

STILL IN CAPTIVITY

11 SCHOOLGIRLS OF FGC, BIRNIN YAURI

565 DAYS

1 STUDENT OF BETHEL BAPTIST HIGH SCHOOL, KUJAMA

537 DAYS

REMINISCENCES

Why I preferred civil service job to CBN – Alhaji Shehu Othman

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Why price of Irish potato soars

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7 Personalities That Will Shape Nigeria In 2023

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Al-Mustapha: Abacha's right-hand man eyeing Buhari's seat

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2022: Budget padding, 8 other controversies that rocked N/Assembly

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WEATHER SUMMARY:



ABUJA:
Max: 36
Sunny



KANO:
Max: 28
Sunny



KADUNA:
Max: 31
Sunny



KATSINA:
Max: 28
Sunny



MAIDUGURI:
Max: 30
Sunny



JOS:
Max: 27
Sunny



SOKOTO:
Max: 30
Cloudy



MAKURDI:
Max: 37
Sunny



ENUGU:
Max: 38
Sunny



IBADAN:
Max: 37
Sunny



P/H:
Max: 32
Sunny



LAGOS:
Max: 34
Sunny

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SUNDAY MAGAZINE

TRAVELOGUE Qatar: Its culture, people



By John Oluwalana **By John Oluwalana**

It is one of the most beautiful cities in the world. It is a city of contrasts, where the old meets the new, and the traditional meets the modern. It is a city where you can see the world's tallest building, the Burj Khalifa, and the world's largest artificial island, Palm Jumeirah. It is a city where you can experience the rich culture and heritage of the Gulf region, and the modern amenities of a global city.

Qatar is a small country, but it has a big heart. It is a country that has embraced the world, and has become a hub for international trade and commerce. It is a country that has invested in education, healthcare, and infrastructure, and has become a model for other countries in the region.

Qatar is a country that is full of life and energy. It is a country that is full of opportunities, and is a country that is full of hope. It is a country that is full of promise, and is a country that is full of potential.

PRAYER TIMES

SOURCE: Islamic Research and Timing Organisation, Kaduna.

City	Fajr	Zukhr	Asr	Maghrib	Isha
ABUJA	5:30	12:38	3:51	6:21	7:26
ENUGU	5:30	12:39	3:52	6:22	7:27
KADUNA	5:33	12:39	3:52	6:19	7:24
KANO	5:32	12:34	3:42	6:12	7:17
KATSINA	5:37	12:38	3:51	6:15	7:20
LAGOS	5:47	12:56	4:09	6:40	7:45
MAIDUGURI	5:15	12:17	3:30	5:55	7:02
P/HARCOURT	5:30	12:42	3:55	6:26	7:31
SOKOTO	5:46	12:46	3:59	6:26	7:31

PAGE 3 COMMENT

2023: A defining year for Nigeria

The year 2022, which ended yesterday, is one which millions of Nigerians will be in a hurry to forget. It was a year marked by repeated governance failures and so many unfortunate, and quite often, rather avoidable events. A majority of Nigerians will remember 2022 for unprecedented rises in the prices of consumer goods and services, particularly food items. Food inflation increased each month consistently throughout the year, from 17.37 per cent in January to 24.13 per cent in December 2022, a harrowing trend that was felt across millions of shopping baskets, dining tables, and empty stomachs throughout the country.

A biting fuel scarcity, which had been absent for most of the previous six years, returned with a vengeance to worsen the already bad economic situation for many millions. University students stayed home for almost the entire year due to a punishing industrial action by their lecturers and the federal government's intransigence, an impasse that was finally resolved in the eighth month the same way it easily could have been at the start of it.

Above all, too many Nigerians died needlessly in the outgoing year. Hundreds died in otherwise avoidable road and boat accidents. But hundreds more Nigerian adults, girls and school children were killed or abducted by bandits, kidnappers or other sundry non-state actors, not to talk of those killed through the too frequent "collateral damage" resulting from airstrikes against terrorists. The horrors that followed the terrorist attack on the Abuja-Kaduna train in March remain painfully fresh in the memory, for the families of those killed or abducted, as for the nation as a whole, even if, the final outcome turned out better than feared.

There is no doubt that governance failure,

particularly at the very top of it, accounted for much of these sad events, a fact that would not admit of any form of sugar-coating.

Yet, by all measures, the year 2023, which opens today, promises to be a defining year for Nigerian democracy, economy and society. If key individuals and institutions play their part faithfully to the full, this year could well be the turning point Nigeria has needed for a long time. A number of consequential events are packed into this

year, and if Nigeria can get all of them right, there is a good chance the year could be a positive reference point for decades to come.

First, the much-anticipated 2023 General Elections will hold in late February and early March this year, when Nigerians elect a new crop of leaders across federal and state government levels. That election would be a culmination of a year-long political and campaign activities that begun with preparations for party primaries since early last year, and the formal commencement of the main election campaigns in September.

This year's election cannot be more crucial for Nigeria. The quality of governance at all levels has so deteriorated that Nigerians' frustrations and yearning for change are equally palpable. But the elections will be holding in a general security climate that, except for the Civil War nearly 60 years ago, has hardly ever been worse in this country. This makes the election a vicious circle of sorts for Nigeria: the security situation poses a threat to the peaceful conduct of the election, but paradoxically the polls themselves are a flashpoint that could further worsen the security.

Before the dust is settled on the general election, the National Population Commission (NPC), will also be conducting its census in April, an exercise that is unacceptably seven

years behind schedule. A national census is about the only thing in Nigeria that is both more logistically challenging and controversial than our general elections. In this sense, this year's census is also caught up in the same vicious circle in relation to the general security climate in the country. It too must not fail.

And on the economic front, the Dangote Refinery is expected to come on stream by the middle of the year. If this happens, it will be a game changer for Nigeria in many respects. With a refining capacity of 650,000 barrels per day, it has the potential to more than meet Nigeria's domestic needs, and would thus have several immediate impacts on the economy. This will not only free Nigeria of the embarrassment of having to import refined petroleum products but should also remove the lingering fuel scarcity, the pressure on foreign exchange, and above all to free Nigeria of unaccountable subsidy payments.

Daily Trust calls on all key actors and stakeholders to do everything in their power to pilot Nigeria safely out this vicious circle. President Muhammadu Buhari has a duty

to make good to his promise of a free, fair and peaceful election. In the few months ahead, we urge President Buhari to lead, not from behind, but at the very front of these issues and events in this most important period for Nigeria.

We also call on the Independent National Electoral INEC and the security agencies, particularly the police, to live up to their billing and deliver a free, fair and successful election for Nigeria. The NPC must also intensify its public campaigns if the census is to hold as scheduled and especially if must be free, complete and credible. Federal authorities must also work out all regulatory and enforcement mechanisms for running a private refinery of this scale to ensure Nigeria does not end up domestic monopoly of a crucial national resource.

Overall, Nigerians can look up to 2023 with hope and we wish you a Happy New Year.

TODAY IN HISTORY



On this day in 1914: Lord Frederick Lugard, the governor of both the Northern Nigeria Protectorate and the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria, signed a document consolidating the two, thereby creating the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria.

HAPPENING THIS WEEK



Senate President, Ahmed Lawan said President Muhammadu Buhari will sign the 2023 appropriation bill on Tuesday, January 3, 2023. The Senate President made this known after a closed-door meeting with Buhari at the Presidential Villa, Abuja.



The World Braille Day will be celebrated on Wednesday January 4, 2022. World Braille Day, celebrated since 2019, is observed to raise awareness of the importance of Braille as a means of communication in the full realization of the human rights for blind and partially sighted people.



The Supreme Court will on Friday, 6th of January 2023 deliver judgement on the Ngo chieftaincy tussle. The Uwuile and Egwe Oke Royal Families of Ngo had been in court over the ownership of the community in Andoni Local Government Council, Rivers State for over 50 years.

SUNDAYPHOTO



Kabul, Afghanistan
Commuters make their way along a street during snowfall

Photo: AFP/Getty



President Buhari

7 personalities that will shape Nigeria in 2023



Dangote



Atiku



Tinubu



Obi



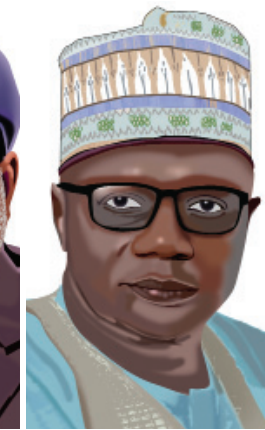
Prof Yakubu



IGP Baba



Ariwoola



Isa-Kwarra

Illustrations: KEHINDE O. OMOTOSHO

By Ismail Mudashir

President Muhammadu Buhari and six other top personalities selected from across critical spheres will shape the country this year, Daily Trust on Sunday reports.

This year will usher in a new president as the second and final term of President Buhari lapses on May 29. Already, 18 candidates are gearing up for the presidential election slated for February 25. One of them will take over the country's plum job on May 29.

A new crop of leaders is also expected to emerge at the parliament. The elections for the National Assembly would be held on the same day as the presidential.

The governorship elections would be held in 30 of the 36 states on March 11. The elections in Kogi, Bayelsa, Edo, Ondo, Ekiti and Osun states are now held at different times.

Buhari

Elected in 2015 as the 15th president of the country, Buhari's actions or inactions will shape the year. Though he has assured Nigerians that he would bequeath the country with credible elections and give the electoral body free hands to conduct the exercise, all eyes are on the octogenarian to fulfil the pledges.

"INEC is ready because I made sure they were given all the resources they asked because I don't want any excuses that they were denied funds by the government," Buhari said while responding to a question on the readiness of INEC to conduct the elections in Washington DC, USA, at an interactive session titled: "A Conversation with President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria", on December 17, 2022.

Pundits believe that if the president fulfils his pledge, the country's democracy will be strengthened and Nigerians' fate in the system enhanced.

Nigerians expect that the president will ensure a smooth transition of power to the winner of the February 25, presidential

election. Before then, he is expected to step up his campaigns against terrorism and banditry and complete some of his legacy projects.

At the twilight of his tenure, the country is expected to end subsidy on petroleum as announced by the federal government. A deadline of June has been set. The president has laid the foundation for this with his assent to the Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB).

INEC Chair, Yakubu

The Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Professor Mahmood Yakubu, is also on the radar as he oversees and gives directions on the conduct of the polls to national commissioners who in turn supervise the Resident Electoral Commissioners (RECs) in states.

The success or otherwise of the elections rests largely on Yakubu's shoulders. The chief electoral officer of the country is to ensure the electoral umpire functions independently and free from external influence. The commission, under him, is also expected to display openness and transparency in all its activities and its relationship with all stakeholders.

Stakeholders are expecting Yakubu to be firm in the implementation of the electoral law. To them, the game changer in this election circle, the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), should not be jettisoned.

Yakubu will declare the winner of the presidential election after the announcement of the results by the returning officer who is usually a professor from one of the country's universities.

IGP, Baba

The Inspector General of Police (IGP), Usman Alkali Baba, has the mandate to coordinate the police and other security agencies to ensure the elections are conducted peacefully.

Ahead of the polls, the country has continued to witness election-related violence. Scores of people have been killed and dozens

injured in different clashes. This is just as the menace of banditry is still terrorising the North West; farmers/herders clashes in the North Central; Boko Haram in the North East; IPOB in the South East and pockets of security breaches being recorded in the South West.

The neutrality of the police is another issue that Baba is expected to ensure.

CJN, Ariwoola

The Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN), Justice Olukayode Ariwoola, presides over the Supreme Court, the highest court in Nigeria which decisions are final.

Some of the litigations that will trail the elections will end at the apex court.

Ahead of the elections, the CJN on November 7, 2022, inaugurated members of the 2023 Election Petitions Tribunals. A total of 307 judges will be serving on the tribunals set up to adjudicate disputes that may arise from the 2023 elections.

The Court of Appeal coordinates and serves as the secretariat of the election petitions tribunals across the country. Daily Trust on Sunday reports that members of the tribunals are expected to be deployed to states this month (January).

"As the Chief Justice of Nigeria, I will not condone any act of recklessness, abuse of power and public trust," Mr Ariwoola warned the judicial officers who will be handling post-election cases.

As some of the cases will end at the apex court, the CJN will constitute panels of the Supreme

Court that will entertain post-election cases that would drag to the apex court.

Dangling on Ariwoola is the responsibility to monitor and address allegations of corruption and misconduct that may be levelled against judicial officials as he is the Chairman of the National Judicial Council (NJC).

Winner of presidential poll

The winner of the February 25 presidential election will play a critical role in shaping the country this year.

A total of 18 presidential candidates have indicated interest in taking over the job of President Muhammadu Buhari on May 29, this year, but the pendulum is swinging towards the candidates of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu; Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Atiku Abubakar; Labour Party (LP), Peter Obi; and Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso of the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP). The fate of the candidates would be determined by 84 million registered voters in 176,846 polling units of the country.

After swearing in, the new president will take charge of the affairs of the country, make his first appointments, including Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Chief of Staff and media aides.

In the second week of his tenure, the new president will transmit a proclamation letter to the National Assembly to terminate the Ninth Assembly and kick-start the 10 Assembly. This

will give room for the emergence of new presiding officers for the legislature.

Pundits say the success of the new president in this regard will shape the country positively or negatively.

Aliko Dangote

Aliko Dangote is the richest black person and the 75th richest person in the world, according to Bloomberg Billionaire Index. He is the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Dangote Group, the largest industrial conglomerate in West Africa.

In October, 2022, the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA) disclosed that the Dangote Petroleum Refinery was at 97 per cent. It is expected to begin production this year.

The refinery, with 650,000 barrels per-day installed capacity, is expected to meet the country's requirement for all refined petroleum products.

Industry experts say the successful completion of the refinery will have a significant impact on Nigeria's foreign exchange (forex) market through import substitution.

NPC, Isa-Kwarra

Seventeen years after, the country is gearing up for the conduct of a national population census. The exercise was last held in 2006 during the tenure of President Olusegun Obasanjo.

The exercise, which ideally is to be conducted every 10 years, has now been scheduled for April this year. A pilot census was held in July last year.

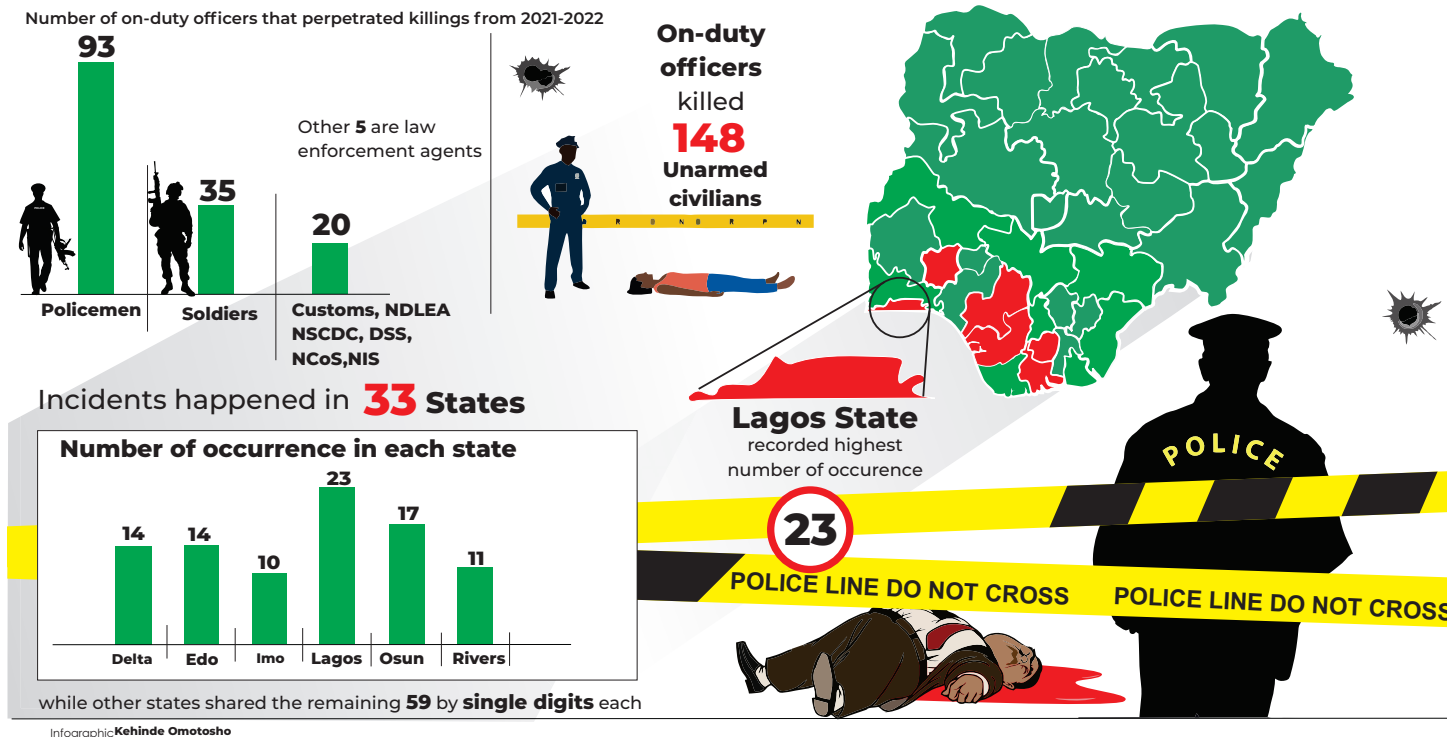
Daily Trust on Sunday reports that the exercise would be held under the chairmanship of Nasir Isa-Kwarra. Thus all eyes are on him as he is expected to supervise the conduct of the exercise.

Experts say the importance of census cannot be overestimated as it is the centre of every planning activity, and that no meaningful development can be achieved without taking census data into account.

This year will usher in a new president as the second and final term of President Buhari lapses on May 29. Already, 18 candidates are gearing up for the presidential election slated for February 25. One of them will take over the country's plum job on May 29

BIGSTORY

Breakdown of killings perpetrated by on-duty officers on civilians from 2021-2022



How security officials killed 148 civilians in 2 years

- Incidents pitch citizens against forces – Analysts
- Enlisting thugs, drug addicts, lunatics responsible – Psychologist

By Hamisu Kabir Matazu & Haruna Ibrahim

At least 148 civilians have been killed by law enforcement agents over the last two years across Nigeria, media reports' data analysed by *Daily Trust on Sunday* has revealed.

According to the data, the killings, which may likely be higher, were perpetrated in different locations by 92 policemen, 35 soldiers and five other law enforcement agents from the paramilitary forces like customs and immigration.

Based on the statistics mined by this newspaper, which relied primarily on news accounts, the number of civilians killed by the police surged in 2022 compared to 2021 and 2020.

According to the data, 50 people were killed within nine months in 2022, while 43 and 49 were killed in 2021 and 2020 respectively.

Based on the record, the incidents happened in 33 states, where Lagos led the chart with 23; Osun 17; Delta 14; Edo 14; Rivers 11; Imo 10, while the rest shared the remaining 59.

The data revealed that the majority of the people killed were male and that the incidents were more frequent in cities.

In most of these incidents, as revealed by the records, the security operatives used lethal

force to kill their victims over offences that ordinarily attract no fine when taken to a court of law.

Also, the killings, based on news reports, were done by security operatives who were mostly drunk, through shooting and beating.

Timeline

The latest of the grim incidents was on this year's Christmas Day, 2022, when an Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP), Drambi Vandi, shot dead a pregnant Lagos-based female lawyer, Bolanle Raheem, who was returning from an eatery with her four children and sister around 11am under the Ajah Bridge.

The ASP was said to have shot at their moving vehicle and a bullet hit Bolanle who later died in the hospital.

Reacting, the National Publicity Secretary of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Akorede Lawal, described the incident as unfortunate, adding that the president of the association, Yakubu Maikyau, was monitoring the situation.

Meanwhile, the officer responsible for the killing has been remanded till January 30, 2022, following his arraignment in court on Friday.

Another incident was the murder of a UN humanitarian aid worker, Alen Mlutega, by a soldier on Thursday, November 17, 2022 in Damboa LGA of Borno State.

Sources said the soldier went to the helipad in Damboa town and insulted the aircrew of a helicopter and the humanitarians; calling them all sorts of names before he opened fire on them and killed two of his colleagues, stabbed the aid worker to death and injured a pilot.

Another sad incident was the murder of Sheikh Goni Aisami Nguru who volunteered to help a stranded soldier with a ride on the Nguru-Gashua road in Yobe State.

The soldier flanked Sheikh Nguru and sought help, which he obliged. After some distance the soldier asked the cleric to park claiming an odd sound was emanating from the car. But as Nguru opened the bonnet, the soldier came from behind and shot him in the head.

The soldier and his accomplice were later apprehended while attempting to escape with the car and handed over to police.

Another incident was on Tuesday, December 6, 2023, when a 31-year-old man identified as Gafaru Buraimoh of Land Estate, Ajah, Lagos, was shot dead at about 10pm while coming out of SkyMall by a policeman attached to Ajah Division.

A source said, "The police wanted to arrest those that were selling black market petrol and they started shooting because the boys refused to allow them to impound their fuel. Unfortunately, Buraimoh was

coming out of SkyMall when he was hit by a stray bullet."

Confirming the incident, spokesman of the Lagos State Police Command, SP Benjamin Hundeyin, said the officer behind the shooting, an inspector, was disarmed and had been detained and that investigation had commenced.

Before then, in March, 2022, a soldier Operation Hadin Kai in Borno State killed seven civilians, including a three-year-old girl, in Mafa LGA.

The soldier was said to be under the influence of psychotropic substances when he opened fire on the civilians without any provocation.

Also, in July, 2022, a viral video on social media showed a police officer carrying a man and his girlfriend into a vehicle, which many people alleged were shot by him at the Monkey Roundabout close to the EFCC office in Enugu.

The police spokesman in Enugu, Daniel Ndukwe, in a statement, said the Commissioner of Police (CP), Abubakar Lawal, immediately ordered investigation into the incident.

These are a few out of several cases, some of which were not reported.

The most disturbing aspect of the killings is that the officers are usually not indicted and sometimes are convicted to serve lesser terms in prison.

Several investigations have

been launched into these unlawful killings by the security agencies but the outcomes take longer than expected due to what they usually term "lack of enough evidence".

Killings pitch civilians against forces – Analysts

Many analysts described the killings as avoidable, saying unless security officers operated within the confines of the law, their attitudes would keep pushing the country into a state of anarchy.

The analysts believe that only a change of attitude will determine the reduction in the number of brutal killings of citizens by security operatives in Nigeria.

One of the security analysts, Dr Kabiru Adamu, observed that the attitude of most on-duty officers would bring mistrust and lack of community support to security agencies in the country.

He said, "In any counterinsurgency going, one of the first things to achieve is winning the hearts and minds of the affected population.

"Also, if the security operatives continue like this and fail to win the hearts and confidence of citizens, then the insurgents will get the opportunity to win the people.

"And, where the people feel they are being killed or maltreated by the state actors, it will further entrench them against the government and the bad guys will recruit them."

Enlisting thugs, drug addicts, lunatics responsible – Psychologist

Also, a psychologist, Mahmud Sarki, said many factors contributed to the killing of civilians by security officers.

He noted that prominent among the factors were lack of background checks and sneaking drug addicts, thugs and lunatics by politicians into the forces without recourse to standard procedures.

He said, "People with established behaviour of thuggery, drug abuse and all sorts of ills are now found in the forces and the government has not done anything to work on them or change their past life.

"Also, these same people are being posted to harsh environments, with low salaries, stunted promotions and working under a lot of pressure. So, by the time they consume their substances and get provoked over an issue, one can't predict what they will do."

He further said, "It's very common for people separated for too long from their loved ones or mentally ill officers employed without proper psychological checks to kill at the slightest provocation."

He, therefore, advised the federal government to take the issue of recruitment seriously by screening candidates before enlisting them into the military, police and paramilitary forces.

He noted that, "The only way to do that is by resisting polluted candidates presented to them by irresponsible politicians to enlist."

New Year: Let's look ahead with hope – Buhari

● Vows to deliver free, fair elections

By Muideen Olaniyi

President Muhammadu Buhari has urged all Nigerians to enter the New Year with new hope and see it as a period to move forward as a nation towards unity, progress and prosperity.

The president in his New Year message released yesterday said the year 2023 would be a time his administration would use to work to solidify on delivering key strategic priorities under its Security, Economy and Anti-Corruption (SEA) agenda.

Buhari, who welcomed both praises and knocks from Nigerians, said he did his best to people while praying that the next

president would continue the race to make Nigeria one of the leading countries of the world by the end of the century.

He said Nigerians must also take responsibility to ensure they participated in ensuring that the 2023 elections were free and fair by not engaging in anti-state activities and other nefarious acts that might affect the polls.

He further charged them to resist every attempt to be used by politicians to create unrest in any form to disrupt the elections, pledging that, "We as government will ensure such activities are met with the full force of the law.

"This year (2023) is particularly important to me because this message is in essence valedictory.

After having the honour of serving you, my compatriots, for the last seven plus years, my tenure as your president in the most revered tradition of our ongoing and maturing democracy must necessarily come to an end.

"In the next five months we would have gone to the polls and elected a new president along with new governors and a plethora of other elected officials at both the national and state levels.

"All these electoral and democratic principles are working in concert because of the transcendent belief, beyond partisan politics, of you, the great citizens of Nigeria. In addition is my personal commitment and executive promise to see to the

letter that the 2023 elections being diligently conducted by INEC will be free and fair. The collective electoral will and votes of Nigerians will be fulfilled even in the twilight moments of my watch."

On security, Buhari said, "We will continue to engage, push back and dismantle the operations of both internal and external extremist and criminal groups waging war against our communities across the nation. We will also focus on ensuring that free and fair elections would be held come February, 2023.

