

STILL IN CAPTIVITY

11 SCHOOLGIRLS OF FGC, BIRNIN YAURI

572 DAYS

1 STUDENT OF BETHEL BAPTIST HIGH SCHOOL, KUJAMA

544 DAYS

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Victims of Southern Kaduna attack narrate ordeal



1 year after birth, UAE hospital offers to separate Nigeria's conjoined twins

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One collateral killing too many

Again, dozens of indefensible citizens have suffered collateral damage from mistaken airstrikes, this time in Zamfara State. More than 60 people were recently killed in the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) airstrikes targeted at bandits in Mutunji community in Maru Local Government Area of Zamfara State. This huge loss was recorded when bandits, that were the targets of the NAF, rushed into Mutunji community and used the inhabitants as shields from the airstrikes. Residents told reporters that the criminals rode on more than 300 motorbikes into Dandalla.

After they were harassed out of their camps by the military fighter jets from Dansadau Emirate in Zamfara State, the bandits, in large numbers reportedly headed for and entered into the Mutunji community where they shielded themselves with residents of Dandalla. They told the residents that no one would be allowed to leave the community and that they would all die together since the military has decided to carry out air raids on them.

While responding to questions at a media briefing on recent military operations, the Director, Defence Media Operations (DMO), Major General Musa Danmadami, said the military had set up a board to investigate the matter with a view to ascertaining whether or not there was collateral damage. The board is also to confirm the number of victims involved. "The air bombardment was a precision bombardment and a lot of terrorists were equally neutralised during the operations", Danmadami said.

Lamenting the deaths of some soldiers from the ground forces during the operations, Danmadami said the number of soldiers killed was over-exaggerated in the media; adding that the number of civilians killed had also not been officially communicated to the military by the Zamfara State government. But regardless of how small anyone thinks the number of casualties from among ground forces might be, the life of every Nigerian, whether as a soldier or as a law-abiding

citizen, is sacred. The inexcusable loss of over 60 innocent lives in what ought to be a precision bombardment in Zamfara is certainly a huge national disaster.

The Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Oladayo Amao, had announced in October 2022 that a committee of officers has been instated to compile all allegations of accidental air strikes on civilians as well as review the circumstances leading to such strikes.

He said the investigation was further aimed at promoting accountability, allow NAF to learn valuable lessons in order to mitigate similar cases in the future as well as take extra measures to minimise civilians harm and casualties in conflict areas.

Statistics from miscalculated airstrikes in the past show that 11 of such miscarried airstrikes have occurred between 2014 and 2022; with a total of 234 casualties. The 11 airstrikes occurred in different locations across five states including Borno, Katsina, Niger, Yobe and Zamfara. While five of the airstrikes with collateral damages happened in 5 years, between 2014 and 2019; 6 miscalculated airstrikes by the NAF occurred in two years, between 2021 and 2022. With the airstrikes that occurred at different times in Kayamla village, Rann IDP camp, Daglun, Gajigana village, Mainok and Kwatar Daban Masara, Borno state leads with the highest figure of 6 of such airstrikes occurring in one state. While Zamfara experienced two of such bombings, Katsina, Niger and Yobe each suffered one attack.

A total casualty figure of 234 fatalities suffered in precision bombardments from 11 separate airstrikes is wanton and unpardonable. The highest collateral damage in a single attack occurred in the December 17, 2022 offensive that claimed over 60 lives in Zamfara state. The least casualty figure of two victims was witnessed during the attack of July 6, 2022 in Kunkunni village in Katsina State.

While the difficulty of the terrain in Zamfara state may be appreciated, the operation by troops

was recently complicated by bandits who now live among civilian population and use same as shield. A change in strategy should, however, have long been decided by the NAF after the third of the eleven airstrikes that hit struck wrong targets.

It's totally unacceptable that in spite of the colossal number of victims involved in most of the airstrikes with collateral damages, no one has ever been held accountable. Nigerians doubt if there has ever been a report on the collateral killings in all the previous bombardments. If there were any reports, they were certainly not made public. Not a single family of the victims involved in the bombardments claim to have received any compensations. The military once declared that victims of the airstrike that mistakenly killed nine farmers in Buhari village in Yobe State on September 16, 2021 were not entitled to any compensations because the bombarded site was a Boko Haram enclave. This argument is actually untenable.

Collateral killings from airstrikes are most often associated with intelligence failure. But even with adequate intelligence, poor training of personnel and the nature or quality of the technology deployed in airstrikes are two critical factors that make or mar operations by troops. Only an independent investigative panel would reveal whether the NAF has the requisite advanced technology for precision air bombardments and whether its flying personnel, too, have the necessary training for manning high-tech equipment including Super Tucano fighter aircrafts.

Airstrikes, which after operations leave behind casualties, would simply be turning the war against bandits and other criminal elements in to a war against innocent Nigerians. While Daily Trust encourages the NAF to re-think its operational strategies in its fight against terrorists, the collateral damages suffered in the air bombardments that killed 60 people in Zamfara State should be the last to be heard of in the NAF onslaught against bandits and terrorist groups in Nigeria. The recent miscalculated attack in Zamfara is, indeed, one collateral killing too many.

TODAY IN HISTORY



On this day in 2020: Ukrainian Boeing 737-800 crashed just after take-off from Tehran, Iran, killing all 176 people on board.

HAPPENING THIS WEEK



Central Bank of Nigeria

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) withdrawal policy across all payment channels by individuals and corporate organisations starts on Monday 9 January 2023. Individuals and corporate entities can withdraw a maximum of N500,000 and N5 million respectively.



The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) has approved registration for 2023 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) to begin on Saturday, January 14. It is to end on Tuesday, February 12.



The awards ceremony of the 8th edition of All Africa Music Awards (AFRIMA) starts on Thursday January 12 in Senegal. This will be the first time the main awards ceremony will be held in a francophone country.

SUNDAYPHOTO



Residents crossing the Lagos/Ikorodu Expressway, abandoning the pedestrian bridge at Ikorodu area of Lagos State at the weekend

Photo: Benedict Uwalaka

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BIG INTERVIEW

Why Obasanjo, Yar'Adua, Jonathan, Buhari could not fix power sector crisis – Ex-TCN MD

- Mambilla hydro not economically viable
- Leading political parties lack understanding of issues at stake
- What must be done to give Nigerians electricity

A former Managing Director (MD) of the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN) and former staff of the African Development Bank (AfDB), Dr Usman Gur Mohammad, in an interview on *Trust TV's 30 Minutes* x-rays the issues in the power sector and how a better understanding by the presidential candidates will help drive solutions. Excerpts:

By Mannir Dan-Ali

You were part of those under the PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) engagement that x-rayed the power sector in relation to what the four main presidential candidates of the APC, PDP, NNPP and LP are offering Nigerians. What's your verdict?

The programme by PWC was on the power sector post-2023. We actually reviewed the manifestos of all the political parties before we went to that programme and the conclusion that we had is that with all the rhetoric about making 20,000 megawatts or 25,000 megawatts, there is no analysis of the problem that made us to stay on 4,000 megawatts as of today and there is nothing to show how the 20,000 megawatts is going to be made.

There are no details and I can conclude that there is no understanding by the four major political parties of the intrigues and the issues in the power sector. So, the conclusion is that if they come to power, they are likely going to spend another four years just like the current government has spent seven years without a significant movement in the power sector; that's exactly what is going to be.

But don't you think they will push back and say a lot of the things could not be properly understood until you are actually sitting in office and looking at the figures before you?

The problem is that the power sector has a lot of vested interests and the vested interests will not even allow them to understand the sector for them to be able to do any good analysis.

There was a discussion we had with PWC and we concluded that they would reach out to KPMG – which is another accounting firm – so that together with me, we are going to work with them to understand what the power sector is all about, to understand the intricacies and to understand the issues that have made us be spending trillions on the power sector without movement.

Why is it so difficult for this



■ Dr Usman Gur Mohammad

huge amount to translate to better power delivery to Nigerians?

Let me start with the Obasanjo, Yar'Adua, and Jonathan regime; what went wrong in those times? I will also tell you what went wrong under the Buhari administration.

Under the Obasanjo regime they passed the power sector reform into law and they unbundled the power sector into 11 companies and handed over all. They never embarked on privatisation; they stopped there.

But the biggest investment that Obasanjo did in the power sector was the National Integrated Power Project (NIPP). We embarked on that project without adequate study, we were convinced by some foreign companies that they were going to supply gas turbines to us, and then they said they were not even going to be doing the installation; that they

would hand it over to a Nigerian that was working with them who would take the responsibility of the installation.

So, what we did basically was that, it's like you want to build a house and you award a contract to somebody to build the house for you and he does the roof and keeps it for you when you have not started the civil works; that is exactly what we did with the NIPP.

They brought this gas turbine under FOB, and some of them stayed for more than four years in Port Harcourt, with no road even to carry them; the bridges were not tested to see whether they could be carried. So, we didn't even clear the place where we were going to install the gas turbines and there was no gas supply to the locations.

This is exactly what happened with transmission also. We awarded so many contracts that

we didn't carry out the studies. Some of those contracts actually failed completely and some of them were completed with a lot of inadequacies.

When I was made MD of the transmission company, one of the first contracts I awarded was for the procurement of three emergency reactors. I had to buy three reactors for a transmission that had been completed under the NIPP.

We installed a reactor in Ikot Ekpene, one in Ugwaji and one in Jos. We had to also do emergency procurement of transposition towers. They built those lines without transposition.

So, no way to evacuate the power?

There is no way; it will not work. The problem with electricity is not like the road where you can award a contract of nine inches and then you do four inches. You will

see the road and people will ply it. Whether the road will last for three years or one year or four years; it depends. For electricity, it will not work, that's the process. So, I had to do that for a contract that had been completed.

I'll give you another example. A 330kV line was awarded from Alauji to Owerri to Iyala to Onitsha with a 330KV substation in Owerri. That line has been funded 100 per cent through LC and all the money has been withdrawn. There's no line nowhere and nothing, simply because the necessary studies that were supposed to be done were not done.

These are some of the reasons that accounted for so much wastage that we are seeing happening under the NIPP. We spent so much money but you cannot relate the asset that we got out of the project with the money that has been spent.

When you come to Yar'Adua; he actually did something that many other people did not do. He suspended the implementation of the power sector reform and set up a committee to review the power sector reform to advise him on how to go about it. That is the best thing to do actually.

But what happened immediately after he died, Jonathan discarded the report and called a consultant to advise them on how to go about privatisation.

They employed an Indian consultant who advised them to do what is called pilot - privatise one or two states and see the experience that you learn from those two states before embarking on entire privatisation.

Jonathan discarded that report and completely took a decision to privatise the entire network - distribution and generation.

Meanwhile, there were certain studies that they were supposed to carry out to do the privatisation. For the DisCos, anybody who is taking over a DisCo, a company that is experienced will insist that you have to give them the aggregate, technical and commercial laws determined scientifically. This was not done.

We assumed a 25 per cent loss, so when we went to a road show all over the world, everybody told us, all the companies that have experience told us, "Please go and determine the studies, determine scientifically the aggregate technical commercial, we are not ready to do that."

We eventually knew nobody was going to come. So, we lowered the qualification criteria to allow Nigerian companies to take over those companies. That was how all the DisCos were taken over by companies that have no experience.

Continued on page 6

Live broadcast on



Theme:

Interrogating the 2023 Presidential Agenda

..... 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

Time: 10:00 am

Venue: NAF Conference Centre and Suites,

Gwarinpa Express Way, near NEXT

Shopping Mall, Kado, Abuja

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'Why Obasanjo, Yar'Adua, Jonathan, Buhari could not fix power sector crisis'

Continued from page 4

Have they not added any value; I mean for customers, as all they are after is just metering and that hasn't happened?

Unfortunately, for utility, even a company that is experienced, if you don't monitor them you will end up losing because you can take over your utility, make as much money as you can from that utility and discard it back worse than when you took over to the person who gave you, and that's exactly what happened, because they don't have the capacity, they don't have the experience, they signed what they called "technical partnership" with qualified companies, but what is technical partnership? It's a loose relationship that has no responsibility on the part of the technical partners.

Is that why some, like Kaduna DisCo, had to be taken over?

I'll tell you what happened. We encouraged Nigerian banks because those companies have no capacity to raise long-term finance. We encouraged Nigerian companies to invest in the DisCos. I mean the government encouraged Nigerian banks to invest in the DisCos. That money that came from the banks was short-term and very expensive and is not ideal for financing this kind of infrastructure.

We created a liquidity problem for the power sector; that was the beginning of a liquidity problem for the power sector.

At the end of the day, now you have people who have no experience, no capacity. Eventually, most of the companies, yes they have MDs that came from the private sector, but the people that are running the DisCos are actually former NEPA staff; they are the

ones running the places actually.

At the end of the day you discover that no significant investment has come to the DisCos.

We sometimes see the Generating Companies (GenCos) claiming they have put back some turbines to work and are generating a bit more electricity...?

When I was MD, distribution was the most serious problem that we had, but unfortunately, as of today, we have actually descended so low that even the generation is a problem.

There is a significant lack of gas supply. Some of the IOCs have pulled out of distribution, like Shell, and now there are several of them that cannot recover some of the turbines that they claimed that they had. At the end of the day, now sometimes we find it difficult to generate up to 4,000 megawatts.

So much talk about Mambilla, especially under this government, and it doesn't appear as if even this spade work will happen before it goes...

I was the MD of TCN, and throughout the discussion of Mambilla, they excluded me because everybody knew I would tell the truth. Eventually, when China Exim Bank sent their consultant to come to Nigeria and review the project, the China Exim Bank sneaked in and met me and we discussed extensively and I discovered that there was no project actually.

A project is something that is financially viable. If you have a project that is not financially viable, that project doesn't exist and nobody is going to put in his money.

I don't believe China Exim Bank is going to put money into that Mambilla project because when we discussed it we discovered that the tariff for Mambilla is going to be 13 cents per kilowatt hour.

You know that we have been making a lot of noise on Azura. Azura was about 10.4 or 11 cents per kilowatt hour; and we have been making a lot of noise because it's very expensive.

How do we have a hydro that is going to sell at 13 cents? Who is going to buy that energy and how are you going to recover the money? That is the question.

In the review, what we discovered is that the plant factor of a hydro, of Mambilla, was very high. What this means is that the percentage of water, if you are discharging the water at the same time for within the year, you would spend only about 20 to 30 per cent and the water will finish, meaning you are putting a big generator that is generating less. If you distribute that cost of putting that big generator to the tariff, I'm putting it in a layman's language, the tariff becomes very high.

The tariff for hydro is supposed to be between five and in most cases six cents per kilowatt hour, and this



■ Dr Usman Gur Mohammad

is 13 cent per kilowatt hour. I knew that the project would not fly. The China Exim Bank can be deceiving us and be doing whatever they want, but it will not fly.

So, forget about what they talk about; they have litigation with some people, and there is no project because at 13 cents per kilowatt hour, it doesn't make economic sense for anybody to put his money there; that is the fact.

What has been the general thrust of the Buhari administration in terms of the power sector?

What the Buhari administration took over from Jonathan is the completely privatised power sector with a transmission company under the government, but it was given to Manitoba Hydro International to manage on behalf of the government.

The government has taken over what you call the Single Buyer Model where the bulk trader is the one buying all the electricity and they sell to the DisCos.

So it is similar to the NNPC importing fuel?

Yes! This single buyer model in electricity has never worked anywhere in the world; it has never worked. I don't know how they advised us to do this. It has never worked, because it makes the DisCos to be not accountable to anybody; it makes the GenCos to be lazy.

Because you have somebody who is taking the responsibility and taking the cost, meaning, if the DisCos don't generate enough money to put into the sector, the shortfall that is supposed to go to transmission and go to generation is going to be paid by the government.

So is it another subsidy type of thing?

It is a subsidy. It's supposed to be a transitional arrangement of five years, but now we have spent more than 10 years and it is still existing.

Under the arrangement, the government of President Buhari has pumped close to N2trn into the power sector to finance this kind of subsidy and at the end of the day that money has not translated to a single megawatt increase because

it's just financing consumption. We are just financing the failure of the power sector reform; that is how it is.

But how come we are having frequent power collapse, the whole grid collapsing maybe up to 10 times last year?

The system will collapse because all the necessary ingredients for a system not to collapse are there. Example, you need to have an adequate transmission line. That was the reason why we embarked on what you call transmission, but first of all, I did 20 LGco transmission expansion, which was the first of its kind in Nigeria, nobody had done this kind of thing before.

Then we also, on the basis of the 20 expansion transmission co, established what we call the transmission rehabilitation expansion programme, where we raised \$1.661bn from multilateral donors to put redundancy across the country.

Redundancy means that we have to put what we call N-1 so that every line that you are building is supposed to be in a loop so that if there's a problem you can back-feed or brand-feed. This means every transformer or any equipment that gets out of that substation should not affect the supply.

We completed all the studies and launched procurement. We were about to sign the contract and everything and then they announced that they had sacked me; no query, no nothing.

But the government is a continuum; so has it not been continued?

I don't know, because by now we are supposed to be seeing commissioning. For the Abuja transmission; we were to build five substations in Lugbe, Apo, Kuje, Lokogoma and Dawaki. All of those were signed when I was the MD, but up till today have they been commissioned? No. We are supposed to have a line that runs from Lafia to Abuja, where is the line?

Is it a mafia that is making sure that all these things do not happen so that another new contract will be given?

What happened is that the same

mistake we made on NIPP; we now came and createe what they call Siemens. I think they distracted the management of transmission and insisted that they should do Siemens.

What is Siemens; is the company or what?

If you look at the video that they did they show everything. They will electrify Nigeria, they did it in Egypt. Meanwhile the problem of Egypt is completely different from our problem. The problem of Egypt that Siemens resolved was the problem of generation. If you want to increase generation, you can actually bring ships, there are ships that are generators, and you can put them in the sea of Lagos.

Like what happened in Lagos under Tinubu who brought all those big generators?

Oh yes! You can bring so many of them. Ghana has so many of them like that. You can bring them and increase generation, but the question is that our problem is actually not generation, it is transmission and distribution.

We were working. We finished TRIM phase one, we almost finished the procurement and were supposed to go to phase two where we were going to have additional transmission lines like from Sokoto to Kaura Namoda to Katsina, and then from Kano to Calabar which will provide redundancy across the areas.

We also connected the Eko Atlantic and completed the loop between Akamba and Alagbon so that Lagos would also have a loop.

Additionally, we were supposed to close the loop between Delta and Port Harcourt, we would have looped Nigeria in such a way that we would have provided all the redundancy that was needed for us to have adequate electricity in Nigeria; now all these things have not been done.

What will be your advice if you are to meet the presidential candidates of the four main parties aspiring to rule Nigeria?

Number one, they have to understand the power sector very well, understanding generation, transmission and distribution. They have to understand that electricity is not like water; you don't store it. If your transmission capacity is 4,000MW and your distribution capacity is 2,000MW, your generation capacity is 4,000MW, you can only generate 2,000MW. At any point in time supply and demand must be equal.

When you say the system is collapsing, it is because at any point in time supply and demand are not equal and there are certain ingredients that you need to have. You need to have what they call a spinning reserve. As of today, we operate the grid without a spinning reserve.

All over the world, if you want to operate a stable grid in addition to having adequate redundancy, you need to have a spinning reserve, you need to have adequate scada and you need to have frequency under control; meaning all the generators must be on grid code.

They have to have people who are incorruptible. The president has to be the driver; meaning he has to be the person who will champion the power sector otherwise there's no way we can move forward.

So, forget about what they talk about; they have litigation with some people, and there is no project because at 13 cents per kilowatt hour, it doesn't make economic sense for anybody to put his money there; that is the fact.

Coming elections won't be business as usual — Onaiyekan

His Grace, John Cardinal Onaiyekan, Catholic Archbishop

Emeritus of Abuja, has cautioned politicians against any attempt to rig the forthcoming general elections.

Onaiyekan, who spoke yesterday during the celebration of his 40th anniversary as bishop at the Holy Trinity Church, Maitama, Abuja, said, "With the current yearnings of the people for a better country, the elections

● Warns against rigging

will no longer be business as usual. "As regards to the results of the elections, politicians should desist from any form of manipulation to their favour if not voted for.

"All those who are planning to play games and schemes to rig in order to frustrate the desires of the people as regards the results of the elections should desist from such.

"All of them; whether they are in government or not; they should

desist from rigging or causing violence; they should not do it, they should allow this elections to run in a free and fair way."

He noted that he had no special candidate, adding that the advice was for the politicians to understand that "the mood in which Nigeria now is, is not a mood that they will quietly accept rigged elections.

"For the sake of peace, there

will be serious repercussions if anybody doesn't allow free and fair elections. It won't be business as usual anymore.

"I want Nigerians to know that they can no longer keep quiet all the time, hoping that things will change, that God will work miracles."

Onaiyekan advised Nigerians to use their voter's cards to express their minds. (NAN)

Yoruba Nation 'struggle' in disarray as leaders resign

From Abdullateef Aliyu, Lagos

The Yoruba Nation agitation has suffered a string of setbacks as major proponents of the movement have quit the struggle amid constant allegations of funds mismanagement, lack of transparency and corruption within the leadership, Daily Trust on Sunday reports.

The setbacks followed mass resignation of its leaders, with the latest being the newly appointed Chairman of Ilana Omo Oodua, Prof Wale Adeniran.

Adeniran said yesterday that he was stepping aside less than three weeks after he took over the leadership of the self-determination group following the resignation of its former leader and Second Republic senator, Banji Akintoye.

Specifically, Adeniran took over on December 17, amid an intractable crisis of ego worsened by allegations of mismanagement of funds.

But in a video which circulated on Saturday, Adeniran said he stepped aside as chairman and member of the group and as a participant in the Yoruba Nation struggle.

His resignation preceded that of the spokesman of the group, Maxwell Adeleye, who quit the forum and called for accountability in the group.

Daily Trust on Sunday further reports that Ilana Omo Oodua (making the paths for descendants of Oodua) is the primus inter pares in the Yoruba self-determination struggle and it has proclaimed the Yoruba Nation and written to the United Nations and other global bodies to recognise the struggle.

The group singlehandedly secured the release of Yoruba Nation agitator, Chief Sunday Adeyemo, popularly known as Sunday Igboho, and rose against the federal government over his alleged persecution.

But over time, there has been a wide gulf among the proponents; the situation that has made the struggle for the actualisation of the Yoruba Nation a seemingly tall order.

Adeniran, while stepping down from all the activities of the group, cited allegations of funds mismanagement, while challenging anyone who sent money to him or to the group to come forward with receipts of such payments indicating the amount and the date it was paid.

Elections: Lalong explains why Plateau, others will vote APC

From Dickson S. Adama, Jos

Plateau State Governor, Simon Lalong, has expressed confidence that the people of the state will vote the All Progressives Congress (APC) in the forthcoming general elections.

Lalong, who is the Director General of the APC Presidential Campaign Council (PCC), stressed that Nigerians at large would vote APC again because of its achievements in the areas of peace, development and justice.

Speaking at the Bit Pol Cultural Festival in his village, N'yak, in Shendam LGA to usher in the New Year; the governor said the APC under his administration had done a lot to restore peace to Plateau State and address previous acts of injustice, exclusion and division.

He said this followed his restoration of traditional stools and creation of new ones in the state to give the people a sense of belonging in the affairs of the state, as well as the creation of the Peace Building Agency and opening up of room for dialogue, understanding and unity.

He thanked his people for always supporting him and voting for the APC, and that he was sure such support would manifest in the polls when they voted to elect Bola Ahmed Tinubu as president, as well as Dr Nentawe Yilwatda as Governor of Plateau State.

In his remarks, Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Idris Wase, said the people of Nyak should be very proud to have produced an illustrious son like Governor Lalong who was humble, patriotic and honest.



■ Rivers State Governor, Nyesom Wike (right) welcomes the Board Chairman, Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), Mrs Lauretta Onochie, during the latter's visit to the Government House in Port Harcourt recently. PHOTO: NAN

Buhari's visit: Kogi queries Ohinoyi of Ebiraland

From Labaran Tijani, Lokoja

The Kogi State Government has issued a query to the Ohinoyi of Ebiraland, Dr Ado Ibrahim, for allegedly disrespecting President Muhammadu Buhari and Governor Yahaya Bello.

The monarch was accused of refusing to welcome the president during his working visit to the state on December 29, 2022.

The letter, dated January 5, 2023, was signed by Enimola A. Eniola, Director, Chieftaincy Affairs, on behalf of the Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs.

The monarch was directed to "forward a written explanation within 48 hours on why disciplinary action should not be taken against him for acts of insubordination and disloyalty."

The king was asked to appear before a panel to be set up by the state government to give an oral explanation why he should not be punished for his action.

The letter reads in part: "It has been observed with serious concern that you have been exhibiting deliberate attitude and actions capable of bringing Kogi and Ebiraland in particular to grave disrepute. The actions are quite unbecoming of a revered royal father of your status.

"In flagrant disregard to the persons and high offices of the president and the governor, you bluntly refused to come out and receive the president at the designated venue rightly approved by the executive governor of the state.

"You have chosen to disdain the office of the executive governor,

and this time, you did it with effrontery before the number one citizen of Nigeria.

"It's on record that in times past, top-most traditional rulers, including the President, Kogi State Council of Chiefs do receive the governor of the state on his return from critical missions undertaken on behalf of the state.

"This action of yours is an act of insubordination and disloyalty to the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces, the Executive Governor of Kogi State and the entire Ebiraland as a whole. It portends grave danger to the security of the state and laying bad precedence for the traditional institution of the state."

A palace source told Daily Trust on Sunday that the monarch has received the query and was considering his course of action.

Hoodlums disrupt PVC distribution in Edo

From Usman A. Bello, Benin

Hoodlums over the weekend disrupted the distribution of the Permanent Voter's Cards (PVCs) in some parts of Ikpoba Okha LGA of Edo State.

It was learnt that the incident

happened on Friday and Saturday in Ward 01 at Iwogban/Uteh; Ward 05 at St Saviour's School; Ward 07 at Ugbekun; Ward 06 at Maria Goretti College; RA 09 at Obanyator; Army Children's School and Ogheghe Health Centre.

The hoodlums were said to

have stormed the collection centres in the morning when officials of INEC moved the distribution of the PVCs to ward level.

The Head of Voter Education, Edo INEC office, Timidi Warriowe, in a statement, said, "INEC, Edo State, has received reports of unruly

incidents between yesterday Friday and Saturday which degenerated to the disruption of the collection of PVCs and threat to officials and materials in the five wards.

He said INEC had informed the police command about the situation.

He called on the citizens, especially community leaders, on the need to ensure the safety of INEC officials and materials deployed to their various communities to ensure that voters collected their PVCs and were able to vote in the elections.

FEATURE

From Abdullateef Aliyu, Lagos

Olubadan

In January, 2022, when the country was in the mood of the New Year, the Olubadan, one of the prominent traditional rulers in the South West, precisely in Oyo State, Oba Saliu Adetunji, died at the age of 93.

The monarch was the 41st Olubadan after he succeeded Oba Samuel Odulana who died in 2016.

Oba Adetunji died at the University College Hospital, Ibadan, and going by the chieftaincy practice of Ibadan, a successor was immediately ratified in person of Oba Lekan Balogun who was holding the position of Balogun, who is usually the next Olubadan, when an Olubadan joins his ancestors.

Brig Gen Ibrahim Sabo

On January 1, 2022, Nigeria lost one of its finest military officers in the person of a former head of the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI), Brigadier General Ibrahim Sabo (Rtd.) Sabo who died in Israel served in the regime of the late Military Head of State, General Sani Abacha.

