of lengthier lengths, a beard trimmer works well.





TAMBARi

Extra

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Page 24

Dylan Thomas Prize 2023 longlist announced

Art is a form of therapy
- Oriana Jemide

Oriana Jemide is a multidisciplinary creative working within visual arts and creative writing. Her work focuses on developing sensory architectural and landscape sets through combining multiple mediums including painting, sculpture, photography and sound.

How are you using art as a tool for change? This is always a tricky question to answer. It's like when I get asked to summarise what I do in one sentence. There are a few ways I use art as a tool for change, and I always want to talk about them. I think I will start with my

work as an artist, moving through the art world with my practice which is one piece, and then the organisations I'm building to create what I consider to be more tangible change is what I will land with.

As a Black female artist of Nigerian heritage who actually grew up in Nigeria, I feel there is

an expectation of the sort of artist I am to be, especially in terms of what I create. My decision to go against the grain is a tool for change. Most Nigerian artists and generally Black artists, at least the ones who have commercial success, are often portrait artists whose work has a very African

identity or socio-political element. Industry experts have often told me there is no market for Black landscape artists and I will sell more if I paint portraits.

Although I have painted portraits in the past, I consider myself more of a landscape and textile painter. That is the work

that feels more meaningful to make. I want my work to serve as a form of healing, and to me, there is nothing more healing than the beauty of our surroundings and our relationship with them. I see my choice to stick to the style of work I make as a way of

Continued on page 24

Continued from page 23

Art is a form of therapy - Oriana Jemide



changing the narrative around Black art and what is considered black art worthy of recognition and success. I see it as carving out a path for other Black artists and creatives to do original and supported work.

Art goes beyond just pictures and objects that people like to look at and touch but can create more meaning in their lives. My company, "The Medela school," is a visual arts platform that provides educational and well-being support through art classes and workshops. At its core, the Medela School focuses on the intersection of creativity, community, education, and well-being, with visual art being its conduit. For me, there is this big piece on the tangible and measurable impact art has on people's everyday lives as a way to change the narrative of its value.

What is The Medela School? How is this initiative intertwined with your creativity?

We describe ourselves as "the community where everyone is an artist." We are passionate about creating greater accessibility to visual arts to promote joy and learning for every individual who encounters our work.

We see ourselves as building an ecosystem where art is considered essential, not an extracurricular activity. Through our skill-based art classes and therapeutic art workshops, we hope to transform society's view on the value of visual art, making it something everyone can be a part of.

This project came from my desire to create tangible change through art. It is one thing to produce artwork that promotes healing but another to empower others to experience healing for themselves through art.

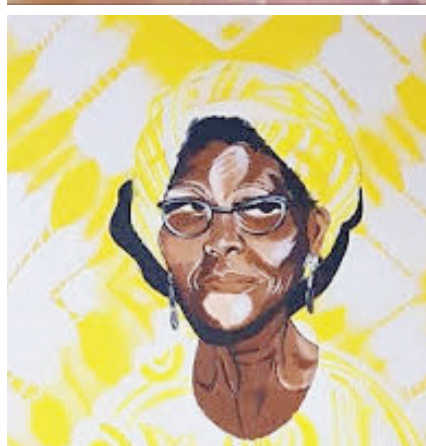
I've always known that I wanted people to share my art and feel healed, but at some point, that was not enough. I wanted to take it a step further, and creating "The Medela School" was that step.

Is art a form of therapy?

The simple answer is yes. Research reveals that art can be a great way to identify symptoms of mental health conditions as it captures the true, raw emotions of an individual.

Additionally, it is sometimes used as an alternative to talking therapy for those who struggle with expressing themselves verbally.

Research reveals that art can be a great way to identify symptoms of mental health conditions as it captures the true, raw emotions of an individual



It helps individuals process their emotions in a way that becomes coherent to them and those trying to support them.

What does the future hold for The Medela School?

The goal of "The Medela School" is to provide access to visual art for everyone, whether it's them using it as a form of therapy or nurturing their artistic skills. We hope anyone will see that it is something they can be a part of.

So, our mission is to try out all the ways we can make that happen. For now, it looks like physical communities gathering to make art regardless of age, gender, or race. We are focused on the community element of our work at the moment.

In the future, we aim to extend our reach by moving online. We have plans for an online platform so that anyone from anywhere can access the practice of making art, build their artistic knowledge, and see its value in improving their lives, especially their well-being.

We hope to one day own an arts and well-being centre that will house all the services we provide first in the UK, with hopes to open up in other countries. Finally, we hope to develop a model, an accredited curriculum that organisations can adopt to explore the need for visual art in everyday life.

How does your Initiative inspire others to explore your art form?

In terms of encouraging people to explore visual art, we pride ourselves on meeting people where they are. Whether they are complete novices or budding artists, we hope that we can provide each individual with tools to take them to the next stage of their journey.

People often ask why not provide one service, art as a skill or art as well-being? In my five years of teaching and facilitating art, I've found that the two are closely interlinked, and having a holistic approach allows people to reap the full benefit.

I've come to observe that those who explore art for their well-being enjoy it so much that they become interested in developing it as a skill and vice versa. We don't want to leave any stone unturned.

Culled from tcsnetwork.co.uk

Dylan Thomas Prize 2023 longlist announced

By agency report

Warsan Shire, Okwiri Oduor, Arinze Ifeakandu and Derek Owusu are on the longlist for the Swansea University Dylan Thomas Prize 2023 announced.

Dylan Thomas was a Welsh poet and writer who became widely popular in his lifetime and remained so after his premature death at the age of 39. In his honour, the International Dylan Thomas Prize aimed at encouraging raw creative talent worldwide was set up by Swansea University. The £20,000 Prize is awarded annually to the best published or produced literary work in the English language, written by an author aged 39 or under.

Past winners of the award included Fiona McFarlane, Max Porter, Joshua Ferris, Claire Vaye Watkins, Maggie Shipstead and Rachel Trezise. In 2018, Kayo Chingonyi went home with the honours for his poetry collection Kumukanda.

The jury this year is chaired by esteemed British producer and Books Editor for BBC Radio Di Speirs, alongside prize-winning Welsh author and lecturer in English at Swansea University, Jon Gower, American bestselling author and 2012 winner of the Swansea University Dylan Thomas Prize winner Maggie Shipstead, British poet and the founder of Octavia Poetry Collective for Women of Colour, Rachel Long, and Nepali Indian author and 2013 Prize shortlistee Prajwal Parajuly.



The longlist shared today featuring twelve writers with four of African descent and they and their genre of writing is; God's Children Are Little Broken Things, Arinze Ifeakandu (Orion, Weidenfeld & Nicolson) – short story collection; Things They Lost, Okwiri Oduor (Oneworld) – novel; Losing the Plot, Derek Owusu (Canongate Books) – novel; Bless the Daughter Raised by a Voice in Her Head, Warsan Shire (Chatto & Windus) – poetry collection.

Derek Owusu tweeted, "So happy that my second novel, Losing the Plot, has been long listed for the prestigious Dylan Thomas Prize, along side some amazing books!"

The Swansea University Dylan Thomas Prize shortlist will be announced on Thursday 23 March followed by the winner's ceremony held in Swansea on Thursday 11 May, prior to International Dylan Thomas Day on Sunday 14 May.

President Buhari inaugurates JK Randle Centre for Yoruba Culture and History

President Muhammadu Buhari has inaugurated the John Randle Centre for Yoruba Culture and History in Lagos.

The President in company of Gov. Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State; Ooni of Ife, Oba Adeyeye Ogunwusi and many other stakeholders in the entertainment and tourism industries toured the entire facility.

"I declare this site open," the President said.

The John Randle Centre for Yoruba Culture and History forms part of the urban regeneration at the heart of Lagos Island, a part of the city steeped in rich history.

The centre, which used to serve as a hub for cultural tourism, recreation and entertainment, was originally built in 1928.

Now redeveloped as a cultural attraction, it is meant to reveal to visitors the time-honoured story of Yoruba ethnicity, one of the most influential ethnicities in Nigeria.

Mr Damilare Ojewole, the site architect, who took visitors on tour of the facility explained that the centre brings to the fore the origin of Yoruba culture.

Ojewole said that the centre educates individuals on the creation of Yoruba empire through 'Ile-Ori', 'Ori-Olokun', 'Esu' and more.

According to him, there is another session for recreation where there are large sized swimming pool



President Muhammadu Buhari inaugurates the newly redeveloped tourist site, John Randle Centre for Yoruba Culture and History in Lagos.

and restaurants.

"This place, you will learn about happenings in the Yoruba empire in the olden days and now, the customs and practices.

"We have exhibitions on how naming ceremonies were conducted in the old, divinations, it reveals the various masquerades in Yoruba land, we have contemporary art section, fashion and more.

"At another session, we have a gadget for visitors to check the meaning of their names and we have a good ambience for tales by moonlight.

"The permanent exhibition here celebrates the language, rituals, festivals, deities and ancestry of the Yoruba people at this time and will ensure that the legacy of Yoruba culture and history is kept alive in Lagos," he said.

The centre will afford Yoruba experts and novices to be able to dive into the stories, myths and traditions of Yoruba heritage.

The space provides unbeatable atmosphere for learning programmes, art installations and live music events.

The centre is said to serve as a place for remembrance and reconnection for Yoruba people from Cuba, Brazil, Haiti, America and the Caribbeans, as well as the rest of Southwest Nigeria.

It reveals how Yoruba culture continues to influence musicians, artistes and creative innovators in the present day.

The architecture of the centre takes its cues from traditional Yoruba architecture and craftsmanship, using visual metaphors to reflect the strong art and philosophical origins of the language and culture

The building form responds to its context in the shape of a fractal, rises from the earth and leans forward (O tesiwaju), reflecting the progressive nature of the Yorubas. (NAN)



We spend N2.2m to transport 350 tomato baskets to Aba-Katsina merchants

From Mahmoud Idris, Katsina & Ado Abubakar Musa, Jos

Merchants that ferry tomato from Dantankari, Tafoki, Danja and other villages of Katsina State, have decried slim profit margin in their business, courtesy of high cost of living across the country.

According to them, the ravaging economic situation in country has made the prices of everything needed in the business to triple, thereby edging out those with small capital.

The public relations officer of the Tomato Dealers Association, Dantankari, Dandume Local Government Area, Kabiru Abdullahi, said the business was now tough for both farmers and merchants.

“Farmers are crying over the cost of inputs, such as seeds, pesticides and fertiliser, while we are complaining about the cost of baskets, cover paper, transportation and labour for loading and offloading.

“The cost of transporting 350 baskets from this Dantankari village to Aba in Abia State is N2.2million due to high cost of diesel and dangers involved in going to the South East. Not



■ Baskets of tomato ready for transportation to the Eastern part of the country

every transporter can dare the dreaded sit-at-home order and other heinous activities of gunmen in the region,” he said.

He added that drivers demand not less than N1.5m upfront payment to cover fuel and other expenses while in transit.

A merchant who transports goods to South East markets from Katsina farms, Elizabeth

Atondu, said that before now, they transported a basket of tomatoes from Katsina to Onitsha, Anambra State at N2,000 only, but this year, a basket can only get to Onitsha at nothing less than N6,000.

“Before now, we were buying a bundle of covering paper at N15,000, but presently, it costs N110,000. Everything has gone extremely high. Thirty pieces of

empty baskets were N15,000, but this year, they are sold at N26,000. In the recent past, we were paying N600,000 to transport a truck-load of tomato to the East, but now, it is N2.2m. Therefore, if I buy a basket of tomato at N2,000 here at farm and put up all the necessary expenses for it to reach Onitsha market, it must be sold from N10,000 upward for me to realise

a meaningful gain,” she said.

She prayed that the recent changes in some naira notes and the cashless policy would help in reshaping the country’s economy.

On the side of tomato farmers, Daily Trust on Sunday learnt that high cost of inputs had forced them to reduce the volume of their production this year.

Harisu Abdullahi, the chairman of Dandume Local Government Irrigation Farmers Association, said because many of the farmers could not afford adequate fertiliser, tomato did not yield well this year, making its supply less than that of the previous years.

“One can imagine that we bought Urea fertiliser at N23,500 and NPK variety at N28,500; this is besides the N70,000 for water pump machine; we have not talked about pesticides and other inputs. This unfortunate development has edged out many of our farmers out of the business.

“The painful thing is the way the market price of tomato has crashed due to the deadline for the change of some naira notes.

“Many of our merchants are struggling to change their money at the banks instead of patronising our produce.”

Abdullahi extolled Muntari

Continued on page 26

MARKET WATCH

Compiled by: Hussein Yahaya, Vincent A. Yusuf, Hope Abah, Ibrahim Musa Giginyu & Risikat Ramoni

DAWANAU GRAIN MARKET, KANO

Crop	Per/KG	Price (N)
Grains		
Maize	100kg	22,000
Beans	100kg	42,000
Sorghum	100kg	20,000
Millet	100kg	22,500
Wheat	100kg	43,000
Rice	100kg	61,000
Rice (Paddy)	100kg	23,000
Tomato	Big basket	7,000

DANDUME GRAIN MARKET, KATSINA

Crop	Per/KG	Price (N)
Grains		
Maize	100kg	21,000
Beans	100kg	42,000
Sorghum	100kg	23,000
Millet	100kg	23,500
Wheat	100kg	44,000
Rice	100kg	60,000
Rice (Paddy)	100kg	22,500
Tomato	Big basket	9,000

KUMO GRAIN MARKET, GOMBE STATE

Crop	Per/KG	Price (N)
Grains		
Maize	100kg	21,000
Beans	100kg	42,000
Sorghum	100kg	23,000
Millet	100kg	23,500
Wheat	100kg	44,000
Rice	100kg	60,000
Rice (Paddy)	100kg	22,500
Tomato	Big basket	9,000

YANBUHU MARKET, PLATEAU STATE

Crop	Per/KG	Price (N)
Grains		
Maize	100kg	22,000
Rice (locally)	100kg	68,000
Rice (Paddy)	100kg	30,000
Beans	100kg	37,000
Wheat	100kg	68,000
Soya beans	100kg	36,000
Millet	100kg	26,000

BAKORI GRAINS MARKET, KATSINA

Crop	Per/KG	Price (N)
Grains		
Maize	100kg	22,000
Sorghum	100kg	21,000
Rice (Paddy)	100kg	68,000
Beans	100kg	35,000
Soybeans	100kg	33,000
Millet	100kg	28,000
Wheat	100kg	55,000
Tomato	(B/Basket)	3,000

UGBA MARKET, LOGO LGA, BENUE STATE

Crop	Per/KG	Price (N)
Grains		
Rice (local)	50kg	31,000
Maize	(29L bag)	42,000
Millet	100kg	31,500
big Beans	100kg	52,000
small Beans	100kg	48,000
Guinea corn	100kg	32,000
Sesame	100kg	66,000
Soybean	100kg	35,000
Bambara	100kg	53,000
Tomatoes	Big basket	_____

ATTENTION READERS: In some markets, prices of products are relative to the size of the bags. some bags(29L and 30L) weigh far more than 100kg. The case in question are markets in Nasarawa and Benue states.