"Our security forces are working in partnership to ensure the wins we have got in the war against insurgency, banditry, secession and other crimes are sustained and more wins acquired."

He further said that over 82,000 insurgents with their families had surrendered to the

military, adding that a number of surrendered insurgents were currently being processed by a rehabilitation programme, code named Operation Safe Corridor.

He also said the fight against banditry, kidnapping and other crimes in the North West and other regions was gaining momentum and showing very clear results, citing the resumption of train services on the Kaduna to Abuja corridor.

On the anti-corruption drive of the administration, he said the federal government had created new records in the fight, growing from 117 convictions in 2017 to 3,615 as at December, 2022, adding that, "We as a government are committed to ridding our nation of all forms of corruption through the collaboration with all the arms of government to effectively prosecute this fight"

Elections: Be guided by your heart, not stomach, Kaigama tells Nigerians

By Abbas Jimoh

Ahead of the 2023 general elections, the Catholic Archbishop of Abuja, Most Rev Ignatius Ayau Kaigama, has urged Nigerians to be guided by their heads and hearts and not their stomachs and pockets.

This was contained in his New Year 2023 message issued yesterday.

He expressed hope that with prayers, citizens' expectations as individuals and as a nation would be met.

The statement reads in part: "Having faced multidimensional challenges, we in our nation in this time of democratic transition must all keep in mind the fact that our Lord makes demands of us to fulfil our civic responsibilities.

"We have a duty to come out, each one of us, with a Permanent Voter's Card (PVC), queue up at our polling units, conduct ourselves peacefully and orderly, get accredited and cast our votes during the 2023 general elections.

"In choosing who to vote, let your head and your heart guide you, not your stomach and your pocket."

He further said that it was in working together and in patient dialogue as Pope Francis urged in Fratelli Tutti (No 198) that Nigerians could "prevent predatory politicians from using religion, ethnicity and regions against them; pitching them against one another."

He added that, "We have already seen that without solidarity we have no chance against poverty, diseases, natural disasters, unemployment, ignorance, terrorism, insurgency and other forms of insecurity.

"So, let us embrace sincere dialogue and work in solidarity with all people of goodwill for a better country."



■ DIG Babatunde Kokumo (2nd right), cutting tape to inaugurate the Police Station at Ago Awaye Iseyin Local Government of Oyo State on Saturday. With him are: Commissioner of Police, Oyo State, Adebowale Williams (right) and others
PHOTO: NAN

World leaders mourn Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI

By Itodo Daniel Sule, Abbas Jimoh, with agency report

Leaders around the world are mourning the death of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI at 95 years who was the first pope in modern history to step down from his position.

Benedict made history in 2013 when he became the first pope to resign instead of serving for the rest of his life in almost 600 years.

He said at the time of his decision that because of his advanced age he no longer had the "strength" required for the "adequate exercise of the Petrine Ministry."

The leaders praised Benedict's service to the church and efforts to spread its teachings and peace around the globe.

President Muhammadu Buhari on behalf of the government and people of Nigeria commiserated with Pope Francis, the Catholic Church in Nigeria and around the world, as well as all Christian faithful, who are mourning the passing away of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI.

The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in a statement by its President, Archbishop Daniel Okoh, described the late Pope Benedict XVI as a great theologian whose life epitomised the balance

of faith, reason and work in ways that positively influenced both Catholics and non-Catholics throughout the world.

Italian Prime Minister, Giorgia Meloni, called Benedict "a giant of faith and reason" who devoted his life to the service of the church.

The Chancellor of Benedict's native country, Germany, Olaf Scholz, tweeted that the former pope was a special leader for many, not only in Germany.

He said the world lost a "formidable figure" of the church, a "controversial personality" and a "clever theologian."

European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen,

tweeted that Benedict sent a "strong signal" through his resignation in that he saw himself as a servant of his church.

Irish President, Michael Higgins, said in a statement that Benedict would be remembered for his "untiring efforts" to find a path to promote peace and goodwill throughout the world, including his interest in achieving peace in Northern Ireland.

United Kingdom's Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, said Benedict's 2010 visit to the UK was a historic moment for Catholics and non-Catholics in the country, hence that he was saddened to learn of the former pope's death.

2023 year of renewed hope, victory – Tinubu

By Saawua Terzungwe

The presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Bola Ahmed Tinubu, has said 2023 is a year of hope and victory over the avalanche of challenges bedeviling the country.

Tinubu, in a statement yesterday by the Director,

Media and Publicity of the All Progressives Congress (APC) Presidential Campaign Council (PCC), Bayo Onanuga, said he had the best vision for the future of Nigeria.

He noted that the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari had tried its best amid the challenges being faced by the country, adding that

the world would watch Nigeria soar higher and higher under his watch.

The statement reads in part: "Every vote is a testament of renewed hope; the certainty of victory over poverty and the conviction that our country carries within its bosom the potentials of the world's next super power, indeed, the first black super power.

"The coming administration of APC under the leadership of Asiwaju Tinubu and Senator Kashim Shettima, when elected, by the goodwill of Nigerians, shall put an aeroplane on the tarmac already built by President Buhari that will take us at supersonic speed to our destination. The world shall watch Nigeria soar higher and higher."

REMINISCENCES

Why I preferred civil service job to CBN – Alhaji Shehu Othman

Ninety-year-old Alhaji Shehu Othman attended some of the best schools in Northern Nigeria in the towns of Katsina-Ala, Benue State; Katsina, Katsina State; Bida, Niger State; and Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, Kaduna State, before he worked in many establishments and served as commissioner in the defunct Benue-Plateau State, then Plateau State. He holds the traditional title, Magaji Gari Keana, in his home state of Nasarawa.

By Kabiru A. Yusuf

How was schooling in Keana when you started out?

There was no primary school in Keana. We were under the Lafia Emirate and the Emir then, Muhammad Agwai II, had a strong connection with Keana. We were told that because of the love he had for the people of Keana he sent a letter to the then Chief of Keana that he should send two or three of his boys to come and enroll in school in Lafia.

When the letter reached the Chief of Keana, he called his brothers and they deliberated and one of them offered to send his son.

Was it difficult to send children to school?

Nobody wanted his children to depart from him. But one of the chief's brothers brought his son and the chief also brought his son. He asked for another volunteer for a third son, so my father offered me.

How old were you?

I was a small boy.

What were you doing?

I was working on the farm with my elder brother when somebody came and summoned me and took me to the chief's palace. My father presented me to the chief. The chief asked me, "Can you go to school?" I said yes and my father was happy.

So, in Lafia, what happened?

My grandfather had been deported from Keana to Lafia because he was very tough; very naughty. So, the Emir of Lafia put me in his care while I went to elementary school.

Had your grandfather any title in Lafia?

Yes. He was later turbaned the Wamban Lafia.

Where did you go after finishing elementary school?

Then, after elementary school you go to primary school, then middle school, because there was no secondary school. Five of us from Lafia were chosen to go to primary school in Katsina-Ala. I was the most brilliant. The others were from the Lafia royal family. I was also from the Keana royal family.

So, we were in Katsina-Ala for primary education. From there if you passed your exam you would go to middle school in Katsina-Ala. So I went to middle school. When we finished middle four primary school, we were supposed to go and work because there was no



Alhaji Shehu Othman

upgraded school in the division except in Katsina, Kano, Okene, Bida and Bauchi.

Were Katsina, Kano, Okene, Bida and Bauchi the only secondary schools in Northern Nigeria?

Yes! So, they chose four of us from Katsina-Ala to go to Katsina.

Was it strange moving to Katsina?

When I was told I was going to Katsina, I asked where it was. When I was told that it was very

far and in Hausa land I was not very keen. But I was informed that I had an uncle there. He was from my tribe, Alago, but his mother was Kanuri.

So, since my uncle was there I felt at ease. He was working at Katsina Hospital. I went to his house. He was aware of me but had never seen me. He also had a son, Shehu. Shehu was a classmate to Ahmadu Kurfi, the District Head of Kurfi. He used to be the secretary of the Northern Nigerian

Marketing Board in Kano.

But with your uncle in Katsina, why did you move to Bida?

We came from Benue and the only foods we met in Katsina were fura da nono and tuwo. We were not used to them so we complained.

What type of food did you prefer?

Yam. We also used to leave our hair, we didn't shave and they said we must shave. All sorts of rules and regulations in Katsina; they did not favour us.

Information reached Sardauna that the boys from Benue were giving administrators headache. So, they moved us from Katsina to Bida.

How many of you?

Eleven.

Were you happy in Bida?

Yes.

At what point did you start working?

When I finished from Bida I did not get work, but I had a woman in my town that I loved so much. I decided not to continue with education. I wanted to marry. My

parents and everybody were not happy. "Go and finish your school first before you get married," they charged. I said I would marry before I went back to school. So, after I got married, I said no more, I am going to look for a job.

What next?

I moved to Kaduna. My aunt was there. No job and with a wife, but since my host was my aunt, we got food and accommodation free. But I was not comfortable. So I applied for a job in the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperative.

I went for an interview. Abubakar Imam from Zaria was the Chairman of the Northern Public Service Commission. When he was interviewing me, I said I came from Keana and he asked me about my tribe and I said Alago. I was employed as a cooperative inspector and posted to Funtua.

So, you went back to Katsina? Back to Katsina.

When did you start working in the bank?

You see, I worked briefly with Barclays Bank as a clerk.

Continued on page 8

I was working on the farm with my elder brother when somebody came and summoned me and took me to the chief's palace. My father presented me to the chief. The chief asked me, "Can you go to school?" I said yes and my father was happy.

'Why I preferred civil service job to CBN'

Continued from page 7

Before the civil service?

Yes. I started working with the bank.

Why the decision to leave the bank and go to the Northern Civil Service?

I was advised that in the civil service I would mingle with people, know their problems, sympathise with them, advise and help them. I also worked with the CBN in Kano.

How did you get the CBN job?

Through somebody in Zaria, Ibrahim, who was working in the bank. I knew many people in Zaria like the late Emir Shehu Idris and Bello Aliyu. So, since Ibrahim was in the CBN I felt I had somebody I could rely on.

Ibrahim told me, "Shehu, I will take you to the bank but you'll have to go to Lagos, the headquarters."

When I arrived in Lagos, I knew a few army officers: Shehu Musa Yar'Adua, Muhammadu Buhari and Aliyu Gusau.

Where did you know them?

I met Gusau in Kano, his sister was married to my friend, Umaru Imam.

What of Buhari and Yar'Adua?

In Katsina; I was in secondary school and they were in primary school in the same school.

From the CBN you went back to the civil service; what prompted the decision?

My problem with the CBN was that you worked from morning to night without rest. You only deal with money, no customers. The only customers are immigration and customs when they collect revenue from the ports. I was the head of accounts. I was later posted to Kano.

What was the salary like?

It was very good; better than that of the civil service.

So, why did you go back to the civil service?

I got back to the civil service because I didn't want to waste all my time in the bank. No time to

My problem with the CBN was that you worked from morning to night without rest. You only deal with money, no customers. The only customers are immigration and customs when they collect revenue from the ports. I was the head of accounts. I was later posted to Kano.



Alhaji Shehu Othman

pray, no time to..., I said ha! No way.

When were you appointed commissioner in Benue-Plateau State?

After the January 15, 1966, coup in which Sardauna and Tafawa Balewa were killed. I was in Kaduna, I came from Kano to Kaduna. On that day early in the morning I saw Sardauna's house on fire. They said Sardauna had been killed and the army had taken over the government. So, I managed to get back to Kano and hide myself.

The coup led to the breakup of Northern Nigeria as states were created, among which was Benue-Plateau. At what point were you invited to be a commissioner?

1975. I had a friend from Zaria, Shehu Mohammed, his father was Wazirin Zaria; you know him? He was a judge, his father was a judge; his father was Mohammed Lawan.

So, was it your connection to Zaria that led to you being appointed a commissioner?

I was with Shehu Mohammed, Alfa Belgore and Muhammed Uwais, they were all judges of the Supreme Court. Shehu was my friend. Then I informed Shehu that they were making some appointments. They then appointed me commissioner in Benue-Plateau.

Who was the governor?

After Gowon was overthrown, Abdullahi Mohammed from Ilorin became the governor, but he too was born and bred in Jos. When he became governor, Belgore was the chief judge in Jos, and they were all from Ilorin. So, Mohammed appointed me a commissioner.

Why were you taken to the health ministry knowing your background?

I heard they gave me the ministry of health and I said what do I know about health? These people want to kill me or what? I am not a doctor, I am not a nurse, I am nothing, I don't know anything. But I said let me take it, after all I will ask the doctors and

nurses to do the work.

Did you find it difficult to hold the commissionership?

The people liked that I was a commissioner. The whole Alago became very happy, everybody came to Jos to congratulate me.

Were you under pressure to do other things to your community as people want money and all that?

Yes; but where was the money? **Commissioners award contracts?**

But we don't give contracts, it is the governor who will finalise everything, we are just a name but the budget shows I will spend so much for the ministry but when it comes to giving contracts, the governor will give contract to any contractor he wants.

Very unusually you were commissioner four times, health, works and information, and were in government for almost 20 years?

We were in council and the governor noticed that I knew much about other ministries, so when the commissioner for works resigned, the governor said I should handle both health and works.

What of information; how were you handling the ministry and became commissioner later?

At the time Dan Suleiman took over from Abdullahi Mohammed he was advised to hold me tight. So Dan Suleiman came, his father was a Muslim, he was a Christian, so he was trying to side with Christians against Muslims. When I discovered that his father was a Muslim and district head of their village in Adamawa State, I went to him and said I wanted to talk to him. I told him, "You are siding one side oh, be careful."

As his commissioner you told him that?

I told him, wallahi! I told him to be careful: "You come to Benue-Plateau, you don't know the people, you don't know them. There are more pagans than Christians. So if you are siding with Christians

and pagans come to realise it, you will be in trouble, and pagans have more sympathy for Muslims than Christians because they are in the majority. So, I was advising him secretly and he developed interest in me.

So, under Dan Suleiman I headed health, information and establishment.

You have said you are not quite educated, but one of the interesting things about your career is how many university governing councils you served on...?

I think the first university governing council I served on was in Sokoto. You know Yahaya Gusau? He was a permanent secretary during Sardauna. He was the chairman of the governing council. Then I was in Ilorin.

Did you enjoy the appointments on the governing councils of the universities?

I enjoyed Sokoto; I didn't want to leave. But the letter said they also gave me an appointment to the governing council in Ilorin. I said how can I go to Sokoto and to Ilorin? Who is doing these things to me? I didn't know that some of the boys I went to school with in Bida, like permanent secretaries, were the ones making these appointments.

Now that you are retired, do you do any work?

I had a house in Jos, but when I discovered that most of the people I knew in Jos are no longer there I left also.

You moved to Abuja; why not to Keana?

I'm afraid of going to Keana because Keana people will say, "E don bring money plenty, e don bring money na, we go chop", and I don't have money to give them.

But you are the Magajin Gari of Keana, so you must have a role to play?

The Magaji, I will tell you how I got it. Magajin Gari is a title in our place, it is given to the son the chief loves most. But I said if the chief

loved me, I wanted Magajin Gari not Magajin Dangari. My father was a chief, I'm only his son, so people will respect me, but if you come to the question of taking over from him. I'm not keen.

I thought every prince wants to be king?

I know that, but with the kinds of things and demands from the family, I just prayed and prayed and prayed and said let somebody else take over; I don't want it.

In Abuja, what do you do?

Most times I sit down here. Sometimes I visit Belgore; you know he has a house here too? I will go there, crack jokes, talk past events, activities and the present economy in this country.

Do you have friends besides Belgore?

Umaru Mutallab and Belgore, these are the very serious friends I have that I have stayed with for long. Others I can't remember.

How does it feel to be 90?

Fine! I am 90 and I can tell you the date of my birth. Would you like to know the date of my birth?

I believe it's June 26, 1932?

Correct!

Is there anything you do to keep healthy at 90?

I eat good food and I don't like nonsense. If I get any money today, N20,000 today, I will ask my wife to go to the market, buy good food and warn her not to bring me any jaga-jaga food.

Don't you have restrictions on what you eat?

No restrictions! In fact, there was a time the doctors checked me, they just said I shouldn't don't take too much sugar.

What about your family?

I have three wives and 12 children.

What do you think of the situation in our country today?

During the First Republic we had some elders who were really disciplined: Azikiwe, Sardauna and Awolowo. But of all of these, Sardauna was the best. You know Sardauna was the builder of their political party, not Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, and if you people talk about democracy, Arewa has more representatives, but educationally we are backwards. And Tafawa Balewa was a sound man. You would think he went to university.

How was he educated?

That was a gift because he himself was not Hausa-Fulani. He was a gentleman. So when they formed the government, the Nigerian government, Sardauna was supposed to be prime minister but he said, "Abubakar, go."

He made a speech when he was being sworn in as the Prime Minister of Nigeria. He said Nigeria belonged to Nigerians and that everybody could be a prime minister of this country.

So, what is the difference between those times and now?

Quality of leadership. Then, leaders were after sacrifice and to serve the people.

What about now?

Not that they are corrupt, I wouldn't say that. Maybe God has changed to say okay, you Nigeria before I gave you Tafawa Balewa, Sardauna, Awolowo, this time I'm giving you different types of people. Who am I to fight God? I cannot fight God; so that is the position.



May this year bring you and your family
joy, peace, and happiness.

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New Year: We have kept faith with Nigerians — Lawan

● It's a defining year — Gbajabiamila

By Abdullateef Salau & Itodo Daniel Sule

The Senate President, Ahmad Lawan, has said that the 9th National Assembly has remained unwavering in the implementation of its legislative agenda and has kept faith with Nigerians.

Lawan, in his New Year message, said the Electoral Act 2022 had ignited hope in the system and heightened expectations about the 2023 general elections.

He, therefore, called

on Nigerians to seize the opportunities provided to take active part in the ongoing electoral process.

In a statement by his media aide, Ola Awoniyi, Lawan said, "The 9th Assembly has been the breaker of many legislative jinxes in this Fourth Republic, having recorded breakthroughs in many areas of our national legislative environment that had defied the interventions of previous assemblies."

Also, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Femi Gbajabiamila, said

the year 2023 would be significant for Nigerians, being the year that citizens would elect new leaders to pilot the affairs of the country.

Gbajabiamila, in a statement by his media adviser, Lanre Lasisi, said he was optimistic about the opportunities and possibilities that lay ahead and urged Nigerians to remain resolute and determined.

The speaker wished Nigerians success individually and collectively in 2023, calling for prayers for successful elections.

Brace up for recovery, reps' minority caucus urges Nigerians

By Itodo Daniel Sule

The Minority Caucus in the House of Representatives on the occasion of the New Year, 2023, urging them to forge a formidable front in the determination to rescue the nation from oppressive forces.

Minority Leader of the House, Ndudi Elumelu, in a message to mark the new year, said Nigerians had cause to thank God for "surviving the suffocating economic hardship, escalated insecurity and myriad of suppressive experiences occasioned by the misrule of the All Progressives Congress (APC)."

He said the New Year presented a fresh opportunity for Nigerians to rekindle their sense of patriotism, love,

care and commitment to one another as they "redirect their productive energies, collective ingenuity, creativity and resourcefulness to reinvent our nation for the good of all."

"The year 2023 is therefore significant, being the year of the much-awaited general elections that will mark the end of eight years of the asphyxiating regime of the APC, as Nigerians march to the polls to elect a new people-oriented leadership to commence the onerous task of rebuilding our nation."

"Our caucus, therefore, urges Nigerians to set aside all parochial personal, group, sectional, ethnic and religious sentiments and focus on the larger national interest and firmly resist all selfish and anti-democratic forces that might

attempt to distract or subvert their will in the elections.

"Against this backdrop, all democracy institutions and security agencies must deploy all necessary measures to guarantee a free, fair, transparent, peaceful and credible electoral process where Nigerians freely participate and in which all votes count at the end of the day."

The caucus urged President Muhammadu Buhari to write his name in gold by ensuring that he left a lasting legacy as a leader that ensured free and fair elections and handed over to whoever Nigerians genuinely elected in the forthcoming presidential election irrespective of the party the individual belonged to.

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SOME THINGS THAT HAPPENED IN 2022

1. BUHARI SIGNED ELECTORAL ACT 2022 INTO LAW	PRISON, FREED OVER 600 INMATES	AIRLINES
2. ASUU EMBARKED ON STRIKE	11. RUSSIA INVADED UKRAINE	22. NBS DECLARED 133 MILLION NIGERIANS LIVING IN POVERTY
3. OLUBADAN, BASHIR TOFA, ADEBAYO ALAO-AKALA, ALAAFIN OF OYO, TAFE BOLOGUN, ARTHUR NZERIBE DIED	12. QUEEN ELIZABETH DIED	23. 2.7 MILLION UNQUALIFIED REGISTERED VOTERS DISCOVERED
4. FG SANCTIONED TRUST TV, BBC OVER DOCUMENTARIES ON BANDITS	13. FUEL SCARCITY ACROSS NIGERIA	24. CBN INTRODUCED NEW NAIRA NOTES, LIMITED CASH WITHDRAWALS
5. TERRORISTS ATTACKED TRAIN IN KADUNA	14. BUHARI UNVEILED THE NEW NIGERIAN NATIONAL PETROLEUM COMPANY LIMITED	25. HON. GUDAJI N89TRN STAMP DUTY FRAUD ALLEGATION
6. PIPELINES USED FOR OIL THEFT DISCOVERED	15. SECOND NIGER BRIDGE COMPLETED	26. ARGENTINA WON THE WORLD CUP
7. EFCC ARRESTED ROCHAS OKOROCHA	16. NORTHERN GOVS. ENDORSED STATE POLICE	27. PELE DIED
8. TINUBU, ATIKU, OBI, KWANKWASO EMERGED AS PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES	17. CJN, TANKO MUHAMMAD STEPPED DOWN	
9. IKE EKWEREMADU AND HIS WIFE ARRESTED IN UK	18. UK GOT NEW KING, FIRST INDIAN-ORIGIN PM	
10. GUNMEN ATTACKED KUJE	19. OIL DISCOVERED IN THE NORTH	
	20. AISHA BUHARI STUDENT'S ARREST SAGA	
	21. COURT STOPPED NIGERIA AIR OVER PRESSURE FROM LOCAL	

HAPPY NEW YEAR.

Daily Trust
BULAMA
01/01/2023

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

North East: In seeking for President Buhari's intervention

It is not a gain saying that the ravaging effects of the Boko Haram insurgency in the North East zone have left millions of people homeless, and thousands of lives were lost while properties were destroyed worth billions of naira. However, it is painful to note that the region has been left with zero infrastructure due to the activities of the insurgent group.

The United Nations published on its website around 2021, that over 1,400 schools were destroyed and many were forced to close the door in the northeast, all as a result of the endless attacks of the Boko Haram members. Besides, over 2295 teachers lost their lives while over 600,000 kids lost access to education in the region.

Similarly, the huge destruction caused by the insurgency group has left the northeast with zero education outstanding

facilities, good roads, water and power supply. This made the region to be the most undeveloped region in the nation with a high number of out-of-school children, particularly in Yobe, Adamawa and Borno states.

Painfully, the conflicts left millions of people homeless, causing poverty, children to street begging, and joblessness among youths as well as extreme hunger and starvation. Thus, on the other hand, deteriorated the situation instead of reducing it to a minimal level.

Nonetheless, the people of the region began to clap their hands at the president when he first came on board as he intended to restore the lost glory of the region by providing the region with some exceptional projects to improve their standard of living but unfortunately, the entire projects

the presidents intended to execute were completely abandoned though only a few months left for his tenure to be exhausted.

On the same page, the people of the region would be extremely happy if the president will command the contractors to speed up the long-awaited road project linking Akwanga-Jos, and Bauchi-Gombe roads, though the project has been approved by the government around 2018 yet there is nothing on the ground that will assure the project completion shortly. So, if President Buhari intervenes, the project will help in boosting the region's agricultural activities as well as provide job opportunities to the younger generation.

In another development, recently the president inaugurated the continuation of the exploration of hydrocarbon in the Kolmani River around Bauchi and

Gombe states. The projects will go a long way in helping the region to provide job opportunities to its teeming youths as well as boost the nation's economy, particularly in the oil and gas sector. Therefore, if the president will intervene by asking the workers to speed up the projects the good people of the northeast will be very happy.

The completion of the projects like the dualisation of the Akwanja-Jos-Bauchi and Gombe roads, Mambila Power project, and Kolmani oil wells among others will play a pivotal role in improving the lives of the citizens of the regions and the nations entirely. Please, Mr President, we need your intervention.

Indis Yunana Sani writes from the Department of Mass Communication at Borno State University

WAEC and NECO should adopt E-examination

I write to make an observation as well as a recommendation to the above-mentioned bodies concerned about the negative impact of writing NECO and WAEC examinations on paper, which results in obvious exam malpractice. How? Students are provided with papers containing answers to the questions that they write.

This is what nevertheless makes them reluctant to the worst extent possible, since they cannot be read during the examination season. Because they are 100 per cent certain that the answers would be delivered to them

in the examination hall.

Despite the bodies concerned about bringing exam supervisors to the exam hall, they could not stop this educational setback from happening as they are being sadly paid off. Why would the government take her eyes off this educational drawback knowing fully it exists?

Notwithstanding, e-examination could unarguably reduce, if not eradicated, this high-level educational crime. Serious measures have to be thoroughly taken to avoid the continuous production of unproductive fellows.

However, this is a major factor that presents an obstacle to having qualified students when they get opportunities to serve in various government agencies and, by extension, non-governmental organizations. Because they are not educated at the grassroots.

I would, therefore, like to implore the government in the strongest possible terms to decisively respond to my valid points and act accordingly to bring an end to this educational lapse.

