

# DAILY TRUST

SUNDAY

Sunday, January 2, 2022  
Jumada Awwal 28, 1443 AH

SEASON'S GREETINGS TO OUR READERS & ADVERTISERS

www.dailytrust.com  
Vol. 15, No. 46, N250

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SCHOOL CHILDREN IN CAPTIVITY

FEDERAL GOVT COLLEGE,  
BIRNIN YAURI

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DAYS

BETHEL BAPTIST HIGH  
SCHOOL, KUJAMA

183  
DAYS

COVID-19 VACCINE IS SAFE. GO GET VACCINATED!  
PROTECT YOURSELF, PROTECT EVERYONE AROUND YOU.



REMINISCENCES

I heard of Asaba  
massacre only  
after civil war  
– IBM Haruna

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Why consumers will  
pay more for chicken,  
egg this year

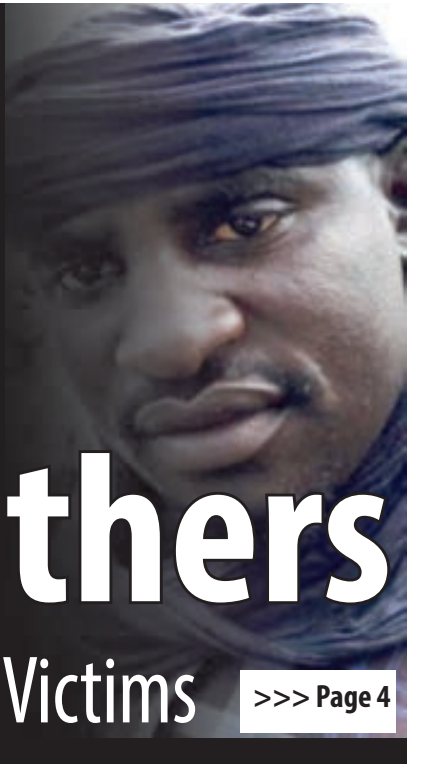
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# How NAF Airstrikes Killed 2 Zamfara Bandits' Leaders, Others

● Police Raid Another Camp, Kill 1, Arrest 2, Rescue 9 Victims

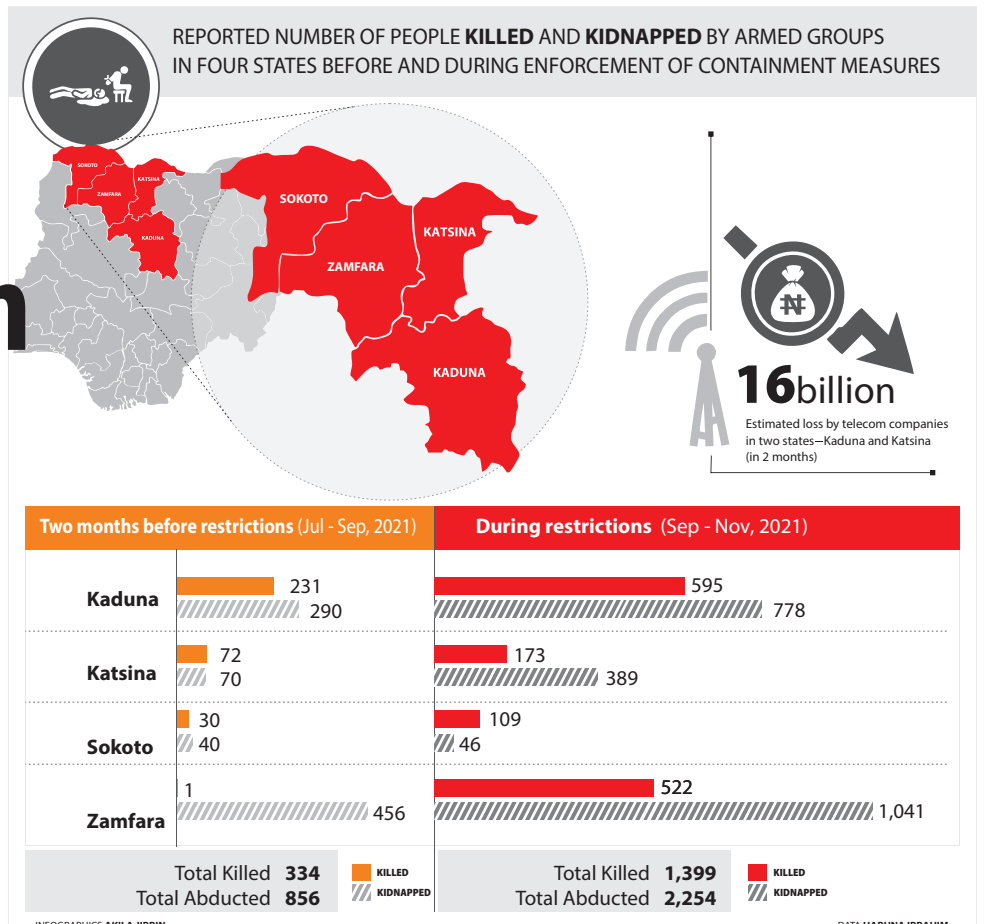
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Despite  
containment  
measures, gunmen  
continue violent  
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- Killings, abductions spike
- What should be done – Analyst



Shun doom predictions, Lagos Catholic archbishop tells Nigerians

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## Manufacturers list forex, tax increase as concerns

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### WEATHER SUMMARY:



**ABUJA:**  
Max: 33  
Min: 18

Sunshine and patchy clouds



**KANO:**  
Max: 30  
Min: 11

Pleasant with intervals of clouds and sunshine



**KADUNA:**  
Max: 32  
Min: 15

Hazy sunshine; air quality will be very unhealthy



**KATSINA:**  
Max: 29  
Min: 12

Breezy in the a.m



**MAIDUGURI:**  
Max: 30  
Min: 11

Hazy sunshine



**JOS:**  
Max: 28  
Min: 11

Hazy sunshine



**SOKOTO:**  
Max: 31  
Min: 16

Breezy in the a.m



**MAKURDI:**  
Max: 38  
Min: 19

Hot with cloud & sun



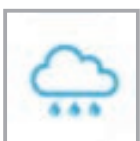
**ENUGU:**  
Max: 37  
Min: 17

Hazy sun & hot



**IBADAN:**  
Max: 37  
Min: 22

Turning cloudy & very warm



**P/H:**  
Max: 32  
Min: 21

More clouds than sun



**LAGOS:**  
Max: 33  
Min: 25

Partly sunny & very warm

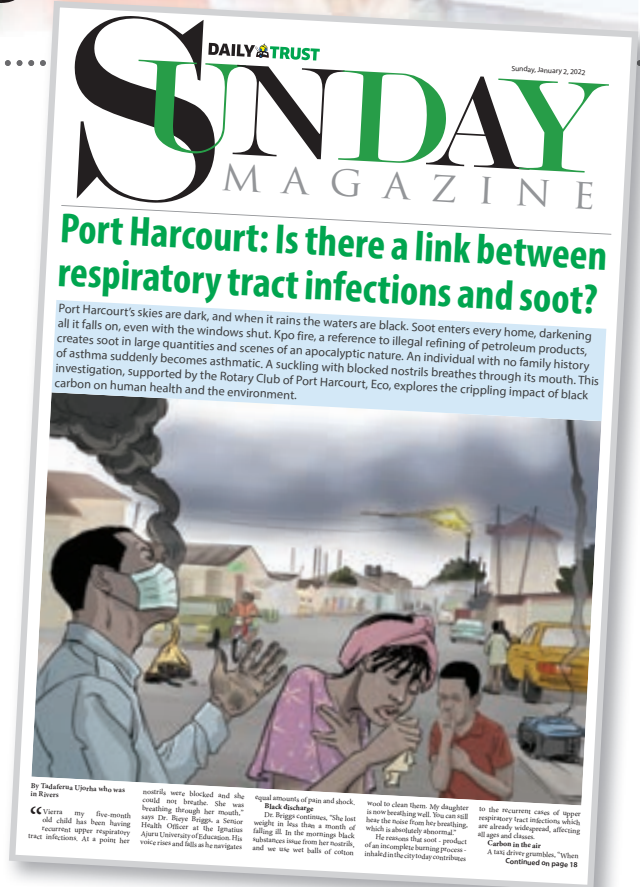
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### PRAYER TIMES

SOURCE: Islamic Research and Timing Organisation, Kaduna.

City	Fajr	Zukhr	Asr	Maghrib	Isha
ABUJA	5:30	12:40	3:54	6:22	7:30
ENUGU	5:29	12:40	3:54	6:24	7:32
KADUNA	5:33	12:39	3:53	6:20	7:28
KANO	5:32	12:36	3:50	6:14	7:22
KATSINA	5:38	12:39	3:53	6:16	7:24
LAGOS	5:47	12:56	4:10	6:43	7:51
MAIDUGURI	5:12	12:16	3:30	5:54	7:02
P/HARCOURT	5:28	12:44	3:58	6:29	7:37
SOKOTO	5:48	12:49	4:03	6:28	7:36

# PAGE 3 COMMENT

## Revive the anti-corruption agenda

Last week, the *Daily Trust on Sunday* reported an in-depth investigation into the government's whistle blowing policy since its inception in 2016. The whistle blowing policy was designed to encourage Nigerians to come forward with information and evidence of corruption, which in turn will help result in increased prosecution and conviction of public officials with unexplained or ill-gotten wealth. At its peak in 2017-2018, the policy is said to have helped the federal government recover some N700 billion through a series of spectacular revelations.

But as the *Daily Trust* report shows, interest in further disclosures has since waned at the Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning where the policy originated. Worse than that, several whistleblowers were not paid their entitlements as promised by the policy, but were instead exposed to vindictive backlash from many of those exposed. Whistleblowers, the report makes clear, have become an endangered species under government that has made anti-corruption one of its focal policies.

Whistleblowing is an effective, low-risk and cheaper mechanism for fighting corruption and other high-level political crimes because it leads authorities straight to stolen wealth the corrupt officials cannot explain, thereby increasing the chances of both convictions and recoveries, and ultimately deterrence. However, whistleblowing depends not just on the quality and timeliness of information provided whistleblowers, regardless of their motivation, but also on the physical and legal protections the government offers to whistleblowers.

This is why in many countries where the whistleblowing policy is in use, it is usually accompanied with enabling legislations to protect potential or past whistleblowers, particularly in relation to their identity. Thus, part of the failure of the whistleblowing policy in the past five years is the

levity with which the authorities have treated the identities of the whistleblowers, making them an easy target of backlash and victimisation by the officials they exposed.

While we are troubled that the government would treat such an important anti-corruption policy with kid gloves, we note that it is not just the whistle-blowing policy that has since petered off but the entire anti-corruption agenda of the government. While speaking at the 3rd National Summit on Diminishing Corruption held barely a month ago on 30th November 2021, the Chairman of the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences (ICPC), Professor Bolaji Owasanoye disclosed that some civil servants might have found a way around the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS), "A syndicate of corrupt individuals within the service corruptly employ unsuspecting Nigerians, issue them fake letters of employment, fraudulently enrolling them on IPPIS and post them to equally unsuspecting MDAs to commence work". While the ICPC Chairman was speaking in the context of the work of his Commission, his comments are at once an indictment of the IPPIS system, a policy designed specifically to curb the fraudulent practice of ghost workers in Nigeria.

In addition, the prosecution of high-level corruption involving Politically Exposed Persons (PEPs) has all but stalled under the current government, after a flurry of cases involving officials of previous governments at the federal and state levels. Specific sectors generally prone to corruption such as security votes and others have gone unchecked, even as budget padding and other forms of financial improprieties are soaring, as the ICPC Chairman disclosed during the same Summit.

Most worrisome still, the government's anti-corruption agenda continues to suffer from political interference. In a report

released two weeks ago, "Twenty Years of Anti-Corruption Efforts in Nigeria: A Critical Look", the Centre for Democracy and Development shows that it remains easy "for vested interests to delay or derail high-level corruption prosecutions" in Nigeria.

Hardly any of these is surprising however. Anti-corruption is no more than a 'mantra' proclaimed by many political candidates or parties, but who, once in government, pay lip-service to same. But while we fear that this government's anti-corruption agenda might go the same way, we believe that there is still some time to breathe new life into its fight against graft, particularly at the highest level.

Fighting corruption is a difficult and slow undertaking but, with the required commitment and resolve, this government could still re-jig its fight against corruption. The government should begin with a holistic performance review of its own anti-corruption policies such as the Treasury Single Account (TSA), IPPIS and the Whistle-Blowing policy with a view towards strengthening them to better accomplish their objectives.

Anti-corruption agencies like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, the Code of Conduct Bureau, and the ICPC are all have high-profile cases in various courts, some under prosecution for over 10 years. The federal government could mandate the heads of these agencies to bring a minimum number of these cases to completion, regardless of the party affiliations of those involved or whichever way the courts decide.

The government should also produce a comprehensive report of all assets recovered since 2015, and mandate all current senior elected and appointed officials to declare their assets when they are due to vacate office. It is time to revive the anti-corruption agenda because as corruption does not sleep, the fight against it cannot.

## TODAY IN HISTORY



2011

Fela! Based on music and lyrics by Nigerian singer Fela Kuti, closes on Broadway after 463 performances and 3 Tony awards

## HAPPENING THIS WEEK



The Lagos State Government has fixed Tuesday, January 4, for public and private primary and secondary schools to resume for the second term for the 2021/2022 academic session in the state. The second term mid-term break will be observed between Thursday, 17 and Friday, 18, February 2022 while schools would be closed on Friday, April 8. Meanwhile Ogun State Government has postponed the resumption date of students in the state from Tuesday, January 4th to Monday January 10th.

## SUNDAY PHOTO



A young trumpeter joins the Anglican Church band as the coffin of Desmond Tutu arrives outside the St George's Cathedral in Cape Town

Photo: Nic Bothma/EPA



Nigeria's Super Eagles will depart for the AFCON in Cameroon on Wednesday, January 5, six days before their opening group game against seven-time champions Egypt in Garoua. The Eagles training opened in Abuja.



The Federal High Court (FHC) will end its Christmas vacation on Friday, January 7 2022. The Chief Judge of FHC, Justice John Tsoho in a statement signed by the Chief Information Officer of the court, Dr Catherine Oby-Christopher, in Abuja said the vacation began on December 20, 2021.

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## We closed Borno IDP camps to restore dignity of our people – Zulum

From Hassan Ibrahim, Maiduguri

Borno State Governor Professor Babagana Umara Zulum has said that his administration will continue to work on issues of security to guarantee security that would allow citizens to pursue their livelihoods in safety.

The governor stated this yesterday in his New Year message to the people of the state.

He said, “We must be very clear that there can be no livelihoods without lives. The results of our proactive measures are beginning to show as we recorded fewer attacks and the security forces did marvellously well in protecting us.”

Zulum disclosed that part of their strategy for strengthening resilience was the step taken to close internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in the state.

He said, “We closed the IDP camps to clean up the places and give our people dignity as well as purpose. Living in an IDP camp is not what we are used to, or what we like as a people. Therefore, we believe that a safe life of dignity is a right for all the citizens of Borno and indeed Nigeria.”

The governor said the IDP camps were becoming slums for social vices adding that no responsible leader would allow people to live an undignified life under his watch.

He explained that the idea of the IDP camp was an interim measure to provide safety especially during the peak of the insurgency and not meant to continue forever.

He said the state would continue to listen to all well-meaning citizens, partners and friends with ideas and suggestions to improve on the efforts put into this process.

He added that the government would in 2022 open up rural communities by working on selected roads and making lives better in local government areas.

## Police raid bandits' camp, kill 1, arrest 2, rescue 9 victims

From Mohammed Ibrahim Yaba, Kaduna

Kaduna State Police Command on Friday raided a camp belonging to one Isiya, a notorious bandit based in Sabon Birni Forest of Igabi LGA of Kaduna State, on the New Year eve.

The command said one of the bandits was killed, while two were arrested during the operation.

The Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) in the state, ASP Jalige Mohammed, disclosed this in a statement issued yesterday.

He said the operation was carried out by the operatives of the command in collaboration with the Force Intelligence Bureau and Special Tactical Squad of the Force Headquarters, Abuja as well as some local vigilantes.

He said eight of the nine victims rescued had since reunited with their families after undergoing a medical check up at the police medical facility and were profiled.

He said the remaining victim was rushed to Barau Dikko Teaching Hospital Kaduna, following a bullet injury.

## How NAF airstrikes killed Zamfara bandits' leaders, others

By Abdulaziz Abdulaziz

Early morning airstrikes by personnel of the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) yesterday morning claimed the lives of two kingpins and about a dozen other bandits operating around Birnin Magaji Local Government Area of Zamfara State.

*Daily Trust on Sunday* gathered that a notorious bandit, Alhaji Auta, was killed when a military jet dropped a bomb on him as he was being conveyed on a motorcycle from his camp to the location of his herds of cattle, early in the

morning.

The sustained attacks also claimed the lives of many of his gang around his camp and adjoining areas.

The raid on Auta's camp is a second major victory recorded by the air force within the space of a month, after the raid that killed the twin kingpins, Tawaye, in Dumburum in the first week of December.

Multiple sources confirmed Auta's death yesterday, though there was no official report on the operation.

A resident of the area who doesn't want to be mentioned said the bomb that killed the bandit was dropped on him

while riding along Nasarawa Mailayi-Gusami Road.

While Auta's death was corroborated by the sources who spoke to our reporter, the account of what followed after the first airstrike that killed him differed.

A resident of Birnin Magaji, who gave his name as Jamilu, said 12 of Auta's men were eliminated when they rushed to the scene to pick his body.

But two sources however gave the casualty in the second attack as seven, who, they said, were killed after Auta's funeral.

Aliyu Birnin Magaji, another resident, said the jet returned to the area three

times, after killing Auta, including around 9:30pm last night.

“Mourners who had gathered after he was killed were bombed and seven of them were killed. After the jet left, their friends came back to move the bodies but the jet returned and bombed them. Right now no one knows how many were killed as no one is willing to go there,” he said.

Aside Auta, another arrowhead in his group, Kachalla Ruga, was also reported dead.

Auta is among the four arrowheads of the gunmen terrorising the Birnin Magaji area, others being Alhaji Shingi, Alhaji Nashama and Shehu Bagewaye.

Commenting on the operation, a researcher who recently interviewed Auta, James Barnett, described Auta as a “deadly bandit” as he called for a concerted effort on all fronts to consolidate the aftermath.

“He was also a de facto powerbroker in Birnin Magaji. He kept that area from being overrun by other gangs like that of Turji and he had historically been one of the key negotiators in previous amnesty deals in Zamfara State.

“Federal and state governments need to be prepared for handling any fallout of his death, including bandits staging reprisals against local communities, Auta's gang fracturing, or bandits who had been in amnesty talks withdrawing from these talks. Coordination between state and federal governments and all security agencies is needed to ensure that kinetic and non-kinetic actions are in sync and complement each other,” he said.



Alhaji Auta (right) was killed in the air raid

PHOTO: James Barnett

## Kano unveils plans to reposition education with multimillion dollars project

By Taiwo Adeniyi

The Project Executive Director, Kano State Education Strategic Investment and Development Initiative, Huzaifa M. Jega, has said the state has set in motion moves to reposition education.

Jega who made this known when he led other members of the development initiative on a visit to the corporate head office of Media Trust Limited publishers of the *Daily Trust* titles and owners of Trust TV in Abuja said the \$500 million project would address five thematic areas including access to the education, closing human resource gap, improving the quality and quantity of education, securing good employment opportunities for graduates and initiating monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in line with global best practices.

He said there was a need to ensure the success of the five-year project which would be implemented in phases to address out of school children, almajarai syndrome, capacities building and assessment

mechanisms for the teachers and other frameworks embedded in the project which also involves contributions from Singapore, Scandinavian countries, South Korea and other countries with proven education mechanisms.

He said the Kano State Government was set to provide 30 per cent of the required funding and expressed confidence in the capacity of the team to raise 70 per cent through donations from well-spirited Nigerians and development partners.

“We are quite confident that we can raise the amount of money in five years because of the stakeholders we have already on-boarded. We are very confident that we will have the required money in five years and given our experiences in design and implementation and sourcing funding for development projects and we are confident that we are going to generate the fund,” he said.

He explained that the project was anchored by the Kano State Government in partnership with Cynox Development Engineering calling for the support of the

media organisation in ensuring the project succeeds by among other things, holding them accountable.

He said the team was ready to tackle challenges that could come up during the course of the project, saying “We are Nigerians born and raised in these circumstances if by now we have not figured out ways to surmount these challenges then what are we doing with our brains?”

For instance, when you talk about girl-child education, when people are very much against it at least at the subconscious level, a strategic communication campaign that stemmed from the Quran shall be used. I am sure our people will respond to it because it is speaking to them in the language of their value, culture and religion. If we are able to contextualise in this manner to give them local substance, I think we can solve all these problems.”

The Executive Director/Editor-in-Chief of Media Trust, Naziru Mikailu, assured the team of the support of the media outfit adding that education was germane to the activities of the organisation.

## BIGSTORY

# Despite containment measures, bandits continue violent campaigns in Kaduna, Katsina



■ Alhaji Lawal Mai Kantin Sauki Jibia



■ Chairman of Grains Sellers Association of Danja LG of Katsina State Alh. Isma'il Danja

By Dalhatu Liman & Ibrahim Babangida Surajo

**W**orried by incessant killings and kidnapping by bandits, the authorities in four states in the North Western part of the country — Kaduna, Katsina, Sokoto and Zamfara — in September, 2021, imposed stringent measures as part of effort to stem the tide.

The containment measures, which was the first coordinated effort among the affected states, were shutting down telecommunication facilities, cessation of weekly markets, ban on transportation of livestock and sale of petroleum products in jerry cans, among others.

However, early December, 2021, the authorities announced adjustments on some of the restrictions, including the restoration of telecom services in most of the affected areas.

Though authorities in the states concerned praised efficacy of the measures in helping reign in the bandits, checks by *Daily Trust on Sunday* in Kaduna and Katsina states, showed that not much was achieved in terms of stopping the attacks, as the bandits evolved strategies to adapt to the changes introduced.

Also, residents were largely exposed to hardship due to widespread implications of the measures while the bandits continued unleashing terror and other atrocities against people, especially in the rural areas.

Scores of local people interviewed by our reporters in both states confirmed that bandits still operated unchallenged despite the restrictions while the people often lacked the means to raise alarm or seek help during raids by the gunmen.

According to a data analysis by an Abuja-based security risk management and intelligence consulting firm, Beacon Consulting Limited, which focuses on Nigeria and the Sahel Region, its incident tracker and several other data sets on security occurrences in Nigeria showed that bandit attacks continued in the four states where the containment measures of

telecommunication blackout and shutting down of rural markets were imposed.

Similarly, data collected by *Daily Trust* corroborate that of Beacon Consulting, as it showed that despite the restrictions in Kaduna and Katsina states, killings and abductions for ransom spiked during the period.

According to the data, from July 1 to September 29, 2021, a number of people were reported to have either been killed or kidnapped by armed groups in the four states.

Kaduna recorded 231 killings and 290 kidnapping incidents; Katsina witnessed 72 killings and 70 abductions; Sokoto had 30 people killed and 40 abducted; while Zamfara recorded one death and 456 abductions three months prior to the imposition of the restrictions.

Despite the restrictions, the data showed that far more people fell prey to attacks by armed groups in the four states within the period compared with the period before the containment measures.

For instance, in Kaduna alone, no fewer than 595 people were killed between September and November, 2021, while 778 were abducted.

In Katsina, 173 people were killed and 389 kidnapped within the period. In Zamfara, 522 people were reported killed while 1,041 were kidnapped; and in Sokoto, 109 people were killed and 46 others abducted.

The data also showed that Kaduna has the highest number of deaths countrywide, with Zamfara where restrictions were imposed coming second. In kidnapping, Zamfara topped the list, while Niger, where there were no restrictions, followed with 864 abductions reported, and Kaduna came third.

Following the development, residents have bemoaned the consequences of the measures on their everyday life as they groan under the restrictions, which they say, has led to hardship and greater poverty.

When *Daily Trust* visited a weekly market in Giwa Local Government Area (LGA) in Kaduna State on a Thursday - the market day - in early December, it found that the market was not officially opened and there

were skeletal commercial activities going on.

An official of the grain suppliers association in Giwa, who craved anonymity, said with the restrictions, commercial activities declined and the weekly market split into smaller markets at Yakawada, Turawa and Mararaban Kuka, hence the Giwa market was now operating at less than 10 per cent normal capacity.

Umaru Lawal (32), a livestock trader in Giwa, told *Daily Trust* that, "Before, I was running my business with N2m, but as I'm talking to you now I don't have even N100,000. I have two wives and four children and all my siblings are dependent on me. On a daily basis, I spend more than N5,000 on my family. We now live from hand to mouth. I have nothing except some farm produce.

"I had been lending money to small business people but now we're all collapsing. I am now idle at home.

"Telecom network blackout and market cessation turned out to be disastrous on us as the places where the bandits hitherto couldn't access until night time; they were able to invade such communities in daylight and unleash terror as no one can inform others about their movements. The measures have been nothing but damaging to us."

A vegetable seller at the Giwa market, Umar Usman, said as far he was concerned small traders were the worst hit by the restrictions.

Usman said, "I hardly sell two bags of okro in a day, unlike before when I could sell more than 10 bags. I now realise only N2,000 a day, or less. Before the measures, I made profit of almost N15,000 daily.

"Sometimes my family of 12 go to bed hungry. This thing has heightened the hardship on the common people, especially we in the rural areas, as prices of food commodities have jerked up.

"Please, help us tell the government to withdraw these measures since security has relatively improved."

Alhaji Jibril Shekarau, who is the chairman of traders in Birnin Gwari LGA in Kaduna State, could not hide his reservations to our reporter over the restrictions.

Alhaji Jibril said, "Though we don't know the real motives of government, honestly we're unhappy with the situation. But we have no other option than to abide by the restrictions.

"I can confirm to you that small businessmen are running out of their seed capital. The marketplace here is barricaded and has since been overtaken by weeds. The closure also aided the already skyrocketing foodstuff prices. There's a glut of farm produce here where it is cultivated and scarce where it is most needed.

"To me, the containment measures have not been yielding the desired results as a number of our colleagues are in the dens of the bandits.

"My immediate younger sister, alongside her children, is currently in the hands of her captors. They have demanded that I bought a brand new motorcycle for them otherwise they'd kill them. They took delivery of the motorcycle but they are yet to release them."

For Saidu Idris Rufeya (47), a livestock trader in Giwa, the situation prior to the restrictions was better than what is being experienced as the bandits strike at will at any time.

Rufeya said, "Eight days ago, our Village Head of Rufeya was abducted. We did not see him again until two days ago when we stumbled upon his corpse alongside eight others."

He further said, "The bandits now disguise by wearing hijab. Honestly, in my village of Rufeya, these containment measures have not made any positive impact as the rate of killing has increased.

"Our economy is negatively affected. We're stranded at home as markets are closed; every business is affected, including farming. Even if you're blessed with good farm produce, you have no market to sell it.

"Therefore, my advice to government is to consider people's plights; we're not animals, we're human beings. We sacrificed everything at our disposal in voting for this administration with the hope that things would be better."

## Katsina

In Katsina State, Malam Musbahu Kabiru, a butcher and suya seller, who came from Musawa LGA to Kafur Main Market for his trade, explained that it was difficult getting livestock to buy.

Malam Musbahu said, "The state government's decision to close markets and telecom network is quite understandable, and we all appreciate it, but currently it has completely crippled our business because there is no more livestock for us to buy.

"We source meat by waiting for someone who is in desperate need of money to bring out livestock for sale within the community. And once we are lucky to get that you will see at least four butchers sharing the meat.

"We are silently suffering along with our families because most of us that are in the meat selling business are not used to farming. And our only source of income is down and the government does not come up with any alternative means or support."

He further said, "It's high time the state government reviewed the measure as now bandits are even taking advantage of it, especially lack of telecom network. They attack villages, rustle animals and kidnap people at will!"

Continued on page 6



**Malam Garba Mustapha, Chairman Truck Loaders Association, Danja L.G. Katsina State**



**Umar Lawal, 32, a livestock trader in Giwa, claimed to have lost N2m**



**Malam Umar Usman, vegetables seller at Giwa Market**



**Saidu Idris Rufeya, 45, a farmer and livestock trader in Giwa**

## Despite containment measures, bandits continue violent campaigns in Kaduna, Katsina

Continued from page 5

Speaking to Daily Trust, the Chairman of Grain Sellers Association in Danja LGA, Alhaji Isma'il Danja, said though the telecom blackout had improved security in the state, it had negatively affected their business of buying and selling.

According to him, the volume of sales of grains has drastically declined due to the gap created by lack of communication between the sellers and the major dealers of grains who are mostly from other states.

Alhaji Isma'il said, "Before these restrictions, most of the major dealers who bought grains here in bulk had since devised the use of telecom and e-transfer of cash to buy grains due to insecurity.

"But with these containment measures in place, the situation is getting worse as they can't be here in person; and they can't communicate with us to do e-transfer. This has reduced the volume of sales by more than 50 per cent.

"Before the telecom blackout, every market day we could sell at least 100 trucks of grains. But now the situation is bad as we barely sell half of that number."

Speaking to Daily Trust in his office, the Chairman of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), Jibia LGA, Alhaji Hamza Lawal, explained that their members in the state were in full support of the state government on the containment measures.

Alhaji Hamza said, "We support the effort put forth by the government because we are living in Jibia, which is a border town between Nigeria and Niger Republic. We all know what we have suffered in the hands of bandits. There was a time when nobody was sleeping with his eyes closed here in Jibia.

"But you know that the challenges these measures have caused are enormous, as it is now difficult for us to communicate with our drivers that are on the roads to know about their safety and location.

"Likewise, the number of passengers has drastically decreased because people are afraid to travel on all the major roads linking Jibia town due to the activities of bandits."

Alhaji Lawal Maikantin Sauki, who operates a provision store in Jibia, also affirmed support for the Katsina State Government on the restriction order.

Alhaji Lawal said, "I support the government's orders to fight banditry despite the fact that some of these orders are affecting my business.

"Our sales have truly decreased as we cannot go and buy new items, and we also can't find all our suppliers to supply the goods for us."

Also, the Chairman of Truck Loaders Association in Danja, Malam Garba Mustapha, said his members who solely depended on the job of loading and offloading bags of grains to cater for their families were facing difficulties due to the reduction in the number of trucks.

Malam Garba said, "Porters in this market are about 300 in number, but the true situation is that we and our families are

in a difficult situation because our work has decreased. We can now hardly load 50 trucks on a market day because most of the buyers are no longer coming and there is no means of communicating with them."

*Katsina gov't reacts*

In an interview with Daily Trust over the measures, Ibrahim Ahmad Katsina, Special Adviser (SA) on Security to Gov Aminu Masari, said the measures had caused drastic reduction in the activities of the bandits - by 70 about per cent - especially as it was difficult for the criminals to kidnap people and negotiate for ransom.

Katsina said, "They (measures) have seriously affected the business of kidnapping and ransom collection, and also cut the activities of informants that often served as the basis for kidnapping. So, to some extent, the containment order has worked.

"Actually, there are tremendous successes, especially the level of kidnapping itself has reduced, cattle rustling has reduced despite the pockets of attacks we're seeing here and there. So, we can say the containment order has reduced the banditry in the state by about 70 per cent."

Asked why despite the measures the bandits still moved on motorcycles fueled by petrol, he said before they were moving in large numbers of up to 300 motorcycles, but that they "now hardly can you see a convoy of 20.

"As I said, every human endeavour has its shortcomings. There are bad elements that smuggle the fuel to them despite the effort that security agents put to cut this chain. But despite that, you hardly see any attack on any community where there are up to 20 motorcycles - the maximum number now is five to 10.

"This is against what was happening before when a convoy of 100 to 200 would surround a village. So, you can see, whether we like it or not, the measures have incapacitated the movement of the bandits, and it has also grounded their networking activities of calling their brothers from other parts of the country to come and join them because the supply chain of fuel has been cut off.

"So the security containment measures have assisted in reducing the potency of the criminal elements.

"Now, the issue of the markets; it is not every market that is closed. It is the animal market that is closed to stop the network for the sales of stolen cattle. And through that, I've told you that more than 70 per cent of cattle rustling has been addressed.

"Secondly, the issue of supplying petroleum products: I've said it has reduced the potency of the vicious attacks they used to unleash against our people.

"And cutting off the network has reduced kidnapping and the network of informants. Most of these measures; we know there are certain pains people are feeling, but they're just for a certain period.

"The government is reviewing measures from time to time, and these containment measures are not permanent; they're temporary, to enable our security forces and the government to see the threat perspective

and the possibility of containing them through certain measures."

However, Daily Trust learnt that the kidnapers have evolved a means of reaching families of victims through dispatching letters.

**Telcos 'lose N16bn' to service shutdown**

The four big telecom operators in the country jointly lost about N16bn when their services were shut down in Kaduna and Katsina states, sources within the companies and the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) told Daily Trust.

The NCC had ordered MTN, Glo, Airtel and 9mobile to shut down all their telecom sites for weeks in the North West states ravaged by banditry and insurgency.

Though the shutdown has been lifted, the telecom operators have been counting their losses. Their inability to sell voice and data services for almost a month in the two states made "the four big telecom operators to lose at least N4bn each," a senior NCC staff told Daily Trust.

The staff, who pleaded anonymity, said based on Nigeria's Average Revenue Per User (ARPU) of telecommunication services, and the estimated number of telecom users in the states, the telecom operators' losses could be more.

ARPU is defined as the total revenue divided by the number of subscribers of telecom operators per month. Nigeria's ARPU stands at \$4.14 (about N2,500).

Though the telcos said it was difficult for them to estimate how much they had lost, some of their top officials said it might be in the region of between N3bn and 6bn.

The total number of active telecom subscribers across all 36 states and Abuja currently stands at 190 million, according to NCC.

By Daily Trust estimates, if at least five million people spend N2,500 on telecom services for one month in the states, the telcos would earn about N8bn to N10bn each in revenue for the period.

The NCC and the four telcos declined to comment on the issue.

**What should be done - Analyst**

An Abuja-based independent security analyst, Kabiru Adamu, of Beacon Consulting Limited, said bandit attacks were ceaseless in the four states that adopted the restrictions, maintaining that though there was difficulty in gathering information from the affected areas, data showed a steady level of occurrences suggesting that the measures were not effective.

He faulted the manner in which the measures were imposed, saying it was not consistent with both local and international laws on human rights; describing the restrictions as obsolete and unconventional.

Adamu said, "In all the states, the imposition was made by executive fiat. None of the states bothered to ensure the legislative arm of government was involved to ensure the implementation was not adverse on law-abiding citizens, as well as being consistent with our democratic practices.

"International laws on freedom of speech and fundamental rights require that

democratic governments respect citizens' rights to fundamental freedom. These were all abused by the extraordinary measures."

The security analyst, therefore suggested "conventional and possible most effective measures, including dominating the ungoverned spaces", especially the forests where the armed groups hibernate and commit their atrocities.