Grain business suffers as CBN's January deadline approaches

From Mahmoud Idris, Katsina

Businesses in some grain markets in Katsina State have been seriously affected as the deadline set by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) for old naira notes ends Tuesday.

Checks by our reporter revealed that most of the farmers in rural areas were not adequately sensitised about the policy.

Mansur Sani, a grain merchant in Dandume, said that as the deadline approached, most farmers without bank accounts halted supply of grains to the market to avoid being paid in old notes, a situation that is starving the market of assorted produce.

"As you can see, most of us and our agents are out to buy farm produce, but only few farmers supply the market with the goods. Their fear is that as the CBN's deadline is fast approaching, they don't want to be paid in old notes and be left struggling to change them in the banks," he said.

Sani added that the situation had occasioned an increase in the prices of available produce in the market.

"Last week, we bought maize at N20,000, sorghum N18,000, soybeans N30,000, but today, because they are short in supply we are buying them at N23,000, N21,000 and N33,000 respectively," Sani said.

Mani Gambo, a farmer in Dandume Local Government Area, said the action of some of the farmers was not in any way a protest but a tactical way of avoiding the traffic of people in banks.

"Many of us have no business with banks, and are not willing to engage in the process of changing the old naira notes; hence we suspended business in the markets until the new notes are available. Even those that are dealing with banks do not want to join long queues of customers seeking the new notes at this material time. Moreover, it is obvious that commercial banks do not have sufficient new notes



Coconut seeds

to dispense," Gambo said.

However, in Funtua, a semi urban town, the story was quiet different last Monday as both farmers and merchants transacted smoothly.

Hussaini Isah Funtua, a grain dealer, said there was fear of uncertainty among the farmers

Our customers are mostly from Sokoto and we have already informed them via phone that we suspended rice milling until after January 31, that is why you can see the rice section of the market is sparsely populated today

but their level of understanding of the policy was better than that of farmers in remote areas.

He said, "The issue is that there was no adequate sensitisation in rural areas, so most farmers were not aware of the validity period given by the CBN.

"Some merchants that are well informed about the policy are not helping matters as instead of sensitising farmers, they instill fear and hatred of the policy through misinformation."

Funtua added that businesses could only continue properly after new naira notes are available in the markets.

When *Daily Trust on Sunday* visited Bakori grain market last Tuesday, both farm produce and buyers were scanty.

Umar Sani, a local rice miller, said some of them had suspended milling pending the release of new naira notes by commercial banks.

"Our customers are mostly from Sokoto and we have already informed them via phone that we suspended rice milling until after January 31, that is why you can see the rice section of the market is

sparsely populated today."

He added that because of the limited supply, a 100kg bag was sold at N68,000 instead of N60,000 it cost last week.

A grain broker in the market, Muhammadu Tarzana, said the absence of the commodity made its price fluctuate.

"Price of maize here started from N22,000 to N24,000, depending on quality. Millet has gone up to N28,000, and it is virtually absent in the market. Those supplying it from Dankama in this state and Potiskum in Yobe have held up till after January 31," he said.

Tarzana called on the CBN to reconsider its timeline and move the deadline to at least one week for people to access the new notes with less difficulty.

Our reporter observed that the trend did not stop at grain markets as petty traders and shop owners in Danja, Funtua, Bakori and parts of Faskari were shying away from the old N1,000, N500, N200 notes as it remained only seven days for them to lose their value.

Demand for coconut seedlings increasing - FG

From Usman A. Bello, Benin

As part of efforts to boost the livelihood of farmers, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) has trained 50 coconut farmers and processors on agro-forestry system-based plantation model to boost the livelihood of the farmers in Edo State.

Speaking during the training, the Minister of Agriculture, Dr Mohammad Abubakar, said the training was one of the federal government's plan to attain food security and self-sufficiency in Nigeria.

"In an effort to attain food security, self-sufficiency, as well as improve the livelihood of coconut farmers and processors, the government, through the coconut value chain, decided to provide you with the necessary knowledge and skills to establish and maintain a successful plantation," he said.

The minister, who was represented by Chukwuemeka Ukattah, a director in the ministry, said members of staff would be trained on nursery establishment, field development, harvesting and processing to meet local and international markets standard and demand.

On his part, the executive director of the Nigerian Institute for Oil Palm Research (NIFOR), Dr Celestine Ikuenobe, noted that Nigeria's coconut production was far below the demand.

"I am sure that if the National Coconut Producers Processors and Marketers Association of Nigeria (NACOPPMAN) worked with this agro-forestry based plantation model, the coconut value chain would be on a scale that could contribute very significantly to our economy.

"We suddenly got a huge demand for coconut seedlings in the last three to four years, but we were caught napping because we did not prepare for the fact that there was going to be an upsurge in the demand for coconut

We spend N2.2m to transport 350 tomato baskets to Aba-Katsina merchants

Continued from page 25

Dandutse, a member of the House of Representatives, for dredging the Dantankari irrigation dam.

"Dandume, and indeed, Dantankari, need a big irrigation dam and a modern tomato market to boost production and revenue for the local government area and the state in general," Abdullahi said.

Jos traders share experience

Our correspondent who visited the popular tomato market at the Farin Gada area of Jos North Local Government

Area of Plateau State reports that dealers and suppliers of tomatoes are complaining of how the recent change in the transportation fare is affecting their lives.

Nasiru Sani, the chairman of the tomato market at Farin Gada and supplier of the produce to the southern part of Nigeria, told *Daily Trust on Sunday* how they were facing difficulties due to exorbitant transportation fare, describing the situation as uncalled for.

He said, "The cost of transportation has reduced the profit of the business drastically. In fact, the business is not

flourishing. Prior to this time, we used to pay between N1,000 and N1,500 as transport fare to Lagos per basket, but today, we pay between N7,000 and N8,000 per basket.

"If you put the transport fare together with other operating costs you will spend something around N10,000. It is after the expenses that you will begin to calculate how much you are going to earn from the transaction. So, there is nothing to write home about at the moment. We don't know what would happen tomorrow. But looking at the situation now, things are not going well. The cost

of transportation is damaging the image of the market," he added.

Nurudden Hashim, another tomato supplier in Jos, also lamented how the cost of transportation was affecting the business, describing the situation as worrisome. He said, "I take tomato to places like Onitsha, Enugu, Lagos and other states in the southern part of the country. The cost of transportation is affecting our business negatively. We used to hire a truck between the rate of N300,000 and N350,000, but today, we pay N1.7m to hire the truck. The situation is getting out

of hand.

"Even if we sell at an expensive price, the transport fare will absorb the money; therefore, it is hard for us to get profit. That is why, if the transportation fare is expensive, the price of the commodity would also be expensive," he said.

Asked what should be done to ease the problem, the chairman said, "We are pleading with the government to do everything possible to intervene and bring an end to the lingering gas prices. We are begging our leaders to consider our situation and make things better."

'Despite intervention, wheat farmers still have issues'

Alhaji Musa Shehu is the national president of Wheat Farmers Association of Nigeria. He took over from Mohammed Salim who passed on weeks ago. *Daily Trust on Sunday* caught up with him during a stakeholders' meeting in Abuja where he explained the current issues confronting wheat farmers and his plans on moving the association forward.

By Vincent A. Yusuf

What do you want to achieve as the new president of the Nigerian Wheat Farmers Association during your tenure?

As you are aware, our leader, Muhammad Salim, may his soul rest in perfect peace, died earlier this month and as a result, I was elected as the association's new president. When you enter a new system, you need to understand how it works, figure out what is going on, and then plan ahead of time where you're going. It's a national issue, in the sense that it's not going to be an easy assignment because we need to work to bring in so many technologies that will propel things forward.

I met the association while it was dealing with a variety of issues. Nonetheless, I am attempting to reform the association in order to build a new structure that will encompass all sections of the country, particularly since the current management is predominantly from northern Nigeria. I'd like to incorporate the southern half of Nigeria into the system. To make the association a standard national one, each of Nigeria's six zones should have a representation. The second concern is the Anchor Borrowers' Programme debt, which I met on ground. The association took part in two ABPs conducted by Unity Bank and Heritage Bank, and I'm currently attempting to figure out how we might repay the loans supplied to farmers. We wish to also reorganise our constitution because it serves as the foundation for any organization or union and has a vast number of amendments that will improve



■ Alhaji Musa Shehu

management. In order to position the association to handle problems internationally, we also need to expand it locally.

The market, high-quality seed, and other factors have all presented hurdles to wheat production over time. What steps will you take to address these issues?

The problem with wheat production is not simply confined to the market; you must also consider the input itself, particularly seed. In the Nigerian setting, research institutes that breed seed only do so on demand; therefore, very few seeds are in the hands of farmers. The certified seeds that we have are insufficient to meet the needs of all farmers in Nigeria involved in wheat cultivation. The Ukraine and

Russia conflict is an indication that we have to do something to boost seed development which will help us to develop our wheat production to meet our local and national demand. So, one of the problems we're facing is that certified seeds are not enough. I know a research institute and other agencies are doing their best now to ensure availability of seed.

On the other hand, like you said, the market is another challenge. If you observe, few years ago, farmers ignored wheat production because there was no market suitable for them. They were always losing but now we have already engaged flour mill association and they promised that no matter how much we produce, they will buy it and in good prices. We have a standard MoU

on that which is an assurance that no matter the quantity produced, they will be bought by the millers. Another challenge is that farmers are still unable to deal with stem borer pest affecting production and we are working hard to find a lasting solution to that disease.

What sort of collaboration do you have with the Lake Chad Research Institute, which has the national mandate to breed wheat varieties?

We have a good relationship with the Lake Chad Research institute, even though there is insecurity in the state where they are but they come to Kano, Kebbi, Katsina, Jigawa, Kaduna and others. At the moment they are also producing good seed that we can use next year and beyond.

I'm aware that there were seed varieties brought in by the CBN from Sudan and Mexico. Are these varieties in the hands of your members?

Normally here in Nigeria, we only have two types of seeds known to the farmers, Atilla Gan Atilla and Norman. Last year, CBN imported seed from Mexico and Sudan. You know geographical similarity also matters. Sudan and parts of Nigeria have similarities. Before they brought it, they had some ecological test to confirm that it can be grown here. We accepted it last year and it worked in some places while in some areas, there were some challenges. I don't think it is now available for every farmer. The African Development Bank is also intervening in seed production. They even directed a research institute to produce more seed for the farmers.

If you go to Kano now, you will

see that a lot of farmers have planted under the supervision of the research institute.

What do you envisage as the country's production target by the time you'll leave office?

My goal is to see a significant growth in hectareage. Kano has a potential for 350,000 hectares; however, it is underutilized due to shortage of seed and other difficulties. My goal is to see that we cultivate 500,000 hectares in Kano alone if the government supports farmers and farmers are prepared to do more. If we expand in all producing states, we will be one step closer to self-sufficiency. We have no choice but to increase output since global conflicts have made it essential.

What about going beyond only dry season production; are you thinking in that direction as well?

Yeah, we are not only going to talk about dry season farming but we are going to intervene in rainy season wheat farming. Countries like Russia, Ukraine and other Asian countries do rain-fed wheat farming but it never happens in the country. It was tested last year in Plateau and parts of Jigawa states. I have the zeal and the will that we are going to do it in two seasons, In Sha Allah.

What do you believe is required at this time to increase wheat production in the country?

We must direct our focus on mechanization. Mechanization is the best, not only in wheat, but any system of farming, which can promote the process and yield, as well as bring more development in the future. Most developed and Asian countries make more gains in agriculture because of mechanization. So, I'm calling on the federal and state governments to focus on mechanization. I think that the state governments need to do more in agriculture. There should increase in their budgetary allocation, particularly those in the northern states where agriculture has the potential for poverty alleviation. The CBN is already doing enough to ensure that farmers have access to funds but the attitude of the farmers is an issue. Some have refused to pay back their loans, which brought some setbacks to the programme. Despite that, there are still facilities for farmers.

Obasanjo Farms commissions new cassava plantlets tech in Ogun

From Peter Moses, Abeokuta

A new cassava breeding technology (Green House Technology) has been commissioned at the Olusegun Obasanjo Farms, Owisi in Ewekoro Local Government Area of Ogun State.

"The new technology has the capacity to produce about three million plantlets of cassava annually," Kehinde Akinyemi, the Special Assistant on Media to former President Olusegun Obasanjo, disclosed in a statement.

According to him, the new technology puts the country behind the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), making her the second in Africa to have such new farm technology in the continent.

He said the project; Semi Autotrophic Hydroponic Facility for Cassava Stem Multiplication, under the Technology for African

Agric Transformation project is in partnership with the IITA and was first introduced to the DRC, which the government accepted and adopted into practice.

He explained that it was during the visit of the former Nigerian President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, to the President of the Central African country, Felix Antoine Tshisekedi, last year, that the idea to implement the new cassava green technology to Nigeria was moved.

At the commissioning ceremony, Obasanjo commended the IITA under the leadership of its outgoing Director General, Dr. Nteranya Sanginga, for his foresight in bringing the technology to Africa.

The former President assured that "as we can see that it is evolutionary, we are taking the product of research and we are bringing it to commercial to produce for our needs and others.

"This is a technology that can grow cassava and get maximum level. This particular specie can give you 30tons per hectare and that is what we are on with the consultant," Obasanjo said.

The Executive Director of Obasanjo Farms, Dr Adeyemo Jamiyu, extolled the former president for his vision for agriculture, stressing, "Baba as at today sees agriculture as agric business and what we are witnessing today is just part of that vision that for an agric business to create wealth and employment, elements of science should be incorporated.

