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Across many filling stations, petrol now sells between N1,330 and N1,350 per litre.

Nigerians Grapple with Survival as Fuel Prices Rise and Power Outages Persist

- Drivers abandon private vehicles for commercial cars
- "Electricity will become better" - President Tinubu

BY GIFT LUCKSON,
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Nigerian drivers are parking their private vehicles and turning to

commercial transportation systems amid rising fuel prices across the country. Middle East Conflict and High Cost of PMS This shift comes amid a fresh surge in the price

of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS), triggered by escalating geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, which have disrupted global crude oil markets and led to higher fuel costs

in Nigeria. The conflict, involving the United States, Israel and Iran has heightened volatility in the global oil market, forcing an upward adjustment in petroleum

product prices locally. Across many filling stations in Lagos, petrol now sells between N1,330 and N1,350 per

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Beauty At A Deadly Price: The rising dangers of plastic surgery among Nigerian women

By Martha Gwary

In recent years, the pursuit of physical perfection has taken a dangerous turn among many Nigerian women, with cosmetic or plastic surgery becoming increasingly popular. Procedures once considered rare and reserved for medical reconstruction are now widely sought for aesthetic enhancement.

A Looming Danger

However, beneath the promise of improved beauty lies a troubling reality. Reports of deaths, severe complications and permanent deformities linked to cosmetic surgery are becoming alarmingly frequent, raising serious concerns about the safety, regulation and social pressures surrounding the trend.

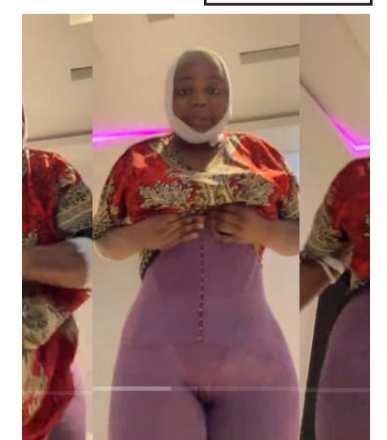
A Growing Obsession With Altered Beauty

Across Nigeria, a disturbing trend is gaining ground: the increasing number of women undergoing cosmetic surgery in pursuit of so-called "perfect" bodies. Procedures such as Brazilian Butt Lifts (BBL), liposuction, breast augmentation and tummy tucks have become fashionable among young women influenced by social media celebrities, reality television stars and online beauty standards.

However, behind the glossy photographs and seemingly flawless results lies a grim reality. Many Nigerian women are paying the ultimate price for these procedures, with several cases ending in death, permanent deformity or severe health complications.

The Influence of Social Media

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BBL recovery phase

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EXPLORING THE HERITAGE, COURAGE, AND CULTURAL PRIDE OF THE KAGORO (AGWOROK) PEOPLE OF SOUTHERN KADUNA



THIS LIFE! >>16

LIFE WAS ONCE SIMPLE AND AFFORDABLE, WITH GREATER CONTENTMENT, SAYS 100-YEAR-OLD HASSANA MUSA



Neptune World

Knowledge without action is wastefulness, and action without knowledge is foolishness

AL-GHAZALI

Emotion is African as reason is Greek

LEOPOLD SEDAR SENGHOR



PICTURE OF THE DAY

In this rare photograph taken in 1902, two years before the British conquest of Kano and Sokoto, colonial officers can be seen intently observing a traditional Gardi in the town of Pategi, located in what is now Kwara State, Nigeria. The Gardi, a well-known figure in many northern communities, is shown performing with a hyena and offering traditional medicine, a powerful symbol of indigenous knowledge and cultural expression. His performance was not just entertainment, it was a showcase of the deep-rooted traditions that thrived in pre-colonial societies. This scene captures a moment when the British were not just conquering territories but also studying the people, cultures, and spiritual systems they sought to rule over. It reflects the early encounters between colonial forces and African traditions, complex, tense, and deeply telling. This image was sourced from the book "Who Shall Enter Paradise? Christian Origins in Muslim Nigeria, 1890-1975," a text that documents the religious and cultural intersections during the colonial period. One hundred and twenty-three years have passed since this photo was taken, yet it remains a vivid reminder of a time when African tradition stood face-to-face with the machinery of empire.

RANDOM FACTS

Why plastics are not suitable for hot drinks

While plastic is convenient and nearly unbreakable, it is often a poor match for boiling water. Using standard plastic cups for hot tea can lead to chemical exposure and physical safety risks that many people overlook.

Why you should reconsider reaching for a plastic cup when brewing your favourite blend.

1. The Risk of Chemical Leaching Most plastics are sensitive to heat. When you pour hot tea (usually between 80°C and 100°C) into a plastic vessel, the high temperature can cause the material to release synthetic chemicals into your drink.

Microplastics: Research suggests that some plastic containers shed billions of microscopic particles when exposed to high heat.

Endocrine Disruptors: Chemicals such as Bisphenol A (BPA) and phthalates are often used to make plastic more durable or flexible. Heat can break the chemical bonds,

allowing these substances to migrate into your tea.

2. Material Warping and Structural Failure Unlike ceramic or glass, many common plastics have a low melting point.

Deformation: Hot tea can cause the walls of a plastic cup to soften or warp, making it unstable.

Scalding Hazard: If the plastic becomes too soft, the cup may collapse or the lid may pop off, leading to accidental spills and severe burns.

3. Flavour Alteration and Porosity Plastic is a porous material, meaning it can absorb and retain flavours and odours over time.

Staining: Tannins in tea quickly stain plastic, leaving a brown film that is difficult to scrub away.

Off-Tastes: Under high heat, some plastics release a "chemical" or "medicinal" taste that ruins the delicate flavour profile of high-quality tea leaves.



Rape victim dies by euthanasia after winning legal case against father

A Spanish woman who has conducted a long legal battle with her father for the right to end her life died by euthanasia on Thursday. Barcelona resident Noelia Castillo, 25, was left paraplegic due to injuries suffered when she tried to take her own life in 2022.

The Catalan government granted her the right to assisted dying in the summer of 2024 but the process was suspended at the last moment after legal objections raised by her father, with the backing of the conservative campaign group Christian Lawyers (Abogados Cristianos).

He argued his daughter suffered from a personality disorder which affected her judgment. He also pointed to "the obligation of the state to protect the lives of people, especially the most vulnerable, as is the case with a young person with mental health problems".

That appeal started an 18-month legal battle which ended when the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled in Noelia Castillo's favour.

On Thursday evening, Abogados Cristianos announced on X that Castillo had died by euthanasia. The group said her case "highlights the serious flaws" in Spain's euthanasia law.



Castillo

Speaking to Spanish TV earlier this week, Castillo said her father had tried to legally block her decision to die with dignity. "He hasn't respected my decision and never will," she said.

She also recounted her difficult childhood, much of it spent in care homes. She said she was first sexually assaulted by her ex-boyfriend of four years after she had taken sleeping pills to help her sleep, and said she was also assaulted on another occasion by several men in a nightclub. The 25-year-old said she had always "felt alone" and never had doubts that she wanted to go ahead with the decision to die by euthanasia.

"Nobody in my family is in favour," she said. "I am leaving and you are

staying here with all the pain, but what about all the suffering I have endured over the years? I just want to live in peace and stop the pain.

"The happiness of a father or a mother or a sister shouldn't precede the happiness of a daughter." Her family would be able to come and say goodbye, Noelia said, but added that she wished to be alone with her doctor when the lethal injection was performed.

Her mother Yolanda said she did not agree with her daughter's decision but "respected" it. Spain's euthanasia law came into force in 2021. According to government data, 426 requests for assisted dying were granted in 2024, the most recent year available.

This was the first time that a case went to court for a judge to decide.



Vicente

Mother acquitted of murder after fatal attack on daughter's alleged rapist

An enraged mom who cut off her boyfriend's testicles and then set fire to his body after catching him trying to rape her daughter has been cleared of his murder.

Erica Pereira da Silveria Vicente confessed to killing her partner Everton Amaro de Silva in Minas Gerais, Brazil — saying she was just trying to protect her 11-year-old daughter from being raped, according to Estado de Minas.

She was alerted by alarming texts the predator sent the preteen — then found him on top of her, trying to rape her, when rushing to her screaming daughter, according to the reports.

However, prosecutors insisted that the brutality of the murder proved it was carried out "not in blind rage but with cold premeditation."

The mom allegedly spiked de Silva's drink with Klonopin, a medication used to treat seizures, and then stabbed and clubbed him while he was unconscious, according to prosecutors.

A teen who heard screams helped the mom carry the body to wasteland in Belo Horizonte — where Vicente cut off the dead man's genitals and set fire to his body, jurors were told.

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NEWS

Nigerians Grapple with Survival as Fuel Prices Rise and Power Outages Persist

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litre, while diesel ranges from N1,650 to N1,700 per litre. Aviation fuel prices have also climbed to between N2,143 and N2,200 per litre.

Surge in Transportation Fares

The rising cost of fuel has triggered an immediate increase in transport fares, particularly among commercial bus operators who often adjust prices in response to fuel price fluctuations.

However, commuters appear to be seeking relief in these commercial vehicles rather than personal cars, which maintain relatively stable fares despite system-wide review.

In some major Bus Rapid Transit systems across Lagos State, including Abule-Egba, Iyana-Ipaja, Oshodi, Obalende, Ikorodu and Ikeja, there have been long queues as more commuters opt for the government-run transport system.

Passengers Lament Hardship

Many passengers attributed the growing patronage to the comparatively lower and more predictable fares offered by the BRT buses compared to commercial buses.

Transportation analysts say the growing pressure on the BRT system reflects the wider economic impact of rising energy costs on urban mobility,



Commuters struggle to enter commercial vehicles amid rising transport fares

particularly in cities like Lagos where millions depend on public transport daily.

They warn that unless more buses are deployed and mass transit options expanded, overcrowding at BRT terminals may worsen as more residents abandon costlier commercial transport options.

Power Outages: A Recurring Inconvenience Nigerians in different states have been experiencing recurring power outages in recent weeks.

However, speaking at the National Convention

of the All Progressives Congress (APC), in Abuja on Friday, President Bola Tinubu assured that the coming days are going to be better.

The country has battled power outages in recent weeks, owing to lower generation. But President Tinubu says a turnaround is underway.

“I assure you, many of you lamenting the problem of electricity and power; we are paying attention to that,” he said.

“Electricity will become better, and we assure you there will be opportunities

and progress in our industrialisation.

“Through the Grid Asset Management Company, we will inject approximately 1,500 megawatts into a new grid corridor,” the president said.

“The impact of our programmes is visible, tangible, impactful, and measurable—not mere rhetoric as some opposition elements like to suggest. We are moving from survival mode to stability.”

Tinubu took over as president in 2023 and

has since initiated several reforms, such as unifying the exchange rate window and removing fuel subsidies.

These moves have been criticised by the opposition, which says they have caused untold hardship to Nigerians. Tinubu, though, admitted that “the road to reform would be tough” and assured Nigerians that the country is getting it right. “Fellow compatriots, since assuming office, our government has remained focused on delivering on our mandate

to the Nigerian people despite a complex global economic and political environment. Today, I can assure you that we are on the right track. Investor confidence has greatly improved.

“Our oil and gas sector has once more become attractive to foreign investment following our reforms. Our Eurobond issuance was oversubscribed by 400%, and Nigeria has exited the financial ‘grey list’, marking a return to global financial credibility,” he said.

Beauty At A Deadly Price: The rising dangers of plastic surgery among Nigerian women

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

and Celebrity Culture

The explosion of social media platforms has played a significant role in promoting unrealistic body standards. Curvaceous figures, tiny waists and exaggerated hips have become symbols of beauty and status.

Influencers and celebrities often showcase surgically enhanced bodies without openly discussing the medical risks involved. As a result, many young women are drawn into the dangerous belief that cosmetic surgery is a quick and harmless path to confidence, popularity and financial opportunities. Unfortunately, what is rarely highlighted online are the botched procedures, infections, or tragic deaths that sometimes follow these operations.

The Rise of Unregulated Clinics

A major concern is the proliferation of poorly regulated cosmetic clinics both within Nigeria and abroad. Some women travel to countries such as Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, or neighbouring African nations where cosmetic surgery is aggressively marketed at relatively cheaper rates.

Others patronise underground clinics within Nigeria operated by individuals who may not be properly qualified. In such environments, basic medical standards are often ignored. Unsanitary conditions, counterfeit implants and inexperienced practitioners significantly increase the likelihood of complications. These unsafe practices have resulted in horrifying outcomes:

women waking up with severely damaged tissues, uneven body structures, chronic



Surgery

infections, or life-threatening blood clots. Deaths That Shock the Nation

In recent years, Nigeria has witnessed several tragic stories of women who never returned home

after cosmetic procedures. Families who expected their daughters or wives to come back with improved

appearances instead received devastating news of sudden deaths.

Medical experts warn that some procedures, particularly the Brazilian Butt Lift, are among the most dangerous cosmetic surgeries in the world. The operation involves transferring fat into the buttocks, a process that can lead to fatal fat embolisms if the fat enters the bloodstream.

Even when death does not occur, survivors often face years of corrective surgeries and emotional trauma. Permanent Deformities and Lifelong Complications For those who survive botched surgeries, the consequences can be equally devastating. Some women are left with hardened tissues, discoloured skin, severe scarring and distorted body shapes that are far worse than their original appearance.

NEWS

BY ABDULLAHI HARUNA



Barber

Barber bags 2 years imprisonment for selling Cannabis Sativa to buy working equipment

Justice Nkeonye Maha of the Federal High Court, Ibadan, has sentenced a barber, Jamiu Badmus, to two years in the correctional centre for peddling 220g of Cannabis Sativa.

Delivering judgment, Maha said that her decision to convict Badmus arose from his guilty plea and the overwhelming evidence tendered against him by the prosecution.

She added that the convict was a first-time offender, who during trial showed remorse, and had promised to turn a new leaf.

"Badmus is hereby sentenced to two years' imprisonment and the sentence starts from the date of his arrest.

"The N143,850 proceeds he realised from the

sale of Cannabis are forfeited to the Federal Government of Nigeria.

"The weed exhibit found in his possession shall be destroyed by the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA)," Maha held. Shortly before the judgment, the defence counsel, Mr Femi Oyinloye, prayed the court to show mercy on his client, who is an orphan and his family's breadwinner.

Oyinloye explained that the convict was lured into the business by one Baba Sunday who told him that drug peddling was lucrative.

The defence counsel further stated that Badmus was a trained barber and was looking for money to buy his barbing equipment before venturing

into the illicit business.

The Prosecutor, Mrs R.O. Ige had earlier informed the court that the convict committed the crime on Nov. 12, 2025, at Apata area of Ibadan, Oyo State. Ige said that concerned Nigerians had tipped off operatives of the NDLEA that Badmus was involved in the peddling of illicit drugs.

She stated that the operatives subsequently apprehended the convict in possession of a bag containing 220g of Cannabis Sativa.

The prosecutor said that the offence contravened the provisions of section 11(C) of the NDLEA Act Cap N30 Law of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004.

Kano deputy governor, Aminu Abdussalam Gwarzo, resigns

The Deputy Governor of Kano State, Comrade Aminu Abdussalam Gwarzo, has resigned.

This was disclosed on Friday in a statement issued by Dr Habibu Sale Mohammed, spokesperson of the Kwankwasiyya Movement.

The Kano State House of Assembly had earlier initiated impeachment proceedings against the deputy governor.

However, a Federal High Court sitting in Kano on Wednesday declined an application by Abdussalam seeking to halt the process.

"The Kwankwasiyya Movement wishes to formally inform the general public, the good people of Kano State, and the entire nation that the Deputy Governor of Kano State has tendered his resignation from office," the statement said.

It added that the decision, though difficult, was taken in the overall interest of the people and the stability of governance in the state.

"Recent circumstances have, to a considerable extent, constrained the full realisation of the benefits and responsibilities attached to the office of the Deputy Governor. In view of this, it has become imperative to allow the office to function optimally in the best interest of the public it is meant to serve," the statement said. The movement clarified that the resignation does not amount to an admission of the allegations raised against him by the state assembly.

"For the avoidance of doubt, this resignation does not in any way constitute an admission of the allegations raised against him by the Kano State House of Assembly.

The Deputy Governor maintains his innocence and firmly believes that his records in office and public service remain a testament to his integrity and commitment to the people," it stated.

It further described the move as an act of statesmanship aimed at preserving peace and avoiding political tension that could hinder governance and development in the state.

The statement also noted that Abdussalam would now focus on strengthening the Kwankwasiyya Movement ahead of the 2027 general elections.

"The Deputy Governor has also resolved to dedicate more time and energy to the Kwankwasiyya Movement, particularly in strengthening its structures, rebuilding strategies, and engaging in critical political realignments ahead of the 2027 general elections," it added.

The movement urged its supporters and residents of Kano State to remain calm, law-abiding, and committed to the ideals of good governance and democracy, assuring that further details would be communicated in due course.

ICPC releases El-Rufai hours after mother's death

The Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) has released Malam Nasir el-Rufai, former governor of Kaduna State. El-Rufai has been in ICPC custody since February 19, 2026.

He was arrested after leaving the custody of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), where he was grilled for 48 hours.

The ICPC had arraigned him on a 10-count charge bordering on the alleged conversion of public property and money laundering.

He was arraigned before a Federal High Court in Kaduna, which adjourned his application for bail till March 31.

But hours after his mother died in Cairo, Egypt, the anti-graft agency freed the former governor, who has denied all the allegations levelled against him.

An ally of El-Rufai confirmed his release but did not go into details.



El-Rufai and later mother.

Bashir El-Rufai, the former governor's son, also confirmed that his father had been set free.

There are strong indications that the release is on compassionate grounds as

the remains of the former governor's mother would be flown in from Cairo on Saturday, according to family sources.

Meanwhile, President Bola Tinubu; Governor Uba

Sani; and Malam Nuhu Ribadu, have all condoled with El-Rufai over his mother's death.

Their comments have attracted divergent reactions on social media, with some describing the ordeal of the former governor as a family affair among the elites.



Gwarzo

OUR HEART

General Oluyede on communities and insecurity

General Olufemi Oluyede, the Chief of Defence Staff, CDS, of the nation's Armed Forces, has an established reputation as a forthright, straight-talking infantry officer who calls a spade by its name without embellishments, regardless of whose ox might be gored.

It was therefore vintage General Oluyede in his remarks on the role of communities in the nation's lingering war against insecurity in the shapes of Islamist insurgency prevalent in the North-east and armed banditry in the North-west and North-central regions of the country. According to him, a significant lesson from the universal history of warfare is that sustainable security can only be achieved through close collaboration between the government security agencies and the local communities.

With the tremendous contributions of local militias, especially the Civilian Joint Task Force, CJTF, communities in the nation's axis of the war against insecurity, can only be enjoined to increase the level of their support in the campaign. This is against the well-known incidents of subversive activities of treacherous quislings embedded in the communities. Such undesirable elements are obviously, those who supply the oxygen for survival of the insurgents in the form of basic necessities such as food items, logistics, spares, and diesel among other critical operational requirements for sustaining life and mobility in the forest.

Even more importantly, it is from people in the communities that the insurgents receive information on the locations and movements, the strength of personnel and their arsenals. The recent spikes in the phenomena of devastating ambushes and brazen assaults of the terrorists on military bases in Borno, Yobe, Katsina, Zamfara, Kebbi Sokoto and Niger states, are clearly, the result of informants from the communities.

The CDS was therefore, saying it as it is by his remarks:

"For us to end this act of terrorism, the people of Borno and Yobe States must take ownership of this problem because the bulk of the people perpetrating these acts are from these states. They are our brothers, our sisters, our cousins and we know them."

To buttress this obviously bitter, disconcerting view, General Oluyede gave a recent graphic and irrefutable incident as an example:

"When Kukawa was attacked and we were conducting follow-up searches, two of the attackers among the wounded ones were inside the village. This means that the people are complicit."

Because it is an unsavoury picture, a negative portrayal, and a bitter truth which is naturally difficult to accept,



some people have, not unexpectedly, challenged and debunked the widespread stories about moles and quislings in some communities in the theatres of war in Borno and Yobe States. Those in denial of the palpable and empirical realities are,

at best, being spurred by the emotions of primordial pride and heroism built on sentiments. This posture is detrimental to the superior task of saving the entire country from the ruinous activities of the few who have taken up arms against the state.