He said, "We should enhance regional cooperation, especially with neighbouring countries, to ensure the sharing of intelligence on threats, border management and weapons' proliferation.

"And addressing our failed values system through the challenges that are affecting our families, religious, educational and media institutions to ensure that traditions that expound good and bad are revived.

"We should also strengthen the rule of law and the administration of criminal justice so that offenders are arrested and punished irrespective of their affiliation.

"In addition, there is a perspective that says the security forces and government, instead of implementing the extra measures, should have used intercepting devices to extract actionable intelligence from the communications of the gunmen. This is what most countries of the world do."

On his part, spokesman of the Katsina State Police Command, SP Gambo Isa, said the containment measures had to a greater extent assisted the security agencies in curtailing the menace of banditry, especially in the state.

SP Isa said, "Because before the measures were taken these bandits used to come in large groups, but with these measures we have succeeded in curtailing the impact of banditry. We have also successfully dealt with the people that are taking commodities to the bandits with the help of the containment order which prohibits the selling and taking food items and fuel to the bandits."

SP Isa further said, in some instances, the measures forced the bandits to release their captives because they could not establish contact with their victims' families for ransom negotiation.

He explained that, "The issue we had with the closure of network was that if the bandits came out to attack villages, especially those close to the forests, people from such villages, unfortunately, would not be able to call the security agencies or even the vigilantes because there was no network.

"But to a greater extent, we were able to curtail the issue of rustling because the markets were closed. And you should know that this containment order is not permanent; rather, it was just put in place to see whether it would work or not."

Effort to speak to the Kaduna State Commissioner for Home Affairs and Internal Security, Samuel Aruwan, proved abortive as he could not be reached by our reporter.

**With additional report from Zakariyya Adaramola**

**This report was produced in partnership with the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD)**

# Young Shall Grow set to compensate families of slain police officers

By Abbas Dalibi

Popular transport and logistics firm, The Young Shall Grow Motors, has begun moves to compensate family members of three police officers killed by suspected Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) members in Anambra State on November 25, 2021.

Daily Trust on Sunday reports that the police officers, ASP Francis Idoko, Inspector Rufa'i Adamu and Inspector Emmanuel Akubo, were killed while on official assignment en route the airport to pick Chief

## ...As widow demands hubby's body

Vincent Obianodo, the founder of The Young Shall Grow Motors.

Our correspondent reports that the slain officers were working under the Lagos State Police Command and were attached to Chief Obianodo as guards.

It was learnt that the representative of the company had held several meetings with the families of the slain officers.

Malam Shu'aibu who represented the family of late Insp Adamu during the meetings, told

our correspondent that several meetings had been held at the Lagos police command between the families of the slain police officers and the representatives of the chairman of The Young Shall Grow.

According to Malam Shu'aibu during the first meeting the company wrote to the police informing them they would support each of the families with N5m.

He, however, said that during

their last meeting, the company said it was going to give each of the families N10m, but that the families were hoping to get something better from the company.

Meanwhile, the widow of late Insp Akubo, Mrs Akubo, told Daily Trust Sunday that she was yet to see the corpse of her husband since the incident, urging the authorities to retrieve his remains to be given a proper burial.

She also appealed that

scholarship should be given to her children to enable them continue with their education.

When contacted, spokesman of the transport company, Mr Bonny Ukatu, who also represented the company during the meetings with the families of the slain police officers, said the move to reach out to the families of the officers was done out of the generosity of the founder.

He said, "It's not his responsibility as they died in active service; it's just like a situation where policemen die in an exchange with armed robbers; who will you hold responsible?"

"I as the spokesman and legal counsel has conducted meetings with the families to see how we can assist them, and I have also been communicating with the founder in this regard."

## Uniabuja gets four professors

By Taiwo Adeniyi

The Governing Council of the University of Abuja (Uniabuja) has approved the promotion of 118 staff, among them four lecturers to the rank of professor.

The spokesman of the university, Dr Habib Yakooob, in a statement, said 43 lecturers and 75 non-teaching staff's promotion was approved at the 91st regular meeting of the council held on December 2 and 3, 2021.

The addition of the four new professors has increased the number of full professors in the institution which was ranked seventh among Nigerian universities with full professors by the National Universities Commission (NUC) in its 2021 Nigerian University System Rankings.

Aside from the four professors, Dr Yakooob said 10 academic staff were promoted to the rank of associate professor; 19 to senior lecturer; four to lecturer I and six to lecturer II.



Representative of the wife of President Muhammadu Buhari, Mrs Mairo Almakura with the baby of the year at the Bwari General hospital in Abuja yesterday. Photo: NAN

## NIS blames passport production delay on COVID-19, forex

By Idowu Isamotu

The acting Comptroller-General (CG) of the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), Isa Idris, has blamed the delay in passport production on the lockdown occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the difficulty in accessing foreign exchange (forex).

The NIS boss, who spoke at a media interaction yesterday, assured that the challenges would be over by March this year.

He said the scarcity of passport booklets was being addressed through the recent launch of the enhanced e-passport.

He explained that, "Just Friday, we received a total of 45,000 booklets towards clearing the backlog, and in December alone we received more than 100,000 booklets which we have continued to distribute across the passport centres nationwide. This is not just for Nigerians in Nigeria alone, but for those in the diaspora as well."

"But with the introduction of the enhanced e-passport, we are good to go in our effort towards addressing the scarcity. This enhanced e-passport is a great improvement on the biometric passport technology which we adopted as a country in 2007. It's a strategic step towards curbing forgery, impersonation and other forms of fraud associated with obtaining travel documents under the old Machine Readable Passport regime."

According to him, the NIS is working to comply with the three-week duration for passport renewal and six-week waiting period for fresh applications.

## 2 suspects escape from police cell in Kogi

By Labaran Tijani, Lokoja

A suspected kidnapper and a vandal were reported to have escaped from a police cell at Egume in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State on new year eve.

The two suspected notorious criminals were alleged to have conspired with others and disarmed the police in the station before they escaped.

Daily Trust on Sunday gathered that the suspected kidnapper was recently transferred from a police cell in Lokoja to Egume police station where he was being detained for an alleged offence of kidnapping and killing of a person.

The second person whom Daily Trust learnt was a hardened criminal who specialises in vandalizing electricity installation.

He was said to have been arrested by

a local vigilante group a few weeks ago and handed over to the police authority for further investigation.

The Divisional Police Officer, at Egume, DSP Sylvester Anigbogu declined to comment on the incident, saying he was not competent to speak.

All efforts to contact the state Police Command's Police Public Relations Officer, ASP Williams Ayah over the issue last night were unsuccessful.

## AGF berates ASUU over strikes

From Sani Ibrahim Paki, Kano

The Accountant General of the Federation (AGF), Ahmed Idris, has blasted the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) over their incessant strike as the only means of resolving issues with government, without considering the students' plight.

He also called for complete reform in the way public universities are being run in the country in order to move with the current global trend.

Idris spoke yesterday in Kano when the foundation he founded, Al-Ihsan Social Intervention Foundation, distributed

admission letters to 30 indigent students it is sponsoring to study at the newly established Khadija University, Majia, Jigawa State.

Idris said, "An average student in our public universities today hardly graduates in his stipulated time without being disrupted by strikes. Their colleagues in private universities may even graduate before them, have their masters' degree or even marry before they complete theirs."

He, however, called on other wealthy individuals to help the education sector as government alone could not educate everyone.

## Shun doom predictions, Lagos Catholic archbishop tells Nigerians

From Abdullateef Aliyu, Lagos

The Catholic Archbishop of Lagos, Most Rev Alfred Adewale Martins, has enjoined Nigerians to be optimistic and embrace a positive mind-set as they enter the New Year 2022 filled with renewed trust in God.

The prelate specifically advised Nigerians to shun predictions of doom, which he noted tended to instill fear and anxiety in their minds.

He also called on President Muhammadu Buhari not to leave any stone unturned in his effort at safeguarding the lives and property of Nigerians,

advising him to "inject fresh personnel with first-rate minds in the top hierarchy of our security agencies."

In his New Year message signed by the Director of Social Communications of the diocese, Rev Fr Anthony Godonu, the prelate admitted that there were indeed numerous challenges that characterised the outgone year for the country as a whole and for the majority of Nigerians.

The message reads in part: "But despite the challenges, Nigerians should be optimistic that 2022 would be a better and prosperous year."

## 3 inmates escape from Kwara custodial centre

From Mumini AbdulKareem, Ilorin

Three inmates have escaped from the Mandala Custodial Centre of the Nigerian Correctional Service (NCoS) in Ilorin, Kwara State.

The escapees, according to a report by Premium Times, were identified as Umaru Altine, a death row inmate convicted for armed robbery; Segun Nasiru and Isa Usman, both charged with armed robbery and awaiting trial.

"They escaped in the early hours of Thursday after cutting the iron of the cell," the paper reported, referencing an internal communication of NCoS about the development.

Speaking with Daily Trust on Sunday yesterday, the spokesperson of NCoS, Francis Enobore, said investigation was ongoing regarding the matter.



## AROUND THE STATES

### BAYELSA

#### 2023: Diri warns against violent politicking

From Bassey Willie, Yenagoa

Bayelsa State Governor, Senator Douye Diri, has called on politicians in the state to be tolerant and shun divisive and violent politics ahead of the 2023 general elections.

Speaking during a crossover inter-denominational service held at his Sampou community in Kolokuma/Opokuma Local Government Area of the state, the governor said the warning became necessary given the destructive brand of politicking of some politicians in the state ahead of the electioneering process.

He recalled how he emerged as governor without involving in violent politics or trying to bring anybody down.

He also called on the youth of the state to resist being used as tools of violence by politicians during elections, while urging them to take advantage of the policies and programmes of his administration to better themselves.

Diri also reaffirmed his administration's determination to continue to create the enabling environment for businesses to thrive and called on private investors to take advantage of the business potential in the state and the prevailing conducive security atmosphere.

### GOMBE

#### Gombe acting CJ swears-in 24 new magistrates

From Haruna Gimba Yaya, Gombe

Acting Chief Judge of Gombe State, Justice Mu'azu Abdulkadir Pindiga, has sworn in 24 newly appointed magistrates approved by the state's judicial service commission (JSC).

According to him, nine of them were appointed as senior magistrates II with 15 others as magistrates I.

Pindiga reminded the newly sworn magistrates to administer justice to all manner of people irrespective of their origin, creed, and religion.

The acting chief judge urged them to be guided by the 1999 constitution while discharging their duties, asking them to forward their quarterly proceedings to the deputy registrar for assessment of their performances.

Pindiga also appealed to Governor Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya to complete the ongoing construction of the Magistrates Court Complex in Gombe metropolis to ease the difficulties faced by magistrates of having to share courts.

### SOKOTO

#### Tambuwal earmarks N1.6bn for projects

From Nasiru Bello, Sokoto

The Sokoto State Executive Council has approved N1.631 billion for the execution of some projects in the state.

The projects include the construction of the Maruda-Tsaki-Lambo-Gantamo-Gajara Road in Kware Local Government for over N475 million while N221 million was earmarked for the purchase of rural water scheme maintenance materials.

The Commissioner for Information, Isah Bajini Galadanchi, who briefed journalists after the meeting on Friday said N420 million was approved for the rehabilitation of 120 water schemes in rural areas of the state.

Similarly, a statement signed by the special adviser to the governor on media and publicity, Muhammad Bello, said the council also approved N515 million for the purchase of electrical materials for use in rural areas.

### RIVERS

#### Soot: Wike directs council chairmen to shut illegal refineries

From Victor Edozie, Port Harcourt

Rivers State Governor, Nyesom Ezenwo Wike, has directed the chairmen of local government councils in the state, especially the Port Harcourt City Local Government Council to shut all the illegal crude oil refining sites.

He has also directed all council Chairmen and community leaders to locate, identify and report to his office all those behind oil bunkering and crude oil refining sites in their localities for prosecution.

Wike said the directive stemmed from the failure of the federal government and its security agencies to rein in those behind oil bunkering and artisanal crude oil refiners in the state.

The governor's directive was contained in a press statement issued in Port Harcourt yesterday by his Special Assistant on Media, Kevin Ehiri.

### OSUN

## First Lady showers gift on baby of the year

From Hameed Oyegbade, Osogbo

The Wife of Osun State Governor, Mrs Kafayat Oyetola on Saturday visited and showered gifts on the baby of the year 2022 in the state.

The baby girl born at 12:01am at the State Hospital, Asubiaro, Osogbo weighs 2.8kg.

Her parents, Mr and Mrs Ibukun Joseph, expressed gratitude to the governor's wife for the gesture.

The Commissioner for Health, Dr Rafiu Isamitu; Special Adviser to the Governor on Health, Siji Olamiju; and the Director of Public Health in the state, Dr Gbenga Adepoju, were on the entourage.

### KATSINA

## FG assures on completion of Katsina windmill, power substation projects

From Tijjani Ibrahim, Katsina

The federal government has promised to ensure speedy completion of the 15-year-old Katsina Windmill and Power Substation Projects.

When completed, the projects will generate 10 megawatts of electricity.

The Minister for Power, Engineer Abubakar Aliyu, who made the pledge yesterday while inspecting the projects, said his visit followed requests made on the project by the Katsina State Government and the Katsina Elders Forum when they visited him in Abuja.

The minister promised to meet

the contractors and the consultants supervising the projects to address their concerns which included the provision of outstanding infrastructures such as power generators.

The minister said the project required 330 KV lines drawn from Kano which was already at about 50 per cent.



Travelers for the Christmas and New Year festivities returning at Ojota in Lagos yesterday

Photo: Benedict Uwalaka

### EKITI

## 2021: Fayemi rates state high despite COVID-19

From Raphael Ogbonnaiye, Ado-Ekiti

Ekiti State Governor, Kayode Fayemi, has said his administration defied COVID-19 challenges to record unprecedented achievements in 2021.

He said the government made a positive impact on the lives of the people adding that he had raised the bar of governance and set a standard for subsequent administrations.

In his New Year state-wide broadcast yesterday, the governor described 2022 as the Year of Fulfilment for the government and people of the state.

He said his administration would complete all ongoing capital projects, including the Cargo Airport, Ado-Iworoko section of Ado-Ifaki Road and renovation of township roads before he would step down from office in October.

Fayemi said several projects done by the government were generating employment and would generate more direct and indirect employment in 2022.

He reiterated his commitment to hand over to a new government in October in a rancour-free environment adding that the 2022 governorship poll offered the Ekiti people another opportunity to prove to the whole world that they are decent people.

### NIGER

## Ward head, 3 women arrested over death of Abuja prince

By Adam Umar

The Niger State Police Command has launched an investigation into the death of an Abuja prince, who allegedly lost his life while in the hotel along with four others.

The deceased Sa'adu Abubakar, an official of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), is the son of the chief of Pai under Gwagwalada Area Council in the FCT, but resident in Suleja, Niger State with his family.

A ward head in Suleja and

three young girls that were reportedly with him at the point of his death have been arrested.

*Daily Trust on Sunday* reports that the deceased was buried on Friday following an intervention by some elders to secure his remains from the police.

Efforts to talk to the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) of Suleja police "B" division, SP Mutala Mustapha, where the case is being handled, was not successful.

He neither picked nor returned phone calls made to him by our reporter.

### EBONYI

## New Year tragedy: Six die in road crash in Ebonyi

From Nabob Ogbonna, Abakiliki

Six persons yesterday lost their lives in a ghastly motor accident involving a truck and a Toyota Sienna car along the Enugu-Abakiliki Highway.

The spot of the accident was a few metres close to Nkalagu Junction in Ishielu Local Government Area of Ebonyi State.

The truck was coming from Abakiliki while the Sienna, which had about seven passengers, was heading to Abakiliki from Enugu when the two had head on collision.

Our correspondent, who was at the scene of the accident, observed that some passengers were still trapped in the bus while rescue operation was still ongoing.

Policemen and sympathizers used an axe to try and rescue the trapped victims of the vehicles for medical attention.

### KWARA

## Siblings drown during swimming expedition

From Mumini AbdulKareem, Ilorin

Two children said to be of the same parents drowned in Asa River, Kwara State on Friday during a swimming expedition.

The bodies of the children identified as Damilare, 12, and Kamaldeen, 14, were recovered from the river by men

of the Kwara State Fire Service.

The incident which occurred along Mubo Street axis of the river, Maraba, Ilorin, left the parents and residents in shock and disbelief.

The spokesman of the State Fire Service, Hassan Adekunle, who confirmed the incident, said the victims from Laru compound, Sabo-Line area,

Ilorin, were on a swimming expedition with their colleagues.

He said the Director, Kwara State Fire Service, Prince Falade Olumuyiwa, urged citizens, particularly parents and teachers, to monitor their children's movement, especially during the holiday period to avoid similar occurrences.

# VENTO FURNITURE

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

### CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR)

JUNIOR SECONDARY  
SCHOOL  
IDU-KORO, ABUJA

#### Project

*Commissioning  
of two blocks of  
toilets (8 units  
for boys  
and 8 units  
for girls) and  
a borehole*



# REMINISCENCES

## I heard of Asaba massacre only after civil war – IBM Haruna

General Ibrahim Bata M. Haruna (ret'd), popularly called IBM Haruna, has gone through a lot in the last 81 years of his life as a soldier, administrator and lawyer. In this interview with *Trust TV* monitored by *Daily Trust on Sunday*, he spoke on key points of his military sojourn and life afterwards.

By Kabiru A. Yusuf

**What circumstances made you one of the first boys that went to the Nigerian Military School - the first 30 children who went into the military. Was it by accident or something just happened at that stage of your life?**

At that stage of my life, 1954, I was 14 years old and fitted into the criteria for the selection and recruitment of young children of veterans. My father was one of veterans; he served in the Second World War. He was demobilised and returned to the Nigerian police.

He was in the Nigerian police in Zaria when it was muted that children of veterans of that age could be recruited. And I was in my Roman Catholic School in Zaria, that was St Patrick's, which was just lying on the fence of the army barracks. So it was easy for me to walk over and present myself for recruitment.

On that fateful day we presented ourselves and we did medical test examination and other things, questions and so on. However, I was lucky to be one of the 30 boys that were recruited.

**Can you recall others?**

There were quite a few - 30. I am one of the surviving boys. There is another surviving one called Emmanuel Ekpe. Musa Usman, who has passed on, became our parade commander on passing out. There are only two of us who are surviving.

**Did you at any stage regret the decision to go into the army so early in your life?**

No. I did not have the exposure to critically make such choices. When my father was demobilised and returned from World War II, we came to Kaduna and I knew only Kaduna and Zaria. We were there long enough until the extension of Constitution Road was built.

When he was posted to Zaria, we followed along and started school in Wusasa. But my mother wasn't quite agreeable with the hardship; that was why I got back to the barracks. I needed to go to Sabo Gari to attend the military school and we were accommodated in the boys company in the disused British quarters.

**You received a very good training after the military school. You were also in Ghana; tell us a bit about that period of your life.**

Ghana was tough; it was strengthening, so you needed stamina, determination and courage. Everything must have been done to test your leadership quality and character. But fortunately, out of 100 or more candidates that started, from Nigeria, I think we had less than 20.

Then we had the largest number of RMA cadets, which used to be about 4. We were 8 at that time - 1959. We were called Regular Officers Special Training School and my set was ROST 11, where we had some famous generals like Murtala Muhammed.

It was a lucky date to be selected at that stage because your future education must have been ruptured because we have done the qualifying examinations, which was for school or college certificate. And if you failed you would probably end up as an ordinary rank or soldier so as to try the opportunities again. So, one was lucky to have flown through the first attempt. After that, we had to go through the Short Service course, another reorientation.

**This was also in England?**

Also in England. The second training was rigorous. It was on works, academics and military. There were tough times when you had to go on training in remote places like Scotland and Ireland, where you only had hard times. Through the winter we would go through war exercises we never had before.

**Immediately after your training, it seems you had to fight in the civil war.**

Yes. My set was commissioned in June 1961. It was a two-year course. From 59, we were there through 60 and 61 and we were commissioned into the Nigerian army. We were cadets when we partook in the parade in London to herald the independence.

**What was your experience during the civil war?**

When the civil war came, I was among the very few officers who were recalled from Staff College. I was attending the Joint Services Staff College, which subsequently became the National Defence College. I was recalled but I didn't find my way back to that college until 1973, after the civil war.

At the beginning of the civil war, I had trained in my first posting, after commissioning as an ordinance officer. Most of my mates had been sent to



General Ibrahim Bata M. Haruna (ret'd)

one battalion in Enugu. General Murtala was sent to the signals in Lagos. I was also sent to the ordinance in Yaba, and from

there, I attended the ordinance training, involving storekeeping, accounting, financial accounting with ammunition

and vehicles and armaments, vehicle management, supply calculation.

So, at the beginning of the civil war I was in the ordinance. I was the chief provision and account officer in the accounts unit. Just before the civil war, I became the commanding officer of the Ordinance Depot. Things moved so quickly and I became the chief ordinance officer, and as a result. I found myself very deep in the provisioning and calculation of logistics for the preparatory stages, making sure that the bulk of the military was based in the

When my father was demobilised and returned from World War II, we came to Kaduna and I knew only Kaduna and Zaria. We were there long enough until the extension of Constitution Road was built.

Continued on page 11



**General IBM Haruna**

**Continued from page 10**  
North had ordinance support. So it became very evident that the Kaduna depot, which was then a sub-depot, had to be upgraded, and therefore, more stocks had to be stored there, more personnel had to be trained, security of control weapons and sensitive weapons became very critical. The logistics to support the preparation for the civil war had to be based mostly in Kaduna as the main supporting depot and Makurdi as a sub-base; then consequentially, I became the

**At that point, I took over to reorganise and stabilise the division and ensured that the Mid-West was fully secured and the troops there were organised and there were some disciplined and recognisable units.**

rear commander in Kaduna. Shuwa was my contemporary and partner. We had Captain Yakubu and some other officers I can't easily recall their names. That was after we had set up the line of support and reinforcement.

**So rear means you have never been on the frontline?**

Yes, rear means that you exercise subordinate command to the warfront commander and provide him his logistics support. You have to foresee what is going on and plan; not only plan but more provision of enforcement of material requirements.

As a rear or base commander you have subordinate units and the stores. Essentially, rear troops were to be with the administration, governance and the security of the base to make sure we were receiving and passing to the main commander.

**Did that role ever change?**

For that time, I was also the security commander in Kaduna base. We worked hand in laws with Hassan Katsina, who was the governor of the North. As things progressed I was posted back to Lagos.

**I asked about the frontline role because your name is associated with the Asaba massacre.**

I am coming to that. From Kaduna, we went back to Lagos, and when the Mid-West crisis erupted, I was in Lagos. Apart from my role as an ordinance officer, I was also serving as a rear commander to Adekunle's team when it started; and subsequently, the involvement of the warfronts.

Again, I had to do the role of mobilising troops and logistics from Lagos to support the force that was to be deployed to counter this intrusion, which I did in Lagos.

And, in fact, when we were

threatened by the troops coming to Ore, I had reinforcement from Kaduna and Lagos.

It wasn't long after that and Murtala was appointed as commander and had to form the second division to advance the war.

It was long after engagement in Asaba and subsequently in Onitsha when I was appointed to take over from the acting GOC, Colonel Jalo.

The success in Mid-West battle and crosses in Onitsha had been recorded before I was posted; it was just a fighting force that was arranged into the various attempts to cross into River Niger at Asaba. And subsequently, we turned around to Awka.

At that point, I took over to reorganise and stabilise the division and ensured that the Mid-West was fully secured and the troops there were organised and there were some disciplined and recognisable units. I was with my headquarters in Onitsha, with the sector that was rear, to ensure that the defence and security of Onitsha were consolidated.

**So this so-called massacre was just you doing your job?**

There was no massacre; if there was, I was not involved. I told you that I took over the division after Onitsha had been ravaged. I never heard of massacre until after the civil war.

I went there as a General Officer Commanding (GOC). I took over during the so-called massacre. It was in the process of taking over Asaba and subsequent crossing of the troops to Onitsha.

I heard all these stories after the war; my name was even brandished. In fact, there was an occasion not long ago when some two professors from the United States came to conduct enquiry into this matter extensively,

on behalf of the International Criminal Court and I told them that I was not there. I never heard of it. And when I did, it was a very unfortunate incident.

**Was there a massacre, what happened there?**

As far as I am concerned, I was not there, so I cannot vouch for what happened. But there was a battle there and people have expressed their views about it, saying it was a massacre. All I can say is from reading reports years after the civil war. I particularly got a little bit irritated when people were mistaking me for Ibrahim Taiwo. I did not enter the civil war until Onitsha was captured.

My civil war front line engagement was when we were consolidating on the Mid-West and Onitsha as an organised military formation. So there was no real battle engagement except when we were in defence of Onitsha. In the Mid-West, we were also consolidating and ensuring that the political integrity of there was maintained.

So I don't know where this story about massacre started, but I hear that as part of war efforts. We were in relationship with sympathetic heroes to the Biafran troops, who were causing an alarming fear of losing the front of the division in Onitsha and ensuring that they were not cut off from the Mid-West and the rest of the command logistics chain to Lagos.

We had a process for the war. Some saboteurs who were sympathetic to the other side were rounded up and shot. I read in some books that in the process there were people who were in an American Catholic school or so, and those who were in the environs were making life really containable for the division.

I am talking about what I heard and read, I was not there, I was not a witness. The troops were not in my command. Our orders and operations were very clear - consolidating the military command in the Mid-West and ensuring that we did not lose ground in Onitsha while the main thrust into the Biafran area was going on.

**After the war you became minister of information and culture. Part of what you were remembered for in that period was that you initiated the formation of the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) and the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA). But more controversially, I think you were an early advocate of the Nigerian Press Council, I wonder what you thought could be achieved by these organisations.**

I think we should do this perspective one after the other, it is not as if it was related to the civil war; it was not.

**This was after how long?**

Six years after. In fact, it was after Gowon's coup, who was the commander-in-chief. This was actually also to say it was during the Murtala regime, which had the mindset of a revolutionary regime. The regime took some forthright steps with respect to political international relations and the internal administration, which resulted in many civil

servants who were entrenched in the civil service losing their jobs. It was that kind of revolution and I was appointed minister of information and culture.

So we are in a kind of atmosphere and environment of revolutionary posture, which required that as a minister of information you had to play some dynamic role that was not consistent with the normal run of events.

The regime decided to centralise formation on the basis of available new technology like the DoSat, which would enable the transmission to all parts of Nigeria through communication facilities.

The NTA was formed as a result of that, and of course, the African continent as a whole was hungry for having an information system. Africa was determined to sell its own information because relying on foreign information as we did on the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) during the civil war caused a lot of problems because the other balancing sides of the stories were not told.

So, in 1976, about six years after the civil war, we had to reinforce our sovereignty as a country and corruption.

**Looking back, would you still defend those hasty policies of the Murtala/Obasanjo government? People have been criticising them since then.**

Yes, the consequences were very severe but we supported it because we needed it. Perhaps they still don't want it because we didn't carry it through. But at least we established the motion that we were free to sell our own side of the story to our people and the world through the NTA and communicate our information through the NAN. And of course, to promote the black man's culture, we stood by FESTAC 77, which brought the whole world to Nigeria. When I look back and see what is happening with the promotion of our culture and the pride of our people, I feel we have left something behind.

**Tell us about Murtala as your classmate and head of state. Was he really a revolutionary or a hotheaded person who wanted to bring change quickly?**

He was both.

**Was there a deliberate programme to move the country forward or it was just something that was rushed?**

Well, you will recall that he came into the scene as a result of coup.

**Did he lead the coup?**

I don't know. I don't have the evidence, but it is a fact of history that people organised it, rolled it on, it succeeded and he was appointed as head of state. There were options, including General Danjuma.

Talking about that regime's programmes, it was very evident that they were ambitious and committed to bring a change in Nigeria in the name of revolution.

Since the regime lasted for about six months only, its intent, and perhaps, methodology and cooperation sort for were not delivered; therefore, there was the tendency to return to status quo.

**Continued on page 12**

## 'I heard of Asaba massacre only after civil war'

Continued from page 11

And this is where we have been - five paces forward, 10 backwards.

**You served both Murtala and Obasanjo, how would you compare the two?**

Strictly speaking, I did not serve Obasanjo's regime, it was that of Murtala that I served. Thereafter, I did not hold any appointment.

**So you left after Murtala was killed?**

I retired in March 77, immediately after the Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC).

**After your retirement you studied Law. How easy is it for somebody who has spent all his life in the military to practise law?**

It is very easy. I am already used to discipline. If you have the mental disposition and intelligence you will commit yourself to a new assignment, which is self-imposed. Nobody told me to go back to the university. I advised myself and wanted to be a farmer, but the university authorities themselves assigned me to read Law.

I have enjoyed it, except that I have never become a competent industrialised farmer as I wished to be because, after my retirement the first option was to go back to my ancestral engagement, which was farming.

**You are in Kongo, Zaria, do you really blend with the youth? How do your classmates view you?**

Fantastic. I still blend. We are all friends; we communicate and they see me as an uncle. Many of them are in the frontline of the judiciary—all the courts. In fact, I am about to celebrate our 40th call to the bar with my classmates. By Saturday we will celebrate it.

**Tell us about your tenure as chairman of the Executive Committee of Africa and the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF)? How did you cope?**

It was an experience of brushing politics. There was no clear definition as to the route or function of the ACF. It was formed to create favourable opinions and support for those who created it in the background. So it was difficult.

**Who are those people in the background?**

I don't play politics. It was during the regime of Obasanjo and Atiku when they were facing general elections. And you know what happens in all our political experiences, especially when you are approaching general elections.

So it was a game, and the North is generally perceived as a balancing wedge in political terms. The North is always perceived to manipulate the political fortunes in their favour.

The politicians are not naive if they know how to manage the dynamics. The essence is to have a symbol that looks as if it is consolidating the North. And each one tries to use it. Whether you are in the main political leadership scheme or position, it is like we have a masquerade we can use, beat or blame.

We can say we moderately try to synthesize various views and allow politicians present their parties and programmes without

blackmailing the ACF as a uniting force in a democratic system.

We presented what we thought was the best for the North, not dictating to them how to play their politics. They have to earn two third of votes in two third of the states, not only in the northern states or with northern politicians.

**You were notably neutral as ACF chairman; you tried not to allow politics to come into the Forum. Did you really succeed?**

I think we succeeded because we were preparing the atmosphere for a free choice, a display as far as it was possible within the democratic contest.

When we started moving around to our leaders, we didn't go empty handed. We told them to play their strategies, but this was what we wanted. We told them that we wanted education in the forefront and dam in Taraba, which had been on the drawing board since the First Republic, and other essentials we considered strategic development in the interest of the North. In that small pamphlet we had given them some statistics. And foreseeing the possibilities of real crisis, particularly in education and the children, we did not make political choices; we gave them strategic developmental choices and priorities for the North in the context of Nigeria.

**From your experience in the ACF, is it possible to really unite the North, which is inherently very diverse?**

I don't think the intent was to have one northern agenda. That is why we say that to manage our diversity, answers must be given to the problems we have—imbalance, equity and justice—to the different components. The intention has never been that we would evolve a common northern culture, people or political system, but to respect those diversities as we move on. But we know that if we are not patient to promote such policies, then we are not working for an equitable participation within the Nigerian states.

**What do you make of the agitations of today? Things are heating up towards the 2023 elections. There are demands that the country should be restructured, there should be zoning and rotation of the presidential seat. Are you worried about what you see going on in the country you fought for when you were young?**

Yes, I am worried about the fate of the youth. What is happening is very saddening.

**What should we do?**

What is to be done is to stay on the track of democracy, dialogue to



■ General Ibrahim Bata M. Haruna

reach agreement; and for people to sincerely carry out their duties in good faith.

**Are there specific steps you think the current government can take to bring down tension and divisions?**

The current government has to face laid down constitution processes. They have to strengthen the institutions to carry out their functions.

It is disheartening that the law is not applied equally to all. Political games are played to waste other people's lives.

**Can you give an example of one of the incidents you are worried about?**

Kanu is an example. Leaders are asking that he should be released without trial; hence subverting the constitutional provision of the rule of law.

**Are you surprised that the president said he would look into their request? What does it mean?**

Well, he is the president. He is a politician. I will only warn that if the right things are not done, we will go back to the experiences we had in 1966, which led to civil war and loss of lives, as well as wastage of economic power. It is actually disappointing.

The amnesty strategy started

with the Niger Delta, but it is a wrong prescription, and we can't continue with that because other people will ask for more and more.

These agitations have continued to arise because the government lacks either the authority or proper use of the big stick of the law to rally people around the essentials of growing and developing a nation-state.

And the reason the wrong prescriptions are made is because the leadership has been blamed. They are probably shortsighted in how to fortify their position, which they perhaps believe they don't merit, so they give up to anybody without really exercising their powers and the principles that should guide them.

**Retired generals like you are being called upon by the government to advise or help in the security situation bedeviling the country ...**

I think the retired generals, air marshals and admirals are available if they are called upon, depending on the assignment they are given. But there's always this lip service that they are in the reserve. We have no reserve engagement. If you call the officers today they would not know where to go. There is no institutional channel. So they are all in the same group poisoning the possibility of growing a healthy Nigeria.

**Would you like to talk about your family?**

Those pictures are of my wife and daughters. I am a polygamous Islamic man. I have produced children here and there. We are still a family even though we cannot accommodate ourselves in one place. But those pictures you see there are those who are around on my 70th birthday.

**You are now 81 and still**

**strong. I think everybody knows you golf, do you think golfing has anything to do with keeping you going?**

Well, not golf per say. It is just one of the options. But you are advised to keep doing exercises, such as walking, riding a bicycle and horses.

**Which ones do you do?**

I have slowed down on playing golf because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In my younger days I played tennis, squash and so on. And they say that as you get older you get smaller, so I now play my golf. The best thing for retired people, if it is possible, is actually to farm. You can walk, play tennis or swim, all at your pace.

**But you don't farm now. What are your hobbies?**

I have a farmland but I don't farm; I don't even garden. I think I have stressed my senses and body already. You know what it is to be a soldier at 14 and still be alive - you have run, jumped and climbed; and you have been shot at.

**So how do you spend your typical day at 81?**

I watch what you people do on television and know what is going on all over the world.

**Are there restrictions on your diet?**

Yes, because I was diagnosed of type 2 diabetes. It weakens me and affects my ability to stretch my energy. One of my most enjoyed time now is the opportunity to watch television. I also walk the stairs and down; and that's good. Fasting and praying and good for the inside, but we don't see it.

We have just introduced another television channel for you to add to your viewing pleasure. We wish you long life and happiness with your family, as well as service to the country.

I don't think the intent was to have one northern agenda. That is why we say that to manage our diversity, answers must be given to the problems we have—imbalance, equity and justice—to the different components.



The editor welcomes brief letters on topical issues. Write an e-mail to [sunday@dailytrust.com](mailto:sunday@dailytrust.com) or [sundaytrust@yahoo.com](mailto:sundaytrust@yahoo.com).