Esther Samuel, Department of Mass Communication, Borno State University

Politicians, stop stimulating thugs

I would like to draw the attention of Nigerian politicians to the dangers of accommodating a large number of political hooligans to support them in achieving their political goals. Despite the fact that some of these political hoodlums are educated, they have failed to recognize their ill-doings from being stimulated into such nasty acts by their political bosses, which their masters couldn't even try to instil in their offspring.

However, as leaders who are responsibly expected to shun this horrible menace of innovating political clouds by employing

political thugs, they should not have consistently fuelled the heavy rate of criminality. If they cannot assist in diminishing, if not eradicating, the myriad of illicit elements, likewise, they should not boost the high incidence of terrorism.

Notwithstanding, Nigerian youths, in this regard, should be reminded that if they are preoccupied with one business or another i.e a small-scale business, at least, they would not have time for the politicians to draw them into such illegal acts that will make them the gruesome outlaws.

Despite this, working with the government is not

the only source of human survival and comfort, self-reliance is privately the best key to a more comfortable and peaceful life.

In conclusion, I, therefore, urge our politicians to stick to the quote once said by Obafemi Awolowo that "the children of the poor that you failed to educate, would not let your children sleep peacefully." This citation clearly explains the dangers of refusing to give proper education to the children of the laymen.

Falmata Abdullahi Yusuf wrote from the Department of Mass Communication, Borno State University

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'Do as I say, not as I do'

One of my primary school teachers was fond of saying, do as I say, not as I do. I recall it because it seems to me that what was perhaps a simple, jocular, statement by him has become the beloved mantra of our political leaders. They tell us to do as they say, not as they do.

Come to think of it, my teacher's statement actually says something fundamental about human societies divided into leaders and the led. The rich and the powerful are separated from the poor and the powerless. They are not meant to live the same way; nor are they meant to enjoy the same privileges and freedoms. It would be a very boring world if everyone were to enjoy the same privileges and treat the law better than a piece of paper headed for the trash can.

Much of the reportage in our news media is about the important and the very important people telling the unimportant and the very unimportant people how to live their lives in accordance with their pronouncements. Because they wear their privileges on their sleeves, they feel entitled to tell the people not to steal; but they ignore their own advice and steal and steal big. They tell the people to shun violence; but they recruit, train, and equip thugs ready to break heads and limbs.

They tell the people to be their brothers' keepers, but they turn brothers against brothers and neighbours against neighbours. They preach religious harmony but fan the embers of religious intolerance and mine religious differences. They say, in the words of our first national anthem, that though tribes and tongues may differ, in brotherhood we stand - as in one people, one nation, one destiny; but they set tongues against tongues and tribes against tribes. They tell the people to shun corruption like the plague, but they embrace corruption and have made a virtue of blatant corrupt enrichment of themselves, their relations, and their friends. Amazing how easily leaders make a vice of virtue.

They are in their elements during religious festivities or occasions meant to deepen the people's faith in their various faiths. Such occasions call for a pause by the adherents to re-examine their lives and see if they are living and carrying on living their private and public lives in accordance with the tenets of their faith. The Christians have Christmas, and the Muslims have Sallah. At such times, the politicians wax strong in exhorting the faithful to walk in the footsteps of the founders of the faith.

They exhort the Christians to live like Jesus; and they exhort the Muslims to live like the Prophet Mohammed. Both men lived virtuous and exemplary lives; they shunned wealth; they shunned power; they preached love and lived by example; they preached equity, fairness, and justice as the binding principles of humanity.

It is not for lack of looking, and looking hard enough, that I am unable to find a single man among our political leaders, all of whom are either Christians or Muslims, living by their own exhortations. None of them lives a virtuous life; none of them follows the tenets of their faith. They are not poster children for fairness, equity, and justice in our country. They lie, they dissemble

and they make a virtue of all human vices because in their book, whatever they do justifies the end of power - stolen or captured.

This past week, EFCC put out for sale some 47 mansions seized from some thieves of state. The courts deemed them to be products of corruption, as indeed they are. All their original owners were either Muslims or Christians who quote the holy books. All of them were men and women elected or appointed into high public offices and charged with the safety of our public treasuries at national and sub-national levels.

The bible makes the point that it will be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of the needle than for a rich man to enter heaven. It should be something worth bearing in mind in the second most religious nation in the world - after India. The problem is that we are a nation of faux religiosity.

I know that poverty is a hard sell. If you take out the pursuit of wealth and the good life out of human societies, people are left with nothing to aspire to it. The problem is: when a nation elevates greed, unfairness, and inequity as the cardinal principles of state and individual policy, it takes itself down the arid path of soullessness where injustice replaces justice, inequity replaces equity and unfairness replaces fairness.

Leaders and the people build great nations by walking along the same path towards that greatness strewn with roses of equity, justice, and fairness. You cannot build a nation of preachers in which the leaders preach and do not feel ethically bound to listen to their own preachments. You cannot build a great nation and unite the people by dichotomizing the society into the permanently rich and privileged and the permanently poor and underprivileged. You cannot build a great nation if the leaders feel entitled to turn our common treasuries into their private purses.

In times of economic difficulties, leaders recognise the symbolism of minimal sacrifices such as giving up certain financial privileges or a reduction in their salaries for a certain period to demonstrate that they too share in the suffering of the people. But here we are: with the people groaning under the crushing weight of inflation and with the university teachers grumbling over unpaid salaries, the federal government takes the inadvisable option of increasing salaries in the public sector. You wonder how that will chain inflation or make a difference in the lives of the 138 million poor people.

The right of our political leaders to insist that we do as they say, not as they do, is a given by virtue of their position, wealth, and power. But if we must recover the soul of our nation and point it in the direction of our abbreviated collective dreams, perhaps our political leaders must preach less and live a life of virtue, not of vice; protect our common treasuries and refrain from soiling their manicured fingers with Otukpa palm oil; degrade faux religiosity and claim the higher grounds of true religious virtues.

I wish you a new year in a nation renewed in the dreams of our noble founding fathers.

PERSPECTIVE

There was only one Pelé

By Zayd Ibn Isah

Edson Arantes Do Nascimento — the man, the legend—better known around the world as Pelé, has finally passed on at the old age of 82. He transitioned at the Israelita Albert Einstein Hospital in Sao Paulo, where he had been undergoing treatment for colon cancer. The news of his death has now travelled far and wide, with world leaders, athletes and celebrities paying glowing tributes to the sport icon.

Many years ago, Pelé was just a small boy from the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais. His glorious rise from humble beginnings due to his extraordinary exploits in the beautiful round leather game was nothing short of meteoric. The now legendary tale of how he won Brazil its first World Cup title in 1958 as a teenager is one of the most iconic eras in football. Pelé would later go on to win two more of the old Jules Rimet trophies for his country in 1962 and 1970. Till date, he is the only footballer in the history of the sport to have won the coveted title a whooping three times, and also has a world record of 1,281 goals; deservedly, he was named FIFA's Player of the Century in 2000.

There's no gainsaying the fact that a documentation of football's history is incomplete without acknowledging the sterling role that players like Pelé had in revolutionising the game to be what it is today. There are many attributes that separate ordinary players from the ones of great repute, but what endeared Pelé the most to football fans all over the world—especially the older generation, transcended his dazzling skills and goalscoring prowess. This is because off the pitch, Pelé's greatness shone through in how easy he blended in with the commoners. Nowadays, many of the biggest footballers exude carefully curated and branded images that make them come off as god-like or otherworldly. Not Pelé. The man perfectly mirrored the spirited optimism and unassuming disposition of authentic people, the real people. When he was with the people, it was clear that he was one of them.

At his first World Cup in 1958, Pele scored three goals in the semi-final against France, becoming the youngest player to score a hat-trick in that stage of a World Cup. He scored two more in the 5-2 final over hosts Sweden. It was during this period that Santos began to receive mouth-watering offers from the likes of Real Madrid, Inter Milan and major European clubs. These tempting offers were coming at a time Brazil was experiencing political and economic instability. Losing Pele to any of the European clubs would have meant the end to the political career of then President, Janio Quadros, whose popularity had tanked after a ban on bikinis in a country of many beaches.

Pelé was extremely loved by his people due to his enormous role in Brazil's first World Cup triumph. This prompted Quadros to gather together a coalition of willing partners who pushed through a bill naming Pele as a national treasure. His status as a national treasure did not confer any special rights and privileges on him. It was a law meant to douse rising tensions at the time by preventing Pelé from leaving the country. Although Quadros' tenure as President ended unceremoniously, none of his successors deemed it necessary to repeal the ridiculous law which tethered Pele to Santos like a tree, because they all needed him to survive in office.

That Pelé did not play for European football giants like Real Madrid or Inter Milan does not make his achievements pale in comparison to other soccer giants, especially his generational rival, Maradona. It was never his wish. Whenever he was asked why he never left Santos, Pelé would smile wryly and respond by saying that the thought of leaving the club during his prime never really crossed his mind. Unfortunately, we are left to only consider alternate possibilities, although I doubt the situation would have remained the

same if Quadros and his successors had acted differently.

Funnily enough, Pele was never a fan of Santos, the football club that made him. He was a fan of another football club based in Rio de Janeiro. In an interview with the YouTube channel 'Pilhado', he said the team that made him famous and which he devoted most of his career for, was never the team of his dreams. He had always been a Vasco da Gama fan. He said, "Most of my friends and my father's friends were Corinthian fans, or Club Atletico Bauru or Club Noroeste de Bauru fans, but from Brazil, most of them are Corinthian fans. I don't know why I stopped being a Vasco da Gama fan. I started to like Vasco and I became a Vasco fan. I didn't leave, I'm a Vasco fan. In case you don't remember, I'm a Vasco fan."

The older generation of football fans often feel that younger generations are too quick to dismiss the golden era which saw icons like Pelé dominate the pitch. It is why they take it upon themselves to remind younger ones of Pelé whenever unending debates on which player was/is the undisputed GOAT (Greatest of All Times) pop up on social media. This younger generation cannot be faulted for centering their debates on the Messi-Ronaldo rivalry. And with Lionel Messi adding the coveted World Cup title to his list of decorations, the GOAT debate is not ending anytime soon. But while the debates persist, let us not forget that the Guinness World Records and FIFA officially recognize Pelé as the player with the most career goals in the sport's history. Pele also holds the record for the most assists in the history of the World Cup. He is also the only player to ever score in a FIFA World Cup Final before turning 18, with the additional record of being the first teenager to score 25 international goals. The records are there, and as such, anyone can "go and verify".

Although Pele's life on and off the pitch was exemplary, it was not altogether without criticism. After all, a lot was expected of him not just as a global sporting hero, but as an icon of Brazil. In 1964, a military dictatorship came to power in Brazil and people expected Pelé to use his undeniable influence and condemn it. He would draw the ire of some Brazilians for choosing neutrality. In a 2021 Netflix documentary titled 'Pelé, he admitted that his hands were tied then. "I don't think I could have done anything different", he said. "It wasn't possible. What were you doing during the dictatorship? What side were you on? You get lost in these things. I am Brazilian. I want what is best for my people. I was no superhuman. I didn't work miracles or anything."

However, this criticism does little to diminish his status as a giant of the game. Neither does it cast any blemish upon the extraordinary fact of his football career and his affable charm. This generation can be forgiven for saying that his achievements pale in comparison to the individual exploits of Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo. After all, they did not watch him make those beautiful passes, execute dazzling dribbles and score those breathtaking, joy-giving goals. The fact remains that prime Pelé was a phenomenon on the football field, and if there is one word to perfectly describe him then, it would be the word "unstoppable".

So, until either a careful revision of history or future occurrences are enough to settle the debates once and for all, let every lover of the beautiful game pay their respects, even as the entire world eulogizes one of the finest, if not the greatest football player ever. The Greatest of All Time.

Pelé came, he saw and he conquered. But most importantly, he lived life as he played the beautiful game of football—fully, gloriously, like none other.

Zayd Ibn Isah wrote from Abuja. He can be reached via isahzayd@gmail.com



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Emefiele's return from 'exile': Matters arising

One issue that is serving as a hangover dispensation from 2022 to 2023 is the matter of Godwin Emefiele - the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN). He is presently in the eye of a storm of damaging allegations bordering on various shades of misdemeanor with yet to be defined specific grounds of culpability on his part. Recently there was a national scare that he was to be arrested by the Department of State Security Services (DSSS) which filed a suit in court for his arrest and detention for 60 days, on the ground of sponsoring terrorism. In response to the suit by the DSSS there were sessions of street rage with crowds protesting over what they saw as witch-hunting of the gentleman.

Coincidentally or otherwise, at the last count the officer had reportedly travelled out of the country on the grounds of serious health challenges - a situation that has been accentuated by a media report that he is presently hospitalised for cardiac complications. By virtue of the humanity in all of us, what Emefiele deserved with the development was sympathy from countrymen and women, as well as prayers that he recovers quickly and returns to his job. For he left at a most inauspicious time when several national issues under his purview were raging and demanded his personal attention, the scare from the DSSS effort to cage him, notwithstanding.

Essentially, among the issues that

demand Emefiele's direct and personal attention are the ongoing swap of old currency notes for redesigned ones, the trending allegations of sponsorship of terrorism, the controversy over the custody of stamp duty revenue, and the mother of all national concerns - the humongous hemorrhage of the country's common patrimony through suspect administration of the 'ways and means' window by officials of government. To wit is the recently emerging fact that the current administration had spent a whopping sum of N23.7 trillion through the 'ways and means' window in its seven years' tenure. This is a series of loans which are created by the CBN for government to borrow for emergency services and obligations, but must be paid back before the succeeding financial year. In the present case the ways and means package had already been spent without recourse to the National Assembly, and had accumulated over the years to the scandalous amount of N23.7 trillion as at the end of 2022. This amount was presented by President Muhammadu Buhari to the National Assembly last week as a debt to be repaid from the country's future earnings for the next 40 years. It needs to be recalled that the issue generated rumpus in the Senate during the week with the legislature declining to approve it unless further details were provided by the executive.

Also begging for Emefiele's attention is

the yet to be rested issue of the 'missing' N89 trillion earned supposedly by the country from stamp duties. At a time that Nigeria is contending with sundry loans of foreign and local nature, as well as indulgence in abuse of ways and means provisions, it rankles the mind that as much as N89 trillion can be allowed to vanish into thin air with worthless controversies serving as unbelievable 'clarifications'. Against the backdrop of these issues and any other ones that may crop up in future, the man's attention is needed even if all that may be required of him is to explain issues. But for now all the country can settle for is that the man gets well quick and returns home to help in resolving these outstanding issues.

Fortunately, the alibi now exists for his return especially if his health status becomes resolved as an Abuja Federal

High Court presided by Justice M.A. Hassan has issued an order of perpetual injunction restraining the DSSS from inviting, arresting detaining or charging the CBN Governor with any allegation of terrorism or fraudulent practice. This development is coming a week after the Chief Judge of the Federal High Court Abuja Justice John Tsoho, had rejected the suit filed by the DSSS to arrest Emefiele over terrorism charges. With these two landmark court orders, Emefiele and his host of supporters can heave a sigh of relief as he can return to office in an unencumbered state, and face the other burning issues of the day.

For instance the country needs his personal handling of the currency swap exercise in respect of which numerous complications have arisen to challenge the integrity of the enterprise, needful to the country as it is. Even during the attendance of a team from the CBN at a National Assembly session, Emefiele's absence was consciously felt as there were clarifications that strictly demanded his personal attention. Meanwhile among the trending challenges of the exercise have been the weekly cash withdrawal limits, which have been adjusted to N500,000.00 for individuals and N5 million for corporate bodies. The limits were initially N100,000.00 for the individual and N500,000.00 for corporate bodies.

Incidentally in anticipation of further protests the apex bank has even made provision for what it called 'compelling circumstances' whereby deviations from the rules can be accommodated with the payment of taxes for extra cash withdrawals, in order to prove that the cash control policy is not cast in iron.

Against the backdrop of the foregoing the coast is clear for the return of Emefiele to Nigeria and take his rightful place in the scheme of things. Of course, to say that it will not be business as usual is just stating the obvious, as lessons aplenty must have been learnt.

Against the backdrop of these issues and any other ones that may crop up in future, the man's attention is needed even if all that may be required of him is to explain issues.

Nigeria needs massive investments to avert a deepening crisis in education

By Cristian Munduate

Thirteen-year-old Ibrahim was abducted from school in north-west Nigeria in late 2020. Gun-toting men attacked his school around midnight and abducted him and his classmates. They spent one week in captivity before being rescued. "Ibrahim is not going back to that school, nor any other school soon," said his traumatized father.

Like Ibrahim, far too many Nigerian children today are not in school, and for those who are, far too many are not getting the kind of education they need to be successful in life. This needs to change.

With an estimated 10.2 million children out of primary school and 8.1 million out of junior secondary school, Nigeria has one of the world's highest rates of out-of-school children in the world. One in three children in the country is not in school and Nigeria's out-of-school population accounts for 15 percent of the global total.

Around 66 percent of all out-of-school children are in the North-East and North-West where schools continue to be attacked and schoolchildren abducted. This has caused learning disruption for 1.3 million children because of precautionary school closures in 2021.

Between 2017 and 2021, 84 schools were attacked by armed groups, 29 of these attacks were carried out in 2021. In 2021 alone, 1,446 schoolchildren and 24 teachers and other school staff were abducted by armed men in the North-West.

Furthermore, for those children who make it to the classroom, most do not learn sufficiently. In fact, 75 percent of children aged 7 to 14 years in Nigeria cannot read a simple sentence or solve a basic math problem. Poor learning fuels school dropout, depriving children of their fundamental right to quality education.

Early childhood education, which paves the way for learning at school and throughout life, is out of reach for most young children in Nigeria. Only a little more than a third (38 percent) of children between the ages of 3 and 5 attend early childhood learning programmes.

Behind these massive challenges is low public education financing.

Between 2001 and 2017, Nigeria allocated on average 1.97 percent of GDP per year to education, below the global recommended benchmark of 4 to 6 percent. While 10.1 percent was allocated to education at federal and state levels in 2022, there is still a long way to go to reach the international benchmarks of 15 to 20 percent of national budgets spent on education. Regressive spending patterns

also show that salaries account for 90 percent of total recurrent spending, leaving less than 10 percent for quality learning support.

Due to this chronic underinvestment, there is only one junior secondary school for every five primary schools and a shortage of 175,000 teachers in basic education across the country.

As we embark into a new year, we can turn this challenge into an opportunity with the right investments. By improving access to quality and inclusive education for all children, including providing life skills, digital skills, and 21st century job skills for adolescents, we can build the next generation of young Nigerians who will transform the country. And we will also be able to unlock positive economic and security impacts that will be felt the world over.

To give some ideas of what can be done in Nigeria, among other interventions, together with partners, we are supporting two models that can make a difference: Reading and Numeracy Activity (RANA) and Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL).

RANA works to improve teachers' capacities to provide quality literacy and numeracy for girls and boys in grades 1 to 3. TaRL targets schoolchildren from grades 4 to 6 with focused and tailored support in reading and math depending on their learning level.

RANA and TaRL are delivering promising results for children. Children participating in the TaRL pilot, for example, saw their reading and math skills improve dramatically. Children able to read a whole paragraph increased from 14 to 45 per cent while those who could do a simple subtraction rose from 11 to 59 per cent in the space of a year. These models now need to be introduced across the country to benefit all children in Nigeria.

UNICEF welcomes the Government of Nigeria's pledge to increase annual domestic expenditure on education by 50 percent over the next two years and 100 percent by 2025 and improve school safety and quality of learning. It is only with a significant increase in expenditure and more efficient planning, budgeting and delivery of education through tried-and-tested interventions such as RANA and TaRL that Nigeria can create a generation of educated young people able to contribute to one of Africa's largest economies.

UNICEF calls all citizens, communities, families and different actors and sectors to commit to education. Education for children is the responsibility of all adults. All children in Nigeria have a right to education, which is the key for their development and the prosperity of Nigeria.

Munduate is Country Representative, UNICEF

SUNDAY

MAGAZINE

TRAVELOGUE

Qatar: Its culture, people



■ Souq Waqif

By Jide Olusola who was in Qatar

Located in the heart of the Middle East, Qatar is a unique destination that embraces modernity while remaining steep in tradition.

Qatar, a gateway to the world, with around half of the world's population within a five-hour flight radius, has a history that stretches forwards and backwards. There is spectacular architecture everywhere, from public art galleries to skyscrapers and minarets.

This is a compact country on a peninsula in the Arabian Gulf, but the possibilities within are limitless. It is a melting point that is home to a huge expatriate population - around 160 nationalities in total, with the Qataris making up just about per cent.

Few decades ago, Doha was a small town in the desert, but it's now a metropolis which is rich with history, art and industry. With more than 560km of coastline that frames the desert, it is home to beaches, lagoons, inland sea and mangrove island that thrive in the salty gulf waters where pearl divers and fishermen have made their livelihoods for centuries.

In Qatar, you will find two very different types of deserts. In the North, there is the hamada or rocky desert, a surreal landscape of ethereal rock formations and monoliths; and in the South, rolling sand dunes curve towards the turquoise waters of the Khor Al Udaid, also known as the Inland Sea.

The desert landscape is spectacular on the country's West coast, particularly in Ras Abroug, where unusual limestone formations make a dramatic terrain. At nearby Zekreet, American artist, Richard Serra's, world-

renowned sculpture of the East-West/West-East emerges breathtakingly from the sands.

Qatar is one of the rare places in the world where the desert meets the sea, and the best time to visit is between October and May when the temperatures are moderate. During this time, you can experience the traditional desert lifestyle with activities such as camel riding and spending a night in a Bedouin tent.

Dressing conservatively is recommended in Qatar, especially in historic neighborhoods and places of worship, like wearing clothing that covers shoulders, arms and legs.

It is a warm and friendly country and you will come across many people who will greet you with a smile and wish you well. Alcohol is served in licensed places to those over 21 years of age. However, public intoxication is not acceptable. The use of illegal drugs is strictly prohibited.

In Doha, the easiest way to get around is the new metro system. There are three lines covering most of the city, with extensions on the way. It is safe, fast, cheap and clean. In fact, Qatar is an extremely safe country. In an online database, Numbeo's 2022 rankings, Qatar is rated the safest country in the world. So, you can travel safely and with peace of mind to Qatar.

There is also a comprehensive bus service and tax services such as Uber and Careem.

Doha is blessed with lots of diverse locations that you can visit with its cultural life divided across three distinct areas: Souq Waqif, Katara Cultural Village and Msheireb Downtown Doha.

In the heart of the city is its oldest market, Souq Waqif. Once it was a hub for trading sheep and goats, but after it was rebuilt, it

became a tourist hotspot and a link to the country's past. Its tangled warren of streets and lanes are home to stalls full of clothes, antiques, spices, jewellery and food.

Talking about food, Shay Al Shoomos is a popular spot with the locals when you want to eat. The first restaurant to be owned and operated by a Qatari woman, its known for its flavoursome, homely vibe and authentic Qatari food. You can also visit The Pearl where you will be spoilt with different choices of cafes and diners.

After eating, make your way to the Katara Cultural Village which is the city's multicultural hub. The village got its name from Katara which is the ancient name for Qatar. It is all about art, history and culture. Here, you can explore the collection of outdoor sculptures and artwork, the magnificent Greek styled amphitheatre, mosques, amongst other interesting sites. There is a public beach if you want to swim. There is also an opera house, a maritime museum and a planetarium.

Msheireb Downtown is right next to Souq Waqif and it's full of restaurants, boutiques and museums. It is a carefully planned district that came about as a total rethink of the city centre.

Qatar has more than its share of museums which tell the story of the country and region at large; object by object. Everything in the museums tells a story: from a priceless pearl to even the origin of number plates for cars. The museums are a great way to learn a little about Qatar's culture and history.

At the National Museum you will learn about the country's nature and wildlife, the history of trading and pearling and the huge

cultural shift of the last few decades. The museum gives voice to the country's culture and heritage through artefacts, oral history, music, films, and artworks.

The museum houses approximately 8,000 objects telling the story of Qatar, past, present and future from archeological artefacts to household items, from pearl diving and desert life to oil and ambition. It is located on Museum Park Street on the Southern side of the Corniche in Doha.

The Museum of Islamic Arts is one of the world's premiere institutions of Islamic arts where you can deepen your knowledge on Islamic arts. It houses one of the finest collections of Islamic arts in the world, including ceramics, carpets and manuscripts spanning over a thousand years.

The Msheireb museums are spread across four houses, each reconstructed to reflect a different facet of Qatar's history. The first is a carefully restored early 20th Century Qatari family home; the second is the site of the humble former headquarters of an oil company which shows the country's 20th Century transformation into an energy powerhouse; the third brings visitors up to speed with the country's recent past, present and future. Finally, the fourth is a house packed full of artefacts telling the story of the impact of slavery on the region.

Another museum is the FBQ Museum where you will find the imposing stone palace that houses the Sheikh Faisal Bin Qassim Al Thani Museum (FBQ for short). It is one of the world's largest private museums; telling the story of Qatar through the lens of

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TRAVELOGUE

Qatar: Its culture, people



Qatar National Convention Centre

Continued from page 17

one of its richest entrepreneurs. In there, you will see a large selection of the sheikh's own personal interests on display, including over 600 vintage cars. Qatar National Library is a contemporary hub of knowledge. It is just beyond books as it hosts events, exhibitions and cultural workshops. In there are rare books, manuscripts and other materials related to Arab-Islamic civilisation.

Arab Museum of Modern Art offers a vital alternative of Arabic art. It houses one of the largest collections of sculptures and paintings by Arab artists in the world. The gallery has a permanent collection, a library and hosts regular exhibitions.

Arab Postal Stamps Museum collects artefacts from 22 Arab countries. It is a cultural survey showcasing the design, history and commerce of a vibrant region.

