

January 15, 2023  
Jumada Al-Akhir 22, 1444 AH

STILL IN CAPTIVITY

11 SCHOOLGIRLS OF FGC, BIRNIN YAURI

579 DAYS

1 STUDENT OF BETHEL BAPTIST HIGH SCHOOL, KUJAMA

551 DAYS

### REMINISCENCES

## Nigeria will restructure itself – Prof Elaigwu

>> Pages 9, 10 & 11



## As Buhari exits, questions over rice pyramids linger

>>>Page 25



At *Daily Trust* town hall:

# Katsina Voters Demand Improved Security, LG Revival, Employment, Others

>>Page 8

- Fear Allah, Don't Make Bogus Pledges, Prof Lugga Urges Politicians
- What We Will Do If Elected – Governorship Candidates



## Libraries in comatose

- 19 years after, no functional library in Taraba
- Reptiles, leaking roofs in Niger
- Broken seats, outdated books in Anambra
- Educationists urge revamp of public libraries >> Pages 4 & 6



## RACE TO ASO ROCK

Osakwe: >>>Page 30

## A clergyman's second shot at presidency



NEWS 199 ghost doctors found on Zamfara govt payroll >> Page 37

Atiku in Kogi, promises to revive Ajaokuta, river port >> Page 7

## INSIDEPOLITICS

# Hazy contest for Sokoto Government House

Page 29 >>>



### WEATHER SUMMARY:



**ABUJA:**  
Max: 36  
Sunny



**KANO:**  
Max: 30  
Mostly Sunny



**KADUNA:**  
Max: 33  
Mostly Sunny



**KATSINA:**  
Max: 31  
Mostly Sunny



**MAIDUGURI:**  
Max: 32  
Sunny



**JOS:**  
Max: 28  
Mostly Sunny



**SOKOTO:**  
Max: 33  
Sunny



**MAKURDI:**  
Max: 38  
Mostly Sunny



**ENUGU:**  
Max: 37  
Mostly Sunny



**IBADAN:**  
Max: 37  
Mostly Sunny



**P/H:**  
Max: 31  
Partly Cloudy



**LAGOS:**  
Max: 34  
Partly Cloudy

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## SUNDAY MAGAZINE

### Climate change: Poor insurance culture compounds farmers' anguish amid poverty

Impacts of climate change have plunged millions of Nigerians in agriculture, the country's major employer of labour, into untold hardship and threaten food security as many fail to take mitigation measures such as adequate insurance cover. While climate-related crises will linger for decades, taking insurance policy can help cushion their far-reaching effects on farmers.

This evidently painful scene portrays natural disasters that have the most far-reaching effects on the lives of Nigerians. Daily Trust reports that the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is very low in Nigeria despite that it contributes significantly to the country's GDP. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the sector contributed 24.7 per cent to the country's GDP in 2021. In 2022, it is expected to contribute 25.2 per cent. In 2021, the sector employed 25.2 million people, or 36 per cent of the total 200 million population, mostly in rural areas.

A 2018 report by the United States Global Change and Food Security Initiative revealed that agricultural insurance uptake in Nigeria was significantly low at three per cent. At a workshop organised in Abuja in April, 2021, and chaired by the insurance industry, it was revealed that the percentage of smallholder farmers who access insurance products was less than five per cent, noting that the industry produced over 90 per cent of food consumed across the country.

The Head, Agric Insurance, AIRCO, Leonard Okereke, warned that the poor uptake of insurance products was a threat to Nigeria's food security. At the workshop, the Executive Director of the National Insurance Commission (NAICOM), Sir Akhilesh Dasgupta, called for greater insurance uptake among farmers.

During the Agriculture Insurance 2022, the Agriculture Insurance Corporation (AIC) held a meeting with the National Insurance Commission (NAICOM) to discuss the low uptake of insurance products. The meeting was held in Abuja. The AIC is a state-owned insurance company established in 2003. It is a key player in the insurance industry in Nigeria. In his report, the Executive Director of AIC, Sir Akhilesh Dasgupta, said the market had the potential to generate at least \$600 million annually for the industry. He said the industry had the potential to generate at least \$600 million annually for the industry. He said the industry had the potential to generate at least \$600 million annually for the industry.

## PRAYER TIMES

SOURCE: Islamic Research and Timing Organisation, Kaduna.

City	Fajr	Zukhr	Asr	Maghrib	Isha
ABUJA	5:35	12:44	3:58	6:29	7:34
ENUGU	5:35	12:45	3:59	6:30	7:35
KADUNA	5:38	12:45	3:59	6:27	7:32
KANO	5:37	12:40	3:54	6:20	7:25
KATSINA	5:42	12:44	3:58	6:23	7:28
LAGOS	5:52	1:02	4:16	6:48	7:53
MAIDUGURI	5:20	12:23	3:37	6:03	7:08
P/HARCOURT	5:35	12:48	4:02	6:34	7:39
SOKOTO	5:51	12:52	4:06	6:34	7:39

# PAGE 3 COMMENT

## Second Niger Bridge is a reminder of One Nigeria

The completion of the Second Niger Bridge, which closes today after being open to traffic over the past month, is a big deal for Nigeria's infrastructural development, the economy and well, for the whole point of "One Nigeria".

A nation's physical infrastructure projects like roads, bridges, dams, rail lines, power plants and so on are primarily designed and constructed to boost economic development by opening further vistas for trade and other economic activities domestically or internationally. But all too often, they become social and cultural infrastructure as well. Some physical infrastructure projects, in fact, become monuments and symbols not only of the nation's economic ambitions, but also of its cultural and political self-imagining. Just as a road or bridge is key to the movement of people, goods and services between two or more communities, it also opens the door into peoples' hearts, and helps in no small measure in bridging cultural and political differences between peoples. The road, water and rail networks that connect European countries, for example, have helped facilitate not only the free movement of people, goods and services across Europe, but also to cement the whole political idea of a European Union as one people.

It is in this latter sense of infrastructure that Daily Trust locates the significance of the completed Second Niger Bridge. In a statement declaring the Second Niger Bridge open to the public for one month just before Christmas on December 15th last year, the Minister of Works and Housing, Mr Babatunde Fashola, SAN, said that President Muhammadu Buhari's vision for completing the bridge was to help reduce the waste of man hours from the traffic gridlock on the First Niger Bridge, save lives, and deepen economic connectivity not just between Delta and Anambra states, but also across the entire country.

We agree with the President and commend his political will for completing what many of his predecessors had talked so much about but acted little upon. Still, we are confident that the significance of the bridge goes far beyond its economic benefits for the South East and the rest of the country. It embodies a lot of Nigerian history, and its completion by the Buhari administration at this rather turbulent moment is in fact

a reminder of the depth of commitment by the federal government of the very idea of One Nigeria, an idea presently challenged on several different fronts by those misguided and miseducated enough to think otherwise.

The First Niger Bridge was commissioned and opened for traffic in December 1965. Its commissioning was about the last major public function of the late First Republic Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa before he was assassinated this very day the following month on January 15 1966. Less than three years later the bridge was destroyed during the civil war and was thus among the first post-war reconstruction efforts of General Yakubu Gowon's Reconstruction, Reconciliation and Rehabilitation programme. That first bridge is still standing today as a constant reminder of the price we have all paid for keeping Nigeria one, even if, as our country has grown, it has struggled to keep fit. And it was for the same reasons of national reconciliation and reconstruction that the idea of a second bridge was first muted shortly after.

It is for these same reasons that we commend President Muhammadu Buhari for realizing that most important vision of his early predecessors for advancing the course of One Nigeria, at a time when rumblings for a reversion to an unfortunate past by a young generation unfamiliar with the pains of that past could not be louder or deadlier. The Second Niger Bridge is therefore yet another

handshake across The Niger and a reminder that we are one country, one people whose fortunes are not only too deeply intertwined to be severed, but simply better served together.

Still, this work is not fully done, and it behoves the Buhari government to have it fully completed before its exit date this May. As Mr Fashola has severally explained over the past five years since its commencement date in August 2018, the project is being funded by a consortium of private and public partners, principally the Nigerian Sovereign Investment Authority (NSIA) at a total cost of N406.2bn, according to NSIA's website. The first phase of the project comprises the main bridge—1.6km long—over the River Niger, approach roads from Asaba and Onitsha ends, both totalling 10.3km, and two secondary bridges and a new cloverleaf interchange at Onitsha-Owerri Road. According to NSIA, this first phase of the project has reached 92% completion, including the main bridge which has been fully completed.

But work is yet to commence at all on the second phase of the project, comprising approach roads along Benin-Asaba and Onitsha-Enugu roads, each measuring 17.5km and are designed to connect to those neighbouring states and by implication link the bridge to the rest of the country. We urge President Buhari and his Works and Housing Minister, Babatunde Fashola, to expedite action on the project to ensure full completion before they are due to leave office in May. We also urge both to ensure timely completion of the Abuja-Kaduna-Kano and Lagos-Ibadan expressways which are also being funded by the NSIA. We remind the government that only physical infrastructure projects that are fully completed make enduring legacy. Above all, we remind the government that a people connected by roads and bridges are a people connected by hearts.

## TODAY IN HISTORY



WIKIPEDIA

On this day in 2001, Wikipedia a free Wiki or content encyclopedia is launched by Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger.

## HAPPENING THIS WEEK



The Central Bank of Nigeria is poised to begin the rollout of the National Domestic Card Scheme. The card scheme is billed to become operational beginning January 16, 2023. The card will, among other functions, unify payments in Nigeria, drive cashless transactions and promote transparency.

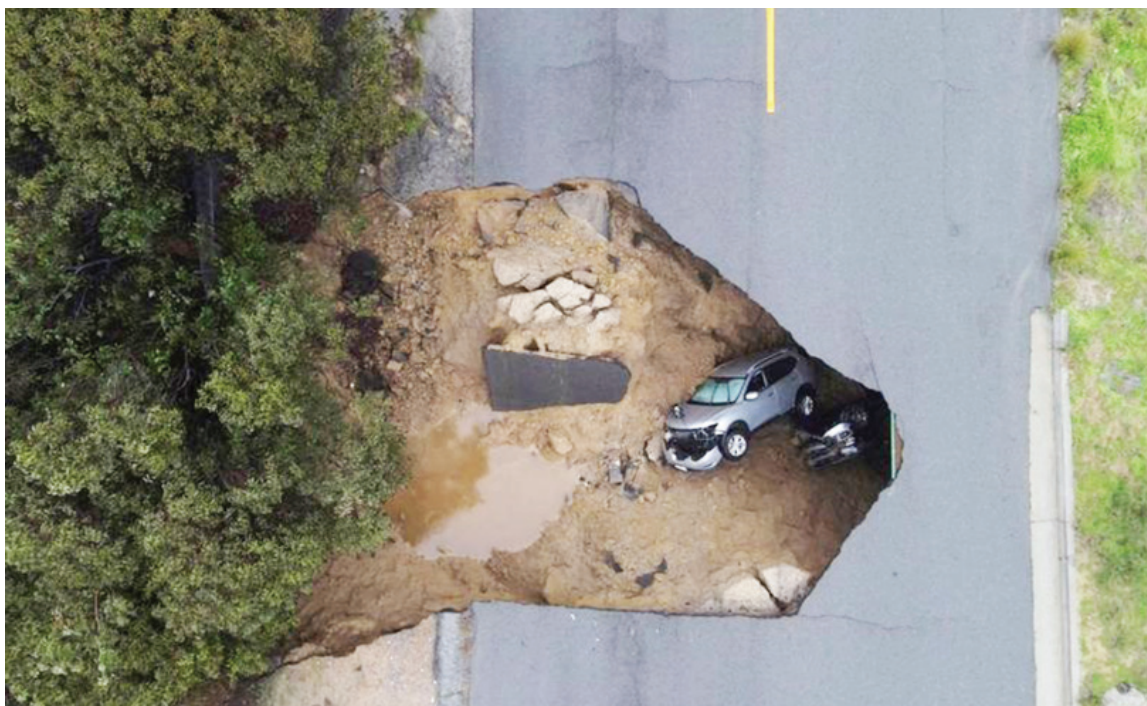


The Senate will resume its 2023 plenary on January 17 after its Wednesday, December 28, 2022 session.



A Federal High Court in Abuja on Thursday ordered the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Godwin Emefiele, to appear before it on January 18, 2023, to explain his refusal to obey valid order for payment of \$70m debt. Justice Inyang Ekwo issued the fresh order following confirmation that Emefiele has refused to obey the order of the court to pay the judgment debt.

## SUNDAYPHOTO



Several people had to be rescued after two vehicles fell into a sinkhole in Chatsworth, California, January 10

Photo: REUTERS/David Swanson

# BIGSTORY



Outside view of the Abubakar Imam Library, Minna, Niger State

## Libraries in comatose

- 19 years after, no functional library in Taraba
- Reptiles, leaking roofs in Niger
- Broken seats, outdated books in Anambra
- Educationists urge revamp of public libraries

The sorry conditions and non-functionality of many libraries across states of the federation, coupled with the challenge of poor reading culture, have put education in the country at risk, *Daily Trust on Sunday* reports.

From Magaji Isa Hunkuyi (Jalingo), Abubakar Akote (Minna), Titus Eleweke (Awka), Peter Moses (Abeokuta) & Bassey Willie (Yenagoa)

Many public libraries across the states are in terrible state of disrepair, findings by *Daily Trust on Sunday* revealed.

Checks by our correspondents in at least one state each from five geopolitical zones of the country showed a lack of attention for public libraries by relevant authorities.

Educationists told *Daily Trust on Sunday* that libraries all over world over play significant roles in the society as gateways to knowledge, history and culture.

According to them, the resources and services libraries offer create opportunities for learning, support literacy and education. They also provide everyone access to information and education, regardless of socioeconomic status or location.

They, however, expressed disgust that reading culture that will make life meaningful is at its lowest ebb as people have been

carried away by other forces.

A librarian who gave his name as Yusuf Aminu, said libraries record the least traffic of people these days because of poor patronage.

"I was born and brought up in Taraba State. I read Library Science but had to switch over to business administration when I discovered that my chances were getting narrow.

"Government at all levels doesn't care about libraries. On the other hand, students believe that they can get everything on Google using their phones. They copy and paste answers for their lecturers from the comfort of their rooms and that is why some of them cannot even write simple sentences without committing blunders," he said.

Notwithstanding the important role libraries play, especially in supporting public education, checks by our correspondents showed that state-owned libraries are in sorry and non-functional conditions, mostly stocked with outdated books.

**19 years after, no functional library in Taraba**

In Taraba State, *Daily Trust on*

*Sunday* reports that there has been no functional state library in the last 19 years.

The only state library, which is a small building located along Hammaruwa Road in Jalingo, was razed down by midnight fire in 2009 and it has not been renovated since then.

The Commissioner for Education in the state, Johanes Jigem, told our correspondent that the library, which was razed down by fire, had not been rebuilt, adding that at the moment, the state does not have a functional library.

He, however, said the state government had acquired a building at the TC Quarters in Jalingo, where it planned to set up an e-library. He said fund for the e-library project was captured in the 2023 budget.

"We are not building a books' library because that is outdated. The governor assured us that the e-library would be executed from this year's budget," he said.

The only functional library in Jalingo is the National Library, which is located within the premises of a secondary school in Jalingo.

The National Library has two

sections; the books' section, which serves as the main library, and the e-library, which is currently not functioning.

The head of the National Library in Taraba State, Rhoda Aranda, was not around when our correspondent visited the library.

She, however, told our correspondent on the phone that the National Library in Jalingo was open to members of the public, including students.

She revealed that more books were needed, and that individuals and corporate bodies were being contacted to assist the library with books.

**It is sad – Educationists**

Meanwhile, educationists have decried the absence of libraries in Taraba State, saying it is discouraging reading habits among students.

A principal of one of the secondary schools in the state, Haruna Dauda, said the absence of libraries in the state was one of the factors causing poor performance among public secondary school students.

He said both teachers and students needed libraries to update their knowledge, but lamented that

Taraba did not have a government-owned library.

A former director of nomadic education in the state, Musa Abubakar, expressed dismay over the failure of the Taraba State Government to revive library services in Jalingo, the state capital since it got burnt about 19 years ago.

He said states in the country that attached top priority to education paid greater attention to library services, thereby encouraging search of knowledge among students.

Abubakar called on the state government to revive library services in the state in order to encourage reading culture among students.

**Staff battle reptiles, leaking roofs in Niger**

The complete dilapidation of the Abubakar Imam Library, the Niger State-owned library, Minna, the state capital, and its branches across the state, has raised concern among staff, residents and educationists in the state.

*Daily Trust on Sunday* found that while the library headquarters in Minna is on the verge of collapse, its branches in Kontagora, Suleja, Agaie and Rijau are also in shambles. Only those in Bida and the new and old correctional centres in Minna are functioning minimally.

Before its current state, members of staff of the Abubakar Imam Library Board, Minna said the facility was always a busy place, with hundreds of users, including teachers, lecturers, researchers and secondary school students coming from different places.

Named after the famous northern Hausa novelist, the author of "Magana Jari Ce," Abubakar Imam, the poor condition of the library has further worsened the hopelessness of citizens in the public education and capacity of the government to provide quality education.

Instead of books, library staff mingled with reptiles, birds and ants that mostly get into the library through vandalised windows, especially during the rainy season.

A resident, Suleiman Hamidu said, "You can't talk of quality education without a functional library where students can go freely to read. Public libraries should be made functional with up-to-date books for students and researchers to always access.

"As shameful as it is, you cannot bring somebody from another state to show your state library because if you take him inside you won't even see current newspapers to read. You won't see anything reasonable for the past 20 years in the Niger State library. The entire building is collapsing. It has been a long time since the government renovated that place."

One of the users, Musa K. Adamu, said he had been visiting the library since the 1990s, saying the dilapidation of the facility in Minna has affected users as they no longer have access to books and research materials.

**Continued on page 6**

**20<sup>TH</sup> Daily Trust DIALOGUE**

Live broadcast on **Trust TV**

**Theme:**  
**Interrogating the 2023 Presidential Agenda**



**John Cardinal Onaiyekan**  
Archbishop Emeritus of Abuja.  
**CHAIRMAN OF THE EVENT**

..... Panelists .....



**Mrs. Ibukun Awosika**  
Former Chairman,  
First Bank of Nigeria (FBN).



**Prof. Jibrin Ibrahim**  
Professor of Political Science and  
member of the Board of the Centre  
for Democracy and Development (CDD).



**Dr. Yetunde Anibaba**  
Lecturer, Analysis of Business Problems,  
Lagos Business School



**Dr. Eugene Enahoro**  
Human Capacity Development Specialist  
and CEO, Heltoni Services Limited.

**Date:** Thursday, January, 26, 2023 | **Venue:** NAF Conference Centre and Suites,  
**Time:** 10:00 am | Gwarinpa Express Way, near NEXT  
| Shopping Mall, Kado, Abuja

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## Libraries in comatose

Continued from page 4

"You discover that world encyclopaedias have been wrapped in sacks now because there is no safe place to spread them for users. If you ask for any reasonable text book that a student doesn't have money to buy or that is no longer in the market, the public library should be able to assure you that you will get it, but here, you can't find any. The library has completely collapsed," he said.

He called on the state government to revive the library so that those who have no money to stock their homes with books can find a place to fall back to.

An SS 2 student of Semait Schools, Minna, Hauwa Ibrahim Inuwa, also told our correspondent that she was always in the Abubakar Imam Library to read, but hardly found interesting books.

"The Niger State Library is not okay because there are not enough books, and the chairs have spoiled. I want the government to repair this library so that many people can come to read," she said.

Our correspondent who visited the facility reports that books and the entire building have become obsolete due to years of neglect by the government.

The deteriorating state of the library is said to have worsened since 2014 when the contract awarded by the immediate past administration of Dr Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu to overhaul the facility was stopped in 2015 after the contractor had started removing the roofs.

The electricity transformer that powered the facility has also been vandalised and all cables carted away, forcing the management of the facility to tap light from neighbouring houses, while the generator set used as an alternative was also stolen until management bought a new one recently.

*Daily Trust on Sunday* also found that the three sections in the library - reference, circulation and serial sections - had been merged with the ground floor because the upstairs where the serial and reference sections were located are no longer habitable as roofs had been blown off.

Books and reference materials were wrapped in sacks due to lack of space to keep them on shelves for users. The roots of important books and files destroyed by rain and wastes of birds also littered the upstairs of the library, with some staff seen operating under trees as offices were not habitable. Chairs and tables have also been destroyed by water that leaked during the rainy season.

"When it rains we will just be squeezing ourselves in a corner because everywhere is leaking. If it doesn't rain, we hang outside," one of the junior members of staff said.

Established many years ago during the military regime of Lieutenant Colonel Lawan Gwadabe (retd), the Niger State Library, Minna, is said not to have been renovated throughout this long period of its existence. And new books have not been procured for over a decade.

The acting executive director

of the Niger State Library Board, Mallam Ibrahim Haruna, told our correspondent that the state of the Abubakar Imam Library was pathetic.

"This is the heart of the state because this is the only legal university for the less privileged. It supports their formal education, but looking at the present situation of the library, it is worrisome and demands for urgent attention from the government, non-governmental organisations and friends of library who really want things done for their children.

"We inherited this library as far back as 1976 when the state was created out of Sokoto. That was when the existence of the library board came to Niger State, with a serving point at Bida. Then, gradually, it was transferred to the state capital. The current structure was constructed in 1991 by a military administrator of the state, Colonel Lawan Gwadabe (retd). Since then, the structure had not undergone renovation until the immediate past administration of Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu," he said.

Mallam Haruna confirmed that the books in the library were obsolete. He, however, said they were still relevant for research, adding that some of them were inherited from the colonial leaders.

"Since I came to this Board as far back as 2012, there have never been acquisitions of books till today. We have written and put the same in our budget but the problem is lack of release of funds by the government," he said.

Mallam Haruna also revealed that the library lacks a functional e-section to effectively serve its users.

He said that despite the poor state of the facility, users, including secondary school students, still come to read.

Haruna called for immediate intervention from the government, stakeholders and non-governmental organisations to bring the Abubakar Imam Library back to life.

An educationist, Dr Hamza Kamar, the Director of Studies, Legend International Schools, Nkangbe, Minna, said that despite the fact that many families now have libraries in their homes, phasing out public libraries would portend high risk to educational development.

"A state library is still a repository of knowledge. It cannot be phased out. There is a need to re-evaluate the role of the public library in the present age," said.

Broken seats, outdated books in Anambra

The situation of libraries in Anambra State is nothing to write home about. The only state-owned library, the Prof Kenneth Dike Library, Awka, is stocked with outdated books.

A visit to the library will convince one that people hardly make use of the facility because of outdated materials.

Some chairs in the library and offices are broken.

It was learnt that people have resorted to using the facility for functions, such as birthdays and launch of products, among others.



■ Taraba state Library building located along Hammaruwa road Jalingo which was razed down by mid night fire in 2009 and was renovated  
PHOTO: Magaji Isa Hunkuyi



■ The current State of the Reference Section of Abubakar Imam Library Minna, Niger State

Dr Henry Duru of the Department of Mass Communication, Nnamdi University, Awka, expressed concern over the non-functionality of the state library.

Duru said he loved going to libraries to read and do research but became discouraged when he saw that all the books in the libraries were outdated.

"You cannot find up-to-date books in the library. There are no modern books in the library. If you want to read anything about Nigeria history you cannot get any modern book," he said.

He said that while online had provided an alternative, it is not enough, saying some materials cannot be gotten online.

He appealed to the government to give priority to stocking its library with new and modern books for people to read.

Also speaking, a business education lecturer at the Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Alonta Gabriel, said that generally, Nigeria has poor infrastructure in terms of libraries and this has a direct effect on the reading culture of the people.

He, however, said people were no longer relying on physical libraries for reading and doing

research, noting that online libraries provide good resources for reading in today's world.

An insider in the state library board who confided in our correspondent said he could not remember the last time they bought books for the library.

### Poor readership in Ogun

*Daily Trust on Sunday* reports that the majority of libraries are owned by the tertiary institutions in Ogun, the state with the highest number of institutions in Nigeria.

Public libraries in the state include the Simeon Adebayo Library, Kuto and the National Library, Ake, both in Abeokuta, the state capital. Named after the late lawyer and diplomat, Simeon Adebayo, the library is also the headquarters of the Ogun state Library Board.

The state's branch of the National Library of Nigeria's permanent site is currently under construction within the precinct of the Secretariat, Oke-Mosan, Abeokuta.

The state-owned library was recently renovated by the state government.

When visited, it was observed that the libraries are in good shape structurally and possess some of the relevant books. However, the facilities are lagging behind on

the e-library, which is currently in vogue.

Besides, only a handful of writers and students still make use of libraries in the state, in view of the dying culture of reading and library usage, our correspondent gathered.

The former state chairman of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA), Dada Olanipekun, described the situation as pathetic.

He submitted that technology, mental laziness of the younger generation and the family had affected the development of libraries in the state.

"The state of the library in terms of edifice is fine. But in terms of readability, that is another problem. Do they read academic works or go for research materials?"

"The state of the library in terms of readership is poor because majority of Nigerians don't read. Most times, if you do a census on how many visitors or readers we have each day, you will be shocked. And if you don't have readers, how do you expand libraries? As far as I am concerned, the situation is pathetic except you have your own library," Olanipekun, who is the publisher of the Prestige newspaper, said.

# Lassa fever cases rise to 28 in Edo

From Usman A. Bello, Benin

The Edo State Government said it has recorded four more cases of Lassa fever; bringing the total number of confirmed cases to 28 in the state.

Commissioner for Health, Prof Obehi Akoria, said the four new cases were confirmed in Esan West, Etsako West and Esan North East LGAs.

Akoria said, "25 persons are currently on admission, and with the four new cases, we now have a total of 28 confirmed cases in the state. Luckily, we have not recorded any death from the disease."

"The 25 persons, 20 adults and five paediatrics, are currently receiving medical care at the Irrua Specialist Teaching Hospital and are responding to treatment."

# Atiku in Kogi, promises to revive Ajaokuta, river port

By Tijani Labaran, Lokoja

The presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, has promised that if voted to power he would revive the Ajaokuta Steel Company in Kogi State to create jobs for young Nigerians.

Atiku said this at the Confluence Stadium, Lokoja, during his presidential campaign rally in the state.

He said, "Give us your support; the nightmare that was the challenge of the iron and steel Company, Ajaokuta, in Kogi State will be a

thing of the past."

He also assured the people of the state of his readiness to ensure that the Lokoja River Port being handled by the National Inland Waterways Authority (NIWA) was completed to the benefit of all in the country.

He further said he would put the structure on ground to create jobs and enlarge the business community, restating his earlier commitment to empower women and youths with \$10bn to boost their personal income for an enduring economy.

Atiku added that a vote for him would end the incessant

ASUU strikes and incidents of salary arrears that enveloped the nation's universities, ministries and agencies.

Former governors of Kogi, Captain Idris Wada and Ibrahim Idris, called on the people of the state to vote for the party, saying the situation of the state was pathetic due to poor leadership of the APC-led government.

Also, the Chairman of PDP in the state, Engr Sam Ohoutu, said the resounding welcome that attended the campaign rally of the party's presidential candidate was evidence of acceptance.

# Kaduna Electric disconnects govt offices in Sokoto, Zamfara

By Simon Echewofun Sunday (Abuja) & Abubakar Auwal (Sokoto)

The management of the Kaduna Electric has said it has been forced to disconnect power supply to all Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and other facilities belonging to Sokoto and Zamfara state governments over a debt of over N2.5 billion.

Spokesman of the DisCo, Abdulazeez Abdullahi, on Saturday, said the states were issued demand, as well as final disconnection notices, by the company three weeks ago.

He said, "Disconnection is a last resort for us, and Kaduna Electric is pained to embark on this course of action."

He said the Sokoto State Government was owing

electricity bills of N1,496,313,156 (N1.496bn), with Zamfara owing N1,040,506,730 (N1bn) as at December, 2022.

He further said, "It is rather sad to note that Zamfara State Government has not made any payment for its electricity bills for the past 12 months, while Sokoto State Government has defaulted in the last four months."

Efforts to get the Sokoto State Government's reaction proved abortive as the Special Adviser to the Governor on Media and Publicity, Muhammad Bello declined comment on the matter and referred our reporter to the Commissioner for Information, Akibu Dalhatu, who could not be reached on phone.

The Zamfara State Government could also not be reached for comment.



From left: Executive Director/CEO, Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) Dr. Ezra Yakusak; Director, Corporate Services Department NEPC, Mrs Uduak Etokowoh and the Director Export Development/Incentives NEPC, Mrs Getrude Ukoanam, during the Council's press conference and the presentation of NEPC year ended 2022 progress report on non-oil performance held in Abuja on Friday. Photo: Ikechukwu Ibe

# Buratai: Oil thieves, bandits will have hard nuts to crack in N/East

By Saawua Terzungwe

A former Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lt Gen Tukur Buratai (Rtd), has said oil thieves and bandits threatening to attack and takeover oil sites in the North East will have hard nuts to crack.

Recall that President Muhammadu Buhari, in November, last year, flagged off the drilling of crude oil at the Kolmani Field on the border of Bauchi and Gombe states in the North East.

Speaking during a fund-raising dinner and unveiling of the manifesto for the governorship candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Bauchi State, Air Marshal Sadique Abubakar (Rtd), in Abuja on Friday night, Buratai disclosed that bandits and oil thieves were threatening to take over oil wells in Bauchi.

He said the security forces would leave no stone unturned in dealing decisively with oil thieves and bandits in the region if they

proceeded with their evil plans.

In a goodwill message, a former Governor of Rivers State, Rotimi Amaechi, said Sadique worked hard in eliminating oil thieves in Rivers and should be elected as Bauchi governor to enable him turn around the fortunes of the state.

Similarly, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of the Federation (AGF), Abubakar Malami (SAN), said Sadique contributed tremendously

in nipping the Boko Haram insurgents and should be elected to guarantee the security of lives and property in the state.

On his part, a former Governor of Bauchi State, Isa Yuguda, said, "Sadique Abubakar will emerge as the next Governor of Bauchi State and the narrative will change."

Meanwhile, over N1bn was realised at the dinner as donors from different walks of life, mostly politicians and businessmen, made their donations at the event.

# Tinubu pledges to reverse brain drain in health sector

By Ojoma Akor

The presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Bola Ahmed Tinubu, has promised to reverse the massive brain drain in the health sector and also introduce innovative policies to ensure quality healthcare service delivery for Nigerians if elected in February.