## Osinbajo's firmness, strength in governance, worthy of emulation

Professor Yemi Osinbajo (SAN) is Nigeria's biggest political revelation in recent times. Since his stint as Attorney General and Commissioner of Justice in Lagos State, he has demonstrated capacity, excellence, and dedication to duty as virtues of governance. Now as the Vice-President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, these virtues still live with him and are, no doubt, worthy of emulation.

Since May 2015 when he was sworn in as the vice-president, the professor of law has demonstrated matchless courage, fearlessness, boldness yet submission to his boss, President Muhammadu Buhari.

The respected senior advocate of Nigeria who is arguably the most active Vice-President since Nigeria entered its Fourth Republic, is a man of courage who does not shy away from taking strong yet difficult decisions in the interest of Nigerians.

In describing him, the Senator representing Osun Central in the Senate, Olusola Adeyeye, once said, "Osinbajo has been the most fearless champion of federalism in this country."

Also, the National Leader of the All Progressives Congress, Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, at a book launch in 2012, extolled Osinbajo. "The capability and firmness of Osinbajo in my time of travails made me triumph against every plan by my detractors to destroy my image and my career," the former Lagos governor said.

It is also on record that Osinbajo never stampeded the judiciary when he acted as President. The leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra, Nnamdi Kanu, got a fair hearing and was first granted bail when Osinbajo was the Acting President.

Also, in August 2018, while President Buhari was away and handed over to Vice-

President Osinbajo as Acting President, the professor of law demonstrated firmness when he sacked the then Director-General of the Department of State Services, Lawal Daura, and directed that he be handed over to law enforcement agents immediately after his appointment was terminated. Daura had embarrassed the nation and the Presidency when his men invaded the National Assembly.

The siege by the DSS caught most employees of the National Assembly unawares as cleaners, bankers, reporters, and others who had business to transact within the complex were prevented from entering the premises.

The security officials used an unmarked white Coaster bus and two black Hilux pickups to block the main gate leading to the National Assembly.

Osinbajo, a man of discipline, took a

bold step the same day and fired Daura, and appointed Matthew Seiyefa as the DSS DG.

Earlier in February 2017, the Vice-President also in an acting capacity as the President sacked all the directors in the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority at the time for gross incompetence that could have endangered the lives of the flying public.

Though detractors came up with all manner of criticisms, the fact remains that VP Osinbajo has been the bold lion who does not seize to do what is right no matter who's is gored in as much as it is in the best interest of Nigerians, and whenever he has the opportunity to do so.

VP Osinbajo has always been dispassionate and non-sentimental about issues of governance, justice, and fairness and a man like him deserves the respect of every Nigerian.

*Muhammad Sani writes from Kano State*

## When social media becomes a saviour

With the ongoing stubborn weather (Harmattan) in the extreme northern parts of Nigeria, one sleeps even unwillingly most at times, especially in the morning hours. Whether you like it or not, the weather will induce you to sleep during this holiday.

I have been trying to terminate its act of inducing sleep in me especially after Subhi (Morning) prayers but all efforts proved abortive until recently when I discovered that social media is the weapon against it.

Before I discovered social media to be a helping instrument in that aspect, I tried some other things like reciting the Qur'an, reading a book/novel, or even reading them from mobile apps but it didn't work.

Until I noticed that any day I decided to check messages from my social media accounts (Facebook and WhatsApp), sleep would not come around.

Subhanallah! So, sleeping doesn't surface if I open social media immediately after the Subhi

prayer and morning supplications. Although, I used to start dozing even while still praying/supplicating. But once I opened Facebook/WhatsApp, it's gone.

After I discovered this phenomenon, I said I needed to manipulate the development and strategize it to have it in pros instead of cons. There's no way I can open social media instead of opening the Qur'an or books. It would be a misplacement of priority at its peak. And I should be the one using social media and not otherwise, nor should I surrender to sleeping desire when I cannot allow the weather to make a jest of me.

So, side by side, are my Qur'an, book, and phone if I should succeed in reciting/reading in the morning at this period. Once the sleep showed up in the process of reading, I grabbed my phone and before you know it, it's gone; then back to reading. Social networking has become my antidote against unwanted sleeping.

*Mohammed Aliyu Baba, a student of ABU, Zaria, writes from Kaduna*

## 2022: The fears and expectations

The year 2021 has come and gone. Last year means different things to different people either for better or worse. It could be remembered as the post-COVID-19 year in which the country struggled to recover from the devastating effects of the pandemic. The government rolled out various intervention policies to uplift the people who were pushed to poverty by COVID-19.

Despite these policies, the majority of Nigerians are yet to recover from the shocks associated with the pandemic. The new year should serve as a period of assessment by our policymakers. There is a need for more intervention programs to improve the living standard of Nigerians. The government plans to remove fuel subsidy in the New Year is untimely. It will come at the wrong time when the country is grappling with hyperinflation and prices of goods and services have gone beyond the reach of the poor man. Though, the Minister of Finance, Zainab Ahmed,

has assured Nigerians about transportation subsidy which will see 40 million people benefit from N5000, any price hike of petroleum will worsen the living condition of Nigerians. Given the negative effect of subsidy removal, our policymakers should shelve the plan. If the government insists or eventually removes fuel subsidies, it should ensure an effective price control system is put in place in the country.

Last year, President Muhammadu Buhari had declined assent to the bill that will pave the way for direct primaries, citing insecurity, financial cost, and litigation as the reasons. Will Mr president make a u-turn and finally sign the bill this year?

The year 2021 was a worse year for the people of the North with bandits and South East with the activities of IPOB.

We hope that this mountainous insecurity may not find itself into the New Year.

*Ibrahim Mustapha Pambegua writes from Kaduna State*

## DIALOGUE WITH MY COUNTRY

ochima495@gmail.com  
danagbese@dailytrust.comwith  
**Dan Agbese**  
08055001912 (SMS only)

## Re-echoing Bishop Kukah

I sympathise with Dr Hassan Kukah, bishop of the Catholic diocese of Sokoto. As a priest, he is one of the commanders of the forces of good against the forces of evil. He has railed against evil; he has joined forces with like-minded fellow Nigerians to move this behemoth of a country towards its rightful place in the tropical sun. But nothing seems to work. Evil persists and evil forces hold sway in northern Nigeria. He cannot but be frustrated; we cannot but share his frustration.

In his 2021 Christmas sermon, titled "A Nation Still Search of Truth and Vindication," Kukah returned to the theme of evil and warned that the northern region was "now fully in the grip of evil." It is easy to see, he said that a "catalogue of unprecedented cruelty has been unleashed on innocent citizens" in the once most secure and the most peaceful region in the country.

The blood of the innocent flows daily in various parts of the old region; and there is no determined effort to stop it. Children have been turned into means of making quick money by bandits and kidnapers. No one is safe and nothing is sacred anymore – least of all life, the precious lives of fellow human beings in their own country. Said the bishop: "In their sleep, on their farmlands, in their markets or even on the highway, innocent citizens have been mowed down and turned into burnt offerings to gods of evil."

Kukah sees evil and denounces evil. He cannot close his eyes to things that ail us or padlock his lips just to be in the good books of those who own the north and see nothing wrong with its tragic movement downhill. Kukah is not the most beloved cleric among those in northern Nigeria who believe that speaking truth to power amounts to attacking the president of northern extraction.

It is a pity with a capital P. Many of the leaders of the region find it expedient to padlock their lips and squeak, not speak, from both sides of the mouth when they feel moved to make their voices heard on the evil that has gripped the region. They see evil but refuse to denounce evil. I suppose they know only too well that when good people do nothing to stop evil, it spreads and raises the spectre of consuming even those who feel sufficiently protected by the taxpayers whose money funds the security agencies that protect them. It can only get worse because, according to Kukah, "communities have been turned into gulags of misery, death, pain and perfidy."

Where did the north miss it? Where did the north get it so badly wrong? I know evil did not just descend on the region in one fell swoop; it crept up on it until it turned our young men into killer unfeeling and callous

People of my generation who were born and brought up in the north cannot understand why and how evil became the defining feature of northern Nigeria today. When I think about it, I feel traumatised by our collective loss of innocence.

machines, mowing down people they do not know and could not have had disagreements with them. They have become hardened killers because basic human feelings have deserted them.

People of my generation who were born and brought up in the north cannot understand why and how evil became the defining feature of northern Nigeria today. When I think about it, I feel traumatised by our collective loss of innocence. As a staff writer with the New Nigerian, I travelled to most parts of the region in the late sixties in open lorries night and day totally secure. If the night caught up with us and the driver was tired, he simply packed his lorry by the roadside, and we all slept on the ground by the roadside.

We feared no attack against our persons because there were no bands of bloody thirsty killers. If I was thirsty, someone who had water gave it to me; if I was hungry someone who had something to eat such peanuts and akarawillingly sacrificed what he had that I might have something. We were our brothers' keepers, sharing our common humanity and bonded by mutual care and respect.

Now, sadly, the centre has fallen out. We are isolated on the tiny islands of fault lines of ethnicity and religions. We are not our brother's keepers anymore; we are their killers. Evil casts a darkening shadow over northern Nigeria. In a recent and chilling piece on the situation in northern Nigeria, titled "Never in the history of our nation has it been this bad," Professor Usman Yusuf, former executive secretary of NHIS, wrote: "The nation awoke on 6th December 2021 to the horrifying news of the gruesome massacre of 42 innocent travellers including women, children and babies at Gidan Bawa in Sabon Birni LGA of Sokoto State. Armed bandits ambushed and shot at their bus setting it ablaze and stood guard watching until all the passengers were burnt alive."

A good example of the loss of our common humanity in northern Nigeria. Yusuf went on to detail more killings in the old region about the same period. He noted that a third of the president's home state, Katsina, "is under siege by bandits and mass killings are daily occurrences. The capital city Katsina, is filling up with IDPs displaced from the 13 LGAs terrorized by these armed bandits."

The tragedy is not that these killings are taking place; rather the tragedy is that northern leaders feel impotent in protecting their old region and their people from the evil enveloping it and making life increasingly cheap. It is a callous indifference that borders on indifferent and irresponsible leadership.

Yusuf wrote: "The deafening silence in the north to our people's sufferings is not only morally wrong but it nourishes, validates and perpetuates the failings of this government. The region has now literally become an orphan with two living parents on account of our silence. Those of us who criticize this president and his government do so primarily because it is our duty and responsibility as citizens to speak up at times like this when things are going wrong but most importantly, we speak because we care deeply for this country and are very worried by the current state of the nation."

"The ship of state is drifting."  
Still, we choose to live in denial, luxuriate in the drift and drink to the tragedy now holding the north hostage. May the new year renew our leaders and awaken their sense of leadership beyond adorning themselves in expensive traditional clothes.

## BEYOND THE SURFACE

Email: misterkakanda@yahoo.com  
Twitter: @gimbakakandawith  
**Gimba Kakanda**

## What money can't buy

Whether in measuring a nation's vulnerability in the balance of power or the influence of a non-state actor, the supremacy of political power has always overridden any form of influence. The bid to equate money with power is also one inspired by a flawed understanding of power. The interests of Nigeria's wealthy citizens in political offices, for instance, is a realization that money isn't power, and this plays out whenever a political officeholder vacates a seat or a criminal occupies one.

The controversial arrest of former Governor Rochas Okorocha's son-in-law, Uche Nwosu, by armed police officers last week underlined this difference in power. He was arrested inside the church during the Sunday service and, according to him and as seen in viral images, the captors "asked me to remove my clothes, handcuffed me, snapped me, made a video, and sent it to the CSO." The arrest and admitted mishandling explained why, despite his social status, Nwosu must've run for governor in Imo state.

The politics of the arrest is the rift between Okorocha's family and the current Governor Hope Uzodinma. Nwosu ran against Uzodinma in 2019 and failed to succeed his father-in-law. The fact that Nwosu who, according to him, was neither invited by the police nor served with a warrant of arrest, also validates the claim that the police episode is a reminder of his distance to real power. It was disclosed that he was arrested based on a petition that he was "sponsoring insecurity" in the state, but that doesn't warrant the Commando-style power show at the church.

The arrest of Nwosu is exactly the reason the political elite always struggle to take power or stay in office in Nigeria. Money is never enough protection. An unfavourable government can undo even centuries-old generational wealth in the blink of an eye. If the governorship election that produced Uzodinma had favoured the Action Alliance in Imo State, or Okorocha had not been tamed by the All Progressives Congress, the current Governor would've probably been the humiliated captive at the church last Sunday.

Whether Dangote or Adenuga, Otedola or Sani Bello, a vengeful government can reduce any ultra-wealthy families or their heirs to small-time traders scouting for shops at Alaba Market. It can erase the famous surnames wherever money is made. This fear drives the quest for power, especially in a country this institutionally frail. Whether in Washington or Beijing, Moscow or London, the man with the capability to disrupt market dynamics with just a hastily-written press statement remains more powerful than those with fat bank accounts.

In 2003, this reality of powers was also tested in Russia. The oil tycoon, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, stood up to President Vladimir Putin and made moves that undermined the latter's hold on power. With a net worth of about \$30 million, Khodorkovsky was Russia's richest man. Then came the allegation that he owed the state about \$27.5 billion in taxes. Putin rushed to take most of the assets of his company, Yukos Oil Company, seized and shared among loyal firms.

Khodorkovsky rushed to attribute his "retribution for financing political parties that opposed Putin," and that gross mistake led to his fall from the country's richest man to a long-held prisoner, and charged for fraud, embezzlement, and money-laundering. In just about a decade, one of the world's richest men was less than \$250 million rich. He could afford the loyalty

The arrest of Nwosu is exactly the reason the political elite always struggle to take power or stay in office in Nigeria. Money is never enough protection. An unfavourable government can undo even centuries-old generational wealth in the blink of an eye.

of a sizable number of citizens and even politicians, but daring to equate his power with the might of a person who controls means of production and distribution had him cut down to size.

China too was quick to remind its richest citizen, Jack Ma, the founder of Alibaba and the Ant Group, of the boundaries of his power. The billionaire's disappearance for about three months in 2021 alarmed the world that he was feared dead or captured, and his travails began after his criticism of the Chinese financial system at an assembly of some of the country's elite. Ma offered to revolutionize the system, but his ambition was interpreted as an attempt to undermine the reigning power.

Ma's decision to make Ant Group public, which was intended to be the world's biggest initial public offering on the stock exchange, was halted by Chinese regulators, and the promising tech company was disassembled and parts of it offered to other firms. Like Khodorkovsky, a fine of about \$2.8 billion was levied against Ma's Alibaba for antitrust violations. Since his return to the public to watch the shrinking of his business empire, having also been removed as president of Hupan University, which he founded, he has maintained a respectable silence to watch what's likely his financial funeral.

The stories of Khodorkovsky and Ma are cautionary tales for others like them, those intoxicated to confuse money with actual power. The political power is an envious and fragile space, and it responds to threats that attempt to play down its superiority unkindly. This has inspired this culture of either kissing the ring to retain or maintain one's wealth and influence or ending up buried and erased for doing otherwise.

Every election year, Nigerian billionaires too rush to finance political parties that have high chances of acquiring power. But, unlike Khodorkovsky, these politicians don't stand up to the ruling party. They've mastered the art of dealing with all political camps, and their loyalty to the government has come from the awareness of its capability to neutralize them and their vast business empires.

Nigerian elite has never found the geography of power confusing. It knows where the actual power lies, and the politically disadvantaged multimillionaires and billionaires have also learnt the art of tiptoeing through the palaces of serving politicians until they too chance upon the seats of power, which is the ambition of almost all families with stakes in big businesses. They know that money can't buy the hurt egos of threatened leaders. Money may be a means to power, but it's not power.

COMMENT & DEBATE

**PENPOINT**  
0805 9252424 (SMS only)

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

## Electoral bill matter: Has the N/Assembly the final say?

It is no more news that President Muhammadu Buhari had since declined assent to the Electoral Act Amendment Bill 2021, passed and transmitted to him by the National Assembly. The President had cited as the central plank for declining assent, the bill's provision of mandatory direct primaries by political parties in selecting candidates for elective offices. He therefore favours a reversal to the provision of liberty for political parties to choose between direct and indirect primaries, depending on which one serves their purpose and as provided for in the current Electoral Act. With this development the dynamics of the issue have simply transmitted to the terrain of conjecture, if the circumstances of Nigeria's political terrain are anything to go by.

In this regard is also one of two possible outcomes under consideration. First is the question of whether the N/Assembly will deploy its constitutional powers to override the President and allow the legislation see the light of day as passed by it. That option seems to have been overtaken by current developments. The other is whether the legislature will eat the humble pie and concede to the President the amendments to the bill as he desires. In the circumstance, the second option seems likely to hold whenever the institution resumes from its end-of-year break. This second option may entail the National Assembly expunging the 'offensive' clause a resending the bill to the President for assent. This is now advisable given the

peculiar history of failed efforts in the past to amend the Electoral Act. In effect Nigerians should expect a yet newer Electoral Act Amendment Bill 2021.

Meanwhile, against the backdrop of the Nigerian political terrain, this amendment desired by the President offers more than meets the eye, hence there are already several swirling dramatic plots around it, and which may not abate in a hurry. Left to some Nigerians, this unending drama of amending the Electoral Act may end up as a merry-go-round affair that will start and end just as a non-starter. Nobody should be surprised if at the end of the day Nigeria goes into 2023 polls with the extant Electoral Act, for whatever reason.

Interestingly the starting point of this re-reworking phase remains the role of the National Assembly in the wake of the President's decline of assent, since it has the final say on the matter constitutionally, but not in practice. This is where many Nigerians are already wary of the response from the National Assembly, especially the current Ninth Assembly which has on more than one occasion, demonstrated undue deference and subservience to the Executive arm on matters that ordinarily demand its independence in discretion. Even on this matter the institution has leaked enough signals to discourage whoever expects any affirmative action from it with respect to challenging President Muhammadu Buhari.

It did not surprise many observers that

as soon as the President made his position clear, conflicting signals emanated from the National Assembly, over how to respond to the Presidency. For instance, the Senate went into a closed session to discuss in 'tongues', only to come out without any definite message for the country, other than that the matter be resolved by individual Senators with their constituents during the vacation. The House of Representatives did not fare better in keeping its response also blowing in the wind. As if 'mother luck' would offer them a reprieve, the President's decline of assent came up just as the two chambers were due for their annual vacation, with the situation granting them an alibi to treat the matter as one of personal volition.

Meanwhile, even as the federal legislators may be enjoying their vacation the country still needs them to move forward on the matter as the constitution confers on them the sole prerogative of doing the needful. And this is where and why the country expects the National Assembly to stand and

be counted on the side of the country's future greatness. This expectation remain at best nebulous as far as the National Assembly is concerned.

In arguing the case for removing the direct primaries clause, the President and his co travelers have told the nation that the country is better off by allowing for the handpicking of candidates for elective offices, than providing for a wider screening of same persons as shall be, through the direct primaries. By this argument, the critical process of selecting candidates for elective offices has been reduced to the simple calculus of matching the sacred obligation of featuring the most acceptable candidates for elective offices, with considerations of mere costs and resource deployment. In the context of national development, nothing can be more denigrating of the national interest than such a base contemplation.

The foregoing notwithstanding the Electoral Act Amendment Bill offers other provisions that should not be compromised just because of the 'lost' wisdom of mandatory direct primaries. As the African proverb goes 'instead of an animal caught in a trap to escape, it is better to cut and hold its tail'. Let the Bill be reworked and sent to the President for assent while the battle for further amendment of the electoral process can continue.

As is clear the battle to reform Nigerian politics is not to be achieved through a single skirmish. The issues involved run very deep, as legends will say. It will take some effort and time. Hence let this phase come and go provided the Electoral Act Amendment Bill shall see the light of day.

If the National Assembly failed to veto the President on this bill inspite of its elaborate antecedents as comprising inputs from the political parties including the ruling APC of the President, civil society groups and the international community - especially the country's partners in the democracy project, then expecting the body to resist the President remains an exercise in futility.

The foregoing notwithstanding the Electoral Act Amendment Bill offers other provisions that should not be compromised just because of the 'lost' wisdom of mandatory direct primaries.

## Nigerians: An impatient people

By Qudus Adewale Lawal

The retrogression of Nigeria did not start in 2015. It started in 1914 when the incompatible entities of the Southern and Northern Protectorates were unfortunately merged for effective administration by the colonialists. It is important to note here that this merger was not done for the good of the peoples of these regions but to reduce the costs and personnel needed to run the conglomerate, and maximise their exploitation agenda.

The exposure of Nigerians to poor quality education is historical. It dated back to the colonial era when blacks were not deemed fit to have equal education with their white counterparts. They were exposed to substandard education and poor leadership training. Thus, the majority of those who led the struggle for self-governance were not holistic in their plans. They agitated to replace the colonialists in the management of their country's affairs without the blueprints of how they intended to run the country to be bequeathed onto them.

Due to their unguided quest for freedom, they presented themselves in manners that made the colonialists manipulate their marked weaknesses. They fought dirty among themselves home and abroad before the people they wanted to expunge.

Their quest to gain independence as they saw in Europe, America, and Asia and their impatience compelled them to reject and request for new constitutions and leaders. Thus, boring lists of Governors-General

and colonial constitutions inundate the country's political history.

From Lugard, Clifford, Richard, Macpherson, and Lyttelton's Constitutions, to the Independence Constitution of 1960, the nationalists confused the colonialists more in their unprepared quest for independence.

Unfortunately for them, the British government barely prepared them for leadership roles. The "Nigerian educated elites" were not allowed to contribute directly to the affairs of their country. Thus, upon the granting of independence, the Nigerian independence fighters were unprepared to govern. They were short of the expertise to run a vast and diverse entity bequeathed onto them.

More importantly, the nationalist outlook worn by this group of independence fighters was merely peripheral. They had no national interests deep inside them. They only came together to fight a common enemy.

Before independence, it was evident that national interest was not a top agendum of the independence struggle. The earlier call for independence was rejected by a group among the nationalists. Shortly after independence, ethnic politics became widely pronounced with each former protectorate canvassing for its interests. In less than six years of independence, the military took over power from the divided nationalists. This was to become a recurrent phenomenon in the political history of Nigeria till the Fourth Republic.

From the foregoing, it can be deduced

that the impatience trait in today's Nigerians is hereditary. The reasons for this are not far from the poorly structured inherited education system and poor leadership training Nigerians were exposed to.

The nonviolence and unsophisticated approach of the nationalists in securing independence from the British has been the source of today's neo-colonialism. The activities of the multinational organisations which are agents of neo-colonialism and the direct interference of the West in the internal affairs of Nigeria are evidence of the nonviolence and unsophisticated termination of the unwholesome relationship that existed between Nigeria and the British monarch.

Violence scholars have valid arguments on the importance of violence in the advancement of human society. Many of the breakthroughs which science and technology have brought to mankind today are products of a violent era. These were initiatives that came up during warfare and rivalry among today's developed nations, that were aimed at helping them to have upper hands against their adversaries. From naval power, airpower, transport, and logistics, communication and information technology, ordnance, among other discoveries which are used today to ease the day-to-day activities of man.

In the same vein, nations that gained their independence through violence severance of their relationship with their colonial rulers enjoy unfettered freedom from their erstwhile masters than those whose independence was negotiated like

Nigeria. The United States of America will quickly come to mind. Many with a layman knowledge of history will not know that the United States of America was once a colony of the British monarch. Not only did the Americans revolt against British rule, but they also fought a war of independence and severed their relationship with the British monarch violently. Today, the United States is not associated with the British Commonwealth of Nations. She is also the most powerful country in the world (courtesy of the Second World War). China will also come to mind in this instance.

The development of Nigeria is delayed by the large ignorance of many Nigerians which birth their historic impatient nature. Nigeria is too vast and diverse to be run as a centralised country. If Nigeria must develop, she must give her federating units some reasonable amount of power to act independently. It must be decentralised. This is what is known as restructuring in some quarters.

Another alternative is that the area occupied by modern day Nigeria should be disintegrated into countries that will be made up of people of similar culture and geography. Thus, only two options are available to kick-start Nigeria's progress. It is either decentralisation or disintegration.

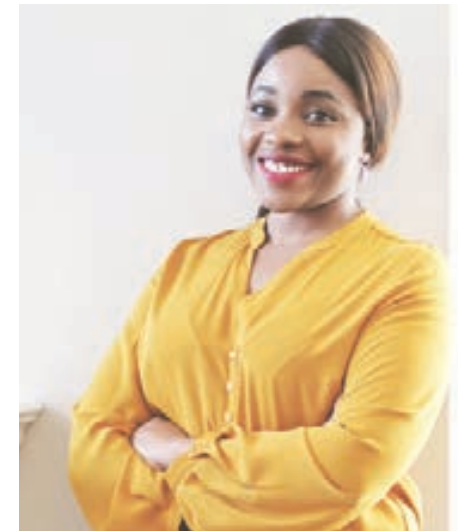
If these are known, understood, and implemented by Nigerians, especially those who find themselves at the corridors of power, with some level of patience, we will begin to trail the path of greatness.

Lawal writes from Lagos

# EVERYTHING WOMAN

## Inspirational Nigerian women of 2021

Daily Trust on Sunday recognises few Nigerian women who have done exceptionally well in the fields of health, entertainment, technology, advocacy and business in the outgone year, 2021.



Rosemary Etim Bassey

**Seun Runsewe**  
Seun Runsewe is the vice president of Growth at Softcom. The main focus of her enterprises is delivering growth to Nigerian entrepreneurs through the help of their digital banking platform, Eyowo. Before Softcom, Seun was the director of product at Opera-backed payments startupOPay. It was reported that the company had raised over UDS 170m in funding previously and has a workforce of over 300,000 in Nigeria, making it the largest agency network in the country.

She also built and launched Switch by Sterling Bank, a multi-currency digital banking platform that provides interest savings, health insurance products for middle-class Nigerians and gave Nigerians in the Diaspora a platform to sort out multiple financial issues in one place. She was an early member and the business leader at Paystack, a fintech company which got acquired by stripe at \$200m.

Seun holds a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Covenant University and a professional certificate in Digital Marketing, Enterprise Resource Planning and Technology Project Management. In 2019, her works were recognised by The Future Project and made as an honoree of #YTech100 for one of the best Nigerian technocrats.

### Odunayo Eweniyi

Eweniyi is the co-founder of PiggyVest and the Feminist Coalition, a financial technology company that allows Nigerians to save their money as earned interest. It also provides investment opportunities.

It was reported that the young entrepreneur was inspired to start the enterprise as the tweet of a woman saved a N1000 every day for a year in a wooden box. Founded in 2016, PiggyVest now harbours over 2 million Nigerians on its platforms.

In an interview with the CNN, Odun explained, "We are targeting people that have smart-phones and already have bank accounts. The ideal user of our platform would be young adults, mid-level professionals not



earning too much, not too little."

She also stated that the platform had helped its users save over \$250 million.

For her efforts, Odun was nominated for the Future Awards Africa Prize for Young Person of the Year in 2020. She was also listed amongst Time 100 Next 2021 for her contributions during the EndSARS protests of October 2020.

### Chika Maduko

Chika Maduko is the chief executive officer of Greymate Care, a health care technology company that delivers on-demand care for vulnerable patients. The company was launched in 2016 after a member of her family fell ill.

Greymate is a health online platform where patients who are in need of care can pick the type of services they need and will be matched with suitable caregivers.

In an interview with the CNN, Chika Maduko said, "Greymate Care was born out of personal pain, which was finding a caregiver for my grandmother when she was sick. It was pretty gruesome in my family then because my mom and sister would try to balance their own lives trying to move her between both houses, trying to find a caregiver."

She also stated that Greymate Care oversaw over 1,000 caregivers who have all been trained in



emergency first aid, principal car, food hygiene, principal care, health and safety.

### Vivian Nwakah

Vivian Nwakah is the founder of MEDSAF, an online pharmacy that delivers individual and healthcare enterprises such as hospitals and pharmacies, easy and cost-effective medications through its advanced technology platform.

Nwakah was motivated to work with the healthcare sector after a friend passed on after ingesting fake malaria drugs. The unfortunate incident led to the birth of MEDSAF in 2016. Vivian works with a vision to build a better and safer healthcare system in Nigeria and across other West African countries.

Her entrepreneurial efforts have been recognised by many reputable organisations, such as Forbes, Seedstars, Women in Africa and the British Royal Family. Before venturing into the healthcare sector, Vivian also started up a renewable energy company which focused on hybrid diesel solar installations.

### Fade Ogunro

She is a techpreneur, television personality, film producer, radio personality and fashion designer. She has worked with PM News, The Guardian newspaper, 234 Next and Beat 99.9 FM. She is also the founder



of Bookings Africa, an online talent company in Africa.

Bookings Africa is a platform that allows members to search for individuals with different talents, gives the means to communicate with them, obtain prices for their services and compare them with other service providers. The application has over 14 talent companies and is available in Nigeria, South Africa and Kenya.

She is also the co-owner and head of production of a video production company, Film Factory NG. She manages her own fashion show titled Fashion Friday with Fade.

Fade is the first African woman to be part of the Global Campaign Board of Cherie Blair Foundation for Women, a foundation that supports women in business through training, mentoring, networking and technology. The foundation also sets up opportunities for market, finance and contacts leaving the women empowered efficiently to build better futures for themselves, their families and the community in general.

Ogunro is also a former ballerina and is currently sponsoring Anthony Mmesoma Madu, an 11-year-old ballerina, whose video went viral in 2020.

### Rinu Oduala

Rinu is a human rights advocate whose focus is primarily on justice, equity and community development.

She has been at the forefront of advocacy issues related to youth, children, women etc. She is the chief executive officer of The Savvy Reach, also one of the leading voices during the 2020 #EndSARS movement.

Rinu has worked to assemble groups and link individuals with knowledge and the necessary tools to policymakers to ensure the creation of policies that ensure equity.

She has been acknowledged by reputable brands for her efforts in community development. As a brand strategist, she continues to provide room to activists and organisers to influence and make an impact.

Rinu was listed among the 31 women creating positive impact in Africa by the NBC.

### Temilade Openiyi

Popularly known as TEMS, Temilade is a Nigerian Afrobeat and R&B singer. She surfaced in the music industry in 2016 with the hit track, "Mr Rebel." TEMS rose to prominence after her hit single, "Try me" was released in 2020.

In 2020, TEMS dropped her debut EP "For Broken Ears," which featured "Damages" a follow-up hit to "Try me." Her collaboration with Wizkid on the song, "Essence" secured her a number one spot on BBC 1Xtra airplay chart and her first entry into the Billboard Hot 100. She was also listed among the Future Awards Africa Class of 2020.

In 2021, it was revealed that TEMS was set to feature on American rapper Drake's Certified Lover Boy album. Her collaboration with Drake on "Fountains2 secured her a second Billboard Hot 100 entry with the song debuting at number 26.

In 2021, she released her second EP titled, If Orange Was a Place, which featured a hit track, "Crazy Tings." The song peaked at number 3 on the UK Afrobeat charts. It premiered at number seven on the Billboard World Albums chart and number nine on the Heatseekers album chart.

Within the year, TEMS has been pictured with many foreign celebrities, such as Adele, Rihanna, Brent Faiyaz etc.

## Port Harcourt: Is there a link between respiratory tract infections and soot?

Port Harcourt's skies are dark, and when it rains the waters are black. Soot enters every home, darkening all it falls on, even with the windows shut. Kpo fire, a reference to illegal refining of petroleum products, creates soot in large quantities and scenes of an apocalyptic nature. An individual with no family history of asthma suddenly becomes asthmatic. A suckling with blocked nostrils breathes through its mouth. This investigation, supported by the Rotary Club of Port Harcourt, Eco, explores the crippling impact of black carbon on human health and the environment.



By Tadaferua Ujorha who was in Rivers

“Vierra my five-month old child has been having recurrent upper respiratory tract infections. At a point her

nostrils were blocked and she could not breathe. She was breathing through her mouth,” says Dr. Bieye Briggs, a Senior Health Officer at the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. His voice rises and falls as he navigates

equal amounts of pain and shock.

### Black discharge

Dr. Briggs continues, “She lost weight in less than a month of falling ill. In the mornings black substances issue from her nostrils, and we use wet balls of cotton

wool to clean them. My daughter is now breathing well. You can still hear the noise from her breathing, which is absolutely abnormal.”

He reasons that soot - product of an incomplete burning process - inhaled in the city today contributes

to the recurrent cases of upper respiratory tract infections which are already widespread, affecting all ages and classes.

### Carbon in the air

A taxi driver grumbles, “When

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# Port Harcourt: Is there a link between respiratory tract infections and soot?

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rain falls, the water is black because of carbon in the air. We inhale it and many have developed breathing problems and they cough as well. If you park your taxi overnight, before daybreak the windscreen is black. When you wash the car, the water is black. Soot is not good for those treating asthma."

Soot emerges from the numerous illegal refineries. Ross Amabo George, a member of the Rotary Club of Port Harcourt, Eco, comments, "The origin of soot has to do with the artisanal refining of petroleum products. We call it kpo fire. The operators have their farms located in various areas close to petroleum facilities where they can puncture oil wells, or they buy oil products at cheap prices, and they begin to refine them. The only difference between the refining process of the kpo fire operators and NNPC is the control, in the sense that these boys refine their products in an uncontrolled environment. The refineries produce in a controlled environment."

## Asthma unresponsive to treatment

Dr. Briggs, a public health physician and environmental advocate, has a two-year-old son who is also being treated for upper respiratory tract infections. Serapis-Bey Briggs missed school for two weeks in October this year. The medical doctor refers to a colleague's mother who had to be rushed to the facility recently. Hear him: "She was born asthmatic, but in recent times, the frequency of attacks has increased and it is now unresponsive to conventional treatment that would have otherwise arrested the attacks."

### 'It's spreading'

Emem Okon, Charter President of Rotary Club of Port, Harcourt Eco, comments, "I learnt that people that live in a polluted environment are more vulnerable to COVID-19 infections, which means all of us here are vulnerable, especially the elderly. Something needs to be done. We have tried to survive with it for the past five years, but how much longer can we hold on? How much longer can people who live in areas with high concentrations of soot survive? It's spreading because people in Akwa Ibom and Bayelsa are complaining."

Rivers State took the lead recently by logging 188 new infections at about mid-December. Rivers is regarded as the third "most hit state" by COVID-19.

### WHO standard

"The WHO standard for particulate matter is ten grammes per mmg. Any city that goes above that recommended figure is abnormal. For five years we generated data, the average in Port Harcourt was around 43 mm, and that is extreme. That is very dangerous as against the 10 mm WHO standard," adds Dr. Perry Tammi who holds a PhD in Environmental Studies, and is part of an emerging group of scholars who have done investigation on soot.

He lives in Borikiri, a part of Port Harcourt where sale of



A scene in Borikiri.



16-year-old Nengi Amakiri is asthmatic, and comes from a family with no history of asthma.



Dr. Bieye Briggs attends to 10 persons every day with upper respiratory tract infections.

illegally refined products is an everyday activity, especially around the jetty. There the waters are black and shiny. The kpo fire refining sites flourish not too far from Borikiri, and a fair number have been abandoned.