The existence of collaborators in the North-east communities engulfed by insurgency is also a fact in the Northwestern states of Katsina, Zamfara, Kebbi, Sokoto, Kaduna and in the other parts of the country afflicted by the plague of banditry. In these states, the arrested couriers of arms, drugs as well as informants of bandits over the years, evidenced this fact. Sadly, the arrests, especially in Katsina, Zamfara and Kaduna have included a huge number of women.

In regions peculiarly ravaged by poverty and related economic difficulties, terrorists easily use financial or material inducements to recruit new collaborators or new members. There are also instances where coercion or threats of violence are deployed to enforce compliance towards serving as informants of the terrorists.

General Olufemi Oluyede is absolutely correct in his prognosis of the existence of elements in the communities who serve as informants and collaborators with the terrorists.

However, the military cannot as such, be exonerated of the blame for failures to evolve effective counter-intelligence strategies fifteen years after its asymmetrical war with the insurgents. The point here is, if the rag-tag militants of insurgents and bandits could induce people to be loyal to them, the Armed Forces ought to have greater reach and capacity in the recruitment of citizens sympathetic to the more noble and patriotic project of ridding the country of the scourge of terrorism.

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NORTH-EAST

BY GIFT LUCKSON
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Bauchi government, UNICEF seek swift passage of six-month maternity leave bill



New mothers.

Bauchi State Government and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have called for the speedy passage of the six-month maternity leave bill.

They described it as a critical step towards improving child health and promoting exclusive breastfeeding in the state. The executive secretary of the Bauchi State Primary Health Care Development Agency,

Dr Rilwanu Mohammed, stressed that extending maternity leave from three to six months would significantly improve the well-being of mothers and newborns.

He said the proposed legislation would enable working mothers to exclusively breastfeed their babies for the recommended six months, which he noted is essential for boosting immunity, reducing child

mortality and ensuring healthy growth.

Dr Mohammed explained that many mothers are often forced to return to work shortly after delivery due to the current limited maternity leave period, thereby making it difficult to practice exclusive breastfeeding.

To him, the passage of the bill would align Bauchi State with global best practices and demonstrate the government's

commitment to improving maternal and child health outcomes.

"We are advocating for the speedy passage of the six-month maternity leave bill because it will allow mothers to properly care for their newborns and practice exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life," he said.

Also speaking, UNICEF Chief of Field Office in Bauchi, Dr Nuzat Rafique, said the agency is supporting the state government and other stakeholders to ensure the bill becomes law.

Dr Rafique noted that evidence shows that babies who are exclusively breastfed for the first six months are healthier and less prone to infections and malnutrition.

She added that extending maternity leave would also help reduce infant mortality and improve children's nutrition in the state.

The UNICEF official urged lawmakers and relevant stakeholders to prioritise the bill to enable mothers to provide adequate care and nutrition to their infants during the critical early months of life.

Adamawa rolls out 1.4 million doses of anti-polio vaccine for 1.2 million children

Adamawa State has set aside 1.4 million doses of vaccine in its fresh anti-polio campaign targeting 1.2 million children.

The state has mobilised 1,685 teams of health personnel for the exercise, scheduled to begin this Sunday, March 29.

The teams, each comprising a vaccinator, a community sensitiser, and a recorder, are to visit each of the 226 wards of the 21 local government areas of the state, administering oral polio vaccination to children aged 0-59 months.

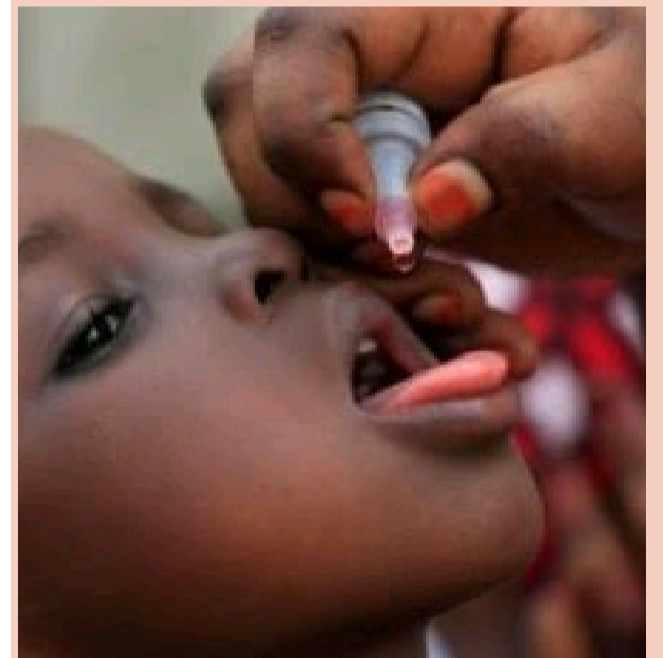
The details were disclosed in Yola on Friday during a media briefing on the exercise, as part of activities of the National Immunisation Plus Campaign, supported in the state by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in

collaboration with the Adamawa State Primary Health Care Development Agency (ADSPHCDA).

The Chief Executive of the ADSPHCDA, Dr Sulaiman Bashir, said the polio campaign remains necessary for Nigeria to be doubly sure that the polio virus does not affect anyone should it be brought from any country that still has the virus.

He said that even after the four scheduled days of the exercise (from Sunday to Wednesday, April 1), two further days will be declared so that any household not reached for any reason in the first four days will be visited.

"This is a unique exercise, the only one that takes us to every household in the state," Bashir said.



Anti-polio vaccine.

Sand-laden truck rams into newly renovated gate at Gombe Government House



Accident scene

A truck loaded with sand has rammed into the main gate of the Gombe State Government House, damaging the structure. The incident, which occurred around 12:55 p.m., involved a gate

reportedly constructed as part of ongoing renovation projects at the Government House under Governor Muhammadu Yahaya. The gate has yet to be officially inaugurated. Eyewitnesses said the

truck lost control before crashing into the multi-million-naira facility.

"I was standing across the road when I saw the truck approaching at speed. Suddenly, the driver seemed to lose control, and the vehicle

veered off and hit the gate," said a trader, Musa Abdullahi.

Another witness, a commercial motorcyclist, Ibrahim Sadiq, said the incident could have been more tragic if pedestrians

had been nearby. "It happened very fast. People started running when they saw the truck coming. Thankfully, no one was injured," he said.

A security aide in the area, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the impact caused significant damage to the newly installed gate. "The gate is part of the ongoing renovation. The force of the crash bent parts of the structure," he added.

The truck is alleged to belong to Tricata Nigeria Ltd., although its registration number was not immediately available.

Confirming the incident, the Director-General of Press Affairs at the Gombe Government House, Ismaila Misilli, said no life was lost.

"It happened earlier today. We thank God there was no loss of life."

"The driver sustained injuries and is currently receiving treatment," he said.

The Government House is currently undergoing extensive renovation and rehabilitation, part of what the administration describes as legacy infrastructure projects across the state.

NORTH-EAST

BY IBRAHEEM EL-TAFSEER

EU-funded initiative targets reduction of child malnutrition deaths in North-East

A nutrition programme funded by the European Union Humanitarian Aid has contributed to a significant reduction in malnutrition-related child mortality across Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states, officials said on Monday.

The assessment was made during a media dialogue in Damaturu, where journalists and health officials reviewed the initiative implemented by UNICEF in partnership with the three state governments.

A key driver of the impact has been the large-scale distribution of Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) across health facilities.

Dr Babagana Kundi Machina, Executive Secretary of the Yobe State Primary Health Care Board, said the European Union grant strengthened nutrition coordination and ensured an uninterrupted supply of RUTF and therapeutic milk. He listed core interventions to include: community-based screening using Mid-Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) tapes, treatment of severe acute malnutrition across



Beneficiaries

306 outpatient centres and improved data systems and supply chain management. Yobe State Nutritional Officer, Hadiza Maina Adamu, noted that sustained collaboration with development partners had improved recovery rates.

“The availability of RUTF has made treatment more feasible, accessible, and effective,” she said. Before the dialogue, journalists visited the Gwange and Mairi Primary Health Care Centres, where they observed MUAC screening and appetite testing for children. A tour of a medical warehouse

also revealed over 3,264 cartons of therapeutic food stocked under a UNICEF Yobe State Government partnership. Stakeholders said the joint effort among UNICEF, the European Union, and state governments has been essential to sustaining life-saving nutrition support in the humanitarian context of North-East Nigeria.

Taraba government unveils database to capture, manage youth data

Taraba State Governor, Dr Agbu Kefas, has launched a statewide youth database and profiling system to enhance youth-focused policies and programmes in the state. The initiative, developed by the Taraba State Youth Development Agency, was unveiled primarily to boost and improve service delivery in the state.

Governor Kefas described the platform as a critical tool for generating accurate and reliable data to drive youth empowerment and development programmes across the state.

He said his administration remains committed to prioritising young people. The development of the state, as reflected in the 2026 budget.

He stressed that future budgets would be deliberately structured to support youth development initiatives, especially in vocational skills.

The governor added that the project was part of his administration's efforts to reposition youths for meaningful participation in the state's growth and development.

He urged young people to key into the initiative by cooperating with relevant authorities, even as he advised them to shun negative tendencies and embrace the opportunities for their self-development.

Earlier, the Chairman of the Taraba State Youth Development Agency, Nongha Gara, said the database would serve as an invaluable asset for effective planning and implementation of youth-focused programmes.

Gara noted that the system would ensure that government interventions are better targeted and inclusive.

Also speaking, Mariya Pantuvo, who demonstrated the newly developed platform, highlighted its features and its capacity to capture and manage youth data across the state.

Pantuvo expressed optimism that the initiative would improve service delivery and ensure that no youth in Taraba State is left out of government interventions.



Dr Kefas

Police rescue abducted boy in Borno, arrest suspects



Victim

Borno State Police Command has successfully rescued a kidnapped seven-year-old boy, arrested five suspects and recovered ransom.

A statement issued to journalists on Friday in Maiduguri by the State's police public relations officer (PPRO) Nahum Kenneth Daso, said on

24th March, 2026 at about 1530hrs, a report was received at the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID), Maiduguri, from a resident of Chad Basin Area Maiduguri, that his 7-year-old son, was kidnapped on 23rd March, 2026 at about 1840hrs by unknown persons.

Daso said preliminary investigation revealed that the suspects contacted the victim's mother through a concealed GSM number and demanded a ransom of ten million naira (N10,000,000.00), which was later negotiated to eight million naira (N8,000,000.00). He said a sum of one

million five hundred thousand naira (N1,500,000.00) was subsequently paid into a POS account provided by the suspects.

The PPRO added that upon intensive digital forensic analysis, detectives of the Command traced and arrested one Musa Mohammed Bashir, a POS operator, whose account was used to receive the ransom.

He said further coordinated operations led to the arrest of four additional suspects, namely: Ali Adam (aka Abba), 24 years; Abubakar Sadiq, 29 years; Abba Goni Abba, 18 years; and Mohammed Musa (aka Ale Mamman), 18 years, all residents of Chad Basin and Bulabulin Alajiri areas of Maiduguri.

“Consequently, the victim was rescued unharmed and taken to the hospital for medical evaluation before being safely reunited with his family. The sum of one million five hundred thousand Naira (N1,500,000.00) was also recovered.

The case is still under investigation and the suspect will be charged in court.

The Commissioner of Police, Borno State Command, CP Naziru Abdulmajid, commended the detectives for the swift breakthrough and reassured members of the public of the Command's sustained commitment to intelligence-led policing and urged the public to continue providing timely and actionable information to security agencies,” the statement read.

Daso said the command calls on members of the public to remain vigilant and report suspicious movements or activities to the nearest

CUSTOMS

BY ABDULLAHI HARUNA

Nigeria, UK Customs launch digital initiative to tackle £1.2bn trade imbalance

Nigeria's Customs Service (NCS) and the United Kingdom's Tax and Customs authority have agreed to establish a structured data-sharing framework to resolve a staggering £1.2 billion discrepancy in bilateral trade figures, a gap that has long undermined transparency and efficiency across Nigeria's West African trade corridors.

The commitment, according to a statement by the Service, Abdullahi Maiwada, emerged from a high-level bilateral meeting held in London on 18 March 2026, on the sidelines of President Bola Tinubu's State Visit to the United Kingdom, under the Nigeria, United Kingdom Enhanced Trade and Investment Partnership (ETIP) framework, signalling a new chapter in customs cooperation between Africa's largest economy and its former colonial ruler.

The talks, he said, were led by Comptroller General of Customs Adewale Adeniyi and Head of International Customs and Border Engagement at His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC), Megan Shaw, and centred on customs modernisation, data



Adeniyi

transparency in bilateral trade flows, and expanded operational cooperation. At the heart of the engagement was a striking statistical anomaly: while Nigeria recorded approximately £504 million in UK-origin goods as imports in 2024,

the United Kingdom reported exports to Nigeria valued at approximately £1.7 billion for the same period, a mismatch of roughly £1.2 billion that both administrations described as a structural issue demanding coordinated resolution. To bridge this gap, both

parties agreed to explore establishing a pre-arrival data exchange framework that links their respective digital customs platforms to enhance risk management, improve data reconciliation, and strengthen compliance monitoring across the Nigeria-UK trade corridor.

Adeniyi, whose service oversees one of Africa's busiest port environments, stressed the strategic importance of the exercise. "Effective customs cooperation remains a critical enabler of economic growth and sustainable trade development," he stated, adding that "customs administrations serve as the frontline institutions responsible for ensuring that trade flows between both countries are transparent, secure, and mutually beneficial."

The CGC further noted that Nigeria and the United Kingdom share a long-standing economic relationship, anchored by active trade across key sectors, including industrial goods, agriculture, energy, and consumer products, which are deeply intertwined with port and maritime logistics operations.

The meeting, Maiwada noted, also gave both sides an opportunity to showcase their respective modernisation programmes. The UK presented advances in artificial intelligence-driven trade tools, digital verification systems, and real-time analytics capabilities, with direct implications for port processing speeds, cargo

risk assessment, and border security.

Beyond data reconciliation, the London engagement produced concrete deliverables with far-reaching implications for trade facilitation. These include developing a Customs Mutual Administrative Assistance Framework, commencing technical scoping for capacity-building and knowledge exchange, and establishing a joint technical engagement mechanism under the ETIP framework. For Nigeria's ports and trade ecosystem, the outcomes are significant.

"The NCS has reaffirmed its commitment to deepening international partnerships as part of a broader modernisation agenda designed to promote transparency, efficiency, and competitiveness in Nigeria's trading environment," the statement said.

The Service further assured stakeholders that "insights from this engagement will strengthen its operational capacity, enhance trade facilitation, and support Nigeria's economic reform objectives under the Renewed Hope programme."

Simplified Trade Regime: Nigeria Customs Service seeks collaboration with AfCFTA Secretariat

The Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) has held an engagement with a delegation from the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat at its Headquarters in Maitama, Abuja. The meeting focused on advancing the implementation of the Simplified Trade Regime (STR) to support small-scale cross-border trade. Comptroller-General of Customs, Adewale Adeniyi was represented at the meeting by the Deputy Comptroller-General (DCG) in charge of Tariff and Trade, Caroline Niagwan, who reaffirmed the Service's commitment to facilitating trade and supporting Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) through simplified and transparent customs processes. DCG Niagwan stated, "Our goal is to make trade easier, more transparent, and inclusive for small-scale traders, while ensuring compliance with national and regional trade regulations." Leader of the AfCFTA delegation,

Pedro Esteveao, outlined the objectives of the engagement and highlighted Nigeria's designation as the pilot country for the Simplified Trade Regime in West Africa.

He noted that Nigeria's position as the largest market in the region places it at a strategic advantage in driving inclusive trade and regional economic growth.

During the session, the NCS presented its draft Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for implementing the STR in Nigeria. The presentation detailed simplified customs procedures covering informal cross-border trade, passenger baggage, and low-value e-commerce transactions, supported by digital declaration systems and risk-based controls. Nabil Zibani, a consultant with the AfCFTA Secretariat, delivered a presentation on the proposed continental STR framework. He emphasised the importance of enabling MSMEs to comply with customs procedures through simplified, transparent, and accessible systems that promote

participation in regional trade.

Discussions during the engagement identified key areas of convergence between the NCS draft SOP and the AfCFTA framework, including the simplification of documentation and procedures, the use of digital platforms for declaration and clearance, the adoption of de minimis thresholds for low-value trade, and the promotion of inclusive trade, particularly for women and MSMEs.

Both parties agreed on the need for sustained technical engagement to refine implementation strategies, address operational challenges, and ensure alignment between national and continental frameworks.

The engagement marks a significant step toward positioning Nigeria as a pilot country for implementing the Simplified Trade Regime under the AfCFTA, while reinforcing the Nigeria Customs Service's commitment to facilitating legitimate trade, strengthening regional integration, and supporting inclusive economic growth.



Customs headquarters

PRIME PHOTOS

BY MERCY ADAJE
MercyAdaje@neptuneprime.com.ng



In this photograph, the Ameer of Fika, Alhaji Muhammadu Ibn Idrissa OBE welcomed the West African Airways Corporation's staff in the year 1943. The Airplane behind was the first Airplane to land in Yobe State.

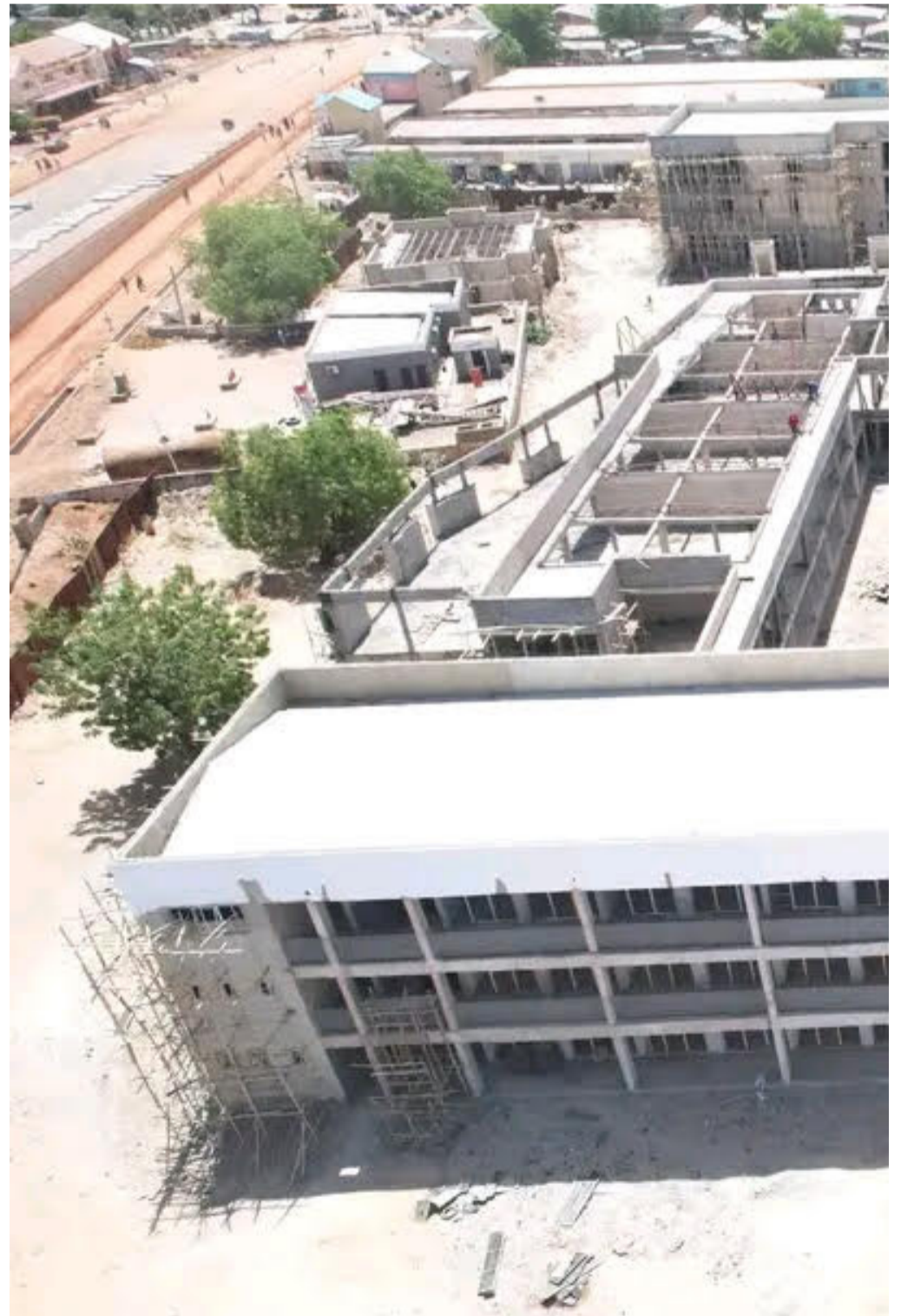


Nigerian Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, inspects the Honour Guard in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, May 21, 1963.