"Baba has linked cassava production with science by his investment in this project to further empower millions of cassava farmers in the country. And to have that come to pass, there must be that part of science, which is being incorporated into agriculture. So today, we are seeing that aspect of the breeding



■ Alhaji Musa Shehu

operation in the crop sector with cassava as a point of reference," Adeyemo said.

At the tour of the facility, guests were shown how pathogen-free cassava stems are multiplied with emphasis on its genetic potential and stress free in handling with respect to

transportation.

"At full capacity, the screenhouse has the potential to hold about one million plantlets, which is planting materials for 50ha, and this volume can be repeated 2 to 3 times a year. So, this can produce about three million plantlets annually," Obasanjo said.

AGRO SOLUTIONS



Feeding apple waste to chickens may boost their health

An apple a day may keep the livestock veterinarian away. Juice, pulp, and other waste from Empire apples, when injected into chicken eggs before hatching, show signs of boosting the animal's intestinal health, according to Cornell research.

"Apples are one of the top fruits produced in the United States and we have long been aware of their health benefits," says lead author Cydney Jackson, a doctoral student in the field of food science. "In our study, we were able to see how an apple — specifically, the Empire apple developed at Cornell in the 1940s — improved the intestinal health of production broilers, and we observed signs for the overall good health of the bird," Jackson says.

The researchers injected juice, pomace, and pulp — in vivo — into the amniotic fluid of the developing embryo inside a chicken egg. After the eggs were hatched, relevant samples were collected for analyses. Jackson and his team found that introducing apple juice and pomace into the egg can increase the young chicken's transport system for amino acids, improve the bioavailability of iron, boost the microbial populations in the animal's large intestine, and support the growth of potentially beneficial gut bacteria.

"Apples are comprised of bioactive constituents such as phytochemicals and prebiotics that could help intestinal health and the gut microbiome," says Elad Tako, associate professor of food science in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and a co-author of the paper.

Each year, the U.S. sees nearly \$20 billion in apple sales, with an estimated 5 million tons of

the fruit produced annually in the U.S. within the last decade, according to the paper.

For juice and apple production, about 33.4 million bushels of apples were used in 2021-2022, according to the U.S. Apple Association. Nearly 175,350 metric tons of apple pomace — the fibrous waste — is produced annually and typically tossed away in landfills, according to the paper. This damages the environment, as it disrupts the carbon-nitrogen ratio of soil due to the pomace's sugar content.

"Pomace is treated like industrial waste now. If we can potentially use the pomace, which is rich in nutrients, we can add it to the diet of broilers," Tako says. "We can improve the nutrition in their feed and achieve productivity in a more natural way — and potentially reduce the use of added dietary chemicals."

The researchers say this was an initial study to demonstrate the potential effect for adding apple waste to chicken feed, and they indicated a need for long-term studies.

"Potentially, we'll be upscaling industrial waste that is currently being discarded. That's sustainable," says Tako.

In addition to Jackson and Tako, the co-authors of "Empire Apple (Malus domestica) Juice, Pomace, and Pulp Modulate Intestinal Functionality, Morphology, and Bacterial Populations In Vivo (Gallus gallus)" are Cornell doctoral students Viral Shukla, Nikolai Kolba and Nikita Agarwal; and Olga I. Padilla-Zakour, professor of food science. The funding for the research was provided by USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

Source: Successful Farming

Jos harmattan affects poultry operators, birds

From Dickson S. Adama, Jos

The Poultry Farmers Association in Plateau State has expressed worry over the level of challenges faced by poultry operators in the state, particularly in Jos the capital and other parts with intense cold.

Speaking with *Daily Trust on Sunday* in Jos, the Plateau State capital, on their plight, the association's Chairman, Johnson Bagudu, said the harmattan which comes with severe cold, especially in January, has affected the poultry business in many ways as the cold has several detrimental impact on the birds/chickens.

This outcome, according to him, poses lots of challenges for poultry owners, while making strenuous efforts to remain in business and keep afloat.

"In fact, the harmattan is kind of a disaster to us because the cold affects the chickens as well as their production drastically. The production of the chickens in this harmattan has dropped to about 70 percent.

"Yet the chickens keep eating at the normal rate which must be provided by the poultry owners despite their low production. That implies that the business undoubtedly suffers some setbacks this period.

"Besides, many chickens have died due to the

weather, and since no one can actually regulate or control the weather, the chicken owners leave everything to fate.

"During this harmattan period you will see the chickens looking sickly, dull and cold, but whenever the weather is a little bit warm, you will see them very agile/active and jumping from one place to the other," he said.

According to Bagudu, they can't really do anything to keep the chickens warm during the harmattan, because at their matured stage their feathers serve as protection.

Bagudu had last year cried out to the government to assist with the challenges being faced by the poultry farmers, saying it has led to some of them quitting the business.

He said among the problems are the high cost of feeds, day-old chicks, their drugs/treatment as well as consistent and ready market for sales.

Bagudu said the eggs produced in Plateau State before was among the best in the country. He said it is imperative for the government to come to their aid because the employment opportunity the poultry industry provided the youths in the state has helped to reduce crime and criminality, drug abuse and other societal ills associated with unemployment and idleness.

Fertiliser from human faeces, urine 'safe' on food crops — Scientists

Fertiliser made from human faeces and urine is safe to use in agriculture and has "huge potential" to replace 25 percent of current synthetic products in some countries, according to research.

The findings come as farmers continue to struggle with rising fertiliser costs due to a combination of climate change and the war in Ukraine.

Researchers screened human waste for 310 chemicals - including rubber additives, insect repellents and pharmaceuticals - and only found them in 6.5 percent of the samples examined, but still at low concentrations.

Scientists said low levels of the painkiller ibuprofen and mood-stabilising drug carbamazepine were found - but added that someone would have to eat more than 500,000 cabbage heads to accumulate a dose equal to one pill.

Author Franziska Hafner, a student at the University of Hohenheim in Stuttgart, said products made from human urine and faeces "are viable and safe nitrogen fertilisers" and "did not show any risk regarding transmission of pathogens or pharmaceuticals."

The work by experts in Germany also looked at modern products already being made from human urine which are turned into ammonium and nitrate.

This included Aurin, which was recently approved for use in agriculture in Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Austria, and CROP - combined regenerative organic food production - which is part of ongoing space projects to recycle wastewater for future bases on the moon and Mars.

The lead author of the study Dr Ariane Krause, a scientist at the Leibniz Institute of Vegetable and Ornamental Crops in Germany, said: "If correctly prepared and quality-controlled, up to 25 percent of conventional synthetic mineral fertilisers in Germany could be replaced by recycling fertilisers from human urine and faeces.

"Combined with an agricultural transition involving the reduction of livestock farming and plant cultivation for fodder, even less synthetic fertiliser



■ Poultry farm

would be necessary, resulting, for example, in lower consumption of fossil natural gas.

"Our study results demonstrate that nitrified urine fertilisers such as Aurin and CROP have a huge potential as fertiliser in agriculture.

"They argue for a greater use of these recycled products in the future."

The peer-reviewed research has been published in the journal *Frontiers In Environmental Science* and comes amid record-breaking food inflation, with many shoppers struggling with supermarket bills.

Last week, a study by researchers at Edinburgh University warned soaring farming costs mostly driven by high fertiliser prices could leave an extra 100 million people starving around the world.

The scientists said the cost of fertiliser along with climate change would have the biggest impact on food security and could cause up to one million more people to die from malnutrition.

Artificial fertilisers are made from or through using fossil fuels - they contribute to global emissions and can be harmful to their immediate environment.

Source: Sky News





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INSIDEPOLITICS

Powerful forces threaten chances of Benue APC governorship candidate

From Hope Abah Emmanuel, Makurdi

The verdict of the Court of Appeal sitting in Makurdi on the governorship candidature of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Benue State has thrown a spanner in the party's wheel of progress ahead of the March 11 election, political analysts believe.

The court, on January 23 ordered a rerun of the party's governorship primary election into 11 local government areas.

A three-man panel led by Justice Biobelle Abraham Georgewill also ordered that the primary election be held within 14 days from the date of judgement, and ordered the erstwhile governorship candidate, Hyacinth Alia and the party to pay the plaintiff, Professor Terhemen Shija the sum of N2million.

Shija had brought an appeal challenging a Federal High Court decision on his case against the governorship candidate of the party. The court had dismissed his suit challenging the primary election in Benue State, which produced Alia as candidate.

Leading other two colleagues - Justice Mohammed Danjuma and Justice Ibrahim Wakali - Georgewill held that Professor Shija was able to prove that the APC did not conduct gubernatorial primary election on May 27, 2022.

The court, however, held that Shija failed to prove that the party didn't hold a rerun governorship primary on June 9, 2022; hence the judge ruled,

"Yes, I have seen that the APC did not conduct a valid primary election on May 27, 2022, reason the appeal panel ordered a fresh election conducted on June 9, 2022 in some local government areas. In the interest of justice, I cannot allow those voters in the remaining 11 local government areas to be disenfranchised. Therefore, the APC should go back and conduct election in 11 local governments within 14 days, and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should recognise the winner afterwards, adding both results to declare the gubernatorial candidate of the party," the judge ruled.

The local government areas expected to hold the fresh primary election as ordered by the court include Gboko, Gwer-East, Gwer-West, Guma, Katsina, Logo, Makurdi, Otukpo, Ukum, Tarka and Vandeikya.

Earlier, a rerun was held in 12 local government areas of Buruku, Kwande, Agatu, Konshisha, Ogbadibo, Ushongo, Oju Okpokwu, Ado, Ohimini Obi and Apa.

In a related development on same day, the court dismissed Senator Barnabas Gemade's appeal, thereby



Fr. Hyacinth Alia



Chief Barnabas Gemade



Prof Terhemen Shija

upholding the lower court's decision which dismissed the former's suit against Alia for being statute-barred.

Consequent upon this twist, the APC would rather now focus on repeating primary election in the affected local areas instead of proceeding with governorship campaigns like the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

In reaction to the ruling, the APC said it would comply with the court order to conduct fresh primary election in the affected areas within the time limit set by the INEC.

The state chairman of the party, Comrade Austin Agada, at a press conference in Makurdi said, "The APC, Benue State chapter, has received the judgement of the Court of Appeal in the case filed by Professor Terhemen Shija against its gubernatorial flag-bearer with equanimity. The party will immediately comply with the judgement by going for a rerun.

"As a law-abiding political party, we call on our teeming members and supporters in the affected local government areas to remain calm and prepare for the rerun.

"However, we are fully aware of the antics of certain moles in her membership who have become willing tools and agents of the opposition to destabilise the party. We encourage our loyal members to remain focused as the party is poised to defeat both the internal and external enemies in the forthcoming general elections."

Meanwhile, Shija, on Wednesday kicked against the court judgement. In a statement signed by Dr James Mbachiantim, the director-general of the Professor Terhemen Shija Governorship Campaign Organisation, noted that after due consultations with stakeholders and his lawyers, he decided to appeal against the judgement of the Court of Appeal.

The statement reads, "While we appreciate the courage of the justices of the court, their pronouncements, however, fell short of our expectations. The judgement also threw up certain legal issues that can only be resolved by the highest court in the land. For instance, since the court accepted our submission and held that there was no APC governorship primary election in Benue State for the 2023 polls at the first instance, how could there have been any basis or legitimacy for a rerun?"

"The resolution of the foregoing and several other issues has compelled us to approach the Supreme Court.

"We appeal to APC members and the entire Benue electorate for calm and understanding that the judicial process is part and parcel of democracy.

"Perhaps it might be necessary for us to recall that the privilege and burden of representing the people was thrust upon Professor Terhemen Shija early in life when he was elected as a member of the House of Representatives on the platform of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) for Vandeikya federal constituency in 1992.

"There is no doubt that if allowed to strive, beneficiaries of impunity today would be its victims tomorrow; hence it has become necessary that enduring democracy thrives in a trajectory that transcends the current participants on the scene.

"This is the context in which we have resorted to the judiciary."

However, political observers believe that the foregoing is being orchestrated to thwart Alia's ambition to rule the state.

A political analyst, Edwin Gbeji said, "Let me say that many of these 'big men' are afraid of the candidature of Fr. Alia. It is becoming clearer that he is the man to beat, so they

don't want him to get to the poll. Those fighting him from within the party also have scores to settle with the leader of the party in the state, Senator George Akume, who they believe forced Fr. Alia on them, while those outside, especially the PDP, fear that they may lose the election with the formidable candidature of the cleric."

Another political observer, Christian Ochapa, however, thinks that a rerun would still be in favour of Alia, adding that in the event that the APC would not conduct the rerun, the result validated by the court from the 12 other local government areas would be enough to qualify him for the election.

He said, "That the Court of Appeal accepted results from 12 out of the 23 local government areas in the state is a clear indication that Alia and others participated in the primary although the process was said to be laced with irregularities in some council wards, which occasioned a rerun in those wards sometime last year. So, the court verdict ordering a rerun in the 11 local government areas will legitimate the party's primary.

"Alia is seen as a highly refined Reverend gentleman whose acceptability cuts across party divides. The PDP has since developed cold feet following the Appeal Court judgement ordering rerun in 11 local government areas of the state."

It would be recalled that the party's first direct governorship primary election of May 27, 2022 produced Alia as winner, but some aspirants, including Chief Barnabas Gemade, Chief Mike Aondoakaa, former Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice; Dr Mathias Byuan, Chief Stephen Lawani and Prof Terhemen Shija wrote a petition to the National Working Committee of the party,

calling for cancellation of the election, citing electoral malpractices.

Consequently, the NWC ordered for a rerun in 12 local governments, which was held on June 8 and 9 2022, and Alia maintained his landslide victory.

In the meantime, apart from Lawani, who has laid down his guards to work for the party's victory, the likes of Gemade, Shija and Aondoakaa are still on warpath to reclaim Alia's victory. At the time of filing this report, judgement in Aondoakaa's appeal is pending.

The PDP also dragged the APC and its candidate to court, alleging that they did not comply with the electoral act to hold a valid primary election.

Alia had in the foremost primary polled a total of 526,807 votes to defeat 12 other aspirants of the party, including the former national chairman of the PDP, Senator Gemade, a former deputy governor of the state, Lawani, Shija, a business tycoon, Dr Mattias Byuan, two former ministers; Sam Ode and Michael Aondoakaa respectively, among others.

The priest won in 13 out of 23 local government areas while Lawani led in five, Ode in four and Byuan in one.

The chairman of the APC electoral panel for Benue, Dr Peter Ojie, announced the winner on May 28, 2022 during a special congress of the party.