Alao Akala

Also, on January 12, 2022, a former governor of Oyo State, Otunba Christopher Alao Akala, an indigene of Ogbomosho, died at the age of 71. Akala who ruled Oyo State from 2007 to 2011 was found dead in his bathroom while his aides and guests were waiting for him. Before then, he made an attempt to return to government house and contested on the platform of the Action Democratic Party (ADP) and lost. He later joined the All Progressives Congress (APC) before his death.

Ernest Shonekan

Former Head of the Interim National Government, Chief Ernest Shonekan, was an elder statesman and nationalist whose name will remain green in the history book of Nigeria. Shonekan died at the age of 85 in Lagos on January 11, and his death was mourned across the country.

He was a lawyer and politician who served as Head of State of Nigeria from August 26, 1993, to November 17, 1993, during the dark days of June 12, when the nation was in turmoil over the annulment of the election of MKO Abiola described as the freest and fairest election ever conducted in Nigeria.

In November, 1993, three months into his administration, he was overthrown in what was known as a palace coup by Gen Sani Abacha. Shonekan was reputed to have founded the foremost private sector think-tank group, the Nigerian Economic Summit Group, focusing on Nigeria's economy.

Prof Abdullahi Mahdi

Prof Mahdi who was Vice Chancellor (VC) of the Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, Kaduna State, died on December 16, 2022, at the age of 77. He was a historian who was born in Gwoza, Borno State. He was appointed as VC in 1999. He was later appointed the pioneer VC of the Gombe State University (GSU).

Prominent Nigerians who died in 2022

The year 2022 has passed but Nigerians will not forget in a hurry how the country was hit by high profile deaths. *Daily Trust Saturday* compiles a list of 15 of such deaths recorded in the last one year.



■ Bashir Tofa



■ Ernest Shonekan



■ Shehu Malami



■ Alao Akala



■ Sheikh Adam Tahir



■ Oba Lamidi Adeyemi III



■ Tafa Balogun



■ Prof George Obiozor



■ V/ Admiral Iko Ibrahim



■ Prof Abdullahi Mahdi

Shehu Malami

Regarded as a highly influential Sokoto prince, Alhaji Shehu Malami, a former Nigerian High Commissioner to South Africa, died on December 19, at the age of 85 at an Egyptian hospital.

Malami was a forebear of the great Islamic reformer and founder of the Sokoto Caliphate, Sheikh Usman bin Fodiyo, popularly referred to as Shehu Danfodiyo. He belonged to the Sultan Bello ruling house.

Prof George Obiozor

President of Ohaneze Ndigbo, the apex Igbo cultural organisation, Prof George Obiozor, died a few days before the New Year. He was an academician and diplomat. He was a former Nigerian Ambassador to the United States (US). As a member of the Southern and Middle Belt Leaders Forum (SMBLF), he was involved in the move to endorse the Labour Party (LP) for the 2023 presidential election.

Alhaji Muazu Muhammed Kwairinga

Emir of Funakye, Alhaji Mu'azu Kwairinga III, was appointed by Gov Inuwa Yahaya of Gombe State and reigned for 15 months and died at the age of 45 on Sunday, August 28.

Tafa Balogun

Former Inspector General of Police (IGP), Tafa Balogun, who hailed from Ila Orangun in Osun State, died on August 4, in Lagos at the age of 74. As IGP he served under former President Olusegun Obasanjo, but his tenure ended over

an alleged frosty relationship with Obasanjo who allegedly instigated his trial for corruption.

Alaafin

The 45th Monarch of the Oyo Empire, Oba Lamidi Adeyemi III, reigned for 51 before his death on April 22, 2022, at the age of 83 at the Afe Babalola University Teaching Hospital, Ado-Ekiti in Ekiti State. A replacement is yet to be appointed following the raging controversy over the rightful person among the shortlisted princes.

The late monarch who was highly influential in Yorubaland was well known for his numerous wives and children. Following his death, one of the chiefs was reported to have said that his 18 wives were now available for suitors.

Emmanuel Yawe

National Publicity Secretary of the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF), a Northern socio-political group, Emmanuel Yawe, who was elected spokesman of the forum in 2020, died in March, 2022. The Taraba-Born media practitioner started his journalism with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) and once served as the Chief Press Secretary to the Governor of the then Gongola State in 1983.

Alhaji Ahmadu Muhammadu Wabi

Emir of Jama'are in Bauchi State was another top monarch from the North which the country lost to the cold hands of death in 2022. Like the Alaafin of Oyo, Wabi also reigned for 51 years before he died on February 5, 2022, at the age of

92. He was appointed at a youthful age as the ninth Emir of Jama'are on November 19, 1970, and got staff of office on May 11, 1971. He left behind two wives, 35 children and many grandchildren.

He has been replaced with one of his sons, Alhaji Nuhu Ahmed Wabi, as the emir by Bauchi State Governor, Bala Muhammed.

Vice Admiral Ishaya Iko Ibrahim

Vice Admiral Ishaya Iko Ibrahim died on January 4, 2022. He was the 18th Chief of Naval Staff (CNS). He was a flag officer before his appointment as CNS in August, 2008. Ibrahim who died in Abuja at the age of 69 was an indigene of Kaduna State. He was until his death the Chairman of the National Inland Waterways Authority (NIWA).

Alhaji Bashir Tofa

Just a few days ago, the first "Bashir Othman Tofa Lecture" instituted in honour of the late elder statesman was held virtually and attended by prominent Nigerians. The foremost Kano-born politician died at the age of 74 on January, 2022. Tofa was the National Republican Convention (NRC) candidate in the annulled June 12, 1993, presidential election where late MKO Abiola was adjudged winner.

Tofa was in politics since 1976 when he was a councillor in Dawakin Tofa LGA in 1977. In the Second Republic, he was at various times the secretary of the Kano branch of NPN. He later became the

party's national financial secretary.

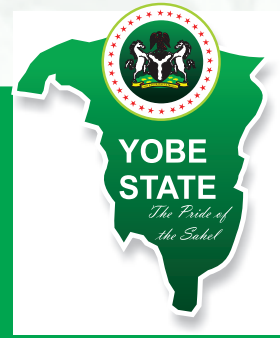
He was also a businessman and industrialist. He was chairman of the International Petro-Energy Company (IPEC) and Abba Othman and Sons Ltd. He was also involved as a board member in Impex Ventures, Century Merchant Bank and General Metal Products Ltd. He was equally famous for his literary prowess, having authored several literatures in Hausa language.

Sheikh Adam Tahir

The Chief Imam of Jama'a Emirate in Jema'a LGA of Kaduna state, Sheikh Adam Tahir, died at the age of 130 in 2022. He was Nigeria's oldest imam and left behind 26 children, 290 grandchildren and over 200 great-grandchildren. He was the Chief Imam of the Kafanchan Central Mosque and was also one of the kingmakers in the emirate.

In addition to the 15 highlighted above, the nation also lost some high profile citizens in the year under review. They include Colonel Anthony Obi (Rtd), a former Governor of Osun and Abia states who hailed from Enugu; Dr Ahmad Ibrahim-BUK, foremost Islamic Cleric in Kano; Prof Gidado Tahir, foremost academician and one time Chairman of the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC); Oba Yishau Oyetunji Kodaolu I, Olukoyi of Ikoyi Land i Osun; Oba Abdulganiyu Salawudeen Adekunle Ologunbebi, Aseyin of Iseyin in Oyo State; and Chief Kemi Nelson, Lagos APC Women Leader.

YOU ARE MOST WELCOME TO YOBE STATE OUR DEAR PRESIDENT



His Excellency,
Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR
President and Commander-in-Chief, Federal Republic of Nigeria



Hon. Mai Mala Buni, CON
Executive Governor,
Yobe State.

The Government and good people of Yobe state heartily welcome His Excellency, Muhammadu Buhari GCFR, President and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, Federal Republic of Nigeria, on a State Visit to Yobe state, on Monday 9th, January 2023.

projects executed by the Hon. Mai Mala Buni CON, administration, which include, the Yobe International Cargo Airport, Maternity, Newborn and Paediatric Healthcare complex, Model School and Housing Estate in Damaturu.

While in the state, President Muhammadu Buhari will commission some legacy

Barka da Zuwa Baba, Barra Kinshero Baba, Jabbama Boddum Baba.



Signed
Alh. Mohammed Lamin,
Hon. Commissioner of Home Affairs, Information and Culture.

Victims of Southern Kaduna attack narrate ordeal

Some communities in southern part of Kaduna recently came under attacks leading to loss of many lives and destruction of properties. Survivors and victims of the attack recount their experiences to *Daily Trust on Sunday* in this report.



Ishaku Aluwong, from Sokwong community



Women at Sokwong community



Mrs Elizabeth Joel

PHOTOS: Ahmed Ali

From Ahmed Ali, Kafanchan

It was on a Sunday night when families retired to sleep that gunmen attacked the Mallagum and Sokwong communities in Kaura LGAs of Kaduna State and killed about 40 people.

Narrating his ordeal, Nathan Thomas Yashim, who lost his father, step-mother and some relatives, said they were suspecting herdsmen.

He said, "We don't have any issue with the Fulani in this area. We hid and protected them during the 2011 post-presidential election crisis and escorted them out of our community unharmed; so why the attack on us now?"

"They shot at us and we ran for our lives. They entered our house, burnt down my car and all my belongings. I rushed to rescue my father in his house but unfortunately the evil doers ended his life together with many people of my community."

He further said, "I farm in large quantities. In fact, I am the largest farmer in my community, but the attackers have ruined my life. I don't know where and how to start from because I depend on farming to earn my living. They have reduced me to square zero."

He added that, "We are still receiving calls from the attackers with the phone numbers of those killed; that they are coming for another attack because they have not finished yet."

Another victim, Ishaku Aluwong, from Sokwong community, told our reporter that on his way back from his ginger farm he met some Fulani with their cattle a day before the attack.

He said, "Two of them faced me, one with a cutlass and the other with a knife. They said they were going to kill me. I asked them what happened. The one with the knife insisted that he was going to kill me, and I begged him to spare my life but he collected the cutlass and attacked me. That's how my hand was matcheted because I raised it to protect my head."

An aged woman, Elizabeth Joel,



Some of the houses burnt in Mallagum attack

from Sokwong, said the attackers came to her room and asked her to leave immediately or she would be killed.

She said, "I saw people running when the attackers invaded our community. So, I told the members of our house to go and leave me because I am old and also not well.

One of the attackers said I should

be killed, but the remaining two objected to the idea. They then ordered me to leave the house quickly and they set the house on fire. I hid under banana trees and watched how they burnt my house and other neighbouring houses."

The first attack was on December 13, 2021, after a dispute between a farmer and herdsmen in



Barden Kagoro, Moses Akayet Sofa

Mallagum which led to the death of the farmer.

"We also lost seven of our members after the chaos and some are still missing," said Abdulhamid Musa Albarka, the Southern Kaduna Chairman of the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN).

A Ward Head in Sokwong, Joseph Nkut, said he ran and hid in a banana farm and watched how the attackers were setting houses on fire, shooting and killing people.

He said, "I watched as they killed members of my community. People were running and screaming, but there was no one to help them. Everything happened within a short time."

He further said that apart from individuals' support, mostly politicians, and an NGO, Gideon & Funmi Parra-Mallam Peace Foundation, there was no support from the government.

Speaking with our correspondent, a former District Head of Mallagum, Moses Akayet Sofa, said the damage and the loss of lives affected every family in the community because they were all related.

Akayet, who is also the Barden Kagoro, said they had some respite when the mobile policemen arrived at the scene after some time.

He, therefore, called on the government to do everything possible to stop the attacks and also come to the aid of his people and provide them with food, shelter and clothes.

The National President of

Kagoro Development Association (KDA), Professor Duniya Jiles Gambo, said over 40 persons were killed and over 150 houses burnt in the attacks.

He lamented on how the government abandoned them without bringing any relief material.

He said, "We are only seeing them on television responding and giving relief materials in other places, but the last time they came here was in March, 2022, after an attack, where they collected the data and took statistics, but up to now we have not seen them again."

Our correspondent observed that after the attack, military men have been stationed around the communities.

The founder of Gideon & Funmi Parra-Mallam Peace Foundation, Reverend Gideon Parra-Mallam, who brought bags of rice, bean, garri, clothes and blankets to the displaced communities of Sokwong and Mallagum, called on the government to do the needful to bring back peace to the communities and bring the culprits to book.

He said, "Government should take serious measures to protect the lives and property of its citizens."

He also called on the residents to eschew bitterness and refrain from taking revenge or taking the law into their hands, noting that, "God is on top of everything; killing each other in the name of revenge cannot do good to us and cannot take us anywhere. All we want is justice and peace."

How insecurity is hampering oil exploration in Niger

The delay in oil exploration activities in the Bida Basin of Niger State has continued to generate concerns among citizens of the state, *Daily Trust on Sunday* reports.

Abubakar Akote, Minna

The House of Representatives recently asked the federal government to fast track geophysical survey and seismic data acquisition to ascertain the availability of hydrocarbons in the Bida Basin.

The house, while adopting a motion sponsored by Saidu Musa Abdul, the Member Representing Bida, Gbako and Katcha, urged the Federal Ministry of Petroleum Resources, Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) and the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) Limited to conclude the geophysical survey begun by the defunct Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) to ascertain the availability of hydrocarbon in the area.

The Niger State Governor, Abubakar Sani Bello, also made a similar appeal at the seventh National Council on Hydrocarbons which was held in Minna recently.

The governor said there was presence of commercially viable hydrocarbons in the basin as proved by preliminary surveys carried out both by the state and federal governments.

He said, "In an effort to explore and harness the hydrocarbon opportunities in the Bida Basin, Niger State Government under our leadership has engaged Whitepages International Company Limited as a consultant, in collaboration with the Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai; and the Federal University of Technology, Minna, and the results have been impressive."

Bello explained that in an interaction with the Federal Ministry of Petroleum Resources through the defunct DPR towards an accelerated development of the Bida Basin hydrocarbon deposits, the 3-D Seismic Geophysics Survey System by the Frontier Exploration Service (FES), in collaboration with the Integrated Data Service Limited (IDSL), had been completed.

He, therefore, appealed to the Federal Ministry of Petroleum Resources and its relevant agencies to expedite action for the continuation of the next stage of the exploration.

The project's Technical Coordinator and NNPC Chair for Oil Exploration in Bida Basin, Professor Nuhu George Obaje, of the Department of Geology, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai, Niger State told *Daily Trust on Sunday* that all the preliminary surveys had been completed with high prospect of oil presence, but cited the worsening security challenge in the state as the major cause of delay to begin drilling.

He said, "While the current government

had given the NNPC the mandate, they were supposed to have finished drilling all the basins. The government has been moving well but we didn't move fast enough because of constraints such as insecurity that slowed down the exploration. Even researchers from universities sometime were afraid of entering the bush because of worsening security problems that came with incessant attacks and abductions. Otherwise, by the Federal Government's mandate, we were supposed to finish all the drilling before the end of this administration. And also, NNPC could not send its contractors to the bush. So, insecurity slowed down the drilling.

"This oil and gas exploration by the Buhari administration is commendable and if we move fast enough, before May 2023, we should drill in the Bida Basin and we should be able to make success and progress in the Bida Basin. There is need to move fast enough to ensure that Bida Basin begins production and declares Niger State an oil producing state. Enough funds were made available by Maikanti Kacalla Baru to see to full exploration of oil and gas in Bida Basin but the major challenge was insecurity."

Professor Obaje further said that while all surveys had been concluded, the next thing was to find a drillable location, noting that, "Before you drill, you have to do some environmental impact assessment, and the next line of action is for the NNPC or any investor to go and drill. And all the studies that have been done by the IBB University, FUT and NNPC would be put together to see the point to drill. There could be oil in the basin, but you have to drill at the correct point to be able to hit the accumulation.

So, we are looking for a trap; which is an accumulation point; a trap could be about three kilometres down and that is what the sizing is trying to see."

He added that he was hopeful that in the next few months the drilling would start, especially that the security situation in the state was improving.

Professor Obaje explained that the first drilling would be done by the NNPC to woo other companies to the basin, explaining that, "By the time we try the oil, many companies would start coming because if they find oil in Gbako LGA people will know that there is enough oil in the Bida Basin and other companies would come, but the first oil has to be drilled by the government; which will be done by the NNPC.

He added that, "The problem with inland basins is that frontier basins are high risk basins and most companies are not eager to go there. Even the big companies that are far in the oil business in Nigeria have



PHOTOS: Prof. Nuhu Obaje
Head of Geological Operation of the Shekang Group of China observes oil slicks on water during a second drilling of shallow well at Kudu in Mokwa Local Government in June 2014. Drilling was entirely water-based. No diesel nor any chemical used.



Like at Kudu and Makera, oil slicks (oil shows) oozed out in abundance when the rig penetrates the carbonaceous dark shales

refused to come. So, what the government is doing is that we would build the confidence of investors or companies. We will use government money to look for this oil. If we find the oil, the companies will begin to come, because at that time the risk is low. It is the same thing they did in Gombe and Bauchi. So, NNPC is the one looking at this basin through a department called Frontier Exploration Services. They are the ones looking at all the frontier or inland basins that are of high risk. So, NNPC was the one that did the one in Gombe/Bauchi and is the one that is also doing the one in Bida Basin."

The Emir of Agaie, Alhaji Yusuf Nuhu, told *Daily Trust on Sunday* that the traditional institution and local government councils had already started sensitising communities in addressing the fear of insecurity expressed by contractors and surveyors.

He said, "The NNPC which went round confirmed to us that oil is very much available, just like that of Kolmani and Nasarawa State. Now that the federal government has started drilling that of Bauchi and Gombe states, we plead that the federal government should also hasten to come to the Bida Basin. I think it will go a long way to boost economic activities and bring growth to the country.

"So, we are urging the federal government to as a matter of urgency start drilling oil in the Bida Basin.

"We have already made it known to our people. Our people have already been informed to make sure they report anything strange, anything that they are not familiar

with to the district heads so that the emirate council will know, the local government and state will also know and quickly they will come to take care of the situation. And of course, hunters are there and the vigilantes and we are going to organise them in such a way that they are going to protect whatever facility that is going to be put in place."

The emir also urged the federal government to complete the dredging of the Baro Port as it prepared to drill oil in the Bida Basin.

Also speaking, the Chairman of Agaie LGA, Ibrahim Halil Sayuti, said the immediate exploration of oil and gas in the Bida Basin would boost the Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) of all LGAs in the state and the nation as a whole.

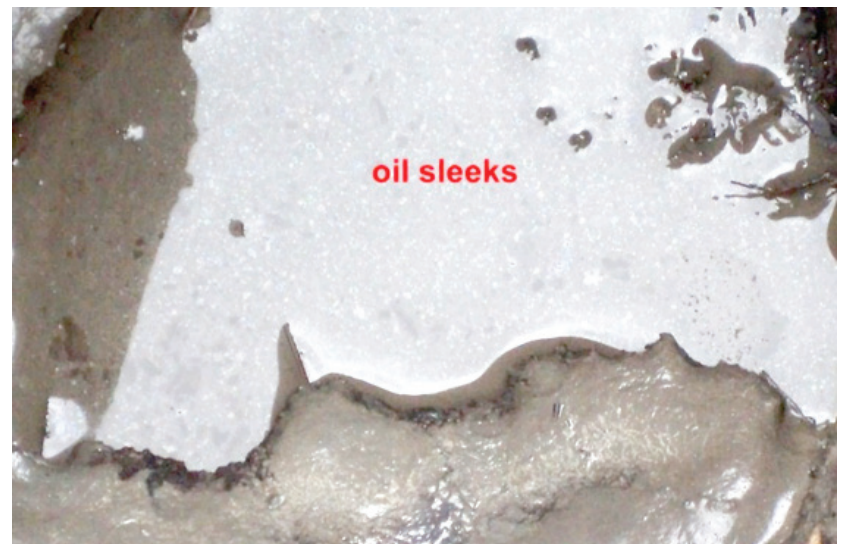
He said the drilling would also make Baro a more strategic place in moving products across the country, noting that, "Baro is one of the best tourist sites in Northern Nigeria. So, drilling this oil and having Baro as a well will create millions of jobs."

Sayuti further said that the necessary measures were already in place to curtail the security situation in the area, noting that things were improving.

The Bida Basin covers over 150 kilometres long and 50 kilometres wide across the 10 LGAs of Bida, Gbako, Agaie, Lapai, Lavun, Mokwa, Edati, Katcha, Mashegu and Kontagora in Niger State; and four LGAs in Kogi and two LGAs in Kwara States and Abaji Area Council of the FCT, with Niger State owning about 80 per cent of the basin with its centre around Bida.



Inspection of the drilling operation at Kudu, Mokwa Local Government where dark shales recovered. These are the envisaged petroleum source rocks.



Dark-coloured muds/shales and oil slicks recovered from the Kudu-1 well

EVERYTHING WOMAN

How religious, cultural beliefs on CS fuel maternal mortality



■ Giving birth

PHOTO: Internet

By Dana Daniel Zagi and Rosemary Etim Basse

Religious, cultural and societal beliefs on Caesarean Section (CS) and other sundry factors are fueling high maternal and neonatal mortality in Nigeria. *Daily Trust on Sunday* examines some of the societal, religious and cultural colourations about CS.

Culturally, vaginal delivery, the natural childbirth process, is applauded by many society and women who endure such a process are considered strong and courageous.

Whereas those who willfully agree to CS as an alternative means of childbirth are perceived as weak and lazy.

The cultural pedestal for women who give birth naturally is an enviable high one that most women want to attain.

Because of some cultural and societal inclinations, some women who are required to undergo CS to enable safe delivery refused notwithstanding the inherent danger.

For some, instructions from religious leaders against CS resulted in irreversible health complications and in some cases the death of both mother and child.

There are concerns also that stigmatisation of women who undergo CS also contributes to the growing number of women declining to undergo the operation, thereby leading to more maternal mortality.

Nigeria is one of the countries with a very high maternal mortality rate, with the country accounting for about 20 per cent of global maternal deaths.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) of Nigeria stands at 814 deaths per 100,000 live births.

Ranked high among religious nations of the world, Nigerians have been known worldwide to painstakingly follow religious tenets as handed down to them by their religious leaders.

While there are no exact statistics, there are, however, concerns that an alarming number of women die daily at childbirth due to their refusal to submit to CS because of their religious and cultural beliefs.

For others fortunate to survive, most are

left with irreversible medical conditions as scars to show for it.

But does the method of delivery matter as long as the child is born and both mother and child are safe?

A recent case of a woman who refused CS because her pastor said she would deliver like “the Hebrew women” but lost her baby and her womb in the process has brought to the fore the impact of religious and cultural beliefs on how people view CS.

According to the report, the woman who happened to be a primer (first pregnancy) insisted on delivering the “normal” way because her pastor assured her of it.

Her case could be one out of many which might have gone unreported in the country.

Not woman enough

A number of women say there is a stigma over CS; that people view them as not being “woman enough” to give birth through the natural process.

Faith (not her real name), a mother of four who lives in Gombe State, had all four children delivered through CS.

She said, “I was told that as long as I start having my first child through CS, all the rest would be through CS.

“After my first CS, I prayed alongside my mother to deliver my next baby naturally like the Hebrew women. I drank anointing oil my mother brought from Jerusalem, but I still had to go through CS for all my children.

“My in-laws said I was not strong and that I refused to endure the process of natural birth. They even said that I just wanted to waste their brother’s money because CS at the time was N150,000.

“The doctors told me that having my babies through natural birth was risky because my babies were all big. I was worried about all they said and angry because they never considered my life or that of my baby, but thank God my husband did not listen to them.”

Blessing (not her real name) who lives in Abuja was also stigmatised by her husband’s cousin for going through CS.

Recounting her experience, Blessing quoted her in-laws as saying, “Because of fear, you couldn’t give birth to just one child, but allowed them to cut you open.”

She added that though she prayed for natural delivery, she had to undergo CS due to complications.

I opted for CS - Gift

While some women resort to CS as the last option, Gift, a mother of two, willingly opted for CS.

Speaking with *Daily Trust on Sunday*, Gift said, “I opted for it; they gave me options because the pregnancy was already 38 weeks and they advised that I should be induced to give birth, but I told them that instead of me being induced, I would prefer I did a CS.”

Speaking about being stigmatised after undergoing CS, she said, “Nobody has come to me to face me and to tell me you are not a real mum or you are lazy or whatever.”

Cosmas Olayinka, an Abuja resident who has three kids, all of who were delivered through CS, said that although doctors suggested his wife had CS for her first baby, she chose CS for her second and last babies.

About being stigmatised, Mrs Olayinka admitted that, “There are times that I have been talked to, but I have never felt less of myself as a CS mum.”

Unraveling CS myths

Daily Trust on Sunday discussed the myths surrounding CS with Dr Yamuna Aminu Kani, a consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist at the Rasheed Shakoni Teaching Hospital in Jigawa State.

She described CS as “an incision that is made on the abdominal wall and then into the uterus with the aim of delivering a baby after the age of viability, which is the age that the baby can survive the outside world.”

She explained that there were many myths surrounding CS but that the most common one was fear.

She said, “Some believe that if you have one CS, you have to continue to have CS all your life.

“Many women have their babies vaginally after the first CS, depending on the indication, unless the indication is contracted pelvis; that is, those that have pelvic deformity that is recurrent in all deliveries. Otherwise many women have a CS because of many reasons like placenta previa and foetal distress.

Dr Yamuna added that the myths

surrounding CS varied from locality to locality and that their contexts were dependent on the educational exposure of communities.

She said, “When you are in an elite environment, the myths that people believe tend to be different from what we have among the local people who have less education.

“Some who read a lot will tell you that they have heard that CS is easier than vaginal birth, meanwhile others will tell you that they are afraid they are going to die during CS. These are two opposite myths occurring at the same time.”

She further said that from experience, stigmatisation from CS are majorly cultural as society looked down on women as weaklings or not being “woman enough.”

She said, “The only thing I can say about the religious aspect is there are women who of course they have already been counselled that they are not going to be able to deliver vaginally maybe because of a contracted pelvis but they resort to prayer houses and taking religious concoctions thinking it they remedy the indications for a CS. Some of them end up with complications.”

Advising those that stigmatise women who undergo CS, Dr Yauna said, “There is no need to stigmatise any woman that is having a baby through CS. She has gone through the pregnancy just like anyone else and at the end of the day CS recovery takes longer than vaginal birth. So, it is not as if she is having it easy as they believe.”

Clerics speak

For Dr Dawood Muhammed, Imam of the Kumbiya Kumbiya Mosque in Gombe State, CS is allowed in Islam, adding that husbands and wives had no reason to refuse CS.

On the issue of stigmatisation of women who undergo CS, Dr Dawood said, “It has nothing to do with Islam, rather tradition. Whosoever says that CS is prohibited has no reason in Islamic injunction except if he is ignorant about it.

“Originally, natural delivery was preferred, but if there’s a problem then they can opt for CS.”

Advising women that have bad impressions about CS, Dr Dawood said, “I will advise our people to go and have proper knowledge of Islam; let them try and get teachers to teach them about what Islam entails instead of doing things without reference from the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet (SAW).”

Also speaking, Reverend Ubasi Guruza of the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) in Jos, Plateau State, said there was nothing wrong in CS.

He noted that many things needed to be taken into consideration when discussing people’s health, especially the issue of childbirth.