The former Lagos State governor stated this yesterday in Abuja during a symposium organised by the Healthcare Transformation Coalition (HTC) with the theme: "Repositioning the health sector: Creating the pathway for an effective health system post-2023".

Represented by the Deputy Chief Whip of the Senate, Senator Aliyu Sabi Abdullahi, Tinubu said his achievements as governor, as well as that of the APC vice presidential candidate, Kashim Shettima, in Borno State proved that there would be remarkable improvement in the health sector under their leadership.

# FG develops plan against Lassa fever

By Ojoma Akor

The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC), in collaboration with partners, federal and state stakeholders of the Technical Working Group (TWG), has developed a five-year strategic plan to reduce Lassa fever

fatality ratio in the country to less than 10 per cent.

Director General of NCDC, Dr Ifedayo Adetifa, made the disclosure yesterday during an update on COVID-19 pandemic response and development in the health sector organised by the Federal Ministry of Health and

other partners.

He said, to date, there were 8,202 suspected cases of Lassa fever, 1,067 confirmed cases across 27 states and 112 LGAs of the country.

He further said that cumulatively, from week one to week 52 last year, 189 deaths had

been reported, with a Case Fatality Rate (CFR) of 17.7 per cent, which was lower than the CFR for the same period in 2021 (20.0 per cent).

The NCDC boss noted that 72 per cent of all confirmed Lassa fever cases in 2022 were reported from Ondo, Edo and Bauchi states.

# Despite being defrauded, I will return to Nigeria with my family – American

From Mumini Abdulkareem, Ilorin

Despite being swindled of over \$1,000, an American citizen, Vonapoulos Moss, has said she will love to return to Nigeria with her family.

Moss was allegedly defrauded by one Awolaye Oluwatofunmi, a

suspected internet fraudster, who was arrested and paraded by the operatives of the Kwara State Police Command on Friday.

The victim broke her silence over the incident while speaking with Daily Trust on Sunday.

According to the mother of one, the incident has not dampened her love for the country.

She said, "This is my first time in Nigeria and I have met beautiful hearts and beautiful black faces since my arrival."

"I am somebody with a very good heart also, and despite the incident, I still love to come back to Nigeria with my family."

"The authorities should let him (suspect) go."

Spokesperson of the Kwara State Police Command, Ajayi Okasanmi, said the suspect, via TikTok, presented himself to Moss as an American named Howard Adam and extorted about \$1,000 from her.

He said, "The suspect lured the victim to fly into Nigeria on January 9, 2023, through the Murtala Muhammed International Airport

in Lagos after which she flew into Ilorin the next day and was received by the suspect."

"The suspect also deceitfully took an unspecified amount of dollars from the victim before she was rescued by police operatives."

"The necessary authorities have been contacted for appropriate action."

At *Daily Trust* town hall:

# Katsina voters demand improved security, LG revival, employment, others

- Fear Allah, don't make bogus pledges, Prof Lugga urges politicians
- What we will do if elected – Governorship candidates

By Ismail Mudashir, Clement A. Oloyede, Tijjani Ibrahim & Zahraddeen Y. Shu'aibu

Ahead of the March 11, 2023, governorship election, voters in Katsina State have emphasised the need for clear-cut policies to tackle insecurity, unemployment and local government administration in the state.

Speaking at the Media Trust/CDD town hall meeting for gubernatorial candidates in the state, the voters from various sub-groups also appealed to the candidates to take issues of substance abuse among youths with top priority.

The event, which was chaired by Professor Sani Abubakar Lugga, the fifth Waziri of Katsina, had in attendance the deputy gubernatorial candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Faruk Lawal Jobe; gubernatorial candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Senator Yakubu Lado Danmarke; and the gubernatorial candidate of the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP), Imrana Ja'afar Jino.

Others are the deputy governorship candidate of the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP), Dr Rabe Darma; candidate of the Zenith Labour Party (ZLP), Ibrahim Tukur Saude; and deputy governorship candidate of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), Ibrahim Suleiman Bakori. The candidates of the Boot Party (BP) and the Accord Party (AP) were also in attendance.

The event was organised by the Media Trust Group, owners of *Daily Trust*, *Aminiyah*, *Trust TV* and *Trust Radio*, in collaboration with the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD); Vision FM; *Farin Wata TV*, as well as *Katsina City News*—an online newspaper.

*Daily Trust on Sunday* reports that various speakers adjudged the event attended by hundreds of voters and other stakeholders as successful and peaceful.

Participants asked the candidates what they would do to revive the local government system to address some of the challenges facing the state.

Responding, all the candidates promised to support the local government autonomy bill, adding that no kobo would be used out of their money.

They said the LGAs, as one of the poverty grounds, would enjoy full autonomy to the extent that jobs would be created among people at the grassroots and women and the vulnerable would also be supported with capital and



■ Candidates during the town hall meeting

PHOTO: Ismail Mudashir

other means of earning a living.

"It is on our agenda to give local governments their allocations, but we have to form a committee or agency that will check their activities. If you just give them their money without checking them, you may end up generating another poverty which will not be good for the society," the APC candidate said.

During the question and answer session, Dr Imam Umar Nadada of the All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN), Katsina State chapter, asked the contestants about their plans for farmers and farming in the state.

In their responses, the contestants explained most of their policies and programmes to include extension services, improved seeds, provision of fertiliser, mechanised and irrigation farming, among other things.

Questions were also asked regarding the place of women in the government of whosoever emerges as the winner in the gubernatorial election.

Hajiya Fatima Kaita, a participant, decried that of the over 28 appointees of the present administration, only two were women.

In their responses, the contestants gave their commitments as regards the place of women in government.

While APC's Jobe promised to treat women with equity, Lado of PDP said 30 per cent of his appointees would be women. Rabe

of NNPP said 70 per cent would be women and youths, and Jino of PRP said the place of women was sacrosanct in his party.

Another question came on what the parties have in store for herders, especially with some policies in other parts of the country banning open grazing, a situation that if not properly addressed could compound the security situation in the North.

On his part, elder statesman, Brigadier General Ahmed Daku (Rtd) advised the contestants to be faithful to their promises if elected and ensure constant monitoring and evaluation of all the projects that they would award while in office.

A leader of visually impaired persons in Katsina State, Sadiq Lawal, urged the candidates to address the challenges facing blind persons in the state.

Earlier in their various opening remarks, each of the candidates laid out their manifestoes on how they would govern the state if given the opportunity.

**APC promises to solve insecurity, others**

The candidate of the APC, Dr Radda, who was represented by his deputy, Jobe promised to adopt the strategy employed by the present administration to solve the security challenges facing the state.

He said the security challenges had been one of the most worrying problems, hence the need to make it among the top priorities of their administration.

"We will use the same techniques used by this administration, especially the engagement of traditional rulers, in tackling banditry," he said.

Radda further said other areas they would prioritise included public sector administration reform, education and entrepreneurship and social care to support the underprivileged, orphans and widows.

He added that, "The Health sector will also be improved, facilities, personnel among others."

**We will tackle substance abuse, ensure projects are need-based – PDP**

The candidate of the PDP, Senator Danmarke, promised to ensure that in addressing substance abuse, leaders led by example.

He also said his administration would ensure that projects to be executed were based on the priority needs of the people.

**We will adopt Islamic governmental system – NNPP**

The deputy governorship candidate of NNPP, Dr Darma, said if elected the party would run an Islamic-based system of government.

He said if the system was adopted, the fight against corruption would end in the state as there would be no more corruption.

He also promised to improve revenue generation that would provide more than the federal allocation the state was receiving.

He further said, "Also, as you can see, we lack a good governmental system in Katsina State. So, we will adopt a system in which the federal allocation will be 20 per cent of our IGR."

**We will pay compensation of those killed through insecurity – PRP**

The candidate of PRP, Imrana Ja'afar Jino, said his administration would pay compensation for each person killed in the state as a result of insecurity.

He added that they would run a government that would be youth-inclusive as they had a great role to play in running the government.

Other candidates, including SDP's deputy candidate, Architect Ibrahim Suleiman Bakori; Kabiru Ado of BP; and Ibrahim Saude of ZLP, also reeled out their plans for the state in areas of health, security, employment, education, youth empowerment, among others.

"We can explore one mineral resource, glass sand, that can make the state self-sufficient and not dependent on federal resources; that is what we hope to do," the ZLP candidate said.

**Politicians must fear God – Prof Lugga**

The Chairman of the town hall meeting, Prof Lugga, charged the candidates to fear the Almighty God and appealed to them to be mindful of their promises and tell the voters what was reasonable.

He also called on the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and security agencies to have the fear of God in their activities.

He said, "We gathered the candidates to tell Katsina people what they have for them and for the people to ask them what they are expecting from them."

"We should fear God and promise what we can do, not to just get votes. We should remember that we will explain to God what we said and what we are going to do. God Almighty has given too much emphasis on issues of promise."

"I call on you to tell people what is reasonable and the promises that you can deliver and leave everything to God."

For the voters, he also asked them to fear God and avoid what was not right, saying, "Only God can give leadership and He has laid down rules for leadership which must be followed. We should vote for the right people."

"INEC should fear God and ensure that they give what people voted for. For the security personnel, they should also fear Allah."

# REMINISCENCES

## Nigeria will restructure itself – Prof Elaigwu

Jonah Isawa Elaigwu was a professor of Political Science with the University of Jos (Unijos) for more than 45 years. However, because of his specialisation in federalism he worked severally outside the field of Political Science. He was a member of the Presidential Advisory Council (PAC) in the regime of General Ibrahim Babangida and later became the Director General (DG) of the National Council for Inter-Governmental Relations. He wrote a biography of General Yakubu Gowon and now lives in Jos where he runs a research institute.



Jonah Isawa Elaigwu

By Kabiru A. Yusuf

**I** know you went to Katsina-Ala Secondary School in Benue State which was then one of the elite schools in your part of Nigeria. Can you tell us a little bit about this?

I started school at the Methodist Primary School, Otukpo, Benue State. From there, in 1960, I went to Katsina-Ala for secondary school. In the old North we had provincial secondary schools which replaced middle schools. The one in Katsina-Ala was Benue Provincial Secondary School. We had such schools in different parts of the North.

The good thing about the Benue Provincial Secondary School was that it was pan-religious, pan-ethnic, transcultural and it

provided the basis for interacting with many people at that early age. By the 1980s people were fighting over uniforms. There was nothing like that then as the government provided uniforms for us: class wear, house wear and athletics wear.

Religion didn't matter to most of us. If they slaughtered a cow like they used to do during the holidays, all of us enjoyed it. So, you wouldn't find people quarrelling about religion and all that.

Incidentally, many Christians studied the subject Islam Religious Studies, Some of them wrote it in the West African School Certificate (WASC). Many Muslims also took Christian Religious Studies (CRS).

Danladi Yakubu, a former Deputy Governor of Plateau State, was my senior. He wrote CRS and

got a credit. There were many such cases. And there were schools in other parts of the North that did the same thing.

So, the good thing about the environment was the fact that it

didn't matter what religion you practiced, what ethnic group you belonged to and what geopolitical area you came from. The important point was that you were a student of the same college and the loyalty

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to the college came first. Even many years after you leave you will maintain the relationship with classmates and others. It was the same thing at King's College, Lagos.

In fact, my classmates at Kings College, just like other sets still do, if anybody from our set dies we task ourselves for the burial.

**Why did you move from Katsina-Ala to Kings College?**

Then, from Katsina-Ala and the other provincial secondary schools in the North, when you wrote mock exams the Northern government would choose 15 science and 10 arts students and send them to King's College.

After the mock, some of us were sent to Keffi for Higher School Certificate (HSC), others to Barewa College, Zaria; Government College, Kaduna; and others to Okene.

**Being from rural Benue, how did you find Lagos?**

I really didn't find it strange. I had spent holidays in Zaria, Kaduna, and so on. So, my rural perspective had been tampered with urban and semi-urban sojourns in these places and therefore I didn't find myself weird in the Lagos setting.

Incidentally, Kings College was very interesting. They would initiate you into the King's College culture to "drive out the old school traits" in you so that you become urban and no longer "a bush school man".

Kings College was very national. We all spoke English; no vernacular. We were very proud of the King's College song and up till today when we meet we say, "Floriat" and all that. There was this sense of togetherness built by the colonial authority.

**Who were your classmates at King's College?**

In the arts there were Yemi Ogunbiyi, Yemi Adefulu, Professor Otunbanjo, Ibrahim Attah, John. A few of them are dead.

**Given the link of the college with Britain, many who graduated from there tended to go abroad for their first degrees but you went to Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria?**

Incidentally, I wanted to study law and I applied to the University of Ibadan (UI) and the University of Lagos (Unilag). Lagos gave me political science. The forms from Ibadan came late. There was nothing like JAMB.

ABU admitted me into the Department of Government which had just started. I was with people like Senator George Nkwob, late David Attah and a few others in that class. We were the second set

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# 'Nigeria will restructure itself'

Continued from page 9

of those who studied for a BSc in social science with specialisation in government.

**Were you taken on as a graduate assistant?**

No! By the time we graduated we had interviews all done and knew whether we were going to Lever Brothers, Federal Civil Service, Foreign Service and all that.

I wanted to go into the Foreign Service. The Chairman of the commission, Sule Katagum, interviewed us. After the interview he called me back to the panel and he said, "Look, young man, you want to go for Foreign Service but we can't send all the best people into Foreign Service. We need people in the domestic service to create the basis for development. So, I would recommend that you stay in the domestic service."

I didn't like it but he was very persuasive like a father and explained the advantages. I agreed. So, I was recruited into the Federal Civil Service.

Before then, I had a second class upper degree and the Vice Chancellor of ABU, Prof Ishaya Audu, was trying to develop the staff of the university. So, while in the civil service Prof O'Connell recommended me to Prof Ishaya Audu. ABU had sent Andrew Kasai and one other person to Wisconsin, USA. So, I was admitted into Duke University, Carolina, and later to Stanford in California.

**Did you study up to PhD in California?**

Yea! I went to Stanford, finished my masters in 1972, then started my PhD. Actually, my masters and my PhD programmes were together. In 1973 I left for my field

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■ Jonah Isawa Elaigwu

research which brought me back to Nigeria, took me to Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, and of course I went to Ethiopia in 1974 for the fun of it. Ali Mazrui and his wife invited me to a diplomatic gathering. President Jomo Kenyatta came and I saw him live. Mazrui introduced me to him.

**Was your research on federalism?**

It was a combination of federalism with a tinch of civil/military relations, because in my three exams, political theory was one of them, then comparative politics, particularly thematic issues like civil/military relations, and of course federalism and international relations.

I was in Uganda the week Field Marshal Idi Amin's wife was butchered and put in a doctor's car booth. I was scared at YMC Guest House. My friends at Makerere University told me nobody cared about me, I but I told them I was going to ministries, universities and other places and asking questions and somebody could pick me up.

**Was your choice of federalism as a speciality based on your background as a minority within another minority from Benue State?**

No! At that point one wasn't politically cognitive, one wasn't politically aware to the level of thinking in a sophisticated way you are putting it.

I was interested in federalism particularly after the civil war. I saw what Nigeria went through, I saw that the federal system in the First Republic had a loose centre and very strong regions. It was even

said: "Regional tails were wagging the federal dog."

And my question all along had been, what would happen if you do not shift from the federal model but provide different kinds of relationship between the centre and the peripheral?

Federalism is meant to manage conflicts through sharing of power so that legally each unit will operate within its own sphere.

Example, Kenya inherited a quasi-federal system and by 1964 replaced it with the Majibo Constitution, saying quasi-federalism was expensive and disintegrating.

Ghana inherited the quasi federal model. Nkrumah kicked it out and said look, "We are going unitary because federalism is a ploy to disunite us."

Uganda had a combination of federalism. Buganda had a federal relationship with the centre, but Bunyoro had a unitary relationship with the centre.

**What will you say given the structural experiences we have gone through from the First Republic, and what do you think is the ideal structure?**

There is nothing in human nature and in polity you can say is ideal because the best also changes from time to time.

The people wanted the centre to be stronger, which under Gowon was effected. It was the same thing under Murtala and others followed.

By 1999, the same Nigerians were saying the centre is too strong, the centre is suffocating the states, let us devolve power, let us amend the legislative list in such a way that

we will bring down some powers from the centre to the states; which the General Sani Abacha conference tried to do.

But basically we must always remember that the reasons why you adopted federalism is not because of finesse, it is not because you like it, it is because of its functional utility.

Now, if a society is badly divided, it means that the centre's power will be limited, the federal pendulum would go in favour of the periphery, the states, the local governments and all that.

Now, if you centralise power, it will be part of what we call centripetal poll to the centre where the centre has more.

Very often, in all countries, the United States (US), Belgium, Australia, India and all these places, the pendulum is more to the periphery.

The federal pendulum gets adjusted from time to time depending on the exigencies of the political arena. You can't say this is an ideal thing. It is ideal because it solves the problem and the problem you solve in time A is not the same problem you will solve in time B.

**Is our current structure dealing with our problems?**

I think it has tried in a lot of ways. We had the problem of large regions. We had the problem of many minorities out of the circle of the political arena. The 12 states were to create new centres which generated their own forms of developmental processes; with development going to some states where nobody even thought about them because they were local

government headquarters.

The creation of states had advantages because it made the centre stronger. Two, it dealt with the fact that none of the states could succeed on their own. Three, it provided new avenues for distribution of resources to a wider space, and four, it provided a new framework for distribution of resources.

Over time we moved from 12 to 19 to 21 to 30 and to 36. But one of the problems with the creation of states is that it has political consequences because if you create a state, the states lose most of their powers. Don't forget they lost prison, native police and even the judiciary which they had.

Secondly, you have new states with less powers financially and politically. You have new states with less area to deal with. So, it is convenient in some way, but also the resource bases for most of them have actually dried up.

**Why did you write Gen Gowon's biography?**

Gen Gowon was overthrown as I was finishing my PhD thesis in 1975 and I read in some newspapers about "Gowon's nine years of failure." Many journalists didn't see anything good about him at all.

And my study, especially during my field work, showed me that in African countries, and particularly in Nigeria, if you were a head of state for one night, you had tried, and to say nine years of failure; I found that very annoying. It was not analytically correct that for nine years you were there and there was total failure.

**In trying to set the records straight, what did you find good about Gowon?**

I wouldn't say what was good about him, because you are going to areas that are fairly subjective. What I would say were his achievements.

All the airports in Nigeria that were developed later, who created them? Gowon. The network of roads that we have now, who created them? Gowon. I remember in 1964 I was going to Jos from Makurdi and we spent three days there because it was during the rainy season. The road was all laterite and we had to wait until after the rains. And what were the vehicles we were boarding? Gongoro (trucks).

A friend recently told me that he used to take his son to school in his car and that once he told the son to trek to school because it was a couple of blocks away from their house but that he refused, saying, "I am used to going in a car."

**Granted that Gowon built roads and airports, but there was the oil boom money. What else would he have done with the money rather than do those things?**

But isn't that presumptuous that there was money and therefore you had to use it for development purposes. Education is another area he also invested money in. The man could have decided to "chop" the money like they are doing. The amount of incorrigible level of insensitivity to the poor Nigerians that Nigerian leaders have displayed after Gowon; you would be shocked.

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**Is there any evidence that Gowon didn't "chop" money?**

For the first time in 1978 I met him in London when he drove to High Banet Station to pick me up with a Volkswagen Passat, to his house. That was his only car.

Before then, when Gowon was kicked out of office, he had nowhere to stay. One Mr Oti gave him a two-bedroom house in London where he could stay.

**Who is Mr Oti?**

One of his friends. Later some Nigerians, including Prof Ishaya Audu, helped him to get another house at Broadgate. He still stays there.

When I went to his house he couldn't even pay his children's fees, and as Buhari said, at his 70th birthday he wrote to Buhari to request for that.

He told me that what annoyed him most was that with all he had done, the British government wrote to him that he didn't have enough money to cover his schooling.

**The school he was attending himself?**

Yes! That if he didn't, he couldn't stay in the country. It was after there was a protest that the British government, through the home office, said there was a mistake.

He told me that if he had taken money would he be asking for all that nonsense and going through all that? In short, he had to pay his children's school fees, medical bills and electricity. He had no driver. And the next time I went, he came in the tube (train) to the hotel where I was to pick me; very humble and all that.

**Why was he overthrown, from your own study?**

You are no longer dealing with his achievements. Okay, let's go to the removal. Gowon stayed for nine years under military rule; that is a long time.

**Why did he overstay?**

In military regimes you have to have a turnover otherwise the same people who came in with you turn against you.

Two, there were intra-military issues that many of those who had fought the civil war thought that since Gowon had promised after FESTAC he was going to change those people, then he shifted it to after the Queen came and all that, that those who had been in governance for long had overstayed outside the barracks; that they should go back and others should go into government. So much human ambition.

Three, the issue of 1976 as a date for return to civil rule and reneging on that made politicians

who were waiting on the wings to coalesce with people in the military to overthrow him.

**You served on the Presidential Advisory Council during the government of Gen Babangida; what was that job about?**

You must give Babangida three credits for courage, intelligence and humility. He asked me to get him people in economics, sociology and anthropology. I was in political science. He made Aboyade the chair of the council.

He told us that as a military regime they didn't have structures for feeling the pulse of the people. He said we lived with the people.

Two, he said they didn't know the processes of government and international nuances. That we in the council would put brains together. They did that because ministries brought their budgets through us, we went through them and questioned them before they went to the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC). It was a rigorous process.

**Was it a full time job?**

It was part time. We kept flying in and out. We had accommodations in Lagos and Abuja.

The interesting thing was that there were many crises which the PAC helped to defuse; some even religious. If you remember the International Monetary Fund (IMF) thing and so on; we tried working with the government to defuse them; even when it came to the political crisis and registration of political parties.

**Were you involved in creating the two party structure; a little to the left, a little to the right?**

It is not for fun; it was a situation in which creating those two parties saved the country from violence, because many politicians were waiting; that their political parties would be registered. In fact, some of them had thrown parties in Lagos and were waiting for it to be announced. Yet if you saw the report from the National Electoral Commission (NEC), none of them met 50 per cent.

So, it was a way of saying, since none of them met 50 per cent, how could we create a basis for unity among Nigerians and avoid the obvious disaster that would come from violence under a military regime. The move was a mechanism for dealing with the looming crisis.

**With all these, how come his transition programme ended up in failure?**

There was a committee after the report written by a group. Jerry Gana and others were in that committee. After they made their report, the white paper panel was



Jonah Isawa Elaigwu

set up. I was a member of the white paper panel and we recommended the exit of the military in 1992. The AFRC approved it.

Now, a number of factors were responsible: the military over time had factionalised by 1993. So, intra-military conspiracies, which is normal in military regimes, were partly responsible for the failure of that transition programme.

Secondly, ambitious politicians working with the military exacerbated the problems on the table for Babangida.

Thirdly, ambitious young military people, you should know them by now, who actually were on the wings complicated the setting.

And finally, the Nigerian factor; once you are doing anything, we would want to skew the system to suit us; that also adulterated the process.

**Don't you think Babangida didn't really want to go until he was forced out by his colleagues?**

When I was talking of ambitious people and all that, it included all of them: Babangida, Sani Abacha, MKO Abiola and some younger officers. But some things went beyond my knowledge.

But the main issue wouldn't be that Babangida was trying to prolong his stay. He knew he was going, but how would he go safely and neatly without the barracks erupting in a volcano?

How would he go without the political environment which was politically toxic degenerate into violence? There were many other questions, but I am trying to be careful to limit myself to what I know.

**We have another toxic political environment as we are about to transition to another government this 2023. Are you optimistic that we will navigate the period seamlessly?**

My late friend, George Obiozor, used to tease me that I am an indestructible optimist, and I would tell him if the matter concerns the country. I love it, anytime I am out of the country, I like to come back to it, I miss my pounded yam and egusi soup or something. I miss the company of my people; I relate warmly with my friends. I miss the forthrightness, the candour of Nigerians. I miss the fact that despite our problems, we are determined to prove ourselves as Nigerians even outside the country. Forget the crooks; they are not as many as those who you know and hear about that are contributing wonderful things to the world.

Now when you look at that setting, I am optimistic that for good or for bad, the Nigerian system, God willing, even if there is minimum bloodshed, would find itself restructuring itself, summersault and bounce back on the road.

Meanwhile, note that we have three political groups: the group of politicians who know how to acquire power and use it for the ends of the state, welfare, security

and foreign relations. That group is getting extinct; talking about Aminu Kano, Shehu Shagari, Adamu Ciroma and their likes. They knew how to use power and didn't see it as an investment for their private lives.

The second group are political contractors who are 80 per cent in the political arena, who see politics as an investment from which they must harvest with huge profits. You remember Adelabu and Ladoja. You remember Chris Uba and Ngige, there are many of them all over the country.

The third group are thugs; these are the hirelings of the political contractors. They hire them to dispense maximum violence to those who don't tow their lines.

So I think part of the problem that we have currently is the fact that the political contractors are dominant. Most politicians are dominant in vices rather than virtues.

**At 75 you are retired from the university and now run an NGO; aside the NGO how do you occupy yourself?**

Let me say that the NOG, Institute of Governance and Social Research (IGSR), is a research institute because of the kind of peace building activities that we do. So, it is not primarily an NGO. I retired from there on July 1, last year, but I still go there to work as a senior fellow.

So I still work, I still do my research; I still do all kinds of things. If I stop, I think I will die.

**Do you have any hobbies?**

I can't do too much. My doctor has told me I can't do anything beyond walking. So I walk during the day and in the evening I watch TV.

**What about your family?**

I have six children who are all grownups.

Now when you look at that setting, I am optimistic that for good or for bad, the Nigerian system, God willing, even if there is minimum bloodshed, would find itself restructuring itself, summersault and bounce back on the road.

Armed Forces Remembrance Day:

# Widows of fallen heroes seek support

● How Nigeria's lost soul can be restored – Wounded soldiers

By Dana Daniel Zagi & Idowu Isamotu

**A**s Nigeria marks the 2023 Armed Forces Remembrance Day today, widows of fallen soldiers have appealed to the federal government and well-meaning Nigerians to address the issues that affect their welfare.

The Armed Forces Remembrance Day is set aside every year to celebrate serving men of the armed forces and remember those who died in the line of duty.

Some of the widows who spoke to Daily Trust on Sunday said they had been going through hardship since they lost their breadwinners.

Mrs Esther Augustine Ogedengbe, one of the widows, told Daily Trust on Sunday that life had not been the same since she lost her husband.

Mrs Ogedengbe, a mother of two who lost her husband in 2015, narrated how being the breadwinner hadn't been easy with little or no assistance from the government or elsewhere.

She said, "Widows here are really suffering; all widows. If you don't come close to people you will not know what people are really passing through."

Recounting the memories that come with the Armed Forces Remembrance Day, Mrs Ogedengbe said that for most of the years she stayed in the barracks after being widowed only few of the commanders made

them (widows) feel special with gifts and other moral support.

Another widow, Mrs Linda Gabriel, said that her late husband called her a night before he paid the supreme price.

She said, "That day I fainted because my husband was my everything. I don't have a mother, I don't have a father. My two girls are still in primary school; life has not been easy, but I thank God."

Also speaking, Mrs Tabitha John said her husband died after a protracted ailment in 2022, leaving six kids for her to fend for, adding that she was yet to access her husband's benefits.

Mrs Lami Ajang, a mother of three, said she was yet to receive all her late husband's entitlements, noting that, "They have paid me some money, but they have not paid all."

Relating to the plight of the widows, Major General Cecil Esekhaigbe (Rtd), Chairman of the Centre for Wounded Service Heroes Fund, acknowledged the efforts of the government in trying to provide succour for dependents of fallen heroes.

He said, "The government has been doing its best, but you know, we have an economy that has competing needs. There are so many other sectors competing for the government's attention."

He added that the military had a good system of looking after families of soldiers that were dead or away through laudable welfare schemes, but noted that "this might not be enough but a reminder that they are not forgotten."



■ Kits belonging to fallen soldiers

Gen Esekhaigbe, therefore, encouraged the widows not to lose faith, but be consoled that their husbands died for the unity of the country, reminding them that the government would not forget them.

## How Nigeria's lost soul can be restored – Wounded soldiers

Meanwhile, a cross section of wounded servicemen have said that the lost soul of Nigeria could be restored if all Nigerians worked together regardless of political parties with support for the security agencies in order to eliminate all forms of insecurity in the country.

They noted that Nigeria would emerge stronger soon,

adding that the resilient belief in the promise of tomorrow was embodied in thousands of years of Nigerian history.

Speaking through their Chairman, Board of Trustees, Gen Esekhaigbe, they explained that there was the need to salute the courage and resilience of frontline security personnel and the service chiefs, as well as other heads of security agencies, for their efforts to restore normalcy.

Gen Esekhaigbe said, "Our prayers are with you, and we will continue to do everything we can to support all the wounded servicemen and families of the fallen heroes and whatever it takes, we are going to be there as

one nation and one Nigeria, we are not going to breakaway.

"We can do big things as a country when we work together, regardless of our political parties, to support the security agencies to eliminate all forms of insecurities. There is a lot more we can do, but we have to do it together to restore the soul of Nigerians.

"I reaffirmed that the Centre is unshakably committed to the Armed forces, the wounded servicemen and families of the fallen heroes, Nigeria will emerge stronger, that resilient belief in the promise of tomorrow is embodied in thousands of years of Nigerians history."

## 2023: INEC adds 9.5m to registered voters

● Removes 53,264 for infractions

Abbas Jimoh

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) on Wednesday announced additional 9,518,188 eligible registrants in the national register of voters that will be used for this year's general elections.

INEC Chairman, Prof Mahmood Yakubu, disclosed this in Abuja during a meeting with the leadership of the nation's 18 registered political parties, where the new register was formally presented to them.

Daily Trust on Sunday reports that while the presidential and National Assembly elections will be held on Saturday, February 25, 2023; the governorship elections in 28 states for all state assemblies will be held on Saturday March 11, 2023.

### Removes 53,264 from register

The INEC boss added that for the 2019 general elections, Nigeria had a voter population of 84,004,084, and that after the cleaning up of the data from the last Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) exercise (June, 2021 to July, 2022); 9,518,188 new voters were added to the previous register, resulting in the preliminary register of 93,522,272 which was presented to Nigerians for claims and objections as required by law.

Yakubu said, "At the end of the period for claims and objections by citizens, the commission received 53,264 objections from Nigerians to the prevalence of ineligible persons on the register by virtue of age, citizenship or death. These names have been verified and removed from the register.