Air quality in Port Harcourt was put at 156 for Tuesday, December 28, 2021, on iqair.com, a reference to air quality experts who provide real time, evidence-based, air quality information. The service is given free to the public. The interpretation indicates that the PM 2.5 in Port Harcourt is currently 12.9 times above the WHO annual air quality guideline value. When air quality reaches 151-200, it is considered unhealthy, indicates the website.

### No history of asthma

Nengi Amakiri is 16 years old and lives in Woji, a part of the city heavily impacted by soot. Smoke from kpo fire sites are conveyed by winds into Woji, and locals sense the smoke every day. The area plays host to a series of narrow winding roads which may be flooded during the rainy season. Her story is a remarkable one. She has been diagnosed with pre-asthma, and hails from a family which does not

have a history of asthma. Nengi fainted twice in October. If she enters a stuffy room, her eyes turn red and she becomes weak. The doctor diagnosed pre-asthma and advised that she should always go out with a face mask, keep indoors and that she should avoid smoke-filled places.

### Soot in excess

According to Mrs. Joy Amakiri, "There is no history of asthma in the family. In the presence of the doctor I called my sister in-law, as well as my elder sister, and asked. Both said nobody on both sides has ever had asthma."

She continues, "Soot is normal here. Everybody knows it is here in excess. When you go outside sometimes you recognise that smoke is in the air. I was asking the doctor if we should get her an inhaler. The doctor replied that she is under observation, and therefore there is no need for an inhaler for now. He repeated that we should not allow her to go out and play, especially when the weather is hot."

### 'Recurring infections'

"Between 2016 and now, available statistics have shown that the level of respiratory tract infections have risen to about 25

per cent compared to what it used to be, from patients coming to us for clinical evaluation and those sent to us for radiologic diagnosis, says Dr Ebby Donaldson, a consultant radiologist, Rivers State University Teaching Hospital.

### X-rays have doubled

Dr. Donaldson presents some disturbing statistics, "I cannot be specific with the data relating to children, but it is increasing significantly. If we look at the number of X-rays we do for respiratory tract infections to evaluate children, it has almost doubled. The issue is not only that it has doubled, there is recurrent infection. When you treat over a while, in the next two weeks the child is coming down with respiratory tract infections. You treat the child and in the next two to four weeks, the same patient or child is coming back for the same evaluation. It is a continual thing because of the continual inhalation of organic air pollutant."

### '10 patients every day'

Dr. Briggs gives statistics relating to the number of persons presenting with respiratory illnesses, "There is barely a day that passes by when I consult in

my consulting room that I would not see ten patients out of twenty, that are coming down with upper respiratory tract infections. This has been going on from my observations from the year 2017, and that coincides with the time when soot became manifest in our atmosphere." This provides a population of at least two hundred (200) persons with respiratory tract infections presenting every month at the same facility.

### 'I live in soot'

"I live right in the middle of the Soot; the area where the refining is done is close to where I live. I live in Borikiri," says Tonye Nria-Dappa, a journalist who works in the city. We drive through Borikiri and note the many houses and roof tops which have become dark owing to the sustained impact of Soot. In a part of the community the sale of illegally refined products continues. Many move about which jerry cans. There is a lot of noise and activity, and the roads have a certain blackness and shine to them, evidence of the illegal trade. Your nostrils inhale the smell of petroleum products.

### My daughter began to snore

Nria-Dappa describes the atmosphere in Borikiri "The area will be dark as though it is going to rain, but it will not rain. By the next morning, as you come out you will find on every object that you have, there is this black dust. Whether you close your windows or not it will always find a way into an enclosure. You will find black dust on everything, even food if you leave it uncovered as well as on water. There is no day that we have respite, whether it is raining, or it is not raining. Nobody is spared. Whether you are a child or an adult, as long as you can inhale air into your system, you are bound to be affected by it." She refers to her daughter who is still in primary school who began to snore recently. She thinks that this is strange. Attempts by this reporter

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PHOTOS: Tadaferua Ujorha, Fyनेface D. Fyनेface, Tonye Nria-Dappa, Fayama Yellowe, Tammy Perri



Dark skies above Bakana Island

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to interview the Rivers State Commissioner for Health were unsuccessful.

**Bakana island**

“Bakana is an island and at a point we used to witness an influx of visitors every weekend. This was before the advent of soot. Soot has scared away many people. Many do not come to the town again. When the elite come home, they spend a lot and this helps to boost the economy,” explains Fayama Yellowe, who hails from the island. From time to time the weather around the island turns dark, but it’s not the type of darkness which comes before rain. It’s the soot announcing its presence.

Speaking on the economy, he reasons “Our people go to the swamp to pick periwinkles and other fishes. But because of the crude that has taken over the water bodies, you cannot find fish. If you put all these together, you can imagine the kind of poverty, and the economic downturn which the Soot has brought to us.”

**Soot fights Fyनेface**

“I am having a daily fight against soot in my house, and soot is fighting back because I campaign against it” says Fyनेface Dumnamene Fyनेface, an Environmental Activist and Human Rights defender, with a hint of a smile on his face. He continues “In my house because I have tiles on the floor, I don’t wear slippers or any form of footwear. As I walk around the house, my feet are already dirty with thick black substances. When I touch something which I haven’t touched or handled for two or three days, there will be soot on it. Despite the existence of mosquito nets, it still penetrates the house.”

**‘D Line very bad’**

“When you leave the house and you look into the sky, you will see the soot in the form of dark clouds. You will think it is going to rain, but it won’t. That is soot. If you are in a vehicle in Port Harcourt and you do not use the air conditioning system, and your windows are always open, you will be inhaling poison. In your office

you encounter soot every day. The D Line area of port Harcourt is one of the worst areas, compared to what is happening in other parts of the city,” he says.

D Line was the setting for a huge fire which broke out in late November. It is believed that illegally refined products were stored in the building that caught fire. Another fire broke out at Nembe jetty, as well as another at an illegal oil dumpsite in Rumuokoro axis of Obio/Akpor local government area. All these resulted in loss of properties, and have become additional sources for the emission of soot in the city. kpo fire products are cheaper than those available from other sources, and therefore constitute a huge trading activity among the people.

**‘Irreversible damage’**

Professor Babatunde Bernard who served on the committee set up by the rivers state government to investigate the sources of soot, sheds light on its impact on aquatic life. His words: “There are many behavioural changes or even reproductive changes that will happen to both male and female.

Yes, there is a link, an obvious and established link between soot and the rise of respiratory infections in Port Harcourt

Some of the substances in Soot have the capacity to interfere and feminise eggs. The female lays a thousand eggs and all of them turn out to be feminine or masculine. All the siblings that hatch out, all of them turn out to be male. Where will they find a female to lay the next eggs? They can actually go to the gene level and alter some things there, and the organism is not able to reproduce.”

**‘There is a link’**

Dr. Dantoye Alasia is a consultant physician and respiratologist: “Yes, there is a link, an obvious and established link between soot and the rise of respiratory infections in Port Harcourt. Talking about soot kind of narrows it down. What we are dealing with is air pollution, and when there is air pollution, there are a lot of things that go into the air, things that shouldn’t be there naturally. The real problem is the degree of air pollution, and how poor our air quality is. Finding soot is part of the evidence that we have a massive air pollution issue. Across the world it is known that air pollution is a major contributor to respiratory diseases and death.”

The respiratologist who is also Head Respiratory and Infectious Diseases Unit, University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital (UPTH) argues “In areas where air pollution and air quality is poor, definitely those risks for lung disease and respiratory disease will be higher. We look at the pattern of respiratory presentation, and we found that there was a peak and that peak coincides with the period of the public visibility of this soot. Air pollution builds over time, gets worse and then reaches those critical levels when it becomes obvious.”

**Sandra’s story**

Sandra Hart (25) is asthmatic. She lives in Iwofe, a part of Port Harcourt which is frequently bathed in soot. She has observed that there is less soot in Bori where her parents live. At Iwofe she has experienced more frequent and troubling asthma attacks.

Her words: “I have been having a series of attacks in the past three months. When I wake

up in the morning we don’t open the windows. Even with that the house is always black. We mop the house every morning and night. As someone who is asthmatic, I need air, fresh air, and air is already polluted. I need to receive fresh air, whether its fresh air or it’s not. If I have an attack I need to have the aminophylline injection. You need fresh air thereafter, but because the air is not fresh, it’s as though the injection is not working.” Asthmatics naturally have huge difficulties healing in an environment which itself lacks fresh air.

**Data from X rays**

Dr. Donaldson adds that chest X rays are on the rise. Hear him: “I cannot be very specific with the number, but I want to say that out of every ten persons presenting at the radiology department, six have come to do the chest X-ray. Out of the six four relate to respiratory tract infections. This occurs on a daily basis from 2019 till now.” He draws attention to the fact that non-smokers are coming down with chest infections because of the passive inhalation of toxic organic substances. The radiologist adds that soot and organic substances are destroying the lungs of people, and that there is a slight rise in the numbers of individuals coming down with lung cancer.

**Renewable energy**

On the way forward Mr. Fyनेface states, “The federal government should commit to their promise of giving licences for modular refineries. I am not saying that a modular refinery is not going to contribute to the soot, but it will be less compared to what is currently happening. We should begin to bring in policies that will make us move away from hydrocarbons to clean and renewable energy. That’s another way we can go. In addition all the agencies of government such as NESREA and NOSDRA must take the regulatory activities of their offices seriously, because if they fail to do so we will continue to have soot.”

**Political will**

Speaking in the same vein, Ross argues “We need political

will involving the president, Federal Ministry of Environment, and the state government. It’s not something you can do all at once, but you can start the process, start engaging the federal government, the United Nations. Use some level of advocacy, use the CSOs, and let them build trust with these Kpo fire boys, and start teaching them that there is a way you can burn this stuff without polluting the air.”

**Kpo fire**

“Of course, government should be able to provide alternatives to the boys doing the kpo fire business, to discourage them from going back to it. Some of them confessed during our social studies with them, that if they had alternatives they would prefer that than doing the Kpo fire business. We advised government to establish a sustainable study in terms of air quality, so they can produce an air quality index to advice the public,” posits Professor Bernard who argues that the environment has a carrying capacity. He points out that once that is jettisoned, it will return whatever was put in it back to its source.

**Modular refineries**

“We wish to interface directly with the youths engaged in the Kpo fire business. If we talk directly with them, we can organise them and put them directly into cooperatives, and now use them to apply for the modular refinery. The modular refinery is possibly an alternative to the Kpo fire business. We thought it will be key to make them part of it. Then we will group them together and form cooperative society’s and apply for a licence,” says Dr. Peter Medee, Commissioner for Energy and Natural Resources.

He declares, “The population here is huge. Rivers is a destination and it is like the headquarters of the South South. Governor Wike is involved in huge infrastructural projects and the state is like a huge construction site. If we can provide infrastructure we can attract a lot of industries to the state. The more industries, the more jobs we will create. If we create more jobs, some of these boys in the illegal refining trade will no longer engage in what is illegitimate. Rivers will become a hub of industrialisation.”

**Soot lockdown**

Ross speaks on the idea of a lockdown. Hear him: “If you lockdown Port Harcourt for one day, you are going to disrupt the logistics of the whole oil and gas sector for one day. There is a cost to lockdowns and how long can you lockdown? A lockdown is a temporary solution. It is a mitigation measure and it doesn’t solve the problem. The long term measure should be how we stop this, because the era of fossil fuels is coming to an end. We are moving to the era of renewable energy. The long term solution is to identify the Kpo fire operators, legalise and control the trade. It’s a federal responsibility. I like to look at it from a broader perspective. It’s not enough to chase them out of the market. It’s going to be very hard.”

Attempts made to speak with the immediate past Rivers state commissioner for Health Professor Princewill Chike were not successful.

*Ujorha is a freelance journalist.*

# LIVE Healthier

Home  
Remedy  
Alert!

## HONEY AND THYME HERBAL HOMEMADE COUGH SYRUP

### Ingredients

4 cups water  
4 ounces thyme leaf and flower  
(fresh is best, but dried will work)  
1 cup raw, organic honey  
1/4 cup brandy, optional (works  
as a preservative)

### Recipe

• Mix the thyme and water in a pan over low heat. Cover with a lid left slightly ajar, and simmer until the liquid is reduced by half, about 45 minutes.

• Drain the liquid and discard the herbs. Let the mixture cool until just warm, then pour in the honey and liquor (if using). Whisk until smooth. Transfer to a glass bottle, label, and store in the fridge for up to four weeks (without liquor) or four months (with liquor).

Source: <https://wholefully.com/homemade-cough-syrup/>



■ cough syrup in spoon

## A diet rich in plant-based products reduces the risk of cognitive impairment in the elderly

A diet rich in plant products reduces the risk of cognitive impairment and dementia in the elderly. This is the result of a study by the Biomarkers and Nutritional Food Metabolomics Research Group of the Faculty of Pharmacy and Food Sciences of the University of Barcelona (UB) and the CIBER on Frailty and Healthy Aging (CIBERFES).

The paper, published in the journal *Molecular Nutrition and Food Research*, is led by Cristina Andrés-Lacueva, professor at the Faculty of Pharmacy and Food Sciences and head of the Biomarkers and Nutritional Metabolomics of Food Research Group of the UB and the Biomedical Research Network Center in Frailty and Healthy Aging (CIBERFES), which is also part of the Food Innovation Network of Catalonia (XIA).

This European study, part of the Joint Programming Initiative "A Healthy Diet for a Healthy Life" (JPI HDHL), was carried out over 12 years with the participation of 842 people aged over 65 in the Bordeaux and Dijon regions (France).

Metabolomics to study the impact of diet on health

The study analyses the relationship between the metabolism of dietary components, intestinal microbiota, endogenous metabolism and cognitive impairment. As Mireia Urpí-Sardà, from the Department of Nutrition, Food Science and Gastronomy and CIBERFES, notes, "what we analysed in the cohorts



under study is the modulating role of the diet in the risk of suffering cognitive impairment." Urpí-Sardà points out that "the results show a significant association between these processes and certain metabolites."

The results reveal a protective association between metabolites derived from cocoa, coffee, mushrooms and red wine, microbial metabolism of polyphenol-rich foods (apple, cocoa, green tea, blueberries, oranges or pomegranates) and cognitive impairment in the elderly.

The analysis of plasma samples indicated that some metabolites are related to the progression of cognitive impairment and dementia. As Professor Cristina Andrés-Lacueva explains, "for

example, 2-furoylglycine and 3-methylanthine, which are biomarkers of coffee and cocoa consumption, had a protective profile, while saccharin-derived from the consumption of artificial sweeteners- is associated with a damaging role."

Mercè Pallàs, professor at the Faculty of Pharmacy and Food Sciences and member of the Institute of Neurosciences (UBNeuro) of the UB, stresses that "the study of the relationship between cognitive impairment, the metabolism of the microbiota and food and endogenous metabolism is essential to develop preventive and therapeutic strategies that help to take care of our cognitive health."

Dietary changes for a healthy cognitive aging

Therefore, changes in lifestyle and diet are decisive as a strategy to prevent cognitive deterioration and its progression in neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's and other dementias. "A higher intake of fruits, vegetables and plant-based foods provides polyphenols and other bioactive compounds that could help reduce the risk of cognitive decline due to ageing," says Cristina Andrés-Lacueva.

Teams from the Department of Pharmacology, Toxicology and Therapeutic Chemistry of the Faculty of Pharmacy and Food Sciences, and the Department of Genetics, Microbiology and Statistics of the Faculty of Biology have also participated in the study. The University of Bordeaux and the INRAE Center of the University Clermont-Ferrand (France), King's College London (United Kingdom), the University of Amsterdam (Netherlands) and the Paracelsus Medical Private University (Austria) have also collaborated in the study. The research has received funding from the International Joint Programming Actions PCIN-2015-229, from the European Regional Development Funds (ERDF) and from the former Ministry of Economy, Industry and Competitiveness (MINECO), through the Joint Programming Initiative "A Healthy Diet for a Healthy Life."

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

## Child abuse and neglect linked to early death in adulthood

Children who experience sexual or physical abuse or are neglected are more likely to die prematurely as adults, according to a new study analysing data from the 1950s to the present by researchers at UCL and the University of Cambridge.

The study, published in *BMJ Open*, found that adults who reported experiencing sexual abuse by the age of 16 had a 2.6 times higher risk of dying in middle age -- that is, between 45 and 58 -- than those who did not report sexual abuse.

Adults who reported experiencing physical abuse by 16, meanwhile, had a 1.7 times higher risk of premature death, while those who experienced neglect -- assessed using questionnaire responses gathered from parents and teachers of respondents during childhood -- had a 1.4 times higher risk.

The researchers also looked at the link between early-life socioeconomic

disadvantage and early death. They found that those who were disadvantaged at birth (that is, those whose father's job was classed as unskilled manual labour) had a 1.9 times higher risk of premature mortality than other socioeconomic groups.

The study was based on data from 9,310 people born in 1958 who are part of the 1958 National Child Development Study, a nationally representative birth cohort study.

First author Dr Nina Rogers, who led the work while at UCL and is now at the University of Cambridge, said: "Our work shows the long-lasting consequences that specific types of child abuse and neglect can have. The findings are especially important because these early-life adversities are not uncommon, affecting millions of people in the UK."\*

The researchers examined socioeconomic and health-related



factors that might explain why people who were abused or neglected as children, or who were born at an economic disadvantage, were more likely to die in middle age. They found that smoking appeared to be especially important in explaining mortality among those who were physically abused or neglected, and among those who were economically disadvantaged.

However, none of the examined factors, which ranged from mental health to obesity to risky behaviour such as illegal drug-taking and problem drinking, appeared to account for the higher likelihood of early death for people who experienced sexual abuse as children.

Senior author Dr Snehal Pinto

Pereira (UCL Surgery & Interventional Science) said: "This study is the first to disentangle the independent associations between different kinds of child maltreatment and mortality in adulthood. Importantly, very few studies have

considered the long-term implications of experiencing neglect in childhood. I therefore think our finding that children who are neglected have a 43% higher risk of dying early in adulthood, highlights a critical component of child maltreatment where knowledge of long-term outcomes is particularly sparse."

The prevalence of different early-life adversities among the cohort members included in the study varied from 1.6% (sexual abuse) to 11% (psychological abuse), with 10% classified as socioeconomically disadvantaged in early-life.

At seven and 11 years of age each cohort member's mother and teacher answered questions from which the

researchers were able to deduce if they showed signs of neglect. When cohort members were 45 years old, they were asked questions about whether they had ever experienced sexual, physical or psychological abuse or witnessed abuse of others in their family by the age of 16 years. The researchers then followed the cohort members up for 13 years and deaths were recorded during that time. Psychological abuse and witnessing of abuse of others were not independently linked to higher likelihood of early death.

The work was supported by the US National Institute on Aging (NIA) of the National Institutes of Health, the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and the Medical Research Council (MRC).

\* According to the Office for National Statistics, in 2019 the Crime Survey for England and Wales estimated that one in five adults aged 18 to 74 years experienced at least one form of child abuse, whether psychological abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, or witnessing domestic violence or abuse, before the age of 16 years (8.5 million people).

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

# TAMBARi

## Extra

### CULINARY CORNER



PHOTO: Internet

## Home-made pizza recipe

Compiled by Rosemary Etim Bassey

#### Ingredients

Active dry yeast, bread flour, extra virgin olive oil, tomato sauce (smooth or pureed), firm mozzarella cheese (grated), fresh soft mozzarella cheese (separated into small clumps), parmesan cheese (grated), Feta cheese (crumbled), mushrooms, very thinly sliced if raw, otherwise first sautéed, Bell pepper (stems and seeds removed, very thinly sliced), Italian pepperoncini, thinly sliced, Italian sausage, cooked ahead and crumbled, Sliced black olives, chopped fresh basil, pepperoni, thinly sliced, onions, thinly sliced raw or caramelized

#### Recipe

- Pour warm water in a bowl of a dough mixer, sprinkle some yeast over it and let it sit for five minutes until it has dissolved completely. The yeast will begin to foam to indicate it is still active and has not dissolved.
- Add in flour, salt, sugar, olive oil. Using the

mixing paddle attachment, mix on low speed for a minute. Then replace the mixing paddle with the dough hook attachment. Knead the pizza dough on low to medium speed for about seven to 10 minutes.

- Lace the inside of a large bowl with a thin layer of olive oil and place the pizza dough in the bowl. Make sure to turn it around so it gets coated with the oil. Cover the dough with a plastic wrap. The longer the rising of the dough, the better the flavour of the crust. For a quick rise, place the dough in a warm place for an hour or hour and half.

- Place your pizza pan in the lower third of your oven and preheat the oven to 475°F for at least 30 minutes or an hour preferably. You need to use something that will not twist at high temperatures.

- Take out the plastic cover from the dough, dust your hands with some flour and push the dough so it flattens down a bit. Divide the dough into half. Make two rounds of balls of dough and place in another bowl with a

plastic cover and let seat for 15 minutes.

- Starting with one, take one ball of the dough and flatten it with your hands on a nicely floured surface. Start from the centre and work it outwards, using your fingertips to press the dough to ½ inch thick. Stretch the dough until it can stretch no more.

- Use your fingertips to press down and create dents on alongside the surface of the dough. Brush the top of the dough with olive oil to prevent the dough from getting soggy from toppings. Let sit for another 10-15 minutes. Repeat with the second ball of dough.

- Spread the tomato all over the dough, sprinkle on some cheese and add your desired topping. Be careful not to overload with many toppings so the dough doesn't become soggy.

- Bake pizza in the oven at 475°F, until the crust is brown and the cheese is golden for about 10 to 15 minutes. If you desire, towards the end of the baking time, you can sprinkle a little more cheese.

## Hello, there

While wishing you a prosperous New Year, I urge you to start it with positivity and embrace optimism with an open heart. It is our wish that the year is going to be filled with joy, laughter, achievements and wins for you. To kick off the year, allow us to entice you with a simple recipe of homemade pizza and watermelon and cucumber and lime juice.

Also, you can never get tired of sewing Ankara styles because you will always need them. Head over to our female fashion where we will be showcasing lovely styles you should add to your wardrobe this season. Our men's fashion will be showing off different haircut styles for the elite man.

People with dark underarms often find it uncomfortable to wear sleeveless clothes. Nonetheless, our beauty section will be giving out tips on how to get rid of dark underarms.

Until next week, stay safe and have a fulfilling New Year.

Editor

**Amina Alhassan**

*aminaalhassan@dailytrust.com*

## Stay safe!

## Watermelon, cucumber & lime juice



This is a perfect fruit blend that can be served to both adults and kids. It is also a good replacement for fizzy drinks at home.

#### Ingredients

Watermelon, cucumber, lime, ice cubes

#### Recipe

- Cut and blend watermelon, cucumber and lime to a pulp.
- Using a mesh strainer, drain the juice from the pulp and set aside. You can use a wooden stick to stir the pulp until all the juice is out.
- Serve in a glass with ice cubes or leave in the freezer to chill.

## HEALTHY LIVING

### Symptoms & causes of migraines

Migraines, although similar to headaches, are actually more severe. A migraine can be defined as a common neurological disease that brings about a variety of symptoms, most particularly a throbbing, pulsing headache on one side of your head. Migraines are likely to worsen with physical activity, light, sounds or smell. They may last at least four hours or even days.

The primary symptom of migraine is headache. The pain is often defined as pounding or throbbing. It sometimes starts as a dull ache that worsens into a pulsing pain that is mild, moderate or severe. The pain can shift from one side of your head to the other and can affect the front of your head, the back of the head and

in some severe cases, the whole head is affected. Other symptoms of migraine include nausea and vomiting, stomach upset and abdominal pain, sensitivity to light, noise and odours, feeling tired, dizziness and blurred vision. Migraines are often triggered by:

- Emotional stress: This is one of the primary triggers of migraine. When an individual is under stress, certain chemicals in the brain are released to deal with the situation. The release of this can lead to a migraine. Emotions such as anxiety, excitement and worry can increase muscle tension and dilate blood vessels which can worsen your migraine.

- Skipping meals: Skipping a meal and staying for a long time often leads to having a

migraine; which is why it is commonly said that breakfast is the most important meal of the day.

- Exposure to light: continuous exposure to flashing lights, fluorescent lights, tv or computer lights and even sunlight can often lead to a migraine. Health experts have advised that not to spend too much time in front of the computer because of the head and eyes.

- Hormonal changes in women: Migraines in women are



more common during their menstrual periods. The sudden drop in oestrogen that triggers the menses can also lead to having a migraine. Migraines tend to worsen during puberty and menopause due to oestrogen fluctuations.

Source: <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/5005-migraine-headaches>

# Ankara style collection Vol 1

Compiled by Rosemary Etim Bassey

Ankara will never go out of style; they will always be played with to create new designs. They

can be mixed with different materials such as lace, chiffon and will still look unique. Whether an English or a traditional outfit, you can always feel safe when choosing Ankara.



# Haircut styles

Compiled by Rosemary Etim Bassey

You can tell a lot by the kind of haircut a man keeps. Haircuts are a very defining factor for men of style. If you decide to keep

dreadlocks, make sure to keep them neat always. If you're carrying an afro, make sure it's always combed and conditioned. A tacky hairdo with a nice outfit will still have you looking irresponsible.



## ETIQUETTE

### Simple cough etiquette



Compiled by Rosemary Etim Bassey

Cough etiquette can simply be explained as hygiene practices individuals should maintain in order to prevent the passing on of respiratory infections such as cold and flu to people around them. In the light of COVID-19 pandemic and its new strain of variants, it is important that one goes through these guidelines in order to reduce the spread of the virus.

Simple cough rules to live by include:

A. Cover cough and sneeze: Every time you want to cough or sneeze, make sure to cover your nose and mouth properly. If possible, use a disposable tissue to do so. If a cough or sneeze creeps up on you when a tissue isn't readily available, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve. This will prevent your hands from becoming contaminated with cold or flu viruses.

B. Dispose contaminated products immediately: Make sure to dispose of every single use tissue immediately after you cough or sneeze. Be sure to keep a waste bin near you if you are stuck in the bed with a flu, instead of littering your contaminated tissue around. If you don't have a bin, a plastic bag will suffice. If you happen to sneeze or cough on top of a surface such as a desk or laptop, wipe it off immediately with a disposable disinfectant wipe to remove the germs.

C. Keep your hands clean: For every time you cough or sneeze, make sure to wash your hands for at least 15-20 seconds after. Wash your hands right after you come in contact with contaminated objects or surfaces. In the absence of soap and water, use alcohol-based hand sanitising products that contain at 60 per cent alcohol. These products also help in getting rid of flu and germs from contaminated hands.

D. Avoid touching your face: When suffering from a cold or flu, avoid touching our face with your hands especially if they've come in close contact with contaminated surfaces and objects. Touching the face gives way to cold and flu viruses to enter the mucous membranes of the nose and eyes and cause an infection.

E. Avoid close contact with individuals: if you find yourself suffering from a cold or flu, try to stay away from work, school, religious centres and other places that are most likely to be filled with crowd. If you feel the need to go to any of these places, avoid close contact with others. Try not to shake hands and stand at least one metre away from the people around.

# Getting rid of dark underarms

Compiled by Rosemary Etim Bassey

Often times, a lot of people with dark underarms tend to be embarrassed about it. It keeps some people from putting on sleeveless clothes, wearing bath suits in public and also participating in sports. Similar to skin blemishes and discolouration on other parts of the body, having dark underarms can lead to lack of confidence and low self-esteem.

Dark underarms are usually caused by many reasons such as deodorants and antiperspirants (chemical irritants), shaving (irritation and abrasion), lack of exfoliation, friction from tight clothes, smoker's melanosis (hyperpigmentation caused by smoking), hyperpigmentation (increased melanin), acanthosis nigricans (often a sign of diabetes, obesity, or abnormal hormone levels), erythrasma (bacterial infection), melasma (dark patches on skin) and Addison's disease (damaged adrenal gland).

Dark underarms can be cleared through different remedies, both natural, physical and medical. A few of them are:

·Change your brand of deodorant/antiperspirant: If you find your underarms getting irritated by your deodorants, you can simply change, or better, switch to a natural alternative such as baking soda, apple cider and vinegar.

·Stop shaving: If shaving causes you to have dark underarms, try waxing or have a laser hair removal instead.

·Exfoliate more: try as much as possible to exfoliate your underarms. You can use bath salt or exfoliating scrubs at least two to three times a week.

·Potatoes: Grate a potato and squeeze the juice from it. Apply the juice to your armpits and leave for 10 minutes. Rinse with cool water.

·Cucumber: Cut cucumbers in thick slices and rub them on the dark areas of your underarms. After 10 minutes, rinse your armpits with cool water.

·Lemon: Cut lemons in thick slices and rub them on the dark areas of your underarms. After 10 minutes, rinse your armpits with cool water. Once dry, apply moisturiser.

·Orange peel: Mix 1 tablespoon of milk, rose water and enough powdered orange peel to make a thick paste. Mildly scrub your armpits with

the mixture and leave it on for 15 minutes. Rinse after with cool water and repeat two or three times per week.

·Turmeric: In a small bowl, mix two tablespoons of fresh lemon juice with enough turmeric to form a paste. Apply the mixture evenly to the armpit and leave on for 30 minutes. Rinse with cold water.

·Egg oil: Right before bedtime, massage some egg oil into your armpits. In the morning, wash armpits with pH-balanced body

wash or soap.

·Coconut oil: Massage few drops of coconut oil on your underarms, after 15 minutes, wash your underarms with warm water and a mild soap. Repeat these process two or three times a day.

·Tea tree oil: In a small spray bottle, mix five drops of tea tree oil with eight ounces of water. Spray mixture on your armpit and allow it to dry off naturally. Do this every day, after drying off following a bath or shower.



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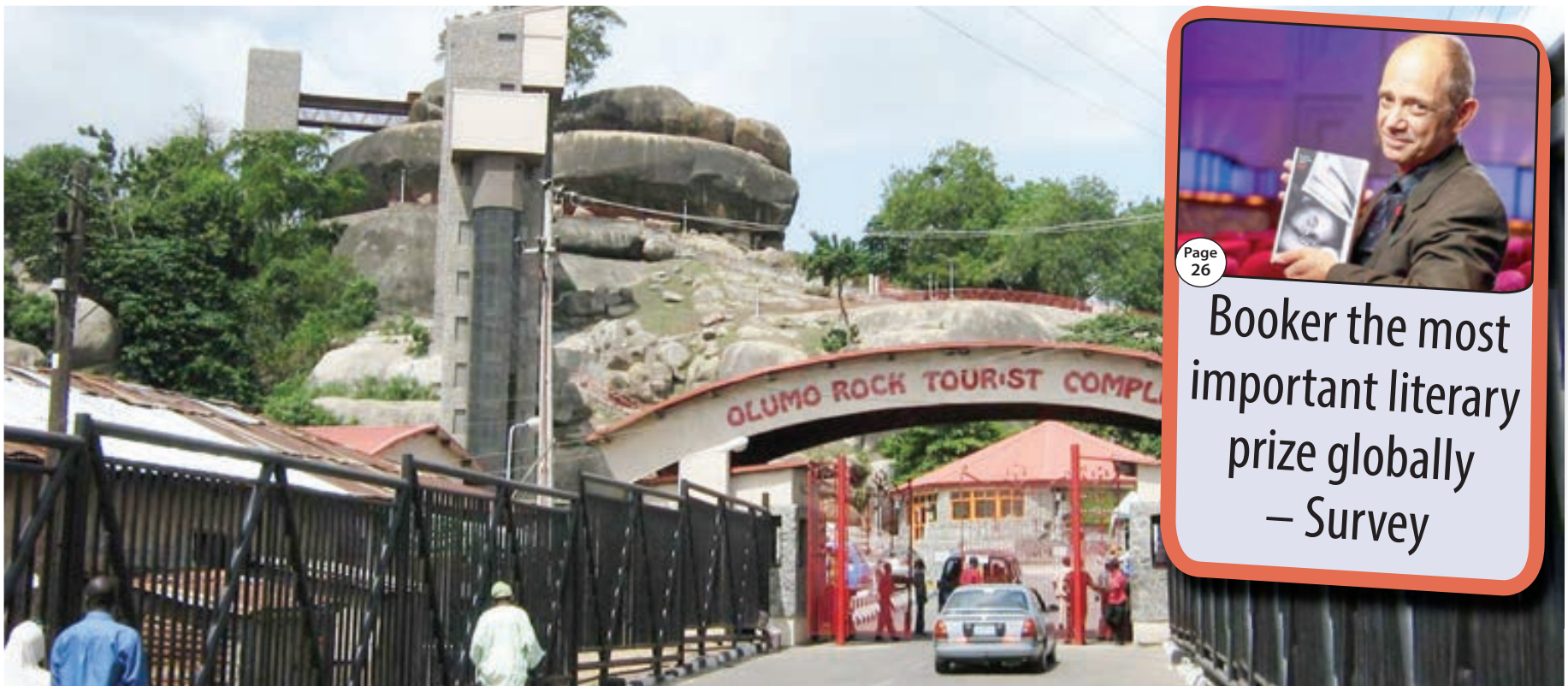
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Page 26  
 Booker the most important literary prize globally – Survey



The art industry witnessed yet another year filled with triumphs in 2021 despite challenges. While the industry is yet to fully recover from the COVID-10 pandemic of 2020 due to some restrictions in 2021, stakeholders in the industry will hope to experience a better 2022.

By Taiwo Adeniyi

**Return of looted Benin artefacts**

This was a significant occurrence in the art industry globally. Though a major breakthrough for Nigerians, it is of more importance to Art history globally. The return of the looted Benin artefacts followed

years of advocacy from and outside the country.

The Jesus College of the University of Cambridge set the pace for other institutions and governments with the return of looted Benin artefacts. The two repossessed bronze artefacts are Cockerel, "Okpa" and an ancestral head, "Uhunwun Elao" from Jesus College, Cambridge, England and

University of Aberdeen, Scotland, respectively.

Activists and artists globally will be happy to see their efforts pay off, regardless of the number of artefacts already returned.

The deed of transfer of the looted artefacts was signed between the Benin Kingdom and the United Kingdom.

With over 145 artefacts looted

from the palace in 1897 during the British invasion yet to be returned, 2022 could mark the return of some, if not all of the looted artefacts as other countries, including Germany, have made known their desires to return the artefacts to Nigeria.

The artefacts helped in propagating the popularity of the Benin Kingdom and brought the

limelight to the glorious past of the Benin people. The artefacts also represent the culture, tradition and identity of the Benin people and Nigeria.

The looted artefacts made in the 13th century yet to be returned include brass plaques, bronze figures, carved ivory tusks, musical

Continued on page 26



■ Oba of Benin signing the transfer legal deed of the looted Benin artefacts



■ DG National Council for Arts and Culture, Otunba Segun Runsewe

## Events that will shape art industry in 2022

Continued from page 25

instruments, weaving equipment, jewellery and ceramic and coral objects.

### In-person exhibitions, festivals return

The art industry was expected to recover from the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic lockdown in 2021. Some exhibitions and festivals did not hold due to restrictions. The recovery, however, continues in 2022.