He said, “As a Christian leader, when I see some pastors who discourage their subjects or their members from going through CS I feel they have limited knowledge of the scripture.

“What is most important is that we understand that it is God that gives wisdom for medical science. So, if there is a need for medical intervention during delivery, the parents should not disregard it.

“Sometimes, especially for first-timers, you need adequate presence of doctors and guardians so that you are able to deliver your babies safely. If the intervention is CS, I encourage every Christian to submit themselves because in the long run if that is what is needed, what is most important is for the mother and the child to be separated in peace, in good health and the two of them return home alive and well.”



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

The irony of Lagos pedestrian bridges

Lagos is the most populous city in Africa, housing millions of people from diverse ethnicities and walks of life. It is boastful of several pedestrian bridges, in the belief that the pedestrians, who happen to be the most vulnerable on the motor road, will now be safe. As observed, many lives have been lost to fatal accidents on the roads, and so sadly, the majority of these victims have been those who should or could have used the pedestrian bridges. Why would any Lagosian risk the safety of their own life? Or are there 'demons' on the bridges, whose presence could send waves of fright to any potential bridge user? While

one may not be able to satisfactorily answer these questions, one could proceed to discuss the happenings on the bridges.

First, Lagos bridges are fast becoming a home to beggars. Beggars have successfully found a cool spot for their alms solicitation endeavours. Think about the characteristics of beggars in Lagos, you are sure to encounter those with offensive body structures, unbelievable bulging body parts, red-looking terminal wounds among others. In fairness to these beggars, they do not interfere with the movement of pedestrians, however, their mere presence could be the "turn off" for some pedestrians since not

everyone is naturally wired to encounter such a disturbing sight and still hold their heads up.

Petty traders, on their part, have suddenly become landlords on the bridges. They have their "shops" on the bridges and do their business there. Why would anyone rent a business space on a pedestrian bridge? Poverty or what? Whatever it is, their presence is a symptom of a problem. If left unchecked, the few Lagosians who still use the bridges may soon become discouraged due to the artificial or man-made traffic that will be created on the bridges.

Going further, we could see that

vagabonds have become the unofficial patrol officers as one is sure to see people who evidently have no purpose on the bridges wandering lazily and sometimes dangerously. In fact, this last category of Lagos bridge "owners" are the most notorious.

My conclusion of this entire irony of a bridge is for the government to superintend its infrastructure and ensure that Lagos bridges are taken back from these many "landlords" that have taken charge of these costly structures.

Samuel Ogunnaike wrote from Lagos

North East and the restoration of peace

It was in 2015, that Muhammadu Buhari emerged and became the president of Nigeria with an ideology of transforming the level of development, reshaping the economic sector, to work betterment of security and education in the country.

He started showing unprecedented potentiality in the office by looking after the insecurity issues through an initiative from the military commands, and it was witnessed how the military captures the Boko Haram terrorists and used strategic planning to destroy their hideouts, taking away some local communities which remain under the authority of the terrorists for a quiet long time.

However, President Muhammadu Buhari came into power when people, especially, the ones in the Northeast region were battling to survive

insecurity, he reconsidered their conditions and technically works to empower the region and pursue the terrorists away from the region. Several successful operations were recorded and until now the process of carrying out operations continues. Borno State was an epicentre of Boko Haram terrorism, the state faces unexplainable destruction, and thousands of people died while others fled from their lands of origin.

But, after the coming of President Muhammadu Buhari, he stand for the state and encountered the terrorists with manpower, by purchasing war jets, injecting billions of naira in security units to keep the military courageous in chasing out the terrorists, he also provides funds for rebuilding the state where the Boko Haram terrorists destroyed during their powerful time.

This is commendable, the president focuses on defence service to protect the people of the country at large. He, in addition, did what is unforgettable because the reigns of Boko Haram terrorism had crippled the country's development and made the Northeast a cave of war and away from comfort.

Though a few groups of terrorists refused to surrender and are carrying out attacks across the sectional area commands in the Northeast region according to many sources, 90% were eliminated while others surrendered from the unlawful acts. He, president Muhammadu Buhari commissioned various construction projects to make the lives of those people better.

Maryam Adamu, Department of Mass Communication, Borno State University

New Baga Roundabout: Kudos to Governor Zulum

In 2022, Borno State governor, Prof Babagana Umara Zulum awarded the contract for the reconstruction of the popular West-End Roundabout, in Maiduguri Metropolis. The roundabout links Baga Road, Custom, Post Office area and Kashim Ibrahim Way. The reconstruction is no doubt part of the development agenda of giving Borno a facelift.

The roundabout has a long history. In the first place, the roundabout has the fish symbol. However, the fish, alongside other symbols, like the horse at the popular cross Mai-doki were removed during the reign of late Governor Mala Kachalla, due to the introduction of Sharia law in 2002.

The placement of fish at the

West-End Roundabout is an indication of the route of Baga town, Kukawa Local Government Area. Baga is a renowned centre for fishing because of Lake Chad.

The removal of the fish in the early 20th century made the roundabout remain as it was until the intervention by Governor Zulum.

The roundabout has been redesigned. It has a canoe and other fishing equipment. This singular project has given the people of northern Borno a sense of belonging. Thank you for bringing back our identity. Posterity will always remember this giant stride.

Maryam Adamu wrote from Department of Mass Communication, Borno State University

DIALOGUE WITH MY
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The men who speak with God

What glittering titles they have – primates, apostles, prophets, general overseers, men of God, etc. These are the religious leaders who claim special relationship with God and are privileged to speak with him; they presume to know the mind of the Almighty; they speak in tongues to lend some authenticity to their claims and lace their speeches with ‘God tells me...’

They have become part and parcel of our national politics, reflecting the changing mores in the infernal struggle for political power, the only power that matters in all human societies. Once you have it, every other thing is added unto you. Ah yes, the late Dr Kwame Nkrumah got it right. He advised his fellow African leaders to first seek the kingdom of politics.

In the times before these, the babalawo and other traditional juju men once held the stage as the go-to authorities who operated between the living and the dead and between now and the future only they could see. They could swing an election in favour of every political scoundrel who sought the help of the gods. The Igbo call the eyes and ears of the gods. Politicians beat the paths to their doors in a desperate search for assurances of election victory. Goats and chickens paid the supreme sacrifice to make the gods happy.

It seems that the paths to their doors now spot overgrown weeds, indicating a certain degree of abandonment in the uncertainties of an uncertain political world. The politicians have made a choice between God and the gods and are sticking with God. But the eyes and the ears of the gods have not lost out. The politicians are wise enough not to put all their eggs in one basket. The gods serve as their fallback position in case they fail to persuade God to their political cause or causes.

Wherever politicians are gathered today there must be present a man of God as evidence that the politicians are wise enough to always seek the face of God. That was amply demonstrated in the heat of the controversy over the Muslim-Muslim presidential ticket of APC last year. At the unveiling of the presidential candidate and his running mate, the party picked some men from motor parks in Abuja and dressed them in borrowed robes as bishops to grace the gathering. The party sought to show that the Christian community was not opposed to the Muslim-Muslim ticket. It was a wretched attempt to religiously legitimise what did not require such legitimacy. The lack of wisdom in dragging religion into our leadership recruitment process is worse than unfortunate.

It may be right and proper for politicians seeking power to seek the face of God. They even do better because they seek the face of God, and they seek the faces of the gods. President Goodluck Jonathan sought the face of God in 2011. The men of God rallied round him with each claiming he heard from God that Jonathan was his choice for president. It came to pass and thus confirmed the dubious wisdom of beating the path to the doors of the men of God. Seeking God's support in the pursuit of individual political ambitions has become the new political modus operandum – just to sound intellectual for the moment.

In 2015, Rev Father Mbaka, he of the controversial adoration ministries, turned his back on Jonathan and gave the thumbs up to Muhammadu Buhari. But in 2019, he gave the thumbs down to the president. Still, Buhari won his re-election. This, I think, introduced some confusion as to how well or poorly the men of God who claim to know God's mind really do. How did the man of God fail to properly read God's mind in 2019? The question points to one fundamental problem in dragging God into the soulless pursuit of political power in which lies, bribery, deceit, death, destruction, and false promises are the means by which men and women ascend the political throne at all levels in our country.

As you read this, many of the politicians are waiting on the men of God to receive a divine assurance of their victory in the general elections. Some of them will be losers. Some of the men of God claim that God has told them who our next president will be. Others say they are yet to hear from God. All of them are mis-hearers of the divine voice.

No man, no matter how well-steeped in he may be in his faith, knows God's mind, or the minds of the gods. Our politicians are victims of men who exploit their fears and the uncertainty inherent in the nature of our national politics. Their prophecies are nothing but puerile guesses. Their ranks swell with man a 419er. Still, the politicians flap around them like moths attracted to bright lights.

These people are taking the name of the Lord in vain. They break the sixth commandment, to wit, ‘thou shalt not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.’

Many moons ago, Pastor Chris Okotie, the musician turned into a shepherd to recover the lost sheep and lead them back to the Lord, told the country and the rest of the world that he had conferred with God and received his assurance and blessing that he would become the next president of Nigeria. Okotie's name does not feature on the list of our former presidents. Did God ditch him for someone else or did he mishear the Lord?

Politics is a dirty game; ours is dirtier than most. We are the second most religious country in the world after India. It counts for something. Our religiosity, genuine or faux, are on full display in every nook and cranny of the country. Our men of God would do well to give him a good name consistent with our religiosity. They must not continue to take the Lord's name in vain just because doing so improves their circumstances, as in building mansions and riding fleets of expensive and even owning jets – all at the expense of the politicians.

We cannot substitute their prophecies for the people's electoral decisions with the instrumentality of the ballot paper. By all means, let the politicians seek the face of God or the faces of the gods. What the men who speak with God must not do is to suggest that a man who clearly rigged an election had the support of the Almighty God. Nor should they try to persuade us that God or the gods help the voters to make wrong choices.

They should instead turn their attention to persuading God to help us elect competent men and women into various levels of political leadership. The emergence of a leader who proves incompetent, provincial, and indifferent must not be ascribed to God. Therefore, if the men of God cannot separate the chaff of thieves from the grains of honest men and women, then we must dismiss them as largely fake.

As you read this, many of the politicians are waiting on the men of God to receive a divine assurance of their victory in the general elections. Some of them will be losers. Some of the men of God claim that God has told them who our next president will be. Others say they are yet to hear from God. All of them are mis-hearers of the divine voice.

PERSPECTIVE

Is Bello the new Prince of the Niger?

In his heydays when he littered everywhere with tangible traces of real governance, late political maverick, and bulldozer, Alhaji Abubakar Audu—the Adoja of the universe—was famously and boisterously called ‘The Prince of the Niger’. It was an appellation carved on the marble of reverence, prestige, and royalty. In his days as the executive governor of Kogi State when democracy was rebirthed in 1999, Prince Abubakar Audu was the rave of the nascent democracy, he shone so brilliantly that his traces illuminated everywhere in infrastructure, security, and prosperity. He brought the then president, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo to not just Kogi State but Igalaland - Anyigba to be precise. Audu perhaps brought the first sitting president to Igalaland—Similarly, Governor Yahaya Bello Adoza just replicated this rare feat by bringing President Muhammadu Buhari to Okene—the headquarters of Epira civilization. To a mere looker, this is a mere happenstance but for those with an appreciation of historical relics, this is a political statement. Like Audu, Bello just made a bold statement.

The narratives now will be a two-lane reality when Kogi political history is being dissected. Anything that brings a sitting president to any state is a huge reference to governance. Presidents don't go to state visits just like that, they visit where serious things of national consequences are happening. For instance, when there are security breaches of great magnitude that lead to loss of lives and property, the president can visit the location to console victims and identify with those living in those states. In the case of Kogi State, the president did not visit Kogi for condolences but to commission projects of impact. Like Obasanjo to Anyigba, Buhari was in Okene.

What would make Yahaya Bello site the first reference hospital in north central Nigeria in Okene in less than eight years of his administration? The answer isn't far-fetched. It's the realization that he is a freeborn motivated by the impulse that the land that births him deserves the manure of appreciation. Only a slave distances self from the land of his birth; a freeborn draws rain of progress to his land. We have seen Bello's traces of a ‘worthy son’ to his Epira people.

President Muhammadu Buhari came close to emptying his saliva in praises of Governor Yahaya Bello when he was ushered into the Reference Hospital in Okene. Like Obasanjo, who danced to the tune of Tijay Bala when he came to commission the Kogi State University in Anyigba, Buhari jived in ecstasy throughout his visit to Okene.

Kogi State University was one of the signatures in Kogi State during Prince Audu's reign. The university opened its vista of opportunities to students from not just the state but neighbouring states of Anambra, Enugu, Edo, Nasarawa, Niger, and

Benue. It remains a melting point to date. Bello, like Prince Audu, wasted no time in establishing the Confluence University of Science and Technology in Osara. Now with the just commissioned Reference Hospital, the new school will take another lead in medical school complementing the one in Anyigba and the proposed medical school in the Federal University Lokoja that will use the Federal Medical Center, Lokoja as its teaching hospital. Indeed, Kogi is now the hub of medical schools in Nigeria with the three senatorial zones hosting medical schools. This is what vision and real love for a people do and Bello is a remarkable reference here. He didn't build tourist abodes, he invested in healing abodes. All hail Bello, the new Prince of Niger.

All these modest and enviable achievements didn't happen by accident, they came from an inclusive think tank anchored by his crack team of the New Direction gang, these people employed a bottom-top approach to building a template that has become a veritable compass for the Yahaya Bello government.

In his speech at the event, he summarized thus the magic behind his successes.

‘Shortly after my inauguration into the office for the first time on 27th January 2016 I commissioned a multidisciplinary team of consultants to design a governance template for my administration drawing from our campaign promises and direct feedback from the people of Kogi State whom they interacted with in every nook and cranny of the state.’

The outcome is what we call the Kogi State New Direction Blueprint which I like to define as ‘our roadmap for accelerated and proportional development of Kogi State in all her constituencies’. The New Direction Blueprint has helped us to steadily translate our mission statement into the reality that we now see in Kogi State, a few of which will be commissioned today.

Our performance matrix is rooted in an overall mission statement as an administration, which reads thus: ‘To develop Kogi State into Nigeria's foremost and most secure emerging commercial hub through optimization of the state's geographical location, natural endowments and human resources for a sustainable future.’

Whether we like it or not, Alhaji Yahaya Bello has redefined the governance template in Kogi State, he has moved the state from a family empire to an inclusive forte, and he has demystified political demagoguery and collapsed political dynasties. He has shown those with power before now that you can make your people a priority regardless of the tides or fortune. By the time power returns, we can be more purposeful with real governance like the era of Audu and Bello- the two inarguably Princes of the Niger.

Abdullahi O. Haruna
(Haruspice) wrote from Abuja

COMMENT & DEBATE

[PENPOINT]

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with

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Obasanjo, the letterman, strikes again

Not a few feathers in the country's political space were ruffled by the latest letter penned by former President Olusegun Obasanjo, which became public on New Year's Day. The letter which was titled 'My Appeal to All Nigerians, Particularly Young Nigerians' has seemingly attracted more reactions and attacks in the media which question his legitimacy to write it, than even its content and thrust. The raging attacks on the author ostensibly derive from his endorsement of Peter Obi - one of the leading contenders for the office of the President who is running on the platform of the Labour Party (LP) in the forthcoming general polls slated for February this year. Not only did Obasanjo endorse Obi, he went further to deconstruct and de-market the other leading candidates such as Bola Tinubu of the All Progressives Congress (APC) and Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), by scoring them lower on his adopted criteria than Obi his preferred candidate. This seemingly is where he stirred the hornets' nest.

Among what he wrote in the letter, is that while "none of the contestants is a saint ... when one compares their character, antecedent, their understanding, knowledge, discipline and vitality that they can bring to bear and the great efforts required to stay focused on the job, particularly looking at where the country is today and with the experience on the job that I personally had, Peter Obi as a mentee has an edge". Not done with the ranking of the candidates, Obasanjo did not spare the current administration of President Muhammadu Buhari, which he described as having taken the country backwards.

Among reactions to the letter are in the

first place, the rebuttal from the Presidency, which described Obasanjo as a frustrated man. Others comprise a series of angry personal rebuttals from both Tinubu and Atiku along with their spokespersons and a battalion of critics who cite Obasanjo's 'sins' while he was in and out of office at two periods—firstly as a military ruler of the country (1976 -1979), and later as an elected civilian president between (1999 -2007). On the flip side are also numerous voices commending him for the courage to write the letter which they claim is a timely intervention, given the prevailing state of affairs in the country.

Meanwhile, taken on face value of its content, and stripping it of whatever reference to Obi and his competitors, the letter basically constitutes the stuff from a caring elder statesman to a hurting nation. Seen in context there is hardly anything that the letter represents other than a homily which is aimed at stirring up the countrymen and women - especially the youth, to the crucial nature of the forthcoming polls, being a make or mar dispensation for the country. For emphasis, it also needs to be observed that there is hardly anything written the letter by the author, which has not been placed in the public domain by other observers of the state of affairs in the country—including several of the present traducers of Obasanjo, even with more scathing language.

While it is not the intention of this column to hold brief for Obasanjo, who this column had on several instances found cause to disagree with, there had been circumstances in the public domain which any keen observer of the country like Obasanjo, can easily rely upon to exercise his personal liberty to make his now

controversial value judgment. By the same token, his traducers who are henpecking him presently, are also depending on the same premise of personal liberty and freedom of speech to launch the series of invectives on him. This is where in less auspicious times and with diminished stakes at risk, Nigerians would say that 'grammar jam grammar' and leave the matter as 'one one draw', with the resignation that Obasanjo has met his match with the avalanche of rebuttals to his letter.

However, these are not ordinary times but the build-up to a landmark electoral exercise with the likelihood of featuring novel developments and tendencies which may be unlike what had been taking place in past electoral exercises. In the circumstances, a key factor of concern to the political parties and their candidates is the deployment by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC),

The truth of the matter is that Obasanjo cannot be discountenanced by his traducers even if his crusade is seen as self justified, given his antecedents as his inclination to assert himself cannot be taken away.

of electronic voting protocols that will brook no fear or favouritism. Just as well, the INEC has severally assured the country the forthcoming elections shall provide room for voters to vote according to their individual convictions. And that is where Obasanjo's letter matters, especially when it comes to how much credibility he commands across the country and whether his traducers can easily discountenance his clout in the nation. This is what regular Nigerians will call 'the pepper' of the entire matter.

The truth of the matter is that Obasanjo cannot be discountenanced by his traducers even if his crusade is seen as self justified, given his antecedents as his inclination to assert himself cannot be taken away. This is a man who has featured on the national scene in various capacities over a period spanning the entire history of independent Nigeria. As a soldier he featured actively in Nigeria's foreign military assignments. Beyond that he was engaged in one role or the other in the series of military interventions in governance of the country and rose to be the head of state. He was later elected as president of the country under a democratic dispensation. In his personal capacity he is an author of 27 books, in various genres of literature, beyond his numerous letters in which he expressed his views bluntly to different recipients be such friends or foes. A voracious reader and compulsive seeker of knowledge he obtained a doctorate degree from the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), in 2018, after he left office as president.

It is therefore not surprising that his penchant for shaking tables metaphorically through books and letters writing is grounded on a foundation of patriotism, intellectual sensitivity to the Nigerian cause, as well as long, active association with the soul of the Nigerian nation. His comments are therefore in most cases not frivolous but credible, even if not always popular.

With respect to the current salvo from him, he may not succeed in conjuring Peter Obi into the presidential seat. However, given the traditional, didactic slant of his interventions, it is time Nigerians - especially the present complement of contenders for political offices, to take Obasanjo's grouses more seriously.

Domestication or globalisation of health policy in Nigeria?

By Dr Kamaluddeen Garba

The Covid-19 pandemic that brought the world to its knees was one of the greatest challenges witnessed by mankind in recent times. In my opinion, it is the hypothetical World War III, the world is afraid of. Unarguably, the impact of which we are yet to fully recover from it. At the outset it was shrouded by controversies of mythical proportions. Not only the laymen, even the scientific and medical fraternities were not spared from the needless debate of it being a hoax. With the success of the Covid-19 vaccines and massive reductions in deaths and hospitalisation, this has put to rest the arguments of the naysayers.

The novel Coronavirus has crippled the world economy in no small measure. It has put several businesses in extinction, mental and casual workers losing their sources of livelihoods and deprivation of school children to education were some of the most glaring impacts. On the other hand, the global pandemic had opened a new vista in almost every facet of our lives. One area that this change is noticeable is the ICT. No one could have imagined hitherto that workers could transitioned rapidly to the hybrid working system

which has now been normalised.

Going back to the health sector. The pandemic should afford us some time for reflection and review of what is going on with our health policy. The Federal Government through the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control performed creditably well in containing the spread of the virus. On the flip side of it, the health performance indices of Nigeria are adjudged to be one of the poorest in Sub Saharan Africa, thanks to under-5 mortality, maternal mortality, Malaria and other childhood diseases to mention but few. To be more specific, a World Bank data in 2020 put it that 1 out of 9 children die before their fifth birthday in Nigeria, which is the worst in Sub Saharan Africa; comparable only to a war-torn Somalia. In the same breath, 1 out of every 4 deaths of Malaria in the world is in Nigeria as reflected in WHO "World Malaria Report 2019". These numbers are grossly unacceptable and is enough to trigger goosebumps to any discerning mind, health care authority and government. We are in a brink of total health collapse and everything humanly possible should be done to salvage the system.

Humongous number of resources both financial and non-financial have been expended since the outbreak of the Covid-

19, a disease with much lower mortality and morbidity in comparison to tropical diseases such as Malaria. This partly fuelled the conspiracy theory(ies) regarding the disease initially. Government must show the same aggression and vigour to tropical diseases ravaging our precious population as they are doing with Covid-19. One might be tempted to ask whether it is not time for us to recalibrate these policies to reflect domestic realities in addressing these recurring health challenges.

As we approach the 2023 elections, where expectedly leaders would be elected at various levels. We must be serious in the business of governance. This can be done by asking the hard questions from our politicians on how they intend to upturn these statistics. Political office seekers should steer clear of the rhetorical and generic cliché of improving health or pumping money into health when asked as to what they would do with healthcare. They should give us objectives that is SMART in a strict managerial sense. We must demand for actionable and realistic plan in getting out of this quagmire. For instance, States and LG should not only staff Primary Health Cares (PHCs) and General Hospitals with essential medications but should do that that to the vulnerable populations at

a subsidised rate. This is because Health access by all conventions is a right and should be borne from the public purse. They should provide us with a realistic, workable and sustainable ways of funding this. Anyone incapable of discharging this public obligation has no business seeking our votes come 2023.

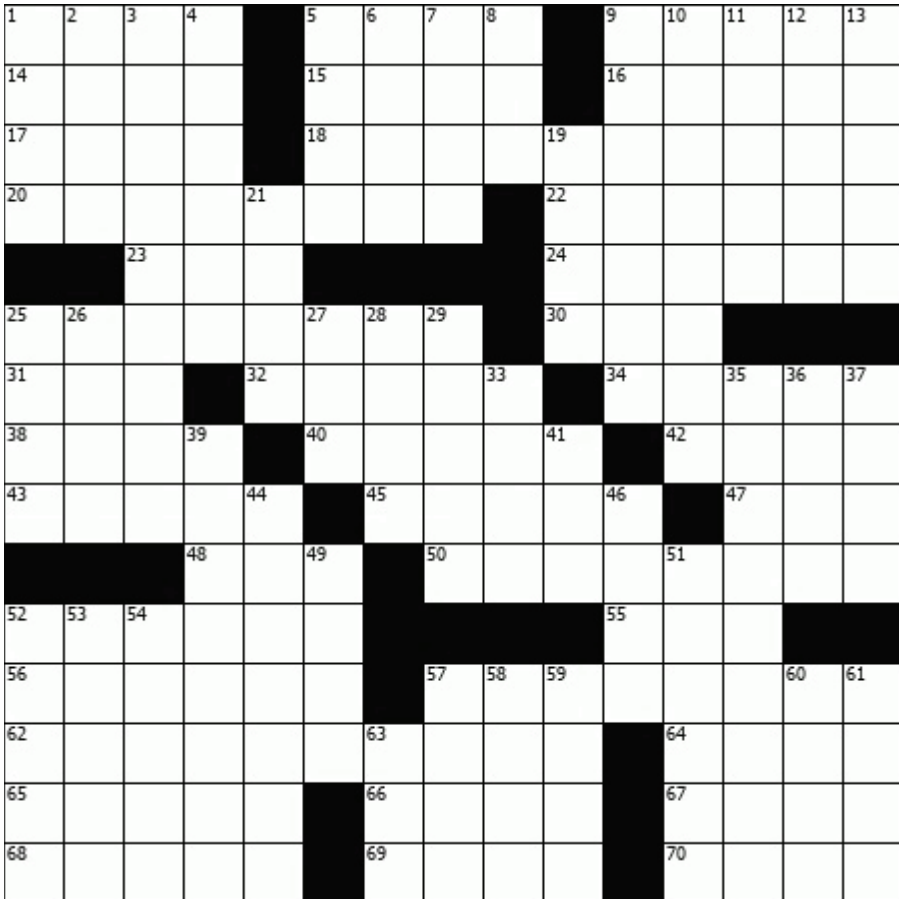
With the staring numbers of burden of malaria in Nigeria, the Government at the centre should as a matter of urgency declare it as an emergency. It is a disease worthy of prioritisation; we should lead the world in the development of its vaccine because we are the country that is worst affected by it. In addition, the available antimalarial medications are gradually losing their effectiveness due to resistance. It is our challenge and we don't expect someone to remove the log from our eyes. We have seen how industrialised countries heavily invested in the COVAX scheme and how within a short period stem the tide of the virus. The Nigerian Government should lead the world in ending this by investing heavily in Malaria vaccine as a short-term goal. This is doable!

Dr Garba is of the Arewa Renaissance Group and can be reach at kamal4kanam@yahoo.com

Adama Baba's

CROSSWORDZ No. 417

CLUES



Across

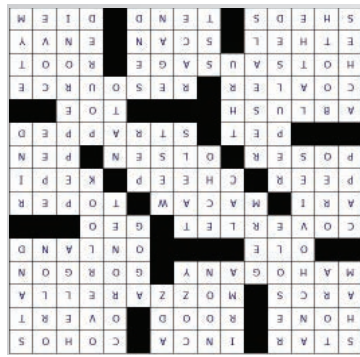
1. Walk of Fame attraction
5. Machu Picchu builder
9. Some salmon
14. Sharpen, as on a whetstone
15. Crucifix
16. Unconcealed
17. Bow shapes
18. Pizza topping
20. Furniture wood
22. Medusa was one
23. Flamenco exclamation
24. Back from flying
25. Decorative bedspread
30. Earth prefix
31. "Exodus" hero
32. Cockatiel kin
34. Fields persona
38. Take a gander
40. Chick's pronouncement
42. French military cap
43. Baffling question
45. Clark Kent's pal
47. Some people don't care if its tip is felt
48. Stroke
50. Penniless
52. Red-faced
55. Low digit
56. Certain fuel carrier
57. Money or property, e.g.
62. Pizza topping
64. Word with canal or beer
65. A Barrymore
66. Read quickly
67. One of the seven deadlies
68. Outbuildings
69. Shepherd
70. Per ____ (daily allowance)

Down

1. Subterfuge
2. One-third of the title of a movie about 12/7/41
3. Pizza toppings
4. Do a cobbler's job
5. "____ La Douce"
6. Time for a break, often
7. Teapot cover
8. Wood dresser
9. Small crown
10. Scenic viewpoint
11. Andrew Wyeth's model
12. Acrylic fabric
13. Rise
19. Highly excited
21. Microorganism
25. Abner's artist
26. Nabisco goodie
27. Varnish ingredient
28. Reverberation
29. Chinese weight units
33. Needle point?
35. Pizza topping
36. Rapier's cousin
37. Lemon component
39. Fought off
41. For each
44. Closes up again
46. Western defense assn.
49. Way header
51. Rained cats and dogs
52. Yearns painfully
53. Place for a phone
54. Bat maker's tool
57. Word with foot and rat
58. "Magnet and Steel" singer Walter
59. Transmit
60. Small inlet
61. Study of word origins (Abbr.)
63. Concorde, e.g.