"Consequently, the register of voters for the 2023 general elections stands at 93,469,008. Of this cumulative figure, 49,054,162 (52.5 per cent) are males while 44,414,846 (47.5 per cent) are females."

He added that the distribution by age group showed that 37,060,399 (39.65 per cent) were youths between the ages of 18 and 34; 33,413,591 (35.75 per cent) were middle aged persons between the ages of 35 and 49; 17,700,270 (18.94 per cent) were elderly voters between the ages of 50 and 69, while 5,294,748 (5.66 per cent) were senior citizens aged 70 and above.

In terms of occupational distribution, the INEC boss said that students constituted the largest category with 26,027,481 (27.8 per cent) of all voters, followed by 14,742,554 (15.8 per cent) farmers/fishermen and 13,006,939 (13.9 per cent) housewives.

According to him, the data on disability was not collected for previous registrations, but that the cumulative figure of 85,362 persons from the recent CVR indicates that

there are 21,150 (24.5 per cent) persons with albinism; 13,387 (15.7 per cent) with physical impediments and 8,103 (9.5 per cent) are blind.

### Cleaning up the data

Yakubu had in April, 2022, said that the introduction of the biometric registration of voters in 2011 helped to sanitise the register.

According to him, initially 73,528,040 Nigerians were registered in 2011 and that using the Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) the commission was able to remove 4,239,923 invalid registrations.

He said, "Unfortunately, the troubling issue of invalid registration still persists, which we detected while cleaning up the latest registration data. As against the AFIS used in previous exercises, the commission introduced the Automated Biometric Identification System (ABIS), which is a more comprehensive and robust system involving not just fingerprint identification, but also facial biometric recognition.

"Sadly, it seems that many registrants, either out of ignorance that they do not need to re-register if they had done so before, or a belief that our systems will not detect this infraction, have gone out to register again."

Yakubu further said both categories: failure of ABIS and incomplete data,

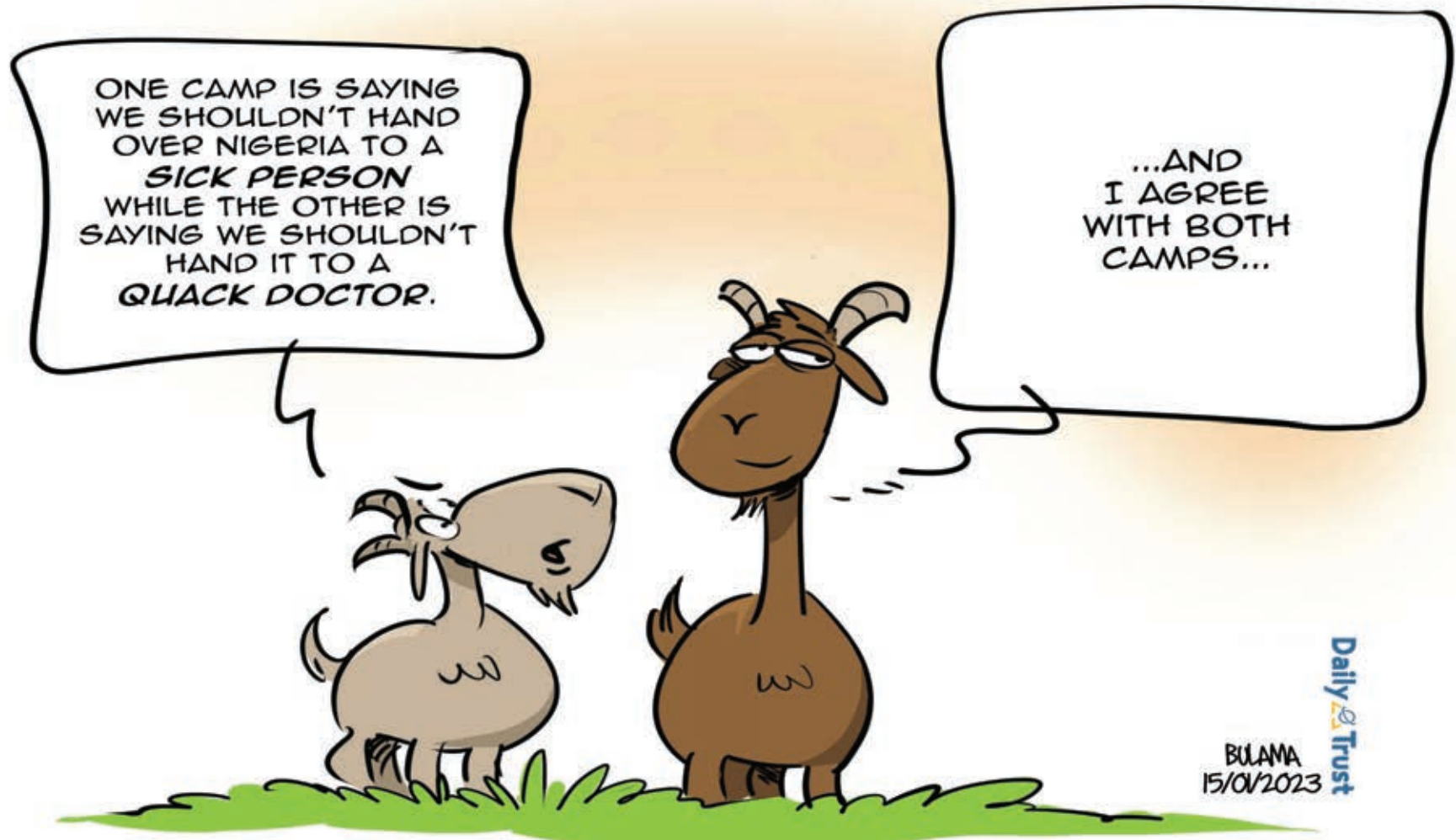
constituted invalid registration, lamenting that nearly 45 per cent of completed registrations nationwide were invalid, rising to as high as 60 per cent or more in some states, and that this infraction happened in all the states of the federation.

### Legal provisions

Presenting the details of the register, INEC's Director, Voter Registry, Engr Iro Gambo, said that the 1999 constitution (as amended) and Sections 9 to 23 of the Electoral Act 2022 empowered the commission to conduct the registration of persons qualified to vote and to prepare, maintain and revise the register of voters.

He said, "Section 10 (6) of the Electoral Act 2022 states that, 'As soon as claims and objections have expired, the supplementary list shall be included in the revised register which shall be certified by the commission as the official register of voters for the purpose of any election conducted under this act and supersedes all previous registers.'

"The national register of voters used for the display exercise comprises the 2019 register of voters, post-2019 CVR exercise for the stand-alone governorship elections and area council elections (Anambra, FCT, Ekiti and Osun states) and the post-ABIS data from the just concluded nationwide 2021/22 CVR."



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## Regardless, cut Peter Obi some slacks

His victory, his loss—none would diminish him or strip him of his previous achievements. He made, set indelible records, and etched his name in the historical folklore of Nigerian politics. In Peter Obi, many hopes are currently stashed. Supports that cut across tribes and religions. Groups among the Igbos, Afenifere among the Yorubas, and Coalition of North East Elders for Peace and Development (CNEEPD) among the Northerners are an attestation to the belief in a budding Nigerian 001 - if fate would beam a smile on him in the coming election, or ones to come.

Despite disparaging political views, Obi has electrified Nigerian youths and given them a new, reverberating voice. For his acclaimed honesty, he paid with

impeachment as the then Anambra State governor. His sin: he wouldn't inflate the state budget and contracts. But he reclaimed his mandate, and posterity reinstated him on the governorship seat. Like other Nigerian politicians, he's not perfect; but across sectors, he has executed laudable projects at Anambra State.

Education-wise, Anambra was 24th on the national log, he spurred the state's education to number 1. And just when other governors were leaving debts, Obi claimed he left \$500m in Anambra coffers as investments. True or false, the courage to declare credit, when colleagues declare debts is worthy of applause. The Debt Management Organization (DMO) would later put a stamp of affirmation on him as

"least corrupt". That EFCC has not taken axes after him to date, is another reason to commend him. If there is a financial mess at his feet, this time wouldn't have been fair to him. Researchers affirm his good works across many sectors, too.

Hundreds of thousands of Nigerian youths, who in the past, must pitch their political tents with either the ruling party or the second most influential party, suddenly rallied around the Anambra man and a party with far less influence, resources, and even structures. Reason: the increasing plights of Nigeria have become unbearable for them.

Being at the receiving end of daily and unending aspersions and yet growing wider audience, Obi has only grown abuse absorbers and remained focused on

his goal: getting to the helm of Nigeria's affairs. A perfect human or politician exists nowhere in the world, and a fractional part of Nigerians may continue to take cutting tongues after Obi, Pandora's papers might have bared his feet of clay, he may be tagged "word-slurrer", "a joker without structure or huge resources", but for being the hope to many Nigerians and youths across tribes and religions, for igniting the political interest of many Nigerians who in the past would rather sleep at home on election days than a vote, Peter Obi deserves some accolades. Regardless of differences in political views and affiliations, cut Peter Obi some slacks.

Hashim Yussuf Amao wrote from Ibadan, Oyo State

## Youth and social vices: inevitable confusion

Youths are significant in every sphere of life as they are seen as strong, agile and fit, being that they have the strength to achieve whatever they set their mind to achieving. Unfortunately, the youths of today would rather channel their strength to activities of doom that will eventually plunge their life into a lifelong abyss and leave them frustrated, dried, and wounded.

They have the advantage of age and a promising future, to be the leaders of tomorrow, but they have started engaging in activities that render them irrelevant and irresponsible in society. It was never recorded in time and space that nationalists like Obafemi Awolowo, Nnamdi Azikwe,

Ahmadu Bello, etc. started their youth days with any fraudulent activity. Instead, we were told of how they strived to achieve education at all costs to liberate their people from ignorance and bring independence to the nation.

In our society today, education is variably considered as an option amongst various means. The popular saying that "education is the best legacy" has been rephrased by the present-day youths into "education is a scam". Whereas fraudulent activities have been pushed into a crescendo, they downplay the many adverse consequences that will eventually accompany the fraud committed by anyone in society and embrace the act without consciousness.

An average teen in a university is not interested in a reading group but will not hesitate to have a sleepless night with a group of guys in order to get an 'update' that enables them to dupe a client. They have no interest in group reading but call themselves names like 'my gee', and 'senior gee' which signify their expertness or hierarchy in fraudulent activities.

Engaging in fraud is like hiding behind a finger which is impossible to achieve, a popular proverb says "All day for the thieves one day for the owner" the tentacle of law and justice will catch up with anyone engaging in fraudulent activities.

Sikiru Kayode Emmanuel wrote from the Department of English, Lagos State University

## Thank you, Governor Bala Mohammed

Dear Governor Bala Mohammed of Bauchi State, on behalf of the thousand youths of the state, we want to express our profound gratitude for the recent Kaura Economic Empowerment Programme (KEEP).

The Kaura Economic Empowerment Programme (KEEP) is an initiative of the Bauchi State Government that is aimed at empowering women and youths with incentives that would alleviate poverty and provide them with job opportunities in the state.

Your Excellency, it was with great pleasure that we received the news of the youth's empowerment under your administration because the programme will reduce the level of unemployment

across the state.

Many youths in the state were empowered with motorcycles, grinding machines, sewing machines, Sharon buses, and grinding machines, among others.

The essence of empowering youths and women is to change the lives of thousands who could resort to armed robbery, kidnapping, raping, drug addiction, and other illegal acts thereby turning them to be great products of the state and maintaining law and others.

Sir, your administration has shown clearly youths are of paramount importance.

Jemimah Musa Sule wrote from the Department of Mass Communication, University of Maiduguri

DIALOGUE WITH MY  
COUNTRYochima495@gmail.com  
danagbese@dailytrust.comwith  
Dan Agbese  
08055001912 (SMS only)

## The fixers and the unfixable

Every country is beset with problems; problems that need to be fixed so the nation and its citizens can saunter and hum along the boulevard of modern development. Problems are challenges. They invite brave men and women to tackle them. Problems are endemic in all societies. Without them, human beings would never be motivated to serve their countries. History remembers those who came, saw, fixed their countries' problems and lifted them to new heights of progress and development.

Without problems, we would not have politicians. They are born and exist to fix what is broken. Sometimes they break what is not broken just so they can have something to fix. Democracy simplifies the process of recruiting the fixers who can fix our problems. Every election circle throws up men and women who tout themselves as the authentic fixers of what is broken. Democracy obliges us to believe them and give them the power to be the master fixers and the master problem solvers.

Some of our country's problems are as old as yours sincerely. Many more are younger than yours sincerely. That they constitute challenges to every generation may point to the fact that human problems and their solutions are not linear but circular. My mind drifted to some of these lingering problems last night. I woke up wondering why they still make our country, and its leaders look like failed fixers and failed promise keepers.

Power supply, the engine of modern development, became epileptic when I was a young man; it remains so in my old age; education, once the pride of our country, is a pathetic victim of contradictory policies and policy summersaults; potable water was a challenge in my village, Ikpeba; it still is as indeed it is in almost all our villages; corruption, the poison in the veins and the blood of our nation, remains defiant of military and civilian solutions and continues in its unholy determination to kill our country; insecurity, born after the civil war, beginning with armed robbery, today has many pikins such as bandits and kidnappers; Boko Haram has been waging a bloody war against the Nigerian state since 2009, it remains undefeated.

Weep not, brother. Nigeria is a lucky country in more senses than one. We have never lacked problems crying to be fixed; and we have never lacked men and women who believe they can fix them. We have had eight men in khaki who came because they felt the problems overwhelmed the agbada and baban riga men. They reasoned that our problems could not be solved through the tardy ways of bureaucracy but with immediate effect.

Each came and waved the swagger stick at the problems and commanded them to disappear with immediate effect. Problems have bad manners, you know. They smirked and thumbed their noses at the generals. The generals left the stage but the problems they came to solve are still with us. There was no magic really, in the phrase, "with immediate effect." It is a just

By the time he left office, he believed that he had broken the backbone of some of the problems and they would no longer taunt his successors in government. He failed to reckon with the fact that some of our nastiest problems are like mosquitoes: they have the capacity to sniff and survive all insect killers.

a phrase with the naïve promise of an urgent solution.

The civilians returned in 1999. We have had four sets of them, each leading us on our weary journey to the never-nation for which we are permitted the luxury of dreaming about. I guess that President Olusegun Obasanjo must have been shocked to see that the problems he tackled as our military ruler in the middle to late seventies, were still waiting for him and chuckling as he assembled his team for the battle royale with them.

By the time he left office, he believed that he had broken the backbone of some of the problems and they would no longer taunt his successors in government. He failed to reckon with the fact that some of our nastiest problems are like mosquitoes: they have the capacity to sniff and survive all insect killers.

President Buhari and the fixers who took office with him as state governors in 2015, have nearly exhausted their statutory period of eight years in office. In a few months' time, they will yield place to their successors, a new set of fixers in the executive and the legislative branches of government who, as befits new sheriffs about to descend on the town, are loudly promising and assuring us that they are the new men chosen by God and sent by him to fix our problems. Come to think of it, all our political leaders, military and civilians, were God sent although I doubt that the Almighty was eventually mighty pleased with what they made of the opportunity to serve their nation and their people as political leaders.

What will the outgoing set of big men be leaving behind for the new set of big men? These big men met armed robbery, kidnapping, corruption, epileptic power supply, potable water denied to millions of people, hospitals that are worse than consulting clinics, roads that were serious national challenges and Boko Haram that burdened the nation with internally displaced persons, Nigerians living as refugees in their own country. They also met separatist agitations in Igbo land and Yoruba land. They came to fix the problems they met, but the result is not a credit to their capacity as fixers.

During their time in office, they saw our country turned into the poverty capital of the world with 138 million people officially classified as poor. They saw the emergence of banditry, killer Fulani herdsmen and a cocktail of other crimes and criminals. I think it is easy to see that they too will be leaving behind worsening national challenges—more crimes, more corruption, a dilapidated educational system assiduously producing certificated young men and women; a rising tide of unemployment with our young people who are the sons and daughters of nobodies wearing their cheap shoes chasing jobs that are either not there or are hoarded for the sons and daughters of somebodies.

In the circular nature of human progress and development, these problems have not been fixed. There must be a good reason why problems are passed on from one set of rulers to another. It may sound cynical but think of it this way: if a previous set of rulers had fixed these problems, what would we have expected their successors to do? If there are no problems to be fixed, politics and nations lose champions and aspirations to political leadership loses meaning. The more stubborn the problems are, the greater the challenge they offer brave men and women.

The president said he has done his best for the country. True. The state governors too claim they have done their best for their various states, even if most of them will leave their states with the detritus of their incompetence, poor and indifferent leadership that have done more harm than good to their states.

Take note that the president and the state governors are not claiming that they fixed the problems they met and those that came of age during their time; they are only saying they have done their best. This should moderate our expectations from our new set of fixers who emerge after the general elections.

## PERSPECTIVE

## On the rising cases of divorce

By Mukhtar Garba Kobi

Marriage is a solid foundation that formalizes different genders to have affairs which usually leads to procreation alongside lowering the level of adultery and fornication in the lands. Beauty has contributed to attracting many ladies into marriages but what most of them are yet to understand is that money never lasts forever. The first mistake we make as humans before marriage is allowing our hearts to be influenced by physical body features or the gravity of one's pocket, they are pertinent in life but not as important as building a marriage from the stand of truth which pave way for a peaceful matrimonial life.

Most times, one should ponder twice when it comes to choosing a life partner. Marriage is indubitably meant till eternity whereby only death will set them apart; couples should not let their future children curse them for the wrong partners they chose. The level of mother's knowledge does not make her a saint but applying them into practice and her good habits could be seen in the way and manner her children behave. Similarly, they say stitch in time saves nine, this proverb goes in line with when a guy selects a pious woman, she always thinks outside the box but her opponent has a narrow understanding of life itself talkless of coaching her biological children. People should be using sense coupled with good behavioural conduct when choosing a husband or wife not only considering desires that fade as time flies.

Moreover, the rate of marriages has significantly increased, it is difficult for a week to pass without attending weddings of relatives, friends or neighbours; yet those marriages last for a short period. Some parents are more eager to give the hands of their daughters in marriage than enroll them to learning in higher institutions which is not possible due to the unbearable tuition fees, while some ladies lacked

home training and they start following guys, spending nights away, going to clubs and mingling with opposite genders; their parents marry them off to anyone willing and ready not minding whether she loves him or not. Oftentimes, we believe what we see but when it comes to marriage seeing is not believing, marriage is not meant for the joy of one, it is for two souls to live in harmony forever as one.

Factors that lead to an increase in divorce cases, therefore, include forceful marriage, tying the marital knot because of wealth, irresponsibility of husbands, alcoholism and intoxication as well as excessive love of luxuries. After marriage, the true and hidden habits of partners are revealed, when the love before marriage is built on lies and fake lifestyles, the marriage would never last long; few that endure staying in such marriages are been hurt emotionally which results in cardiovascular infections or hypertension. Also, hatred from the husband's mother or relatives when a wife is unable to conceive or give birth, daily misunderstandings between couples, disrespect to the parents by marriage partners, carelessness, and showing less concern for the wife or husband are triggering reasons that lead to divorce.

In conclusion, for couples to have long-lasting marriages, they should be building relationships even before marriage on truth, and decency and shun any act that would lead to regret or divorce. As a man, if she is the most beautiful to you, then wait and rethink whether she is fit to be regarded as the best mom in bearing, counselling, and putting your future children on right track; if she is the opposite just forget about her and find solace somewhere. Parents should stop giving their daughters' hands in marriages to people just because they are rich, title holders, or politicians; good behavioral conducts need to be prioritized. Finally, ladies should be lowering their money egos, excessive love of luxuries or looking after rich families, instead, they should be focusing on sensible, responsible and people that truly love them.

Kobi wrote from Bauchi,  
Bauchi State

COMMENT & DEBATE

**PENPOINT**

0805 9252424 (SMS only)

with

**Monima Daminabo**

email: monidams@yahoo.co.uk

## Beyond Nigeria's current fiscal meltdown

Watching the build up to the forthcoming general polls which are due in a matter of weeks from now, it is not difficult to see a foreboding that there are bare-faced information gaps in much of the campaigns, as there is much more than meets the eyes than is before the general public. While the twists and turns as well as the facts, fallacies, half-truths and outright lies associated with electioneering campaigns are trending with mouth-watering promises flowing from both sides of the mouths of candidates seeking public offices, not a few Nigerians would have wished that more attention be paid to the fiscal condition of the country, especially in the light of recent revelations which point to a literal or incipient meltdown of the economy.

Beyond the traditional complaints like unprecedented state of insecurity and runaway criminality, weak industrial infrastructure and epileptic energy supply among others, recent revelations from the fiscal terrain have only heightened the state of alarm for not a few citizens. Nigerians across the country are literally living on tenterhooks with most not sure of the next meal or restful sleep. Adding the spectre of distress in the economy and the fiscal terrain constitutes a burden too many for them. That is why the fate of the economy is of prime concern.

As is trite knowledge, unlike the political system where much drama can be generated by mere pronouncements of the potentates, the economy is not easily swayed by mere pronouncements by any potentate. Positive changes can only be attained by painstaking efforts at strategic planning and boosting productivity, as the economy is the network of resources, relationships and other factors that determine the quality of life for the individual citizen, from cradle to grave.

As at the last count the country's fiscal terrain has been in a state of unease with a few topical issues dominating others to keep it so. And with their end game swaying in limbo, the added grief from such misfortune to the wider society can be appreciated. Listed in no chronological order are the ongoing currency swap exercise, contentious matter of allegedly 'missing' N89 trillion of stamp duty funds, and the debt burden of the country especially with respect to the outstanding ways and means palaver which the Senate has in its wisdom deferred debate on to this week Wednesday January 17 2023. Understandably, their significance of these issues derives from the debilitating effect which their mismanagement has on the entire economy. Meanwhile, it remains a wonder how many Nigerians would have wished like this author how much increase which the country records over time, in

savings for the rainy day. But that is a matter for another day.

For now the challenge borders on how the country can fare into the future in the light of the fiscal meltdown facing it, even as had earlier been observed in this column, that the thrust of electioneering campaign has in the main not focused on the more debilitating debacles as mentioned above. Rather campaign debates (except in the case of a few instances) remain more fixated on the character weaknesses of the candidates, power sharing calculus and rather mundane premises. The implications include the reality that short of constructive engagement between the political class and

the wider society over the fiscal meltdown, whichever incoming administration may simply run business as usual, and thereby deny the country the fulfilment of the lofty expectations from the 2023 polls exercise.

For all practical intents and purposes, the Buhari administration can no more be expected to deliver any significant dividend of governance. All expectations need to be channeled to an incoming administration. These include for instance the myriad problems surrounding the currency swap exercise have tended to downgrade it to a point where the entire country is watching how the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) hopes to complete the assignment as planned with minimum headaches for Nigerians. Meanwhile the outstanding 'missing' N89 trillion stamp duty fund remains one headache which from all indications the present administration of President Muhamadu Buhari may hand over to its successor. Just as well is the contentious debt burden along with the N23.1 trillion ways and means matter whose future can be known only after the Senate debate on it holds on Wednesday this week being January 17 2023.

Yet for Nigerians, all is not yet lost, given the capacity of the people to spring back from any adversity and edge of any precipice where mis-governance or any other misfortune has driven it to. Indeed the country's contemporary state of affairs calls to mind the aphorism that it is not what happens to a man that matters more than how he takes it. Even the current fiscal meltdown cannot break the country.

Interestingly, it is this spirit of 'never say die' by Nigerians under any circumstance that not only sustains the people but also conditions them to tolerate any abuse from any leadership. The political class knows that the country can even take more bashing than is presently imposed on the people.

God, please save Nigeria.

For all practical intents and purposes, the Buhari administration can no more be expected to deliver any significant dividend of governance. All expectations need to be channeled to an incoming administration.

## Forty days to Nigeria's biggest moment

By Kene Obiezu

Nation holds its breath as it counts days to epic 2023 elections which will go a long way in determining whether it moves forward or backwards in its journey of nationhood.

That it has been quite the journey would be a massive understatement. There have been many occasions on which it looked like that journey would come to a shuddering halt.

That the journey has proceeded somewhat defiantly is testament to the resilience of the country - an extraordinary resilience that has defied even the caprices of military rule.

The Nigerian military may have no direct role to play in the upcoming elections. In fact, the provision of security for the elections should be left for sister security agencies.

However, whether it is charged with directly providing security for the elections or not, the ability of the Nigerian military to quell the storms building elsewhere will be key.

Since President Muhammadu Buhari assumed office in 2015, the storms have built up from year to year, each destructively more devastating than the last.

Before the man hailed as just what the doctor ordered for Nigeria in 2015 came on board, Nigerians had sufficiently stewed in bad leadership and were exhausted at last.

When a basket of rotten eggs was slapped on the face of the Peoples Democratic Party in the form of a historic defeat after sixteen years in power,

Nigerians breathed a sigh of relief.

The hope around the country then was that with the breath of fresh air expected to come with power changing hands, a new lease of life beckoned for the country at last.

Those hopes were desperately short-lived for it took only a couple of months for even the most ardent advocate of change to realize that Nigeria had sold a hyena only to buy a hippopotamus.

It has now been eight years of anguish and blame games. Nigerians rightly feel anguished at the fact that the Buhari administration has not lived up to its early promise.

Nigerians also right blame themselves for having been hoodwinked so easily when the handwriting was writ large on the wall all along. Nigerians also blame the president.

On his part, the president and his team have spent a large chunk of the last eight years blaming the Peoples Democratic Party for the woes of the country.

The president and the All Progressives Congress has no doubt that he has done astonishingly well given the circumstances. For them, the problems stem from elsewhere.

That thousands have been slaughtered by ruthless terrorists around the country and countless communities razed since 2015 is because the PDP was in power for 16 years.

Nigerians have heard quite an earful in the last eight years. Young people have been branded lazy. Dissident groups in the country have been promised a language they will understand.

Yet, the problems remain. With barely forty days to go to crucial elections, is Nigeria ready to address the pains of the last eight

years and say never again.

Are Nigerians ready to shape the next eight years of their lives and those of their children in the crucible of the ballot box?

Is the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) ready to conduct free and fair elections and spare the country the sparring of sore losers and saboteurs?

Are Nigeria's security agencies ready to rout the terrorists whose biggest dream right now is to ensure that people are too afraid to fully participate in the elections?

It would appear that everyone in Nigeria has a role to play in ensuring successful polls. Given how dire Nigeria's straits are at the moment, what exactly would be successful polls?

A number of presidential candidates currently parade themselves before Nigerians, each laying claim to the country's highest office. But who does the cap fit if any?

That Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the candidate of the All Progressives Congress, is frequently mentioned in the same breath with drug-running fills quite a large number of Nigerians with trepidation.

His failing health and flailing words have many worried by the prospect of him cashing in on his bright chances at the polls to become Nigeria's next president.

Given how alarming the All Progressives Congress has seemingly failed in power in the last eight years, many Nigerians are asking if anything good can come out of the party as long as the apple does not fall far from the tree.

For Atiku Abubakar, the Wazirin Adamawa, who is having a sixth shot at the country's highest office, a difficult childhood

tending cattle in the bushes of Jada make for a wonderful story.

A veteran political combatant and former vice president, Nigerians worry about his seeming wanderlust and the undying whispers that wed him to corruption.

An Atiku presidency would be a return to a past pockmarked by indiscretion and punctuated by impunity. But Nigerians may yet prefer the past to the present.

In Peter Obi, many young Nigerians see the Nigerian president they have always wished and even prayed for. Visionary, visceral and vivacious, the former Anambra Governor's fighting talk about Nigeria's problem is promising.

Yet, many cite the relative obscurity of the Labour Party and Nigeria's historic voting patterns to predict that it would take a miracle for the man who has stolen even many hearts to win.

There are a couple of other contenders who are just in the race to fulfill all righteousness. They know they won't win but they are ready to go again and again.

Whoever Nigerians settle for, there can be no mistake. The folly of the past cannot be reprised. Bad politicians must be denied access to Nigeria's highest office.

Folly extracts an extortionate cost these days. Nigerians have been paying for the monumental folly that was first displayed eight years ago.

Nigerians may not have enough in the tank to go again if the mistakes of the past are reprised.

Kene Obiezu wrote via keneobiezu@gmail.com

## Truck trafficking 41 children from Niger intercepted in Kwara

From Mumini Abdulkareem, Ilorin

The Kwara State police command has arrested three suspected child traffickers conveying 41 children from Niger State.

The suspects, Musa Ayuba, Jeremiah Muda and Luka Ayuba, were said to be coming from Bangi village in Kontagora when they were intercepted.

The police spokesman in the state, Okasanmi Ajayi, said they were arrested with 41 teenagers, comprising 22 boys and 19 girls "while waiting for a lorry that was to convey them to their destination in Ilorin, the Kwara State capital.

He gave the ages of the children to be between five and 15 years.

"The suspects, while undergoing interrogation, claimed to be coming from Niger State to Ilorin to meet a certain pastor to enroll the children in a yet-to-be-determined school.

"The claim looked spurious and would be discreetly investigated as it is highly suspected to be a case of child trafficking," he said.

He said the children were in the custody of the police command while efforts to contact the state Ministry of Women Affairs as well as investigation into the matter are ongoing.

He said the suspects would be charged to court after investigation.

## Osinbajo, govs, others attend Shehu of Borno daughter's wedding

From Olatunji Omirin, Maiduguri

Vice President Yemi Osinbajo yesterday led a presidential delegation to witness the wedding Fatiha of the daughter of Shehu of Borno, Alhaji Abubakar Garbai Elkanemi in Maiduguri, the state capital.

Other members of the delegation include the Chief of Staff to the President, Prof Ibrahim Gambari; National Security Adviser, Major General Babagana Monguno (ret); Director-General, National Intelligence Agency (NIA) Ahmed Abubakar; Chief

Executive Officer of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) Limited, Mele Kyari and Ambassador Babagana Kingibe.

Daily Trust on Sunday reports that the Maiduguri Central Mosque, venue of the ceremony, was filled with many dignitaries, including governors, top politicians, traditional rulers and other well wishers.

The royal wedding, which is between the son of the Emir of Lafia, Umar Sidi Bage and the daughter of Shehu of Borno, Aisha Shehu Abubakar, was also attended by 86 emirs and chiefs from different parts of the country.