COURSE CODE	COURSE TITLE	CREDITS	TOTAL SCORE	LETTER GRADE	GRADE POINT	WEIGHTED GRADE POINT
PHY 300	SIWES	6	80	A	5	30
GPA: 5.00		CGPA: 4.81				
LEVEL: 400		YEAR: 2020/2021		SEMESTER: First Semester		
COURSE CODE	COURSE TITLE	CREDITS	TOTAL SCORE	LETTER GRADE	GRADE POINT	WEIGHTED GRADE POINT
PHY401	Quantum Mechanics I	3	68	B	4	12
PHY403	Mathematical Methods in Physics I	3	74	A	5	15
PHY405	Analytical Mechanics II	2	73	A	5	10
PHY407	Computational Physics	3	82	A	5	15
PHY409	Physics Seminar	1	85	A	5	5
PHY411	Nuclear and Particle Physics	2	62	B	4	8
PHY413	Statistical Mechanics	3	76	A	5	15
PHY433	Atmospheric Physics	2	67	B	4	8
GPA: 4.63		CGPA: 4.78				
LEVEL: 400		YEAR: 2020/2021		SEMESTER: Second Semester		
COURSE CODE	COURSE TITLE	CREDITS	TOTAL SCORE	LETTER GRADE	GRADE POINT	WEIGHTED GRADE POINT
GST302	Introduction to Entrepreneurial Skills	2	79	A	5	10
PHY400	Research Project	6	85	A	5	30
PHY402	Quantum Mechanics II	3	84	A	5	15
PHY404	Mathematical Methods in Physics II	3	95	A	5	15
PHY424	Solid State Physics II	3	61	B	4	12
PHY428	Atomic and Molecular Spectroscopy	3	68	B	4	12
PHY432	Digital Electronics and Microprocessors	2	88	A	5	10
PHY488	Communication	2	86	A	5	10
GPA: 4.75		CGPA: 4.78				
Grade Point Summary						
		168	168	4.78		
		Total Credit Units	FLW Cum Credit Units	FLW CGPA		

Meet Ayuba Emmanuel, the best graduating student from the Department of Physics, Federal University Wukari with an outstanding CGPA of 4.78. He is also a celebrated data analyst with a passion for transforming raw data into meaningful business insights.



Yobe State Governor Mai Mala Buni is set to complete the Damaturu Commercial Mall Centre with over 200 shops. This development follows the nine modern markets constructed by his administration.

PRIME10MENT

BY MERCY ADAJE
MercyAdaje@neptuneprime.com.ng

AREWA24 returns with hit drama series "Zabi Biyu"

AREWA24, a leading Hausa language family entertainment and lifestyle television channel and production studio in Nigeria and West Africa, has staged another exciting time for entertainment lovers as it returns post-Ramadan with its hit drama series "Zabi Biyu".

The anticipated second season is expected to hit the airwaves soon following the success of its debut season. The media firm said Zabi Biyu captivated audiences across Northern Nigeria and beyond with its compelling storytelling, rich cultural themes, and appealing characters.

The Chief Executive Officer of media firm, Celestine Umeibe, said the series quickly became a fan favourite, praised for its authentic portrayal of love, choices, and the complexities of modern relationships within a traditional society.

He said season 2 promises to build on this success with even more drama, deeper character development, and unexpected twists.

Umeibe said, "Viewers can look forward to a continuation of the story as the characters navigate the consequences of their past decisions while facing new challenges that test their values, relationships, and ambitions."

Celestine Umeibe also said: "Zabi Biyu represents the kind of culturally resonant drama series we are committed to delivering to our audiences, especially the youth/young adults. The response to Season 1 was phenomenal, and we are thrilled to bring viewers an even more engaging and captivating Season 2."

"For our advertisers, they can connect with loyal viewers in a meaningful way, following a highly engaged TV audience across Hausa-speaking communities."

"At the heart of Zabi Biyu is a story that reflects the lived experiences of our audience, evolving in a way that is more intense and emotionally layered, while staying true to the cultural nuances, language, and everyday realities that resonate across Hausa-speaking communities," said Salisu Balarabe, Director of Zabi Biyu Season 2.



Wizkid and Ayra Starr

Wizkid, Ayra Starr win big at 2026 MOBO Awards in UK

Music stars Wizkid and Ayra Starr, along with British-Nigerian media personality Niko Omilana, were among the winners at the 2026 MOBO Awards held in Manchester, United Kingdom.

Wizkid won the Best African Music Act award, beating fellow Nigerians Davido, Rema, Shallipopi, Tiwa Savage, and Adekunle Gold.

Ayra Starr claimed the Best International Act prize, surpassing global stars such as Cardi B, Gunna, and Kehlani.

Niko Omilana emerged as the winner of the Best Media Personality category, beating nominees including Bemi Orojuogun, popularly known as Bus Aunty, and DJ Remi Burgz.

The 2026 edition of the MOBO Awards, the first held in Manchester, celebrated Black music and culture, honouring several international stars that night.

Other celebrities of Nigerian descent also made the nominees list, including German-Nigerian singer Odeal, nominated for Best Male Act and Best R&B/Soul Act, and British actors Wunmi Mosaku, Damson Idris, Dayo Koleosho, and Cynthia Erivo, nominated in the Best Performance in a TV Show/Film category.

Actress Adesua Etomi to co-produce, voice-cast animated feature "Malika: Warrior Queen"

Nigerian actress, Adesua Etomi, will executive-produce and voice-cast the protagonist of Roye Okupe's upcoming animation feature 'Malika: Warrior Queen'.

The animation feature is created by Okupe, whose animated series 'Iyanu' is a huge success on Cartoon Network.

Adapted from YouNeek Studios' graphic novel series of the same title, "Malika: Warrior Queen" tells the story of a 15th-century queen and warrior who inherits the throne from her father, leading to the splitting of the Kingdom of Azzaz in half.

After several wars, she united the Kingdom, expanding it into one of the largest empires in West Africa. However, with the expansion comes the rise of enemies within her council, along with the allure of one of the world's feared superpowers, the Ming Dynasty.

Malika must battle to win the clandestine war within the walls of her empire, while simultaneously working to defeat an indomitable external foe determined to vanquish her entire people. This is the first graphic novel series by Roye Okupe, published by YouNeek Studio in 2017.

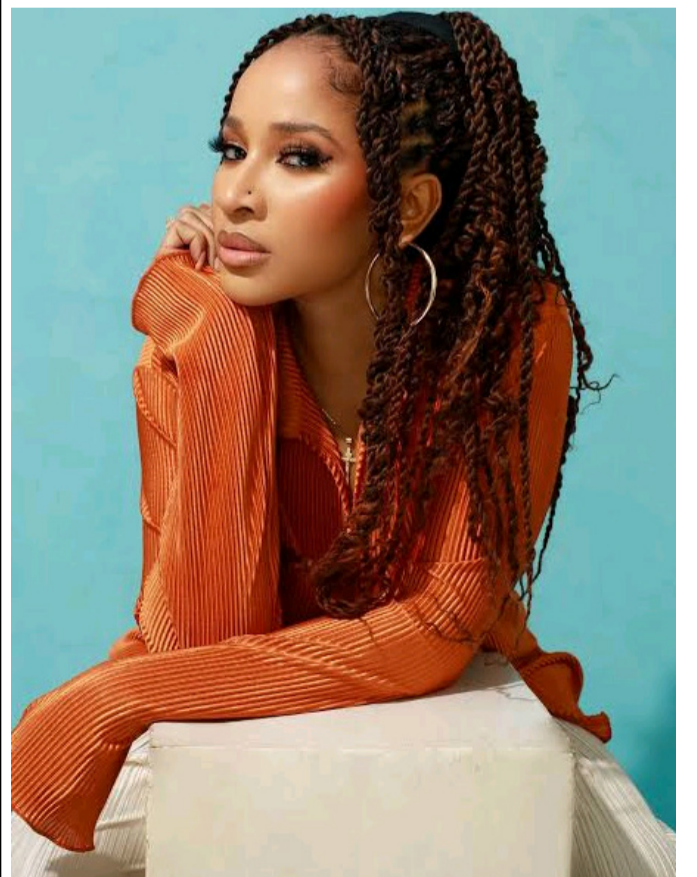
Already a Singapore-based production house and financier, August Media Group has agreed to finance up to one-third of the production and marketing costs for the feature film, while joining as a co-producer.

The group will oversee animation production for the film, working with a team of established studios and artists from across Asia to bring Okupe's anime-inspired African mythology fantasy to life.

"Roye Okupe's vision for 'Malika: Warrior Queen' pushes the boundaries of what afro-anime can be on the big screen. We are excited to bring together some of the most talented anime animation studios in Asia to help realise that vision," said August Media Group founder and CEO, Jyotirmoy Saha.

On his part, Okupe said, the CEO's ability to "attract gifted studios and artists through Asia to work on this film adds an exciting new dimension to the visual storytelling we are looking to achieve".

August Media Group animation projects comprise the internationally Emmy-nominated preschool series 'Tish Tash', and the Asian Television Award-winning action-adventure series 'Barangay 143' and 'George of the Jungle'.



Adesua Etomi



AREWA24

NEPTUNE PRIME BUSINESS

BY ABDULLAH HARUNA

MARKET SURVEY



Prices of food items, services soar in FCT amid rising fuel costs and unstable power supply

Prices of food items, goods, and services have risen sharply across the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), as Nigerians grapple with the ripple effects of the Middle East crisis on fuel costs. A recent survey showed that the increase in pump prices of petroleum products has triggered a surge in transportation and production costs, pushing up market prices. At major markets along the Abuja-Keffi road, traders said a big basket of tomatoes, which sold

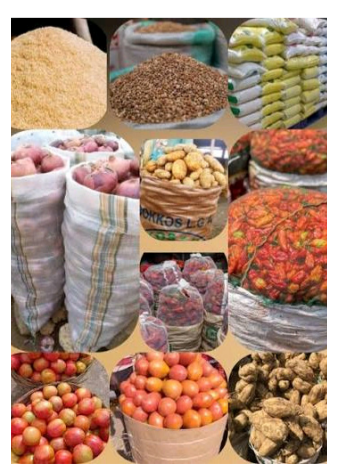
for between N9,000 and N10,000 in February, now goes for between N30,000 and N35,000. Similarly, a bag of onions previously sold for between N15,000 and N25,000 now costs as much as N45,000, while smaller measures have also doubled in price. At Lugbe, Orozo, Karu, Wuse, and Nyanya markets, prices of yams, beans, pepper, and sweet potatoes recorded significant increases, with traders blaming rising transport fares and fuel

costs. Business owners also lamented the impact of poor electricity supply, saying reliance on diesel-powered generators has further driven up production costs. A sachet water distributor, said, "We rely more on diesel; we spend a lot of money to buy diesel and we burn it just to produce the water, what we make as profit for now is very small." An ice-block seller added, "I buy diesel and fuel just to power my generators



because we rarely get five hours of light daily. This is ripping me off and stifling my business." Residents also expressed frustration over the rising cost of living. "I was surprised today when I took my children to the same salon for a haircut and I was charged N3,000. This is outrageous. Something needs to be done and fast," a mother of two

said. Another resident lamented that her standard of living was declining daily, urging authorities to address transportation and production costs. Citizens and traders have called on the Federal Government of Nigeria to urgently intervene by addressing fuel prices, electricity challenges, and other key factors driving inflation.



MILESTONE

BY AYANDA NGWANE



Ambassador Ayanda Ngwane, Nancy Taiye Aragbaye and Special Assistant to the President of Nigeria on Art, Culture, Tourism Ayomide Adeagbo among other dignitaries.

Diaspora Returns Brings African Leaders Together for an Evening of Art, Fashion, and Economic Dialogue in Lagos

High-profile Culture and Connect Mixer brings together diaspora leaders, creatives, policymakers, and industry changemakers in a landmark evening of art, fashion, and African economic vision.

The poolside terrace of the iconic Eko Hotel and Suites in Lagos came alive on Wednesday evening as Nigeria's creative, diplomatic, and entrepreneurial community converged for the Diaspora Returns:

The exclusive event drew investors, artists, fashion designers, policy advocates, and diaspora professionals for an evening rich in conversation, creative expression, and continental ambition.

The night was hosted by Precious Osuji, a creative leader and passionate diaspora advocate whose warmth and command of the room kept the energy flowing from start to finish. From welcome addresses to a runway showcase and an immersive art exhibition, the event affirmed Nigeria's enduring status as the heartbeat of African creative enterprise.

The evening was anchored by its producer, Nancy Taiye Aragbaye, who delivered the Welcome Address and whose vision brought the entire Diaspora Returns concept to life. With over 15 years of experience spanning education, leadership, and entrepreneurship, Aragbaye has built a reputation as one of the foremost advocates for diaspora-Africa economic integration.

As Diaspora Relations Advisor to foreign and local entities, she oversees the construction of high-quality bridges between Africa and its diaspora for the

purpose of sustainable economic development. Her Edtech platform, Strategic Solutions Global, is an international leadership institute dedicated to equipping women leaders — or 'LeadHERS' — across Africa and the diaspora with the tools, resources, and networks needed to disrupt outdated systems. She also serves as USA National Head for Africa's Young Entrepreneurs, and sits on the Advisory Boards of both the Global Entrepreneurship Festival and the Entrepreneurship Village, widely regarded as Africa's Silicon Valley.

Aragbaye's words set a powerful tone for the evening, anchoring its central thesis: that the African diaspora is not just a cultural export, but an economic force to be reckoned with.

The evening's most electrifying presence was undoubtedly 19 Keys — global cultural thought leader, entrepreneur, and founder of the award-winning show *High Lvl Conversations*, which has amassed over 100 million views worldwide. 19 Keys travelled all the way from Los Angeles, California to be present at the mixer, a gesture that spoke volumes about the significance of the Diaspora Returns platform on the global stage.

Representing a community of millions across the domains of artificial intelligence, financial literacy, and culture, 19 Keys is one of the most influential voices shaping the intersection of Black excellence and global economics. He has spoken in 15 countries, carrying a message of empowerment, strategic thinking, and cultural pride to audiences on every continent. His presence in Lagos came

with a particularly meaningful gesture: his wellness brand, Supermind, sponsored and awarded funding to three groups of students at Lagos University for their businesses — a tangible investment in Nigeria's next generation of entrepreneurs that drew enthusiastic applause from the audience. In a room full of visionaries, 19 Keys stood out as a man who does not just speak about change — he finances it. Delivering the Special Address was Ayomide Adeagbo, Special Assistant to the President of Nigeria on Art, Culture, Tourism and the Creative Economy — and the Official Partner for the evening. An award-winning photographer, published author, and founder of Xtreme Media, Adeagbo brings over a decade of experience operating at the crossroads of photography and politics.

In his current presidential role, he is tasked with institutionalising the Presidency's creative economy agenda — shaping policy, driving creative engagement frameworks with measurable, sustainable outcomes. His presence at the mixer underscored the Nigerian government's growing recognition of culture as a cornerstone of economic development.

The evening's Strategic Partners' Spotlight gave well-deserved recognition to the institutions and brands whose support made the mixer possible. Zenith Bank, one of Nigeria's foremost financial institutions, stood as a proud partner of the evening, reinforcing the banking sector's alignment with the diaspora economic agenda. The

Lagos State Office of Diaspora Affairs, represented by Jermaine Sanwo-Olu, delivered goodwill messages that affirmed the state government's commitment to welcoming and leveraging its diaspora community.

BRICS Africa Channel, the pan-African media powerhouse connecting Africa to the global *BRICS* conversation, was represented by its CEO, Ambassador Ayanda Ngwane. The channel's partnership added an important continental and geopolitical dimension to the evening — a clear signal that the Diaspora Returns vision extends well beyond Nigeria's borders.

Proven Skincare, an Asian-owned US-based brand, joined as a product sponsor — bringing with it a statement about the growing global commercial interest in Africa's rising consumer market. Proven Skincare's sponsorship was a fitting symbol of the evening's expansive reach: that the Diaspora Returns platform is not only attracting African and Black-owned enterprises, but commanding the attention of international brands who recognise Africa as a destination for serious business.

Eko Hotel & Suites, serving as Culture Ambassador and Hospitality Partner, provided the exquisite poolside setting that lent the mixer its distinctive glamour.

Mubarak Olalekan Bakare: Bilateral and the Art of Cultural Diplomacy

Among the most riveting moments of the evening was the Exhibition Artists' Bio segment, which spotlighted Mubarak Olalekan Bakare, Founder of Bilateral — a revolutionary

platform designed to catapult African and diasporic art and culture to global prominence.

A recipient of the African Achievers Award (2020), one of the 10 Outstanding Young Persons of Nigeria (2023) in Cultural Achievement, and winner of the 2024 Global Leadership Award for Cultural Diplomacy, he has also been recognised as a Top 100 Under 40 Most Influential People of African Descent. Notably the tallest model in Sub-Saharan Africa, his presence commands as much attention as his ideas. In 2025, he was conferred the title of Global Culture and Youth Ambassador by the Federal Republic of Nigeria through the Ministry of Youth Development. Through Expedition 54 Limited, he forges symbiotic partnerships between African enterprises and international markets, and has spoken at the United Nations and the Caribbean Maritime University Industry and Academy Conference in Jamaica, among other global stages.

Tosan Keke: Art as Transformation
Also featured in the art exhibition was Tosan Keke, a Nigerian-born multidisciplinary artist whose work moves like water — fluid, transformative, and alive. Blending emotion, abstraction, and energy, Keke's practice is a meditation on beauty, rebirth, and presence. His pieces are both immersive and intensely personal, inviting viewers to feel, reflect, and connect with what lies beyond the surface.

His series *WOTR* channels themes of love, healing, and cosmic power — creating work that is bold, intimate, and unmistakably his. The mixer provided a fitting stage for Keke's art, whose themes of transformation and connection resonated deeply with the spirit of the evening.

Neptune Prime MD Ambassador Ayanda Ngwane Bringing dual institutional weight to the evening was Ambassador Ayanda Ngwane, who attended not only as CEO of BRICS Africa Channel but

also in her capacity as MD Ambassador of Neptune Prime. Her presence across both roles made her one of the most consequential figures in the room — embodying the kind of cross-sector, cross-continental leadership that the Diaspora Returns platform exists to celebrate and connect.

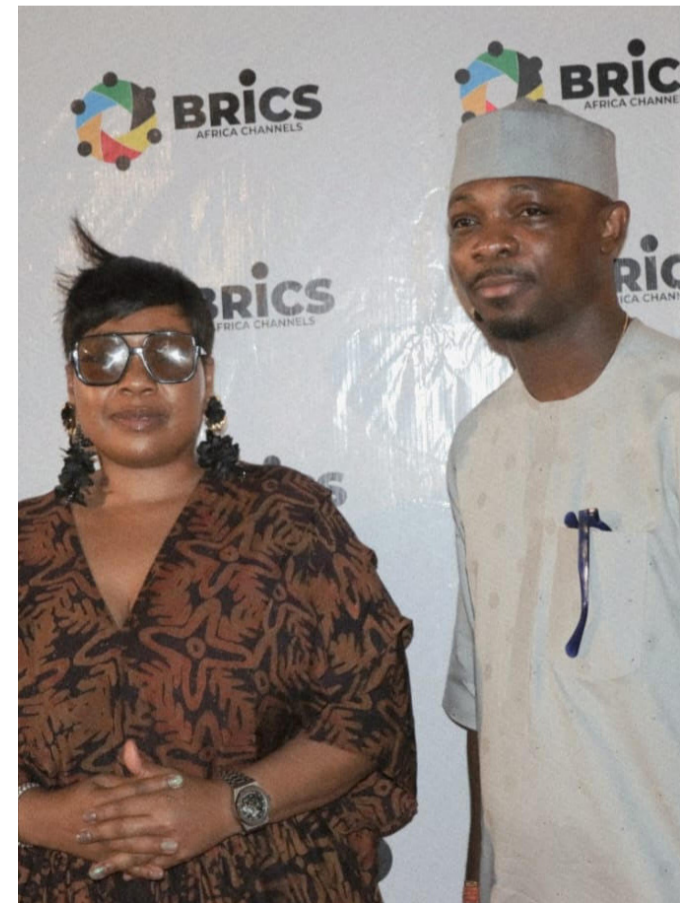
Ngwane's engagement with the evening's proceedings was a powerful signal of Neptune Prime's deepening investment in Africa's cultural and business ecosystem, and of BRICS Africa Channel's commitment to amplifying the continent's voice on the world stage. Her dual representation underscored a broader truth visible throughout the night: that Africa's most impactful leaders are no longer operating in silos — they are building empires that span industries, borders, and conversations.