TURN UPSIDE-DOWN FOR SOLUTION>>

Check out the solved grid on the right to see if you got it correctly. Please send comments to abdullahiadamax@gmail.com



Word Search VEGETABLES

G L R R W H C A N I P S C
 Z L K E T P P O T A T O T
 N B B B W Y I O N O I N O
 H R R M F O N N H O A P C
 A M O U K E L S S L T I E
 S N C C E O I F P R B L L
 A M C U G D H G I L A C E
 E S O C A A G L E L A P R
 P Q L R B E I T R R U T Y
 P U I I B B T P R A E A D
 L A L F A U B O B E B U C
 N S Q S C B T U B R S I K
 J H J E R R U T A B A G A

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell an additional word related to VEGETABLES

CLUES

- | | |
|-------------|----------|
| BEET | LETTUCE |
| BROCCOLI | ONION |
| CABBAGE | PARSNIP |
| CARROT | PEAS |
| CAULIFLOWER | POTATO |
| CELERY | RADISH |
| CORN | RUTABAGA |
| CUCUMBER | SPINACH |
| EGGPLANT | SQUASH |
| KOHLRABI | |

FASTFACT

"I am among those who think that science has great beauty." - Marie Curie

How Ogun family was wiped out on New Year day

A couple and their child were murdered on New Year Day at their home located on Oba Karunwi Street at the Ibara GRA, in Abeokuta, Ogun State, *Daily Trust on Sunday* reports.

From Peter Moses, Abeokuta

With two gates, one the entry point and the other the exit point, the quiet street is host to the private residence of a first class monarch, the Osile of Oke-Ona Egba, Oba Adedapo Tejuoso; the state's office of the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA), as well as the National Industrial Court.

Yet the killers marched on the street and hacked down the couple, Kehinde and Bukola Fatinoye, and their son, Oreoluwa, and their adopted son, Felix, in a semi-detached duplex and set the building on fire. The two boys were tied with ropes and thrown into the Ogun River.

The incident happened while the family was still mourning the death of their son who died in June, 2022, while playing football.

The festive period brought a relief to the family, and like many others, they attended a cross over service and returned home only to meet their death.

Police spokesman in the state, Abimbola Oyeyemi, said, "It is true that a couple was killed and set ablaze at their residence in Abeokuta shortly after they returned from a cross over service.

"One person has been arrested by our operatives



The building which was set ablaze after the couple's killing

in connection with the incident. We will get to the root of the matter as investigation has since begun.

"The assailants took advantage of the busy cross over night into the New Year to carry out the dastardly act."

The murdered woman was a worker with the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB), while her husband was in the employ of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN).

The adopted son, however, was said to have escaped miraculously from the river and returned to narrate how the incident occurred to the police.

The burial service for the couple took place at the Anglican Church, Iporo-Ake, Abeokuta, on Monday and were thereafter buried in the Lantoro area of Abeokuta.

Couple's last moments
A source told *Daily Trust on Sunday* that the woman attended a security meeting organised by the residents and landlords on the street on December 31.

The cleric of the couple's church, Rev S. K. Oyewale, explained that, "We ended the service around 2am. We spoke together in anticipation that we were going to meet by 10am for the Holy Communion service."

The cleric described the couple as "a completely gentle family and full of respect for everyone."

He said, "In the church, they were very active; they touched a lot of lives; not only in the church, but all over. Our brother was a pillar in the church; he was a pillar in the family, he was a pillar at work. This is very disheartening and we hope God brings all those behind

Seyi Fatinoye, a younger brother of the late man, has demanded justice for the family, noting that his late brother was a gentleman and breadwinner of the family.



The couple while alive

Daily Trust on Sunday gathered that the adopted son, Felix, was brought in handcuffs to the riverbank where Oreoluwa's corpse was recovered to identify the corpse.

While Felix was being led away, he shouted, "I am not a killer. I did not kill them. I'm not a killer. I know what I saw. I told them to let us check the river before we left. I saw him (the killer). Why will I not recognise someone who wanted to kill me? I saw him. I know what I saw. I know what I'm saying. I'm not a killer."

When asked who the killer was, Felix said, "Brother Lekan."

Another source told our correspondent the late couple, the murdered son and Felix were due to relocate to Canada this month before the incident happened.

Family demands justice
Seyi Fatinoye, a younger brother of the late man, has demanded justice for the family, noting that his late brother was a gentleman and

breadwinner of the family.

He said, "My brother was a very humble and gentle man. He was not a troublemaker, he did not like trouble at all. He was also very nice. Those people that did this to us will not go free."

"Look at my life, I buried my brother's son, buried my brother, buried his wife, what else is left for me in this life? This is my life; I don't have anything again in this world."

Meanwhile, Governor Dapo Abiodun has given marching orders to the police command in the state to go after the killers of the couple and bring them to justice.

He said, "This is a grievous crime; no doubt. I have directed the Commissioner of Police to ensure that everything is done in order to arrest the people behind the dastard act. I assure you that the perpetrators will not go unpunished. Such a heinous crime should not go without making the people responsible face the full wrath of the law."

the act to justice."

Son's corpse recovered after 3 days

The decomposing corpse of the son of the couple, Oreoluwa, was recovered from the Ogun River on Tuesday morning by fishermen and handed over to the police.

I'm not the killer, adopted son says

REQUEST FOR TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL APPLICATION FOR MONITORING AND SUPERVISION OF CONSTRUCTION OF WASH FACILITIES IN SOKOTO STATE

Green Habitat Initiative (GHI) is a non-profit organization currently receiving a grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to implement the Project for Improved Sustainability of Integrated WASH Service (I-WASH).

GHI now intends to begin construction of WASH facilities including hand washing facilities, toilets, solar-powered boreholes and rehabilitation of handpumps in Yabo and Silame LGAs of Sokoto State.

Eligible Companies are invited to submit their interest to monitor and supervise the construction of WASH Facilities in Sokoto State.

The expression of interest must include:

Technical Application
The technical application must present the following:
Good understanding of the call and expectations (maximum 1 page)

List experiences in execution of WASH or WASH related projects (Not more than 2 pages including pictures)
Tools, relevant equipment and methodology to be employed (max 3 pages)

Work plan and scheduling assuming all construction works will be completed in 30 days (max 2 pages)

CVs of key personnel to be employed on the project and roles (not more than 5 and must include a civil engineer or related field with experience in steel construction, WASH expert and Project Manager). The CV of each expert should not be more than 3 pages.

Financial Application
Detailed budget in Microsoft Excel (avoid Lump Sums except where necessary)

Evidence of registration with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC), TCC and Other key financial documents if available.

The proposal should be sent on or before 15th January 2023 to the under-listed email address: bidsubmissions@greenhabitat.ng

NB: For inquiries on the general scope of work, kindly send your request to this email: bidsubmissions@greenhabitat.ng

**Signed:
Procurement Committee**

NEWSROYALE

Igue: Benin's New Year festival

From Usman A. Bello, Benin

The Igue festival is an age-long tradition of Benin Kingdom in Edo State where indigenes offer sacrifices of thanks to God for the New Year.

The tradition which started during the reign of Oba Ewuare I has transcended many monarchs of the kingdom. During the festival, the rich tradition of the kingdom is on display.

Daily Trust on Sunday's findings revealed that the people use the festival to offer sacrifices for good health and prosperity while entering a new year.

The Oba of Benin, Omo N'Oba N'Edo, Uku Akpolokpolo Oba Ewuare II, commenced the 2022 Ugie, otherwise called Igue, with Ugierhoba rites, signaling the end of 2022.

Ugierhoba, it was gathered, is a ceremony where the monarch pays homage to the spirits of his ancestors (enikaro) in his palace in Benin City, with the rites performed on the Ugha-Erhoba altar dedicated to previous obas.

Performing the indoor ceremony, Oba Ewuare II, assisted by palace functionaries, poured libations at the Ugha-Erhoba shrine and used kola nut to offer prayers of protection to God and his ancestors.

Palace functionaries, including Chief Osuan, made supplications unto the oba in a special performance with his ceremonial sword, pledging their loyalty to the great Benin throne.

The Edion group led by Chief Edionwe Oliha, the Oliha of Benin, also played their various roles at



■ Oba Ewuare paying tribute to his ancestor at Ugha-Erhoba altar during the Igue festival

PHOTO: Usman A. Bello

the Igue festival which started at Ogiso Era in 40BC.

Chiefs and other palace guilds, including Ewaise (diviners), Ifiento (soldiers) cleared the way for the monarch, while a set of royal drummers took part in the traditional rites.

During the event, the oba, clad in white, led the procession by paying tributes to his ancestors at Ugha-Ozolua and Ugha-Erhoba in accordance with the dictates of the ancestors.

Traditional songs and performances by Ohen-Ebor Oba (priests and priestesses of different deities), along with Emehe (ancient royal praise singers), supplied spiritual renditions to the admiration of all.

The Ugha-Erhoba was followed by Ugie Emobo rites in which the monarch inspired royal fans who trooped out to participate in the blessings of Ugie Emobo in his palace.

The Ugie Emobo, held at the

oba's palace gate where different rites were performed, is designed to ward off evil spirits from Benin Kingdom.

During the rites, Oba Ewuare, clad red, engaged in dancing with his white ivory gong which he struck to ward off evil forces that might be hovering around any part of Benin Kingdom.

This was done after the Esogban of Benin, Chief David Edebiri, also known as the Odionwere of Benin, had performed the necessary rites that drove away evil spirits from Benin and thereafter prayed for the oba and left the scene without turning back.

On Esogban's departure, the monarch with Chief Ihama, head of the Ihogbe group and Iwebo guild, exhibited a grand cultural dexterity during the spiritual rejuvenation and fortification exercise, while Ogbelaka Royal

drummers supplied the impetus and rhythm for the dances.

In a rare display of royalty and splendour, the oba, with his ceremonial sword (eben) and ancestral staff (ukhurhe Edohia), proceeded to Argue-Edion (elders porch) where he offered prayers of protection and bountiful harvest.

As the festival was winding down, family heads preformed the Igue-Edohia rite to thank God and the ancestors for the outgoing year and usher in the New Year with good health and bountiful harvests.

This provided an opportunity for families to offer sacrifices of adoration and supplication to gods of the land, as well as the guardian spirits, for a prosperous new year, protection of the royal household and peace for the entire kingdom.

Chief Isaac Oghafua, the Oyorba of Benin, who spoke on the Igue-Edohia rite, explained that the ceremony was paramount to Benin's customs and tradition.

He said the thanksgiving was key to receiving abundant blessings from the ancestors and Almighty God.

Cultural troupes, including Uhuala Ndiocha masquerades and Ugo cultural troupe from Ihet, Nasa, both from Imo State, South East Nigeria, also entertained guests.

A resident of Benin, Osahon Osasuwa, noted that the festival was very dear to the Benin people because it afforded them the opportunity to pray and offer sacrifice to God and the ancestors for reaching the year, as well as starting the New Year in good health.

This provided an opportunity for families to offer sacrifices of adoration and supplication to gods of the land, as well as the guardian spirits, for a prosperous new year, protection of the royal household and peace for the entire kingdom.

Thrills of Gbagyi festival in Karu

By Abubakar Sadiq Isah

The Gbagyi of Karu Chiefdom in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC) of the FCT on Monday, January 2, 2023, held their annual cultural festival during which they showcased their heritage which thrilled spectators.

Daily Trust on Sunday which was at the venue of the event reports that the spectators were enthralled by the dances and other displays by various cultural troupes, as well as the exhibition of Gbagyi cultural artifacts.

Decked in their different costumes, the troupes marched in a procession to the stage to display.

Also, entertaining spectators were masquerades and hunters who displayed their prowess with bows and arrows and guns.

The Chairman of Bwari Area Council, John Gabaya, who was the chairman of the occasion, said the FCT natives could only be identified by showcasing their culture and tradition, noting that they should not allow other Nigerians to come and show them their cultures.

The chairman appreciated the Sa'Karuyi of Karu, Dr Emmanuel Kyauta Yepwi, and members of his traditional council for promoting peace across the council.

In his address, the Chairman of Karu Chiefdom Development Association, Dangana D. Jimiko, said the festival served as a symbol of strengthening the bond of unity and togetherness of the good people of Karu and the entire original inhabitants of Abuja, adding that it was in line with government's policy and programme of promoting culture and tourism for development.

He said the seventh annual festival involved the Gbagyi, Gede, Gwandara and the other nine indigenous tribes in the FCT.

Also speaking, the Commissioner for Public Complaints Commission (PCC) representing the FCT, Mr Ezekiel Dalhatu Musa, said indiscriminate demolition of the ancestral homes of the FCT natives by government and land grabbers had been a threat to the Gbagyi culture in the territory.

Musa, who spoke as a guest speaker at the event, said the Gbagyi race was at a crossroads, noting that as a major tribe in the FCT there was the need to set a pace in order for others to follow.

He said, "But we can't do or achieve this stride without realigning our culture, even as incredible feats have been reached and can be attained using our culture."

He, therefore, called on the government to address the avalanche of injustices



■ Locals entertain guests during the Gbagyi cultural festival in Karu, FCT

PHOTO: Abubakar Sadiq Isah

against the natives of the FCT by creating a development commission that would cater for them, as well as preserve their culture.

Senator representing the FCT, Philip Aduda, said he was optimistic that Gbagyi culture would soon be exported to the world.

On his part, the Sa'Karuyi of Karu Chiefdom, Yepwi, called on the youths to continue to remain loyal to constituted authorities, even as he cautioned them not to allow themselves to be used as thugs ahead of the February 25, 2023, elections.

TAMBARI

Extra

CULINARY CORNER

Beef noodle soup

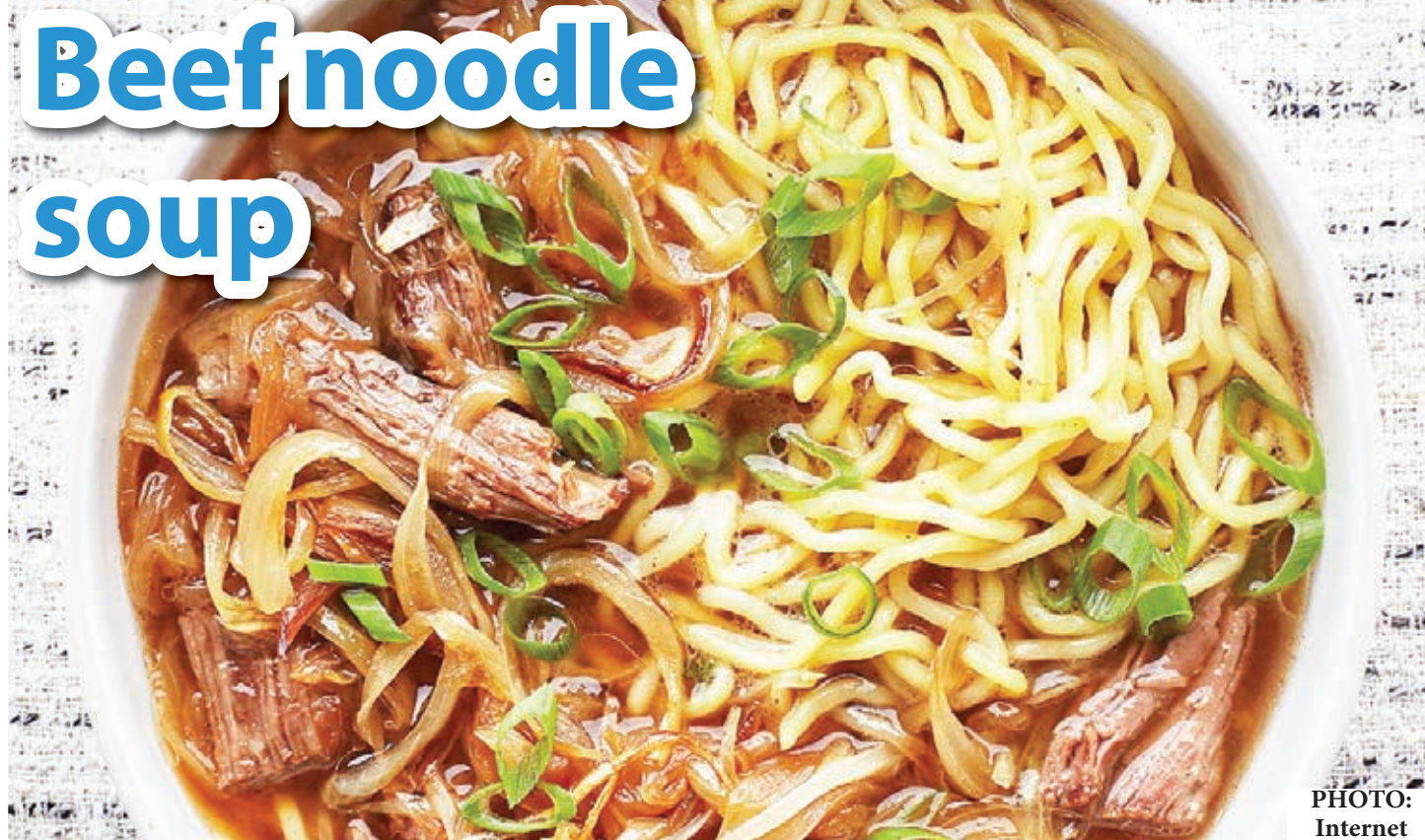


PHOTO: Internet

Compiled by **Rosemary Etim Bassey**

Beef noodle soup is a type of noodle dish made with beef that has been stewed or braised, beef broth, veggies, and noodles. In East and Southeast Asia, it takes many different forms.

Ingredients

Egg noodles, ginger, garlic, chilli, eggs, lean beef, bean

pressure pot) put together beef, sprout (optional), green pepper, red bell pepper, spring onions, onion /shallot, carrot, garlic chives, celery (optional), soy sauce, sesame oil, seasoning cubes and salt.

Recipe

- Wash beef and add some water to boil for like 3-5mins to remove blood. Remove after 5mins max and throw away water.
- In a clean pot (preferably

pressure pot) put together beef, garlic, ginger, onions, carrot and peppers. Toast/roast in the pot until beef is brown and veggies are sweating.

- Add soy sauce (2tbs per 1/2 kilo of meat) sesame oil and some seasoning and water.
- Cover and let cook (check and add water at intervals) until your meat is completely cooked and falls apart when you touch (if you don't have a pressure pot,

this will take longer)

- After meat is cooked, blend the broth with all the veggies and chilli and garlic chives. Put blended mixture back on fire to reduce till it becomes thicker than a snicker.
- Boil your eggs and noodles and blanch the bean sprout if you're using any.
- Assemble your meal with spring onions and pour in your broth and enjoy.

HEALTHY LIVING

Simple ways to detox your body

Detoxification or detox often refers to following a certain diet or utilising special items that claim to cleanse your body of toxins, hence, boosting health and promoting weight loss. In reality, your body has all the tools it needs to get rid of pollutants and doesn't need any specialised diets or pricey supplements to do so. However, you can improve the natural detoxification process of your body. Here are simple ways you can help detox your body:

Reduce liquor intake: Drinking too much can seriously harm your liver's ability to operate by accumulating fat, inflaming it, and leaving scar tissues behind. When this occurs, your liver is unable to operate normally and carry out its essential functions which include removing waste and other toxins from your body. One of the easiest methods to maintain a healthy detoxification system in your body is to limit or completely avoid liquor.

Sleep more: It's imperative to get enough rest every night to support your body's natural detoxification process and overall health. Your brain can organise and recharge when you sleep, and it may also flush out hazardous waste by-products that build up throughout the day. Stress, anxiety, high blood pressure, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and obesity are just a few of the

short- and long-term health effects of getting too little sleep. To help maintain optimum health, you should typically get 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night.



Consume antioxidant-rich foods:

Consuming an antioxidant-rich diet can aid your body in fending against oxidative stress, which is brought on by too many free radicals and other pollutants and raises your risk of disease.

Concentrate on obtaining antioxidants through food rather than pills, which when taken in big numbers, may actually raise your chance of developing certain diseases. Vitamin A, C, and E are some examples of antioxidants. The highest concentrations of antioxidants can be found in berries, fruits, nuts, chocolate, vegetables, spices, and drinks like coffee and green tea.

Limit your consumption of processed foods and sugar:

According to research, eating a lot of sugary and processed foods increases your risk of developing diabetes, heart disease, and other chronic illnesses including obesity. These conditions impair your body's capacity to naturally cleanse by hurting vital organs like your liver and kidneys. By letting junk food sit on the shelf, you can reduce your consumption. The temptation is completely eliminated if you don't keep it in your kitchen. Another smart strategy to cut back on intake is to swap out processed foods for fruits and vegetables and other healthier options.

Source: www.healthline.com

Hello, there!

Welcome to another week filled with prosperity and blessings. Jim Rohn once said; "Discipline is the bridge between goals and accomplishment." As we set our goals and target for the year, remember to practice discipline as it will help you in achieving your goals.

Looking for new recipes to spice up your diet? Move along to our culinary corner for a recipe on sizzling beef noodle soup to go alongside a yummy pineapple iced tea.

Wondering how to spice up your office dress styles? Whether in ankara or English wear, be rest assured we have you covered. Our women's fashion page offers a variety of corporate styles that will leave you turning heads at work.

Not all the time, plain outfits and neutral colours. Sometimes, a little bling is all it takes to add more swag to your style. Head over to our men's fashion page to see how a man of style can efficiently rock a jewellery set.

The goal is to have healthy, supple and glowing skin all year round. Our beauty sections list out all the tips that will help prevent premature ageing and leave you looking forever young.

Until next week, stay safe and have an amazing week ahead.

Amina Alhassan
(Editor)

aminaalhassan@dailytrust.com

Pineapple iced tea



This pineapple iced tea comes together in no time.

Ingredients

Water, green tea bags, pineapple juice, sugar (or to taste), ice

Recipe

- Bring the water to a slow boil in a pot or saucepan.
- After adding the sugar to the water, mix it until it dissolves.
- Add the tea bags after taking the pot off the heat. Allow 8 to 10 minutes to steep.
- Add the pineapple juice and stir.
- Place in a pitcher and let cool just a bit at room temperature before putting in the refrigerator.
- Serve with ice and enjoy

WOMEN'S FASHION

Corporate style guide

Compiled by Rosemary Etim Bassey

Your office's dress code will determine what is and isn't appropriate for you to wear there. But you shouldn't let dress requirements prevent you from looking your best at work. Keep the colours modest and the designs simple yet classy.



SOCIETY NEWS

Compiled by Rosemary Etim Bassey

Tosin of Kubis Fabrics shuts down Lagos in grand style



It was a gathering of Lagos top socialites as Alhaja Kuburat Shokunbi, CEO of Kubis Fabrics held an extravagant wedding ceremony for her daughter, Tosin Shokunbi. Present at the event were the Oba Elegushi and wife; Oba

Oloworo and wife; Oba Oniru and wife and Oba Onikate Surelere and wife. All the guests looked stunning as pictures of the ladies in their stunning asoebi costume have now gone viral on the internet.

Charly Boy, wife reveal secret to successful marriage

Charles Oputa, widely known as Charly Boy, and his wife, Lady Diane, have revealed the secret to their long-standing marriage.



The couple posted a video on Instagram in which they discussed their marital problems and how they occasionally wanted to give up but decided to "manage" and carry on. They discussed some of the problems they have as a couple and how frequently they fight,

claiming it has happened more than 5,000 times. However, they decide to renew their vows and carry on rather than give up. "If he go rise, we go manage am; if e no rise, we go manage am. Marriage na management," they said.

My silence was golden — Fancy Acholonu

The recent highly publicized issue involving Fancy Acholonu's relationship with Alexx Ekubo is officially over. The model and businesswoman who now lives in the US and was once engaged to the Nollywood star said she has now finished talking about it.



After publicly apologising, Fancy recently broke her silence about the reasons for the breakup of her five-year relationship with Alexx and revealed a number of details.

Along with other things, she accused her ex-fiance of being manipulative, narcissistic, and a cheat. She also criticized his choice to avoid having a physical

relationship with her. In her most recent post, the model states that she's ready to put all the drama behind her. She said; "I never wanted to speak to you. My silence was golden. I do not want to tarnish his image. My pain was my secret. He opened me up for selfish reasons. I should have known better. I'm sorry to everyone. This is very humiliating but I have to defend myself with the truth. This too shall pass. Taking time off to heal."

Bling season

Compiled by Rosemary Etim Bassey

Before now, men used to only wear a few pieces of jewellery such as a class ring, a wedding band, a neck chain, a watch, or even cufflinks if the situation called for them. Today's men have made the decision to wear jewellery more frequently, and fortunately, they may pick from a variety of designs and materials.



ETIQUETTE

Watch wearing etiquette



Compiled by Rosemary Etim Bassey

Watch wearing etiquette is crucial for watch enthusiasts. After all, well-made timepieces are heirloom investments. Knowing how to wear a pricey timepiece is important if you possess one. Follow the wristwatch wearing guidelines listed below:

- Wear a watch that suits your style: Wear a watch that matches your taste and fashion, just like you would your clothing. Get something you actually want that you can sustain for a long time instead of just falling into fashion traps.
- Not too tight, not too loose: You should be able to wear your watch without discomfort. When you are out and about, you wouldn't want to be fixing it all the time.
- When in gathering or speaking to someone, avoid looking at your watch; always checking your watch while in a meeting or at a social event is considered inappropriate. In addition to violating the rules on watch wearing, you risk damaging your reputation by doing this. Be sociable and interact with others.
- Admire but from a distance: You may observe but not touch. It is improper to ask the wearer if you can touch their wrists to admire their watch because some wristwatches are sensitive.
- Light with light, dark with dark: Watch-obsessed guys think it's proper to wear a watch with dark dials at night and a watch with light dials during the day.
- Don't repeat the same watch often: Wear a variety of watches that are appropriate for the occasion to practise rotating your watch collection. A sports watch under a suit or a dive watch in the gym are inappropriate wears.
- Wear on your more comfortable wrist: Traditionally, you should wear your watch on the hand that is least dominant to shield it from any potential harm. There isn't exactly a correct way to wear a watch anymore. Select a wrist that will allow you to move comfortably.
- Drop the oversized watch trend: Oversized timepieces for men have been the standard for the past several years. This widespread fad had only one objective: to shout for attention. A large watch dwarfs your wrist, distorts the proportions of your complete ensemble, and just doesn't "fit" into an outfit that has been carefully put together.
- Match your colours and metals: Try to coordinate the watch's colours and metals with the rest of your attire. Choose a watch in a metal that matches the colour of your cufflinks, rings, collar bars, and buckles on your shoes and belts. Don't wear a brown band with a black suit, and only wear yellow gold with yellow gold. Pay special attention to the elements of the watch that stand out the most, such as the strap, the metal, and even the dial.