He announced that the leadership of the party in the state had adopted the direct method of governorship primary election, which was reaffirmed by the National Executive Council of the party in accordance with the amended Electoral Act, 2022.

Arising from this development, political analysts believe that in weeks to come, more dramas would unfold as the general elections fast approach.

RACE TO ASO ROCK**KACHIKWU:**

Kachikwu's rough road to presidential contest



By Abbas Jimoh

Dumebi Kachikwu, the presidential candidate of the African Democratic Congress (ADC), is a Nigerian media and business mogul, as well as the Chairman and founder of Roots Television.

Born December 20, 1971, into the family of late Justice Francis Okafor Kachikwu and Barrister (Mrs) Josephine Ada Kachikwu, Dumebi is the younger brother of Emmanuel Ibe Kachikwu, a former Minister of State for Petroleum Resources, a politician, lawyer and former Group Managing Director (GMD) of the then Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC).

The Delta State-born politician from Onicha-Ugbo is happily married to Ikeme Kachikwu and they have six children - four boys and two girls.

In 2022, Dumebi Kachikwu picked the nomination form to run for Nigeria's presidency under the platform of the ADC. He defeated his closest rival Kingsley Moghalu, in Abeokuta, Ogun State, where the party held its primaries, to emerge the flag bearer of the party.

While Kachikwu polled 977 votes, Moghalu had 589 and another aspirant, Chukwuka Monye, came third with 339 votes.

Kachikwu later announced Ahmed Buhari as his running mate for the 2023 presidential election.

Buhari was the presidential candidate of the Sustainable National Party of Nigeria (SNPN) in the 2019 election.

Chances

A Nigerian broadcaster, actress, film producer and founder of Mabeloboh Centre For Save Our Stars, Mabel Akomu Obob, said that with Nigeria's top dogs making waves in preparation for the 2023 elections, a name that keeps gleaming is the ADC presidential candidate, Dumebi Kachikwu.

She said that though most Nigerians may consider him an underdog due to the odds against him in a corrupt and monetised electoral system, the people's mandate for a fresh young face may be in his favour.

According to her, Nigerians' hunger for a much-needed new Nigeria, coupled with Dumebi's humble personality, tough steel passion to serve the people, may lead the electorate to give him a second look by not underestimating his true capabilities of reviving our down-ridden economy and his abilities to snatch the presidency in February.

"The truth is that Dumebi is not a man to be cast aside easily and not be tempted to give a second look at what he is bringing to the table. One can say that his ideology represents the hope of the people and the

dreams of a new Nigeria that works for all. A country where we must define our common charter as Nigerians and constitute a new nation that is not only inclusive for all but guarantees equal rights and expressions to all, irrespective of tribe, tongue and religion," she said.

Political battles

He said that despite not spending a dime on delegates before the primary election, he was surprised he defeated aspirants who shared money to delegates.

He said, "I had a banquet for all the delegates, announced to them that I was an aspirant but told them I didn't have money (and that) they should vote their conscience so that if I win, my conscience will be free that I didn't pay.

"If I'd lost, I have my business to go back to. So, I don't have to be a president to work for Nigeria. I left them that night, not knowing what my fate would be.

"I announced to them that I was not going to give anybody money and some were upset. My opponents shared money to the delegates. Later, my wife said, 'Please, spend this money on the delegates to avoid disgrace', and I told her my conscience forbids that.

"I was already delivering my speech accepting defeat when I saw that the body language of the delegates had changed. They were smiling at me. The most painful thing was to see losers go to the media to desecrate the process which produced me. They were telling lies to the public," he said after his emergence.

Suspended by party

In September 2022, the ADC announced his suspension over alleged anti-party activities. His suspension was contained in a statement released by the Deputy National Chairman (Politics) of the party, Bamidele Ajadi.

This was due to no love lost with the National Chairman of the party, Chief Ralph Nwosu.

Mr Ajadi accused Mr Kachikwu of making 'defamatory' statements that contravene the values of the ADC. He also accused him of anti-party activities.

Mr Ajadi described the action of the party's 2023 presidential flag bearer as a sign of "crass irresponsibility, gross indiscipline, disingenuous scandalization" and an attempt to blackmail the party's executives to do his bidding.

In addition to Mr Kachikwu's alleged infractions, Mr Ajadi said the candidate, since his emergence on June 9, has also "refused to share with the party any meaningful, constructive or reasonable Presidential Campaign Roadmap for the forthcoming presidential election."

"His negative actions and/or inactions

so far, have put in jeopardy the fate and prospects of all our candidates contesting for various offices across the country. The committee of the whole house, in a very clear and unequivocal term, condemned the said video in its entirety and described it as a piece of badly crafted blackmail and mudslinging, and thereby unanimously recommended his immediate suspension from the party from today, Friday September 2, 2022."

Before the then suspension, there was tension at the ADC national secretariat in Abuja as 27 state chairpersons of the party called for the resignation of Mr Nwosu.

They said the national chairman had overstayed his tenure in office. Mr Nwosu has allegedly been the party's chairman for 17 years.

However, ADC's National Chairman, Chief Ralph Nwosu faulted the move and also rejected claims by Kachikwu that the party has resolved its differences with him.

Nwosu who insisted that Kachikwu remains expelled from the party, reiterated the resolve to rally support for over 1,980 candidates of the party jostling for various elective seats in the country and warned Kachikwu to stop parading himself as the presidential candidate of the party.

Agenda for Nigeria

Dumebi Kachikwu presenting a blueprint on how he would turn the fortune of Nigeria for good if he was elected for the office of President identified 20 areas, where he would make a significant difference in the lives of Nigerians and the country if elected.

He promised to initiate wide-ranging public service reforms to eliminate corruption and win the war against terrorism.

He also promised to create equal opportunities for men and women and an enhanced welfare package for teachers and initiate a technology-driven education and healthcare system to stop medical and education tourism abroad.

He pledged to eliminate corruption by ensuring that Nigerian workers are paid better salaries and building modern cities with better amenities, world-class health facilities and accessible and affordable internet services across the country.

He said if elected President, he would collaborate with state governments to invest in power generation, build broadband internet infrastructure and limit states and the private sector to distribution activities only.

"Together we can design a new menu for our people. We will rebuild Nigeria from the ground up and do away with the faulty and archaic colonial foundation that now characterises our current existence. We must define our common charter as Nigerians and constitute a new nation that is not only inclusive for all but guarantees equal rights and expressions to all irrespective of tribe, tongue and religion.

"This new Nigeria must come first before any other identification. It will be our common bond as we do away with all colonial relics of division, mistrust and hatred," Kachikwu said.

With the February 25 presidential election weeks away, it is left to be seen of what fate the electorate would seal for Kachikwu to either win and succeed President Muhammadu Buhari in Aso Presidential Villa or wait till 2027 to re-contest if he would still be interested.

He pledged to eliminate corruption by ensuring that Nigerian workers are paid better salaries and building modern cities with better amenities, world-class health facilities and accessible and affordable internet services across the country



ATIKU ABUBAKAR: THE ONLY SOLUTION TO THE SITUATION IN NIGERIA TODAY.

In the last eight years, Nigeria has witnessed dramatic changes that have reshaped our social, economic and political environment in negative ways. Solutions that were promised have been clearly incapable of providing meals on our tables, or sustaining unity, peace and progress for the generality of our people.

- All across the country, lives and properties of our citizens have been lost to communal clashes, some between long existing neighbours, that could have been managed by a committed government.
- An insurgency in the North-East that we were promised would be wiped out in the first four years of the APC has persisted without control.
- In the midst of all these violence, the current government has remained silent and has shown its incapacity in dealing with these challenges, even exhibiting extreme bias.

Today, they still claim, without shame, that only they can solve the problems they have obviously made worse.

In the coming election, the decision to be made is

obvious. Do we continue with the failed policies that rendered Nigeria economically, politically and socially or do we change path and elect a leadership that has proven itself most adequately prepared to address these challenges?

- As we search for a leader who will provide ingenious solutions to move Nigeria out of its current challenges, it is fundamental that our next president must have a history of building bridges to connect all the different groups that make up the Nigerian nation and must possess certain qualities that reveal a commitment to the Democratic principle in his private and public life, and in the way they delegate responsibilities.
- Unlike candidates who celebrate the mentorship of political disciples from within their limited political space, Atiku's mentorship cuts across the entire nation, regardless of ethnicity, religion or geopolitical space.
- His emergence as a candidate is seen as the much awaited opportunity to reintroduce a government that is built on a wealth of experience in economic management, and that

is driven by pure desire to instill Democratic values, unsoiled by petty tribalism or nepotism, factors that have continually stifled Nigeria's growth.

- Beyond his strong record in the defence of democratic values, Atiku's role in nurturing one of the greatest period of growth the Nigerian economy ever witnessed speaks volumes for his ability to address our current crises.
- Atiku is the only presidential aspirant that has a verifiable track-record of canvassing the need for restructuring the Federal administration process in order for Nigeria to achieve sustainable peace, unity and progress.
- Atiku's consistent call for restructuring has now been accepted as the only condition for sustainable peace, unity and progress in Nigeria.
- He stands as the first presidential aspirant to genuinely seek a complete reappraisal of our current fiscal arrangement to ensure equity for all in a true federal system.
- It is on record that Atiku was the prime mover of 13% derivation on oil revenue to oil producing states. Atiku believes that no amount of resources is too much to be sacrificed to allay the feelings and fears of marginalisation by any group in Nigeria.
- It is much to his credit also that the 13% derivation principle is enshrined and sustained in the present constitution.
- Judging from Atiku Abubakar's visions, and his commitment to execute his visions for the development of Nigeria, a desire he has consistently pursued for many years now, he remains the best man for the job in 2023.
- Atiku Abubakar's intention to run for the office of the president of the federal republic of Nigeria has reignited the hopes of many.



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CBN accredits 400 agents to mop up old naira notes

From Tijani Labaran, Lokoja

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has licensed over 400 money agents to facilitate easy access to the newly redesigned notes by the rural dwellers across the length and breadth of Kogi State.

The bank stated that this would enable more people meet the January 31 deadline for the final withdrawal of the old notes from circulation.

The director, strategy management of the apex bank, Clement Buari disclosed this on Saturday at the palace of the Elulu of Mopa, Oba Julius Olufunsho Joledo.

He said the people could visit any of the banks or money agents to swap their old notes with the newly redesigned notes, adding that an individual would be entitled to swap 10,000 at a time and at no cost.

“People can also deposit their old notes into their accounts while those without bank accounts would be encouraged to open one at the point of the licensed agents,” Buari said.

He explained that the exercise is to capture the unbanked population in the 13 local government areas of the state, adding that the overall aim is to encourage the cashless and e-payment policy of the CBN.

Borno will become production state again – Obi

From Olatunji Omirin, Maiduguri

The presidential candidate of the Labour Party (LP), Peter Obi, has assured that Borno State would become a production state and pride of Nigerians if he is elected next month.

Obi said this while addressing a group of academics, students and youths at a town hall meeting before his campaign in Maiduguri yesterday.

He said he was committed to a better Nigeria, where fairness, equity and socio-economic development of the country would be a golden principle.

“Borno is bigger than Belgium, Netherlands, Poland and Israel. We are assuring you that there would not be corruption, insecurity and Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) strike if Obi becomes president.

“Borno will become a production state that will feed the whole of Nigeria. The state will blossom again, better than it used to be.

“Let me assure you that my commitment is to build a better Nigeria,” he said.

Consequently, the governorship candidate of the party in Borno State, Ibrahim Kadafir Mshelia, called on the electorate to vote massively for the LP at all levels.

2023: Tinubu will drive the needed change – Abiodun

From Peter Moses, Abeokuta

The Ogun State governor, Dapo Abiodun, has said the presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Bola Ahmed Tinubu, remains the best candidate to drive the change Nigeria requires.

He spoke in Abeokuta at the Asiwaju affirmation seminar with the theme, “Unlocking Economic Prosperity for Generation Next,” organised by Hope Movement, in collaboration with the Strategic Movement for BAT’s Presidency and D.A continuity.

The governor noted that Tinubu’s capacity to assemble a strong team to initiate and execute developmental policies and programmes have never been in doubt, judging from his antecedence as the Lagos State governor.

He also noted that the APC presidential candidate had built bridges across all ethnic and political divides, a development he said had earned him acceptance across the country.

In his remarks, the global convener of the Hope Movement, Godwin Odusami, corroborated Abiodun’s

position saying, “We believe in Asiwaju to drive the needed growth and development in Nigeria.”

Odusami also promised that the movement would collaborate and recruit intellectual youths in the diaspora for positive engagement under a Tinubu presidency.

Addressing the youth at the gathering, the Police Community Relations Committee (PCRC) chairman in Ogun State, Samson Popoola, an architect, said Tinubu had invested so much in the democracy of this country to earn him the presidency.

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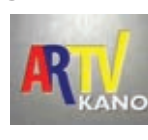
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Electing competent leaders for nation building

The election season is here and soon Nigerians will be going to the polls to elect new leaders for this great country. The type of leaders we choose will determine the future of the nation, therefore we must choose carefully and wisely. Proverbs 29:2 (NKJV) "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; But when a wicked man rules, the people groan." There is need to have competent leadership for nation building. A nation or any team for that matter rises or falls with leadership. And when a team is performing badly in sports, the coach is changed and the same players begin to do well. Performing teams retain their coaches and don't change for the sake of change. That is usually counterproductive.

I believe that every Nigerian has something to contribute to the building of this great nation but leaders have a special responsibility. Bernard Montgomery, British Field Marshal said, "Leadership is the capacity and will to rally men and women to a common purpose and the character, which inspires confidence."

We must therefore be able to define our common purpose and decide how to achieve it. A leader therefore has the responsibility of ensuring that this purpose is achieved by rallying the people to contribute their quota towards achieving this common goal. A leader is not to impose his opinions on people but must understand the collective aspirations of the people and work to make them a reality. Leaders must be able to provide the vision that will unite us all and move us forward. Renowned leadership expert John Maxwell said that a leader should be able to see before others see, farther than others see and more than others see.

He must also be able to communicate this vision with such clarity and simplicity so as to carry everyone along.

A leader must possess the competence

to lead. He should be able to harness all the resources to achieve set goals.

He needs intuition to navigate through difficult terrains. A leader is a reader. He is a reader of situations, trends, resources, people and himself.