Fashion, Networking, and the Road Ahead

The Afrolegance Fashion Runway Showcase, curated by Deborah Ngozi Egwu, brought further glamour to the proceedings, blending Afrocentric design aesthetics with a distinctly contemporary sensibility. The showcase drew sustained applause from an audience that clearly appreciated the convergence of heritage and modernity on the runway.

The evening's extended Networking Session gave attendees the opportunity to build connections that transcended the formality of the programme — exactly the kind of organic relationship-building that the Diaspora Returns concept has been built to catalyse.

Precious Osuji closed the evening with a Vote of Thanks on behalf of the organising team, bringing to a warm end what many in attendance described as one of Nigeria's most purposeful cultural gatherings of the year. As the Eko Hotel poolside lights shimmered across the water, the message of the night was unmistakable: the African diaspora is coming home — and it means business.



The CEO of BRICS Africa Channel and the MD of Neptune Prime, Ambassador Ayanda Ngwane, and Special Assistant to the President of Nigeria on Art, Culture and Tourism Ayomide Adeagbo.

HERITAGE

BY TAWHEED YAKUB

Exploring the heritage, courage, and cultural pride of the Kagoro (Agworok) people of Southern Kaduna

The Kagoro (Agworok) people of Nigeria are a culturally rich and historically grounded ethnic group, known for their resilience, strong communal values, and deeply preserved ancestral heritage passed down through generations. Renowned for bravery, unity, and a deep attachment to their homeland, the Kagoro people have maintained their cultural identity despite colonial restructuring, missionary influence, political transitions, and the pressures of modern civilisation.

They are predominantly found in Kaduna State, particularly in Kaura Local Government Area, with key settlements such as Kagoro town and its surrounding districts.

Their homeland lies within a scenic highland region characterised by rocky hills, lush vegetation, and fertile valleys. These geographical features have shaped their agricultural practices, settlement patterns, and defensive strategies in earlier periods, while also fostering a strong community-oriented lifestyle.

Over time, the Kagoro people have contributed significantly to the socio-political development of Southern Kaduna, upholding values that emphasise courage, respect for elders, communal cooperation, justice, and unity.

Historical Background and Origin

Kagoro history is largely preserved through oral

traditions, clan narratives, praise songs, and ancestral lineage accounts transmitted by elders.

Linguistically, the Kagoro language (Gworok/Agworok) belongs to the Niger-Congo language family and shares cultural and historical ties with other Southern Kaduna ethnic groups.

Traditionally, the Kagoro lived in clustered settlements organised around clans and extended families. These settlements were often strategically located on elevated terrain for security during inter-communal conflicts and to strengthen cooperation in farming, defence, and social organisation.

The Kagoro people maintained relationships with neighbouring groups such as the Atyap, Bajju, Ham, and Hausa communities through trade, intermarriage, and cultural exchange, while preserving a distinct ethnic identity.

Leadership was structured around traditional rulers, clan heads, and councils of elders responsible for land administration, conflict resolution, marriage negotiations, religious rites, and community welfare.

Today, the Kagoro Chiefdom, under the Agwam Agworok, remains a respected institution overseeing cultural preservation and traditional governance.

Culture and Tradition
Kagoro culture is strongly communal and built around kinship ties. Elders serve as custodians of wisdom

and moral authority, while youths are expected to uphold discipline, courage, and communal responsibility.

Communal labour, especially during farming seasons, house construction, and harvest periods, is a defining feature of Kagoro society. Cooperation and solidarity are deeply valued.

The Gworok (Agworok) language remains central to identity and is expressed through proverbs, folktales, war songs, praise poetry, and ritual expressions. Oral tradition plays a vital role in transmitting ethics, heroism, honesty, and reverence for ancestry.

Today, Christianity is predominant among the Kagoro people, alongside Islam and remnants of indigenous spiritual practices. While religion has reshaped aspects of social life, many cultural customs continue alongside modern faith traditions.

Traditional music, drumming, dance displays, and symbolic attire remain important during festivals and ceremonies, reinforcing unity and cultural pride.

Marriage Customs

Marriage among the Kagoro is regarded as a sacred union that connects not only a man and woman but also their extended families and clans. The process traditionally involves family introductions, negotiations conducted by elders, agreement on bride price (often livestock, farm produce, or symbolic items), blessings, and moral counsel



to the couple. Ceremonies are accompanied by music, dance, feasting, and broad community participation.

While polygamy existed in earlier times, religious influence and economic factors have reduced its prevalence. Contemporary Kagoro marriages often blend traditional rites with church, mosque, or civil ceremonies, reflecting adaptation without erasing heritage.

Socio-Economic Life

Agriculture remains central to Kagoro's livelihood. The people cultivate crops such as maize, millet, guinea corn, yams, cassava, beans, and vegetables.

Animal rearing, petty trading, blacksmithing, and local crafts have historically supported the economy.

In modern times, Kagoro men and women are active in education, civil service, security services, politics, healthcare, entrepreneurship, and other professional sectors, contributing significantly to Southern Kaduna and Nigeria while maintaining cultural ties.

Modern Times
Like many indigenous communities, the Kagoro people face challenges including youth migration to urban centres, language preservation concerns, economic pressures, land disputes, and social transformation.

However, cultural associations, traditional councils, churches, and community festivals continue

to promote Kagoro heritage. Efforts to document oral traditions and encourage the teaching of the Gworok language among younger generations reflect a strong commitment to sustaining identity in a changing world.

Ceremonies and Cultural Practices

Kagoro ceremonies symbolise unity, bravery, spirituality, and ancestral respect. Important cultural events include harvest celebrations, naming ceremonies, marriage rites, funerals, reconciliation

gatherings, and traditional festivals such as the Afan Festival celebrated in Southern Kaduna.

These practices reinforce values of diligence, courage, honour, social harmony, and collective responsibility.

From the highlands of Kaura to urban centres across Nigeria and the diaspora, the Kagoro people continue to demonstrate that tradition and modernity can coexist, preserving a proud legacy built on resilience, unity, and deep cultural identity.



HISTORICITI

BY FALMATA MA'AJI MUHAMMAD (Student at Helwan University, Cairo, Egypt)



The Napata Legacy: Faith and resilience in ancient Sudan

Napata, nestled along the Nile in northern Sudan, was the spiritual heartbeat of the Kushite kingdom, it became both a political capital and a religious sanctuary, shaping the destiny of Kush and Egypt alike.

Location

Napata lay near modern-day Karima, Sudan, just below the Fourth Cataract of the Nile. Its most iconic landmark, Jebel Barkal, rose dramatically above the desert, a natural monument that ancient peoples believed was the dwelling place of Amun. Surrounding Napata were royal cemeteries at El-Kurru and Nuri.

History

Napata's history unfolds like the story of a city born in the shadow of an empire, transformed into the beating heart of a kingdom, and remembered as a sacred capital

long after its political power faded.

It began in the 15th century BCE when Egyptian pharaohs, expanding southward, established Napata as a frontier outpost. The presence of Jebel Barkal, a striking mountain believed to be the dwelling place of Amun, gave the site a spiritual aura that Egyptians and Kushites alike revered. Over time, Napata grew beyond its role as a provincial station, becoming the centre of Kushite identity.

By the 8th century BCE, Napata had risen to prominence as the capital of Kush. From here, King Piye launched his celebrated campaign into Egypt, uniting the Nile Valley under Kushite rule and founding the 25th Dynasty. His successors, including Shabaka and Taharka, ruled Egypt as

pharaohs, blending Egyptian traditions with Kushite strength. This was Napata's golden age, when its kings were not only rulers but guardians of divine authority, crowned beneath the shadow of Jebel Barkal.

Resilience

The city's fortunes shifted in 593 BCE when Egyptian forces attacked, weakening its political role. The Kushite kings moved their capital to Meroë, deeper into Nubia, where they could resist Egyptian influence more securely. Yet Napata did not vanish; it remained the spiritual capital of Kush, the place where coronations were held and rituals performed, a city whose sanctity outlasted its political decline.

For centuries, Napata's pyramids at Nuri and El-Kurru, along with its temples

carved into Jebel Barkal, stood as symbols of a civilisation that bridged Africa and Egypt.

Cultural significance

Napata was the spiritual capital of Kush, where kings were crowned and divine legitimacy was affirmed. The cult of Amun flourished here, blending Egyptian traditions

with Kushite identity. Even after losing political dominance, Napata remained the soul of the kingdom, a place of pilgrimage and ritual.

Architectural Background

•Jebel Barkal Temples: Carved into the sacred mountain, dedicated to Amun and other deities.

•Royal Pyramids: Distinctive Kushite pyramids at Nuri and El-Kurru, smaller and steeper than Egyptian ones, yet equally symbolic of royal power.

•Fusion of Styles: Napatan architecture combined Egyptian temple layouts with local innovations, reflecting a cultural crossroads.



ROOTS

BY GIFT LUCKSON
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James Armistead Lafayette: From enslavement to freedom through dedicated spying

James Armistead Lafayette was an enslaved African American who served the Continental Army during the American Revolutionary War under the Marquis de Lafayette, and later received a legislative emancipation.

Life as a Double Agent

As a double agent, he reported the activities of Benedict Arnold after he had defected to the British and the activities of Lord Charles Cornwallis during the run-up to the siege of Yorktown. He fed the British false information while disclosing very accurate and detailed accounts to the Americans.

Origin

James was born to an enslaved mother either in North Carolina or Virginia. He became the property of Colonel John Armistead of New Kent County, Virginia.

Before the Colonel died in 1779, he became the first slave owned by and personal manservant of Armistead's son William. Most sources believe that he was born in 1748, though others put his birth around 1760. James's enslaver taught him to read and write.

Role in the Revolutionary War

His enslaver William Armistead was an ardent Patriot and served as commissary for Virginia's troops in the Revolutionary War. After his father died in 1779, he inherited stores and land, as well as James (who never used "Armistead" as his surname during his lifetime). When the conflict began in 1775, Virginia's royal governor, Lord Dunmore, promised freedom to slaves who joined his forces. Instead, James volunteered for the Continental Army under General Lafayette.

He worked for Lafayette as a courier, labourer, and spy. Posing as a runaway slave, James joined former Continental Army officer Benedict Arnold's camp in Portsmouth, Virginia ostensibly as a spy for the British. This role allowed Armistead to gain Arnold's confidence, in part by guiding British troops through local roads. "The ex-slave, who later renamed himself James Armistead Lafayette in the general's honour, served as a double agent against the British under the avowedly anti-slavery Lafayette."

A Dedicated Spy

After Arnold departed north in the spring of 1781, James remained in Virginia and continued his work at the camps of Lord Charles Cornwallis. Now employed by the British as a courier, James travelled between their camps and often overheard officers speak openly

about their strategies.

He prepared written reports and delivered them to other American spies. In this way, he relayed much information about the British plans for troop deployment and their arms. His espionage was instrumental in helping American and French forces defeat the British during the siege of Yorktown.

Legacy and Slave Business

James Lafayette acquired two parcels totalling about forty acres in New Kent County in 1816 and became a relatively wealthy farmer in the area with his (second) wife and several children (including a son).

He also became a slaveowner. In 1818, Lafayette applied to Virginia's legislature for a pension based on his Revolutionary War service. He eventually received \$60 (equivalent to \$1,262 in 2025) for present relief and a \$40 annual pension (\$841).

In 1824, the Marquis de Lafayette returned to the United States at the invitation of President James Monroe. He made a tour of all 24 states, during which huge crowds gathered to see him and he was feted as a hero. Lafayette visited Yorktown, as well as George Washington's grave at Mount Vernon and also gave a speech to the Virginia General Assembly in Richmond. While in Richmond, he abruptly ordered his carriage stopped when he saw James in the crowd, and rushed to embrace him.

Death

Sources differ as to whether James A. Lafayette died in Baltimore or New Kent County in 1830 (the year he picked up his last pension payment), or in Virginia in 1832.

During his lifetime, James's heroism was mentioned in a two-volume book of historical fiction by James E. Heath, Edge Hill: or the Family of the Fitz Royals (1828).

The French artist Jean-Baptiste Le Paon included a black servant in French livery in a portrait he painted of the Marquis de LaFayette in 1785, which some think was intended to represent him.

John Blennerhassett Martin painted his portrait about the time of Heath's book, and distributed copies with the Marquis de LaFayette's testimony concerning his service. Some believe a figure of James Lafayette may be on the Lafayette memorial dedicated in Prospect Park, in Brooklyn, New York in 1917 and in turn the painting Lafayette at Yorktown by Jean-Baptiste Le Paon upon which the monument's sculptural relief is based.

In 1997, Virginia erected a highway marker on the grounds of the historic New Kent County courthouse to recognise his service.



THIS LIFE!

BY TAWHEED YAKUB

Life was once simple and affordable, with greater contentment, says 100-year-old Hassana Musa



Hassana Musa

Hassana Musa, a 100-year-old resident of Potiskum Local Government Area of Yobe State, from the Kampala area, has lived through a century of remarkable experiences marked by peace, simplicity, and wisdom. In this exclusive interview with Neptune Prime, she reflects on her life's journey, sharing memories of her youthful days, the values that shaped her generation, and heartfelt advice for the younger generation.

Neptune Prime: Can you tell us about your childhood and what life was like when you were growing up?

Hassana: My childhood was a beautiful and memorable chapter of my life. It was a time when life was simple, affordable, and full of contentment. People lived modestly but with dignity and peace. We never experienced the kind of insecurity that troubles society today. The air was pure, the environment was calm, and diseases were rare. Families were close-knit, neighbours cared for one another, and children grew up under the watchful eyes of not just their parents but the entire community. We had fewer

distractions, and that allowed us to truly appreciate the little joys of life, playing in open fields, sitting under trees during the evening breeze, and sharing laughter without worry.

Neptune Prime: What are some of the happiest memories from your early years?

Hassana: Some of my happiest memories revolve around the peaceful family life we enjoyed. Our parents were our first teachers, instilling discipline, respect, and compassion in us. I remember how we gathered every evening to share stories, meals, and laughter. Even after our parents passed away, their teachings remained the guiding light of our lives. We continued to live peacefully and respectfully, just as they taught us. The bond we shared as siblings was unbreakable, and our home was always filled with warmth and togetherness. Those were truly golden years that I will forever cherish.

Neptune Prime: Were there any challenges you faced as a young person that shaped the way you see life today?

Hassana: Honestly, during my youth, life was much easier and more secure than

it is today. We did not face major challenges as the young people of this generation do. There was unity and collective responsibility; everyone looked out for one another. That sense of community and safety shaped my view of life. It taught me that a peaceful society is built on honesty, trust, and mutual care. When people live with sincerity and fairness, challenges are easily overcome. Those values still guide my understanding of what true happiness and security mean.

Neptune Prime: What values or principles do you think every young person should live by?

Hassana: The world today is fast-paced and full of temptations. Young people must remember that obedience to their parents is the foundation of lasting success. When you earn your parents' blessings, you attract divine favour that follows you all through life. Respect for elders, humility, honesty, and patience are virtues that never go out of fashion. The youth must learn that success built on deceit or arrogance never lasts. True success is built on knowledge,

good manners, and the fear of Allah.

Neptune Prime: If you could go back to your youth, what is one thing you would do differently?

Hassana: I would not wish to go back to my youth, not because it was unpleasant, but because I have no regrets about that time. I lived fully, loved sincerely, and made good use of every opportunity. My youth was filled with purpose and joy. I am content with the choices I made and the lessons I learned. The fulfilment of that period continues to inspire me in my old age. I always tell people that peace of mind comes from living without regrets and being grateful for every stage of life.

Neptune Prime: What advice would you give young people about handling failures or disappointments in life?

Hassana: Failure is not the end; it is a teacher. Young people should approach failure with patience, reflection, and renewed effort. They must invest their youthful energy in continuous learning, prayer, and obedience. These are the true pillars of success. No one can thrive without knowledge, spiritual strength, and the guidance of their parents. Life is a journey of ups and downs, and it is through perseverance that one builds resilience. So, whenever they fall, I advise them to rise with gratitude and keep moving forward.

Neptune Prime: In your lifetime, what kind of leaders have inspired you the most, and why?

Hassana: Throughout my lifetime, I have encountered many leaders who demonstrated integrity and humility. I may not mention specific names, but what inspired me was their sense of responsibility. In the past, leadership was viewed as a sacred trust. People accepted leadership positions with fear of accountability before God. They served selflessly and were always mindful of the people's welfare. That spirit of sincerity is what I admired most in the leaders of my generation.

Neptune Prime: What qualities do you believe good leaders should have to guide society?

Hassana: A good leader must be honest, transparent, and just. Leadership is a trust, and a leader's first duty is to serve, not to be served. When given a responsibility, one must ensure that resources reach the rightful beneficiaries. A leader should not hoard or

misuse what belongs to the people. Compassion, fairness, and the ability to listen are essential qualities. Leadership is not about wealth or power, it is about integrity and sacrifice.

Neptune Prime: How do you think today's leaders differ from those of your time?

Hassana: The difference is like night and day. In our time, leadership was a burden many avoided because it came with great responsibility. People feared being unjust. Today, many chase leadership positions for personal gain. Corruption, dishonesty, and self-interest have replaced trust and sincerity. In the past, a leader's word was sacred; today, promises are easily broken.

Neptune Prime: How do you spend your time now, and what keeps you happy in your old age?

Hassana: These days, I spend most of my time at home. My greatest joy now comes from my grandchildren. They visit me often, and their laughter fills my home with life. I love listening to their stories and watching them grow. Their presence reminds me that life continues through the generations. I also enjoy receiving visitors, especially neighbours and relatives. Sharing conversations, food, and memories keeps my spirit alive.

Neptune Prime: Is there a book, song, or tradition that has always stayed with you throughout your life?

Hassana: I cannot say there is a particular book or song that has stayed with me, but the traditions of our upbringing, respect, hospitality, and faith, have never left me. Those values are my constant companions. They shape how I relate to others and how I see the world.

Neptune Prime: What life lessons have you learned that you wish more people understood?

Hassana: I have learned that life is unpredictable. Sometimes it blesses you, other times it tests you. The key is to remain patient and prayerful. I have also learned that nothing in life is permanent, neither joy nor sorrow. We must therefore live with gratitude and humility. I always pray for Allah's protection and guidance for my children, grandchildren, and for people everywhere. The world would be a better place if everyone lived with compassion and sincerity.

Neptune Prime: How would you like to be remembered by your family and community?

Hassana: I want to be remembered for my generosity and the little acts of kindness I shared during my lifetime. I used to prepare pap often, not only for myself but for anyone who came to my home. I always believed that what you eat is gone, but what others

eat from your hands remains a lasting reward in the hereafter. I want people to remember me for the food, the warmth, and the care I offered freely. One day, visitors will come and find neither me nor my pap container, but I hope the memory of my hospitality will remain alive in their hearts.

Neptune Prime: What message would you leave behind for future generations?

Hassana: My message is simple: be mindful of time. Time passes quickly, and no one lives forever. Use it wisely. Live peacefully, respect others, and seek harmony wherever you go. Life is too short for conflict and envy. I encourage future generations to build communities based on love, patience, and mutual respect. Those who live in peace leave behind a legacy that never fades.

Neptune Prime: When you look back, how do you feel about the journey of life so far?