Many people in the art industry will remember 2020 for the exhibitions and festivals that were never held, shows that were cancelled and trips that were put off. Last year brought some recoveries, but in 2022, artists shall hope to build on the momentum to improve their lot, especially with the aid of technological advancement.

The lockdown opened up a new vista in the art industry, with people embracing technology to drive their works during the lockdown.

Exhibitions and art festivals are now held virtually and physically, a lesson learnt during the year 2020 lockdown.

The 2021 edition of the Beeta Arts Festival, titled, 'Re-imagine', was held virtually and physically in Abuja, leading to a convergence of African arts with presentations from Kenya, Uganda, Mauritius, Ethiopia, Egypt and Tunisia.

More festivals are expected to take a similar format in 2022, transiting to a borderless pool of ideas generation to the benefit of the stakeholders in the industry.

A Benue-based artist, Desrey-Hope Okpanachi, also expressed hope that art would dominate in 2022, adding her desire for people to see art better, appreciate it better and be better aware of its importance and contribution to the society.

"This will keep artists sane to some great degree. I hope for more support and appreciation and contribution from the public. So as artists we can be inspired to stay resilient and speak what we must," she said, adding that Nigerian artists should be supported and encouraged.

Chike Emembo, an Abuja-based art entrepreneur, corroborated Okpanachi in a recent interview with Daily Trust on Sunday. Emembo, who is also the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) branch chairman of the Society of Nigerian Artists (SNA), said institutions could help the artists.

"Artists do not mind committing hours to their works. I have a passion to see people succeed in this art we are doing. You do not want to leave a bad image for upcoming generations," he said, urging artists to explore a means of turning their passion into wealth.

### Is it the year tourism strives in Nigeria?

Nigeria has more than 15 museums and more than 40 tourist centres. The Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove and Sukur Cultural Landscape are recognised by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) as world heritage centres.

A world heritage site is a unique landmark, which is geographically and historically identifiable, and has special cultural or physical significance with legal protection by the international convention

administered by UNESCO.

Fourteen sites in Nigeria, including Oban Hills, Niger Delta Mangroves, Gashaki-Gumpti National Park, Idanre Hill, Alok Ikom Stone Monoliths and Lake Chad Cultural Landscape are on the tentative list of the UNESCO world heritage centre. Despite the number of tourist attractions, tourism is yet to contribute significantly to Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

The United Nations Development Programme said Africa had the world's second fastest growing tourism sector in 2019, adding that 70million international tourists visited Africa, and tourism brought about US\$170billion to the continent's gross domestic product in 2019.

With the reappointment of Otunba Segun Runsewe as the director-general of the National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC), and Mr Folorunso Coker as director-general, Nigeria Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) by President Muhammadu Buhari in 2021, more would be expected from them in transforming the sector.

Top government agencies must find ways of transforming the country's tourism potentials to tangible benefits to the people. The collaboration of these agencies, including the National Commission for Museums and Monuments and the National Gallery of Art, is crucial to turning tourism into the 'new oil' in Nigeria.



■ Desrey-Hope Okpanachi

## Booker the most important literary prize globally – Survey

By Taiwo Adeniyi

Booker is the most important literary prize in the world, a survey conducted by Nielsen Book states.

The international survey showed publishers, writers, booksellers and media rank Booker Prize ahead of Pulitzer.

The survey was conducted in 2020 and repeated in 2021, and showed that the Booker and the Pulitzer were best known, followed by the Costa, British Book Awards, and Women's Prize for Fiction in the UK, and the National Book Awards and Newbery Prizes in the US.

The Booker came out top internationally as Booker received the highest "importance rating" of the awards, in both years receiving the highest importance rating of the awards tested over UK/Ireland respondents, but trailing behind the Pulitzer, National



■ Damon Galgut, winner of the 2021 Booker Prize for fiction

Book Award and Newbery among US respondents.

Nielsen also found that among publishers and writers, the potential impact on sales remained the most important factor in choosing to submit to a prize, over domestic or international status.

## Skits making takes youths off streets – Daramola



From Christiana T. Alabi, Lagos

The convener of the Nigeria Skits Industry Festival and Awards, Bimbo Daramola, has said many Nigerian youths are gainfully employed and also creating employment through skits.

Rising from taking video pictures off their phones and mobile devices, skit makers now have modern production equipment and editing suites, where a lot derive their livelihood and feed their families from.

Some of the popular skit makers in Nigeria are Broda Shaggi, Taooma, Brain Jotter, Cute Abiola, Pastor Remote, Nas Boy, Lasisi Elenu, Bae U, Ikorodu Bois and Woli Agba, among others.

Daramola stated that the huge usage of data in Nigeria today is also traceable to the exponential growth in the number of

Nigerians who are skit makers and have been taken off the streets.

In recognition of the creativity and efforts put in by this set of people, Daramola had planned the maiden edition of Nigeria Skits Industry awards, which was initially scheduled to hold on December 12, 2021, but was postponed due to the death of the creative director and vice chairman of the Awards Council, Mr Joshua Olorunfemi.

"This is the minimum we can do for such a good and resourceful man who gave all of himself to this initiative. Indeed, on his sickbed he was still churning out designs and giving his intelligent input. He would be sorely missed. One assurance is that the logo of this project, alongside the entire idea, will forever be part of the enduring statements and contributions of this great Nigerian," Daramola said.

## Betty White dies, 3 weeks away from 100th birthday

Comedic actress, Betty White, who capped a career of more than 80 years by becoming America's geriatric sweetheart after Emmy-winning roles on television sitcoms, "The Golden Girls and The Mary Tyler Moore Show," died on Friday, less than three weeks away from her 100th birthday.

The agent, Jeff Witjas, told the People magazine that, "Even though Betty was about to be 100, I thought she would live forever." No cause was cited.

In a youth-driven entertainment industry where an actress over 40 faces career twilight, White was an anomaly who was a star in her 60s and a pop culture phenomenon in her 80s and 90s.

Playing on her eminent likability, White was still starring in a TV sitcom, "Hot in Cleveland," at age 92 until it was cancelled in late 2014.

White said her longevity was a result of good health, good fortune and loving her work.

"It is incredible that I am still in this business and that you are still putting up with me," White said in an appearance at the 2018 Emmy Awards ceremony, where she was honoured for her long career. "It is incredible that you can stay in a career this

long and still have people put up with you. I wish they did that at home," she added.

She was great at defying expectation. She managed to grow very old and somehow, not old enough. We will miss you, Betty," former costar and friend, Ryan Reynolds wrote in a Twitter post.

Minutes after news emerged of her death, US President Joe Biden told reporters, "That's a shame. She was a lovely lady." His wife, Jill Biden said, "Who didn't love Betty White? We are so sad about her death."

The Associated Press voted her the Entertainer of the Year in 2010, and a 2011 Reuters/Ipsos poll found that White, then 89, was the most popular and trusted celebrity in America with an 86 per cent favourability rating. (Reuters)



■ Betty White

**FOREVER IN OUR HEART**

# One Year Remembrance

OF A GEM OF INESTIMABLE VALUE, A FATHER, BROTHER, GRAND FATHER.

ONE YEAR HAS PASSED TODAY, 2ND JANUARY, 2022.

AS IF IT WAS YESTERDAY, BUT WE ARE CONSOLED THAT YOU ARE WITH GOD ALMIGHTY.



**Mr. VICTOR TUMBA VANDI**

(Marafa)

12th Dec, 1958 - 2nd Jan, 2021

**Lovingly remembered by:**

Mrs Margaret Paul Wanje (Daughter)

**Grand Children:**

Martina Natawa Wanje

Victor Dlama Wanje

Paul Mbursa Wanje



## FEATURE



PHOTOS: Hassan Ibrahim

Some displaced youths from Gwoza hawking cow meat at Kasuwan Shanu, Maiduguri

## How we survive outside IDPs camps – Borno youths

From Hassan Ibrahim, Maiduguri

Some youths displaced by Boko Haram insurgents, who chose not to stay at Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps, have said they engage in hard labour and hawking in Maiduguri, the Borno State capital, to make ends meet on a daily basis.

40-year-old Abubakar Umar, who was seen splitting firewood with an axe at Kasuwan Shanu, said he was displaced from Barawa village in Gwoza Local Government Area of the state, adding that it is better to use his strength to feed than live in any displaced persons' camp.

Umar said, "Splitting firewood is a legitimate means of earning a living with dignity. I make from N2,000 to N5,000 per day, depending the quantity of firewood. Sometimes I make up to N8,000 if we get a contract to fell a tree as a team. Between three and five persons charge up to N20,000

to fell a tree. Sometimes we get like N7,000. We cut it into smaller sizes.

"I have spent almost eight years in this job; and I am happy that Allah blessed me with it as a source of livelihood. No one owes me money. It is better than cheating, stealing or buying things on credit. It is good to find something legitimate to do to earn a living.

"I make a lot of money from cutting firewood. I am comfortably taking care of my family and other needs. I have a wife and eight children, and all of us get food and essential items. I also pay house rent and the school fees of my children without much stress.

"I thank God for giving me the health and strength to do this job. The only thing I need is a good axe. It is good to use your good health to generate income and train your children to become good members of the society."

He continued; "I started this job after Boko Haram raided our village and we moved to Maiduguri as refugees. We did not allow that

unfortunate incident to kill our mindset. Sometimes, if the job is not forthcoming as a result of scarcity of firewood, I also engage in bricklaying and any other hard labour to feed my family. This job has helped me in many capacities.

"My major target is to raise capital for a more profitable business because, as I am growing older, I need to have a better means of livelihood."

Corroborating Umar's story, another displaced person from Barawa, Ibrahim Musa said, "We decided not to stay at the IDP camp because we didn't want our hearts and morals to die. That's why we formed a team and our leader resolved to venture into firewood trade. From there, he started loading it in trucks to the abattoir section of Kasuwan Shanu.

"When we joined the business, I and my colleague used to get between N700 and N1,000 per day. Gradually, the profit kept increasing while other opportunities emerged, such as

loading firewood in trucks and trailer. Thirty minutes ago, our boss travelled to Bauchi to source for firewood because there are not many forests in Borno. The places we get firewood from are Buni Yadi and Bauchi."

"We want to return home, but the security situation is not conducive, so we are praying that government would defeat the insurgents so that we can go home and continue our major source of livelihood, especially farming and rearing livestock.

"We make efforts to pay school fees for our children because we cannot allow them to grow without good education. We also pay little revenue to officials of the market," Musa said.

Also, a 30-year-old man, Muhammed Haruna Arawa, who was displaced from Pege in Gwoza Local Government Area and now hawking cow meat at Kasuwan Shanu as a means of livelihood, told *Daily Trust on Sunday* that he preferred making efforts to feed himself than beg or depend on someone else.

He said, "We the people of Gwoza are not used to idleness, begging or thuggery and other forms of cheating or stealing. The youths are trained to fend for themselves through any legitimate trade. Majority of us are farmers and butchers, but the activities of Boko Haram displaced us from our ancestral homes and we decided to embrace this trade to earn a living. We cannot sit down waiting for someone to give us money or food.

"We buy from 10 kilograms of cow meat. And sometimes we come together and buy 200 kilograms and share among ourselves every day to sell. I make between N2,000 and N3,500 a day, depending on sales.

"Our parents had told us that it is better to die than steal, so no matter how small or inferior the business is, it is better than stealing. And God has given us good health and strength to do any kind of legitimate job. You don't need to wait for anyone, you should struggle for your need. If not because of insurgents, nothing else would have forced us to abandon our farming activities. Farming is more profitable, and we were doing it with ease."

Furthermore, a 38-year-old Saleh Abubakar, who was a butcher in his village before he

was displaced said, "I have made a lot of money from this trade. I got married and have four children. I have been selling meat in Kasuwan Shanu for over 9 years. It is through this daily struggle that I feed my family and pay house rent, as well as the school fees of my children.

"Those of us from Gwoza believe that the sweat of other people would not benefit us; that is why we work to earn a living. We believe it is better you kill us than to steal someone's property. We prefer to fend for ourselves and take care of our families.

"We want to go back to our ancestral homes because opportunities there are many. We plead with the Borno State Government to secure our areas so that we can return home," Abubakar said.

Musa Usman, 28, who hails from Bayan Dutse in Gwoza, also said, "It is a disgrace for us to bring yourself down and beg fellow human beings to feed. As a healthy young man I make between N1,500 and N4,000 per day. I use the proceeds of my struggle to pay house rent and the school fees of my children.

"We came from agrarian communities, but the security situation compelled us to take refuge in Maiduguri. We pray and hope to return to our ancestral land soon. Let the government provide the security that would enable us to go back home and continue our farming activities. We know the present administration is working towards taking displaced victims of Boko Haram back home. We are ready to return."

Another displaced person, 47-year-old Adam Muhammad, who was a fisherman in his village but now selling dry grasses at Kasuwan Shanu, said he had no option than to engage in cutting grasses from the bush and selling to traders and farmers rearing cows in Maiduguri.

"I do this job during both rainy and dry seasons. I make between N1,000 and N2,000 per day, depending on sales. However, sometimes when we witness poor sales, we get N500 per day.

"We used to go to Chad to catch fish and sell in Doron Baga, but the activities of Boko Haram insurgents displaced us from the trade. Although some people have started returning to Baga, I did not return due to the fear that the security situation has not improved; but God willing, if peace is restored I will go back and continue my life. It was that condition that forced me to do this job.

"I have a wife and seven children now at Fulaburin Alajeri. I feed my family, pay house rent and the school fees of my children. I am grateful to Allah for sparing my life and giving me good health to go out every day into some farmlands east of Maimalari Barracks to cut grasses for free and bring to the market. Farmers rearing cows and horses are patronising us. This job has been taking care of my family and personal income for the past four years," Muhammad said.



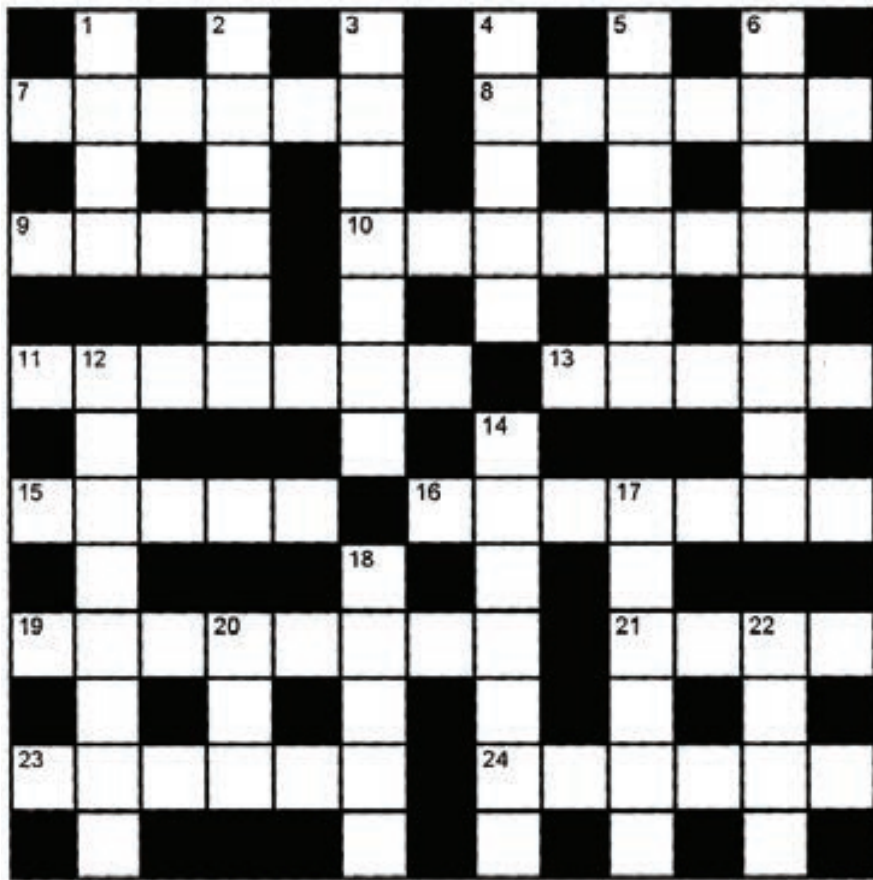
Adam Muhammad, a former fisherman now cutting grasses for sell in Maiduguri



Some displaced youths splitting firewood at Kasuwan Shanu in Maiduguri

Adama Baba's

## CROSSWORDZ No. 347



### CLUES

#### Across

- 7 Trustworthy (6)
- 8 Thin wallpaper under final covering (6)
- 9 Stumble (4)
- 10 Saw in the mind's eye (8)
- 11 Statistical middle point (7)
- 13 Be compatible (5)
- 15 Mentally quick (5)
- 16 The real world (7)
- 19 Makes suitable or ready (8)
- 21 Reset equipment or counter to start point (4)
- 23 Pursued for food or sport (6)
- 24 ConventiOnal, not strange (6)

#### Down

- 1 Having little money or possessions (4)
- 2 The elasticity and hardness of a metal (6)
- 3 Cords on instruments or conditions (7)
- 4 Free from impurities or dirt (5)
- 5 Putting an end to something (6)
- 6 A fixed charge for borrowing money (8)
- 12 Healthy and active (8)
- 14 Individuals, people generally (7)
- 17 Long-bodied reptile (6)
- 18 An equal exchange (5)
- 20 Coal mine (3)
- 22 Not imagined (4)

### TURN UPSIDE-DOWN FOR SOLUTION >>

Check out the solved grid on the right to see if you got it correctly. Please send comments to [addbaba@yahoo.com](mailto:addbaba@yahoo.com)



### Word Search Weather



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

### CLUES

- |            |             |
|------------|-------------|
| BAROMETER  | ICE         |
| BLIZZARD   | LIGHTNING   |
| CELSIUS    | MIST        |
| CLOUDS     | MONSOON     |
| COLD       | OVERCAST    |
| CYCLONE    | RAIN        |
| DOWNPOUR   | SHOWER      |
| DRIZZLE    | SLEET       |
| DROUGHT    | SNOW        |
| FAHRENHEIT | SQUALL      |
| FLOOD      | STORM       |
| FLURRIES   | SUNNY       |
| FOG        | TEMPERATURE |
| FORECAST   | THERMOMETER |
| FREEZE     | THUNDER     |
| FROST      | TORNADO     |
| HAIL       | TSUNAMI     |
| HOT        | TYPHOON     |
| HUMIDITY   | VISIBILITY  |
| HURRICANE  | WINDY       |

### FASTFACT

The coldest place on Earth is Vostok (in Antarctica) and the hottest area is El Azizia (in Libya).



SCRIBBLES by Akila Jibrin

## SUNDAYSUDOKU! <sup>No.</sup> 347

A Sudoku puzzle initially displays a partially filled grid and the aim is to fill each square with a number from 1 to 9. Each number can only appear once in the same row, column or box.

				2		4		
	1	8						2
		5		6	1			
	2		1					3
					7	8		
6			3			9		
	3			8				
	5						3	
9		4				1	8	6

## CAPTION THE CARTOON

Take a good look at the cartoon below and fill in the words that you feel would make it even funnier!



## FASTFACT

The oldest tree is estimated to be about 4600 years old, a bristlecone pine from California.



## Why consumers will pay more for chicken, egg next year

By Vincent A. Yusuf (Abuja), Mahmoud Idris (Katsina), Lami Sadiq (Kaduna), Ibrahim Musa Giginyu (Kano) & Risikat Ramoni (Lagos)

For poultry farmers, the advent of COVID-19 has introduced new dynamics in the industry, which have made prices of both chicken and eggs unpredictable and in the upward curve.

This year, prices of major grains like maize remained high, even at the time of harvest, which is different from what obtained in previous years. Before COVID-19, maize was sold at N90,000 per ton while soybeans cost between N100,000 and N112,000, but the current price of maize is N220,000, while soybeans is up to N440,000 per metric ton in some markets across the country. And many dealers in these crops project a further rise during the off season.

This is going to further strain the cost of egg and meat production, which will also push retail prices of these products higher in the coming months.

Our correspondents across various states reports that farmers and buyers are bracing up for a more difficult season if the current scenario persist.

In Abuja, old layers are sold between N3,500 and N4,000 and crate of eggs N1,900 at the Utako Market. During the Charismas and New Year celebrations, the price of broiler went up to as much as N8,000, and there are reports of higher prices in some markets.



■ Eggs collected from a farm in the outskirts of Abuja

In Kaduna State, the current farm gate price of eggs per crate varies between N1,500 and N1,600, but poultry farmers say the product could be sold as high as between N1,800 and N2,000 at retail price.

Farmers in the state are lamenting that despite being the season for egg sales, they are barely making even due to the weekly price increase of chicken feed.

One of the farmers, Malam Musa

Danyaro, explained that most farms sell eggs at N1,550 per crate while others sell between N1,500 and N1,600. He said the profit margin was not encouraging despite the high cost of eggs. "I am able to break even, but the profit margin is not encouraging at all because of the weekly price increase of chicken feeds," he said.

He added that most farmers are not making profits, and as such are closing

shops. "This is egg season; the patronage is always there during such period, but for me, there is a slight downward change in my booking records."

Ibrahim Hamisu, a resident of Kaduna, told *Daily Trust on Sunday* that a single egg is now sold at N70 and not many people can afford it. He now relies on fish as a cheaper source of protein.

"It is unfortunate that eggs, which used to cost N25, are now sold at N70. Poultry farmers have explained to us that this is due to the high cost of chicken feed because a particular content used in mixing the feed is said to be imported, and with the dollar rising, that has affected chicken feed, and of course, it will affect the price of eggs," he said.

*Daily Trust on Sunday* reports that in Katsina State, eggs, which had been the cheapest source of nutrient to a common man, are now fast becoming unaffordable.

Many consumers said the high cost of eggs, especially at retail level, had made many of them cut down on consumption.

Usman Umar Funtua said that going by the economic situation in the country, a common man is now more concerned about basic food items such as maize, sorghum and rice than eggs.

"A fried egg at teashops now costs not less than N80, which in some months back was N50. The galloping prices of food items have made many of us to keep eggs out of our plan. If one can sustain the provision of basic food

Continued on page 32

### MARKET WATCH

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

#### AGYARAGU MARKET, NASARAWA STATE

Crop	Per/KG	Price (N)
<b>Grains</b>		
Maize	100kg	28,000
Rice paddy	100kg	22,500
Millet	80kg	21,000
Sorghum	100kg	25,000
<b>Oil Seed</b>		
Soybeans	100kg	36,000
Sesame	100kg	55,000
<b>Tubers</b>		
Yam	100PCS medium size	84,000
Cassava	Pick Up Truck	68,000
<b>Legumes</b>		
Groundnut (shelled)	120kg	120,000
Groundnut (Unshelled)	100kg	24,000
Beans	50kg	32,500

#### WADATA MARKET, MAKURDI, BENUE STATE

Crop	Per/KG	Price (N)
<b>Grains</b>		
Maize	100kg	25,000
Rice paddy	100kg	24,000
Millet	100kg	32,000
Sorghum	100kg	28,000
<b>Oil Seed</b>		
Soybeans	100kg	42,000
Sesame	110kg	60,000
<b>Legumes</b>		
Beans (big)	100kg	70,000
Beans (small)	100kg	64,000
<b>Vegetables</b>		
Tomato	big basket	12,000

#### DUTSEN-ALHAJI MARKET, FCT

Crop	Per/KG	Price (N)
<b>Grains</b>		
Maize	(100kg) new	29,000
Beans	(100kg) Old	54,000
Sorghum	(100kg)	32,500
Millet	(100kg) Old	31,500
Rice	(100kg)	60,000
Tomato	(Big Basket)	11,000

#### DAWANAU GRAINS MARKET KANO, KANO STATE

Crop	Per/KG	Price (N)
<b>Grains</b>		
Maize	100kg	25,000
Wheat	100kg	36,000
Rice (milled)	100kg	57,000
Rice (paddy)	80kg	19,000
Millet	100kg	22,000
Sorghum	100kg	22,000
<b>Oil Seed</b>		
Soybeans	100kg	40,000
Sesame	100kg	69,500
<b>Legumes</b>		
Groundnut (unshelled)	100kg	17,000
Groundnut (shelled)	100kg	90,000
beans (old)	100kg	37,000
Beans (small)	100kg	64,000
Tomato	(Big Basket)	10,200

#### BAKORI MARKET, KATSINA

Crop	Per/KG	Price (N)
<b>Grains</b>		
Maize	100Kg	23,000
Millet	100Kg	22,000
Soybeans	100Kg	36,000
Sorghum	100Kg	22,000
White beans	100Kg	37,000
Tomato	Crate	5,000
Wheat	100Kg	30,000

#### IDAH MARKET, KADUNA

Crop	Per/KG	Price (N)
<b>Grains</b>		
Maize	100kg	28,000
Beans	100kg	51,000
Sorghum	100kg	30,000
Millet	100kg	29,000
Rice(milled)	100kg	58,000
Tomato	Big basket	10,000



## 2021: Sweet for crop farmers, bitter for their livestock peers, others

By Vincent A. Yusuf

Since the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020 smallholder crop farmers had never had it so profitable as they witnessed in the last one year. While they were smiling as the prices of crops hit the roof, their counterparts from the livestock sector saw the worst in decades as feeding their animals became difficult.

Many of the livestock farmers have since lost their jobs and investments while others are struggling to survive hoping for better days, but going by the current demand-supply curve and the dynamics of production, it is far from over.

Mr Musa Yohana, a smallholder farmer in Nasarawa State, had never got money like he did in 2021. He cultivated sesame, maize, groundnut, rice and yam.

According to him, he got four bags of 110kg of sesame, 21 bags of groundnut, 29 bags of paddy rice, nine bags of maize, three bags of sorghum and 450 tubers of yam, and that with the current prices of the commodities life is better for him and his family.

Sesame now sells for N58,000 per bag, maize costs N23,000, sorghum N24,000, groundnut (unshelled) is N23,500, while rice is N22,000. If Mr Yohana sells everything, he will realise over N1m; something he had thought was not possible.

The 37-year-old father of three said God had decided to wipe away his tears this year, as he has bought a Bajaj motorcycle at the cost of N380,000 for Okada business during the dry season because they do not have irrigation facilities in his village.



■ Maize pyramid in Funtua

Like Mr Yohana, many crop farmers had it better in the 2021 cropping season even though the cost of production was high.

On the other hand, livestock farmers have been in a difficult situation since April, 2020, when the lockdown was implemented, triggering a sudden rise in the prices of grains and other production ingredients. It got worse during the 2021 season, particularly for many smallholder and medium scale farmers who have low capacity to produce feeds.

Many farmers, particularly poultry farmers, have continued to grapple with the cost of inputs, and many said they did not make profit and were struggling to keep the business going.

The cost of feeds and supplements of top brands like Ultima Feed, New Hope Feed, Chikun Feed, Top Feed, Animal Care Feed, Hybrid Feed, Vital Feed and other livestock feeds have gone up from N2,700 to between N6,200

and N8,400 per 25kg; depending on brand, availability and location.

A smallholder poultry farmer, Mr Austin Ben, said, "Chicken and other animals are living things; you must feed them well otherwise you can't get any good result. But the reality is that the price of their feed does not make keeping them profitable again. You will look at their drugs and other things. Those who are still in it are doing so because farming has become part of them and they cannot leave it. Maybe the big players who have the money have a different experience. But to be honest, small people like us hardly make anything worth the effort."

Besides livestock farmers, consumers and other value chain actors like those using wheat, maize and soybeans struggled to stay in business because of the rising cost curve of the grains. Even crops like cassava witnessed huge price increase never witnessed in the country before.

## Babban Gona 2021 food security white paper highlights major issues

By Baba Martins

Babban Gona, an agricultural support organisation, has blamed the prevailing insecurity and continued food importation for the soaring food prices across the country.

The organisation, in its 2021 edition of the Nigeria Food Security White Paper, declared that the unemployment in Nigeria was one of the root causes of violence which in turn caused chronic food shortages, erratic food supply and price inflation.

The report had it that while overall inflation in the country sat at 17.75 per cent, food inflation moved to 22.28 per cent in May, 2021, compared to 19.56 per cent in December, 2020, adding that Nigeria's heavy reliance on imported food products had contributed to the soaring prices.

The report reads in part: "Between 2020 and 2021 the cost of Nigeria's imported agricultural products went up by 140 per cent, spiking 18.37 per cent in the first quarter of 2021 compared to the last quarter of 2020."

The report added that, "With a booming population, growing inflation, inadequate employment for its youths and rising levels of insecurity and extremism, Nigeria is on the precipice of a food security crisis that requires urgent and immediate attention."

One of the issues compounding the problem, according to an expert, is rural poverty, saying that the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) "2019 Poverty and Inequality in Nigeria" report defines an individual living on less than N137,000 (\$382) per year as living below the poverty line.

The Babban Gona report further reads: "Poverty is especially

severe in rural areas, at 44.9 per cent. An analysis of household food expenditure in 2019 revealed that starchy roots, tubers and plantains, rice, vegetables, fish and seafood, grains and flours were the top food items purchased, accounting for a combined 59.19 per cent of food expenditure and 24.8 per cent of total household expenditure.

"The emergence of socio-political conflicts and insecurity has become a major threat to Nigeria's food security in recent months. Many farmers in rural communities across the country have been deprived of access to their farmlands for fear of either being kidnapped for ransom or being attacked or killed by herders.

"This insecurity in Northern Nigeria has contributed to a rise in migration to cities from 47 per cent to 52 per cent, contributing to a rise in the unemployment rate to 32.5 per cent. Young people lack economic opportunities and sporadic civil unrest worsens poverty and malnutrition.

"These unemployed youths are at risk of being recruited to conduct violent acts perpetuated in different regions in Nigeria. It is our belief at Babban Gona that the best way to disrupt this downward spiral of poverty and violence is to create opportunities for dignified and fulfilling work for the very demographic at the risk of being led astray. The subsequent shift in consumption patterns has contributed to a shift in employment within the food production system: fewer people are working in agriculture while more are working in transport, wholesaling, retailing, food processing and vending, further undermining Nigeria's food production capacity."

## Why consumers will pay more for chicken, egg next year

Continued from page 31

items to his family, I think he should thank God," he said.

Funtua added that retailers now sell a crate of eggs at N1,750 instead of the N900 it was sold last year.

Another consumer, Malam Hassan Idris, said only those whose family members are not many could afford eggs, at least once in a while.

"Sometimes, what is affecting our economy is the number of family members we keep. Even with the increase in price of eggs, a man with a wife and five children can afford it once in a while. Some, out of ignorance, are seeing it as luxury, but egg is a necessity, especially for children and the aged," he said.

Also, Aminu Musa, a poultry farm manager, said high cost of chicken feed gave birth to the increase in the price of eggs in the market.

"Our choices are either to buy the feed from market or mill it in our farms. The latter is less costly and guarantees strict adherence to the required formula. A 25kg bag of chicken mash is now sold

at not less than N4,500 instead of N3,000 months back; same with grower and layer mash that are N4,000 and N6,000 respectively.

Prices of drugs and antibiotics have also gone high. Vitalite and anticosidiosis that were sold at N1,000 and N1,500 respectively are now N2,000 and N3,000 respectively."

Musa added that those who chose to mill the chicken feed were bedevilled with the increasing market price of maize and soybeans, which, as at last week, were sold at N22,000 and N35,000 per 100kg bag respectively.

This, according to him, has made egg production more costly. He, however, said they were making even in the business.

"Some of us that are doing it big are making profit in the business. If you have 3,000 chickens at a point of lay, they will consume 11 bags of feed per day; and everything being equal, we are realising not less than N40,000 profit from the daily sale of egg," he said.

He added that they were selling a crate between N1,350 and N1,450 to dealers, who would later sell to retailers, then consumers.

Another farm manager, Jamilu

Sani, said that apart from the high cost of feeds and farm produce, insecurity had also contributed to the high cost of eggs.

"Many farms have closed due to the level of insecurity in the country, especially in the Kankara, Faskari, Bakori, Sabuwa, Birningwari and Dandume axis, as well as Zamfara State, which were supplying us with the produce," Sani said.

In Kano, a crate of eggs is sold between N1,750 and N1,800. Farmers in the state who spoke with *Daily Trust* on Sunday also

attributed the high cost of the produce to the high cost of poultry feed.

A farmer, Malam Kabiru Hussein, said a day-old chick, which was sold at N150 last year, is now N350.

Similarly, Malam Aminu Buba, who claimed to consume five eggs in his house every day, said he had resorted to soybeans cake as a substitute because he can no longer afford eggs.

Our correspondents in Lagos said that as at Friday when many people were closing their farms, a

crate of eggs was sold at N2,000 (big size) while others cost between N1,800 and N1,900 per crate. Some months ago, a piece of egg cost between N60 and N70 in some areas while it was N80 in some places.

Getting a N50 egg in Lagos is now impossible, except slightly cracked ones.

A poultry farmer, Mr Sesan Ade, said the price of eggs at the moment would not enable him to break even as his customers still insisted on buying at a cheap price. He, however, noted that the patronage had been good as he was able to sell all the eggs in his farm before taking a break for the year.

The prices of broilers and layers have also pushed the price of local chicken up, even though most farmers rear them in free range system without spending money on their feed.

A farmer told *Daily Trust* on Sunday that the price of local chicken had gone up because many people were changing their consumption from the expensive chickens in the farms to local ones, which only very few hitherto sought after.



■ Layers farm

# Nigeria moves to tap from livestock value chain

- Expands FCT dairy plant at Paikon-Kore
- To improve low yielding indigenous cattle breeds

By Hussein Yahaya

Livestock is a vital component of food security and industrial raw materials globally. As a result, nearly all countries strive to sustainably develop their livestock value chain. Even during the COVID-19 disruptions, governments in most parts of the world initiated policies to promote development of livestock.

Relevant statistics have shown that the global dairy market, valued at \$718.9 billion (US) in 2019, is projected to grow to \$1032.7 billion by 2024, at a CAGR of 5 per cent over the forecast period.

*Daily Trust on Sunday*, which has been monitoring the subsector, reports that the global market is primarily dominated by the milk segment, followed by butter and cheese. The yogurt and dairy desserts segments are expected to be the fastest-growing across the world.

In addition, according to the World Health Organisation, the annual meat production was projected to increase from 218.0million metric tonnes from 1997 to 1999 to 376.0million metric tonnes by 2030. This is due to the growing demand for low-fat and high-protein diet across the world.

The statistics above shows that a lot of opportunities exist for foreign exchange generation in Nigeria if the livestock subsector can be optimally developed.

In 2016, Nigeria was recorded as having the third largest livestock population in Africa. Despite this, there is lack of sufficient quantities of animal protein in the diet of the average Nigerian.

A document from the Raw Material Research Development Council (RMRDC) seen by *Daily Trust on Sunday* shows that the domestic supply of animal protein is growing at 1.8 per cent while the overall demand is estimated to rise at 51 per cent.

According to the document, out of the estimated demand of about 1.7 million tonnes of milk, only about 692,570 tonnes were produced locally.

This, the Director-General of the Council, Professor Hussaini D. Ibrahim, said made Nigeria the largest importer of processed milk and other dairy products in West Africa with an estimated expenditure of about \$1.5bn per annum, as the indigenous dairy cattle breeds produce about 2 litres of milk per day.