Beauty tips to prevent premature ageing



Compiled by Rosemary Etim Bassey

Our skin ages due to a variety of factors. There are some things we can't change while there are others we can. The ageing process is one thing that we cannot stop. We all develop visible facial lines over time. Our faces naturally lose some of their youthful fullness as we age. We feel that our skin is getting drier and thinner. These modifications mostly depend on our genes. Our environment and lifestyle choices however, can potentially speed up the ageing process of our skin. We can lessen the effects that this form of ageing has on our skin by taking some preventive measures:

Daily sun protection for your skin is a must: Sun protection is necessary whether you're running errands or spending the day at the beach. Seek out shade, wear sun-protective clothes such as a light, long-sleeved shirt; slacks, a wide-brimmed hat, and UV-protective sunglasses, and use sunscreen that is broad-spectrum, SPF 30 (or greater), and water-resistant to protect your skin. Every day, you should put sunscreen on any exposed skin that isn't covered by clothing. Look for garments with an ultraviolet protection factor (UPF) marking for better protection.

Instead of tanning yourself, apply self-tanner: Your skin ages faster each time you acquire a tan. This is accurate whether you tan outdoors in a tanning bed, or with other indoor tanning tools. All of them give off dangerous UV rays that quicken the ageing process of your skin.

Stop smoking, if you do: Smoking dramatically hastens the ageing process of the skin. It results in crow's feet and a lifeless complexion.

Steer clear of constant facial expressions: The underlying muscles are tightened as you make a facial expression. These lines become permanent if you tense the same muscles repeatedly over a long period of time. Squinting lines can be lessened by wearing sunglasses.

Consume a nutritious, balanced diet: According to the results of a few studies, eating a lot of fresh fruits and vegetables may help avoid the harm that causes early skin ageing. Research findings also point to the possibility that a diet high in sugar or other refined carbs may hasten ageing.

Try to work out most days of the week: Results from a few researches indicate that light exercise can increase immunity and enhance circulation. The skin may then appear more youthful as a result of this.

Gently cleanse your skin: Cleaning your skin with a scrubber can irritate it. Skin ageing is accelerated by irritation.

Without harming your skin, gentle washing helps eliminate pollution, makeup, and other chemicals.

Wash your face twice a day, and after heavy sweating: You should immediately cleanse your skin after sweating since perspiration irritates the skin, especially when wearing a hat or helmet.

Use a face moisturiser on a daily basis: Moisturiser holds water in our

skin, making it look younger.

Stop using skin care products that burn or sting: It suggests your skin is irritated when it burns or stings. Skin irritation can make it appear older.

Consider using retinol cream: Retinol, a vitamin A derivative can be found in many over-the-counter skincare products at concentrations of up to 2%. A retinol lotion can help stop early skin ageing when used daily.

Dermatologists advise you to start by using a retinol every other day rather than every day because it can take time for your skin to get used to it. You can begin using the retinol every day if you don't encounter any adverse side effects after a few weeks, such as increasing burning or redness. Consult your dermatologist if you are considering using a prescription retinoid cream at levels greater than 2%.

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Only creativity can stand you out in photography – Mariam Olapade

Mariam Olanike Olopade is a 24-year-old documentary photographer based in Abeokuta, Ogun State. The graduate of the Moshood Abiola Polytechnic (MAPOLY), Abeokuta, has made a name for herself in the male-dominated industry. She speaks to *Daily Trust on Sunday* about her job and the challenges of the creative industry.

From Peter Moses, Abeokuta

Why photography? Photography was not my choice; it was my mum's decision in 2013. After I completed computer training in 2012 she suggested I learn

photography from one of her friends. I declined and told her about my decision and passion to learn tailoring from a friend's mum. But you know how it is with our parents, their opinions must count. That was how I underwent a forceful three-year photography

training from 2013 to 2015 before I gained admission into MAPOLY. But I wouldn't count that as learning photography because it was a local process; I barely knew anything aside from going to the photo laboratory to print hard copy images.

Fast forward to September, 2021, I decided to learn a skill because I was bored after my HND. I gave photography another trial and here we are. I see myself as a budding photographer, and with digital photography, I continuously tell stories through visuals. My

genres are photojournalism, documentary, events and portraits. I am looking forward to launching my mobile photography business this year. The motivation is to report stories on child's rights through images and videos, to

Continued on page 24



Photographs taken by Mariam Olopade

'Only creativity can stand you out in photography'

Continued from page 23

offer info-visual documentaries, birth new ideas to storytelling, pronounce aesthetics and preserve memories.

I am not so well occupied for now, but I go to the studio every day to assist my facilitator and sometimes do my personal works. I also take time to do street photography and landscape with my mobile phone.

What are your goals as a photographer?

My goal is simple. Like Tolani Ali, a documentary female photographer and official photographer to Vice President Yemi Osibajo, I want to be a creative and official photographer to someone with high hierarchy in government. I want to be known as a documentary photographer and journalist on child's rights.

A photographer must at every minute fuel his/her passion for photography; it is very important. Also, the ability to think creatively outside the box to create something unique. The industry is overfilled and there is competition out there. To stand out, one must be able to picture a great idea.

What has been your experience as a photographer and journalist?

Being a photographer and a journalist is a little distraction for me. To balance it I have decided to do less writing and more picturing since they aid each other.

What distinguishes you from a roadside photographer?

I am totally different from a roadside photographer because I am in the media and technology world. I am learning and I understand photography as an entire course and not just a skill. I attend classes by facilitators abroad and am looking forward to acquiring professional courses and certification from top photographers



internationally.

What was your parents' position when you took up photography?

My mum would have been happy I am doing photography in its real sense if she were alive because it was what she wanted. But my dad supports anything I do so far it is legal.

Which of your shots do you cherish most and why?

My favourite project of all time is the "OLUMO ROCK" documentary which was taken with my mobile phone. I was able to tell the story to an extent of the beauty of the historical rock.

How do you improve your craft?

Like I tell people, photography is expensive, and to keep acquiring skills means you have to spend a lot, but all thanks to YouTube and facilitators who have been helping in ways to limit the expenses. I watch YouTube photography video classes a lot.

At what age did you venture into photography?

At age 15, but officially in

2022 at age 24.

What is the biggest challenge that you foresee in photography as an industry?

I foresee a blackout of creativity, a lack of finance to run personal projects and gears.

How do you stay motivated in your work?

My motivation while working comes from my mood. If I don't feel like retouching, I won't open my laptop. To stay motivated, I try to place myself in a happy and lively mood.

Describe a time when you failed in this role and the lessons you learned?

I have failed many times, cried, felt like giving up when there was no money to get photography gears when I would work on an image several times and still get rejected. When my hard-earned photography equipment got spoiled a few days after purchase and many more. Truth is, sometimes some circumstances happen to keep us focused. I am not shaken!

30 Oko prisoners exhibit skills at talent hunt

Thirty inmates of the Oko Custodial Centre of the Nigeria Correctional Service (NCoS) participated and showcased their God-given talents at an edutainment talent hunt held in Benin, Edo State.

The inmates participated in comedy, drama, news casting, dance, singing, among others, at the event tagged: "Yellow Ribbon Edutainment Therapy Programme".

The programme was designed to educate, enlighten and entertain, as well as for the discovery of talents in the entertainment industry.

The event, which was one of several inmates' reform and rehabilitation programmes of the custodial centre, was to achieve positive self-discovery during festive periods.

The Controller of Corrections, Edo Command, Charles Ogwude, was represented by the Deputy Controller of Corrections in charge of the custodial centre,



Sikiru Balogun.

Ogwude, who appreciated the partners for their commitment, noted that NCoS placed a premium on humane custody and on inmates' reformation and rehabilitation. He advised the inmates to continue to maximise the various available opportunities in preparing for life outside custody.

Speaking, Edwin Asibor, Co-Organiser and Executive Director of Securing the Creative Goldmine in Youth Initiative, urged the inmates to have positive disposition about life and develop their God-given talents as life in the outside world held lots of prospects for them.

According to Asibor, who is also an advocate of the

Yellow Ribbon Project, great men have at one time or the other spent years in prison custody, come out and held great positions.

He further said that the inmates were further motivated when a guest artiste, Asi Oracle, who was once an inmate, made a thrilling song performance, even as he advised that they could achieve great heights with obedience and hard work.

Apart from exhortations from the various partners and guests, the inmates contested keenly in the various areas of talent display, while prizes were awarded to seven winners for extraordinary performances in dance, singing, comedy and rapping. (NAN)

Enugu urges communities to preserve heritage

The Enugu State Government has urged communities in the state to preserve and promote their cultural identities and heritage for their younger generations.

Dr Kingsley Udeh, the Commissioner for Rural Development, made the call during the second edition of the Great Achallaukwu Festival by Affa community in Udi LGA.

The great Achallaukwu Dynasty comprises communities in Igbo-Etiti, Uzo-Uwani and Udi LGAs.

The festival, which began with a Holy Mass celebrated by the Spiritual Director of the Great Achallaukwu Dynasty, Rev Fr Joe Ezechi, had many sons and daughters of Affa in attendance, including Affa's traditional ruler, HRH Marius Ahamu.

Udeh, represented by the ministry's spokesman, Mrs Ifeoma Ogbu, said there was the need for communities to promote and sustain their cultures from dying.

He said to correct people's negative attitude to their cultures, "Enugu government is calling all the communities in Enugu and their leaders to resuscitate their cultures through training and retraining people on them."

Udeh further said that



Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi of Enugu State

some people advocated doing it in a modern way to accommodate Christianity.

"We accepted and we do not have problem celebrating it together as brothers and sisters."

President General of Affa Autonomous Community, Mr Victor Uchedienyi, said the event was to celebrate their paternity and ancestral bond and cultural values.

According to him, the celebration will help to integrate their strength, overcome their weaknesses, make them one indivisible people and promote love and relationship.

Uchedienyi, who is the convener of the event, said their forefather, Achallaukwu, had children dispersed and developed into numerous communities who retained some of his cultural values.

He said, "We shall no longer tolerate any dividing element in our paternity relationship. Great Achallaukwu Dynasty will continue to transform their culture to suit modern day society."

"We are called upon to co-exist and concentrate on the things that can bind us together, transform ancient practices that are obsolete and analyse our values and market our rich cultural values." (NAN)

the manner youths acted and dressed in the area were not benefitting to their culture and as such the stakeholders should sensitise them to uphold the values in their culture.

He added that, "Today this community is celebrating its ancestral father called Achallaukwu. It is an occasion all members of the community should embrace.

"I am advising them to take the celebration serious by exploring the opportunity to reach out to all the strata of the community which include women, youths children and the elderly.

"There is need to cooperate and bring their culture to enviable heights."

An elder, Mr Emmanuel Eketaonwu, said the event was used to remember their days, stressing they had done it in a traditional way before



AGRIC BUSINESS

'Over 1,800 trucks of livestock leave North to South monthly'

● 'Extortion kills our business'

By Dalhatu Liman

No fewer than 1,800 truckloads of livestock leave the northern part of Nigeria to the southern part every month, says the Chairman of the Association of Sheep and Goat Sellers of Nigeria, Alhaji Mustafa Ali.

Ali, who doubles as the National Auditor of the Amalgamated Union of Foodstuff and Cattle Dealers of Nigeria (AUFCDN), said extortion in Benue and Taraba states remained their major headache.

He said, "Based on our estimation, every month at least 1,800 trucks ferry livestock from different parts of the North to Lagos, Port Harcourt, Uyo, Delta, Calabar, among others. They include cows, goats, sheep and camels. A trailer carries at least 4,000 goats or sheep, but for cows, it carries 35 or more."

He explained that Lagos topped the list of the livestock destinations in the South, followed by Rivers, Delta, Akwa Ibom, Enugu, Abia and Bayelsa states.

He, however, expressed dismay



■ A scene from Maigatari livestock market in Jigawa State

over the current economic crunch, saying, "Unlike what we experience in recent years, from November or two weeks to Christmas, you would see the business booming till January. But now the animals are costly from our end, same thing

at the point of sales. Although we thank God as it keeps moving, though not as sharp as it was."

On the potentials associated with the livestock value chain, he said the business was blessed with huge prospects which began from

the point of buying the livestock to the final merchant.

He said, "The chances are abundant, most especially during festive periods, as the value chain creates many job opportunities for youths and others."

The National Organising Secretary of AUFCDN, Alhaji Ayuba Umar Rano, recently explained to our reporter how multiple extortion under the pretext of taxes by non-state actors in some states are affecting their profits.

He explained that the extortion varied from state to state, lamenting that Benue was the most awful as illegal tax collectors mounted over 40 toll gates.

Rano said, "Take Taraba and Benue states for example, most especially Benue; there is no state in Nigeria where we are overtaxed illegally by non-state revenue collectors like Benue. There are more than 30 toll gates mounted by rascals to extort our members. At each toll gate a truckload of cattle pays N50,000 as tax. We had a meeting with their revenue service which mandated us to pay N50,000 for a trailer if the cattle were not taken on board within the state and N25,000 for the ones bought in the state.

"Both state governments are not unaware of this issue. The worst part is that the tax accrued from us is not remitted to either federal or state governments—it ends

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MARKET WATCH

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

DAWANAU GRAIN MARKET, KANO

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

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





Cotton aggregation centre in Taraba State



Malam Hamza explained the advantages of the variety in his farm

Climate change:

More cotton farmers opt for better technology

By Vincent A. Yusuf

Last year, Nigeria saw its worst flood in half a century which destroyed crops, lives and other property across the country.

Many cotton growers in Adamawa State were devastated by the flood which overwhelmed their fields which led to massive yield losses - more than 50 per cent in some farms - and every farmer has a story to tell.

When her fellow farmers saw success with the unconventional biotech variety named Bollgard II, which sold for up to N550,000 per metric tonne, Mama Hauwa Mohammed (46) returned to cotton farming last year.

However, last year's flood devastated her land, and for her, "It doesn't matter what I get, that's how God intended it."

The mother of four further said, "Whatever happened last season, I hope to increase the farm to at least one hectare this coming planting season."

Alhaji Umar Musa, said that in his more than 20 years of cotton cultivation he had never seen anything like this, as several farms were damaged by the 2022 flood, notably those close to the Savannah Sugar Company - which is less than five kilometres from the Kem community in Shellig LGA.

The flood impacted many cotton and soybean farms, resulting in a significant

decrease in outputs compared to the previous season when farmers had good cropping.

Also, the price of the crop has not improved over the previous season due to the tension surrounding the country's general elections next month as market participants are trading with caution, noted Alhaji Umar.

Umar presently buys cotton for N360,000 per metric tonne, but this time last year it was N450,000, and prices are expected to remain stagnant unless the elections are completed next month.

On his part, Muhammed Hamza, who started producing cotton again three years ago after years of abandonment, used the Bollgard II and harvested three metric tonnes on one of his farms and sold each tonne for N450,000.

He said, "Since then I've made the decision to grow cotton on this property every year. I planted this in early July, 2022, and by the beginning of December, I harvested. A single plant bears more than 100 bolls, as you can see, which is highly intriguing to every cotton grower. Farmers will undoubtedly prosper if one hectare can yield three tonnes since it can fetch N1.5m."

Malam Hamza, who is also a teacher, stated that if the flood had not devastated many crops, some farmers might have gotten more than three tonnes per hectare.

Mr Amos Phiri, who provides the cotton farmers with extension services, said that as more farmers got involved in it,

cotton production was rising and that their agronomic practices were also advancing.

He said, "We began with 200 farmers in the first season, then in the following season we received a record of 500 to 700 farmers, and in the following season, which is 2021, we received more than 1,500 farmers. We sold up to 15,000 cartons of seed weighing 15kg each in this region for this season alone, which indicates a significant rise in farmers."

The increase, according to the extension officer, was caused by the fact that farmers last season enjoyed favourable cotton prices because cotton was sold to merchants for N530, 000 per tonne, which encouraged many farmers to enter the market.

He said, "Previously, the farmers shied away from cotton because of the problems surrounding its growing in this zone as they spent more on spraying and the yield was not particularly impressive."

"When we introduced this cotton type, their production grew significantly because they can produce up to 2.5 tonnes or more per hectare, which has inspired them to pursue farming to the fullest extent possible. With the standard type, they get less than a tonne per hectare, but for now, they are getting more than two tonnes per hectare, and that has encouraged them to start farming, which is why I believe their number keeps rising year in and year out."

He explained that, "The advantage of Bt cotton, most especially for the farmers,

is that it protects its bolls from bollworm, which is the major pest that causes great damage to cotton. Since the bolls have been conserved, they have more bolls counting in some stands, up to 100, but with the conventional one, farmers used to grow "you'll find out in the stand you will hardly find up to 40 bolls."

Speaking on the variety's robustness, Dr Phiri acknowledged that it yields more bolls - more than twice as many as farmers receive from the conventional one - and said that "this is a big advantage of this variety."

Another benefit is that fewer sprayings are needed because the variety can defend itself against bollworms. If the farm is well cleared and cared for, the farmer won't have to struggle to control bollworms and will instead focus on other minor pests that impact cotton. Instead of spraying 10 times throughout the season, the farmer will now just need to do so once or twice.

The African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA), based in Nairobi, Kenya, has been tracking the development of the technology in the hands of the farmers and their experiences cultivating it since the start of the Bt cotton variety planting in 2019.

The association's spokesman, Aghan Daniel, was impressed with the nation's advancement in the adoption of the Bt technology during a recent visit to the field in Adamawa State and noted that other African nations might learn from Nigeria.

'Over 1,800 trucks of livestock leave North to South monthly'

Continued from page 25

up in the pockets of these rascals. I can tell you that the number of these toll gates is uncountable."

He, however, said the situation was not the same on some routes, especially for cattle dealers from Mubi in Adamawa State, Gombe, Kano, Kaduna and Niger states to Lagos as "they don't spend a penny along that route."

He noted that, "We only encounter minor extortions from the security agents on these routes. They are very lenient

towards our members. They may demand a token from only N200 to N1,000. But on the Benue route, in some instances at one toll gate they demand from N2,000. They would even split themselves into three groups - whereby all of them can tax you. That is how they subject us to unwarranted suffering."

Speaking on other challenges associated with the business, Rano said they were enormous in view of how valuable cows and cost of transportation were.

He said, "Recently, we loaded cattle from Maigatari to Owerri;

after they passed Benin some miscreants popped up from the bush, beat the people in the truck and took away eight cows. Each of the cows costs no less than N800,000.

"If you want to ferry cows from Mubi to Port Harcourt, you will spend not less than N500,000 on the road. As I am speaking to you, there is a truck that left Gombe to Port Harcourt; they called to notify me that they spent more than N580,000 even before they reached Port Harcourt. The challenges are immeasurable.

"Due to the high cost of gasoline, we hire a trailer for N1.5m to 1.6m; this is apart from other expenses on the road. Before a cow reaches its destination in the South, its expenses could be around N75,000 to N80,000, unlike what we spent those days in which a cow cost us just N30,000 - this is from its transport fare to food and taxes on the road. Now, besides the cost which you bought it at the market, you must add up at least N80,000 on top.

"Again, if you are selling it to a ready-buyer, they would not buy

the cow at the rate you can realise a reasonable profit; only if you sell it on balance, where you will collect your money in piecemeal. Only then can you realise some equitable profit. Issues like these are causes of major concern to us. Only a few of us make money out of the business, especially these days.

"Our main concern is these rascals who extort us just like that. A man would just come and squeeze you to pay him a sum of N40,000 without a commensurate service rendered to you."

Kano wheat farmers hopeful amid inputs prices' hike

From Zahraddeen Yakubu Shuaibu, Kano

As dry season farming is intensifying in Kano and other parts of the North, wheat farmers in the state are hopeful of a bumper harvest despite the high costs of fertiliser, seeds and other inputs as the farmers have planted vast farmlands with varieties of wheat.

Daily Trust on Sunday gathered that the farmers, with the hope to recover the losses of the last dry season when irrigation was stalled due to the repair of dams, have delved into wheat farming more than before when the crop was abandoned for some reasons.

It was also gathered that many farmers who were not into wheat farming have joined the trend; all in the quest to benefit from the transformation of the agricultural sector in the state.

According to statistics, the global scarcity of wheat is caused by the Russian-Ukraine war and the lack of foreign exchange. The price of wheat has risen by almost 50 per cent since the start of 2022, and its importation has fallen by 16.09 per cent.

According to a data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the total importation of wheat into Nigeria was N753.59bn in the first three quarters of 2022, which is a N144.59bn fall from the N898.19bn it was in the corresponding period of 2021. The importation of wheat crashed by 16.09 per cent year-on-year in the first nine months of 2022.

Flour which is made from wheat is essential in the production of pasta, bread, noodles and other food items. Therefore, the fall in wheat importation has translated to higher prices of most of these food items.

Some farmers said that during the last harvest period, wheat sold for between N30,000 and N35,000 for a 100kg bag, but now sold for N65,000 to N70,000.

Also, the federal government, through the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, said it distributed 280 metric tonnes of



■ One of the wheat farms

high yield varieties of wheat to 5,600 farmers in the North East and North West to boost production, noting that the distribution of the seeds and other inputs was in preparation of its plan to cultivate 250,000 hectares of wheat this year.

As one of the most expensive

farm produce, wheat is planted during the early period of the dry season as it requires much of the cold and hazy weather. Although it doesn't require much water, the wheat is estimated to be one of the crops that consume much fertiliser.

"Fertiliser is the soul of wheat if

one wants to get the desired yield. Wheat is even planted alongside fertilizer application. You have to mix the seeds with fertiliser before you spray them. It doesn't require much water that is why it can be planted during this season. So, our problem with wheat is fertiliser," farmer, Alhaji Ahmad Tahir Karfi, said.

During a visit to some of the irrigation areas in the state like Kadawa, Gafan and Kura in Bunkure and Rano LGAs, the farmers disclosed what led them into wheat farming.

One of the farmers, Alhaji Muhammad Salisu, said, "We have to divert to wheat farming this time around seeing the challenges we are facing in tomato farming. Our region, Gafan and Kadawa area, is one of the largest tomato farming areas, if not the best in the whole of Africa. But look at the place now, it is deserted. In a block of 15 hectares you will hardly see one hectare of tomato; the remaining are all wheat.

"The reasons are that the

elections are approaching and tomato is mostly transported to the South and we have been victims of several election crises. Also, the risk in tomato farming are enormous. This time around that fertiliser and other inputs are costly, it is difficult for one to delve into tomato so much. That is why many farmers have decided to farm what can be dried like wheat so that if the market is not appreciating you can keep it in the store."

Also speaking, Abdurrahman Isyaku of the Bunkure irrigation area said that last year he farmed only one hectare of wheat, but that this time around he had seven hectares, with over 10 other hectares under his watch.

He said, "Compared to last season, this year people are trooping into wheat farming. The number is more than double. But the seed is expensive. 100kg is N70,000, and you have to use over two sacks in a hectare. It can also consume up to 10 bags of fertiliser. Roughly I spent around N250,000 on fertiliser and seeds. But I am very sure that the yield will be good."

Another farmer, Iliyasu Muhammad, said, "We are yet to get the inputs distributed by the FG. For me, I don't collect that one because I prefer to invest my money. The FG's inputs; you will pay them back. I have six hectares and am hopeful of positive yields."

Patronage of local wheat boosts production – Marketers

Speaking on the situation, the Chairman of the Dawanau Grain Market, Alhaji Mustapha Maikalwa, said, "The companies that were buying 10,000 tonnes of wheat now buy more than 100,000 tonnes as a result of the drop in importation. So, this year the patronage will double. That is why we don't expect the price to crash. It is easier for the companies because they can patronise with the naira; no need for dollars.

"The price will not crash based on the realities of the global situation. But it will not reach up to the amount it was sold during last season's planting period."



■ Muhammad Salisu in his farm

Edo to empower 500,000 poultry farmers

From Usman A. Bello, Benin

Gov Godwin Obaseki has said that his administration, in collaboration with Amo Farm Sieberer Hatchery Limited and Heifer International, will empower 500,000 smallholder poultry farmers through improved poultry production practices.

He disclosed this during the ground breaking ceremony of the Heifer-supported 10,000 per day Amo Farm Poultry Processing Plant at Obayantor in Ikpoba-Okha LGA.

According to him, the state is ready to harness the potentials in poultry production to diversify the economy and

eliminate unemployment in the state.

He said, "Today we are putting a processing facility that will help hatch chickens so that farmers will come and buy; they will support them with feeds and other veterinary products.

"And once they have grown their chickens, they will buy back from the farmers and the farmers can go on with their normal jobs with this as a side business.

"Farmers no longer have to wait for Christmas or Easter to sell their chickens because there is already an existing market they can sell to."

The Country Director of Heifer international, Rufus Idris, stated that the

partnership was to support 200,000 farmers by 2025 and 500,000 farmers by 2030.

Idris further said that the farmers would engage in the production of noiler and broiler chickens, while a private sector partner, Amo Farm, would guarantee sustainable off-take of the chickens produced by the farmers.

He explained that the initiative would impact about 500,000 farmers, create more than 850 jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities for youths and women.

He said, "Under this partnership, Amo Farm Sieberer Hatchery Limited is to establish a standard poultry processing plant, starting with a 10,000 chicken per day capacity.

"Edo is known for its large number of smallholder poultry farmers who are constrained by poor market access for chickens produced due to absence of structured market and off-taker in the state.

"Nigeria consumes about 1.5 million tonnes of chicken annually, but only 30 per cent of that is produced locally.

"Nigeria's poultry sector, a \$4.2bn industry, is witnessing a rise in demand for poultry meat and egg driven by increasing population and urbanization."

Also speaking, the Managing Director of Amo Farms, Ayoola Oduntan, represented by Alaba Yunusa Oduntan, said negotiations for the plant had been ongoing since 2017.

AGRO SOLUTIONS



■ Black soldier fly larvae turn organic waste into organic fertilizer

Ugandan farmers embrace maggots as solution to fertiliser shortage

In reaction to fertiliser shortages worldwide, Ugandan farmers are reaching for an alternative way to fertilise their fields—maggots.

The fertiliser shortage is credited mainly to the Russia/Ukraine war. Together, the countries are responsible for the export of nearly 30 per cent of nitrogen and phosphorus-based fertilisers across the globe.

The organic process of producing fertiliser using maggots is simple. The maggots - larvae of the black soldier fly - are placed in large vats or tubs full of fermented food waste (the fermentation process softens the waste). There the maggots go to work, eating the food waste over a period of about a week. As they digest the waste, enzymes break it down and the insects' faeces then become usable fertiliser.

Uganda is known for growing cotton, tea, tobacco and coffee - the latter of which brings in the highest revenue stream in the region. But with synthetic fertilisers in short supply, prices have doubled or tripled for the crop-boosting inputs. In sub-Saharan Africa's growing regions, most farmers are operating small, primarily family-run farms with tight budgets, leaving producers unable to afford the new and higher prices of synthetic fertilisers.

And in Uganda, the maggot-filled vats are quickly becoming a hot commodity. Agricultural officials in the country are distributing the vats for free, taking interested farmers' names down on a list to receive some of the fertiliser-producing insects.

The number of farmers in Uganda's farm districts using the larvae farming programme facilitated by waste management company, Marula Proteen, and agricultural exporter, Enimiro, has grown from just two farmers in January, 2021, to more than 1,300 participating farmers today.

And thanks to the process, farmers aren't just getting nutrients for their crops. Once producers get the vats, they are guaranteed a "three-fold cash profit" after 14 days of raising the larvae on food waste, according to the AP.