The Borno State governor,

Babagana Zulum, stood on behalf of the family of the bride while his counterpart, the governor of Nasarawa State, Abdullahi Sule, represented the family of the groom.

The marriage solemnisation was officiated by the chief imam of Borno, Laisu Ibrahim, under the watchful eyes of the Shehu upon the payment of N1million as bride price.

Prayers were later offered for peaceful 2023 elections and the stability of Borno State and the entire country.

The vice president and other dignitaries were later hosted to a launch at the Presidential Lodge at the Government House.

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# SUNDAY

## MAGAZINE

## Climate change: Poor insurance culture compounds farmers' anguish amid poverty

Impacts of climate change have plunged millions of Nigerians in agriculture, the country's major employer of labour, into untold hardship and threaten food security as many fail to take mitigation measures such as adequate insurance cover. While climate-related crises will linger for decades, taking insurance policy can help cushion their far-reaching effects on farmers.



■ Flooded rice paddy in Taraba

By Afeez Hanafi

The distress in Julde Atiku's face was palpable. Desolate and nervous, he intermittently glanced at the sorry sight of his flooded surroundings. The 74-year-old rice farmer in Ardo Kola LGA of Taraba State was among hundreds of smallholders in the agrarian community whose houses and farmlands were ravaged by floods in the last rainy season.

For Atiku, a N4m investment raised through a loan and sale of landed property has gone down the drain. He had hoped to harvest at least 700 bags of the crop, but as the harvest period drew nearer, a flood swept away the rice paddy.

He said, "I took a N1.5m loan from the bank, but it was not enough. I then sold one of my houses for N2.5m. I invested everything in rice farming. I was going to harvest at least 700 bags of rice but couldn't get a grain in the end."

In the neighbouring Tao community, Adamu Inuwa and his co-farmers suffered worse fates. Each of them had planted 30 to 100 bags of rice only for the flood to wash the crop away overnight.

"We are pleading in the name of God for the government to intervene to see to our plight and help us," Inuwa appealed.

In Mutum Biyu, Gassol LGA, Taraba State, Mohammed Haruna was among many farmers who took millions of naira in loans to cultivate rice. They also lost everything to flooding last year.

"It is normal for farmers to take loans from different financial institutions and invest in farming activities. I obtained about N8m loan to farm, but floods destroyed everything. This is the first time I would experience such loss as a result of flood. For now, I and other farmers are confused. We don't know what to do," he lamented.

Ordinarily, with appropriate insurance cover, the farmers should not have found themselves in such a precarious situation, whereby they have to wait for the government's intervention which may not materialise, may be delayed or grossly fall short of their expectations if eventually rendered.

Unfortunately, none of them insured their farms against risks such as flood and consequently have been plunged into devastating losses. Majority of the locals

depend solely on agriculture to pay bills.

The 2022 flooding was described as the worst in Nigeria since 2012, destroying over 500,000 hectares belonging to thousands of smallholder and commercial farmers, said Kabiru Ibrahim, the National President of the All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN).

This is aside from the 600 persons killed and about 1.4 million people displaced, according to the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).

Most of these farmers obtained loans from the Anchor Borrower Programme (ABP) of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), commercial banks and microfinance banks with the expectation to repay after harvest.

### Climate change

The high intensity of flooding was attributed to the adverse effects of global warming - a phenomenon resulting in unpredictable weather conditions that necessitate adaptation and mitigation methods.

In October, 2022, the Minister of Water Resources, Suleiman Adamu, said it would take 30 years of consistent investment to control the menace of flooding in Nigeria.

This evidently foretells more perilous natural disasters ahead and the need for insurance cover to cushion the effects of losses.

Sadly, agriculture insurance penetration is very low in Nigeria despite that it contributes significantly to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the sector contributed N18.7trn - representing 25.8 per cent - to Nigeria's real GDP of N72.39trn in 2021. It is also the largest employer, providing jobs for over 36 per cent of the over 200 million population, mostly people in the rural areas.

A 2018 report by the United States' Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative revealed that agriculture insurance uptake in Nigeria was significantly low at three per cent.

At a workshop organised in Abuja in April, 2021, underwriters in agriculture insurance stated that the percentage of smallholder farmers who access insurance products was less than five per cent, noting that such farmers produced over 98 per cent of food consumed across the country.

The Head, Agric Insurance, AIICO Insurance Plc, Leonard Okerefor, warned that poor access to insurance by smallholders was a threat to Nigeria's food security.

At the workshop, the Director, Policy and Regulation, National Insurance Commission (NAICOM), Leo Akah, also decried the level of ignorance in agriculture insurance among farmers.

During the Agriculture Insurance Stakeholders Conference held in October, 2022, the Agric Manager, Africa Reinsurance Corporation (Africa Re), Mr Isaac Magina, revealed that the total agriculture insurance market value in Africa in 2021 stood at \$390m, shooting up its total market value to \$45.5bn.

While these figures may look impressive, it is a far cry from the agric insurance potential, particularly in Nigeria. In his opening remarks at the conference, the Deputy Managing Director of Africa Re, Ken Aghoghovbia, said the market had the potential to generate at least \$600m agriculture insurance premium yearly in Nigeria as against the \$10m reported in 2021.

### More tales of woes

Innocent Aluu was on the cusp of raking in over N30m from his poultry in Bayelsa

Continued on page 18

# Climate change: Poor insurance culture compounds farmers' anguish amid poverty

Continued from page 17

State when flood-related crises struck. Accessing quality feeds and medications for his 10,000 birds became difficult as many parts of the state were flooded. The birds were also hit by water-borne infections and started dying.

Aluu said, "For the birds, the daily losses increased from 20 to 100 birds; then we recorded 200 deaths. By the time we checked, we had lost 9,400 birds. For the 600 birds that survived, I had to call people to buy them for N500 each. These were birds that I should have sold for N3,000 each (N30m for 10,000 birds).

"The plant that was meant for the hatchery was destroyed by the floods. We also have fish ponds with fishes at the grow-out stage. When the floods came, the fishes began to die. Each day we went to check the ponds, we found fishes floating. We lost all of them," he recalled painfully.

Aluu estimated his losses, including destruction to assets, at N75m, and all his 17 workers lost their jobs.

He further said, "I feel hopeless. There is a lot of maintenance and repairs to do. If I put all these into consideration, it means I would need a huge amount of money to start again. Right now, I am pleading with the government to please come to our aid."

Flooding also wreaked havoc on fish farms in Odogbolu LGA of Ogun State. About 200 fish farmers lost over N500m investments, according to the Chairman of the Fish Farmers Association (FFA), Lazarus Okole.

He added that except the federal and the state governments came to their rescue, many farmers might die from the shock of the huge losses.

As pathetic as the situations of the farmers are, the life-threatening shock is pretty avoidable with adequate insurance which they did not consider crucial all along.

"I didn't do comprehensive insurance. I only insured my workers and the birds against theft; not natural disaster," Aluu noted.

Safiya Yahaya, the Chairperson of Small Scale Women Farmers Organisation in Nigeria (SSWFON), Kogi State chapter, who lost six hectares of rice and cassava worth N1.6m to flooding, admitted that many farmers were indifferent to insurance.

She said, "All the reports I got from farmers across the state are terrible. Most of us took loans, including from microfinance banks, to farm. We don't know how to repay the loans now. About 600 farmers were affected altogether and we have not received help from the government. We are in a very difficult situation now.

"It is not easy for us to feed our families. We didn't expect the floods, so none of my members insured their farms. Moving forward, we will consider insurance against this kind of disaster. We will appreciate it if the insurance company can educate us about how we can insure our farms against flood."

Indeed, the plight of thousands of affected farmers is better imagined, particularly in the face of worsening economic hardship in the country. Already, Nigeria is battling galloping inflation and multidimensional poverty affecting 133 million people - more than half



■ Another flooded rice paddy farmland in Taraba

of the population.

These sorry conditions can only be compounded by the ordeal of farmers and other business owners who lost all their fortunes to the natural disaster.

### Saving grace

Perhaps, the Director General of the Nigerian Agribusiness Group (NABG), Dr Manzo Maigari, is one of the few farmers who would easily get back on their feet after the humongous losses caused by flooding simply because he insured his expansive farms.

The former Kaduna State Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development told Daily Trust on Sunday that insurance was a major step farmers must take to mitigate the effects of climate change.

He said, "I lost 500 hectares of rice to flooding in Benue State. When you want to quantify that, it is over N2bn. 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."

However, most farmers, like every other average Nigerian, are reluctant in buying insurance products either because of sheer wish against calamity, low awareness or lack of trust which make them think they may not get compensation (on time) when losses arise. Some also see premium payment as a waste of money in the event that they don't suffer losses.

**Worryingly, climate change crises such as flooding, extreme heat and drought pose significant risks to agricultural production and food security across the continent and even globally; hence, the need for insurance covers to mitigate the impact on both the customers and the underwriters.**

While default in compensation payment could be true in some cases, it is not as rampant as many believe, as evidence of paid compensations abound.

For instance, a document sighted by our correspondent revealed that the Nigerian Agricultural Insurance Corporation (NAIC) in five years paid a total claim of N801m to 2,059 crop farmers and 910 livestock farmers who insured their investments.

Going by the act that established NAIC, agriculture insurance scheme is mandatory on all agricultural investments funded from public funds including loans disbursed by developmental banks, deposit money banks (commercial banks), micro finance banks and other financial institutions.

However, compliance with the act is very low even though NAIC offers premiums at 60 per cent discount to smallholder farmers.

A source close to the CBN, which provides loans to farmers under ABP, told Daily Trust on Sunday that most of the farmers that got loans from commercial banks did not care to secure insurance policy for the facility.

"Many people are very much aware of the cultural and to some extent religious sensitivity to bank loans and insurance. Many people in sections of the North believe that paying interest on loans is not even acceptable. Others believe they cannot secure insurance for anything," the source said.

Such a lukewarm attitude is partly responsible for why the CBN has yet to recover a large chunk of loans lent to farmers thereby gradually crippling the ABP, the official added.

Figures at the beginning of the wet season in 2022 showed that the apex bank had expended over N1 trillion to over 4.8 million farmers across the country, but only recovered N400 billion.

Matching insurance covers with climate risks

Agriculture is central not only to Nigeria, but Africa as a whole. About 60 per cent of Africa's population are engaged in the sector and it contributes 16 per cent to the continent's GDP.

Worryingly, climate change crises such as flooding, extreme heat and drought pose significant risks to agricultural production and food security across the continent and even globally; hence, the need for insurance covers to mitigate the impact on both the

customers and the underwriters.

"The climate change does not only affect the customers, it actually affects the insurance companies too. So there must be a holistic approach to it," said the Executive Director, Technical Operations, Coronation Life Insurance Ltd, Adebowale Adesona.

Adesona noted that insurance companies are mostly used to insuring risks they understand, stressing the need to invest in gathering quality data on climate-related risks so they can design appropriate products.

He said, "Climate change is evolving and people are still trying to understand the impact and build models around it. So many insurance companies, not just only in Nigeria but across the world, are trying to shy away from developing products around it because they don't understand the pattern."

"Developing the right products around climate change involves bringing together the key stakeholders in the industry. For instance, brokers will be helpful in the advisory capacity in terms of speaking to customers and understanding them. Based on what they gather, they can synergise with insurance companies to cover these effects of climate change. Climate modelers can also model the impact to be developed into products."

A study by Coronation Assurance Ltd titled: "The Role of Insurance in Mitigating the Impact of Climate Change in Africa", disclosed that a small portion of Africa's potential climate risk is currently underwritten.

The article reads in part: "For example, only seven per cent of the \$200bn in damages caused by Cyclone Idai which struck Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe in 2019 was covered by insurance. Unless more is done to increase levels of risk underwriting, Africa will not build the domestic resilience to manage the increasingly severe weather events predicted to be the future room."

Adesona further stated that reinsurance and NAICOM had major roles to play in providing capacity for insurable risks hinged on climate change.

"For instance, flooding affected a lot of Nigerians, but if there is a reinsurance company outside Nigeria that partners with Nigerian insurance firms, it will be easier to manage the losses. Overall, the regulator's (NAICOM) body language to climate change will determine the seriousness of this synergy. The moment the regulator starts talking about climate change, every player will start to think about how to develop products and make their business green.

"NAICOM needs to provide guidelines and begin conversations around climate change. They need to provide guidelines on doing things that are environment-friendly and engendering collaboration across the market for us to develop products that will meet the demands of climate change," he added.

Adesona, a former director, Actuarial and Insurance Management Services, PwC Nigeria, cited parametric insurance as an initiative that can be adopted. The scheme insures a policyholder against the occurrence of a specific event by paying a certain amount as compensation based on the magnitude of the event, as opposed to the magnitude of the losses.

He said, "With climate change, we need to be talking about parametric insurance whereby claims are triggered when a certain parameter occurs. For instance, the insurer can say when the temperature reaches 30 degree celsius or when the rain falls at a certain level, the claim is triggered and not necessarily when the loss occurs. This is particularly good for farmers to protect them from flooding and drought.

"There are existing products but we need to do a lot of innovations in terms of being able to take in the peculiarities of climate change effects in designing products."

Continued on [www.dailytrust.com](http://www.dailytrust.com)



■ Atiku



■ Inuwa



■ Dead birds at Aluu's poultry

# TAMBARi

## Extra

### CULINARY CORNER

## Oven baked jollof rice with chicken



PHOTO: Internet

Compiled by Rosemary Etim Bassey

This quick and simple oven-baked jollof rice dish with chicken is spicy and tasty and might even surpass the traditional way of making jollof rice in terms of flavour.

**Ingredients**

Chicken thighs, basmati rice, roasted red peppers, white onion, ginger, garlic cloves, scotch bonnet

chilli, vegetable oil, tomato paste, passata, bay leaves, dried thyme, curry powder, chicken stock, salt and pepper.

**Recipe**

Turn the oven on to 200C. Rinse the rice thoroughly and set aside. To create a smooth paste, thoroughly blend the peppers, onion, ginger, garlic, and chilli. Place aside.

Heat the oil over medium heat

in a big, shallow skillet. Add the chicken and cook for a further 4-5 minutes, or until barely done.

Fry the chicken and curry powder together for a further minute, or until fragrant.

The tomato paste should then be added and fried for a further 1-2 minutes, or until black and thoroughly mixed with the chicken.

Reduce the heat to low and stir in the passata and blended

pepper combination. Simmer the sauce for 3 to 4 minutes, or until it thickens.

Stir the rice into the sauce.

After that, incorporate the stock, thyme, and bay leaves. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Place in a hot oven and cover with a fitting lid. For 45 minutes, bake.

Remove the lid after the oven has been turned off, then fluff the rice with a fork before serving.

### HEALTHY LIVING

## Symptoms of caffeine withdrawal

The most widely used psychoactive substance worldwide is caffeine. It works as a central nervous system stimulant, which means it stimulates brain neural activity and raises alertness while lowering tiredness. If the body starts to rely on caffeine, cutting it out of the diet can lead to withdrawal symptoms, which normally start 12 to 24 hours after ceasing caffeine consumption. Here are some typical indications and effects of caffeine withdrawal:

**Headaches:** One of the most frequently reported effects of caffeine withdrawal is headaches. Caffeine is believed to narrow blood vessels, therefore cutting back or halting consumption allows blood vessels to open up and enhances blood flow to the brain. As the brain adjusts to the increase in blood flow, this abrupt change in blood flow can result in excruciating withdrawal headaches that can vary in length

and intensity. As the brain adjusts to this increase in blood flow, headaches will lessen.

**Fatigue:** A daily cup of coffee is a need for many people who need an energy boost. By inhibiting adenosine receptors, a neurotransmitter that might make you feel sleepy, caffeine helps to improve alertness and decrease fatigue. The opposite result, though, of cutting out caffeine from your diet can result in weariness and drowsiness.

**Difficulty concentrating:** Before work, exams, sporting events, or presentations, people frequently drink caffeinated beverages to increase concentration. The excitatory neurotransmitters dopamine and norepinephrine are more active when caffeine is

consumed, and adrenaline levels rise as well. This chain of events increases heart rate, blood pressure, and brain



your body fights to adjust to life without it.

**Depressed moods:**

It's commonly known that caffeine can improve mood. It has been shown that its ability to inhibit adenosine not only boosts alertness but also elevates mood. The stimulant effects of caffeine can cause

resulting activity, in heightened alertness and sharper focus. Caffeine withdrawal can have a detrimental impact on your ability to concentrate as

sensations of wellbeing and enhanced energy, which disappear after caffeine intake is stopped, according to research from 2008. As a result, if you decide to stop drinking coffee, your mood might suffer.

Source: [www.healthline.com](http://www.healthline.com)

### Hello, there!

Welcome to another beautiful week. It's okay to be afraid of not know what the future holds, however, do not walk in doubt. Doubts are a far greater barrier to success than physical obstacles or challenges. Take that brave step and watch how things work out for your benefit.

Jollof rice is a staple meal in every Nigerian home so allow us indulge you in a recipe different from the conventional method familiar to all. Head over to our culinary corner for an oven baked jollof rice recipe to go with a yummy pina colada green smoothie.

Velvet is a distinctive and beautiful fabric; its beauty resides in its adaptability, as it has remained in vogue since the 90s. Explore our female fashion page for a lovely showcase of velvet styles.

Lounge outfits convey a sense of comfort and ease. For a man of style, our men's fashion page provides a variety of comfortable and stylish loungewear.

Long and healthy hair is every woman's desire, and with the right products and treatment, it can be achieved. Essential oils that aid hair growth is all our beauty section lists.

Until next week, stay safe and remain blessed.

**Amina Alhassan**  
(Editor)

[aminaalhassan@dailytrust.com](mailto:aminaalhassan@dailytrust.com)

## Pina colada green smoothie



A sweet yet very healthy smoothie and can also be used as breakfast meal replacement.

**Ingredients**

Coconut milk, fresh spinach leaves, ripe banana, frozen pineapple chunks, agave nectar (optional)

**Recipe**

In a blender, put the coconut milk, spinach, banana, and pineapple in that sequence. If required, sweeten with agave nectar.

Blend until completely smooth. Enjoy right away.

# Unique in velvet

Compiled by Rosemary Etim Bassey

The velvet material is beautiful, strong, and versatile all at once. Velvet can be used to make dresses, skirts, coats, shoes, and handbags. Wearing velvet offers countless styling options and is also the quickest and easiest way to make almost any outfit seem better.



## SOCIETY NEWS

Compiled by Rosemary Etim Bassey

### Nkiru Sylvanus ties traditional knot



Nkiru Sylvanus, a Nollywood actress, and Riches Sammy, her fiancé, have chosen to be together forever. The couple married in a traditional engagement ceremony, which has delighted followers and lovers of love.

looking lovely, and the love of her life complimented her well, looking handsome as well. The lovely event took place in Imo State, where she was born. Earlier this month, the actress released pre-wedding photos with her husband-to-be but did not divulge his identity.

### Olori Mariam Anako celebrates birthday

The senior wife of the Ooni of Ife Oba Adeyeye Ogunwusi, Olori Mariam Anako, celebrated her birthday on Friday, January 13. Months after she wed the first-class king, the oil and gas business woman turned a year older.



One of the Ooni's aides, Prince Olayinka Awosunle, announced her birthday on social media. The official photographer for the king, Awosunle, posted pictures of the queen with the caption: "Happy birthday to a very amicable, magnificent, and magnanimous Olori of the Source!!!"

### Ireti Doyle breaks silence over divorce



Nollywood actress, Ireti Doyle, has officially acknowledged her divorce from legendary broadcaster, Patrick Doyle.

that she had her first child when she was 19 years' old, emphasising that she had no business being married at that time.

The actress said during an interview with Chude that she was no longer married to her spouse, Patrick, a film producer and actor, with whom she had six children.

"When you're an adult, it's not a life and death situation...there are some situations that are way beyond your control," she added.

Ireti shared an excerpt from the interview on her Instagram feed. The actress revealed

She also said, "The truth of the matter is that I had no business being married at that time, period! Let's not talk about the choice of who I married."

## Comfortable loungewear

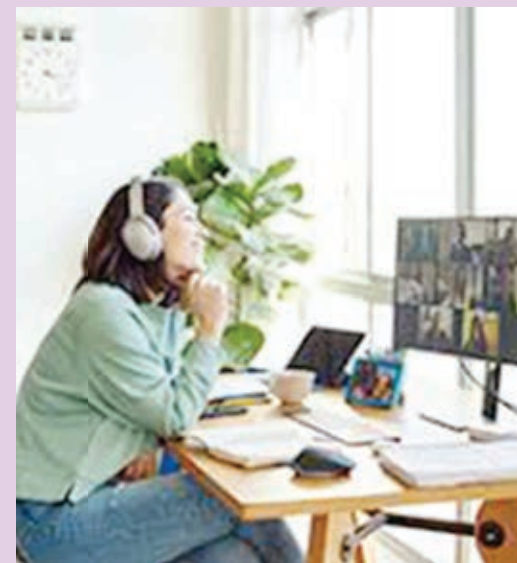
Compiled by Rosemary Etim Bassey

Lounge wears are the equivalent of bubus for women. They are comfortable, can be used to run errands or even worn to have a nice time with friends and family. They come in different variations such as sweat pants with sweat shirts; joggers and a t-shirt or even a nice set of pyjamas.



## ETIQUETTE

### Virtual meeting etiquettes



Compiled by Rosemary Etim Bassey

Some people think that since a virtual meeting isn't the same as a real one, it's acceptable to disregard any meeting protocol that would normally be observed. This is a flawed premise. Business etiquette guidelines are in effect while we are at work. Here are some etiquette rules to observe at your next virtual meeting:

**Wear professional attire:** The freedom to wear whatever you want to work is one of the best aspects of working from home. That is the fantasy. Still, unless your employer has instructed differently, it is improper to wear your pyjamas to a virtual meeting. Make the effort to dress neatly and professionally. Remember to comb your hair and brush your teeth. Make it a point to dress professionally from the waist up; as long as you appear tidy on the screen, nobody will notice that you're wearing shorts.

**Test your connection, screen, and equipment:** A virtual conference participant's worst nightmare is being cut off because of sluggish internet connections, malfunctioning technology, or subpar sound. These may ruin meetings and irritate your client or your staff. These problems go against the very purpose of holding a virtual meeting, which is to be able to see and hear each other clearly despite the virtual environment. Hide any private information that you do not want the other attendees of your meeting to see if you are sharing a screen. Make sure you are only displaying information that is pertinent to the meeting by testing your screen beforehand. To prevent any problems, close any superfluous browser tabs and documents.

**Take note of your surroundings:** Make it appear as though you have a dedicated workstation, whether or not you have a home office. Make an attempt to offer a clean background and remove any potential distractions. An organised appearance from your workstation speaks volumes about your professionalism. Eliminating distractions might also help you focus on the meeting.

**Mute yourself unless you're talking:** Before the meeting begins, turn on your mute function. This lessens ambient noise and conversational disruptions. When it's your turn to talk or when it's necessary, you can unmute yourself.

**Give your full attention:** During a particularly boring stretch, it can be tempting to check your phone or look through your documents, but resist the urge. It's possible that you will overlook important details, and on top of that, it's just plain impolite. Since this is a virtual meeting, demonstrate that you are paying attention to the speaker through active body language.

**Don't interrupt:** Don't cut someone off when they're speaking on the other end of the line. Due to the nature of online connections, keep in mind that there can be some delays. As a result, wait a little period of time after someone has finished speaking before responding.

# Essential oils for hair growth and health

Compiled by Rosemary Etim Bassey

Essential oils which are derived from plants, are all-natural but powerful tools to utilise in your haircare regimen. It is recommended to choose the best essential oils for scalp and hair that are 100 percent natural, organic, and pure rather than chemical creams and fake hair treatments that are frequently laced with unidentified substances. There is an essential oil that is ideal for you, regardless of whether you battle with flat hair, split ends, slow hair development, hair loss, or brittle hair. Here are few essential oils to add to your hair care routine:

**Castor oil:** Castor oil can do wonders for your hair because it is high in proteins, minerals, and vitamin E. Your hair will become softer and more moisturised, giving them a gloss. The main benefit of castor oil is that it promotes better blood flow which is essential for healthy hair development. On a dry, flaky scalp, this oil performs well. Castor oil is useful, but it is also very thick and challenging to wipe off. Use it to lessen viscosity after combining it with sesame oil. Simply warm the oils before using them frequently on your hair and scalp.

**Tea tree oil:** Thanks to its antibacterial and cleaning qualities, tea tree oil is another oil that promotes hair growth. Additionally, it stops dandruff and dryness. Tea tree oil is the greatest oil for hair development and thickness because it helps the scalp absorb nutrients efficiently and activates dormant hair follicles. Due to its high concentration, tea tree oil needs to be diluted by combining it with another carrier oil. It not only promotes hair growth but also thoroughly cleanses an oily scalp and fills your hair with a fresh mint scent.

**Rosemary essential oil:** Rosemary oil is a fantastic essential oil to promote hair development and prevent premature greying or dandruff because of its anti-inflammatory characteristics. To help with circulation and to encourage nerve growth, dilute a few drops of rosemary essential oil and massage it into your scalp. This can relieve dry or itchy scalps and prevent hair loss.

**Thyme essential oil:** One of the best essential oils for scalp care is thyme. By stimulating the scalp and actively reducing hair loss, it aids in promoting hair growth. Additionally, it was discovered to be beneficial in halting hair loss in alopecia sufferers. It is advised that

you use no more than 1 or 2 drops of thyme essential oil due to its powerful and pungent nature. Apply it to your scalp after diluting it with your preferred carrier oil. After ten minutes, make sure to wipe it off.

**Argan oil:** Argan oil enhances the health of the scalp and prevents hair breakage because it is rich in

vitamin E and has antioxidant characteristics. It is the best oil for hair growth because it goes through the least amount of processing. You can use argan oil on your hair strands right out of the container.

**Amla oil:** It is a well-known hair tonic in eastern medicine and is made from the amla fruit

because it is high in vitamin C, minerals, and antioxidants. It works on all hair types, but it especially helps dry, damaged hair because it strengthens and increases resiliency. Additionally, it controls oil production, reduces scalp inflammation, and moisturises the hair shaft to protect it.



**Daily Trust**

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## 'Female photographers have edge in industry'

Mrs Fatima Latinwo hails from Ifon in Osun State but was born and brought up in Ilorin, Kwara State. The 2014 accounting graduate of the Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH), Ogbomosho, Oyo State said her passion and love for photography has defined a different career path for her outside her course of study with the establishment of Fatty Bold Photography. The mother of one, in this interview, tells *Daily Trust on Sunday* her trajectory, struggles and successes in the industry.

From Mumini AbdulKareem, Ilorin

**W**hy did you choose to be a photographer?

I always like taking pictures with my phone. Then my

sister advised me after I finished school to make photography my profession since I love taking pictures. I was skeptical but decided to give it a try. I went on Instagram to look for who will train me before a friend introduced

me to the person that trained me in Ilorin.

**How easy was it for you crossing from accounting to photography?**

They are two entirely different fields. I never thought about going

into photography. I turned my hobby into a profession. When I told my mum about my intention of going into photography, she sounded confused and shocked. My dad couldn't believe it as well, especially being an Islamic cleric.

**How challenging was that?**

People have mixed feelings/thoughts towards female photographers. But being one gives you an edge in the industry if you're good at what you do. If an

**Continued on page 24**

## 'Female photographers have edge in industry'

Continued from page 23

event is held inside a mosque, you have to dress modestly as you know you can't wear your normal top and jeans/trousers. If you are not well prepared you won't be able to take the shots you need, and you also need a male assistant.

When I started, I was the only one and I would put my hijab and other clothes inside my bag because you don't know the kind of situation you might find yourself in, especially when you are going into core Ilorin. You won't be able to cope if you're not well dressed and some people will even doubt your ability just because you are a female. Also, being single as a female photographer is different from when you are married and with kids.

### What do you mean?

As a single female photographer, I go at late hours and shoot at very short notice. I'll just carry my bag. That won't be possible now with family commitments; with a spouse and a son. I have to plan. Then I have my freedom and can go anywhere, but as a married woman, there are some trips I won't embark on. I got a job offer in Lagos last December but couldn't go; that won't be the case if I am single. I can even go to farther places.

### How have you been able to combine home and work?

I have a very supportive, understanding husband and family. If I have a job, I drop our baby with my aunty; even if it's for a week, she will take care of him. In a situation where you don't have people around you, you'll probably have to get a maid who will be helping you to carry your child while you are at locations.

### How can you quantify the sacrifices you have made on this job to get to where you are today?

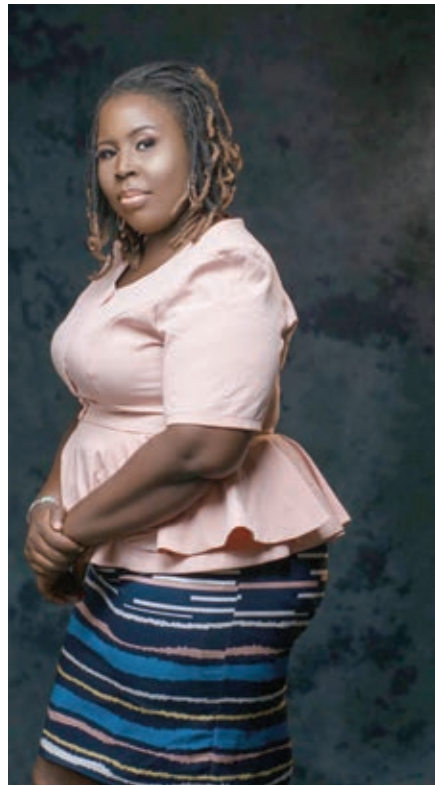
I was lucky I didn't come through the analogue period and so I can't really say I struggled. The only struggle I'll say is normal photography hustle. One of the benefits female photographers get is the extraordinary support and willingness from the males who dominate the industry. You have to make yourself stand out and have a unique selling point to keep your customers because the males in our industry are very good.

### What would you like to change about the profession?

Pricing. When you agree on a price with a customer, he/she can get a cheaper price from another photographer and that is really affecting everyone in the industry; I am also guilty of that.

### How have you been able to deal with advances from male customers?

Being a professional is different from just working. When I'm at an event shooting, no man will have the nerve to even walk up to me to make such advances because I will be very busy. And you know Ilorin is a really small place. If you do anything, it will reverberate and tarnish your image. You have to be professional about your job; free of emotion unless you want to ruin your reputation or become a prostitute. We snap a lot of rich men whose wife gives us access to go into their



■ Mrs Fatima Latinwo

homes and enter their matrimonial rooms. You have to be extremely careful, how can you be flirting with the husband of your client that gave you so much freedom?