Meanwhile, Qatar's spectacular public arts are not confined to galleries or museums. The country has a penchant for sculptures. Around every corner you will find works by local artists and world-renowned artists, from the quirky to the moving, from the laneways of Souq Waqif to the sands of the desert.

Walking the lanes of Souq Waqif, you are bound to run into Le Pounce, an avant-garde piece by French artist, Cesar Baldaccini. It is a two-storey gold thumb sticking out of the ground.

The 14 sculptures of British artist, Damien Hirst's, The Miraculous Journey, right outside the women and children's hospital at Sidra Medicine depict various stages of the development of a foetus.

Over at the Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC) you will see a giant spider in marble, bronze and stainless steel; its spindly legs straddling the foyer.

Subodh Gupta's Gandhi's Three Monkeys on the waterfront in Katara Cultural Village takes the form of three giant heads to portray different facets of war and peace.



The giant spider inside the Qatar National Convention Centre



The bronze Lamp Bear at the Hamad International Airport

There is more to do at the Hamad International Airport than taking a cup of coffee and waiting to travel. There is a plethora of sculptures to check out. The airport's authorities work closely with Qatar Museums on its ever-expanding art collection from local and international artists, enlivening the space and enriching travellers' experiences.

In the airport's main hall, surrounded by food and retail, you will find Lamp Bear, a huge sculpture that has become something of a mascot for the airport. At metres tall, the bronze bear is a playful statement that humanises the space.

You will find oversized, hollow bronze sculptures which double as playgrounds, inviting children and adults to explore the inside of the toy-like figures.

Meanwhile, beyond Doha, there are other cities where one can find interesting places to visit.

The third largest municipality in Qatar, Al Rayyan, which is roughly 10 kilometres North of Doha, is derived from an Arabic phrase that means "irrigation." The city is a must-visit destination, especially for tourists interested in learning about local culture, as it is home to some of Qatar's most well-known attractions. Al Rayyan has a wide variety of galleries, museums, retail centres and a fantastic culinary scene, in addition to sharing borders with

the largest communities in the nation. Every traveller may find something to do in the city. Al Rayyan has everything, whether you're interested in international cuisine, culture, art or history.

Al Wakra, which is located to the North of Doha, is well-known for being a top fishing location with a number of fantastic tourist attractions. This city has a lot more to offer than travellers may know, including stunning parks, a wide variety of historical monuments and immaculate beaches. The city is a well-known location for pearl diving and is home to many prosperous merchants. Souq Al Wakra, which contains a number of courtyards and lanes that have been there for years, is one of the best spots to visit in this city. The Souq Al Wakrah is the ideal location to enjoy the city's classic charm.

Umm Salal Mohammed is a village in Umm Salal, one of Qatar's smallest municipalities, yet it has a lot to offer visitors. Visitors who have been here before return time and time again since the village offers so many lovely attractions such as lovely parks, historical sites, playgrounds, and entertaining excursions. Barzan Olympic Park, Barzan Towers, Umm Salal Stadium, and the most well-known market, Umm Salal Central Market, are a few locations that tourists might put on their bucket lists.

Khawr Al Udayd, which is situated in South East Qatar close to the Saudi Arabian border, is a fantastic place to visit. It also has a stunning beach, which is its most well-known feature, and is recognised as one of UNESCO's World Heritage Sites. The sand dunes in the vicinity are among the most beautiful and are definitely worth seeing. Tourists should reserve trips to visit this location because only qualified drivers with the right vehicles can get there. A few of the most exciting activities include 4X4 dunes drives, sand skiing, camel rides and barbecues.

Al Khor's lengthy, intriguing history-which predates Doha's-is among its most intriguing features. Although the city has a population

of just over 30,000, some of Qatar's most outstanding tourist attractions draw visitors from around the globe. There is so much to discover in this city, from grand parks to immaculate beaches to cultural and natural attractions. Al Thakira, Al Khor Park, and Purple Island are a few locations you shouldn't miss.

Some of the most successful foreign businesses are based in Ras Laffan Mechanical City (RLIC), which is 80 kilometres North East of Doha. It is understandable why businesspeople and entrepreneurs frequent the town. Ras Laffan Mechanical City is one of the largest industrial export places in the world and plays a vital part in the commercial world. It is tucked away along the Northern coast of the Qatari landmass.

Mesaieed is brimming with entertaining activities that tourists of all interests and ages would be delighted to experience. This town offers a lifetime of travel memories, from its stunning beaches to its spectacular sand dunes to its fascinating history and culture.

One of Qatar's most distinctive and cutting-edge cities, Mesaieed, is completely apart from the others. In fact, it is one of the Middle Eastern cities renowned for being the main industrial centre and petroleum hub.

Madinat Al-Shamal, which is in Qatar's most Northern region and founded in the 1970s, is one of the least populous towns in the country. The town is one of the most impressive and famous in Qatar; with a variety of impressive sights to visit, including deserted fishing villages, clean beaches, archaeological monuments and scenic natural areas. It is one of the most stunning deserted settlements in Qalaat al Thaqab, with lovely houses influenced by Islamic architecture.

Al Zubara's past as a pearl-fishing town and commerce harbor in the 18th and 19th centuries is fascinating. It is now Qatar's largest archaeological marvel and a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2013. Al Zubara, which is roughly 100 kilometres North West of Doha, was established in the 18th Century and has grown to be one of the biggest and most important cities in the region. Visitors can visit mosques, defensive structures, historical ruins and a lovely market.

The most prominent fishing area in Qatar is Al Ruwais, which is well-known for its collection of historic fishermen's huts. Travellers can discover a variety of attractions in this city, including its ancient structures, the port and the neighbouring Jassasiya Carvings, which is actually its most breathtaking sight. Exploring the Jassasiya Carvings, which date back to 1500BC, is a truly wonderful experience. For those interested in historical sites and the legends around them, Al Ruwais is the ideal destination.

Dukhan, which is roughly 80 kilometres from Doha and became well-known after oil was discovered, is one of the most significant industrial cities in Qatar. Some of its main draws include its amazing beaches, lovely sands, and canals, which make it a must-visit summer destination for tourists looking for ideal family holidays packed with exciting adventures. Although Dukhan, located inside the Al Shahaniya municipality, is not as well-known as its neighbouring cities, it nevertheless boasts its fair share of well-known sights that will undoubtedly make a vacation there memorable. Some of the city's biggest tourist attractions include Dukhan Beach and Dukhan Masjid.

All said and done, Qataris are welcoming and helpful, they do expect foreigners to respect cultural and religious customs, as well as to dress and behave conservatively in public. Feel free to behave anyway you like while at your house or another private location.

The nation has an established social services system and a high level of living as a result of its oil resources. Both the anniversary of the ruler's accession to power and the day Qatar gained independence from Great Britain in 1971 are observed as national holidays. In public spaces and regional media, the national flag, the state seal, and pictures of the leaders are prominently displayed.



UNESCO World Heritage site



Katara Cultural Village

TAMBARI

Extra

CULINARY CORNER

Creamy chicken potato soup



PHOTO: Internet

Compiled by **Rosemary Etim Bassey**

With potatoes that are tender, well-seasoned chicken, vegetables, and basic seasonings, this chicken potato soup has a cream and savoury flavour.

Ingredients

Onion, carrot, chicken thighs, red potatoes, chicken

stock, water, heavy whipping cream, spinach (chopped), salt, ground black pepper, ground paprika.

Recipe

1 Trim any extra fat from the chicken thighs, then cut into bite-sized pieces. Cut the bacon into cubes.

2 Wash the potatoes and cut them into little pieces. Place potatoes in a bowl with water, then cover.

3 Add chicken to the pot after cutting into bite-sized pieces. Cook the chicken well and season with salt and pepper.

4 When the chicken is done, stir in the chopped onions. Cook for approximately 3-4 minutes.

5 Once the onions are done, add the carrots to the stew and simmer for an additional 4-5 minutes.

6 Remove the potatoes

from the water and place them in the pot. Add the paprika, salt, pepper, chicken stock, and water. a low boil is reached.

7 Cook for about 10 minutes, or until the potatoes are tender.

8 Add the chopped spinach to the soup.

9 Add heavy whipping cream. Turn off the heat after bringing to a gentle boil.

HEALTHY LIVING

Beginners' guide to meal planning

Meal planning is the practise of creating a weekly menu that meets your dietary requirements. Some people stick to a meal plan in order to achieve a particular goal, such as weight loss or lower cholesterol levels. Some people arrange their meals to stay within their budget or to provide for their entire family.

If you're considering meal planning for yourself or your family, here are some points to consider:

1 Choose your meal-planning method: For various people, meal planning takes on different forms. Some people compose a grocery list based on the meals they'll prepare and eat throughout the next week. Others prepare and portion out all of their meals for the upcoming week using meal prep containers, requiring little to no cooking throughout the course of the week. Pick the method of meal preparation that works best for you! You can prepare as much or as little in advance as you'd like; just keep in mind that the primary point is to plan your meals for the entire week.

2 Stock up on essentials for the refrigerator and pantry: Meal preparation is made simpler and less frightening by

maintaining a supply of staple goods in your cupboard and refrigerator. Example meat, veggies, rice, spices etc

3 Set up your kitchen: If



you lack the essential tools, it is difficult to prepare and store meals. Everything from knives and pans to

storage bags and containers is considered to be proper kitchen equipment.

4 Set a day for planning and shopping: Decide which day is most convenient for you! As these days will affect the days and meals you plan, try to keep them consistent. Even though you may occasionally need to shop or plan on a different day, being consistent will help you turn meal planning into a weekly ritual.

5. Choose the meals you want to prepare: Establish a weekly meal plan that includes how many meals you'll make, how many you'll eat out, and which meals you'll rely on convenience foods.

You don't have to prepare every meal; it will all rely on your lifestyle and schedule. Many people decide to concentrate their efforts on dinner. Lunchtime leftovers from dinner are excellent.

Source: www.totaste.com

Hello, there!

As we begin the new year, let us not hurry to make new year resolutions, rather seek out individual purpose and work towards fulfilling it. We all get 365 days to start over, seek new opportunities, grow and learn. With focus and discipline, we can make all days count for something. Welcome to a new year

We'll be kicking of the new year with something light yet so filling and tasty. Head over to our culinary corner for a creamy chicken potato soup recipe, to go along with it; a mixed berry smoothie recipe.

Because of its versatility in fashion, Ankara can never go out of style. Whether formal or informal, there will always be an Ankara outfit that fits your style. Our women's fashion page shows off some Ankara styles that will leave you obsessed with it.

Shirts are a fashion staple for every man because they can be used formally or informally.

Our men's fashion page features different shirt styles for you to try out.

There's so much knowledge to gain and money to save, if we ever took out time to read cosmetic or skincare labels before purchasing them. Our beauty section lists out reasons why you should read cosmetic labels.

Until next week, stay safe and remain blessed.

Happy New Year!

Amina Alhassan
(Editor)

aminaalhassan@dailytrust.com

Mixed berry smoothie



This quick and nutritious mixed berry smoothie recipe is delicious and perfect for the season.

Ingredients

Coconut milk or almond milk, banana, frozen mixed berries, vanilla Greek yogurt, honey, fresh berries and mint sprigs (for garnishing)

Recipe

1 Blend the coconut milk, banana, berries, and yoghurt until completely smooth. Add an additional 1/4 cup of liquid if the smoothie seems too thick.

2 If desired, taste and add honey. Pour into two glasses and, if preferred, top with fresh berries and mint sprigs.

Ankara Obsession

Compiled by Rosemary Etim Bassey

Ankara will never go out of style since it can be mixed with a variety of textiles, such as lace and chiffon, to create a unique piece. No matter where you go, wearing Ankara in a traditional or English style will make you feel glam and queenly.



The shirt code

Compiled by Rosemary Etim Bassey

One of the most common and significant items in menswear is the shirt. They serve as the focal point around which the rest of your clothing is constructed. They are also crucial for framing your physical look and enhancing your level of comfort. Finding a dress shirt that matches your personal style, physical features, and wardrobe is so crucial.



ETIQUETTE

Eating etiquette for the workplace



Compiled by Rosemary Etim Bassey

Everybody eats at work occasionally, whether it's by packing their own lunch every day, keeping snacks at their desks for mid-afternoon and overtime munching, or partaking in a workplace picnic. While conventional decency and basic table manners still apply when eating at work, consideration must also be given to other people's personal space and olfactory sensitivities. Here are a few rules to live by when eating at work:

Observe company protocol: Many businesses have precise rules about when and how to take meals. While some companies prefer that employees only eat in the company break room, others are okay with desk snacking and eating as long as the food is manageable. Other businesses prefer that staff eat only during authorised lunch periods and avoid bringing food to their desks. To find out more about your company's food policy, consult your employee handbook or contact human resources.

2 Avoid eating in front of clients or customers: Never consume food when interacting with customers face-to-face or over the phone. Drinking water or coffee during a meeting is acceptable, but unless you're at a lunch or dinner meeting, you should never combine food and client service. Additionally, refrain from nibbling on candy or chewing gum while interacting with customers.

3 Clean up your own mess: Always clean up after yourself, whether you're eating a snack at your desk or preparing a messy meal in the workplace kitchen. Cleaning your desk or table, placing garbage in the proper cans, wiping down your desk or table, and cleaning the dishes you use from communal spaces are all examples of this. Don't store leftovers in the communal refrigerator for an extended period of time. Before it spoils, dispose of any leftover food.

4 Never steal: Never take food from the fridge or kitchen in the office that isn't yours. Make sure to carefully label your personal food with your name to prevent anyone from attempting to steal it or transport it in a lunchbox. Keep your hands to yourself unless there is a dish of cookies or donuts left on the break room table, which usually signifies the food is open for anyone who wants it. If there is food left out, you can always ask management if it is free to eat or if someone else accidentally left it out.

5 Adopt proper hygiene: After eating, wash your hands and, if you can, brush your teeth. If you ate at your desk, clean any surfaces you may have touched, such as the phone and keyboard. You should also pick up any crumbs that have been left behind, as they may emit a foul odour or attract unwelcome insects or vermin.

Why you should read cosmetic labels

Compiled by Rosemary Etim Bassey

Your cosmetics, face cream, skin moisturiser, or cleanser may temporarily make you look smoother and brighter, but they can also mess with your hormones and reproductive health, expose you to pesticides known to cause cancer, and deliver harmful pollutants that can age your skin. Many people claim to have sensitive skin because when household or skin care products come into touch with their skin, they hurt, burn, get red, or feel tight. Or people claim to have it because their skin always feels itchy after coming into contact with a product, even though they don't notice any obvious consequences.

It is crucial to read the label whether you have sensitive skin or not because of this. The following are some elements that everyone needs to be aware of:

Is it Hypoallergenic: A "hypoallergenic" product is one that is believed to cause less allergic reactions like other products. When promoting items to customers with sensitive skin, the word "hypoallergenic" is frequently used in the cosmetics industry. You should be aware that there are presently no regulations or definitions that govern the usage of the phrase or guarantee that goods marked as hypoallergenic are less irritating before you fall for the hype.

What is the shelf life: Look for an open container symbol or an expiration date, which can indicate how long a product is thought to be safe to use when stored and used normally. Cosmetics that are stored in a warm, humid atmosphere may expire sooner.

Will it clog your pores? The term "noncomedogenic" refers to a cosmetic product that is not intended to clog skin pores. Under makeup, skin that can't breathe can develop pimples and become irritated.

Be aware that some components can masquerade as others: Some newer preservatives also function as masking agents. In order to provide the impression that the product is preservative-free, manufacturers can describe the preservative in the ingredient list as a "fragrance."

Liquor-free: A personal care product may only be partially telling the truth when it says "liquor-free" on the label. There are numerous forms of liquor, and when a cosmetics label claims to being "liquor-free," it most frequently means that it is free of ethyl alcohol. Other forms of alcohol, such as cetyl, stearyl, cetearyl, or lanolin alcohol, may still be included in your product.

Ingredients in excess might be harmful: You should pay attention to cosmetics and personal care items with a big list of ingredients since the

more substances a product has, the more likely it is that the product or one of its compounds has undergone animal testing. Because their products are less processed and more holistically based, organic cosmetics firms typically have a small ingredients list.

How the product is tested: The terms "cruelty-free" or "not tested on animals" on a cosmetics label refer to the product itself, not necessarily the components. This is where there is a distinction because you might purchase a product that you

believe to be cruelty-free even though the contents have been tested on animals. Finding natural and organic products is the safest course of action, but even here you must use caution. Some dishonest manufacturers use counterfeit labels to deceive their customers. The majority of organic goods are quite hypoallergenic. Those who are prone to allergic reactions or have delicate skin are advised to use it. They do, however, have a shorter shelf life than most because they lack the typical chemical preservatives.



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Movie on violence against women screened

I started collecting materials out of frustration – Alexandre Diop

Artist, Alexandre Diop is a Senegalese that moved to Berlin, Germany, at the age of 18 and now lives and works in Vienna, Austria. In Diop's eyes, Kehinde Wiley, who is best known for his portrait of Barack Obama, is a model of black success. Earlier this year, Diop's art which has relief compositions combining found materials and painted elements, have become highly sought-after among in-the-know collectors. He took up a residency at the Rubell Museum Miami, creating some of his largest and most complex works to date. The fruits of the residency are on display in the museum and reflect his interest in the stories and energies embedded in found objects, as well as his knack for painterly composition and fluency with art history. One of the most arresting works in the exhibition riffs on the trope of the reclining nude odalisque, a form that, in Diop's rendering, has a spine made of door hinges and a hand formed from tea labels. The artist explains that for him, such found materials are not only building blocks, but portals to realities.

Because of the nature of your practice, sourcing materials from the street, each place must have a distinct impact on your work; how did

that manifest in Miami?

I started to collect materials out of frustration, being dissatisfied with visual effects and materiality of the forms I would make with

an academic brush or with pastels. So, for a few years now, the materials have really become part of my work in the sense that I go digging to find materials - it's

maybe 40 per cent of my practice at this point. And I'm not only interested in materials because they've been thrown away, but also in the temporalities they suggest.

I'm interested in discussions between generations—so when I find materials from the 1950s or

Continued on page 24



Alexandre Diop and his mentor Kehinde Wiley in front of one of latter's artworks, Idrissa Ndiaye (2012). PHOTOGRAPH: Kenny Germé, styling by Kevin Lanoy

'I started collecting materials out of frustration'

Continued from page 24

60s, which are not used anymore, they interest me.

Everywhere I go, I always spend the first week exploring the realities and the possibilities. We live in a globalised world and trash is present everywhere, but of course it is not treated the same way everywhere. Africa and India for instance, they are a paradise for me because there is trash everywhere. But if you go to Vienna or Northern Europe, you have different situations. But the process was fast in Miami because it is quite a polluted city. It's always more pleasant when I can find materials quickly

and then start to play with them.

Your works straddle several media and genres: sculpture, painting, assemblage, bas relief. When you're making these works, how do you think of them?

To be honest, my relation to how I symbolise and verbalise my works has really evolved. Example, I remember almost getting into a fight with my ex-girlfriend because I was starting to say that my work is bas relief, and she said, "No, a bas relief is a bas relief," and I would say, "I know, but what I'm doing is also a kind of bas relief, that's how I see it," and she

would disagree and say, "No, now you're playing with words." But then when I started talking about them as sculpture, she would say, "No, it's not sculpture either," but that was her perspective as someone coming from a sculpture background.

So, I like to call my works "object-images". They are objects in the sense that they are wood panels with nails and textiles, and if you turn around the panel you will see all the nails coming through, and this is a really important part of the work-I want my work to be materially strong and heavy. And then I also put a lot of effort into the image on the front, like a painting, because the two-dimensional medium is very practical: it informs the viewer of what the artist wants to show.

How do you approach your found object materials? Do you have an image in mind and you go in search of the right material to express it or do the materials you find dictate the images?

The materiality is one technique for me, but everything always starts in my head - it may not look like it, but I think I'm really a conceptual artist at the end of the day. And sometimes when I see the material, the art is already there. I was educated with an African way of seeing - you see things in an object: a spirit, a parent, a god. It's also like Duchamp seeing a fountain in a urinal. So my education is informed by this African way of reusing materials and Duchamp's way of playing with what already exists.

In the past likened the process of making a new work to creating a new reality; can you explain that idea and the connection with your works?

I don't believe that the reality I am in is more real than the objects I create. The objects I make are a more real expression of what life is or the life that I feel. And every work I make is a reaction to a past work. Sometimes I'll write on a painting the title of a different painting; sometimes the same child from one work comes back in another, or the same moon, the same symbols. It's like I'm writing a book, and every piece is a page.

Culled from theheartnewspaper.com



Diop with one of his colourful paintings



La Grande Odalisque

Movie on violence against women screened

From Ayobami Balogun, Lagos

Sterling One Foundation recently held a screening of the movie, "Chatroom", to raise awareness of the various forms of abuse against women, the cultural traits that fuel them and the resources available to victims as part of its initiatives to reduce instances of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Nigeria and honour UN's 16 days of activism campaign.

The screening, which was held at Ebonylife Cinemas, also featured an interactive session that allowed viewers to share their thoughts on what could be done to reduce violence against women and girls, drawing insights from various communities.

Annually, the United Nations (UN) marks the "16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence" which kicks off on November 25 and runs until December 10 to get more people to participate in ending the abuse of women in all its forms. The campaign,



Mrs Adesuwa Onyenokwe, publisher, Today's Woman magazine, Mrs Hansatu Adegbite, Executive Director, Women in Management, Business and Public Service (WIMBIZ), Her Excellency, the first lady of Ogun state, Mrs Bamidele Abiodun and Mrs Olapeju Ibekwe, CEO, Sterling One Foundation and Producer, CHATROOM at the private screening of the movie

formally acknowledged in 1999, focuses on raising public awareness and influencing policy to combat discriminatory practices and defend women's rights in all communities.

Speaking about the campaign's significance, Mrs Olapeju Ibekwe, CEO of Sterling One Foundation, emphasised the need to raise the right level of awareness given that many women and girls were unaware they had been abused due to the widespread acceptance of some abusive behaviour.

The First Lady of Ogun

State, Mrs Bamidele Abiodun, who was the special guest of honour, spoke on the incidences of sexual and GBV.

"Chatroom" which stars several well-known actors, including Odunlade Adekola, Sambasa Nzeribe, Ibrahim Suleiman, Tony Umez, Omawumi Megbele, and Nengi Adoki, depicts a typical Nigerian neighbourhood where stigmatising abuse victims prevents many cases of abuse, particularly sexual abuse, from being reported.

Govt urged to tackle misinformation through library



Some resource persons and participants at the training

By Taiwo Adeniyi

The federal government has been urged to give priority to libraries in an attempt to fight disinformation and misinformation in the country.

The Director, Communications and Programmes of Youth Initiative for Sustainable Human Development in Africa (YISHDA), Agbara Moses, disclosed this at the Media and Information Literacy for Public Libraries Programme organised by YISHDA, with support from the United States Embassy, Abuja.

He said libraries were imperative to curbing misinformation and disinformation, urging parents to encourage their children to regularly visit libraries and not only rely on social media.

He said, "It is high time information is disseminated accurately. If we can ensure that trusted sources of information like libraries get quality accurate information then it can be channeled through which youth can access credible information

which they can equally share with their friends. Information is central to helping youths understand what the future holds for them. It starts with them having a strategy or specific information that can empower them."

On her part, the Director, Education Resource Centre (ERC) of the FCT, Hajiya Nemat Abdulrahim, described the library as one of the safest places for people to get accurate information, noting that that could be threatened if librarians were not well-trained or provided with relevant skills to guide against misinformation and disinformation.

She said, "This programme is timely and necessary to train librarians on how to identify misinformation and to be drivers of dissemination of accurate information."

The Chairperson of the Nigerian Library Association (NLA) in the FCT, Folashade Adepoju, commended the organisers, saying the programme would help in transforming librarians from bookkeepers to fact-checkers.



AGRIC BUSINESS

Bauchi watermelon farmers record poor harvest

From Hassan Ibrahim, Bauchi

Watermelon farmers have recorded poor harvest this season in Bauchi State following early cessation of rainfall.

Bara village in Kirfi LGA is the hub of watermelon where residents engage mainly in its cultivation during both the rainy and dry seasons.

A watermelon farmer and trader who is also the Deputy Chairman of the Watermelon Market in Bara, Umar Muhammad, said watermelon farming experienced a serious setback this season as “Almost 90 per cent of farmers witnessed poor yield due to early cessation of rainfall.

“Initially, we planted the seeds during consistent rainfall but excess water did not allow them to germinate well. Later, the abrupt cessation of rain struck the plants before they matured. Scorching sun disrupted the little fruits at their development level which affected the growing level and sizes of the fruits.

“We have three categories of watermelon sizes: Number 1, Number 2 and Number 3. At



■ A watermelon farmer sorting out his harvest in Bara village, Bauchi State

the end of this season farmers cultivated only Number 3 due to the challenge of cessation of rainfall. But the Number 1 is the

best grade which is sold at higher prices, followed by Number 2. Unfortunately, this season most farmers did not cultivate

Numbers 1 and 2.”

Muhammad explained that, “Watermelon farming usually takes 65 days from planting to

harvest. We used to plant the seeds between the first week of August and the second week of September, but due to the cessation of rainfall this year, they took up to 95 days before they matured and the fruits came out in smaller sizes.”

Commenting on the level of preparation for the dry season, Muhammad said the situation had forced many farmers to forget about the dry season.

He said, “We have not made any arrangement for now, except those interested, especially at the riverside where there is water. They have concluded arrangements to plant the dry season while some have sunk wells for watering the farms and others have brought the necessary tools for the exercise.”