The farmers then get to keep the cash and the fertiliser the maggots produce and the waste management company gets a growing population of maggots to keep the programme which originated in 2017 going.

The larvae farming programme is not unique to Uganda. It also exists primarily in regions that continuously suffer from drought, including Nigeria and Kenya.

SOURCE: MODERN FARMER

'130 hectares cultivated for sorghum production in Ogun'

From Peter Moses, Abeokuta

The Ogun State Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (OGUNCCIMA) has said that the state has cultivated 130 hectares in Ijebu-Igbo in Ijebu North LGA for the production of sorghum.

OGUNCCIMA's Auditor, Surveyor Olatunde Ayodele, disclosed this at a discussion on "One Local Government One Product" during a meeting of the State Committee on Export Meeting (SCEP) at the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment, Abeokuta.

Ayodele, who is also the pioneer President of the Ijebu Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (IjebuCCIMA), said More-Agro Farmers Cooperative, Ijebu-Ode, ventured into cultivation of sorghum as a result of the disruption of the produce supply chain due to the insurgency in the North East.

He said, "Ogun State has joined the league of sorghum producing states in Nigeria as 130 hectares have been cultivated in Ijebu-Igbo. A cooperative society has also liaised with Nigeria Breweries Plc which is now committed to off-take the produce immediately after being harvested. I am imploring more farmers in the state to go into the cultivation of sorghum due to demand for the produce."

Meanwhile, in completion of the ongoing pilot phase disbursement of inputs and assets to farmers under the

Nigeria COVID-19 Action Recovery and Economic Stimulus (NG-CARES), domesticated as OGUN-CARES FADAMA RA2, farmers from the Mile 6 Farmers Community and Omu-Eleni Farmers Community Association in Odeda and Odogbolu LGAs respectively have received no fewer than 1,500 day-old broilers.

Others got 60 bags of starter feeds, while drugs were disbursed to poultry farmers. Crop farmers also had 20 bags of fertiliser and herbicides, water pumps, sprayers and planters.

It would be recalled that the pilot phase of the distribution of inputs and assets such as pigs, sheep, goats, fertilisers, cassava and rice processing equipment, among others, commenced in Ado-Odo/Ota, Yewa North, Ijebu North and Obafemi Owode LGAs, where groups of livestock and crop farmers and other agricultural value-chain stakeholders were empowered.

In his keynote address at the disbursement exercise in Abeokuta, Commissioner for Agriculture, Dr Adeola Odedina, said OGUN-CARES FADAMA was a World Bank project facilitated by the federal government in conjunction with the Ogun State Government at providing economic incentives for over 20,000 farmers across the state to liberate them from the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Odedina, represented by the Permanent Secretary in the ministry, Dr Dotun Sorunke, stated that the disbursement was to test run the project,

noting that Governor Dapo Abiodun would soon launch the inputs and assets distribution in all the LGAs of the state, advising the beneficiaries to reciprocate the gesture by making judicious use of the items.

Earlier in his address, the Programme Manager of OGUN-CARES FADAMA RA2, Mrs. Solape Awe, said the Prince Dapo Abiodun-led administration was passionate about smallholder farmers, especially youths and women, with the aim of turning their lots around positively, as the items given to them were good leverage, capable of reviving their dwindling farming businesses.

Awe warned the beneficiaries not to block the chances of other farmers from benefiting from the project, by making judicious use of items given to them, imploring those in other enterprises to patiently wait for their turn.

On his part, the Chairman of Odeda LGA, Alhaja Folashade Adeyemi, commended the state government for supporting farmers at the grassroots, admonishing the beneficiaries to make ample use of the inputs and assets for themselves and others in the nearest future.

Also speaking, her counterpart in Odogbolu, Hon Shuaib Ladejobi, represented by Hon Azeez Akinwade, congratulated the beneficiaries and assured that the government would continue with the lofty initiative, warning against wastage, carelessness and selling off the items.

Niger approves policy to boost fish business

By Abubakar Akote, Minna

The Niger State Government has approved an aquaculture policy to boost fish business and improve investment in aquaculture activities in the state.

The Commissioner for Livestock and Fisheries, Alhaji Haruna Dukku, who disclosed this after the presentation of the policy document at the State Executive Council (SEC) meeting in Minna, said USAID had already been invited by the state government to examine the aquaculture potentials of the state with a view to

adding value to the policy.

Dukku said the policy would ease fish business and underwater activities in the state.

The Niger State Agro Business Manager for USAID's Feed the Future Nigeria Agro Business Investment Activity, Mr

Nosa Osunde, who led the USAID team to present the policy document, said the policy was worked on for a couple of months.

He said inputs were made from the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries, the private sector, fishery

associations, as well as other stakeholders in the state, explaining that the policy was to provide an enabling environment for aquaculture in the state and to boost aquaculture activities and investment in Niger State.



■ Catfish

Stakeholders in Taraba proffer solutions to food insecurity

From Magaji Isa Hunkuyi, Jalingo

Stakeholders in Muri area of Taraba State have proffered solutions to the looming food insecurity caused by banditry, kidnapping, communal conflicts and farmers and herders clashes.

The stakeholders, academicians, retired military officers, politicians, farmers, among others, during a two-day summit in Jalingo, lamented that bandits and kidnappers were forcing farmers to abandon their farms.

Muri area which comprises eight LGAs, according to the stakeholders, is currently facing security challenges and if urgent steps are not taken more and more farmers will abandon their farms and the consequences will be food shortage.

In a paper he delivered during the

summit, Professor Yakubu Bila of the Department of Agriculture, University of Maiduguri, observed that food shortage loomed in the Muri area as bandits were now threatening farming activities.

In a paper titled: "Insurgency and Its Implications on Food Security and Development in Muri", Bila observed that in recent years kidnapping, communal conflicts, incessant clashes between grazers and farmers and banditry in the Muri area had forced many farmers to abandon farming.

He said, "The ongoing kidnapping, farmers/herders clashes and banditry in Muri pose a serious threat to food security in the area."

He noted that it is a known fact that people were traumatised, maimed, killed and forced to abandon their only way of

livelihood, farming.

Bila, therefore, said the state government must wake up to its primary obligation of guaranteeing the protection of life and property. He said, "There is an urgent need for the initiation of bottom to top security approach anchored on local community intelligence."

Similarly, Professor Abbas Bashir said peace was desirable for development in any society and commended traditional rulers, law enforcement agencies and spirited individuals that are working tirelessly against inter-ethnic conflicts and banditry in Muri area.

He accused the government of deliberate and sequential breaking of the ranks of traditional institutions that should have been a rallying point in the state and Muri area in particular.



NEW WAY OF FARMING

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INSIDEPOLITICS

Osinbajo, Amaechi, Onu, Okorocha, 2 others missing from Tinubu's campaigns

By Ismail Mudashir, John Chuks Azu, Muideen Olaniyi (Abuja) & Abdullateef Aliyu (Lagos)

The dust trailing the All Progressives Congress (APC) presidential primary seems not to have settled as key contenders who slugged it out with the party's candidate, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, are missing in the campaigns.

Daily Trust reports that seven months after the party's primary was held and won by the former Lagos State governor, the body language of six of the 14 contenders, showed they were still nursing grudges.

The posture of the contenders, who are expected to contribute to the victory of the party in their respective states, is generating concerns among the party's chieftains, it was gathered.

Tinubu polled 1,271 votes to defeat 13 other aspirants, including a former Transport Minister, Rotimi Amaechi, Vice President Yemi Osinbajo and Senate president Ahmad Lawan, who scored 316, 235 and 152 votes, respectively.

The other contestants included; Ogonnaya Onu (1 vote); Rochas Okorocha (zero); Dave Umahi (38 votes); Yahaya Bello (47 votes); Tein Jack-Rich (zero); Pastor Tunde Bakare (zero); Emeka Nwajiuba (1 vote); Ahmed Sani Yarima (4 votes); Prof. Ben Ayade (37 votes) and Ikeobasi Mokhelu (zero).

Daily Trust reports that Osinbajo, Amaechi, Onu, Okorocha, Bakare and Nwajiuba are yet to be seen participating in the campaign rallies of Tinubu, three months after the exercise commenced.

In August, a meeting convened by one of the presidential aspirants, Nicolas Felix, to bring all the contestants together flopped as they shunned it.

While Amaechi, Onu and Bakare, were included in the presidential campaign council of Tinubu, the names of Osinbajo, Okorocha and Nwajiuba were missing from the list.

However, despite their inclusion, Amaechi, Onu and Bakare are yet to be seen at any of the campaign rallies, 50 days before the presidential election.

Osinbajo

Osinbajo has not attended any of Tinubu's campaigns, Daily Trust observed. The development has sparked off suspicion that the two political bigwigs in the ruling party have not fully reconciled after the presidential primary.

The presidential candidate had on June 10 paid an unscheduled visit to the vice president at his Aguda House residence, Abuja, a few hours after Osinbajo congratulated him for the victory and promised to work

- Ojudu, VP's aide declines comment
- Former Rivers gov not treated fairly — Aide
- I'm working from behind the scenes — Ex-Imo gov



■ Osinbajo



■ Amaechi



■ Onu



■ Okorocha

with him to emerge victorious in the general elections.

The visit came after the notion that Tinubu had deliberately ignored the vice president despite standing up to greet him at the convention venue where the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Femi Gbajabiamila, was said to have drawn his attention to it.

Subsequently, the name of the vice president was not included in the campaign list, but Festus Keyamo, spokesman of the campaign, said President Muhammadu Buhari requested that Osinbajo and Boss Mustapha, Secretary to the Government of the Federation, should not be part of the campaign council so they could focus on governance.

Osinbajo had, however, on December 21, 2022, visited Tinubu at his home in Abuja in the presence of his running mate, Senator Kashim Shettima, after widespread information that his absence from the campaign the presidential candidate is a result of a frosty relationship.

Reliable sources said the visit was not for any political purpose but a friendly one because of the duo's longstanding relationship, adding that it was in response to an earlier visit by Tinubu to the vice president after the primaries.

When contacted on phone on the matter, the Special Adviser to the President on Political Matters, Senator Babafemi Ojudu (Vice President's office), simply said: "No comment. I don't know."

Amaechi

Also, conspicuously missing is the former minister of Transportation, Rotimi Amaechi, who came second during the presidential primary of the APC.

Although he was named as the special adviser on infrastructure in Tinubu's campaign council, he has not been seen in any of the campaign rallies.

Twice the campaign DG of President Buhari in 2015 and 2019, the former governor of Rivers State, has been away from the public glare since he was defeated by Tinubu.

An aide to the former minister said his boss has not been treated fairly by Tinubu.

"It is an understatement to say he (Amaechi) is not happy. When Oshiomhole went to Port Harcourt, he asked the people to only support Tinubu and that for the other positions, they should support Wike. A similar thing was re-enacted when the Ebonyi governor visited the state," he said.

Onu

A former Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation, Dr Ogonnaya Onu, is also missing on the campaign trail.

Onu, a founding member of the APC, who also contested for the presidential ticket in June, declared at the Eagle Square venue of the convention that there was no justice in the party's leadership selection.

He had been at the forefront of the advocacy for power rotation to the South East of Nigeria, which has not occupied the nation's exalted office.

When contacted, one of Onu's aides, said his principal has been doing what he is supposed to do behind the scenes as it is not compulsory to be seen openly all the time.

"During the 2015 and 2019 elections, you didn't see him many times on the campaign trail, yet he was part of it and doing what he had to do.

"He is a man of integrity; he must not come out openly. He will not change irrespective of the injustice meted out to him and the South East," he said.

Bakare

Though Pastor Tunde Bakare was appointed as a member of the PCC, he has been indifferent about the campaign since it kicked off.

Sources close to him say Bakare, who has maintained that he is the 16th president of Nigeria, has not changed his position though it is still within the realm of wonder how that dream would be realised when he is not contesting.

It was learnt that Bakare also shunned a meeting of presidential aspirants which was later postponed in September 2022 and it didn't later hold.

A source said Pastor Bakare, who got the invitation through one of his aides, felt slighted that a meeting was being called when issues arising from the convention had not been resolved.

"As it is, the pastor has not participated in the campaign and he has never at any time advised his congregation to vote for any candidate," the source said.

But Bakare, in July, downplayed the Muslim-Muslim ticket of the APC, saying people should focus on nation-building.

Nwajiuba

A former minister of state for Education, Barrister Chukwuemeka Nwajiuba, has also not been sighted at any of Tinubu's campaign rallies since last year.

Nwajiuba, who got one vote during the APC primary, is believed to have filed two suits against the party's flag bearer.

The suit filed before a Federal High Court in Abuja seeking to

replace Tinubu as the presidential candidate of the APC because his nomination did not meet the requirements of Section 90(3) of the 2022 Electoral Act, was in December dismissed by the court for being statute barred having been filed outside the period of 14 days after the cause of action under Section 285(9) of the Nigerian Constitution, 1999.

Similarly, another court earlier dismissed a suit by Nwajiuba through a non-governmental organisation, Incorporated Trustees of Rights for All International, seeking to disqualify Tinubu and the candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Atiku Abubakar, over allegation of breach of the Electoral Act, and primaries marred by corruption and massive vote buying.

The court held that the NGO lacked the locus standi to bring the action before it.

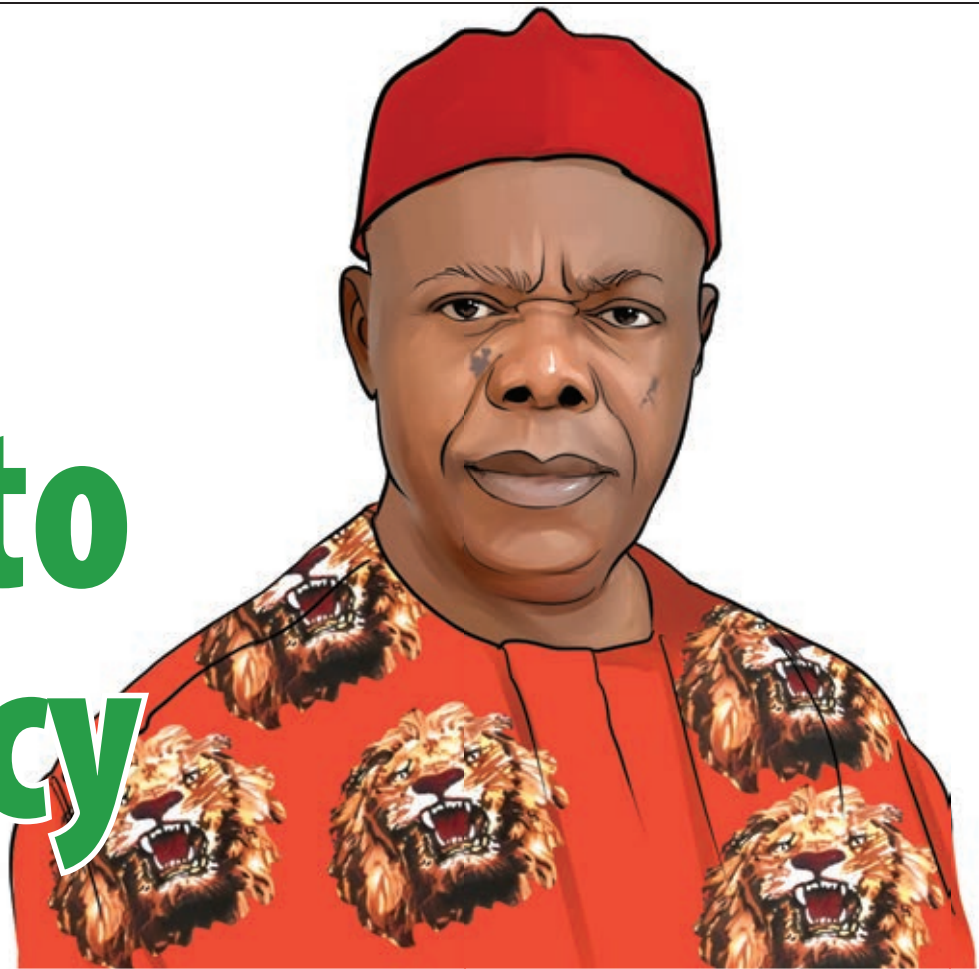
I'm still in APC - Okorocha

A former governor of Imo State, Rochas Okorocha, who polled zero votes during the primary, was not included in the campaign council of the party. The founding member of the APC, however, said he was doing all possible to ensure the party succeeds.

"I am doing the much I can; campaigns don't start and end with rallies. There are other subtle ways of campaigning. But I am still with APC; I have not left APC," he said.

On his reaction to his exclusion from the campaign council, Okorocha said "Mine is for the love of my nation and party; I don't have to hold any position to campaign for APC or campaign for the party. Those things are immaterial.

"We understand that politics is local too. I will make a statement overall on this whole thing soon."

RACE TO ASO**APGA'S UMEADI:****Jurist in tall race to presidency**

From John C. Azu (Abuja) & Titus Eleweke (Awka)

Having succeeded in the judiciary turf where he had a sterling career in adjudicating disputes, Justice Peter Umeadi, the presidential candidate of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), hopes to be victorious in the 2023 general elections.

Justice Umeadi, alongside 17 other candidates of other political parties, who is contesting for the highest office in the land, believes he is the best qualified for the job. Umeadi, on Wednesday, June 1, 2022, emerged as APGA's presidential candidate at a special convention of the party in the FCT.

Following his nomination, which a faction of the party challenged in court, Umeadi laid out his programmes for "sound education, affordable healthcare, food, security of life and property and ability to achieve life ambitions in a setting presenting a level playing field and predetermined standards" if elected president.

Early life, career

Born in Uruoji, Agukwu-Nri in Anaocha LGA of Anambra State. He attended the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), Enugu Campus, and graduated with LL.B (Hons) in 1979. He was at the Nigerian Law School, Lagos, and was called to the bar in 1980. He was then appointed a judge of the High Court of Anambra State in 1997. In 2011, he was sworn in as the Chief Judge (CJ) of Anambra State. He was also a member of the National Judicial Council (NJC) and the National Judicial Institute (NJI). He retired from the judiciary in 2019 after eight years as CJ. In March, 2019, he was appointed a visiting professor at the UNN.

Following his retirement, in March 2019, he joined APGA and declared intention to run

for the presidency of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. On June 1, 2022, he became the presidential candidate of APGA after a primary election, with Comrade Abdullahi Koli Mohammed as his running mate.

It would be recalled that the NJC in May, 2018, absolved Justice Umeadi of any wrongdoing in a petition of misconduct brought against him over a matter before his court.

Umeadi has been honoured as the Sardauna of Nasaru and Dan Amar of Ningi in Bauchi State.

Plan for Nigeria

Justice Umeadi said he planned to reconcile the length and breadth of the country and reposition it by institutionalising the rule of law, separation of power and due process.

He further said that equity and justice demanded that the South East be allowed to produce the president of Nigeria since it was the only zone that was yet to do so since the dawn of the present democratic dispensation

in 1999, adding that he was the most competent and qualified candidate among the presidential candidates for the 2023 polls.

He is also advocating against the winner-takes-it-all kind of politics in Nigeria for the survival of the Nigerian nation beyond 2023.

He said, "The overall goal of my manifesto is to ensure that no one will be left behind. You should also include health, education, agriculture, and energy, and also paramount in my mind are the issues of women, youth, children, and the disabled. I am going to abide by all of that. That is why I have always said that, apart from history, the next thing I am going to champion is the implementation of the Child Rights Acts because the child is the nation, and it is the child that is the basis of all development."

Security

Umeadi said, "The issue is that

we have to be up and running in terms of security. We have to look at our security application generally; not just for the elections, but also to feel safe and freely move about our normal businesses. We have to be honest with ourselves: why are those security issues not being resolved, and if they are not, should we not be talking about sanctions?"

Analysts weigh Umeadi

Political analysts in Anambra State and elsewhere have cast doubts on the possibility of the APGA presidential candidate winning majority votes in the state in 2023.

During a reception in his honour by the Igbo Elders and Leaders in the South West in June, 2022, the group described him in a communique as a jurist who had "displayed the highest level of professionalism, courage and incorruptibility expected of a president."

In his view, Michael Udoka said that the influence of the presidential candidate of the Labour Party (LP), Peter Obi, as a former governor of the state would dim the chances of Umeadi winning the election in the state, even as he belonged to ruling APGA in the state.

He noted that the only person with a chance of winning the election in the state was Obi because Umeadi was only "a former chief judge of the state and nothing more."

"Honestly, the Peter Obi 'Obidient' movement will not allow him to win election in the state."

He said if one was talking about the party/person that could win an election in the state, it was Peter Obi or Abubakar Atiku.

He explained that, "Anambra State from inception was a PDP state until Obi became governor in 2006 through APGA. Anambra

State has sympathy for PDP for now and most of the big men in the state belong to PDP.

"I don't think Umeadi has the chance of winning election in the state and not to talk of Nigeria."

Similarly, Cyril Obiora said that Umeadi could not win up to 10 per cent of votes in the state, noting that anybody voting for Umeadi knew he/she was wasting his/her vote.

He said, "Why would any person vote for him when he knows he cannot win in the state? Any vote for him is a waste. He cannot win the election? His principal, the governor, has said that he cannot win."

For his part, an Abuja-based lawyer, Obinna Onya, said Umeadi was one of the most competent persons seeking the office of the president in 2023, but questioned APGA's preparedness for the campaigns and the elections.

He said, "Politics is beyond publishing a candidate in line with the Electoral Act, but you have to go a step further by engaging other states."

"APGA's stronghold is Anambra, so if they are sponsoring a presidential candidate, the question is, do they really intend to go the full length or they are just marking time? I don't think they are ready to go the full length."

"What I would have expected from APGA, since this is not a parliamentary system and APGA has its stronghold in the South East, is to reach out to liaise with other political parties that have good structures in other regions in exchange for relevance in the centre to support their candidates."

"For me, I don't think APGA is serious about the presidential election, I think what they are playing is a spoiler's game."

In his view, Michael Udoka said that the influence of the presidential candidate of the Labour Party (LP), Peter Obi, as a former governor of the state would dim the chances of Umeadi winning the election in the state, even as he belonged to ruling APGA in the state.

APPRECIATION



Amb Ahmed Rufai Abubakar CFR

I wish to express my profound gratitude to the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, His Excellency Muhammadu BUHARI, GCFR and the Executive Governor of Katsina State, H.E. Rt. Hon. Alhaji Aminu Bello MASARI, CFR, for their support and gracious presence through high level representation and personal presence at my Turbaning as the Sardaunan Katsina.

2. I am especially grateful to His Highness the Emir of Katsina, Alhaji (Dr) Abdulmumini Kabir USMAN, CFR, for finding me worthy of appointment and turbaning as the Sardaunan Katsina, on Saturday, 31st December, 2022 at his Palace in Katsina. Similarly, I am highly grateful to the Sultan, Emirs, Obas, Obis and other Traditional Rulers who personally or through representations graced the occasion.

3. I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to the Presidents of Niger Republic, Chad, Guinea Bissau and Ghana for sending high level delegations to grace the occasion.

4. I warmly appreciate the President of the Senate, Senator Ahmed LAWAN, GCON, the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Mr Boss MUSTAPHA, CFR, the National Security Adviser, Mohammed Babagana MUNGUNO, CFR, Senator Abdullahi ADAMU, CFR, the Patrons of the Turbaning events and ceremony, Members of the National Assembly, Members of the Federal Executive Council, Members of the diplomatic community, captains of industry, hundreds of very important personalities from within and outside the country.

5. I also wish to thank members of the Katsina Emirate Council, title holders, District and Village Heads, Chairman (Senator Hadi

SIRIKA) and members of the Organising Committee, security personnel and service men and women who ensured safety and security in all the events, the media, trade unions and other professional groups.

6. I am grateful to the good people of Katsina for their love and overwhelming goodwill expressed through their impressive turnout, and for demonstrating hospitality and good conduct during the events.

7. Preceding the Turbaning ceremony, a two-day Conference to commemorate the occasion was held. Similarly, exhibition matches of Polo and Golf did take place in support of good causes. I owe the scholars and the participants in the Conference, as well as the organisers, sponsors and players of the two games a debt of gratitude for honouring me so generously.

8. Lastly, a magnificent spectacle such as this is the outcome of the handiwork of so many kind hearts and willing hands, that gave material and non-material support – I am grateful to you all.

9. Finally, let me seize this opportunity to reiterate my commitment to community and national service, including the strengthening of the bond of unity among Nigerians, through the instrumentality of my new position as Sardaunan Katsina.

10. I am grateful to Allah (SWT) that all our guests have returned to their various destinations safely.

Signed
Amb. Ahmed Rufai ABUBAKAR, CFR
Sardaunan Katsina

1 year after birth, UAE hospital offers to separate Nigeria's conjoined twins

One year after their birth as triplets in one of Kaduna's remote communities, two of the babies, Hassana and Hussaina, who are conjoined and share some organs have received an offer for free separation surgery by a United Arab Emirates (UAE) hospital. *Daily Trust on Sunday* reports that N57.6 million is required for non-surgery expenses, including tests, drugs, flight tickets, nine months accommodation, feeding, among others.

From Lami Sadiq, Kaduna

When Malam Hassan Isa left his home at Gangara community in Giwa LGA of Kaduna State in the morning sometime in early January, 2022, he didn't envisage that his pregnant wife, Suwaiba, would deliver triplets. A medical scan months earlier revealed that Suwaiba was pregnant with twins. It was her eighth pregnancy, and her husband, a twin himself, said he was elated. However, when his sister-in-law approached him at the village square later that morning to announce that his wife had delivered, Isa said a sense of foreboding descended on him.

Isa told *Daily Trust on Sunday* that he rushed home and discovered that several villagers had converged outside his home.

He said, "When I saw that my wife had delivered triplets, not twins, I felt a sense of relief and gratitude to Allah, not minding that two of the girls were joined together. It is a miracle that is left for only Allah."

Suwaiba recalled in a telephone conversation that, "It was a simple delivery."

The 33-year-old mother explained that the labour pains started around 5am when she woke up to ease herself and say her early morning prayers. She said she had prepared to welcome a set of twins, but that instead a set of female conjoined twins popped out.

She said alone in her room, "I saw them, and honestly I was not afraid and not even worried. I am a believer. A few seconds later, I felt my abdomen move again and I thought the placenta was about to come out, but it was another girl; I had delivered triplets."

The couple told this reporter that they were persuaded to leave their home on the fringes of Kaduna, near Funtua in Katsina State for the Ahmadu Bello University Teaching Hospital (ABUTH), Zaria.

Hassana and Hussaina's triplet sister, Hauwa, has been medically certified healthy. The triplets spent almost nine months at ABUTH where they underwent nutritional rehabilitation and some investigations with the help of Global Initiative for Peace, Love and Care (GIPLC); an NGO which caters for vulnerable children and women. The family were moved to the University of Abuja Teaching Hospital (UATH),

Gwagwalada, where they are presently being observed.

With a reputation for successful separation of conjoined twins, UATH in 2018 separated a set of conjoined twins whose liver was one.

However, the National Coordinator of GIPLC, Nuhu Fulani Kwajafa, told *Daily Trust on Sunday* that the case of the Isa conjoined twins, Hassana and Hussaina, was more complicated.

Shedding more light on the issue, a consultant paediatric surgeon at ABUTH, told our correspondent that Hassana and Hussaina had a condition called omphalo-ischiopagus tetrapod; which means they are joined in the abdomen and in the pelvis and have four legs.