### Do you have any regrets?

The only regret I have is that I should have started while I was in LAUTECH. Now, I work for a lot of people. I took a picture that trended last year of five female doctors who are sisters; they are my clients. I used to go to their family house in the Asa Dam area. On an occasion I saw that since all of them were around, why not try something with all of them in their lab coats; they agreed. That was how I took the shot; it wasn't planned, the next thing I saw was that Alhaji Atiku Abubakar reposted the picture and it trended. It wasn't like I made a lot of money from it, but it exposed me more to people.

Photography has taken me to some states in Nigeria and I am hoping soon it will take me out of the country.

### Do you think photography is a profession that women can take seriously?

Yes; photography is lucrative and expensive if you want to be up-to-date with the latest technologies. We have a lot of female photographers in Ilorin now.

### How do you view photography in Kwara, vis-a-vis its cultural and religious peculiarities?

Photography business in Ilorin is a big deal and is growing rapidly. With what we have on ground, there is no need to go to places like Lagos to get a photographer except based on interest.

### How much have you invested so far?

More than I can quantify, because you need to keep on investing. Photography is expensive, accessories are very costly, but our clients at times don't understand. They call it "ordinary photography" if you give them a price. My highest pay yet was from a client in France. Though she didn't come to Nigeria, she messaged me on Instagram for a wedding at Osogbo for only soft copies.

### What are your plans?

I plan to have a big studio and establish something really big with a lot of people working for me. Photography has really developed over the years and lots of people are coming in now.

### What is your message/advice to upcoming female photographers?

I'm still an upcoming photographer myself, but I urge them to be focused and dedicated.

Photography business in Ilorin is a big deal and is growing rapidly. With what we have on ground, there is no need to go to places like Lagos to get a photographer except based on interest.

## Safal-Cornell Kiswahili Prize for African Literature 2022 shortlist announced

By agency report

The shortlisted manuscripts for the Safal-Cornell Kiswahili Prize for African Literature have been announced.

The Safal Cornell Kiswahili Prize for African Literature, formerly the Mabati-Cornell Prize, recognises writing in poetry and prose in the Kiswahili language.

Magdaline Nakhumicha Wafula of Moi University, Dr Hamisi Babusa of Kenyatta University, Kenya and Professor F.E.M.K. Senkoro read and nominated the manuscripts for the 2022 competition.

The shortlists for the fiction category are Dunia na Watu Wake by Ahmad Simba Mwaita (Tanzania); Wimbo wa Hatima by Isaac Ndolo (Kenya) and Ujanajike by Dotto Daudi Rangimoto (Tanzania).

For the poetry category: Mzoga Unaonukia by Lenard Mtesigwa (Tanzania); Mamangu Nipe Wosia by Salum Makamba (Tanzania) and Uswahilini by Ally Bakari Mchanyato (Tanzania).

Prof Senkoro said that the receipt of a very large number of manuscripts of novels and poems from various parts of Africa, especially East Africa, was sufficient



evidence that there was a great treasure of creativity, especially among young people, that transcended the boundaries of each country, and which if sprinkled with the basics of writing and publishing literary works would greatly strengthen Kiswahili literature.

The winners will be announced at a ceremony in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on January 25, 2023. The total proposed awards of \$15,000 will see winners in each category getting \$5,000 each while the runners up will get \$2,500 each.

## British council boosts creative sector

From Ayobami Balogun, Lagos

The Country Director of the British Council in Nigeria, Lucy Pearson, has said the council's creative economy showcase programme which started in November, 2022, will run through March, 2023, is aimed at stimulating links among Nigerian creatives by providing them access to the British Council's exhibition spaces for displays, showcases and performances in prime locations in Abuja, Port Harcourt, Lagos and Kano states.

Though the initiative is aimed at assisting performance artistes and art exhibitors in recovering from the economic challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the bigger picture is to use the creative industry as part of the building blocks for the national economy.

Lucy Pearson said, "This initiative by the British Council is assisting performance artists and art exhibitors, many of whom were adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant economic challenges. Many creative businesses, particularly those involving art forms that require live performances, are still recovering from the long-term harmful



■ Participants at the event

effects of the crisis."

British Council's Head of Arts, West Africa and Creative Economy Lead SSA, Brenda Fashugba, said the intervention would stimulate creative entrepreneurship.

The British Council appointed four curators to review submissions from artists and creative entrepreneurs following a widely advertised call for applications that ended in July 2022. The curators for the four venues in

the different states were Creative Arts and Visual Imagery Centre (CAVIC) in Abuja, TASCK in Lagos, StartUp South in Port Harcourt and StartUp Kano in Kano. The curators selected the best entries for venue support and worked with the exhibitors to deliver their work and draw audiences to attend. All profits made through the sale of tickets or other financial rewards, including sponsorships, would go to the exhibitors.



# AGRIC BUSINESS

## As Buhari exits, questions over rice pyramids linger

By Vincent A. Yusuf

President Muhammadu Buhari launched 13 rice pyramids in Abuja in January, 2022, in a ceremony that received international media attention and elevated Nigeria to the position of top rice producer in Africa.

The launch was to showcase the successes of the Central Bank of Nigeria's (CBN's) Anchor Borrower Programme (ABP) driven by the Rice Farmers Association of Nigeria (RIFAN) and to announce a crash in the price of the crop.

However, one year after the debut, the price of rice increased to N40,000 per 50kg in December, 2022, up from N26,000 before the fiesta, leaving Nigerians wondering if the event was stage-managed to make the president believe the billions of naira put into the production were worth it.

Prior to 2015, about N600bn worth of rice was imported each year to close the demand-supply mismatch for milled rice.

With only six operational integrated rice mills and a national paddy output of roughly 4.5 million metric tonnes at the time, the Nigerian rice business was



Abuja rice pyramid launched by President Muhammadu Buhari

unattractive to both farmers and millers because imported rice predominated the Nigerian market.

However, a game-changing scheme, the ABP, was launched in November, 2015, starting with the financing of smallholder farmers of rice and wheat.

Through the provision of inputs in kind, biometric identification of farms and farmers, extension

services, secured markets through well-established offtake contracts and additional connections to the agro-processors to ensure the transmission of the benefits from primary production to other nodes of the value chain, ABP created a dynamic ecosystem among all stakeholders.

As at February, 2022, the CBN had disbursed N975.61bn to 4.52

million smallholder farmers across the country under ABP.

Productivity per hectare increased to an average of four to five metric tonnes, integrated rice mills grew astronomically to over 50 in 2021 and national output to over nine million metric tonnes.

For many Nigerians, the billions of naira did not translate to cheap rice; instead, they are

spending more to eat rice.

"Finding cheap rice is a worry for me as a customer. I don't understand why the government would claim that after spending billions on rice cultivation we cannot afford it," said Mr Akin Tunde in Abuja.

For two seasons now the ABP has stopped due to bad loans and as Buhari exits in the next four months stakeholders fear the success may be reversed.

**Rice production in W/Africa grew by 44%**

**Region still imports 8m tons**

Dr Boladale Adebawale, the Executive Secretary of the ECOWAS Rice Observatory, speaking recently in Abuja, stated that in the 14 of the ECOWAS member states rice played a very important and increasing socio-economic role.

She said the consumption of rice had experienced an exponential demand growth since the second-half of the 70s due to an increasing population that was nearly doubling every 25 years.

Dr Boladale said, "The regional production increased by 44 per cent between 2008,

Continued on page 26

### MARKET WATCH

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

#### DAWANAU GRAIN MARKET, KANO

Crop	Per/KG	Price (N)
<b>Grains</b>		
Maize	100kg	23,000
Beans	100kg	38,000
Sorghum	100kg	19,500
Millet	100kg	23,500
Wheat	100kg	44,000
Rice	100kg	64,000
Rice (Paddy)	100kg	25,000
Tomato	Big basket	9,000

#### DANDUME GRAIN MARKET, KATSINA

Crop	Per/KG	Price (N)
<b>Grains</b>		
Maize	100kg	21,500
Beans	100kg	40,000
Sorghum	100kg	19,000
Millet	100kg	24,000
Wheat	100kg	44,500
Rice	100kg	63,000
Rice (Paddy)	100kg	24,000
Tomato	Big basket	10,000

#### KUMO GRAIN MARKET, GOMBE STATE

Crop	Per/KG	Price (N)
<b>Grains</b>		
Maize	100kg	22,600
Beans	100kg	39,500
Sorghum	100kg	20,500
Millet	100kg	25,000
Wheat	100kg	45,000
Rice	100kg	62,500
Rice (Paddy)	100kg	23,500
Tomato	Big basket	9,500

#### MUTUMBIYU GRAIN MARKET, TARABA

Crop	Per/KG	Price (N)
<b>Grains</b>		
Maize	100kg	18,000
Rice (locally)	100kg	46,000
Rice (Paddy)	100kg	20,000
Beans (white)	100kg	45,000
Cassava (dried)	100kg	10,000
Soya beans	100kg	30,000
Sesame	100kg	65,000

#### AGYARAGU MARKET, NASARAWA STATE

Crop	Per/KG	Price (N)
<b>Grains</b>		
Maize	100kg	25,000
Sorghum	100kg	23,000
Rice (Paddy)	100kg	26,000
Beans	100kg	46,000
Soybeans	100kg	32,000
Millet	100kg	26,000
Cassava (dried)	100kg	12,000
Sesame	100kg	93,000

#### UGBA MARKET, LOGO LGA, BENUE STATE

Crop	Per/KG	Price (N)
<b>Grains</b>		
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.



# Dry season: Kano tractor operators make brisk business

From Zahraddeen Yakubu  
Shuaibu, Kano

Tractor owners and operators in the Kadawa irrigation region of Kano State are making brisk business as the dry season farming has begun. Farmers in the area are taking advantage of the irrigation to engage in a number of crops throughout the year which in turn paves way for many people to earn a means of livelihood.

Harrowing, tillage and dice levelling are some of the basic requirements in farming which are usually done with the aid of tractors. This has given a chance to many people to engage in the business either by owning tractors or serving as labourers. Apart from them, others like mechanics, diesel and spare parts sellers are also benefiting.

During a visit to the irrigation area, many tractors were sighted working on large farms.

Speaking to our reporter, owner of one of the tractors, Hamisu Nasiru, said he had been in the business for the past 15 years and that he started as an operator and now owned a tractor.

He said although tractors were very expensive and difficult to handle, the way they worked in the area had given them chances to cope with all the expenses and even count profits.



■ Tractor operators at a farm in Kano

He explained that, "Every business is like this. Despite all the difficulties we still count profit, but sometimes we run at a loss. For every hectare we charge N35,000 to N40,000 and in a day we can do only up to five hectares in a day because it is the dry season and the sand is strong. But in the rainy season we can do up to 10 hectares in a day because the land is soft at that time.

Also speaking, Alhaji Aminu Umar Chiromawa, who owns a tractor, said his biggest challenge was that the tractor was too fragile and could easily get damaged, noting spare parts were very expensive.

He further said, "I was selling spare parts of tractors, but when I got familiar with the drivers I decided to buy my own five years ago. I bought a second hand for

N2.5m and later sold it and got a new one for N5.9m in Lagos. That was when it was not as expensive. A new one is now around N10m.

"We get more than N160,000 in a day, but diesel is expensive. Likewise engine oil and other spare parts. So, if you are not lucky and the machine develops failure all what you get may go to mechanics and spare parts dealers."

## As Buhari exits, questions over rice pyramids linger

Continued from page 25

when we were only producing 6.9 million metric tonnes in the region to 13.8 million metric tonnes recorded for 2020 alone.

"However, demand has not been met from local production, no matter how much we try to shy away from that. The region has relied on importation from Asia to meet this shortfall. In 2020 alone as I mentioned earlier, over eight million tons of milled rice was imported by West Africa. And the bill was over \$3.4bn. This did not only deplete the scarce foreign reserves that we have, but what it has done is to undermine the indigenous capabilities that we have in the production of rice and the development of the rice value chain as well.

"In West Africa, local production of rice covers only 62 per cent of current demand, and it is a fact. In Nigeria it covers only about 72 per cent. That is also a fact."

**Troubled CBN, dead ABP leave farmers in limbo**

Muhammed Ali Baba of RIFAN, during the launch of a rice policy in Abuja, said, "The greatest challenge we have had so far with the ABP is repayment. It is what has killed it.

"These past two seasons we didn't have ABP because repayment was abysmal," adding that the value chain players,

especially those at the lower level, must be sensitised if such intervention must be sustained.

For some time now the CBN has been facing criticism over the huge amount (about N1trn) spent in the programme with rice still unaffordable.

Although the ABP recorded some successes in the sector, some stakeholders believe that most of the funds ended up in the hands of people who are not real farmers, adding that increased local production is due to import ban and border closure.

"A lot of people got rich through a number of interventions because of corruption in the system. Some people forced themselves to become leaders of some commodity associations just to tap into the funds. These people don't have farms but because they know those who are in charge of administering these funds.

"That's why output will never commensurate the amount claimed to have been spent on production," Ali Barde, a farmer said.

Dr Fatima Aliyu, the focal person for rice at the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, while speaking on rice transformation in the country recently said that by 2018, Nigeria had achieved 70 per cent self-sufficiency.

"No matter what people say, Nigeria has made gigantic progress in the production of rice in Africa.

People don't notice it because we have a very large population. But whatever the case, when our borders were closed, when there was a shutdown of everywhere during the COVID-19 pandemic, the exporters were not exporting, so there was nothing to import, but there was rice in Nigeria," she said.

**Gov Bagudu speaks**

Governor Atiku Bagudu Abubakar of Kebbi State, who is the Vice Chairman of the National Food Security Council and also Chairman of the Presidential Task Force on Rice and Wheat, also believes a lot has been done.

He said, "We have done well, there's no doubt about it, in the rice sector, the increase in production, the mobilization of private investments, the coming together of financiers, scientists and policy makers under the leadership of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture has produced monumental results above 15 million tons.

"But that we have done well does not mean we cannot do better, and that again needs to be appreciated. The goal of doubling rice production by 2030 to 30 million metric tons is even modest. And in terms of the fact that we have seen rapid increases in yield, we have seen revolution at the lowest level, meaning at the farmer level and most of our farming communities today, you find farmers transiting and willing to embrace agronomic practices, which in a while ago they

were very reluctant to embrace. They are now willing to invest in seedling and or even appreciate the value of adequacy of inputs and so on and so forth.

"So this transformation is achieving a critical mass which we believe will bring to bear how easy it is for us to go to the next level in terms of achieving that 30 million tons. And it makes sense because the former known Western states which include Niger, Sokoto, Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara, have a landmass of about 149,000 square kilometres, slightly bigger than Bangladesh. Bangladesh is 147,000, but yet Bangladesh, even with 170 million people occupying that land, produces about 35 million metric tons of rice. So if we ask to support even one part of the country. We can see why the 30 million goal is not too ambitious. So it's not out of a dream, especially given the fact that all the 36 states in Nigeria and FCT have potential for rice production."

But with Buhari's tenure coming to an end, CBN under search light and commercial banks' interest rate going beyond smallholder farmers, the future is unpredictable.

Currently, farmers are battling low productivity, high cost of production, poor rural infrastructure, land tenure issues, climatic factors, little access to irrigation services, banditry and insurgency.

## Watermelon thrives in Jigawa

From Ali Rabi'u Ali, Dutse

Watermelon farmers are excited as they are set to make brisk business during this year's harvest season in Jigawa State.

Every year during the harmattan period watermelon farmers in the state harvest and sell their products to different parts of the country and beyond. They export the product to as far as the neighbouring Niger Republic and other close African countries.

Muhammad Afno Takazza from Takazza community in Guri LGA said, "I sold my watermelon and realised good profits this period. I sold the watermelon for N40,000 per 100 pieces."

He added that, "I have spent many years doing the watermelon business. I married two wives and have 10 children. I have married off two of my daughters; all with the business.

"I usually take the watermelon to the South East, South West and North East, but the challenges we are facing now are connected with the increase of fuel price and other transport issues.

Other farmers in the community said that immediately after they experienced serious flooding they decided to increase their dry season farming.

Ibrahim Takazza, another farmer, said, "The watermelon market this season is very good.

Alhaji Ibrahim Mai Kolawa on his part said, "After I sold my watermelon I got more than triple of what I spent."

In Karnaya community of Dutse LGA, most of the farmers said watermelon this year had good yield and that the price was so good, unlike last year when they sold it for very low prices.

Daily Trust on Sunday reports that watermelon is grown in tropical to temperate regions worldwide. It is around 90 per cent water, which makes it useful for staying hydrated in the dry season. It can also satisfy a sweet tooth with its natural sugars and contains antioxidants. These substances help remove some molecules known as free radicals or reactive species from the body.



■ A watermelon farmer

# How neem preserves grains, prevents diseases



■ Neem tree



■ Patrick Obet

From Dickson S. Adama, Jos

Neem, which is popularly referred to as “dogonyaro” in Nigeria, especially in the Northern part of the country, is a tree that bears fruits and leaves with many economic, health and agricultural benefits.

Neem is bitter in all its compartments: leaves, sprout, fruits/seeds, stem and roots.

It is common in Nigeria but not quite many know its extensive use, importance and application. The plant is also grown in other nations of the world and some journals succinctly capture its importance.

The editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, in an article which was recently revised and updated by Melissa Petruzzello, said the neem plant which is also botanically called *Azadirachta indica*, is a fast-growing tree of the mahogany family valued as a medicinal plant, as a source of organic pesticides and for its timber.

The plant, they say, has long been used in Ayurvedic and folk medicine, in cosmetics and in organic farming applications.

“Neem trees can reach 15 to 30 metres (49 to 98 feet) in height and have attractive rounded crowns and thick furrowed bark. The compound leaves have toothed leaflets and are typically evergreen but do drop during periods of extreme drought.

“The small fragrant white flowers are bisexual or staminate (male) and are borne in clusters in the axils of the leaves. The fruit is a smooth yellow-green drupe and has a sweet-flavoured pulp.

“Neem is usually grown from seed but can be propagated from cuttings or root suckers. The plant is hardy and resilient and grows well in poor, rocky soils. Neem tolerates a wide variety of environmental conditions but cannot survive freezing temperatures or being waterlogged.

“Nearly all parts of the neem

tree are useful, and many of its medicinal and cosmetic uses are based on its antibacterial and antifungal properties. Neem is commonly used in shampoos for treating dandruff and in soaps or creams for skin conditions such as acne, psoriasis, and athlete’s foot.

“It is also a component in some toothpastes and mouthwashes, especially in the Indian subcontinent, and young twigs are used directly as crude toothbrushes in rural areas. The leaves have long been used as a traditional treatment for diabetes, and there is some clinical evidence suggesting that it may help control blood sugar levels.

“However, the oil and neem stem and leaves are unsafe for consumption by pregnant women and can cause miscarriage,” the article reads in part.

It further said that the oil extracted from the seeds could be used directly as insect and mite repellent and fungicide and was

the source of many commercial pesticide products, including dusts, granules and concentrates.

Neem-based pesticides, it added, generally had low toxicity for mammals and were common in organic farming applications.

The plant is common, particularly in the Northern part of the country, but with little knowledge of its significance. Many people who happen to use it merely use it as chewing sticks to keep their teeth clean or the leaves to treat ailments such as malaria.

But there are vital agricultural benefits/uses of the plant which just a handful of people are aware of and equally apply.

In Plateau State for instance, the plant is common, especially in the Central and Southern zones in Langtang North, Langtang South, Qua’an Pan, Shendam, Kanke LGAs, among others.

Our correspondent gathered that the plant is used as a preservative for grains and as

protection against crop diseases when planted.

A farmer in Langtang South, Patrick Obet, said neem has so much value for them which covers health, agriculture, building and environmental preservation, and that they use the tree as shade in their region which was hot and sunny.

He explained that the leaves are used to preserve grains like maize, millet and sorghum, adding that whenever the leaves were mixed with grains they prevented pests from attacking because of their bitterness.

Obet said the leaves also make the grains to stay healthy and remain in their much desired forms during storage, besides its ability to prevent the crops from diseases.

According to him, the trees are partly planted by people, but that they mostly grow through birds which feed on the seeds and excrete them at other locations.

Another farmer in Langtang North, Rose Danladi, agreed that neem leaves prevent grains from rotting and that oil could be extracted from the seed and used to treat ailments like fever, pointing out that sick children were often given half spoon to drink.

She said even adults could use the leaves to treat fever by boiling and drinking it before bathing with the rest.

On his part, a resident of Du District in Jos South, Victor James Davou, said his parents told them a lot about the agricultural and health value of the plant, and that they had been practicalising them and getting good results.

He said apart from using the leaves to preserve grains, the seeds could be grinded and mixed with grains before planting, noting that such prevented termites from eating up the planted grains.

Davou, therefore, urged every Nigerian to take advantage of the agricultural/farming, nutritional, health and building construction value of the neem plant, adding that the wood carved out of the plant was good for building houses because termites did not eat it.

## Kwara sees 33% food prices increase, Sokoto 19%

By Vincent A. Yusuf

Average food prices rose 15 per cent between January and September, 2022, but the regional distribution of the price changes was very varied, stakeholders at the recently concluded agricultural summit said.

In a communiqué at the 2022 Agricultural Summit Africa (ASA), they said: “Kwara State had seen a 33 per cent year-on-year increase in food prices, compared to 19 per cent witnessed in Sokoto. This showcases how consumers can experience vastly different changes in price even in similar regions, reflecting volatility.”

The conference attracted farmers, policymakers, financial institutions, governments, the

investing community and thought leaders to discuss opportunities in the agriculture value chain.

Participants included the Chairman of Sterling Bank, Mr Asue Ighodalo; Executive Director, Technical Services/Operations Leadway Assurance Company Limited, Ms Adetola Adegbayi; Nestle MD, Nigeria, Wassim Elhousseini; Co-Founder and CEO of Tomato Jos, Mira Mehta; Interim Coordinator, Nigeria Commodity Exchange (NCX), Ihua Elenwor; and a host of other captains of industries.

The experts underlined critical areas of agriculture that require special attention in order to produce the desired development to power the trillion-dollar economy, including the political landscape and institutional

framework, national plans, and delivery mechanisms for putting the plans into action.

Smallholder farmers confront a number of issues, including digitisation, a lack of sound agricultural practices, access to markets, price, and logistics, a lack of timely crop payments, and a lack of credit. Some of these issues were caused by a lack of proper finance in the agriculture sector, and in some circumstances have a more negative impact on the type of money that the farmer may access.

Policy makers and stakeholders have to think of the sector end-to-end in order to provide the right kind of solutions targeted at the sector. The end-to-end assessment of the sector should also be tailored to different crops in order for it to be implementable.

They identified lack of policy synchronisation is one of the issues facing the agriculture and agro-processing industry. Many sectors have their own unique policies, yet they frequently conflict with one another, confusing the sector’s stakeholders.

Smallholder farmers are essential to the agriculture industry, and he noted that in Nigeria, the purpose of agriculture is to enact policies that would increase productivity as well as the country’s economic standing.

The communiqué reads in part: “To grow Nigeria’s agriculture sector, there is a need for farmer awareness and social engineering, to help the smallholder farmers understand how to structure their finances better and improve their productivity at the farms. Also,

there is a need for investment in other aspects of the value chains such as transportation and storage to improve the output of the sector.

“The right mix of funding (equity and long-term debt funding) is required for investment in the agriculture sector. However, to attract equity investors, the right risk sharing structure (that informs investors of how their investment is protected if risk occurs) is required.

“Data is oil and stakeholders in the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) require data to function and drive innovation. Credible and available data boosts confidence for investors, regulators, trade partners and other stakeholders.”

AGRO SOLUTIONS



Chicken pellets food

# How to balance your poultry feeds

If your poultry production is largely on a farm where ample supplies of grain are grown, this publication can and should lead to low-cost, efficient production. Grain in some form may comprise 75 per cent to 90 per cent of a well-balanced poultry ration. Frequently, however, a full grain bin means careless or indifferent feeding because no attempt is made to balance this ration properly. One must include all the essential nutrients in order to obtain a profitable rate of growth or egg production. The poultry raiser who must buy all his feed knows this full well, and in addition he aims to sell only high quality products; otherwise he cannot continue long in business. The purpose of this publication is to encourage the efficient use of feed on farms where poultry and eggs are being produced. It is the poultry keeper's responsibility to market well-finished birds, and eggs of the best quality, in order to secure maximum returns in relation to feed and other costs.

**Feeds**

Wheat usually is one of the best grains for poultry feeding, although a proportion of coarse grains in some form should always be included in the ration, along with wheat. In seasons of rust or frost, when wheat is shrunken, more should be ground and fed in mashes and less in the scratch feed. Either hard spring or Durum wheat may be used.

Corn (maize) is a very desirable grain fed whole, cracked or ground. Ripe corn on the cob may be fed to hens and turkeys. Shelled corn may be used with other grains as scratch feed. Corn chop could be included in any of the dry mash rations listed in this circular. The corn, if not thoroughly dried, should be mixed with the other chop in the mash immediately after grinding.

Millet (proso or hog millet), where grown, may be used to good advantage in growing, laying, and fattening rations. Millet may compromise up to one-third of the whole grain fed, and up to one-third of the chop mixture in dry mashes.

By-products of grain (such as wheat middlings, shorts, bran, barley meal, oat flour, oat middlings, and soybeans) have a place in poultry feeding, especially where feed must be bought. They may be higher in price than the whole grain, and if used should be fed for a specific purpose, such bran, shorts or middlings in growing and laying rations, and oat flour, oat middlings, oat feed, or barley meal in fattening rations.

Skim milk and butter milk are excellent for all classes of poultry but especially valuable for young chicks, laying hens and fattening birds. Milk supplies the vitamin

riboflavin which is indispensable to high hatching quality in eggs. As a desirable protein supplement, milk undoubtedly heads the list.

"Concentrates" and "Balancers" are especially prepared supplements put up by feed companies. They should be added to home-grown chopped grains in proportions recommended by the manufacturers.

Fish oils (cod liver oil, pilchard oil, etc.) are used in chick rations, in winter laying rations and in rations for producing eggs for hatching, as a source of Vitamins A and D when the supply of green pasture and direct sunshine is limited or lacking. Standard fish oils for poultry should contain 1,250 units or more of Vitamin A, or more of Vitamin D, per gramme. If fed in dry mash the oil should be mixed first with a small quantity of ground wheat.

**Rations for growing chickens**

**Starter rations:**

Young chicks require a diet rich in protein and certain vitamins, with a carefully balanced mineral content. Two pounds of chick starter dry mash will feed one chick up to about six weeks of age. After that, in the case of the birds to be reared to maturity, a cheaper ration with increasing amounts of whole grain may be used. Birds to be killed as broilers, however, should be kept on a more concentrated diet to promote the rapid growth essential to profit in broiler raising.

While one may mix chick starter at home, the simplest plan is to purchase 200 pounds of commercial chick starter mash for each 100 chicks. Choose a brand that is flaky or mealy, avoiding the less palatable finely ground mixtures that tend to paste inside the chick's mouth. The dry mash should be stored in a cool dry place and fed fresh daily.

Start feeding the chicks as soon as they want to eat. Place dry mash on clean egg-cup flats (cup type) or on clean cardboard, at several points around the brooder, with possibly a little cracked wheat or chick scratch grain sprinkled over the mash. After two or three days, when all the chicks have learned to eat, place the dry mash in self-feeders. The usual method is to keep dry mash continuously before the birds, though some people prefer to lift the feeders for an hour at a time during each half day.

Provide a constant supply of fresh drinking water in clean chick fountains. Place hard insoluble grit or fine gravel in pans or hoppers separate from the feed. In addition to the dry mash a little cracked wheat may be fed at three weeks, and a little whole wheat after four weeks.

SOURCE: *Manitoba*

# 'There is market for plantain farmers in Edo'

From Usman A Bello, Benin

Plantain farming is a profitable venture in which farmers can conveniently and easily recoup their investment without much stress if they follow the right process.

A plantain farmer in Edo State, James Okhiokpaimwonyi, described plantain farming as an income-generating business and a means of employment.

He said, "For a new person going into plantain farming, he would first of all acquire a land; depending on his or her financial capability. After acquiring the land, the farmer employs a worker to clear the land before looking for suckers to plant.

"If the land is not fertile enough, the farmer adds animal dung, get suckers for planting and plants 700 per hectare.

"The normal time to start planting and get a good result is between April and August, and the planting spacing is four meters apart. Plantain is not good for planting during the dry season."

He listed government policy, availability of land, capital, labour, among others, as challenges confronting plantain farmers.

He said, "But the common one is storage. The peak production of plantain is between August and December and we can't preserve it because it ripens easily almost at the same time."

He added that, "There are a lot of benefits in plantain farming because like tree crops, it takes time before it dies, and if you have any, it is an investment that is stable provided you apply manure.

"Plantain can be intercrop with other tree crops but one can harvest within a year and it is a continuous process as it didn't die after harvesting like cassava.

"In plantain farming, you harvest and the sucker will still grow and one can also sell the sucker to get money, so it is profitable."

On the market, Okhiokpaimwonyi said, "There is a huge market for plantain. We get customers from Lagos and other parts of the country.

"The local market for plantain is thriving because once you harvest and take it to the market you get buyers.



A plantain market

He, therefore, called on the people to inter-crop plantain with other tree crops, while those who were looking for jobs should look for plots and start plantain farming.

He lamented that they have not got any assistance

in terms of inputs and loans from the government.

He, therefore, called on the government to try and assist farmers, make provision for storage and export of the product, while also giving incentives to young farmers.



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**TEL:** +234 9161650587, +234 8127027474.  
**email:** rahamaniyyafertilizer@gmail.com

# INSIDEPOLITICS

## Hazy contest for Sokoto Government House



■ Ahmed Aliyu Sokoto



■ Aminu Umar Ahmed



■ Sa'idu Umar Ubandoma

From Yusha'u A. Ibrahim & Abubakar Auwal, Sokoto

**A**head of the March 11, 2023, governorship election in Sokoto State, contenders in the Seat of the Caliphate are leaving no stone unturned to clinch the seat.

*Daily Trust on Sunday* reports that the election will be a tough one as the gladiators move to outdo one another in their quest to woo voters.