Another watermelon farmer and trader, Adamu Sarkin Yamma Bara, said, “This season, watermelon farmers have been tested by God with very poor yields because we planted watermelon more than what was planted last season but the cessation of rainfall has resulted in poor yields. A good number of farmers have not harvested anything while a few others harvested only tiny fruits.”

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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	20,000
Beans	100kg	39,000
Sorghum	100kg	18,000
Millet	100kg	23,000
Wheat	100kg	46,000
Rice (milled)	100kg	61,000
Rice (Paddy)	100kg	22,500
Tomato	Big basket	12,500

FUNTUA GRAINS MARKET, KATSINA

Crop	Per/KG	Price (N)
Grains		
Maize	100kg	19,000
Sorghum	100kg	17,000
Rice (milled)	100kg	60,000
Beans	100kg	36,000
Soybeans	100kg	25,000
Millet	100kg	26,000
Wheat	100kg	50,000
Tomato	Big basket	5,500

MUTUMBIYU GRAIN MARKET, TARABA STATE

Crop	Per/KG	Price (N)
Grains		
Maize	100kg	18,000
Rice (locally)	100kg	47,000
Rice (paddy)	100kg	19,000
Beans (white)	100kg	45,000
Cassava (dried)	100kg	10,000
Soya beans	100kg	29,000

ALAMIS (LAFIA) MARKET, NASARAWA STATE

Crop	Per/KG	Price (N)
Grains		
Maize	100kg	25,000
Sorghum	100kg	23,000
Rice (Paddy)	100kg	26,000
Beans	100kg	42,000
Soybeans	100kg	35,000
Millet	100kg	26,000
Cassava (dried)	100kg	10,000
Tomato	Big basket	15,500

KUMO GRAIN MARKET, GOMBE STATE

Crop	Per/KG	Price (N)
Grains		
Maize	100kg	21,600
Beans	100kg	40,500
Sorghum	100kg	20,000
Millet	100kg	24,000
Wheat	100kg	45,500
Rice	100kg	57,000
Rice (Paddy)	100kg	21,000
Tomato	Big basket	11,000

UGBA MARKET IN LOGO LGA BENUE STATE

Crop	Per/KG	Price (N)
Grains		
Rice (local)	50kg	34,000
Maize	(29L bag)	34,000
Millet	100kg	31,500
big Beans	100kg	50,000
small Beans	100kg	45,000
Guinea corn	100kg	32,000
Sesame	100kg	81,000
Soybean	100kg	32,000
Bambara	100kg	50,000
Tomatoes	Big basket	25,000

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.



Climate Change: I lost 500 hectares of rice to flooding – Dr Manzo

Dr Manzo Maigari is the Director General (DG) of the Nigerian Agribusiness Group (NABG). In this interview with Daily Trust on Sunday, the former Kaduna State Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development shares his recent losses and what farmers should do to cushion the effects of climate change.

From Maryam Ahmadu-Suka, Kaduna

Many farmers in Nigeria experienced losses during the last rainy season due to flooding. In the light of this, how has climate change affected agriculture in the country?

I lost 500 hectares of rice to the flooding in Benue State. When you want to quantify that in money it is over N2bn. Olam lost 4,000 hectares of rice and there are states that are still under water.

What are you putting in place to forestall recurrence?

We are sensitising the people. They must see agriculture as business. So, people must naturally engage and involve insurance companies in their businesses as the starting point. We need to look at alternatives to rainy season farming. If you know that there is going to be flooding which you do not have control over, why do you plant around that time? It is better if you wait until the flood is over then you can engage in irrigation farming.

Are you suggesting that farmers should not plant during the rainy season?

If a farmer does not have insurance to cover the possibility of flooding, then it's

better you wait till the rains are over then engage in irrigation farming because there is no point farming and incurring losses. There is also a need to focus on research and development to see if there are crop varieties that can survive flooding; can stay under water for maybe one to two months. So, all these things are what we should be contemplating and farmers need to understand this.

What is the cause of the recurring flooding in the country?

Our own practices as human beings are exacerbating the issue of climate change. Example, unsustainable farming practices like bush burning that generate a lot of carbon dioxide which affects the atmosphere, allowing a lot of our farm produce to rot. You find out that some of us, instead of leaving one to two metres of the forest around river banks, we will refuse, saying it will harbour rodents and the rest that will destroy our crops. Then you farm close to the river and create problems.

These practices lead to contamination and in no time erosion takes place and you begin to lose your farm and the river will continue expanding, gets filled up with sand and soil and the water is displaced thereby



■ Dr Manzo

causing flooding.

NABG recently organised a workshop for farmers; was it informed by the issue

of climate change?

Yes. Avenues like those serve to provide farmers with information and understanding of what they need to be doing because the path on which we are is a path to self-destruction. We need to retrace our steps and begin to change the way we do things; things like agro forestry on the boundaries of our farms. You can just plant trees which will in turn stop wind erosion that will wash your top soil away. They will stop water erosion and they will retain moisture because the water cycle around your farm will be better maintained because water through transpiration goes through the tree into the atmosphere and then it is absorbed back into the tree. All these are things we have done over time without knowing the negative impact as we now know. We should be able to begin retracing our steps.

I was just talking with the chairman of the Climate Action Trust and they are looking at how they can support small holder farmers to plant 10 million trees across all the states in Northern Nigeria. These are practices that will help us restore our environment and even our livelihoods because the very moment we lose everything, then there is no more life.

Bauchi watermelon farmers record poor harvest

Continued from page 25

Sarkin Yamma who engages in both rainy and dry season farming, said the situation had compelled many farmers to abandon dry season farming because, "Many invested their whole capital during the rainy season and they have not recovered their funds due to the poor yields. Only a few courageous farmers have started clearing their farms in preparation for the dry season production.

"Many other farmers want to participate in the dry season farming to recuperate from

the challenges but have no capital to buy seeds, fertiliser and insecticide. The number of farmers planning to grow watermelon for the dry season has drastically reduced."

Sarkin Yamma disclosed that the poor harvest was not only in Bara, noting that it was spread across many areas.

He said, "I am also engaged in buying and selling watermelon from within and outside Bauchi State, because apart from the production of watermelon on my farm, I use to buy trucks of the fruit from different places to distribute across the country.

Recently travelled to Shellig in Adamawa State, there was also a poor yield of watermelon there. I also visited Biu in Borno State; the situation was still the same, and I further travelled to Buni Yadi in Yobe State. There too watermelons did not grow well and were not available. Just yesterday (Friday) I came back from Ningi, there was poor yield. The situation is worrisome?"

On his part, Yusuf Ali Bara told Daily Trust on Sunday that farmers had a very difficult experience from the beginning of the season: "We planted the seeds twice because the heavy and consistent rainfall at the beginning of the planting period did not allow the seeds to germinate. We had to plant again in early September with the expectation that the rain would last till the end of October. But despite this we ended up with very poor yield because of the sudden cessation of rain."

Responding to whether there were other challenges apart from the cessation of rainfall, Ali said, "We have been into watermelon for many years and we know the major challenges associated with its farming for both rainy and dry seasons. We believe that the cessation of rain was responsible for the poor harvest of the fruits.

"We had in the past witnessed incidents of insects or diseases that made the leaves of the watermelon turn red, but this season everywhere was greenish and no presence of any insect or disease within or outside the watermelon farms."



■ A watermelon farmer, Adamu Sarkin Yamma, displaying sizes of fruits harvested in his farm

1,033 agripreneurs trained in Edo

From Usman A. Bello, Benin

Not less than 1,033 incubatees in various agribusinesses have so far been trained in Edo State since the initiative came on board in 2020 by Livelihood Improvement Family Enterprises-Niger Delta (LIFE-ND), an International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) project.

The project's Coordinator in Edo, Jude Ekpu, disclosed this at an engagement with media stakeholders in Benin City.

He said the project was conceived to address poverty, boost food security and create jobs for youths and women in rural communities through agribusiness development on a sustainable basis.

Ekpu, represented by Benedict Akhamie, communication officer of LIFE-ND in the state, said 4,250 people were targeted in Edo but that 1,033 had so far been trained.

He noted that 116 trainers were engaged to train the beneficiaries on four priority commodities: cassava, rice, poultry and fishery.

He said the project adopted an incubation model of training wherein youths and women learnt under the tutelage of experienced agribusiness owners.

He disclosed that capacities of the participants were developed on record and book-keeping, agricultural entrepreneurship, agricultural enterprise development, food and nutrition, environment and climate change.

He explained that the project was designed by the federal government, IFAD and the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) to be implemented over a period of 12 years with a financing gap of six years in the first instance and an additional six years to be financed by other partners or an additional IFAD loan.

He further said, "The goal of the LIFE-ND project is the transformation of the rural economy in which all the rural population can derive prosperity and equal benefits. The project has as its development objective to enhance income, food security and job creation for rural youths, women and the vulnerable through agribusiness development.

"The project is implemented in 10 LGAs per state and 10 communities in each LGA, giving a total of 100 communities in Edo State alone where the LGAs participating are Akoko Edo, Esan North-East, Esan South-West, Esan West, Etsako Central, Ikpoba Okha, Orhionmwon, Ovia North-East, Owan West and Uhumwonde."

Why price of Irish potato soars



■ Dry season potato harvest in Barkin-Ladi, Plateau State

From Ado Abubakar Musa, Jos

The large Irish potato production in Plateau State, according to PotatoPRO.com, a leading information source for the global potato industry, has made Nigeria the fourth biggest producer in sub-Saharan Africa.

However, the state is the number one producer of Irish potato in Nigeria with the tuber currently produced in nine of the 17 LGAs of the state.

The Potato Value Chain Support Project of the African Development Bank (AfDB) pegs Plateau as accounting for 90 per cent of the potato production in the country, with countries such as Ghana, Benin, Chad, Niger and Cameroon importing large supplies from Nigeria.

However, despite being the number one producer of the crop in the country, the price of potato this year

is the highest in the last two decades in the state, with a 50kg bag selling for between N45,000 and N50,000. Many buyers say the current price of potato is beyond their reach, with others saying they have stopped eating it completely until the price drops to an affordable level.

Abdullahi Suleiman, a Jos resident, said he loved eating Irish potato but that the hike in its price had forced him to replace it with sweet potato which was far cheaper.

Suleiman said, "Honestly, it is not easy for me to buy Irish potato because it is too expensive. This is something that was recently sold between N20,000 and N25,000, but it is now sold between N45,000 and N50,000. I can't buy Irish potato for now. We are looking for cheaper foods like sweet potato which is sold at N6,000 per bag to sustain our lives."

Joy Marcus, another Jos resident, who came to the market to buy Irish potato but couldn't afford it, said, "I came to enquire about the price of a bag of the potato, but what they told me is different from what I was expecting. They said a bag is between N45,000 and N50,000. I can't afford it. I have already called the person that sent me and told him about the price. I have to go back home."

AFAN gives reasons
The All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN) in the state said lots of factors contributed to the scarcity and hike in the price of potato, noting that excessive rainfall, late blight and lack of adherence to good agricultural practices affected yield during this rainy season thereby hindering the mass production of the crop.

John Chindap Wuyep, state Chairman of AFAN, said millions of naira were lost in this year's potato

farming but that a lot of lessons had been learned from the challenges encountered.

He said, "The issue of the price of potato is as a result of climate change, excessive rainfall this year and potato blight, which was very severe. Almost 90 per cent of what was produced during the rainy season was affected by the late blight."

"Most of the farmers are now in the field so that they can try the dry season because the climate change this year made the rain very excessive that all what the farmers produced became waste. But I believe in the next few months, you will see potato coming from dry season farming."

Asked if the demand of potato was not part of the price hike, the chairman said, "Even during the harvest season, the price was still high. The demand is there really, but it is not available. About 95 per cent of the farmers suffered this year."

"During rainy season, we have more seedlings. But climate change has affected even the seedlings. So, those who are for the dry season now, getting the seedlings is very difficult and imported ones are not coming as usual because of the exchange rate of the naira. But we are going to overcome it. Potato blight is a global issue. It is not only Plateau. But Plateau became peculiar because of our climate."

Wuyep added that prices of farm inputs like pesticides and fertilisers were also factors that affected the mass production of potato.

He said, "Farmers said

the hike in the prices of the inputs prevented them from engaging or expanding the cultivation of potato."

'What we are doing to overcome challenges'

Mr Wuyep said a lot needed to be done to boost the production of the crop, especially now that farmers were knowledgeable about the difficulties they went through.

He said, "Sometimes, we the farmers, we don't follow the best agricultural practices, particularly in the application of pesticides to enable you to prevent unforeseen circumstances of diseases. Those who followed them suffered minimal losses. We believe that so many people have learned a lesson. Many even lost their lives because of the trauma. This climate change, we have to adapt to it by adopting modern and best agricultural practices."

"With the climate change here on the Plateau, we want the government to provide farmers with small dams for them to farm all year round. You can't farm for only three months and you go and rest. If all these are there, the infrastructure: dams, roads and concussive markets and conditioning like the storage facilities, I believe everything would be okay. The excessive rain made the blight worse."

We lost millions of naira to blight - Farmers

Potato farmers in the state continue to count their losses; describing the situation as terrible.

Monday Albert, a potato farmer, said, "I invested N600,000 this year but was only able to recover N80,000. I was expecting a profit but I lost my capital. I don't even know how to start."

"I have a customer who stored potatoes worth N6m in my shop but we lost almost everything to the strange disease. He was only able to recover N400,000."

"So, the potato must be expensive because it is not much and those who were lucky to harvest theirs had possibly spent a lot during cultivation. They applied fertilisers and pesticides which are very expensive. All your expenses must be put together while selling the potato, and that is why it is very expensive in the market. As a potato farmer, I can't eat it. I would rather sell it and buy cheaper food with the money."

Price hike affecting us - Potato dealer

Hajjiya Sabuwa, a potato dealer in Jos, said the hike in the price of the potato was affecting their sales because this year potato was costly and scarce, adding that only few people who were buoyant could afford to buy in the market as a bag was sold for N50,000.

She said, "This year there is low yield in potato cultivation. This has also contributed to the high cost. It is not everyone that can afford and as such, only few people come for potato and that has affected our income."



■ Potatoe market on the plateau

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Felicitations



On behalf of the Board, management and staff of Funtua Inland Dry Port and EMOG Bonded Terminal, I felicitate with the Director General of National Intelligence Agency, Amb. Ahmed Rufai Abubakar, CFR on his Turbanning as the Sardaunan of Katsina by His His Royal Highness, Alhaji Dr Abdulmumuni Kabir Usman , CFR, the Emir of Katsina.

This is a honor well deserved because you have continually impacted in the lives of people you come into contact. We wish you the best and pray for Allah's guidance and wisdom to lead your people.

**H. E. Amb. Ahmed Rufai
Abubakar, CFR
Sardaunan Katsina**

Signed:

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INSIDEPOLITICS

By Abdullateef Salau & Itodo Daniel Sule

2022: Budget padding, 8 other controversies that rocked N/Assembly

Members of the National Assembly had a tough time in 2022. The year began with a tit for tat between the executive and the legislature over the Electoral Act. Not long after that, majority of the federal lawmakers suffered defeat during party primaries, with the Senate President, Ahmad Lawan, described as the worst loser, having lost both presidential and senatorial tickets. Almost two-dozen senators also cried to President Buhari for help without success. Others changed parties in desperate moves to return to the parliament. As the clock ticks towards the end of the Ninth Assembly in June, many of the lawmakers' political careers are hanging.

The much-touted constitution amendment is in limbo, with no success in sight after gulping taxpayers' hard-earned money. Also, a threat by opposition members to sack Buhari over rising insecurity fizzled out, justifying the claims by critics who dismissed the threat as empty.

The federal parliamentary workers were also not left out; they were in a confused state over the presence of two men occupying the post and discharging the functions of the Clerk to the National Assembly (CNA).

Power play over Electoral Act

The year 2022 also saw the end of the drama, intrigues and power play between the executive and the legislature over the Electoral Act.

In the twilight of 2021, President Buhari declined assent to the Electoral Bill, citing direct primary as the only option of nominating candidates for election.

The lawmakers, determined to get the bill scale through, said the reasons advanced by the president did not hold water and therefore set in machinations to override Buhari's veto in line with Section 58 (5) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended).

After grandstanding, the legislators failed to make good their threat, and when they reconvened in January, 2022, re-amended the draft law to include direct, indirect or consensus methods of picking candidates for elective offices.

President Buhari assented to the bill on February 25. While the dust was about to settle, another issue came up; Buhari's amendment request that Section 84(12), which bars political appointees from contesting elections, was overwhelmingly rejected by the lawmakers.

Senators from across party lines spoke against amending the bill and urged that the senate abide by a court ruling which stopped the National Assembly from tampering with the electoral law.

In what seemed like a tit for tat, Buhari also withheld assent to a new amendment to Section



■ President Muhammadu Buhari



■ Senate President, Ahmad Lawan



■ Speaker of Representative, Femi Gbajabamila

84(8) carried out by the lawmakers in May to make provision for statutory delegates to participate and vote at conventions, congresses or meetings of political parties.

High legislative turnover

Almost all the members of the National Assembly sought tickets of their parties to contest the 2023 elections but only a few succeeded. Some were knocked off by their second term governors who are also eyeing legislative seats. For others who sought other positions, especially governorship, the political calculations in their respective states did not work in their favour.

Few others chose not to seek re-election based on the political exigencies they found themselves in.

Old timers like Ahmad Lawan (Yobe), Ike Ekweremadu (Enugu), James Manager (Delta), Oluremi Tinubu (Lagos) and Smart Adeyemi (Kogi) will be missing in the 10th National Assembly.

In the House of Representatives, the list includes former Speaker Yakubu Dogara; Deputy Minority Leader, Toby Okechukwu; Leo Ogor; Ossai Nicholas Ossai; Herman Hembe and Pat Asadu.

Buhari impeachment threat

Opposition lawmakers in July threatened to impeach President Buhari if the country's worsening insecurity was not addressed after six weeks.

The move began in the senate when opposition members stormed out of plenary chanting, "Buhari must go", when the Senate President, Lawan, blocked the move to debate a resolution reached at an executive session during which they had agreed to a six-week ultimatum on the president to address the spate of insecurity.

The impeachment plot thickened two days after when PDP members in the House of Representatives aligned with their colleagues in the senate.

Presidential spokesman, Garba

Shehu, fired at the opposition lawmakers, describing them as "divided" and "confused" and urged them to spend their time and energy on tackling the pressing issues Nigerians faced.

Budget padding

Members of the National Assembly were mostly accused of padding the federal government budget. However, the 2023 budget scrutiny revealed a different thing: MDAs shifted the blame to the Ministry of Finance which collates the estimates submitted by all government agencies for the next fiscal year.

The agencies, after the lawmakers uncovered some suspicious spending proposals buried in the budget, said the finance ministry should be held responsible.

The National Universities Commission (NUC), Ministries of Defence, Power and Humanitarian Affairs told senators that they had no knowledge of the line items running into billions of naira in their 2023 budget proposals.

The finance ministry blamed computing error, which it said "resulted in a wrong description of the projects."

The Senate Appropriation Committee later cleared the minister, Zainab Ahmed, of alleged padding after a series of explanations.

Constitution review

The current constitution review exercise is gradually toying the path of its "predecessors" which ended as jamborees with little or no success.

The National Assembly had in March transmitted 44 constitution amendment bills to the 36 state assemblies for further legislative work but only a handful of them acted on the bills and forwarded their decisions to the National Assembly. Those in charge, the constitution review committee in both the senate and House of Representatives, raised concern recently, accusing state governors of frustrating the process.

When the bill came up for first reading, Rep Mark Gbillah (Benue) raised a point of order, drawing the attention of the speaker to the fact the bill was earlier rejected following the controversies that trailed it, questioning the rationale behind its re-introduction.

But Speaker Gbajabamila said that the contentious aspects had been removed from the reworked bill and that the new bill came up after wider consultations with stakeholders, including governors.

Cross-dressing bill

Another bill that raised controversy at the house was a bill seeking to amend the Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act (2013) to outlaw cross-dressing in Nigeria.

The bill, which was sponsored by Rep Muda Lawal, proposed that cross-dressing, whether done privately or publicly, should be prohibited and proposed a six-month jail term for offenders.

But when the bill came up for second reading, Deputy Speaker, Hon Idris Wase, who presided over the sitting, said the bill be stepped down in view of its sensitive nature.

He observed that some cultures in Nigeria, especially in the South South, had men that tied wrapper as cultural dressing, noting that the effects of the bill could be detrimental to their traditions.

N/Assembly clerk

The presence of two Clerks to the National Assembly (CAN) created confusion in parliament on who to address as the chief accounting officer.

Sani Magaji Tambuwal, who was named acting CNA and Amos Olatunde Ojo, the outgoing clerk, were in charge and both were discharging the duties of the office.

Ojo, who was due to retire from service February, 2023, was asked to proceed on a three-month mandatory pre-retirement leave in November in line with public service rules.

However, in a dramatic U-turn, the National Assembly Service Commission (NASC) recalled Ojo to office until February, 2023, notwithstanding the appointment of Tambuwal as acting CNA to succeed him.

The recall of Ojo followed a letter from the Senate President, Lawan, to the Chairman of NASC, to the effect that Ojo's services were still needed to compile and transmit the 2023 Appropriation Bill to be passed by the National Assembly to President Buhari for assent.

The National Assembly staff union described the development as "policy summersault" on the part of the NASC which approved the appointment and the retention of Tambuwal and Amos.

Speaker of the House of Representatives, Femi Gbajabamila, at the "Distinguished Parliamentarians Lecture 2022" organised by NILDS, said he was doubtful that the constitution amendment process would be concluded before the Ninth National Assembly wound up in view of the delay.

Reps vs CBN over cashless policy

In the twilight of 2022 there was a faceoff between the House of Representatives and the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Godwin Emefiele, over the apex bank's cashless policy.

The CBN had earlier limited cash withdrawal to N100,000 per week for individuals and N500,000 for corporate organisations, but later reviewed it to N500,000 and N5m respectively following pressure from Nigerians.

The house had passed a resolution asking the apex bank not to proceed with the implementation of the cash withdrawal limits which was due to come into effect on January 9, 2023, until Emefiele briefed lawmakers on contentious issues.

Following Emefiele's failure to appear before the house on two occasions, the lawmakers resolved to allow the bank's Deputy Governor in charge of Financial System Stability, Aishah Ahmad, to represent him.

The lawmakers, after grilling the CBN chief, said they would take a position on the matter at a later date.

Water resources bill

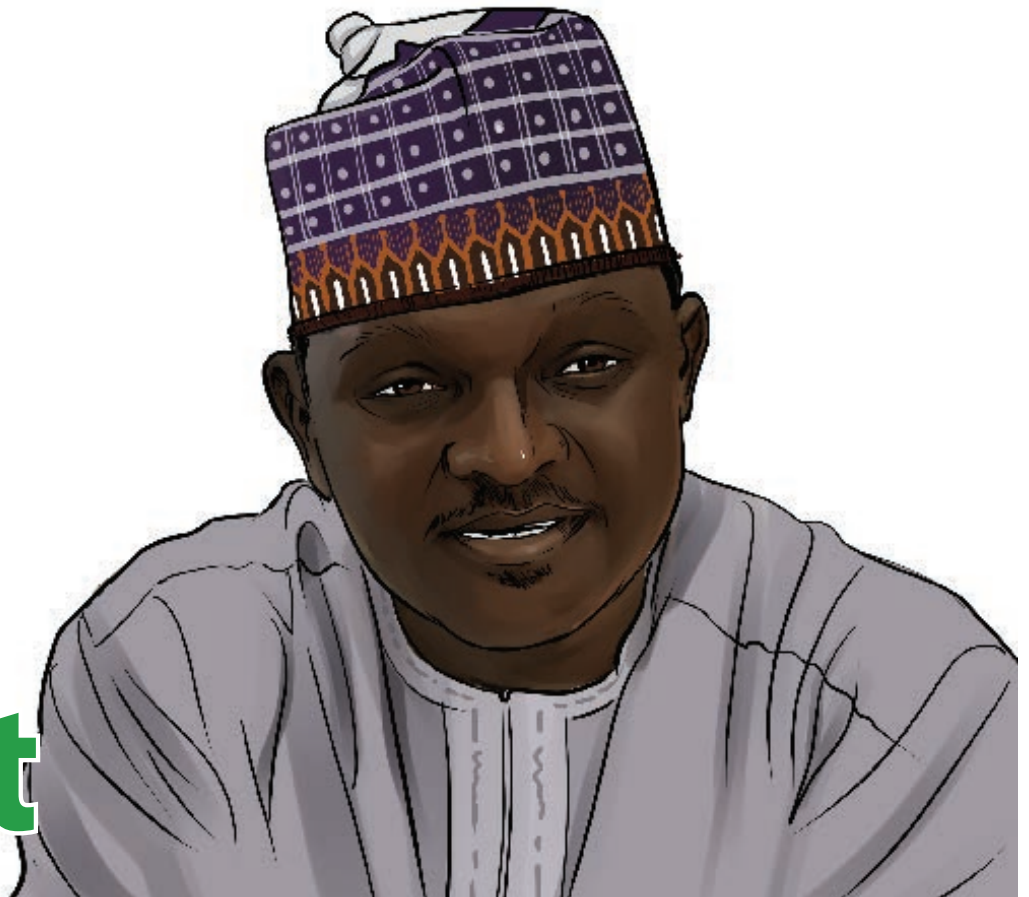
In the House of Representatives, the re-introduction of the National Water Resources Bill in July, 2022, generated controversies.

The house had in September, 2020, withdrawn the water resources bill it had already passed following criticisms that trailed the legislative decision.

But the reintroduction of the bill in July by Rep Sada Soli raised dust at the Green Chamber, with the lawmakers opposing it.