Hassana: I feel grateful. My journey has been blessed with peace, lessons, and love. Every stage of life taught me something valuable. Childhood taught me innocence, youth taught me hard work, and old age has taught me contentment. I thank Allah for giving me a life full of meaning and for surrounding me with family and loved ones.

Neptune Prime: What do you think is missing in the modern world compared to the past?

Hassana: The modern world lacks patience and sincerity. People rush through life chasing material things but forget the value of peace and contentment. In the past, we had less, but we had more joy. People trusted one another, shared meals, and celebrated together. Today, there is more wealth but less happiness. I pray that the younger generation learns to slow down and appreciate the true essence of life.

Neptune Prime: What gives you hope when you think of the future?

Hassana: My hope lies in the hands of the young ones. I see potential in them. Despite the challenges, many are striving to make positive changes. If they combine knowledge with good character, they can rebuild society with integrity. My hope is that they remember the wisdom of their elders and use it to light their path.

Neptune Prime: Finally, what words of wisdom would you want people to remember from you?

Hassana: Remember that kindness never goes to waste. Be sincere, be patient, and always be grateful. Life is a journey that ends sooner than we think, so let your actions speak of love and honesty. May Allah bless every heart that seeks goodness and guide every soul toward peace.

I cannot say there is a particular book or song that has stayed with me, but the traditions of our upbringing, respect, hospitality, and faith, have never left me



HUMANIST

BY JAMEEL LAWAN YAKASAI



Family demands justice and closure two years after son's arrest and disappearance

The family of Yahaya in Kurami Village, Bakori Local Government Area of Katsina State, has been left in distress since their son, then 22, allegedly disappeared after being taken from the community on the instruction of the village head over two years ago.

Although the circumstances surrounding Yahaya's disappearance remain unclear, amid allegations ranging from theft to kidnapping, his parents insist he was innocent. PUNCH Metro gathered that the incident occurred on June 12, 2023. The family said it happened around 9 p.m., shortly after the evening prayer, while Yahaya and other household members were having dinner.

Yahaya's mother, Shafa'tu Idris, said her son was called from outside the compound by a young boy. Although he hesitated at first, the mother said she encouraged him to find out who was calling. Moments after he stepped outside, the family said they heard people shouting, "Thief, thief." Shafa'tu said that she

collapsed after learning that it was her son who was being accused and taken away by military men allegedly summoned by the village head.

"I am traumatised. I have been since my son was taken from me. I begged them in the name of God. I want the people in authority to help me beg the village head to free my son," she said. "For over two years now, I have not known how my son is doing. I don't know where he is. I don't know whether they have killed him or tortured him. Please, help a mother. I have not been myself since they took my son away."

In a separate interview, Yahaya's father, Urwatu Ahmed, corroborated his wife's account, saying he was at work when one of his daughters called him.

"My son helps me with farming. He just graduated from secondary school. I am trying to raise money for him to attend a higher institution, but you know that the economy is currently hard.

"My daughter called to tell me that some soldiers had come to arrest my son. This

was past 9 p.m. after the night prayer. When I got home, my wife told me they were eating when people came to call Yahaya.

The distraught father said he went to the village head's residence to plead for his son's release.

"I begged our village head, Bishir Aminu, to forgive my son for whatever crime he might have committed. I asked him to call the soldiers he contacted to release him so I could know how my son was doing.

"He told me that he was the one who called the army to arrest my son and that he would not ask the officer to release him," he said.

According to Ahmed, the village head maintained his position even during a second visit a week later.

"He said he would not tell me where the soldiers were, claiming they would think he connived with me," he added.

Ahmed said he later escalated the matter to the district head of Bakori, Amiru Tukur, where he again encountered the village head.

"The district head told me that my son entered

someone's house and that the person shouted 'thief', which made the village head call the soldiers," he said.

"I told him nobody ever explained what my son did. I only wanted to know where he was and how he was doing."

He alleged that attempts to contact the military officer involved were unsuccessful. "They said even if he called, the officer would not answer. They told him that once the army arrests someone, nobody would see that person until they decide to release or kill him," he said.

The father added that the district head asked him to return later, but took no further action. "It is now heading to the third year since they took my son away," he said.

He further claimed that humanitarian organisations later intervened, but the village head allegedly changed the narrative.

"When they met him, he said my son was now a kidnapper, which was different from what we were told earlier. He told them to forget about the case.

"Anytime we seek help, the

village head tells people not to interfere, and they abandon the matter. That has been our situation since 2023," Ahmed said.

When contacted, the district head denied knowledge of the incident.

"I am not aware of this incident. What power do I or the village head have to direct soldiers to arrest someone?" Tukur said.

However, during a conference call involving Tukur, Aminu, and Yahaya's father, the village head admitted that Yahaya was taken by the military but denied summoning them.

"The military is not under the village head. I only control ward heads," he said. "It is true the boy was taken by the military. That night, an Alhaji called for help, saying bandits were at his house. We rushed there. While we were there, a military vehicle passed, asked about the boy, and took him away. That is all I know."

Yahaya's father dismissed the explanation, insisting that the soldiers were invited by the village head and that the district head was aware of the arrest.

The founder of Injustice Is Real, Ngozi Molokwu, said the organisation's legal officers contacted the village head and security authorities following interviews with the family.

She said the village head confirmed his awareness of Yahaya's arrest but claimed he could not facilitate his release, adding that he did not want to be suspected of complicity.

Molokwu added that human rights lawyers who travelled to Kurami Village faced resistance from residents but were later told that Yahaya was being held at the Nigerian Air Force Base in Funtua by an officer identified as Aliyu Mairago. According to her, a petition submitted to the Nigerian Air Force seeking clarification was rejected, with the force stating that no officer by that name was stationed in Katsina State—a position later reaffirmed in Abuja.

Efforts to reach the spokesperson of the Nigerian Air Force, Air Commodore Ehimen Ejodame, proved abortive, as calls and messages sent to him were not returned.

FEATURES

Maiduguri and the value of human life

By Dakuku Peterside

On the evening of March 16, 2026, as families in Maiduguri prepared to eat their evening meal, a series of coordinated suicide bombings ripped through the city. The attacks struck the Monday Market axis, the post office corridor, the entrance to the University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital, and the Kaleri area, leaving at least 23 people dead and 108 others injured. But these were not nameless statistics.

They were traders closing for the day, students making their way home, patients and visitors gathered near a hospital gate, and ordinary residents trying to navigate an already strained city. Yet as so often happens, their humanity was swiftly compressed into a chilling headline: "at least 23 killed, over 100 injured."

In the hours that followed, images of mangled bodies, shattered stalls, and grieving families filled television screens and social media feeds. The official response was equally familiar: statements of condemnation, routine briefings, and then a swift return to business as usual. President Bola Tinubu's team, preparing for a high-profile state visit to the United Kingdom, described as Nigeria's first in 37 years, pressed on with the itinerary. Diplomacy matters, and no serious argument denies that. But symbolism matters too. When a major terrorist attack does not interrupt the choreography of elite power, citizens feel overlooked and undervalued, sending a painful message about what, and who, truly counts.

That message becomes even more unsettling when viewed through the lens of geography and class. Maiduguri is not just another city; it is the epicentre of a long insurgency and a frontline community that has endured repeated waves of violence for years. The victims of the recent nasty attacks were not captains of industry, political heavyweights, or members of Nigeria's protected elite. They were mostly ordinary people in the North-East, far from the country's principal centres of privilege and power.

That distance matters. It shapes how quickly outrage rises, how long attention lasts, and how forcefully the state is compelled to respond. The uncomfortable truth is that violence in places like Maiduguri is too often absorbed as routine national tragedy, whereas a comparable attack in Abuja, Lagos or Port Harcourt would likely provoke a deeper political shock and a more sustained national reckoning. That disparity is precisely why Nigeria must build a public ethic and a policy culture that treat every life as equal in worth, whether lost in the shadow of power or far from it regardless of ethnicity, religion or class.

People experiencing poverty in the North-East are treated as collateral in a war that has dragged on for too long, while the privileges of the political



Peterside

elite remain untouched. The state asks ordinary Nigerians to bear the burden of insecurity, but seldom asks the powerful to surrender even symbolic convenience in solidarity with them. This hierarchy is reinforced by language. Victims in places like Maiduguri become "residents," "casualties," and "the injured." Their names, livelihoods, and family stories disappear almost immediately. When tragedy strikes the elite or the well-connected, the narrative changes. The dead become full people again: professionals, parents, pillars of their community. In Maiduguri, individuality dissolves into arithmetic. That is what made the attack more than an act of terror. It became a revelation of something deeper in Nigeria's public culture: our growing tolerance for unequal grief. The greater scandal is not only that bombs could still explode in the symbolic centre of Nigeria's counter-insurgency campaign. It is that the deaths of ordinary people now enter national consciousness as familiar numbers, briefly mourned, bureaucratically processed, and then absorbed into the noise of governance. Maiduguri occupies an uneasy place in the Nigerian imagination. It is central because it has been the epicentre of Boko Haram's insurgency and the theatre of the country's military response. Yet it is also treated as peripheral, as though its suffering were a regional condition rather than a national emergency. The latest bombings shattered any fragile illusion that the city had fully emerged from the worst years of jihadist violence.

They also came amid warnings of renewed militant resilience in Borno and a humanitarian crisis that remains severe across the

region. Reuters reported that the insurgency has displaced about 2 million people, while the Associated Press put the death toll from Boko Haram's campaign at more than 40,000 since 2009. IOM's October 2025 displacement round counted 2,333,190 internally displaced persons in north-east Nigeria, while the 2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan estimated that 5.9 million people in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe face severe to extreme needs.

These figures matter because they show scale, but they also obscure individual stories. Behind every casualty number lies a broken household, lost income, trauma that lingers, and a future suddenly altered. A child loses a parent. A mother waits outside an emergency ward. A family begins again under the weight of pain the country will scarcely remember. Highlighting these personal tragedies can inspire citizens and policymakers to prioritise human-centred responses to violence.

The federal government did not remain entirely inert. President Tinubu condemned the bombings, security chiefs were ordered to relocate to Maiduguri, and Operation Hadin Kai intensified patrols and surveillance after intelligence suggested the risk of further suicide attacks. Two days later, Nigerian troops backed by air support repelled a major insurgent assault on a military base in Malam Fatori, showing that the threat was not isolated but part of a wider militant push.

Yet this is precisely why Maiduguri is more than a security story. It is a moral test for Nigeria's leadership. A government can condemn violence, deploy officials, and still leave intact the wider perception that ordi-

nary Nigerians are expected to absorb extraordinary suffering without disrupting the rituals of power. Recognising this moral failure can motivate policy-makers and citizens to demand more equitable and compassionate governance that values all lives equally. In Maiduguri, repetition deepens the erasure. The city has suffered so much that its suffering now risks being treated as routine. Repetition breeds distance, and distance breeds moral fatigue.

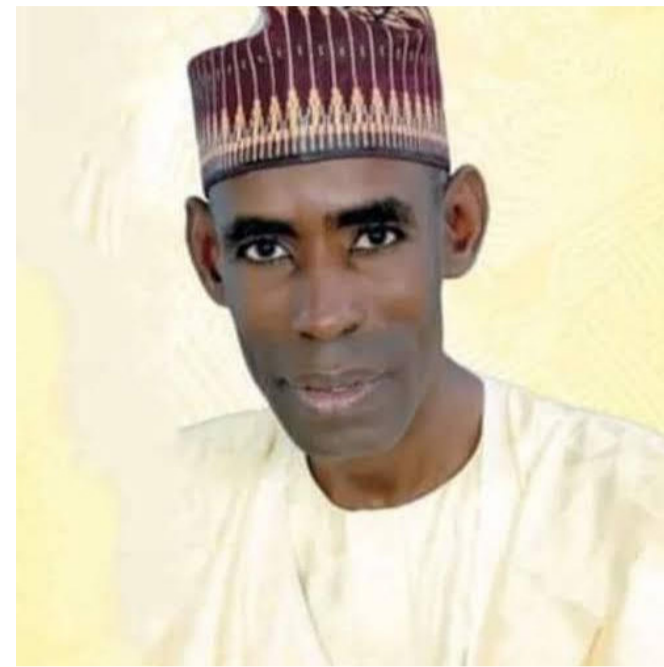
Fatigue is one of the gravest dangers any republic can face, because it teaches both state and society to accept what should remain intolerable. This moral fatigue must be challenged to prevent acceptance of ongoing injustice and violence. This is why the problem is not only Boko Haram, ISWAP, or whichever faction carried out the latest bombings. It is also the political psychology that prolonged insecurity produces. When violence becomes chronic, leaders begin to manage it rather than end it. Citizens learn survival skills in places where they can expect protection. National attention drifts toward spectacle, elections, elite quarrels, and diplomatic theatre. In that atmosphere, grief itself becomes stratified. Some deaths shake the state. Others pass through it.

The true measure of how a state values human life is not in its condolences but in its preparedness.

It lies in whether warnings are acted upon, whether intelligence systems work, whether hospitals can handle mass casualties, whether victims' families receive visible support, and whether leaders are willing to treat attacks on ordinary citizens as national disruptions rather than local inconveniences.

Recent reporting suggests that the warning signs were already there. In April 2025, Reuters reported concerns from Governor Babagana Zulum and other analysts that jihadist groups were regrouping, launching more coordinated attacks, and adapting their tactics. The March 2026 bombings did not emerge from nowhere. They exposed, once again, Nigeria's habit of reacting after violence has already broken out.

That reactive pattern is why official statements increasingly sound hollow. Nigerians know the script: condemn, reassure, deploy, investigate, restore calm. Some of these steps are necessary. None is sufficient on its own. A serious state would do more. It would build layered intelligence around vulnerable urban centres, improve civilian alert systems, strengthen trauma care and emergency logistics, publish credible after-action reviews, compensate victims transparently, and honour the dead not only with prayers but with policy. The point is not performance. It is equal citizenship. The hardest question raised by Maiduguri is not whether Nigeria can eventually defeat insurgents militarily.



Engr. Gwarzo

Northern Nigeria and the Perfidy of Politics: A rejoinder in support of Ambassador Usman Sarki,

By Engr. Bello Gwarzo Abdullahi, FNSE

Ambassador Usman Sarki's essay, "Northern Nigeria and the Perfidy of Politics," is an accurate diagnosis of a region in distress. His intervention deserves our attention and reinforcement. The issues he raises are real, structural, and long overdue for sober confrontation.

Northern Nigeria stands at a defining moment. The pressures on its unity, security, and socio-economic foundations are unmistakable. In a federation where the region once served as a stabilising pillar, visible cracks now demand urgent repair. Ambassador Sarki's reflections are therefore a call to moral and institutional reckoning. His description of contemporary politics as stripped of moral compass and reduced to transaction—captures a painful truth. The widening gulf between potential and performance cannot be denied. The North remains richly endowed with land, human capital, and a civilisational heritage that once anchored national stability. Yet these advantages have not translated into commensurate progress.

There was a time when political leadership in the region was guided by clarity of vision and disciplined stewardship. Leaders such as Ahmadu Bello, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Aminu Kano, and Joseph Tarka differed in ideology yet converged in seriousness of purpose. Public office was treated as a trust, not a trophy. Institution-building—education, agriculture, industrial planning, administrative discipline—was central to their politics. That ethical infrastructure has weakened. Ambassador Sarki rightly underscores the collapse of institutions as evidence of this perfidy. Education, once a source of pride, now struggles under the weight of neglect. The persistence of mass illiteracy and the failure to meaningfully reform the Almajiri framework represent not cultural continuity, but policy inertia. Governance structures, particularly at the local level, have

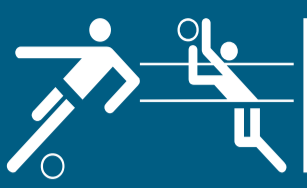
been diluted by politicisation and patronage. Recruitment into leadership positions increasingly prioritises loyalty and financial capacity over competence and character. The consequences are visible in insecurity, youth unemployment, and social fragmentation.

To support this diagnosis, one must also insist on prescription. A rejoinder that merely agrees without proposing direction would be incomplete. Leadership must now move beyond commentary to execution. The moral critique advanced by Ambassador Sarki must be matched by a structured agenda for renewal.

Educational reform must shift from incremental adjustments to systemic integration. Qur'anic education and formal literacy should be integrated such that religious instruction with numeracy, literacy, and vocational training can preserve identity while preparing youth for economic participation. Teacher professionalisation, rural incentives, and transparent monitoring of enrollment and retention metrics are practical steps that can be implemented without delay.

Agriculture—arguably the region's strongest comparative advantage—requires mechanisation and value-chain development. Subsistence farming cannot sustain a rapidly growing population. Public-private partnerships to establish mechanisation hubs, irrigation expansion, and crop-specific processing clusters would not only reduce post-harvest losses but also absorb unemployed youth into productive enterprise. Industrialisation anchored in agro-processing remains a viable pathway if pursued with discipline rather than slogans.

Security must also be re-rooted at the grassroots. Revitalising district-level administrative structures for early-warning systems and conflict mediation can complement formal security architecture. Technology, properly deployed, can enhance surveillance and coordination across vast rural terrains.



SPORTS

BY MUHAMMAD KUKURI,
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Super Eagles

International Friendly: Nigeria secures 2-1 victory over Iran

In a tightly contested international friendly played largely behind closed doors in Antalya, Turkey, Nigeria secured a 2-1 victory over Iran on Friday. The match, held at the home ground of Turkish Süper Lig side Antalyaspor, served as a crucial preparation fixture for both nations, albeit under vastly different circumstances. Iran's path to the World Cup later this year remains shrouded in uncertainty due to ongoing geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, with speculation persisting that the team could face potential withdrawal from the tournament.

Despite the instability and the current impossibility of hosting matches on home soil, the Iranian squad is pressing forward with its preparatory camp. Their opponents, Nigeria's Super Eagles, are themselves in a period of transition after failing to qualify for the World Cup, having been eliminated during the African playoff round last year. Under the guidance of head coach Eric Chelle, the team looked to build momentum using a blend of experienced attackers and emerging talents. Nigeria asserted its dominance early in the first half. Moses Simon, ignited the scoring by cutting in from the left

flank and unleashing a precise low drive that beat veteran goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand to his right. The Super Eagles doubled their advantage shortly after the halftime interval. With star striker Victor Osimhen sidelined due to injury, Akor Adams seized his opportunity. Played through on goal by a clever pass from Atlético Madrid's Ademola Lookman, Adams displayed composure delicately lifting the ball over the onrushing Beiranvand to make it 2-0. Iran found a lifeline when a scramble in the Nigerian penalty area following a corner kick allowed Olympiacos striker Mehdi Taremi to pounce and slot home from close range.

The goal ignited a small but vocal contingent of Iran-supporting spectators in the stands, but despite pressing for an equaliser in the final stages, Iran were unable to breach the Nigerian defence again.

The match also highlighted Nigeria's evolving goalkeeping situation. Long-time first-choice Stanley Nwabali was absent from the squad as he is currently without a club. In his absence, Maduka Okoye was allowed to stake his claim for the number-one jersey during this international window. Nigeria's defensive line also saw a late adjustment; Fulham defender Calvin Bassey was forced to withdraw from the squad on Thursday due to an injury concern. He was subsequently replaced by Chibuike Nwaiwu for the friendly encounter.

D'Tigress to face Los Angeles Sparks in US exhibition



D'Tigress

Nigeria's D'Tigress will face the Los Angeles Sparks in a pre-season exhibition game next month. The high-profile friendly is scheduled to be held at the Viejas Arena on Saturday, April 25, 2026. The encounter will form part of the D'Tigress' preparations for the 2026 FIBA Women's World Cup, slated to be held in Germany in September. It will be the first meeting between a Nigerian side and one of the most decorated franchises in the WNBA. D'Tigress recently participated in the 2026 FIBA Women's World Cup qualifying tournament in France, where Rena Wakama's side recorded two wins and three defeats.

Mohamed Salah announces exit from Liverpool at the end of the season

Mohamed Salah, forward for Liverpool FC, has confirmed that he will leave the club at the end of the season, ending speculation about his future.

The announcement follows a difficult season and comes after reported tensions with head coach Arne Slot, marking the end of an era at the club.

Salah shares an emotional farewell video, revealing his decision through social media, where he appears in front of trophy cabinets, delivering an emotional message.

"Hello everyone. Unfortunately, the day has come. This is the first part of my farewell. I will leave Liverpool at the end of the season".