Professor Ibrahim said this situation was caused by the indigenous breeds of cattle in Nigeria, which are mostly populated by low yielding Zebu, Muturu and Kuribreeds.



Some of the cows at Milky Way Dairy Farm, near Bokkos Plateau State PHOTO: Vincent A. Yusuf

The Kuri and Zebu breeds are kept mainly for dairy and meat production, while the Muturu, humpless breeds are not milked as their small size made them to be perceived as unproductive. Consequently, meat production by local cattle breeds are low.

Kuri, the largest breed, weighs between 500kg and 600kg, with a milk production of about 0.74 and 1.27 litres per cow per day, compared to 20 and 30 litres per cow/day of the exotic breeds. The Bunaji local breed can give between 2.5 litres per cow per day, depending on the season.

The low productivity is associated with low genetic potentials, inadequate feeding, prevalence of diseases, little veterinary care and poor selection and breeding programme. Genetic

improvement of local varieties relies mostly on natural gross breeding. Also, high mortality (20 - 25%) and long calving interval (20 - 26 months) and slow maturation add to these problems.

He said that in view of the importance of optimising livestock value chain for sustainable development, the federal government, through the Council, had initiated a livestock development programme. The programme, he said, aimed at overhauling the livestock value chain from production to marketing. This includes improvement in the cattle breeds for milk, meat and leather production, coupled with industrial utilisation of waste products, such as blood, horns and hoofs.

One of the major projects

embarked on, he added, was the expansion of Federal Capital Territory (FCT) mini dairy plant at Paikon-Kore in the Gwagwalada Area Council, which was initiated inline with the federal government's policy of enhancing traditional livestock productivity, as well as resolving the constant conflicts between farming communities and pastoralists. The project, which he said was handicapped by some technicalities, has been overhauled through collaboration between the RMRDC and other stakeholders.

He said the site now has a milk collection centre, living quarters, solar-powered borehole and generator. A grazing reserve of about 50 hectares of land has been put in and grassed by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture. The United States Agency for

International Development USAID and the RMRDC have prepared a feasibility study for the upstream and downstream components of the project.

The USAID has donated a 1,000 litre milk collection centre with a back-up generator for the project, while the ARD-FCT secretariat has donated a complete building. Also, the RMRDC has renovated the building and installed the milk collection tank. In addition, a total of 408 milk cooperative farmers have been trained on milk hygiene and handling by the RMRDC and USAID.

The second phase of the project is expected to expand the milk collection centre to a mini dairy.

He said the council was working in tandem with the Adamawa State FADAMA III Project, the Adamawa State Agricultural Development and Investment Ltd. (AADIL), Modibo Adama University of Technology (MAUTECH) and Gurin/Mbamba Community Associations to promote the use of artificial insemination techniques for increased production of milk and beef from the filial generation of inseminated cattle and to provide training to artificial inseminators and milk processors.

He said the Council was also collaborating with Kaduna, Niger, Taraba, Kwara and Oyo state governments on the establishment of similar project.

The Council has upgraded the indigenous technology for processing kilishi, a well-known sun-dried meat product that is now popular globally, by removing the drudgery associated with its production through collaboration with the University of Benin and Wilberforce University, USA.

The collaboration, he said, had led to the development of a modern kilishi processing technology. The indigenous technology had been improved on by incorporating dryers, smoking kilns, unit control measures of inputs and high sanitary conditions, to cut production time from 2 to 3 days to less than 10 hours.

Considering the relevance of blood meal to animal feed production, the council, in collaboration with the Department of Animal Science, Faculty of Agriculture, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, developed a vegetable curried blood meal as a raw material for the livestock feeds industry and appropriate techniques for processing of blood into blood meal. Fourteen useful raw materials for the feed mill industry have been produced from abattoir waste and by-products (blood and rumen content). The project, when fully commercialised, will reduce the cost of production of blood meal and the environmental pollution problems arising from abattoir wastes in the country.

Presently, Nigeria has achieved 10 per cent of local content in milk production. The council noted that while progress may be slow, with the dogged resolve by relevant collaborators, the subsector has a very bright future, and will, within the next few years, save the country more than N30bn annually in foreign exchange equivalent, in addition to employment generation and poverty reduction.



Calves in one of the farms

## AGRO SOLUTIONS



## Ways to boost wheat yield

Experts have identified steps you can take to get more from your wheat crop.

**Recognise diseases that erode yield**

Foliar diseases are likely costing more yield than you may think. In 2015, Kansas farmers lost nearly 23 per cent of their crops to wheat diseases, specifically stripe rust (15.4 per cent) and fusarium head blight (3.4 per cent). Both of these can be controlled with mid-season application of fungicides.

Wheat Streak Mosaic Virus (WSMV) wreaked 2.7 per cent of the state's wheat crops, and it must be controlled by management practices. WSMV is vectored by the wheat curl mite which lives on green grass hosts and can zap a field of emerged wheat in the fall. It is imperative that prior to fall planting, you control volunteer wheat and other grassy weeds in order to stop the "green bridge". This helps keep wheat curl mites from attacking new wheat.

**Pay attention to seed populations**

That is one factor in wheat yield determination. Other factors include grains per square foot and individual grain weight. The former is dependent upon the number of grain-bearing tillers. Grain weight, meanwhile, is determined in the last 40 days of the growing season and is trickier to manage. Temperature, moisture availability and plant nutrition all affect grain weight.

Using crop protection products such as fungicides and adequate fertiliser during the growing season can protect maximum yield provided weather is conducive.

**Reduce tillage**

If you have already got good quality and nutritious soil (either through fertilising or crop rotation), do not overdo it with tilling. Leaving the soil as it is will encourage nutrient uptake in wheat.

**Try nitrogen fertiliser**

Using nitrogen rich fertiliser has been shown to improve yield without sacrificing quality, and is a much more efficient choice compared to simple farmyard manure.

**Try green manure**

On fertile soil, you can try using green manure. Pick forage legumes to grow (preventing weeds from emerging) and then turn into the soil to improve structure and act as manure.

**Fungicides**

Farmers in Kansas lost 23 per cent of their wheat crops to fungi wheat diseases in 2015. A simple mid-season fungicide spray can drastically reduce this figure and boost yield.

Sources: *Precision Agriculture and Successful Farming*

## Fish farmers say challenges getting worse

By Seun Adeuyi

Due to serious challenges confronting the aquaculture industry, fish farmers are currently facing intense threats that may force them to go out of business.

One of the factors attributed to this, according to findings by *Daily Trust on Sunday*, is the rising cost of feeds, which cut across all fish species. The other is "irregular prices attached to fish products".

The demand for fish increased approximately from 1.392 million tons to 1.889 million tons between 2004 and 2012, with only 20 per cent of this demand met locally, according to available data.

Based on the great business opportunities in the country's aquaculture, experts claim Nigeria has the potential of 3.2 million tons of fish production with room for expansion, but that due to several challenges, the growth in the sector has been stunted over the years.

Our reporter visited the Kado Fish Market in Abuja. The market is a one-stop hub for fish and other things relating to cooking.

James Idikwu, a fish feeds seller, said the prices of all brands of fish feed had gone up compared to what obtained three years ago.

He said, "In 2019, 2mm of fish feed we sold for N11,000 is now being sold for N22,000. Most factors that make the fish feed

high are the costs of electricity for production, transportation and bad government policies."

Idikwu, therefore, appealed to the federal government to ease access to foreign exchange (forex) for fish farmers and other farmers through the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and other windows, adding that government should also provide waivers to fish feed importers so that Nigerian farmers could get fish feeds at lower rates.

A fish farmer, Joseph Ikechkwu, while noting that aquaculture is growing at a faster rate and the challenges getting bigger, said the high cost of feeds was caused by total dependence on feed importation, adding that

about 80 per cent of the feeds were imported.

He said, "This is one of the things the government should have done, by establishing feed mills. We have raw materials for the establishment of feed mills, but it has not been considered. So, the cost of feeds is taking the highest budget in aquaculture."

"Taking a critical look at agriculture, one can easily access a rice farm if it's 10 hectares or more; it could easily be ascertained. That also goes for livestock, the number of the animals can be counted, but for aquaculture, the fish grows in the water and nobody sees it, fish farmers are underrated, that's why we don't get assistance in terms of loans."



■ A fish farm

## Biosafety agency gives scorecard on effort to boost food security

By Baba Martins

The Director General (DG) of the National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA), Rufus Ebegeba, has said that one of the mandates of the agency is to use available technology to increase production and assist the federal government in meeting its food security mandate.

Addressing journalists during the end of the year media chat in his office, Ebegeba disclosed that the agency had faced so many challenges in the discharge of its duties within the year, but that they were committed to assisting the federal government in meeting its set target of food security.

The DG listed some of the challenges as the lockdown occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic, poor funding, activism by Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) leading to litigations, insufficient vehicles for operational activities, among others.

However, the NBMA boss said despite the challenges they had been able to release at least three Genetically Modified Organism (GMO) products for commercial purposes: cotton, cowpea and maize.

He said many others were within the stage of confined field trial, adding that any product that was approved by the agency had been certified safe for the public.

Ebegeba also explained that Tela maize will save farmers up to N268b annually on insecticides as the number of times insecticides would be applied would be reduced from 10 to just once or twice, a development he said would also eliminate health hazards associated with spraying.

He said, "We are an enforcement agency; it is to tell Nigerians that any product we release and approve for the public is safe. To ensure that risk assessment is carried out, so that before these products are released we are sure they are safe for the

environment. Our responsibility is not necessarily to convince the Nigerian public on GMOs, but to assure them that these products are safe, no need to worry, panic and also to ensure that the government's effort in food security is met.

"Farmers spend a lot of money purchasing chemicals, like the Tela maize, once it is in the market, instead of spraying up to 10 times, you will not spray more than once or twice, so it has reduced the amount of money used. There is also the health implication in spraying these chemicals. Some of the farmers fall sick and use more money to buy drugs; all these are reduced. So at the end of the day a lot of money is being saved."

"Three commercial products are now out, cotton, cowpea and maize, but for the confined field trial we have cassava. Let me say that confined field trials are experimental fields, many times they may succeed and at times may not."

## New bird flu could be 2022's pandemic, Israeli experts warn

Israel's National Security Council (NSC) has assumed control of a massive bird flu outbreak in Galilee, which scientists warn could become a "mass disaster" for humans.

Over half a billion migrating birds pass through the area every year, heading for warm African countries or balmy European summers, making this a catastrophic location for a

major bird flu outbreak - right at the nexus of global avian travel.

The virus can be deadly if it infects people. The World Health Organization (WHO) has said more than half of the confirmed 863 human cases it had tracked since 2003 proved fatal. Most strains or variants of avian flu, H5N1, are relatively difficult to transmit to people.

"It is the ability of "these

viruses to mutate into new strains that poses such a threat as we have seen with the coronavirus (COVID-19).

"There could be a mutation that also infects people and turns into a mass disaster," said Yossi Leshem, a zoologist at Tel Aviv University and Director of the International Centre for the Study of Bird Migration at Latrun.

So far, at least 5,400 wild cranes have died infected with the new H5N1 avian flu, which Israeli authorities fear could expand into a global emergency.

Of the 30,000 Eurasian cranes passing this winter at the Hula Nature Reserve, 17 per cent are dead, and scientists fear the worst for their surviving lot, at least 10,000 of which appear to be ailing. The infection of the

cranes is the same strain of avian flu which infected chickens throughout Northern Israel and led to the cull in recent days of nearly one million birds.

Israelis will be without their beloved chicken schnitzel - and without eggs - until a supply chain of imported birds is established.

Source: *Yahoonews*

# INSIDEPOLITICS

## How Kwankwaso's brother's death, Shekarau's daughter's wedding changed Kano's political calculation



■ Governor Abdullahi Umar Ganduje



■ Senator Ibrahim Shekarau



■ Senator Rabiu Kwankwaso

From Clement A. Oloyede & Zahraddeen Yakubu Shuaibu, Kano

Two events — death and marriage — in the past few days, have changed the political calculation in Kano ahead of the 2023 elections, such that some analysts are seeing it as the dawn of a new era.

The demise of Alhaji Inuwa Kwankwaso, Senator Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso's younger brother, and the wedding of the daughter of Senator Ibrahim Shekarau, both former governors of the state, are said to have brought an unexpected unity among three hitherto estranged political leaders in Kano State since 1999.

Kwankwaso and Shekarau both governed the state for eight years each, while the current governor, Abdullahi Umar Ganduje, is 17 months away from completing his second term.

Notably, the two former governors have a lot in common as far as Kano and Nigeria are concerned, beyond presiding over the affairs of the country's commercial centre. While Kwankwaso served as minister of defence under the administration of former President Olusegun Obasanjo, Shekarau was the minister of education during the tenure of Goodluck Jonathan.

Similarly, Kwankwaso represented the Kano Central senatorial district in the National Assembly between 2015 and 2019, a position currently occupied by Shekarau.

Also, both men are considered among the strongest politicians and power brokers in Kano politics, and are highly respected, with very huge and dedicated followers.

This probably accounts for the emergence of Shekarau as governor of Kano State in 2003, when he denied Kwankwaso his first attempt to complete his eight years as governor.

Since then, the politics of Kano has been hugely divided between these powerful gladiators. And the current governor, Dr Abdullahi Umar Ganduje had always been Kwankwaso's ally since 1999 until they fell

apart after the 2015 elections that ushered in the 'Gandujiyya' factor in the terrain.

Ganduje served as Kwankwaso's deputy for eight years and was also with him when he was minister of defence.

But since they both fell apart, animosity has been the order of the day. While Ganduje and Kwankwaso rarely attacks each other's personality, their supporters have never held back the sword of words against, leading many to believe they are playing their leaders' cards.

As such, when the death of Alhaji Inuwa Kwankwaso was announced and the former governor started receiving many visitors, several of such visitations, including the ones from Governor Ganduje and Senator Shekarau, raised eyebrows.

While Ganduje visited his former boss on December 21, Shekarau visited two days later, a day before the wedding fatiha of his daughter.

*Daily Trust on Sunday* reports that during Ganduje's visit, the former governor invited him to the grave of his father, Musa Saleh Kwankwaso, located within his Bompai residence, where a special prayer was offered.

After the prayer, which took place in the presence of many loyalists from both sides, the two political gladiators were left alone for a private talk for some minutes.

Later on, the governor, in an interview with Radio France International, indicated his readiness to reconcile with Kwankwaso, admitting that the feud between them was nothing but the handiwork of political miscreants.

Also, while featuring on the *BBC Hausa*, Kwankwaso expressed happiness over the condolence visit by his successor.

"I am very happy that he (Ganduje) came to condole with me; it is very good for all of us. We are in politics for nothing but to serve people, we are not into politics of bitterness or to harm anyone. That is the main reason I joined politics.

"What I want you to understand is that

nobody will play a great role in producing a governor and later say he does not like that person or his government. However, if you find that you are not needed in that government, it is better for you to step aside, hold onto yourself and just watch.

"We thank God; and I know that many people will be happy that he came. What is happening is just politics, and I hope that one day it would come to pass. I hope that what is happening at state and national levels of politics would turn out to be the best for us," he said.

Apart from politicians, a huge percentage of business and religious leaders, as well as other groups that are regarded as being pivotal to Kano politics and policies, also visited the former governor.

Notable among the prominent businessmen from the state seen at Kwankwaso's residence were Alhaji Auwalu Abdullahi Rano, the chief executive officer of A A Rano; Alhaji Isah Gerawa, the chairman, Gerawa Oil Mill; Alhaji Abdulmuminu Yakubu Maishanu, the chief executive officer of AYM Shafa Oil Limited; Alhaji Muhammad Abubakar Maifata, chairman, Umza International Farms Ltd; Alhaji Abdulmunaf Yunusa Sarina, chairman, Azman Air Services Limited, and Alhaji Aliko Bebeji, chief executive officer, Aliko Oil.

From the political scene, all the 44 local government chairmen, led by Murtala Sule Garo, commissioner for local government affairs in Kano State, as well as members of the Kano State House of Assembly, led by Speaker Hamisu Ibrahim Chidari, and former secretary to the state government under Kwankwaso, Rabiu Suleman Bichi, an engineer, who is now a major power broker under Ganduje, also paid condolence visits to the Kwankwasiyya leader.

Notably, Kwankwaso's residences, both in Kano and Abuja, have been receiving many visitors across all sectors.

**Kwankwaso gives out Shekarau's**

**daughter in wedding**

On December 24, Kano residents and observers were surprised when they not only saw Kwankwaso at the wedding fatiha of Halima Ibrahim Shekarau and Adamu Yusuf Maitama, but the former governor was the one that gave out the bride.

Is political truce in the offing?

With the recent happenings in the Kano political environment, residents and analysts are already looking ahead for a new era.

A political observer, Ibrahim Musa Hamshaki, told *Daily Trust* on Sunday that the three political leaders were in need of one another to be successful, but leadership struggle may never allow them to unite.

"The three camps are all in need of one another, but they can't be at the same place because all of them want to be on top. I think the most affected in this is the sitting governor because there's one advantage the other camps have over him. They have the masses. Everybody knows that Kwankwaso and Shekarau have the highest number of supporters in Kano.

"I think the only camp in the middle of this crisis is that of Ganduje. He needs either Shekarau or Kwankwaso to achieve what he wants. It is better for him to settle the crisis within his party so that he can finish his tenure and probably produce the next governor. But believe me, none of the three camps can produce a governor or succeed alone," he said.

Ganduje on Friday said this year will usher in a new era of peace and reconciliation among political parties' stakeholders in the state and the country in general.

In a statement, by the state Commissioner for Information, Muhammad Garba, the governor said the next few months should also be for internal democracy to flourish where political parties are expected to produce more credible representatives at various levels who have the capacity and ability to win elections and subsequently build on laudable programs and policies initiated by the past leaders.

# Likely contenders for Kaduna's Sir Kashim Ibrahim House

From a former governor to senators, agency heads and technocrats, there is a handful of qualified contenders for Kaduna's seat of power, Sir Kashim Ibrahim House, come 2023.



■ Mukhtar Ramalan Yero

From Lami Sadiq, Kaduna

Less than 14 months to Nigeria's general elections, and with Governor Nasir el-Rufai's tenure coming to an end on May 29, 2023, contenders within the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) and the opposition, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), are not leaving anything to chance. Those who have eyes on El-Rufai's seat are already making strategic moves, some overtly, and others, covertly.

Within the APC, all eyes are set on El-Rufai, who is expected to endorse a successor. However, the governor, who has not shown any inclination to any candidate yet, has made it clear that for now, his attention rests on delivering the dividends of democracy to the people of Kaduna State. However, recently, the governor called on the people to rally round any candidate he would anoint, an indication that any contender within the APC who gets his nod would likely become the party's flag-bearer.

Although he is yet to endorse anyone, about four names from the APC have been making the rounds in the political circle. They are: Senator Uba Sani; commissioner for planning and budget in the state, Mohammed Sani Abdullahi (Dattijo); the director-general of the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), Dr Bashir Jamoh; and business mogul, Idris Othman.

Within the PDP, a former governor of the state, Ramalan Yero, has indicated that he is a likely contender. A former member of the House of Representatives, Muhammad Isa Ashiru, is equally not backing out. Below are some of the top contenders likely to succeed Governor Nasir el-Rufai in 2023:

## Senator Uba Sani

Senator Sani, a former senior special assistant to former President



■ Bashir Yusuf Jamoh

Olusegun Obasanjo, is presently the senator representing Kaduna Central. He also served as a special adviser on political affairs and inter-governmental relations to El-Rufai during his first tenure. He is the chairman, Senate Committee on Banking, Insurance and other Financial Institutions.

He is said to have sponsored at least 10 bills in the Red Chamber, and like most of El-Rufai's associates, Sani is brilliant. He is seen as one who has to rely on El-Rufai's endorsement, even though he seems to be shedding off his political dependence on the governor. He showed this trend recently when he tried to 'plant' his men in strategic positions during the APC ward, local government and state congresses in Kaduna.

Whether he has succeeded or not is yet to be seen, but the lawmaker has not hidden his aspiration; and his supporters are constantly promoting his qualities and philanthropic activities on the social media.

## Bashir Yusuf Jamoh

Bashir Jamoh is the present director-general of the NIMASA. He is the first maritime professional to head the agency with about 32 years of professional experience in the transportation, especially maritime sector.

Jamoh holds a master's degree in Management from the Maritime and Ocean University in South Korea, and a PhD in Logistics and Transport Management from the University of Port Harcourt.

He worked with the Kaduna State Government before transferring his services to the then National Maritime Authority (NMA) in 1994.

The 56-year-old man is an astute administrator with an intimidating curriculum vitae. He has attended a lot of leadership and management courses at Harvard, Oxford and



■ Uba Sani

Cambridge universities, as well as the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Turin, Italy, among others.

In 2017, his daughter married the nephew and personal assistant to President Muhammadu Buhari, Sabiu Tunde Yusuf.

Pundits say that Jamoh, who is from Zaria, has the support of the presidency and is one contender to watch out for. A technocrat with a robust qualification and decades of experience in administration and leadership, Jamoh is seen as the kind of person El-Rufai would want to hand over Kaduna State to.

## Mohammed Sani Abdullahi (Dattijo)

Mohammed Sani Abdullahi, popularly called Dattijo, is the son of a former House of Representatives member and onetime senior special assistant to former President Goodluck Jonathan on Millennium Development Goals.

The 42-year-old man first came to political light when El-Rufai appointed him as the commissioner for planning and budget in 2015. In 2019, he was appointed as chief of staff to the governor. He served until October 2021 when the governor reshuffled his cabinet and moved him back to the Ministry of Planning and Budget. His critics saw this move as an attempt by Governor El-Rufai to 'clip his wings' after he addressed the deposed Emir of Kano, Muhammadu Sanusi, as 'former emir'. The governor has, however, refuted the claim, saying that Dattijo was deployed to the ministry to solve the budget challenges in the state.

Prior to his engagement with the Kaduna State Government, Dattijo served as a policy adviser at the then office of the United Nations secretary-general, Ban Ki Moon, and was a member of the team that designed the Sustainable



■ Muhammad Isa Ashiru

Development Goals (SDGs).

Although pundits say he lacks a political structure and largely depends on El-Rufai's endorsement, Dattijo is another man to watch out for. Many say the young technocrat fits the bill of Governor El-Rufai's quest to leave Kaduna State in the hands of a smart young technocrat who understands his vision for the state.

## Idris Othman

Idris Othman is considered a dark horse in the political equation of the state. Not much is known about the business mogul, but his name is often whispered in political circles as a likely contender for the seat of power.

He is the elder brother of Senator Suleiman Hunkuyi, who has made several unsuccessful attempts to become the governor of the state. Sources close to Sir Kashim Ibrahim House say that Othman, who is a close ally of Governor El-Rufai, has not made his intention known, but there are possibilities that his name is on the governor's list of likely contenders. Analysts, however, say that past rumours that the businessman had turned down calls to contest elections could mean that he is not interested.

## Mukhtar Ramalan Yero

Yero is a former governor of Kaduna State whose dream of a second term was quashed by Governor El-Rufai in 2015. Yero, who hails from Zaria, is a certified public accountant and has a master's degree in Business Administration.

He had worked in the Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, the Nigerian Universal Bank Limited, and a private firm, Nalado Nigeria Limited, where he rose to become a director of finance and administration.

He was appointed a commissioner for finance in



■ Mohammed Sani Abdullahi

2007 during the tenure of Alhaji Namadi Sambo as governor. In 2010, Yero was selected by the then Governor Patrick Ibrahim Yakowa to fill the vacant seat of his deputy after Sambo was elevated as vice president.

In December 2012, he became the governor of the state on the platform of the PDP following the death of Yakowa in a helicopter crash. However, his dream to return to office did not materialise as El-Rufai of the APC defeated him at the polls.

In an interview with Daily Trust early in the year, Yero said he was now more mature and experienced to return as governor.

## Muhammad Isa Ashiru

Ashiru is a civil servant turned politician. He bagged a Higher National Diploma (HND) from The Polytechnic Kaduna and later a master's degree in Public Policy and Administration from Bayero University, Kano.

Between 1999 and 2007, he represented Kadan constituency in the State House of Assembly. He was later elected into the House of Representatives, where he represented Makarfi/Kudan constituency.

Originally a member of the PDP, Ashiru moved to the APC in 2014, where he sought the party's governorship ticket but lost to El-Rufai. He later returned to the PDP and clinched the party's governorship ticket in 2019 after defeating other contenders, such as former Governor Yero, in the primary election. He, however, lost to El-Rufai of the APC in the general elections.

Pundits see Ashiru, 59, as a grassroots politician and mobiliser. He lost to El-Rufai in 2019 by a small margin. There are indications that he would once again slug it out for the PDP ticket with Yero and others.

# BUSINESS

## I prefer strong, competitive Nigerian flag carriers – Aviation expert

In this interview, Dr Gabriel Olowo, the president of Sabre West Africa, as well as the Aviation Roundtable and Safety Initiative, a think-tank group in the aviation sector, spoke on his expectations in the industry in 2022 and the plan by the federal government to establish a national carrier.

From Abdullateef Aliyu, Lagos

### How would you assess the aviation sector in 2021?

In 2021, aviation started with fresh hopes as the devastating effect of COVID-19 (which hit the world economy between February and March 2020) began to show gradual decline and airports opened in phases.

Thanks to medical researchers, discoveries and advancement in medicine for vaccines, protocols and other remedies.

Aviation business was beginning to crawl between 10 to 30 per cent, year-on-year in Q1 till mid Q2, 2021. Q3 was growing steadily to almost 75 per cent by 2020, when different variants of COVID-19, known as Delta and now Omicron, raised its ugly head. Discriminatory border closures, visa regimes and protocols disrupted growth once again.

Another big disincentive to travels began to nosedive once again. Sadly, performance returned to Q1 levels, especially this December Q4, and one only hopes the decline does not continue into 2022.

### What has improved; and what is left to be done?

I will imagine that nothing has been left undone as people world over yearn to have their life back but for the so-called global disaster called COVID. Riots and protests have been witnessed in economies where you least expected them. Total closure of airports and borders is daily resisted as if people prefer to die rather than go hungry. There's COVID fatigue everywhere. See football premiership in Europe for instance and the economics of full stadiums every other day there's a game.

### Do you think COVID-19 has affected the development and investment in the country's airports?

Absolutely, yes.

### What are your expectations for 2022?

One should positively look forward to 2022 with great hopes that the Omicron variant would not metamorphose into another variant or any other plague that would impact life so negatively.

### How do you think government would attract investment in the aviation industry?

Government should continue to address issues of insecurity and its adverse effect on Nigeria's risk assessment. The country's risk speaks volume on economic index measurement, example, exchange rates, insurance premiums, pricing, inflation etc.

It should steer clear of "doing business" but provide a friendly environment and ease of doing business. The language is on the lips, but experience shows that the situation is growing worse (home and abroad). Government agencies see business tasks as a disruption of their schedule rather than a fulfillment of it. How can one explain passport renewal taking forever, for instance? Aside from internal trade, businesses cannot thrive without inter-economy movement. This should, however, not be taken in isolation.

Businesses hitherto under the "exclusive clause" should be opened to investors; anything short of this will continue to encourage illegal and sharp practices.

Government should prioritise spending on security, and thereafter, welfare of citizens; that is spending on health care, infrastructure deficit, housing, roads and education.

Recurrent expenditure spending should be cut and made lower than capital expenditure, which demands huge reduction in the size of governance.

Our media should make deliberate efforts to sell the destination Nigeria rather than its challenges, which is not uncommon in any



■ Olowo,

economy.

Do you think the government can achieve a national carrier by April 2022 as claimed?

I am not worried about the time of entry or exit of any carrier, my earnest desire is to see the emergence of strong, efficient, globally competitive Nigerian flag carriers. The weight thrown by the government on Air Peace/ Emirate commercial negotiations in the UAE disagreement is a confirmation that Nigeria already endorsed that flag carrier by throwing its weight behind it, a commendable Aero politics indeed. It was

so with Arik Air before its demise.

I am trusting that the same steam will be deployed to sanitise all the routes which post negative trade balance to Nigeria, vis-a-vis BASAs, till date; no thanks to corruption.

The government should go its full hug to all destinations served by all countries hitherto in preparation for additional 1 or 2 more Nigerian flag carriers. Forget the nomenclature, national or flag carrier. The experience of operators at the Nigeria Airways is history. To see Nigeria aviation flourish again remains my focus.

## How CBN's 5-year dev plan will stimulate Nigeria's economy – Director



■ CBN Governor Godwin Emefiele

Maryam Ahmadu-Suka, Kaduna

The Director of Corporate Communications, Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Nwanisobi Osita, has said the five-year development plan embarked upon by the governor of the apex bank, Godwin Emefiele, will re-jig and stimulate the Nigerian economy, which will,

in turn, stimulate sustainability and reduce inflation.

He further said the CBN was promoting the e-naira, which is the equivalent of the physical naira to drive the digital economy, saying, "We are already seeing inflation trending downward from about 16.63 per cent to about 15.4 per cent."

Speaking at a one-day interactive session with members of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and the Trade Union Congress (TUC) in Kaduna over the weekend, Osita, who was represented by the deputy director, Sam Okogbue, said, "We have seen what happened to the Nigerian economy, especially because Nigeria is a mono-product economy, dependent solely on oil for our forex earnings, as well as over 60 per cent of government expenditure.

"When you look at Governor Emefiele's five-year policy thrust, starting with the one he wants to grow the economy by double digits, then you look at what happened to the economy from 2020 when we slipped into

recession, recording about a negative 6.10 in quarter 2 of 2020, minus 3.62, 20 of quarter 3 and then move to a positive trajectory, but still very fragile."

He, however, explained that today, the economy is growing in quarter 3 of 2021 by 4.03 per cent, which he said was as a result of some of the interventions of the CBN, and of course, what the physical authority did to grow the economy.

"If you look at some of these interventions, targeted credit facilities, where we disbursed over 364 billion to about 766,000 beneficiaries, and then you look at the ACMIS, where we committed about N134 billion to about 37,000 beneficiaries, then you look at the health sector intervention facility, where we committed over N108 billion to about 117 projects.

"The whole essence is to re-jig and stimulate the economy, and we are seeing the impact. We are not where we should be, no doubt about that. Our target is to ensure that we grow this economy sustainably to bring down inflation. We have already seen inflation trending downward from about

16.63 per cent to about 15.4 per cent," he added.

In his goodwill message, the director of Michael Imodu Labour Institute Ilorin, Comrade Issa Aremu, commended the giant strides of the CBN under Governor Emefiele in repositioning the Nigerian economy for good.

He further called on the government and wealthy individuals to key into the CBN policy on cotton to revive moribund textile industries for job-creation and economic development, saying, "Because of the policy, Nigeria now has a surplus of cotton, which is not being harnessed."

The chairman of the NLC in Kaduna, Comrade Ayuba Mohammed Suleiman, urged workers to make good use of what they would learn at the occasion, and commended the CBN for choosing Kaduna for the interactive session.

Yunusa Zubairu, who represented the chairman of the TUC in Kaduna, expressed happiness that the event was happening in Kaduna and hoped that members would benefit from the interaction.



President Muhammadu Buhari



Engr. Mansur Ahmed

# Manufacturers list forex, tax increase as concerns

Sunday Michael Ogwu

The Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN), led by Mansur Ahmed, an engineer, recently paid a courtesy call on President Muhammadu Buhari to highlight few concerns that could be addressed in the immediate term to improve the manufacturing environment.

The group told the president that the MAN had articulated remedial measures for these challenges in the Blueprint for Accelerated Development of Manufacturing in Nigeria, which will be formally presented to him within the first quarter of 2022.

The association appreciated that the federal government had addressed some of these challenges while others are receiving the attention of the relevant ministries, departments.

They listed the immediate areas of concern to include inadequate supply of forex. Mansur said Manufacturers had been finding it difficult to source forex for importation of machines and raw materials that are not available in the country.

He said, "While we commend and support the recent CBN policy on non-allocation of forex to BDCs, we are constrained to observe that it has not translated into any meaningful improvement in supply of forex to manufacturers.

"We, therefore, request for the intervention of Your Excellency to ensure the prioritisation of

allocation for the purpose of importing raw materials and vital machine and equipment that are not available locally. In addition, we request that you direct the Central Bank of Nigeria and the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment to engage the association to find ways of driving forex to the manufacturing sector."

The delegation further noted that manufacturers still contended with inadequate electricity supply from the national grid and high electricity tariff from distribution companies, coupled with the enormous cost of providing alternative energy at over N72.7billion, thereby limiting the competitiveness of manufacturing in Nigeria.

While commending the government for the ongoing reform in the power sector, they implored the president to direct that the National Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) to remove all the bottlenecks inhibiting manufacturers access to the Eligible Customer Scheme. As a matter of policy, significant amount of the 2000 MW stranded electricity in the system can be made available to manufacturers through this scheme.

The manufacturers said limited access to long term loans and high cost of loanable funds were also jointly restraining the ability of the sector to produce at full capacity and adversely affecting the contribution of manufacturing to the gross domestic product.

The group applauded the efforts

of the federal government aimed at resolving these issues through various stimulus packages, but noted that genuine and deserving manufacturers are not able to access the funds.

They recommended that a monitoring and evaluation platform involving the private sector be set up to oversight the allocation of these funds. This will ensure that the funds are judiciously allocated to genuine manufacturers who have access to these incentives.

The MAN commended the wisdom of the administration in instituting Executive Orders 003 and 005 on patronage of made in Nigeria goods and development of local content.

The association requested that ministries, departments and agencies of government be mandated to strictly prioritise the patronage of made in Nigeria items in all their purchases and contracts.

In the same vein, they urged Mr President, as the chairman of the Presidential Motoring Committee for Implementation of Executive Order 005, to direct that the Ministry of Science Technology and Innovation to inaugurate the secretariat that would implement the strategies for the executive order.

"As a test case of this initiative, we humbly request that Mr President directs the Standard Organisation of Nigeria (SON) to certify local manufacturers of LPG gas cylinders to be specifically designated as priority provider

of the 10million cooking gas cylinders to be procured by the federal government for 12 states in the federation," Mansur said.

The manufacturers also expressed concern over the imminent increase in taxes, duty rates and excise duties, particularly for food and beverages.

They noted that the concern is because the affected sub-sectors are currently groaning under multiple taxes, levies and fees from the different tiers of government and the disposable income of the average Nigerian is already eroded, causing high inventory of unsold manufactured products.

"While appreciating that government needs to generate funds to meet its rising social and economic obligations, we strongly opine that it is the tax base that should be expanded to capture the untaxed.

"The existing genuine and diligent corporate taxpayers should not be overburdened as this could be counterproductive and the envisaged increased revenue may not be realized," they argued.

## The AfCFTA agreement

The MAN president appreciated the administration for ensuring that proper consultation and sensitisation were carried out before signing the African Continental Free Trade Area AfCFTA framework agreement.