The contest is more or less among candidates of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the state, Sa'idu Umar Ubandoma; All Progressives Congress (APC), Ahmed Aliyu Sokoto; New Nigerian Peoples Party (NNPP), Senator Umaru Dahiru Tambuwal; and that of Labour Party (LP), Aminu Umar Ahmed.

The PDP candidate, a professional banker, is a former Commissioner for Finance and former Secretary to the State Government (SSG). He got the ticket following the blessings of Governor Aminu Waziri Tambuwal.

*Daily Trust on Sunday* gathered that Ubandoma's emergence as PDP gubernatorial candidate raised dust within the party as many members who were supporting the present Deputy Governor, Muhammad Manir Dan'ya, kicked against it.

On his part, Aliyu of the APC is a second-timer in the race for the government house, having contested for the same seat in 2019 but was defeated by Gov Tambuwal.

Aliyu held many public and political appointments. He was director of finance in various LGAs of the state before he was elevated to the position of Commissioner for Social Welfare and later redeployed to the Ministry of Health in the Gov Aliyu Magatakarda Wamakko-led administration.

In 2014, Aliyu was picked as the

running mate of Tambuwal who was then the governorship candidate of the APC. They jointly won the election in 2015.

He, however, resigned from his position as the deputy governor in 2018 after his boss decamped to PDP. He subsequently secured the governorship ticket of APC.

After losing in the election in 2019, Aliyu was appointed Executive Secretary of the Police Trust Fund by President Muhammadu Buhari. In 2022 he voluntarily resigned to aspire for the governorship ticket of the APC; which he eventually won.

Senator Umaru Dahiru Tambuwal of NNPP, a lawyer, has been in politics since the Second Republic. A one-time commissioner in the old Sokoto State and former senator (Sokoto South) for four consecutive terms, he aspired for the governorship ticket of APC in 2014.

Ahmad of the LP was a seasoned civil servant and unionist who ventured into politics after he retired from the civil service last year. He is the immediate past Chairman of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and former Director General of the Sokoto State Contributory Health Scheme.

### Candidates on the scale

The PDP candidate, Umar, is enjoying the support of Tambuwal and a former Governor of Sokoto State, Attahiru Dalhatu Bafarawa.

Another factor that will work for him is the choice of Bafarawa's son as his running mate.

However, Umar has many thorns to clear on his path to victory; one of which is the lingering internal crisis in his party which emanated as a result of his emergence as the flag bearer.

*Daily Trust on Sunday* observed that some prominent members of the party, including a former Minister of Water Resources and two-term Deputy Governor of the state, Mukhtari Shagari; and Alhaji Umaru Kwabo appear to

Maigari Dingyadi, who was then the governorship candidate of the party in Sokoto State.

"Gov Tambuwal is certainly on the edge and has to maintain a delicate balance between trying to install a governor in the state and contributing towards the installation of Atiku as a president."

Prof Yahaya T. Baba of the Department of Political Science, Usmanu Danfodio University, Sokoto (UDUS), also opined that the incumbency factor would allow the PDP candidate to use the machinery and resources of the state to win the election.

He said, "We have seen how Rivers State governor appointed hundreds of special advisers and other political appointees for political purposes. Gov Tambuwal has recently appointed many commissioners, special advisers, directors general, special assistants and other political appointees to win the election."

The lingering internal crisis within the APC in the state will also be an added advantage to the PDP's candidate, as according to him, several APC members, including members of the National Assembly, have decamped to PDP courtesy of the crisis, noting that, "These people will certainly work for the party's victory during the election."

For the APC candidate, Prof Baba said, "Even though the APC is not controlling the state, the party's support base is fairly good in terms of followership."

"The party also has strong leaders in the state that include former Gov Wamakko and Maigari Dingyadi that can mobilise votes for the gubernatorial candidate."

He, however, said despite the federal might factor which the candidate was enjoying, APC didn't have the control of power in the state and that, that could be his major weakness, arguing that the "incumbency factor matters a lot when it comes to election."

On the NNPP and LP candidates, the political pundit said the two political parties were not visible in Sokoto, hence that their gubernatorial candidates might not make any significant impact during the election.

He said, "The PDP and APC influences have overshadowed those of the NNPP and LP in Sokoto. Many people do not even know who is contesting for LP in Sokoto because you hardly see its candidate on posters or billboards on the streets. It is highly unlikely for the NNPP and LP to even make a significant impact during the election, not to talk of forming the next government in Sokoto State."

"Maybe on based on the dynamism of the election, NNPP and LP can make an impact during the election if they make an informal alliance with either PDP or APC to alter the balance of votes between them."

Dr Bashir Muhammad Achida, another political analyst in Sokoto, said the PDP candidate was seen by many people as a subservient person who joined the race on the directives of his master.

He said, "Although Ubandoma worked in the private sector, many people see him as somebody who lacks the experience to man the public sector. Even though he served as commissioner and later SSG, you cannot compare him with politicians like Bafarawa and Wamakko who started politics from the grassroots."

"However, the man came from a reputable family; that would equally be an added advantage to him when we are talking about the qualities of a leader."

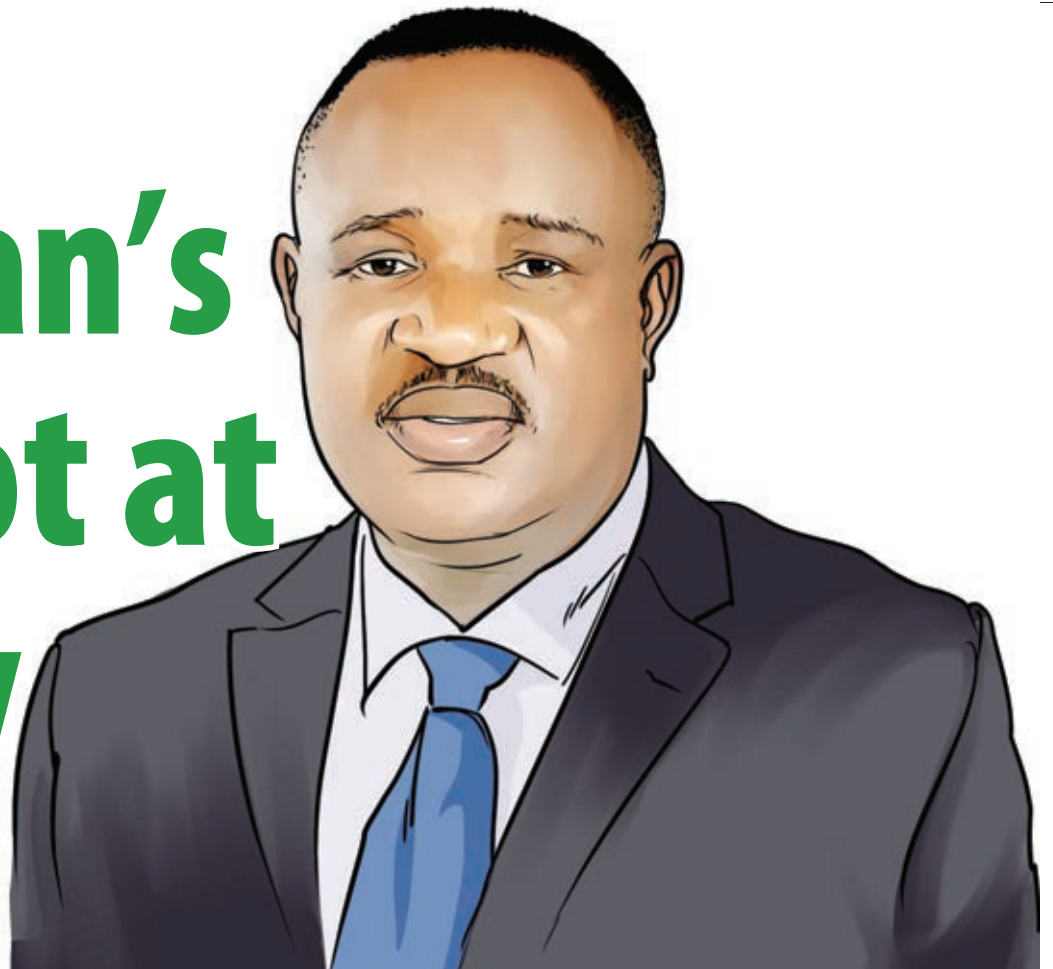


■ Sen Tambuwal

be skeptical about their support of his candidature.

A political analyst in the state, Malam Abubakar Umar, believes that as a DG of the PDP's presidential candidate, Atiku Abubakar's, campaign organisation, Gov Tambuwal's effort at the national level may diminish the impact of his presence and contribution to Ubandoma's campaign. Meanwhile, at the moment the governor participates in the campaigns at the state level.

He noted that, "Something similar happened when Bafarawa was the presidential candidate of the Democratic Peoples Party (DPP). His Nationwide campaign depreciated his presence in Sokoto to campaign for the current Minister of Police Affairs, Muhammadu

**RACE TO ASO****OSAKWE:****A clergyman's second shot at presidency**

By Abdullateef Salau

**M**r Felix Johnson Osakwe, the presidential candidate of the National Rescue Movement (NRM), is once again racing to succeed President Muhammadu Buhari after a poor outing in the 2019 general elections in which he emerged 17th.

Though not a neophyte, he is barely known in Nigeria's political circle. Osakwe, pundits say, belongs to the class of those vying for elective positions to enrich their public profile having known that their victory can be likened to a camel passing through the eye of the needle.

Osakwe hails from Ukwuani LGA of Delta State. He was born in Ilesha, Osun State, where he spent most of his youth and attended the Apostolic Primary School, Ijebu-Ijesha and obtained a diploma in theology from Calvary Bible College, Osun State.

In the late 1990s, he moved to the United States (US) where he studied legal and criminal justice at Ashworth University, Atlanta, Georgia. He further obtained bachelor's degree in theology and a masters' in theology from Freedom University and Theological Seminary, USA. He was conferred with honorary PhDs by Freedom University and Theological Seminary, USA; and Highstone International University, USA.

Osakwe joined the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) as a teenager in the 1980s and rose to become one of the church's first generation of evangelists. He later established his ministry, Christ Evangelical and Prayer Ministry (CEPM).

He is known among his circle as a teacher, life coach, character moulder/influencer and human development expert.

Since 2017, he has served as the Director for Executive Affairs at the Universal Peace Federation, Nigeria, a network of peace ambassadors with consultative status at the United Nations

Economic and Social Council (UNESCO).

In that capacity, he engages with stakeholders and duty-bearers in social, economic and political spaces to broker peace and manage crisis.

**Politics**

Osakwe's first shot at the presidency was in the 2019 elections. A year before then he sought the presidential ticket of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) against the likes of former Minister of Information, Professor Jerry Gana; a former Governor of Cross River State, Donald Duke; John Dara and Prof Iyorwuese Hagher.

Duke won the SDP ticket and Osakwe dumped the party and pitched tent with the Democratic Peoples Party (DPP) and was adopted as its presidential candidate. He contested the 2019 presidential election and came 17th.

**Why I'm eyeing Buhari's seat**

Osakwe said he joined the 2023 race to Aso Villa to birth a "great and prosperous nation where everyone has access to new, exciting and unhindered opportunities.

"Having sojourned in the largest and most civilised democracy in the world for over three decades, the time has come for me and my team to take the mantle of leadership of this country in 2023. Nigerians need a leadership that will take the nation out of the woods and to the promised land."

He premised his presidential bid on six goals: affordable healthcare, human capital development, resurgent agro-industry, social cohesion and stability, vibrant technovative sector and safer communities.

In line with his party's name, Osakwe said he was poised to rescue the nation from the inherent imperfections in its body polity; declaring that Nigerians should gear up for a new country where the opinions of all would count, with all segments of the Nigerian society as stakeholders.

He said, "Our political movement focuses on aggressive and accelerated growth and even development of human and material resources in all parts of Nigeria.

"We will ensure that our national integrity and solidarity is restored to give every Nigerian a pride of place in the global community. My team craves a prosperous and powerful most populous black nation in the world that will robustly engage world powers and discuss African development and not debt relief.

"We will grow our nation and exit the citizens from poverty and mass illiteracy and despondency while we steer the ship of our nation state in the direction of self-sufficiency in food production without necessarily promoting hunger and starvation.

"Our social contract with Nigerians is that we will make this Nation a land of New Exciting and Unhindered Opportunities and run an all-inclusive administration where we prioritise input from the socio-political environment and not rule by proxies. Our administration shall be for all Nigerians while we pride ourselves

above blind acquisition of stolen wealth.

"Considering the social crisis occasioned by the collapse of social order and the menace of insecurity, our immediate priority will be to make this country safe again."

**Legal battle**

Osakwe's candidature and chances at the general elections are threatened by the internal wrangling and the attendant legal battle rocking the party.

NRM has been enmeshed in a crisis following the replacement of Mazi Okwudili Nwaanyajike with Osakwe as its presidential candidate by its National Executive Committee (NEC). The NEC suspended Nwaanyajike and 14 other members.

NRM National Chairman, Ambassador Isaac Chigozie Udeh, said the party decided in good faith to brighten its chances at the poll.

But Nwaanyajike, in an interview with Daily Trust, insisted that he was not suspended, assuring that his "stolen" presidential ticket would be recovered.

He said, "The matter is now in the Supreme Court and we are confident that the judiciary, being the last hope of the citizens, will do the right thing by toeing the part of justice. Even if it's a day to the presidential election, I will recover the ticket."

**Chances**

Observers place Osakwe in the class of presidential contenders whose parties are contributing to having a long ballot during the

election.

They said Osakwe and his likes might have good qualities and the necessary expertise to turn things around, but that the platforms on which they were running for Nigeria's presidency were unpopular, thereby blighting their chances.

The Team Lead of Good Governance Team Nigeria, Tunde Salman, said, "The fact that we have more people coming out to indicate interest to govern Nigeria shows that the country's political space is expanding; which is good for our democracy.

"However, the Nigerian political space is still dominated by the two big parties, APC and PDP, plus the Labour Party, which we can now refer to as a third force due to the popularity Peter Obi's candidacy enjoys from some sections of the Nigerian society.

"The domineering features of the big parties, no doubt, will blight the chances of the candidates of smaller parties at the polls. The structure of a party and its popularity matters in Nigeria's electoral space.

"Mr Osakwe and other small parties' candidates may have good qualities and may have excellent records in their chosen fields, but having a crowded electoral contest creates a nightmare for INEC, especially the issue of printing long ballots."

Salman further said that the affected candidates and their parties were also short of resources to run campaigns in at least half of the 36 states of the federation to engage voters on their policies and programmes.

He added that, "Though it is within their constitutional right to contest any elective position, I will advise that they should start from local or state levels where development is needed most and their impact will be felt."

**Osakwe's candidature and chances at the general elections are threatened by the internal wrangling and the attendant legal battle rocking the party**

# BUSINESS

## How Yobe SMEs struggle to survive inflation

From Habibu Idris Gimba

**A**s high prices of commodities persist, some Micro Small Scale and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) find it difficult to survive in Yobe State.

A survey by *Daily Trust on Sunday* revealed that virtually all the entrepreneurs in the state have taken steps to increase the prices of their products and services to keep afloat.

Mallam Abdullahi, a barber in the Gwange area of Damaturu, said he had increased the price of his services.

He said, "I started shaving when we were buying a litre of fuel at N50, and now we are buying a litre at N315. We used to collect N50 to N100 per person, but now we collect N200 to N300."

"The price of a clipper is not more than N1,500, but now if you want a good clipper that can shave five to six people without any pain. You have to buy it for N9,000 to N9,500; sometimes it reaches N10,000."

"We have tools like after-shave and dusting powder which we used to buy for N70 but now costing N550. We buy butterfly clipper oil for N450 which was N150."

The situation of Mrs Maijidda Akawu, a local food seller, is not different, as she said she had to stop her weekly saving routine (adashe) for her to remain in business.

Maijidda said she cut the amount of meat she bought daily when she realised that the profit was no longer sustainable, and that she had slashed unnecessary expenses by producing less and dropping some items from her menu.

She said, "I am not gaining anything as a food seller, because what you eat for yourself and your children is your profit. For now there is no provision of weekly thrift, no unnecessary spending. I swear there is a time when we will come and cook the food, if we recover our capital, we thank God."

Mallam Idris Abubakar, a foodstuff seller, said he had taken numerous steps to ensure that his long-term ambition was achievable, including sacking three boys who were working under him.

He said, "I had three boys working for me, but I fired them after I realised that this inflation has not reduced; it is increasing every day.



A barber at work



Onions displayed for sale

To ensure that he did not leave the business, Abubakar decided to raise the prices of his goods despite numerous

complaints by his customers.

Hassan Ibrahim, a bakery owner, agrees with numerous challenges facing their

factories, saying, "I don't want to be one of the people who closed their bakeries, but to be honest, the situation in which we run our business is difficult. If you look at the people who are working under you and you close the factory, how do you think their lives will be?"

To compete with others a bakery owner has taken another direction, by ensuring that they produce a lot of products so that they can compete with others in the market.

As the inflation persists in the country, most Nigerians have had to cut back their shopping in a bid to manage their earnings. That is why some have given up buying groceries now as disclosed by Aliyu Umar Gambo, a vegetable seller.

"Yesterday was good, today was not good, every time my buyers come to shop, and they come across a new price, they are surprised. I use to apologise to them by saying that this is how we got the goods," he said

Salisu Abdulkareem, owner of provision store, said, "We are really suffering due to the market situation, because things we used to sell for N10 in the last years are now up to N20 or N30 and some have even doubled their prices."

"That is why all the small businessmen have lost a lot of their capital. There is a man who used to buy one trailer of goods, but now he can't buy even half of it. Because if he used N10m to buy products before, now he has to get N100m before he can afford the same."

**'We have taken steps to survive the situation'**

The Chairman of Yobe State Bakery Owners Association, Alhaji Manu, said the cheapest flour brand was the one they now bought for N30,000 or N30,500.

He said, "If dealers will give you one bag of flour on credit, they will give it to you for N32,000 and you will also buy sugar for N32,000 to N33,000 a bag."

He, therefore, said the bakeries had reduced the sizes of their tins, noting that some of their members had moved to make two quality breads which prices were higher than others and an affordable one which price was right for the needs of the poor.

All efforts to contact the Focal Person of the Yobe Micro Small and Medium Enterprise Survival Fund and Guaranteed Offtake Scheme, Mr Abubakar Adamu Fika, proved abortive.



Food stuff on display



Grains at the market

# NNPC deepens onslaught on oil thieves



A section of the Kaduna refinery

From Jide Olasunkanmi, Lagos

Activities of oil thieves assumed a dangerous dimension last year, causing a lot of damage to Nigeria's economy. The impact was so monumental that the country was forced to start looking for a solution.

In October, the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) Limited discovered an illegal underwater 2.5-mile connection from the Forcados export terminal operating undetected for nearly 9 years.

While the country has known the land-based pipeline taps for decades, an underwater one was the first of its kind.

In its continuous efforts to stem oil theft and restore Nigeria's production to an optimum capacity, a private security contractor, in collaboration with the federal government security agencies and the NNPC, on December 31, 2022, destroyed a barge loaded with stolen crude. The barge was earlier arrested with suspects on December 22.

The barge, named MT Brighton 1, which was loaded with stolen crude, was apprehended in one of the creeks running into the Ramos River in Agge community, a border village between Delta and Bayelsa states.

Also, the security intervention team on the last day of the year demolished a filling station, Blessed Corporate Oil & Gas Services Limited in Opete, Warri, Delta State, for being in the custody of a truck laden with stolen crude and discharging the illegal contents into its underground storage tanks.

Virtually every month in the year under review witnessed one astonishing revelation or another, particularly reports of discoveries of crude oil theft in the Niger Delta, resulting in multi-million-naira losses to Nigeria on a daily basis.

One of the most recent onslaughts was by a former warlord, popularly known as Tompolo, who was engaged by the federal government to help stem the tide of crude oil theft. Tompolo exposed security officials as being party to criminality. It was reported that "16 hidden tapping points on the trans-Forcados/Ramos pipeline had been uncovered."

Many more illegal pipeline tap points have since been discovered; and the

discoveries are likely to continue in the new year. A report was recently released, revealing the destruction by military men of a ship used to convey stolen crude in an apparent effort to conceal those behind the theft.

The Group Chief Executive officer of the NNPC, Mele Kyari, at a Senate joint committees on Gas and Petroleum (Upstream and Downstream), said a four-kilometre illegal oil connection line from Forcados terminal into the sea, which had been in operation for 9 years, was detected during a clampdown.

"Oil theft in the country has been going on for over 22 years, but the dimension and rate it assumed in recent times is unprecedented," Kyari said.

Allegations and insinuations have been rife to the effect that top functionaries of government and prominent people in the society, including clergies, are deeply involved in the illegal business.

Earlier in 2022, the Authority Chief Executive of the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC), Gbenga Komolafe, revealed that Nigeria lost about N434billion to oil theft between January and March.

According to the NNPC, the country loses 470,000 barrels of crude oil monthly to theft, amounting to \$700million. The Valuechain Energy magazine also reports that despite an increase in the production quota assigned to Nigeria by the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the country continued to fail in meeting the quota for several months due to theft. Thus, from both the export and import ends of the petroleum industry, the volume of declared leakages was so massive that the general economy, which the petroleum resources are

supposed to support, was in a parlous state.

The federal government, in its recently drafted fiscal strategy paper (2023-2025), said that oil revenues underperformed in the country due to significant production shortfalls, such as shut-ins resulting from pipeline vandalism and crude oil theft.

Kyari said, "Brass, Forcados and Bonny terminals were all practically doing zero production," and the combined effect was "the loss of 600,000 barrels per day."

He added that the NNPC carried out aerial surveillance of the affected areas and discovered "the economic saboteurs carrying out their activities unchallenged and unperturbed," and that 395 illegal refineries had been deactivated, with 274 reservoirs destroyed, and 1,561 metal tanks also destroyed, while 49 trucks were seized in the process.

In the course of the year, Nigeria lost its status as Africa's top oil producer to Angola following output decline among its peers in the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

The country further slipped to the fourth position on Africa's biggest oil producers' lists as its crude oil production dropped below Angola, Libya and Algeria in September 2022, according to OPEC data, which showed that Angola, Algeria and Libya produced more oil than Nigeria.

In 2022, Nigeria produced its lowest OPEC quota in decades, failing to take advantage of the high crude oil prices induced majorly by the Russia-Ukraine war. While OPEC's production share for most of 2022 averaged 1.8million bpd for Nigeria, the country fell short of meeting its quota during the year, mostly hovering between 900,000 bpd and 1.2 million barrels per day for the greater part of the year.

The country largely failed to meet its

allocation, which declined steadily from 1.39 million bpd in January to a low of 937,000 barrels in September before rising above 1 million bpd in October and November.

Dr Mohammad Sanusi Barkindo exited the scene in Nigerians and the global energy community was thrown into shock and grief on July 5, 2022. Barkindo died in Abuja at the age of 63, few days before he was set to finish his six-year term as secretary-general of the OPEC.

It was one of the major sad periods in the year for the oil and gas sector of the Nigerian economy. Until his death, Barkindo remained relentless in consolidating and solidifying the position of the producers' bloc in the scheme of international energy diplomacy.

There appeared to be no respite for the late OPEC scribe in the face of the prevailing market crisis and his role in forging a coordinated response by the world's leading energy producers. As the market remained in disarray due to the war in Ukraine, geopolitical tensions and global recession, Dr Barkindo's OPEC's intervention through the output cut became urgent in order to tame and avert global energy crisis.

#### North now an oil-producing zone

The decade also witnessed a renewed interest in oil exploration in the North by the federal government through the NNPC, in a bid to increase the country's oil and gas reserves.

The President Muhammadu Buhari-led administration became the most dogged about the search, culminating in the eventual discovery of crude oil.

In November 2022, the president flagged off the Kolmani Integrated Development Project, the first crude oil project in northern Nigeria, on the boundary of Bauchi and Gombe states. The commercial quantity discovery was the first in the region after several crude oil explorations in the Upper Benue Trough.

During the flag-off in Bauchi, Buhari said the successful discovery of the Kolmani oil and gas field would attract foreign investment, generate employment and increase government revenue.

As a fully integrated development project comprising upstream production, oil refining, power generation and fertiliser, the project promises many benefits for the country, including but not limited to energy security, financial security and food security, as well as overall socio-economic development for the country.

The development is to the credit of the administration, that at a time when there is a near-zero appetite for investment in fossil energy, coupled with the location challenges, it was able to attract investment of over \$3billion to the project.

#### Last line

The preceding analysis of events in 2022 showed that the sector performed below par and failed to live up to the expectation of Nigerians, amidst high oil prices.

For the common man, it would go down as a year scarcity of petroleum products became the norm rather than the exception; just as prices skyrocketed.

Allegations and insinuations have been rife to the effect that top functionaries of government and prominent people in the society, including clergies, are deeply involved in the illegal business

# Understanding the essence of true worship

## What is worship?

We'll focus on two aspects.  
**1. To ascribe credit of all good things and achievements to Him.**

The Bible says in James 1:17, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." It is dangerous to ascribe credit to yourself or anything or anyone else. God made Nebuchadnezzar king, but he began to think it was himself. God was nice to Nebuchadnezzar until he began to think he was god. God turned him into a beast with claws and sent him to the wilderness to eat grass and be there for days. Herod died because he ascribed credit to himself. If you studied Jesus who was the most perfect human on earth, what made Him so distinct were statements like this: "I can only do what I see my Father do" John 5:19. "I only speak the words I hear my father say. I can only do the works that my father does." He kept on transferring the credit to God! And that protected Him and kept Him in power. Power flow is tied to credit transfer. Worship is reserved only for God. Only He is worthy and not any of His servants (Revelation 19:10). We are not to worship saints, prophets, statues, angels, any false gods, or Mary, the mother of Jesus. We also should not be worshipping for the expectation of something in return, such as a miraculous healing. Worship is done for God—because He deserves it—and for His pleasure alone. But when we worship Him genuinely from our heart, He does wonders and fearful things!

**2. Total Surrender To God.** "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matthew 22:37-40). "...love the Lord with all thy heart..." That means total surrender!

## WORSHIP IS TOTAL SURRENDER TO GOD. BEYOND SINGING CLAPPING AND DANCING

True worship is conviction followed by affection, affection that is a response to truth, not to any external stimuli, including music. Music as such has nothing to do with worship. Music can't produce worship, although it certainly can produce emotion. Music is not the origin

of worship, but it can be the expression of it. Do not look to music to induce your worship; look to music as simply an expression of that which is induced by a heart that is rapt by the mercies of God, obedient to His commands. *True worship is total surrender to God!*

God cannot be explained, God can only be experienced. Salvation is not taught or acquired from parents, teachers, friends or from learning; it is experienced personally.

*It's not enough to be saved, it's more important to surrender fully to the plans, purposes, and principles of God.* A true worshipper is one who lives by doing the will of God. John 9:31 says, "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth."

God did not design us to function independently of Him. He gave us dominion not independence. You can only be in control as long as you are under His control. You and I need Him more than He will ever need us if He will even ever need us. You need to realise how limited and helpless you are without Him. Your authority is delegated authority. He remains the Sovereign Ruler of the universe.

**Growth** is about incremental surrender. The extent to which you surrender is the extent to which you can experience God.

It is not enough to sing His praises; you must be willing to obey Him in everything whether it's convenient or not. He must be your Master; He must be your Lord! This is worship and this is praise! *Verbal or physical expression is meaningless unless surrender is in place.*

True worship is not confined to what we do in church or open praise (although these things are both good and we are told in the Bible to do them). It is the acknowledgment of God and all His power and glory in everything we do. *The highest form of praise and worship is obedience to Him and His Word.*

## 7 Questions That Determine Who Is Ruling Over Your Life

Come to think of it, the battle of life is the battle for control. Satan wanted control, he was thrown out of heaven. When Jesus was about to start His ministry, Satan showed up and wanted to control Him. He asked Jesus to worship him in exchange for the wealth of the world which he stole from Adam. There's a constant battle to

keep people and things under control.

Control is not bad, it depends on the person who has it. When a bad person has control bad things happen, he uses it to oppress people. When a good person has control, good things happen. Proverbs 29:2. "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn." Proverbs 29:2

God wants you to have control but under His control. He wants you to control your circumstances, your environment, resources, your emotions, etc. for Him. He gave you dominion over the earth to rule on His behalf.

The devil controls through self. He lied to Adam by making him believe he did not need the control of God, that he can control himself. That was rebellion.

The answers to the following questions will help you determined who is in control of your life.

1. Who or what is in control of your thoughts? Your thoughts dictate your actions. You are ruled by whatever is controlling your thoughts. Whatever dominates your heart dominates your life. How much of your life is God controlling? Judges 17:6, "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes." This is the exact opposite of worship. If you are doing only what is right in your own eyes, then you have no king, and your life will be chaotic. How much of your day do you spend in prayer and study of the Word? Do you have a king in your life, or you are your own king?

2. Who is in control of your relationships? What decides how you relate with people? If your heart is not right towards God, it cannot be right towards men. The true test of a yielded life is how you treat your enemies and those you are better than. When you love people, you will not slander them, hate them or keep malice with them. You will not wish them bad or try to undermine them.

3. Who is running your account? Do you obey biblical laws governing money? Do you surrender your tithe completely and regularly? Do you release your first fruits? Are you ready to trust God with your seed knowing that He will indeed multiply it back to you? It's not enough to call Him Provider, are you willing to fully rely on Him to provide for your needs? Until you are ready to surrender your resources, your worship

is not deep enough.

4. How willing are you to obey Him in all things? Is there anything you'll find difficult to surrender to God if He demands it? Can you surrender your Isaac if God calls for it? A young man walked away from following Him when asked to sell his goods and give to the poor. Jesus gave up His life because the Father asked Him to. This is ultimate worship!

5. What matters more to you, your ego, dignity, comfort or His instructions? Are you ashamed to preach Jesus because of your self-image? Are you willing to suffer for His Name's sake?

6. How much of your talent are you using to serve Him? In what way are you serving God? Is God using you anywhere in the church or outside of the Church?

7. Are you willing to go wherever He sends you?

Abraham obeyed every instruction given to him by God, he became the father of many nations. He ended up very rich.

David's addiction to doing the will of God earned him a big place in the heart of God. God did not only prosper him and his lineage, but his throne was also preserved for Christ to seat on!

*Complete surrender guarantees you a permanent place in the Garden of Eden- where everything is provided.*

True rest is found in complete surrender. True blessings are reserved for those surrender everything to Him.

Deepen your fellowship or intimacy with God, but importantly, surrender completely to His rulership and worship will flow out of you effortlessly.