The Egyptian star, who had a contract until 2027, also spoke about his bond with the club: "I never imagined how much this club, this city and these people would become part of my life. Liverpool is not just a football club. It's a passion. It's a history".

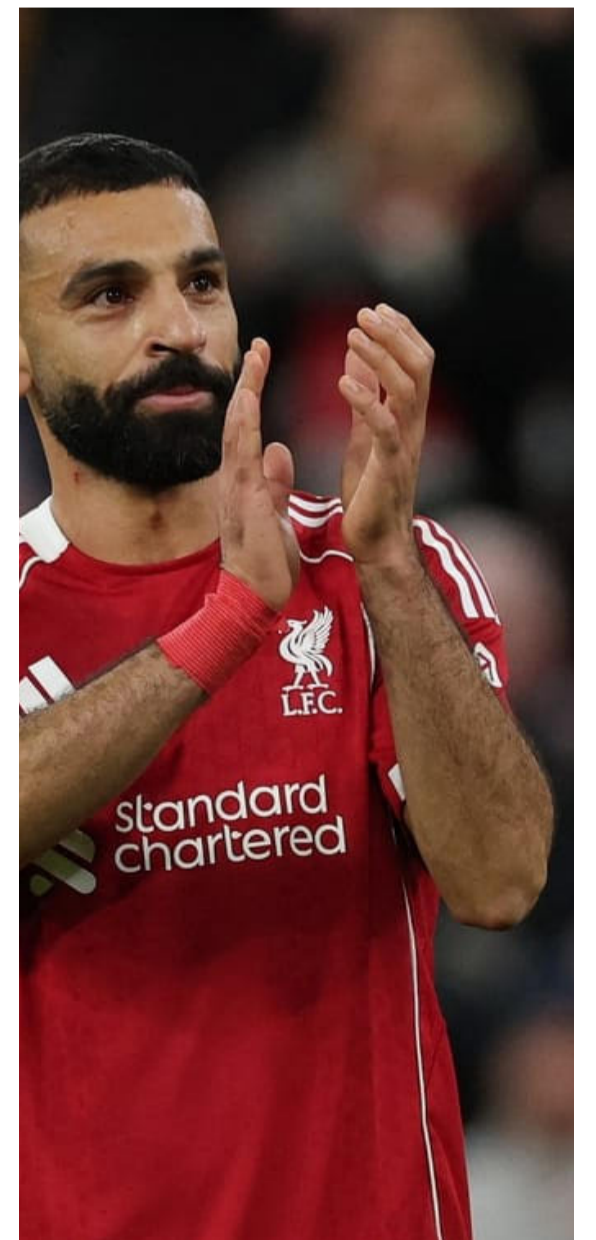
Liverpool confirmed that the decision to make the announcement came from Salah himself, highlighting his respect for the fans.

"Salah expressed his desire to inform supporters as early as possible to provide clarity about his future".

The club also emphasised that the focus remains on the current season.

"There are still many matches to play, and Salah remains fully committed to achieving the best possible outcome this season".

A proper farewell is expected at Anfield, where his legacy will be celebrated.



Salah

SALUTE TO SERVICE

BY MERCY ADAJE
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Abdulrahman Bello Dambazau: A record of excellence in military and public service

Abdulrahman Bello Dambazau CFR, GSS, psc, ndc, fwc(+) was born on 14 March 1954. He is a retired Nigerian Army general, academic, and politician who served as Chief of Army Staff of Nigeria from 2008 to 2010. He later became Minister of the Interior in the administration of Muhammadu Buhari from 2015 to 2019. Dambazau was born into a traditional military family belonging to the Fulani Dambazawa clan of Kano. Military service ran deep within his lineage. His father served in the Colonial Army during the British era, and several of his brothers later held senior positions in the Nigerian Army. In recognition of his status within the Kano Emirate, he holds the traditional title of Baraden Kano. Dambazau received his secondary education at Barewa College, Zaria, one of Northern Nigeria's most prestigious schools, graduating in 1974. That same year he proceeded to the Nigerian Defence Academy as a member of the 17 Regular Combatant Course. He was commissioned into the Infantry Corps of the Nigerian Army as a Second Lieutenant in June 1977. His academic and professional development continued both in Nigeria and abroad. In 1979, he attended the United States Army Military Police School at Fort McClellan. Dambazau later pursued higher education in the United States and the United Kingdom. He earned a Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice

from Kent State University in 1982 and obtained a PhD in Criminology from Keele University in 1989. His academic background made him one of the few Nigerian senior military officers with deep scholarly training in criminology and criminal justice. He began as a military police officer and in 1979 served as aide de camp to the Chief of Army Staff. Between 1984 and 1985 he worked as a special investigator and also commanded several military police units. From 1993 to 1999, he served as Registrar of the Nigerian Defence Academy, where he played an important role in the administration of officer training. He later became Chief Instructor of the Support Weapons Wing at the Infantry Centre and School between 1999 and 2001. His expertise in training and doctrine also led to his appointment as Directing Staff at the National War College between 2004 and 2006. Between 2007 and 2008, he served as General Officer Commanding the 2 Division of the Nigerian Army in Ibadan. In 2008, he was appointed Chief of Army Staff by President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua. His tenure coincided with a politically sensitive period in Nigeria due to the prolonged illness of the president. After the death of Yar'Adua in 2010, the succeeding president Goodluck Jonathan retired Dambazau from military service. During his leadership of the Nigerian Army, Dambazau initiated several institutional



Dambazau

and infrastructural reforms. One of his notable achievements was the establishment of the Nigerian Army Wide Area Network Infrastructure in 2010, which improved communication and information sharing within the army. He also supervised the reconstruction of the 44 Army Reference Hospital and its upgrade to a Level Four United Nations hospital. Under his leadership, the Yar'Adua Barracks was constructed through direct labour using Nigerian Army engineers. He also expanded the Nigerian Army Peacekeeping Centre, enabling it to train two battalions simultaneous-

ly. The centre later gained recognition by the United Nations as a regional peacekeeping training institution. Dambazau also supervised the revision of the Nigerian Army training manuals and laid the foundation for the Counter Terrorism and Counter Insurgency Training Centre at Jaji, Kaduna State. In 2015, Dambazau returned to public service when he was appointed Minister of the Interior by President Muhammadu Buhari. During his tenure, he carried out major reforms across the four agencies under the ministry. These reforms stream-

lined career progression, improved training structures, and strengthened appointment and promotion procedures. He introduced biometric technology and further digitalised the Nigerian international passport system. This process included the integration of advanced traveller information in partnership with INTERPOL. He also initiated reforms in the Nigerian prison system to reduce the number of inmates awaiting trial. These reforms improved logistics for transporting inmates to court and led to the construction of modern correctional facilities with a capacity of about three thousand inmates. The correctional reform process contributed to the enactment of a new Correctional Act designed to shift the focus of the prison system from punishment to rehabilitation in line with international standards, particularly the Mandela Rules. Another initiative was the creation of a Situation Room within the Ministry of the Interior to coordinate the activities of security and public safety agencies, especially during emergencies. Dambazau also led the United States and Nigeria Security Sector Initiative, which focused on reforming the security sector, improving defence procurement, and strengthening the response to the insurgency in North-Eastern Nigeria. He proposed the establishment of an Institute of Domestic Security to provide strategic train-

ing for senior officers across Nigeria's security agencies. He also advocated for the local production of Nigerian passports rather than overseas manufacturing in order to reduce costs and protect national data. Among other initiatives, he introduced the Ministry of Interior Games as a platform for strengthening cooperation among the agencies. The event was successfully held twice during his tenure. He revitalised the Federal Fire Service by expanding its operational capacity from a single outdated fire truck to more than forty new fire trucks along with additional water tankers. Six zonal fire headquarters were also established, and the national fire training school was reactivated and properly equipped. Dambazau also created the Agro Rangers unit within the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps to protect agricultural investments from banditry and criminal attacks. In collaboration with the Economic Community of West African States, he organised a high-level regional conference on the implementation of the ECOWAS Protocol on Transhumance. The aim was to improve monitoring of cross-border livestock movements and reduce conflicts associated with pastoral migration. Working with the European Union, he also designed strategies to address irregular migration from Nigeria to Europe.

The second invasion of Onitsha (January 2, 1968) and the enduring impact

The Second Invasion of Onitsha, which began on 2 January 1968, stands as one of the most decisive military campaigns of the Nigerian Civil War. It marked a turning point in the struggle between the Federal Government of Nigeria and the secessionist Republic of Biafra, not only because of its military outcome but also because of the deep political, economic and human consequences that followed. Onitsha occupied a place of great importance in the eastern region of Nigeria. Situated on the eastern bank of the River Niger, the town was a major commercial centre and a vital gateway linking the river to the interior of Biafran territory. Control of Onitsha meant control of trade routes, supply lines and access to large populations. For the Federal Government, capturing the city was essential to tightening the siege on Biafra and weakening its capacity to sustain the war. For Biafra, holding Onitsha was critical to survival.

Earlier attempts by Federal forces to take Onitsha in late

1967 had failed. Although Nigerian troops crossed the River Niger and briefly entered the town, they were unable to consolidate their position. Biafran forces mounted strong resistance, forcing the Federal troops to withdraw after episodes of destruction and looting rather than a clear military victory. These early failures compelled the Federal command to rethink its strategy and prepare a more coordinated and determined campaign. By the end of 1967, the Federal Government reorganised its approach. The Second Division of the Nigerian Army, under the command of Colonel Murtala Mohammed, was tasked with leading a renewed offensive. A key element of the new plan was a northern manoeuvre that involved crossing the River Niger at Idah rather than attempting a direct assault on heavily defended positions around Onitsha. This move allowed Federal troops to advance through less fortified routes and apply pressure on Biafran forces from unexpected directions. On 2 January 1968, the Second

Invasion officially commenced. Federal troops pushed forward in a series of coordinated advances, engaging Biafran units stationed in towns and villages that formed the outer defensive ring around Onitsha. Biafran forces, including the 53rd Brigade and elements of other battalions, resisted fiercely. However, they were gradually forced to retreat in the face of superior manpower, firepower and sustained momentum from the Federal side. As the campaign progressed, the fighting spread across much of what is now Anambra and Enugu States. Towns such as Atani, Udi and Ozala became battlegrounds as Federal troops dismantled defensive positions and overcame obstacles left behind by retreating Biafran soldiers. Bridges were destroyed, roads were mined and ambushes were laid, all in an effort to slow the advance. Despite these measures, Federal forces continued to move closer to their objective. Recognising the seriousness of the threat, Biafran leadership reorganised its command structure. General Odumegwu



Ojukwu appointed experienced officers to strengthen the defence of the region. General Timothy Onwuatuogwu was placed in charge of a new divisional command, while officers such as Major Joseph Achuzie played prominent roles in attempts to halt or delay the Federal advance. Several coun-

terattacks were launched, some with initial success, but none proved sufficient to reverse the overall course of the campaign. The capture of Awka in mid-January further tilted the balance in favour of the Federal forces. With Awka under their control, Federal troops were positioned to strike directly at

Onitsha while also threatening other key towns in the Biafran heartland. The loss of Awka disrupted Biafran communications and made the defence of Onitsha increasingly difficult. By the end of January 1968, Federal forces entered and secured Onitsha, bringing the Second Invasion to a close. The fall of the city was a major blow to Biafra. It severed important supply routes, reduced access to the River Niger and undermined morale among both soldiers and civilians. For the Federal Government, the victory represented a significant step toward reclaiming secessionist territory and restoring control over the eastern region. Beyond its military significance, the Second Invasion of Onitsha left lasting scars. Civilians bore the brunt of the fighting through displacement, destruction of homes and loss of livelihoods. The campaign illustrated the harsh realities of the civil war and the profound suffering experienced by ordinary people caught between two determined sides.

In historical perspective, the Second Invasion of Onitsha remains a powerful example of how geography, strategy and leadership can shape the outcome of war. It also serves as a reminder of the high cost of conflict and the enduring importance of remembering and studying Nigeria's past with honesty and care.

SOCIALS/FASHION

BY AYANDA NGWANE



Osuji

From Bracelets to Billboards and Beyond: The rise of Precious Osuji

By Ayanda Ngwane

Hailing from the small town of Old Bridge, New Jersey comes Precious Onyinyechi Osuji, a creative leader, business professional, and political activist. By the age of nineteen, Precious had already built a makeup studio with her bare hands, founded a media company, and broken into high places with the United Nations. For many, these would be the achievements of a lifetime. For Osuji, they are just the beginning. Osuji first exhibited entrepreneurial instincts at

the age of six, crafting and selling bracelets to classmates and producing crocheted garments for peers. What she did not recognize then — and would only come to fully acknowledge at eighteen — was that she had already become an artist, an entrepreneur, and a creator all at once. At seventeen, she constructed her own makeup studio from the ground up. Two years later, she founded Mahogany Media. This venture would see her expand her love for the cosmetics industry into billboard sales and transit advertising, con-

ducting business with high-profile clients and industry figures before she had turned twenty. Despite her accomplishments, Osuji has spoken candidly about the personal challenges that have shaped her journey. In 2023, she underwent a significant period of social isolation — one that, by her own account, cost her friendships, professional contacts, and business momentum. The experience, however, yielded an important insight: that no individual, regardless of talent or ambition, can build greatness on their own.

Beyond the business of cosmetics, Osuji's work extends into art, politics, and philanthropy — disciplines she does not treat as separate, but as interconnected tools for influence. A skilled painter and visual artist, her creative practice informs her broader understanding of beauty as both expression and infrastructure. Her engagement in politics, including her work with the United Nations and proximity to governmental spaces, reflects a growing interest in cultural policy and the role of young leaders in shap-

ing global narratives. Alongside this, her philanthropic efforts have focused on community engagement and diaspora-centred initiatives, reinforcing her commitment to impact beyond profit. Most notably, Osuji has founded Mahogany Hospitality Group, a company redefining the intersection of beauty and hospitality through in-hotel beauty experiences. Positioned as both an operating partner and cultural curator, the company reflects her larger vision: to embed beauty as a permanent fixture within all

areas of global culture. Today, Osuji holds multiple professional titles — among them artist, activist, entrepreneur, and creative leader — and shows no signs of slowing down. She attributes her relentless drive to a personal philosophy centred on the finite nature of time, the limitless potential of knowledge, and the power of unapologetic self-expression. “Don’t let your light dim because you are afraid to embrace your uniqueness,” she has said — a charge she appears, by every measure, to be living out.

TECHWORLD

BY MUHAMMAD KUKURI
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GAMESCIENE

Dubbed the 'sickest ever' video game because players only have one aim - to massacre as many people as possible in a 'genocide crusade', Hatred is the second game in history to get adults only rating.

GADGETADDICT

Obviously inspired by the iPhone's glass touchscreen display, the Iconoclock, which is a wall clock that points out each hour with approximations of familiar app icons. Its crystal face delivers a similar jet black yet glossy background as the ubiquitous smartphone.

web update

Jury finds Meta, YouTube liable in social media addiction trial

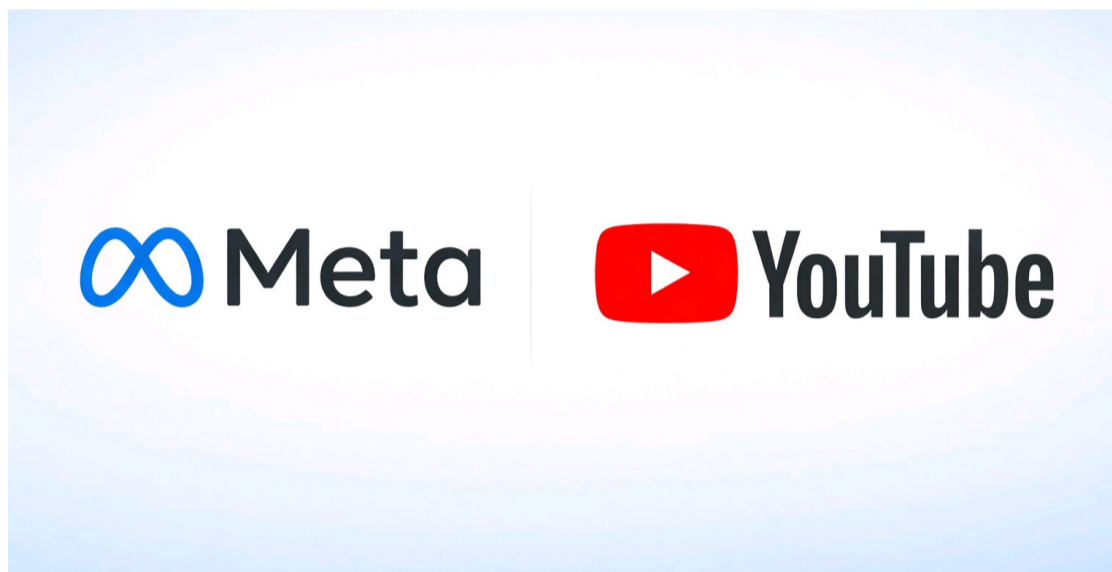
A Los Angeles jury has found Meta and YouTube liable for harming a young woman because of the addictive design of their social media platforms, ordering the companies to pay \$6 million in damages, including \$3 million in punitive damages.

The verdict hands plaintiffs in more than a thousand similar pending cases significant leverage — and signals to the broader tech industry that juries are prepared to hold social media companies accountable for the mental health toll of their design choices.

The jury answered yes to all seven questions on verdict forms for both companies, finding that Meta and YouTube were negligent in the design and operation of their platforms and that their negligence was a substantial factor in causing harm to the plaintiff.

Jurors also found that both companies knew or should have known their services posed a danger to minors, that they failed to adequately warn users of that danger, and that a reasonable platform operator would have done so.

The panel awarded \$3 million in compensatory damages, assigning Meta 100 per cent of the responsibility for the plaintiff's harm — a \$2.1 million share — and YouTube the remaining per cent, or \$900,000. In a second phase, jurors added a further \$3 million in total punitive damages after finding



Meta and YouTube

both companies had acted with malice, oppression, or fraud.

Both companies said they would appeal the verdict.

"This case misunderstands YouTube, which is a responsibly built streaming platform, not a social media site," Google spokesperson Jose Castaneda said.

A spokesperson for Meta said they "respectfully disagree with the verdict," adding that "teen mental health is profoundly complex and cannot be linked to a single app."

Nine of the 12 jurors further found that both companies had acted with malice, oppression,

or fraud, a finding that set the stage for the separate punitive damages.

The plaintiff, known in court documents by her initials K.G.M. and called Kaley at trial, began using YouTube when she was six, downloading the app on her iPod Touch to watch videos about lip gloss and an online kids game.

She joined Instagram at nine, getting around a block her mother had put in place to keep her off the platform.

She told jurors that her near-constant social media use "really affected my self-worth," saying the apps led her to abandon

hobbies, struggle to make friends, and constantly measure herself against others. In closing arguments, plaintiff attorney Mark Lanier cast the case as a story of corporate greed, saying that features like infinite scrolling, autoplay videos, notifications, and like counts were engineered to drive compulsive use among young people.

Meta and YouTube had maintained throughout the trial that Kaley's mental health struggles had nothing to do with their platforms.

Meta's lawyer pointed to her life at home and a turbulent relationship with her parents, while YouTube disputed how much time Kaley actually spent on its platform.

Sony Music takes down 135,000 AI-generated deepfake tracks

Global music company Sony Music has moved to remove over 135,000 artificial intelligence-generated "deepfake" songs from major streaming platforms.

The company said the fraudulent tracks use voice cloning technology to imitate popular artists, including Beyoncé, Harry Styles and the rock band Queen.

According to Sony Music, the uploads are designed to divert streaming revenue from legitimate rights holders and often target artists during major release periods.

Speaking at the launch of the Global Music Report in London, President of Sony's Global Digital Business, Dennis Kooker, warned that the trend poses serious risks to the



Sony Music

industry. He noted that such content could damage release campaigns and negatively affect the reputation of artists. The report, released

by the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry, showed that global recorded music revenues grew by 6.4 per cent last year to \$31.7 billion.

This marks the 11th consecutive year of industry growth despite rising technological challenges. Industry stakeholders are now calling for stricter regulations, including proper labelling of AI-generated content.