The next most important attribute of a leader is integrity. He must possess the integrity that will enable the people to trust him. Trust is the foundation of leadership. This will not be possible if the leaders are selfish and insensitive to the needs of the people. It is said that "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

Leaders must work very hard to build credibility in a cynical society. People don't believe anything especially when they have suffered many disappointments by different leaders. People don't believe especially in leadership for very many reasons.

Leaders often make frantic efforts to win the hearts of the people and be ahead of their competitors. Leaders have made promises they have not been able to deliver on.

Trust is difficult in a situation where leaders loot the treasury and ignore the yearnings of the people. It is time for leaders to become accountable to the people. It is time for leaders to become good stewards of the resources of state. People get tired and become cynical when promises made by leaders are not kept. People want to see basic amenities provided for them: security, adequate health care, good roads, portable water, and constant supply of electricity, to mention a few.

Every time I watch the public being interviewed on television concerning the government; I feel very bad.

Leaders have over the years created the impression that we can fix everything. The truth is that we simply can't.

People believe the government should

provide schools, jobs, houses, hospitals, good roads etc. Fair enough but what is the dividing line between government responsibility and individual responsibility?

The romance between leaders and followers is one that we hate and love. People want strong and good leaders but they hate them when they fail to keep their promises.

RE ORIENTATION

I believe time has come for the Church to spearhead a campaign for reorientation. We just need to trust the government and love the nation. People must be made to understand that we all have a role to play in building a strong nation. The starting point is to think carefully of the type of person or persons to elect. We must choose people who have what it takes to move the nation forward. We must choose men and women of integrity. We must choose people who can deliver, people who can lead us to build a nation that we can all be proud of.

I look forward to seeing the day Nigerians will talk about Nigeria with love and passion the way Americans talk of their country.

Let me close with these few thoughts:

1. Leadership is a life we live, not a show we perform. Leadership is modelling the character we want the nation or organization to possess. Leadership is serving the people the way we want the people to serve the nation. Leadership is doing what we profess. Leadership is modelling a life of sacrifice, humility and meekness. Jesus was a servant leader who modelled the Christian life for us to follow. He led by example, and so should we.

2. It is not how we begin that matters but how we finish. My prayer is that we will all finish well in Jesus name.

3. When man rejected the authority of God in the Garden of Eden he lost his authority over the earth. Our authority derives from our submission to God.

Without God we can do nothing. We must continue to maintain a close relationship with Him if we are to end well. Leaders receive many counsels and they should, but the one counsel that can never fail is the counsel of God. King Solomon's only desire was divine wisdom to lead the people. This pleased God tremendously and He not only gave it to him, He added tremendous wealth. This nation will flourish if elected leaders seek for and are guided by the wisdom of God. True wisdom is found in the Word of God. To succeed and excel, it is imperative to operate in the wisdom of God. This wisdom begins with the fear of God. I pray that God will begin to raise God-fearing leaders to lead us!

4. Lean on God for help; He can do what you are not capable of doing. You may have heard the story of a little bird that perched on the back of a big elephant while crossing a local bridge made of ropes and planks. Naturally, the bridge was shaking while they were crossing and when they got to the other side, the little bird said to the elephant; did you see how we shook the bridge? I believe we too can shake bridges and move mountains riding on the back of the very big God who made heaven and earth. Apostle Paul puts it this way, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." It is not that we cannot do anything at all on our own strength, but we can simply do more and do better by relying on God.

May you become a leader of integrity and may you make the right impact on the people you lead in Jesus Name! I pray that you will leave a legacy that your children and generations after you will be proud of in Jesus Name! Have a blessed week!

Bishop Dr Charles Olowojoba is the General Overseer of Dayspring Bible Church Worldwide with HQ in Abuja, Nigeria & President, Dayspring Christian

By Stephen Ojapah MSP

The conversion of St Paul

I am the least of the apostles; in fact, since I persecuted the church of God. I hardly deserve the name apostle; but by God's grace, that is what I am, and the grace that he gave me has not been fruitless. On the contrary, I have worked harder than any of the others; or rather not I but the grace of God that is with me. (I Corinthians 15:9-10).

Every January 25, the Catholic Church remembers the conversion of St Paul. One of most iconic figures in the bible, and in Christian theology and development. The reading from his letter to the Corinthians. St Paul referred to the fact that he is the least of the apostles and because of his past records; he is not worthy to be called an apostle. The detail of his conversion experience can be found in Acts of the Apostle 22: 3-16. In his first Homily at the Basilica of St Paul Outside the walls on the 25 of April 2005 Pope Benedict XVI said: "Even before Providence led him to Rome, the Apostle wrote his most important Letter, from a doctrinal point of view, to the Christians of this city, the capital of the Empire. The first part of it has just been proclaimed, a closely packed introduction in which the Apostle greets the community of Rome, introducing himself as a "servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle" (Rom 1: 1). A little further on he adds: "Through him [Christ] we have been favoured with apostleship, that we may spread his name and bring to obedient faith all the Gentiles" (Rom 1: 5)."

At last, Paul proclaimed Christ with martyrdom, and his blood, together with

Peter's and that of many other Gospel witnesses, fertilized the Church of Rome which presides in charity over universal communion (cf. St Ignatius of Antioch, Ad Rom., Inscr.: Funk, I, 252). As we all know, the 20th century was a period of martyrdom. Pope John Paul II placed a strong emphasis on this, when he asked the Church to "update the Martyrology", and canonized and beatified numerous martyrs of recent history. Consequently, if the blood of martyrs is the seed of new Christians, it is legitimate at the beginning of the third millennium to expect the Church to blossom anew, especially in the places where she has suffered the worst for the faith and Gospel witness.

St Paul, was very convinced he was fighting a battle for God, he was so radical in his approach to the Jewish religion and its defense. He killed so many believers of the new faith notable among them was St Stephen the first martyr (Act 7:58). He equally put so many in prison (Acts 8:3). He continued to threaten many more with persecution and imprisonment ((Acts 9:1). All of these and many more where his records of accomplishment before his conversion experience. That conversion story brought so many respite to the new Christian Ummah.

The horrendous deeds of Paul is the most documented in the new testament. With his conversion, the Holy Spirit began a quite revival of hearts and minds towards the Christian faith. And a fresh understanding began to immerge within the empire, the

oppressive and virulent treatment meted out to Christians slowed down abit. It did not end, because for the next three hundred years the Church will continue to suffer in various degress, through wicked emperors like Nero, (37-68 AD) Vespasian (69-79 AD), (Domitian 81-96 AD), (Trajan 98-117 AD), (Hadrian 117-138 AD), (Marcus Aurelius (161-180 AD), (Maximinus the Thracian 235-238), (Decius 249 -251 AD), (Valerian 253-260 AD), (Diocletian 284- 305 AD). (Constantius and Galerius Early 4th Century). With all the barrage of humiliation suffered by Christians right from the time of Paul. The Holy Spirit still guided the church even in the worst of times for over three hundred years it was one horror after another. For example, in 250, Decius decided that all Christians had to pay homage to the Roman gods or be killed and he was as good as his evil words. This carnage became known as "The Decian Persecution" as it came directly from the Emperor himself. This persecution took the life of no less a personage than Pope St. Fabian did. The persecution went so far as to prohibit Christian worship in the empire — period. Mercifully, Decius died one year after his edict had been in effect.

The Catholic Church celebrates the conversion of St Paul to thank God for the great action of the Holy Spirit that touched his heart, and to thank God for the great work he did while on earth. For me as an MSP Priest and many of our Priests working round the world, it's our major celebration

as priests named after the great apostle Paul. We emulate him both in his passion for the great work of evangelization and if need be in his martyrdom.

The persecution of the Church is as old as the institution. However, we have not lost sight of the possibility of the great action of the Holy Spirit. There are so many elements and systems, whether, private or public that perpetuate the art of persecution of its citizens and members. We have numerous examples, both within Christian and Muslim Communities. All we pray for is a change of heart like Paul. Those who suffer for their faith in China, the Uyghur Muslims for example. Those who suffer for their Faith in Palestine, The Christian population and even the Muslim population, we pray for a change of heart those governments and systems.

Nigeria has one of the most contestable theories of persecution, depending on who you talk to, but I know the stories of the Muslim population in Imo State and what they are going through. I am equally very informed about the situation of the Christians in Zamfara, Kebbi and what they are going through. All we pray for is a change of heart like St Paul.

Fr Stephen Ojapah is a priest of the Missionary Society of St Paul. He is equally the director for Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenism for the Catholic Diocese of Sokoto, a member of IDFP. He is also a KAICIID Fellow. (omeizaajapah85@gmail.com)

BUSINESS

Why airline operators, experts push for local aircraft repair facilities

From Abdullateef Aliyu, Lagos

In recent times, there has been a focus on the strategic importance of Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) to aviation business.

It is an incontrovertible evidence that a successful airline business is hinged on the existence of local MRO, which would save airlines billions of dollars in revenue annually.

At a time sourcing for dollars has become a hard nut to crack, coupled with skyrocketing prices, airlines have continued to run at a loss, making their money in naira and ending up converting everything to dollars to fulfill financial obligations with the MRO.

To underscore the importance of MRO, the federal government, in its aviation roadmap, listed MRO as one of the projects to be implemented.

But stakeholders in the industry say the MRO, which is far better than other projects, would have been a game changer for airlines bogged down by skyrocketing dollars and pressure to source for dollars to conduct scheduled checks on their aircraft.

Speaking with our correspondent, the vice president of Airline Operators of Nigeria (AON), Mr Allen Onyema, said Nigerian airlines were being exposed to racketeers and scammers in a bid to source dollars to carry out scheduled maintenance. In addition, many airlines have had their aircraft seized on account of not being able to pay for services rendered by MRO firms in Europe or America.

A recent report indicated that global aviation (MRO) logistics market size is estimated to reach \$13.1 billion by 2027.

Nigeria was said to have spent about N1.25 trillion in 2021 on MRO activities in countries like Ethiopia, Morocco, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, South Africa and others with advanced maintenance facilities, according to the managing director of the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), Captain Rabiu Yadudu, in a recent statement.

This is why stakeholders say that any roadmap without an MRO that would facilitate airline business would be an exercise in futility.

Daily Trust on Sunday reports that MRO is a major component of the aviation roadmap of the federal government, and like other projects under the roadmap, there is uncertainty over the status of the project.

In January 2021, the federal government unveiled preferred bidders who emerged for MRO centre and Aviation Leasing Company.



It is a big shame that those in charge have since been content with flying aircraft to Europe or the US for maintenance. Those with oversight of aviation ought to have shown interest in how and where maintenance is done. And this is another major reason for losses. Flying aircraft out for maintenance keeps your profit graph on the floor

The Consortium of A J Walters Leasing Limited and Glovesly Pro-Project Limited emerged as the preferred bidders for the ALC, while the Consortium of A J Walters Aviation Limited, Egypt Air Maintenance & Engineering (EGME), and Glovesly Pro-Project Limited emerged as the preferred bidder to establish the MRO centre.

This followed the evaluation of the proposals submitted by bidders in response to the request for proposals for the Aviation Leasing Company (ALC) and the MRO centre by the Federal Ministry of Aviation.

While the government vowed that it would fulfill its promise to deliver the projects under the MRO, the delay is causing unease and doubt among the operators.

Veteran aviator, Captain Oladele Ore, said that having an MRO was more important than a national carrier.

Ore, who is the founder, Aviation Round Table (ART), now christened Aviation Safety Round Table Initiative, (ASRTI) said, "This is also necessary now because those representing the government failed to give attention to that critical element for a successful airline business.

"It is a big shame that those in charge have since been content with flying aircraft to Europe or the US for maintenance. Those with oversight of aviation ought to have shown interest in how and where maintenance is done. And this is another major reason for losses. Flying aircraft out for maintenance keeps your profit graph on the floor.

"What you can do in a local maintenance base, either in Port Harcourt, Orom, Abuja, Lagos, Enugu, or anywhere else within the country, we refused to provide.

"For me, rather than establish an airline, the priority should have been a maintenance facility.

"At this stage in the history of aviation in Nigeria, we ought to have attained mastery in various aspects of maintenance with the different hangars laying claim to expertise in one or two aspects of aircraft maintenance."

Daily Trust on Sunday, however, reports that Ibom Air is currently building an MRO in its hub in Akwa Ibom, which is about 85 per cent completed. Similarly, Aero Contractors has a hangar at the Murtala Muhammed Airport General Aviation Terminal in Lagos, while 7-Star Global Hangar is also involved in MRO activities

and successfully completed a C-Check on the MD83 aircraft belonging to Dana Airlines.

The collaboration and the success of both companies led to the release of the certificate of airworthiness by the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA).

The Director of Business Development/Corporate Affairs of the firm, Sani Ahmadu, stated that 7-Star Global Hangar was committed to providing responsible, professional and premium quality aircraft maintenance services.

However, Ore said the government must team up with the indigenous companies already doing MRO to increase capacity and explore ways of meeting local demands to stop the financial demurrage on Nigeria.

According to him, there can be an MRO hangar "with mastery in fixing challenges bordering on wheels or brakes. And those with that challenge go nowhere else."

He said there could be another MRO with specialisation in mainframe, another renowned for engine repairs would each attract clients to benefit from a comparative advantage in quality service and in cost that will reflect

the economy of scales.

MROs with known different specialisations will inspire healthy competition. This is good for the real growth and development of the aviation industry in Nigeria.

He added, "The acquisition of Ibom Air will be the game changer and will also hasten the actualisation of the people's desire for a national carrier. Such a move, no doubt, will be a master stroke, game changer and a perfect fit."

A former rector of the Nigerian College of Aviation Technology (NCAT), Zaria, Captain Samuel Caulcrick, has called for a policy to encourage the set-up of MRO facilities.

Caulcrick said there must be an enabling environment for investors into the MRO project.

To achieve this, he said, "For instance, the NCAA can say it would not renew an existing AOC or issue an AOC to an intending operator without a local MRO identified in the application form. The government can give them a timeline because this could take up to three years to accomplish.

"Now, if we take the MRO business to foreign countries, it means we are creating business for those countries when we were the one that created the business. So, it is better to let it stay within the economy. That is one argument by which the MRO supports the economy. So, this economy should not lose to other economies after creating that business.

"Also, MRO supports the naira in the pockets of all of us. Once the aircraft is taken out, there is the cost of labour that would be paid by the airline."