There are those who have not experienced real salvation and there are those who have received Christ as their Saviour but have not surrendered fully to Him to control their lives. I'll like to pray for both so that we can enjoy praise and His presence in a new dimension.

Welcome to a life of grace and abundance! I cancel anything that will make you weep or put you to shame; you will not mourn neither will you be mourned, in the Name of Jesus. God will visit you and bless you with financial abundance, in the Name of Jesus!

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

By Margaret Ogbebor SSMA

"If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). Christianity calls for self-denial, by self-denial I mean do away with attitudes, behaviour and dealings that are not in accordance with the Christian faith. Christianity calls for discipline and self-sacrifice. Since our master who is our exemplar suffered was crucified and died, we too in one way or the other will likewise share in his suffering. Jesus did not promise a rosy life to his followers but he promises them a happy end if they are able to endure to the end. "Those who endure to the end would be saved" (Matthew 24:13). Endurance is one of the key to salvation. Renunciation help us as Christians to do away with things that are against our Christian calling, the so called extravagant life style that do not give glory to God should be put aside because they serve as distraction to our salvation.

To be a true disciple of Christ, there is need for us to carry our crosses. These crosses we carry make us partakers in the sufferings of Christ. "No cross no crown". Crosses are symbols of sufferings. They are not pleasant or palatable situations but they serve as our pathway to salvation. Crosses come to us in various ways such as crisis in the family, setbacks in businesses, and sickness among others. Crisis in the family occur when the husband and wife no longer understand themselves. The period of crisis in marriage is not easy especially when one of the parties begin to bridge the contract it will affect the other party negatively. Most of the time if care is not taken it would even lead to the separation

of the family. In some families their crosses may not come from both parents it may even be the children who are wayward, stubborn and arrogant, if their behaviour is becoming an eye saw to the extent that it is bringing shame to the family, it could be referred to as a cross. Negative attitude of the children can also serve as crosses to the family. When situations like these occur such families should not avoid or run away from it they should be very careful in dealing with the matter. They need to think deep and reflect to really identify the bone of contention and after that, back it up with prayers. Our crosses should lead us closer to God and not take us away from God; He is the only one that has solution to every problem.

However, setbacks in businesses can even be our cross. In a situation whereby we have tried everything and nothing seem to be working, we have used all the strategies that we have, applied all the techniques we acquired from different seminars and nothing is changing when situations like this occur there is need to call on God instead of seeking help where there is no help. Some persons would even promise you solution which is temporal all because they have no power to bring you lasting solution. Once your business stops flourishing it will cause you pain and becomes a cross that you need to carry. Carrying this type of cross is not easy because it is a pain, a thorn in the flesh when situation like this happen the best solution is to go for counselling and back it up with prayer. Our crosses should draw us closer to God who has all it takes to solve our problems.

# Crosses

Another cross most people carry is the cross of sickness. Many a time sickness has forced a lot of people to do a lot of things and even seek help where there is no help. Some people have abandoned their faith and their God due to the fact that they felt that God refused to help them when they needed Him most. They see the cross of sickness as a burden too much to bear and they have decided to give up. As Christians we should not behave like those who do not have hope. We should always remember that God's plans for us are for good and not for evil (Jeremiah 29:11). He wants us to come with all our problems and tribulations because He is capable of taking care of them, He says "Come to me all you who labour and are over laden and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11: 28-29). For us Christians, Jesus is our burden bearer no matter how heavy our burden may be he has the shock absorber to carry every load. He made it open to all who are passing through hard times to come to him and have rest so that they can be burden free and be happy again. It is in God alone that we can really get the rest we desire from our troubles.

Furthermore, it is advisable for us to accept whatever cross that is sent to us by God be it in the family, business, sickness or otherwise. These crosses are pathway through which we find God our creator but on the other hand there are some crosses we carry that are self-inflicted, for instance sickness as a result of beautification of the body resulting to cancer, this kind of cross cannot gain any merit because it is not from God but self-inflicted due to the fact that we want to

change what God has already created to suit our own selfish ambition and desire. There are also crosses that are inflicted on us by the wickedness of this world, this type of crosses are not from God, we are expected to reject and rebuke such crosses so that we would not be suffering for nothing. With prayers and the help of God those crosses inflicted on us by the wickedness of this world would disappear and we would be happy again. We need to be firm and remain focused because "he who puts his hands on the plough and look backwards is not fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). Fortitude is the virtue we need to really carry our crosses.

To identify a particular issue as your cross you must have tried all you can and still no solution, you have no choice but to surrender to the will of God. Then you begin to ask God for His grace in carrying your cross. "Three times I prayed to the Lord about this and asked Him to take it away. But His answer was my grace is all you need. For my strength is made perfect in weakness..." (2 Corinthians 12:8-10).

As Christians, each and every one of us has our own crosses to carry. There is no one that is without a cross because it is part of our rudiments for salvation. All we need is to ask God for the grace to carry our crosses happily and joyfully without complaining. Remember "when the king of glory appears we will be crowned with the crown of unfailing glory" (1 Peter 5:).

**Sr Margret Ogbebor SSMA is a Catholic Nun, working in the Catholic Diocese of Sokoto. She is the Head Teacher of St Martin de Porres Nursery and Primary School Katsina. okaimaogbebor@gmail.com**  
**[Repeat]**

# Despite millions of graduates, Nigeria's development not positively impacted

Despite producing thousands of graduates yearly, Nigeria is yet to witness commensurate impact in terms of development, *Daily Trust on Sunday* reports.

By Chidimma C. Okeke & John Chuks Azu

Every year, higher institutions of learning in Nigeria churn out thousands of graduates across different disciplines with certificates that should qualify them to become a competent workforce that would contribute to national development, but the reverse seems to be the case.

This is in addition to other thousands graduated from prestigious universities in Europe, United Kingdom, Asia, Africa and other parts of the continent. Although many stay back in these countries to seek greener pastures, others return to Nigeria to secure meaningful employment.

It is no longer news that Nigeria has the highest number of education migrants across the globe. And this is not far from the challenges of incessant strike, poor infrastructure, inadequate lecturers, securing admission into choice schools, among others faced in the tertiary education system in the country, thus, raising the question of quality of graduates.

One major challenge for many Nigerian graduates over time has remained that of securing jobs that tally with their courses of study. Many have been forced to take jobs outside their field of study as you see an engineer working as a teller in the bank or teaching in the classroom.

The debate on not securing jobs has been blamed on the quality of graduates produced from the tertiary education system in the country.

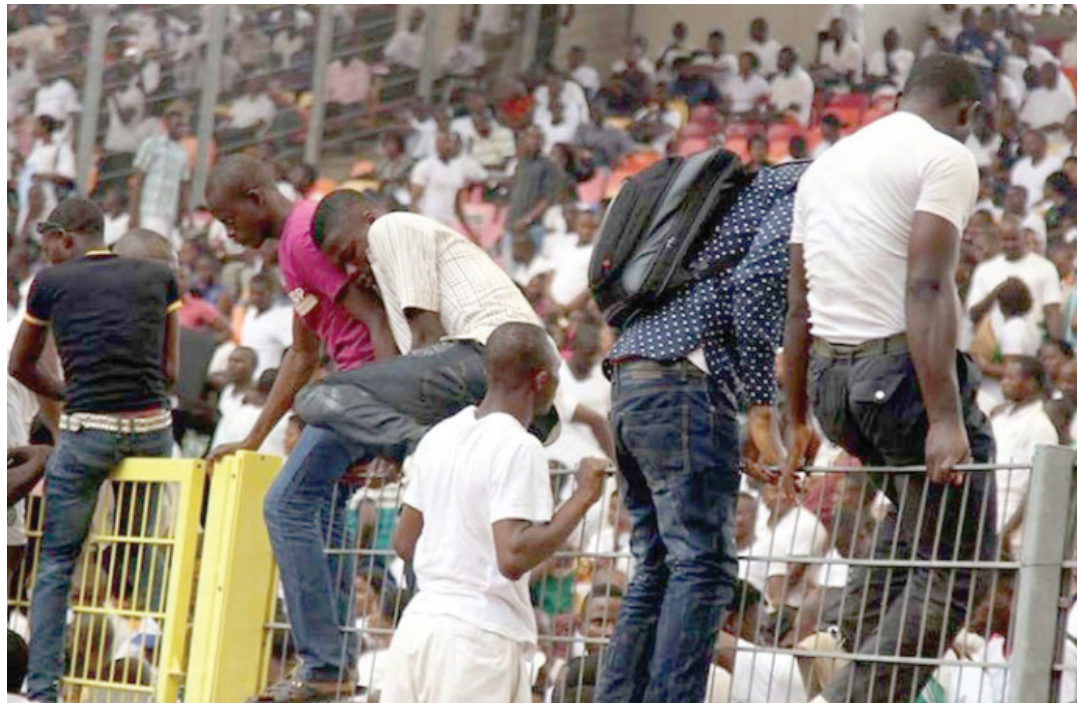
Many argue that the quality of graduates produced is low and does not meet the standard of industries for employment. Others, however, opine that there is nothing wrong with the quality of graduates, adding that Nigerian graduates outshine their counterparts outside the country, which could be the reason for the current brain drain being experienced in the country as a result of migration.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has linked unemployment in Nigeria to the phenomenon of jobless growth, increased number of school graduates with no matching job opportunities, a moratorium on employment in many public - and private sector institutions and continued job losses in the manufacturing and oil sectors.

The ILO maintained that the recent economic growth in Nigeria has not resulted in a rapid reduction of poverty or in the creation of sufficient decent jobs for the young and rapidly growing labour force.

Meanwhile, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) pegged the number of unemployed youths in Nigeria to 25 million.

An undergraduate in the



FILE PHOTO: Cross section of graduates during a job screening exercise

University of Abuja, Ferdinand Azu, has high hopes of securing a job after graduation but is scared of the reality on the ground where many with good grades are yet to secure a job.

"You know it is everyone's dream to graduate from the university and secure a good job so you can live a meaningful life and give back to your parents and the society. I am scared because I have seen a lot of graduates who are yet to get good jobs and I get worried because I do not want such fate to befall me," he said.

He said he won't mind leaving Nigeria if he failed to secure a good job. "I cannot suffer for years in the university and come back and still become a burden to my parents and relatives, we have to find a way," he said.

Azu, however, disagreed that the quality of graduates is the problem in securing jobs in Nigeria but lack of industries and corruption as good jobs are reserved for the privileged.

Blessing Oche, a graduate of Business Administration, said she worked as a Banker after graduating 15 years ago, and after she lost her job she was not able to secure another job.

"Being unemployed is not easy because no one planned to graduate from the university only to come and sit at home looking for what to do to survive. I always have a dream of working to a certain time and saving up before I could establish a business of mine, but losing my job barely two years after I gained employment scattered my dreams," she said.

Blessing, who now engages in online marketing, said that sometimes she regretted going to university, saying, "I feel it is a waste of time because what I am doing now doesn't require a university education; even with a secondary certificate I can do it."

## Why many are unemployed

A Professor of Education, Curriculum and Instructions, University of Abuja, Prof Emmanuel Ndam Danladi said, "Development is the ability to utilise available human and material resources to improve the life of citizens and promote happiness and progress. Underdevelopment, on the other hand, is the inability of a people to harness the available human and material resources to improve the quality of life of the citizens that leads to frustration and social instability.

"When you juxtapose the conceptual analysis above and the millions of graduates that our universities have turned out over the years, you will agree that there is no scarcity of manpower in Nigeria. Rather, we can easily conclude that there has been 'unwise' use of the graduates by the government," he said.

He further said that if on the other hand the problem is the quality of human resources, then, "we can trace the problem to poor funding of university programmes that have failed to impact positively on graduates. 'Better soup na money buy am.'"

For Professor Ben Ugheoke, an individual is productive if he or she finds a place they can apply themselves and their talents effectively, saying, "As it were, the Nigerian economic environment is unable to absorb graduates from the various tertiary institutions in the country. Thus, you have a large number of graduates chasing after very few or unavailable job opportunities in the organised sectors, be they private or government."

He said the prevailing economic conditions did not favour business entrepreneurship, thus, it is difficult for graduates to venture into businesses here and there.

An educationist, Michael Sule, said most Nigerian graduates are unemployable because they lacked employability skills. And no emphasis is laid on entrepreneurship in the school curriculum and the quality of training is not in sync with the situation of the society, as well as corruption on the part of the leaders.

"In Nigeria today, most graduates do not know the rudiments of the course they study because they are more after the certificate than the knowledge. Some illegal means like sleeping with lecturers, paying for assignments and good grades and using influential parents or relatives to get through their studies, so how can such a person be employable.

"The unfortunate reality is those who do not work for the certificates occupy the workforce while those who strived remain unemployed," he said.

## Why Nigeria is not growing - Experts

Experts opined that lack of connection between research and learning is responsible for Nigeria's low progress despite hundreds of higher private and public institutions across the country.

A national secretary general of the Academic Staff Union of Research Institutions, Professor Theophilus Ndubuaku, said the neglect of researchers and research institutions by successive Nigerian governments was responsible for the world's poverty capital status of Nigeria.

"It is true that Nigeria is among the most, if not the most endowed countries in the world, in terms of quantity, quality and diversity of natural resources. However, since it is globally acknowledged that research is the key to development of any country, it is not surprising, therefore, that neglect is responsible for the socioeconomic

retrogression of Nigeria," he said.

Similarly, a professor of Natural Resources, Law and Policy, Abdullahi Shehu Zuru, also identified lack of connection between research institutions and industries as the major cause of Nigeria's low industrial and economic growth.

## The way forward

The solution, according to Professor Ugheoke, is a possible re-jigging of the existing configuration by doing some things differently.

"Highways in the country may be concessioned with some rigid framework that would provide employment for citizens and revenue streams for the government. Same goes for the energy sector. Rather than run a national grid for power supply we could develop micro grid systems, managed under some rigid framework that could generate employment for citizens and revenue for the government," he said.

He said the money the government would have used in developing the infrastructure could be channeled to repositioning other sectors like health, education etc for greater efficiency and effectiveness.

"If this is done, the number of graduates roaming the streets would be reduced and the society would become a safer place to live," he said.

An educationist, Mrs Olusola Bankole, said there was the need for the county to review its educational objectives, which are currently driving the zeal to acquire a certificate without much emphasis on life skills for personal, family and national development.

"We need to refocus and rethink our education philosophy and essence in Nigeria; what is the reason for education? It has to be from nursery and primary school levels and we have to adopt an education-for-life approach like in some countries by impacting the life of the learner to impact society," she said.

For Sule, the government should revive all the defunct industries to help create employment and reduce pressure on government agencies, which are crowded.

"We should go back as a producing country, where skilled people will be built and grow instead of everyone depending on government jobs where many professions are buried due to lack of new knowledge," he said.

Also, Prof Danladi suggested the amendment of the Nigerian constitution to collapse the two National Assembly houses to one of 109 members and be paid sitting allowance to save money for other projects.

He said government should probe the revenue generation sources of the country to curb corruption and fund universities, especially, in the areas of entrepreneurship and skills acquisition.

From Peter Moses, Abeokuta

‘To sleep like the dead’ connotes sleeping very deeply and restfully. But in the Ogun State community, even the dead could no longer sleep at ease.

For about three months now, the Ipokia community, the headquarters of Ipokia Local Government Area of the state, has been filled with the terror of demented group of ritualists who go about exhuming corpses and chop off their heads.

While residents are asleep, the hoodlums would storm graveyards, and in many cases, compounds where people buried their loved ones, to carry out their heinous crimes.

Residents of the community told *Daily Trust on Sunday* that in different parts of the town, hoodlums are said to have dug graves to exhume skulls and other human parts.

The locals explained that the ritualists started the act about two months ago and have succeeded in making away with scores of dry human heads.

Our correspondent gathered that nobody has been arrested since the act of exhuming corpses began in Ipokia town despite the presence of security operatives in the ancient town. Residents of Ipokia said it was unfortunate that security agencies had been able to track down those behind this despicable act.

Being the headquarters of Ipokia Local Government, the border town hosts a police divisional headquarters, an office of the Department of State Services (DSS), an office of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), the So-Safe Corps, the Amotekun Corps and others. However, despite the security men's presence, the suspected ritualists operate and get away with it.

A local said, “They sneak into people's compounds, dig graves and remove skulls and any other part they need. They will do it in a manner that residents won't wake up to know there is anything going on around them.

“You will just wake up in the morning to see that the grave in your compound has been dug and skull removed. Nobody has been arrested since two months ago when this aberration started.”

An indigene of the community, Ade Ashade, told *Daily Trust on Sunday* that more than 50 graves

**Adeyemi said the perpetrators were becoming more desperate in their bid to harvest as many skulls from tombs in Ipokia for reasons best known to them.**



■ Ipokia Roundabout

# Ogun community where the dead no longer ‘sleep’

Suspected ritualists have shifted their reign of terror from the living to the dead in Ipokia community of Ogun State as they now invade burial grounds, exhume corpses and chop off their heads. Over 50 cases have been recorded in the last three months, *Daily Trust on Sunday* reports.

have been dug since the strange incident began, describing it as a tough moment for the town.

“I can confirm to you that more than 50 graves have been dug. At a point it became a daily occurrence. People began to rush down home to dig holes round the graves and put concrete in order to protect it.

“This crime is being committed every day in the town despite the presence of the DSS, police and other security outfits. No one has been arrested. Definitely, the perpetrators of this crime are indigenes, not strangers,” Ashade told our correspondent.

An elder in the community, Prince Samuel Adeyemi, also confirmed that two corpses were dug out in his compound, lamenting that “nobody is doing anything to stop the act.”

Adeyemi said the perpetrators were becoming more desperate in their bid to harvest as many skulls from tombs in Ipokia for reasons best known to them.

The nonagenarian said he had reported the incident to the police, urging the authorities concerned to act fast and bring the perpetrators to book.

“Dead bodies are no longer safe in Ipokia because some people want to become billionaires overnight. Please help us,” he lamented.

**We are helpless – Ipokia monarch**

The Onipokia of Ipokia, Oba Yisa Olusola Olaniyan, expressed concern over the incident, saying his community “is not getting enough support from security agents.”

The monarch told *Daily Trust on Sunday* that a suspect was arrested over the incident in November, but alleged that he was

set free by the police.

He particularly regretted that the incident had caused a lot of families pain and “dented the image of the town.”

The Onipokia, however, explained that a meeting had been held by the elders and the council chairman over the incident, and a local security watch of vigilantes to be monitored by Ipokia Youth Council leaders was instituted.

Oba Olaniyan said, “What you asked me is true; and it has been going on for some time. Myself, the chiefs and elders have met over it, even with the local government chairman, who is the chief security officer of the local government.

“We instituted a local security watch of vigilantes to be monitored by Ipokia Youth Council leaders. Part of our problems is that we are not getting enough support from the security agents like the police and members of Amotekun. But we are hopeful that very soon, we will get them because some of them were almost caught about four nights ago in a compound when they came as usual to commit their evil act. They escaped into a nearby bush.”

Asked if he has been able to identify reasons behind this act, he responded, “I wish I knew who these people are so that we can hand them over to the authorities to face the wrath of the law. They are denting the image of this town and causing a lot of families pain, which I am not happy about.

“The police actually got a suspect while I was in the US in November 2022, but I heard that he was released from Elewera, the headquarters of the police in the state headquarters, after a few days.

“Don't ask me why they released



■ Onipokia

him because the police are the ones who can give that detail.”

Also speaking with our correspondent, the president, Spotlight Club, Ipokia, Bankole Habeeb Oluwatobi said, “I will challenge the Nigeria Police Force. How come such a thing is happening and they are not able to nail it down to one or two people? I know they have the capacity for intelligence gathering to curb this act.

“When I heard that information I needed to quickly rush back home to see if it was true. And my findings showed that it was true. I hope the police would act appropriately to make sure that those behind this are brought to book.”

**Why it is difficult to track down perpetrators – Police**

Speaking with *Daily Trust on Sunday*, the police spokesman in the state, Abimbola Oyeyemi, described the development as a premeditated crime, which he said made it difficult to track down the

perpetrators.

Oyeyemi submitted that it is wrong for the community to say they are not getting enough support from the police, saying, “except they are saying we should deploy policemen to all the burial grounds in the community.”

“People should be vigilant and report suspicious movements to the police, especially at night. We are on top of our games and anybody caught will be brought to book,” the police spokesman said.

Reacting to the allegation of freeing a suspect, Oyeyemi said, “Anybody arrested for such crime can only be charged for unlawful possession of human parts, not murder. They should not forget that it is a bailable offence. That you take a suspect to court and it grants him bail does not mean that the case has ended. The court only grants him bail so that he would attend trial from his house.

“If a suspect gets bail in court, it does not mean that the police are not doing their job.”

## FACTCHECK

In partnership with

Centre for Democracy Development (CDD)

## IPOB used false narratives to blame military for Amorka arson

By Faruk Shuaibu

In the night of October 20, 2022, Amorka, a village in Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State, was attacked at 11pm. Gunshots sent shivers down the spines of residents of the community, which shares boundary with Imo State and is located on a highway connecting South East and the South South.

After the attack, ruins of burnt trucks and shops were left, some of which were posted on the social media.

Screenshot of the posts alleged that the incident happened in Amorka, courtesy of Biafra TV, IPOB Community Radio, Biafra (Source: Crowdtangle).

**Background**

The message indicated that the precursor of the attack on the community was related to the continued detention of the leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Nnamdi Kanu.

Since he was brought back from Kenya in June, Kanu has been in detention with the Department of Security Service (DSS) although the Court of Appeal set him free.

The federal government refused to let him go, announcing two weeks later that Kanu was still in detention because he posed a flight risk and he intended to leave the country.

However, the IPOB denied these allegations, pointing out that its security outfit was created to curb the insecurity that has worsened in the region overtime.

An investigation by the BBC revealed how members of the group, especially those outside the country, used Facebook to incite ethnic violence and call for the death of those who refused to carry out the orders it issued, especially the sit-at-home it declared on Mondays to protest the continued detention of its leader.

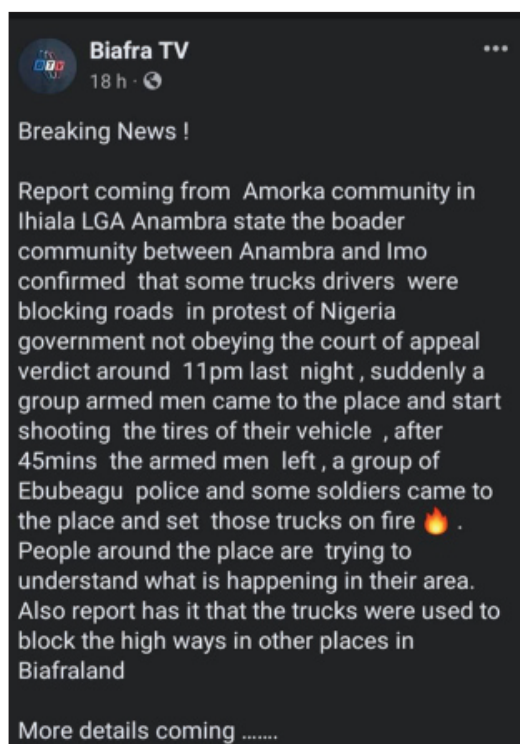
The investigation documented how one of its supporters, Nneka Igwenagu, called a youth leader in Anambra State a chicken that did not need to be alive. A few weeks later, the leader was killed for resisting to comply with the sit-at-home order in their community.

The activities of the armed outfit introduced a new wave of violence that has affected everyone in the region. It has also led to the creation of splinter groups, thereby escalating attacks.

Since no group claims responsibility for any attack that occurs in the region, the media has adopted the phrase, "unknown gunmen" to describe the attackers, who often target security personnel and government infrastructures.

**How the attack was reported**

CrowdTangle churned out over 100 posts from various groups, with



a total of 9,291 social interactions, including the video of the incident and a text blaming the military and Ebubeagu, a regional security outfit created by governors of the region, as well as a press statement, two days later, by the IPOB reiterating the position.

Twitter showed a few messages regarding the incident while Facebook was the leading platform for reporting the attack.

The first post that had the video was by Chinasa Nworu at 2:50 pm. The content on the page described the owner as a Biafran activist with 38,775 followers. The page was created on May 24, 2020 and administered from Kuwait.

The video received 2,000 views and was shared 155 times. These figures are less compared to the ones in the Biafran Times (Source: Crowdtangle).

In the page, it was stated, "Can anyone stop the sun from shining? If not, then no one can stop Biafra."

The administrators of the company, created on November 8, 2017 and described as a media group, are mainly from outside the country. Five people control it from Italy, two from Germany and three each from Austria, Nigeria and South Africa.

An analysis of the post showed that it had 137,000 views and a total of 1,800 shares.

According to the analysis by CrowdTangle, 35 pages also posted the same video with the write-up. Most of these groups have the same affiliation with the propagation of the Biafran cause.

Our analysis indicated coordinated networks to amplify the narrative that the military committed the attack. This is because the posts were a few minutes apart from one another.

As if the coordinated misinformation was ineffective,

the media and publicity secretary of the IPOB, Emma Powerful, issued a statement denouncing the protest as contained in the post.

In the statement, Powerful blamed the military for forcing truck owners to make the blockade to support the detained IPOB leader so as to cause economic hardship for the people.

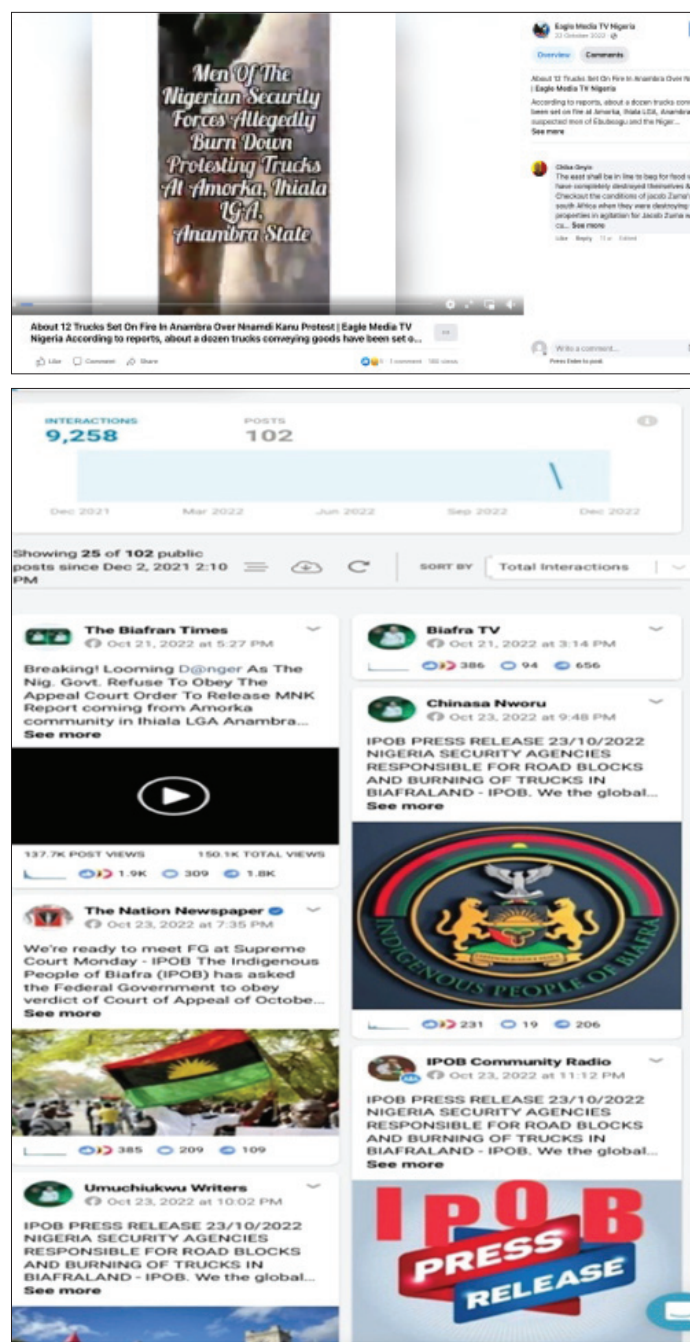
He stated that this tactic was to fuel artificial food scarcity in the region so that prices of commodities would skyrocket.

"The public should know that it is the Nigerian security agents that forced drivers to block roads with their trucks. The same security agents with Ebubeagu militias also set fire to those trucks carrying goods to the East and not the Eastern Security Network (ESN), unknown gunmen or criminals.

"Government's security agents blocked all the major routes to Biafra land and refused to all trucks carrying goods into the region. In the end, they set fire to those trucks loaded with consumable goods," Powerful alleged.

**Was there protest in Ihiala?**

The post alleged that there was protest against the unlawful detention of Kanu, which was organised by the association of truck drivers in Aba. It added that one of the drivers said they were



mobilising to shut down Nigeria if the government disobeyed the court judgement on the IPOB leader.

Without evidence to corroborate the protest, another page promoting the IPOB, Eagle Media TV Nigeria, doctored the video of the Amorka incident and the demonstration in Aba to show the narrative that there was a protest in the community.

The video also used a voice-over to narrate what happened in the community, including burnt trucks and vehicles in traffic gridlock to prove that there was a protest.

Like the coordination in the Amorka post, the statement issued by Powerful also shows the same pattern as the pages of Chinasa Nworu, Umuchiukwu Writers and Biafra TV, among others.

The incident was amplified on these platforms to escalate the differences between the government of Nigeria and the people of the region, who feel marginalised.

The misinformation was spread despite the efforts of the Anambra State police public relations officer, DSP Ikenga Tochukwu, describing the incident as a case of robbery and arson.

The second narrative, mainly reported by the mainstream media in Nigeria, stated that yet-to-be-identified attackers carried out the incident. The report further stated that sources fingered IPOB members who protested their leader's detention despite a court order.

Another source claimed that the hoodlums also dropped sheets of paper with typed messages, saying there would be no peace until Kanu was released.

Although the IPOB admitted that some groups were using its name to commit crimes in the region, the claim that the military was behind the attack is false. This is because the group and its supporters only gave half facts of what transpired in the community.

When DSP Ikenga was contacted, he said an investigation was yet to be completed on the incident, but reiterated that it was an attempt to rob a truck with perishable goods. He said that when they discovered that the truck did not contain what they intended to carry, they got angry and set it ablaze, a situation that affected other things around the area.