Nigerian journalists receive training in AI tools for financial reporting

DataPro, Nigeria's technology-driven credit rating agency, has announced its annual virtual training for media practitioners, with this year's programme focused on equipping journalists with practical skills in artificial intelligence tools for financial reporting and analysis.

The training, themed "Reporting Financial Analysis in the Age of AI," targets participants drawn from the print and electronic media, capital market publication editors, financial analysts, communication officers, and financial industry influencers.

Speaking on the theme, the company's executive director and chief rating officer, Oladele Adeoye, said financial reporting has evolved well beyond the presentation of numbers. "Financial reporting is no longer just about numbers; it is about trust, transparency, and resilience," he said.

"In the age of AI, media practitioners must be equipped to interpret dynamic data and communicate it in ways that empower society."

DataPro conceived the training programme in 2021 as part of its corporate social responsibility initiative, to raise awareness among the investing public about the value propositions of the credit rating industry.

The primary objective of the 2026 edition is to equip media practitioners with a working understanding of how AI tools are reshaping financial reporting and analysis — a shift the agency says is redefining how complex financial data is interpreted and communicated to the public.

In addition to the media training, DataPro organises the International Credit Rating Webinar annually every October, continuing its efforts to socialise and promote the rating industry in Nigeria. The agency is regulated by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).



AI in journalism

WORLD NEWS

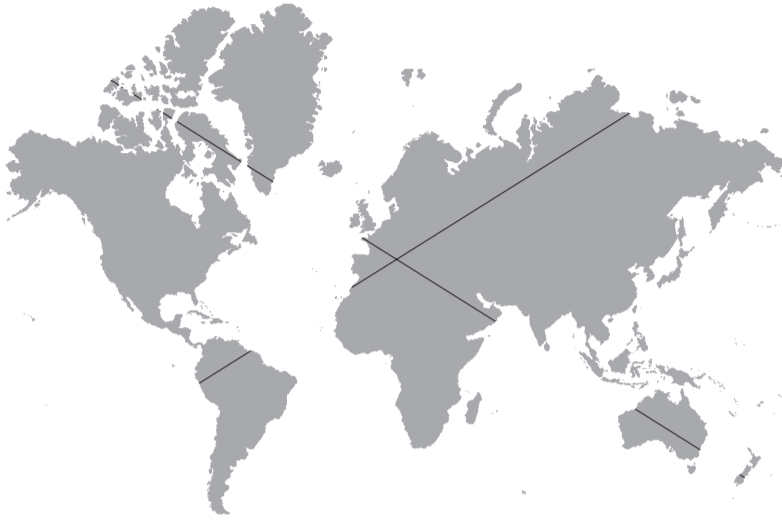
BY ABDULLAHI HARUNA



Ambulance

Man arrested for stealing ambulance with patient on board

A man has been arrested after an ambulance was stolen from outside a hospital while a patient was still on board. It happened at Royal Stoke at about 20:15 GMT on Wednesday, Staffordshire Police said. As well as the patient, a paramedic and another person were in the back of the ambulance when it was driven off. None of them was injured during the incident, police said. Officers followed the vehicle until the driver stopped at an Esso petrol station on the A34, at the junction of Liverpool Road and London Road in Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire. A police dog and its handler searched marshland near London Road and found a man who tried to run away but was stopped by the canine. Staffordshire Police said a 31-year-old man, from Stoke-on-Trent, was arrested on suspicion of kidnap, vehicle theft, drinking and driving and failing to provide a specimen for analysis. He was being questioned in custody on Thursday. A West Midlands Ambulance Service spokesperson said: "As soon as the vehicle was brought to a stop, a second ambulance was sent to take the patient to hospital [while] a welfare check was carried out on our staff member to maintain their wellbeing. "A full investigation, alongside Staffordshire Police, is underway to understand the circumstances surrounding the incident." Anyone with any information was urged to get in touch with the police.



Trump pushes deadline to strike Iran's energy facilities to April 6 amid ongoing talks



Trump

United States President Donald Trump has set a new deadline of Monday, April 6, for a possible strike on Iran's energy infrastructure, even as diplomatic efforts continue between both countries. In a statement, Trump announced a 10-day pause on military action, saying discussions were progressing positively. "As per Iranian government's request, please let this statement serve to represent that I am pausing the period of Energy Plant destruction by 10 days to Monday, April 6, 2026, at 8 P.M., Eastern Time. Talks are ongoing and, despite erroneous statements to the contrary by the fake news media, and others, they are going very well," he said. Earlier reports indicated that Trump maintained the United States was engaged in talks with Iran, despite repeated denials from Tehran. He claimed Iranian leaders were negotiating behind the scenes but were unwilling to acknowledge it publicly due to internal and external pressures. An Iranian embassy official in Islamabad, however, said discussions in Pakistan remained a possibility, though no agreement had been finalised. According to Reuters, Washington has proposed a 15-point negotiation framework reportedly delivered through Pakistan. The proposal includes reopening the Strait of Hormuz, dismantling Iran's highly enriched uranium stockpiles, limiting its missile programme, and reducing support for regional allies. Tensions remain high despite Trump's earlier declaration of a five-day ceasefire, which he said was meant to create room for dialogue. Shortly after the announcement, Iran reportedly launched multiple missile strikes on Israel. The escalation followed an earlier ultimatum by Trump, warning that

the United States would "obliterate" Iran's energy infrastructure if the Strait of Hormuz—critical to global oil and gas shipments—was not reopened without threat. The waterway, which handles about 20 per cent of global oil and liquefied natural gas flows, remains severely disrupted amid fears of Iranian attacks. The situation has already rattled global markets, with European gas prices surging and concerns growing over a wider energy crisis. The conflict has reportedly resulted in significant casualties, including senior Iranian figures such as Ali Khamenei. His son, Mojtaba Khamenei, who is said to have assumed leadership, has reportedly been in a coma and absent from public view. The United States has also recorded losses, including military personnel and equipment, while several of its bases in the Middle East have come under attack. In Israel, Iranian drone strikes have hit multiple locations, further destabilising the region. Despite repeated claims by Trump that US forces had severely weakened Iran's military capabilities, Tehran has continued its operations against both the United States and Israel. Since the conflict began on February 28, more than 2,000 people have reportedly been killed. Markets have reacted sharply to developments. Trump's initial decision to delay military action briefly boosted equities and pushed oil prices below \$100 per barrel. However, renewed uncertainty—after Iran denied any ongoing negotiations—has reversed those gains. On Tuesday, US Treasury yields rose and the dollar strengthened amid continued concerns over energy supply disruptions. Brent crude climbed 4.2 per cent to \$104.21 per barrel, while US crude increased 4.3 per cent to \$91.93 per barrel, rebounding from sharp losses recorded a day earlier.



Slaves

U.S. abstains as UN labels slavery 'gravest crime against humanity'

The United Nations General Assembly has adopted a landmark resolution declaring slavery the "gravest crime against humanity," while also calling for the return of stolen cultural artefacts and renewed discussions on reparations. The resolution, submitted by John Mahama with backing from the African Union, seeks to promote healing and justice for countries and descendants affected by the transatlantic slave trade. It was approved with 123 votes in favour, while 52 countries—including the United Kingdom and several European Union members—abstained. The United States, Argentina and Israel voted against the motion. Mahama described the decision as a critical step toward preserving historical memory and preventing future injustices. "The adoption of this resolution serves as a safeguard against forgetting," he told the assembly. For over a century, countries impacted by slavery have demanded reparations. However, the debate has intensified in recent years, especially as some nations and institutions have acknowledged their roles in the transatlantic slave trade. Between the 15th and 19th centuries, an estimated 12 to 15 million Africans were forcibly taken to the Americas, with millions dying during the journey. The long-term effects of slavery continue to manifest in economic inequality, racial discrimination and underdevelopment across affected regions. Reparations are seen as a form of restitution—combining apology, compensation and structural support for descendants of enslaved people. Ghana's Foreign Minister, Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa, stressed that the demand is not about personal gain for leaders but about justice, education and long-term development initiatives. While the resolution has been widely welcomed, some experts remain cautious about its real-world impact. British scholar Esther Xosei noted that meaningful progress may depend more on public awareness and grassroots advocacy than diplomatic resolutions alone. "The real battle will be among ordinary people, where misinformation about history still exists," she argued. One often-cited example of reparations is Germany's compensation to Jewish victims of the Holocaust, which has exceeded \$80 billion since 1952. However, no country has paid direct reparations to descendants of enslaved Africans.

DID YOU KNOW?

BY VIVIAN OKAFOR

The Earth's rotation is slowing down

The Earth's rotation is slowing down, a long-term geological trend that has been happening for billions of years, though recent studies highlight that human-driven climate change is currently accelerating this deceleration at an unprecedented rate. Research published in *Nature* (2025/2026) indicates that melting polar ice sheets and glaciers are redistributing

mass toward the equator. This redistribution increases the planet's "moment of inertia," acting as a drag that slows the rotation, similar to a figure skater extending their arms to slow their spin. Between 2000 and 2020, climate change caused the day to lengthen by about 1.33 milliseconds per century, a rate faster than at any time in the last 3.6 million years.

Tidal Friction, while climate change is a factor, the long-term, primary cause of the slowing is the gravitational tug of the Moon, which acts as a "cosmic brake," creating tidal friction that gradually reduces Earth's rotational momentum. As a result of this deceleration, days are gradually becoming longer—by about 1.7 to 1.8 milliseconds every cen-

ture. Projections suggest that in roughly 200 million years, a day on Earth could be 25 hours long. Although the long-term trend is a slowdown, Earth's spin speed can fluctuate, and the crust has experienced temporary periods of faster rotation in recent years, leading to discussions about the potential need for a "negative leap second"



Zebras have the strongest and most deadly Kicks in the animal kingdom

Zebras are generally considered to have the strongest kick among land animals, capable of delivering roughly 3,000 pounds of force—enough to shatter a lion's jaw or kill a predator with a single blow.

Zebra's stripes are unique, much like human fingerprints. Zebras are primarily found in various African habitats, ranging from savannahs and grasslands to mountainous regions. A zebra's species determines their preferred habitat, with different types occupying different geographical areas. Their kicks, often delivered with both hind legs, are essential for defending against predators in the African savannah.

Zebras have been known to kill a 450 lb male African lion with a single body kick. Zebras, especially males, use their rear legs to strike competing bachelors, often during fights. The ze-

bra is thought to deliver as much as 15,000 Newtons in a kick, or the force of one and a half metric tons.

When lions attack, zebras often defend themselves by kicking backwards with both hind legs while running or standing their ground.



LIVING LEGENDS

BY AISHA AUYO
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Asa, Renowned Singer and Songwriter

Bukola Elemide (born 17 September 1982), known professionally as A□a is a French-Nigerian singer and songwriter.

A□a was born in Paris to Nigerian parents who were working and studying cinematography in France. Her family returned to live in Nigeria when she was two years old. Her parents hail from Ogun State, Nigeria. A□a grew up in Lagos city, in the South-western part of Nigeria, and 18 years later, returned to Paris, where her life as an artist took off. In 2004, Asa met her manager and friend, Janet Nwose, who introduced her to Cobhams Asuquo, who in turn became the producer of her first studio album Asa (Asha).

A□a returned to France at the age of 20 to study at the IMFP school of jazz music, where she was told by teachers that she should go ahead and become a recording artist because she was ready and needed no schooling. Back in Nigeria, her song "Eyé Adaba," was beginning to get airplay.

A□a soon signed to Naïve Records. Partnered with Asuquo, and with the new involvement of Christophe Dupouy and Benjamin Constant, she produced her first platinum-selling self-titled album, A□a. The release of the album saw A□a charting on radios across

Europe, Asia, and Africa and she went on to win the prestigious French Constantin Award in 2008 when she was voted the best fresh talent of 10 singers or groups by a jury of 19 music-industry specialists in Paris.

Her second album, Beautiful Imperfection, in collaboration with French composer Nicolas Mollard, was released on 25 October 2010 and went platinum in 2011. The lead single from Beautiful Imperfection, titled "Be My Man", was released in late September 2010. It was reported that by 2014 A□a sold 400,000 albums worldwide.

Asa's third studio album, Bed of Stone, was released in August 2014. The singles are "Dead Again", "Eyo", "Satan Be Gone", "The One That Never Comes" and "Moving On". She went on a world tour from 2015 to 2017.

Asa's music influences grew over the years from the collection of great music her father had built up for his work as a cinematographer.

These records featuring American, Nigerian and African soul classics, included artists such as Marvin Gaye, Fela Kuti, Bob Marley, Aretha Franklin, King Sunny Adé, Diana Ross, Nina Simone, and Miriam Makeba. A□a drew inspiration from the collection of her father's playlist.



Asa



Mrs Felix-Adejumo

Funke Felix-Adejumo, Philanthropist and Gender Advocate

Funke Felix-Adejumo is the President of the Funke Felix-Adejumo Foundation. She is a Female Enthusiast and Philanthropist. Her unique unction and utterance have endowed her with the hearts of millions of people who have listened to her at conferences and seminars around the world. Funke Felix-Adejumo have a

great passion for womanhood with a divine purpose on earth "Honouring God and Blessing Humanity". This vision has transformed into many works such as the establishment of the Grace Orphanage, the construction of a Children's Hospital and other great works that God is doing through her. Her foundation is dedicated to making a worldwide

impact with a special call to restoring dignity to womanhood and equipping women from all over the world. She has authored over 50 books such as "Fifty Lessons Life Taught Me". "My Seed is Designed for the Palace", and many others. She is married to Bishop Felix 'Remi Adejumo and their most blissful home

is blessed with four children, five grandchildren, and many adopted children. She is the mother of the Agape Family Worldwide, hers is a story of a woman helped by God. Mrs Felix-Adejumo, has, on different occasions, restated her unwavering commitment to finding lasting solutions to issues of domestic abuse against women.

ANIMAL WORLD

By Mercy Adaje
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The Aye-Aye: One of the forest's most unusual nocturnal hunters

When darkness falls in the forests of Madagascar, a strange creature begins its hunt. With glowing eyes and silent movements, the aye-aye creeps along tree branches, listening carefully to the world around it.

Suddenly tap, tap, tap. It drums its long, thin finger against the bark of a tree, as if sending a secret code. It isn't random. The aye-aye is searching. It listens closely, waiting for the hollow sound that reveals insects hiding deep inside. The moment it finds one, it bites through the wood and slips its finger in to pull out its prey.

Everything about the aye-aye is built for this nighttime mission. Its sharp ears catch the faintest sounds. Its wide eyes see clearly in the dark. Its long tail helps it balance as it moves swiftly through the trees.

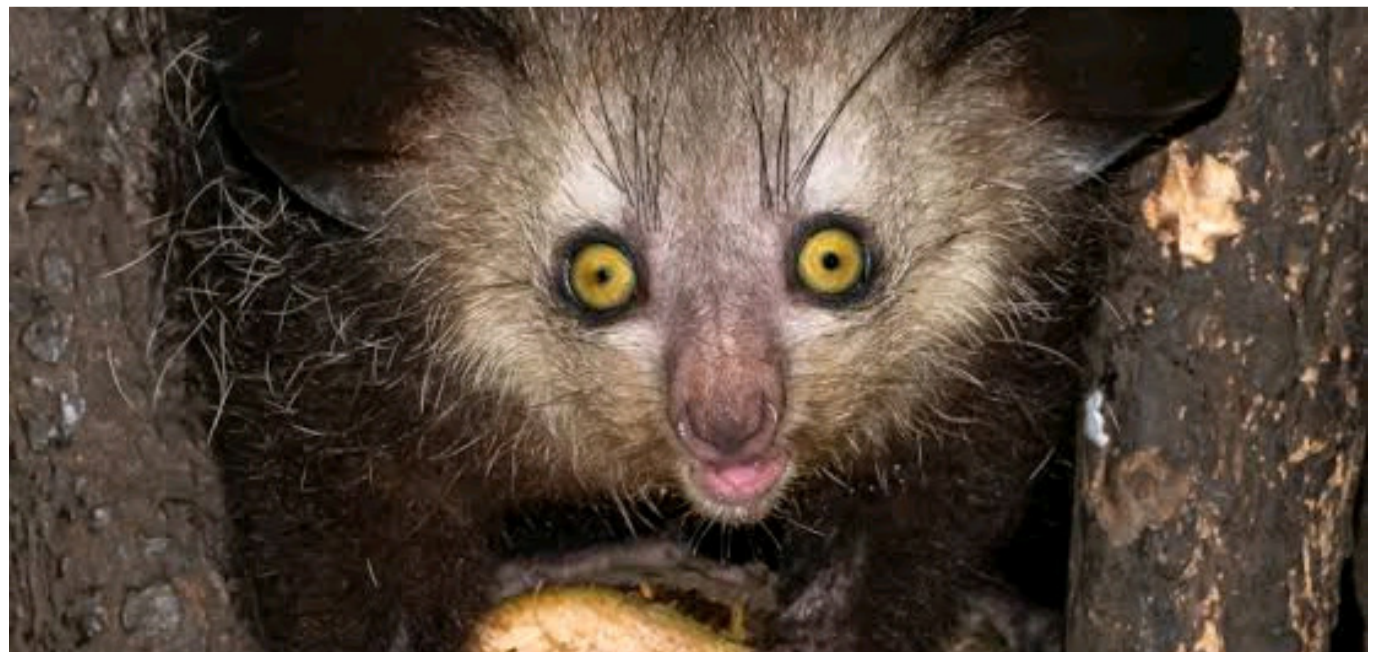
By day, it disappears, curled up in a nest of leaves high above the ground. But at night, it becomes one of the forest's most unusual hunters.

Though it may look eerie, the aye-aye is harmless and incredibly clever. It is not a monster of the night, but a survivor, perfectly designed for life in the shadows.

It is the world's largest nocturnal primate. It is characterised by its unusual method of finding food: it taps on trees to find grubs, then gnaws holes in the



wood using its forward-slanting incisors to create a small hole into which it inserts its narrow middle finger to pull the grubs out. This foraging method is called percussive foraging and takes up 5–41% of foraging time. The only other living mammal species known to find food in this way are the striped possum and trioks (genus *Dactylopsila*) of northern Australia and New Guinea, which are marsupials. From an ecological perspective, the aye-aye fills the niche of a woodpecker, as it is capable of penetrating wood to extract the invertebrates within.



JOKES AND PUZZLES

BY ABDULLAH HARUNA

JOKES

1. Why don't skeletons fight each other?
Answer: They don't have the guts.
2. Why did the computer go to therapy?
Answer: Too many bytes from its past.
3. Why did the math book look sad?
Answer: It had too many problems.
4. Why don't eggs tell jokes?
Answer: They might crack up.
5. What do you call fake spaghetti?
Answer: An impasta.
6. Why did the student eat his homework?
Answer: Because the teacher said it was a piece of cake.
7. Why did the scarecrow win an award?
Answer: He was outstanding in his field.
8. What do you call a fish wearing a crown?
Answer: King of the sea.
9. Why don't secrets last in a bakery?
Answer: Because the dough always rises.
10. Why did the bicycle fall over?
Answer: It was two-tired.
11. What do you call a lazy kangaroo?
Answer: A pouch potato.
12. Why did the phone break up with the charger?
Answer: It felt drained.
13. Why did the chicken join a band?
Answer: Because it had drumsticks.
14. What do you call a bear with no teeth?
Answer: A gummy bear.
15. Why don't programmers like nature?
Answer: Too many bugs.
16. Why did the coffee file a police report?
Answer: It got mugged.
17. Why was the belt arrested?
Answer: For holding up pants.
18. What do you call a snowman in summer?
Answer: A puddle.
19. Why did the clock get kicked out of school?
Answer: It kept tocking back.



RIDDLES

1. What has keys but can't open locks?
Answer: A piano
2. What has a face and two hands but no arms or legs?
Answer: A clock
3. What gets wetter the more it dries?
Answer: A towel
4. What has one eye but cannot see?
Answer: A needle
5. What can travel around the world while staying in a corner?
Answer: A stamp
6. What has a neck but no head?
Answer: A bottle
7. What begins with T, ends with T, and has T in it?
Answer: A teapot
8. What is always in front of you but can't be seen?
Answer: The future
9. What has legs but doesn't walk?
Answer: A table
10. What can you catch but not throw?
Answer: A cold
11. What has a heart that doesn't beat?
Answer: An artichoke
12. What comes down but never goes up?
Answer: Rain
13. What has many teeth but can't bite?
Answer: A comb
14. What runs but never walks?
Answer: Water
15. What has an endless supply of letters but starts empty?
Answer: A mailbox
16. What can fill a room but takes up no space?
Answer: Light
17. What has a thumb and four fingers but is not alive?
Answer: A glove



SPORTS: BEHIND THE SCENES

By Muhammad Kukuri
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Olympic Champion Michael Johnson agrees to refund £375,000 "secret" payment

Four-time Olympic champion Michael Johnson has confirmed he will refund a sum of \$500,000 (£375,000) he allegedly "secretly" paid himself just days before his Grand Slam Track (GST) league collapsed.