NEWSROYALE

Pomp as Turbanning holds in Sifawa

By Tadaferua Ujorha, who was in Sokoto

Sifawa came alive on January 14 when a number of deserving persons were given titles by Muhammad Tambari, the Sarkin Kudu Sifawa. The venue was the brand-new palace of Sarkin Kudu, which seemed to glow that morning, and when sunshine fell upon its walls, they were a wonder to behold.

Men in turbans and large gowns in different shades of white and other colours, moved from one corner of the palace to the other. The nearby mosque is also brand new, and the 200-year-old Shehu Uthman Dan Fodio Mosque, also in Sifawa, has been renovated.

All roads lead to Sifawa

A huge crowd was present and included titled men from Sifawa, as well as from neighbouring communities and local governments. Quite a number of persons made the journey from Abuja and other parts of the country. The governors of Sokoto and Borno states were represented. The former was represented by the Commissioner for Local Government, Alhaji Abdullahi MaiGwandu, while the latter was represented by Dr Mohammed Kyari Dikwa, former Accountant General, Borno State. Also present was the Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General Farouk Yahaya, and numerous District Heads. It was a gathering of who is who in Sifawa.

History was made as it was the first time a woman, Kulu Abdullahi Sifawa, commissioner for Women Affairs, Sokoto State, was given a title in the community.

Festive atmosphere

On the eve of the event, Sifawa wore a new look, and painters and other artisans were seen putting finishing touches to parts of the palace. The hall, where the turbanning proper was to take place, was already arranged and all the carpets and chairs were already positioned. A red carpet ran from one end of the hall to the other, and a festive atmosphere hung over the community.

Flutes, drums

Then there were numerous musicians with trumpets and flutes and drums, who either performed or danced within or around the palace. Whenever a titled man or royal left the palace which has beautiful lofty art and illustrations on its walls, a musician with a long trumpet drew close to the official, and began to produce such unforgettable music from his tireless instrument. At such moments, the local raconteurs will suddenly begin to chant.

Long history

Not many people know that Sifawa has a long history, as well as gates, a dead river named Bela, and an extensive city wall, or the remains of what was once an extensive city wall. Usman Dan Fodio lived in the community for six years, he gave out many flags at Sifawa to his disciples, and wrote many of his great works in the community.

City walls

According to Attahiru Sifawa,



Samaila Sifawa Magajin Garin Sifawa



Richly decorated Camels and their riders added colour to the occasion

a professor of History at the Sokoto State University, its walls are two kilometre long as well as two kilometre wide. They were initially made of rock and sand, and in many places, have vanished or are significantly diminished in size. In a number of areas, the walls have been encroached upon, and in a few places such as at Yar Kofar, parts of the wall are still standing, providing a clear impression of what it looked like a long time ago.

Memories of Gwonja

There are parts of Sifawa which give clear hints of its trading connections with other parts of West Africa. One of such is the area named Shiyar Fatake, which used to host long distance traders who were involved in the trade in Kolanuts, and travelled to Kano, Katsina, as well as Gwonja in Ghana, while trading in Kolanuts. Another part named Yar Marna, suggests that dye pits existed there, and that the dyeing of cloth was an activity in the area sometime ago.

Titles

Those given titles have distinguished themselves in different fields of endeavour, and include Samaila Sifawa (Magajin Gari), Abubakar Yahaya (Magajin Rafin), Haliru Sifawa (Sadaukin Sifawa), Kulu Sifawa (Gimbiya Sifawa), Abubakar Sarkin Kudu, (Bunun Sifawa), Zayyanu Bello (Tafarkin Sifawa) and Nasiru Shehu (Dan Iyan Sifawa).



Sifawa has a large number of performers

The event was also an opportunity to understand the history and meaning behind the titles that were given out, as well as know more about aspects of Hausa culture. After the turbanning, huge crowds followed each of the recipients to their various houses where festivities continued. A caravan of camels and a large happy crowd escorted Magajin Gari to his family house in the Yar Kofar part of Sifawa where prayers were offered for him. The large crowd finally arrived at his personal house.

Magajin Gari

According to professor Sifawa, "Magajin Gari is one of the titles indigenous to Hausa land, particularly in this very part of Hausa land, the northwest. If you look at the process through which states evolved, before the emergence of states in Hausa land, the earliest stage of political development was from the era of the Magajis. Urbanisation started at the family and clan levels where we used to have Maigida, head of the household. Gradually, it developed to Magaji."

He continues "When it now went beyond the household, the extended family, it became a clan, a group of extended families now coming together to form a community. Now, the head will be referred to as Magaji. He is the custodian of their traditions, and he is the head of the family and the community."

Kanta Kebbi

He explains how the title of Magaji emerged, using the example of Kanta of Kebbi. "Eventually, Kanta became a commander of the Songhai army, a commander under the authority of Songhai. All the various community heads were called Magajis by then, including his father. That was at a particular stage of political development. When large kingdoms had not emerged, settlements were not like large cities. These titles given out at Sifawa recall the glorious old days. That era was called the era of the Magajis because paramount chiefs, that is Sarakunan Kasar, had not emerged."

New titles

Sifawa points out that "Sadauki is a new title in Sifawa, and it is not as old as Magajin Gari and Magajin Rafi. Magajin Rafi is very ancient and indigenous to Hausa land. From the available records, this is the first Magajin Rafi and the logic here is simple. Two to three hundred years ago, there was a seasonal river passing by Sifawa named Bela, but it ended up as a dead river. So there is no water resource to maintain, like areas around Kebbi, Silame and other parts of Sokoto. Because of the existence of year round waterways in those areas, there was the need for someone to oversee the affairs of the river. Sadauki is not indigenous. It signifies somebody that is brave and hardworking. It does not belong to the traditional titles known to Sifawa. Gimbiya is a title given to a princess from the community, and it is a title known in Hausa land. Bunu is a chieftaincy title also given to Princes. Tafarki is in charge of road construction, like an engineer."

In sum Sifawa says, "Dan Iya, Tafarki, Sadauki, Magajin Rafi, perform very important functions and don't have to be members of royal families. In the case of Magaji, it alternates. Sometimes, they appoint somebody from outside. The last Magaji before this one, was not from the royal family."

Askin Sarautar

Another aspect of the day's event was the ceremony known locally as Askin Sarautar, translated as

'traditional shaving ceremony'. This refers to a tradition in Sifawa, as well as in other communities in Hausa land, where freshly turbaned individuals go through a ceremonial public shaving of the head. According to Sifawa "In those days, they will shave the head of the turbaned, and then the individual will be dressed. Traditional barbers will come and shave the head of the turbaned individual. It is done to mark the appointment and it's a very important activity. The last time this happened was about 15 years ago. It was not done this time because of the nature of the celebrants who are not so traditional. If they were people rooted in the traditions, they would have done the public shaving. Its purely traditional."

Durbar

Askin Sarautar took place in the evening. This ceremony featured a public talk on the history of Sifawa, and various forms of entertainment by performers and musicians, men on camels, horses and dancers who formed part of a durbar celebration.

Magajin Gari speaks

Samaila Sifawa, the newly turbaned Magajin Gari, who is a career banker and member of the Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies, Kuru, opens up on his plans for his people. "We will concentrate on education; nothing is as important as education. Education is enlightenment and brings about the beauty of life itself. We will begin with the primary schools, which is the backbone for any sound educational system. We will examine what we can do to uplift the structure, to make the environment conducive for learning."

Plans for Agriculture

He also has plans for agriculture in the community. His words "Our community is agrarian. Farmers depend on rainfall farming, and there is no dam nearby. The farmers only go to the farm when it rains. Some of us devised a method by digging wells. If you dig 50 metres you get water. We will dig wells for them. We will do things that will impact on the people positively."

It was a powerful culturally rich event in Sifawa, whose impact will last for many years.

FACTCHECK

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Was Nigeria's inflation rate highest under Obasanjo?

By Hajara Hussaini

The spokesperson of the All Progressives Congress (APC) Presidential Campaign Council, Festus Keyamo, during an interview with Arise TV on January 16, 2023, said the highest inflation rate in the history of Nigeria was recorded under the former President Olusegun Obasanjo administration.

"This is not the highest inflation rate. In 2005 under Obasanjo and Atiku, we had a 28 per cent inflation rate. Under Obasanjo and Atiku, we had the highest. Go and fact-check me," he said.

Opposition parties have been making false statements without verification since the kick-off of campaigns, but with few weeks to the 2023 general elections, the rate at which these claims keep coming in is alarming.

However, the heat between the APC and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) is like no other due to their long rivalry.

Background

Inflation is the persistent increase in the prices of goods and services, which translates as a decline in the purchasing power over time.

According to Nigeria's inflation historical data, the Obasanjo administration experienced an increase at some point, but as at 2007 when they left office, inflation rate was 5.39 per cent, which showed an improvement from when they were sworn in as president in 1999 when the inflation rate was 6.62 per cent.

The inflation rate in Nigeria experienced a rise at different points in the current administration, as well as an all-high in November 2022 at 21.47 per cent. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) attributed it to a sharp increase in demand as December was around the corner, import cost hikes due to the depreciation of the naira, and a rise in production costs.

In December 2022, the inflation rate showed a decline



■ Festus Keyamo

of 0.13 per cent compared to November. However, on a year-on-year basis, the headline inflation rate was 5.72 per cent, points higher compared to the rate recorded in December 2021, which was 15.63 per cent.

A breakdown of inflation figures, year-on-year showed that the inflation rate at the end of 2015 was 9.01 per cent, the same year the Buhari administration kicked off.

In 2016, at the thick of recession, it skyrocketed to 15.68 per cent, and in 2017, it further moved up to 16.52 per cent. It, however, slowed to 12.09 per cent in 2018, and later, 11.40 in 2019, then rose to 15.75 per cent in December 2020.

In 2021, the inflation rate rose for the first time in eight months to 15.63 per cent. The reason was also attributed to high yuletide spending.

Inflation rose to its highest level since 2017, rising from 16.82 per cent recorded in April 2022 to 17.71 per cent in May, according to a Consumer Price Index report by the NBS.

On the debt level, as at 2015 before President Buhari took over power, Nigeria's debt revenue stood at N8.8trillion, according to the Debt Management Office.

However, recent statistics from the DMO showed that Nigeria's debt skyrocketed from N8.8trn in 2015 to N44trn in the

third quarter of 2022.

The country's debt rose from N39.56trn in December 2021 to N41.60trn in the first three months of 2022 alone.

Also, fuel price when the Buhari government started stood at N87 per litre. As at May 2016, it had moved to N145 per litre, representing a 66 per cent increase.

In 2020, it was further reviewed upwards to N162 per litre. In the same year, the product sold between N165 per litre and N220 at fueling stations. This was further compounded by the unavailability of the product, with the major oil marketers saying they could not continue selling fuel at N165 per litre.

Currently fuel price is over N200 per litre.

Also, in 2015 when President Buhari assumed office, the dollar was exchanged at N198/\$ in the parallel market. By 2018, it was N306 to the dollar, and in 2019, it went up to N360 to the dollar and eventually exchanged at N520 in 2021.

From 2021 till date, the dollar at the parallel market is exchanged between N732 and N755 to a dollar.

Similarly, the consumer index price of food increased to 590.2 in December 2022. The CPI measures changes in the price level of the market basket of consumer goods and services purchased by households.

The unemployment scene also rose in the last quarter of 2015 at 10.4 per cent according to the NBS. The figure went up to 14.2 per cent at the end of 2016. At the end of 2017, it moved up to 20.42 per cent and 23.1 per cent in 2018. The latest figures from the NBS indicate that the unemployment rate now stands at 33.3 per cent.

Lastly, we examined the breakdown of Gross Domestic Products (GDP) figures from the NBS and the World Bank from 2015 to 2020 and it showed that Nigeria's GDP in 2015 when President Buhari assumed office stood at \$486billion; it declined to \$404bn when the country slipped into recession.

In 2017, GDP figures further declined to \$375bn. However, in 2018, as the economy began to recover, the figures improved to \$397bn. In 2019, the figure surged to \$448bn.

By 2020, in the heat of the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected virtually every sector of the world economy, Nigeria's GDP figures declined to \$432bn.

The GDP figures were estimated to have risen to \$440bn in 2021, with 3.98 per cent growth of the economy, although official figures by the World Bank are still being expected.

Verification

The former president, Olusegun Obasanjo and his vice president, Atiku Abubakar, ruled between 1999 and 2007. The economy experienced a rise in the inflation rate to about 18.87 per cent with an annual rate increase of 11.94 per cent.

However, a report by WorldData info reveals that the highest inflation in Nigeria was recorded in 1995 during the late General Sani Abacha regime at 72.84 per cent with an annual rate increase of 15.80 per cent.

Similarly, other reports and data on the inflation rate in Nigeria showed that 1995 was the highest before Obasanjo assumed office in 1999.

Conclusion

Based on investigations and verifiable data, fact-checkers at Daily Trust can confirm that the claim by Festus Keyamo suggesting that Nigeria's inflation rate was highest during the Obasanjo administration is false.

However, a report by WorldData info reveals that the highest inflation in Nigeria was recorded in 1995 during the late General Sani Abacha regime at 72.84 per cent with an annual rate increase of 15.80 per cent. Similarly, other reports and data on the inflation rate in Nigeria showed that 1995 was the highest before Obasanjo assumed office in 1999



STATES

FCT

Northern group hails Naja'atu, urges support for Atiku

By Itodo Daniel Sule

A group, Northern Democratic Movement for Good Governance (NDMG), has called on patriotic Nigerians irrespective of tribe and religion to rally round the candidature of former Vice President Atiku Abubakar to become the president in order to rescue Nigeria from the present state of stagnation.

The group praised the decision of a popular social critic and former Tinubu's presidential campaign director, Hajia Naja'atu Mohammed, for ditching the presidential candidate of the APC, Asiawaju Bola Tinubu.

In a statement issued yesterday by the coordinator of the group, Mallam Danladi Bashir Abu, NDMG urged Nigerians to consider the need to enthrone competence over "narrow and parochial interest in their choice of a new leader for the country."

"Her (Naja'atu) action is a patriotic move that must be lauded by all and sundry, especially those who have the love of the country at heart," he said.

The group added that what the country needs at this time is a mentally and physically fit leader to steer it away from its current path of underdevelopment.

ANAMBRA

Product availability won't end scarcity – IPMAN

From Titus Eleweke Awka

The Independent Petroleum Marketers Association of Nigeria (IPMAN) has stated that the present hike and scarcity of the petroleum products in Nigeria cannot end by just making products available to marketers.