RACE TO ASO ROCK

AL-MUSTAPHA: Abacha's right-hand man eyeing Buhari's seat



By Saawua Terzungwe

Major Hamza Al-Mustapha (Rtd), the presidential candidate of the Action Alliance (AA) for the February 25, 2023, general elections, is like the proverbial cat with nine lives sequel to the strategic roles he played as a military officer and his ability to survive several legal, political and security battles.

As an intelligence officer, Al-Mustapha served as the Chief Security Officer (CSO) to General Sani Abacha when he served as head of state from 1993 to his death in 1998.

Born in July, 1960, Al-Mustapha started his early education in Nguru, Yobe State, and was enrolled at the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA), Kaduna, after which he was commissioned into the Nigerian Army (NA) in 1983.

He held various command positions in the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI), 82 Division, Army Headquarters and the Ministry of Defence before Abacha appointed him CSO.

Following Gen Abacha's death on June 8, 1998, Al-Mustapha assembled the top military hierarchy in order to avoid a succession crisis. Gen Abdulsalam Abubakar emerged as head of state on June 9, 1998, and Al-Mustapha was removed from office and subsequently arrested.

In one of his interviews read by our reporter, Al-Mustapha said, "On October 21, 1998, I was arrested because of a video cassette, not because of the late Kudirat Abiola. The family of the late Abiola was, as it is, a very close family to me. But something happened, which a particular camera in the villa captured.

"So, they wanted to take the video tape and burn it so that Nigerians would not know what happened. That was the beginning of my travails. Many people,

particularly lawyers, took money from those who were looking for the cassette, who ruled Nigeria.

"They would go to radio and television stations to rain abuses on me, rather than coming to court because they were paid to do so. But they did not know what was going on in the court of law.

"I appeared before 14 judges in Lagos. As soon as the matter was about to finish, they would stop it and take us to another court. For 15 years, I was in that state. Out of the 15 years, five years and two months I served in detention with torture. The remaining were in Ikoyi Prison, Kirikiri Prison and Jos Prison."

Abacha's regime

Gen Abacha seized power in 1993 and appointed Al-Mustapha as CSO November 17, 1993. In this role, he was responsible for the security of the regime and established a number of elite military-security organisations, including the dreaded Strike Force which personnel were trained in Libya and North Korea.

Al-Mustapha was, therefore, respected even by his superiors in the military because of his affiliation with and proximity to Abacha. His sagacity and influence in the regime were overwhelming.

Politics and power

It is imperative to state that Al-Mustapha oversaw the reorganisation of Nigeria into six geopolitical zones. With this he cultivated a vast network of spies and informants across the country.

Military intelligence

As an intelligence officer, Al-Mustapha was involved in counter-intelligence activities and was involved in the investigation of at least two coup attempts in the 1980s which brought him to the attention of General Sani Abacha who was the Chief of Army Staff (COAS).

He was also involved in operations in Chad, Liberia, Bakassi, Gambia and Sierra Leone.

Death sentence

On January 30, 2012, Al-Mustapha and Lateef Shofolahan, a protocol officer in the Moshood Abiola campaign organisation, were sentenced to death by hanging for the murder of Kudirat Abiola, wife of Abiola, widely believed to be the winner of the June 12, 1993, presidential election.

Al-Mustapha was convicted for ordering a security agent to kill Kudirat, but he denied taking part in her 1996 assassination, saying he was tortured into a false confession

earlier.

In an interview, Al-Mustapha said, "It was under duress that I made it. If the prosecution had seen the torture and the conditions we were subjected to, you would never have prosecuted this case.

"It was a dictation. I decided to do that so that I would be sent to court or the prisons so that I can see my lawyers. For one year, I could not set my eyes on my lawyers or members of my family."

But the trial judge, Justice Mojisala Dada, was not convinced with his argument, ruling that both men were responsible for Kudirat's machine-gun killing and should die by hanging.

Release

On July 12, 2013, Al-Mustapha was released from the Kirikiri Prison, Lagos, following his discharge and acquittal of the murder charge by the Court of Appeal.

Emergence as AA candidate

Al-Mustapha emerged the presidential candidate of AA at the party's primary poll held in June, 2022, in Abuja.

He defeated another contestant, Samson Odupitan, after two other aspirants, Felix Osakwe and Tunde Kelani, withdrew from the race and pledged their support for him, polling 506 votes to defeat Odupitan who got 215 after the Chairman of AA, Kenneth Udeza, had said 842 delegates were accredited for the primary using option A4.

Before then, in 2019, Al-Mustapha was the presidential candidate of the Peoples Party of Nigeria (PPN).

Tackling insecurity

Al-Mustapha told the delegates that his experience as a military officer and while working with Abacha would enable him to tackle the nation's security challenges if given the mandate in 2023.

He added that, "I'm a humble person and I have what it takes to contain the insecurity ravaging the country.

"If I become the president, I will live in Sambisa; I will stay there during weekends, holidays and see if anyone will touch me. I will deal with the problem of insecurity no matter whose ox is gored.

"Look at the silly acts of Boko Haram, I swear, if it is not possible in six months to deal with them, I will demote all these senior officers and send them home. They would be prosecuted and must return the money given to them. I will probe them.

"So, within these six months, I will bring sanity into the way the Nigerian military operates to be able to confront emerging security threats with renewed vigour and commitment."

Chances

Pundits say Al-Mustapha is a good presidential material but that the vehicle on which he wants to clinch office is unpopular.

Some say he will remain a key player in the nation's scheme of things even if he doesn't win the poll.

A political analyst, Chief Jackson Lekan Ojo, told *Daily Trust on Sunday* in a telephone chat that, "Al-Mustapha is very intelligent, knowledgeable, articulate and hypersensitive to the issue of national growth and development. He is a presidential material.

"He knows much about Nigeria - the economy, security, inclusiveness. But the only unfortunate thing is that he belongs to a very unpopular party, and in Nigeria, we don't appreciate individuals, we appreciate political parties.

"If we are in a nation where we respect the driver, Al-Mustapha is supposed to be one of the leading presidential candidates."

However, with the February 25 presidential election fast approaching and politicking getting more intense, it is left to be seen how Al-Mustapha would slug it out with the candidates of the other political parties.

He knows much about Nigeria - the economy, security, inclusiveness. But the only unfortunate thing is that he belongs to a very unpopular party, and in Nigeria, we don't appreciate individuals, we appreciate political parties

BUSINESS ANALYSIS

Controversy rages over 20% fresh tax on soft drinks

There is no end in sight to the controversy over the imposition of 20 per cent ad valorem tax on soft drinks manufacturers as the carbonated soft drinks sectoral group of the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) insists the fresh tax coming after a N10 per litre proposal is anti-business. *Daily Trust on Sunday* reports that the controversy is raging and taking a new dimension.



■ Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, Zainab Ahmed

From Abdullateef Aliyu, Lagos

The federal government had in the Finance Act 2021 introduced the excise duty which was tagged, “Sugar Tax”.

The Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, Zainab Ahmed, had explained that the excise duty on soft drinks would discourage excessive consumption of sugar beverages which contributed to diabetes, obesity, among others.

She stated that, “There’s now an excise duty of N10 per litre imposed on all non-alcoholic and sweetened beverages. This is to discourage excessive consumption of sugar in beverages which contributes to a number of health conditions, including diabetes and obesity.”

Daily Trust on Sunday reports that the sectoral group of MAN had raised alarm over the fresh tax burden of another 20 per cent ad valorem tax. Rising from its meeting in Lagos recently, the group rejected the proposed tax, warning that such a move would spell doom for the sector as the effects of the prevailing N10 per litre tax regime were already crippling the sector.

They pointed out that a study revealed that the N10 per litre excise tax which took effect between June and August, 2022, showed an -8 per cent revenue decline as a direct result of excise tax implementation.

It is projected that the decline will hit -25 per cent by December, 2022, if not reviewed.

This excludes the cost of write offs of products produced, excised but not sold. With the proposed 20 per cent ad valorem tax introduction, the collapse of the soft drinks market is imminent.

“Most certainly, the additional 20 per cent will not only kill the sector but result in the loss of revenue by the federal government and a consequential phenomenal loss of jobs by various layers of the Nigerian workforce,” the group, which accounts for 33 per cent of the entire manufacturing sector in Nigeria, said after the meeting.

They also decried the devastating effects of the N10 per litre tax which they said had “become burdensome with the high cost of operation in the country and its constituent elements.”

They, therefore, called for the suspension of the excise tax being proposed by the federal government to forestall the collapse of the industry.

Corporate Affairs and Sustainability Director of the Nigerian Bottling Company (NBC), Ekuma Eze, pointed out that the N10 per litre currently in practice had no bearing on profitability for any of the members of the sectoral group.

He stated that since the introduction of the N10 per



■ Soft drinks

litre excise tax businesses in the sector had been experiencing a worrisome decline, with the average loss in volume revenue -10 per cent between June and September, 2022, and that it was estimated that the decline would further worsen to -25 per cent by December, 2022.

The group equally rejected the move to bring up the sugar angle as a justification to impose the additional 20 per cent ad valorem excise tax on the Carbonated Soft Drinks (CSD) segment.

This followed a protest by a coalition, the National Action on Sugar Reduction, urging the government to increase taxes on sugary drinks and invest the revenue in public health.

The coalition said, “Soft drinks taxes are a ‘win’ for Nigerians. Consumption of sugary drinks is known to be a risk factor for diseases like type 2 diabetes, heart diseases, stroke and cancer.”

But the sectoral group decried the “ongoing emotional campaign to string up the sugar angle.”

It said the campaign was “in reaction to the multidimensional pressure that has been unleashed on the government by the vehement opposition in response to the proposed regulation by the sectoral group and concerned stakeholders over the last couple of weeks.”

The group stated that the ongoing campaign to link sugar and use it as a poster boy or silver bullet to solve Nigeria’s healthcare problems was at best misleading.

The group said, “Citizens’ health is a significant responsibility of all governments, and any action to protect citizens’ health is desirable and should be supported. But the false attribution of sugar-related ailments to a single cause or product is wrong.”

The group further stated that the lobby group that had encouraged the federal government to impose higher taxes on Sugar-Sweetened Beverages (SSB) had used data that did not support their argument for the increases in taxes on sweetened beverages.

It said, “Firstly, the group agrees that 70 per cent of citizens’ medical bills in the country are private expenses and do not involve the government.

“The call for the government to raise taxes to cover these private expenses is perplexing and inconsistent with best global tax practices that place the burden or incidence of tax on a product to cover the cost to the government of treatment of patients that consume the product.”

Corroborating the position, Mr Teslim Shitta-Bay, a foremost economic analyst, argued that

the advocates of the so-called sugar tax had argued that in 2007 Nigerians consumed 9ml per person, and in 2021 or 14 years after, they consumed 14ml per person; representing a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 3.46 per cent, which was only slightly higher than the national population growth rate over the period.

Nigerians, he noted, consumed 8kg of sugar per person per annum, which was below the prescribed World Health Organisation’s (WHO’s) 9.1kg per person and was significantly lower than the United Kingdom’s (UK’s) 30kg or the United States’ (US’) 46kg per person.

Shitta-Bay also raised greater health concerns in the aftermath of the sugar tax.

He said, “Yes, health issues can be connected to economic development, but in this case, there is no justification to use health to rationalise simply because the carbonated soft drinks sector has not violated the regulations.”

Other experts say while the government has a responsibility to explore new revenue opportunities, taxing struggling businesses may trigger even more economic woes for the nation, with even a far-reaching effect on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

A former Director General of the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), Dr Muda Yusuf, said the proposed tax “will hurt the carbonated drinks and non-alcoholic beverage segments of the manufacturing sector.”

Yusuf, who is the CEO of the Centre for the Promotion of Private Enterprise (CPPE), said, “The decision seems to suggest that the policy makers are largely disconnected from the realities of manufacturing challenges in Nigeria. This class of investors has enough challenges already.

“They are grappling with high and escalating production costs, rising operating costs, depreciating exchange rate, illiquidity in the forex market, soaring cost of logistics, multiple taxation and surging energy cost.

“It is unfair to contemplate an additional tax on this struggling sector.

“There are implications as well for the ability to retain existing jobs let alone creating new ones. In essence, this tax proposition is a negation of the quest for job creation and poverty reduction.

“Besides, the food, beverage and tobacco sectors have excellent records of backward integration with inherent multiplier effects on jobs and incomes.

“CPPE strongly advises against the contemplation of an additional tax on this critical sector of our economy.”



PENTECOSTAL FELLOWSHIP OF NIGERIA

NEW YEAR MESSAGE

EMBRACE THE FUTURE WITH COURAGE

Greetings to all Nigerians in the precious name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Welcome to Year 2023. On behalf of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) and millions of Pentecostals all over Nigeria, we declare that Year 2023 shall be one of peace, progress and turn-around for good and the fulfillment of God's promise over Nigeria.

This is a season of joy but it is also a time that calls for sober reflection. Nigerians are in great pains. Nigeria is under severe and unbearable pressure like never before.

Those who seek to be voted for should therefore seek above all things, to ease the pains of Nigerians, to stop the painful but unavoidable drift abroad of the best of our brains, to make Nigeria safe for all, to make Nigeria a comfortable home with adequate, reliable means of livelihood for the masses, not a space where pittance of paltry salary increase are being touted.

We urge these prospective leaders to create an environment where every Nigerian can thrive and prosper without recourse to dubious and evil acts. They should be decisive and ruthless in crushing insecurity, corruption, injustice, selfishness and nepotism that have become systemic and endemic, eating the fabrics of our nation.

We urge you not to just seek power, but seek to rebuild a terribly battered, brutalized and polarised nation that Nigeria has become today.

Our economy should be completely overhauled, not by foreign institutions who only seek to milk us to build their own economies; not by merely changing the colours of the naira but by pushing up its value greatly among the currencies of the world.

The extremely rich and diverse resources that God has mercifully bestowed on us as a nation should be properly harnessed, managed and distributed evenly to flow from the top to the grassroots, not just allowed to be stolen and trapped with the opulent small percent at the top, doling mere pittance down to the populace.

Our Constitution needs to be replaced with a people-oriented one that will facilitate the restructuring of our nation in a way that will make speedy development of the geopolitical zones possible, not just the cosmetic amendments that will bring no change to our nation.

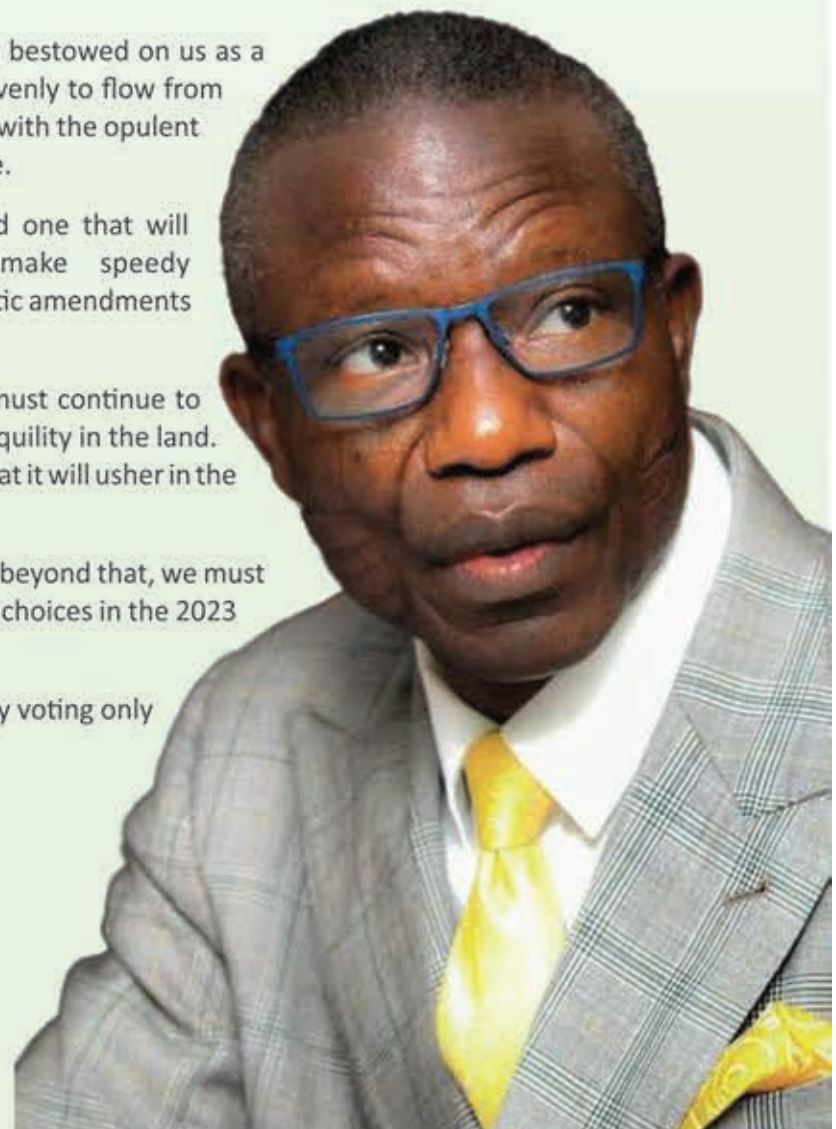
We must continue to uphold our nation, Nigeria in prayers. We must continue to commit Nigeria into God's hands to ensure there is peace and tranquility in the land. We will continue to pray that the elections will be free and fair and that it will usher in the much desired change for the good of the country.

Nigeria can not continue like this. Nigeria needs a true change. But beyond that, we must embrace the future with courage. We must be bold and wise in our choices in the 2023 election.

Let everyone use his or her vote to bring a true change to Nigeria by voting only those who will courageously bring the change that Nigeria needs.

God bless Nigeria!

Bishop Francis Wale Oke
President, Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria



Expectation is key to receiving

Acts 3:5 "5And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them." A crippled man was healed when he paid attention to the servants of the Lord-Peter and John.

Expectation is the breeding ground for miracles!

Expectation qualifies you for receivership. It separates you. It transfers you from the masses who need miracles...to the chosen who receive them. Expectation is proof of faith. Hebrews 11:6, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

Impossible things happen to those who expect them to happen. "For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith," (Mark 11:23).

You read the story of Blind Bartimaeus in Mark 10:46-52. He was always at the gate. Faith brought him to the gate daily, but Expectation caused him to receive a miracle.

We read about his bold faith when he yells for Jesus to have mercy on him. *Crying may get you attention, but it takes faith and expectation to get you a miracle.*

We often overlook the significance of his garment. During those times, beggars were issued government clothing signifying they were legitimately disabled. It labelled them for all to know and recognize their need. As Bartimaeus cried out to Jesus, it says he threw aside his garment! What he was saying was, "I know I can't see yet, I know I'm not healed yet, but if Jesus is anywhere in my vicinity, I'm casting this away, fully expecting that I will never go back to that life of begging again. Jesus is going to give me a miracle today." Now that is the power of expectation!

You can have Faith without expectation,

but you can't have Expectation without Faith. Understand that faith has to come first before expectation can exist. If you don't believe that it's the will of God for you to be healed, to be delivered, to prosper, to live life abundantly then it's highly doubtful you'll expect to be healed, to be delivered, to prosper, or to live life abundantly. Expectation is built on faith, but faith doesn't imply expectation is there.

Expectation of manifestation is the proof that you believe you have received.

Likewise, when you give you must believe that your harvest has been released and you are expecting it to manifest. Proverbs 24:14 say, "...there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off."

Expect your seed to produce a bountiful harvest.

Many years ago, lots of women were gathered in the Obstetrics & Gynaecology section of the hospital. In order to separate them, an announcement was made. All expectant mothers please come to the right. Less than half of the women moved to the right. What made them expectant mothers? They were carrying something that would come out at the fullness of time. How many people know that they are carrying something here today?

Every woman that was pregnant knew it. They had symptoms, they felt funny.

They walked carefully because they were carrying something precious. A look at their abdomen showed protrusion in some and nothing in others.

Some pregnancies were obvious but the younger ones were not. *You may not look like a millionaire right now but you are carrying the seed of a millionaire!*

The heavier ones had stretched and swollen stomachs. The stomach has to stretch to accommodate the child within. God stretches you to give you more. He calls for more seed, more commitment and dedication; more prayer, sometimes for sacrifice, etc.

Here is the key, they did something that

clicked. A patient missed her period and came to the clinic. I decided to investigate her for pregnancy first but she told me not to bother because she did nothing. Those who have planted nothing should expect nothing.

Have you been tithing, sowing precious seeds, or serving? Your seed has clicked. Expect to receive a bountiful harvest.

Why Is Planting A Seed So Important?

- Your seed registers your consent to the Word of God.

- Your seed registers your faith in God's methods.

What should you expect to manifest? Be careful what you expect.

Psalm 126:6 "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

Expect the covenant blessings to manifest. Always expect a higher level of the blessing to manifest. May you experience a blessing explosion in your life! Expect the favour of God to manifest. Expect your harvest to manifest. Expect the answers to your prayer to manifest. Expect your healing to manifest. Expect the defeat of your enemies to manifest. Expect all blessings pronounced over you here to manifest. Expect your breakthrough to manifest. Expect grace for greater things to manifest. *Think big. You don't experience big things thinking small.*

Always expect grace to serve God, grace to pray, study the Word, love the unlovable, grace to give etc.

It is not everyone that expects that receives. Some pregnancies are aborted for various reasons. It is a well known fact that certain things are dangerous to a growing foetus. Do everything possible to protect what you are carrying. Keep yourself pure.

I see your breakthrough. I see your miracle coming. I see your harvest flowing in, in Jesus name.

Whenever you come to church expect to

have an encounter with God and be saved. *Where two or three are gathered together in my name...Expect to be delivered and cleansed. Expect to be healed. Expect to be blessed with peace, joy, prosperity, with a good family, social life, etc. Expect to be equipped and empowered to serve. Don't live to be served, live to serve. If you ask Dangote what he loves doing, he will say he loves serving people with what they need. Expect people to be converted when you preach Christ to them. Be ready to endure if they ridicule you. Expect to live long and make heaven.*

Where do your expectations come from? Do they come from those around you, or from the Word of God? Are you trying to gain the approval of your boss, friend, neighbour, mother-in-law...? Are your expectations for the future based upon past experiences? That's a very limited perspective. None of us understands all that God did to bring us to the moment we are living right now. Don't limit a limitless God.

Build up your expectation by searching God's Word.

God's Word is the building block for the glorious destiny you desire.

Expectation is acting as if your miracle has already happened. Organize your life around your expected miracle. Plan it. Talk it. Believe it.

Begin to expect the goodness of God to flow over every portion of your life like a great tidal wave of blessing. Let His goodness and love, His miracle-working power flood your life like never before.

In summary, It is your longing that becomes your belonging. It is your petition that becomes your possession. Someone said this and I like it. *"What you don't expect you don't experience. What you don't desire you don't deserve. If you don't know what you want, you may die in want."*

Expectation (hope) is the switch to proofs." Get ready! Great things are on the way!

Bishop Dr Charles Olowojoba is the General Overseer of Dayspring Bible Church Worldwide with HQ in Abuja, Nigeria & President, Dayspring Christian Ministries Int'l.

Seek knowledge not power

By Fr. Valentine Anaweokhai

My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6).

The above statement is a section of a popular text in both the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. The full verse reads thus: "my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children". It implies that knowledge is priceless, and that lack of it is at one's own peril and doom. And as the English philosopher and statesman, Francis Bacon would assert, 'knowledge is power'. In other words, Knowledge is key to everything in life, including growth and development. Not just that, as Robert Boyce once claimed, "when knowledge is shared, power is multiplied." The bottom line is that knowledge remains the pathway to God, self, and nature's discovery and awareness.

The online Catholic Encyclopedia defines Knowledge as "essentially the consciousness of an object, that is, of anything, fact, or principle belonging to the physical, mental, or metaphysical order, that may in any manner be reached by cognitive faculties". In other words, knowledge is the desire to be conscious of oneself, nature, and God. It includes every human effort aimed at grasping and explaining reality both in the supernatural and natural realms of existence. I would not want to go into any epistemological analysis of the concept of knowledge, but however, let me say that the moment people cease to seek knowledge, the moment they start deteriorating and retrogressing.

Both the Christian Scriptures (Isaiah

11:2-4) and the Catechism of the Catholic Church, CCC. 1831, recognize knowledge as one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Gift of Knowledge enables a person to know God, oneself, and grow perfect in the science of the saints. It allows a person to understand the meaning and purpose God has for him and to live up to this meaning. It differs from wisdom in that it is an action, not just a desire to live up to the ways of God. It differs from Understanding in that it is not just ability, it is a knowing.

Humans by nature are knowing beings, very inquisitive, who desire to know and ask questions, to seek clarifications and be better informed. Therefore, people must seek knowledge to be well educated, formed, and informed. To be knowledgeable is to be fully conscious of oneself, God, and environment. Knowledge helps one to be adequately aware of what is happening both within and without. Education, therefore, becomes one of the significant agencies through which knowledge is shared and transmitted from one person to another. This gives credence to the above claim that knowledge shared is power multiplied. And I cannot agree less.

That being the case, education as an instrument, becomes a viable means of acquiring useful and impactful knowledge for self-development and formation. Education, in this sense, as reiterated in the Catholic Church Policy on Education in Nigeria, (Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, [CBCN.], 2015), 'should be directed towards the formation of the human person in view of his [her] end and in the duties of which, he [she] will, as an adult, have a share'. When it is well planned and articulated, the knowledge disseminated should be intended for a

holistic and integral formation of the person. This includes spiritual, physical, moral, and intellectual development.

Knowledge, when properly acquired, harnessed, and expressed, can promote mutual coexistence, respect, tolerance, reconciliation, healing, and understanding. It can build bridges and destroy fences. It can foil the culture of religious extremism and intolerance, hatred, bigotry, terrorism, and ruthless aggression that destroys the spirit of fraternity among fellow humans. It can enable human beings appreciate the highest good and values of life. It can engender a culture of simplicity, honesty, faithfulness, loyalty, truthfulness, gentleness, holiness of life, hard work, and prayerfulness. It can bring about the establishment of a system of justice, fairness, and equity.