He said witnesses of the incident had come forward with information at their disposal, but added that the attackers' identities were yet to be confirmed. "Whatever guise or umbrella anybody wants to use to commit crime, we will unmask the person," he vowed.

**This fact-check was produced with mentorship from the African Academy for Open Source Investigations (AAOSI) to tackle the disinformation that undermines democracies, and as part of an initiative by the International Centre for Journalists (ICFJ) and Code for Africa (CfA), in partnership with Daily Trust Foundation.**



STATES

KANO

Fire guts police headquarters in Kano

From Salim Umar Ibrahim, Kano

A large section of the administrative block at the Police Command headquarters in Kano was yesterday gutted by fire.

It was gathered that the fire started from the provost office and spread to the Finance Department, conference room, PPRO's office, Assistant Commissioner of Police (Admin) office, Deputy Commissioner (Admin) office, among other offices.

Efforts to reach command's spokesman, SP Abdullahi Haruna Kiyawa proved abortive as his phone was switched off and access to the scene of the incident was denied.

However, the Public Relations Officer, Kano Fire Service, Saminu Yusuf Abdullahi told Daily Trust on Sunday that they received a distress call from the Patrol and Guard of Hoto Police Division around 1:20pm and a team of fire fighters swung into action to put out the fire.

He added that while the fire has been brought under control, at the time of filing this report, details of the incident are yet to reach him.

KADUNA

Zaria-Kano Highway reopens after tanker drivers' blockade

From Mohammed Ibrahim Yaba, Kaduna

Two days after tanker drivers blocked the Zaria-Kano highway over the alleged killing of their colleague by a soldier, they have agreed to reopen the road.

Daily Trust on Sunday gathered that the protesting drivers, who used their heavy vehicles to block the busy highway, agreed to remove them on Saturday after a series of negotiations with security agencies and Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC).

The crisis began on Wednesday at 3.30 pm shortly after a soldier attached to a construction company shot the victim following an altercation.

The drivers blocked the road to demand justice for the victim's family.

The incident happened near Tashar Yari in Makarfi town along the highway and led to a serious gridlock that got many travellers stranded.

Confirming the reopening of the road on Saturday morning, the state acting sector commandant of the FRSC, Lawal Garba, said normalcy had returned.

FCT

NGO targets job creation for 50,000 in 2023

By Aishah Saleeman

A non-governmental organisation, The Tijjaniyya Grassroots Mobilisation and Empowerment Initiative (TIGMEIN), has said its target is to create over 50,000 job opportunities for its members and others in 2023.

The lead spokesperson and Board of Trustees chairman of the group, Dr Umar Alhaji Ibrahim Pandogari, disclosed this during the national stakeholders meeting of state coordinators, secretaries and state Amirah in Abuja.

At the meeting, it was resolved that the empowerment activities and skills acquisition training for over 50,000 participants would be carried out in Kaduna, Gombe, Osun and Rivers states in areas of production to stimulate economic activities across the zones.

He said the purpose of the stakeholders meeting was to map out strategies for better engagement and re-emphasise the need for the unity of Tijjaniyya and the Muslim Ummah.

Pandogari encouraged members to be self-reliant as they raise funds to embark on the all important course of creating job opportunities for members and other people in the society.

The primary focus of the TIGMEIN is to trigger sustainable grassroots development of Tijjaniyya adherents and sympathizers, individuals and groups, as well as the country in general through unity and empowerment.

ZAMFARA

'199 ghost doctors found on Zamfara govt payroll'

From Shehu Umar, Gusau

Governor Bello Mohammed Matawalle has said his administration found 199 ghost doctors on the payroll of the state government as part of the process to implement the N30,000 minimum wage.

He said the state government was paying salaries for 280 medical doctors but in actual sense, there are only 81 of them in the state.

The governor made the pronouncement in a chat with newsmen in his residence

in Maradun town, the headquarters of Maradun Local Government Area of the state, saying the situation made it difficult to pay their monthly salaries.

He said he had met with the state chapter of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) officials and other stakeholders on how to trace those 199 ghost doctors.

"I have paid both November and December salaries to all the health workers, but unfortunately, we discovered discrepancies in the way the salaries are being paid," Matawalle said.

He said the ghost doctors were discovered following the ongoing data

capturing of the workforce in the state through the office of the Head of Service as part of his government's readiness to commence proper implementation of the N30,000 minimum wage to workers.

He assured that no bonafide civil servant would be retrenched over the implementation of the N30,000 minimum wage.

The governor also said the presidential flag-bearer of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Bola Ahmed Tinubu, promised to establish a gold refinery in the state as a measure to end insecurity in the state if elected.

Olumo Rock is a mountain in south-western Nigeria. It is located in Ikija area of Abeokuta, Ogun State, and was normally used as a natural fortress during inter-tribal warfare in the 19th century.



Photo: Benedict Uwalaka

BORNO

Buhari approves two institutes for Borno

From Olatunji Omirin, Maiduguri

President Muhammadu Buhari has approved the establishment of an Industrial Equipment and Machinery Development Institute (IEMDI) and a Skills Acquisition Institute in Borno State.

The message was conveyed when the executive vice chairman of the National Agency for Science and

Engineering Infrastructure (NASENI), Professor Mohammed Sani Haruna paid a courtesy visit to the Government House in Maiduguri on Friday.

The NASENI boss explained that the development institute was aimed at researching, designing and manufacturing tools, machines, processing, and equipment that would fast-track the establishment of cottage industries.

He added that the institute would produce spare parts of all equipment that would ensure industrialisation, not only in Borno but the entire North East.

The NASENI executive vice chairman informed Governor Zulum that President Buhari had approved skills development training of 100 youths to be selected from all the 27 local government areas on vulcanizing and modern plumbing.

BENUE

Ortom, APC condemn destruction of billboards

From Hope Abah Emmanuel, Makurdi

Governor Samuel Ortom and the opposition All Progressives Congress (APC) in Benue State have condemned the destruction of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party's (PDP) campaign billboards in Gboko area.

Our correspondent reports that billboards belonging to the PDP mounted at strategic places in Gboko town were vandalised.

The governor, on Saturday condemned the destruction of the billboards, noting that the act was capable of triggering crises in the area. Consequently, he called for caution on the part of party supporters.

Speaking through his media aide, Terver Akase, the governor stressed that no individual or group had the right to pull down campaign materials of political opponents, no matter the circumstances.

Ortom added that the introduction of electronic voting had strengthened the country's electoral system, adding that anyone confident about his chances at the polls should canvass for votes among the people rather than attack other contestants.

He urged security operatives to investigate the incidents in Gboko and bring those responsible to justice, to serve as deterrent to others.

NIGER

Daily Trust columnist berates Niger governors over abandoned projects

By Abubakar Akote, Minna

A member of the Editorial Board of Daily Trust Newspapers, Professor Muhammad Umar Ndagi, has criticised the abandonment of developmental projects by successive governments in Niger State.

Ndagi, who is the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, University of Abuja, said the abandonment was due to the past and current governments' regionalism and lack of agenda for the development of the state.

He stated this while delivering a memorial lecture tagged, 'Building an all-inclusive state for the prosperity of all' in honour of the late vice chancellor of the Federal University of Technology, Minna, Professor Muhammad A. Daniyan, organised by the Ena Eyelo Foundation (Nupe People's Socioeconomic Development Association) held at the Etsu Yahaya Abubakar Lecture Theatre, Niger State College of Education, Minna.

He said most local government

chairmen in the state had relocated to the state capital, abandoning their areas to traditional rulers who have no constitutional power or resources to implement any development programmes.

He also said the challenge of the state was the incessant felling of economic trees, especially shea nut trees because of the failure of the government to utilise state resources for development.

"One lamentable practice that has become characteristic of some governors is their refusal to complete development projects left by their predecessors, a factor that plausibly explains why dozens of abandoned projects litter parts of the state," he said.

Earlier, the chairman of the Ena Eyelo Foundation, Dr Jonathan Jiya, said it was formed by some Nupe citizens, including the late Professor Muhammad Daniyan, to create equitable opportunities for women and youths who lack access to resources to develop their potentials.

# FEVER PITCH

UNBEATABLE SPORTS ACTION

## Guardiola gives up on premier league title

The Manchester City manager, Pep Guardiola was furious following another poor display from his team as they suffered another setback in the title race.

The champions slumped to their second consecutive defeat in four days after they were surprisingly dumped out of the EFL Cup by Southampton on Wednesday night before surrendering their lead against Manchester United yesterday afternoon.

Speaking after the match at full-time, a visibly frustrated Guardiola appeared to concede defeat in his team's quest to retain the league title.

'I don't care about the Premier League and the Carabao Cup, we cannot win. We won a lot, so it's not a problem,' he was quoted to have said via BT Sport.

The 51-year-old Spaniard was



Guardiola

also seemingly frustrated with United's controversial equaliser.

Fernandes fired home after Rashford stepped aside to allow his teammate through, before a

host of City players protested instantly to referee Stuart Atwell who gave the goal after a VAR ruling, having initially ruled it out for offside.

'Well, Rashford is off-side, Bruno Fernandes is not. Whether Rashford intervened and distracted our keeper and our central defenders, I don't know. The rule is the rule.' Guardiola was quoted to have said.

The result now leaves Man City five points adrift of Arsenal, who could extend their lead if they beat Spurs in the North London derby tomorrow.

On the other hand, United, are only a point adrift of their local rivals in third with both legs firmly in the title race.

## Nigerian army reintegrates wounded soldiers through sports

>>> Page 39

# El clasico in Saudi Arabia as Madrid battle Barcelona for Supercopa glory

By Jide Olusola with agency reports

Real Madrid will play arch rivals Barcelona in the Spanish Super Cup final in Saudi Arabia tonight, in one of the biggest matches on the football calendar.

On Wednesday, Real Madrid defeated Valencia on penalties in the competition's first semi-final, while Barcelona also needed a penalty shootout to advance, defeating Real Betis on Thursday to set up El Clasico.

The Spanish Super Cup is not a priority competition, but the match has unquestionably grown more significant because Barcelona is in the final, and a victory for the trophy holders would tie them with Barcelona on 13 victories in this specific competition.

In contrast, Real Madrid has already defeated Barcelona this year, winning 3-1 when the two clubs faced off in a league match at the Bernabeu in the middle of October.

Barcelona are the most successful side in this competition, but they have not



Barcelona's goalkeeper, Marc-Andre ter Stegen saves the ball during a La Liga football match at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium, Madrid in October 2022

lifted the trophy since 2018, losing in the final of the 2020-21 Spanish Super Cup to Athletic Bilbao.

Real Madrid possible starting line-up could have Courtois in goal as expected while Carvajal, Nacho, Rudiger,

Mendy could form the defence shield. Kroos, Valverde, Modric are expected to run the midfield while Rodrygo, Benzema, Vinicius lead the attack front.

Barcelona possible starting line-up will have Ter Stegen

manning the sticks while Kounde, Araujo, Christensen, Balde could provide defensive cover for him. in the midfield, Xavi could line up Frankie de Jong, Busquets, Pedri while Dembele, Lewandowski, Fati play upfront.

## Enyimba kickstart NPFL season with win over Nasarawa Utd

By Jide Olusola

Eight-time Nigeria Professional Football League champions, Enyimba have begun the 2022/23 abridged season with a 2-1 win over Nasarawa United at the Zaria Road stadium, Jos yesterday.

The Elephants kicked off the game with a blistering start that saw Abubakar threatening with a strike that narrowly went over in the first minute.

In the 25th minute, Nasarawa had a rare chance as Dennis Victor floated in a cross as Josiah Oche nodded down to Maigishiri whose volley went off target.

Keen to make amends after a rather poor performance last season, Enyimba got the opener in the 32nd minute through Elijah Akanni who scored an absolute beauty from outside of the box.

Buoyed by the goal, the Finidi-George side doubled the lead six minutes later as Imoh Obot scored with a thunderous freekick that left the Nasarawa keeper, David Yinka stunned.

Fully in control of the game, Enyimba gave little or no space for their hosts to make any meaningful threat to their goal area but their resilience was tested as the game went in the second half.

In the 77th minute, Enyimba keeper, Ojo Olorunleke was finally tested as he pulled a top save to keep out a goal bound freekick but he was finally breached after Nasarawa Utd was awarded a penalty in the 87th minute.

Ojo had initially saved the penalty but the rebound was headed in by Oche Josiah.

The hosts, Nasarawa United pressured Enyimba at closing stages but the Elephants defended well to repel everything thrown at them to end the game 2-1.

## Aruna knocked out of WTT Contender Durban

African champions, Quadri Aruna has suffered defeat in the last eight at the WTT Contender in Durban yesterday morning.

Ukraine's Yaroslav Zhmudenko beat Aruna in three sets game in the quarter-final 3-0 (11-8, 11-7, 11-3) to book a place in the semi-final

against Simon Gauzy.

The journey started for the Nigerian superstar when he defeated China's Sun Wen 3-1 (12-10, 15-13, 11-13, 11-8) in the first round.

The 34-year-old came from behind twice to beat French teenage sensation Felix Lebrun 3-2 (3-11,

11-6, 12-10, 15-13, 11-5) in the round of 16.

For the Egyptian, she defeated Yuan Wan of Germany 3-1 (11-9, 8-11, 11-6, 11-9) before she outshined Polish opponent Natalia Bajor 3-0 (11-8, 11-5, 11-8) in the round of 16.

Aruna will be playing at the WTT Contender Doha at the Lusail Sports Arena, Doha, Qatar, later this month.

In the same vein, women champion, Dina Meshref has also exited the tournament after losing 3-2 (8-11, 11-8, 9-11, 11-5, 13-11)

to Chinese Taipei's Chien Tung-Chuan in the women's singles quarter-final.

The tense game ended after five sets with the Egyptian bowing out of the championship. Tung-Chuan came from behind twice before sealing the victory in the fifth set.

# Nigerian army reintegrates wounded soldiers through sports

By Jide Olusola

The Nigerian Army has thrown its weight to help support and reintegrate its wounded soldiers back into the civilian life through sports.

As part of the moves, the soldiers played a friendly sitting volleyball game with West African champions, Team FCT at the MKO Abiola National Stadium, Abuja.

According to the Team Lead, Invictus Nigeria, Ojey Bobby, the game shows the power of sports in recovery, through which the soldiers will have a wider understanding of what their veterans had gone through and why they need to recover and adjust to a new lifestyle.

"Invictus Game is a foundation that caters for wounded service men all over the world. Nigeria became the first African country to join in October last year. We need to thank the Chief of Defence Staff who gave approval for these men to use sports



■ Wounded soldiers (Team Invictus) in a group photograph with Team FCT disabled athletes after their friendly game

for recovery.

"We are the 25th country in the country. We hope to participate the Games in Germany and it will be a great one for our wounded soldiers," he said.

Speaking in the same vein, coach for Invictus Nigeria, Cheri Agoawuike praised the team for the performance despite being newly formed.

"It was a performance because

they are few days old and they played a West African champion. Sports is a tool for rehabilitation, integration and for them to be reabsorbed into the society. With sports, they are accepted back in the society," he said.

The Invictus Games, founded by Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex is an international multi-sport event first held in 2014, for wounded, injured and sick servicemen and women, both serving and veterans.

## Amokachi to superintend over Tinubu-Shettima youth football tournament

From Ibraheem Hamza Muhammad

A former Nigerian international and Presidential aide, Daniel Amokachi "Da bull" has been appointed to oversee the organization of the maiden edition of Tinubu-Shettima Youth Football tournament.

This was made known by Senator Umaru Tanko Al-Makura who disclosed to the media that plans have reached advanced stage for the national competition to kick-off.

According to him, "The presidential candidate of the APC, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu and his running mate, Senator Kashim Shettima Mustapha are sports enthusiasts who have been supporting youths and sports activities even before they ventured into mainstream politics.

"No country will prosper if its youths are not encouraged to seek for International stardom by displaying their talents in sports and many other fields of human endeavours," he said.

In his acceptance speech, Amokachi said the tournament was to support Tinubu's presidential bid while discovering new talents.

"I have planned with FIFA/CAF Technical Instructor, Mohammed Ameenu amongst other stakeholders to organise the football fiesta tagged, "Unity Cup" with the main aim to support Tinubu/Shettima and to fish-out young and grassroots talents towards taking Nigeria to stardom and to play football Internationally," he said.

## Ardent supporter donates training kits to Gombe United

From Rabilu Abubakar, Gombe

The Gombe state Sports Commission (GSSC) has held a solidarity walk in support of governor Muhammad Inuwa Yahaya for supporting sports activities in Gombe.

While kickstarting the rally from the APC Square, the Chairman, Gombe State Sports Commission, Mr. Olare Daniel Terry, said the Commission had organised the rally to support the Governor for supporting activities which led

Gombe State team to win in their home and away matches.

Mr. Terry said the solidarity walk was meant to tell the world that Governor Inuwa was a sport-loving governor, who was promoting sports in the state.

He used the medium to call on players to shun drug abuse, because it tarnished their image.

In the mean time, the Commander, Nigeria Drugs Laws and Enforcement Agency NDLEA, Mrs Ekaete Silvia E, who was represented by the Principal Staff

Officer, Drugs Demand Reduction, Mr. Zakari Ya'u Sambo, said no player could excel if he engaged in drugs.

Mrs Ekaete, said youths were the future of tomorrow and as such should shun drugs, because it could lead people to die young.

Similarly, the Director of Sports, Gombe State, Mr. Musa Sale Jarmai, commended Governor Inuwa for his support and urged the people of Gombe to re-elect him for a second term, so that he could further develop the state excellently.

## 2022 Jos festival: Malcomines, Babale Farms, Army share top laurels

By Ernest Ekpenyong

The just concluded 2022 Jos international polo tournament was an unforgettable epoch that changed polo folklore, crowning three brand new champions in the high-goal, medium, intermediate, and Low-goal categories of the glamorous king of games grand slam.

Revered for its robust competition, the prestigious polo fiesta that galloped off with over 30 teams jostling for four major cups and a handful of subsidiary prizes saw the home teams, four times defending champions, Malcomines and Babale Farm sweeping two of the biggest laurels.

The final match decided before a full house at the late Gen. Usman

Katsina Polo Ground was a thrilling encounter which saw Malcomines defeat Keffi Pony 9-3 goals to clinched their fifth back-to-back Governors Cup winners and overall champions.

"We really clicked as a team. Each one of us knew where to go during a play and kept our cool throughout the tournament. We had a lot of fun and never let ourselves get down if a play didn't go our way," Murtala Laushi, Malcomines Patron declares.

"While we appreciate our Governor and the Plateau State Government, our esteemed sponsors for this robust partnership and several



■ Murtala Laushi and his players receive the Governor's Cup as they celebrate their fifth straight victory

individuals for their support, we want to pledge that we will endeavor to do more as a club to promote peace and in the state," the elated polo boss enthused.

## SPORTING VERDICT DAVID NGOBUA

ngobuadavid@gmail.com 08035975831 (Text only)

## Bosso's €100,000 bribery claim should be investigated

A few days ago, a stunning news emerged on social media that the Chief Coach of Nigeria's National U-20 Men's team, the Flying Eagles, Ladan Bosso, had turned down a whopping €100,000 from a football agent who wanted his player to be included in the team that he is preparing for the 2023 AFCON Championship in Egypt. Another version of the same report had it that other Europe based agents too had him with bribe for them to have sole ownership of his players who might be scouted by foreign clubs at the championship that will be starting in February.

The report did state clearly that Bosso said he refused to be seduced or induced with such huge amount of money. According to the online medium InsideNews247.com, Bosso said he wants to take full responsibility for the success or failure of the team. As such, he is not ready to compromise his team selection for any gratification.

As the report went viral on social media, some of us who saw the danger inherent in it expected an instant rejoinder from the coach disassociating himself with the medium, it's reporter and the report itself. Unfortunately, that didn't happen until a few days ago when the football governing body, the NFF released an official statement in which Bosso distanced himself from the controversial interview.

The coach who is never shy of controversies was quoted by the NFF as saying "Please, permit me to clear the air on the news making the rounds about me rejecting an amount of money from a football agent. I never made such a claim to any journalist, talk less of in a formal interview. There was no time I made such a statement to either a journalist or any other person for that matter. If any one has proof of my making such a statement, the person should come out and tender it in public.

"At the moment, I am focused on ensuring the Flying Eagles prepare very well and we are able to pick the very best legs to represent Nigeria at the Africa U-20 Cup of Nations in Egypt. We surely can do without such distractions."

The response from the coach through his employers came as a relief to those who felt disturbed that despite FIFA's hard stance on issues of bribery and corruption, the national team coach was still romancing people who will be quick to offer him bribe to influence his team selection.

However, even as the somehow belated statement appear to have doused the shock that greeted the bribery story, there is an important area that the rebuttal failed to cover. The statement from the NFF fell short of expectations because it didn't end with an order for the writer to withdraw the story or be sued for defamation. This has left room for speculations that the interview was actually granted.

Therefore, to clear all doubts, either Coach Bosso or the NFF should insist on immediate withdrawal of the story and a public apology from the online medium that did the report that has tampered with the image of the coach and the football federation. Casually waving aside the serious issue is not good enough.

One is not insisting that Bosso granted the interview and also made such a damning revelation but it is possible that he got carried away while talking to one of his numerous friends in the media. Another thing is that some of us who have known the coach for a long time can attest to his courage. As a former military personnel, he is never afraid to wage 'war' with anyone when necessary.

He speaks his mind no matter whose ox is gored. Bosso in 2007 minced no words when he accused FIFA of racism at the U-20 World Championship in Canada. An ordinary man wouldn't have dared FIFA in that manner. Although he burnt his fingers in the incident, after sometime, he bounced back and is still coaching the same national team.

Moreover, it will be absurd to say that Bosso is not under any pressure from football agents. It will be hard for me to be convinced that no football agent has made contact with the outspoken gaffer since he returned as coach of the Flying Eagles. Football agents like to flock around national team coaches to induce them in order to find spaces for their wards in the teams. Even the senior national team the Super Eagles is presently controlled by big agents with deep pockets. This explains why it now a common thing to find unknown average foreign-based players in the Super Eagles.

By this, I am of the opinion that my friend Bosso should be the man we all know him to be by naming and shaming anyone who may be disturbing him with bribe. There is no coach of any Nigerian national team who is not tempted with money for selection of players. These agents are recalcitrant. They don't take no for an answer. Some of the agents are even within the NFF itself. They do this through proxies to avoid the prying eyes of the public.

So, the NFF shouldn't be quick to accept Bosso's denial of the online report. Agreed he said he didn't accept any bribe but that shouldn't be enough for the football federation to also conclude that he wasn't offered money. Once bribe is offered, whether it was accepted or not, an offence was committed. Therefore, the NFF should investigate further to know, if truly something was neither given nor taken. Bosso may have decided save someone's neck.

However, if it is eventually discovered that the report by the online medium was a mere fabrication of the imagination of the writer, the NFF shouldn't hesitate to take appropriate legal actions that would deter others who might want to toe the same ignominious path in future.



Last week's exchange was a significant turning point in the presidential campaign, as both APC and PDP candidates had been careful to promote the fiction that health and personal integrity were not on the agenda.



Raducanu

## Raducanu ready to play in Melbourne after ankle injury

Emma Raducanu says she "fully trusts" the ankle injury that threatened her participation at the Australian Open. The 20-year-old Briton rolled her left ankle in Auckland nine days ago, but says she is ready to play in Melbourne. Raducanu, ranked 75th in the world, faces Germany's Tamara Korpatsch in the first round on Monday. "I've been able to do preparation, albeit more limited than usual. But I'm feeling in a good place to go out there and give it my best shot," she said. Raducanu, who stunned the world by winning the 2021 US Open as a teenage qualifier, has been hoping to put behind her the injury problems that marred her first full year on the WTA Tour.

## The futility must end here

Last weekend, armed Fulani herdsmen arrived in Igueben, my hometown.

They had a plan: assault the incoming Warri-Itakpe 4pm train at the Ekekhen Train Station. That they did, abducting 32 persons, including staff of the Nigeria Railway Corporation.

It had taken the federal government an entire generation to complete the rail line, an impossible dream when I attended Utantan Primary School in Igueben in the 1960s. It had been a stunning surprise when ordinary pipe-born water arrived during that time.

I have not been to the area since the rail service was launched two years ago, but it is not difficult to understand how much of a life-changer it has been to many. All of that changed last Saturday. I will return to this subject shortly.

Three days later, at a campaign stop in Damaturu, Yobe State, President Muhammadu Buhari was calling on voters to ensure victory next month of his APC presidential candidate, Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

Mr. Buhari, who has failed comprehensively on every single electoral pledge in his eight years in charge, alleged that a Tinubu presidency would guarantee the "progress" he has made in the security, economy and education sectors.

The account was provided by presidential spokesman Femi Adesina, who does not speak Hausa, of a statement Mr. Buhari gave in Hausa. Apparently, news reporters cannot muster the vast security outlays that the president and the candidate deploy to protect themselves as they travel, leading reporters to cover the events through a privileged spokesman's bulletins.

Mr. Tinubu seized the chance. Mr. Bayo Onanuga of his Presidential Campaign Council issued a blistering statement calling on Mr. Atiku Abubakar, to "come clean over two issues clouding his campaign: his health status and his scandalous confession of how he colluded with his former boss, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, to fleece the Nigerian treasury, using the special purpose vehicles after he became Vice-President in 1999."

The "scandalous confession" referred to a public statement made the previous day by Michael Achimugu, a former Atiku aide, who alleged that the former Vice-President had used a mechanism described as "Special Purpose Vehicles" for corrupt purposes during the Obasanjo presidency.

I quote Mr. Onanuga at some length: "The lies of several years and the various diversionary tactics are no longer sustainable. Atiku's edifice of lies is about to crash on him. The PDP presidential candidate is certainly not okay, the papering efforts notwithstanding. Eyebrows were raised when Atiku did

not return to the country after the December holidays to continue his lacklustre and faltering fifth campaign for Nigeria's presidency...

"We have it on good authority that Atiku indeed fell ill, while missing (sic) on the field. He was indeed in the UK for some medical help, though handlers camouflage that he was there on the invitation of some British officials at Whitehall, in a mimic of the earlier visit of the APC rival, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

"Despite the efforts by his handlers to showcase Atiku as healthy and physically fit to endure the rigours of the presidential campaign, pictures from rallies have belied this.

"Campaign pictures sometimes showed him being helped to descend steps at stadia. Sometimes, he walked with an apparent handicap, dragging his feet."

That statement attracted the immediate dismissal of the Atiku/Okowa Campaign Organisation which described Mr. Tinubu as "corruption personified," and unfit to hold the office of President.

"Since Tinubu by himself has opened the channels for Nigerians to examine his ill health, we have no other option than to further expose that the APC candidate must be suffering from manifest Parkinson's disease accompanied by incontinence.

"For clarity, Parkinson disease is a brain disorder whose symptoms include shaking hands, stiffness of limbs, difficulty with coordination, problem with balance when walking, articulation disorder, memory problems as well as general mental and physical weakness which are all being witnessed in the APC presidential candidate...

"It is rather unfortunate that the APC presidential candidate, who cannot stand erect or walk up an elevation unaided, who is plagued by visible tremor of the hands, who palpitates at the slightest physical exertion and who is reported in the public space as being challenged by incontinence could attempt to speak on the health status of any Nigerian.

"Moreover, some medical professionals have associated certain cases of nerve cell death with narcotic use and unhealthy lifestyle and our campaign urges Tinubu to examine himself in that regard."

"Furthermore, Nigerians find it incongruous that the tarnished Asiwaju Tinubu who is badgered by a smelly criminal past including the \$460,000 forfeiture sentence for narcotic related offense by a court of competent jurisdiction in the United States; alleged looting of Lagos State treasury and stripping of her property; cases of forgery, impersonation, perjury, inconsistencies in name, age as well as questionable educational

background, ancestry and genealogy could attempt to speak on corruption and integrity."

Last week's exchange was a significant turning point in the presidential campaign, as both APC and PDP candidates had been careful to promote the fiction that health and personal integrity were not on the agenda.

Now they are, and I challenge each candidate, if he seeks the advantage, to publicly declare his assets, including his health information. As I have always said, character comes before any manifestoes.

If they fail to, the electorate must use the information they have disclosed about each other to dismiss them and to demand that they be investigated by the incoming government.

Part of that investigation must include the curious helplessness of the Buhari government before the insecurity in the country.

Ask yourself: How is such a small southern Nigerian town as Igueben—which is a driving distance of over 1,036km from Meradi, Niger Republic; 1,714km from N'Djamena, Chad; and 3,470km from Nouakchott, Mauritania—was casually accessed and overrun by persons described as herdsmen unless they have GPS and other communication support?

Ask yourself: How do they manage the intimidation and kidnapping business without semi-official support in a country in which the government has a full database of all adults through BVN and NIN registration?

Consider that last year, gospel artiste Tosin Alao told Amina Atairu the harrowing story of his band's 2018 kidnapping. He disclosed:

- "Each time our phone rings, [the kidnappers] will dial some networks to know the identity of the person...they speak to people in the communication world."

- "They told me that...they're not the only one that will share the money: the police, military, etc."

- "When they took the N5 million... they flipped it because there is a way they will know if it is being tracked."

This, then, is the sick country the soul of which Nigerians will be prospecting in next month's election. Nigeria uses words, not action, to hunt the hunters or to solve problems. That is why The Economist, which in 2015 endorsed Buhari, last week dismissed him as having "floundered in every measure" in "eight dismal years".

And Buhari offers Tinubu to continue his futility.

But now that Messrs Atiku and Tinubu are fully exposed, including by each other, the only question left is: do you choose health or sickness, stench or fresh air, hope or hopelessness?

**This column welcomes rebuttals from interested government officials.**

- [sonala.olumhense@gmail.com](mailto:sonala.olumhense@gmail.com)
- [@Sonala.Olumhense](https://twitter.com/Sonala.Olumhense)



Loeb

## Loeb's six appeal makes Dakar rally history

French driver Sebastien Loeb won a record sixth successive stage in the Dakar Rally on Saturday although barring a disaster Qatar's Nasser Al-Attiyah looks set for a fifth title.

Loeb, a record nine-time world rally champion, won the 13th and penultimate stage, a 154 kilometres special from Shaybah to Al-Hofuf, to break Finnish driver Ari Vatanen's mark of five consecutive victories in 1989.

The 48-year-old Prodrive star is in second spot overall – the same position as he filled last year – 1 hour and 21 minutes behind Al-Attiyah.

"It's great, even though the record was not necessarily my goal," said Loeb.