The Chairman of IPMAN, Enugu Depot, Mr Chinedu Anyaso, who stated this in a press briefing on the constitution of a 14-member steering committee by President Muhammadu Buhari to end the present hike of the product, described the supply of products as

only a short-term measure towards ending hike and scarcity of the petroleum products in Nigeria.

According to Anyaso, if the NNPC continues selling the products to independent tank farm owners, there was no way the price would come down since they will add money before selling to independent marketers.

The IPMAN boss said though the federal government may have done its studies before coming up with the steering committee, it was out of place not to have involved stakeholders like the independent and major marketers in the committee.

NIGER

Police arrest suspected kidnappers, rescue 7 victims

By Abubakar Akote, Minna

Joint security operatives comprising the police and vigilantes in Niger State have arrested two suspected kidnappers in the state.

The suspects are: Isyaku Anaruwa Abdullahi, of Kwakuti village via Kafin-Koro, Paikoro Local Government Area and Muhammadu Sani Yakubu, of Paiko-Kore village in Gwagwalada area of FCT, Abuja.

Parading the suspects in Minna, the Command's Public Relations Officer, DSP Wasiu Abiodun, said they were arrested on Friday around Lambata-Agaie-Gunu Road, Gurara LGA based on intelligence from the locals.

He said the suspects were arrested with support from the local vigilante members and during interrogation, they confessed to belonging to the kidnap syndicates terrorizing Gwagwalada FCT Abuja, Lambata and Kafin-Koro areas respectively.

Abiodun said three handsets and the sum of N2.1 million, collected as ransom negotiated to release two victims earlier abducted at Gwagwalada, were recovered.

The police spokesman said the suspects further confessed that the kidnapped victims were kept at Gwalo forest, between Lambata and Kafin-Koro areas.

"The victims were rescued unhurt, taken to FMC for medical attention and reunited with their families," he said.

ZAMFARA

PDP alleges plot to attack its guber candidate, top officials

From Shehu Umar, Gusau

The opposition Peoples Democratic party PDP in Zamfara State has accused the government of planning to attack its top officials using state's anti-thuggery outfit.

At a press briefing by its publicity secretary, Abba Bello Oando, the PDP said the state government was planning to lurch its ill-conceived ulterior motive by using hired thugs and the state government's anti-

thuggery unit to cause bodily harm to their teeming supporters during campaign rallies, especially in the capital, Gusau, and Tsafe town.

Some prominent party leaders and individuals specifically identified as primary targets of attacks include PDP's governorship candidate, Dr. Dauda Lawal; Wadatau Madawaki; and Salihu Maibuhu Gummi.

Others are Rabi'u Ili Bakura; Garba Bisu; Abubakar Bargaja Gummi; Musa Mallaha; Muktar Muhammad Lugga and Aliyu Ikra Bilbis.

They accused the state government of destroying their campaign offices, vehicles, and other things.

However, Governor Bello Matawalle, through his Special Adviser on Public Enlightenment, Media and Communication, Zailani Bappa, dismissed the allegations, calling them baseless and ill motivated.

He said the opposition PDP had last Monday sponsored thugs to disrupt APC's campaign in Birnin Magaji Local Government Area, leading to the death of some thugs.

From left Kogi state Gov. Yahaya Bello, Yobe state Gov. Mai Mala Buni, and former SGF Alh. Yayale Ahmed, yesterday at Gudi country home of Nassarawa state Gov. Abdullahi Sule, when they paid him condolence visit over the death of his son Hassan Sule.



Photo: Govt. House Damaturu

BENUÉ

Ortom condoles Nasarawa gov over son's death

From Hope Abah Emmanuel, Makurdi

Governor Samuel Ortom of Benue State has condoled with his Nasarawa State counterpart, Engr. Abdullahi Sule, over the sudden death of his son, Hassan.

The deceased died on Thursday night at the age of

36.

Ortom in a condolence message to Governor Sule noted that the death of a dear one is painful and devastating.

He remarked in the message signed by his spokesman, Nathaniel Ikyur, that the young Hassan was a bridge builder who ensured peaceful and harmonious

co-existence between his father's administration and the youths in Nasarawa State.

The governor acknowledged that late Hassan created the enabling environment for people of his age group from different ethnic and religious backgrounds to appreciate the dynamics of governance

which his father was enthrone in the state.

He added, "Your Excellency, it is hard to believe that your son Hassan has been snatched by death in his prime but be consoled that he will be remembered for the good deeds he promoted among various groups in the state. He will be sorely missed."

AKWA IBOM

Akwa Ibom wins cleanest state award for fifth time

From Iniabasi Umo, Uyo

Akwa Ibom State has been adjudged the cleanest state in Nigeria for the fifth consecutive time.

This was revealed by the chairman State Waste Management and Environmental Protection Agency, Prince Akpan Ikim, when he presented the award to Governor Udom Emmanuel at the State Executive Council (EXCO) meeting in Uyo.

Ikim ascribed the consistent wins to Governor Udom Emmanuel's untiring

support to the agency.

The Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Mr Ini Ememobong, who made this known in a press release, said "The governor congratulated the agency for their diligence and hard work, which has resulted in the state winning the award for five years consecutively."

Ememobong also stated that at the meeting, Governor Emmanuel tasked members of his EXCO to put in more energy to conclude their ministerial assignments as the administration is winding down.

KOGI

Footballer slumps, dies in Kogi

By Tijani Labaran, Lokoja

A footballer, Segun Idowu, slumped and died after colliding with his team mate during the ongoing Kogi FA Chairman's Cup at the Confluence Stadium, Lokoja.

A statement from the Kogi State Football Association Chairman, Suleiman Isah Umar, described the untimely death of the young lad on Friday as shocking and painful to the football family in Kogi.

He said the entire Kogi State Football Association has been thrown into

mourning following the footballer's death.

"We were on the field when the collision happened," Umar said.

"He was revived and quickly rushed to the hospital and reports coming out of the hospital says he was doing fine; we kept praying that God Almighty should intervene; only to get the sad news that he has passed on.

"God will repose his soul and comfort his immediate and extended family during this trying period; and we pray not to witness such moment again," he added.

FEVER PITCH

UNBEATABLE SPORTS ACTION

Klopp defends Mo Salah's recent struggles

Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah's struggles in front of goal are down to the club no longer having the "well-drilled" front three that terrorised defences in the past, manager Jurgen Klopp said.

Although Salah has scored 17 goals in all competitions at the halfway mark this season, he has scored only seven in the Premier League where he has averaged nearly 24 goals a season during his time with Liverpool.

The Egyptian forward has won three Golden Boots for most goals in a season, but has been far from his best after the summer departure of his strike partner Sadio Mane and injuries to Roberto Firmino, Diogo Jota and Luis Diaz.

"Of course, Mo is suffering. It was a well-drilled machine



Mo Salah

the front three, everything was clear (in) what we were doing. Everybody suffers from that, that's clear," Klopp told reporters.

"It is specific, offensive play that

requires a lot of work and lot of information, and not always obvious information. You create a feeling about a lot of these things, about where your teammate is and where to pass the ball without looking."

Mane moved to Bayern Munich in the close season while Jota, Firmino and Diaz have not played since the World Cup, with Liverpool falling to ninth in the standings.

Liverpool reinforced their attack with the mid-season signing of Dutch forward Cody Gakpo who is still adapting to the team, while Darwin Nunez has not been consistent, scoring just one goal in the FA Cup since the season restarted last month.

Sabalenka fights back to win first Grand Slam title

>>> Page 39

Insurance end Remo's winning streak as Rivers Utd remain unbeaten

By Jide Olusola

Bendel Insurance have continued their perfect run in the 2022/23 abridged Nigeria Professional Football League (NPFL) as they defeated visiting Remo Stars 3-0 at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium, Benin City yesterday in the Match Day four fixtures.

The 'Benin Arsenal' got to a perfect start when Imade Osarenkhoe who is now the joint leading top scorer opened the scoring in the fifth minute to be the first player to score against Remo Stars this season.

It will be noted that Remo Stars prior to this game were the only team in the NPFL to concede a goal.

Buoyed by the goal, the hosts kept the pressure up on the Remo defence and came close to scoring on three occasions, but were not clinical enough in the front of the goal.

In the 25th minute, Sarki Ismael made amends for the misses to increase his side lead and ensure the first half ended 2-0.

At the restart of the second half, Remo Stars pushed forward to get back into the game but were unlucky in their attempts and were duly punished in the 78th minute when Austine Ogunye made it 3-0 to further extinguish any hope from the Blue Sky to make a comeback.

The Benin side have now



Remo Stars midfielder, Segun Odegbile guiding the ball away from Bendel Insurance players

won all the four games played this season while condemning the Ikenne side to its first loss of the season.

Insurance have now displaced Remo on top of Group A table to lead with 12 points.

In the same vein, NPFL champions Rivers United sealed another away win after a come-from-behind win over Dakkada FC at the Godswill Akpabio International Stadium in Uyo.

United went, saw and defeated their hosts 2-1 in a week four encounter to seal

their third win of the season in Uyo.

The Pride of Rivers' two goals, scored by Naibe Akpesiri and Nyima Nwangwa, helped to cancel Isaac George's early goal for Dakkada.

After a five-goal thriller against Dakkada last season, Stanley Eguma's side have now their second consecutive game in Uyo.

Rivers United now has a four-point lead at the top of the Group B table after three victories and a draw in four games.

Meanwhile, the Match Day 4 games continue today with Enyimba hosting Kwara United while Akwa United host Plateau United.

Wikki Tourists will play host to Doma United just as Abia Warriors will be guests to Sunshine Stars. Niger Tornadoes trade tackles with Enugu Rangers while Lobi Stars clash with Bayelsa United.

Ek-Kanemi battle Shooting Stars in Ibadan while Nasarawa will seek its first league win against Gombe United.

CBN Junior Tennis championship serves off Feb 6

By Jide Olusola

The junior edition of the annual Central Bank Tennis (CBN) tournament has been scheduled to serve off on February 6 inside the Lagos Lawn Tennis Club in Onikan, Lagos.

CBN Junior Open which is the oldest National Tennis tournament in Nigeria started in 1978 and sponsored by the Central Bank of Nigeria currently attracts over 200 tennis players nationwide

It is a week-long tournament with competition available in different categories such as men's singles, women's singles, men's doubles, women's doubles, wheelchair men's singles, and wheelchair women's singles.

The CBN Open has helped, over the years, in the discovery of tennis stars like David Imonite, Sadiq Abdullahi, Remi Osho, Sunday Maku, Veronica Oyibokia, Rolake Olagbegi, Clara Udofa, Margaret Oladunjoye, and more recently the likes of Shehu Lawal, Sunday Maku, Abdulmumuni Babalola, Sunday Emmanuel, Fatima Abinu, Destiny Da Silva, Taiwo Owolabi, Christy Agugbom, Sylvester Emmanuel, Blessing Samuel, Sarah Adegoke and a host of others.

The Bank in 2007, introduced the CBN Junior Tennis Championship to ensure that new stars are discovered and developed early enough. The championship is open to boys and girls aged 10, 12, 14, and 16 and serves as a feeder to the senior category.

Leeds United, Leicester City reach FA Cup fifth round

Leeds United eased into the 2022/2023 English FA Cup fifth round yesterday after a stunner from Jack Harrison helped see off Accrington with a 3-1 away win.

Harrison blasted the English Premier League side in front

from distance midway through the first half against the third-tier strugglers.

Thereafter, a first Leeds United goal for Junior Firpo and another from Luis Sinisterra helped ease some of the pressure on manager

Jesse Marsch.

Substitute Leslie Adekoya scored with his first touch late on to earn John Coleman's team a consolation.

Earlier, Sinisterra had been denied when his drive was

brilliantly tipped onto a post by Accrington goalkeeper Toby Savin.

The visitors survived a scare when Harvey Rodgers skied over the bar from six yards with the score at 1-0.

Leicester City made heavy

weather of their trip to play fourth tier Walsall.

Kelechi Iheanacho scored the only goal with a deflected strike in the second half, after Youri Tielemans had struck a post from the penalty kick spot.

Sabalenka fights back to win first Grand Slam title

Belarusian fifth seed Aryna Sabalenka won her first Grand Slam singles title by fighting back to beat Elena Rybakina in the Australian Open final yesterday.

In an absorbing contest which showcased the power of both players, 24-year-old Sabalenka triumphed 4-6 6-3 6-4.

Sabalenka, who won under a neutral flag because of Belarus' support of Russia's war in Ukraine, hit 51 winners as her high-risk game paid off in Melbourne.

Kazakhstan's Rybakina was unable to add a second Slam to her Wimbledon title.



Belarusian star, Aryna Sabalenka with her first Grand Slam title

Instead it was Sabalenka who put her name on the exclusive list of people to win a major title as she fulfilled her long-seen potential. Sabalenka could not convert her first three championship points - producing an edgy double

fault, pulling a forehand wide and knocking a backhand long - but also held her nerve in between by saving a break point with a hefty unreturned first serve.

At the fourth opportunity, she finally got over the line when 22nd seed Rybakina hit a forehand long.

Sabalenka, full of elation and emotion, instantly fell to the court and covered her face as she cried in celebration.

After returning to her feet and hugging Rybakina, she walked over to her team for a celebration which also left her coach Anton Dubrov sobbing.

36 teams hit Lagos for 2023 international polo tournament

By Ernest Ekpenyong

Defending champions Kano Lintex and former champions, Lagos Leighton Kings are set to rekindle their festering rivals as the prestigious 2023 Lagos international polo galloped off yesterday with thirty-five other teams eyeing top laurels.

Kano Lintex defeated Leighton Kings with a sudden death goal to overthrow the title holder and won their first ever Majekodunmi Cup title, and since last year the battle cry in Lagos has been that of revenge as the two are joined by a new comer in the race for the

biggest prize of the tournament.

For the second time in the rich history of the international polo festival, the glamorous event would be decided over three weeks of bumper to bumper polo actions with six equally matched teams jostling for the Open Cup from Jan. 28- Feb.5 in the opening week.

The highly revered Majekodunmi Cup will take the center stage from February 7-12, 2023 with three teams including the defending champions, Lintex, former champions Leighton Kings and a debutant battling for the top prize.

The last week of February 7,

2023 would feature 27 teams drawn from major polo centers across the country locked in battle royale for the Low Cup and the Silver Cup and respectively.

The race for the two major prizes gallops off February 8, while the winners are billed to emerge on February 19, in the final games of the tournament.