Nowadays, when one hears young people claiming that education is a scam, and that going to school has not helped anyone, this calls for a serious concern. How did we get here and what sort of a mentality is this? The immediate consequence of such assertion is seen in the kind of lifestyle now predominantly embraced by some young people and even those who should be their role models and mentors in the society. There is now an inordinate and scandalous quest for power and money. The question is, what is money without knowledge? And what is power without knowledge? The fact remains that money or power acquired without the requisite knowledge on how to utilize them can be lethal and destructive. It can be oppressive and demonic.

What people sometimes fail to understand is that, when knowledge is painstakingly and prayerfully pursued, it makes one very powerful, influential, and wealthy. Thomas Aquinas would

say "wonder is the desire of knowledge." So long as people wonder, the desire to know never quenches. Little wonder then that knowledge breeds both power and wealth. A surgeon who deals with spinal cord issues, by virtue of his specialized knowledge, is a 'saviour' to those who have related problems. He makes a lot of money through his surgeries and is ipso facto, a 'powerful person'. In this context, he did not just start pursuing money or power but based on the specialized knowledge and skills he has acquired over time, he makes his money and enjoys his influence simultaneously.

Such acquired knowledge and skills can take a person to places, and enable one to become wealthy, in as much as the person knows how and where to apply it. That is why, rather than pursue power or wealth in themselves, it is always better to pursue knowledge. The more knowledge one seeks, the more powerful one becomes. And if such knowledge is intended for gains in a healthy manner, it yields immeasurable profits. Knowledge can make one both powerful and wealthy. Power alone without knowledge, can make one a despot and a brute. Wealth alone without knowledge can turn one into a fool and moron. The time people ignorantly expend on vain pursuit of power and wealth, if channelled to acquisition of qualitative education and transformative knowledge and skills, is more enriching.

However, let me quickly state here also that I am not utterly against the desire and quest for power and wealth, since in themselves, they are not evil. It is simply the extent people go and the inhumane manner, that sometimes, some people adopt in their pursuit, that I find repulsive, unacceptable, and condemnable. On this basis, the biblical dictum remains ever true, "my people perish for lack of knowledge." And on the final analysis, the appeal is; seek knowledge not power.

Fr. Valentine Anaweokhai
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Domestic homicide rises in Adamawa

● Police, rights activists worried

Homicide detectives at the Criminal Investigations Department at the police headquarters in Yola, the state capital are struggling to cope with a high number of horrifying cases involving family members and intimate partners, *Daily Trust on Sunday* checks have revealed.

Kabiru R. Anwar, Yola

At least 42 stories involving different incidences of domestic violence in Adamawa State have been published in local and national media between November 2021 and Nov 2022.

The public always wakes up to the shocking news of attacks on spouses and close family members. From the news of a father crushing the heads of his two little children to death for not saying the right word during a family prayer session to that of a wife stabbing her husband to death, incidents of cruelty among members of the same family have been unusually rampant in Adamawa state.

The story of a 20-year-old housewife, Caroline Barka arrested for killing her 38-year-old husband brought to the fore the other side of the burning issue of domestic violence which usually involve female victims.

Caroline stabbed her husband, Barka Malgwa, a bricklayer and vigilante member in Madagali with a knife following a heated argument that resulted in a physical struggle between the couple.

According to her, Barka would return home late and drunk when the children were asleep, stumble on them and on slightest provocation threaten to deal with her. Despite the usual domestic conflict, Caroline never in her wildest imagination thought her relationship with Barka would end in tragedy.

Sitting in a detention room at the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) wing of the Adamawa State Police Command in Yola, the capital city, 270 kilometres from her village was her nine-month-old baby, Alheri who has been sick and always crying from mosquito bites, Caroline held tight the pale looking infant in her arms.

Remorseful Caroline now realised she was not the only detainee as her nine-month-old baby, Alheri was also with her in the detention cell as thoughts of her older child, Emmanuel who is three years old also troubled her.

Answering a few questions from *Daily Trust on Sunday*, Caroline admitted to the offence for which she was being charged while expressing deep regret for her actions. She wished she had tolerated her husband that fateful night. If she had ignored him or thrown the knife away after seizing it from him, he would have been alive and she wouldn't have been a murderer.

"I am here (in detention) because I fought with my husband and he died in the course of the



■ Caroline Barka, 20, detained for the murder of her husband, Barka Malgwa in Madagali



■ Elisha Tari, 25, detained for killing his children

fight. He was drunk. He returned one night and fell on top of our child and I was afraid he could injure the little child, so I challenged him.

"He then threatened me with a knife, holding it to my neck. I seized the knife and stabbed him in the rib. He rushed out to his uncle's apartment, crying that he has been stabbed and they questioned him saying, 'were you not threatening to cut your wife's neck, what happened?' He kept quiet. So his uncle did not know it was serious. He was later rushed to the hospital and died on the way", she said.

In a remorseful tone, she said she spent time reflecting on the circumstances that led to the unfortunate incident while the ghost of her husband haunted her in her dreams.

"I always cry and have nightmares and the baby is always crying from mosquito bites and is always sick here. My husband

does come around in my dream and play with the children as he used to. I want to face the future with repentance. I want to live a quiet life with my children. I don't want anything bad to happen to me again. I regret my action. It was not intentional. I know I made a mistake, yet I am appealing for mercy," she said.

Barka's family said they were not interested in pursuing the case against Caroline as they left the matter to God.

Similarly, on July 31, a 58-year-old housewife, Hajaratu Sini from Wunbirmi Tilli in Michika told journalists that she was arrested for killing her husband's mistress after she caught her in bed with her husband of forty years.

Hajara said she tracked her husband to the house of the widow, Kwada whom he had been dating. After chasing him out of the lady's room, the lady, Kwada joined in the fight thereby provoking her. She

then picked a stick and hit her in the head, resulting in her eventual death.

Another gruesome case that happened August was one the police in August announced the arrest of a 25-year-old father, Elisha Tari for stoning his sons aged three and five years to death for disobeying him.

Mr Elisha Tari was apprehended on August 18 along the Cameroon border while escaping to the neighbouring country after the murdered children's grandfather reported the crime at the police divisional office in the Michika area.

When interviewed by journalists, Tari said he used stones and a stick to crush the heads of his sons for disobeying his instruction during a family prayer session when he asked them to say "God" and they kept repeating "fire" instead.

Preliminary investigation

revealed that the victims' mother had separated from the abusive husband, two months earlier over a disagreement, leaving the children with their father.

That same month of August the then state Chief Judge, Justice Nathan Musa had sentenced a local wrestler from Guyuk area to death by hanging for the murder of his estranged wife.

The wrestler, Thank-You Grim had separated from his wife, Kwalla who already got a suitor and asked for divorce letter to enable her remarry. Grim invited her over to his house to collect the letter she had requested but on arrival, the story changed as Grim wanted her to return to him, a proposal she instantly rejected.

In the course of an argument, Kwalla allegedly insulted the wrestler who became enraged, threw her to the ground and used a pestle to hit her on the head until she died, sparking outrage in the village.

Police, Human rights activists worry

Police and human rights activists are worried about the escalating incidence of domestic violence as well as rape in Adamawa State as the Nigerian police experimenting an advocacy initiative with the hope of finding a solution to the problem.

The state Police Commissioner, Sikiru Akande recently pointed out to the alarming increase in cases of murder and other forms violence against family members as well as gender-based violence in the state, saying the police would embark on an advocacy campaign to sensitise the public on the need for domestic peace.

Disclosing his plans while parading dozens of suspects before the media, the police chief stressed the need for the state-wide sensitisation effort aimed at promoting peaceful resolution of domestic crisis to check the high rate of domestic violence, saying communities could play a vital role in settling disputes between spouses and avert incidences of domestic abuse.

A human rights activist and volunteer with Displaced Children Support Initiative, Comrade Adamu Babaji decried the prevalence of domestic violence in the state that is recovering from Boko Haram insurgency, he called on government and other stakeholders to invest adequately on economic empowerment, education as well as trauma counseling for victims.

He further urged religious and community leaders to preach domestic peace and enlighten their followers on ways to resolve domestic rows without taking the law into their hands.

When interviewed by journalists, Tari said he used stones and a stick to crush the heads of his sons for disobeying his instruction during a family prayer session when he asked them to say "God" and they kept repeating "fire" instead.

Inside Tiv's 'mammy wata' dance



Blessing dancing behind mask



Spectators

From Hope Abah Emmanuel, Makurdi

The Tiv people of Benue State are known for their various cultural displays, especially mammy wata (mermaid) dance often displayed at occasions.

Fun lovers in local parlance also refer to the fascinating theatrical art as *ajigber* or *jöv mbakuv*.

The dance has over the years become a delight for spectators, especially at performances to mark the end of the year.

The dancers are masked in "mermaid" costumes and make intricate movements accompanying the beat of drums to suggest that they are mermaids.

Blessing Nev, a top performer of the mammy wata dance, said, "The mammy wata has been a dance for the male folk for years, but we (female) only wanted to give it a try and it came out perfect. So, ever since we have continued to perform the dance. In fact, I performed it in a competition and came second."

Nev dispelled the belief by lots of people that there is the involvement of mysticism in the art occasioned by body movements in which performers twist themselves.

She said, "There's no magic about this dance. The magic there is the body movement, costume and tactics."

"Also, there's nothing occultic about the dance; the only difference about this dance is the costume, the mask and energy."

She further explained that the mammy wata was mostly

performed during Christmas and New Year celebrations, but that she could do the dance anytime to the delight of her admirers.

She added that, "We have been doing well though it has not been easy. God has always helped us to get on. In the future, however, I hope to start a troupe of my own with the support of many people."

Nev's twin sister and mammy wata dancer, Mercy, expressed optimism that the dance would continue to enable her to promote her culture.

She said, "Someone encouraged me to do the dance. I tried it and fell in love with my performance. It gives me joy. Before now, I did other different kinds of Tiv dances, but I ventured into the mammy wata two years ago."

"The challenge about the dance for me was when I started it wasn't easy, especially in wearing the mask. But I endured it. For instance, the first day that I wore the mask to perform, I was suffocating and it felt like I was going to die. However, I endured it to the end of the performance on stage."

She further said, "There is nothing occultic about the mammy wata dance now, but our fathers were involved in it in their days. What we do now is to improve on the culture and nothing more. I used to work for Takuruku Entertainment, but right now I do other things on the sidelines while awaiting the process to get into a higher institution."

For Abigail Ahula, another female dancer, her debut into the mermaid dance was simply to

prove to the male counterparts that the dance after all was not their exclusive right.

She said, "Truly, the dance used to be exclusive for the menfolk, but I want to prove that women can even do better. I have been into mammy wata dance for at least two years now, but the major challenge I faced was at the initial stage. I had a lot of body pain, and of course I found it difficult to use the mask, but now I have perfected the art to keep my breathing steady when masked."

"We normally have our peak performances at Christmas, though we still do it anytime we are called upon. We do it on request any other time of the year. I have benefited a job through this dance. It was during one of our performances that the president general of Mdzough U Tiv noticed me on stage and assisted me to get employment as a teacher where I work presently."

"But I still perform, the teaching job hasn't hindered me in any way. I would like to say that there is nothing magical about the dance but people can be suspecting something fishy because of the mask we wear."

A cultural enthusiast, Tahav Agerzua, who recently announced a live show involving the twin dancers at Kenville Park in High Level, Makurdi, disclosed that the two stars of Takuruku Performing Troupe were to perform to entertain neighbours on their birth anniversary.

Agerzua, who is the immediate past Principal Special Assistant (PSA) to Governor Samuel Ortom,

noted that, "The great dancers, Mercy and Blessing Nev, picked up their dancing skills at High Level, Makurdi, where they were born and bred where their mother owned a restaurant close to Ebony Theatre - the first modern private cultural troupe in the state."

He said, "The place where they will perform (during the birthday) is within sight of where their family lived at the time of their birth about two decades ago. Ade, their mother, recalls that right from their days as toddlers the artistes from Ebony Theatre captivated the girls."

He further said that their mother, Mrs Nev, recalled that, "Whenever they were rehearsing the two would climb the short fence that separated our house and the troupe's premises to watch. They would be engrossed and would do nothing else but watch."

He added that the twins who hailed from Abeda Mbadyul in Logo LGA affirmed that Ebony Theatre introduced them into the entertainment world when they assigned the role of children to them in a drama when they were five years old.

Agerzua also noted that at the age of seven, Eugeneus the Great made the twins act in a film.

He said, "Now in their 20s, both of them performed with several troupes before they jointly featured in the Swange Music and Dance Festival 2019 as members of Takuruku Entertainment Troupe that emerged overall best."

"Besides their spectacular performances in cultural and

modern dances, their outstanding creativity and talent have manifested in their invasion of the male-dominated mammy wata dance."

In a similar development, Dr Charles Iornumbe, a mammy wata (*ajigber*) dancer in his younger days, said, "Those moments remain memorable for me. I didn't just only feel fulfilled but elated that I made my family proud. I loved to interpret my role to the admiration of my audience, especially when my clothes were properly sewn to fit my size. I'd wriggled my waist and dance with passion."

Iornumbe, who is the Director General (DG) of Radio Benue, carried out his doctoral research on traditional heritage such as Tiv customology, having being propelled by the indigenous dances of the people and because he had earned a living and paid his way through school from the gains of the theatrical dances, including *kwagh hir*, even as he noted that there were no magical strings to the dance.

He posited that, "Except that we cannot rule out the fact that some people go as far as acquiring charms so that they could undo other troupes during competitions."

President General of Mdzough U Tiv (MUT, Tiv's highest socio-cultural body, CP Iorbee Ighah (Rtd), while commenting on the advancement of the dance, assured that his leadership would thrive to uphold the custom, culture and tradition of the people.

Ighah said, "Females are delving into the dance. We will promote and preserve the culture. Culture is dynamic and you don't need to throw it away; even if you go to Israel where Jesus was born, they have kept their culture. So, culture is not something to play with. You can try to improve on it so that you can preserve it for unborn kids to come and know that this was the culture of their forebears."

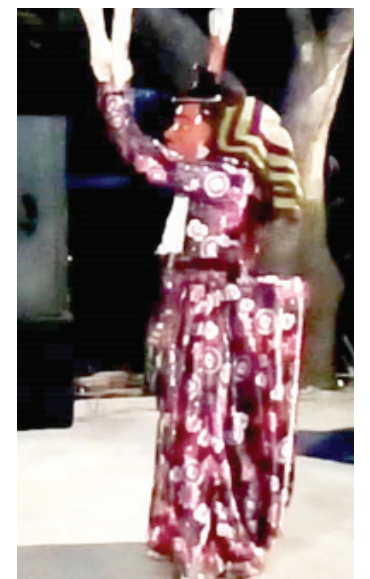
Truly, the dance used to be exclusive for the menfolk, but I want to prove that women can even do better.



Blessing and Mercy



Ladies Mermaid dancers with their magics



A masked dancer

EXPLAINERIn partnership with
Centre for Democracy Development (CDD)

What to know about dangers of new Lagos rail project

By Faruk Shuaibu

The Lagos State Government recently conducted a test ride of the first phase of its yet-to-be-commissioned Blue Rail Line project.

The 13-kilometre electric-powered rail is from Mile 2 to Marina with five stations and it is expected to ferry about 250,000 passengers daily when its operations commence.

Before then, the Managing Director (MD) of the Lagos Metropolitan Area Transport Authority (LAMATA), Abimbola Akinajo, warned residents of the state not to trespass on the rail line because “it is electrified”, advising them to make use of pedestrian bridges to avoid being electrocuted.

In a video message, Akinajo said there were alternatives to using the overhead bridges and other exits provided once the train became operational.

He said, “If you want to cross from one side to the other, you must make use of the overhead bridges.

“We have a government that is very responsible and we have fenced all the alignments for the Blue Line to ensure that people do not cross it.

“But we see time and time again that people go there and cut the fences and they run across. This is not acceptable.

“Unlike the train system, driven with diesel engines, which most Nigerians are conversant with, the Blue Line will be powered by electricity, thus crossing the track will no longer be an option.

“The Blue Line will use the power known as the Third Rail Electrification System. It works by directly attaching a current carrying a conductor to the rail tracks, which means the entire length of the track will be electrified. That means the train will be propelled by the electricity passing through the road tracks which is about 750 volts; an amount of power three times more than electricity being utilised for domestic use.

“Crossing the track when the rail track is in operation early 2023 will mean instant death. We appeal that you make use of the pedestrian bridges which have been provided to cross the 10-lane Lagos-Badagry Expressway. The pedestrian bridge has the ability to take commuters into the train station, the bus station, as well as to cross the expressway. Please, avoid going close to the tracks; your safety is important to us.”

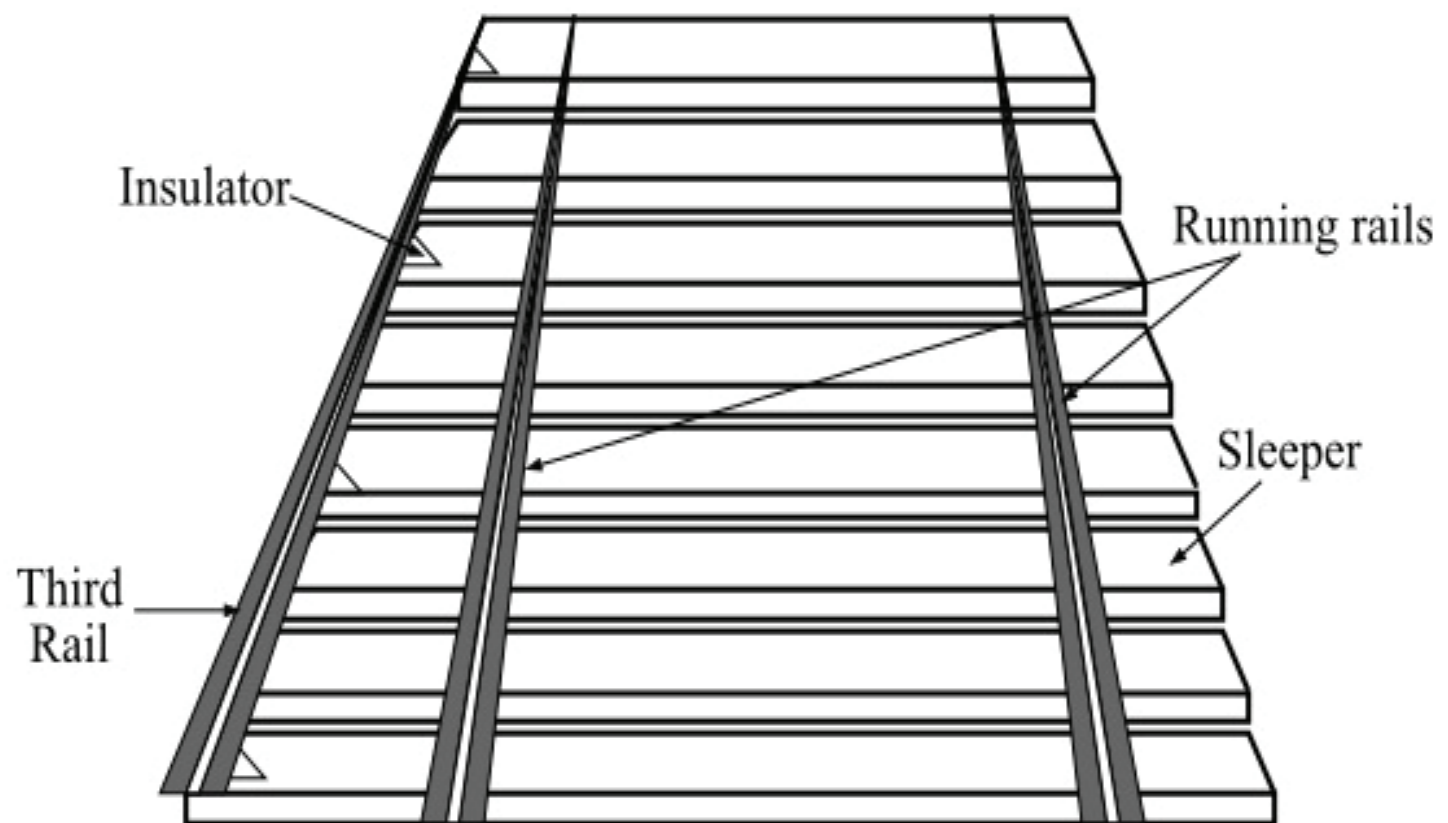


Figure - Third Rail Traction System

What is third rail line?
According to an online publication by Agico Group, the Third Rail, also called conductor rail, is a type of train powered by electric energy on two steel rails.

It explained that, “In order to supply power to the train, a live rail is added next to the railway, which is the third rail. The third rail is usually located between two rails or outside one of the steel rails.

The collector — which connects the train with the electrified rail (also called contact shoe) — of an electric train touches and slides on an electric third rail to transmit electricity to the train.

Also, a publication by a tutorial noted that on most tracks with third rail, the electric steel is placed outside the running rails, but that in some cases a central conductor rail is used.

It added that the third rails had to be interrupted at level crossings and at crossovers for smooth transition to the train shoe.

It stated that the advantages of the rail were that it was cost-effective, less affected by natural disasters and reduced maintenance workload.

However, the use of electricity on the tracks makes it dangerous for humans and animals. Thus, passersby risk walking on the tracks at level crossings.

Its danger
The Network Rail, an NGO that creates awareness on dangers of third rail lines, noted that, “The third rail is probably one of the most difficult dangers to see.”

It said carrying 750 volts, the track is very easy to kill as the “current that flows through is three times as powerful as your home electricity. It’s designed to send power to the train, but you are 70 per cent water and the perfect conductor - it will pull you in and not let go until the emergency services are able to switch the power off.”

While stating that researches show that in the United Kingdom, the bulk of its young population do not know of the dangers of the rail, it remains unaware of its potentially fatal dangers. It advised that the only way to avoid these dangers is to never step foot on the railway.

Just as LAMATA expressed fear that the fence it erected on the rail

tracks could be vandalised, the belief that walking along the tracks due to train routes being shorter than roads or highways is another threat for trespassers to use it.

A report by the BBC said the electrified track poses great danger in parts of the UK where third rails are used with 49 deaths recorded in 2010 due to trespassers easily touching the rail line accidentally.

It added that if “the problem is not solved by having overhead power lines instead, in wet weather the electricity can arc through the air and hit people four feet away. In both cases the power is left on overnight, which many people do not realise.”

The report gave a first-hand witness account of death on one of the lines in the UK.

On July 23, 2006, Walford took a short-cut across a railway line in Eastleigh, Hampshire, with his 18-year-old girlfriend, Sammy Cook.

He said: “We were walking along the railway line and Sammy tripped and she fell onto the live rail. She was electrocuted.

“We; I and a very close friend of hers called Louise, pulled her off by her belt and I picked her up in my arms and carried her to the side of the railway line and she took her last breath in my arms.”

He added: “The railways really are dangerous places. It’s just not worth taking that risk. It’s not a playground for kids and it’s not safe for adults.”

“Unlike the train system, driven with diesel engines, which most Nigerians are conversant with, the Blue Line will be powered by electricity, thus crossing the track will no longer be an option



STATES

BAYELSA

Friend kills policeman on duty, steals rifle

From Bassey Willie, Yenagoa

A friend of a police officer attached to a commercial bank has shot and killed the officer and took away his rifle in Bayelsa State.

A source, who works in the bank, told *Daily Trust on Sunday* that the incident happened on Wednesday at the bank on the D. S. P. Alameisegha Road in Yenagoa when both men were about to have lunch.

He said that while the policeman, identified as Corporal Bob, left his rifle on the bench and was washing the spoons needed for the meal, his civilian friend picked his rifle and shot him in the back and ran away with his rifle.

He also informed that the killer was last week introduced to officials of the bank by the deceased as his kinsman.

Police spokesman in Bayelsa State, SP Asinim Butswat, said the identity of the suspect was known and that investigation was ongoing to arrest him.

AKWA IBOM

Emmanuel signs N700bn budget for 2023

From Iniabasi Umo, Uyo

The Akwa Ibom State governor, Mr Udom Emmanuel, has signed into law the 2023 Appropriation Bill of N700bn passed by the House of Assembly.

The budget, signed by Gov Emmanuel during the last State Executive Council (SEC) meeting of 2022, is made up of N356bn and N344bn as capital and recurrent expenditures respectively.

In a press release signed by the Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Mr Ini Ememobong, Gov Emmanuel also extended the retirement age of teachers in the employ of the state government from 60 to 65 years, effective from December 30, 2022.

The statement added that, "Approval was granted for the release of the sum of N675 million for the payment of 2019 leave grant to teachers in government employ. Exco granted approval for the employment of 1,000 junior staff into the state civil service.

"Exco granted approval for the training of 2,000 youths in maritime safety and surveillance, to be undertaken by the Ministry of Labour and Manpower Planning."

JOS

Peace building: Muslims honour Wase, Kwande, others

From Ado Abubakar Musa, Jos

The Muslim ummah in Jos, under the umbrella of the Plateau Peace and Unity Forum, has honoured the Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Ahmed Idris Wase; a former Nigerian Ambassador to Switzerland, Yahaya Kwande; and other sons and daughters for promoting peace in Plateau State.

Other recipients of the excellence awards include Hon Muhammad Adam, Member representing Jos North/Bassa; Hon Yusuf Gagdi, Member representing Kanam/Kanke/Pankshin; Hon Shehu Bala, Jos North LGA chairman; Hon Dayyabu Garga, Chairman of Kanam LGA; the first Chairman of Jos North LGA, Hon. Sama'ila Muhammad; a former Minister of State for Information and Communication, Ibrahim Dasuki Nakande; and the General Editor of Daily Trust, Hamza Idris.