He said, "Now that we have signed, ratified and deposited the instrument of ratification at the repository, the National Action

Committee (NAC) should be effectively supported to continue to vigorously engage the private sector and relevant ministries, departments and agencies of government to accelerate the putting in place of all structures required for beneficial trade.

"In this regard, we implore the government to urgently embark on the following: establish the designated competent authority that will superintend the administration of Rules of Origin and Commission the automation of the Certificate of Origin, export and import documentation processes for AfCFTA transactions."

He said government needed to sustain the implementation of policies that have helped the economy to quickly recover from recession, survive the onslaught of COVID-19 and revive other initiatives that have suddenly gone quiescent.

He said the MAN was full of expectations that government would continue to make manufacturing a centerpiece of its economic agenda and the enabler for up-scaling national output, employment and wealth creation.

"This is because of its very strong and productive link with agriculture, petrochemical and solid minerals beneficiation," he added.

President Muhammadu Buhari, in his response, assured the manufacturers that the federal government would take appropriate measures to improve access to foreign exchange for importation of raw materials and machines that are not available locally.

He told the executives of the MAN that the relevant ministry would revisit their concerns about the increase in excise duties on the identified products and other tariff-related matters.

# NEWSROYALE

## How *Odun Olodumare* promotes peace, unity in Iwoland

Clement Adeyi

Palaces and traditional seats of power, according to common belief, are places where deities are harboured and worshipped. It is also a common belief that palaces in some parts of the country are places where idol worshipping is a trend or common practice.

However, the Oluwo of Iwo, Oba Abdulrasheed Adewale Akanbi, Telu I, believes that a palace is not supposed to be a place of idolatry or worshipping of deities or small gods.

According to him, it is a place where only God Almighty should be worshipped because deities are inferior as He (God) is the creator of all things.

The monarch, therefore, condemned the presence and worshipping of idols in palaces.

According to the paramount ruler, kings who are custodians of the cultures and traditions of their people are representatives of God on earth and cannot be subjects to deities, noting that their duties are not only to uphold and promote the ideals, but to also lead the people to God and worship Him instead of worshipping idols. He stressed that idol worshipping is alien to kingship.

“God is the king; that means that the place where the king lives (palace) should be the house of God. The only odium and rival of God in that palace are the deities or idols. There cannot be two kings in a palace. Idols must not be in a palace.

“A king must celebrate the King of all kings. A king must not celebrate lesser kings, but the God Almighty. I cannot be second in command to any deity,” he said.

In conformity with his stand, the monarch usually organises cultural and traditional activities that draw people from Christianity, Islam and traditional religions.

Oluwo’s kingship is a blend of modernity and tradition as he upholds both the culture and tradition of his land and is committed to their growth and values, as well as socio-religious and economic activities.

Recently, he organised two first of their kind events in Iwo: God’s Festival aka *Odun Olodumare* in Yoruba, and Iwo Day.

The monarch, who is the progenitor of both events in Yoruba land, told *Daily Trust on Sunday* that the main significance of God’s Festival (*Odun Olodumare*) was to shower praises on God who brought him to the throne of his forefathers and to thank Him for His goodness and all that He (God) had been doing for the people of the land, and that it was also to unite people from different religions to uphold the virtues of peace, unity and love.

“As a king, I am a representative of God. I had a personal relationship with Him from my childhood. As a result, I owe my people the responsibility to lead them to Him to know Him more and enjoy His benefits much more. Also, I am God’s servant, and as His servant, I must have His inspiration as a king,” Oba Akanbi said.

But how did he get the inspiration to organise God’s Festival as a king that is not a pastor?

“I can swear by the crown of my head that it was God who told me to organise God’s Festival which we call *Odun Olodumare* in Yoruba parlance. He asked me to tell His



Oluwo

people that it should be held every November 9,” he claimed.

While speaking further on the purpose of the festival, the monarch who is fondly called *Ilufemiloye*, said, “Another purpose is to praise and thank Him for all His goodness and not to supplicate or ask for anything. I mean the Almighty God and not small gods. It is now an annual festival which is going to be celebrated more than Christmas in the town. This is because God is the greatest. During the celebration, it is songs, praise and dance galore. There is nothing like bringing any problem to Him, but just to thank, honour and adore Him. You are to dance to His glory as if you can feel His presence. God’s food is praise. The more you give Him the food, the more He would give you more blessings as compensation.

“God is a master-servant. The more you feed Him with praise, the more He does good for you. Praising and thanking Him is better than vain repetition for demands from Him. That is why it is better to praise and thank Him. It even makes it easier for you to receive blessings from Him instead of vain repetitions of demands.

“Try it and see. If you keep praising and thanking Him consistently for one month, you will see the enormous ways that He would bless you.”

Oba Akanbi also explained that the Iwo Day which was held at the Oluwo Stadium was to bring the people of the land from all walks of life together to celebrate the laudable achievements that the town had made since he ascended the throne and to imbibe the spirit of unity, peace, progress, as well as Yoruba cultural values.

“Two Day was celebrated to bring all the sons and daughters together to rejoice over our achievements so far, especially since I assumed the throne of my forefathers.

“I am a servant-leader. I serve my people even when I am sleeping and without taking anything from them in return. If I represent God for them, then anything that will come to them should come to me; whether good or bad. I can lay my life for them,” the monarch said.

He further told *Daily Trust on Sunday* that he used the occasion to encourage Iwo sons and daughters to harmonise interests and commitments capable of engendering the development and progress of the town.

The monarch, however, lamented that despite consistent effort to promote the cultures and traditions of Yoruba and other indigenous tribes in the country by the custodians, they kept deteriorating due to cultural imperialism.

“This is why I keep on harping on the

fact that there is no need to promote deities because they can do damage to our cultures. Our cultures can always grow richer if only we do not put deities first.

“There is need to improve on our cultures and tradition. If you don’t do that, you will be stagnant and they will expire. Our cultures are deteriorating fast. That is why our indigenous languages are also going down. This is as a result of parents’ failure to impress it on their children to embrace their cultures and traditions by teaching them and encouraging them to practise them.

“Also, the social media has diverted the attention of our youths so much from their cultures. All that is going on now is promotion of the cultures of advanced countries at the expense of our cultures which are very rich and need to be preserved,” the monarch said.

The Oluwo also expressed worry that indigenous languages were not independent but depended on the official language (English) to maintain relevance, noting that the indigenous languages did not have names or parlances for some English words.

“For example, what are the Yoruba words for strawberry, physics and several other subjects or courses, plot, acre, etc? The same thing applies to other languages as they too may not have names or parlances for some English words,” he explained.

“Therefore, I urge the university curriculum planners to develop curriculums that would develop words in indigenous languages for English. This would not only increase our language value, but would also improve our cultural values, as well as youths’ passion for them and their growth.

“The Chinese, German and many other tribes in advanced countries study all their courses in their indigenous languages. But in Nigeria, most people can’t express themselves fully in their indigenous languages. When they speak, they must fix English words into their languages, especially because some words in English have no local language names or parlance. So, our indigenous languages are not independent, which is a dent on our cultures.

“Therefore, curriculum planners should sit down and come up with courses like Yoruba, Igbo or Hausa (Independent) in order to upgrade our indigenous languages as a way of saving our cultures from extinction,” the flamboyant monarch concluded.

**I am a servant-leader. I serve my people even when I am sleeping and without taking anything from them in return. If I represent God for them, then anything that will come to them should come to me; whether good or bad. I can lay my life for them**

1 Kings 17:7-15, "And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land. [8] And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, [9] Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee. [10] So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. [11] And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand.

[12] And she said, As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die. [13] And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. [14] For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth. [15] And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days."

Here was a case of dramatic financial intervention that saved a prophet and a family from being wiped out by lack and starvation. When you are faced with this kind of situation, you have no time to do business; God just has to provide. God will step into your situation and deliver you, in Jesus Name!

(MSG) To tell you the truth, I was a little afraid. I know you have high standards and

## Financial miracles (I)

hate sloppiness, and don't suffer fools gladly.'

Basically there are 4 things that determine a person's financial status:

1. What you think and how you think. What you believe. The servant with the one talent had four problems. The first was his ignorance. He said in Luke 19:21, "I know you are an austere man, reaping where you did not sow." He said he knew but what he knew was wrong. What you know affects the way you think. Ignorance limits people. Acquiring relevant knowledge is key to achieving financial independence. The prodigal son thought of money as something you get from others and spend without having to work for it, etc. But God intends for us to live better than that.

2. What you do to get money. Or rather the service you render to get money. Here we shall see his other problems. Matthew 25:24-25, "Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I KNEW thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: [25] And I was AFRAID, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine." (b) He ignored his talent or gift. It is your talent that makes you unique and useful. There are things you do better than others; God put them there to make others need you. This young man became irrelevant because no one knew what he could do well because he buried his potential. (c) He was selfish; he didn't think it wise to serve anybody but himself. Money is a reward for service. It is a reward for the value you add to others. If you serve yourself you pay yourself. But

if you serve others they will pay you. The more people you serve, the more money you earn. Money must be earned before it can be spent. Most people spend all their energy thinking about what they want to acquire and get frustrated when they don't get them. Spend your time thinking of what to do to earn money. In deciding that, think of what you are talented to do and what you love to do. On the other hand, the woman whose husband died had to be lunched into the oil business. She was directed to reach inside for the marketing skills inside her. She must have possessed marketing skills to be able to market the oil that multiplied miraculously. You can have the best products but they will not be sold if you don't know how to market them. Even at that, you have to develop your salesmanship for it to feed you. Allow God to lead you into a business that matches your talent and He will prosper it. God will give you that idea that will launch you into major and continuous inflow of money, in the name of Jesus! Don't rest until you get something doing! (d) He had fear in his life. Fear has held many people back from succeeding. They want assurances before making a move. Successful people are risk-takers. They take risks based on the promises of God. Once you identify your talent, start using it!

3. The financial principles you employ. Your work ethics, your money management skill, etc. You must know how to keep money and how to multiply money. Your investment strategy matters. The seeds you sow determines the harvest

you reap. Majority of people who received financial intervention had to sow a seed. Seed sowing is God's design to multiply your income from the little you earn. Practice it until you master it; you will certainly become financially independent.

4. The spiritual power backing you. The God you serve determines your financial principles and the backing you enjoy. In our case we are talking about the Almighty God. There are four ways God helps with your finances:

- He gives you talents, potential, a gift.
- He ensures that you have something doing and then blesses the labours of your hands. God moved a brother from joblessness to two good jobs. He joined the church during one of our annual programmes, AGSS. Shortly after, two organizations he applied to a long time ago called him and interviewed him. He got both jobs and had 2 appointments letters. He now had to pray again to decide which one to choose. That same anointing is here today to terminate joblessness.
- He multiplies your seed sown and
- He gives you miracle supply to bridge the gap.

I decree an immediate turn around in your finances now, in the name of Jesus. Receive your financial miracle now, in Jesus Name!!

God will give you all the help you need in Jesus Name!

This was first published on November 21, 2021

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

## Through the birth of Christ joy has come into the world

By Margaret Ogbebor SSMA

“I bring you good tidings of great joy to all the people, this very day in David's town your saviour was born Christ the Lord” (Lk 2:10-11). The joy derived from the birth of Christ is referred to as “True Joy.” True joy is a feeling of great pleasure and happiness. It includes positive pleasant emotions ranging from contentment to satisfactory. It goes beyond what words of mouth can explain. It is a feeling of inner gladness, delight or rejoicing; true joy is often limitless no matter the circumstances it may face. It remains and stands forever amidst sufferings, difficulties or pains; it is endless. This true joy is what Elizabeth experienced when she heard Mary's greeting “the child in her womb leapt for joy (Lk 1:39-45). John the Baptist (the child in the womb) was able to recognise and identified it. A joy that knows no bound. It flows from every corner (North, South, East and West) of the earth. It is a fountain we can run to for help, security, survival and freedom.

True joy is an experience we enter into in which we are fully aware and conscious of our feelings. Words are not enough to explain it. It is not bought with money because it is obtained from within; it is a gift that is given and is real not fake. Only God has the power to give true joy. Any heart that prepares adequately for the birth of Christ will be connected to this fountain (true joy) because it flows to satisfy our unquestionable desire and thirst. It is the living spring that washes away every pain of sorrow, quenches every thirst and leaves our hearts with happiness that the world cannot give.

Furthermore “The people who walk in darkness have seen a great light, upon those who dwelt in a land of deep

darkness, on them has light shined. (Is 9:1). Here Isaiah is giving us hope and courage, telling us that what we have been waiting for has just arrived: the dawn of a holy day; a glorious light shines in our world. In our world that is divided by fear and greed, Isaiah is giving us a new hope that will keep us going amidst the situations surrounding us. This is the season we have been longing and waiting for. The birth of Christ is God's divine plan to save us from the darkness of sin and suffering, only those who have really passed through the darkness of pains and suffering can genuinely appreciate the gift of light and freedom. Many a time our challenges, pains, worries and anxiety are referred to darkness because at this time we are weighed down by the yoke of our problems and our eyes and our minds are blind-folded by it, preventing us from seeing beyond our nose. There are many problems in our lives that really need the light of Christ to penetrate them so that we can see clearly and raise our heads high in victory and freedom. The sick, the poor, the unemployed, the prisoners, those who lack shelter, those who are suffering among others are referred to those who are still in the dark. They are in the dark because of their situation and they cannot help themselves. The sick needs the light of Christ to make them whole, the unemployed is waiting for the light of Christ to connect them to where they could get their daily bread and even earn a living; so also the prisoners, the homeless, all those undergoing one form of suffering or another are waiting patiently for the light of Christ to take them to their new Jerusalem (a place of freedom and liberation) where they would be happy and their needs will be met.

Similarly, those who have buried their lives in the pit of sin, people who have lost hope of repentance, people who feel that

they are satisfied with their ways of life are in the dark. People who see repentance as an impossibility, people who think that their situation is beyond repair, the light of Christ is capable of penetrating your darkness no matter how thick it may be. “The Lord says this now let's settle the matter. You are stained red with sin, but I will wash you as clean as snow. Although your stains are deep red, you will be as white as wool” (Is 1: 18). The joy of this season (Christmas) is incomparable because this is the beginning of our salvation. The birth of Christ is referred to as “incarnation” which means God the son became man in order to redeem us from our sins and lead us to the light of glory. He always had the nature of God, but he did not think that he should try to become equal with God by force. Instead of this, of his own free will he gave up all he had, and took the nature of a servant. He became like man” (Phil 2:6-11). Jesus becoming man was for a mission, that is, to deliver us from our old ways of life and give a new life in himself. This is the season we are celebrating.

However, the true joy brought by Christ's birth is not for a particular set of people; it is for all. No one would say that he is not invited to be part of this joyous moment. Individuals are called to be part of this celebration by preparing themselves personally to receive him. Families are not left out because it is the domestic church that needs to be aware of this unique celebration. It is the duty of the parents to prepare their children for this great bundle of joy that is sent to us by God. God has decided to send us his only begotten son. Parents should not be carried away only by the externalities of the great celebration; they should also take out time to teach their children the importance of this holy season.

The birth of Jesus to our world today

is something significant, the baby Jesus lying in the crib is just a “symbol”, but Jesus born in our hearts is the “reality”. The moment we allow Jesus into our lives salvation has come into our hearts. This period is referred to as a moment of transformation, that is moving from one stage to the other. It is a moment whereby we are able to take a step ahead moving forward to begin a new life for the future. It is period when God has decided to visit his people (the world). A time of remembrance when God sent his only son as the saviour of the world because left to ourselves we can do nothing. Looking at our helplessness, he decided to intervene in the situation of our world by sending us a redeemer that would free us from every problem. There are many problems in the world today, the problem of kidnapping, banditry, insecurity, killings among others, are found in every nook and cranny of our world. Today, we need the light of Christ to touch us as individuals, as families and even the world at large so that the true joy which he has really brought into our world may radiate as expected.

In Christ our hope and courage are regained. His birth into our world today gives us that rare privilege which exposes us to a bundle of true joy; the joy that the bitterness of this world can not dilute this is what we are celebrating. The decorations will soon be over; travellers will soon be returning to their base, parties will soon come to an end. But the “true joy” which the birth of Christ brings into our lives can never come to an end.

*Sr Margret Ogbebor SSMA is a Catholic Nun, working in the Catholic Diocese of Sokoto. She is the Head Teacher of St Martin de Porres Nursery and Primary School Katsina. okaimaogbebor@gmail.com*

# SPECIAL REPORT

## Deep Blue Project: Amaechi's attempt at solving Nigeria's maritime security issues

From Eugene Agha

The federal government became worried in 2015 over the rising piracy trends in the Gulf of Guinea and vowed not to allow maritime piracy in the region to expand relatively unchecked on Nigerian waters.

This inadvertently accounts for the reason which the Minister of Transportation, Rotimi Chibuike Amaechi, rode on that he would crack down on piracy, suggesting that the ministry's priorities would be shifting in the coming years.

However, activities around the Gulf of Guinea in recent years show that fighting piracy would prove challenging. The rising piracy on the nation's waters and extending to the Gulf of Guinea became a source of concern to countries in Europe and America, as Nigeria accounts for over 65 per cent of vessel traffic in the sub-region.

Nigeria, as an import dominating nation, freight insurance costs jacked up suddenly and the resultant effect is the rise in the prices of goods and services.

Furthermore, Nigeria's main source of revenue, crude oil, which is exported, became threatened following the rise in piracy.

As such, the thought of helping the Nigerian Navy (NN) confront piracy was conceived by Amaechi. At the last World Maritime Day celebration held in Lagos, the minister said he conceived the idea of the Deep Blue Project all alone to tackle cases of sea robbery.

Amaechi said it would improve relations with nations in the sub-region, which was coming at a time Nigeria needs all the allies it can get in the area.

But unfolding events have shown the underbelly of a proverbial rotten fish as stakeholders alleged that the entire process was replete with fraud.

### Gulf of Guinea

The Gulf of Guinea is the North Easternmost part of the tropical Atlantic Ocean, from Cape Lopez in Gabon, North and West, to Cape Palmas in Liberia.

The intersection of the Equator and Prime Meridian is in the gulf. Among the many rivers that drain into the Gulf of Guinea are the Niger, which flows through Nigeria, and the Volta.

The countries around the Gulf of Guinea are Liberia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon (Ambazonia), Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, São Tomé and Príncipe, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo and Angola.

The Gulf of Guinea derives its appellation from the former names of the coast of Africa. The South coast of West Africa, located



■ Lagos ports Complex, Apapa

North of the Gulf of Guinea, was historically called Upper Guinea. The West coast of Southern Africa located to the East was historically called Lower Guinea.

Gulf of Guinea piracy has evolved from near-shore robbery to open sea piracy and the violent kidnapping of crew members for ransom. In 2020, 136 seafarers were abducted at gunpoint, held for weeks and months, suffering serious injuries to their physical and mental wellbeing. Nigeria accounts for two-third of the entire Gulf of Guinea, with over 50 per cent of the attacks occurring on Nigerian waters.

### How pirates attack, what motivates them

Many attacks on the nation's territorial waters are linked to what occurred in the early 2000 in Somalia, where different groups of bandits held crewmen onboard merchant ships hostage and at times killed seafarers if they could not get what they want.

The attacks are often targeted at oil vessels or container ships, and in some cases offshore platforms. Most of the attacks occur at night and the pirates operate in gangs of

between 15 and 20, depending on the size of the ship to be attacked.

It was learnt that some of the pirates get information from commercial sex workers who go on board to satisfy the sexual needs of the crew men who can be at sea for an upward of three to six months.

Some old seafarers who confided in our correspondent said those who bought fish illegally from trawlers (yama-yama) provided pirates information about the movements of vessels around the country's waters.

The attraction is the money which the crew gets from illegal sale of fish and stolen crude oil which buyers refer to as "ROB".

The pirates often disguise their boats to appear as local fishermen or better still as law enforcement officers who are at sea to authenticate the genuineness of ships on the country's waters. Some pirates also steal valuables onboard which they sell to dubious businessmen.

*Daily Trust on Sunday* also learnt while interacting with retired merchant naval personnel that during attacks, pirates avoid inflicting injuries on victims. The

belief is that an injured victim would eventually become a burden to them.

### How gov't is responding to rising cases of piracy

In 2017, Mr Amaechi, during the World Maritime Day celebration in Lagos, disclosed that the federal government approved the award of a security contract valued at \$195m (about N60b then) to an Israeli firm, HLSI Security Systems and Technologies, to procure security equipment and train Nigerian security personnel to tackle crime on the nation's waterways.

Amaechi said the contract would commence in December, 2017, and run for three years after which the firm would hand over to Nigerian security personnel.

He said the agreement became imperative given the high charges shipping firms paid for security escort on Nigerian waterways.

According to him, due to insecurity on the nation's waterways, the maritime sector spends \$18m on a yearly basis in addition to high war risk insurance payable by shippers to do business on the waters.

According to Amaechi, "When you see the equipment on the waterways, people will know they are safe and secured. Mr President has kindly approved that, and that is being done through the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA). In the three years, they will train our navy, our army and our police so that we can stop spending money escorting boats and vessels on our waterways.

"Currently, Maersk told me they spend between \$15m and \$18m annually on those escorting their vessels from one point to another on our waterways."

Two years later, precisely in 2019, the Senate expressed displeasure at the move by the federal government to contract the security of the nation's water to a foreign firm.

At a joint investigative hearing of the Senate Committee on Marine, Navy and Finance, the Chairman of the committee, Senator George Sekibo, said the deal was meant to upstage an indigenous firm, Ocean Marine Safety Limited, which, according to him, had an existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Nigerian Navy for the security of vessels on Secured Anchorage Area.

### Why is there so much fuel theft in Nigeria?

Nigeria's fuel market has become a juicy target for both local

The attraction is the money which the crew gets from illegal sale of fish and stolen crude oil which buyers refer to as "ROB".

Continued on page 42

## SPECIAL REPORT

## Deep Blue Project: Amaechi's attempt at solving Nigeria's maritime security issues



Rotimi Amaechi, Minister of Transportation



Dr Bashir Jamoh, NIMASA DG

Continued from page 41

and international thieves. It is the world's second biggest, according to energy ministry data, featuring a total daily demand of nearly 173,300 barrels of crude as at May, 2019.

The previous state of insecurity in the Niger Delta and complicity on the part of villagers in riverine communities have allowed organised groups to open clandestine refineries with taps along major pipelines. An unconfirmed report also alleged internal complicity at refineries and terminals, with the reporters accusing the refineries of opening their doors for theft of crude oil.

Crude stolen from infrastructure belonging to the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) ends in the hands of foreigners who ferry such stolen products to refineries abroad.

For years, four of Nigeria's domestic oil refineries have operated well below their capacities due to a mix of underinvestment, deferred maintenance and frequent collapse of machines, including deadly explosions caused by militants.

Nigeria has grown increasingly dependent on fuel imports in recent years, with about two-third of total demand imported. Nigeria is a critical export market for foreign refiners and trading firms.

**Enters Deep Blue Project**

The Director General of NIMASA, Dr Bashir Jamoh, in July, said the agency would not rest on its oars until cases of piracy and sea robbery were reduced to a manageable level within the Gulf of Guinea.

NIMASA was riding on the fact

that the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) gave credence to Nigeria's effort in combating piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and linking it to the Integrated National Security and Waterways Protection Infrastructure, also called the Deep Blue Project of the federal government.

However, some stakeholders have argued that it is wrong to ascribe the security gains achieved by the Nigerian Navy to a project which only took off in June, 2021.

A maritime expert, Capt Waridi Enisuoh, told our correspondent on phone that the drop in piracy as recognised by IMB was linked to the presence of foreign navies around the Gulf of Guinea.

According to him, the presence of the foreign navies has to do with their economic interest in Nigeria and other West Africa countries.

Nigeria occupies two-third of the Gulf of Guinea, making it the country with the largest coastline in the sub-region.

But Dr Jamoh explained that IIMB in its recently released second quarter (Q2) 2021 report on the global reduction of piracy in 27 years in Nigeria, including the Gulf of Guinea, noted that: "The number of kidnapping in the Gulf of Guinea in the second quarter of 2021 is the lowest since Q2 of 2019."

According to Jamoh, while 33 incidents of piracy were reported in the last quarter of 2020, only six cases were reported in the second quarter of 2021, adding that the IMB report also noted that the number of kidnapped crew in the region also declined from 50 in the last quarter of 2020 to 10 in the second quarter of 2021.

While IMB welcomes reduced

piracy and armed robbery activities in the Gulf of Guinea, Michael Howlett, a Director at IMB, commended effort by the federal government to tackle the challenge of piracy in the region, adding that reporting all incidents to the regional authorities and IMB PRC would ensure seafarers maintained pressure against pirates.

Meanwhile, Enisuoh noted that what NIMASA did was only to twist IMB observation to soothe the ego of the sponsors of the Deep Blue Project.

**Experts' views of Deep Blue Project**

An Australia-trained maritime expert, Capt Enisuoh said the Deep Blue Project was a fraud perpetrated on Nigeria by its promoters.

Capt Enisuoh was in the Australia search and rescue team. He is an aircraft pilot and captain of a vessel.

Enisuoh who spoke to our correspondent on phone explained that Nigeria's maritime domain was so vast such that two mission patrol aircraft could not account for the drop in piracy in the Gulf of Guinea.

He said the only reason why there was a remarkable drop in piracy was the presence of foreign navies in the area between July and November of 2021, and that they were on patrol of the waters because of their economic interest in the region.

"All the upstream facilities in the oil and gas sector are owned by foreign companies. They discovered that they would be the one to suffer the most if they allow piracy to thrive," he added.

Speaking on the mission aircraft, he said to test the integrity

or the capability of the aircraft, what the promoters of the Deep Blue Project ought to have done was to conduct a blind test of the aircraft since it they were for search and rescue.

"What that means is that they should shut down the aircraft system that identifies an object at sea. Fly it to about 100 nautical miles before dropping a floating object from the sky into the ocean and then come back and turn on the aircraft system and start a search of the object.

"By so doing you would have known how long it would take to identify a missing object or the presence of pirates at sea while conducting an aerial surveillance," he explained.

Capt Enisuoh noted that the Aguster helicopter could only make 200 nautical miles to and fro, adding that it meant that it could make 100 to and 100 back to base, which according to him was a mere scratch on the surface considering the size of the nation's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

"Two Aguster helicopters cannot perform such a miracle that would bring about reduction in sea robbery in just one month. Everything has to do with the quest by NIMASA to be elected into the C Category of the IMO seat," he said.

He said Nigeria needed over 100 of search and rescue aircraft if it was serious about fighting piracy.

**Why it matters to NIMASA**

NIMASA is keenly aware of events occurring in the Gulf of Guinea as evident in several trackable security alerts across several international maritime agencies such as IMB. It is also aware that piracy is likely to increase in the Gulf of Guinea as opportunities arise for criminal organisations and that this would affect its chances of being re-elected into Category C of IMO.

For over 10 years the agency

has campaigned among member nations to be allowed into the IMO. Part of the claims they have is that over 65 per cent of vessels coming to West Africa end up in Nigeria.

But an expert who does not want his name mentioned said what NIMASA failed to realise was that oil theft was becoming a wave of the future if allowed to go unchecked and that the most to be affected were oil companies and foreign vessels.

While Nigeria exports more crude oil to Europe and America, it also depends on import from other countries.

He, therefore, advised that NIMASA should consider engaging with the Nigerian Navy to establish greater security measures for curbing piracy networks as "assisting the navy and the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) would improve the already tensed relationship that has grown between them because of the continuous claim by NIMASA to the achievement that brought about a drop in piracy in the area."

**What has the navy done?**

The Nigerian Navy has said it recovered N75bn worth of stolen petroleum products in five years. The products recovered between 2015 and 2019 include crude oil, diesel and petrol.

The Director of information of the Nigerian Navy, Commodore Suleiman Dahun, told our correspondent that a total of 2,287 illegal refineries were discovered and destroyed within the same period and that the recoveries boosted the economy and denied criminal oil entrepreneurs of N75bn.

He added that the highest number of 1,218 refineries were destroyed in 2017, but decreased in 2018 and 2019 as a result of the swamp buggy operations in the Niger Delta which made it difficult to reactivate illegal refining sites.

He further said, "The Nigerian Navy also recorded successes in anti-crude oil theft operations and illegally sourced petroleum products which have reduced illegal oil dealings within the Nigerian maritime environment from 2017 to 2019.

"For instance, in 2017, the NN denied criminal oil entrepreneurs dealing on illegal oil about 218,057 barrels of crude oil valued at about N3,724,413,560 and 60,553,415 litres of Automotive Gas Oil (AGO) valued at N11,807,915,925.

"Similarly, in 2018, illegal oil dealings of about 295,028 barrels of crude oil valued at about N5,039,078,240 and 23,991,325 litres of AGO valued at N4,678,308,375 were denied the criminal oil entrepreneurs by the NN.

"In the same vein, in 2019, the NN denied criminal oil entrepreneurs dealing on illegal oil 296,192 barrels of crude oil valued at about N5,058,959,360 and 42,729,530 litres of AGO valued at N8,332,258,350."

He added that it was evident that the number of barrels and litres of crude oil and AGO denied the criminal oil entrepreneurs by the navy decreased between 2017 and 2019.

The previous state of insecurity in the Niger Delta and complicity on the part of villagers in riverine communities have allowed organised groups to open clandestine refineries with taps along major pipelines.

**Police rescue 21 abducted almajirai in Zamfara**

From Shehu Umar, Gusau

Police Tactical Operatives, in conjunction with the military have rescued 21 abducted almajirai in Zamfara State, after a gun battle with suspected armed kidnapers.

The Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) in the state, SP Muhammad Shehu, who disclosed this yesterday, said that a distress call was received from Kucheri Village in Tsafe LGA that bandits, in their large numbers, blocked the Gusau-Funtua Federal Highway at Kucheri axis and abducted unspecified number of commuters in five different vehicles.

“The security operatives succeeded in rescuing 21 kidnapped children, including two females who were coming from Rini Village in Bakura LGA to Katsina State for the Almajiri School along with their teacher, Lawali Ibrahim. The said scholar, Lawali Ibrahim, and the driver of their Hummer Bus Vehicle are among the victims that are currently in captivity.

“The Commissioner of Police, Ayuba Elkanah, had already sent a reinforcement of police operatives to complement the efforts of the joint security operatives currently working to rescue the remaining victims and apprehend the perpetrators,” he said.

The command called on the public especially drivers and passengers to desist from night journey because it was mostly used by the bandits to block roads and kidnapped commuters in the state.

**NACOMYO cautions FG against fuel price hike**

From Hameed Oyegbade, Osogbo

The National Council of Muslim Youth Organisations (NACOMYO), Osun State chapter has cautioned the federal government against fuel price hike.

It also called on the government to address the problem of insecurity and economic hardship in the country.

The group made the call at its 14th NACOMYO youth conference organised to mark its 30th anniversary, and award presentation with the theme, “Sound Approach to Islamic Propagation in Contemporary World; Muslim Youths on Call.”

In a communiqué signed by the state coordinator, Imam Tajudeen Adedokun, and the state secretary, Alhaji Yusuf Wahab Ishola, at the end of the events, NACOMYO urged Nigerians to live with the fear of Allah and shun immoral pursuit of wealth.

It called on parents to give their children sound Islamic and western education for a better future and cautioned the federal government against increasing the price of petrol but to address the problem of insecurity and economic hardship in the country.

**NLC warns FG against anti-people’s policies**

By Idowu Isamotu

The Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) yesterday warned the federal government to halt all its policies affecting the living standard of Nigerians in 2022, saying it will resist every attempt to inflict more pains on the citizens.

The congress also warned state governors starving pensioners and workers with

their entitlements and the new minimum wage to desist from forcing them into more poverty.

President of NLC, Ayuba Wabba, in his new year message made available to journalists in Abuja, specifically said the labour movement was concerned about “the deceit and duplicity associated with the politics of petrol price increase” by successive Nigerian governments.

Wabba said, “Our argument

has been that there is a limit to the imposition of hardship and suffering on the fragile shoulders of the Nigerian people.

“It is gratifying that amidst the deteriorating conditions of living, Organised Labour was able to rise up to ensure that the masses of our people were not completely run over by market forces enabled by the anti-people policies of government and at the whims of shylock

capitalists.

“Still, the government is not relenting in its determination to push through further increases in the pump price of petrol and which as usual had been dubbed as “removal of petrol subsidy”.

“We have told government in very clear terms that Nigerians have suffered enough and will not endure more punishment by way of further petrol and electricity price increases.”



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# Concerns as Uzodimma-Okorochoa feud tears Imo apart

Jude Aguguo Owuamanam, Owerri

The invasion of the St Peter Anglican Church, Ezianya Obairé, Nkwere Local Government Area of Imo State and the arrest of Uche Nwosu, the son-in-law of a former governor of the state, Rochas Okorochoa, is another chapter in the unending feud between Okorochoa and the incumbent Governor, Hope Uzodimma, which has turned the state apart.

On December 2021, Ugwumba Uche Nwosu, the governorship candidate of the Action Alliance (AA) in the 2019 election, gathered the creme de la creme of the state at his Ezianya Obairé country home to give his mother a befitting burial.

The funeral ceremony of the late Ezinne Jemaimah Adanweze Nwosu, aged 78, was filled with pageantry.

It was also attended by prominent persons in both the politics and economy of Nigeria. A surprise appearance was Chief Emeka Ihedioha, erstwhile governor of the state who was sacked by the Supreme Court on January 14, 2020, to pave way for Uzodimma's.

It is believed in some quarters that the presence of Ihedioha might have sent jitters down the spines of the powers-that-be at the Douglas House. Prior to this, there was a rumoured romance between Ihedioha and the Okorochoa camp, who parted ways after the 2019 elections.

The manner of Ihedioha's removal drew many sympathisers, which led to the forging of alliances to edge Uzodimma out.

Uzodimma, having realised his level of popularity, knew that any alliance between his two arch enemies would spell doom for his second term aspiration. He, therefore, decided to take steps to dismantle their political structures.

His first action was to use the instrumentality of a judicial panel set up by Ihedioha to probe Okorochoa's eight-year tenure. That panel indicted Okorochoa of massive land grabbing, accusing him of dispossessing many indigenes of the state of their landed property. Many choice properties belonging to Okorochoa and his family were taken away and given back to people said to be their original owners.

Ihedioha did not also escape Uzodimma's wrath as every attempt was made to erase his imprints in Imo.

Therefore, the Ezianya Obairé gathering became a bitter pill for Uzodimma, who neither attended nor sent representatives to commiserate with his kinsman.

An indication that Uzodimma might have taken a special interest in the Ezianya Obairé gathering was the suspension of three members of the House of Assembly who attended the funeral ceremony - Arthur Egwim (Ideato North), Ngozie Obiefule (Isu) and Obinna Okwara (Nkwere).

However, more was to come for the Okorochoa political family. Penultimate Sunday, December 26, Uche Nwosu gathered people for the outing ceremony of his mother. But the unthinkable happened.

Few minutes into the ceremony, some heavily armed policemen stormed the church, and in a commando style, abducted Nwosu, who was sitting comfortably listening to the clerics. Worshippers scampered out of the church as gunshots from the rampaging policemen rent the

air.