"It's going to be three weeks of thrilling polo experience for our esteemed sponsors, partners and lovers of the noble game." Tournament Manager, Olumayowa Ogunnusi disclosed at a world press conference heralding the 2023 edition.

China seeks stronger ties with Africa through sports

By Jide Olusola

In a bid to continue its promotion of trade and economic cooperation across the African continent, the organizers of the China Africa Youth friendly football tournament is set to hold the third edition of the China-Africa Youth Football (CAYF) tournament between June and July 2023.

The Asian giants over the years, identified sports, particularly football, as a tool of friendship to strengthen cultural, business and social exchanges, while at the same time, facilitating and promoting the development of youth football between participating countries.

It will be noted that the first edition was held alongside the

first China-Africa Trade Expo (CAETE) in 2019 in China with teams from four African countries of Nigeria, Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Kenya, as well as four teams from the host country, China (from Hunan, Shanghai, Guangdong and Shandong provinces).

The second edition was scheduled to be hosted in Nigeria, Africa, in 2020, and had already received the support of the Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all plans were halted.

The China-Africa Youth Football (CAYF) (friendly) tournament remains a platform to provide opportunities for host countries to show case their culture and tourism

potentials, businesses, services and products to other participating countries.

"The co-founder of the CAYF tournament and President of the African Organizing Committee (AOC), Mr. Ikunagu A. Sunny, has maintained contact with the participants from the last edition and continues to support their local activities.

"The tournament contributes to the local economy of host countries through necessary associated ancillary services such as transport, accommodation, food, etc, in addition to being a platform for recruitment of local talent" the planning coordinator of the AOC, Dr Ogwu Ikechukwu said in a statement made available to Daily Trust.

Brighton tell Caicedo to take time off

Brighton have told midfielder Moises Caicedo to take time off until after Tuesday's transfer deadline.

The move comes amid uncertainty over the 21-year-old's future after he told them he wanted to be allowed to leave after bids from Arsenal and Chelsea.

The Seagulls remain insistent that they do not want to sell Caicedo this month and that the player is not for sale.

The decision means the Ecuador international will miss today's FA Cup fourth round tie against Liverpool.

Brighton feel it is in no-one's

interests for Caicedo to be around the club at present, but still expect him to be with them for the remainder of the season.

Caicedo has made 26 appearances for the south coast club in the Premier League, scoring twice, and is under contract until 2025.

Brighton have turned down a £60m bid from Premier League leaders Arsenal for him, and also reportedly rejected an earlier £55m offer by Chelsea.

In direct communication with the Gunners, the Seagulls have reiterated that Caicedo is not for sale.



Moises Caicedo

However, the player has confirmed he wanted to leave the Sussex club in an open letter posted on Instagram on Friday.

SPORTING VERDICT

DAVID NGOBIA

ngobuadavid@gmail.com 08035975831 (Text only)

My skepticism about transfer of sports facilities to States

On Friday, January 27, the Federal Government officially transferred ownership of the Ahmadu Bello Stadium (ABS) Kaduna to the Kaduna State Government. The brief ceremony which ended with a novelty football match between Team el-Rufai and Team Dare on the bumpy pitch of ABS came after the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two parties. While the Minister of Sports, Sunday Dare, signed for the Federal Government, Governor Nasir Ahmad El-Rufai signed on behalf of the Kaduna State Government.

Although details of the agreement are still unknown, what is now an open secret is that the 25,000 capacity stadium built in 1965 by the late Premier of northern region, Sir Ahmadu Bello, will henceforth be controlled and managed by the Kaduna State Government for the benefit of the 19 northern states and Nigeria in general.

It is also important to note that the edifice boasts of other sports facilities like three Olympic standard swimming pools, two indoor sports halls and other outdoor sports facilities. This means the stadium is not only about the main bowl which has hosted historic matches including the one which featured the legendary Pele of Brazil who passed away recently.

The transfer of ABS to Kaduna State is not a new development because other national edifices like the Nnamdi Azikiwe stadium and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa stadium had been handed over to Enugu State and Bauchi State respectively. Therefore, those who may be tempted to say the transfer of ABS to the Kaduna State Government is an All Progressives Congress (APC), affair should be guided.

However, in view of the fact that infrastructure is the back bone of sports development, the question we should ask is, how far with the other stadia already transferred to the state governments? It would be a fat lie, if we say that the Nnamdi Azikiwe stadium Enugu and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa stadium in Bauchi have been transformed or elevated to world class sporting facilities. These facilities are worse off and this explains why for two seasons now, Enugu Rangers are playing their home matches at neighbouring Awka City stadium in Anambra State.

This is enough for us to question the capacity of states to upgrade and manage these national assets that the present Federal Government is eager to transfer to them in line with the newly introduced National Sports Industry Policy (NSIP), which among other things, is centered on sub-national governments as well as private sector involvement in sports development in Nigeria. Already the Minister of Sports has announced that the next in line to be transferred without a 'sign on fee' is the Obafemi Awolowo stadium in Ibadan.

So, I am not enthusiastic about the transfer of these sporting edifices because most of the stadia that are built by the various state governments are in comatose. It is the same old story of lack of maintenance. I always wonder why we have become so used to what is now known as poor maintenance culture. Is there any state owned stadium that is well maintained? Let's take few examples and the answer to this question will come out clearly.

Lobi Stars are not playing at the Aper Aku stadium in Makurdi because the league organizers banned the pitch and other facilities there. The same hammer fell on Lafia Township stadium owned by the Nasarawa State Government. Consequently, both Lobi Stars and Nasarawa United were playing their home matches in Jos until United suddenly opted for ABS as their new home ground. The Bako Kotangora stadium Minna is also dilapidated that is why Niger Tornados are playing their home matches in Kaduna. Kwara United are playing in Ibadan at the Lekan Salami stadium because the Ilorin Township stadium is in a sorry state presently. Abia Warriors and El-Kanemi Warriors will soon be sent away from their home grounds because of substandard facilities. And the biggest shame has just befallen Rivers State whose club, Rivers United, are to play their CAF Confederations Cup matches at the 'Nest of Champions' in Uyo because the Adokiye Amasiemaka stadium is below international standard.

These few examples are sufficient to convince us that state governments have not fared any better in sports facilities management. So, where is the belief that they would manage better the national assets being transferred to them coming from?

When ABS was handed over to the Kaduna State Government, Governor El-Rufai made a solemn pledge to modernise it to a world standard edifice suitable for everyone to watch football and other sports events. He also promised to collaborate with the private sector to ensure that all other uncompleted facilities at the stadium are completed. Of course, the Governor is not a failure. He once demonstrated his capacity to destroy illegal structures when he served as FCT a minister and he is presently building critical infrastructure for residents of Kaduna State.

However, if I were there when he took over ABS, I would have reminded him that the famous Ranchers Bees stadium is also in need of urgent attention. The Muritala Mohammed Square which houses some sports facilities is also not glittering enough. This means, no one should expect anything miraculous to happen to the newly acquired ABS anytime soon.

However, if Governor El-Rufai will prove skeptics wrong by transforming the stadium to a world class facility before his exit in May, the 19 northern states would heave a sigh of relief. Without any doubt, the north is lagging far behind in certain sports because of lack of facilities. A sport like swimming which offers so many medals at championships is not popular in the north because the region can only boast of private swimming pools. I doubt if there is a single standard and functional swimming pool in any of the stadia in the north.

Therefore, if all His Excellency, El-Rufai can do is to revive the three abandoned swimming pools inside the ABS Kaduna for use by the 19 northern states, it will be a major achievement.

SPORT ROUND-UP



Djokovic

Djokovic battle Tsitsipas for 10th Australian Open title

Novak Djokovic shrugged off controversy involving his father to reach a record-extending 10th Australian Open final and set up a blockbuster decider with Greek trailblazer Stefanos Tsitsipas and a battle for the world number one ranking today.

Nine-times champion Djokovic maintained his perfect semi-final record at Melbourne Park with a 7-5 6-1 6-2 win over outgunned American Tommy Paul at Rod Laver Arena, where his father Srdjan was a conspicuous absentee.

Earlier on centre court, Tsitsipas saw off Russian 18th seed Karen Khachanov 7-6(2) 6-4 6-7(6) 6-3 to become the first Greek to reach the title match in a city boasting the biggest Greek population outside the southern European nation.



Cavani

FIFA bans four Uruguay players for World Cup chaos

Uruguay's Fernando Muslera and Jose Maria Gimenez were hit with four-match bans by FIFA.

While Diego Godin and Edinson Cavani were suspended for a game each after they confronted the referee following their World Cup match against Ghana.

FIFA launched proceedings against the players who angrily harangued the referee after crashing out of the tournament in Qatar, in spite of beating Ghana 2-0 in their final group match on Dec. 2.

The players will also have to carry out football-related community service, and will pay fines of up to 20,000 Swiss francs (\$21,701).

Welcoming the APC earlier, following its formation in February 2013, I had urged the party to understand that it would be held to a higher standard than the PDP because it had clearly and circumstantially proclaimed itself to be the superior.

To Vote APC in 2023, You Must First Hate Yourself (1)

With less than one month to Nigeria's general election, one political party ought not to be on the ballot at all. That is the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC).

If dignity was of any concern to APC or if it had any sense of character or shame whatsoever, it would have called or written to the electoral commission sometime in the past two years as Nigerians began to turn their political attention toward 2023 and requested to be taken out of participation.

Because it makes no sense for APC to consider itself worthy of leadership in 2023 just as in 2015 it made the case that the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) was unworthy of leadership.

"In the past, political Manifestos in Nigeria were hardly different from mere platitudes and general statements to which parties could not be held accountable," the party said at that time. "The APC Manifesto is different. We have clearly stated what we will deliver to Nigeria when elected into office. Our focus is on six priority areas: National Security, Good Governance, Human Capital Development."

The other areas: Relief: "We believe the Nigerian people need immediate relief from the unnecessary hardship 16 years of rule by the incumbent government has imposed."

Recovery: "We believe our competent management and leadership will ensure that Nigeria can begin to repair its diminished institutions and the processes of democratic governance."

Reform: "We believe that the APC's Vision for the nation will restructure governance in a way that kick-starts our political economy so that we can begin to walk the path of our better future."

The party then offered what it called "An Honest Contract with Nigeria," affirming the need for Nigeria to look forward rather than to the failed policies and practices of the PDP

Among others, remember, APC promised three million new jobs a year; healthcare for all; and guaranteed free education.

It would "Triple education spending over next 10 years, from the current .5% to 24.5%." Triple? Five years later, education spending in the current budget is an abysmal 6.7%!

APC said it would: "Immediately increase the proportion of Federal spending on healthcare from 5.5% to 10%, with the aim of bringing it to 15% by 2020." That was a blatant lie by several miles: the health sector received 4.14% in 2020, 4.7 in 2022, and 5.7

in 2023!

On corruption, APC said it would: "Create a functionally independent anti-corruption agency, with adequate and predictable funding and full prosecutorial powers and free from political interference."

The party claimed it would: "End immunity from prosecution for sitting politicians."

Welcoming the APC earlier, following its formation in February 2013, I had urged the party to understand that it would be held to a higher standard than the PDP because it had clearly and circumstantially proclaimed itself to be the superior.

To be seen to be programmed to serve, rather than to serve its members, I said it needed to establish and to announce clear public standards, and demonstrate that those standards were higher than partisan politics and the APC itself.

"I challenge the APC to set such standards into a code of conduct and of obligations, and publish it. This will demonstrate that the party understands the quality of the challenge that is before our nation, and that it intends to subordinate itself to it."

Not simply did the party fail to honour any of these commitments, evidence abounds that it has taken Nigerian into deeper deterioration than the PDP ever did.

That corruption has soared is amply illustrated in every facet of official life in Nigeria today, culminating in the party primaries in 2022 that was an open advertisement for transactional politics and the emergence of Bola Tinubu as its candidate.

Mr Tinubu is now known worldwide, principally for the opaqueness of his track record, and sometimes for issues of personal character. Those include an entire library of allegations as detailed in this scandalous research project, or this one. In 2018 in Vanguard newspaper, the now-deceased Yinka Odumakin described in an unforgettable four-part profile the Tinubu that Nigerians ought to avoid.

But remember: during his 2015 campaign Buhari requested Nigerians, "Allow me prove to you that in our lifetime you and your country can be proud of this country."

Eight years later, where is that country? Is it not stunning that a man who is at best a question mark in any discussion of leadership potential of any kind is APC's proud presidential candidate and

prospective Buhari successor?

In almost every measure, APC has made being Nigerian a source of shame and embarrassment. For every mile of infrastructure built, such as the Lagos light rail which Buhari commissioned last week, there is an Abuja light rail which he commissioned just four years ago which no longer works. For every high school teacher or government clerk prosecuted for corruption by the EFCC, there are 30 APC current and former governors and 20 Ministers it will not touch. For every new eye-service airport terminal built, such as in Lagos, several older ones are rotting in real time. For every year APC has been in control since 2015, jobs and companies have fled by the hundreds of thousands and insecurity has crisscrossed the country dozens of times over. For every airline APC promised, it shamelessly rides 10 presidential jets around the world.

This explains the turmoil that Nigeria is in. The presidency snatches off the streets the chairman of the EFCC, bundles him out of office, but never publishes the report of its kangaroo court. The APC government decides to sell off the assets it has allegedly recovered, without disclosing what they are, only to claim that they have been sold, or perhaps quietly returned to their original owners.

It is no surprise that APC wants to remain in power; it has far more to hide than the PDP did in 2015. At that time, and for that reason, it was easy for APC to hawk the propaganda of CHANGE, and for Nigerians to buy it.

It is for this same reason that Nigerians must now reject APC at the centre and around the country. Unless you truly hate yourself or you are a masochist, it is obvious that the same treatment that was applied to PDP in 2015 must now apply to APC.

By this advocacy, I do not mean that PDP should replace APC. In previous columns I have argued that they are sides of the same coin, a coin I call 'APDPC': They are cynical, conniving, cynical political parties that lack honour, patriotism, or value. Anyone who seeks the advancement of Nigeria and the Nigerian ought to reject lest he catch the diseases by which they have traveled for the past 24 years.

Clearly, who you vote for is your business. But unless you wish yourself at least another generation of swimming in sewage, neither APC nor PDP can be your option in 2023.

Instead, use them as a cudgel or a curse. Save yourself.

This column welcomes rebuttals from interested government officials.

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