The convener of the occasion and former House of Representatives member, Hon Baba Akawu, while delivering his speech, said, "This is a very special prayer activity coming at a very critical time of our nation's history. It is organised to recognize, honour and celebrate some very distinguished members of our ummah that are giving their best to Allah and humanity.

"We gathered here today to pray for our dear state, country, victims of Boko Haram, banditry, flood and Plateau ethno-religious crises and for a successful and peaceful conduct of the 2023 elections."

NIGER

13 abductees rescued in Niger

From Abubakar Akote, Minna

Thirteen abductees have been rescued by security operatives in Gurara and Paikoro LGAs of Niger State.

The state's Commissioner for Internal Security and Humanitarian Affairs, Emmanuel Umar, disclosed

this in Minna, noting that the rescued victims were nine women and three men.

He gave the names of the victims as Ramatu Usman, Jamila Jafaru, Fatima Usman, Hassana Usman, Salamatu Bio, Suleman Usman, Bayi Mohammed, Awwalu Shagari, whom he said were kidnapped at Maje-Daji in Gwagwalada Area Council of the FCT.

He said the other victims were Fauziya Musa, Nazifa Ibrahim, Mansura Musa, and Wasila Musa who were kidnapped at Gwalu village in Paikoro LGA of Niger State.

Umar further said they were rescued on Friday around 1pm following a tip off that bandits were sighted around Bonu, Gwalu, and Chimbi areas of Gurara and Paikoro LGAs.



Traders display their goods on the middle of the road at Ile-Epo Market in Lagos yesterday

PHOTO: Benedict Uwalaka

BORNO

Residents discover corpse in drain

From Olatunji Omirin, Maiduguri

Men of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) have evacuated the corpse of a young man dumped inside the drainage in Maiduguri, the state capital.

Our correspondent, who visited the scene, sighted the corpse of a man covered with blood dumped near a transformer at the Old GRA on Damboa Road.

It was gathered that the corpse was found in a drain by residents who alerted

the CJTF Commander at Damboa Circular Junction in Maiduguri.

Speaking with the *Daily Trust on Sunday*, a member of the CJTF, Ba'na Umaru, said, "We received distress calls this morning that a body was found in this area,

we have alerted the security agencies, including the police and civil defence.

"One of his eyes was plucked out and his hands and some other parts of his body removed. We have been directed by the police to evacuate the corpse."

FCT

460,643 uncollected PVCs in 11 years in FCT — INEC

By Abbas Jimoh

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has said that a total of 460,643 Permanent Voter's Cards (PVCs) have remained uncollected in 11 years in the FCT.

This was contained in a one-page report on "total PVC received and collected as of 24th December, 2022" from the electoral operations department, FCT INEC office, on Saturday in Abuja.

Daily Trust on Sunday

reports that the commission had fixed January 22, 2023, as the deadline for the collection of PVCs by registrants ahead of the 2023 general elections.

The document showed that the uncollected old PVCs from 2011 to 2019 stand at 230,007, while that of 2021 to 2022 is 230,636.

According to the document, a total 305,960 PVCs were received from the commission's headquarters in 2021/2022 out of which 75,324 were collected and 230,636 were uncollected.

KANO

Sugarcane market fined N50,000 over sanitation

From Zahradddeen Yakubu Shuaibu, Kano

A mobile court in Kano State has fined a sugarcane market in Kano metropolis the sum of N50,000 over a breach of the monthly sanitation law in the state.

The Magistrate, Auwal Yusuf Sulaiman, also ordered the closure of the market located at Kofar Waika along Muhammadu Buhari Way and requested that the owners should bring themselves to the Ministry of Environment

for punishment.

Similarly, the mobile court arrested 111 defaulters which led to the generation of N240,300 fine. Among the defaulters were tricycle riders, motorcycle riders and drivers.

Speaking during the exercise, the Kano State Commissioner for Environment, Dr Kabiru Ibrahim Getso, described the exercise as successful as majority of the people in the state were complying with the order.

SOKOTO

G-5: We will deal with erring members lawfully – Tambuwal

From Abubakar Auwal, Sokoto

Governor Aminu Waziri Tambuwal of Sokoto State has said that the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) will explore lawful avenues to bring its erring members to book.

While interacting with newsmen on Saturday, Tambuwal said, "PDP is a law-abiding party and it will explore lawful

avenues to bring any of its erring members to book.

"The five good colleagues that are in G-5, you know, I have always been saying this, we engage in political engineering and political negotiations; it is not a war of attrition.

"I always submit that in this our business, whatever it is that you are doing, even if you try to hide it, it will come out.

You cannot plan and execute a political project in your own bedroom.

"So, when my colleagues resolve on what to do, I think it is then that the party will now respond on whatever position they have taken."

He also urged politicians to be mature during their campaigns in order not to aggravate the fragile security situation in parts of the state.

FEVER PITCH

UNBEATABLE SPORTS ACTION

Okoye bemoans Watford bench role position

Watford goalkeeper, Maduka Okoye, has admitted that his move to the Hornets is not going as planned but he believes he made the right call to move to Vicarage Road.

The Championship side swooped Okoye up from Dutch side Sparta Rotterdam in the 2022 January transfer window, then loaning him back to see out the season in the Netherlands.

The shot-stopper, who has been capped 16 times at international level by Nigeria, has not yet made a single Championship appearance for Watford this season.

Though he has made one appearance for the Hornets this term, in the EFL Cup against MK Dons.

Despite that, he is optimistic that he made the right choice in

joining Watford.

“Every goalkeeper who goes from the Netherlands to England has some problems at the start,” he told Dutch outlet Voetbal Primeur.

“Some things are different in England than in the Netherlands, just take the physical aspect.

“Sports wise, it has not worked out as I had hoped, but we are sticking to the plan.

“No, it is certainly not easy. It is quite tough, I have to tell you honestly.

“At Sparta, I played every week and now I’m on the bench. That was something I had to get used to.

“I am still 100 per cent behind my transfer because I did well in the Eredivisie and of course I could not stay with Sparta forever. Watford currently sit fifth in



■ Okoye the Championship table as they aim for promotion back to the Premier League and Okoye is hoping they can do the job.

Grassroot talents, key to football development, says Mouktar

>>> Page 39

Man City slip up as Rashford send Man Utd into top four

Manchester City slipped off the pace in their bid to catch up with Premier League leaders Arsenal as they were held to a 1-1 draw by strugglers Everton in their final match of the year.

Erling Haaland made a positive start for Pep Guardiola’s men when he latched on to Riyad Mahrez’s pass to tap home his 21st league goal of the season.

The result left second-placed City, while Everton are 16th with 15 points. They are two points above the relegation zone.

Also, Newcastle United missed the chance to close the gap to leaders Arsenal at the top of the Premier League after they were held to a 0-0 draw at home to Leeds United.

Similarly, Southampton will end the year rock bottom of the Premier League and facing a fight for survival after conceding a late goal to slide to a 2-1 defeat by Fulham.

New manager Nathan Jones looked set to earn his first point in charge until Joao Palhinha’s powerful strike restored

Fulham’s lead in the 88th minute.

Aleksandar Mitrovic then had a stoppage-time penalty saved by Southampton goalkeeper Gavin Bazunu but the damage was done as Saints suffered a fifth successive league defeat.

Southampton captain James Ward-Prowse’s superb free kick in the 56th minute looked like securing a draw which would have lifted his side off the foot of the table.

Crystal Palace scored twice from set pieces in the first half to beat Bournemouth 2-0 away in the Premier League banishing their Boxing Day blues and finishing the year on a high.

In-form Marcus Rashford stepped off the bench to earn Manchester United a 1-0 victory over Wolverhampton Wanderers, a win that moved Erik ten Hag’s side into the Premier League top four.

Ten Hag left the club’s top goalscorer on the bench from the start due to an “internal disciplinary issue”, and saw his team struggle to break down Wolves in the opening period,



■ Haaland has now scored the most goals before the turn of the year in the Premier League

youngster Alejandro Garnacho wasting the visitors’ best chance.

Rashford came on for the

second half to give United more cutting edge in attack, showing great strength and composure

to hold off his marker and fire the winner 14 minutes from time.

Ronaldo to become Saudi Arabia’s 2030 World Cup bid ambassador



Cristiano Ronaldo will become an ambassador for Saudi Arabia’s World Cup bid as part of the deal that has seen him join Al-Nassr.

The superstar attacker completed his move to the Saudi Pro League side on Friday night, ahead of the January transfer window. He will earn a staggering £173million per year through his basic salary, bonuses and image rights.

Al-Nassr have also inserted

a separate clause into his new contract, one which mimics a deal Lionel Messi has also signed with the Middle Eastern country. Negotiations continued during the World Cup and were finally completed this week to see Ronaldo leave Europe for the first time.

According to Marca, a clause in his new contract will see Ronaldo become an ambassador for the Saudi bid for the 2030 World Cup. The Middle Eastern

country is understood to be lining up a joint bid with Egypt and Greece for the right to host the tournament in six years.

The Paris Saint-Germain superstar is thought to earn more than £20m per year in return for him promoting the tourism to the country. Messi has already been paraded by the Saudi state during a visit in May.

Ronaldo will represent Saudi’s image abroad, with his arrival said to be considered a

‘matter of state’. The deal follows that of Messi’s own move to become an ambassador for Saudi Arabia.

Ronaldo’s decision to follow in Messi’s footsteps to become an ambassador for the country will likely concern human rights groups. Saudi Arabia has been accused of a litany of abuses, including the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, mass executions and the persecution of the LGBT+ community.

P/Harcourt glitters for 2023 Niger Delta Polo Festival

By Ernest Ekpenyong

Polo enthusiasts and the lovers of the noble game of kings are in for a special treat with the prestigious Niger Delta Polo festival scheduled to blast off from January 8, 2023 at the old GRA Polo Ground, Garden City, Rivers State promises to be one of the grandest holiday seasons in years.

President Port Harcourt Polo Club, Dr. Chukwudi Dimkpa confirmed this much, stated that preparations to host the international polo event is "In fulfillment of our commitment to deliver the best and biggest Polo tournament that will place Rivers and Nigeria on the map of global reckoning for sports, tourism and business."

"Everything is looking up to very exciting games this year and we have put everything on the ground to make this edition one of the most memorable in years," Dimkpa enthused on phone, assuring polo freaks of world class games and the best of entertainment."

Polo Royals report that preparations for the forthcoming Port Harcourt polo tournament



■ Players jostling for the ball during the Golden Jubilee Anniversary of the Niger Delta Polo festival in Port Harcourt Polo last year.

that is high on the global tourism calendar with blue chip corporate giants signing up to the only regional polo tournament in the country that remains the pride of Edo, Delta, Bayelsa, Akwa- Ibom, Cross Rivers and host Rivers states.

Major prizes at stake during the festival include King Diette-Spiff Cup which is the event's biggest prize, OB Lulu Briggs Cup and T.Y Danjuma Cup, and King T.J.T Princewill Cup among others.

Odusanya, Adegoke set new tennis records, crowned champions

From Dotun Omisakin, Lagos

Bose Odusanya and Mutiu Adegoke on Friday were crowned the winners of the singles title of both the men and female categories respectively of the just concluded 54th Molade Okoya- Thomas Tennis Championship.

They both set new records as Odusanya enshrined her name in history as the first player to win the annual championship for eight times consecutively in the singles' category.

She broke the 46 years record

of Dele Olanunbo who won the men singles title for seven times consecutively between 1969-1976, overpowering Aanu Anjuwon, 4-0 in the final to claim her 8th titles.

In the men singles, there was an upset as sensational junior Muiz Adegoke claimed his first title after he won much experienced David Faleye, 4-2 in the final.

After the final match, Odusanya revealed that she had to rise against the odds of her health challenges to participate in the tournament, giving glory to God for the success.

"I am grateful for winning this

tournament, it is not by power but by God grace because for this tournament, I have not been training because I am not feeling fine." She said.

Also, elated Adegoke said that his exposure during the last National Sports Festival, NSF in Delta gave him the courage to fight to the last, saying that David was better than him.

The Chairman, Lagos State Tennis Association, Mr. Tunji Lawal said that Muiz Adegoke's victory has proven that there is an emergence of new talents in Lagos.

Grassroot talents, key to football development, says Mouktar

By Jide Olusola

The FCT FA chairman, Adam Mouktar Mohammed has again reiterated that discovering talents at the grassroots levels is important for the development of football in Nigeria.

Speaking to our correspondent, Mouktar said Nigeria is no where close to its sporting future due to a dearth of talents at the grassroot levels.

"We don't have any option than to do it. Without the grassroots, we can't have the pool of talents to play and to succeed. I believe that we must do it if we want to achieve it and without that, we are no where near our sporting future.



■ Adam Mouktar Mohammed

"We must see the grassroots as the foundation and from there we grow from the bottom to the top," he declared.

He further stated that the Nigeria

Professional Football League (NPFL) which is abridged is not good for the game but is hopeful of a better league system afterwards.

"We have a big problem in our hands and when the abridged league takes place, it will not be good for our football.

"But let's pray and hope that after this year, we will sit down and properly structure the league to be handled by people who love football, have passion for the game and have the knowledge to drive the whole ecosystem.

"To seek sponsorship, you must have the right system in place. We have reached the tipping point and it can't get worse and we have to get it right," he said.

Rangers FC ready for league start, says Maikaba

Rangers International FC of Enugu Technical Adviser, Abdul Maikaba has assured the club's numerous supporters that the team was fully ready for the forthcoming Nigeria Professional Football League (NPFL) season.

Maikaba gave the assurance in Enugu on Friday, saying, the players had overcome the shock of the unimpressive display at the Lagos pre-season tournament.

The widely experienced and travelled tactician said his wards had overcome the shock from the tournament and worked hard to have a great 2022/2023 football season.

"Actually, I can say that we have reached the peak of our preparations and the players are responding very well, more especially after the shock in Lagos.

"We needed to work harder

and the players have been giving their best to catch up with the level needed for the start of the season.

I am happy with the progress and I believe that we are ready for the kickoff of the league slated to start on Jan. 8, 2023," said Maikaba.

Maikaba said his team would do well wherever they played their home matches following the ongoing rehabilitation work at the Nnamdi Azikiwe Stadium, Enugu.

SPORTING VERDICT DAVID NGOBUA

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Adieu Pele, undisputed king of football

Before Thursday, December 29, I had concluded plans to write on the raging battle between the Interim Management Committee (IMC) and the Nigeria Professional Football League (NPFL) club owners and the failure of the former to restart Nigeria's topflight this year.

I was preparing to deliver another no holds barred article before the news broke that Edson Arantes do Nascimento, nicknamed Pele, had passed away at 82 years after a long battle with colon cancer.

When I confirmed that his death was no longer another rumour as it was the case on a few occasions in the past, I was left with no option than to change my plan.

I, hereby join the rest of the world to pay tribute to the undisputed king of football.

When most of us were growing up, age and rural life combined to deny us the opportunity to watch live how the young Pele took the football world by storm with his mesmerising skills.

However, as we grew older, technology enabled us to have an idea of the playing abilities of the man we all adored blindly. Yes, blindly because we didn't have the opportunity to see for ourselves what made him so special and popular around the world, especially in the field of play. But every talented football player before and during the time some of us began to play football either nicknamed himself Pele or was given the alias by those who considered him good enough to be so named.

Born on October 23, 1940, Pele was so talented that he began to play professional football in the Brazilian topflight with Santos at the age of 15 and Brazil's national team at the age of 16. Arguably, some of us believe that then there was nothing like "football age", a cancerous practice that has made nonsense of African football.

So, playing against bigger and "very dangerous" opponents at such a tender age made Pele's heroics on the field more intriguing. To put the icing on the cake, he won the first of his three World Cup titles in 1958 in Sweden when he was only 17 years. He would later win two more titles in 1962 in Chile and 1970 in Mexico. Till date, Pele is the only one in the whole world who has won three FIFA World Cup titles.

Without doubt, what made Pele so phenomenal was his electrifying play and penchant for spectacular goals that he scored for fun. He made acrobatic, overhead-kicks, scissors-kicks or what we call in local parlance "sangalo" very popular around the world.

No wonder, he scored 77 times for Brazil in 92 appearances, a goal scoring record that was recently equalled by Neymar at the just concluded FIFA World Cup in Qatar. Apart from the national team, Pele scored a whopping 655 goals in 700 matches for both Santos and New York Cosmos. As a matter of fact, it is recorded that his 1,279 goals in 1,363 matches, which includes friendlies, is recognised as a Guinness World Record.

Therefore, even at the time he retired from active football in 1977, having played for 21 years, he remained world football's most influential and renowned personality. Regarded as one of the greatest players of all time and labelled "The GREATEST" by the world football governing body, FIFA, Pele was named one of the most successful and popular sports figures of the 20th Century. In 1999, he was named Athlete of the Century by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and was included in TIME's list of the 100 most important people of the 20th Century. As late as 2000, Pele was voted World Player of the 20th Century by the International Federation of Football History and Statistics (IFFHS) and was a joint winner of the FIFA Player of the Century with Maradona.

Considering his unmatched achievements as a player and the subsequent recognitions he earned, it has been difficult for some of us to understand why some people found it hard to put the label of the Greatest Of All Time (GOAT) on Pele when even the custodian of the game, FIFA, had tagged him the greatest.

It, therefore, baffles me when football fans of the 21st Century attempt to equate or even place their heroes like Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo ahead of Pele whom even FIFA recognises as the GREATEST and not "one of the greatest". For me there is simply no basis for comparison because those players who are being compared with Pele still have so much to achieve to attain his lofty height. Unfortunately, time is against them as they are both in the twilight of their illustrious careers.

Without undermining their achievements, those who are tempted to ascribe the label of GOAT to Messi and Ronaldo of Portugal make reference to their bulging cabinets of silverware made up of Champions League trophies, FIFA World Player of the Year awards, Ballon d'or and a host of other trophies, but the truth is that Messi only recently won his first and surely his only FIFA World Cup. Ronaldo has failed to win. Unfortunately, both have only a few years to leave the stage.

It is necessary to stress here that there is no basis for comparison between Pele and the "New generation GOATS". Let's not forget that one gold medal is valued more than one million silver medals.

Therefore, since the ultimate prize in football is the World Cup trophy, a player who has won everything but the most coveted trophy is not in the same league with someone with three FIFA World Cup trophies.

Therefore, as long as no other football player has won three FIFA World Cups, Pele will indisputably remain the GOAT, even in death.

Among the present generation of footballers, only Kylian Mbappe who clocked 24 years recently stands a chance to equal or even surpass Pele's record of three World Cup titles. For now, there is none like the legendary Edson Arantes do Nascimento of Brazil.

Fare thee well, Pele, the King of Football!

**SPORT
ROUND-UP**



LeBron James

James scores 47 points on birthday in Lakers win

LeBron James scored a season-high 47 points on his 38th birthday as the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Atlanta Hawks 130-121.

He also made 10 rebounds and nine assists at the State Farm Arena in Atlanta.

The Hawks led by 15 points at half-time, but James scored 13 in the third quarter and 16 in the fourth for a Lakers side missing Anthony Davis.

James said he promised his team-mates 40 points before the game.

James scored 48 points against the Hawks on his 25th birthday in 2009.

The Lakers remain third from bottom of the NBA Western Conference, while the Hawks are ninth in the Eastern.



Cameron Norrie

United Cup: Norrie beats Nadal as Britain lead Spain

Cameron Norrie beat Rafael Nadal for the first time and Katie Swan saw off Nuria Parrizas-Diaz to put Great Britain 2-0 up over Spain in their United Cup group stage encounter.

Norrie came from a set down to beat the 22-time Grand Slam champion 3-6 6-3 6-4 at the Ken Rosewall Arena in Sydney.

The 27-year-old had lost his four previous meetings with Nadal.

Australian Open champion Nadal, 36, cruised through the first set, but Norrie broke Nadal's serve in the sixth game of the second set and held his own to level the contest.

World number 14 Norrie broke early in the deciding set and saved two break points while leading 3-2 before serving out for victory.



For anyone who has great faith in the word of the government, this first day of 2023 is surely one to celebrate. Remember, only as recently as October 2022, Rauf Aregbesola, who is Buhari's Minister of the Interior, reminded Nigerians that the insecurity nationwide would end in December.

Now that insecurity has 'ended'

Happy New Year, Nigeria! According to the calendar of the federal government, insecurity is now 'over'.

Following seven years' worth of President Muhammadu Buhari's meetings with security chiefs, various and persistent directives and orders, repeated budgetary provisions and outlays, declarations of intent and ambition, speeches at home and abroad, expensive orders of sophisticated military equipment, one of which led to an unresolved political blowout in July 2019 over the government's spending of \$1bn from the Excess Crude Account, insecurity in Nigeria slammed to a halt at midnight last night, December 31, 2022.

It is a new day and a new year! Mr. Buhari has done exactly as he promised as he ran for office in 2015, reiterated on a "Next Level" basis in 2019, and routinely assured Nigerians whenever a microphone was placed in front of him: he has ended the plague of insecurity.

For anyone who has great faith in the word of the government, this first day of 2023 is surely one to celebrate. Remember, only as recently as October 2022, Rauf Aregbesola, who is Buhari's Minister of the Interior, reminded Nigerians that the insecurity nationwide would end in December.

According to the minister, Mr. Buhari himself had given his security agencies yesterday's deadline. "I believe that nobody is resting in [any of] the arms of government with the mandate of maintaining law and order, guaranteeing security and eliminating threats," Mr. Aregbesola stressed. "We are at it, and in the first instance, we must ask ourselves, governance is about ensuring the security of lives and properties.

"We will eliminate all insecurity issues by December... Nigerians will definitely heave a sigh of relief at the end of the day."

It has been quite some time getting here. Earlier, during his Democracy Day Speech in June 2021, Mr. Buhari recalled his pre-election commitment, just as he had done dozens of time before.

"When you elected me as your President in 2015, you did so knowing that I will put an end to the growing insecurity, especially the insurgency in the North East, but the unintended consequences of our scattering them in the North East pushed them further in-country which is what we are now facing and dealing with.

"We will, by the Grace of God put an end

to these challenges too. Unfortunately, like in most conflict situations, some Nigerian criminals are taking undue advantage of a difficult situation and profiteering therefrom with the misguided belief that adherence to the democratic norms handicaps this administration from frontally and decisively tackling them.

"We are already addressing these obstacles and we will soon bring some of these culprits to justice."

And then one month later, Mr. Buhari again restated his pledge when he held a presidential dinner for members of the National Assembly in Abuja. He told them that his administration would use everything within its powers to end insecurity in the country and bring the criminals responsible to justice.

And so, with December 2022 now accomplished, Nigerians must jubilate that Mr. Buhari's pledge about insecurity also has. As of last night, Nigeria is now a secure country.

This means that no longer are members of ISWAP and Boko Haram controlling an inch of Nigerian territory. No longer is banditry the nation's most prominent industry. No longer are parents afraid that their children may be snatched from classrooms to be forced into marriage or converted into soldiers.

This means that no longer are there AK47-wielding cattle herdsman overrunning farms and towns and villages. No longer are Nigerians to be afraid of sundry criminals emerging from badly-maintained highways to make their choice of travelers for kidnapping-for-ransom or the harvesting of body parts.

This means that no longer will intercity train services be sacked by criminals who are better-armed and more intelligent than members of Nigeria's security services. Train services will no longer be requiring the protection of the Nigeria Air Force or expensive private security.

It further means that no longer are security institutions such as Kuje Prison and the Nigeria Defence Academy and police stations and airports in any danger of being taken by armed bandits at will. It means that no longer will Buhari's armed presidential convoys require the protection of armed presidential convoys or the Nigeria Air Force.

It means that Nigerian businesses and offices are no longer in danger of being ransacked by unknown gunmen taking

advantage of the indifference of indifferent governments which look the other way when citizens need them the most. It means that citizens can now walk the streets, unafraid either of other men who attack simply because they can, or of policemen in uniforms who shoot and kill citizens because the citizens are unarmed.

This means that as decreed and declared by Mr. Buhari, the era of insecurity that came into operation during the reign of his predecessors is over. Nigerians can now emerge from the shadows and from hiding and resume their lives.

It means that neither Mr. Buhari nor his security chiefs nor the state governors will ever again be bothered with questions about insecurity, such as why they themselves need extensive and heavily-armed convoys and road closures just to get to the airport or to return home. It means that even the wife of the president will find her heavily-fortified official home to be secure enough for her to live in, rather than another country.

But of course, everyone knows that nothing is often what it seems in Nigeria, particularly when the motivation is an official pronouncement. Nigeria did not become secure as of last midnight, just as it never became more secure in the past seven and a half years because Mr. Buhari broadcast his directives into every television camera.

Buhari did not start the insecurity in Nigeria, but he acquired the presidency partly by bragging that he was the man to end it. Instead, he has boosted it year by year because he neither really understood the challenge nor was he willing to do what was required to bring it under control.

Prominent among those problems are that the Nigeria leader arrived in office lacking genuine commitment and for the insecurity and any other challenge that Nigeria faced. It is why there is no aspect of his brief in which he accomplished anything beyond platitudes.

Sadly, Nigeria is increasingly insecure because of—rather than despite—Mr. Buhari. Despite his government's claims, Nigeria is worse than before his arrival, and the entire world knows it: it is more chaotic, more dysfunctional, and exceedingly more corrupt. That is one explanation why some of Nigeria's most infernal creatures are currently trying to succeed him next May.

That is why, as we enter January 2023, and with less than five months before Mr. Buhari leaves office, is for him to be apologizing profusely for the cynicism and betrayal of the outgoing menace he superintends.

Happy New Year, Nigeria? Please!

This column welcomes rebuttals from interested government officials.

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