The worshippers, who initially thought that it was kidnappers that struck, were bemused when it was later realised that the rampaging gunmen were actually men of the Nigerian police.

This was later confirmed by the police spokesperson in the state, Mike Abattam, who, in a statement, revealed that Nwosu was arrested by his men.

The manner the arrest was carried out has cast a big blow on the integrity of both the police and the Imo State Government.

The first reaction came from Okorochoa, who told newsmen at his Spilbat mansion in Owerri that the action was taken by the state government to humiliate him and his family.

He said, "Uche Nwosu, my wife and daughter were in the church for an outing service when a group of men in police uniform invaded the place while sermon was ongoing and started shooting.

"They were identified as policemen from the Imo State Government House by their colleagues attached to Uche for the burial. I got the commissioner of police, who said the IGP approved his arrest.

"Such arrest without a warrant is unfortunate. Most security operatives in Imo know nothing about the arrest. The IGP could only do this on a high level misinformation from Hope Uzodimma. I am waiting to hear Nwosu's offence.

"Uzodimma has to answer for most of the activities going on. He must mention the names of those who are responsible for insecurity in Imo State. Buhari should be informed about what is happening in Imo State.

"What is happening in Imo State is under reported. It is bad. How come it was only Abuja and the Imo State Government House that know about the arrest?

"I want to know the reason for the attack on a church. Why should Uche Nwosu be treated like a criminal? The Imo State Government should provide answers immediately. You can't govern people by intimidation."

Uzodimma, having realised his level of popularity, knew that any alliance between his two arch enemies would spell doom for his second term aspiration. He, therefore, decided to take steps to dismantle their political structures



■ Senator Rochas Okorochoa



■ Gov Hope Uzodimma

Narrating his ordeal after his release, Nwosu said he was stripped naked, humiliated and treated like a criminal.

He said, "While sermon was ongoing, I saw some military people who came in. I asked my boys to go and welcome them because I thought they escorted a very important person to the church to condole with me over the death of my mother.

"All of a sudden, over 15 masked security operatives jumped into the church. While some rushed to the altar, some came to where I was sitting and ordered me to move or they would move me. They started shooting and disrupted the sermon. I demanded to know what was going on, but they said they had an instruction to bring me. They manhandled me and bundled me into one of the vehicles they came in. One of them ordered me to lie down, while one placed his leg on my head.

"When they drove off, they started making calls in Hausa, unknown to them that I understand the language. They were telling one Shaba, who is the chief security officer that they had got me. At Umuaka, they stopped and ordered that I should get down. At that point, I thought they were going to assassinate me. They bundled me into another vehicle and drove off.

"When we got to Owerri, three other vehicles were driven straight to the Government House and the one carrying me drove towards Okigwe road and I began to ask them where they were taking me to. But they never responded to me. They drove towards Okigwe and stopped. At that point I thought they wanted to kill me. They asked me to remove my cloths. They handcuffed me, snapped me, made a video and sent to the governor's chief security officer.

"We continued until we got to Enugu airport. We waited for about one hour before a chartered flight arrived. We boarded it and landed in Abuja. We moved to the force headquarters and we did an interview. They accused me of sponsoring insecurity in Imo State. I want to thank the IGP who intervened and ordered my release."

But the Commissioner for Information and Strategy in the state, Declan Emelumbe, as well as the Senior Special Assistant on Local Media, Modestus Nwamkpa, described as baseless, any attempt to link the governor with the incident.

Emelumbe said, "It is foolhardy for anyone to think that the governor had a hand in what happened at Ezianya Obairé. The police have told the whole world that the action was taken after Uche Nwosu failed to respond to their invitation," while

Nwamkpa said it was shadow-chasing to attribute the incident to Governor Uzodimma.

However, many residents of the state

see the state government as being highly culpable in the incident.

Most of Uzodimma's kinsmen who spoke to *Daily Trust on Sunday* said the incident was politics taken too far.

Also, an Orlu foremost sociopolitical organisation, Orlu Peoples Assembly (OPA), saw it as a cheap political blackmail by the governor.

An industrialist and chairman, Board of Directors of the OPA, Chief Fidel Anujuo, said, "That action is highly condemnable. It is a public relations disaster, not only for the police but also for the Imo State Government, which remained mute when it ought to have condemned not only the desecration of the holy place but the infringement on Nwosu's right.

"It is only the governor and the people that can halt this uncomfortable and abysmal situation we have unfortunately found ourselves in.

"The watery apology from the spokesperson of the governor seems to me as an afterthought."

In a statement titled, "Desecration of St Peter's Church, Ezianya Obairé, the archbishop of Anglican Province, Owerri (Feast of St John the Apostle), The Most Rev Dr David O. C Onuoha, described the day of the incident as a black Sunday.

He said the church would soon engage members of the Nigeria Police Force to ascertain the reasons for such sacrilegious act.

"Much as we are not concerned or interested in the reason for this invasion, which is unprecedented in the more than 160-year history of the church in this state, we are gravely worried and disturbed that worshippers were greatly frightened, worried, confused and completely disorganised by the presence of heavily armed security operatives in the church service, thereby disrupting the worship of God's people.

"While the church is in support of, and have always been praying for the success of our security personnel in the daunting task and challenge of securing lives and property in our dear state, perpetrators/sponsors of this crime against humanity must be brought to book, no matter how highly placed they are. We warn that such act is capable of worsening the security challenges we are currently facing," part of the statement reads.

Also, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) described the incident as absurd.

The chairman of the association in Imo State, The Reverend Eches Divine-Eches advised policemen to always carry out their duties in a professional manner. He told them to shun actions capable of giving detractors and criminally-minded persons the opportunity to destroy their good work.

# Remembering a role model, Alhaji Sani Dangote

From Shuaibu Idris Miqati

As the saying goes, there is a time to live and a time to leave. Such is the story of every human being. When I received the sad news of the passing away of a dear friend and boss, it was, to say the least, devastating, painful, and indeed, extremely difficult to come to terms with. However, as Muslims, we say that from Allah we all came and to him we shall return.

It was in 1987 while working in a merchant bank that I came to know Alhaji Sani Dangote as a customer. He and his two brothers: Alhaji Aliko and the late Alhaji Bello were running a family business and were coming to transact businesses with the bank. As a young banker, I was saddled with the responsibility of managing the relationship as an account officer.

The relationship between the bank and customers involved funding of import and export of commodities like cocoa, gum Arabic, cotton lint sugar, flour, salt and others.

It was an excellent relationship as the customer was regular in timely repayment of facilities extended. Businesses were expanding and the relationship became even more personal beyond a banker/customer relationship.

Sani Gote, as he was fondly called by friends and associates, would come to the bank, full of energy, dynamism and passion. He made meticulous presentation of transactions requiring either financial support, or simply advise. In most instances, we seldom had little, very little indeed to add to the ideas and thought processes brought by Alhaji Sani. The level of intellectual pedigree, researching of materials on subject matter and the support documents usually prepared and submitted by Alhaji Sani amazed many.

Sani, although by any standard a silver spoon personality, moved about an air of gentility, humility and esteem. He moved with grace, poise and dignity. He would greet everyone he came across, irrespective of age or knowledge of the person. Even his enemies, if he had any, would attest to this fact. Sani could walk into any gathering without being noticed. The aura and magnificence of the way he walked gave one the chance to see class, taste and quintessence in him. Sani electrified any environment with his appearance.

**Sani, although by any standard a silver spoon personality, moved about an air of gentility, humility and esteem. He moved with grace, poise and dignity. He would greet everyone he came across, irrespective of age or knowledge of the person**

Alhaji Sani, a devout Muslim, consummate family man and bridge builder, was also a peacemaker at all times. He never engaged in unnecessary arguments.

During discussions, Sani would insist on his viewpoint with reasons. Oftentimes, in the face of superior position of facts, he yielded only after sufficiently being convinced about reasons adduced. His ways of reasoning could best be described as that of an inquisitive researcher or natural/pure science expert.

I can claim to be one of the few subordinates of Alhaji Sani that he often listened to. I had a measure of influence on him as my suggestions were almost always considered, sometimes even against his wish, because of the respect I earned.

We related extremely well and were fairly close while I was in the bank and even after I left banking.

A transaction that brought us closer was while I was assigned the responsibility to sell a distressed asset (a textile factory located in Kano) and I suggested to the family to buy. After several efforts to convince his brother, Alhaji Aliko to buy the company and venture into industrial production, the family agreed, a decision that signalled their foray into the manufacturing business.

Alhaji Aliko left the textile firm for Alhaji Sani to run, and he was coming regularly for one thing or another from the bank. This transaction and the running of the textile factory brought us so close that we were seeing almost daily. We were visiting Kano regularly and this afforded us an opportunity to visit his mum often together, and as such, I became an adopted member of the family.

Somehow, in 2002, after several efforts, I agreed to work for the Dangote Group. He was happy that although I didn't join them earlier, either in the company or Liberty Bank, a financial institution they used to own, I finally joined the family to add my bit to the development of an African giant.

Few years after joining the group, there was a need to post me to his office as special adviser/assistant. While in that capacity, I helped to raise funds to set up Dansa juice, Alsan Insurance Brokerage Company and a host of other factories.

Alhaji Sani made me a member of the Board of Directors of some of these companies, such as Alsan Insurance Brokers, Nasal Insurance etc.

A detribalised Nigerian, Alhaji Sani touched many lives. He was always ready to help. He listened to people, offered alternative solutions and views, interrogated issues and formed opinions. He intervened in matters relating to family, business, government and anything that were brought to his attention.

He was a role model to many people. To family members and friends, Sani was loyal to a fault. He could deliver a business idea he conceived, nurtured and developed to a relative and move on without ill feelings. He often interceded between persons and his brothers or amongst family members because of the respect he commanded within the family as a result of being just and equitable.

He had the listening ears of the powerful and mighty. Sani could be approached on the road for assistance and he would wait to listen. Such qualities are extremely rare and in short supply today, at least not from people of his calibre.

Even after I left the services of the Dangote Group, we remained close to each other. On several occasions he would invite



Alhaji Sani Dangote

me for discussions on issues pertaining to business and other matters.

I served as a technical person when Alhaji Sani and Mr Emmanuel Ijewere set up the Nigeria Agri Business Group (NABG), which served as an adviser to governments on agricultural issues.

I recall that when Dr Akinwinmi Adesina, the then minister of agriculture, wanted a decent and competent person to be appointed as the managing director of the Bank of Agriculture, he requested Alhaji Sani to help look for the candidate. He reached out to me to help with the head hunting exercise. I got candidates, and without seeing or speaking with any of them, Alhaji Sani gave the names to the minister. He never asked me where the candidates were from, language they spoke or the religion they practised. One of them got the job. Several months after the appointment, the person neither called nor paid a visit to Alhaji Sani as a mark of appreciation, yet when I met him and the matter was brought up, he said he didn't feel it was necessary. He said, "My concern is that the person should be happy with the job and delivering as expected." Such is the life of Alhaji Sani Dangote. He did not expect anything from anyone, not even thanks.

He was a coach in business and the polo sport, which he loved and cherished most.

As an entrepreneur, Sani's foray into so many businesses is a testimony of his acumen. Sani and I went to Ghana to explore tomato

puree business, as well as Guinea Bissau for oil related businesses. Niger Republic, Togo and Benin Republics, to mention but a few, all enjoyed Sani's business acumen in one way or another. One can write a book on this matter alone.

The death of Alhaji Sani Dangote is a personal loss to me. It is certainly not a loss to his immediate family alone but to mankind and humanity.

We never brought death near even with the ailment he suffered for years. I spoke to him few weeks to his death and we were full of hope as one of the companies under his management had a change of directors and he retained me as one of the directors of the company.

It has taken me such a long time to write these few lines because every time I sat by my computer, I felt down and in pains. We lost a rare gem, peacemaker, pillar and supporter of the family. Unfortunately, many misunderstood Sani and mistook him for what he was not and treated him unfairly, yet he never held grudges. He would say, "Leave people with their thoughts." He recognised mischievous persons around him and his brother, yet he would rather leave the sleeping dogs to sleep well.

May Allah, in his infinite mercies forgive Alhaji Sani Dangote all his sins and grant him aljannah firdaus, amin. I will forever pray for your eternal rest in perfect peace.

Miqati (mni) wrote from Lagos.

# FEVER PITCH

UNBEATABLE SPORTS ACTION

## Mark D Ball Basketball Championship dunks off Jan 15

Joshua Odeyemi

The Local Organising Committee (LOC) of the Mark D Ball Basketball Championship, has announced that the competition will now begin on January 15.

The championship was billed to begin on January 8, 2022, but a statement by the Secretary of the LOC, Umar Abdullahi, on Thursday, announced a slight change in the commencement date of the Championship.

“This development was taken by the LOC due to requests from some of the participating teams, who pleaded for time.

“Consequently, the

Women Championship originally slated to commence on January 8, 2022, will now dunk off on January 15 and end on January 22, while the Men’s Championship will commence on January 22 and run for 3 Months,” the statement read in part.

A total of 24 teams (12 women’s and 12 men’s basketball teams) will be competing for honours in the championship to be held at the Indoor Basketball Hall of the Moshood Abiola National Stadium, Abuja.

The tournament is part of stakeholders’ efforts geared towards resurrecting the domestic basketball leagues in 2022.



Convener of the championship, Igoche Mark

### NPFL: Epic showdown as Kano Pillars host Enyimba >>> Page 47

## Again, D’Tigress threaten to boycott FIBA World Cup over unpaid allowances



D’Tigress celebrating a win during their impressive 2018 World Cup campaign in Spain

Jide Olusola

The D’Tigress have again declared their intention to boycott FIBA World Cup qualifying series following the failure of the Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development and the Nigeria Basketball Federation (NBBF) to pay allowances and bonuses owed them.

It will be recalled in October last year, the players accused Caretaker Chairman of the NBBF, Musa Ahmadu-Kida, of neglecting the team during the Tokyo 2020 Olympics and the 2021 Afrobasket – which they won.

The team also accused the Ministry of Youth and Sports

Development and the NBBF of withholding their bonuses and allowances since the 2018 FIBA Women’s World Cup in Tenerife, Spain as well as the \$100,000 donated to them just before the Olympics, totalling \$197,118.

Shortly after that, the Ministry of Sports made attempts to resolve the dispute between the players and former board over bonuses and money donated by corporate organisations in Nigeria ahead of the 2020 Olympics Games in Tokyo, Japan, the players rejected the proposed part payment of debts owed them, insisting on receiving all their entitlements.

The African champions in a New Year message shared on

the social media said the Sports ministry and the Nigeria Basketball Federation are yet to pay them as promised and has threatened not to be a part of the World Cup qualifiers in Serbia if the outstanding allowances and bonuses were not paid to players and officials in full.

“Since the conclusion of the hearing at the beginning of November, no line of communication or responses have been received by D’Tigress from the House, Sports Ministry nor Musa Kida concerning repayment of debts.

“More than 7 weeks have elapsed since the chairman’s decision for the former NBBF president, Musa Kida to settle the players and officials

‘ debt of D’Tigress, while the ministry completes the Olympic training grant balance, yet no engagement.

“We are sending a reminder to all involved including the Sports Ministry, the former NBBF president, Musa Kida, the House of Representatives and FIBA concerning these debts. Adaora Elonu our representative can be a bridge for communication, however, no official communication has been established through her either.

“With the FIBA World Cup qualifiers approaching in Serbia, we stand our ground and will not be scrambled into competition in last minute,” they declared.

## DeRozan scores buzzer-beating three-pointer as Bulls beat Pacers

DeMar DeRozan scored a buzzer-beating three-pointer to give the Chicago Bulls a 108-106 win at the Indiana Pacers.

DeRozan top-scored for the Bulls with 28 points, while Coby White added 24 and Nikola Vucevic made his fourth straight double-double in a game in which the lead changed hands 12 times.

LeBron James scored 43 points and added 14 rebounds the day after his 37th birthday to lead the Los Angeles Lakers to a 139-106 demolition of the Portland Trail Blazers.

James reached double figures in points with less than six minutes played, and recorded a double-double inside the first half.

Team-mate Russell Westbrook posted a triple-double - 15 points, 13 rebounds and 12 assists - while Ben McLemore led the Trail Blazers with 28 points off the bench.

The Boston Celtics beat the Phoenix Suns 123-108, while Trae Young made 35 points and 11 assists as the Atlanta Hawks overcame a 16-point deficit to beat the Cleveland Cavaliers 121-118.

Six Miami Heat players reached double figures as they held off the Houston Rockets 120-110 for a fifth consecutive win, and the Memphis Grizzlies made it four in a row with a 118-105 victory over the San Antonio Spurs.

Donovan Mitchell returned from a two-game absence through injury to score a season-high 39 points as the Utah Jazz beat the Minnesota Timberwolves 120-108.

The Dallas Mavericks beat the Sacramento Kings 112-96, the Toronto Raptors overcame the LA Clippers 116-108 and the Oklahoma City Thunder defeated the New York Knicks 95-80.

## Venus Williams pulls out of Australian Open due to injury

Venus Williams has reportedly followed sister Serena Williams in withdrawing from the upcoming Australian Open.

The 41-year-old turned out at three Grand Slam tournaments

in 2021 but dealt with multiple injury problems throughout the calendar year.

Serena Williams is already confirmed to be missing this year’s Australian Open on medical grounds, and according

to News Corp - via The Express - Venus has now pulled out as well.

The seven-time Grand Slam champion now finds herself ranked 318th in the world and has not made it past the third round of the Australian Open since

2017, bowing out in round two to Sara Errani last year.

While Venus Williams has never won the Australian Open, she has reached the final on two occasions in 2003 and 2017, losing to sister Serena in both

editions.

The American has not stepped foot onto the court since suffering defeat in the first round of the Chicago Women’s Open back in August, losing to Hsieh Su-wei of Chinese Taipei in straight sets.

# Guardiola concedes Arsenal were a better team

Pep Guardiola believes Arsenal were the better team even though his Manchester City side came away from the Emirates Stadium with a 2-1 victory yesterday.

The Gunners backed up their impressive start to the first half by breaking the deadlock just after the half-hour mark, when Bukayo Saka tucked away his left-footed strike from just inside the penalty area.

However, the game turned on its head after the break in dramatic fashion, when Granit Xhaka's 57th-minute challenge on Bernardo Silva was deemed a penalty by VAR, and the spot-kick subsequently converted by Riyad Mahrez, before Gabriel Magalhaes picked up his second yellow card just two minutes later.

Both sides pushed for the winner but it was City who snatched it at the death, with Rodri scoring in the 93rd-minute to secure all three points for the Citizens, condemning Arsenal to an undeserved defeat in the eyes of Guardiola.



"Congratulations, they were better. Arsenal was better today. But football it's happened," the Spaniard said in his post-match interview for BT Sport.

"We faced a team who struggled to be in the top four and started the season at the bottom. Now they are

in the top four.

Man City kickstarted the New Year with their 11th successive Premier League victory which has now moved them 11 points clear at the top of the table, with their nearest challengers Chelsea and Liverpool to lock horns today.

## NPFL: Epic showdown as Kano Pillars host Enyimba

Jide Olusola

Kano Pillars will today seek to earn their first win in the ongoing 2021/22 Nigeria Professional Football League season when Enyimba comes visiting today for the matchday 4 encounter.

Pillars have endured a horrendous start to this campaign following 2 losses and a draw so far while Enyimba have been in impressive form despite losing their last match to Rivers United.

In Bauchi, MFM will seek to go back to Lagos with all the points when they play against Wikki Tourists while Rivers United will play host to Sunshine Stars in Port Harcourt.

Enugu Rangers will lock horns with Niger Tornadoes at the famed Cathedral while Plateau United welcome Heartland to Jos.

In Uyo, Dakkada FC will do everything to ensure they end Remo Stars' clean sheets rub and improve their scoring prowess

having conceded four (4) goals and have scored just two (2) this season.

Both sides have never met in the NPFL but the last time they met was in a lower league, Nigeria National League (NNL) and that was in 2016 where former players, Victor Mbaoma and Oche Salifu gave the Sky Blue Stars a 2-0 victory at the Otunba Dipo Dina Stadium in Ijebu Ode and the return fixture saw Dakkada defeat Remo Stars by 1-0 in Uyo.

## FCT SWAN calls for synergy with FG in 2022

Sports Writers Association of Nigeria (SWAN) Federal Capital Territory (FCT) chapter has called for synergy with the government in uplifting sports in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic in the new year 2022.

Comrade Bunmi Haruna, the chapter's chairman, who made this call in his New Year message, said while 2021 was a mixed bag of blessings and hardship, he is praying for a better 2022.

"It is a mix bag of blessings and hardship as sports brought succour to many Nigerians with good

outings at the Olympics and other international competitions in the midst of COVID-19 pandemic," Haruna said.

"However, the sporting media, a key stakeholder in the success of the sector faced the brunt of the hardship as they suffered neglect from the government. It is my hope and prayers that government will include SWAN in its intervention program this year.

"We thank all our friends that came through for us in the year 2021 and plead for more support in the new year 2022.

"I salute all SWAN members and thank you all for those incredible stories, life-changing moments of sportsmen and women, failures to ultimate successes, issues, challenges and for making millionaires out of noble beginnings.

"These are all stuffs of legends that inspired us all. I want you to know you deserve the best always. We will work with stakeholders for the development of our sector for the ultimate benefit of everyone. 2022 will be a special and memorable year for us all.

## Africa Men Handball Nations Cup scheduled for June 2022

The 25th edition of the Men Africa Handball Cup Of Nations 2022 will now hold in June 2022 after it was initially postponed due to the covid-19 pandemic.

The biennial biggest handball championship in the continent was to hold in Morocco from the 13th to 23rd of January 2020 but was postponed after the Confederation of Africa Handball (CAHB) received protest notification from two participating countries a day after the draws for the competition

amongst other logistical issues.

The protest effectively ensured that the draw, which pitted Nigeria against Morocco, Angola and Kenya was cancelled and the competition postponed indefinitely.

But after the executive committee of the governing body of handball in Africa met earlier on Wednesday and considered all issues, it was decided that the Africa Men Handball Nations Cup will be rescheduled to June and will hold from June 22nd to July 2022.

The draw for the competition which was cancelled will hold on a new date which will be communicated soon by CAHB.

The Senior National Men Handball Team otherwise known as the Golden Arrows were in camping ahead of the competition in Abuja before the postponement.

Nigeria has participated in eleven editions of the Africa Men Handball Nations with their best outing recorded in the 1998 edition.

### SPORTING VERDICT

DAVID NGOBIA

ngobuadavid@gmail.com 08035975831 (Text only)

## Super Eagles chaotic build-up to 2022 AFCON

Three-time African champions, the Super Eagles of Nigeria will kick-start their quest for a fourth AFCON title against seven-time winners, the Pharaohs of Egypt at the 2022 Africa Cup of Nations on Tuesday, January 11 at Roumade Adjia Stadium, Garoua in Cameroon.

Apart from Egypt, the Super Eagles have Sudan and debutants Guinea Bissau to contend with in Group D. Based on current world rankings, the Super Eagles are the highest ranked team in the group. They are therefore highly favoured to progress from the group along with the Pharaohs who are the most successful team in the history of AFCON.

Although the Super Eagles boast of quality players who are playing for some big clubs in Europe, recent happenings in the team call for cautious optimism. Only incurable optimists can beat their chest and say Nigeria is among the title favourites. It is, therefore, left for us to prepare our minds for any eventuality. Another football disaster is staring us in the face.

The first booby-trap for the team is no doubt NFF's consortium of indigenous coaches for the 2022 AFCON. Following the sack of the erstwhile Technical Adviser, Gernot Rohr, the NFF has appointed its current Technical Director, Austin Eguavoen, to head the team's technical crew on an interim basis. He has Salisu Yusuf, Paul Aigbogun, Joseph Yobo, Dr. Terry Eguaoje and Alloy Agu as assistants.

Meanwhile, Eguavoen's former teammates, Austin Jay-Jay Okocha, Kanu Nwankwu and Garba Lawal are to provide technical and ambassadorial support. NFF is yet to explain to Nigerians the relevance of the technical and ambassadorial roles assigned to the ex-internationals.

Undoubtedly, having six coaches at a go portends great danger for the team. A similar experiment had failed us in the past. Soon after he qualified Nigeria for the 2002 World Cup, Late Amodu Shuaibu was sacked and Chief Festus Adegboye Onigbinde was appointed to lead the team to Korea/Japan. The octogenarian and his lieutenants failed to deliver in the country's third World Cup appearance. Too many hands actually spoiled our good soup.

Because we are a people who hardly learn from experience, on the eve of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, the then leadership of the NFF sacked Amodu Shuaibu again and appointed Bora Milutinovic to lead the Super Eagles to the first senior World Cup on African soil. Despite Bora's intimidating profile, the team performed so abysmally that he didn't see any need to return to Nigeria. After accusing the NFF of undue interference, he took the next available flight to his base in Europe.

Therefore, NFF's decision to sack Rohr on the eve of 2022 AFCON is not popular among Nigerians who have discerning minds. Without any intent to undermine Eguavoen and his assistants, only a miracle like the one that happened in 2013 in South Africa will catapult the Super Eagles to victory in Cameroon.

In case of another dismal performance by the Super Eagles, the question of why sack Rohr will pop up among football stakeholders. Many would say the Franco-German tactician should have been allowed to see out his contract in December. It is only if there is another accidental discharge that Nigerians would see meaning in the sack of Rohr.

Apart from the consortium of coaches which is like a ticking bomb, the NFF has since announced the appointment of a relatively unknown Jose Vitor dos Santos Peseiro, a Portuguese coach, as the new Technical Adviser of the Super Eagles. The coach who is scheduled to arrive Nigeria today will be in Cameroon with the team as an observer.

Most Nigerians are wondering why the NFF rushed to sign a coach who has no known pedigree and is not meant to coach the team at the 2022 AFCON. Available records show that from Panathinaikos to FC Porto to Braga and even Saudi Arabia, there has hardly been a happy ending for the Portuguese. Nigerians are still trying to figure out why the NFF went for him. Maybe it is because he is Jose, Mourinho's 'brother'.

Well, what I know for sure is that Peseiro will be the de facto coach in the stands in Cameroon while Eguavoen will serve as the ceremonial head in the dugout. No one should be deceived by that 'observatory' role assigned to the Portuguese. The present NFF is suffering from 'colonial mentality' so anything in white colour is good enough for the Super Eagles. Personally, I know the coach to hold responsible should the Super Eagles fumble and wobble again.

Also of great concern is the recent withdrawals from the squad. As at the time of press, Nigeria and Africa's most expensive player, Victor Osimhen, was already out of the team over health concerns. Going by the fact that Napoli were unwilling to release him, most Nigerians have received with a pinch of salt the claim that the player had tested positive for the killer coronavirus. They are of the opinion that it is only a ploy to deny them the services of one of their most potent strikers.

Apart from Osimhen, Leo Balogun, Shehu Abdullahi and Dennis Emmanuel are out of the 2022 AFCON squad. They have since been replaced by less illustrious players. And before the kick-off, the team might witness more withdrawals.

It is in view of the above that I call on Nigerians to start praying for the Super Eagles to escape another sporting disaster in Cameroon. Although I have recommended prayers, I am not unmindful of the hopelessness in prayers without corresponding actions. Therefore, as we pray for them, the Super Eagles must also play their part for our collective prayers to work.



Think about it: I criticize Buhari a lot, and he deserves it, but Nigeria's democracy was defined two decades ago by President Olusegun Obasanjo, who now pronounces himself as having been a great leader.

## Giving life to hope

Experience teaches us that a new year is a gift. Nobody is entitled to it, and no one can boast he will achieve it.

That is why, when we enter a new year, we celebrate. Sometimes, it with a tinge of guilt as we think of those who did not make it into that pivotal new day. That day includes yesterday, the first of 2022, as we entered the third COVID-19 year.

Three days ago, the WHO reported 5,411,759 deaths attributed to the virus in the past two years; 812,577 of those were in the United States, where I write this, and 3027 in my home country, Nigeria.

There continue to be the 'traditional' killers. Cancer, for example, took nearly 10 million deaths in 2020, WHO also said. With cancer, we sometimes have a chance to say the goodbyes that COVID-19 often denies. But that opportunity is often at great cost, as families must endure the pain of watching the sufferer waste away.

But what about road crashes, which claim about 1.3 million people lives every year? WHO's profile of road crashes shows that they cost most countries 3% of their Gross Domestic Product.

Of critical interest to such communities as Nigeria is the revelation that "93% of the world's fatalities on the roads occur in low-and middle-income countries, even though these countries have approximately 60% of the world's vehicles."

Put that the other way, the high-income countries, which possess 40% of the world's vehicles, suffer only 7% of the world's road fatalities.

These figures are not difficult for observers of Nigeria's mass transit—and I speak only figuratively—to understand. We have no real road system, as it is under perpetual construction or repair, every government finding ways to keep the ruse going, and officials happy to pursue projects they know will not endure.

For eight years from 1999, and particularly through President Goodluck Jonathan and Buhari in the past seven years, road development has continued to be a major drain on the nation's purse. Rarely is there a breakthrough road; major highways often lack modern technical designs.

The point of this is that there is little surprise that Nigerians die in massive numbers on roads that are barely there. Short stretches of good road cost lives. Long stretches of bad cost lives either by themselves because of vehicles competing to get through, some collapsing in invisible trenches or floods, or armed herdsmen and

other criminals taking advantage of the poor roads to maim, rob and kidnap.

Still, as a people, we hope. We pray. We beg our leaders to do the right thing by our votes.

But we deceive ourselves. Our leaders are not the problem; we are.

Think about it: I criticize Buhari a lot, and he deserves it, but Nigeria's democracy was defined two decades ago by President Olusegun Obasanjo, who now pronounces as having been a great leader. I have called him Nigeria's First 419 President, and profiled him several times, including in this story. He is single-handedly responsible for Nigeria's direction, or lack of one, in the past two decades.

But for Mr. Obasanjo, Mr. Jonathan—facing criminal charges on his record from a panel Obasanjo had himself set up—would never have become vice-presidential candidate, let alone president. But for Jonathan's atrocious performance in office, including vowing everything under the sun but never delivering, Buhari would never have become president. And Obasanjo pretends everyone has forgotten that he tried to subvert the constitution and obtain a third term in office!

When I developed my original "Countdown Calendar," it was for Obasanjo when he began his second term in 2003. I argued that based on his record, the issue of corruption would define his legacy.

I wrote: "Whatever else he imagines he is accomplishing in office, the issue of what he does, or does not do with the corruption question is what he will always be remembered by. It is the signature of his government."

It was, given the way he ran the Peoples Democratic Party, bragged about how many decades it would keep Nigeria in a chokehold, and singlehandedly picked members of its presidential ticket. It was the template that would bring Buhari to power.

Still, as a people, we hope.

In mid-2019 when I inaugurated the Buhari Countdown Calendar, he had 1444 days left in office. When I last updated it, he had 1261 days. Today, after running considerably out of steam and with his heart fixed on enjoying the spoils of office, he has 512.

Now that we know better, it is not an argument as to whether Buhari has anything left, it is whether he had any in the first place. Over the next 17 months, he will commission some projects to convey the impression of a successful campaigner,

but they will be the effort not of a few years, but of eight consecutive years of under-performance, unconscionable borrowing, and layers of budgeting.

And he will own the record of the most corrupt era in corruption in Africa. If you are literate and have tears to shed, open this page for yourself for an intense picture of the Buhari years. They are the Auditor-General's reports but don't worry, nobody important reads them.

By this day next year, Buhari will have 149 days left. I doubt that anything would have changed because his severe limitations will continue to complicate and confuse governance and consolidate his failure.

This is an unrepentant nepotist who is constructing a \$1.9bn rail line into another country because "I have cousins, family members, etc., in Niger Republic. I shouldn't just cut them off."

But consider this: on Friday, Rotimi Amaechi, his Minister of Transportation, cried out for \$36bn, which Nigeria lacks, for the nation's rail network, which includes the Niger rail. But only three years ago, the same man put the figure at \$16bn, \$20bn less! What we have is clearly a strategy of project launchings with no commitment to completion.

And consider also that last weekend, Clem Agba, the Minister of State for National Planning, declared that in 2021, the government completed 500 rural roads. I immediately dashed to the ministry's website, and then to Works and Housing, but could not find the list. Showcasing Buhari's "achievements" on Thursday, Lai Mohammed, the Information and Culture boss, did not highlight these "roads."

Still, we hope. It is our nature. But the last 21 years have exposed us. We are empty, indeed as porous as a Buhari promise.

We fail to follow our prayers and hopes with action. And when we do, it is with either fear or cynicism, such as accepting gratification from politicians we put in office. We let them hide away in the cities, or when they visit us, in mansions built with our money. Before our eyes, they guard themselves with thugs and the police and we vote for them again.

Hope is good. But it is meaningless unless accompanied with the strength and determination to rise and scream, "No more!" That is how Jesus cleared the temple.

As 2022 begins and the politicians again prepare to label you a cheap fool, remember that.

**This column welcomes rebuttals from interested government officials.**

- [sonala.olumhense@gmail.com](mailto:sonala.olumhense@gmail.com)
- [@Sonala.Olumhense](https://twitter.com/Sonala.Olumhense)

## SPORT ROUND-UP



Jurgen Klopp

### Klopp to miss Chelsea game after suspected positive covid test

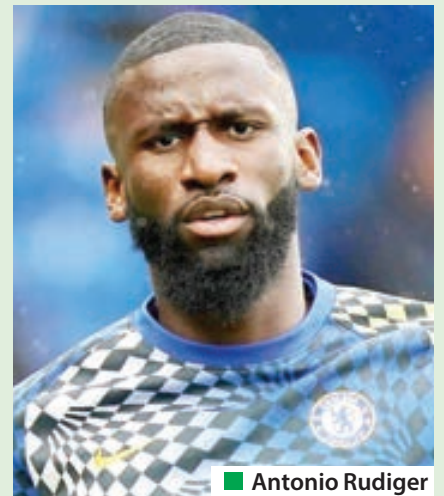
Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp has returned a suspected positive test for Covid-19 and will miss Sunday's Premier League game against Chelsea.

The 54-year-old is experiencing mild symptoms and is isolating, so his assistant Pep Lijnders will take charge for the visit to Stamford Bridge.

A Liverpool statement said there had been no further cases among the playing squad.

However, three backroom staff have also returned suspected positive tests.

Liverpool are third in the Premier League table, one point behind Chelsea and 12 adrift of leaders Manchester City with two games in hand on Pep Guardiola's side.



Antonio Rudiger

### Madrid 'drop interest in Chelsea's Rudiger

Real Madrid have reportedly dropped their interest in Chelsea centre-back Antonio Rudiger.

The Germany international has now entered the final six months of his contract at Stamford Bridge, meaning that he is currently able to discuss terms with foreign clubs.

Real Madrid have been heavily linked with the 28-year-old, who is believed to be leaning towards leaving Chelsea despite his status as a key player for the European Cup holders.

However, according to ABC, Los Blancos are not planning to sign the German due to the presence of Eder Militao and David Alaba at the Bernabeu.