He explained that so far no case as complicated as theirs had survived separation in Nigeria, even though he noted that their chance of survival if separated overseas was between 70 and 80 per cent.

He said they had reached the perfect time for separation, as separation should be done usually between nine and 12 months for complex cases. "This is for them to be able to develop like other children. By this time, you expect a child to be able to start sitting down, crawling and walking. You also need that period for two things: for them to grow well so that their tissues can be well separated. Secondly, to buy time for all the investigations you need to do so that when you are going in for surgery you know that this is what you are going in to treat."

Meanwhile, Kwajafa said a London-based hospital had sent a bill of £896,000 for the surgery before a UAE hospital, Burjeel Medical City, in Abu Dhabi, put the surgery bill at \$300,000, but that the hospital had offered to conduct the separation for free.

Daily Trust on Sunday further reports that a letter from Burjeel Medical City addressed to the GIPLC by its director of operations, Jayaprakash Kalijavedu, stated that it would cover the medical expenses for the entire procedure during and post-treatment.

Kwajafa said, "In fact, the chairman of the hospital has a keen interest in the case and has offered to send a team of doctors to Nigeria to accompany the family back to the UAE for a projected nine-month post-surgery stay for close observation to complete recovery.



■ A medical expert familiar with the case of the twins says their chances of survival is between 70 and 80 percent if the separation is done abroad



■ The conjoined twins have a condition called omphalo-ischiopagus tetrapod; which means they are joined in the abdomen and pelvic and have four legs

The surgery will be conducted by doctors from Italy, USA and UAE."

Though elated by the offer, Kwajafa said getting the triplets, their parents, an interpreter and the link person to the UAE hospital, as well as resources for their accommodation, feeding and other logistics would cost about N57.6m, which remained an obstacle to the separation at the moment.

He, however, noted that the Kaduna State Government had through the Commissioner for Internal Security and Home Affairs, Samuel Aruwan, provided funds for the family's upkeep and hospital scans and tests at the early stage of investigations and that Governor Nasir El-Rufai had also promised to make further financial assistance when the final bill for separation was ready.

A Nigerian journalist based in the UK, George Onmonya Daniel, also said he mentioned the plight of the family to Gov El-Rufai during an airport chance meeting in which the governor promised financial assistance for the separation.



■ A recent picture of conjoined twins Hassana and Hussaina

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." (Mathew 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."

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 determine 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 Olowjoba is the General Overseer of Dayspring Bible Church Worldwide with HQ in Abuja, Nigeria & President, Dayspring Christian Ministries Int'l.

By Stephen Ojapah MSP

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, and wept when we remembered Zion... They carried us away in captivity requiring of us a song... Now how shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? (Psalm 137: 1-4).

Rivers of Babylon is a Rastafari song written and recorded by Brent Dowe and Trevor McNaughton of the Jamaican reggae group The Melodians in 1970. The lyrics are adapted from the texts of the Psalms 19, and 137 in the Hebrew Bible. The Melodians' original version of the song appeared on the soundtrack album for the 1972 movie *Harder They Come*. Which made it internationally known. The song was re-popularized in Europe by the 1978 Boney M cover version, which was awarded a platinum disc and in one of the top-ten, all-time best selling singles in the UK.

The song is based on the Biblical Psalm 137:1-4, a hymn expressing the lamentations of the Jewish people in exile following the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem in 586 BC. Previously the kingdom of Judah, after being united under kings David and Solomon, had been split in two, with the kingdom of Israel in the north, conquered by the Assyrians in 722 BC, which caused the dispersion of the 10 of the 12 tribes of Israel. The Southern Kingdom of Judah (hence the name Jews), home of the tribe of Judah and part of the tribe of Levi, was free from foreign domination until the Babylonian conquest to which Rivers of Babylon refers.

In the Rastafarian faith, the term "Babylon" is used for any governmental system which either oppressive or unjust.

That all may be free

In Jamaica, Rastafarians also use Babylon to refer to the police, often seen as a source of oppression because they arrest members for they use marijuana (which is sacramental for the Rastafarians). Therefore, "By the rivers of Babylon" refers to living in a repressive society and the longing for Freedom just like the Israelites in captivity. Rastafarians also identify themselves as belonging to the twelve tribes of Israel.

When Jesus began his public ministry, he entered the synagogue, He was handed the scroll, and He read from the prophet Isaiah. "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free." (Luke 4:18). The biggest freedom Christ worn for us is freedom from the clutches of sin and the dominance of the devil. From the clutches of sin, we experience this grace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. However, there are other forms, of freedom, Christi advocated for his followers, and that is freedom from the oppression of the poor by the rich. We see this play out in the story of Lazarus and the rich man. The entire work of the prophet Amos was centered on the freedom of the poor, in an oppressive government and kings. Freedom is a great experience, Martin Luther Junior, longed for it for black Americans until he paid with his life. Rosa Parks, the mother of freedom movement, best known for her pivotal

role in the Montgomery bus boycott; lived all her life begging for freedom, just to be black. Nelson Mandela washed himself with the walls of Robben Island Prison, after living with the harsh realities of the apartheid regime in South Africa.

There are many more persons begging with their lives and some even with their bloods for the opportunity to be free once again. Free to move around like other normal people, free to use the toilets without asking for permission. Yes, you heard me. Free to use the restrooms in the most unhygienic situation without permission. I experienced that for thirty-three days. Freedom is an eternal gift from God our Father. Fellow humans have denied their fellow humans that gift.

On 5th October 2022, we read a statement from the Nigerian Defense Headquarters. That the remaining 23 victims of the Abuja-Kaduna train victims have been finally freed after six months. I spent 33 days with the kidnapers. An experience that has changed my entire worldview for good. The Abuja-Kaduna trained victims spent over 6 months. All parting with almost a hundred million naira each, as ransom. Freedom for these sons and daughters of ours will forever mean something completely different, because I have passed through that crucible of fire. They have a completely new world to face and see differently going forward, not as they use to know it before.

On the same day the remaining 23 were set

free, my mum called me at about 11 pm. That the bandits just kidnapped some persons close to our house in Yola, Adamawa State. Like the Rastafarians who cried and long for freedom from oppressive regimes and governments. Many Nigerians are simply crying for freedom from the menace of kidnapping and banditry. The ones that have been freed, through some personal assistance from family and friends, now have to begin another kind of journey to freedom. The freedom from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. One of the most worrying prison of life. The most unattended to especially to the victims of trauma like kidnapping, banditry and rape.

While living with the bandits in the bush, we developed some friendship with fellow victims, one day, we were discussing on how life will be for us if we ever make it back alive. We thought of so many things we could do to get back to normalcy. One of us simply said, life for him was to get back to his farm as soon as possible, if ever he makes it back alive, this is after spending 7 weeks already. He had no means of even attending to the trauma that has just befallen him. Like the Rastafarians, who long for freedom from oppressive systems, we pray for the time we all will be free in Nigeria, from the menace of banditry, boko haram, and kidnappings.

Fr Stephen Ojapah is a priest of the Missionary Society of St Paul. He is equally the director for Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenism for the Catholic Diocese of Sokoto, a member of IDFP. He is also a KAICIID Fellow

[Repeat]

Poverty, cultural practices threaten girl-child education in Oyo

Daily Trust on Sunday in this report examines how farming, poverty, religious beliefs and early marriage have put girl child education on the edge in some Oyo State communities.

From Peter Moses

Like every young lady with ambition, 17-year-old Azeezat (not real name), born into a polygamous family in Kisi community in Irepo LGA of Oyo State, wants to become a nurse to save lives.

But the dream of the final year science student of Novelty Academy, Kisi, is battling storms. Her father, who is a welder and farmer, wants her to get married upon completion of secondary school.

Azeezat's father, who has nine other children, isn't a fan of girl child education, hence he is not ready to fund her education beyond SSCE.

She told our correspondent that, "He has not told me directly, but my mum is aware. His attitude towards girl child education is negative and I feel bad because he wants to kill my goal."

She noted that apart from her father's negative attitude to girl child education he's being influenced by his peers.

She said, "My father and his friends usually discuss under the mango tree that female students usually misbehave while on campus."

The young girl, however, seems undeterred, saying, "I will work hard to further my studies since I have the knowledge of tailoring."

Azeezat is not alone in such a situation, as thousands of girls in the community have had their dreams cut short due to their fathers' indisposition to girl child education. To the men, investment in girl child education "is a waste as she will end up in her husband's house."

A mother of two in Kisi, Raimot Ahmad, told our correspondent that, "In the olden days in Kisi, the majority of families did not enroll their daughters in school. They did not see any value for it."

"But things are now changing, every family now sees pride in girl child education. Although, there are still exceptions. Some Islamic sects like Mokondoros still don't enroll their female wards in school. They don't believe in Western education."

In October, 2019, during the first celebration of the International Day of the Girl Child under Governor Seyi Makinde's watch, the Secretary to the Government of Oyo State (SSG), Mrs Olubamiwo Adeosun, harped on the government's commitment to girl child education "because education is one of the pillars of the administration."

"When we say that education is one of the pillars of this administration, it is very clear because education sure makes a complete difference in the lives of people, even the generations



Oyo State governor, Seyi Makinde, interacting with a female student

to come. And we know that if we want to make our difference in the history of Oyo State, then education is key.

"You also know that when we talk about the number of girl children, it is almost equal if not more than that of the boys, so if you do not invest in the girl children you are missing out on so much value on the children."

She added that, "But we should not just let the celebration of the girl child end with the international day celebration; let us continue to invest in the girl child so that these children we are seeing here today will become leaders of tomorrow, and not just leaders, but good leaders, because we have invested in them all."

In December, 2020, the National Education Data Survey (NEDS) conducted by the National Population Commission (NPC) revealed that 12 per cent of children of school age in Oyo State were still out-of-school. The data captured both male and female children.

But despite the staggering data, the state government boasted that it had been able to bring 40,000 children back to school.

However, UNICEF's 2021 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS-6) indicated that 16.3 per cent of female children were out of senior and junior secondary schools in Oyo State. Also, 14.9 per cent of the population (three years and above) of both male and female had never attended formal education in the state.

Findings by *Daily Trust on Sunday* revealed that poverty, pregnancy, child labour, child marriage and religious beliefs are some of the factors militating against girl child education in Kisi and other parts of Oyo State.

Child marriage, CGB

Sections 23 and 24 of the Child Rights Law of Oyo State prohibits

child marriage and betrothal. Under the law, a child is said to be a person under 18 years and as such "is incapable of contracting a valid marriage."

Yet, child marriage, which is rampant in many Oyo State communities, has had adverse effects on girl child education, findings by *Daily Trust on Sunday* have shown.

UNICEF's 2021 MICS-6 revealed that 3.4 per cent of girls married before 15 years, while 13.2 per cent married before 18 years in Oyo State.

Apart from child marriage, girls in the state also suffer human rights violation like rape and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). In Oyo, 43.2 per cent of women underwent one form of FGM or the other, the UNICEF report indicated.

Farming

In Ogbomosho and some of its adjoining communities, farming activities are dealing huge blows on girl child education.

With major focus on cashew, groundnut and tomato, Iresa-Adu, Iresa-Apa, Onikeke, Fasina, Gbena, Baasa, among other communities in Surulere LGA of the state, are homes to commercial farmers. The council was part of the former Ogbomosho LGA.

A teacher in one of the public secondary schools in Ogbomosho told *Daily Trust on Sunday* that students were always engaged in work on farms, picking cashew or working as labourers in cashew warehouses. This, the teacher said, affected education adversely in the area.

He said, "During the last WAEC registration, we needed to go to the houses of some students who had stopped coming to school to plead with them to come and register."

"We discovered that two of the girls were pregnant and that was why they stopped coming to school, but we still registered them.

"Things like these are very common in schools in Ogbomosho. But there are a lot of factors responsible for them."

"One of the reasons is poverty. From our interactions with students, we have discovered that some of them are the ones fending for themselves. They engage in menial jobs to take care of themselves, and this is a big distraction for their education."

In Arulogun Oja town, Ibadan, the Baale, Chief Lawal Taofik Arulogun told *Daily Trust on Sunday* that some parents were in the habit of engaging their daughters in hawking and farming to the detriment of their education.

He said, "Some parents don't believe in educating their girl children as they see it as a waste of resources."

He added that, "Government should do more door-to-door campaigns on the importance of educating a girl child. If they can do it when campaigning for elections, then nothing stops them from doing it when they are in office."

Let's adopt carrot & stick approach - Advocate

An advocate of girl child education and Chief Responsibility Officer at Natinee Empowerment for Sustainable Initiative (NESII), Ms Enitan Sophie Oluwa, identified "lack of resources exacerbated by poverty and patriarchal values" as one of the factors militating the education of girls.

She said, "Stigma is another great factor militating against girl child education. I mean a society heavy on religion, culture and other factors that make a girl child get discriminated against and seen as less important. Many girls are being denied access to schooling and education on the grounds of being female and seen as the gender that would be married off which makes the investment without returns."

"Societal expectation from the girl child based on her biological functions tends to dictate a lot as regards the kind of educational empowerment a girl child would get."

She submitted that, "Girl child education hasn't totally gotten the attention it needs, but over the years more energy has been put there and many more efforts would yield results in coming years."

"I believe in the carrot and stick method where people are enlightened and encouraged to send their daughters to school. With the many government policies neatly carved on paper with little action in reality."

"One of the radical ways for me is encouraging people to have only the number of children they can cater for. Enforcing laws when they get violated will also send a strong signal to other people on how serious the government is."

"When we say girl child education is threatened, I think we need to imagine the fate of girls with disabilities. This feels like double jeopardy, and I know we have to act fast to ensure every child regardless of their disability status gets the education they require to live a fulfilling life."

Islam prioritises girl child education - Cleric

An Ilorin-based Islamic scholar, Sambo Fatuu, told *Daily Trust on Sunday* that, "In Islam, the education of the girl child is treated with utmost importance, and Islam makes provision for the rights of women; whether as a girl child, wife, sister or mother."

He cited examples of Maryam Aloma Muktar, a former Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN); and Zainab Ahmed, the current Minister of finance: as good examples of female Northerners who got Western education.

The Islamic scholar also admitted that some Muslims "still refuse their girl child access to basic education, but it is very minimal."

"As for South West Nigeria, it is true that we have some Muslims who still refuse their girl child access to basic education, but it is very minimal. The reason for this is not far-fetched. It is as a result of the bias from some quarters who deny our girls the right to use their hijab. This was common in all states in the South West until recently when the Supreme Court affirmed that the girl child has a right to her hijab; whether in school or at home."

Govt mum

Several efforts to get comments from officials of the state government proved abortive as for three days, the Commissioner for Education, Science and Technology, Abdulrahman Abdulaheem, could not be reached via his mobile phone.

Also, the Chairman of SUBEB, Dr Nureni Adeniran, did not pick calls put across to his mobile phone and failed to respond to an SMS.

This report is supported by the Onelife Initiative for Human Development



The Deputy Governor of Kaduna State, Dr Hadiza Balarabe presenting a staff of office to Lemson Barde of Odion Yenka Chiefdom



Malam Nasir El-Rufai presenting a staff of office to the Emir of Jere Alhaji Abdullahi Daniya Jere

El-Rufa'i's coronations raise dust in Southern Kaduna

From Ahmed Ali, Kafanchan

Five months to the end of his tenure, Governor Nasir el-Rufa'i of Kaduna State has been crowning traditional rulers in the Southern part of the state, a move observers say is political which can either shove up or further alienate his party, the All Progressives Congress (APC) in the zone.

Within three months, our correspondent reports that the governor presented staff of office to eight traditional rulers in the zone, out of which five were given staff of office in December alone.

Among the people who

ascended thrones are Zamani Dogonyaro as the Agom of Kachia; Bitrus James as the Dnatayi of Dnata; Luka Kogi Yabuwat as the Agwam of Kajju; Abubakar Balarabe Karma as the Sarkin Gwantu and Abdullahi Dan Iya as the Sarkin Jere.

Others are Lemson Barde of Odion Yenka; Habila Sa'idu as Agom of Godogodo and Halidu Ibrahim of Fadan Ayu.

Our correspondent further reports that many of the stools became vacant after their occupiers died in 2021. For instance, Agwam Luka Kogi Yabuwat of Kajju succeeded Agwam Malam Nuhu Bature

who died in December, 2021. Agom Habila Sa'idu of Godogodo succeeded Agom Ilya Ajiya Antang who also died in 2021. Odion Barde Lemson of Yenka and Halidu Ibrahim of Fadan Ayu succeeded their predecessors; Odion Sako Gajere and Yahaya Mamuda respectively, who both died in 2021.

Abubakar Abdullahi Balarabe Karma was crowned the Sarkin Gwantu after the chiefdom, then Numana Chiefdom, was restructured and split into Arak and Gwantu chiefdoms in January, 2022. The second-class traditional ruler of Gwantu, Brig Gen Ilya Yamma (Rtd), relocated to Arak to serve as a third-class chief. Yamma, who is from Arak succeeded the then Etum Numana, Gambo Makama, who was killed alongside his wife in his residence at Arak on the eve of 2018.

However, the coronation of Bitrus James of Dnata and Zamani Dogonyaro of Kachia followed the creation of Dnata and Kachia chiefdoms from Jere Emirate and Adara Chiefdom respectively. The creation of Kachia Chiefdom followed the split of Adara Chiefdom into Kufena and Kachia chiefdoms four years after the late Agom Adara, Maiwada Galadima, was kidnapped and killed by bandits in 2018.

The Kaduna State Government had while announcing the creation of Dnata Chiefdom from Jere Emirate in Kagarko LGA and Arak Chiefdom from Gwantu Chiefdom in Sanga LGA said it was part of the administration's reform of traditional institutions.

Gov El-Rufa'i attended four out of the eight coronations, while his Deputy, Dr Hadiza Sabuwa Balarabe, who is from

the Southern part of the state and currently the deputy governorship candidate of the APC in the state; and Sen Uba Sani attended the other four.

Speaking at the coronations, El-Rufa'i said his administration was out to secure, strengthen and better the welfare of the traditional rulers in order to discharge their duties effectively.

He advised the monarchs to see their appointments as a call to service and called on the people to provide support for a smooth administration.

However, coming on the eve of general elections and five months to the end of his tenure, political observers view the wave of coronations by El-Rufa'i as simply a political game aimed at swinging votes from the people of Southern Kaduna.

Our reporter, who witnessed the coronation of Agom Kajju in Zonkwa, Zangon Kataf LGA, reports that the turnout was poor.

Although supporters of the APC-led government described the wave of coronations as "spreading prosperity", their critics faulted the timing, saying it was either political or aimed at further subduing the people of the area.

"It's indeed a good development for the Government of Kaduna State to present staff of office to chiefs in Southern Kaduna, especially since some communities have spent years or months without a traditional ruler," said Rev Waziri Gambo, who spoke with our reporter.

His submission was, however, faulted by the Southern Kaduna Peoples Union (SOKAPU) which believes that the government's strategy is not political but provocative and aims at downgrading the traditional

institution in the zone.

"Where is prosperity when you abandon people and leave them without a shepherd to protect and promote their cultures for more than a year? This was not the case of Zazzau Emirate when Dr Shehu Idris died. How many days or weeks did it take to install Ambassador Ahmed Nuhu Bamalli as the next emir?" asked Luka Biniyat, spokesman of SOKAPU.

Speaking with *Daily Trust on Sunday*, Biniyat described the coronations as a "deliberate policy that seeks to downgrade" the traditional institutions by lowering them from their first-class status.

"It is a provocative insult and negative progress for our revered culture and tradition. If it were politics, he would have upgraded our traditional institutions and even created new ones to gain more converts to the APC."

Biniyat further said the zone would only vote for a governorship candidate willing to undo what he described as "the unacceptable tinkering" with their traditional institutions carried out by the present government.

Also, Auta Allahmagani, a politician from Zangon Kataf LGA, said, "They have done the coronations to win the favour of the people because of the wrong assumption that what they are doing will get them votes for the general elections."

Comrade Augustine Bayei, a youth leader, said the governor's decision to coronate the chiefs and create new chiefdoms in the zone was aimed at reviewing "his battered relationship with the people" and to create a soft landing for the APC governorship flag bearer.



Newly installed Chief of Gwantu Chiefdom in Sanga LGA

EXPLAINERIn partnership with
Centre for Democracy Development (CDD)

What you should know about Pension Reform Act 2014

By Philip Shimnom Clement

Nine years after the birth and implementation of the Pension Reform Act 2014 (PRA 2014), some Nigerians still confuse the provisions of the act with the repealed and replaced Pension Reform Act 2004 (PRA 2004).

On July 1, 2014, President Goodluck Jonathan signed into law the PRA 2014, thereby officially burying the PRA 2004, which was for 10 years the unified legislation for the regulation and supervision of the pension landscape in Nigeria.

The PRA 2014 was novel in its modifications and changes in Nigeria's pension sector operations. The new act is the enabling legislation for administering the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS).

Recall that the PRA 2004 established the National Pension Commission (PenCom) as the overall supervisory body for the pension sector in Nigeria. The commission is responsible for licensing, regulating and monitoring the operations of all Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs) and Pension Fund Custodians (PFCs).

Checks by *Daily Trust on Sunday* show that the PRA 2014 brought some significant amendments to the act such as the exemption of military personnel and Department of State Services (DSS) personnel from the CPS.

The PRA 2014 Act also incorporated subsequent reviews to the 2004 Act, such as the Universities (Miscellaneous) Provisions Act 2012 (which revised the retirement age and benefits of university professors) and the Third Alteration Act (which places responsibility of pension matters with the National Industrial Court).

This explainer outlines some of the major modifications and new provisions in the PRA 2014:

Upward review of pension contributions

In the PRA 2014, the contribution rate was increased to 18 per cent of employees' monthly emolument from 15 per cent stipulated in the 2004 Act. Employers are to contribute 10 per cent while the employees contribute eight per cent. Furthermore, the PRA 2014 allows employers to shoulder the total burden of pension contributions of their employees.

In addition to increasing the pension contribution rate, the PRA 2014 also expanded the CPS



■ PenCom DG, Aisha Dahir-Umar

to cover private sector employers with three staff and above, enabling broader participation in the CPS. The PRA 2004 covered only employers with five staff and above.

Opening of temporary RSA for employees

The PRA 2014 provides that an employer opens a Temporary Retirement Savings Account (TRSA) on behalf of an employee that failed to open a Retirement Savings Account (RSA) within three months of assumption of duty. Worthy of note is that this was not required under the repealed act of 2004.

The 2014 act also expanded the scope of monthly emoluments by leaving its determination to employees' contracts. However, it shall not be less than the total of basic salary, housing allowance and transport allowance.

Similarly, the act has reduced the waiting period for accessing benefits in the event of job loss by employees from six months to four months.

Licence revocation/penalties for erring operators

Daily Trust recalls that the PRA 2004 only allowed PenCom to revoke the licence of erring pension operators but does not provide for other temporary measures that PenCom may take to settle inherent challenges.

However, the PRA 2014 empowers PenCom to take proactive corrective measures on licenced operators whose situations, actions or inactions jeopardise the safety of pension

remedial measures that may be taken by the Commission to resolve identified challenges in licenced operators.

Similarly, the sanctions provided under the PRA 2004 were no longer enough deterrents against infractions of the law. Consequently, the PRA 2014 has provided stiffer penalties that will serve as deterrence against mismanagement or diversion of pension funds assets under any guise. Thus, operators who mismanage pension funds will be liable on conviction to not less than 10 years imprisonment or a fine of an amount equal to three times the amount so misappropriated or diverted or both imprisonment and fine.

Utilisation of pension funds for national growth

Daily Trust checks show that the PRA 2014 also makes provisions that will enable the creation of additional permissible investment instruments to accommodate initiatives for national development, such as investment in the real sector, including infrastructure and real estate development.

This is already being implemented as the National Pension Commission recently approved the use of 25 per cent RSA savings for mortgage

PenCom, operators' stand on PRA 2014

Daily Trust notes that although there are two bills before the National Assembly seeking to exclude personnel of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) and the National Assembly from the CPS. But PenCom, Licenced Pension Fund Operators (LPFOs) and analysts in the sector have cautioned on the dangers of such move.

According to the commission, PRA 2014 deals principally with occupational pensions, which aims to provide means of

livelihood to workers upon their retirement, while adding that the primary objective of the PRA 2014 is to ensure that everyone who works receives his/her retirement benefits as and when due.

Also, LPFOs have collectively called on Nigerians to ensure that the Contributory Pension Scheme is sustained in order to achieve this objective.

The LPFOs have also warned that the two Bills are out to undermine the essence of pensions and social security cover as enshrined in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), as both would ultimately deny retirees adequate periodic incomes in retirement and should be discouraged by Nigerians.

Similarly, *Daily Trust* recalls that a former president of the Trade Union Congress (TUC), Comrade Bobboi Kaigama, explained why the federal government should uphold the provisions of the Pension Reform Act 2014 to sustain the CPS.

He added that allowing any Ministry, Department or Agency (MDA) of government to exit the scheme would further plunge the country into more debt.

Expressing his disapproval for the exemption of permanent secretaries, heads of service, Accountant General of the Federation and other top government functionaries, Comrade Kaigama recalled that when in 2004 the Obasanjo administration enacted the PRA, it was to address the problem bedevilling the pension system.

He said the federal government proposed to spend N577bn on payment of pension and gratuity in 2022 alone and that exempting any government agency would further increase government's annual budgets for pension and gratuity.

"Sometimes, some of the budgetary provisions are not funded. If the budget is not funded 100 per cent, those you want to dole out N577bn will not get it. That is why we are saying the CPS is more stable. You can predict it," he said.

On automation of services to ease access to retirement benefits, Kaigama said, "Before now, you would go from table to table when you retire, but now you don't have to go to any desk. Only your details are needed and your retirement benefits are processed."

He urged state governments which have not keyed into the CPS to do so in order to keep paying accrued rights and contribute their portions of monthly pension as the employees contributed theirs too.

Also, LPFOs have collectively called on Nigerians to ensure that the Contributory Pension Scheme is sustained in order to achieve this objective.



STATES

KOGI

Community gets electricity 36 years after

From Tijani Labaran, Lokoja

Ogbogba community in Igala-Mela LGA of Kogi State has been provided with electricity after about 36 years of struggle to have the area lit up, Daily Trust on Sunday reports.

The electricity project which was mooted in 1986 remained abandoned over the years until members of the Frontier Club, led by Alhaji Abubakar Sani, complemented the efforts of the community to make the electrification a reality.

Speaking during the inauguration of the project, the community's monarch, Etemahi Abel Emakoji Etu Ojotu, praised members of the Frontier Club for completing the community, saying it would help in improving the standard of living of his subjects.

The Chairman of Ogbogba Community Development Association (OCDA), Mr Ainoko Stephen, also commended the Frontier Club for making them to actualise their dream of electricity in the community.

Chairman of Frontier Club, Alhaji Abubakar Sani, explained that one of the primary aims of the club was improving human and infrastructural development of needy communities in Igala land.

KEBBI

PDP reps candidate, Abba Haliru, is dead

From Ismail Adebayo, Birnin Kebbi

Candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) for Birnin Kebbi/Kalgo/Bunza Federal Constituency in the coming general elections, Barrister Abba Bello Haliru, is dead.

While confirming his death to newsmen, the PDP Governorship Campaign Council Director General, Alhaji Abubakar Shehu, said he died on Friday night in Abuja after a brief illness.

The late Abba was the first son of a former PDP national chairman, Dr Bello Haliru.