Three GST events were held in Kingston, Miami and Philadelphia – before the project folded in December 2025.

Contracted runners had been promised lucrative prize money and salaries in the competition's inaugural season, but the final event was cancelled and organisers later voluntarily filed for bankruptcy in the USA.

A legal filing in Delaware by vendors claiming against Johnson and GST includes an accusation that eight days before the collapse, he "secretly" paid himself \$500,000 (£375,000). GST called that accusation "unfounded and false".

A GST spokesperson said: "While Mr Johnson has been clear that the \$500k was a reimbursement and not a payment, to avoid disruption and continue moving forward, he and Winners Alliance have agreed to fund the \$500k to the plan so that all creditors can benefit and receive a greater distribution in connection with the company's reorganisation and efforts to resurrect the league."

In May 2025, Johnson put \$2.25m (£1.68m) into the business, after Eldridge Industries decided not to invest \$40m (£30m).

Johnson's spokesperson said: "Michael has asserted defences to the claim, including that this was a partial reimbursement of over \$2m (£1.5m) of expenses advances by Michael for the benefit of the athletes."



Johnson

16-year-old autistic cyclist receives N10 million donation from Delta Government

The Delta State Government has welcomed 16-year-old autistic cyclist Kanyeyachukwu Tagbo-Okeke during a brief stop in Asaba on his long-distance endurance ride.

Kanyeyachukwu, from Enugu State, arrived with his parents, members of the Kanyeyachukwu Autism Foundation, cycling officials, and a medical support team.

The visit formed part of his journey from Enugu through Anambra, with Lagos as the final destination. At the Government House, the cyclist and his entourage were received by the wife of the Delta governor, Mrs Tobore Oborevwo, alongside senior officials including the Secretary to the State Government, Dr Kingsley Emu, the Assembly member Mrs Bridget Anyafulu, and the commissioner for Women Affairs, Ms Pat Ajudua.

Mrs Oborevwo described the visit as "both inspiring and symbolic," praising Kanyeyachukwu's courage and determination. She noted that his endurance ride, Ride with Kanye, aims to raise awareness about autism.

"His achievements, including recognition in the Guinness World Record, highlight his talents in the arts and his passion for cycling," she said.

She further emphasised that the event aligned with her You Matter Charity Foundation, which promotes inclusion and recognises every individual's value.

"This event celebrates excellence, resilience, and the strength of the human spirit, not merely a young person with special needs," Mrs Oborevwo added. She also commended Kanyeyachukwu's parents for their dedication and belief in his abilities, assuring continued support for future milestones, including a potential Guinness World Record return. Dr Emu highlighted the significance of the You Matter initiative in supporting individuals who excel despite challenges. "His journey is a clear example of the impact of such support," he said, praising the teen's parents amid Nigeria's limited facilities for special needs children. Chief Chuck Nduka-Eze, patron of the Autism Foundation, described Kanyeyachukwu's story as "deeply inspiring," noting his artistic talent emerged at age three. "He created the world's largest artistic painting thanks to family encouragement," he said, stressing that neglect could have hindered his achievements.

He added that the teen's cycling challenge could make him one of the youngest to complete an Enugu-to-Lagos journey.

The highlight of the visit was the presentation of a symbolic N10 million cheque to support Kanyeyachukwu's advocacy and ongoing journey. His father expressed gratitude to the state government and the governor's wife for the warm reception, describing her as compassionate and committed to vulnerable groups.



Tagbo-Okeke

BOOKS

BY MUHAMMAD AL-TJANI

Then I Was Guided (20)

CONTINUED FROM LAST WEEK

1. Sahih, Bukhari, Chapter: About the saying of the sick, vol 2, Sahih, Muslim, End of the book of al Wasiyyah, vol 5 p 75, Musnad, Ahmed, vol 1 p 335, vol 5 p 116 Tarikh, Tabari, vol 3 p 193, Tarikh, Ibn al Athir, vol 2 p 320

The story in brief is as follows: The Prophet (saw) organized an army to be sent to Asia Minor two days before his death. He appointed Usamah ibn Zayd ibn Haritha, (who was eighteen years old), as its commander in chief, then the holy Prophet attached some important men, both MuHajjireen and Ansar, to this expedition, such as Abu Bakr, Umar, Abu Obaydah and other well-known Companions. Some people criticized the Prophet for appointing Usamah as the commander in chief of that army, and asked how could he have appointed so young a man as their commander. In fact the same people had previously criticized the Prophet for appointing Usamah's father as an army commander before him.

They went on criticizing until the Prophet became so angry that he left his bed, feverish and with his head bandaged, with two men supporting him and his feet barely touching the ground (may my parents be sacrificed for him). He ascended the pulpit, praised Allah highly then said, "O People! I have been informed that some of you object to my appointing Usamah as commander of the detachment. You now object to my appointing Usamah as commander in chief as you objected to me appointing his father commander in chief before him. By Allah, his father was certainly competent for his appointment as commander in chief and his son is also competent for the appointment." Then he exhorted them to start without further delay and kept saying, "Send the detachment of Usamah; deploy the detachment of Usamah, send forward the detachment of Usamah." He kept repeating the exhortations but the Companions were still sluggish, and camped by al-Jurf.

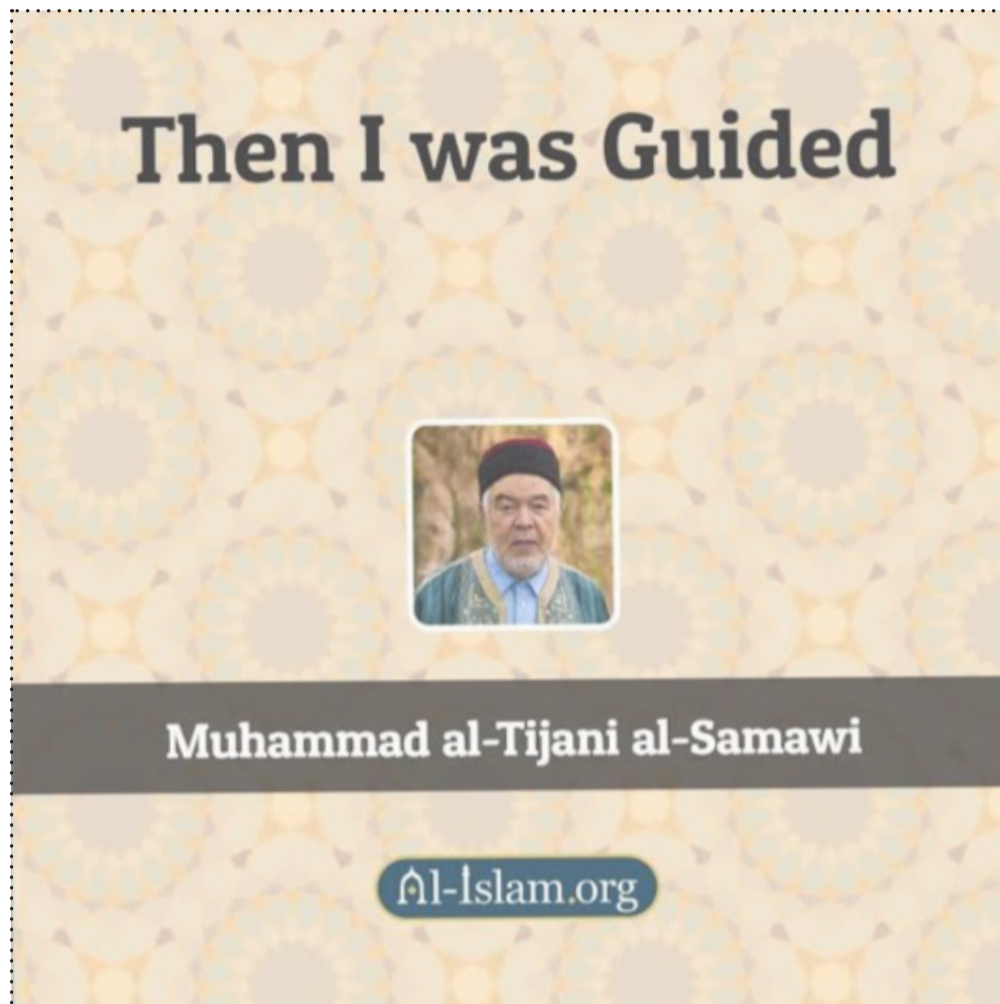
Events like that made me ask, "What is this insolence towards Allah and His Messenger? Why all that disobedience towards the orders of the blessed Messenger who was so caring and kind to all the believers?"

I could not imagine, nor indeed could anybody else, an acceptable explanation for all that disobedience and insolence. As usual, when I read about those events which touch on the integrity of the Companions, I try to deny or ignore them, but it is impossible to do so when all the historians and scholars, Shi'a and Sunnis, agree on their authenticity.

I have promised my God to be fair, and I shall never be biased in favor of my creed, and will never use anything but the truth as my criterion. But the truth here is so bitter, and the holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said, "Say the truth even if it is about you, and say the truth even if it is bitter..." The truth in this case is that the Companions who criticized the appointment of Usamah disobeyed all the clear texts that could not be doubted or misinterpreted, and there is no excuse for that, although some people make flimsy excuses in order to preserve the integrity of the Companions and "the virtuous ancestors".

But the free and sensible person would not accept such feeble excuses, unless he is one of those who cannot comprehend any saying, or is perhaps one of those who are blinded by their own prejudice to the extent that they cannot differentiate between the obligatory task that must be obeyed and the prohibition that must be avoided. I thought deeply to find an acceptable excuse for those people, but without success.

I read the points of view of the Sunnis which provide us with an excuse based on the fact that these people were the elders of Quraysh, and were among the early followers of Islam, whereas Usamah was a young man who had not fought in the decisive battles that gave Islam its glory, such as Badr, Uhud and Hunayn; and that he was a young man with no experience of



life when the Messenger of Allah appointed him military commander. Furthermore, they thought that human nature, by its inclination, makes it difficult for elderly people to be led by young men, therefore they (i.e. the Companions) criticized the appointment and wanted the Messenger of Allah to appoint a prominent and respectable Companion. It is an excuse which is not based on any rational or logical premise, and any Muslim who reads the Qur'an and understands its rules must reject such an excuse, because Allah - the Almighty - says: "Whatever the Messenger gives you, accept it, and from whatever he forbids you, keep back." (Holy Qur'an 59:7)

"And it behooves not a believing man and a believing woman that they should have any choice in their matter when Allah and His Messenger have decided a matter; and whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he surely strays off a manifest straying." (Holy Qur'an 33:36)

So what kind of an excuse could any rational person accept after reading all these clear texts, and what can I say about people who angered the Messenger of Allah, when they knew

that the Messenger's anger is Allah's anger. They accused him of talking "nonsense", and they shouted and disagreed in his presence when he was ill (may my parents be sacrificed for him), until he ordered them to leave his room. That did not seem to be enough for them, and instead of returning to the right path and asking Allah's forgiveness for what they had done to His Messenger, and asking the Messenger for forgiveness as the Qur'an taught them, they went on criticizing him, despite all the care and kindness he had for them. They did not appreciate him or respect him, and two days after having accused him of talking "nonsense", they criticized him for appointing Usamah as military commander.

They forced him to come out in the appalling condition which the historians describe. Due to the severity of his illness, he had to walk with the support of two men, and then he had to swear by Allah that Usamah was a competent commander for the army.

Furthermore, the Messenger informed us that they had criticized him previously for appointing his father as a commander, which indicates that these people had had many previous confrontations

with him, and that they were not willing to obey his orders or accept his judgment, rather, they were prepared to oppose him and confront him, even if such behavior went against the rules of Allah and His Messenger.

What leads us to believe that there was open opposition (to the orders of the Prophet), was that in spite of all the anger shown by the Messenger of Allah, and the fact that he himself tied the flag with his noble hand to the post and commanded them to march immediately, they were sluggish and reluctant to move, and did not go until he had died (may my parents be sacrificed for him). The Prophet (s.a.w.) died feeling sorry for his unfortunate nation, which he feared would go backwards and end up in hell, and no one would be saved except a few, and the Messenger of Allah described them as a handful.

I am surprised that those Companions angered the Prophet on that Thursday and accused him of talking "nonsense", and said, "It is sufficient for us that we have the Book of Allah," when the Holy Qur'an states: "Say if you love Allah, then follow me and Allah will love you." (Holy Qur'an 3:31)

As if they were more knowledgeable about

the Book of Allah and its rules than he to whom it had been revealed. There they were, two days after that great misfortune, and two days before he (the holy Prophet) went up to meet his High Companion, angering him even more by criticizing him for appointing Usamah, and not obeying his orders. Whereas he was ill and bed-ridden in the first misfortune, in the second one he had to come out, with his head bandaged and covered by a blanket and supported by two men with his feet barely on the ground, and address them from the top of the pulpit. He started his speech with the profession of the unity of Allah and praised Him in order to make them feel that he was not talking nonsense, and then he informed them about what he knew regarding their criticism of his orders.

Furthermore, he reminded them of an incident which had occurred four years previously, in which he was criticized by them. After all that, did they really think that he was talking nonsense or that his illness had overcome him so that he was unaware of what he was saying? Praise and thanks be to You, Allah, how did these people dare oppose Your Messenger? They disagreed with him when he signed the peace treaty, they opposed him very strongly even when he ordered them to make the sacrifice and shave their heads, and even repeated it three times although no one cared to obey; and again they pulled him by his shirt to prevent him from praying for Abdullah ibn Ubay and said to him, "Allah forbade you from praying for the hypocrites!" As if they were teaching him what had been revealed to him, when You said in Your Holy Qur'an: "We have revealed to you the reminder that you may make clear to men what has been revealed to them." (Holy Qur'an 16:44)

And You said: "We have revealed the Book to you with the truth that you may judge between people by means of that which Allah has taught you." (Holy Qur'an 4:105) And You said, and Your saying is the truth:

TO BE CONTINUED

SPACE
AVAILABLE

The Arbiter

BY HASSAN GIMBA



Iran, Beware the Fangs of January, the Scourge of February, the Ides of March (2)

CONTINUED FROM LAST WEEK

Last week, we promised to examine the choices available to Iran and the United States, as well as how military confrontation might unfold. We also noted that Israel reportedly considered using nuclear weapons in its last war with Iran—an approach known as the Samson Option. We stated that if this had happened, or if it happens in the future, Israel would become only the second nation to use nuclear weapons in warfare, after the United States used atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

The Samson Option refers to the final act of the biblical judge Samson, who, blind and bound by the Philistines, found the strength to bring down the pillars of the temple of Dagon, killing his enemies — and himself — “in one final, apocalyptic gesture”. It implies Israel’s readiness to resort to nuclear weapons if it were ever facing the prospect of annihilation.

But in this war, it is not only Israel that can lay claim to a Samson Option. Iran and its current leadership have spoken of no retreat, no surrender and no softness if attacked. Some people were wishfully speaking, knowing it was false, that Ayatollah Ali Khamenei had planned to escape to Moscow with \$92 billion. They do not know the thinking of the Shiite Muslim whose whole being is to die a martyr. And they do not know that material things have no place in the hearts of people like Khamenei.

They mistake him for the likes of Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu, who plan for survival and arrange backups and options to ensure it. Trump recently reactivated the plane, Doomsday, after a 51-year hiatus, and Netanyahu landed in Crete,

Greece, with his plane, the Wing of Zion, all in a bid to escape Iranian retaliation. Khamenei and the Iranian leadership do not have options A, B, or C regarding their survival in the current standoff. It is going to be an all-or-nothing war for them. And to this end, they have all appointed up to ten successors for each so that there would be no leadership vacuum.

While Iran could be hurt by an American attack, its ideology, structure, resistance framework, and global influence won’t collapse. The nation’s revolutionary ideals have shaped successive generations, with leadership passed down from the founders. The system is so deeply rooted and has such strong foundations that the presence or absence of individuals would hardly make any difference.

Israel is applying a lot of pressure on America to attack Iran - to do the “dirty job” for it as it did for Europe, according to Germany’s chancellor, Friedrich Merz, who said Israel was doing a “dirty work for all of us” while defending Israel’s unprovoked attacks on Iran in June last year. The strategy therein for the Israelites is to come in “when America has weakened Iran” and depleted its ability to fight back. They do not care even if America gets bruised in the process because they will maintain their fake myth of “God’s chosen people of a strong nation that cannot be defeated.”

That would effectively transform it from a regional power and bully into a global power, supplanting America, which Iran might have degraded. And that is also one of Israel’s game plans. It would get an open



Dr Gimba

field to play by its own terms, setting the rules while others are forced to comply. No country in the region would dare speak against or stand up to it again.

Of course, many bogey Jews who love them more than their religion and its founder will clap for them. Yes, they love them more than they love the founder of their religion and his mother. If not, why venerate a people who spit on you, call you an idolator, say your God is burning in human excrement in hell, and his

mother is a whore?

While Israel has captured the American state, pushing it, using its military as a hammer against cultivated enemies, America previously had international approval, even if flawed, for its actions in Iraq, Libya, and Afghanistan on Israel’s behalf. Now, without UN or global support, America is acting alone, especially since Gulf states have refused it the use of the bases in their territories.

This refusal, even by the UAE, which is literally

in bed with Israel, may be a result of the fear of attacks by Iran and its allies. But, by and large, it is because their eyes have opened to Israel’s plans of “Greater Israel”. Once Iran, God forbid, is no more, all the Gulf states would collapse like a pack of cards, Pakistan and Turkiye would be brought down on their knees, and “Greater Israel” would be born. They all realise that they are being used to get at Iran, the lone sentinel at the gate, and after that, they would all be enslaved and become minions of Israel and the Western hegemons.

Thirdly, they have realised how America never allows fights in their country but takes them elsewhere, visiting destruction on infrastructure and causing mayhem and death abroad. A Saudi official complained that when Saudi Arabian oil installations were targeted a few years back, they complained to the US and requested assistance, but the US did nothing. Therefore, self-preservation is also a factor.

On a global scale, if Iran falls, the world will change. China will receive a strategic blow and will have to seek a compromise with the US; otherwise, its economy will collapse because almost 100 per cent of its oil imports come from Iran. Russia will lose an ally in the Middle East and find itself in strategic isolation. The dollar will strengthen, and all talk of BRICS and de-dollarisation will turn into wishful thinking. China and Russia must have known this.

The US and Israel, a Siamese twins combo, may have some options. They may want to keep Iran under constant threat of attack, hoping to strain

its military and economy. But this requires a major, long-term US military presence in the region and at a cost to them, too. The US may also consider a naval blockade, as it did with Venezuela. But Iran is not Venezuela, and so could counter by blocking the Strait of Hormuz for US-allied shipping, which would likely force America to attack targets inside Iran directly because the global economy would dive as over 20 per cent of oil passes through the Strait of Hormuz. And then the war! And this time around, Iran has promised to consider any attack, no matter how limited, as a full-scale war. Rather than hesitating or trying to match the scale of the attack, Iran would retaliate immediately against all reachable US interests.

They claim Iran is at its weakest, yet they are amassing an armada after an armada, gathering a force in one place, never before seen in the history of warfare, yet they are afraid to attack! They thought they could intimidate Iran. What a humiliation to America! Iran has reportedly rejected requests from the US that would allow it withdraw without losing face. The other came from Israel. Washington’s message to Tehran was that the US would carry out a limited attack against it and that Tehran should accept it or respond only symbolically. Tehran, while rejecting this request, announced that it has redefined its war rules and red lines and considers any attack as a full-scale war.

Israel’s message to one of the intermediaries was that it...

Hassan Gimba is the Publisher and CEO of Neptune Prime.

TO BE CONTINUED



Aware of Iran’s strength and resilience, Netanyahu has worked relentlessly to push America into confronting Iran on his country’s behalf