EBONYI

We'll begin production of dialysis machine soon - Umahi

From Nabob Ogbonna, Abakaliki

Production of dialysers for treating renal disorders is to commence at the David Umahi Federal University of Health Sciences Teaching Hospital, Uburu, Ohaozara LGA of Ebonyi State in the next few months.

Gov David Umahi disclosed this while hosting students and staff of the university who paid him a New Year homage at his Uburu country home.

"Factory for the production of dialysers is ready for installation in the next month.

"Being a federal university means that I will be better positioned to help you after May 29," he said.

He emphasised that his vision for the institution was to show to the world that a better Nigeria was possible through good governance.

DELTA

Tompolo donates 458 desks to varsity

From Meluwa Kelvin, Asaba

The President/Chairman of Tompolo Foundation, High Chief Owezide Government Ekpemupolo, alias Tompolo, has donated 458 desks to students of the Nigeria Maritime University (NMU) in Delta State.

The Executive Secretary of the Tompolo Foundation, Dr Paul Bebenimibo, announced the donation during a goodwill message he presented at the combined matriculation ceremony for 2019/2020, 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 academic sessions in Okenrenkoko, Warri South West LGA.

While noting that Tompolo is a strategic partner of NMU, Dr Bebenimibo said he was putting measures in place to enable the institution to compete well with other world-class universities.

KWARA

600 dead, retired teachers to be replaced

From Mumini Abdulkareem, Ilorin

The Kwara State Government has said it will employ no fewer than 600 teachers to fill vacancies created by death and retirement in different subjects.

The Chairman of the Kwara State Universal Basic Education Board (KWSUBEB), Prof Raheem Adaramaja, disclosed this on Saturday, adding that the bulk of qualified applicants from a recruitment exercise in 2021 would

fill the vacancies.

He explained that the delay was due to the cost and length of time associated with a new recruitment exercise, noting that the new vacancies arose as a result of retirement, death, relocation and other factors.



■ Borno State Governor, Babagana Zulum answering questions from the State House Correspondents after meeting with President Muhammed Buhari at the Presidential Villa in Abuja

PHOTO: NAN

YOBE

Yobe spends N9bn on agric projects

From Habibu Idris Gimba

The Yobe State Government said it spent over N9 billion on agricultural projects and programmes from 2019 to 2022 to boost productivity and food security in the state.

The Commissioner for Agriculture, Dr Mairo Ahmad Amshi, disclosed this at the handing over ceremony of the administrative block and 20 hectares to the National Animal Production

Research Institute (NAPRI), Zaria, donated by the state government.

Dr Amshi said the Governor Mai Mala Buni administration attached great importance to the agricultural sector given its potential as a major source of employment and income generation.

She said, "In order to help sustain farmers through increased food production and enhanced standard of living, the Buni administration deliberately tailored its agricultural

policies towards accelerated food production through the provision of basic inputs and agricultural implements, particularly tractors, animal traction, fertiliser, chemicals, seedlings, and even threshers."

She assured that her ministry would continue to anchor the policy thrust of the government in the agricultural sector as agriculture remained the major occupation of the people of the state.

FCT

Al-Habibiyyah tasks Nigerians on voting

By Abbas Jimoh

The Al-Habibiyyah Islamic Society of Nigeria (AIS) has urged Nigerians to go beyond collecting their Permanent Voter's Cards (PVCs) and use them to vote for credible candidates in this year's elections.

The Chief Imam of AIS, Ustaz Fuad Adeyemi, made the call in Abuja during a Khutbah (special Friday sermon) marking the organisation's 20th anniversary.

According to him, it was important for citizens to vote their conscience and not because of money or

other non-nationalistic considerations.

He also said that the organization, apart from the FCT, was physically present and active in Sokoto, Kebbi, Kaduna, Kogi, Lagos, Osun, Oyo, and Niger states, with a plan to expand to other parts of the country.

He listed some of the interventions of the society to include Al-Habibiyyah Food Bank and Feed-the-Indigent programmes which debuted almost two decades ago; where not less than 3,000 people have been fed daily annually for the 30-day Ramadan and on the day of Eid.

ANAMBRA

2023: Maintain alliance with North, Arthur Eze urges S/East

From Titus Eleweke Awka

Oil magnet, Prince Arthur Eze, has advised Ndi-Igbo and the South Easterners to maintain their alliance with the North by supporting Atiku Abubakar, saying his administration will be more beneficial to the South East.

Eze made the call in Ogidi, Anambra State, during a solidarity visit to the Director General of the Atiku-Okowa Presidential Campaign Council (PCC) in the state, Prof Obiora Okonkwo.

Speaking to journalists after a meeting with Okonkwo and select stakeholders, Eze said the Igbo were better off with Atiku than any other person.

He noted that the long-standing alliance between

the North and the South East had always produced many political benefits to the South East.

He said, "I have known Atiku Abubakar to be an honest man, liberal, and a pan-Nigerian who aspires best for the nation and he is committed to the renaissance of Ndi-Igbo."

"He has demonstrated his huge love and concern for us, Ndi-Igbo, by continuously choosing an Igbo man to be his running mate since 2007 when he picked Senator Ben Ndi Obi; again in 2019 when he picked Peter Obi; and now Ifeanyi Okowa, an Igbo man from Delta State. He was willing to drop his ambition if the ticket was micro-zoned to the South East. Only Atiku Abubakar agreed to such terms."

FEVER PITCH

UNBEATABLE SPORTS ACTION

Ivory Coast forward Fofana completes Chelsea move

Chelsea announced yesterday they had completed the signing of Ivory Coast forward David Datro Fofana on a six-and-a-half year deal from Norwegian champions Molde.

The Blues confirmed the 20-year-old has signed a contract at Stamford Bridge until 2029, with the option of a further year. The fee is believed to be between £8 million and £10 million.

Fofana described Chelsea as “the club of my dreams” in a short message on the club’s website.

“Hello dear fans,” he said. “I’m here, I’ve arrived well and I’m very happy to sign for the club of my dreams. I’ll see you soon on the pitch.”

The forward, who recently made his first start for Ivory Coast, scored 24 goals and registered 10 assists in 65 games for Molde.

Chelsea have also signed France defender Benoit Badiashile from Monaco for a reported fee of just under 40 million euros (\$42 million) during the January transfer window.

The London side also signed Brazilian midfielder Andrey Santos from Vasco da Gama.

Santos scored eight goals in 38 appearances for Vasco da Gama.

He made his league debut aged 17 in 2021 before playing a key role in his side’s promotion back to the top flight in Brazil in the 2022 season.

Graham Potter’s side are 10th in the Premier League after



■ Fofana

Thursday’s 1-0 loss to Manchester City and have a mounting injury list that includes goalkeeper Edouard Mendy and forward Raheem Sterling.

Dare propels pet team, Ogbomosho Rockets to debut victory

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7 months wait over as 2022/23 NPFL season kicks off today

By Jide Olusola

Another season of the Nigeria Professional Football League (NPFL) is due to start today after a protracted break brought on by the organizational backlog.

In the first game of the season, Akwa United will host Bendel Insurance at the Uyo stadium with the Nigeria Football Federation president, Ibrahim Gusau and Interim Management Company (IMC) Chairman, Gbenga Elegbeleye, at the Nest of Champions in Uyo in attendance.

However, due to logistical concerns, the first matchday’s remaining games have been moved back one week.

Since the last game was played in July 2022, it took another six months for the organizers to approve the start of another season which according to the IMC will be shown on TV.

Meanwhile, Akwa United coach, Ayodeji Ayeni, his team is completely ready for today’s match.

He discussed the opportunities his squad had in the match as well as the hiring process the club had started after losing some important players



■ Akwa United players celebrating a goal with the technical crew during a game last season

during the league’s break.

In the same vein, Coach Monday Odigie, Bendel Insurance coach, is confident that his team can earn a promotion to the top division after an absence of 11 years.

Coach Ayeni acknowledged

that the country’s clubs struggled as a result of the inconsistent start dates.

He disclosed that Akwa United has been preparing for training graduation for more than four months, from low to middle, from middle to high, etc.

The last time these neighbours met was 12 April 2008, when Bendel Insurance defeated Akwa United 3-2 in Benin. But the slim win wasn’t enough to stave off relegation as they finished 20th on the log with 39 points.

Egypt 2023: Bosso calls Nwosu, Daga, Bernard, 32 other players to camp

Isah Ladan Bosso, Head Coach of Nigeria’s U20 boys, has invited 35 players to resume camping in Abuja on Monday as preparations for this year’s Africa U20 Cup of Nations begins in earnest.

Goalkeeper Nathaniel Nwosu, who is also number one choice for the Olympic Eagles, is at the top of the roster alongside midfielder Daniel Daga and forward Promise Bernard. Training sessions will commence on Monday as Bosso looks to pick his final squad for the tournament that also serves as the qualifying tournament for this year’s FIFA U20 World Cup finals in Indonesia.

There are also goalkeeper Chijioke Anigboso, defenders Benjamin Frederick, Nathaniel Tambe and Hassan Shaibu, midfielders Ibrahim Yahaya and Muhammad Aminu, and forwards Adams Olalekan and Ayuba Francis.

Seven-time champions Nigeria will do battle with host nation, Egypt, Senegal and Mozambique in Group A of the 12-nation tournament taking place in the cities of Cairo, Alexandria and Ismailia, 19th February – 11th March. All four semi-finalists at the championship will fly Africa’s flag at this year’s FIFA U20 World Cup.

Uganda, Central African Republic, South Sudan and Congo are in Group B, while The Gambia, Tunisia, Benin Republic and Zambia will slot it out in Group C.

240 players hit Benin as Edo cricket league starts today

By Jide Olusola

The ancient city of Benin is set to witness the kick off of the 2023 Edo State cricket league season today.

The tournament this time will be played in a round-robin format with a total of 28 matches followed by super 4 playoffs with eight teams are set to participate with about 240 players from different part of the

country.

The eight teams in the league include No Limit Cricket Club (CC), Uniben CC, Ambrose Ali CC, and the Crusader CC.

Others are Integrity Force CC, U17 CC, Dolphin CC, and Invictus CC.

“There will be class performances, new talent discovery, and a testing ground

for those expected to play for the country.

“I know that the national sectors will be looking closely at the Edo State Cricket league to evaluate the potential of those expected in the national camps.” Barr. Abraham Oviawe, Vice Chairman of Edo State Cricket Association said.

The league’s regular names like Destiny Eghosa, Prosper Useni,

Peter Aho, and Selim brothers will feature for various clubs while Joshua Afia, a leg spinner and debutant at the national team will play as a new entrant as well as Nigeria’s national captain, Sylvester Okpe.

Also expected for the first time will be Isaac Okpe and other players from Kaduna, Oyo, Ogun, and Akwa Ibom states.

Salome Sunday from Akwa Ibom State has recently become Nigeria’s national female cricket powerhouse.

Salome has recorded 486 runs in 28 matches. In June 2022 at Kigali, Salome was the only Nigerian appointed to play in the Commonwealth Select XI during the 2022 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM)

Dare propels pet team, Ogbomoshos Rockets to debut victory

By Jide Olusola

The minister of Youth and Sports Development, Sunday Dare led his pet basketball club, Ogbomoshos Rockets, to a debut victory over LAUTECH Thunders yesterday at the freshly renovated basketball court inside Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH) (45-35).

The Minister played the first quarter for Ogbomoshos Rockets in the warm-up game while former D'Tigers captain Olumide Oyedeji played for LAUTECH Thunders.

Dare stated that several of the basketball players have been deemed as excellent enough to play for the national teams in the near future.

"I am happy that I am able to give back to the community especially the youth in the University campus, the largest concentration of youth in this country are in the campuses. And you can see the talents. Investment in youth is directly an investment in sports development.

"I am sure one or two of them will make it to the national team. We have seen the flashes. We have seen Olumide Oyedeji who is former NBA player and



■ Sports minister, Sunday Dare in a group photograph with some Ogbomoshos Rockets players

D'Tigers captain he is also happy seeing some talents her.

"First, we have seen LAUTECH basketball team will now start their trainings on the new reconstructed court and become more competitive on one of the best basketball court balls. We also built stand for supporters to sit and

cheer them to victory during matches.

"So, they have all the components they need, beyond that, to keep that alive we are going to have a six-team tournament in February. The teams will come from Kwara, Oyo, Osun, Ekiti, Lagos and Ogun States," Dare concluded.

Williams pulls out of Australian Open

Venus Williams has withdrawn from this month's Australian Open after sustaining an injury at a warm-up tournament.

The 42-year-old had been awarded a wildcard for the Grand Slam, which begins on 16 January in Melbourne.

Williams was injured during the ASB Classic in Auckland.

Meanwhile, Tunisian world number two Ons Jabeur suffered a shock 6-3 1-6 6-3 defeat by Czech 18-year-old world number 102 Linda Noskova in the Adelaide International semi-finals.

Noskova, who beat two-time Australian Open champion Victoria Azarenka in the quarter-finals, will face Belarus' world number five

Aryna Sabalenka - a 6-3 6-2 winner against Romania's Irina-Camelia Begu - in Sunday's final.

Coco Gauff reached the final of the ASB Classic in Auckland by beating Montenegro's Danka Kovinic 6-0 6-2.

American Gauff will face Spain's Rebeka Masarova, who beat Belgian Ysaline Bonaventure 6-3 6-3.

Adesanya loses UFC no.1 spot in 2023 rankings

Former UFC champion Israel Adesanya has lost his position atop the middleweight category to Alex Pereira in the most recent 2023 rankings.

At UFC 281 at Madison Square Garden in New York City, USA, the Nigerian-born New Zealander lost his belt to his Brazilian opponent.

The middleweight champion Adesanya (23-2 MMA, 12-2 UFC), who led Pereira 3-1 on the judges' scorecards in their title match, was halted in Round 5 of their fight. Pereira (7-1 MMA, 4-0 UFC) had Adesanya rocked and severely injured three minutes into the last session, resulting in a standing TKO victory for him.

Adesanya is now number two and for the first time since unifying the belt in 2019, Adesanya is no longer sitting atop the middleweight division and is now the No.1 contender.

Adesanya, however, continues

to be a slight betting favourite to ultimately exact revenge on the former in an anticipated title rematch this year.

Adesanya, who is attempting to return to the winner's circle for the first

time as a middleweight in his mixed martial arts career, is anticipated to face Pereira in the summer and is currently a -150 favourite over the champion, who is a +130 underdog.



■ Israel Adesanya receives heavy punches to his face during his fight to Brazilian Alex Pereira last year

Twenty-two teams gallop for laurels at 2023 Port Harcourt polo festival

By Ernest Ekpenyong

Strata Based Group and other Port Harcourt based blue-chip organizations top the list of corporate and individual benefactors of the 2023 prestigious that gallops off with fanfare in the Garden City, the Rivers State capital city this weekend.

Port Harcourt Polo President, Chukwudi Dimkpa who expressed gratitude to the sponsors for supporting the club to host the international polo fiesta listed other sponsors to include Allied

Victory, Bob Track, Cassectric, Elshon Nigeria, Sidafeco Ventures, Willten Aviation and Deep Offshore Shipping, among others.

Dr. Dimkpa told Polo Royals that everything was on ground to ensure that the 2023 PH polo grand event remains an epoch that will linger for long in the memories of all participants, invited guests and enthusiasts of the king of games.

"All the organizing committees are on ground and working around the clock to deliver on all fronts the required values to our esteemed

traditional sponsors, partners, patrons, participating teams and thousands of enthusiasts who have over the decades made Port Harcourt polo a festival of choice," he added.

Daily Trust authoritatively reports that perpetual rivals and Nigerian polo powerhouses, Kano, Kaduna and Lagos are set to rekindle their rivalry for dominance as the prestigious 2023 Niger Delta Polo Tournament gallops off in grand style with over twenty teams vying for honours.

SPORTING VERDICT

DAVID NGOBUA

ngobuadavid@gmail.com 08035975831 (Text only)

Football wins as 2023 NPFL season resumes

Barring last minute hitches, the 2022/2023 Nigeria Professional Football League (NPFL) season will commence today at the Godswill Akpabio International stadium in Uyo where the official opening match of the season is to be played between Akwa United and Bendel Insurance of Benin City. It promises to be a cracker on one of the best football playing turfs in Nigeria.

However, for inexplicable reasons, the remaining Week one matches will be played next weekend when the other clubs would take to the field in the abridged league that many of them have accepted to feature in grudgingly. The league is kicking-off six months after Rivers United were crowned champions of the 2021/2022 season.

Indeed, it has been several weeks of unending drama as the new league organizers, the Interim Management Committee (IMC) for the NPFL kept trying to restart the domestic league as mandated by the Federal Ministry of Youths and Sports Development and supported by the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF). While striving to carry out the responsibilities assigned to it, the IMC incurred the wrath of club managers alias Club Owners who thought they would be allowed to run the show in the absence of the sacked League Management Company (LMC). The Club Owners who had imagined that they were being liberated from the tyrannical grip of the LMC are no longer comfortable with most of the pragmatic decisions that have been taken by the IMC.

Without any doubt, the main reason for the face-off between the IMC and the Club Owners is the decision of the former to introduce the abridged league format for the current season. Of course, following the failure of the domestic league to restart in time, the only way to catch up or harmonise the NPFL calendar with the big leagues in Europe is to abridge the local league. Therefore, the IMC believes fervently that if the abridged format is adopted, the current season would end in May and resume in August along with the rest of the leagues in the world.

Unfortunately, due to reasons their critics consider to be selfish, most of the Club Owners are vehemently opposed to the abridged league. After the clubs met with the IMC and it was decided that only the abridged league was the way forward, most of them declined to participate in it. As a matter of fact, the Club Owners said 17 of their members had voted for a full league so the IMC must listen to them.

When both parties refused to shift grounds, the future of Nigerian professional football league became gloomy. Many then concluded that there would be no NPFL this season. However, after days of persuasion and coercion, the clubs soft pedaled, thereby making the way for the new season to commence today.

However, most of the clubs are still grumbling that they were forced to accept the abridged league. Therefore, even after today's match in Uyo, football stakeholders will have to wait till next weekend to know if the rest of the clubs would be part of the abridged league.

For those of us who are familiar with the administration of football in Nigeria and how the Club Owners run the state owned club, those opposed to the abridged league are only fighting to protect their selfish interests. They know that playing the abridged league will deny them of some of the 'careless' money they usually obtain from their respective state governments. Of course, they know that the abridged league comes with fewer matches so there will be no reason for them to submit bogus budgets for nearly 400 matches. In addition, the clubs know they stand the high risk of being relegated when the league is abridged. When matches are fewer, it leaves little room for manipulations. The more the matches, the easier it is for clubs to recover lost grounds. Therefore, the decision of the IMC to organise an abridged league is like tucking a bitter pill down the throats of the Club Owners.

Well, the time has come for all to sheathe their swords for the good of the domestic league. It should be a case of no victor, no vanquished. For now, the IMC has demonstrated commitment to its responsibility and deserves to be given a chance. Therefore, it is heartwarming to know that despite distractions from different quarters, the IMC was able to bring in a formidable sponsor in the name of GTI Investment which recently splashed N200m on the 20 clubs as take off grants. So, apart from the hundreds of millions of Naira that will accrue to them from their respective state governments, each of the clubs will receive N10m grant from the GTI Investment's largesse.

And unlike what was obtainable in the time of the defunct LMC, the IMC is allowing its sponsors to deal directly with the clubs in almost all financial transactions. The future is also looking quite bright for the referees and other match officials whose indemnities and allowances are to be paid directly to them by the new sponsors. This is good news because we are all living witnesses to how the league suffered poor officiating in the past years simply because unpaid and poorly motivated referees saw their appointments as opportunities to make quick money. It was so bad that at a stage clubs were saddled with the responsibility of paying referees' indemnities. Questionable officiating became inevitable because he who pays the piper dictates the tune.

It is against this background that the Club Owners must bury their pride and cooperate with the IMC to get the NPFL running again. So much time has been wasted already. Therefore, there is no need to continue to chase after shadows. Anything being done legitimately to harmonise the NPFL calendar with those of the advanced leagues should be encouraged without much ado.



This is why the 2023 presidential election is an easy one. Anyone can proclaim that he will accomplish a million and one things, and that may be so. But the first question must be: what have you accomplished, and how?

The year of eloquence

As Nigeria enters 2023, political campaigns, particularly among the presidential candidates but also in the departure campaign of President Muhammadu Buhari, have stepped up.

Mr Buhari's campaign is that he is departing in May, for certain, when his tenure ends. And that he will not influence the election (although he will campaign for the candidate of his All Progressives Congress, APC, Mr. Bola Ahmed Tinubu). And that he will put considerable distance between Abuja and himself by retiring to his farm.

First, the president. Mr. Buhari may retire to his farm, but I am sure that it is clear to him that his politics will not retire there with him. Whether or not APC retains the presidency, the sheer weight of the failure of his eight years will guarantee that he will never distance himself from his tenure.

To begin with, Buhari will not simply be departing with a limp claim to leadership on any subject: there is a lot of evidence that his tenure has been a spectacular collapse and thrown Nigeria into deep economic and political distress.

As a result, the farm will be no respite from the kind of virulent criticism than the one to which he subjected his predecessors in his eight years, predecessors who did not have the kind of popular acceptance Buhari enjoyed when he took office.

Despite Buhari's loud, decades-long advertising of character and throughout the 2015 campaign, as attested to by the Centre for Democracy and Development, there has been no evidence of Buhari's example or willingness to deploy Nigeria's best resources to elevate the country. He never declared his assets publicly; even his limited declaration in 2015 raised a lot of questions about him. Subsequent developments about his government, policies and officials in his eight years offer no proof of fidelity to the constitution or the people.

Among others, Buhari swore that his APC would end corruption and insecurity. Instead, both problems have deepened scandalously, with key officials of his government routinely entangled in probes, and Buhari himself ignoring the court of law.

This is why it is impossible to see how Buhari can positively impact the deeply-flawed Tinubu campaign, which has unwisely declared that it will follow in his footsteps.

The Tinubu campaign is handicapped by the presidential candidate's identity,

health and character questions, a problem it has emphasized by trying to avoid it. He has chosen to avoid open interviews and debates, focusing instead on his manifesto as well as speeches in the friendly confines of APC events.

The problem here is that not only is Tinubu's manifesto extremely weak, but he also lacks the personal presence in front of a microphone to sell it or to make his campaign his own. It is difficult to see Tinubu benefiting from these weaknesses in addition to those of Buhari.

A similar problem confronts the Peoples Democratic Party candidate, Atiku Abubakar, who has the same challenge of character at home and abroad following his performance in the Olusegun Obasanjo presidency in which he was vice-president. Atiku was famously investigated in the United States, and a damning congressional report painted him as a face of foreign corruption.

These embarrassing track records and unexplained wealth have not prevented either gentleman from seeking the presidency of Nigeria even though they mock each other for them as if it were merely a game. Last November, Atiku declared Tinubu to be unfit for the presidency as he has no integrity. The party affirmed that Buhari was avoiding Tinubu because of the APC candidate's links to hard drugs.

Tinubu used the same playbook, dismissing Atiku as bereft of integrity.

This is a pathetic picture, but if each man can identify the other as lacking in integrity, that is consistent with what every adult Nigerian knows about them despite party and government officials trying to paper over those deficiencies for political gain.

That, then, is the story of 2023: the year that Nigerians define themselves for the world.

Up until now, Nigeria has remained something of a mystery. People are mystified that a nation that often produces extremely brilliant people is at the same time so convoluted and complicated.

Yes: around the world, crooks with Nigerian passports make far more news than an army of their hardworking, law-abiding compatriots that is to be found in every country.

Prior to COVID-19, that army of Nigerians was remitting over \$25 billion annually, comparable to the annual federal budget. They enjoy recognition in many fields internationally, and at home, support a wide variety of institutions, organizations, and causes.

Back in the homeland, powerful Nigerians send their families abroad to advance themselves while they ignore those are poor.

But in a campaign video in 2015, Buhari asked Nigerians, "Is the naira in your bank account of greater value today than it was four years ago? How can we allow the cowards of Boko Haram to take over any part of this country, a sovereign state? How can young people die looking for jobs in Abuja and justice is not met? What is going on here? Is this our country? Allow me prove to you that in our lifetime you and your country can be proud of this country."

In the eight years that followed, as we all know, the naira has lost its value several times over. Nigerians have continued to die looking for jobs and food and meaning. Cowards of all hues have overrun the land. The corrupt have remained on the ascendancy. And yet Buhari is asking voters to support a candidate who has vowed to continue with this journey to hell.

This is why 2023 is the year that Nigerians, with their own voices and their votes, announce to the world who they really are by clearly affirming what values matter to them. Does education matter, for instance? If so, is it right for a candidate in an examination to pay someone to write it for him?

Should someone purchase a university degree? For that matter, should he purchase a medical degree to practice as a doctor or a surgeon? If so, would you patronize such a charlatan? Would you send your child to him for surgery?

Would you get on a flight knowing that the pilot purchased the credentials with which he obtained the job? Speaking of aviation, should someone whose experience with locomotives is as a vulcanizer or painter steal the certificates of an aeronautical engineer, and then take a job in the presidential fleet to fly the president?

This is why the 2023 presidential election is an easy one. Anyone can proclaim that he will accomplish a million and one things, and that may be so. But the first question must be: what have you accomplished, and how?

It is simple: when you know that a surgeon is a fraud, you hand him over to the police, not patronize him. Which is why, this year, Nigerians tell themselves and the world clearly whom they really are through whom they choose as their new leader.

2023, Nigeria, is your year of eloquence.

This column welcomes rebuttals from interested government officials.

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Deschamps

Deschamps extends France contract to 2026

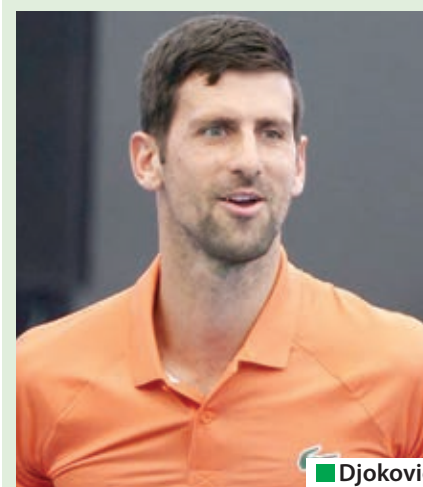
Didier Deschamps has extended his contract as France head coach until June 2026 and is expected to remain in charge for a fourth World Cup.

He led France to World Cup victory in 2018 and to the 2022 final in Qatar, which they lost to Argentina.

Since the 54-year-old former Chelsea midfielder took charge in 2012, France have also reached the 2014 World Cup quarter-finals and 2016 Euros final.

Deschamps has won 89, drawn 28 and lost 22 of his 139 matches in charge.

Deschamps, who also won the World Cup as a player in 1998, helped France win the Nations League in 2021.



Djokovic

Djokovic beats Medvedev to reach Adelaide final

Novak Djokovic's preparations for the Australian Open continued as he beat world number seven Daniil Medvedev to reach the Adelaide International final.

The 35-year-old is yet to drop a set in Adelaide, beating Medvedev 6-3 6-4.

Djokovic will face American Sebastian Korda in today's final.

The Australian Open begins on 16 January and Djokovic is targeting a 10th title in Melbourne, which would be a men's record-equalling 22nd Grand Slam win.

Adelaide is world number five Djokovic's first tournament in Australia since he was deported in 2022 because of his Covid-19 vaccine status. His visa ban has now been overturned.